November 21, 2017

Gift from Lab parent to strengthen current programs while providing seed money to ignite new activities and University connections

A $2 million gift from an anonymous Lab parent will support a variety of programmatic initiatives at Lab which will benefit students of all ages and provide new opportunities for faculty. Foundational to the gift is a desire to strengthen current Lab programs while providing the seed money to ignite new activities and connections with the University.

Says Lab Director Charlie Abelmann, “This individual very much sees how the Laboratory Schools exist in the context of the University of Chicago; He has a strong desire to foster interconnections that strengthen both.”

The gift will fund four key areas for the Laboratory Schools:

- **Computational Thinking**: Ensuring that students are introduced to computational thinking starting in preschool via makerspaces and curricula that incorporate “unplugged” algorithmic activities in the classroom; partnering with the UChicago Department of Computer Science to bring the skills of postdoctoral students, and other resources, to the Schools; providing possible one-year fellowships, and/or other staffing support, so that Lab’s computer science teachers can expand CS curricula or develop new electives; and connecting Lab students to experts across the University, including the Polsky Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation.

- **Innovation in Teaching and Learning**: Sponsoring curricular and cocurricular experimentation and the development of new ideas. Grants will reward collective innovation and a team approach to foster interdisciplinary teacher teams and cross school work with University connections. Resources will also be available for student-proposed activities.

- **Physical Education and Athletics**: Support for a community effort to upgrade Jackman Field through its conversion to turf and the installation of a new practice track. This project will serve both Lab’s physical education and interscholastic athletics programs, and this gift will be integrated into the Connections 2018 community fundraising objectives.

- **Sustainability**: Investing in, and expanding, highly experiential programs that teach about social, scientific, and environmental issues. This will include building greenhouses on both Lab campuses so that gardening can become a year-round activity, and inviting guest gardeners and experts to help Lab educators and students expand their knowledge.

In appreciating the gift, Director Abelmann explains, “This gift provides funding both for activities that are near-term and tangible, as well as activities that celebrate innovation and creativity, and that will push Lab back into its role as a true laboratory school—a place that helps define excellence in teaching and learning. Importantly, it is structured in a manner that is in line with Lab’s mission of igniting a spirit of scholarship, curiosity, and creativity.”