In 1957, when University of Hartford founders were discussing the values that should lie at the heart of their new institution, Dorothy Schiro said, “We must never lose focus on those who can benefit most from an education.”

I have thought of that statement many times during my 17½ years as the University’s president, not only because Dorothy Schiro was the daughter of Beatrice Fox Auerbach, a woman who did so much to establish the University on firm footing; not only because Schiro was one of the University’s first regents; but also because she was my Aunt Betty’s best friend in college.

I have often recalled her quotation because it speaks so eloquently and simply about a value that has distinguished this University since its founding: make a world-class education available to deserving students regardless of their ability to pay.

Because that value is so important here, we have decided to devote all monies given to our annual fund—which we call the Anchor Fund—to scholarships for deserving students throughout the University for the next two years. Nothing is more important to us than making the University affordable and accessible for all students.

Our early calls for gifts for this purpose have met with very encouraging results. No matter what size gift is made to the Anchor Fund, we are putting it immediately to work to help students who need it most. And I can tell you that those students and their families really appreciate the help.

Running parallel to this campaign for gifts of any size is a decision by my colleagues in Institutional Advancement to designate pledges and gifts to the Anchor Fund in the next two years of $1,000 or more per year as gifts to support “Harrison Scholars.” While I am just a little bit embarrassed to have my name attached to it, I can think of nothing I would rather have my name associated with.

In order to sustain funding for scholarships, we need more than a two-year annual fund campaign. That’s why we are in the midst of a multiyear campaign to raise larger gifts for endowed scholarships. Our original goal was to raise $10 million for this purpose. To date—with two years left—we have raised over $8 million. More is needed. The more we can raise, the more students we can help. You can start a named endowment with a pledge of $25,000 or more. Your gift of $5,000 or more can be directed to the unrestricted scholarship endowment.

My wife, Dianne, and I started a named endowment with our own funds and gifts we received for our 40th wedding anniversary five years ago. The Dianne Harrison Scholarship now provides junior or senior English majors who have an interest in studying British literature with financial help to complete their studies at the University. (You can see my wife’s influence: she is a British literature scholar!)

My interest in scholarship funds, like so much in my life, stems from my mother. In 1932, when she completed high school, she was admitted to Bryn Mawr College. It was the depth of the Depression, so even though she had received a small scholarship from the college, it did not look as if she would be able to attend. Her great-uncle asked her to come to see him one day, and he offered to provide her with the funds she needed to attend, and to graduate from, Bryn Mawr. He later supplied my Aunt Betty with the same financial help.

That example of supporting those who will benefit most has driven me throughout my career in education. Talented students deserve the opportunity to attend a university like ours that can challenge and support them and can prepare them for rich and rewarding careers. I believe that during my tenure here we have done our part in keeping the cost of attendance as low as we possibly can. Now we need your help in providing the funds to those who need them, as my Uncle DeWitt did, to allow deserving students to achieve their dreams.

Please join Dianne and me in giving to the Anchor Fund. I can tell you that our students will never forget your help. Neither will their grateful president.

Walter Harrison
President