



SIGNATURE SUPPORT: David Primo, Susan McDaniel, Robert Novy-Marx, and Gretchen Birbeck are among the professors appointed to 100 endowed positions that were created through the support of alumni and University friends to *The Meliora Challenge* campaign.

Celebrating Our Faculty

By Joel Seligman

Our faculty are the University's greatest resource. Their teaching, their research, their continuity represent the human heart of the University of Rochester. Our faculty are the catalyst of innovation and discovery, the compass that guides student learning.

Few aspects of our *Meliora Challenge* campaign have been as inspiring as the recollections of our alumni of how much University faculty meant to them.

I write in celebration. We have received a commitment to create the 100th endowed professorship of our Campaign, nearly doubling the 107 created in the first 155 years of our University. This is especially remarkable to have achieved in fewer than 11 years.

Our first endowed professorship dates to 1887 when Don Alonzo Watson, a cofounder of the company that became Western Union, endowed the Watson professorship at the University, with Martin Brewer Anderson, the University's first president, as the inaugural holder.

In *The Meliora Challenge*, among many other endowed professorships, we have established the Ani and Mark Gabrellian Professorship, with political scientist David Primo as the inaugural holder. University Trustee Ani Gabrellian '84 and her husband, Mark '79, created the professorship based on the belief that the challenges facing society today and in the future would increasingly require analytical and problem-solving approaches that transcend individual disciplines. Professor Primo is the author of several works, including his award-winning *Rules and Restraint: Government Spending and the Design of Institutions*. Professor Primo's work has had a

significant impact on governmental policy and implementation.

Susan McDaniel is the Dr. Laurie Sands Distinguished Professor of Families and Health in the Departments of Family Medicine and Psychiatry. The Sands Family Foundation funded this professorship to support a recognized leader in family medicine who promotes the health of individuals and families through clinical service, training, and research. In 2016, Dr. McDaniel was named the president of the American Psychological Association and is dedicated to transforming health care by integrating behavioral health into clinical medicine.

Robert Novy-Marx is the Lori and Alan S. Zekelman Professor of Business Administration. Professor Novy-Marx is well known for his research on value and quality investing. His work has demonstrated that most state pension funds rely on excessively optimistic scenarios when determining their ability to meet future obligations, resulting in a net shortfall of some \$3 trillion rather than the \$1 trillion that had previously been thought to be the shortfall. This is a recalculation that has profound implications for state finance.

Gretchen Birbeck is the Edward A. and Alma Vollertsen Rykenboer Professor in Neurology. She also holds an adjunct faculty position with the University of Zambia. Since 1994, Dr. Birbeck has provided clinical care and conducted cerebral malaria research and neuro-HIV clinical trials in sub-Saharan Africa, where she serves as the director for Chikankata's Epilepsy Care Team in Zambia's rural Southern Province. Her work has made it possible for more than 3,000 patients with epilepsy to receive treatment they otherwise would not have

received and to change national policy that potentially could help thousands of others. She is also helping to shed light on how malaria—often considered a disease of the developing world which is not given adequate resources and attention—can become fatal.

As long as the University of Rochester exists, such endowed professorships will continue to honor our faculty and our donors. It is notable, for example, as Medical Center CEO Mark Taubman likes to recall, that physicist Stephen Hawking long held the same endowed Lucasian Professorship of Mathematics at the University of Cambridge that close to 300 years earlier Sir Isaac Newton had held.

Endowed professorships often provide pivotal funds to strengthen outstanding scholarship or stimulate new fields. We have today 1,311 tenured faculty. They deserve our approbation. What distinguishes Rochester and other outstanding research universities is the combination of stellar teaching, commitment to our community, and research that can transform lives. Few sources of support are more critical than those that give faculty the time and means to create transforming ideas. The intellectual breakthroughs that we have helped achieve in fields as variegated as cancer research, financial economics, or creative literature often were achieved over years of unwavering support.

With *The Meliora Challenge* campaign we have made important steps in recognizing some of our outstanding faculty. As we near the conclusion of the Campaign, I remain more determined than ever to continue to work with our wonderful alumni and friends to establish more support for our faculty. They are the linchpin of our enduring success. 