



# milestones



## Gift establishes Friedman Center for Nutrition and Inflammation

Dr. David Artis, center, with researchers, from left, Dr. Anne-Laure Flamar, Dr. Jimmy Castellanos, Dr. Hiroki Kabata and Dr. Mei-Yi Zheng

JOHN ABBOTT

With a \$7.5 million gift from the Friedman Family Foundation, endowed by Stephen and Vice Chair Overseer Barbara Friedman, Weill Cornell Medicine has established an innovative cross-campus center dedicated to improving human health through research in the complex relationship between nutrition, inflammation and the development of disease.

The Friedman Center for Nutrition and Inflammation will create new programs across Weill Cornell Medicine and Cornell's Ithaca campus, harnessing key resources to study the interaction between diet, the immune system and the microbiome – the genetic material generated by the viruses, bacteria, fungi and parasites that live in or on the human body.

The two Cornell campuses are working together to engage other donors to match the support provided by the Friedmans and the Friedman Family Foundation with the vision of a \$15 million initiative that will foster groundbreaking research and provide state-of-the-art education in nutrition, inflammation and the microbiome for medical and graduate students and clinicians.

The Friedman Center will be directed by Dr. David Artis, a world leader in immunology, inflammation and microbiome research. He is director of the Jill Roberts Institute for Research in Inflammatory Bowel Disease and the Michael Kors Professor in Immunology at Weill Cornell Medicine.

Researchers at the center will work to develop treatments and preventive strategies for illnesses including cancer, arthritis, Alzheimer's disease, diabetes and inflammatory bowel disease – virtually every disease area represented in the Belfer Research Building, says Dr. Artis.

"The Friedmans' generous commitment to establish this important program represents a moment for Weill Cornell Medicine to move forward into a new realm of healthcare," says Dr. Augustine M.K. Choi, the Stephen and Suzanne Weiss Dean of Weill Cornell Medicine and Cornell's provost for medical affairs. "This gift from Barbara and Steve so genuinely supports every facet of our mission to care, discover and teach."

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Dean Augustine M.K. Choi

Building on the exceptional biomedical research and clinical care programs at Weill Cornell Medicine, and the globally recognized life-sciences research programs in Ithaca, the center will forge partnerships that will facilitate translation of the latest discoveries in nutrition and immunological research to patient care, and establish education and training programs for the next generation of healthcare leaders.

"As we continue to learn more about the connection between diet, inflammation and the development

of disease, we must leverage the profound strengths of our faculty on both campuses," says Barbara Friedman. "We hope that discoveries made at the Friedman Center for Nutrition and Inflammation will ultimately result in improved health on a global scale."

*Continued on p.2*



## Gift establishes Friedman Center for Nutrition and Inflammation Continued from cover

“One of the most exciting advances in biomedical research and patient care is our growing understanding of the influence of diet and nutrition on changes in the composition of the microbiota – the complex group of organisms living in and on our bodies – and how these changes subsequently affect our immunity to infection and our susceptibility to complex diseases, including asthma, diabetes, inflammatory bowel disease and cancer,” says Dr. Artis. “We have to teach medical students about this emerging area of disease research, we have to fund investigators to do cutting-edge research, and we have to aid our clinical colleagues in implementing new discoveries to improve the lives of patients.”

The Friedmans have a long history of philanthropy at Weill Cornell Medicine. They are both Cornell alumni, class of 1959, who have actively supported the university, where Barbara Friedman is trustee emerita. She has also served on the advisory board of Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar and been a member of Weill Cornell Medicine’s Board of Overseers since 1993.

“We are extremely grateful to the Friedman family, whose leadership gift will infuse nutrition science into the medical school curriculum and build bridges to the outstanding nutrition programs in Ithaca,” says Jessica Bibliowicz, chairman of the Weill Cornell Medicine Board of Overseers. “Barbara and Steve’s generous support will transform the ways in which

our medical students learn about the science of nutrition and inflammation, and help to develop new targeted therapies with enormous promise for a range of devastating diseases.”

