Expanding Space for Dance, Music, Theatre

GRANTS SUPPORT NEW PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

Two recent grants will be instrumental in providing support for the university’s ambitious plan to develop a new Performing Arts Center. The center will create a larger home for The Hartt School’s Dance, Theatre, and Vocal divisions, and provide expanded space for the Community Division. To be constructed in Hartford at the corner of Albany Avenue and Westbourne Parkway, within a historic complex of visionary industrial-era buildings, the center will address critical space needs and will further strengthen the university’s and Hartt’s strong bonds with the community. The project will involve renovating approximately 71,000 square feet of space in three buildings at an estimated cost of $30 million.

The Hartford Provides Grant for Community Division Building

The Hartford Financial Services Group has made a $200,000 corporate contribution to the University of Hartford to be used in the construction of the Hartt Community Division building for the planned Performing Arts Center. The Community Division offers low-cost performing arts courses to local people of all ages.

The grant reflects The Hartford’s philanthropic focus on K–12 public education in the city of Hartford. Neil Wolin, the company’s executive vice president and general counsel and a member of the university’s board of regents, said, “This is yet another stage of the university’s growing engagement in Hartford’s revitalization. As a company that shares that commitment, The Hartford is pleased to support the establishment of the new Performing Arts Center.”

The Hartford has long been a supporter of the university. The company created the Donald R. Frahm scholarship in 2004 in honor of its former chairman and CEO, endowing the scholarship with $125,000 to provide four years of financial aid to a student from the city of Hartford. The scholarship recipient is also eligible for summer internships at The Hartford, where the student receives business and life-skills training.

In addition, The Hartford supports both the university’s Hartford Scholars program, which provides half tuition to students from Hartford, and its Educational Main Street program, which shares the university’s resources with public schools in north Hartford.

Theatre to Be Named for Edward and Ann Roberts in Recognition of Foundation Grant

The Edward C. and Ann T. Roberts Foundation has pledged $100,000 for the University of Hartford’s Performing Arts Center facility for The Hartt School.

In recognition of the gift, a theatre in the facility will be named in honor of the late Edward C. “Ned” and Ann T. “Sunny” Roberts, who established the foundation in 1964 for the support of the arts.

“The project is of interest to us because of its impact not only on the university but also on the neighborhood and community, especially since the Hartford-based Artists Collective is nearby on Albany Avenue,” said Elizabeth Normen, executive director of the Roberts Foundation.

The foundation has provided a variety of support for the arts at the university over the years. A grant to the Hartford Art School and The Hartt School helped launch a three-year program to develop young leadership in the arts. The foundation also made a grant to improve lighting at the university’s Joseloff Gallery. And grants for the creation of new work have gone to faculty at the Hartford Art School and The Hartt School.

Ned and Sunny Roberts grew up in Hartford and were married in 1939. He served as a trustee of The Hartt School. She studied at the Hartford Art School and became a recognized amateur painter and a member of the Connecticut Academy of Fine Arts. Ned died in 1966; Sunny, in 1991. Portions of their estates were left to establish a foundation to benefit the Greater Hartford community.
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Through the Eyes of Hartford’s Children

CENTER FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH RECEIVES $1 MILLION GRANT TO STUDY VULNERABLE FAMILIES

“What we’re trying to do is understand what Hartford’s most vulnerable young children experience daily in their social worlds, so that we can create better strategies to help them develop to their potential,” says Tim Black, associate professor of sociology and director of the University’s Center for Social Research.

The center recently received a $1 million three-year state grant from Connecticut’s Children’s Trust Fund (CTF) to study vulnerable children and families in Hartford. “We want to examine more fully the parental and societal factors that contribute to child abuse and neglect on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis,” explains Black.

The grant will supplement 10 years of research that Black and his colleagues have already conducted on CTF’s statewide home visitation program, which provides first-time, needy mothers with home visitors who serve as advocates, teachers, trainers, and mentors. The Hartford study will track approximately 300 families and will include an in-depth, ethnographic study of a selected sample of these families. Black notes that the research methodology is particularly valuable because it focuses on seeing the world through the eyes of families and children—of putting ourselves in their places—and relies heavily on relationships developed by culturally appropriate, bilingual researchers with Hartford families.

Student interns will also have an opportunity to acquire hands-on research experience on the grant. Black sees this type of research as a perfect fit for the University. “We have the opportunity to take academia into the community, to build bridges into Hartford neighborhoods so we can help solve real day-to-day problems.”

Hats Off at Hillyer: Celebrating a Scholarship and a New Book

There were a lot of reasons for jubilation: the launching of a new book, the doubling of an endowed scholarship, and the bestowal of an outstanding young alumnus award.

And celebrate they did, as a way of paying tribute to Darius Mehri, who graduated from the university’s Hillyer College in 1986. At a dinner last October, Mehri, who is a recipient of Hillyer’s Outstanding Young Alumnus Award, was honored for the successful launch of his book, Notes from Toyota-Land: An American Engineer in Japan. The book was published in September 2005.

Mehri’s father, Dr. Parviz B. Mehri, originally created the Mehri Scholar program in 1985 to reward the top academic freshman at Hillyer with a sophomore-year scholarship. To recognize his son’s success, Mehri has decided to double the endowment, making possible the awarding of scholarships to the top two freshmen each year.

Darius Mehri went on after Hillyer to earn degrees from the University of Rochester, City College of New York, and the University of Wisconsin. “I was a classic underachiever when I came to [Hartford] 22 years ago,” he said at the celebration dinner. “Fortunately, I came to a wonderful place that turns people with potential into educated adults.”

