

TEXAS★LEADER

PLANNING TO CHANGE THE WORLD

Full Circle

A Gift to Support
Leaders of the Future

Summer/Fall 2026



TEXAS
The University of Texas at Austin



From *the* President

The University of Texas at Austin is built on a bold and enduring mission.

We have a duty to serve students, families, patients and the great people of Texas. Your support enables us to take big steps forward and reach greater heights. The What Starts Here campaign has helped us achieve that in remarkable and historic ways. And our greatest days are ahead.

Texas students are thriving. The scholarships and support funded through this campaign have opened the door for more young Texans to come to the Forty Acres. They arrive here ready to learn, grow and develop their curiosity. They leave here ready to lead, serve and be positive contributors to our society.

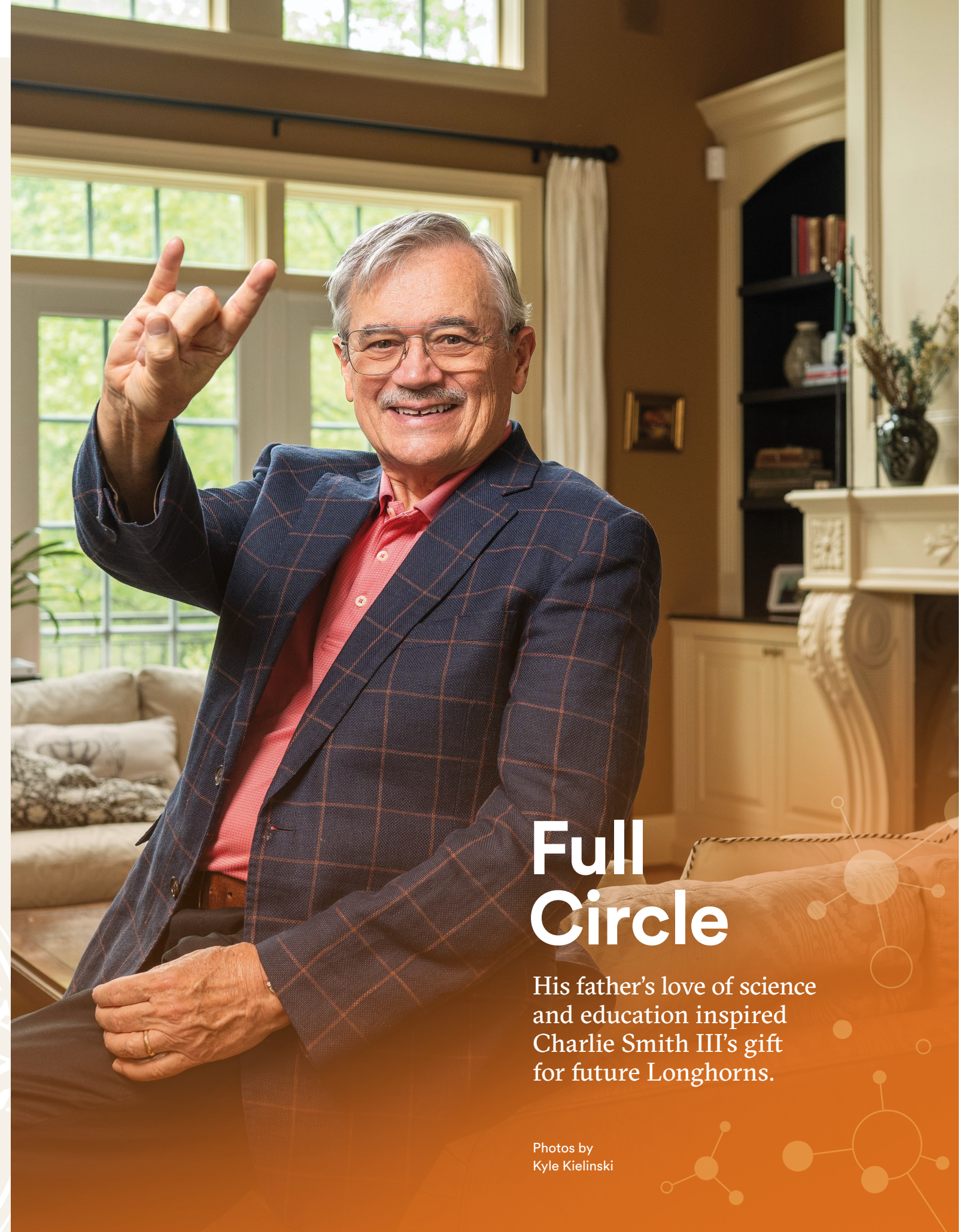
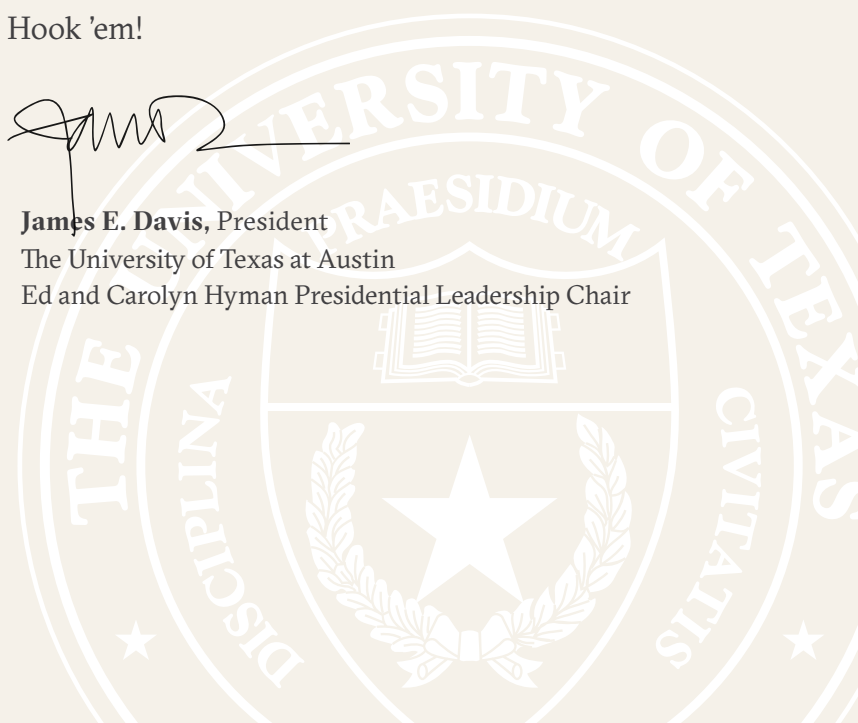
Texas research leads the nation. The best minds work together on our campus. Longhorns advance the frontiers of science — from energy and artificial intelligence to materials science, life sciences and more. The discoveries that start here don't just stay here. They improve lives across Texas and the world.

