Edith and Peter O’Donnell Jr. Athenaeum Signals New Era for UT Dallas Arts

SUPPORTED BY A $32 MILLION GIFT FROM THE O’DONNELL FOUNDATION, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS RECENTLY BROKE GROUND ON THE EDITH AND PETER O’DONNELL JR. ATHENAEUM, A VISIONARY ARTS COMPLEX THAT WILL BE A DESTINATION FOR BOTH COMETS AND THE BROADER COMMUNITY.

The O’Donnell Foundation gift is the single largest monetary gift from one of UT Dallas’ most significant donors. Of the $32 million gifted by the foundation, $22 million will support the construction of the Crow Museum and performance hall, with an additional $10 million creating a programming endowment for the Athenaeum.

"Peter and Edith O’Donnell were crucial to the development of UT Dallas, almost from the beginning," said William T. Solomon, president and CEO of the O’Donnell Foundation. "They saw the University as having the potential to blend their passion for education, Peter’s interest in science and engineering, and Edith’s love of the arts. All of this finds unique expression in the role envisioned for the Athenaeum, which makes it especially appropriate that the complex will bear the O’Donnell name."

The construction of the O’Donnell Athenaeum project is a core priority for New Dimensions: The Campaign for UT Dallas. To date, the University has raised $73.9 million toward the project, including $10.95 million from Mrs. Margaret McDermott, $5 million from Mrs. Bea Wallace and $25.45 million from the Crow family. When completed, the O’Donnell Athenaeum will be the apex of a period of significant growth for the arts at UT Dallas, which began in 2014 with the creation of the Edith O’Donnell Institute of Art History. As a home for world-renowned art collections and a much-needed performance space on campus, the O’Donnell Athenaeum will create a bridge between UT Dallas and external communities, a place to welcome schoolchildren, families and visitors from around the world.

"Not only will students, faculty and staff have a wonderful new addition to campus where they can find inspiration and collaborate, but the Athenaeum can reach out into the community, increasing the University’s impact well beyond its campus boundaries," said UT System Regent Christina Melton Crain. "UT Dallas will become a destination for art enthusiasts from across the globe bringing heightened awareness of UT Dallas’ excellence."

Designed by Morphosis Architects, the O’Donnell Athenaeum’s three cultural buildings will have second floors larger than their ground floors, creating covered exterior spaces that can be used for studying, daytime and nighttime events, performances, art display and an enriched daily campus life. These spaces, alongside the complex’s museums, collection storage rooms, rehearsal studios and performance hall offer limitless opportunities for interdisciplinary academic work and expanded cultural programming at UT Dallas.

"This new space allows us to grow our collection and programs and, as part of a top-tier research university, expand our research and conservation initiatives, all while fulfilling our mission of being a museum of relevance and belonging for UT Dallas students and faculty, and the larger North Texas community," said Amy Hofland, senior director of the Crow Museum of Asian Art at UT Dallas.

To support the Edith and Peter O’Donnell Jr. Athenaeum, visit giving.utdallas.edu/athenaeum.
Donors Enhance Accessibility, DEI Initiatives Across University

OVER THE PAST year, donations from local corporations and individual donors contributed more than $1 million to increase accessibility and enhance diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programs at The University of Texas at Dallas.

Promoting these causes is a pillar of the University’s strategic plan announced in 2018. Last year, UT Dallas hired Dr. Yvette Pearson as the first vice president of diversity, equity and inclusion. Her office is leading efforts to create a culture of equity across campus while supporting underrepresented and minority students academically, financially and professionally.

“Our vision is for UT Dallas to be a global leader in eradicating barriers to diversity, equity and inclusion,” Pearson said. “We’re doing the very challenging work of recruiting more diverse students, faculty and staff, while making sure we have an equitable and inclusive climate so that members of our community from all backgrounds are welcomed, treated fairly and encouraged in their pursuit of excellence.”