In 1996, Mehri went to Japan to work as a computer simulation engineer in the Toyota production group. Notes from Toyota-Land charts his transformation from wide-eyed engineer to social critic troubled by Japanese corporate practices. The book was the subject of reviews in both The Wall Street Journal and The Christian Science Monitor in early January.
This fall the university admitted as its first group of National Honor Scholars 11 students whose excellent high school academic records put them in the top echelon of entering freshmen. The new scholarship program was created by life regent Belle K. Ribicoff with additional support from Richard J. Cardin, ’62, regent and co-chair of the campaign steering committee.

The university’s first four-year, full-tuition scholarship will help Hartford vie with other schools to attract the very brightest students.

“It is a small but significant step toward making the university a livelier and more competitive school, a better place in which to learn and to teach,” says Ribicoff. “Our first group of students will raise the academic bar for their classmates and will help lift the standards of the university’s pool of applicants. What we need,” she says, “is faith in ourselves and support for our highest aspirations.”

Maria Qadri, a biomedical engineering major from Parsippany, N.J., and a National Honor Scholar, says she chose the University of Hartford because of the new program. “If it wasn’t for the scholarship, I would have stayed at home and gone to a state school,” she says. “The scholarship gave me recognition, which allowed me to participate in three research projects involving real people.”

In one project, Qadri is building a physical therapy device to help a 13-year-old boy with cerebral palsy. Another involves developing technology to analyze neuropathy in the feet of diabetic patients. She is also working with two seniors to build a device for babies suffering from sleep apnea, work she will continue after those seniors graduate.

“Qadri is just the kind of intelligent, engaged student the program is intended to attract,” says Catherine Stevenson, associate professor of English and drama and academic dean of the university’s international and honors programs.

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Members of the university’s giving societies and other special guests were invited to a private reception with Ann Garrels before the NPR correspondent’s Rogow Lecture on Nov. 7. Garrels (right) is shown with President Walter Harrison and donor Claire Pryor ’84.
Giving Beyond the Limits of Time: A Special Kind of Generosity

BY PETER H. CONGLETON

Friends and alumni of the University of Hartford are choosing to provide it with ongoing financial support by making charitable bequests to the university in their wills or estate plans. To celebrate and honor the members of what has been formally designated the Founders’ Planned Giving Society, a luncheon was held in September at the 1877 Club. Membership in the Founders’ Society is bestowed upon those who have notified the Office of Planned Giving that charitable provisions, which benefit the University of Hartford, are included in their estate plans.

Dr. John Cannon (center), a retired physician and parent of a University of Hartford graduate, checks the pulse of his former patient, Charles Condon, secretary of the university. Bernard “Buck” den Ouden (left), professor of philosophy in the College of Arts and Sciences, looks on. Behind them is Ernie Gardow, professor emeritus, who is also a former patient of Dr. Cannon. Cannon, Condon, Gardow, and den Ouden are all members of the university’s Founders’ Planned Giving Society.

“Don’t wait for tomorrow when you can do something that is worthwhile today.” – JOHN & DORIS CANNON

President Walter Harrison expressed his appreciation to those in attendance for their commitment to the university and praised the society members for the many ways in which they have chosen to become “stakeholders” in its future. Society members, who gathered in the 1877 Club that crisp autumn day have made commitments to the university in a variety of ways.

As an example, Dr. John Cannon and his wife, Doris, have designated the University of Hartford as the recipient of their two charitable remainder trusts, managed for the university by the Bank of America. Dr. Cannon, a retired physician and parent of a University of Hartford graduate, and his wife maintain a loyal and active interest in the university and an enthusiastic commitment to The Hartt School in particular.

A charitable remainder trust provides a donor with income for the lifetime of one or more beneficiaries, or for a term of years. Depending on the payout amount agreed upon (never less than 5 percent) and actuarial factors, the donor is allowed a charitable federal income tax deduction in the year of the gift. When the trust terminates, the entire remaining principal, including growth, if any, is distributed to the designated charitable organization(s). The Cannons receive quarterly income payments from the trusts.

The Founders’ Society luncheon offered a venue to celebrate this kind of abiding connection. John and Doris Cannon said, “Don’t wait for tomorrow when you can do something that is worthwhile today.” This sentiment applies equally to the other members who have made their own plans for meaningful gifts to the university.

Professor Emeritus Ernie Gardow and his wife Margery both taught at the university. He was a professor and dean of mechanical engineering at the College of Engineering from 1968 to 1999, and she was a part-time instructor in the English Language Institute in the 1980s. They have designated a percentage of their charitable remainder trust to satisfy their desire to provide for the University of Hartford, together with other charitable organizations.

The charitable plans of some members include provisions in their wills, revocable trusts, retirement plans, or life insurance policies, while others have entered into life income gift arrangements such as charitable gift annuities and charitable remainder trusts.

Gifts have been designated to endow scholarship funds or professorships, or to fund important areas of anticipated future need. Drawing upon a wide variety of options, Founders’ Society members have found numerous ways to structure gifts that ultimately will serve useful and meaningful purposes at the university.

The Cannons, the Gardows, and Charles Condon, together with all the other members of the Founders’ Society, invite you to join them in exploring ways to plan your future as a stakeholder in the University of Hartford. For more information, or to permit the university to recognize you for plans you have already made, please contact Peter H. Congleton, director of planned giving, at 860.768.5201 or e-mail congleton@hartford.edu.