Focus and Steadfastness

An Interview with Howard P. Milstein, Co-Chair, Howard & Abby Milstein Foundation

Howard P. Milstein

Many of the world’s problems are interrelated: improvements in healthcare and education bring economic stability, which brings security and peace, and so on. These problems cannot be addressed by government alone; business and philanthropic leaders must bridge that gap. We do this by finding innovative solutions in a hands-on, entrepreneurial manner that brings the intensity and skills honed in the business world to philanthropic causes.

Are you optimistic that educational reform will happen in the U.S.? To be competitive globally, we need to restore the concept of competitive excellence in our educational system. We take a hands-on approach to fostering excellence here at home by providing the right opportunities to the best and brightest from all walks of life. At Cornell University, we created the Milstein Scholars program, which annually gives 20 promising students, who might otherwise not afford it, the opportunity to pursue a Cornell education. At the faculty level, we created the Milstein Fellowship program, which provides funding that allows the university to bring the best educators onboard when no open positions are available.

At the elementary and secondary levels, we support a variety of programs that target a similar need to have both a long-term vision of what you are trying to achieve and the ability to challenge conventional thinking. It has less to do with patience and more to do with focus and steadfastness, as it does in business. For too many companies, in the rush to meet the demands of the next quarter, there’s little thought given to the next quarter century and the next generation. With that in mind, one of our latest philanthropic initiatives involves working to establish mutually beneficial partnerships between health and medical organizations in the United States and those in China. My family has been active in various businesses in China for more than two decades, including with the Nicklaus Company, which has designed more than 45 golf courses in China. Special emphasis for our new medical initiative will include skin biology, reproductive biology, blood medicine and senior health.

You have been engaged in the community and a leader in supporting worthy causes for many years. Was this instilled in you early on and what has made this work so important to you?

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Would you highlight your unique approach to philanthropy?

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