“Her wonderful generosity will make an important difference in our students’ lives for generations to come.”

— President Jack Miller

Carol A. Ammon ’73
A Passion for Learning, A Passion for Helping
Passion, combined with a hefty dose of serendipity, is Carol Ammon’s prescription for success. It has served her well at every turn in her life, from her days as an undergraduate at CCSU, to the founding of her own pharmaceutical company and taking it public. She now finds herself in the enviable position of determining how best to share the fortune she earned, and high on the list is her alma mater, CCSU.

“Paying it back is the absolute right thing to do,” Ammon says with total conviction. She graduated from Central with a BA in 1973.

“I’m a custodian of this money; I don’t own it,” she emphasizes. For those who dream of earning big bucks or hitting the lottery jackpot, Ammon would tell them that the “greatest gift is how extraordinarily satisfying it is to give it back and see the difference it can make.”

These days, much of her time is spent as chairman of the board and a trustee of the Christiana Care Health System, but she also manages her charitable foundation to, as she puts it, “maximize and leverage” the majority of her wealth. Ammon now lives in Delaware, where Christiana is based, but grew up in New Hyde Park, NY. As a high school student, Ammon was unsure of what her college or career options might be. Her guidance counselor recommended Central, and a trip to New Britain with her parents convinced her Central was the place for her.

“As soon as I got on campus, I felt comfortable and like I belonged,” she says. “I loved the environment, the size of the campus, and the small classes. I didn’t feel lost.” That was 1969, a time when many women felt limited in their career choices. Ammon recalls how her parents had instilled in her the sense that she could do anything. At Central, she set out to discover what that “anything” would be. With the help of Career Services, she took aptitude tests, talked to counselors, and researched options. One chemistry class changed everything.

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“I seemed to have an inclination for the sciences, but a career in the sciences was highly unusual for women,” Ammon reminisces. The mentoring of two chemistry professors helped her gain the confidence she needed to stay the course.

“I was one of eight women in the program, but Professors Richard Groth and Timothy Shine [both of whom have since retired] made me feel very comfortable. They gave me direction and helped me believe a science career was possible.” Much appreciated support also came from her dorm parents, Beth ’65 and Lenny Lavalette ’67.

“Beth and Lenny helped me reach a number of important decisions relative to my future,” Ammon says. “I have so much to thank them for.”

After graduating from Central, Ammon was hired as an associate scientist in pharmaceutical research and development. During her 23 years with the corporation, she served in a variety of positions of increasing responsibility in finance, manufacturing, and sales and marketing.

She says of those years, “I had to dig deep and become passionate about everything I was learning.” Her formal education continued at Adelphia University where she earned an MBA and recently was awarded an honorary doctorate. She also completed the Advanced Management Program at Harvard University.

In 1996, she was named president of the US Pharmaceuticals Division of DuPont Merck and was responsible for a significant share of the company’s corporate revenue and earnings. A year later, when DuPont Merck decided to sell off nearly 40 of its pain management products, Ammon seized the opportunity; she led a buyout team to purchase the products and founded a new company. “I was in the right place at the right time,” she recalls.

As CEO of Endo Pharmaceuticals, Inc., based in Chadds Ford, PA, she led the company through incredible growth. When Ammon decided to retire in 2007, Endo was employing 1,000 people and boasting net sales of over $1 billion. The sale of her holdings earned her considerable wealth, which she soon began to invest in the needs of others.

Among those investments is a scholarship fund she helped establish at CCSU in 2008 to honor the memory of her former Central roommate Frances E. Librera ’73. This past December, it was an $8 million endowment from the Carol A. Ammon Foundation, the largest gift the University has ever received. It will be used to fund student scholarships.

“My experience at Central established the foundation for my financial and career success. Now I want to do the same thing for others who want an excellent education,” she says.

At a December news conference announcing her gift, President Jack Miller called Ammon “an inspiration” to students. He added, “Her wonderful generosity will make an important difference in our students’ lives for generations to come. This is particularly important for CCSU, where many of our students must balance work and family responsibilities while pursuing their education.”

Director of Institutional Advancement Cynthia Cayer calls Ammon “a true philanthropist” who is involved in giving for all the right reasons. “She has the right mindset about what her social responsibility is, and she is genuinely concerned about student success and the University.”

As a gesture of gratitude, the Connecticut State University Board of Trustees approved a resolution naming the School of Arts & Sciences the Carol A. Ammon School of Arts & Sciences.

“I can’t tell you how gratifying it is to leverage my success and invest in students, students like me, with a love for learning and a potential yet to be discovered,” she said.

In May 2011, the University will be holding a celebration in honor of Ammon’s extraordinary generosity.

The first Carol A. Ammon Foundation scholarships will be awarded in the fall.