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,

The 2019–2020 school year began and ended, along with many things in our world, in two very different places. We began together, in person, without the inking as to how special that idea would feel just months later. As they filed into Gordon Parks Arts Hall for their first U-High assembly, ninth grade students received cheers of welcome from the other high schools. Sixth graders practical teamwork as they started their transition into Middle School on the Main Line. Colleen crossed the playgrounds of Earl Shapiro and Blaine Halls. Alumni and friends, nearly 150 of them, returned to campus to celebrate our Athletic Hall of Fame class. No one expected that the year would bring one of the most significant transitions our students might ever experience when we moved fully to remote learning. Still it was a year filled with scholarship, curiosity, and creativity at Lab.

As we began the year, Lab published the 2019 Strategic Framework, which reaffirmed our focus on delivering the most outstanding education to our students, and doing it in a manner that instantiates the core values of the University of Chicago. The Framework outlines priorities in four overarching areas:

- Building a model of progressive education for the 21st century
- Ensuring a healthy and inclusive community
- Improving leadership, governance, and decision-making
- Securing Lab’s fiscal soundness and ensuring an appropriately resourced future

Students of all ages worked with our dynamic K-12 Learning Artists in Residence Fahmee Jafari and, later, Sioned Williams.

The U-High boys’ soccer and girls’ tennis teams both won state championships and Model UN, robotics, and journalism garnered national recognition—as they often do!

Time-named Lab one of the top 5 STEM high schools in the nation.

Lab continued to integrate the CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) framework into our educational program. This work seeks to foster in students the behaviors that are critical to lifelong success and wellness: self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness.

On Leap Day, February 29, more than 900 people—parents, faculty, staff, and friends—attended Connections ever, raising $1.5 million for financial aid and teacher development.

Lab awarded nearly $3.5 million in financial aid, the largest sum in our history… until this year. During 2020–2021, we anticipated awarding $3.9 million in financial aid.

COVID-19 will be a defining factor in our world for the foreseeable future, and Lab has benefited enormously from being part of the University of Chicago during this pandemic. Few schools can boast such robust medical and safety supports as we have here. Still, the pandemic has brought significant financial pressures to many educational institutions and Lab is no exception. We have not, however, compromised our robust and enriching curriculum, letting the school必要的enough to ensure that we can safely offer the highest quality of instruction. Neither have we compromised on our commitment to financial aid and supporting the many families in our community who are facing their own unprecedented challenges.

Philanthropic and volunteer support from the Lab community helps us to fulfill our mission in deep and meaningful ways. At a time when so much is unknown, we pause to contemplate in this moment and passion that our community has for the Laboratory Schools. To all of you—the parents, alumni, faculty, staff, and friends who have made a commitment of time, energy, or financial resources, we thank you. We could not do our work without you and together we are making a difference to our nearly 2,100 outstanding students at a time when they need us so greatly.

With deep gratitude,

David W. Magill, Interim Director

2019-20 Financials & Fundraising

Alumni and parent support is critical to sustaining and enhancing the Lab experience

> 51% of parents gave a gift to Lab

Alumni participation in giving was

> 9%

Lab’s endowment is an important source of financial aid

> $3.9 million in FY20

> 15% increase over last year

> 81% of Lab’s operating budget

Campus & Shores

$16.6 million

Endowment Income

$14.9 million

> 19% increase

> 12% above University Target

Endowment Replacement

$15.1 million

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$20.6 million

> 51% increase from FY18

> 19% above University Target

FY18 $13.8
FY19 $20.6
FY20 $24.7

> 1.5x increase over last year

FY18 $21.2
FY19 $23.6
FY20 $34.7

> 61% increase from FY18

> 39% above University Target

FY18 $20.6
FY19 $27.4
FY20 $34.7

> 71% increase from FY18

> 50% above University Target

FY18 $23.3
FY19 $32.7
FY20 $49.8

Operating Statement as of June 30, 2020

($000s)

REVENUES

Tuition…

$73,393

Financial Aid…

($16,006)

Net Tuition…

$57,387

Private Gifts…

$9,598

Endowment Payout…

$1,257

All Other Revenue…

$2,415

TOTAL REVENUES…

$80,975

EXPENSES

Teacher Salaries…

$31,136

Staff Salaries…

$11,117

Benefits…

$11,018

Compensation…

$53,371

All Other Expenses…

$7,495

Space Cost Allocation…

$14,081

TOTAL EXPENSES…

$78,474

Operating Surplus (Deficit)…

$5,728

University Target…

$9,843

NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)…

($115)

Fundraising Highlights

> More than 900 people—parents, faculty, alumni, and friends—attended Connections 2020, raising over $1.6 million for financial aid and faculty professional development.

> Lab will award approximately $3.9 million in need-based financial aid in 2020-21—the most in its history.