We are taking one of our boldest steps yet. We are building an academic medical center and adding human health to the heart of our mission — bringing together research, education and care in a way that will transform human life and flourishing. In April, we celebrated a historic gift that made our vision real. That day was just the beginning.

We are building something one-of-a-kind that will serve generations to come. Every Longhorn is part of this moment. We invite you to be part of our future.

Hook 'em!

James E. Davis, President
The University of Texas at Austin
Ed and Carolyn Hyman Presidential Leadership Chair



Full Circle

His father's love of science and education inspired Charlie Smith III's gift for future Longhorns.

Photos by
Kyle Kielinski

Charles “Charlie” Smith III received so much more than a name from his father and grandfather. Through them, he learned important lessons about responsibility, commitment and generosity — lessons now benefiting The University of Texas at Austin. With significant gifts to UT’s College of Natural Sciences, Charlie is honoring his father’s Longhorn legacy and continuing his family’s long tradition of support and caring.

An Unsteady Start

During the Great Depression, Charlie’s grandfather provided customers at his small-town pharmacy in Canajoharie, New York, with life-saving medication, even when they couldn’t afford to pay him. It was a morally sound decision, but one that proved financially ruinous for his business and family.

His son, Charlie’s father, experienced great hardship early in life. His parents divorced and moved away from Canajoharie, leaving behind him and his younger brother, Robert, to be raised by two maternal grand-aunts. The sisters earned a meager income at Beech-Nut, a baby food manufacturer and the primary employer of most of the town’s residents. Money to raise their young nephews was tight. Fear of burdening anyone with further financial difficulties led Robert to stay silent about an ear infection — a decision that tragically took the 12-year-old’s life.

Charles Jr. supplemented the household income with janitorial work during his high school years and kept a strong

focus on academics — his best chance for a brighter future. Determination to improve his lot brought him to Austin to live with an aunt so he could establish residency and qualify for in-state tuition at UT. After six months, he applied and was accepted to UT, earning a degree in chemistry at a time when just 5.5% of men completed four years of advanced education.

Charlie recalls his hardworking father’s love for UT.

“After graduation, which was followed by three years of military service, my father answered an ad in National Geographic magazine for a job with Pfizer. He was eventually transferred to the Pfizer plant in Terre Haute, Indiana, where he eventually became plant manager. He worked the first 10 years of his career without taking even one day of vacation,” Charlie recalls. “The very first time he took days off, he took the family to Austin.”

His Father’s Footsteps

The year was 1957. UT’s total student body was just under 17,000, and the population of Austin was approximately 160,000. Charlie’s father delighted in walking his wife and three children around his former campus.

“He showed us the Tower and where he had lived,” Charlie says. “He had a lot of pride in The University of Texas.”



Supporting Leaders of the Future

Philanthropy builds a strong pipeline of Texas talent, forging future generations of visionaries and global changemakers. Thanks to Charlie Smith’s generosity, the 2025-26 recipients of his fellowship funding are on a path to success, equipped with the tools and resources they need to accomplish their goals and change the world.

Alia Clark-ElSayed

PH.D. CANDIDATE ’27
Cellular and Molecular Biology



Beyond the immediate research impacts, this fellowship support has helped me develop a clearer vision for my career path. I plan to pursue a career in the biotechnology industry focused on developing novel therapeutics informed by machine learning. Ultimately I aspire to lead research programs that integrate computational approaches with experimental biology to create innovative solutions that would not be possible without these interdisciplinary tools.

