THE SIRRIDGE OFFICE OF MEDICAL HUMANITIES AND BIOETHICS

BACKGROUND

At the UMKC School of Medicine, we know that physicians must have more than technically superior skills in order to provide our community with the best health care possible. They must also be insightful, empathetic individuals who can carefully analyze every component of a case and deliver care with compassion.

The Sirridge Office of Medical Humanities was established at the School of Medicine in 1992 with the goal of expanding opportunities to provide humanities courses for both premedical students and students in UMKC's distinctive six-year BA/MD program. It was initially funded and coordinated by Marjorie and William Sirridge, M.D.s, who were founding physician-docents when our School of Medicine opened in 1971. In 2008 the Sirridge Office of Medical Humanities was renamed to reflect its mission of infusing medical humanities and bioethics throughout the six-year curriculum. The first Sirridge Missouri Endowed Professor in Medical Humanities and Bioethics was also appointed to create and develop the curriculum.

Today the medical humanities curriculum is one of the largest in North America with seven different courses being offered on a regular basis. All are interdisciplinary and co-taught by physicians and faculty from the College of Arts and Sciences and Conservatory of Music and Dance. They explore the interrelationship of medicine and art, literature, law, body image, war, film and music. We are one of a handful of schools in the country who require all students to take a medical humanities course in Year 5 or 6. We are the only school in the country to offer a dedicated medical humanities study abroad experience – every other July Medicine and Music is taught in Graz, Austria with faculty from the UMKC-SOM and the Medical University of Graz.

THE VISION

Now, it's time for us to take this vital program to the next level so that it can meet its full potential, ensuring our students leave medical school not only with superior clinical skills but also the added ability to observe, analyze and reflect on each medical challenge they encounter, providing the best care possible for their patients. To this end, the School of Medicine is undertaking a $250,000 fundraising initiative to raise the national and international profile of the Sirridge Office of Medical Humanities and Bioethics.
FULLFILLING THE VISION

First, we propose to create a national symposium in medical humanities and bioethics to be held every other year at our school of medicine. This will attract scholars from across the United States to come to Kansas City to share ideas on researching, teaching and writing in these growing fields. Our students would be encouraged and supported to attend the symposium and to give papers. The proceedings from the symposium would be published.

Second, we need to fund regular workshops to train medical and nonmedical faculty in teaching medical humanities and bioethics. The Sirridge Office’s curriculum is unique in its depth, breadth and the challenge of co-teaching across disciplines is unusual.

Finally, we will work to assemble a detailed set of reference materials covering the medical humanities and bioethics. This collection will improve our students patient care knowledge, and will be a long-term benefit to their experience with their own professional clinical practice.