From the Russ College Board

Strategic Stewardship

Generosity, coupled with effective planning, shapes the future of Russ College

Last year at this time, I was proud and humbled to read in Ingenuity about the amazing gift left to the Russ College by our wonderful friends, Fritz, B.S.E.E.’42, D.ENG.’75, and Dolores Russ. Since then, Dean Irwin and President McDavis worked together to convene engineering and technology leaders to advise the college on how to strategically allocate gift earnings:

- William Wulf, former president, National Academy of Engineering; professor of computer science, School of Engineering and Applied Science, University of Virginia
- Nan Mattai, senior vice president, Engineering and Technology, Rockwell Collins
- William Marcuson, III, former president, American Society of Civil Engineers; director emeritus of the Geotechnical Laboratory, U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center
- Leah Jamieson, dean, College of Engineering, Purdue University
- Daniel Hammer, professor and chair, bioengineering, University of Pennsylvania
- Norman Fortenberry, director, Center for the Advancement of Scholarship on Engineering Education, National Academy of Engineering
- Richard Alkire, professor emeritus, chemical and biomolecular engineering, University of Illinois
- Emmett Boyle, M.S.’70, principal and chair, The Elmwood Group; Member, Russ College Board of Visitors

Focusing closely on the college’s long-range plan and working with Dean Irwin as well as new provost and Executive Vice President Pam Benoit, the Russ Gift Working Group has recommended that the college shift its traditional research focus areas in avionics, biomedical engineering, energy and the environment, and smart civil infrastructure to a focus on transportation as well as fuels, mediation, and remediation — also acknowledging that biomedical engineering has the greatest potential for future investment.

The group also recommended to focus on recruiting senior faculty in focus areas, continuing to nurture the biomedical engineering group, and continuing to graduate what we call “meta-engineers” — or graduates whose education is “beyond engineering.”

There are four areas in which we have developed tactical, targeted investments.

- For students, we will invest in scholarships, especially those aimed at women and minorities. We’ll also concentrate on student leadership and entrepreneurship, math retention, student competitions, international initiatives, an undergraduate research fund, and grad student research initiatives.

- For faculty, we will invest in research incentives, eminent scholar and graduate student recruiting, matching funds for grants, travel for research promotion, the Russ professorships, chairs in research focus areas, and a biomedical engineering development fund.

- To support our physical infrastructure, we will plan for renovations in Stocker Center as a result of the space being freed by the Academic & Research Center.

And to support personnel and prominence, we will invest in peer-led learning programs, grant writing, math retention, a discretionary reserve, and national partnerships such as the Russ Prize.

The Board of Visitors will assist Dean Irwin with next steps. We will help develop a long-range plan/spending guidelines, help modify the Russ College’s strategic plan, and be a sounding board as the research unit structure is transformed.

I, as well as many of our current board members, was fortunate to know the Russes well, and we are honored to help steward their wishes and vision for the Russ College.