Honoring a Legacy and Advancing the Future of Medical Education

Dr. Ilene B. Harris

Endowed Professorship in the Department of Medical Education and Legacy Research Fund

Mathematics Professor Morton Harris has made a $1.45 million gift to the UIC Department of Medical Education (DME) in memory of his late wife, Professor Ilene B. Harris, past head of the department. The gift will establish both the Dr. Ilene B. Harris Endowed Professorship in the Department of Medical Education and the Dr. Ilene B. Harris Legacy Research Fund. The research fund will support a competitive research grant program open to medical education researchers worldwide.

“Like Ilene was, the department of medical education is dedicated to the development of medical professionals and innovative research to advance the field. I am confident this gift in her honor will promote that goal.”

—Morton Harris

Ilene Harris received her BA, MA and PhD from the University of Chicago, and she met Morton Harris, her future husband, at the International House there. She joined University of Illinois College of Medicine in 2003 as professor in the Departments of Medical Education and Pathology. During that period, she led DME’s flagship Master in Health Professions Education program and expanded DME’s educational offerings to include the Master of Science in Patient Safety Leadership and the PhD in Curriculum Studies with Concentration in Health Professions Education in collaboration with the UIC College of Education. Harris led DME as its head from 2008–19.

She authored more than 150 peer-reviewed publications in premier journals. One of her best-known papers, published in 2014, had been cited more than 600 times by 2020, placing it among the top 1% of cited papers in clinical medicine that year. She received many national awards, and at UIC earned the highest teaching award in 2014 and an award for Outstanding Education Service from the College of Medicine in 2015.

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—Alan Schwartz, interim head of the DME

continued
“Because this gift endows a professorship and research fund, we will be able to extend Dr. Harris’s legacy as a faculty member by retaining outstanding scholars and continue her transformative impact by promoting innovative medical education research worldwide,” said Alan Schwartz, interim head of the DME. “To continue improving health professionals’ training and patient care at UIC, nationally and worldwide, we must maintain our world-class research and teaching faculty and engage with health profession education stakeholders to promote innovative and rigorous scholarship. Professor Harris’s gift in Dr. Harris’s honor addresses both of these goals.”

“This commitment to the department and to our college empowers us to carry out our mission and build upon our tradition of excellence, a tradition greatly influenced by Dr. Ilene Harris, whose legacy will undoubtedly live on.”

—Dean Mark I. Rosenblat, Executive Dean, University of Illinois College of Medicine

“We are so incredibly grateful to Dr. Morton Harris for his exceptional generosity toward the Department of Medical Education,” University of Illinois College of Medicine Executive Dean Mark I. Rosenblatt said. “This commitment to the department and to our college empowers us to carry out our mission and build upon our tradition of excellence, a tradition greatly influenced by Dr. Ilene Harris, whose legacy will undoubtedly live on.”

Professor Morton’s generous contribution counts toward IGNITE: The Campaign for UIC’s $750M goal. It answers the College of Medicine’s aim to support and enhance its national and international research reputation and remain at the forefront of discovery. And, it fulfills UIC’s efforts to empower faculty leaders and drive life-changing discovery.