



# milestones



From left: Dr. Manuel Hidalgo, Dr. Sara Czaja, Dr. Anthony Hollenberg and Dr. Brad Jones of the Weill Department of Medicine, the institution's largest clinical and research-focused department.

ROGER TULLY

## Support for Research Drives Dynamic Growth

Bolstered by the generous support of donors, Weill Cornell Medicine has experienced dramatic growth in its research enterprise over the past five years – an achievement that advances the institution's goal of providing patients with the most advanced treatments and therapies.

Biomedical investigators at Weill Cornell are targeting some of the most formidable health challenges of the 21st century, seeking to translate breakthrough discoveries into cutting-edge treatments. Increased collaboration between researchers and clinicians is helping accelerate the development of new diagnostics and therapies to benefit patients.

Since 2014, Weill Cornell Medicine's research funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has surged more than 40 percent. This expansion in the research enterprise coincides with

the opening of the Belfer Research Building, which serves as the hub for the institution's translational research efforts and has led to the recruitment of more than 40 accomplished biomedical researchers to augment the thriving community of existing faculty.

U.S. News & World Report's 2019 top-10 ranking of Weill Cornell Medicine in its Best Medical Schools for Research underscores the institution's continued excellence in its research and educational ventures. Since its inception in 1898, Weill Cornell Medicine has cultivated a reputation as a leader in biomedical education, consistently attracting the highest caliber of students.

"We are extremely proud of our outstanding clinical, research and education programs," says Dr. Augustine M.K. Choi, the Stephen and Suzanne Weiss Dean of Weill Cornell Medicine. "All of our endeavors are guided by the essential principle to improve the health and lives

of our patients. Weill Cornell Medicine is at the forefront of this work, and I look forward to seeing what more we can accomplish together."

The Belfer Research Building – named in honor of Overseer Vice Chair Robert Belfer and his wife, Renée – offers state-of-the-art laboratory space on East 69th Street for some of the world's leading scientists to engage in high-impact research at Weill Cornell. It headquarters numerous interdisciplinary centers and institutes whose fundamental and translational research activities receive consistent grant support.

To advance these and other programs, Weill Cornell Medicine has recruited prominent investigators whose innovative research attracts NIH funding and recognition.

In the Joan and Sanford I. Weill Department of Medicine, the institution's largest clinical and research-focused department, Dr. Anthony Hollenberg – a leading endocrinologist and researcher who joined the institution as chairman of the department in February 2018 – has recruited numerous eminent physician-scientists

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Dean Augustine M.K. Choi





## Support for Research Drives Dynamic Growth *Continued from cover*

to drive research discoveries that will make an impact on patients' lives. They include: HIV researchers Dr. Douglas Nixon, who was recruited as a professor of immunology in medicine, and Dr. Brad Jones, who was recruited as an assistant professor of immunology in medicine; Dr. Sara Czaja, a professor of gerontology in medicine and the inaugural director of Weill Cornell Medicine's newly established Center on Aging and Behavioral Research; and Dr. Manuel Hidalgo, a physician-scientist who specializes in pancreatic cancer and drug development, who will soon join the department as chief of the Division of Hematology and Medical Oncology.

Weill Cornell's longstanding commitment to training physician-scientists has yielded a robust pipeline of future leaders in academic medicine. The institution is ranked first in the country for its proportion of medical-school graduates who become full-time faculty, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges. Twelve percent of its graduates are MD-PhD students, more than any other graduate school in the country.

Weill Cornell Medicine also strives to foster an entrepreneurial spirit among its faculty, trainees and students, teaching them how to translate their research findings into new treatments and providing them with abundant resources. Since 2014, there has been a 35 percent increase in the number of Weill Cornell Medicine investigators who receive NIH funding.