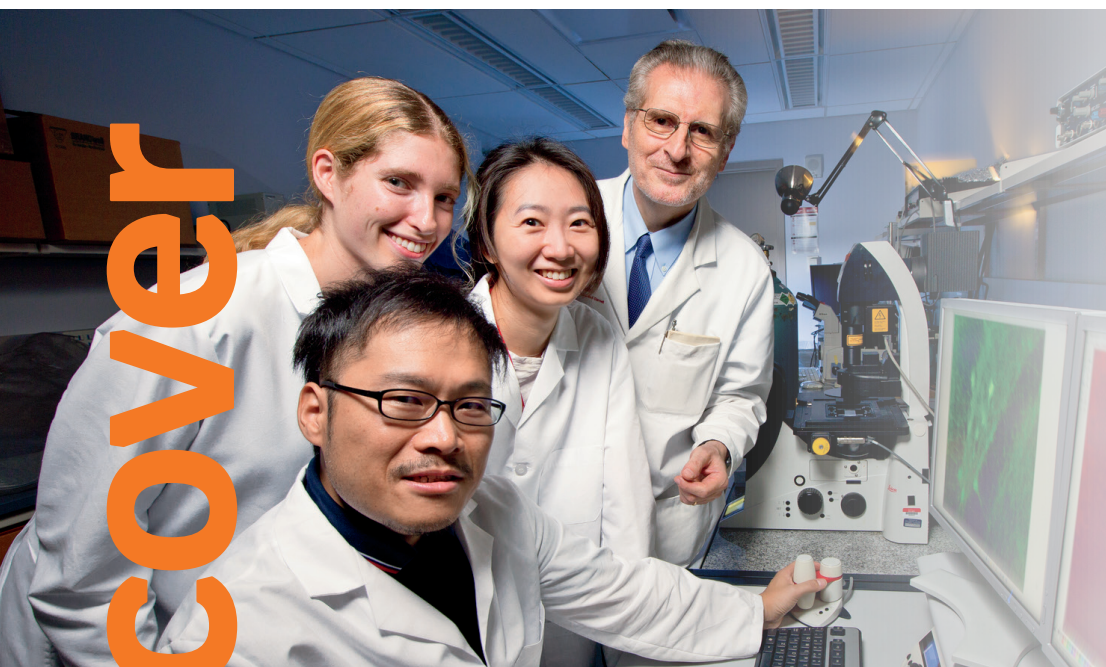
“This is a wonderful example of leveraging the strengths of the Cornell faculty across its Ithaca and New York City campuses. Working together, we can have an even more profound impact on science and medicine,” says Cornell Provost Michael Kotlikoff. “We are so grateful for the Friedmans’ foresight and dedication to this burgeoning area of exploration.”

“The Friedman Center for Nutrition and Inflammation will be at the forefront of understanding how diet and nutrition influence our microbiota and our immune system, and how these processes influence susceptibility to disease,” says Dr. Artis. “This visionary gift will allow us to apply revolutionary technologies that we hope will ultimately provide comprehensive, personalized care – a holistic approach that will take into account each patient’s genetics, diet and lifestyle.”

The Friedman family believes that a strong educational component is critical to the mission of the center and that future physicians will benefit from advanced training in nutrition sciences. “Medical students need to understand that everything we put into our bodies, in addition to our environment, has a profound effect on our overall health,” says Barbara Friedman. “It’s like planting seeds – our hope is that these students take this knowledge with them and help translate these nutrition research discoveries into meaningful changes in their own patients’ lives.”



Vice Chair Overseer Barbara Friedman and Dean Augustine M.K. Choi



Dr. Costantino Iadecola, at right, with researchers from the Feil Family Brain and Mind Research Institute

## Feil family gift boosts research

*In this celebratory year marking the 20th anniversary of the renaming of Weill Cornell Medicine in honor of Joan and Chair Emeritus Sanford I. Weill, we share the stories that showcase our growth across each facet of our mission to Care, Discover and Teach.*

The Feil Family Brain and Mind Research Institute (BMRI), established at Weill Cornell Medicine in 2013 with a transformational gift of \$28 million from the Feil family, has become a research powerhouse in neuroscience and neurodegenerative disease.