Clayton Kosonocky

PH.D. CANDIDATE ’26
Biochemistry



Mr. Smith’s generosity has given me the freedom to focus on research that I believe could have a meaningful impact on how we discover new medicines. We are at an inflection point for therapeutics development where AI could compress what used to take decades into years, and my thesis research has been focused on helping make this happen. None of this would have been possible without the support of donors who invest in the next generation of scientists.

Ayesha Mahmood

PH.D. ’26
Molecular Biosciences



Receiving the Charles Smith Jr. Fellowship allowed me to focus on completing an evaluation of AI-identified compounds that can enhance antibiotic potency and help address the urgent global challenge of antimicrobial resistance. This support expanded the scope and quality of my research while providing meaningful opportunities for collaboration that would not have been possible otherwise, reflecting the generosity and vision of Charles Smith Jr.

Dayea Park

PH.D. CANDIDATE ’26
Cellular and Molecular Biology



Receiving this fellowship has allowed me to strengthen my research, conduct more comprehensive data analysis, develop stronger analytical frameworks for my dissertation, and make significant progress toward its completion. By easing my financial pressures, the fellowship has allowed me to dedicate focused time to research that has the potential to advance the field of molecular biology and inform future therapeutic approaches.

The next time Charlie set foot on the Forty Acres was in November 2024, when he marveled at the advancements that had been made in 67 years.

“Our campus visit exceeded our expectations,” says Charlie, who traveled to UT from his home in Pennsylvania with his wife, Kathy, and daughter, Mackenzie. “We saw a lot of fantastic things in the research laboratories and had lunch with 12 of the Ph.D. students. We could feel their excitement about their collaborations, not only within the University but also with schools in Europe. It was very fulfilling to hear their cutting-edge ideas. And my father was constantly on my mind.”

A Gift for the Ages

Charles Smith Jr. felt a sense of loyalty and pride in his work and encouraged the same values in the employees he managed during his career at Pfizer. When he passed away in 1995 at age 73, he left behind a large quantity of Pfizer stock, acquired during his 34 years with the pharmaceutical giant. His frugality — a trait instilled in him as a child of the Depression era — made him hold on to the Pfizer shares.

“He sold a few hundred shares once to help purchase a house,” Charlie recalls, “and he would rue that decision later.”

The shares are now worth approximately 100 times their original value.

Charlie is excited to use his inheritance to fund The Charles W. Smith Jr. Graduate Fellowships in Molecular Biosciences. The fellowships enable multiple graduate students each year to focus on their research, make critical discoveries and position themselves as leaders of the future.

David Vanden Bout, dean of the College of Natural Sciences, is grateful for the enormous ripple effect the gift will make as it creates opportunities for new generations of Longhorns and continues the Smith legacy far into the future.

“Mr. Smith’s gift will help us recruit more candidates to the doctoral program,” he says. “The size and caliber of our graduate program strengthens our undergraduate experience and is an important factor for outcompeting the world’s top institutions for new faculty recruits.”

The Charles W. Smith Jr. Graduate Fellowships in Molecular Biosciences enable multiple graduate students each year to focus on their research, make critical discoveries and position themselves as leaders of the future.

A portion of the gift will be used to advance AI-powered projects through UT’s Texas Biologics, a research center launched in 2022 to develop protein-based vaccines and therapies for infectious diseases, cancer, neurodegeneration, autoimmune disorders and rare genetic conditions. To date, Texas Biologics has led interdisciplinary teams from the College of Natural Sciences, School of Pharmacy, Cockrell School of Engineering and Dell Medical School in collaboration with Texas Advanced Computing Center to help propel therapeutic discoveries from the lab to the clinic, creating far-reaching impacts on both the local and global healthcare landscape.

“There’s a lot of potential in what Texas Biologics is doing,” says Charlie, “and I’m looking forward to supporting that.” ■

Make a Gift, Get a Gift!

Help us restore, revitalize and reimagine our Tower. With a donation of \$100 or more, you’ll receive a limited edition commemorative gift to thank you for your support.

A gift of \$5,000
gets the complete set!



Make your gift today:
utex.as/towergift



A Bridge Across Time

Sandy and Camille Kress are preserving culture and shaping the future through their support of the Harry Ransom Center.

Sandy, J.D. '75, and Camille Kress' stories began in different places but were brought together by a shared devotion to learning, faith and culture. Today that devotion finds expression at The University of Texas at Austin, where the couple has made a meaningful gift to the Harry Ransom Center. Camille and Sandy Kress have established an endowment to support the Center's literary collections that reflects their belief that the ideas shaping civilization must be protected, studied and passed forward.



Sandy's connection to UT began long before he ever set foot on campus as a student. Born to Marvin and Pauline Kress, BBA '43 and B.A. '47 respectively, Sandy grew up listening to his parents talk about their experiences on the Forty Acres, the backdrop for their blossoming love story.

"My parents first met on campus as students. They fell in love, got married and the rest is history," he laughs. "UT was and forever will be an important part of my family's history and legacy."

