



Amy Bouton and UVA cancer research students not only have the tools for discovery—they also have the context of cancer patients' journeys.

## The Importance of Context

### Cancer Research Shaped by Patients' Perspectives

**E**ach year, Amy Bouton works with more than 300 students pursuing their PhDs. A professor in the Department of Microbiology, Immunology, and Cancer Biology, Bouton is also the associate director of education at UVA Cancer Center and the associate dean for graduate and medical scientists' programs.

Whether the students' interests lie in pharmacology or pancreatic cancer research, Bouton helps ensure they link up with a mentor of their choice and make the most of their time at UVA. Cancer biology and research is a heavily represented discipline, and students often have practicing physicians come in to speak—and even teach—some of their classes.

“Those interactions are incredibly key for our student researchers,” Bouton says. “They learn how to have conversations with physicians,

they hear what kinds of issues are frustrating our oncologists. They understand from the very beginning how their research will translate into the reality of cancer.”

#### Patient Connections

Students also meet with patients—perhaps the most important interaction they'll have during their training.

“These patients are so brave and strong,” Bouton says. “They provide the context that every person who works in cancer research needs to have.”

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#### SPOTLIGHT

**Amy Bouton, PhD**, Associate Director of Education at UVA Cancer Center; Associate Dean for Graduate and Medical Scientists' Programs; Professor in the Department of Microbiology, Immunology, and Cancer Biology





## DEAR FRIENDS

**As an academic medical center,** UVA is committed to training the next generation of cancer researchers and physicians.

In this issue, you'll meet Amy Bouton, who ensures that student researchers not only pursue their own work, but also work closely with patients and practicing physicians. By learning first-hand the challenges cancer patients and their doctors face, these future physician-scientists can tailor their work to meet the most pressing medical needs.

Private philanthropy makes many of our education programs possible. Our residents are often supported by people like Claudia and Rich Lawson, who wanted to give back in honor of a UVA doctor who changed their lives. You'll also read about an initiative to establish a new graduate scholarship fund at UVA. Named in honor of one of our legendary cancer physicians, Dr. Peyton Taylor, the fund will help residents pursue cancer sub-specialties and improve women's health.

All this is great news for cancer patients now, and in the future.

All the best,  
Tom Loughran, Jr., MD  
Director, UVA Cancer Center



Dr. Peyton Taylor

# The Impact of One Life

## Scholarship Fund Honors a Beloved Cancer Doctor

**As a survivor of ovarian cancer,** Phyllis Palmiero understands the value of having an excellent doctor who is also dedicated to research. She credits retired UVA gynecologic oncologist Peyton Taylor, affectionately known to many as “PT,” with saving her life. Now, she’s helping lead the charge to endow graduate student research scholarships in his honor.

“Peyton Taylor is an amazing, phenomenal doctor,” says Phyllis, chief financial officer at Collegiate School in Richmond. “I am here today because of him. He’s the epitome of what a doctor should be, what a researcher should be, and what a teacher should be. He’s a loving man who deeply cares about his patients.”

Taylor, founder of UVA’s Division of Gynecologic Oncology and a key player in designing the Emily Couric Clinical Cancer Center, has touched thousands of lives in his career. In addition to his clinical practice and research, he has also trained hundreds of students throughout Virginia and in Africa. He credits the experience he gained doing research as a medical school student as a deciding factor in choosing to specialize in gynecologic oncology.

But funding for student-driven research is hard to come by. “As state

and federal dollars for medical research are continually cut, student researchers find it almost impossible to obtain seed funding to pursue their own ideas,” Taylor explains. “I was lucky to be able to pursue my own research interests. The opportunity early on made me a better doctor and a better teacher.”

The Peyton T. Taylor Endowed Research Scholarships will support independent research projects by UVA graduate students in Obstetrics and Gynecology. The scholarship recipients will be matched with faculty mentors. Additionally, the funds may facilitate cross-Grounds collaborations between the School of Medicine and other programs at UVA—such as law, business, or education—that are focused on improving women’s health.

### A Personal Connection

Chair of the Cancer Center Board of Directors, Phyllis is a former Virginia government executive who offers her experience and professional connections to promote awareness of everything the UVA Cancer Center has to offer: the latest technologies, innovative treatment options, dedicated researchers, and a caring medical team.

“UVA is a place that saved my life,” says Phyllis, who has been free of ovarian cancer for 15 years. “I’m dedicated to it and will do all I can to strengthen it. It’s a cancer center for the Commonwealth.”

# Points of Light

## A Grateful Couple Helps Ensure a Brighter Future for Cancer Patients

**C**laudia and Richard Lawson have always faced challenges in their lives together. But when Claudia was diagnosed with breast cancer, they faced an uncertain future.

