Dollar$ & Sense
by Jack Mazurak

UMMC’s true economic impact measured in money, people

All the figures orbiting the University of Mississippi Medical Center’s $1.4 billion annual economic impact, its 8,600 employees and its position representing 10 percent of the metro-Jackson economy boil down to people like Lee and Kim Ferguson.

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The School of Nursing has netted a grant of $120,000 to fund academic scholarships with the aim of promoting diversity, and one professor of nursing says credit for the award is largely due to current students.

Last month, the Hearst Foundations awarded $100,000 to UMMC to establish the William Randolph Hearst Endowed Scholarship Fund for diverse students at the School of Nursing. Tracilia "Drew" Beacham, assistant professor of nursing and director of multicultural affairs in the school, said she and Dr. Renee Williams, assistant professor of nursing, were asked by Dr. Kaye Bender, former dean of the school, to write a grant proposal in 2008 after the foundation expressed an interest to support the school.

"WE WANTED TO MAKE IT NEED-BASED," Beacham said, adding that there are many merit-based scholarships available. "We were looking for students who were good students but had financial need."

The grant will fund a permanent endowment to provide scholarships for underrepresented students. The grant also includes an additional $20,000 to help recruit and retain new students.

Williams said the extra funds will allow the nursing faculty to look beyond colleges and reach out to high school students who may not be considering nursing as a career yet.

"We want to get that into their heads early that nursing is an excellent career choice," she said.

WITH THAT SPIRIT IN MIND, a group of Academic and Performing Art Complex students from Murrah High School were invited to visit the nursing school in early February to learn about the world of nursing and the range of opportunities the profession offers.

"They thoroughly enjoyed that," said Williams. "Now that we have the $20,000 in funds for recruiting, we can put it toward activities like that."

Williams, who also serves as co-chair of the school’s Multicultural Committee, said the scholarship fund will contribute to the committee’s primary goal of increasing diversity. Particularly in rural areas of Mississippi, she said, African-Americans are the largest consumers of health care but do not hold many health-care jobs.

"We’ll be making a direct impact on that."

Recently, a national study of nursing education sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation cited diversity as a key priority for nursing schools nationwide. Among recommended policy changes, "Educating Nurses: A Call for Radical Transformation," advised nursing schools to recruit more diverse student bodies.

"Health-care institutions could also show their commitment to diversity through increased scholarships for minority nurses, offering additional incentives for minority nurses to become nurse educators and actively recruiting minority nurses to pursue graduate education," the study’s authors said.

Williams said the Multicultural Committee is committed to recruiting a diverse student body, including African-American males and other underrepresented ethnic minorities, such as Latinos and Native Americans. "We try to run and get the whole gamut," she said.

RETAINING THOSE STUDENTS and helping them be successful is a key part of the committee’s mission, she added.

The scholarships will be awarded to incoming students with at least a 3.0 grade-point average who are Mississippi residents. Beacham said the first scholarships will be awarded this year for the upcoming school year. She said the financial support will be a tremendous help to students who have to balance work and study.

"They’re wonderful students, but there’s such a burden on them to work while they’re in school," Beacham said. "If we could ease that burden, if we could at least give them some money so they don’t have to work that first year, that would help them out a lot."
The integration of University Physicians and University Hospitals and Health System is similar to moving from dating to marriage.

Jointly they’ve been known as University of Mississippi Health Care since 2007 with the launch of the branding campaign. Now the goal is for UMHC to function as one entity. That includes consistent standards around patient billing, one check-in system for hospitals and clinics, one set of contracts with insurance companies, and one phone number for hospital and clinic appointments.

Dr. Scott Stringer, associate vice chancellor for clinical affairs, said the plan is to move from a business relationship between two legally separate entities – UP and UHHS – to one. Ultimately, the goal is to prepare the clinical enterprise for future growth and align strategic and financial goals in a time of health-care change.

“UMHC IS A ONE-STOP shopping experience for health care. We’re delivering the whole product rather than pieces of the product,” Stringer said.