Sandy studied at the University of California, Berkeley, before returning to Texas for law school, drawn by opportunity and a desire to engage in public life. On the Forty Acres, he immersed himself in campus life and student organizations. As chair of the Cultural Entertainment Committee, he helped bring world-class classical, jazz and contemporary artists and ensembles to campus. As student body president, he worked alongside University and state leaders, building relationships that would shape his career in law, public policy and national service.

Camille, the daughter of a minister, grew up in a household where faith and intellectual curiosity were central to daily life. Dinner conversations encouraged her to question, reflect and engage deeply with the world around her. At Baylor University, she

◀ **Sandy and Camille Kress have supported UT for more than 36 years.**

majoring in religion, studying sacred texts and traditions while developing a lifelong interest in how belief shapes culture. Over time, that interest manifested itself in creative expression. Camille became an artist and writer, producing works inspired by biblical themes and later publishing illustrated children's books.

Throughout their 36-year marriage, Sandy and Camille have supported UT in a variety of ways. As they deliberated on their long-term philanthropic goals, they decided to focus their giving on their profound love of books.

"We value what they represent," says Camille. "They're a bridge from the best of our culture to the future."

The Harry Ransom Center — an institution dedicated to preserving literary, artistic and cultural history at the highest level — was a natural choice for their philanthropy. Home to rare manuscripts, archives and artifacts from across the world, the Ransom Center stands as one of the world's leading humanities research libraries. For the Kresses, the Center's mission to collect, preserve and make accessible the cultural record resonated deeply.

"We wanted to focus on one place — somewhere we knew we could make a lasting impact," says Sandy.

"You can see it," adds Camille. "You can walk into the Center and experience what your support is doing."

Preserving the Future

At the heart of the Kresses' giving is a commitment to the long-term care of the Center's collections with a priority on the work of curators — the experts responsible for preserving rare materials, supporting research and bringing collections to life through exhibitions and scholarship.

"Supporting the people who care for the collections, interpret them and make them available is essential," says Sandy.

By investing in this work, the Kresses are helping ensure that the Ransom Center's holdings remain accessible and relevant for generations to come. Their gift also supports future acquisitions, allowing the Ransom Center to continue increasing its collections and global impact.

"The Ransom Center is both expansive and preserving," says Camille. "They promote learning something new while also protecting what matters."

The impact of giving to the Harry Ransom Center is both immediate and enduring. Visitors can experience world-class exhibitions throughout the year. Students and scholars engage directly with materials that shape research, teaching and creative work. And the Ransom Center's influence extends far beyond campus, contributing to a broader understanding of literature, history and culture.

"UT was and forever will be an important part of my family's history and legacy."

— SANDY KRESS

The Kresses' support of the Harry Ransom Center reflects the broader themes of their lives. Through their work in education, public policy and interfaith dialogue, they have sought to build connections between people and ideas, and across time. Sandy and Camille have created a legacy not only of giving but also of understanding — and one that will continue to shape the future long after their final page has been turned. ■

A photograph of Melinda Mayer, an older woman with short white hair, smiling. She is wearing a black and green patterned jacket. She stands in front of a large, modern building with many windows, which is the Blanton Museum of Art. There are some plants and a white sculpture in the foreground.

Beyond the Gallery

For Blanton Museum of Art supporter Melinda Mayer, the power of art is in its ability to help young people see themselves and to inspire the educators who will lead tomorrow's museums.

Photo by Sloan Breedon

In September 2025, Melinda Mayer made a planned gift to create a permanent endowment and to fund the first five years of the Susan and Melinda Mayer Art Museum Education Graduate Fellowship at The University of Texas at Austin's Blanton Museum of Art. The fellowship provides a UT graduate student with an important academic and professional development opportunity, as well as a generous stipend. Mayer Education Fellows receive valuable hands-on experience and mentoring, while K-12 students benefit from the Blanton's outstanding art collection and skilled gallery teaching. Melinda's gift, made in honor of the enduring bond she shared with her late mother, Susan, will strengthen the museum's mission to engage young minds and cultivate future leaders in art education.

Both Melinda and Susan are nationally recognized for their distinguished careers in art museum education as beloved members of The University of Texas at Austin faculty. They viewed museum education as more than simply presenting history. Visual arts education can build self-awareness, empathy and cultural understanding. By encouraging students to recognize and reflect on different perspectives, these experiences also strengthen their sense of identity and place in society.

Melinda taught for 20 years, including 10 years at UT as assistant professor of art and art history, and was known for her unwavering commitment to helping students secure internships and launch successful careers.

Susan began as a docent at the Blanton before soon joining the museum's education staff in 1970, when she launched Art Central, a long-standing program that established the museum as a leader in the rising field of art museum education. She also jointly became faculty in the Department of Art and Art History's Art Education program and was instrumental in founding the Art Museum Education graduate program. Susan served more than 30 years in these synergistic positions.

"My mother recognized early on that collaborations with school districts were a powerful way to not just expand audiences but also ensure future audiences," says Melinda. "She was a trailblazer in art museum education, particularly through the National Art Education Association, where she helped pioneer the Museum Education Division."

