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UNIVERSITY OF CYPRUS FUNDRAISING INITIATIVE GETS BOOST

Entrepreneur Roys Poyiadjis donates €150,000

By **Stephanie Hashagen**

The ongoing Cypriot financial crisis has caused serious concern for the nation's institutes of higher learning. Many Cypriots have lost savings, had to close businesses, and are left without income. University students in Cyprus have been forced to leave school and work to support themselves and family members.

Professor Constantinos Christofides, rector of the University of Cyprus, fears that many students will never finish their education -- an especially serious problem in a country where most young people have traditionally obtained advanced degrees.

"In Cypriot culture, most people have a postgraduate degree," explains Christofides. "A lot of people are looking for work right now, and candidates without advanced degrees will be at a disadvantage."

Christofides isn't easily deterred, though. He's set a new goal for the 2013-2014 school year: Don't lose a single student.

The rector's goal is definitely a lofty one: Many students' families are now unable to help financially. But Christofides says the university has a plan in place to get students support. First, he plans to reduce postgraduate fees by 20%. Additionally, the university will redistribute the budget to allocate more funds to students.

Christofides is confident that these measures will help -- but not enough. "The most significant help we get is from our donors," he says.

One philanthropist is already contributing towards Christofides' goal: Roys Poyiadjis, a New York entrepreneur and financier, recently donated €150,000 designated for postgraduate tuition and fees. For the next decade, Poyiadjis' donation will offer a full-ride scholarship to three postgraduate students a year.

Poyiadjis' inspiration comes from his older brother, scholar and poet Alkis Poyiadjis, who passed away in July 2012.

"Alkis was instrumental in guiding me academically," says Poyiadjis. "He believed that education was the cornerstone of success. That's why I've created this scholarship in his memory."

During the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus, the Poyiadjis family fled Famagusta.

Alkis, who was 17 at the time, was forced to leave his school. Luckily, the bright teenager was soon offered a scholarship to a public school in England. Alkis seized his chance to continue his education -- and after acquiring a Cambridge Diploma of English Studies, he went on to study Pure and Applied linguistics, English and American literature, and French at the University of Kent. He taught English at the State Institute of Foreign Languages in Larnaca, and was an accomplished poet. He published several collections in both Greek and English, including Homecoming Ripples, Rifts and Rivulets, and The Eagle Died in the Air.

Roys Poyiadjis soon followed in his brother's footsteps: He was one of 30 refugee children given a scholarship to at-

tend Athens College. Later, he received his undergraduate degree from University of Kent on another scholarship, and obtained an MBA from the London Business School. Poyiadjis went on to a career in finance and entrepreneurship.

Poyiadjis says if he and Alkis had not received scholarships, there is no way that they would have been able to pay for a university education.

"The scholarships that Alkis and I obtained during a crisis led to great educations and fulfilling careers," says Roys Poyiadjis. "Now in 2013, Cypriots are once again trying to receive an education in the midst of a crisis. I feel privileged to assist University of Cyprus postgraduates. I hope that those who receive this scholarship will one day go on to help someone else in need."

In addition to this scholarship donation, Poyiadjis has donated several million dollars to the research of Dr Rodolfo Llinas of the Department of Physiology and Neuroscience at New York University School of Medicine, who diagnosed and referred Alkis for successful treatment of schizoaffective disorder in 2000.

"We have allocated many resources towards this new fundraising initiative," states Christofides. "We think that Mr Poyiadjis' donation will help open up the door to other successful Cypriots living in the United States, and make them see that the University of Cyprus is a worthy contribution."

Stephanie Hashagen has more than 10 years of experience as a writer and editor for a wide variety of publications and industries



SUPPORT: Roys Poyiadjis (left) and Professor Constantinos Christofides