The Clarence and Martha Jones Family Foundation pledges $2 million to Pennington Student Achievement Center

Ann Jones Carlson ’59 (business), ’78 M.Ed. (education) remembers well her parents’ motto: “We worked hard so we could share with others.” One of their favorite quotes was from Harvey West: “The most rewarding use of life is to spend it for something that outlasts it.”

The Clarence and Martha Jones Family Foundation is carrying on that legacy, ensuring indeed that they will be remembered well into the future, with a $2 million pledge to the William N. Pennington Student Achievement Center, a 75,000 square-foot building that will unite a myriad of student-success services now scattered across campus.

The foundation’s gift will name the second floor academic center of the William N. Pennington Student Achievement Center in honor of the late Clarence Jones ’31 (electrical engineering) and Martha Hansen Jones (attended 1929-31), whose philanthropic support has touched every corner of the campus from academics to athletics.

“My parents always believed in making a difference, particularly when it came to education,” said daughter Charlotte Jones McConnell, “and they would agree that this wonderful building will make a real difference for the University and for generations of students.”

The couple provided funding for the renovation of the former journalism building (now known as the Clarence and Martha Jones Center), an elevator in Morrill Hall, the College of Education, the Clarence and Martha Jones Network Center in the Reynolds School of Journalism, a stress research project in the School of Medicine, computer labs for the College of Engineering, the expansion of Church Fine Arts, intercollegiate athletics and scholarships and much more.

Clarence worked for Reno Newspapers, Inc. for more than 50 years, while Martha was the organist for the First United Methodist Church in Reno for 25 years. Both were honored extensively for their commitment to the Reno community and the University. Martha received the President’s Medal in 1985 and the couple was inducted into the University’s Honor Court in 1997. Clarence was honored by the Board of Regents as a Distinguished Nevadan in 1977.

The William N. Pennington Student Achievement Center will be located at the center of campus on the former site of the Getchell Library. The center will offer evening hours to accommodate students’ schedules, something that is not currently viable with these services spread throughout six or more buildings. Services planned to relocate to the center include the Writing Center, Math Center, Tutoring Center, Career Studio, Advising Center, Student Veterans Lounge, Disability Resource Center, Counseling Services and TRiO Scholars Programs.

Demolition of the Getchell Library began in mid-December 2013 and construction-site preparation will be completed in early 2014. A groundbreaking for the new William N. Pennington Student Achievement Center is anticipated for summer 2014 with grand opening slated for early 2016.

The total cost of the project is estimated at $44 million and will be supported by private gifts and the capital improvement fee paid by students. The William N. Pennington Foundation made a $6 million lead gift to name the William N. Pennington Student Achievement Center, representing half of the $12 million in philanthropic support the University is seeking for the center. The facility will be further funded by $21 million in student capital improvement fees and $11 million from the University.

—Roseann Keegan

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