Susan Mayer was a prolific artist and a trailblazer in art museum education.





Two Lives, One Familiar Path

Both Susan and Melinda were military kids, with childhoods shaped by both the instability and the discipline of military life. Susan was born in Georgia at Fort Oglethorpe, the daughter of one of the U.S. Army's last cavalry officers whose service stretched through the World War II era. Her family moved often and learned to build a sense of home wherever they landed.

A generation later, Melinda's story followed a similar rhythm of movement and adaptation. Her late father, Art, was a U.S. Army officer when Melinda was born at Fort Hood, Texas, during the Vietnam era. She was an only child and moved 18 times before turning 15, which created challenges in social and academic growth. The steady support of her parents and the formative experiences of living in Europe, including time in France and Germany, helped influence her identity.

Melinda realized in college that she wanted to continue in her mother's footsteps and pursue an art-related career.

"My art history class felt like coming home, and I came to understand how strongly two years of visiting museums in Europe had shaped me. With my mother already working at UT, I felt a natural connection to that world," she says.

▲ **The Blanton has the largest and most comprehensive collection of art in Central Texas.**

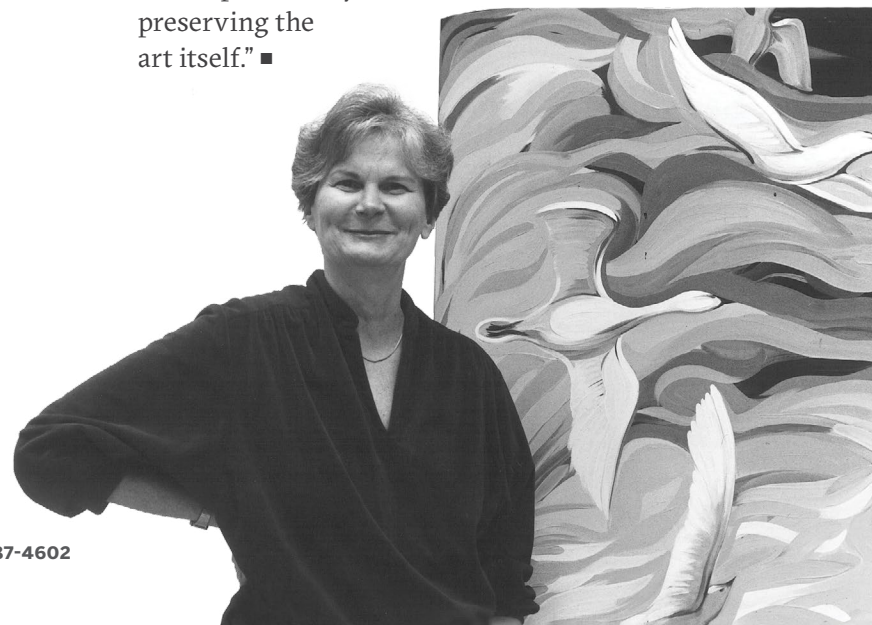
An Investment in the Future

Now retired, Melinda enjoys spending time with her dogs and has become an avid gardener. Living in Austin has given her both joy and a sense of belonging. She values the city's openness of thought and the way it encourages innovation and fresh ideas. Throughout her home, her mother's paintings adorn the walls, helping Melinda feel deeply connected to her.

Melinda has supported many causes on the Forty Acres, including KUT Radio, the Department of Art and Art History, and the Department of History in the College of Liberal Arts. In 2024, she donated Susan's professional papers to UT's Dolph Briscoe Center for American History. Concurrently, Melinda gave a gift to fund an archival graduate student to organize and digitize her mother's papers for future researchers. She sees the creation of the Mayer Endowed Fellowship as a profound way to invest in the future of museum education in perpetuity, and to cultivate deeper, lasting connections between audiences and the arts.

Melinda's gift to the Blanton Museum will strengthen its mission to engage young minds and cultivate future leaders in art education.

"We need to focus on the future," she says, "by building audiences and creating meaningful experiences for people in these spaces, not just preserving the art itself." ■



Painting a Bright Future

Ever since learning about careers in pre-kindergarten, Andrea Escalante has known she wanted to be a teacher. Receiving a Susan and Melinda Mayer Art Museum Education Graduate Fellowship expanded her ideas about her future opportunities.

"I had really never imagined museum education," says Andrea. "I didn't know it was a thing. But since I've been at the Blanton Museum, I've seen how open and willing people are to teach you their world and invite you in."

As a Mayer Fellow, Andrea has had the chance to put her knowledge into action by interacting directly with students, helping her make the leap from the Forty Acres into a professional career. Making a personal connection with her benefactor has also made a strong impression on her.

"Melinda is so passionate about education," says Andrea. "She just got me 100% and made me feel very important. She understood what I've been searching for my whole life."

After graduation, Andrea has her sights set on teaching students in grades 8, 11 or 12.

"Students in that space are in transitional periods," says Andrea. "It's important for them to have a safe person they can turn to as they're trying to navigate through life."