> Alumni and parent support established the Class of 2020 Scholarship Fund with more than $10,000, creating a fund that will support future Lab students in perpetuity.

> Alumni from across the decades are stewarding 30 class scholarships.

> Since the pandemic began, Lab has raised over $2 million in new unrestricted donations, including $1 million from a dramatic new online presence.

> In spring 2020, donors mobilized to support fellow Lab community members and challenges that arose with the global COVID-19 pandemic, making gifts totaling almost $47,000 to the Lab Community Response Fund.

> Responding to the demands of a newly virtual world, Lab hosted the Lab Virtual Market, which engaged 475+ alumni, parents, and friends—events like these will continue throughout 2020-21.

> A generous donor made an in-kind donation of hotspots, Chromebooks, and other technology to help ensuring equitable remote learning.

> 31 families made gifts to the Chris Freeman Memorial Fund, honoring the life and work of a beloved Lab educator.

> Lab received $1.28 million in reallocated gifts from generous alumni who had made provisions for Lab in their estate planning in 2019-20.

> Lab engaged nearly 350 people in 2020-21—the largest sum in our history… until this year. During 2020-2021, we anticipated awarding $3.9 million in financial aid.

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> Parents’ Association

Mission: To foster educational excellence by fostering a spirit of community through the facilitation of communication and cooperation among the Laboratory Schools’ parents, administration, faculty, students and board, and to encourage and facilitate parent participation in programs that support the Laboratory Schools and fundraising initiatives of the Schools.

Highlights

The Parents’ Association began the year with many of our traditional and new fundraising activities and events including:

> Welcoming new families through the Parent orientation, summer parties, and parent orientation events, and building connectivity with gatherings and opportunities to meet one another.

> Supporting parents through PAI interests and parent events around important topics of interest and as providing opportunities for parents to engage at Lab and encouraging all to get involved.

> Coordinating special opportunities for books like Student Swap, the Book Fair Bazaar, and Picture Day.

> Supporting parent-organized affinity groups.

> Supporting student-focused initiatives like yearbooks and the Reusables Center.

> Organizing division-wide and grade-level student events like Middle School Giant Gym Night and providing funding and volunteer providers for student-driven events.

> Awarding over $20,000 in faculty awards, a 15% increase over last year, in support of teaching and learning innovation.

> Launching the Spirit Store and promoting booster activities through the Spirit Council and partnership with students on spirit days and other activities.

> Supporting teachers by providing expertise and the administration to parent and guests speakers.

> Honoring our teachers with faculty appreciation luncheons.

> Creating programming aimed at fostering gratitude within the school community.

> Identifying major themes in parent feedback and sharing with the administration.

> When the schools shifted to remote learning due to COVID-19, the Parents’ Association responded by:

> Pivoting existing programming like Parent-to-Parent discussions to a virtual world.

> Ramping school-wide events like the Mothers of May.

> Expanding the Spirit Store to have available alumni who could respond to the unique needs of families in the moment.

> Path to creating a virtual leadership to mark major student milestones and transitions.

> Sharing positive and constructive feedback with the administration to improve the experiences of students and families.
Nicola Halsall Idehen and Francis Idehen, P’27, P’28

Paying it forward

Nicola Halsall Idehen and Francis Idehen both grew up in New York. From a young age, they were imbued with the value of giving to others and supporting their communities. Nicola attended Harvard Business School together. Since then, they have created a true partnership over the last few decades of work in human capital and finance, often for the same companies, in cities across the U.S. In their giving and in their work, the Idehens are always open doors for others. Their support is focused on financial aid and initiatives at all the schools where they once were students as well as Lab. Nicola identifies gifts for financial aid as part of a “positive cycle of support and access that helps shape contributors to society.” Last year, Francis was named to the Lab Board, which also offers a way for him to support Lab through strategic thinking in areas of governance and administration. For both Nicola and Francis, it is the importance of philanthropy and impact that truly distinguishes Lab, and the family’s support of financial aid has become something they view closely in their experience as a Lab family. In their own commitment to supporting financial aid, the Idehens highlight this idea often, “It’s a way of philanthropy as huge giving—all or nothing,” said Nicola. Francis, “any amount of financial aid counts in someone else’s life.” Their work, the Idehens aim to help others to pursue paths of human capital and finance, and to open doors for others. Their family’s values and the people they value greatly are to continue to make Lab a uniquely wonderful place.

