Greenbaum's Academic Village
CHC has always prided itself on being a “community of scholars,” now more than ever with the new residential community. But Commonwealth Honors College didn’t always have a building of its own, 3,000 students, or even honors advisors. What it did have, since its founding in 1960, was a commitment to academic excellence, scholarship, and providing every opportunity possible to its talented students.

Louis Greenbaum, professor of history from 1955 to 1992, and first director of the original Honors Program from 1960 to 1963, is one of the many people involved in the initial and continued success of this community. Even though he’s been retired from the University for twenty-two years, Greenbaum maintains a strong interest in CHC. Inspired by the progress the program has made in the past fifty years, Greenbaum and his wife, Hilda, donated $250,000 to support the CHC Residential Community. Greenbaum said, “I have great pride in what the students did over many years... our gift is fitting to acknowledge the past and to feel confident about [CHC’s] continued success in the future.” The campus will recognize the Greenbaums’ generosity by naming Classroom 301 the Louis S. Greenbaum Classroom, and the gallery just outside the classroom the Louis and Hilda Greenbaum Gallery. Greenbaum said he felt that donating to support a classroom was particularly
appropriate “because that’s where the action happened. That was the locus of real power, real excitement.” He also hopes his contribution can help further support students through future scholarships and academic programs.

“Those were the three happiest years of my life,” Greenbaum said recalling his time as the Honors Program director. He cited his greatest inspiration as Thomas Jefferson, who designed the University of Virginia to be an “academic village,” because of the belief that learning is a product of people living and interacting together. “[Jefferson’s academic village] was a place where new knowledge could be obtained, new solutions to ancient and vexing problems…. This is an academic village,” said Greenbaum, gesturing at the new facilities, made up of seven buildings that include residence halls, classrooms, a 24-hour café, an events hall, and the Bloom Honors Advising Center. He was proud to see that the humble program he and his colleagues brought to life in 1960 had flourished, opening more opportunities for its exceptional students than he imagined possible.

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