The evolution of the patient-care mission of the Medical Center began with the merger of 17 clinical practices into one UP practice. Upon completion of that massive undertaking, the next step was for UP to work more closely with UHHS.

Now the next phase is to unite the practice plan and the hospital system.

For patients, customer service will be improved because they will be dealing with a single health care organization. For UMHC, improved communication and greater efficiencies will be achieved.

UHHS must find ways to work with physicians because they will make the decisions that will improve health-care quality, efficiency and delivery, said David Putt, CEO of UHHS. He said any way the hospitals and physicians can align interests will benefit the Medical Center.

“This will provide support for higher quality care and better financial performance to advance our institutional mission,” he said. “Our hope is that this will prepare our organization for the post-health-care-reform environment and mitigate the impact of lower reimbursements by developing sustainable platforms for physician-hospital alignment and win-win incentives.”

UMHC IS FOLLOWING A GROWING TREND. Other academic medical institutions, such as the Mayo Clinic, University of Kentucky and Cleveland Clinic, have moved to a singular system for their clinical enterprises.

Dr. Michael Karpf, executive vice president for health affairs at the University of Kentucky, said UK HealthCare, the branded name of the clinical enterprise, has reaped multiple benefits since embarking on its integration plan in 2002. UK’s academic medical center had lost market share because the leadership of the hospital, the practice plan and its college of medicine lacked a common vision and goals.

“We had to do everything to make the hospital profitable, from bricks and mortar to patient care.”

— Dr. Michael Karpf
University of Kentucky

UMHC is under Stringer’s supervision. Both Putt and Keith Gran, CEO of UP, report to him. Their offices are located in the administration offices, and as a visual reminder of the integration, the signage on the UHHS administration offices has been changed to UMHC administration.

Gran said integration will reduce duplication of hospital and clinic functions.

“Integration will be patient-centered to improve our flow, access to services and help improve our ability to take care of the citizens of Mississippi who most need us,” he said.
On the verge of graduating from medical school, Lee Ferguson and his wife, Kim, a recruiter at the School of Nursing, put in an offer to buy a house under construction in Brandon.

Lee matched into internal medicine at UMMC in mid-March and the couple spent the next three weeks hurriedly looking through what felt like three dozen homes. They signed a contract before the end of April and secured the federal first-time homebuyer’s incentive. They plan to close on May 27, a week after Lee graduates and little more than a month before his residency starts.

“It was a whirlwind. It made for a frenzied month, with match day and looking at so many houses. We’d been renting the past several years and decided it’s a wise investment,” Kim said.

Their decision to buy and their career choices impact their lives every bit as much as the economy. The home purchase means revenue for real estate sales people, a closing attorney, builders, at least one bank, county tax rolls and schools. Kim’s salary is one of thousands generating tax revenue for Mississippi and as a physician, Lee’s economic impact will one day be substantial.

**A NEW CONCEPT**

One physician or dentist can generate millions of dollars in annual economic impact, a fact Dr. James Keeton, vice chancellor for health affairs and dean of the School of Medicine, knows well. It’s one of many reasons why he wants state leaders to look at us as a targeted industry. We’re showing how we’re an economic driver. Not only are we generating taxes from employers and producing jobs, but look at the health care professionals we train. We’re never before thought of health-care professionals as a product, but in that sense, our product’s impact is huge.”

A recent study by the Medical Center, the University of Mississippi and outside consultants puts UMMC’s total economic impact at $1.4 billion annually. Medical research will likely bring in $83 million in mostly federal funds this fiscal year, 36 percent more than last. Clinical and hospital revenues account for the lion’s share of the Medical Center’s $1.2 billion budget and provide jobs for thousands of professionals.

With 2,500 students, UMMC’s education mission produces health-care professionals who often go to work in the state with the nation’s greatest health-care needs.

“Most of the degrees we grant here are high-level, terminal degrees. Those usually result in high-paying jobs, which surround themselves with other jobs they’re created,” Keeton said.

