

While the past year has challenged us in extraordinary ways, Spaulding Research Institute has forged ahead with resilience and resolve. And generous supporters like you have stood with us every step of the way. Thanks to you, we have been able to uphold our mission of unlocking the

science of recovery, while also confronting the complexities the COVID-19 pandemic has placed on our patient populations and the execution of our research. Here we pause to recognize the Institute's remarkable achievements during this unprecedented time, fueled by your generous contributions to

our Discovery Centers, Research Accelerator, Leadership Catalyst and Special Initiatives. We are so grateful for your partnership in our efforts to forge a new era of recovery for patients and families living with disability, injury, or illness.

Making impossible recoveries possible

DISCOVERY CENTERS: Driving Recovery Research

Spaulding Research Institute's five founding Discovery Centers are hubs of research excellence and innovation for priority areas in rehabilitation medicine. Your gifts to these Centers fuel the type of scientific collaboration, risk-taking, and creativity needed to make the discoveries that will revolutionize the field of recovery and transform lives.

Executive Spotlight: Ross Zafonte, D.O.

It was a remarkable year of achievement for Spaulding Research Institute's Executive Director Ross Zafonte, D.O., who was appointed Interim President for Spaulding Rehabilitation Network upon the departure of former president David Storto. Dr. Zafonte was the 2020 winner of the prestigious Distinguished Member Award, which is presented each year by the American Academy of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation to pioneering physiatrists, clinicians, researchers, and public servants who have made "significant contributions to the specialty and to individuals with disabilities and vulnerable populations at risk for disabilities." In addition to his ongoing leadership as Principal Investigator on The Football Players Health Study at Harvard University and as Medical Director for Home Base's Traumatic Brain Injury Program, Dr. Zafonte also received the prestigious 2021 Department of Army Public Service Medal for his longstanding work to improve the quality of life of soldiers and Veterans who have suffered brain injuries.



Discovery Center for Brain Injury and Concussion Recovery

This year, Center researchers published landmark studies on the long-term physical and behavioral health impacts of concussion; using wearable technologies to track the motor recovery of individuals with brain injuries; and the potential misdiagnosis of chronic traumatic encephalopathy, a neurodegenerative brain disease believed to arise from repeated hits to the head, in professional football players. Notably, with generous lead funding from actress Emilia Clarke's foundation SameYou and the Heinz Family Foundation, a team led by Dr. Ross Zafonte launched I RISE, a major study on brain resilience.



Faculty Spotlight: Headlining Brain Injury

DANIEL DANESHVAR, M.D., PH.D.

Dr. Daniel Daneshvar is looking to bring more visibility to the field of concussion and brain injury. "These are largely isolating and invisible injuries with long-term effects that we are only beginning to understand," he says. "With the sheer number of athletes experiencing them each year, even small advances in reporting, education, and research could result in major public health benefits." Spaulding's prominence in traumatic brain injury (TBI) recovery at the intersection of clinical care and research led Dr. Daneshvar to join Spaulding's faculty this year to build on his already-extensive expertise in this specialty. For one, he is founding scientific advisor for CrashCourse, a free interactive, multi-sport concussion education program, and at this year's Association of Academic Physiatrists Annual Meeting, he presented a study showing that the program was better than more traditional approaches at teaching teen athletes the urgency of reporting concussion symptoms. "Until now, no one had done a side-by-side comparison of how effective these most commonly used concussion education programs actually are," he notes. His results were published in *Inquiry* and the *Journal of Athletic Training*, and two additional CrashCourse studies are in the works. With support from the Center, Dr. Daneshvar is looking forward to building on his program-effectiveness research as well as exploring the long-term impact of moderate and severe brain injuries, including the risk of dementia, using data from the federally funded Spaulding-Harvard TBI Model System program. "This is a wonderful opportunity for me," he says.

Scott Schoen and Nancy Adams Discovery Center for Recovery from Chronic Pain

This year, Center researchers continued to drive the development and testing of a variety of creative strategies for pain management and narcotic reduction, including open-label placebos, virtual reality, and non-invasive brain stimulation. Ongoing philanthropic support, including funds from the transformational naming gift to the Center from Scott Schoen and Nancy Adams, has been instrumental in sustaining these efforts.



Faculty Spotlight: Self-Conscious Science

CLAS LINNMAN, PH.D.

