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Setting a kind example

In a first for Faculty scholarships,

a Perth medical family and a financial management group have joined forces to support a student with a new Assured Pathway scholarship.

The Vijayasekaran Family and Smith Coffey Rural Pathway Scholarship in Medicine will provide a rural student with \$5,000 for each year of a three-year undergraduate degree and \$10,000 annually for the four-year Doctor of Medicine degree at The University of Western Australia. The scholarship will be decided on the basis of financial disadvantage and academic achievement.

The kind donors of the scholarship are Dr Priya Thalayasingam, an anaesthetist, her husband Dr Vijith Vijayasekaran, a plastic surgeon, and his brother, Dr Shyan Vijayasekaran, an otolaryngologist, and Smith Coffey, which provides financial advice to medical professionals.

Dr Shyan Vijayasekaran, who is a Clinical Associate Professor with the Faculty, said the three family members were all graduates of UWA.

"We feel we need to give back to the University and the community some of the benefits we received from studying at UWA," he said. "The scholarship is a way of helping both the University and also helping somebody who would be less fortunate and may not be able to study medicine without this kind of funding.

"The whole program is designed to enable recruiting of doctors from areas they are not normally recruited from in the hope they will return to those areas to practise."

Dr Shyan Vijayasekaran and his wife - who have four children - said they and his brother and wife, who have three children, wanted to encourage their offspring to think about philanthropy when they were older.

"We thought it was a good way of acting as an example for the next generation," he said.

The family had brought Smith Coffey on board because they had been their financial planners since graduation and had always wanted to be more involved in the

philanthropic side of medicine.

Mr Mike Glossop, Chief Executive Officer of Smith Coffey, said they had worked closely with medical students and professionals for more than 40 years. "We saw the change in the eligibility criteria for the Doctor of Medicine and the scholarship as an opportunity to provide support for students to get straight into medicine," he said. "This scholarship provided us with a way to assist with alleviating the costs burden and give something back to individuals who add so much value in the community."

They chose the Rural Pathway because many of the Smith Coffey staff came from rural WA backgrounds. "We know first hand how this can add another degree of complexity when completing studies," he said. "We certainly encourage others to consider the benefits (of funding scholarships) and assist individuals to reach their dreams."

- Stories by Cathy Saunders