THE JEFFERSON TRUST
AN INITIATIVE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
The University of Virginia’s

JEFFERSON TRUST

Seed Funding for Excellence

In today’s world of innovation, collaboration, and entrepreneurship, it’s critical to give University students and faculty the tools they need to encourage and develop new ideas, test their hypotheses, and lead others. The mission of the Jefferson Trust is simply to meet this important need. We provide annual, unrestricted, seed money support to enterprising students, faculty, and UVA leaders to create important new programs, events, classes, projects, and institutes which will enhance the student experience and the University’s worldwide reputation.

Acting as an early-stage venture fund for the entire UVA community, the Jefferson Trust endowment seeks to support a broad range of grant proposals each year that represent some of the best thinking and forward-looking initiatives around Grounds. Frequently, Trust-supported projects will receive second round funding from various other organizations, foundations, and donors. This often doubles or triples the initial investment and establishes long-lasting opportunities for growth, scholarship, research, and leadership at the University.

The Jefferson Trust is a new paradigm in philanthropic funding for higher education. It provides UVA alumni, parents, and friends the chance to participate in the life of the University in a meaningful, tangible way and to see the immediate impact of their support. The Donor Trustee board of the Jefferson Trust makes all of the decisions regarding grant selection, project mentoring, and results reporting. These Donor Trustees also monitor endowment investment and provide grant oversight, demonstrating the UVA tradition of student self-governance and alumni engagement in a unique and exciting way.

Guidelines for Jefferson Trust grant selection are based on the priorities and core values of the institution, as outlined by the UVA Cornerstone Plan and approved by the Board of Visitors in 2013:

- **ENRICH** and strengthen UVA’s distinctive residential culture
- **ADVANCE** knowledge and serve the public through research, scholarship, arts, and innovation
- **PROVIDE** educational experiences that deliver new levels of student engagement
- **ASSEMBLE AND SUPPORT** a distinguished faculty
- **STEWARD** resources to promote excellence and access

As the result of an extensive planning process initiated by Trustees in 2012 and re-affirmed in 2016, the following goals were set for the Jefferson Trust for the next several years:

- **GROW** the asset base of the endowment to a corpus of $35 million, allowing endowment generation of at least $1 million each year for grant distribution
- **CONTINUE TO BUILD** an even stronger awareness and understanding of the Jefferson Trust and its mission within the University and nationally
- **ENSURE** that grants are strategically awarded and effectively administered for the betterment of the University of Virginia
Established by the Alumni Association in 2006, the Jefferson Trust has invested in more than 150 different initiatives brought forth by students and faculty representing all 11 schools and a myriad of programs and organizations at UVA. With grant awards ranging from as little as $2,500 to as much as $100,000, all of these seed-funded projects add exceptional value to the UVA experience. Many evolve to become a permanent part of the fabric of the University’s life and legacy. Here are just a few of our favorite stories.

**Flash Seminars (2011) $8,000**

Flash Seminars is a student-initiated project funded by the Jefferson Trust that has continued to grow in scope and participation each year. The program is a series of one-hour events planned by student volunteers as a platform for open discussion between students, professors, faculty, and members of the Charlottesville community. Topics span a variety of areas including global health, entrepreneurship, women in the workplace, food sustainability, yoga, and the art of meditation. Over 1,000 people have participated in at least oneFlash Seminar since the program’s inception. With more than 80 different seminars offered each year, they are the living embodiment of Jefferson's notion that learning should not be confined to the classroom. The “flash seminar” concept has been adopted by several other schools since its initial launch.

**PULSE (2015) $194,300 and McIntire Allies & Diversity Dialogues (2017) $15,000**

UVA students who embrace the Jefferson Trust opportunity to apply for grant funding for a new idea, a collaboration, or leadership experience come from many different schools, backgrounds, and perspectives. One student, Santiago Naranjo (Com ’17) engaged with two Trust grants while on Grounds. The first, PULSE at UVA, is an undergraduate retreat each semester that focuses on fostering open dialogue about race, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and mental health. The second, McIntire Allies & Diversity Dialogues, is a project promoting diversity and inclusion at the McIntire School of Commerce in the support of professional and academic opportunities.