The Feil BMRI, which has nearly doubled its funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) since its founding, functions as a hub for basic and translational neuroscience research, with more than 50 faculty members involved in a wide range of investigations related to brain health. Established with the goal of developing breakthrough therapies for patients with neurological diseases, the Institute is directed by Dr. Costantino Iadecola, the Anne Parrish Titzell Professor of Neurology,

professor of neuroscience and a leading neuroscientist in the fields of cerebrovascular diseases, stroke and dementia.

The Institute, which is organized around 11 research clusters, includes the Helen and Robert Appel Alzheimer’s Disease Research Institute – led by newly appointed director Dr. Li Gan – the Center for Neurogenetics, and the Clinical and Translational Neuroscience Unit, to name a few programs.

Philanthropy has been critical to the Feil BMRI’s success, says Dr. Iadecola, noting that donor support has provided for important resources, including cutting-edge equipment and the recruitment of world-class investigators.

“We now have the technology, and the analytic ability, to provide answers to some of the most imposing challenges in brain health,” says Dr. Iadecola. “We’re on the brink of making tremendous discoveries.”

Investigators at the Feil BMRI have published more than 400 papers in high-impact scientific journals over the past five years, reporting on promising new research in areas including stroke, depression and Alzheimer’s disease. Faculty have also built successful links to clinical programs at Weill Cornell Medicine, and provided mentorship to early-career investigators.

“My wife, Lee, and I have great admiration – both personally and professionally – for Dr. Iadecola and Dr. M. Elizabeth Ross (director of the Center for Neurogenetics and the Nathan Cummings Professor in Neurology),” says Vice Chair Overseer Jeffrey Feil. “The Feil Family Brain and Mind Research Institute is fulfilling its mission to advance the treatment of neurological disorders and to train the next generation of researchers working in the neurosciences, which is symbolic of the overall spirit of growth at Weill Cornell Medicine. Our family has been honored to support this important work, which we expect will impact so many patients for generations to come.”

In addition to their extraordinary support for neuroscience research, the Feil family’s legacy of philanthropy at Weill Cornell Medicine extends to education, and includes the single largest gift for scholarship in the history of the institution, as well as a recent \$12.5 million gift in support of the Feil Family Student Center.

20<sup>th</sup>  
1998-2018  
ANNIVERSARY



# What Inspires Giving?

## Meet Sandra and Edward Meyer

Sandra and Edward Meyer have been influential leaders and advocates of Weill Cornell Medicine since 2013. Their generous gift of \$75 million that year resulted in the establishment of the Sandra and Edward Meyer Cancer Center, driving the institution forward as a leader in cancer research and bringing some of the brightest minds on board.

Actively involved as Overseers on Weill Cornell Medicine's Board since 2014, Mr. and Mrs. Meyer's ambitious and authentic focus on philanthropy is inspiring. An additional \$3 million gift in 2015 established the Sandra and Edward Meyer Professorship of Cancer Research, which was awarded to Dr. Silvia Formenti, chairman of the Department of Radiation Oncology.

For 36 years, Edward Meyer served as the CEO of Grey Global Group, an advertising and marketing agency, and Sandra Meyer was an interior designer, while also focusing on their family – they raised two children, Meg and Tony – and community volunteer activities. The Meyers' support and passion for research continues to propel Weill Cornell Medicine on a successful trajectory as a leader in a vast and competitive cancer research and treatment space.

The Meyers recently sat down with Mark Veich, Weill Cornell Medicine's vice provost for external affairs, to discuss the impact of philanthropy on research and what inspires their giving.

**MV: Your family's generosity has been truly transformational. Can you tell me about your experience as you determined how best and where to direct your philanthropy?**

**SM:** At the end of 2013, I lost my closest friend to lung cancer. And in previous years, I lost two very dear friends to cancer as well. We've lost several family members from both sides of the family to cancer. I think curing cancer and making progress in cancer treatment and research is the most important thing we could do to help. We felt that not enough was being done.

