

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette®

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2025

POST-GAZETTE SPECIAL REPORT

CMU OPENS 'NEXT BOLD CHAPTER'

By Maddie Aiken
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Twelve years ago, Carnegie Mellon University raised more than \$1 billion in a five-year fundraising campaign, its record at the time.

Building off that success, university leaders set their sights on something greater. In 2018, CMU announced its intent to raise double that amount by 2025 in a campaign it called "Make Possible."

Many wondered whether that \$2 billion goal would be attainable, recalls Gina Casalegno, dean of students and vice president of student affairs.

The figure proved to be reachable, and then some. The university concluded the campaign this month, raising more than \$2.5 billion to support new campus buildings, scholarships, endowed professorships, research initiatives and more.

"We dreamed big," Ms. Casalegno said. "... It has been really exciting to see the ways in which we have been able to build infrastructure [and] support access and affordability."

The impact of the ongoing campaign are immediately obvious. There are seven new facilities either finished or under construction. Students who have received lifechanging scholarships work in recently built labs. New programs further CMU's excellence in STEM and the arts.

The campaign has both fueled CMU's "next bold chapter" and strengthened its role in "reinventing the intersections of technology, creativity and humanity," CMU President Farnam Jahanian wrote in a letter to the campus community this month.

More than 72,000 alumni, parents, faculty, staff, students and

School shatters fundraising goal with focus on affordability, technology, arts, innovation



Giuseppe LoPiccolo/Post-Gazette

Machine learning Ph.D. student Maxwell Jones, a Rales fellow, described the program as "super transformative." He also earned his bachelor's and master's degrees at CMU.

friends contributed to the historic achievement.

"Make Possible is already transforming lives and unlocking new doors of opportunity for our students, faculty, staff and partners around the world," Mr. Jahanian said. "With this remarkable foundation in place, the possibilities we can achieve together are truly boundless."

'Lighter and lighter' financial burdens

One of the biggest impacts of the campaign is felt in students' pocketbooks. More than \$465 million raised has contributed to hundreds of new endowed scholarships and fellowships.

— and a burden that is lighter and lighter every year," Mr. Bennett said.

"We're not done until we get to zero burden, but having been able to cut that student loan debt down ... is a huge testament to our donors and friends who believe that CMU should continue to be available to any talented student."

Financial assistance programs created by the campaign include Tartan Scholars, designed to meet the needs of high-achieving student leaders with limited resources, and CMU Rales Fellows, which provides graduate students with full tuition and a stipend to cover living expenses.

Ph.D. student and Rales Fellow Maxwell Jones described that program as "super transformative." Mr. Jones, who studies machine learning, is working with Adobe on a research project to use artificial intelligence to make Photoshop more accessible.

"The Rales Fellows program is huge," said Mr. Jones, who also earned his bachelor's and master's degrees at CMU. "If you have one person that can break into a very good job, then that whole family is set up for a long time. You can start learning from the people around you who are also very successful."

'Lead the field'

Scholarships have made an impact on Olivia LaFond, too. In her case, that support directly involves research.

Ms. LaFond, an undergraduate student studying chemical engineering and biomedical engineering, is the recipient of the Porges Family Fund for Undergraduate Research, another fund made possible through the campaign.

Ms. LaFond's research involves ingestible electronics. She's

This emphasis on affordability has led to fewer undergraduate students relying on loans to complete their education, said David Bennett, CMU's vice president for university advancement. Last year, only 28% of undergraduates left CMU with any federal loan debt — down from 52% in 2019.

Those who do have loans owe about \$18,200 total, compared to nearly \$26,000 five years prior.

Because of these efforts, the highly selective university was named the 25th "best value" university in the country by U.S. News & World Report this year.

"Our students are getting a positive, holistic growth experience in an academically rigorous setting

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\$2.5B: CMU SHATTERS FUNDRAISING GOAL

studying a small camera pill that, when ingested, can latch itself to the small intestine and monitor gastrointestinal activity for about a year.