Pearson said that philanthropic partnerships with community members, employers and donors who share this vision will be key to UT Dallas’ success.

Several corporations based in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex have created new funds for scholarships and programmatic support benefiting DEI initiatives.

Mbroh Engineering’s $50,000 gift created the first endowed fund for the Diversity Scholars Program while also supporting the activities of UT Dallas’ chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE). Scholarships for Diversity Scholars students provide $5,000 per year for first-time undergraduates and transfer students, providing critical financial resources that alleviate financial burdens and help talented students remain enrolled in college.

“When considering universities our company wanted to partner with, we were drawn to UT Dallas because of its innovative approach to engineering and research,” said Tony Mbroh, president and CEO of Mbroh Engineering. “We were also impressed with the richness and depth of education and academic experience. Together we are proud to elevate UTD diversity scholars and prepare them to be the future generations of professional talent.”

Since 2010, the program has supported over 250 scholars, more than half of whom study in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields. Diversity Scholars who enrolled in fall 2021 had an average 3.42 GPA and a 100% retention rate in the spring semester.

Goldman Sachs, whose Dallas headquarters doubled in size to 4,000 employees in the last year, also made a significant investment in UT Dallas students. The company sees the University’s graduates as a key source of talent for future growth. Goldman Sachs’ Excellence in Computer Science Scholarships are now the largest philanthropically funded awards offered in the Erik Jonsson School of Engineering and Computer Science and will provide six $10,000 scholarships over the next three years.

Both gifts by Mbroh Engineering and Goldman Sachs were honored with terrace namings within the Engineering and Computer Science West building on UT Dallas’ campus.

At the naming celebration for the Goldman Sachs Terrace, Stephanie Cohen, global co-head of consumer and wealth management at Goldman Sachs, told students why the company’s history inspired its support for UT Dallas’ students.

“Our firm’s founders, Marcus Goldman and Samuel Sachs, were both immigrants and first-generation college students, which is a story many students at UT Dallas can relate to,” Cohen said. “This underscores the importance that education can play in shaping your future and motivating you to take big leaps to accomplish your dreams.”

Continued on next page
In addition to their financial support, both Mbroh Engineering and Goldman Sachs committed to providing mentoring and networking opportunities, experiences which radically shape the trajectory of students’ careers and are often difficult for nontraditional or underrepresented students to access.

“We have invested our resources in a number of areas, including the Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, the Women’s Summit, HackUTD, the Naveen Jindal School of Management’s Scholarship Breakfast and UT Dallas’ chapter of the Association for Computing Machinery,” said Dr. Ram Narayan, managing director at Goldman Sachs and a member of the Jonsson School’s Executive Council.

Creating Career Paths

American Airlines, headquartered in Fort Worth, recently invested in the Jonsson School’s DEI initiatives and the UTDesign program with a $30,000 gift.

“As the global leader in commercial aviation, American Airlines has to carry the banner for DEI around the world,” said Maya Leibman, executive vice president and chief information officer at American Airlines. “These issues are foundational to our company culture, and we are proud to support UT Dallas in making engineering a more accessible career path for all students,” Leibman said.

Leibman has also been involved at UT Dallas as a panelist for several Jonsson School events, including Women in Tech and Dimensions of Diversity: Engineering and Equitable Future.

HumCap, a high-tech HR consulting and recruiting firm based in Plano, created a $50,000 endowed scholarship in 2021 for first-generation STEM students at UT Dallas.

“We want to help those students get an education, then go out and do something great,” said Tad McIntosh, president and CEO of HumCap. “It will change generations.”

Dr. Stephanie Adams, dean of the Jonsson School and Lars Magnus Ericsson Chair, said that one of the Jonsson School’s main goals is to enable greater access to higher education for all students.

“Jonsson School graduates and engineers are in high demand, but the opportunities to participate in this field have not always been welcoming to everyone,” Adams said. “We need to bring our attention to fully including underrepresented students – those who are nontraditional in age, gender, racial and ethnic makeup, or those who are differently abled. Diverse perspectives help all of us by yielding the best solutions to problems facing our society.”