**Thanks to the generosity of donors,** Weill Cornell Medicine has established numerous interdisciplinary centers, institutes and programs that have bolstered the institution's research enterprise, including the following:

**HRH Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud Institute for Computational Biomedicine**

**Ansary Stem Cell Institute**

**Helen and Robert Appel Alzheimer's Disease Research Institute**

**Dalio Institute of Cardiovascular Imaging**

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**Sean Parker Institute for the Voice**

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**Jill Roberts Institute for Research in Inflammatory Bowel Disease**

**Starr-Greenberg Program in Arrhythmia Biology**

**Tri-Institutional Therapeutics Discovery Institute (Tri-I TDI)**

**Joan and Sanford I. Weill Center for Metabolic Health**

In collaboration with Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center and The Rockefeller University – and with extraordinary donor support – Weill Cornell Medicine in 2013 established the Tri-Institutional Therapeutics Discovery Institute (Tri-I TDI). A drug-discovery incubator headquartered in the Belfer Research Building, Tri-I TDI helps transform fundamental discoveries into promising therapies for patients. The Daedalus Fund for Innovation, an initiative launched in 2014 – and supported entirely by philanthropy – has also made a significant impact on the advancement of cutting-edge therapies from bench to bedside, providing essential funding for early-stage research with significant promise for patients.

Located in the world's premier healthcare corridor, Weill Cornell Medicine enjoys robust research collaborations with some of the best academic medical institutions in New York City – including NewYork-Presbyterian, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, The Rockefeller University and Hospital for Special Surgery – as well as with many of its other partners and affiliates around the globe.

"As we reflect on our profound growth, we will continue to focus on building our research enterprise and translating those discoveries into successful new treatments for patients," says Jessica Bibliowicz, chairman of the Board of Overseers. "Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we are leading the way in forging a new model of academic medicine for the 21st century."

## \$3M Gift Establishes Kilts Family Professorship of Surgery

Overseer James Kilts' involvement with Weill Cornell Medicine was inspired by the care his mother received by Dr. Fabrizio Michelassi nearly 20 years ago. Practicing in Chicago at the time, Dr. Michelassi is now chairman of surgery at Weill Cornell. During Mr. Kilts' mother's treatment, the two men became friends and Mr. Kilts began supporting Dr. Michelassi's work in Chicago and then transitioned his support to New York when Dr. Michelassi came onboard at Weill Cornell Medicine.

"I have always respected Dr. Michelassi's work, his bedside manner, his scholarship, and his connection to patients," says Mr. Kilts. "He has a dedication to always making medicine as good as it can be."

Mr. Kilts has a long history of philanthropy at Weill Cornell, and his most recent gift of \$3 million has established the Kilts Family Professorship of

Surgery. Endowed professorships are held by outstanding faculty members who embody the highest standards of a physician or researcher.

"I've seen all the wonderful work the medical center has done helping patients to alleviate problems and live more fulfilled, longer and better lives," says Mr. Kilts. "I feel very fortunate to be able to contribute to that mission with a gift like this."

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**Overseer James Kilts**

Mr. Kilts has been impressed by the Department of Surgery and Weill Cornell's growth over the past decade. In support of Dr. Michelassi's leadership, Mr. Kilts has provided contributions to Weill Cornell Medicine which have benefited major initiatives within the Department of Surgery, including educational facilities and the recruitment of a surgeon-scientist dedicated to pancreatic cancer and regenerative medicine.

"I'm proud of the way the Department of Surgery has evolved over the years since I've been associated with Weill Cornell Medicine," Mr. Kilts says. "Surgery is a highly competitive area, but Dr. Michelassi has made this one of the premier departments in the world. I'm proud of Weill Cornell and for his contributions in making a difference to the world of medicine."

A 12-year member of the Board of Overseers, Mr. Kilts sees an opportunity for Weill Cornell Medicine to continue making a beneficial difference for patients and their families, especially through the recruitment of highly-skilled physicians and researchers who provide great care and forge impactful discoveries.

"You see the quality of the people and of the work at Weill Cornell, along with the dedication of the faculty and students, as well as the Overseers," says Mr. Kilts. "It's been a wonderful experience being part of one of the top medical institutions in the world. As a donor, it's very inspiring and motivating."



