

STEWARDSHIP IS LOCAL

20-SOME FOUNDATION-BUILDING MOMENTS

FROM THE 20TH CENTURY | BY ROBYN K. COGGINS

Schools of medicine are in the business of looking forward—to the possibilities of Big Data, increasingly precise medicine, regenerating body parts . . . The list of palpable ways to enhance human health goes on.

Given all that 21st-century-and-beyond speculating, we thought we'd pause for a moment to take a look back. As the saying goes, hindsight is 20/20, and it's in the rearview mirror that we can really see how far this med school has come.

Unlike some of its peer institutions, the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine did not come of age with a large endowment. It has owed much of its development in the past century to the stewardship and periodic gifts of locals, especially foundations. Turns out, foundation donations are a very Pittsburgh way of giving. Hundreds of foundations—both local and national—support the school. Those funds amounted to \$21 million in the 2013/14 fiscal year.

Clearly, numerous industry partners, alumni, and other donors provide invaluable support to the school, as well. There are so many gifts to Pitt med, in fact, that we can't possibly list even just the foundations that have donated throughout the years. But today, we're highlighting some of our neighbors who have helped Pitt med write history. (We bet you'll recognize a lot of these names, as they've helped shape Pittsburgh's legacy, too.)

Before we focus on local foundation gifts, it's worth mentioning another grant that greatly influenced this school and the way physicians are trained in this country. Abraham Flexner, funded by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, visited 155 American and Canadian medical schools between 1908 and 1910 to evaluate the state of medical education (which was fairly dismal then). He audited dozens of schools, eventually producing *The Flexner Report*, in which he championed the need for professionalism, research, updated facilities, and higher standards and expectations all around. Flexner deemed Pitt's medical school (then the Western Pennsylvania Medical College) one of the few laudable schools he visited. He suggested schools merge with local universities and that local philanthropy would be the road to solvency (many schools were in precarious financial situations). Here we note 20-some ways Pittsburgh foundations rose to the challenge and shaped this medical school in the past century.

1920s As the medical school professionalized, the cost of education and research skyrocketed. The school went from the most solvent part of the early University to deeply in debt by the 1920s. Thankfully, in 1929, the **Maurice and Laura Falk Foundation** stepped in with annual \$5,000 grants to help keep the school afloat, plus occasional bonus funds at the foundation's discretion.

1930s The newly founded **Buhl Foundation** made a three-year gift of \$30,600 to Pitt med to support gynecol-

ogy's **Harold A. Miller** in his research on eclampsia and other complications of pregnancy.

Additionally, the **Maurice and Laura Falk Foundation** donated \$2.1 million to the School of Medicine and \$900,000 to the **Falk Clinic**.

In 1938, the **Carnegie Foundation** gave \$3,500 to support anatomist **Davenport Hooker's** research into fetal responses.

That same year, the **G.N. Stewart Fund** donated \$10,700 for endocrinology studies of pathologist **Julius M. Rogoff** and, as the nation further ramped up to a manufacturing boom, the **Sarah Mellon**

Scaife Foundation funded industrial medicine research at the new **Addison H. Gibson Laboratory**.

According to Barbara Paull's *A Century of Medical Excellence: The History of the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine*, these gifts, combined with others from individuals, signaled a kind of watershed moment for research efforts in the school. Dean **William S. McEllroy**, who foresaw Pitt med becoming a research powerhouse, considered these monies indicative of a trend of giving.

It seems McEllroy was right—much of what Pitt med is now known for came about after generous midcentury funding:

1940s The **Buhl Foundation** helped establish the **Division of Research**, ensuring a core faculty who had no teaching or departmental obligations so they could focus on the bench.

In 1947, the **Renziehausen Foundation** gave \$500,000 for a diabetic ward named after their family, and Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh was able to recruit physician-scientist **Thaddeus Danowski** and two associates to study childhood diabetes.

That same year, the **Addison Gibson Foundation** donated \$100,000 for animal research quarters, with the Scaife family and others committing \$25,000 to expand and complete the **Addison H. Gibson Laboratory**.

And it's hard to imagine where psychiatry—both at Pitt and the field itself—would be without the **Richard King Mellon Foundation's** early goal of creating a “first-rate health center in Pittsburgh.” Their cash infusions in 1947 led to **new recruits in psychiatry**. You may have heard of them: **Henry Brosin**, who directed the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic (WPIC); **Arthur Mirsky**; and **Benjamin Spock**, who established a childhood development clinic with **Margaret McFarland** (mentor to Fred Rogers) and brought on eminent psychologist **Erik Erikson** to lecture monthly at Pitt.

