

University of Rochester Booster Endows a Top Fundraising Position

By Holly Hall

Endowments aren't just for teaching and research positions anymore; nonprofits have been seeking them to fund other positions, like museum curators.

However, providing cash to help pay the salary of someone dedicated to raising cash is a new wrinkle.

Laurence and Cindy Bloch, longtime donors to the University of Rochester, have given \$1.5-million to help supplement the salary of the institution's top fundraiser. It is perhaps another sign of fundraisers' growing importance, along with [rising pay](#).

The Rochester position is named in honor of James D. Thompson, who worked closely with Mr. Bloch, an alumnus, on a so-far successful campaign to raise \$1.2-billion.

Mr. Thompson deserves the honor, Mr. Bloch says, because he "brought major change in an extraordinary way."

"I thought it would elevate the position of chief advancement officer," says Mr. Bloch, an investment and business manager. "There is no greater honor than being in an endowed position."

Nine years after hiring Mr. Thompson, the university has secured more than \$1.1-billion toward its \$1.2-billion campaign, which closes in 2016. Annual cash donations have grown from less than \$55-million in 2005, immediately before Mr. Thompson's first year, to \$125-million in the fiscal year that ended in June.

The gift to create a position in Mr. Thompson's name came after he stepped down to become a fundraising adviser to Joel Seligman, the university's president. The first person to serve as the James D. Thompson chief advancement officer will be [Thomas Farrell](#), a Rochester alumnus and a senior fundraiser for the University of Illinois system. Mr. Farrell begins his new job November 1.

To build ties with donors and spur giving, Mr. Thompson helped create a club for donors who agreed to support the university's annual fund for five years or more. Today, that club has more than 3,000 members.

Funding a fundraiser may have a multiplier effect on a donor's dollars. Curt Simic, president emeritus of the Indiana University Foundation, says such funds often help leaders provide additional training and travel for their staff, which can "help recruit and retain fundraising stars."