

Top Strategic Priorities for Donor Support, 2025



Dr. Ross D. Zafonte President's Fund at Spaulding Rehabilitation

A vital source of flexible funding, the Dr. Ross D. Zafonte President's Fund enables our leadership team to meet the broad spectrum of Spaulding's emergent needs in the constantly evolving landscape of clinical care and biomedical research. The unrestricted resources from this fund ensure our clinicians, researchers, and staff can make the most of promising opportunities in rehabilitation medicine and science, and also respond effectively to unprecedented challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and staffing shortages.

RESEARCH

Schoen Adams Research Institute at Spaulding Rehabilitation

Home to Harvard Medical School's Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Spaulding is a leader in driving discovery in rehabilitation, bringing new treatments to patients of all ages that much faster. At the Schoen Adams Research Institute—the hub of our research enterprise—our world-class team of scientists works to examine the underlying biological mechanisms of recovery, explore new therapeutic strategies, and test innovative technologies. Philanthropic investment helps us recruit pioneering leaders in the field of rehabilitation research and accelerate scientific discoveries through high-risk, high-reward pilot and translational studies.

We have a few key research priorities that need funding urgently:

Discovery Center for Brain Injury and Concussion Recovery

Acquired brain injury is the second most prevalent disability in the U.S., affecting almost 13.5 million Americans. Spaulding's Discovery Center for Brain Injury and Concussion Recovery is dedicated to uncovering new and improved therapies to optimize recovery, productivity, and quality of life for patients with all forms of brain injuries. Researchers at this pioneering center are investigating innovative approaches in imaging, genetics, biomarkers, and neurostimulation, both independently and together, to inform and improve treatments throughout the care spectrum. Philanthropic funding will enable us to recruit an exceptional scientist to lead the center as well as advance our pioneering investigations.

Discovery Center for Stroke Recovery

Every 40 seconds, someone in the United States has a stroke. At the Discovery Center for Stroke Recovery, our innovative scientists are focusing on the long-term needs of stroke survivors, building new knowledge and testing novel strategies to advance patient recovery. Efforts of this groundbreaking center include the exploration of biomarkers to maximize therapeutic response, sophisticated neuromodulation treatments, and state-of-the-art robotics and assistive technologies. To ensure that this type of science can continue at this breakneck speed, our top philanthropic priority is the recruitment of a new director to provide leadership and oversight of the research enterprise in this area.



Research Accelerator

Often the most groundbreaking research is not publicly funded—that's where private support is crucial. Spaulding's Research Accelerator fund offers our rehabilitation experts opportunities to explore creative avenues of investigation and launch pilot studies that can be leveraged to secure other major sources of funding including the National Institutes of Health. Gifts to this fund provide our researchers with the flexible resources to be innovative, take risks, and pursue promising scientific leads.



CLINICAL

Pediatric Rehabilitation Program

Offering the latest in diagnosis, evaluation, and treatment, Spaulding's Pediatric Rehabilitation Program is specifically tailored to meet the needs of patients with permanent and temporary disabilities from infancy to young adulthood. Our pediatric team is also actively engaged in advocacy, education, and clinical research for children with special needs and works with families to help their children reach their full potential. At this critical time when many pediatric medical facilities across the country are closing their doors, Spaulding is committed to maintaining our vital services for these young patients and their families who would otherwise have nowhere else to go. With donor support, we can offset the costs of the program, many of which are not covered by insurance; fuel partnerships in clinical research specific to this unique patient population; and expand our efforts to educate and advocate for this vulnerable population.



Neurologic Music Therapy Program

Based on biomedical research on how music is processed and perceived in the brain, Neurologic Music Therapy (NMT) is the clinical use of music to treat sensory, cognitive, motor, and speech and language dysfunction after a neurologic event or diagnosis. Always on the forefront of advanced treatments and technologies for the recovery from injury and illness, Spaulding was one of the first rehabilitation providers in the country to create a full-time NMT program and has now integrated these services in both the inpatient and outpatient setting. Despite NMT's profound impact on patient outcomes, this specialized and personalized therapy is often not reimbursed by insurance. Philanthropy would ensure we can sustain this life-changing program, supporting the specialized music therapists and the technological platforms it requires. Funding would also enable us to conduct research to prove NMT's efficacy, which is an essential component of broadening reimbursement.



SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Spaulding Adaptive Sports Centers

Spaulding Adaptive Sports Centers (SASC) is dedicated to providing people of all abilities unparalleled opportunities to participate in a wide variety of athletic and recreational activities. Over the past 20 years, SASC has grown into a vibrant 45-plus-sport, network-wide initiative with integrated research and educational components that make it a model for adaptive sports programming nationwide. Adaptive sports programs—even those as successful and clinically integrated as Spaulding’s—are difficult to sustain because they are not reimbursed by insurance or supported by traditional government grants. Spaulding must therefore rely almost exclusively on philanthropic funding to ensure that every person in our growing community has access to SASC. Donor support would fuel three key areas of SASC’s efforts: programming, research, and education/advocacy.



Center for Excellence in Nursing and Patient Care Services

Nurses are the bedrock of clinical care at Spaulding Rehabilitation. To respond to the increased demand for nursing expertise, the growing complexity of nurses’ caregiving roles, and the importance of diversifying our nursing candidate pool, Spaulding established the network-wide Nurses as Leaders initiative in 2019. Building on this proud tradition of supporting nursing professional advancement, Spaulding is now proposing the establishment of a new Center for Excellence in Nursing and Patient Care Services. Aimed at creating a unified hub for nursing leadership activities, the Center will foster strategies for nurses to actively contribute their expertise across the continuum of care, support educational pathways for nurses to grow professionally, and develop new opportunities for nurses to explore and innovate. With donor support, its ultimate goal will be to promote the significant role nurses play in the team-based approach of recovery and in shaping the future of rehabilitation care.



Supportive Surroundings

For patients and families already struggling with the aftermath of serious injury or illness, the financial demands associated with weeks or months of inpatient rehabilitation can add a profound degree of stress and hardship. In response, Spaulding established Supportive Surroundings, which provides coordinated assistance for lodging, transportation, and other specialized needs to our patients and families. The program’s flexible funding offers patients the chance to be close to their loved ones during the demanding experience of rehabilitation, make a safe transition from the hospital to a home environment, and participate in clinical research studies at Spaulding. Supportive Surroundings was launched with a generous lead gift in 2019, and ongoing philanthropic support will enable us to add more accessible, universally designed apartments, enhance our existing apartments, and fund an array of ancillary, yet incredibly beneficial, needs that families might not be able to cover personally or through insurance.