Funding Opportunities

In addition to expansive support from local businesses, donations from individuals are driving investments in financial aid at UT Dallas.

A new $100,000 scholarship to enhance diversity in the Department of Bioengineering was established by members of the department’s Industry Advisory Council, led by Dr. Claire Aldridge.

“UT Dallas’ Department of Bioengineering is a vital part of our local innovation ecosystem,” Aldridge said. “As home to a talented and diverse cohort of scholars, the department generates discoveries and new technologies that transform lives and businesses in North Texas. We’re proud to support this work.”

A second anonymous gift established a $100,000 endowed scholarship in the Jonsson School for students who are active in organizations that promote women in engineering.

Building on the current progress of the University’s accessibility initiatives, alumni are working to ensure UT Dallas’ future excellence in these areas. A significant planned gift by Tina Quinn BS’12 and Charlie Quinn MBA’08 will be used to establish the Christina and Charles Quinn Scholarship for first-generation students pursuing degrees in the STEM fields or management. The Quinns’ gift will also create the Christina and Charles Quinn Professorship for faculty in either the Jonsson or Jindal schools. Any additional realized funds will expand the Charles and Christina Quinn Award for Jindal School veterans, a scholarship established by the couple in 2014 that already benefits students through the Military and Veteran Center.

“It can be difficult for first-generation families to even think about college as an option, let alone navigate the system and afford the costs,” Charlie Quinn said. “We know that UT Dallas has a very diverse student body. We just want to help the University continue to attract world-class professors, develop world-class degree programs and recruit the best students who want to go to UT Dallas, not just those who can already afford it.”

As a major part of the New Dimensions campaign, UT Dallas seeks to enhance financial aid resources to attract the best and brightest talent. Continued philanthropic support to extend the value of a UT Dallas education to all students will be critical to the campaign’s success.

“Our vision is for UT Dallas to be a global leader in eradicating barriers to diversity, equity and inclusion.”

— Dr. Yvette Pearson
Comets Giving Days Raises Record $2.2 Million

UT DALLAS SUPPORTERS contributed more than $2.2 million to over 80 campus causes during Comets Giving Days on April 6-7. Nearly 2,500 individual donations combined to set a record-breaking total for the University during the sixth annual two-day fundraising event.

Throughout the event, campus groups competed to earn bonus funds granted through challenges and matching gift opportunities created by donors. In addition to raising funds for campus causes, more than 200 nonperishable items were collected on campus and at alumni happy hours for the Comet Cupboard.

Toyotas Gift Creates Teaching Scholarship Program

A $750,000 GRANT from the Toyota USA Foundation has created a new scholarship program designed to increase the number of certified STEM teachers in the Dallas Independent School District (DISD). The UT Dallas Teaching Scholars Program will provide annual awards of $10,000 for up to three years to support 20 UT Dallas students who plan to become teachers.

The awards are open to current and prospective students seeking teaching certification in early childhood through sixth grade, in fourth through eighth grade core subjects with an emphasis in math or science, or in fourth through eighth grade math or science. Scholars must have a strong record of academic achievement, leadership and volunteerism.

“Our aim is to bolster science, technology, engineering and mathematics education in local schools, which also requires enhancing the pipeline of trained teaching professionals in the area,” said Michael Medalla, manager for the Toyota USA Foundation. “Scholarships will be offered to a diverse cohort of UT Dallas’ student teachers, providing much-needed financial support during a critical moment in their training.”

UT Dallas’ rigorous education program can be challenging for clinical teachers trying to balance practical preparation with other academic requirements and personal financial concerns, said Dr. Barbara Ashmore, assistant director of student teaching and field experience for the Teacher Development Center.

“Completing the clinical teaching requirement is a full-time job,” Ashmore said. “Some of our students have to take three to nine additional credit hours while doing so. When you’re working all day, every day of the week and also taking classes, putting food on your table and a roof over your head can be very challenging. By offering scholarships to these students, this program will be a real game changer.”