For Dr. Clas Linnman, chronic pain is a two-fold problem, existing both in the brain and in the body. "Most people talk about chronic pain either as a brain phenomenon or as an injury phenomenon, but I think it's just so much more complicated," he says. "The pendulum seems to go back and forth between these explanations, but my lab is dedicated to bridging the two." With support from the Center, Dr. Linnman has been investigating the nature of chronic pain in a variety of conditions, particularly spinal cord injury (SCI) and whiplash injury. With colleagues in Colorado and Minnesota, he has been studying patients with extreme neuropathic pain below their SCI to help refine a potential treatment called dorsal root entry

zone (DREZ) surgery by better understanding the contributions of brain versus body to their pain. In a small sample, the preliminary results appear "fantastic" and are being analyzed for publication. "These patients—people who've been on every kind of medication for years—have gone from a suicidal level of pain to pain-free," says Dr. Linnman. In other work focused on patients with whiplash, a neck injury often caused by a rear-end collision, he has used advanced imaging to find some of the first evidence of persistent peripheral inflammation. Being able to actually "see" a potential pain generator deep in the neck not only offers ways to tailor treatment but can also validate the experience of these patients, whose pain is sometimes dismissed as "all in their head." Dr. Linnman points out that collaborative and early-stage studies like these rely on the Center's philanthropic funding: "The protected time, financial stability, and freedom to explore new ideas that comes with this type of support allows me to do the best possible science."

Discovery Center for Musculoskeletal Injury Recovery

This year, Center researchers examined a range of orthopedic and musculoskeletal issues, including the reliability of wearable sensors in assessing impact measurements in sports, the determinants of running and bone stress injuries, the impact of sports activities and injuries on bone mineral density levels, and the use of shockwave treatments to boost the effectiveness of non-surgical therapies. While delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the search is ongoing for a prominent candidate to fill the Center's new directorship, which was established by a foundational gift from Linda Sallop, Mitch Weisman, and Atlantic Charter.

Faculty Spotlight: Giving Orthobiologics Some Muscle

JOANNE BORG-STEIN, M.D.



Few physicians know orthobiologics like Dr. Joanne Borg-Stein. For more than two decades, she has been exploring the use of these innovative therapies injectable biological substances such as platelets, bone marrow, or fat cells—to bolster the healing of musculoskeletal injuries and osteoarthritis. While the effectiveness of these treatments is not yet validated, Dr. Borg-Stein has demonstrated such significant improvement in patients' level of function and pain in her own rehabilitation practice that she has become a huge proponent of conducting and publishing research to prove their value and broaden their availability. "While there's a very healthy, and very appropriate, degree of academic skepticism, I think there's enough promise to do further research to understand the science behind them." she says. "This is pushing those of us in the field to

be diligent and do the research and the controlled trials to build an evidence-based foundation behind their clinical application." This year, with support from the Center, Dr. Borg-Stein has contributed to a variety of comprehensive articles with her colleagues to augment this foundation even as the COVID-19 pandemic placed necessary restrictions on clinical research. She notes that creating a cadre of postdoctoral scientists with an understanding and appreciation of orthobiologics will be the key to accelerating research and should continue to be the focus of philanthropic investment moving forward. "We're in urgent need of funds to advance the field," she says. "This is the tip of the iceberg and will continue to revolutionize how we treat and prevent musculoskeletal injuries."

Paula Ness Speers and Mark S. Speers Discovery Center for Spinal Cord Injury Recovery

While particularly impacted by COVID-19, Center researchers continued to make marked inroads in uncovering innovative strategies to improve the lives of patients with spinal cord injuries (SCI). The ongoing support from the extraordinary naming gift from Paula Ness Speers and Mark S. Speers and others sustained their explorations of areas like whole-body exercise, intermittent oxygen deprivation, and neural stem cell transplantation. J. Andrew Taylor, Ph.D., received a two-year \$150,000 grant from the Paralyzed Veterans of America to examine the use of a serotonin agonist to improve sleep and the beneficial effects of exercise in patients with SCI.



Faculty Spotlight:

Tiger vs. Netflix

RYAN SOLINSKY, M.D.