**EM:** We saw cancer up close in our family and experienced how it ravaged people. Giving money to develop cures for cancer is a hugely satisfying thing to do. We set out to determine where a gift to cancer research could be most productive. To do that, we met with a number of medical institutions, and came to the conclusion that Weill Cornell Medicine was the right place for our investment. Here, we found a cancer center that was ambitious to grow, and the gifts we gave could immediately be put to use. There was a real passion and a commitment to expanding cancer research. And when we learned that Dr. Lewis Cantley (the Meyer Director of the Sandra and Edward Meyer Cancer Center and a professor of cancer biology at Weill Cornell Medicine) would be involved, we were thoroughly impressed.

**SM:** Our daughter, Meg, studied biochemistry at Harvard University, and Lew Cantley was her professor; 35 years later, he comes back into our lives again. She still says he was the best professor she ever had.

**EM:** We met with Lew, and he explained to us why this would be a particularly apt time to make a major gift to cancer research, because the field was

undergoing great change and there would be considerable progress in the years to come. We've never regretted it for a moment. The progress that's been made here is really astounding. He's used the funding we provided to build a team of remarkable cancer researchers who have put Weill Cornell on par with the leaders in cancer research, which is exactly what we wanted. And now we feel that we've become part of the family here.

**MV: You absolutely have. How did you both first learn about giving back? Is there someone who inspired you to have these philanthropic ideals?**

**SM:** My mother. I remember her saying to me when I was little, "It doesn't matter how much you give, even if it's \$5. If that's all you can afford to give, that's fine." Giving to others was very important to her.

**EM:** Sandy has always had a very strong feeling that people in difficult circumstances need to be helped, which is wonderful. I remember the first year we rented a house somewhere out on Long Island, Sandy found a one-pump gas station off the beaten path that was run by an older gentleman. From then on, she told me, "This is where you're going to buy your gas, because this man needs the help, and the big guys don't."

**SM:** You have to help those less fortunate than you. We've been very fortunate, and we see giving as its own reward.

**MV: What advice do you have for other donors who are deciding how and where to give to make a difference?**

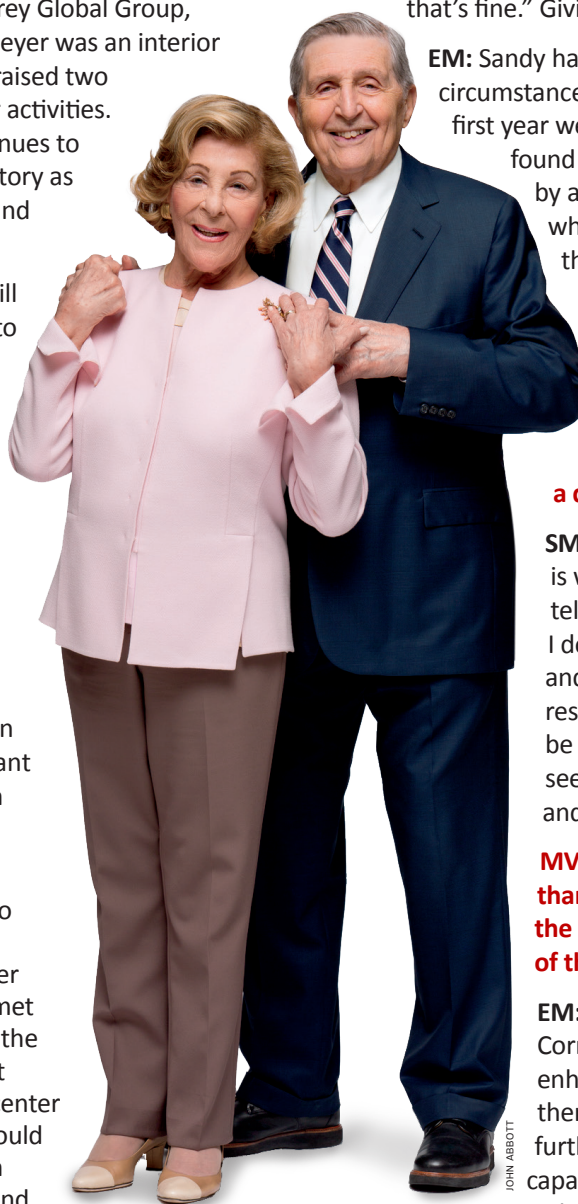
**SM:** The first thing I ask friends who are looking to give back is where they are considering making a gift, and of course I tell them, "You must visit Weill Cornell Medicine." Personally, I don't think there is anything more important than research, and we believe that Weill Cornell has made outstanding research a top priority. But we also feel it's important to be involved across the institution, attending meetings and seeing what progress is being made, from the researchers and physicians themselves.