**MEDICINE FOR MISSISSIPPI**

One of the terms that gets heard almost in finance circles is return on investment, a measure of profit or loss on a given outlay. Medical Center leaders want it used in reference to UMMC.

For instance, the state will provide UMMC $140 million this fiscal year, all of which goes to the education mission. In turn, the state received an estimated $175 million in tax revenues from the Medical Center’s 8,600 employees last year, a 25 percent return on investment.

Assessing the impact of just the School of Medicine, the recent study showed its 2,500 graduates practicing in Mississippi impact the state’s economy to the tune of $1.3 billion annually.

“Our students, though they may not be paying taxes while in school, go out and start practices,” said Dr. LouAnn Woodward, associate vice chancellor for health affairs and vice dean of the School of Medicine.

That’s where they make a major impact. In economic terms, think of each physician as a business in a box. The factory at the School of Medicine ships boxes to communities throughout the state.

The new physician hires staff, nurses and assistants, they buy medical and office equipment.

They write prescriptions, which increase business for pharmacists. They pay accountants for book keeping, insurers, building contractors, service companies and most practice at hospitals too. That’s direct impact. Each new physician creates 15-26 jobs and $32 million a year in compensation revenue, the Medical Center’s study found.

Keeton and Woodward say growing the School of Medicine’s class sizes will increase that economic impact, multiply the positive return on investment and better address the state’s health needs.

“We’ve asked the governor to look at us as an economic development tool,” Woodward said.

They plan to increase class sizes within five years from 120 in 2009 to 165.

Integral to that is a plan to build a new, dedicated building for the school. The plan will require more state support but its long-term impact will far surpass the added cost. When those new physicians are fully deployed, they will generate a 4-to-1 return on every state dollar invested. Construction on the new building could start as soon as 2012.

**TARGETING HEALTH CARE**

When looking to attract businesses and create jobs, economic developers often focus on specific industries. If one business opens, it creates momentum to draw others working in same industry. Soon a region can offer a pool of expertise, trained workers, educational programs and infrastructure tailored to that industry.

Consider Mississippi’s targeting of the automotive industry in the past decade. Or aerospace. Or ship building. Or the steel industry.

Given the intersection of Mississippi’s health needs and its thrust for well-paying jobs, targeting health care makes sense socially and economically. Add the aging baby boomer generation and longer life expectancy, and a continued demand for health care couldn’t be more clear.

“It’s a totally new concept for Mississippi that you’d target health care,” said Dr. David Pope, associate vice chancellor for administrative affairs.

In Mississippi, where 88 of its 82 counties have too few physicians, more doctors and health-care providers will bring wider, tipping benefits beyond direct jobs and economic impact.

Pope is working with Jay Moon, president and CEO of the Mississippi Manufacturers Association, to promote health care as a targeted industry.

“When a business is expanding or locating a facility, they’re going to look at quality of health care as a factor in that decision,” Moon said.

By providing health-care professionals for communities, UMMC contributes to the overall health of the state’s population. It’s a primary function of the Medical Center since, in most health rankings, the state lags the rest of the country.

Any increase in overall health will impact the economy. Healthier people mean less work time and are more productive. Companies looking to move into new communities often consider the work force’s health as one of many factors before committing to a new plant or office.

“Promoting health care is an important factor too. When you’re asking management to relocate to an area, a question they’ll ask is ‘Where can I get my health care?’” Moon said.

“When you consider manufacturing, as a sector of the economy, is the largest provider of health insurance to people, you see why preventative care is becoming more of a focus.”

For all those reasons, the Medical Center’s importance to the state is manifold beyond its role as a hospital and research presence but in its promotion of a supply of medical professionals for the future. And we critically need that constant supply,” Moon said.

Pope said the economic impact study will continue, measuring the impact of UMMC’s research activities, other schools and programs.

“We’re one of the largest economic development tools the state has,” he said. “We’re using the same formulas to calculate impact as industry does and we’re going to demonstrate how the Medical Center’s impact is felt statewide.”
When families gather at the campus cemetery on Wednesday, they will say a final farewell to members of their family who’ve donated their bodies for anatomical research.