For Dr. Ryan Solinsky, the secondary complications of spinal cord injury are of primary concern. Many patients with spinal cord injury (SCI) are plagued by associated health issues—everything from high blood pressure to skin wounds to urinary tract infections—that interfere with their ability to achieve the best possible quality of life. "What often holds people back are all these other problems that they get, which can fly under the radar but can make all the difference in their recovery," he says. "We're trying to understand what predisposes some people to these complications compared to others who are able to live happy, productive lives at their functional ceiling without being sick all of the time." With the Center's support, Dr. Solinsky has been looking at the autonomic nervous system—the body's unconscious regulator of functions like heart rate, digestion, respiration, and urination, which sustains the balance between our "fight-or-flight" and our "rest-and-digest" responses. "That's all controlled through pathways that pass through the spinal cord, and when you get an injury, it results in two systems that are out of balance," he says. "Below the injury, the body may say, 'Tiger! Tiger! Tiger!' in response to a stressor, while above the injury it may have no idea what's going on and say, 'Netflix. Netflix.'" Through comprehensive examinations, Dr. Solinsky has found that those patients who have complete motor and sensory SCI but still retain some autonomic signaling through the spinal cord may suffer fewer secondary complications and have more positive functional outcomes. To build on this successful pilot, he now has funding to apply electrical stimulation to the spinal cord to potentially achieve more autonomic balance. "So if you're all Netflix, how can we stimulate new signals to bring you back into balance and make you more Tiger? " he muses.

Discovery Center for Stroke Recovery

Philanthropic support to the Center, including a generous unrestricted gift from Margaret Sullivan, enabled researchers to pursue studies integrating non-invasive brain stimulation with drug-based therapy to improve post-stroke motor recovery, using wrist-worn sensors for home-based arm rehabilitation in stroke survivors. and uncovering a genetic predictor of impaired cognitive function after stroke.

Faculty Spotlight: Going with the Flow CAN OZAN TAN/PH.D.

Dr. Can Ozan Tan believes that a key to improving certain stroke outcomes may be to focus less on structure and more on function. Up to 70 percent of stroke survivors have persistent thought or memory challenges. Until recently, the traditional view was that they were caused by structural damage to the brain. "We're challenging that notion," says Dr. Tan. "We have shown that functional changes in blood flow to the brain after a stroke contribute to these problems—much like what occurs with aging, but at a much faster rate." With the Center's support, his lab has been using a combination of computational and experimental tools to study our body's ability to maintain an adequate and stable blood flow to the brain, a process known as cerebral autoregulation. The brain is extremely sensitive to changes in blood flow and pressure, both at the high and low ends of the spectrum. Dr. Tan has found that the extent and nature of autoregulation impairment in the brain after a stroke is a strong indicator for neurologic complications, making regulating blood flow a good target for rehabilitative intervention.



Dr. Tan is now restarting studies to examine how physical and cognitive exercise may work to mitigate these problems in stroke survivors. During the pandemic, however, he and his colleagues found plenty to do. "Most stroke survivors do not have access to long-term clinical programs in the community," says Dr. Tan. "Capturing their physical and mental wellness and activity in this setting is paramount, and we started taking steps to translate what we have learned from the lab and clinical settings to major community centers."

RESEARCH ACCELERATOR: Speeding The Science Of Recovery

We are so grateful for all gifts to the Research Accelerator, which offer our rehabilitation experts opportunities to explore novel avenues of investigation and launch pilot studies that can be leveraged to secure other major sources of funding. This past year was noteworthy for Research Accelerator support, with significant grants from the Jack Satter Foundation, the Hearst Foundations, and the Connors Family.

Research Accelerator Award Spotlight

This year, Felipe Fregni, M.D., Ph.D., was the recipient of a competitive Research Accelerator grant for a project entitled "Machine Learning Prediction Model in Phantom Limb Pain."

At Spaulding's Neuromodulation Center, Dr. Fregni has been investigating the promise of applying noninvasive brain stimulation techniques to improve recovery from a variety of chronic painful conditions. Contrary to traditional belief, the brain has remarkable "plasticity"—the ability to adapt or modify its structure and function—which can be a critical component of rehabilitation. Taking advantage of this trait, these innovative techniques involve using electrodes or a magnetic field to painlessly modulate the activity of certain brain pathways to counteract or compensate for the neurological effects of disease or injury. Recently, Dr. Fregni and his team have been evaluating the impact of home-based, non-invasive brain stimulation combined with sensorimotor training to reduce phantom limb pain (PLP), ongoing painful sensations ascribed to a body part that is no longer there. PLP is a frequent and refractory complication in amputees, which severely affects their quality of life and currently has no effective treatment. Because Dr. Fregni's team has found that the analgesic response to their non-pharmacological intervention varies significantly among study participants—depending on sensory, mood, and cognitive characteristics—this new Research Accelerator-funded project will focus on using artificial intelligence methods to uncover predictors of therapeutic outcome. The findings will ideally help the researchers to classify responders and nonresponders to the novel protocol and further develop personalized pain management strategies for PLP.





