LabLife
2019 Special Report on Philanthropy and Volunteerism

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,

At the heart of Lab are people—students, families, alumni, faculty, and staff—who are passionate about inquiry and ideas, creative thinking, and constructive discourse. This intellectual passion very much reflects us as part of the University of Chicago and it helps us create an outstanding educational experience for our students.

Throughout the year, we engaged in dozens of deep dialogues as we worked across our many constituencies to develop a strategic framework that will help us move forward as a community. Largely hundreds of you participated in one-on-one and small group conversations. Thousands more contributed ideas and shared priorities through a quantitative survey. That work revealed our shared and ongoing commitment to our students and our belief that experience and community are foundational to Lab’s educational excellence.

This past year brought many new opportunities to deepen Lab’s student experience and to communit our community:

- **Fundraising Highlights**
  - A $45 million gift to Lab from Bus-Son Li will provide support for Lab to continue our work around cross-cultural education with China. Li visited Lab as part of the Centennial Colloquium on Dewey that we hosted in 2018. He helped launch an exhibition of drawings commemorating Dewey’s historic 1919 trip to China and was responsible for an accompanying book, John Dewey’s Educational Trip to China—in Greenawate of the 100th Anniversary of John Dewey’s Leaning to China (Peking University Press, 2017).
  - Lab developed an age-appropriate version of Career Treks, a program offered by the University of Chicago to underclass students in grades N3–11. Lab worked with University of Chicago to enhance this program and to bring more students to Lab's Career office.

- **Lab’s endowment, an important source of financial aid, continues to grow**
  - 2018-19 Financials and Fundraising
  - Net, Tuition: $64,393
  - REVENUES
  - Operating Surplus (Deficit) $2,279
  - University Target $2,885
  - Tuition $69,736
  - Financial Aid $5,343
  - Tuition $64,393
  - EXPENSES
  - Net, Tuition $64,393
  - University Target $2,885
  - Financial Aid $5,343
  - Tuition $64,393
  - TOTAL REVENUES $78,889
  - TOTAL EXPENSES $78,810
  - SURPLUS (DEFICIT): ($79)
The power of volunteerism

Angela Cobb, Lab parent

“How blessed are we? It’s like we won the lottery to get to be part of this community. I think Lab is a really, really special place and I feel lucky to be part of it. I deeply believe that when you are in a community you should be part of that community. Right? You need to be interested and part of shaping it and making it as strong as it can be for our families and community.

“When my kids were younger, they thought I worked at Lab. And I had a full-time job! I grew up in a family who were deeply involved in my school. They were working parents, but always in charge of something or doing something big. So for me it’s a natural inclination. It is how I was raised and how I was parented.”

—Angela Cobb, parent, to a fifth grader and an eighth grader who chose her professional skills to help Lab. Her background in diversity work prepared her to successfully researching a parent diversity committee and work with the school to create and support the Diversity Advisory Committee, which helped Lab develop its first diversity leadership roles and training in its advisory body. She has also served on the Lab’s board and is an ex officio co-president elect, and her volunteered in many other ways.

“I never thought I would be one of those people who’d shave off. I am a ‘lifer who wanted to high tail it out of Hyde Park. But from college on through my 20s I was genuinely happy to run into and interact with Lab students and Lab friends! And I am still a Lab volunteer leader started when she helped organize her 20th Lab reunion. From there she joined the Alumni Association Executive Board (AAEB), served on the UChicago Alumni Board where she represented Lab with passion and focus, and ultimately served as AAEB president.

“I feel a unique sense of community when I am at the school and that drives me to do more for Lab.

—Chase Chavin

Grant Chavin, ’97, Lab “lifers,” and Lab parents

“Through example I can influence this generation. I can do it and my daughter sees that. If not me, then who?”

—Kevin Tan

Kevin Tan, MBA’87, Lab parent

“After educating their daughter, both Grant and I are deeply involved in Lab public schools in the Chicago suburbs, the Tyas Bowl. Our Lab family when Jasmine joined Lab many years ago, it was as a small child. We are now about to have our 20th Lab reunion. I was a ‘lifer’ who wanted to give back to the Lab community. Volunteering helps me connect to the school, my daughter is attending and get firsthand contact about what she experiences.

“Both Chase and Grant articulate a deep sense of belonging to the Lab community. Chase’s involvement with Lab began more than 20 years ago when he first became a Lab parent. He has worked to engage alumni in broader Lab events, like Connections, and served as an advisor who received the highest level of class gift reception. Now, as a parent to a third and a fourth grader, he tries to be at the school as much as he can and is a champion of Lab’s experiential, project-based learning model. Grant has two children in the 2-2 division this year. Chase: ‘Lab was the only school I attended and it was incredibly formalize. In addition to all the benefits of Lab education and Lab teachers, my closest friends are all people I met at Lab. That community is very much like family to me. My brother and I were on financial aid, so Lab not only offered us opportunities, it helped us take full advantage of those opportunities.

—Kevin Tan

Cheryl Cortez, ’92, MBA’03

“My personal goal is to educate our alumni about how valuable their whole UChicago network is. I hope our alumni leave Lab feeling proud of the education they received and knowing that the network they walk away with is incredibly helpful.

