



Rodney P. Rocconi, MD, FACOG, FASCO
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2500 North State Street • Jackson, Mississippi 39216

March 5, 2026

The Honorable Michael Guest
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Guest,

I am writing today in support of UMMC's Community Project Funding (CPF) request entitled "UMMC Core Facility and Cancer Lab Equipment."

As you know, Mississippi is home to the nation's worst cancer outcomes. As the Director of the Cancer Center and Research Institute (CCRI) and a practicing oncologist, I am acutely aware of the burden that cancer places on families across our state. The CCRI's goal is to build the infrastructure, programs and research prowess to achieve National Cancer Institute (NCI) designation. This designation would bring cutting-edge cancer treatments, clinical trials and specialty care to our state that is currently unavailable.

As the CCRI grows in depth and breadth, it is critical that we recruit more cancer research faculty so that we can reach the threshold needed to apply for the designation. We have had good success in doing so, but with the success has come a host of challenges related to adequate lab space and appropriate equipment.

If funded, this proposal will allow us to purchase key equipment in our core research areas of imaging, genomics and flow cytometry that can outfit the space in the research wing that we seek to renovate. In addition, the equipment will be available for use by our higher education research partners across the state who are doing work in this area and collaboratively with CCRI.

This investment is critical to our overall goal of bringing the best cancer care to Mississippi and improving outcomes for our citizens. I thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration of this proposal and hope that you won't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

Best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'R. Rocconi', written over a horizontal line.

Rodney P. Rocconi, MD
Ergon Chair of Cancer Research



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MISSISSIPPI

Office for
**Research and
Economic Development**

March 13, 2026

The Honorable Michael Guest
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Guest,

I am writing today in support of UMMC's Community Project Funding (CPF) request entitled "UMMC Core Facility and Cancer Lab Equipment."

As you know, Mississippi is home to the nation's worst cancer outcomes. At the University of Mississippi, we are addressing this critical issue by investing heavily in our Cancer Center and Research Institute (CCRI) at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. Our goal is to achieve the National Cancer Institute designation for the CCRI. We are investing heavily in our cancer research program, including recruiting approximately 30 new cancer research faculty. To accommodate this growing research enterprise, we are building new lab space and renovating older lab space to improve the efficiency of utilization. One key renovation project is to update one floor of our original 1963 research building to create a centralized home for our institutional research core facilities. These core facilities provide specialized expertise and state-of-the-art equipment to all researchers at UMMC and to researchers at other institutions across the state. Centralizing them will improve efficiency and free other lab space for use by the CCRI to house new cancer research faculty.

If funded, this CPF proposal will allow us to purchase key equipment in our core research areas of imaging, genomics, and flow cytometry that will outfit the space in the research wing that we seek to renovate. As Vice Chancellor of Research and Economic Development, I have been working with Dr. Gene Bidwell, UMMC's Associate Vice Chancellor for Research, to increase research collaborations between our Oxford and Jackson campuses. This effort has led to an increasing number of collaborative projects, especially in cancer research, including collaborations with our National Center for Natural Products Research and our National Center for Physical Acoustics. I fully support the medical center's plan to renovate space for its institutional core facilities, and I support this request for specialized equipment to be housed in that renovated space. These modern core facilities are non-duplicative with our facilities in Oxford, and they provide a critical resource for researchers at both campuses and at other institutions across the state.

Sincerely,

John C. Higginbotham, PhD, MPH, FACE
Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development