Santiago, a first-generation, low-income student, came to Grounds on an AccessUVA scholarship and immediately began forging a path of inclusion for fellow low-income students and members of the LGBTQ community. Besides being an excellent student and leadership volunteer, he found time to successfully co-sponsor the PULSE grant with fellow student Lital Firestone, and the McIntire grant with Associate Dean Rebecca Leonard. Santiago plans to use the “boundary-breaking” experience gained at UVA to broaden perspectives and build respectful relationships among business professionals and other communities.

**Seriatim: Journal of American Politics (2014) $10,000**

**SECOND-YEAR STUDENT RUSSELL BOGUE (Col ’16) along with classmates Ian Robertson (Col ’16) came to the Jefferson Trust to request funding for development of a new forum and journal dedicated to sharing undergraduates’ ideas on American politics and political theory. Frustrated by a dearth of opportunities for political discourse on Grounds, they created a website, began hosting various events around Grounds, and asked the Trust to support the development of Seriatim: Journal of American Politics each semester.**

Seriatim has grown to become a prominent feature of student life at the University, with an editorial board and staff of about twenty students. They have interviewed former ambassadors, hosted debates between prominent professors on the scope of the National Security Administration, and organized a panel on sexual misconduct, law, and policy that drew local media attention. More than 300 journals are distributed each semester to students and faculty around Grounds.

After graduating in 2016, Russell continued his education as a Rhodes Scholar at the University of Oxford. About the Jefferson Trust, he says, “The University is full of enterprising undergraduates who have unique and exciting ideas about how to improve the student experience. Without an organization like the Trust, many of these ideas would never leave the dorm room. Nothing shows a greater vote of confidence in student initiatives than actually investing money in these projects. I’m very thankful to the Trust for the work they do!”

**UVA Solar Car Team (2017) $20,771**

**FOURTH YEAR MECHANICAL ENGINEERING STUDENT EN DE LIOW** came to the Trust with a dream to lead an all-student team in the holistic, hands-on creation of a solar-powered car to compete in the 2017 Formula Sun Grand Prix. Having a love of cars, En De saw great value in taking on this large scale project that would elevate recognition of UVA Engineering on a national scale. Nearly 50 students from various schools around Grounds participated in the UVA Solar Car Team.

After graduation, En De embarked on his next great, creative adventure as a designer of sports cars for one of the world’s premier automakers, Lotus of Great Britain. He thanked the Jefferson Trust board and Trustee mentor, Ashley Thompson Manning by saying, “The Jefferson Trust has been tremendous. On top of offering vital financial support, having a mentor from the Board advise the team really guided us towards sustainable growth and our long-term goal of creating such a hands-on learning platform for students.”

**Student Entrepreneurs for Economic Development (2011) $55,000**

**Entrepreneurship and Innovations Committee of Student Council (2012) $22,000**

**Pan-University Social Entrepreneurship Initiative, Batten School (2013) $90,000**

**Experiential Entrepreneurship Education, Student Organization (2014) $23,035**

**Darden Impact Ventures, Darden Student Organization (2015) $8,000**

Entrepreneurship has been an area of particular interest for both students and faculty applying for Jefferson Trust support. Beginning with a small, invested group of undergraduates in 2011, a coordinated effort to bring all schools together in collaborative, innovative, pan-University opportunities has resulted in expanded curriculum change at UVA. Since that initial request for funding, the Trust has been a catalyst in the addition of six new courses around social entrepreneurship and impact investing, a variety of entrepreneurial endeavors and resources, and a minor in Social Entrepreneurship at the Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy.
AS A CHILD, MICHAEL SUAREZ could always be found holding a book. Whether it was a novel, poetry, or even an encyclopedia, Suarez devoured anything he could get his hands on.