Weill Cornell Medicine Overseer James Kilts

BRIAN ADAMS



# What Inspires Giving?

## Meet Robert Dow

As longtime supporters of Weill Cornell Medicine, Overseer Robert (Bob) Dow and his wife, Christina Seix, have contributed more than \$30 million to a variety of causes that support Weill Cornell's Mission to care, discover and teach – including a recent gift of \$10 million to support medical student scholarship.

The couple have championed several research areas, including Alzheimer's disease prevention and treatment, male infertility and urology, and created the Robert S. Dow Professorship of Urology. In 2015, they established the Dow Family Scholarship, one of Weill Cornell Medicine's largest scholarship endowments, which has supported six medical students over the past four years.

In addition to providing students with financial assistance, the couple formed the Dow Family Junior Faculty Loan Forgiveness Fund, also in 2015, which assists junior faculty with paying off student loan debt.

A former managing partner at Lord Abbett, an investment management company, Bob joined Weill Cornell Medicine's Board of Overseers in 2013, and serves on the Clinical Affairs/Physician Organization, Student Affairs and Education Committees. Christina established the Christina Seix Academy in 2012, located in Trenton, New Jersey. The pre-K through eighth grade academy provides annual scholarships for all students who attend. Among the criteria for admission is that the child must live in a single-parent household, with an income that is below the poverty line. Christina and Bob's shared passion for education has shown through in their community endeavors, including at Weill Cornell.

Bob recently sat down with Mark Veich, Weill Cornell's vice provost for External Affairs, to speak about the importance of philanthropy and his inspiration for giving.

**MV: We appreciate your continued generosity to Weill Cornell Medicine. Can you tell me about your first experience with us and how you became involved with Weill Cornell?**

**RD:** I was a patient of Dr. Neil Bander (director of urological oncology research) at Weill Cornell Medicine and started supporting his prostate cancer research. As I met with other talented physicians, such as Dr. Peter Schlegel (chairman of urology), I started supporting other research at Weill Cornell and was eventually asked to join the Board of Overseers.

**MV: You have given to all different areas of our mission. What inspires you to give?**

**RD:** Growing up, my parents didn't have a lot but they always had an open house, opening up their doors to those who needed help or a place to stay.

It was on a small scale, but that kindness became a sort of mindset for me. As an adult, my wife and I have been very fortunate to be able to give to important causes and support the areas we're passionate about. We wanted to do something worthwhile and have the ability to choose where our money goes, rather than leaving it all as an estate and have others make the decisions. The impact of investing in important efforts early has a bigger payoff than holding on and leaving it after you die. You can't take it with you.

**MV: You and your wife, Christina, are wonderful advocates and philanthropists for education. Together, you've been able to play a positive role in the education of many students. What has spurred your passion for education?**

**RD:** It was really important to Christina to be able to help disadvantaged kids, and the best way to help them is to start them off with a good education. I've heard a few of the kids at Christina's school talk about how they want to become doctors in order to help people, which is great. Along the path of my life, others have helped me with my education, and it has always been important to me to pay that forward.

**MV: You've been able to meet a few of the Weill Cornell Medicine students that you've supported over the years. What has that experience been like?**

**RD:** It's been really fun to meet the students and learn about their interests and career paths. They're ambitious and driven. It's very possible that someday, they may be my physician and take care of me in my old age.