Dr. George Fair, dean of the School of Interdisciplinary Studies, said the University and the Teacher Development Center have a long history of collaboration with DISD.

“UT Dallas is committed to serving the greater community,” Fair said. “The UT Dallas Teaching Scholars Program launched by Toyota USA Foundation will strengthen our partnership with the Dallas Independent School District by providing support to educate and train students to become high-quality STEM teachers for the district.”

The UT Dallas Teaching Scholars Program will extend the University’s partnership with DISD for the benefit of both teachers and students.

“Dallas ISD is proud to partner with UT Dallas and Toyota on this new initiative,” said Gabriel Sanchez Ramiro, coordinator of student teacher and special initiatives for DISD. “Helping develop strong teachers by increasing our student teaching pipeline will provide our students with the readiest teachers.”

The program provides an opportunity for UT Dallas to make a difference, particularly for student teachers and children from underrepresented populations and low socioeconomic backgrounds.

“Increasing access to education is a primary method of elevating people and communities,” Ashmore said. “Our students will be working with children who really need us.”

Like most school districts throughout the country, DISD faces a significant teacher shortage, especially in the STEM fields, Ashmore said. Providing expert instruction in these areas to students at a young age can significantly enhance comprehension and interest in STEM subjects, providing increased opportunities to pursue higher education degrees and professional careers in high-demand fields.

“We’re demystifying STEM for local students, showing them that the world is a wonderful and exciting place to explore and that math and science can help you do that,” Ashmore said. “If children are engaged in authentic and exciting instruction, they will be more apt to pursue those subjects in high school and college.”

The first UT Dallas Teaching Scholars were selected in 2022. Pictured with project supervisor Joyce DeMasi (center), scholars include (from left) Delana Meyer, Elizabeth Shyu, Michelle Gonzalez, Savannah Wright and Sofia Marin.
UT Dallas, UT Southwestern Break Ground on TI Bioengineering Building

GROUND HAS BEEN broken for construction of a new building that will catalyze a unique partnership between UT Southwestern Medical Center and The University of Texas at Dallas, bringing their biomedical engineering programs together to foster innovative solutions for unmet medical needs.

This 150,000-square-foot building, located on the East Campus of UT Southwestern Medical Center, is made possible by a transformative $15 million gift from Texas Instruments (TI) and funds from the Permanent University Fund of The University of Texas System. The new facility has been named the Texas Instruments Biomedical Engineering and Sciences Building.

"This new facility will deepen the collaboration between UT Southwestern and UT Dallas to advance translational bioengineering research to improve patient care. By integrating biomedical engineering with advances in related fields such as artificial intelligence, molecular imaging, robotics and genetic engineering, the UTSW-UTD collaborations will further solidify North Texas as a hub for biomedical innovation," said Dr. Daniel K. Podolsky, president of UT Southwestern Medical Center, who holds the Philip O'Bryan Montgomery, Jr., M.D. Distinguished Presidential Chair in Academic Administration and the Doris and Bryan Wildenthal Distinguished Chair in Medical Science.

"Biomedical engineering and science are a major driver of UT Dallas' rapidly growing research portfolio," said Dr. Richard C. Benson, president of UT Dallas and the Eugene McDermott Distinguished University Chair of Leadership. "The already robust partnership between UT Dallas and UT Southwestern will take another huge step forward upon the launch of our shared facilities. This partnership will also provide students and faculty with more opportunities to create transformative technologies that will improve lives. We are grateful for the visionary support of TI in this endeavor."

Scheduled for completion in 2023, the new five-story Texas Instruments Biomedical Engineering and Sciences Building will support the work of dozens of faculty and their teams with both wet and dry laboratory space, as well as areas designated specifically to promote multidisciplinary interactions. A Biodesign Center will feature a large assembly/design studio, a metal fabrication shop and rooms for 3D printing.