Because phantom limb pain is resistant to classical treatments, we are exploring new options that incorporate non-invasive brain stimulation and target all dimensions of the pain experience. What we learn about people's differential responses to these approaches can inform how we develop patients' rehabilitation plans."

—Dr. Felipe Fregni

LEADERSHIP CATALYST: Empowering Emerging Researchers

Thanks to your gifts to the Leadership Catalyst—which create an invaluable resource to support research fellowships, provide postdoctoral bridge funding, and underwrite junior faculty positions—we are growing a robust pipeline of young investigators at Spaulding Research Institute. These early-career leaders are defining the course of rehabilitation research and advancing the standard of care for patients and families. Although there were no new Leadership Catalyst fellows in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the fellowship program will resume with a new class in the summer of 2021.

Leadership Catalyst Fellow Spotlight

This year, Matthew Ely, Ph.D., continued his Leadership Catalyst postdoctoral fellowship in the laboratory of J. Andrew Taylor, Ph.D.

Dr. Matthew Ely is investigating ways to increase the physical recovery of individuals with spinal cord injury (SCI) from a cardiovascular standpoint. People with SCI are increasingly sedentary and less physically active, which results in heart shrinkage and a subsequent impairment in cardiac function. As a fellow, Dr. Ely has focused on understanding how the heart changes during the acute period the first two years—after an SCI and how exercise might mitigate these detrimental effects during this phase. He has found that heart atrophy occurs quite quickly and continuously in this early time frame and that certain types of specialized exercise, such as functional electrical stimulation rowing, may help reduce its impact. This area of research is important because smaller heart size and diminished function are associated with increased risk of cardiovascular diseases. An additional focus of Dr. Ely's work is whether altered blood glucose regulationwhich is common after an SCI and a risk factor for cardiovascular disease—is related to adipokines, signaling molecules released from fat cells. He is now creating a protocol to examine if the adipokine profile is altered in people with SCI in a way that inhibits normal insulin function and glucose uptake; if so, it may offer another avenue to reduce patients' risk of heart disease in the future.





This fellowship has allowed me to apply my cardiac expertise to a population that is really understudied and often overlooked—and has the potential to change these people's lives dramatically. But it's helped me too. Andy is one of the smartest people I've met in terms of the way he applies science to the approaches we integrate in our lab. Every time I talk to him, I walk away learning something new."

> —Dr. Matthew Elv (with Dr. J. Andrew Taylor above right)

SPECIAL INITIATIVES: Enhancing Extraordinary Care

Your generous philanthropic support advances a variety of special initiatives and network-wide priorities at Spaulding that are changing the face of rehabilitation medicine.

Nurses As Leaders

It was only appropriate that 2020 was the International Year of the Nurse as our nursing staff across the Spaulding network rose to meet the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic head on. Throughout it all, they remained committed to working on the Nurses As Leaders Four Pillars—clinical care, education, research, and advocacy and the progress of our journey to achieve Magnet® status, a prestigious recognition of nursing excellence. This year, Spaulding held its first-ever Nursing Town Hall Meeting and created the Seacole Scholars, a donor-supported program designed to help patient care assistants fulfill their goal of becoming nurses. We are grateful to all the supporters of our nursing efforts, including lead donors Janice and Ralph James and Carol M. O'Connor Fischer and David B. Fischer as well as the Diana Davis Spencer Foundation, a longstanding donor that gave an additional \$100,000 grant this year to sustain the John Means Spencer Caregiver Award and the Nurses As Leaders Fund.



Despite the unprecedented challenges of working through a pandemic, our nurses were innovative, brave, bold, and compassionate, out-of-the-box thinkers who stopped at nothing to make sure our patients received the best care possible. I know we will use many of the practices we identified during this time to further enhance our nursing culture of excellence."

