The Lawrenceville School received the largest single gift in the School’s 207-year history in June. Joseph C. Tsai ’82, executive vice chairman of global e-commerce company, Alibaba Group, and his wife Clara, through the Joe & Clara Tsai Foundation, made a major gift as an endorsement of the School’s Strategic Plan: A Vision for the Future: Lawrenceville 20/20.

“We are incredibly grateful to Joe and Clara for this historic and transformational gift,” said Head Master Stephen S. Murray H’55 ’65 ’16 P’16 ’21. “This offers us an opportunity to accelerate implementation of key elements of our Strategic Plan and to bring us that much closer to achieving some critically important, far-reaching initiatives.”

The Tsais have requested that the amount of their gift remain confidential. The previous largest gift given to Lawrenceville was a bequest from Henry C. Woods Jr. ’40 and his wife, Janie Woods, in 2010, of $60.2 million.

“Joe embodies lifelong character and commitment. He speaks movingly about his time
as a student at Lawrenceville and understands the pivotal role that a school can play in a young person’s development,’ Murray added. ‘With this gift, Joe and Clara help ensure that we will continue the work of inspiring young people to lead lives of integrity and high purpose.’

In addition to supporting long-term financial sustainability through endowment, the gift will lend important support to one of the School’s four strategic priorities identified in the plan: ‘Celebrate and Reinforce Community.’ Lawrenceville 20/20 envisions a new, world-class athletic center with an exceptional new dining facility as a way to further promote and strengthen community.

The School hopes to break ground on the project within two years, and a part of the Tsai gift will support the planning and construction of the new facilities.

The site for the new complex has not yet been determined; however, Murray said having it ‘centrally located’ on campus is a priority.

‘Far more than simply meeting a pressing facilities need, this gift allows us to give every member of the community multiple reasons to convene – to forge friendships when breaking bread together, to elevate School spirit and pride when supporting our teams, and to reinforce the social fabric of the School through teamwork, healthy competition, and a sense of togetherness in all that we do.’

Former Lawrenceville Board of Trustees President Thomas L. Carter Jr. ’70 said, ‘In addition to reinforcing our hallowed traditions of close community and athletic excellence, this gift will contribute substantially to endowment, which will have a profound impact on current and future generations of the Lawrenceville family.’

Of the gift, Tsai said: ‘I am grateful for what Lawrenceville has given me 35 years ago. Now, Clara and I are thrilled to give back. We express through this gift our appreciation for what a Lawrenceville experience can do for young people, and we wholeheartedly support Steve in his strategic vision of reinforcing campus life around a strong community.’

The Tsai family has generously supported Lawrenceville over the years, with financial aid, faculty support, capital projects, and annual giving, among other important priorities. Born in Taipei, Taiwan, Tsai arrived at Lawrenceville in 1977. As a student, he was a member of the varsity lacrosse and football teams, sports editor of the AA, and part of the Glee Club. He went on to graduate from Yale University and Yale Law School and practiced with Sullivan & Cromwell in New York as an associate in the firm’s Tax Group. In 1995, Joe moved to Hong Kong to begin a career in private equity investment with the Asian office of Investor AB, the Swedish industrial holding company under the stewardship of the Wallenberg family. Tsai’s career took another turn when, in 1999, he met Jack Ma and soon after joined him as one of the founding members of the China-based e-commerce company Alibaba. Today, Tsai is executive vice chairman of Alibaba Group and serves on its board of directors. He has also been a member of Lawrenceville’s Board of Trustees since 2010.