Make a Gift

Your gift to the Blanton's school education program — through either an annual fund gift or the creation of your own endowment — will help bring art, joy, inspiration and learning to young lives.



Scan this QR code or visit blantonmuseum.org/support for more information.

► **Andrea's fellowship allowed her to focus on her passion for teaching.**

▼ **Andrea Escalante feels encouraged and moved by Melinda's enthusiasm for museum education.**



Leading With Heart

Receiving a UT scholarship gave Arthur Mills IV a sense of belonging. Now he is offering the same support to future Longhorns.



ABOVE: Arthur and Carla Mills in front of Rowling Hall, home of Texas McCombs MBA

When Arthur Mills IV, BBA '96, MBA '04, and his wife, Carla, created the Carla and Arthur Mills IV MBA Scholarship, they did so with a simple but powerful conviction.

"When you have the opportunity to bless others, you should," Arthur says. "Carla and I want to help ensure that UT remains a place where everyone can feel at home and empowered to reach their potential. I'm deeply honored to be part of the UT family, and I'm dedicated to helping UT be the best that it can be."

Arthur knew from an early age that he wanted to attend a large university — a place that would challenge him to compete at the highest level. When UT offered him a scholarship, he found his home.

"It was affirming to know there were folks who believed in my potential and that I belonged on the Forty Acres," he says.

As a young man still finding his way, Arthur was grateful when a faculty member took notice and interest. Associate Professor Herbert Miller became a lifelong mentor, making the connection one of Arthur's most meaningful experiences on campus.

"Being part of the Black community — less than 5% of the student population — taught me that I'd need to move differently in many spaces," Arthur says. "Professor Miller said, 'Hey, come to my office. There is some refuge here.'"

A Spirit of Community

After Professor Miller connected him with the business school's mentorship program, Arthur began working with other students there, sharing lessons he had learned and encouraging them to avoid the same mistakes he had made.

That spirit of community grew in grad school, when a class project brought him face to face with the consequences of Austin's rapid redevelopment. Through a Texas Plus initiative, Arthur joined a project in collaboration with a nonprofit serving the Chestnut neighborhood in East Austin, where long-term residents were at risk of being priced out of their community. The work involved complex financial concepts, tools that could help preserve affordable housing and protect homeowners from rising property taxes.

After one community meeting, a woman who had long been a pillar of the neighborhood approached him.

"She had this syrupy Southern drawl," Arthur recalls," and she said, 'Honey, I don't know exactly everything you said or what it all meant, but I get it, and I thank you for being here. Don't stop doing this. It matters.'"

"That was when I started to feel like I could make a difference," he says. "I could use the skills I gained in business school, with an MBA, and actually have a heart that goes along with it."

That balance has defined his career ever since. Though he describes himself as a finance guy at his core, Arthur has always led with heart. After years in the private sector, he channeled his expertise into mission-driven work, launching Mills Management Group, an Atlanta-based boutique consultancy focused on supporting nonprofits and other mission-driven organizations. His MBA, complemented by coursework at the LBJ School of Public Affairs, gave him the fluency to work across both spaces.

Recently, in an amazing full-circle moment in his career, Arthur joined PNC Institutional Asset Management's Nonprofit Strategy & Solutions Group, where he will lead engagements with local markets across the Southeast and the Midwest. In this new role, he will guide and develop collaborative solutions for nonprofit clients from Canada to Cuba, addressing critical financial strategy,

"I'm deeply honored to be part of the UT family, and I'm dedicated to helping UT be the best that it can be."

