

## The Pride of CASE V Award Program 2008

### **Title of Entry**

The Leaders and Best: Nurturing Medical Greatness

### **Category**

8. Best Video/DVD/CD-ROM, Fundraising, Alumni Relations or Commercial Spots – AR, FD, CM

### **Institution**

The University of Michigan Medical School

### **Contact**

Jane Myers

Director of Strategic Communications

University of Michigan Health System

Office of Medical Development and Alumni Relations

301 E. Liberty

Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2251

734-998-7585

jemyers@umich.edu

### **General description of the entry**

“The Leaders and Best: Nurturing Medical Greatness” is a 10-minute film which makes a succinct and emotionally powerful case for scholarship support by highlighting the dreams of outstanding students, the benefactors who support them, the explanations behind higher costs in medical education, and the difference that private support makes in helping to create the next generation of great physicians and medical scientists.

### **Goals and objectives of the project**

The goal of “The Leaders and Best: Nurturing Medical Greatness” is to build a strong case for scholarship support for University of Michigan medical students, utilizing the power of film to capture and crystallize the passion and intellect of some of today’s most outstanding medical students, the faculty who teach them, and the benefactors dedicated to helping them succeed and allowing them to explore the vast horizons of medical service, free of educational debt burdens that might narrow their choices. The film is part of a public relations and marketing effort to support the Dean’s Scholarship Initiative, an ongoing effort, announced in April 2008, with the long-term goal of fully funding the tuition of all University of Michigan medical students through private philanthropy.

The film was premiered at a special April 2008 formal dinner to honor 250 benefactors of endowed scholarship funds and others with an expressed interest in scholarship support.

The five students in the film, along with other students receiving scholarship support, were seated with their donors at the dinner.

### **Description of how project fits into overall institutional and/or advancement goals**

This film is part of a multi-year plan involving the panoply of alumni relations efforts (personal visits by alumni officers, annual alumni reunion, small scholarship dinners in alumni homes, e-newsletters) and efforts on the part of the Dean with alumni, prospects and faculty in a variety of settings to increase scholarship support as part of the Dean's Scholarship Initiative. The portability of film in today's electronic world allows it to be seen by alumni and friends of the Medical School around the world. Viewers are given the opportunity to hear students, faculty and benefactors telling, in their own heartfelt words and from their own personal perspectives, particular stories as they relate to scholarship support, the need as described and experienced by faculty and school leadership, the gratitude felt by the students, the satisfactions experienced by the donors.

### **Audience**

The premiere audience for the film was the important group of prospects and benefactors who attended the April scholarship dinner hosted by Dean James O. Woolliscroft, M.D. The audience over the next five years will be 19,000 University of Michigan Medical School alumni (who will see the film in person at alumni events in Ann Arbor and at alumni events across the country, in both small- and larger-group settings, such as the winter Florida seminars), and who will be able to view the film on the alumni website or by playing the DVD that will be mailed to them as part of a broad scholarship appeal in Fall 2008. Other audiences will include University alumni especially interested in the future of medicine (such as Richard Rogel, a Business School graduate featured as a Medical School donor), Medical School faculty and staff, and grateful patients.

### **Special circumstances or challenges faced**

When working with medical students, medical faculty and medical alumni, who are often practicing physicians, scheduling of preliminary audio interviews and final film sessions becomes a substantial challenge, given the extraordinary value of time for all of these people and the tightly scheduled lives they live. It can, however, be done with experienced, highly conscientious administrative assistance. Additional challenges are those always found in a health care setting: getting security clearances, keeping medical school and hospital administrators apprised of planned film days, and not interfering with teaching, research or the delivery of clinical care.

A fundamental challenge when doing a film with untrained non-actors is achieving your goals – having the things said that you want to be said – without scripting the participants. The late director Sydney Pollack has a wonderful description of this challenge in a Q&A that is attached to the DVD of the 2005 documentary film Pollack made about the architect Frank Gehry called “Sketches of Frank Gehry.” Pollack discusses at some length the challenges inherent in producing an unscripted product, and how different it is from working with trained actors.

A further challenge when making a film like “The Leaders and Best: Nurturing Medical Greatness” is selecting a vendor who embraces your vision and has the imagination to help you refine that vision. We selected Prairie Pictures for this film on the basis of prior performance. They helped us produce our first award-winning scholarship film and we knew they had the capability to do a second one just as effectively. Since that time, their institutional knowledge has expanded, and their knowledge of all the latest film and audio technology remains superb, so we were confident that could deliver the product we wanted. There is always a challenge connected to creating such a film, however, in coming to the “meeting of the minds” with the vendor that makes it possible to ultimately arrive at that “a-ha!” moment when everyone knows the film is done and that it has achieved the goals you wanted it to achieve.

**Total number of professional and support staff who worked on the program; please note the use of freelancers, outside agencies or volunteers.**

Film direction was overseen by Jane Myers, director of strategic communications, and B.J. Bess, director of alumni relations, working with Prairie Pictures, a small locally based film company. Robert Ruiz, director of admissions, and Eric Middleton, counselor in student programs, assisted in the selection of students. Administrative assistant Denise Harrington helped with scheduling audio and film sessions.

**Program budget and unit costs where applicable**

The total budget for the film, including all payments to Prairie Pictures and to Allied Vaughan for DVD reproduction, was \$169,750.

**Documented results, measurements of effectiveness**

Since this film is intended to be used over a minimum five-year period, it is not possible to yet document the anticipated return on investment. The Medical School’s first scholarship film, a key part of our marketing effort over the past five years, resulted in a near doubling of the number of students receiving scholarship support and the establishment of 90 new endowed funds of \$100,000 or more. This upward trajectory in scholarship support is expected to continue with the new film playing a strong role in broadcasting the appeal as widely and effectively as possible.