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Grant: “There are two things that I think about when I reflect on what Lab gave to me. One was a passion for learning. Starting as early as kindergarten and first grade and continuing through high school, the amazing teachers at Lab helped me develop my intellectual curiosity. They taught me to continue to ask questions and how to look for the best answers. The other Lab gave me a sense of community. Some of my closest friends to this day are people who attended Lab with me. To this day I am as close with my close relationships as anything else.

—I only hope that my boys, Austin and Lucas, get just as much out of their Lab experience as I did.”

—Cheryl Cortez
How is Lab funded?

Lab’s annual budget is funded by the following sources:

- Endowment payout: 1.6%
- Fee-based programs: 7.6%
- Annual philanthropy: 5.2%
- Tuition–UChicago*: 38.5%
- Tuition – fees-other: 57.8%

*Tuition–UChicago transfers from the University on behalf of University employees whose children attend Lab.

Why does Lab have a fundraising program?

Fundraising at Lab closes a budget gap in annual operations and allows Lab to meet aspirational goals that would otherwise be impossible to reach. Generous support from parents, alum/i, faculty, and staff allows Lab to offer a first-rate educational program without having to rely solely on tuition income. Furthermore, by connecting passionate philanthropists to programs and projects, fundraising also allows Lab to realize programs that further our vision and mission, and often go above and beyond in creative and meaningful ways. Without the additional income, Lab would be forced to make difficult choices between tuition levels, financial aid budgets, and programmatic activities.

How is Lab’s budget determined and who decides?

As a unit of the University of Chicago, Lab participates in both annual and multi-year University budgeting processes. With the guidance of Lab’s School, and under the director’s leadership, Lab’s finance team works with the principals, department chairs, and other administrators to determine staffing and capital needs and operating budgets. These programmatic costs, along with enrollment forecasts, the growth of net tuition, fundraising, and other revenues are incorporated into a multi-year budgeting model that guides Lab’s annual budget choices.

What are the largest portion of Lab’s budget?

Teacher and assistant teacher compensation accounts for around 50% of Lab’s expense budget. Salaries, and what have generally been greater than 3 percent annual increases, are set and remain in place as part of the teachers’ union negotiations held every several years. The contract negotiated in 2019 will be in effect until June 30, 2023.

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What are the goals of Lab’s financial aid program?

Our financial aid program serves to bolster Lab’s commitment to diversity in all its forms by devaluing the varied socioeconomic backgrounds that make up our community. To that end, our financial aid program seeks to remove financial barriers for students who contribute to and benefit from a Lab education.

How does Lab’s financial aid program work?

All of Lab’s awards are based on demonstrated financial need. Lab does not give merit-based aid. Approximately 15% of families receive aid—separate from any tuition benefit a family might receive as a full-time employee of the University. On average, Lab awards 100% of accepted students’ demonstrated need. Aid monies are distributed through two paths:

1. A scholarship is a formally designated award, usually funded by endowment payout or private gifts, and assigned to a particular student for his or her entire High School career.

2. Financial aid awards subsidize family tuition obligations and are awarded for tuition at any grade level.

Securing financial aid support is a fundraising priority for Lab and a core part of all our development efforts.

How does Lab raise funds?

- Lab’s Alumni Relations and Development Office works with 100+ alum/i and parent volunteers to facilitate all major fundraising efforts for the school.
- During the 2018-2019 school year, 778 (87%) families and 856 (11%) alum/i made a gift to the Schools. This year, Lab’s participation goals are:
  - Parent participation: 90%
  - Alumni participation: 14%
- Our philanthropy program is comprised of several key elements:
  - Annual giving (Parents Fund and Alumni Fund)
  - Connections and Dewey Dance fundraising events
  - Major gifts
  - Bequests and planned giving
  - Classroom gifts
- In 2014, Lab completed the $82 million Lab Campaign, which enhanced every aspect of Lab including a $112 million campus expansion and renovation that included the building of East Chapin Hall and Gordon Parka Arts Hall.

What would a substantially larger endowment do for Lab?

Endowment income has historically been a stabilizing force in the operation of education institutions. Endowment income is less variable relative to other revenue streams and is available in perpetuity. By increasing the endowment, Lab could more reliably address ongoing programs, increase its ability to provide financial aid, and further reduce its dependence on tuition increases.

Please explain the tuition benefit for University of Chicago employees

The University’s Lab Tuition Benefit Program is for full-time employees of the University (and associated units). At minimum this program pays 90% of Lab tuition. That amount increases based on a sliding household income scale. Importantly, non-university families do not subsidize this benefit, and the Schools do not lose any tuition income. The University makes a direct transfer of funds into Lab’s accounts to cover this benefit. That transfer translates to about 30% of Lab’s budget.

How much financial aid does Lab provide annually?

Lab will award approximately $3.5 million in need-based financial aid in 2020-2021 (not including University remission). At Lab, about 90% of Lab students receive financial aid. The National Association of Independent Schools median percentage of students who receive financial aid at day schools is 34%. Continued increases in Lab’s financial aid budget, mainly achieved through philanthropy, are critical to Lab’s ability to attract economic diversity and full access to all educational experiences at Lab.