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JULIA MAROUS STRAUT

First, a love story.

Long ago, a wealthy Pittsburgher, William Croghan Jr., built a mansion, and in it, a ballroom for his daughter, Mary. But it is said that she never danced there. Mary eloped at age 15 with Captain Edward Schenley, a British officer. They sailed off to adventures in England and what is now Suriname. Through the years, the Croghan mansion fell into disrepair. But you can still see elements of the ballroom; they were restored and placed in the Cathedral of Learning in 1955.

We have just added a ballroom of a different kind to this university's campus, and this one will indeed be used for dancing—but not the waltzes Mr. Croghan envisioned. Just a few blocks down Fifth Avenue from Pitt's great Cathedral, in a building envisioned as its modern architectural bookend, now stands a great campanile. In its vast halls, diverse researchers are already choosing their partners and choreographing their scientific steps. In October, we opened the Biomedical Science Tower 3 (BST3). Its very design bows to the collaborative nature of some of today's most exciting science. The laboratories are open and flexible, modeled after Thomas Edison's lab bench prototype. Each floor has common space—coffee and dining areas and nooks with places to schmooze scientifically or just to meditate while taking in grand views of Pittsburgh.

It is one of the finest research buildings in the world. Even before we opened its doors, the BST3 served as a magnet for scientific talent, enabling us to recruit top scientists from the critical disciplines in which our most challenging research questions demand inquiry. These men and women join a core of Pitt faculty members, many of whom have built their careers at Pitt and, in doing so, have also built the University's reputation for excellence.

We've allocated the space not to traditional departments but to interdisciplinary programs like structural biology, computational biology, and the neurosciences. The building also houses programs in developmental biology, bioengineering, drug discovery, and infectious diseases, including vaccine development—fields critical to the next era of biomedical progress. The work that goes on here will lead to greater insight into how our cells and tissues function and to new medicines that will sustain and prolong that function. We can expect advances in our understanding of heartbreaking conditions as well as a transformed regional economy, spurred on by University-derived intellectual property.

Nearly 70 years ago, around the time he drove the last rivet into the Cathedral of Learning, Chancellor John Bowman wrote of that tower, "They shall find wisdom here, and faith. In steel and stone, in character and thought, they shall find beauty, adventure, and moments of high victory." I have the same confident aspirations for those who inhabit the BST3. If only Mary could join us—let the dance begin!

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