

# Record Year of Philanthropy Fuels Innovation and Opportunity at Rose-Hulman

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Unprecedented donor support is fueling Rose-Hulman's momentum. This fall, students will watch atoms dance across their screens in a state-of-the-art physics lab, manipulating quantum simulations that would have been impossible just months ago. Across campus, construction crews will continue to make progress on

Innovation Grove, a visionary entrepreneurial ecosystem unlike anything in higher education that will transform how students learn and launch their careers. Meanwhile, first-year students will begin settling into newly renovated residence halls designed to foster the collaboration and community that define the Rose-Hulman experience.

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*Rose-Hulman President  
Robert A. Coons*



A \$30.5 million gift from Lilly Endowment Inc launched the Trails to Innovation Initiative, creating Innovation Grove, which includes Rose-Hulman Ventures and a hip and knee replacement center in partnership with Union Health.

These scenes all represent the tangible impact of a record year of philanthropy at Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology. The top-ranked STEM college has concluded its most successful fundraising year in institutional history, with donors contributing \$67 million— more than twice the amount raised the previous year, marking the largest fundraising total in Rose-Hulman's history. This extraordinary generosity from alumni, friends, foundations, and community partners is driving significant change across every aspect of campus life, positioning Rose-Hulman to lead in preparing the next generation of innovators and problem-solvers.

## Advancing Innovation and Entrepreneurship

The cornerstone of this record year was the largest gift in Rose-Hulman's history—a [\\$30.5 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc.](#) that has launched the Trails to Innovation initiative. This sweeping effort will create Innovation Grove, an entrepreneurial district unlike anything in higher education, featuring Rose-Hulman Ventures, a hip and knee replacement center in partnership with Union Health, and dedicated STEM education outreach programs.

Planned elements of the project also include a 2.8-mile pedestrian trail system designed to promote healthy, active lifestyles for students and local residents. The Innovation Trails will eventually link the Rose-Hulman campus to the broader Wabash Valley trail network, providing scenic routes for walking, running, and biking. Additionally, a 5-megawatt solar farm is envisioned as part of the district's long-term sustainability goals. Once completed, it will significantly reduce the district's carbon footprint and support clean energy practices.

"This transformative grant enables us to create a dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystem that enhances educational experiences for our students and drives economic growth and innovation in the community," said Rose-Hulman President Robert A. Coons. "By fostering collaboration between students, faculty, and industry partners, Innovation Grove will help shape the future of innovation and entrepreneurship in our region."

Further bolstering entrepreneurship at Rose-Hulman was a \$10 million gift from Niles and Nancy Noblitt to establish the [Noblitt Entrepreneurship Program \(NEP\)](#). The program will enhance curriculum and provide real-world experiences to foster entrepreneurial thinking, along with creating a new endowed chair to coordinate campus-wide innovation efforts.

"Attending Rose-Hulman was a life-changing experience for me," said Niles Noblitt, a 1973 biological engineering alumnus, co-founder of Biomet, Inc., and former chair of the Rose-Hulman Board of Trustees. "Nancy and I want to ensure that future generations of students have the same opportunities I did—to dream big, take risks, and turn ideas into reality."

## Empowering Research and Learning

Philanthropy has also significantly elevated the student academic experience. A notable anonymous alumni gift provided new supercomputing workstations to support advanced coursework and research in physics, optical engineering, and nanoengineering (PHON). These high-powered systems will allow students to explore quantum mechanics, solar energy, semiconductors, and more—on campus or remotely.

"We're grateful for these gifts that put state-of-the-art technology in the hands of our students and faculty and keeps our departments on the leading edge," said Rose-Hulman Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Ellen Goldey, PhD. "This technology also enhances our students' post-graduate opportunities in industry and makes them key candidates for graduate school and doctorate programs."

Meanwhile, grants from the Indiana Small Business Development Center and Minus K Technology are enabling students to engage in innovative projects such as AI-based ophthalmic systems and cutting-edge optical measurements that support cancer research and advanced imaging.

### Strengthening Faculty Excellence

Recognizing that exceptional faculty drive exceptional student outcomes, donors have made strategic investments in teaching excellence. Michael and Karen Huhnke established Dr. Bruce R. Danner Endowed Faculty Fellowship in honor of a beloved former professor, ensuring sustained support for innovation in the PHON Department.

"My Rose-Hulman education paid huge dividends for me professionally and personally," said Michael Huhnke, a 1975 physics and mechanical engineering alumnus. "It was time for me to give back through establishing this faculty fellowship."

### Supporting Students Inside and Outside the Classroom

Improving the student experience has remained a core theme of this year's philanthropic efforts. Generous gifts from an anonymous alumnus and local community leader have made possible a \$10 million renovation of Speed Hall, a first-year residence hall originally built in 1963. This renovation—alongside a new \$31.5 million residence hall opening this fall—supports Rose-Hulman's focus on student life and academic achievement.

"These gifts will enhance the residential experience for our students, addressing the evolving needs of campus life," said President Coons. "Investments like these ensure that our living and learning environments continue to support student success for generations to come."

### Record-Breaking Rose Giving Day

That mission was on full display during Rose-Hulman's sixth annual Rose Giving Day, which raised over \$679,000 from 533 donors—a new record. Matching gifts amplified the impact, supporting everything from mental health services and student scholarships to athletics and summer programs.

"The generosity of our donors is truly inspiring," said Steve Brady, Vice President of Institutional Advancement. "Each contribution—whether large or small—makes a difference, and this year's record-breaking total is a testament to the dedication of the Rose-Hulman community. These

gifts will continue to shape the future of Rose-Hulman and ensure lasting opportunities for students for years to come.”

Together, these gifts and grants illustrate the powerful impact of a connected and committed network of Rose-Hulman supporters. Whether backing faculty and student research, expanding academic programs, improving student housing, or sparking innovation, every act of philanthropy is helping Rose-Hulman continue its mission as the leader in STEM education and a home for innovation, entrepreneurship, and student growth. While celebrating donors and their unwavering support, Rose-Hulman now looks forward to another year of hard work, academic success, and philanthropic achievement.

#### About Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology

Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, located on a scenic 1,300-acre campus in Terre Haute, Indiana, is home to 2,300+ students from 47 states and 33 countries. Consistently ranked among the nation’s top undergraduate STEM colleges, Rose-Hulman delivers a strong return on investment from day one. Students collaborate with esteemed faculty in labs and innovation centers equipped with cutting-edge technology—opportunities often reserved for graduate students elsewhere. With nearly 100% career placement for two decades, Rose-Hulman prepares graduates for success. Founded in 1874, Rose-Hulman offers a vibrant student experience with a close-knit campus community, nationally recognized competition teams, 20 NCAA Division III sports, 90+ student clubs, and 12 fraternities and sororities. Learn more at [rose-hulman.edu](https://rose-hulman.edu).

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