

## Zimmerman Takes Post with Pharmaceutical Firm

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Dr. Thom Zimmerman is leaving as chairman of the University of Louisville Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences to become a consultant with a pharmaceutical company, a move he describes as "stepping up."

Zimmerman will continue to live here and maintain some position with the university, but the details haven't been finalized.

He will become a consultant for Pharmacia & Upjohn Inc., of Bridgewater, N.J. The company had 1998 revenue of \$6.89 billion.

Zimmerman, 56, has been chairman of the U of L Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences since 1986.

"The last two or three years I've been just sickeningly bored," he said. "It's the same old stuff over and over again."

Zimmerman said he began searching for something to do that didn't require him to leave the city.

He has consulted with pharmaceutical companies his entire career and developed a medicine used to treat glaucoma.

His position with Pharmacia & Upjohn will have a variety of duties. Zimmerman might answer questions or the company might need his help in tracking down an expert researcher at a university.

He'll start out with a two-year contract. His exact start date hasn't been finalized yet.

Pharmacia & Upjohn officials couldn't be reached for comment.

Zimmerman said he hopes Pharmacia & Upjohn might invest in Louisville. For example, the company could want to have university faculty conduct research, Zimmerman said.

"What I am going to try to attempt to do is amalgamate their interests with our interests and bridge the two," Zimmerman said.

"There's all kind of possibilities and no possibilities. I could fall flat on my butt and be back here on the tennis court in two years saying, 'Well, I gave it my best shot.'

"It's a shot that interests me, that challenges me, that could help this department tremendously, help this medical school, I hope, a lot and help this whole Louisville medical complex team do better," he said. "That's the stepping up."

Dr. Joel A. Kaplan, dean of the U of L School of Medicine, said he also hopes Pharmacia & Upjohn could bring some research work to Louisville.

"We would love to work out relationships with them and other companies," Kaplan said.

The U of L School of Medicine and its faculty have some relationships with businesses, but this level is new, he said.

"We've not had a chairman before go into the pharmaceutical industry," Kaplan said.

He said Zimmerman deserves credit "for him to be able to get the recognition to be offered a position with a company like Pharmacia & Upjohn and still be able to maintain his status here and to bring the two together."

Zimmerman has built a strong department, which has a Ph.D. program in ophthalmology and visual sciences that is unique in the world, Kaplan said.

"He's really done so much," he said.

Zimmerman also is very entrepreneurial in his thinking, as shown by the consulting position, Kaplan said.

"From the viewpoint of my office and what we're trying to do to build research in Louisville, this is one more aspect . . . that is unique and could contribute an awful lot."

The university has selected a search committee to find a successor for Zimmerman.

The search will be internal and external, Kaplan said.

He said it should take about six months to select a replacement, and Zimmerman has agreed to continue as acting chairman throughout the process.