Noted biomedical researcher Mick Hitchcock steps forward to fund research at Nevada

When noted biomedical researcher Mick Hitchcock learned that the recent federal sequester would affect basic science research funding at the University of Nevada School of Medicine, he wasn’t about to sit back and watch it happen.

“I became passionate about the field of research as a graduate student researcher, and I felt strongly that I wanted to help out,” says Hitchcock, a senior advisor to biopharmaceutical company Gilead.

Hitchcock has worked for more than 30 years in the biopharmaceutical industry. He spent 12 years at Bristol-Myers Squibb before joining Gilead. Together with former Bristol colleague John Martin, he developed Viread, approved by the FDA in 2001 as a once-daily pill to treat HIV. Before Viread, a reported 90 percent of AIDS patients had to take as many as a dozen pills throughout the day, suffering side effects including gauntness, anemia and liver damage. Subsequently they developed Atipla, approved in 2006 as the first single-tablet regimen for treatment of HIV that includes the active component of Viread and two other drugs. The ease of use made it a popular choice for physicians and patients.

“Our scientists and graduate students stand every day on the edge of scientific discovery,” says Thomas L. Schwenk, M.D., dean of the School of Medicine. “An interruption to their important work could lead to significant delays in providing new treatments and methods of caring for patients. We are grateful to have found a friend and advocate in Mick.”

—Roseann Keegan

Maggie Tarrant-Elorza, a graduate research assistant with the Department of Microbiology and Immunology, with Mick Hitchcock, who is providing bridge funding to the medical school for student research.