Not much has changed. "Emily Dickinson said there is no frigate like a book," Suarez says.

Suarez’s passion for historic books came while studying at the University of Oxford as a Marshall Scholar in the mid-1980s. "I discovered that rather than reading the Penguin paperback, I discovered that they were redolent of historical meaning in ways that the modern ones weren’t."

It was while investigating Moll Flanders, a novel by Daniel Defoe, when Suarez knew he had found his calling. He uncovered abridgments, continuations, and modifications that had been made to the work over the years. "I realized that by studying the publishing history of a single book over time, you could, in a much deeper way, understand its reception history. For me, that opened up a whole world. Looking at the original, you could know things that modern critics themselves didn’t know."

Suarez, who has been the director of Rare Book School since 2009, loves what he does. "It’s about inculcating wonder," he explains. "If you can get the students in contact with the material in an informed way, I think it can be a transformative experience for them."

In 2011, the Jefferson Trust awarded a grant to the Rare Book School that helped create a fellowship program to encourage undergraduate and graduate students to participate in hands-on research in the Rare Book School. This program was met with great success and received three additional grants totaling $2.4 million from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to fund the Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship of Scholars in Critical Bibliography program.

From 2013-2015, Rare Book School supplied 60 three-year fellowships for junior faculty, postdoctoral fellows, or doctoral students in the humanities interested in bibliographical studies. In July 2017, they received an additional $1 million grant for the Andrew W. Mellon Society of Fellows in Critical Bibliography. Building on the fellowships’ successes, this scholarly organization will identify and investigate matters of new, compelling cross-disciplinary interest in the areas of bibliography and book history.

Suarez says the Jefferson Trust has paved the way. "I’m filled with admiration for what the Trust does in such a powerful way across the spectrum of UVA life to improve student experience."
Water and Health in Limpopo
(2008) $50,000

DR. REBECCA DILLINGHAM remembers her first visit to the Limpopo region in northern South Africa in 2006, but it’s her second visit six months later she’ll never forget. That’s when community members shared a wish. “They said, ‘All we want is a drop of water,’” Dillingham recalls.

With the help of the Jefferson Trust, UVA’s Center for Global Health Director has been trying to give it to them ever since. The Water and Health in Limpopo Project gives disadvantaged children a fighting chance at a healthy life. The program enlists postdoctoral fellows from both the United States and southern Africa to address the water and sanitation issues that contribute to the severe diarrhea that kills or impairs many young children in Limpopo.

Since the initial grant in 2008, the project has raised over $6.5 million, including a $1.7 million, five-year grant from the National Institutes of Health’s Fogarty International Center in 2012. With the funds, Dillingham has been able to implement local point-of-use water purification technologies that can be used by households. “Unfortunately, water scarcity hasn’t changed in a fundamental way—it’s still a very water-scarce region of the world,” Dillingham says, “but in some small ways we’ve made it better in terms of people having better access to clean water and a better ability to advocate for water in their communities.”

When she visits Limpopo, Dillingham—whose research interests also include HIV medicine—says it’s heartbreaking to see children who haven’t grown because they haven’t had access to clean food and water. “I think that over time there have been small improvements,” she says, “but we have to be modest about that. I believe some of the most important contributions we’ve been able to make have been to support and nurture the leaders in those communities.”

It’s an uphill battle that requires support from anywhere Dillingham can get it. “We always have new threats to deal with,” she says. “Unfortunately, there’s been a real resurgence of malaria in the region where we work that had been malaria-free. Thanks to the scientific and community-action platform that we have, we’ve been able to begin a response to that.”

In March of 2017, the project celebrated its 10th year anniversary. “It was just a really nice opportunity to bring everyone together to review the kinds of work we’ve been able to engage with, thanks to the original grant,” Dillingham says.

When she visits Limpopo, Dillingham recalls. “All we want is a drop of water,” they said. “They said, ‘We always have new threats to deal with,’ she says. “Unfortunately, there’s been a real resurgence of malaria in the region where we work that had been malaria-free. Thanks to the scientific and community-action platform that we have, we’ve been able to begin a response to that.”