**MV: The Meyer Cancer Center has grown enormously, thanks to your philanthropy, and has made great strides in the cancer space since 2014. What do you see for the future of the Meyer Cancer Center and Weill Cornell Medicine?**

**EM:** From an institutional point of view, I think that Weill Cornell is benefiting and will continue to benefit greatly by an enhanced reputation for leadership in cancer research and therapies. I think there will be major institutional support for further cancer research and for expanding the facilities and capabilities that this institution provides. That makes me very optimistic. I think the future for cancer treatment and research at this institution is bright because there's a need for it, a will for it and we're well on our way.

**SM:** I can't stress how important research is, because that's where the future lies. That's where the lives of so many people are going to benefit.

**EM:** We'd like to see an acceleration in the rate of discovery of treatments for cancer. There are still so many types of cancer that go untreated, or if they're treated, the treatment is not particularly successful. We are hopeful that we can see real progress toward cures and treatments being made.





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# From Our Dean



This year marks the 120th anniversary of the founding of Weill Cornell Medicine. Since our inception, this institution has been propelled by the commitment and leadership of so many of our incredible donors and friends. Our Weill Cornell family of supporters, along with our top-tier faculty and staff, have shaped us into the world-class academic medical

center that we are today and continue to keep us at the forefront of a new era of medicine.

2018 also marks 20 years since Weill Cornell Medicine renamed itself in appreciation of the outstanding and transformative leadership of Joan and Sanford I. Weill. Through their historic partnership with us, the Weill family has been an inspiration, leading the way by investing in our efforts across each area of our mission. Their support has been vast and varied, driving groundbreaking initiatives in scientific research, medical education and patient care.

This dedication to bolstering each area of our three-part mission – and keen appreciation for the many places where these areas overlap and intersect – is something that so many of our donors have shown through the years. In this issue alone, you will read about the Feil, Friedman and Meyer families – all exemplary donors who understand that each of our efforts to Care, Discover and Teach are interwoven and driven by the same overarching theme: to deliver the finest care to our patients.

As we continue to shape the future of Weill Cornell Medicine, we are so grateful to those of you – and there are so many – who have generously given us your support. With your help, we have become a leader in each area of our mission, and created a solid foundation on which to build. As we look ahead, I anticipate a bright horizon with limitless potential.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Augustine M.K. Choi". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small horizontal line at the end.

**Augustine M.K. Choi, MD**

Stephen and Suzanne Weiss Dean, Weill Cornell Medicine  
Provost for Medical Affairs, Cornell University



# Heartfelt gift promotes cardiac health

When Dr. David Mortara and Dr. Paul Kligfield met in the mid-1970s, neither of them imagined they would become fast friends.

A former professor at the University of Illinois with a doctorate in physics, Dr. Mortara made a career transition in 1973, pivoting to engineering electrocardiology technology. It was in this new line of work that he met Dr. Kligfield, clinical professor of medicine and former director of Weill Cornell Medicine’s Electrocardiography Laboratory, while providing equipment to what was then New York Hospital. The two shared a passion for electrocardiography and the future of technology in the cardiology field. In 1982, Dr. Mortara established Mortara Instrument Inc., a Milwaukee-based firm that made electrocardiography devices.

