

Former student endows School with scholarship *for the* physically challenged



Dr. Nguyen V. Dat

Dr. Nguyen V. Dat still remembers when, as a student working toward his Ph.D. in biostatistics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in the late 1970s, he had flown into Atlanta, Ga., for a conference sponsored by the American Statistical Association.

Dat and a few other graduate students from his department had picked up their luggage and were discussing the best way to reach their hotel. Someone suggested taking the train, which would drop them off a mere couple of blocks from where they were staying. Most found the idea appealing, but Dat took a cab instead.

Dat, now vice president for clinical research at Abraxis BioScience, Inc., a global company that develops, manufactures and markets a broad portfolio of pharmaceutical products, contracted polio as a child. The disease left his

right leg paralyzed. There was no way he could have carried his luggage and walked two blocks at the same time.

"I paid \$30 for a taxi, instead of just \$1 for the train," recalls Dat. "I've gone through this a million times, and I know how it feels—a student who is physically challenged usually spends more money for what he needs than a student who is not."

To raise awareness for the needs of physically challenged students and to give a little something back to the school that financed his entire doctoral education, Dat made a gift to the School of Public Health to endow an annual scholarship for a graduate student in the Department of Biostatistics. The Nguyen V. Dat Endowed Scholarship gives preference to physically challenged students. In any given year, if no physically challenged student qualifies, it may be awarded to someone else.

"I've wanted to do this for a long time," says Dat. "I feel it's the best thing I can do to inspire other schools to do the same thing. I think using Carolina as an example is good since it has one of the best schools of public health in the country. If nothing else, I'm hoping to inspire people to contribute to the scholarship so it can help more people like me."

Prior to making a scholarship gift to the School, Dat had been making contributions to the Department of Biostatistics every year. He is a longtime part of the School of Public Health's Honor Roll of Donors.

— By Margarita De Pano