In March of 2017, the project celebrated its 10th year anniversary. “It was just a really nice opportunity to bring everyone together to review the kinds of work we’ve been able to engage with, thanks to the original grant,” Dillingham says.

Teachers in the Movement
(2014) $30,000

DERICK ALRIDGE had a front-row seat during his childhood for a significant event in the Civil Rights Movement. It was in his hometown of Rock Hill, South Carolina where several people—a few of them, teachers—were arrested after staging a sit-in at a segregated restaurant. These courageous community members became Alridge’s heroes.

Today, Alridge, a professor in the Curry School of Education, pays homage to those teachers—and a bevy of others from the South—through a Jefferson Trust-funded project called “Teachers in the Movement.”

“It’s a way for me to give back to them what they gave to me,” Alridge says. “We’re giving them credit that’s long overdue.

And it’s cathartic for them to tell their stories.”

The oral history research project uses video to record first-person accounts of educators who were at the forefront of social activism in schools, classrooms, and communities during the Civil Rights movement.

“These teachers fulfilled various functions in the movement: as interlocutors of democracy, curriculum reformers, community organizers, and mentors to young civil rights activists,” says Alridge, who hopes to have interviewed 500 educators by 2021. “If the stories of these teachers are not systematically collected, much of this history will be lost, and with it, a significant dimension of the Civil Rights Movement.”

Alridge’s team has interviewed educators from five states, including Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker, chief of staff and adviser to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Dr. Edward Peeples, a Civil Rights activist from Virginia.

Alridge has interviewed educators from all walks of life, including white teachers who were influential in desegregation

The Jefferson Trust grant, which came in 2014, provided the seed money for equipment, travel, and the hiring of undergraduates. An additional $1 million of support was secured from the Spencer Foundation in 2016 to expand work on the project.

“It was instrumental in the early development of the project,” says Alridge, who comes from a family of educators. “Growing up, I always thought I would do research on these teachers, and at UVA I finally got that opportunity. The organization that gave me that opportunity was the Jefferson Trust.”

With that opportunity came big plans for the future. “What drives our research team is our desire to bring these stories to light,” Alridge says. “We intend to put the project on par someday with other major oral history projects that cover the Civil Rights Movement, such as The Behind the Veil Project at Duke University and the Southern Oral History Project at the University of North Carolina.”
UVA Professor Karen McGlathery’s love for the environment comes from a special place. As a child, she spent a couple weeks every summer at her grandparents’ house on Cape Cod. Whenever there was a storm, McGlathery’s grandfather – who had fought for the British Navy in World War I – would teach her about the ocean.

“Instead of huddling in the house, he would take my hand, and we would go down to the beach,” she recalls, “and watch the waves going sideways and the sand whipping at your ankles. I just found that really exhilarating. He was the one who infused that love of the ocean in me.” It’s a love that has grown exponentially over the years – a love that stands out like bioluminescent algae through her work supported by the Jefferson Trust.

McGlathery talks passionately about one of the Trust-funded projects, a collaboration with a student and a McIntire professor, that involved the restoration of seagrass on the eastern shore of Virginia. In the 1930s, a pandemic and series of storms had killed seagrass and crashed the local economy. “What’s great is that the Jefferson Trust provides the opportunity and mechanism for students to cross disciplines, ask questions, be advised by faculty in two different schools, and explore new areas,” McGlathery says. “I really think it’s at the intersection of the two disciplines where a lot of the great discoveries happen. We have some outstanding students, who have some great projects that would not have otherwise been funded.”

The Jefferson Trust grant spawned the recently launched Environmental Resilience Institute, part of the University’s Cornerstone Plan approved by the BOV in 2013. The Institute, funded with a three-year, $2 million grant from the University’s Strategic Investment Fund, brings together top researchers from all 11 of the University’s schools to tackle problems such as coastal flooding, storm impacts in coastal regions, and water security. “You can’t plod along in a single discipline trying to solve some of these complex problems,” says McGlathery, the director of the new institute. “You need the convergence of the disciplines to accelerate the rate at which we find solutions.”