In 1949, the **Falk Foundation** endowed a medical library with a \$300,000 grant, which prompted an anonymous donor to give an additional \$3 million in matching funds. We now know the fruits of those donations as the **Falk Library of the Health Sciences**.

1950s Three big-name foundations donated millions as part of a five-year promise to build the School of Medicine's endowment: **A. W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust** (\$5 million), the **Richard King**



Time and time again, Pittsburghers have come together to support the creation of a premier medical school.

Mellon Foundation (\$1.25 million with more than \$3.8 million from Richard King Mellon), and the **Sarah Mellon Scaife Foundation** (\$5 million). Scaife Hall opened in 1956.

1960s The **Richard King Mellon Foundation** gave more than \$1 million to support the Department of Physiology, which hired **Ernst Knobil**—his research on reproductive endocrinology helped bring about hormonal contraceptives. A \$4 million gift from the foundation enabled Pitt to recruit surgery chair **Henry Bahnson** and upgrade the surgery department. (Bahnson would be instrumental to attracting Thomas E. Starzl to Pitt decades later.) An additional 1969 donation **endowed the chair of psychiatry**.

A \$1 million donation from the **Maurice and Laura Falk Foundation** in 1964 helped expand and renovate their eponymous clinic.

In 1966, Pitt became a member of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's system.

That same year, the **Richard King Mellon Charitable Trust** granted \$3.23 million to **establish the Department of Neurology**.

On the heels of that gift, **Sarah Mellon Scaife Foundation** gave \$375,000 to expand the **Department of Pharmacology**, which the foundation had helped launch with a \$220,000 grant in 1963. **Gerhard Werner**, head of the program, applied the money to training facili-

ties and research in neurobiology and psychopharmacology.

Freedom House Ambulance Service, instigated with a grant from the **Maurice Falk Medical Fund** in 1967, innovated modern prehospital care, as did Pitt emergency medicine and critical care docs, notably **Nancy Caroline** and **Peter Safar**.

1970s After some exhilarating Super Bowl wins, the 1970s would become a challenging time for Pittsburgh: Toward the end of the decade, the steel industry began to collapse, and funding for many projects dwindled. The grant records for the University are scattered from these times. But we know that **Thomas Detre**, recruited in 1973, was building a psychiatry powerhouse. Pitt would never be the same. The **Mellon foundations** buttressed these efforts. Their support helped position Pitt psychiatry, which would rank third in National Institute of Mental Health funding by 1983. (Pitt has remained among the top NIMH funding recipients since then.)

1980s The **Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation** helped fund the clinical program in geriatric medicine with a \$1 million grant. Those efforts

would later become the UPMC Senior Care-Benedum Geriatric Center in UPMC Montefiore—**then one of the largest clinical geriatrics programs in the United States**. Today, the University's research portfolio on aging is broad and deep, encompassing faculty efforts at 16 schools.

The **Staunton Farm Foundation** gave \$1.5 million to create the Staunton Professor of Pediatrics and Psychiatry, which is now held by **Beatriz Luna**, whose laboratory focuses on the brain basis of adolescent behavior.

The **Richard King Mellon Foundation** made a series of multimillion-dollar gifts throughout the next few years to go toward a **new research-based cancer center that would be run by new recruit Ronald Herberman**. Like geriatrics, this was envisioned as a huge interdisciplinary program (well

before being interdisciplinary was fashionable) by Thomas Detre, who had just become the University's senior vice chancellor for health sciences. Detre would go on to create an elite academic medical center here out of Pitt affiliated hospitals.

1990s A 1999 \$2 million pledge from the **Heinz Endowments**, matched by the **Richard King Mellon Foundation** and Chicago's William G. McGowan Charitable Fund, went toward a new Southside facility for Pitt and UPMC's **McGowan Institute for Regenerative Medicine**.

Rounding out that last year of the century, the **Henry L. Hillman Foundation**, the **Hillman Foundation**, and Henry L. Hillman himself donated \$10 million to establish the **Hillman Cancer Center** in Shadyside. It is now a National Cancer Institute–designated comprehensive cancer center and home to the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute.

Additionally, the **Scaife Family Foundation** and the **DSF Charitable Foundation** contributed \$10 million to establish the **Pittsburgh Institute for Neurodegenerative Diseases**.

This medical school has had some extraordinary, and prescient, neighbors. ■