

Leadership at UMMC

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We as Mississippians have a great asset in the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC). This entity, which has a budget almost as large as all eight public universities combined, is the state's only academic health science center. UMMC is big business. With a budget of \$1.3 billion and over 8,600 employees, UMMC represents 10% of the metro Jackson economy and 2% of the state economy. UMMC really has a multifold mission of education, patient care, research, diversity, and addressing disparity in health care in Mississippi. UMMC through its innovative small business initiatives is also creating a ripple effect in the local business community. UMMC also partners with health care providers around the state through its TelEmergency telemedicine program and the Med-Com program for coordinating transports to the state's only level one trauma center.

I spent some time recently with Dr. Jimmy Keeton, vice chancellor for health affairs and dean of the school of medicine, to learn more about the man at the helm of this organization and to learn more about the past, present, and future of this historic institution. In business lingo, Dr. Keeton is the CEO of UMMC, and reports to Dr. Dan Jones, chancellor at the University of Mississippi and ultimately the Institutions of Higher Learning. Dr. Keeton brings a wealth of experience to this role which he was appointed to after Dr. Dan Jones was appointed to his role as chancellor. A graduate of the University of Mississippi undergraduate and medical schools, Dr. Keeton also completed his residencies in surgery and urology there. He continued his training in pediatric urology at the Hospital for Sick Children in London, England, and he later served as a lieutenant commander in the U.S. Naval Hospital in Great Lakes, Illinois. He served on the faculty at the University from 1973-75 and spent 27 years in private practice before returning to the faculty in 1998 full time. Later, he was appointed Dr. Jones' chief of staff before his current appointment.

Dr. Keeton has continued the positive changes that Dr. Jones brought to UMMC, and he is enthusiastically building a world class organization. As chief cheerleader, he has worked hard to help the employees at UMMC take pride in UMMC and its role in Mississippi's future. Leading any large organization through change is not easy, and Dr. Keeton certainly has work to do, but his leadership style indicates that he is the right person for the job. According to Dr. LouAnn Woodward who serves as associate vice chancellor for health affairs, "Dr. Keeton brings a very personal style to the job, and the people he works with truly know that he cares about them and the institution."

Dr. Keeton is a lifelong student of leadership. In fact, when he heard that then U.S. presidential candidate Bob Dole had requested a list of key leadership books from the Library of Congress, Dr. Keeton wrote the Library of Congress and asked for a similar list which they provided. I am thinking I might try that myself. His management style is one of empowering his team to perform. He is not a micro-manager, but he expects performance. He learned from his father, a small business owner, "as a leader that you ultimately have to make the call." Dr. Keeton also noted that, "you have to keep your sense of humor." There is great wisdom in that point that is often overlooked by leaders. He also stresses to his team that, "each day we need to ask ourselves if we have made a difference today for the State of Mississippi." One of Dr. Keeton's core strengths and keys to his success as a leader is his ability to pull a diverse group together and getting them focused as a team. Particularly given the diverse missions of UMMC, this is a very helpful skill set.

When I see the way the way Dr. Keeton has organized his management team, aligned the vast array of interests at UMMC into a focused strategy, and the passion and vigor that he brings to the job, I know that future looks bright for UMMC and the state. Future plans include a new medical center building, a ring road around the campus, and additional research and development facilities. UMMC has almost doubled its annual research grant money to approximately \$75 million. The expanded research and development will help UMMC in its goal to be designated a national cancer institute similar to M.D. Anderson or Mayo Clinic.

UMMC is one of Mississippi's biggest businesses and is on a growth trajectory. As citizens of the state, we should proud of what is going on there, and as business people, we should be paying attention to this economic engine. As UMMC continues to grow and expand under the leadership of Dr. Keeton and his team, I envision a clustering of health related businesses that piggyback and add to the success of UMMC.

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