

# Transformational \$126 Million Gift Propels Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center into Next Chapter of Excellence

A landmark gift of \$126 million to the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of Miami Leonard M. Miller School of Medicine will accelerate breakthrough advances in finding cures for cancer and expand innovative treatment options for cancer patients. The groundbreaking donation – the single largest in the University of Miami’s 95-year history – will further propel Sylvester’s standing as one of the nation’s preeminent cancer centers.

The unrestricted anonymous gift was made in honor of Stephen D. Nimer, M.D., director of Sylvester and the Oscar de la Renta Endowed Chair in Cancer Research. “I am truly humbled by the magnitude of this gift,” said Dr. Nimer. “I never expected to experience such immense generosity for simply answering the call to serve those in need.”



The gift is an anonymous bequest from a member of a family Dr. Nimer has known for decades. When facing several health challenges, including cancer, the family and those in their immediate networks turned to Dr. Nimer for guidance and support.

“I’ve dedicated my life to excellence and serving the well-being of others,” said Dr. Nimer, who is also a professor of medicine, biochemistry and molecular biology at the Miller School. “I now want to honor this donor. With a gift of this size, it’s our goal to maximize its impact, ensuring that we invest in programs and people who can change outcomes for as many patients as possible. That will mean a legacy that lasts for generations to come.”

Recognized as one of the world’s premier leukemia and stem cell transplant researchers and clinicians, Dr. Nimer led the multiyear effort to secure National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designation in 2019, making Sylvester the only NCI-designated cancer center in South Florida, and one of only two in Florida.

“Sylvester is a leader in cancer care and research and this tremendous act of generosity will have a profound impact on our work in this field,” said University of Miami President Julio Frenk. “The gift is an affirmation of the extraordinary vision and leadership of Dr. Stephen D. Nimer and our talented and passionate team of researchers, clinicians, faculty and

staff who are changing the way we prevent, diagnose and treat cancer.”

To maximize the donation’s impact, the anonymous gift will serve as a matching gift to leverage additional donations of \$1 million or more to Sylvester. To date, philanthropists, including The Pap Corps Champions for Cancer Research, Paul J. DiMare and the DiMare family, Steven Dwoskin (Dwoskin Charitable Trust Foundation), Eric and Elizabeth Feder, and Annette de la Renta have met the challenge, donating \$21 million in total, to accelerate innovative cancer research and bolster endowment funds for faculty chairs.

This matching program will also establish a strong pool of resources for necessary investments in infrastructure, including a new research facility to foster cutting-edge, scientific discovery and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Based on the donor’s previous interest in Dr. Nimer’s research priorities, a part of the gift will be dedicated to advancing research in cancer epigenetics and Sylvester’s experimental therapeutics program. “This will help the people in this community get greater access to more novel treatments,” said Dr. Nimer. “With expanded treatment options and opportunities to develop more cures, our patients can benefit from this landmark gift to our cancer center.”

The gift has already allowed Sylvester to recruit a leader in the field of experimental therapeutics, who will build on the program’s breakthrough impact on cancer care. Funds from the donation will support Sylvester’s continued efforts to attract and retain top-tier scientists and clinicians.

Hilarie Bass, chair of the University of Miami Board of Trustees, said, “What is most exciting about this gift is the tremendous impact it will have on cancer care for the people of South Florida. It will substantially enhance the research that takes place at Sylvester, and lead to enhanced treatment options. Ultimately, anyone seeking cancer care at Sylvester is the true beneficiary.”

Jayne S. Malfitano, member of the University of Miami Board of Trustees, and vice chair of Sylvester Board of Overseers, said, “Sylvester’s preeminent national reputation is due in part to the single-minded dedication our physician-scientists have to those they serve – it is this compassion and excellence for care that makes Sylvester so special.” Ms. Malfitano, who is also the president of the Harcourt M. and Virginia W. Sylvester Foundation board, noted, “The donor saw in our institution, and in Dr. Nimer, in particular, the conviction and talent required to alleviate the suffering of so many battling cancer. I am grateful for the trust they had in our work.”

Ms. Malfitano’s involvement with Sylvester dates back more than 35 years when her father, Harcourt Sylvester, Jr., first pledged a multimillion-dollar naming gift to the University of Miami to build a cancer center in honor of his parents.

Today, Sylvester, part of UHealth – the University of Miami Health System and the University of Miami Leonard M. Miller School of Medicine, combines the strength of more than 300 cancer experts and researchers. Sylvester discovers, develops and delivers more targeted therapies, providing the next generation of cancer clinical care – precision cancer medicine – to each patient.

