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Teacher Funds School's Dorms

By SHELLY BANJO

Jan Vilcek wants to repay New York University's Langone Medical Center for taking a chance on him.

The microbiology professor will on Wednesday announce a \$21 million gift to the medical school to purchase and renovate a student dormitory.

Dr. Vilcek and his wife Marica immigrated to the U.S. from the former Czechoslovakia in 1965. At 31 years old, Dr. Vilcek joined the medical center as an assistant professor, studying the immune system. In the late 1980s, Dr. Vilcek and his colleagues developed an artificial antibody that served as the basis for Remicade, a drug used to treat inflammatory diseases such as colitis, rheumatoid arthritis and Crohn's disease.



Noli Novak

JAN VILCEK

He created the drug in partnership with biotechnology company Centocor, now part of Johnson & Johnson, and decided to plow the profit from the drug's royalties back into charity.

Dr. Vilcek and his wife started a foundation in 2000 to raise awareness of immigrants' contributions to the sciences, arts, and culture in the U.S.

Then in 2005, the Vilceks gave NYU's medical school \$105 million, the largest gift made to the school at the time, to enhance the sciences and to expand the school's research capabilities.

"When I came to this country with nothing, NYU gave me the opportunity to prove myself. It was a courageous move on the part of the university," Dr. Vilcek says.

"Now I want to make it possible for other medical students and young researchers to succeed."

About half of the new \$21 million gift to the medical center will go to buy and renovate a building on East 26th Street that will serve as a 423-student dormitory for undergraduate and graduate medical students. The 26-story building will also include a new lounge, fitness center and study space.

"Prior housing for our medical students was subpar and affordable housing became an issue for attracting potential students," says Robert Grossman, the dean and CEO of NYU Langone Medical Center.

Another \$10 million will go to create the Jan and Marica Vilcek Merit Scholarship Fund, which will provide full tuition for medical-school students based primarily on merit, with a secondary focus on students' financial ability to pay.

"We decided to base the scholarships primarily on merit because my main goal is to improve the competitiveness of our medical school and attract the most highly qualified and talented students," says Dr. Vilcek, who is 77.

The remaining \$1 million of the donation will be used to expand the existing Jan T. Vilcek Endowed Fellowship Fund, created five years ago at the university to support the research of graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.

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