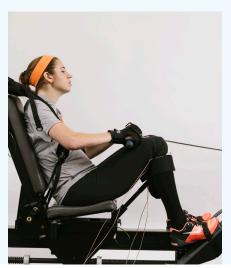
—Maureen Banks, R.N., D.P.N., Chief Operating Officer and Chief Nursing Officer

Dean Center for Tick Borne Illness



In 2015, Spaulding's Dean Center for Tick Borne Illness became the first specialized center in the United States dedicated to improving the lives of people recuperating from tick-borne infections and remains one of only a handful nationwide. This year, the Dean Center opened its new Pediatric Clinic, a first-of-its-kind effort to deliver personalized and innovative treatment to children with Lyme disease using a family-oriented, team-based strategy. The anonymous donor whose generous \$1 million gift launched our Pediatric Clinic has also pledged to match up to \$500,000 from other contributors to support this growing program.

Exercise for Persons with Disabilities (ExPD)



Spaulding's ExPD program provides individually tailored training opportunities for people with spinal cord injury, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, and stroke, enabling them to participate in exercise that is not only fun and engaging but also benefits their overall physical and mental health. With rising enrollment, the demand for staff, equipment, and validated science grows so we are increasingly reliant on philanthropy to ensure ExPD, which is not reimbursed by insurance, continues to fulfill its promise to patients. An anonymous donor pledged a \$300,000 challenge grant to be completed by the end of 2020 to help expand ExPD's efforts and conduct meaningful research to measure the program's impact. We are so grateful to all our donors who helped us successfully meet our deadline for this match, particularly many members of our **Board of Trustees** who redirected their year-end annual giving to show their support of this important initiative.

Supportive Surroundings

Spaulding's Supportive Surroundings program helps offset the added financial demands associated with weeks or months of inpatient rehabilitation for families already struggling with the aftermath of serious injury or illness. The two-pronged initiative provides coordinated assistance for nearby lodging as well as transportation, equipment, and other specialized needs. This year, with the generosity of donors like **Donna Zerwitz**, Supportive Surroundings has served the varied needs of almost 60 patients and their families, including providing nine with short-term living arrangements at our apartments at Harborview. That number is expected to grow as COVID-19 restrictions ease, and already the program has plans to add four more accessible, universally designed apartments to its existing two. Sadly, our Supportive Surroundings community also suffered a devastating loss this year with the tragic passing of founding donor Jennifer K. (Jamie) Bemis, whose lead gift made this entire effort possible.



Supportive Surroundings offers patients the chance to be close to their loved ones during the demanding experience of rehabilitation without contributing to their financial burden or stress. This program is perfectly aligned with Spaulding's mission, and while many of us dreamed of bringing these services to a new level, it was really Jamie's vision and forthrightness that made it a reality."

> —Robert McCall. Senior Vice President of Network Development and Inpatient Rehabilitation Services

SPAULDING RESEARCH INSTITUTE IN THE TIME OF COVID

For biomedical research, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a time of both challenge and opportunity. The investigative teams across Spaulding Research Institute responded with their trademark brand of flexibility, creativity, and collaboration to sustain the scientific excellence for which Spaulding is known, while taking on new roles and responsibilities to treat and safeguard our patient populations in the best ways possible. Generous gifts to the Institute and to our dedicated Emergency Response Fund—most notably from The Manton Foundation—have been instrumental to our achievements over the past year, and philanthropy will remain vital to our ongoing success as we grapple with the many unknowns of what will be our new normal.



The Impact of COVID on Spaulding Science

In mid-March of 2020, in response to the escalating COVID-19 emergency, Spaulding dramatically curtailed its on-site research activities to ensure the health and well-being of our faculty, fellows, students, staff, and study participants as well as to conserve the personal protective equipment needed for the clinical surge in COVID cases. During this time, our researchers had to make critical adjustments in their work while staying true to their mission of advancing the science of recovery. Many evaluated results and submitted to journals at unprecedented rates with the pause in the face-toface study of human subjects. "It was surprisingly productive from a scientific standpoint," says Dr. Ryan Solinsky, a researcher in the Speers Discovery Center for Spinal Cord Injury Recovery. "Having some time outside of the lab allowed me to focus

on analyzing a wealth of data that I may not have gotten to so quickly before." While on-site research has gradually resumed, a virtual component of our research may be here to stay. At the height of the pandemic, many of our clinical investigators continued to collect data using remote technologies while developing and refining the methodologies with which science is conducted. "It's honestly a lot easier for the patients," says Dr. Solinsky. "The degree of coordination in terms of travel and scheduling required for patients with spinal cord injury is almost like running a small business. Although it will never replace the need for in-person interaction, the virtual world can ease some of that burden on our study participants and increase our productivity."

