Lab’s Mission
The Laboratory Schools are home to the youngest members of the University of Chicago’s academic community. We ignite and nurture an enduring spirit of scholarship, curiosity, creativity, and confidence. We value learning experientially, exhibiting kindness, and honoring diversity.
Dear Lab community

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It’s normal for children to feel uncertain about their first day of nursery school. But for Lina Jessen, MBA’04, and Andy Jessen, MBA’04, 50 years ago this September, they chose to attend Lab and live in a room together.

“Tina and I still have a lot of friends from Lab, so many years later, and we still have a lot of roommates who lived in the same room. As I look back at those days, the idea of me and Lina living in one of the dorms seems unbelievable,” says Andy, who was roommates with Lina for two years.

“Tina and I were roommates with a lot of people our age at Lab and it’s amazing that the same people have stuck together for so many years,” says Lina. “Being roommates with each other was a way for us to get to know each other and stay close.

“I was 18 and it was my first time being away from home, but I was so happy to be with Lina,” says Lina. “We shared everything—from doing our homework to going to the movies. We even shared our thoughts on life and our future plans.”

“Tina and I were really close friends and we still are today,” says Andy. “It was really special to be able to share our experiences with each other.”

“Our friendship has lasted for 50 years and it’s been amazing to see how things have changed since we were at Lab,” says Lina. “But one thing that hasn’t changed is the value that we place on our friendship.”

“I’m grateful to have had Tina as my roommate at Lab,” says Andy. “She was always there for me and I know she felt the same way.”

“Looking back on our time at Lab, I feel so lucky to have had such a special experience,” says Lina. “I’m so grateful to Tina for being a part of my life.”

“Tina and I are still roommates today and we still share a lot of memories from our time at Lab,” says Andy. “We’re both so happy to be able to look back on our time together and see how far we’ve come.”

“Tina and I will always be roommates and we’ll always be friends,” says Lina. “We’re so grateful to have had each other at Lab and we’re so grateful to still have each other today.”

“Tina and I have always been close friends and we look forward to spending more time together in the future,” says Andy. “We’re looking forward to seeing where life takes us next.”

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Fundraising and finances at Lab: Frequently asked questions

What is the scope of Lab’s fundraising program?
Lab’s Alumni Relations and Development office works with 100+ alumnae and parent volunteers to facilitate all major fundraising efforts for the school. During the 2020-21 school year, 613 (45%) families and 835 (11%) alumnae made a gift to Lab. Our philanthropy program consists of several key elements, including the Fund for Lab, our annual giving program; special events such as Connections and Dewey Dance; classroom gifts for Earl Shapiro Hall and Lower School classrooms; the annual senior class gift; major gifts in support of specific programs, and bequests and planned giving. In recent years, institutional campaigns have catalyzed tremendous improvements at Lab. As Lab looks toward its future, strategic campaigns remain the most powerful fundraising mechanism for transformational growth.

What are the goals of Lab’s financial aid program?
Lab’s financial aid program seeks to remove financial barriers for students who contribute to and benefit from a Lab education. Lab’s financial aid program serves to bolster the School’s mission to honor diversity in all its forms. Increasing financial aid resources for current and entering students allows us to change the lives of future Lab alumni and strengthen our commitment to cultivating and nurturing a diverse and inclusive community.

What areas does the Lab community support?
Lab is grateful for the support of its core constituents: families, faculty, staff, and friends in a number of critical areas. In 2020-21, donors made gifts to the following areas:

- 30% Annual Giving
- 24% Scholarships & Financial Aid (expandable support)
- 13% Endowment Initiatives
- 11% Dewey Dance & Connections
- 6% Special Initiatives

In 2020-21, Lab awarded more need-based financial aid (not including University tuition remission) than ever before—$3.6 million. In 2021-22, Lab plans to award up to $4.25 million in financial aid, the highest amount in Lab’s history. Continued increases in Lab’s financial aid budget, mainly achieved through philanthropy, are critical to Lab’s commitment to attracting and retaining a diverse and ensuring full access for all students to transformative educational experiences at Lab.

Why does Lab have a fundraising program?
Securing generous support from parents, alumnae, faculty, staff, and friends of Lab helps the institution close budget gaps in annual operations and allows Lab to meet aspirational goals that would otherwise be impossible to reach.

By connecting passionate philanthropists to programs and projects, fundraising also allows Lab to realize activities that further our vision and mission, and often go above and beyond in creative and meaningful ways.

Without these additional resources from dedicated supporters, Lab would be forced to make difficult choices between tuition levels, financial aid budgets, and programmatic activities.

How does Lab have a fundraising program?

How does annual giving, known as the Fund for Lab, support the school?
Lab’s annual giving program makes it possible for Lab to invest in the people and programs that are the heart of the Lab experience. Annual giving supports all of Lab’s core programs, making an immediate and real difference in the lives of students, families, and teachers. In the summer of 2021, Lab retained its annual giving funds, previously known as the Karen Putman Memorial Student Assistance Fund, as the Fund for Lab. We are one community. One Lab. One Fund.

How does Lab’s financial aid program work?
Securing financial aid support has long been a focus of Lab’s development efforts. All of Lab’s awards are based on demonstrated financial need and Lab does not give merit-based aid.

In 2020-21, 9% of families received aid, and as much as any tuition benefit a family might receive through a parent’s full-time employment with the University. Aid monies are distributed through two paths:

1. Financial aid awards subsidize family tuition obligations and are awarded on a family’s AGI.

2. A scholarship is a formally designated award, usually funded by an endowment fund or private gift, and assigned to a particular student for his or her entire High School career.

How much financial aid does Lab provide annually?
In 2020-21, Lab awarded more need-based financial aid (not including University tuition remission) than ever before—$3.6 million. In 2021-22, Lab plans to award up to $4.25 million in financial aid, the highest amount in Lab’s history. Continued increases in Lab’s financial aid budget, mainly achieved through philanthropy, are critical to Lab’s commitment to attracting and retaining a diverse and ensuring full access for all students to transformative educational experiences at Lab.

How would a substantially larger endowment do for Lab?
Endowment income has historically been a stabilizing force in the operation of education institutions. It is less variable relative to other revenue streams, and is available in perpetuity. At Lab, revenue from the endowment provides critical support for our financial aid program. In addition, individual endowment funds also support professional development; Model United Nations; the Dewey Dance & Connections Link Program; the Zena Sutherland Award for Children’s Literature Program; faculty, staff, and student award programs; and more. Growing the endowment remains a long-term priority for philanthropy at Lab.