

Support Group

The faculty and alumni of the New Jersey Medical School rally to augment the effort to create two endowed chairs in surgery, named after esteemed colleagues.



Anne C. Mosenthal, chair of the Department of Surgery, is photographed by a portrait of the late Benjamin F. Rush Jr., the distinguished professor and founding chair of the Department of Surgery at New Jersey Medical School. Charles J. Prestigiacomio, left, is chair of the Department of Neurological Surgery, and Peter W. Carmel is chair emeritus of neurosurgery at the medical school and director of the Neurological Institute of New Jersey.

Two new endowed chairs at New Jersey Medical School (NJMS)—one in surgery and one in neurosurgery—will strengthen the future of surgical education in New Jersey and beyond. Both chairs will have immediate and long-term impacts on their departments, the medical school, and Rutgers. They represent an investment by faculty, alumni, and friends that will pay dividends in prestige, education, and retention of talented faculty.

The Benjamin F. Rush Jr. Endowed Chair of Surgery is named for the distinguished professor and founding chair of the Department of Surgery at New Jersey Medical School, who died in 2013. The chair is held by Anne C. Mosenthal, the chair of the department. The Peter W. Carmel, M.D. Endowed Chair of Neurological Surgery is held by Charles J. Prestigiacomio. It is named for the chair emeritus of neurosurgery at NJMS and director of the Neurological Institute of New Jersey. Both chairs are part of the 18-Chair Challenge, in which an anonymous donor pledged \$27 million in matching

gifts toward new endowed chairs at Rutgers.

The Rush chair was launched with a major bequest by Rush, with generous support from the Rush family, Department of Surgery faculty, and Rush's former trainees. "Dr. Rush was an extraordinary leader in the field of surgery," Mosenthal says. "A master surgeon, he was beloved by his trainees and colleagues for his mentorship, intellect, and surgical skills."

A fundraising committee headed by Mosenthal organized symposia and galas, hosted phone-a-thons, and sent mailings to alumni. The response was inspirational. "It's a great feeling to enhance the department for the future in honor of someone so respected," Mosenthal says. "Faculty and alumni alike really came out with their support. The faculty know this endowed chair will support their work and research, as well as train future surgeons; it will bring stature and recognition to the department and New Jersey Medical School."

The neurosurgery faculty's support was also vital in creating the Carmel chair. "The role of

the faculty has been nothing short of incredible," says Prestigiacomio. Carmel himself has made gifts and pledges toward the chair; Prestigiacomio and his family have pledged funds toward its creation; and faculty colleagues have given generously of their time and money toward two fundraising galas.

As part of the Rush chair, Mosenthal plans to offer a fellowship in surgical research as well as a grant program for faculty research, in keeping with Rush's wishes. "Overall, the endowed chair will support academic development, and maybe even some brilliant discoveries," she says. "It will certainly change the way we train students. By allowing

them to explore new innovations without the burden of financial constraints, it allows for the advancement of science."

Together with Carmel, Prestigiacomio hopes to use the endowed chair to create a "halo effect" for the future, leading to the formation of additional endowments in many disciplines in neurosurgery. His immediate goal is to further enhance education by offering traveling scholarships for students and residents, and fellowships for first- and second-year faculty. "That way, they can bring the skills they learn back to the medical school family while becoming nationally and internationally recognized in their fields over the long term," he says.

Prestigiacomio and Mosenthal view the endowed chairs as indispensable tools for an evolving medical landscape. "There is so much change in health care and medical education right now, and this endowment is a way to move the department forward, embrace all these changes, and enhance the way we train surgeons," says Mosenthal.

— Melissa Kvidahl