"Our gift reflects our confidence in the brilliant minds at UT Southwestern and UT Dallas – to combine medical and engineering talent and resources to solve problems that will advance patient care," said Rich Templeton, chairman, president and CEO of Texas Instruments. "What gets me personally excited is that semiconductor technology will be at the center of the medical discoveries that are made inside this new building."

Since UT Dallas launched its Biomedical Engineering Department in 2010, its undergraduate bioengineering program has become the third largest in the U.S. based on enrollment, according to the American Society for Engineering Education, and its graduate program ranks third, according to U.S. News & World Report, among biomedical engineering programs at Texas public universities, attracting students from around the world.

In addition, support from TI, the UT System and the O'Donnell Foundation made it possible for UT Dallas to establish the Texas Biomedical Device Center in 2012. The UT Southwestern BME Program offers a PhD in biomedical engineering as part of the medical center's Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences.
Investment from Sammons Enterprises Revolutionizes BrainHealth Research

THE CENTER FOR BrainHealth at UT Dallas recently received the largest single corporate gift in the center’s 22-year history from Sammons Enterprises Inc. The multiyear gift will advance work to identify neural indicators of brain health by enhancing the center’s ability to pioneer, test and deliver novel metrics that assess gains in brain health and performance.

In recognition of Sammons’ investment, the Center for BrainHealth’s state-of-the-art imaging center has been named the Sammons BrainHealth Imaging Center. The facility houses two 3-tesla MRI scanners, which are considered the gold standard for human brain research. Sammons’ gift provides critical resources needed to fund the center’s intellectual capital while promoting the discovery and dissemination of innovative imaging techniques, big data analytics and data visualization. These advancements will help drive new directions of inquiry and develop protocols that advance breakthroughs across the field.

“The men and women of Sammons Enterprises are pleased to support the leading-edge, science-backed work of the Center for BrainHealth, whose team is showing the world how to shift focus from problem identification to opportunity capitalization that will lead to healthier outcomes, better quality of life and strong societal benefits,” said Heather Kreager, CEO of Sammons Enterprises.

The company’s gift will fuel three key areas of work at the Center for BrainHealth: brain physiology, neuroinformatics and data visualization. These areas will open a window to view and assess working brain systems, judge the efficacy and effects of therapeutics and cognitive therapies, leverage machine learning and artificial intelligence to personalize brain health care, and create a visual interface to allow individuals to see the increased brain performance over time.

Information from these three areas will be utilized to develop predictive modeling for prevention and early detection, and to trigger proactive capacity-building interventions.

“The pandemic has brought brain-related challenges into stark reality, creating a global brain health crisis as never before witnessed,” said Sandra Bond Chapman PhD’86, chief director of the Center for BrainHealth and the Dee Wyly Distinguished Professor. “We must act boldly and urgently, not only to create awareness, but also to provide ready access to proven, proactive steps to benefit people from all walks of life.”

Learn more at centerforbrainhealth.org/limitless.

Foundation Gift Drives Ackerman Center Growth

A $1.1 MILLION gift from the Edward and Wilhelmina Ackerman Foundation continues a family’s multigenerational support of the Ackerman Center for Holocaust Studies at The University of Texas at Dallas. The gift will support the center’s internationally recognized scholarship while expanding its outreach mission through online learning.

“Today, the lessons of the Holocaust are more important than ever, which means the Ackerman Center’s mission is vital to continuing that engagement with the past, a mission that means so much to my family,” said David B. Ackerman, president of the Ackerman Foundation and chairman of the Ackerman Center Advisory Board. “I am pleased that the Edward and Wilhelmina Ackerman Foundation is again contributing to the ongoing, timeless mission of the Ackerman Center for Holocaust Studies.”

Generous support from Edward and Wilhelmina Ackerman led to the naming of the center, and the family foundation has invested in graduate fellowships in Holocaust studies, the development of undergraduate programs and the growth of educational outreach.

