



**University of New England – Press Conference  
Friday, December 10, 2010**

**Harold Alfond Athletic Complex and Inter-professional Healthcare Workforce Education**

**Remarks of Gregory W. Powell  
Chairman  
Harold Alfond Foundation**

Over his lifetime, Harold Alfond made many gifts to higher education. There were none, however, of which he was more proud than his 1995 gift to the University of New England for this magnificent, state-of-the-art building. Here in this building and here on this campus, the people of this University dedicate themselves, day in and day out, to providing a high quality education that deliberately and creatively connects students to the workforce needs of our economy.

Since 1995, UNE's growth has been unprecedented. The University has steadily increased enrollment of high caliber students, many of whom are the first in their families to go to college. It has expanded academic programs, clinical training opportunities, and community partnerships. It has strengthened its financial position. Near and dear to Mr. Alfond's heart, the University's athletic programs have expanded and its students have excelled with impressive division and conference finishes and titles. And UNE has invested in the future through the construction of new academic buildings and residence halls.

Most importantly, President Ripich, the board, deans, faculty and staff have consistently shown the ability to be responsive, adaptive and entrepreneurial in connecting liberal arts education for UNE students with skills needed in today's occupational-based workforce.

Today, the University educates more healthcare professionals than any institution of higher learning in Maine. Since 1995, UNE has awarded 5,525 degrees in the health professions, including 1,208 nursing degrees.

Sixty percent of UNE graduates go into primary care – and many of those stay right here in Maine. In fact, in the last decade, 40% of graduates from UNE's health programs remained in Maine

to help meet the healthcare needs of our state's rural population. Today, over 15% of the state's primary care physicians are graduates of this school. And 24% of Maine's physicians serving in rural areas have UNE degrees. It's no wonder UNE was recognized by *U.S. News and World Report* as 6<sup>th</sup> in the nation for its leadership in primary care training.

Recently, pundits have had an epiphany. As costs of higher education have continued to skyrocket and our economy has declined, these pundits have concluded that colleges and universities must learn to more closely link their curricula and educational experience to the country's economic and workforce needs.

Here at UNE, that linkage has been recognized and at work for decades. It has been and is this University's mark of excellence.

In 1995, Harold Alfond believed that UNE needed this state-of-the-art health sciences center to become Maine's leader in healthcare workforce education. Today, the University has become *that* leader.

But with success comes new needs and new opportunities. And UNE is not resting on its record, but building on the outstanding success it has achieved.

So this morning, fellow trustee Bob Marden and I are delighted to be here to tell you about how the Harold Alfond Foundation intends to help UNE build on its success and meet new needs and opportunities.

On behalf of the Foundation, we are **pleased to announce a grant commitment of \$10 million dollars to the University of New England.**

Consistent with Harold Alfond's love of athletics and his longstanding commitment to improving healthcare for all Maine citizens, this gift will support *both* athletics and healthcare.

First, we are awarding \$7 million dollars for construction of a new, state-of-the-art athletic complex with everything from an ice arena to a field house, café and fitness center. In our view, this University and its students deserve an athletic facility that is worthy of your academic mission's commitment to good health as a lifestyle and that recognizes your outstanding accomplishments in athletics.

In true Harold Alfond style, starting today, the Foundation will match every dollar contributed to UNE for the complex or any purpose furthering the school's academic mission up to \$7 million dollars.

And then we have a bonus for you: a \$3 million dollar bonus.

In recognition of UNE's role as the state's leading educator of healthcare professionals, we will make a bonus payment of \$3 million dollars to UNE for healthcare education if UNE can get a shovel in the ground next spring and quickly raise the \$7 million in cash.

Harold Alfond would have loved to be here this morning. And if he were here, he would want to speak to you, the students of UNE, and tell you of his life, how he came to support your school, and how important your life's work is and will be to the future of our country.

Harold graduated from high school in 1934 --- over 3/4 of a century ago. On his graduation day, the world's economy and that of the United States were deep in depression, far worse than our current challenges. For Harold, money was scarce and so were opportunities. So Harold Alfond did not go on to college. Instead, he moved to Kennebunk, Maine and got his first full time job, earning 25 cents an hour, working at the Kesslen Shoe Company factory which still stands in Kennebunk on Maine Street not far from here. A few years later, Harold sold his car, bought an abandoned shoe factory, and moved to Norridgewock, Maine.

Back then, Norridgewock was a very rural place. It still is. And so when Harold fell seriously ill in the early years of the business, medical help in rural Maine was as scarce as it was important.

But Harold was a lucky man. He was lucky because there was a single family doctor in Norridgewock --- Dr. Joseph Eshleman. And Dr. Eshleman took care of Harold. Dr. Eshleman was an osteopathic physician and as Harold gratefully recalled, **“Dr. Eshleman pulled me through.”**

This morning, Dr Eshleman's son Jim is with us. Jim, and his two brothers, followed in their Dad's footsteps and went on to become family doctors, and Jim practices family medicine in Norway, Maine. And to complete this circle-of-life story, Jim has a daughter who graduated from the University of New England's school of medicine, was president of her class, and today not only practices family medicine but serves on the faculty of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill medical school.

Harold Alfond never forgot Dr. Eshleman. And the gratitude he felt for Dr. Eshleman highlighted for Harold the importance of UNE's mission.

It highlighted for Harold the importance of quality, affordable healthcare in our state as well as how every man and woman --- with a good education whatever their profession --- can make a difference in the lives of others.

And from Harold's life story, he would want you all to know that he was so grateful to your school for what it does and to you for what you will do with your education to help your fellow man --- **“to pull us all through”** --- in the years ahead.

Merry Christmas!