



A Lasting Connection

Not many alumni know the University of Chicago and Chicago Booth as well as David M. Lee, '87. In addition to pursuing his MBA at the school, Lee has worked at the university's financial mathematics program as an adjunct professor. He also has served on the Parent and Family Council, his reunion committee, the Alumni Association Board, and the Council on Chicago Booth. His eldest son graduated from the College in May, and his middle son will start classes in the fall. This deep connection to the school has fueled Lee's philanthropy throughout the years.

Upon his graduation in 1987, Lee made his first gift to the school that same year. Since then, he's had a long history of giving, making substantial contributions during this current fundraising campaign to support Booth's Charles M. Harper Center, the College, the University of Chicago Francis and Rose Yuen Center in Hong Kong, and the Booth Annual Fund.

"I think Dean Boyer has done a tremendous job with the College, balancing the rigorous core curriculum, culture, and tradition of the school," he said. "My children are lucky to have been able to obtain this top quality education at this juncture in the University of Chicago's history. I hope, and am quite certain, this tremendous experience will stay with them throughout their careers and lives. I believe the university as a whole is moving toward a very exciting path under the leadership of [university president] Bob Zimmer, and I just want to do my small part in giving back to the school."

Lee's gifts to Booth assist the school both here and abroad.

"I focus on the school's core Chicago campus, but also support plans for the school to expand its Asian footprint in Hong Kong," he said. "I strongly believe Chicago Booth is the top business school in the world, and we should support it globally in order to maintain that excellence."

Challenging the Status Quo

Lee was born in Dallas to parents who had immigrated to the United States from Shanghai, China. The family then moved to Hong Kong when Lee was three, but he came back to the United States for his education. He attended Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, and then worked as a consultant/CPA at Arthur Young & Co. in New York. But with his interest in global capital markets and finance, Lee thought it wise to pursue his MBA.

"Miami Ohio had a strong accountancy and mathematics program, in which I double majored. However, it was very much an undergraduate institution with limited global and national exposure at the graduate school level," Lee said. "I was looking for a top finance graduate school education with a global presence and strong diversity of students. The University of Chicago's business school was clearly the top choice."

The school did not disappoint. Lee was taught by faculty members including Professors Merton Miller, Eugene Fama, Doug Diamond, and Abbie Smith.

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"They urged me to challenge the status quo and pushed us as students to rethink assumptions," he said. "It gave me the critical thinking experience and capability to face various challenges in my career. I also learned much from interacting with my classmates."

Upon graduation, Lee joined Bankers Trust Company, became managing director for UBS Investment Bank and Asset Management, and then moved on to Credit Suisse, where he has worked since 2010 and is currently chief risk officer, alternative investments and asset management. Lee—who speaks three different Chinese dialects and is also proficient in Japanese—has traveled extensively for work and pleasure and credits his international upbringing with allowing him to feel comfortable all over the world.

"In my career, it's been very helpful to have an understanding of global cultures," he said. "I deal with different investors, portfolio managers, senior management, and regulators, and it's important to have an understanding of how to think globally and act locally—no matter where you are."

Part of the Faculty

As an alumnus who kept in close touch with his former professors, Lee learned of a plan to expand the mathematics department faculty through adjunct professors in early 2000. He went through the recruitment process and, from 2001-09, while working full-time in New York, he traveled weekly to Chicago to teach in the university's financial mathematics graduate program.

"Although my business schedule was quite busy, I was interested in being connected back to the academic world, especially with a rigorous program like Chicago's," he said. "It was a very rewarding experience. The students were bright and had lots of challenging questions, and I also learned from the faculty. I felt the teaching experience helped my own career, as it forced me to look at financial markets from a different perspective. It was also a great recruiting ground for my firm, and I have hired at least six graduates from the program over the years."

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His family would frequently join Lee in Chicago while he was teaching, which Lee feels helped foster his children's interest in the city and the school.

"Selecting a university was always their own choice," Lee said. "I think, ultimately, the excellent faculty and reputation attracted them to apply and enroll in the College. When I come visit them on campus now, I notice a vast improvement to the facilities and buildings, as well as the technology upgrades. For example, the Mansueto Library site used to be our practice tennis courts in the old days."

Inspiring Philanthropy

Lee was recently named to the Council on Chicago Booth with approximately two years remaining on the University of Chicago Campaign: Inquiry and Impact, and will be working closely with Dean Madhav Rajan and his fellow Council members to further shape the school.

"The campaign is being held at a crucial point of this great university," he said. "Therefore, I decided to be more engaged in terms of leadership positions and also be more supportive in funding to help the school exceed the goals of this campaign."

He hopes others will do the same. As gift chair for his 30-year reunion this year, he issued a challenge to his class, matching Dean's Society level gifts up to \$75,000. To inspire some friendly Booth competition, he then extended an additional \$75,000 in matching funds to all other reunion classes and matched any gift to the Annual Fund dollar for dollar until the funds were used. As a result, the class of 1987 broke the all-time record for reunion fundraising—with more than \$4.7 million raised, in part because of the success of the challenge.

Of his personal motivation to give, Lee said, "I want to ensure the business school continues to be globally competitive in attracting the best students and recruiting the best faculty. This is a special place with many special alums, and I just want to do my share to contribute to its continuous success."