“I thought at the time this would be it,” Claudia remembers, “and I wanted to be sure that Rich was close to our remaining family. We decided to move to Charlottesville, and I was referred to Dr. Christiana Brenin at UVA.”

The connection between patient and doctor was instant. “I loved her from the start. She was compassionate and clear. She gave me hope.”

The Lawsons were so grateful for Dr. Brenin’s care and assistance that they wanted to give back. After speaking with Dr. Brenin, they learned about UVA’s hematology/oncology fellowship program. During the three-year program, fellows rotate in outpatient clinics as well as in the hospital, and participate in

various research endeavors in the field, learning how to provide specialized care for patients with cancer and blood disorders.

“Most private support goes to research,” Dr. Brenin, director of the program, explains. “There is less emphasis on training the next generation of caregivers. But we will be facing a severe physician shortage by 2020, especially in cancer. Every academic medical center is encouraged to train as many new physicians as possible, but funding is tight.”

And that’s why the Lawsons chose to help. They created a charitable remainder unitrust, a planned gift that provides income to them during their lifetimes and then establishes a fund in Dr. Brenin’s honor that will allow UVA Cancer Center to increase the number of fellows on staff. For the Lawsons, planned giving made it possible for them to have a larger impact than they ever imagined.



Claudia and Richard Lawson’s gratefulness to their UVA cancer doctor inspired a gift that will help generations of caregivers to come.

“We believe in giving back and passing it forward,” Rich explains. “Claudia and I are two halves of one whole. Christiana kept us together.”

Claudia agrees. “Christiana Brenin was the light in our lives. We hope that our gift will help future doctors become points of light for other patients. These students will care for and inspire people. I know one day they will find a cure.”

## SUPPORTING THE SEA OF PINK

Charlottesville native Gary Taylor has watched the Charlottesville Women’s Four Miler grow into a community event that draws thousands of people in support of breast cancer patients and survivors.

A personal supporter of the event, Gary also rallied his firm, Northwestern Mutual, to become a major sponsor of the largest all-women’s race in Virginia. Last year, Gary—a managing director for Northwestern Mutual—challenged his team of financial advisers to raise \$5,000, which he matched, to elevate the company’s support. His colleagues also entered a team and distributed water and candy to participants.

“It was something for our company to get our arms around and adopt as a cause,” says Gary, a member of the UVA Cancer Center Board of Directors. “I think the event brings a tremendous spirit and camaraderie to the Charlottesville community. It’s great to be there and to look out on the sea of pink. It’s great moral support for the cancer patients and survivors.”





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# INVESTING IN HOPE

“*These patients are so brave and strong. They provide the context that every person who works in cancer research needs to have.*”

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By talking directly with patients, students learn first-hand the challenges facing these individuals—lack of new treatments, pain management, and side effects from existing drugs. Such knowledge will drive the students’ future research endeavors.

“My goal is to train in a holistic way,” Bouton says. “I don’t want them to be the classic scientist in a lab coat who never sees the light of day. I want them to really understand the disease, from the science behind it to the patient who has it to the person who cares for them. I want them to be able to explain their research equally well to their grandma or to a Nobel Prize winner.”

## A Revolution in Cancer Care

This is an incredible time in the field of cancer research. New technologies and new understanding about the building blocks of cancer are giving researchers and clinicians unparalleled tools with which to control the disease. Still, the next generation of cancer researchers will face a new set of challenges. The idea of “team science” will be key in solving those problems.

“It is absolutely critical that different groups of medical professionals learn how to talk to and work with one another to best understand needs and capabilities,” Bouton says. “Only together will we be able to get to our goal—curing as many cancers as we can, in this lifetime and all those following.”

Bouton also serves as the principal investigator for UVA’s cancer training grant, awarded by the National Cancer Institute to help train the next generation of cancer researchers. Currently in its 39th year, the prestigious grant is one of the longest standing in the country and is a ringing endorsement of the education offered at UVA.

The cancer training program at UVA is both rigorous and dynamic. It includes a number of cancer-related courses such as tumor immunology and advanced topics in cancer biology, and embraces a multidisciplinary approach to the students’ education.

As part of their training, students are also taught to write proposals and apply for fellowships and grants. This has been quite successful, as students in the cancer training program are frequent recipients of fellowships from the National Cancer Institute. Moreover, their work contributes to the millions of dollars of research funding awarded to researchers in the UVA Cancer Center each year.

“The knowledge our students will acquire during their careers in cancer research is absolutely amazing,” Bouton says. “Our goal is to provide them with the means to achieve their goals. I can’t wait to see what kind of life-changing discoveries this next generation will make.”

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# Get Involved!

Mark your calendars! In October 2015, we will be launching a new online platform that will allow you to get involved, fundraise, and host events for UVA Cancer Center!



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