**MV: What advice would you have for donors who are trying to decide how and where to give to make a difference?**

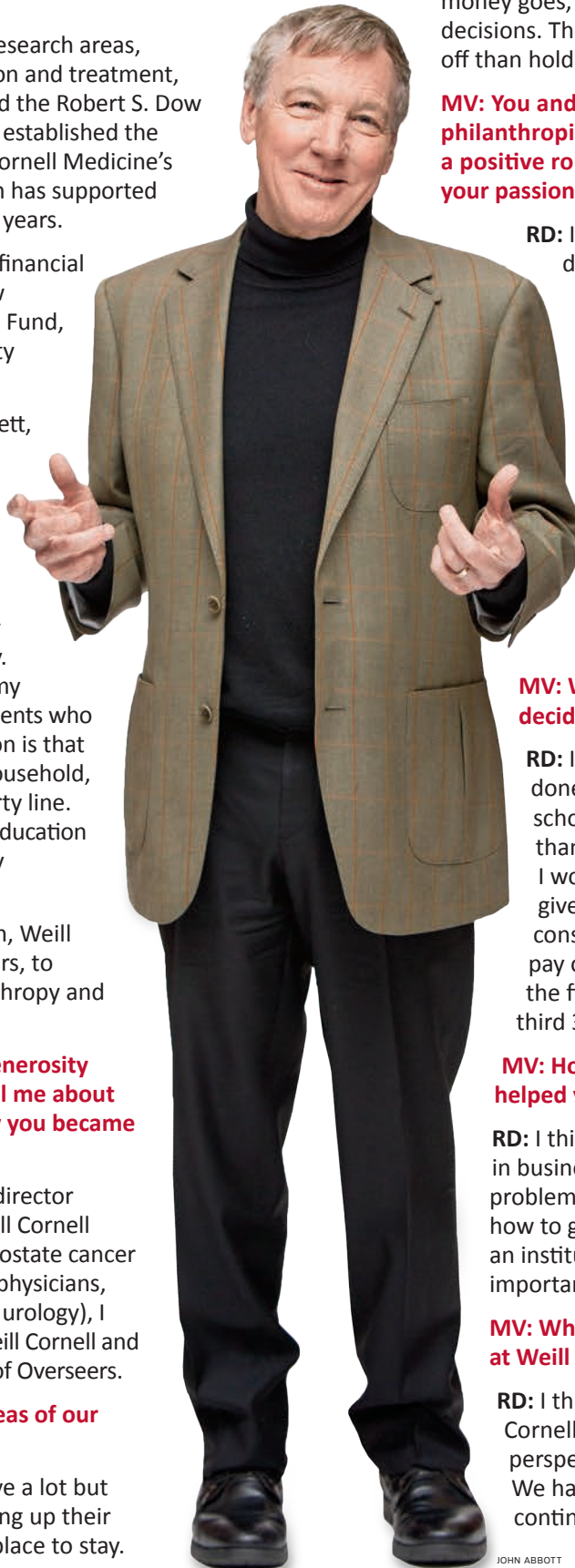
**RD:** I think we all understand that giving to Weill Cornell can be done in a lot of different ways – through buildings and facilities, scholarships and educational funding, research, etc. – and thankfully, we have a lot of supporters interested in a lot of areas. I would tell donors looking to make a difference that they could give to multiple interests. If you're funding a building or research, consider including a percentage of that gift to support a student, or pay off a young doctor's loans. Someone once told me that in life, the first 30 years you learn, the second 30 years you earn, and the third 30 years you return!

**MV: How has your discipline and experience as a business leader helped you to become a better Overseer and philanthropist?**

**RD:** I think having studied engineering has helped me in this role, and in business, especially with problem-solving. As a philanthropist, the problem is what to do with the money, and to solve this, you're deciding how to give and specifically to what cause. By looking at the needs of an institution you want to support, the cost of those needs and what's important, you can put together a plan to make the biggest impact.

**MV: What do you view as our greatest opportunity at Weill Cornell Medicine?**

**RD:** I think we have the opportunity to significantly improve Weill Cornell in a strategic way by appealing to many different people's perspectives and what they're passionate about supporting. We have a great opportunity to come together and ensure the continued success of Weill Cornell.



JOHN ABBOTT

# From Our Dean



When the Belfer Research Building opened in 2014, the structure was filled with infinite promise. Every inch of this state-of-the-art center was crafted to empower Weill Cornell Medicine to perform collaborative, translational research that would change lives. And now, five years later, the Belfer building – and the

hundreds of researchers who work there every day – have fulfilled that promise. The building is buzzing with world-class researchers who are working, hand-in-hand with clinicians, to speed innovative treatments and cures to our patients.

