

UC San Diego Pharmacy School Benefactor “Sam” Skaggs Dies at 89

L.S. “Sam” Skaggs, whose enduring support of pharmacy education and research helped fuel the growth and development of the Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of California, San Diego, died Thursday at the age of 89 of causes related to age.



Skaggs built a retail food-and-drug business empire, but the Utah businessman also nurtured a decades-long, widespread interest in promoting the health sciences. In 2004, he and his family’s Institute for Research donated \$30 million to UC San Diego’s then-2-year-old School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences. It was the largest gift to UC San Diego Health Sciences at the time, and among the largest in UC San Diego history.

“Sam Skaggs was a pioneer, a visionary and a generous philanthropist,” said Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. “He helped ensure the success of the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences. His legacy lives on through his contributions and dedication to the future of pharmaceutical care. We will always be grateful for the positive impact he’s had on the health and well-being of our campus and community.”

L.S. "Sam" Skaggs

The Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, named in Sam Skaggs’ honor, is one of just two pharmacy schools in the UC system and a national leader in pharmaceutical education and research. It boasts more than 150 salaried and volunteer faculty members, with a current enrollment of 240 PharmD and 60 PhD students as well as 30 pharmacy residents.

“Sam Skaggs was instrumental in the development of our school,” said Palmer Taylor, PhD, dean of the Skaggs School and associate vice chancellor of health sciences at UC San Diego. “From our humble beginnings in a temporary building, he followed our growth, occasionally offering sage advice. His gift in 2004 was transformational. It gave us the resources and flexibility to not just grow, but excel.”

Skaggs, who resided in Salt Lake City, built his business and fortune growing the Payless Drug Stores chain, which he took over after his father died from a stroke in 1950. He was 26. In 1979, he acquired American Stores, creating the second-largest U.S. food retailer in the United States. In 1995, shortly before he retired, Skaggs headed one of the largest food companies in the world, with 1,700 stores in 26 states and annual revenue exceeding \$22 billion.

A significant portion of his wealth was devoted to diverse philanthropic interests, from pharmaceutical education and research throughout the American west to religious interests, which included support of Mater Dei Catholic High School in Chula Vista.

In lieu of flowers, friends may make contributions to the "Skaggs School of Pharmacy Scholarship Fund." Checks payable to the UC San Diego Foundation can be sent to University of California, San Diego, c/o Andrina Marshall, 9500 Gilman Drive #0657, La Jolla, Ca. 92093-0657; donations also can be made online at www.givetoucsd.ucsd.edu. Please type "Skaggs School of Pharmacy Scholarship Fund" in the keyword search section.

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