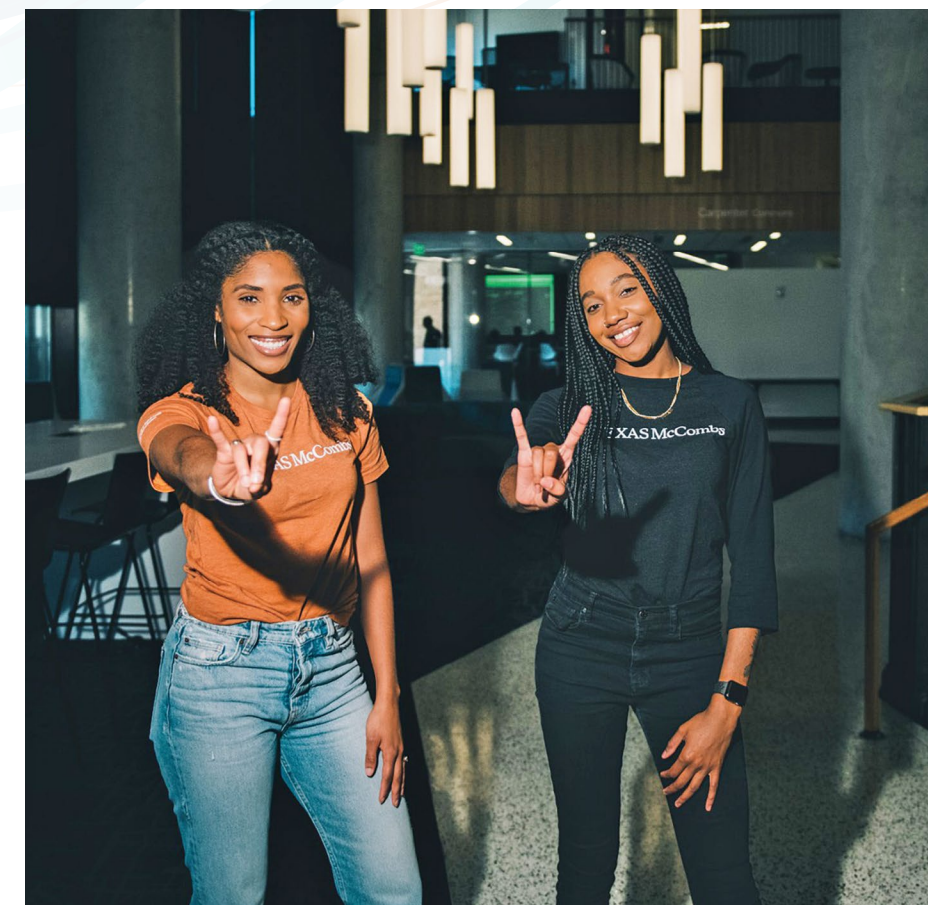
— ARTHUR MILLS IV

governance and fundraising challenges with his signature human touch.

"Nonprofits are still businesses," he says. "If an organization can't stay open, it can't have impact."

The scholarship he and Carla created reflects that same philosophy, offering practical support paired with a deeper sense of purpose.

"One of the things that my parents taught me is that I belong in every room. My time at UT was living proof," says Arthur. "I want future students to feel that same affirmation — that from day one, they know they have potential and that their time at UT can help change the world." ■



The Science of Achievement



At age 13, Karen Hagedorn, B.S. '86, dared to dream of becoming a petroleum engineer like her father and join a long family line of Longhorns that includes her great-grandfather, father, aunt, sister and cousins. With her gifts to The University of Texas at Austin's Cockrell School of Engineering, Karen is showing her support for future generations who aspire to succeed in engineering.

Karen grew up in Houston, where her parents raised her to make education an important focus in her life. Despite attending one of the best math and science high schools in Texas, Karen was advised by her guidance counselor to take typing and stenography classes instead of AP Chemistry and Physics. Karen chose her own path, excelling in chemistry in particular. Her chemistry teacher urged her to reach for the stars.

"At a time when girls weren't really encouraged to go into engineering, she pulled me aside and said, 'You can compete with these guys. You ought to be doing this,'" Karen recalls.

Karen came to the Hildebrand Department of Petroleum and Geosystems Engineering (PGE) to begin her studies at one of the highest-ranking petroleum engineering schools in the nation. Driven to succeed, Karen got involved in many extracurricular activities, which earned her accolades at UT and in various national honor societies. She did manage to make time for fun with her petroleum engineering classmates.

"One of my fondest UT memories was going country western dancing at the Country Palace on Thursday nights for quarter beer night," she says.

Karen became a second-generation PGE graduate, getting her degree with highest honors in just three years. After earning a master's degree and Ph.D. in petroleum engineering from Stanford University, she thrived in her career at ExxonMobil, where she worked in research, production and business analysis of commercial oil and gas recovery projects worldwide. Her career took her to all corners of the globe.

"My favorite place to live was the United Kingdom, and my favorite job with ExxonMobil was in Alaska. But my most rewarding experience was moving to Angola in Africa in 2009. The civil war had just ended in 2002. It pushed me out of my comfort zone, and it was so rewarding to watch the country rebuild and to work with the incredible people there," she says.

A Mindset of Generosity

Philanthropy has been an important endeavor for Karen, and she pays it forward through her support for future Longhorns. She recently created a planned gift designated for three of her existing UT endowments: the Karen D. Hagedorn Endowment; the Frank Ludwig Weisser Memorial Endowed Presidential Scholarship

in Engineering, (named for her maternal great-grandfather, Frank Weisser, who graduated in 1911 with a degree in electrical engineering); and the Alton R. and Doris A. Hagedorn Endowed Graduate Fellowship in Engineering in honor of her parents for supporting her throughout her education.

"I spent nine years in college, including six at Stanford. I was fortunate to have family support, scholarships and summer jobs, and my Stanford tuition and stipend were covered through fellowships and other sources. When I graduated, I didn't owe any money. That just doesn't happen unless someone gives back," she says.

In 2022, Karen retired from ExxonMobil after a 29½-year career. She moved to Austin, where she stays active and enjoys being closer to family. Since 1987, her family has had UT football tickets and now she regularly attends baseball, volleyball, women's and men's basketball and softball games as well. She enjoys traveling and attending symphony, ballet and other cultural events.

"I spent the first third of my life in education, a third working, and hopefully I have a third left when I can enjoy the fruits of my labor," she says.

She makes volunteering an important part of her life and has served on the Engineering Advisory Board, the External Advisory Committee for UT PGE and the advisory board for The University of Alaska Fairbanks. She was a PGE Alumna in Residence and also was a founding member of the UT Austin Women in Engineering Program Advisory Committee, knowing how important it is to have someone encourage you to follow your dreams.

