A young Hope chemistry major, Dr. A. Paul Schaap ’67 practically lived in the laboratory.

“I once became involved in research, while I certainly continued to work at my classes, it became the main focus of my career at Hope College,” he said. “It’s one thing to learn about science in the classroom, or to learn it in the teaching laboratory; but it’s another level of excitement to be involved in original experiments.”

Dr. Schaap went on to a career that included teaching the experience is. From his time at Hope Dr. A. Paul Schaap ‘67 and his wife Carol have become the main focus of my career at Hope College, the company that he had founded in 1987 to commercialize the dioxetanes, which are now distributed worldwide by major corporations because of their sensitivity, versatility and stability as chemiluminescent detector reagents in life-science research and medical diagnostics. Now retired from Lumigen as well, he is active in community service—including as a member of the college’s Board of Trustees.

Dr. Schaap and his wife, Carol, who live in Groves Pointe Park, Mich., have 46 that it is important to give back to Hope to help assure that today’s students have access to the same education that he enjoyed. In addition to a major gift recognized by the naming of the A. Paul Schaap Science Center in 2006, they have provided a $2 million endowment and completed an $8 million charitable remainder unitrust (a deferred gift which will provide a later benefit to Hope) to fund collaborative research.

“It’s a reflection of how important participating in research at Hope was to me in my education and scientific career, and I really want that experience for other students,” he said. “I also saw the importance of research when I was a faculty member at Wayne State University and taught my own students, both undergraduate and graduate.”

Hope is a recognized leader nationally for involving students in collaborative research, experience that brings to life the lessons of the science classroom and adds many more. Junior Robert Sjoholm has been conducting research with chemist and dean Dr. Mosse Lewis his freshman year. His goal is to conduct research in the treatment of infectious diseases that affect predominantly developing countries, likely after obtaining an M.D./Ph.D. degree following Hope.

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The Schaaps’ gift is well-timed. Demand for research experiences is high and the benefits are clear and numerous, but financing the program remains an ongoing challenge—and in some ways an increasingly difficult one. Much of the support for student researchers has traditionally come from external competitive grants, often federal, won by faculty, but much funding is always uncertain. The college is correspondingly placing a priority on building endowment to sustain in certainty a program that is a signature part of a Hope education.

And to expand it. In the latter half of the 20th century, the natural and applied sciences at Hope earned a reputation for excellence through the collaborative-research program, but the methodology is solidly applied in the arts, humanities and social sciences as well. It’s no accident that Hope psychology students have won regional Psi Chi research awards for the past 11 years in a row, and national research honors in three of the past seven years.

The support and projects can take many forms. Linda and David ’64 Wenselink, for example, established an endowed fund in support of collaborative learning through the Center for Faithful Leadership. The center is using the support for consulting projects for area organizations in need.

Senior accounting major Jacob Rolenhagen of Ada, Mich., recall a stipend that enabled him to spend his summer with the center’s AIS (Assessment, Solutions, Implementation) program, helping the independent food pantries of Allegan County develop a way to coordinate their efforts to serve a growing need—given the economic times, they had seen a 30 percent increase in demand for food.

“My work at AIS allowed me to grow both as a student and a person,” said Rolenhagen, who plans to become a CPA after graduation. “There was a way to measure the exact number of people who will be fed because of the project but, I do know the process I developed will feed many and make a great impact. Even if one more child is fed because of my work, it is worth it.”

His work included studying a variety of food pantries and other communities’ solutions, working with multiple organizations and individuals with a variety of needs and ideas, and then bringing the research and interactions together. “The skills I acquired in my position at AIS are not only great tools for success in business, but also in life,” he said.

“My work at the Center for Faithful Leadership solved a real-life problem,” Rolenhagen said of the last time I grew a heart for giving to those who are less fortunate. I cannot thank Dr. Steve VanderVeen and Dr. Virgil Gulker [of the Center faculty] enough for granting me the opportunity to transform in this way during my years at Hope College.”