

Decades of Support: Mac Kenzie Foundation Gives \$1.7 Million in Medical Scholarships

Foundation benefits nearly 800 UC San Diego School of Medicine students

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Since 1977, a small foundation based in Los Angeles has made a big impact on nearly 800 medical students at the University of California, San Diego. The Mac Kenzie Foundation—established by Sophia Mac Kenzie to alleviate the financial burden of medical school for California students—has given \$1.7 million in total donations for students in the UC San Diego School of Medicine. This year, the foundation gave \$85,000, benefiting 24 students.

Concerned about the soaring cost of medical school and the resulting amount of debt taken on by students, Mac Kenzie established the foundation in 1963. She believed that it was especially important to help those planning to become primary care physicians, who may often receive less competitive salaries than medical specialists. Currently, the American Association of Family Physicians predicts that by 2020, the U.S. will have a shortage of 40,000 family physicians.

"Miss Mac Kenzie created the foundation with the goal of lessening the crushing debt with which medical students often graduate," said trustee, Phil Irwin. "We hope to provide students with assistance so that they may have the flexibility to choose to go into primary care with less concern of paying back debt."

In its early stages, the foundation supported three medical schools in the Los Angeles area. After Mac Kenzie's death in 1974, her significant bequest allowed the foundation to expand its support to all medical schools in the state of California. Students are considered for the scholarship based on financial need and academic merit. Per Mac Kenzie's wishes, each scholarship application is reviewed by the foundation's three trustees—an attorney, Irwin; an accountant, Verdi (Steve) Boyer; and a physician, William Corey, M.D.

Julie Huber is one student who is currently benefiting from the Mac Kenzie Foundation's support at UC San Diego. A fourth year medical student, Huber was recently selected to receive the scholarship for the second year in a row. Huber completed the first half of her undergraduate degree at a community college close to Santa Rosa, where she lived at home with her parents and worked part time to cover her educational expenses. She transferred to UC Berkeley, earning a Bachelor's degree in Integrative Biology.

"Between my savings and the support of my parents, I was fortunate enough to minimize undergraduate debt," recalled Huber.

Huber already had plans to practice family medicine when she was accepted to the UC San Diego School of Medicine. It was during her third year that she was selected as a Mac Kenzie scholarship recipient.

"The scholarship has enabled me to concentrate on my academics instead of worrying about finances, both now and after graduation," said Huber. "It has also allowed me to take advantage of unique opportunities in medical school, such as international travel to Kenya and Mexico."

Before her death, Mac Kenzie expressed the hope that beneficiaries of her foundation's scholarship would in turn help the next generation of medical students when they were financially able to do so. Huber is already working to pay her gift forward. She is fundraising to sponsor the education of a Kenyan girl she met during her trip to Africa.

"The generosity of those who contribute to scholarships has inspired me to give back," added Huber. "In the future, I also plan to support need-based scholarships to help others achieve their educational goals."

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