Now, nearly 50 years later, Dr. Mortara has funded a \$1 million fellowship in honor of Dr. Kligfield and his exemplary service, caring for patients and advancing research, at Weill Cornell Medicine and in the electrocardiography field. The Paul D. Kligfield, MD Electrophysiology Fellowship was established to provide funding to a fellow who is passionate about electrocardiology.

“I’m happy to be able to provide funding to sustain someone’s interest in electrocardiography fundamentals and making the science of healthcare more



Dr. David Mortara

precise,” says Dr. Mortara, founder of the University of California San Francisco (UCSF) Center for Physiologic Research and associate professor at the UCSF School of Nursing. “In the absence of fellowships, it may be tougher for someone to become involved in what they’re interested in. I’d love to see some bright, young people, who are developing careers in electrocardiography, benefit from this.”

Dr. Kligfield, a leader at Weill Cornell Medicine for the past four decades, says he was pleasantly surprised by the dedication.

“I’m astonished by the generosity, and it’s a great honor and pleasure to receive this recognition from someone as talented as Dave Mortara, who is a true scholar and innovator, and an old friend,” says Dr. Kligfield. “Among other things, we share an appreciation for the interface of technology and clinical medicine as it relates to the electrocardiogram.”

The first fellowship has been awarded to Dr. Kevin Manocha, a third-year fellow in the Maurice R. and Corinne P. Greenberg Division of Cardiology, whose work focuses on electrophysiology.

“Without funding, without resources, without time being dedicated toward research, it’s difficult to take part in what you’re passionate about,” says Dr. Manocha. “I’m extremely excited and honored to be chosen for this fellowship.”

An active philanthropist in the medical community, Dr. Mortara reflects on giving back by imagining what he believes will make his grandchildren proud, and what they will remember him for, he says.

“Giving back is about having purpose in life and leaving the world a better place.”

## Salute to Scholarship



The ninth annual Salute to Scholarship, held May 8 at Olin Hall, celebrated the generosity of scholarship donors and showcased the medical students who benefit from their philanthropy. Speakers included Dr. Yoon Kang, associate dean for

program development and operations of medical education, and Dr. Richard Cohen (MD ’75), clinical professor of medicine.

The program concluded with the presentation of the Siegel Family Student Prizes, funded by Overseer Herbert Siegel and Jeanne Siegel. The \$25,000 prizes were awarded to eight students.



From left: Dr. Jessica Clemons (MD ’15), Dr. Tarek Khader (MD ’18), Dr. Asia Gobourne (MD ’18), Dr. Anthony Rossi, Jr. (MD ’08) and Dr. Yoon Kang, were all speakers at Salute to Scholarship in May.



From left: Dr. Steven Corwin, Dr. Bruce Lerman, Overseer Maurice Greenberg, Corinne Greenberg, Dean Augustine M.K. Choi, Dr. Karl Krieger

## Greenberg Award Dinner

The 38th annual Maurice R. Greenberg Distinguished Service Award Dinner, held at The Plaza on May 17, celebrated two honorees: Dr. Karl Krieger, vice chairman of the Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery and the Philip Geier Professor of Cardiothoracic Surgery, and Dr. Bruce Lerman, chief of the Maurice R. and Corinne P. Greenberg Division of Cardiology, the Hilda Altschul Master Professor of Medicine and director of the Cardiac Electrophysiology Laboratory at NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center.

The award, endowed in 1981 by Overseer Maurice R. Greenberg, who is also chairman emeritus of the Board of Trustees of NewYork-Presbyterian, has been presented annually to senior members of the medical staff for outstanding service. The event was chaired by Bernadette Castro.

## Dean’s Circle 21st Annual Dinner

The Dean’s Circle, Weill Cornell Medicine’s alumni giving society for leadership donors, held its 21st annual dinner on June 12 at the Belfer Research Building. The event – hosted by Dr. Natasha Leibel (MD ’98), vice president of the Weill Cornell Medical College Alumni Association – offered the opportunity for Dean Augustine M.K. Choi to induct new members and recognize advancing members of the society.

Since the founding of the Dean’s Circle in 1997, members have donated more than \$52.6 million to Weill Cornell Medicine.

