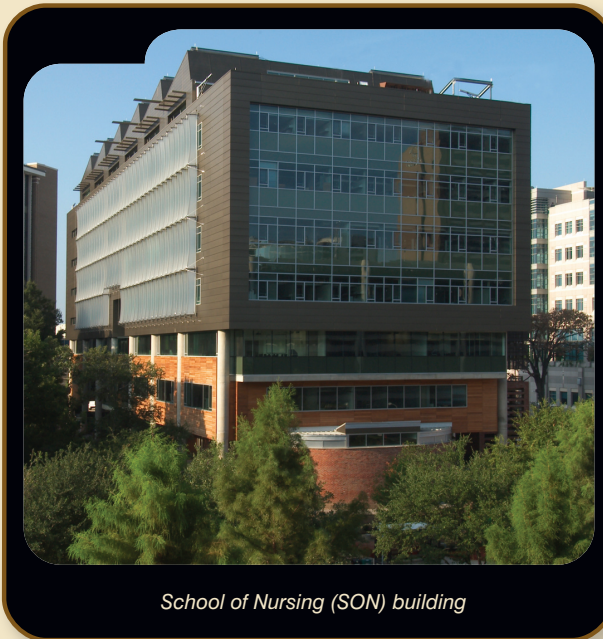


THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER AT HOUSTON



School of Nursing (SON) building

Investing in Innovative Health Care Delivery

Within six months of completing his education at The University of Texas at Austin, Ralph Thomas had started giving back. As a young investment professional he joined other alumni in initiatives to strengthen the business school and ensure that its graduates were placed in top jobs in finance.

Joining the Development Board of The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth) in 1990, he has served on numerous committees and councils, chairing the board 1994-1996. Among the key issues to those active on the Board such as new technology, genetic sequencing, and applied research, he notes, is healthcare delivery.

Bette Thomas's involvement with UTHealth began when she "met the School of Nursing (SON) and PARTNERS," the school's volunteer support organization. Mrs. Thomas has led the group and twice chaired its spring luncheon—PARTNERS' biggest fundraising event. She notes that it's a small organization, adding, "But a small group can raise lots of money." PARTNERS has created three endowed professorships in addition to supporting students, faculty research, and SON projects. They work closely with SON Dean, Patricia L. Starck, DSN, RN, FAAN.

At this spring's PARTNERS luncheon Dean Starck announced the Bette P. Thomas Distinguished Professorship in Innovative Health Care Delivery, an endowment established by Ralph Thomas to honor his wife. It was not only a tribute to Mrs. Thomas's commitment to nursing,

but a statement of the couple's shared belief that this is the start of a new age in the profession.

"This is a time for innovation," Ralph Thomas points out. "Look at the changes in healthcare, all the technology that is coming along for diagnosis, treatment and monitoring, which largely has to be interpreted by nurses." Bette and Ralph both believe a larger role for nurses will not only help to hold down healthcare costs, but also improve access to care.

Dean Starck observes, "This gift will provide the impetus for our school becoming a nationally recognized leader in nursing education, research and practice with an emphasis on healthcare reform and finding innovative solutions for the future. Already, we are advancing the practice-ready field of nurse practitioners to meet healthcare reform's incoming wave of the 'newly insured.' With this distinguished professorship named for Bette, both Thomases are showing that nurses have solutions for the challenges presented by this nation's health needs."

As an investment professional, Ralph Thomas knows the value of an endowment. "It's a permanent form of giving; it has a lasting influence." But he is also aware that an endowment can do more than strengthen existing programs. It can encourage new ways of thinking, opening the door to the future.

Bette Thomas feels that not only the time, but the place is right for innovation in health care. "Nobody is dragging their feet in the Texas Medical Center. They are flying."



Ralph and Bette Thomas