“Consistency in giving maintains our commitment to our institutions and the people in them.”—Francis Idehen

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By Amanda Norton, PhD’10, P’22, P’25, P’29

Philanthropy and impact

Jessica Droste Yagan and Sam Yagan, P’26, P’29, P’32

Aligning values, investment, and impact

Jessica Droste Yagan and Sam Yagan met at the Illinois Math and Science Academy, a place Sam prays for allowing him to embrace his “hustle” and that both Sam and Jessica credit with opening opportunities to them, pushing them to pursue paths of entrepreneurship and impact. As parents, Jessica and Sam were driven to Lab because of its diversity, focus on social justice, and the overwhelming need to increase accessibility to Lab for students who reflect the diversity of the entire city of Chicago. In the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, they saw their gift making it possible for Lab to be the past to the present to diversity and inclusion that it has made over the last few years—the school offered in 2020-21 the largest total amount of aid in its history—and to continue to retain the community of students and families that make Lab such a uniquely amazing place.

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“My hope that this initiative will encourage you to think about your own impact, and the strides we can make when we come together.”—Jessica Droste Yagan

Emily Zhang, ’20 and the Class of 2020

Building a legacy for future Lab students

Emily Zhang, ’20. Using Lab’s team-based learning system and social media, Zhang and colleagues from the Lab Alumni Committee worked to inspire fellow students to give. Zhang’s messages were heavily focused on generally and opening doors to future students as well. In her thank you note to fellow classmates, “It’s my hope that this initiative will encourage you to think about your own impact, and the strides we can make when we come together.”

“Despite the unprecedented changes to society and education unleashed by the global COVID-19 pandemic, Lab parents of the Class of 2020 followed their students in giving generously to the fund as part of their senior course of their lives. For her, Zhang firmly believes that it was because someone or something had inspired you.”—Emily Zhang

Michael Weinberg, Jr., ’41, AB’47

80 consecutive years of giving

Michael Weinberg made his first gift to the University of Chicago at age 16, while still a student at Lab. It is no surprise that Michael chose to support University Lab when he began his own early journey as a philanthropist; he was born in the University’s hometown Chicago—Longfellow Elementary School and started school in Hyde Park at age four. At Lab, he served as president of his class and editor of the school newspaper. He also served as president of the faculty at Lab has always been supportive of Lab students and families. “The faculty at Lab has always been incredible. Look to them for encouragement and advice.”—Michael Weinberg

“When I began seeing people spreading the word and encouraging others to take part in this cause, I felt incredibly moved.”—Emily Zhang

Almost 30 classes at Lab have established alumni scholarships, endowed funds that support students in perpetuity. Since 2007, parents of graduating seniors have supported these scholarships with gifts made in honor of their children’s matriculation, with the idea that the future alumni from each class can continue to give back to the class fund over the course of their lives.

In 2020, for the first time ever, members of the senior class raised their own fund, with over 90% of students contributing a total of $1,935 in support of financial aid, which is a transformative force in the lives of individual students and the Lab community.

The student giving initiative, which was positioned as a matching campaign to also support the seniors’ planned Prom, was led by

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Fundraising and finances at Lab: frequently asked questions

Why does Lab have a fundraising program?
Securing generous support from parents, alumni, 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.

How is Lab funded?
Lab's annual budget is funded by the following sources >>

How much financial aid does Lab provide annually?
In 2019-20, Lab awarded more need-based financial aid (not including University remission) than ever before—$3.3 million. In 2020-21, Lab will award approximately $3.9 million in financial aid, or 10% of families receive aid—separate from any tuition benefit a family might receive as a full-time employee of the University. Securing financial aid support has long been a focus of Lab’s development efforts. As our community works together to face the many impacts of the global pandemic, financial aid is an even more critical philanthropic priority in 2020-21.

All of Lab's awards are based on demonstrated financial need. On average, Lab meets 100% of accepted students' demonstrated need. Lab does not give merit-based aid. Approximately 10% of families receive aid—separate from any tuition benefit a family might receive as a full-time employee of the University. Securing financial aid support has long been a focus of Lab’s development efforts. As our community works together to face the many impacts of the global pandemic, financial aid is an even more critical philanthropic priority in 2020-21.

How does Lab’s financial aid program work?
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 Lab’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 are the goals of Lab’s financial aid program?
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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 50% of Lab tuition for children of these employees. For 2020-21, the University implemented a new formula that ties the amount an affiliated family will be required to pay for their children’s Lab education to a percentage of their adjusted gross income. Importantly, non-university families do not subsidize this benefit and Lab does not draw any tuition income. The University makes a direct transfer of funds into Lab’s account to cover this benefit. That transfer translates to around 28% of Lab’s budgeted revenue.

How is Lab’s budget determined?
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 Board, and under the directorship of Lab, 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 is the anticipated financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Lab?
As it has on educational institutions across the country, including the University of Chicago, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant financial impact on Lab. In 2020-21, Lab faces new pandemic-related expenses—technology, additional teaching and support staff, cleaning, and personal protective equipment for staff; in addition, Lab freezes a significant loss of revenue due to cancelled programs (such as Summer Lab, Extended Day, bus) and the Temporary Withdrawal Program that was offered to current families in 2020-21.