Between that research and her athletic responsibilities — she’s on the women’s basketball team — Ms. LaFond is quite busy.

But she wouldn’t trade her CMU experience for anything. Ms. LaFond said she believes the campaign can help give similar experiences to others.

“The campaign not only gives opportunities to more students to try new things, it also gives the university itself [the opportunity] to gain more perspective from people who wouldn’t have had access to it otherwise,” she said.

Through the campaign, CMU has created 72 endowed professorships, deanships and headships. The university has also started academic programs in areas such as computational biology, formal mathematics and design fusion.

CMU has long been an international trailblazer, said Martial Hebert, dean of the School of Computer Science. The university was the first in the U.S. to offer degrees in artificial intelligence, machine learning, robotics and automated science.

“[This campaign] gives us the means to lead the field — in terms of research, in terms of education, in terms of recruiting the best

students — so that we can carry out those transformations,” Mr. Hebert said.

‘New gateway’

Perhaps the most visible sign of the campaign are the state-of-the-art buildings popping up around campus.

- These include:
 - The Tepper Quad (business)
 - TCS Hall (technology and society)
 - Scaife Hall (engineering)
 - ANSYS Hall (engineering)
 - The Robotics Innovation Center at Hazelwood Green
 - The Highmark Center for Health, Wellness and Athletics
 - The Richard King Mellon Hall of Sciences, which is still under construction

Officials have touted the Highmark Center as a top-tier facility that blends athletic excellence with mental and spiritual needs. The \$105 million building contains several gyms, as well as the university’s counseling center and health services.

Constructing the center allowed CMU to triple its wellness programming, said Ms. Casalegno, the dean of students.

It also can host athletic tournaments. For the first time ever, CMU was able to hold the NCAA Division III women’s volleyball championship last week. Fans crowded into the space to cheer on CMU’s team,

Ms. Casalegno said.

“It was so exciting, and it’s all possible because people believed in this vision of how we could enhance the student experience for all,” she said. “It was electric.”

The campaign has also supported the construction of the Richard King Mellon Hall of Sciences, a premier building that will marry the three disciplines for which CMU is perhaps best known: science, computer science and fine arts.

An art museum and restaurant will be featured in the Forbes Avenue building, which will also serve as a hub for chemistry, biology and computational biology programs.

Barbara Shinn-Cunningham — the Glen de Vries dean of the Mellon College of Science — envisions the \$252 million building fostering further collaboration and innovation across disciplines.

Its prime location at the entrance of campus also means it will act as a “new gateway” to the elite institution, she added.

“It’s not just about academics, it’s about the people of Pittsburgh as well,” Ms. Shinn-Cunningham said.

‘The world needs more Carnegie Mellon’

What’s next for CMU after this historic campaign? To Mr. Bennett, it’s “more of the same.”



Giuseppe LoPiccolo/Post-Gazette
Glen de Vries Dean of CMU’s Mellon College of Science Barbara Shinn-Cunningham: “It’s not just about academics, it’s about the people of Pittsburgh as well.”

“It is more of committing to making this place accessible and affordable for students, it’s more of bringing the best and brightest talent to Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania, it’s more of enriching the student experience, and it’s more of research that drives things that matter,” Mr. Bennett said.

“We are the institution that is driving the conversation in AI and science, AI and business, AI and humanity — and the world needs more Carnegie Mellon. That’s what’s next for us.”



Giuseppe LoPiccolo/Post-Gazette

Martial Hebert, dean of CMU’s School of Computer Science: “[This campaign] gives us the means to lead the field — in terms of research, in terms of education, in terms of recruiting the best students — so that we can carry out those transformations.”



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CMU senior Olivia LaFond’s research focuses on ingestible electronics, specifically a small camera pill that can latch itself to the small intestine and monitor gastrointestinal activity for about a year.