One of Covert’s first goals for ITxM was to create a strategic plan, and a large part of that plan was research. He asked, Why not forge a relationship with a biomedical powerhouse right here in Pittsburgh?

With Covert’s guidance, a relationship between ITxM and Pitt was solidified; that effort focuses on research on blood disorders and blood-related diseases and on serving people with those conditions. A joint gift from ITxM’s Blood Science Foundation and ITxM’s subsidiary, the Hemophilia Center of Western Pennsylvania, allowed for the creation of the School of Medicine’s Vascular Medicine Institute (VMI). The VMI is directed by Mark Gladwin, the Jack D. Myers Professor of Internal Medicine, Distinguished Professor, and chair of medicine. Covert calls the partnership a “win.”

“We committed the seed dollars, and once Mark got started, boom! he really took off. He’s a dynamo,” Covert says. “That passion and energy is what has made VMI so successful.”

Covert also credits another group of contributors. “People who give us the gift of their blood in order for us to treat patients are doing an altruistic act. The dollars we earn that go into the Blood Science Foundation really come from the community, and I feel strongly that the money needs to go back into the community.”

When he was asked to join the Board of Trustees at Pitt in 2014, Covert saw it as another chance to help. “Pitt has given me so much in my life. I came from a small steel mill town near Pittsburgh and grew up and met my wife at Pitt,” he says. “As my career since football has gone through changes, Pitt has prepared me for that.”

“You can’t say that about a lot of places.”

Reprinted from the School of Medicine’s 2016 annual report, Adaptation.