

# PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

## UPMC's promise: \$100M for grads

By Bill Zlatos  
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The University of Pittsburgh Medical Center will announce today a promise to donate \$100 million over 10 years for a plan to help graduates of city schools go to college.

Introduced last year, the tuition assistance plan called The Pittsburgh Promise had attracted only a \$10,000 gift from the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers before UPMC's commitment.

"This is potentially a historic occasion for the city of Pittsburgh," said city schools Superintendent Mark Roosevelt. "The only way we'll get Pittsburgh back to the glory days is by dreaming big and working hard."

Roosevelt said The Pittsburgh Promise could slow the population decline in the city and the district. Pittsburgh is expected to lose 60,000 people over a decade, and Pittsburgh Public Schools has lost 1,180 students over the past year.

UPMC, which posted profits of \$618 million last year, is giving \$10 million in scholarships for 2008 graduates and \$90 million over nine years as part of a challenge grant to create an endowment of \$250 million.

The endowment would provide \$15 million a year in scholarships for the district's 2,000 high school seniors, Roosevelt said.

The initial class would get up to \$5,000 a year for four years of tuition if that bill is not covered by state or federal aid or money from the college. Graduates whose tuition already is covered could get as much as \$1,000 from The Promise.

To get the money, next year's graduating seniors would have to maintain a C average. The following year, seniors would have to have a C-plus average and meet attendance standards. And the scholarships would be limited to attendance at 65 public schools in the state and 31 private schools in the region.

"If you go to school near Pittsburgh, you're more likely to return to Pittsburgh," Roosevelt said.

The scholarship money from The Promise could increase to \$10,000 a year in 2012 if students pass a high school graduation exam the state might initiate.

Roosevelt said he would like the district to begin the exam in 10th grade if the state does not require it first.

Students who fail the exam but get a high school diploma could still get \$5,000 for tuition.

UPMC's money would go to The Pittsburgh Foundation, which would run The Promise as a supporting organization with its own seven-member board.

When fully funded, The Promise would increase the foundation's total assets to \$1 billion, said Richard W. Reed, executive vice president of the foundation. In running The Promise, he said the foundation will waive its usual fee.

"A normal fee would be over a million dollars a year," Reed said.

Pittsburgh Mayor Luke Ravenstahl said he and Roosevelt approached UPMC about six months ago to fund The Pittsburgh Promise. Those talks produced a "gentleman's agreement" three months ago that evolved into today's announcement.

"We had to prove to them why they should put a significant amount of funding behind a program like this. Fortunately, myself, the superintendent and the folks at UPMC were able to develop a relationship, which I think is critical in terms of trying to get deals like this done," Ravenstahl said.

He said the program will attract families to move into the city and stop some families from moving out.

Ravenstahl said UPMC won't get anything in return from the city for making the donation. He acknowledged failing to have the program running in time for this year's class of students, as he promised in December 2006.

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