



**Remarks of Gregory W. Powell
Harold Alfond Foundation**

**University of New England
Harold and Bibby Alfond Center for Health Sciences Groundbreaking Ceremony
Portland, Maine**

**November 29, 2022
1:00 p.m.**

Good afternoon, Provost Mahon, Dean Carreiro, and President Herbert. Thank you for your kind words, James.

It's a pleasure to be here this afternoon with my colleague, Allison Holton, to begin yet another great chapter in the extraordinarily important work of this growing university.

Let me say, on behalf of the Foundation and the Alfond family, that we are deeply grateful and proud to know that the new Health Science Center will bear the names of Mr. and Mrs. Alfond. Thank you for this honor.

And a huge thanks to all of you here today and beyond who have made the launch of this construction project possible. With the superb leadership of your President, Provost, Dean, Board, faculty, and staff you are a winning team.

And Harold Alfond loved nothing more than a winning team.

The Alfond Foundation has been a supporter of UNE for over a quarter of a century. With each grant, we were inspired by the University's health care mission, its vision of quality health care for Maine, and the dedication to achieving both by UNE's leadership.

In Biddeford and here on this campus, the people of this University have dedicated themselves, day in and day out, to providing high-quality, job-relevant education: education that deliberately and creatively prepares students to meet the health care and workforce needs of our state.

So, here at this groundbreaking, let me add just a few more words as to why we are more inspired than ever to support UNE in the construction of the Center which will soon grace this beautiful campus.

First, access to quality health care has never been more important than it is today. There is nothing like a worldwide pandemic to make that case. And with that said, educating and producing highly skilled health care professionals—more of them—is more important than ever. In countless ways, this project builds upon UNE’s legacy of service to our state as the premier educator of Maine’s health professional workforce.

Second, as the new home for UNE’s medical school, this center will enable the University to educate more physicians, physicians so desperately needed throughout our state.

Third, we are particularly proud that the Center will become the home of UNE’s nationally recognized model for interprofessional health care education. Or, as Mr. Alfond would put it: teamwork.

Fourth, the specific benefits of this educational model are numerous. But in the end, UNE’s education model and research shows that when health professionals work together as a team across disciplines, they can be more efficient and provide better patient outcomes. Such teamwork is especially impactful here in Maine and beyond where health care professionals are few, access to health care is constrained, and the need for health care so important to quality of life.

Fifth and finally, let me close with a bit of history, a history I love to share, and some of you have heard from me before. It’s about the very beginning of the Foundation’s reasons for supporting this university and why we continue our support today. It’s about gratitude.

Nearly a century ago, early in his career, as a young man just starting his first shoe business in Norridgewock, Maine, Harold Alfond fell seriously ill. Back then, as today, Maine grappled with a shortage of health care workers statewide – and especially within rural communities. And, back then, as today, Norridgewock was quite a rural community.

Harold was a lucky man. He was lucky because there was one family doctor in Norridgewock – Dr. Joseph Eshleman. And Dr. Eshleman took care of Harold when he fell ill. Dr. Eshleman was an osteopathic physician and, as Harold gratefully recalled, “Dr. Eshleman pulled me through.”

From that time forward, Harold lived a wonderful life. He found the love of his life, Bibby; fathered four fine children; taught them to give; founded Dexter Shoe; launched the first charitable foundation in Maine, and on and on. Health care gave Harold his life, like it has and does for all of us.

Harold Alfond never forgot Dr. Eshleman. And the gratitude he felt for Dr. Eshleman highlighted for Harold the importance of UNE, its mission, the students, and its graduates.

And that gratitude is with us today as we prepare to put the ceremonial shovel in the ground for the new Center. We are hugely grateful to this university and the health care professionals it has produced in the past and will in the future. You pull us through in good times and bad.

Congratulations, good luck, and thank you.