



**Elizabeth Blackwell, MD**  
2/3/1821 – 5/31/1910  
Detail of the painting at  
Upstate's Health Sciences Library



Historical image of  
a young Elizabeth Blackwell



Preliminary sketch by Sharon Bumann  
for sculpture of Elizabeth Blackwell  
as a medical student



Sculpture of Dr. Mary Walker  
Proposal includes commissioning  
the artist to create a similar bronze  
Dr. Blackwell as a 26-year old  
medical student.

# Rationale for the Elizabeth Blackwell 200th Anniversary Legacy Campaign

## PROPOSAL

SUNY Upstate Medical University plans a campaign to celebrate the legacy of Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell during the 200th year anniversary of her birth. The Elizabeth Blackwell Legacy Fund will be used to support a number of enduring programs and artifacts related to her life and contributions.

## RATIONALE

Elizabeth Blackwell is a celebrated alumna of Upstate Medical University, the first woman to attend medical school and receive a medical degree in the United States, graduating from Upstate's founding institution, the Geneva Medical College, in 1849. At the time, medical schools in the United States did not admit women. After being rejected by 29 medical schools, Dr. Blackwell was accepted by Geneva Medical College. The faculty thought it would be a joke to allow the medical students to make the decision about her admission, and all 150 male students unanimously voted to do so. No one thought it was a joke when she graduated at the top of her class (where the dean bowed to her at graduation) and went on to undertake other firsts, including founding the New York Infirmary for Indigent Women and Children, which also served as a nurse's training facility, and collaborated with Florence Nightingale and four others to establish the first medical school for women in England, the London School of Medicine for Women. Blackwell was involved in the abolitionist and women's rights movements, both very active in Upstate New York at the time.

Blackwell represents Upstate's mission "to improve the health of the communities we serve through education, biomedical research and patient care" and its values, including innovation, respect, integrity, teamwork, diversity and inclusion. Her resilience and commitment to the profession and to the indigent continue to inspire us. We are proud of her legacy and wish to provide additional tangible evidence of it.

## GOALS

The Elizabeth Blackwell Legacy Fund will establish support to:

- Establish an Elizabeth Blackwell Scholarship for Upstate students who embody Blackwell's resilience, passion, and service to the indigent and to population health
- Commission a sculpture of Elizabeth Blackwell to be placed on the university grounds
- Contribute toward a campaign to name the Health Science Library in Blackwell's name
- Support an enduring annual lectureship during the month of her birth
- Support a live and virtual Elizabeth Blackwell exhibition sponsored by the Health Science Library.

## CONTACTS

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Medical students Sruti Akula and Neelima Dosakayala invite you to celebrate Elizabeth Blackwell on her 200th birthday. They are two of the thousands of future doctors who could benefit from Blackwell scholarships.