The students who attend the ceremony will express their appreciation to the person who became their first patient.

The 16th annual Ceremony of Thanks-giving formalizes a process that often begins years and years in advance of this day.

“Most people who are body donors make that decision many years before they are near death,” said Dr. Tony Moore, professor of anatomy and director of the Medical Center’s body donation program. “One name in our files has been there since 1971.”

That one name is among the 5,600 people who have completed the legal document willing their bodies to the Medical Center. Their remains are used by medical and dental students, occupational and physical therapy students, residents, researchers and occasionally for continuing education programs.

“Most clinical departments use our material regularly,” says Moore.

And remarkably, there is ample tissue to go around. It wasn’t always the case.

“When I became director of the program in 1993, we were still dependent on other medical schools in the Southeast to supply enough cadavers for gross anatomy,” Moore said. “There were no cadavers at all for the School of Health Related Professions.”

Moore attributes the willingness of people to be donors to their altruism.

“They just want to do a good deed. Some say they want to avoid leaving their families with the expense of a funeral, but most want to do something for the Medical Center.”

At the ceremony, the names of people whose bodies were donated during the previous years will be read; if their families consent. Admittedly, not all families are enthusiastic about carrying out the wishes of the body donor, but in most cases, the ceremony “brings a new appreciation for this process and a new respect for the family member,” Moore said.

Moore demonstrates the dignity and respect that body donors deserve and insists that respect in his students.

“If you treat the donors like family members, then the issue of respect is moot. I cannot remember an incident of disrespect by a student.”

While the public knows Moore in his role as director of the body donation program, he is, first and foremost, a teacher.

“It’s what I always wanted to be, and it’s the most important thing I can think of.”

Before he joined the faculty here in 1976, he was named most outstanding basic science teacher and pre-clinical professor three years in succession at the University of South Florida. At UMMC, he was tapped for the Nelson Order for teaching excellence in 2008 and 2009, was basic science teacher of the year in 2008, basic science all star in 2006 and 2007 and basic science teacher of the year in 1977.

Two students who believe they owe their medical careers to Moore include second-year medical student Meagan Mahoney and senior medical student John Steadman.

Steadman said Moore is “the reason I’m in medical school.” Already married with a family and trying to keep a business running at 37, Steadman found the demands of medical school overwhelming.

“I was going to quit, and when I told Dr. Moore, he said he was disappointed. He said the school and this state needed me. I had no idea he even knew my name, much less anything about me.

“He suggested a leave of absence, which I took, all because of him. If I hadn’t talked to him that day, I wouldn’t be here.”

Mahoney was floundering in gross anatomy her freshman year. “I thought I wasn’t going to make it in medical school.” She asked Moore for help.

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“I found out that there is nothing he won’t do to make sure a student understands – no matter how long it takes. He told me he thought I’d make a fine physician, and that will affect me for the rest of my career.

“He’s one of those people I will never forget.”

— Meagan Mahoney
Salazar to direct Batson’s comprehensive pediatric heart program

by Patrice Sawyer Guilfoyle

The Blair E. Batson Hospital for Children is set to establish its own comprehensive pediatric heart surgery program with the addition of Dr. Jorge Salazar. He joined the Medical Center April 1 as associate professor of surgery, chief of congenital heart surgery and director of the congenital heart program. Previously, Salazar was associate professor of surgery and pediatrics at Texas Children’s Hospital in Houston.

His experience and expertise will enable Batson to have its own comprehensive children’s heart surgery program for Mississippi and the region, building on the hospital’s 2-year-old partnership with Children’s National Medical Center in Washington, D.C., said Dr. Walter Merrill, professor and chief of the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery. Salazar will lead efforts to recruit additional personnel in pediatric cardiology, pediatric intensive care and pediatric anesthesia to establish Batson’s program as a world-class congenital heart center.

“He is a technically gifted surgeon who has achieved excellent results in the repair of complex and high-risk congenital defects, including in newborns. We anticipate that he will further develop our program in an exemplary manner,” said Merrill, a cardiothoracic surgeon.

