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Stanford handed \$400 million gift

Hewlett Foundation funds will aid humanities

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Stanford University received yesterday the largest single donation ever given to an American institution of higher education — \$400 million from the foundation established by late Silicon Valley pioneer William Hewlett.

The donation will be used to provide a huge increase in endowments to Stanford's traditionally underfunded humanities and natural sciences departments, as well as its undergraduate programs.

A beaming Malcolm Beasley, dean of the School of Humanities and Sciences, described the donation from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation as "breath-taking."

Humanities and Sciences is the largest of Stanford's seven schools — but also its least endowed. It is often overlooked by benefactors more interested in promoting the hard sciences, or the law, business and medical schools.

The two co-founders of high-tech giant Hewlett-Packard Co. —

Hewlett, who died in January at the age of 87, and his late partner and fellow Stanford engineering graduate, David Packard — were major benefactors of their alma mater in their lifetimes, donating more than \$300 million to various campus projects and programs.

But the foundation far surpassed those acts of generosity with yesterday's record gift.

Hewlett's son, Walter, foundation president, said it was a tribute to his father's "lifetime of philanthropy, his lifelong devotion to Stanford and his passionate belief in the value of a liberal arts education."

He also said his father was a great believer in "leveraging his philanthropy." Taking that same approach, Hewlett said, the foundation was challenging other potential Stanford benefactors to follow its lead in support of the humanities.

Echoing a complaint often heard at Stanford these days, Hewlett noted that because of the

\$400 million grant for humanities

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unusually high cost of living and housing prices in the Bay Area, the university is at a distinct disadvantage in competing with its Ivy League counterparts and other peer institutions for the best and brightest of faculty and students.

The result, he said, is that funds that might otherwise go to enhance academic programs often are drained off for recruiting and building more affordable housing on campus. He said it was hoped that the foundation's gift would "strengthen the financial underpinnings of this very special institution."

Stanford President John Hennessy, a computer science millionaire himself and former dean of Stanford's engineering school, said the foundation's gift was "very much in the tradition of Bill Hewlett — a strategic investment in the university he loved, addressing its most compelling and immediate needs."

Beyond its size, Hennessy said, what made the gift unusual was that the donated funds will be unrestricted. That will allow the university to increase the School of Humanities and Sciences' relatively small 12 percent share of Stanford's \$8 billion endowment.

Stanford has earmarked \$300 million for endowed professorships and graduate fellowships in the humanities divisions, where they are most needed. The remaining \$100 million will go for undergraduate scholarships, as

part of Hennessy's \$1 billion fundraising drive to improve undergraduate programs.

The gift also seemed to be an endorsement of Hennessy's pledge when he took over as president last year from Gerhard Casper to promote support of the arts and humanities among his friends and colleagues in Silicon Valley.

"This is a ringing affirmation of the centrality of a liberal education ... at a time in history when it is so easy to be swept up in the technology revolution," said Stanford history professor David Kennedy, Pulitzer Prize winner in nonfiction last year for "Freedom From Fear," his book on the Depression and World War II.

According to a spokeswoman for the Council for Aid to Education, based in New York, the Hewlett Foundation's Stanford gift is the largest in terms of cash or stocks ever made to one university

in the United States — and perhaps the world. The largest donation made in support generally of higher education is considered to be a \$1 billion pledge by Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates for minority scholarships.

Before the Hewlett Foundation announcement yesterday, the largest single gift in Stanford's 110-year history was \$150 million, pledged in 1999 by Netscape founder Jim Clark for the creation of a center to house Stanford's new Biomedical Engineering and Sciences program.

Meanwhile, the Chronicle of Higher Education reported last week that Stanford raised \$580 million during the 1999-2000 academic year from alumni and other benefactors, topping the nation's other colleges and universities.

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