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\$100M pledge to benefit United World College

By Megan Bennett / Journal North Reporter

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SANTA FE – The United World College system, whose only U.S. campus is located outside Las Vegas, N.M., recently received a \$100 million pledge from its most prominent donor.



Shelby Davis

Philanthropist Shelby Davis' donation, which will be distributed over 20 years, will go toward 100 annual scholarships for students to attend one of UWC's 17 campuses around the world.

Davis, a billionaire investor and major supporter of the UWC who lives in Jackson Hole, Wyo., has several ties to New Mexico. His son Andrew Davis has a home in Santa Fe.

Former UWC-USA president Phil Geier invited Davis to visit the Montezuma campus back in the '90s. Since then, he has since donated millions to the school over the years, including financing restoration of the campus' historic Montezuma Castle, built as a 19th century luxury hotel.

Since 2016, his Davis New Mexico Scholarship has provided full tuition to about 20 first-generation college students each year, for attendance at a group of colleges around the country. The investment firm he founded, Davis Selected Advisers, once had a Santa Fe office before moving to Tucson more than 20 years ago.

The UWC schools offer a two-year international baccalaureate program. For the Montezuma campus – about five miles east of Las Vegas – Davis' pledge means scholarships for six students annually. For the 2018-2019 academic year, these students will be chosen by committees in Barbados, Bulgaria, Haiti, Nicaragua, Paraguay and the Philippines.

Though these will be partial scholarships, UWC-USA President Victoria Mora said the institution will be able to cover most of the remaining balance for its recipients. "This will supplement our efforts to (support) students who are least capable of paying for this type of education," she said.

The annual cost for UWC-USA students with tuition and room and board is around \$38,000, she said.

According to Mora, the institution chooses specific countries from which it will recruit students prior to the beginning of the academic year. She said that for the 2019-2020 academic year, when a new set of students will be awarded the scholarship money, UWC-USA will be able to pursue students from countries never before represented at the institution.

In the Thursday announcement, Davis noted that UWC is designed to provide young people an educational opportunity "independent of their socio-economic means."

"We need to equip a new generation to work towards a better world," he said.