Salazar received his training in general surgery and cardiothoracic surgery at Johns Hopkins Hospital, followed by an additional fellowship year focusing on congenital heart surgery at the University of California-San Francisco.

He also has served as a faculty member at the University of Texas-San Antonio, and he was a member of the Baylor College of Medicine faculty while working in one of the largest pediatric heart surgery programs in the country at Texas Children’s Hospital. Salazar has performed more than 2,000 congenital heart operations, Merrill said.

The development of a comprehensive children’s heart surgery program began with the Medical Center’s partnership with Children’s National in 2008. Batson Hospital officials conducted an extensive review of the country’s top-rated programs and chose Children’s National to help achieve its goal.

Dr. Richard Jonas, one of the world’s leading pediatric heart surgeons, directs a highly skilled, multidisciplinary team that has operated on and helped care for patients at Batson, alongside UMMC faculty and staff. In the past, more complicated cases have been handled at Children’s National and other medical centers.

Between April 2008 and March 2010, Jonas’ team performed 52 operations in Mississippi and 81 in Washington. Salazar expects to continue to refer the most complex cases to Children’s National during a transition period.

“The state of Mississippi is tremendously in debt to Dr. Jonas and the investment of time he’s made here,” Salazar said. “We will continue that relationship and build upon what they’ve already done.”

Salazar acknowledges his plans are ambitious and there’s hard work ahead. He said the citizens of Mississippi deserve to have the very best care available within the borders of their own state.

“Almost everything that’s worthwhile is a challenge. We definitely have the resources, the people and the commitment to make it happen,” he said.

Dr. Owen “Bev” Evans, interim chair of pediatrics, said Salazar helps with Batson Hospital’s mission to provide care to all children with heart disease.

“Together with the diagnostic and interventional cardiology service, the open heart surgery program will ensure that children with heart disease will get excellent care without leaving Mississippi,” he said.

Salazar said Batson Hospital’s pediatric heart surgery program will have the same expectations as any of the leading pediatric heart centers in the country, and that kind of success depends on a team approach to taking care of patients.

“The bottom line is not only to take care of all the children, but also the adults with congenital heart disease to achieve the very best results. Anything other than excellence is not acceptable,” he said.

Our program depends on all the team members being strong. When you’re in the trenches taking care of these complex patients, you need to be in there with your partners, your teammates.”

The opportunity to change lives and to fill a need in Mississippi drew Salazar to the Medical Center. A father of five, Salazar said he understands every child’s value very well.

“It’s a very important responsibility that we have to the patients and their families because they are entrusting us with their children’s hearts and lives,” he said.

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MBJ lists UP among ‘Best Places to Work’
by Patrice Sawyer Guilfoyle


The MBJ created the “50 Best Places to Work in Mississippi” program in 2005 to recognize companies that retain employees through safe, productive and friendly work environments. This was UP’s first year to participate in the program.

Larry Bouchea, director of UP human resources, said the ranking is a credit to the hard work of employees and the ongoing efforts to improve communication between operations leadership and staff.

“If you have an employee who’s happy in their job, then they’re probably more engaged. If they are more engaged, their work will usually be superior,” he said.

Southern Research Group collects the data for the annual rankings through employee surveys that remain anonymous. The group surveyed the UP workforce on various aspects of their work environment, including job satisfaction, overall perception of the organization and employee commitment.

In response to the MBJ’s announcement that UP had been selected for recognition, Dr. Scott Stringer, associate vice chancellor for clinical affairs and CEO of University of Mississippi Health Care, said staff members are partners with the faculty.

“We share a mutual vision of providing what we all expect to receive from a health-care provider: uncompromised expertise, innovative resources and thinking, listening to our patients, and the drive to treat patients and families like we want to be treated,” he said.

In the large employer category, UP placed third, ranking only behind Atmos Energy and Roy Anderson Construction Co., which ranked first and second, respectively.

“The best part of this recognition is that it really was the employees who made this happen,” Bouchea said.