Dr. Nils Roemer, interim dean of the School of Arts and Humanities and the School of Arts, Technology, and Emerging Communication, said the foundation’s support has been transformational.

“It’s not just a way of supporting the work of the center but actually transforming it every time they’ve made a major gift,” said Roemer, who also directs the center.

The foundation’s most recent contribution will benefit the center’s endowment, support the growth of online educational programming and fund a new biennial awards dinner. According to Roemer, the funding for online and digital learning is particularly important because it will create new avenues for programs beyond the UT Dallas campus to fulfill its outreach mission.

“Over the last two and a half years, we have become early adopters of online learning technologies and this new leadership gift is compelling us to create what we call ‘Ackerman Center 2.0’ – in other words, a digital or online version of ourselves,” Roemer said. “The support of the Ackerman family has been one of the driving forces behind this constant growth of the Ackerman Center.”

“Today, the lessons of the Holocaust are more important than ever.”
— David B. Ackerman
A Celebration of Comets

John Olajide BS’04, founder and CEO of Axxess and co-chair of the New Dimensions campaign, gave the keynote address at UT Dallas’ first All-University Commencement ceremony on May 15.

Ten individuals were honored at the 2022 UT Dallas Awards Gala. Front (from left): Herbert D. Weltzman, Jonathan Campos BA’03, Bonnie C. Shea BS’84, Alicia Makaye PhD’12, and Dr. Suzanne Cole BS’99, BA’99. Back: Barjis Ghadially BA’98, Dr. Field Harrison BS’04, Dr. William F. Tate IV MA’87, and Lucas C. Rodriguez MS’15, PhD’18. Not pictured: Dr. David Mittelman BS’01.

Over 60 UT Dallas alumni gathered at happy hours in Houston (top) and Plano (bottom) to celebrate Comets Giving Days this year.

A $1 million gift from Dr. M. Basheer and Shakila Ahmed established the Basheer and Shakila Distinguished Chair in Natural Sciences and Mathematics and named a lecture hall on the first floor of the new Sciences Building. Ahmed (center) and son M. Sameer Ahmed (left) were recognized for their gift by Dr. David Hyndman, dean of the School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, at the spring UTD Executive Board meeting.

Generous planned giving donors gathered for the annual Legacy Society Luncheon at the Center for BrainHealth in March.

The 11th annual Callier Cares Luncheon honored the Bruton family with the 2022 Ruth and Ken Altshuler Callier Care Award. The family established the David Bruton Jr. Endowed Lecture Series on Communication Disorders in 1981, which has helped advance patient care and research for over 40 years. From left: David Bruton, Karol and Doug Bruton, Carole Lou Bruton and Angela Shoup BS’89, MS’92, PhD’94, the Ludwig A. Michael MD Callier Center Executive Director.

The atrium at the Naveen Jindal School of Management has a new name after the Education Changes Lives and Times Foundation announced a gift supporting a new $1 million endowment for the school.
The New Dimensions campaign seeks to expand financial aid resources to ensure comprehensive affordability across all of UT Dallas’ schools and centers.

Enhance Lives Through Transformative Research
Research and education are in UT Dallas’ DNA. As a top-tier research institution serving the state of Texas, UT Dallas seeks to define itself as the preeminent entrepreneurship and innovation university in the United States.

The New Dimensions campaign will support the recruitment of world-class faculty and graduate students, expand critical research infrastructure and enhance the University’s undergraduate research programs.

Transform the Arts on Campus
The arts are different at UT Dallas. Across every school and center, creativity and innovation are at the core of a UT Dallas education. The New Dimensions campaign will transform UT Dallas into a cultural destination for North Texas through the construction of the Edith and Peter O’Donnell Jr. Athenaeum, a new cultural arts district on campus.

Join the Comet community in supporting the arts, groundbreaking research and life-changing education at UT Dallas.

Learn more and make a gift today at newdimensions.utdallas.edu