The Belfer Research Building is a perfect symbol for the remarkable growth of the Weill Cornell Medicine research enterprise over the past five years – and illustrates what is to come. It has granted us the physical space to grow our research, recruit more than 40 top-tier biomedical researchers and dramatically increase our funding from the National Institutes of Health, which has garnered us a top-10 ranking from U.S. News & World Report. Additionally, this key expansion was made possible by the incredible and ongoing support of so many of our donors and friends. These supporters believe that Weill Cornell Medicine should lead the way in healthcare and biomedical research, and are committed to making it so. And, thanks to their vision and inspired philanthropy, we are doing just that.

We are grateful that our donors and friends understand our tripartite mission, realizing that groundbreaking research cannot stand alone. It must be coupled with exceptional patient care and medical education in order to have the greatest impact on the individuals we serve, and to create the robust academic medical center that we are today. This keen foresight of our leaders and supporters has transformed our research enterprise, and continues to propel our institution to the forefront of biomedical research and healthcare.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Augustine Choi'.

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

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



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Medicine**

Care. Discover. Teach.

## Weill Cornell Medicine

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## Gale and Ira Drukier Prize in Children's Health Research

The fourth annual Gale and Ira Drukier Prize in Children's Health Research has been awarded to Dr. Helen Su, chief of the Human Immunological Diseases Section at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, part of the National Institutes of Health. The Drukier Prize honors an early-career pediatrician whose research has made important contributions toward improving the health of children and adolescents. Dr. Su received the award and spoke about her research at a seminar that took place in the Belfer Research Building on March 19.

From left: Jennifer Birnbaum; Dr. Virginia Pascual, director of the Drukier Institute for Children's Health; Dr. Gale Drukier; Dr. Helen Su; Dr. Ira Drukier; and Dean Augustine M.K. Choi



From left: Dr. Yoon Kang; Scholarship Hall of Fame members Overseer Lloyd Blankfein, Florence Davis of the Starr Foundation, Overseer Vice Chair Jeffrey Feil of the Feil Family Foundation, Jae French, and Allyson Pifko of the Rogosin Institute; Dean Augustine M.K. Choi

## Salute to Scholarship

The annual Salute to Scholarship event was held on April 29 in the Belfer Research Building. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the event, which brings together medical students with the donors who support them. To celebrate the extraordinary impact Weill Cornell Medicine scholarship donors have had on the institution, a Scholarship Hall of Fame was established this year. The Hall of Fame recognizes the most generous scholarship supporters: those who have given more than \$1 million to support medical and graduate school scholarship at Weill Cornell. These supporters were inducted at a ceremony at this year's Salute to Scholarship.

## Second Annual Joan and Sanford I. Weill Exemplary Achievement Award

The second annual Joan and Sanford I. Weill Exemplary Achievement Award was presented on March 5 to Dr. Carl Nathan, chairman of the Department of Microbiology and Immunology, the R.A. Rees Pritchett Professor of Microbiology and former Dean of the Weill Cornell Graduate School of Medical Sciences. The award, established last year in honor of the Weills, celebrates physicians and scientists whose transformational work enhances health and healthcare worldwide.



From left: Board of Overseers Chairman Jessica Bibliowicz; Weill Exemplary Achievement Award recipient Dr. Carl Nathan; Overseer Chair Emeritus Sanford I. Weill; Joan Weill; and Dean Augustine M.K. Choi

## Symposium in Honor of the 90th Birthday of Dr. Richard T. Silver (MD '53)

On April 3, the Division of Hematology and Medical Oncology held an academic symposium to honor the 90th birthday of Dr. Richard T. Silver (MD '53), professor of medicine at Weill Cornell Medicine. Dr. Silver received a medical degree from Weill Cornell Medical College in 1953 and has worked at Weill Cornell Medicine for 61 years, serving as a professor of medicine and emeritus director of the Richard T. Silver M.D. Myeloproliferative Neoplasm Center at Weill Cornell Medicine.

The symposium featured remarks by Dean Augustine M.K. Choi, with presentations by Weill Cornell Medicine faculty members, and was followed by a celebratory gathering.



Dean Augustine M.K. Choi and Dr. Richard T. Silver (MD '53)

*Milestones is a publication of the Office of External Affairs at Weill Cornell Medicine.*

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