The Impact of Spaulding Science on COVID

The complexities of COVID-19 have ushered in unparalleled opportunities for new avenues of discovery—particularly in Spaulding's niche of rehabilitation. Perhaps most significantly, the leadership at Spaulding Research Institute recognized that many patients recovering from the novel coronavirus will contend with ongoing health problems. "It became clear very quickly that this was an area where we could have real impact," says Dr. Joseph Giacino, Director of Spaulding's Neurorehabilitation Laboratory. "The principal investigators from across Spaulding's labs all got together to establish COVID research infrastructure and develop a protocol to examine the long-term effects of this illness and identify associated rehab needs." In April 2020, Spaulding launched the RECOVR (REhabilitation and COVid Recovery) Study, a 12-month longitudinal investigation of patients who were diagnosed with the SARS-CoV-2 virus and treated as inpatients at our dedicated COVID unit at Spaulding Cambridge, which Dr. Giacino co-leads. Preliminary data suggest that about 40 percent of

these patients continue to have persistent physical, cognitive, and emotional symptoms that are significant enough to interfere with employment and even basic activities of daily living as long as six months after hospitalization. In addition to this study, Spaulding scientists are leading and contributing to a multitude of COVID-19-related research projects—including an evaluation of physical activity and health during the pandemic, the use of wearable health-monitoring technologies, a study of disparities in hospitalization and ICU admissions, and the effectiveness of a virtual adaptive sports program—which will not only have relevance to rehabilitation but other areas of health and science more broadly. "If the pandemic taught us anything is that it's possible to dramatically accelerate the time it takes to convert a lab finding into an effective therapy," says Dr. Giacino. "This happened because many of the traditional discipline-specific silos came down. And now these changes are already reverberating into other areas of science. It's exciting."

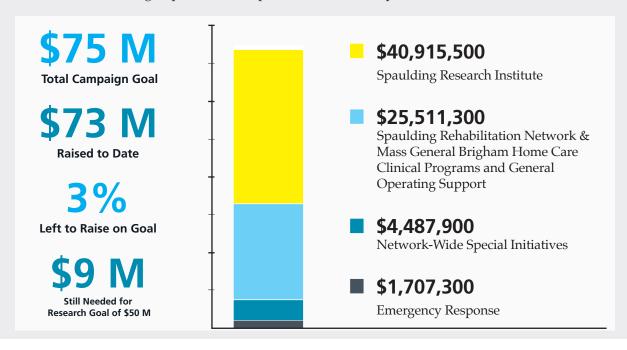


CAMPAIGN FOR SPAULDING RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Launched on October 1, 2016, the Campaign for Spaulding Research Institute is a groundbreaking philanthropic effort to: accelerate the pace at which research discoveries are made; recruit, retain, and train the best and brightest investigators in the science of recovery; and fuel translational rehabilitation science in five Institute-based Discovery Centers focused on recovery from brain injury and concussion, chronic pain, musculoskeletal injury, spinal cord injury, and stroke. This comprehensive campaign, cochaired by Ann Merrifield and Barry Mills, also supports innovative clinical programming and standard-setting in rehabilitation medicine and other strategic Spaulding priorities.

CAMPAIGN PROGRESS

As of April 30, 2021, the Campaign for Spaulding Research Institute has raised \$73 million—or 97 percent of its \$75 million goal—across all areas of institutional and philanthropic importance, including our Emergency Response efforts as we confronted the complexities of COVID-19. We invite you to join us in our capstone year as we continue to expand our pioneering research initiatives and enhance other meaningful priorities to improve the lives of our patients and families.





Barry Mills and Ann Merrifield, Campaign Co-Chairs, (photographed pre-COVID)

This history-making campaign has been so important to the growth and development of Spaulding's research enterprise, which is at the forefront of developing strategies and treatments to rehabilitate patients and improve their lives. This effort is literally transforming the field of recovery."

> —Barry Mills, Co-Chair, Campaign for Spaulding Research Institute

SPECIAL THANK YOU to our Campaign Investor Leaders*

\$10,000,000+

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\$5,000,000-9,999,999

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*as of April 30, 2021 [◊]deceased

SPAULDING RESEARCH INSTITUTE: Making Impossible Recoveries Possible

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