Harris Hancock Scholarship Fund

The Harris Hancock Scholarship Fund was initiated in the late 1970s by three faculty members: Jim Deddens, Jim Osterburg, and David Minda. The fund was given its name when David Minda was the department head in the early 1990s to recognize Harris Hancock who played an important role in the development of the Mathematical Sciences Department.

Hancock was born in Virginia in 1867, just after the Civil War. He did his graduate work at the great mathematical centers of Europe. He began work at the University of Cambridge (England) and moved to the University of Berlin. He received his Berlin PhD in 1894 for a dissertation on elliptic functions directed by Lazarus Fuchs. He received a D.Sc. degree from the Sorbonne in 1901 for a dissertation on algebraic number theory under Gaston Darboux.

He began his academic career at the University of Chicago when the institution held its first classes in 1892. When he moved to UC in 1900, the entire mathematics staff consisted of just Hancock, an assistant professor, and an instructor.

He wanted to help raise the mathematical scholarship in the USA to a level comparable to leading European nations. During his 38-year career at UC, he wrote 8 books and 33 math research papers and produced 5 PhD students (including Gaylord Merriman). His most important legacy for the department is his role in seeing that mathematics was one of eight departments at UC to be aided by the Charles Phelps Taft Memorial Fund, a fund explicitly designated as being in support of the humanities.

Hancock was also interested in improving secondary education. He was a fierce opponent of the College of Education at UC, favoring a Department of Pedagogy within the College of Liberal Arts (later to become the McMicken College of Arts and Sciences). He chaired a committee of Cincinnati citizens who lobbied for the creation of a college preparatory high school in Cincinnati. The work of this group led to the founding of Walnut Hills High School in 1920.

He retired from UC in 1937 and moved to Charlottesville, Virginia. He died there in 1944.