"There is always someone along the way that helps you, and now I want to be part of that for someone else's path," she says. "I am happy that my gifts allow others to pursue their education, because that was the most important gift my parents gave their children." ■

◀
Karen Hagedorn is proud of her family's Longhorn history.

Photo by Sloan Breeden

Texas Leader SPOTLIGHT

Meet University of Texas at Austin alumni and friends who are changing the world through philanthropy and careful estate planning.



Kim Smith
Pharmacy '83
Austin, TX

What are your favorite UT memories?

Choosing a favorite UT memory is tough because my time there was filled with incredible experiences. Coming from the East Texas town of Woodville, Austin felt like a big city. My freshman dorm had more people than my hometown! I loved cheering at football and basketball games, playing intramural softball with friends and strolling across campus to the chimes of the UT Tower clock.

How did UT prepare you for success?

While academics were important, the personal relationships I built at UT, especially in the College of Pharmacy, truly shaped my success. Many of those friendships still endure today. College life taught me more than textbooks ever could, including lessons in empathy, humility, striving for excellence and supporting others. My friends and professors helped me understand the value of kindness, self-love and focusing on long-term goals. To me, real success is being a good friend and offering a helping hand to those in need.

Why did you choose to give to UT?

I graduated from high school in 1978 and received a small scholarship from my local Texas Exes chapter. It made me feel welcomed and supported when I started at UT. Even small gestures can be meaningful, especially for students from small towns.

Since moving back to Austin after stints in Brazil and England, I've become involved at UT through the College of Pharmacy Scholarship Committee, the Dell Medical School Health and Wellness Group and the UT Development Board. Supporting UT is my way of giving back to an institution that transforms lives and enriches our community.

What impact do you want your gift to make?

UT's College of Pharmacy and Dell Medical School are exceptional, offering opportunities to educate future pharmacists and physicians in the latest health practices. I believe deeply in preventive care through healthy food, exercise and stress reduction. My hope is that my gift will support programs that emphasize holistic and preventive care, helping shape well-rounded healthcare professionals.



Mary Angela Branch
Journalism '78
Austin, TX

What are your favorite UT memories?

Walking to the football stadium, getting in free and being part of that energy was unforgettable. Celebrations, driving up and down the Drag in my orange and white Chevy Vega, honking and cheering with everyone else was a time like no other. It felt safe, joyful and full of community.

Another favorite was working at The Daily Texan. It helped confirm that journalism was what I wanted to do.

How did UT prepare you for success?

UT taught me how to be independent and accountable. If I wanted to succeed, it was on me. I had to show up, take good notes, follow instructions and develop strong study habits. The broad curriculum opened my mind to everything from philosophy to physics, biology, language and speech. The professors were engaging and accessible. They encouraged discussion and made time for students outside of class. That experience shaped my work ethic, sense of responsibility and confidence. It prepared me not just for a career, but for life.

Why did you choose to give to UT?

My mother was a single mom who worked very hard to make sure I could attend college, and she was incredibly proud that I graduated from UT. As she got older, she donated what she could to animal and environmental causes and caring for living things around her. That stayed with me.

I believe strongly in the importance of journalism, especially environmental journalism. I want to honor my mother and support education that helps people tell important stories accurately, responsibly and with compassion.

What impact do you want your gift to make?

I want my gift to support journalism that connects science, storytelling and humanity. My hope is that students learn to report with integrity, grounding their work in science while also making it compelling and accessible. Journalism should hold powerful institutions accountable and help people understand what's at stake. If my gift helps inspire even a few students to stay curious, stay courageous and tell these stories well, then it will have made the impact I hope for.



Janet Farren
Interior Design '90
Sugar Land, TX

What are your favorite UT memories?

At 13, I decided to graduate from UT if it was the last thing I ever did. I attended community college and transferred to UT at age 30. I remember walking past the Tower, and it was majestic. It was difficult attending school while working full-time and raising a family, but I graduated six years later. I'm a huge Longhorn football fan and have had season tickets for 40 years!

How did UT prepare you for success?

My forte is space planning, and I'm passionate about upgrading space. In UT's interior design curriculum, I learned to meet certain criteria based on client needs and how to work in teams, and I carried this knowledge throughout my career. As I built a professional network, doors opened simply because I was a UT alumna. I was a distribution representative for 33 years for decorative surfacing manufacturers, including countertops and flooring, and I helped design schools and commercial buildings. I've worked on many buildings in Houston, and I take pride in that.

Why did you choose to give to UT?

As a student, I was on my own and had no financial assistance except for Pell Grants. Supplies for interior design majors are expensive, and my gift will enable students to purchase required tools and take advantage of professional development opportunities. I want to support nontraditional students, just like I was, who face obstacles in their life but are determined to pursue their dreams.

What impact do you want your gift to make?

I want returning students to graduate with a sense of monumental accomplishment and to understand that the world is their oyster. With a UT education, they will be fully prepared to go out and make a difference in their communities. I want them to know the feelings of passion, challenge and perseverance that will lead them to a successful career and lasting memories of fulfillment.



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