Growing up, McGlathery says her high school biology teacher and a professor at Connecticut College (her alma mater) were instrumental in her pursuit of an environmental science career. Of course, her grandparents, who first laid eyes on each other on the open water – they met on a cruise – were the ones that sparked the flame. “From a very young age,” McGlathery says, “I was committed to the environment.”

Developing Future Leaders in Sustainability and Resilience

(2015) $72,500
Developing Students for Leadership in Data-Intensive Research

(2013) $100,000

IN 2013, a Jefferson Trust grant to support fellowships in “Big Data” helped launch the University’s Data Science Institute, a truly collaborative and pan-University Institute seeking solutions to real-world problems using data science research and data-driven methods.

University President Teresa Sullivan made the initial funding request to the Trust to establish a fellows program for graduate students in diverse disciplines to work together on research projects in the area of big data. The program was an immediate success.

Since that time, over $20 million in additional donor and University funding has been secured to develop an interdisciplinary master’s degree program, provide student opportunities in industry-sponsored projects, expand new computing capacities at the University, and formalize the annual “Presidential Fellowship in Data Science” award.

The interest and support for big data expertise has continued to grow at UVA and the popular new Data Science Institute has already graduated over 100 students with advanced degrees in data science. The establishment of the Institute and the commitment to a pan-University and collaborative approach has also played a key role in attracting stellar big data research faculty to UVA. More recent initiatives include a distinguished lecture series, an executive education series, and a new minor in data science open to undergraduate students from all schools and majors. These initiatives have been a powerful testimony to how a small, initial investment in a great idea can have such far-reaching impact.

GRANTS DEVELOPING INTO PAN-UNIVERSITY INSTITUTES AND PROGRAMS

USOAR – Undergraduate Student Opportunities in Academic Research

(2014) $50,000

BRANDON CHO (Col ’20) had no research experience prior to arriving at Virginia - so you can imagine what it must have felt like when he found himself, as a first year student, getting hands-on experience at the lab bench, handling tissue samples from pigs that would be used to test new drugs useful in kidney transplants. “The projects were eye-opening,” says Cho. “They exposed me to a new field and allowed me to develop professionally through hands-on experience. It was fascinating to see how different concepts you learn from the textbooks can be applied in the field. You see everything connect.”

Entering its fifth year, USOAR targets first-year, second-year, and transfer undergraduate students – ones who don’t have previous experience in research – with paid research positions. “It allows them to accomplish both of their goals – they can earn the money they need for their college tuition and expenses, and at the same time get that research experience,” says Director of Undergraduate Research Opportunities Brian Cullaty (Col ’99, Educ ’09), who has seen the program grow from 13 students in 2013-14 to 44 last year.

The program was started by UVA President Teresa Sullivan, based on one she had experienced at the University of Michigan. In 2014, the Jefferson Trust provided a grant to allow the program to expand the number of students served and provide wages for those students. Cho works in the Translational Genomics Transplant Lab, where a main focus is on molecular mechanisms and identifying molecular biomarkers. “I have matured both as a student and as a researcher,” Cho says. “I learned how to manage my time better by balancing my schedule between classes, research, and extracurriculars. I am so thankful for this opportunity.”

Brandi Quarles (Col ’17) worked in an ecology lab where the focus was plant aging. “Surprisingly, not a lot is known about whether or not plants age and in what ways that aging might manifest,” Quarles says. After finishing the program, Quarles continued working in labs and mentoring USOAR students. She subsequently earned a National Science Foundation graduate fellowship to study at Duke, where she is now pursuing her Ph.D.

USOAR continues to thrive and expand after receiving additional support of $559,500 in 2016 from the Strategic Investment Fund of the Cornerstone Plan, a source of funding for initiatives that have the potential to transform a critical area of knowledge or operation.

