



Bickner Gift Establishes Kinesiology's First Chair

by Pat Materka

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Kinesiology has received its first-ever fully endowed professorship from the Bickner Family Foundation.

The \$1.5 million gift continues a long history of support from **Joan and Bruce Bickner**, including Joan's many years of service as a member of the Kinesiology Campaign Council.

The Bickner Chair is one of 20 endowed professorships at U-M created through President Mary Sue Coleman's Donor Challenge, which will fund the balance of the \$2 million positions.

Bruce and Joan stated that the gift reflects their belief in Kinesiology's commitment to excellence in teaching, research, and service.

"The accomplishments of the Division of Kinesiology under Bev Ulrich have been truly outstanding," Joan said. "At this time, the Division is in need of an endowed chair to attract additional faculty of excellence. We are pleased to be able to establish the Division's first chair, and we hope that others will follow our lead. We also hope that the presence of an endowed chair will be further evidence of the growth and development of this academic unit—and an important step toward the University's recognition of Kinesiology as a School.

"We are grateful for President Coleman's challenge grant which helped to make this important development for Kinesiology a reality."

Dean Beverly Ulrich believes this is the only fully endowed chair in the country in a Kinesiology unit that is undesignated. "The faculty have been working together to identify the criteria for a new person to join our group. They will be seeking a person who spans disciplines—for example, sport business and law; exercise physiology and psychology, or pedagogy and mathematics.

"This will open the search to a wide range of candidates throughout the country, even throughout the world," Dr. Ulrich said. "The search itself will give visibility and prominence to Kinesiology at Michigan and elsewhere. It shows that the field of kinesiology can compete for named professorships with disciplines such as engineering and medicine.

"Bruce and Joan truly understand what we are about," she continued. "When we talked about the Michigan Difference Campaign, they indicated that they wanted to do something that we could not do by ourselves. That's where they wanted to play a role."

The Bickner's association with Michigan dates back to Bruce's years as a U-M law student and Joan's position as head pediatric nurse at University Hospital. They settled in Sycamore, IL where Bruce ultimately became chairman and CEO of DeKalb Genetics, and Joan was active in school, church and hospital volunteer work.

But they regularly returned for football and alumni events in Ann Arbor, and it was no surprise when all three of their children chose Michigan. Julie, '98, graduated in sports management and is now a teacher and administrator with the California Virtual Academies, a K-12 distance learning school system. Brian, also a former

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Kinesiology major, is now senior coach for the DeKalb County Swim Team where he took 15 members, his largest group ever, to the Swim Nationals last August. Their son Kevin graduated from the College of Engineering, and is a business operations manager with EMC Corporation.



Bruce and Joan Bickner

Over the years, the family's giving to U-M has focused on many areas of need, from financial scholarships to construction and renovation, including building and equipping Kinesiology's Bicker Auditorium.

"The endowed chair not only reflects their very generous and supportive nature, but their belief in us to steward it for the benefit of the entire unit," Dr. Ulrich said. "It allows us to attract an exceptionally strong candidate who can generate excitement within the faculty and student body.

"God has provided us with both talents and financial resources. We are happy to be able to share our time and resources with others," Joan said.

Owing to her medical background, Joan said that she is particularly impressed by Kinesiology's growing body of movement science research. "The range and diversity of studies related to exercise, motor development, health management, and now this latest initiative, the new Sport Injury Prevention Center, is so important," she said. "We are all living longer, and preventing or managing mobility problems is a key to maintaining quality of life." **M**