

Millersville University receives \$3M gift, its second largest ever, for business college



- [ALEX GELI | Staff Writer](#)



Dena, left, and Samuel Lombardo, of Lititz, stand in front of the Lombardo Welcome Center at Millersville University in June 2018.

Kevin Nash, on behalf of Millersville University

Millersville University has received \$3 million, its second largest gift ever, to help attract students and experienced faculty to its burgeoning college of business, the university announced Wednesday afternoon.

The gift comes from Samuel Lombardo, a successful entrepreneur and business owner from Lititz, and his wife, Dena. The pair has gifted the university \$5 million over the years, including a [\\$1.2 million](#) contribution in 2015 toward the \$7.5 million Lombardo Welcome Center, an internationally recognized building that [generates more energy](#) than it consumes.

Starting Wednesday, the university's business college, created in July 2019 and serving about 700 students, will be known as the Lombardo College of Business.

The university plans to create a \$3 million endowment with the gift that will support student scholarships, faculty research and develop new academic programs.

Millersville President Daniel Wubah said the gift will benefit a local economy hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic by attracting skilled, knowledgeable workers to Lancaster County.

"The timing couldn't have been better," Wubah told LNP | LancasterOnline via Zoom Tuesday, later adding, "He's investing in the future of our community."

Samuel Lombardo, in a phone call Tuesday, said he wanted to help Millersville's business students so they might avoid some of the mistakes he made while starting a business from the ground up. Now 73, he created his own business at 33 years old.

That business – now called [The Benecon Group](#), which specializes in developing innovative and effective employee benefit solutions – has since been listed four different times by Inc. Magazine as one of the "500 Fastest Growing Companies in America."

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Samuel Lombardo serves as chair and CEO, overseeing 165 full-time employees, at least 30 of them Millersville graduates.

He's also known for his family's [restaurant business](#). He bought Lombardo's, an Italian restaurant at 216 Harrisburg Ave., in December 2018. His uncles started the restaurant in 1946, and his cousins ran it before he took over.

"I think people that have been fortunate and blessed and had the ability to persevere and stick to a certain path to success need to share that guidance with young people to help them avoid the same pitfalls that they had to go through themselves," he said.

The Lombardos' gift is the second largest in Millersville's history behind a [\\$3.5 million](#) contribution for nursing students from the estate of Liselotte R. Wehrheim, a 1974 alumnus, last year.

In 2007, the university awarded Samuel Lombardo an honorary doctorate.

The husband and wife have also supported organizations such as the Lancaster Cleft Palate Clinic, Schreiber Pediatrics the Clinic for Special Children, Franklin & Marshall College and the United Disabilities and Veterans Honor Park.