“I am extremely grateful for a Jefferson Trust grant that made USOAR possible,” Cullaty says. “They believed in the program after a small pilot project demonstrated how meaningful the research experiences are for the student participants.”
Interview with Leadership Donor and Trustee Lee Forker (Darden ’63)

LEE FORKER graduated from the Darden School in 1963 and has been a long-term supporter of the University since graduation. His philanthropy has included principal support of the annual Alumnus Family Weekend, the endowment of a chair in the College of Arts and Sciences in honor of his favorite Darden professor, John D. Forbes, and regular donations to the Darden School itself. Ten years ago, he became one of the earliest supporters of the nascent Jefferson Trust. He was drawn to the mission of providing seed money for programs and projects that will increase excellence in any area of the University.

Of particular appeal to Lee has been the donor-directed philosophy of the Jefferson Trust, where the Donor-Trustees make the decisions regarding which grant proposals to fund each year. After reviewing and weighing in on over 500 grant proposals throughout his long engagement with the Trust, he described how he defines a successful grant. “We have in place written standards by which the success of individual projects can be easily determined and measured, including a formal audit process for how the money is to be spent, a mentoring program, and a monitoring structure,” he explains. “Of course, we are always pleased when a project succeeds to the point that other foundations, donors, or the University itself decides to invest second and third rounds of financing.”

Although the Trust provides many opportunities for Trustee engagement, including working on committees such as Finance, Development, Oversight, and Communications, the activity that Lee enjoys most is his work on the Grants Committee, where the initial review of applications and determination of merit for recommendations to the full board are completed. He feels that this is where he can provide useful experience from his prior business career as an investment counselor.

At a reception and end-of-year banquet in April, each year’s new grant announcements are made and celebrated by donors and grant recipients alike. Lee and his fellow Trustees enjoy stimulating dinner conversations with both student and faculty grant recipients and presentations by professors and leaders of the University. “The Jefferson Trust is unique, I believe, in that donors can be engaged with the University in a myriad of ways; intellectually, professionally, and emotionally,” Lee explains. He hopes to continue this special relationship with the University of Virginia for many years to come.

Lee’s love of the Trust has caused him to donate a large amount of time, energy, and funds to this initiative. Lee remarks that “Donor-Trustees have the opportunity to become deeply engaged in the actual work of the Trust, as I have done, or they may just wish to provide financial support for an entity that is increasing excellence at the University. I would encourage all in the University community to learn more about the positive, on-going impact of the Jefferson Trust.”

Grant Mentoring Experience of Trustee Sara Brown (Col ’15)

FOR TRUSTEES of the Jefferson Trust, one of the unique opportunities for engagement in the life of the University is to choose to act as a mentor for any of the grants selected each year. With a wide variety of projects from various schools and student interests to choose from, many Trustees find the direct interaction and idea sharing with grant recipients a rewarding experience, not only for the individuals they mentor, but for themselves, as well.

Trustee Sara Brown found this to be the case, as she volunteered to mentor a 2016 grant awarded to the UVA Career Center for the development of an in-depth career exploration course that provided alumni networking and high-quality internship preparation for second and third year students. “As a recent graduate, I know how important career planning, mentoring, and procuring meaningful internships are to professional growth and preparation for the job market,” she explains. “I really felt this new course could be an invaluable resource for UVA students, and wanted to help in whatever way I could to contribute to this grant’s success.”

Sara provided mentorship support in a number of ways. She acted as a sounding board for the project director, who was appreciative of her personal perspective as a graduate who had very recently navigated the job search herself. She had the opportunity to observe the course syllabus preparation and provide one of the course lectures regarding her experience in professional networking strategies. Although Sara hopes that her mentoring provided extra value to the grant project director and the students participating in the new course, she feels that she benefitted just as much from the experience. “This was a great opportunity to stay in touch with the University and develop a unique relationship with faculty and students as an alumna. I was included in so much of the process, that I felt we were, in some ways, all mentoring each other... and I, too, learned so much!” she exclaims.