

TEXAS★LEADER

PLANNING TO CHANGE THE WORLD

Cheering Them On

“The Lisas” put their whole heart into UT women’s sports



PHOTO: WYATT McSPADDEN



From *the* President

As another academic year begins, I love to see everyone back on campus. There is a palpable excitement in the air here in Austin. As the flagship university of Texas, we understand that this is not just a state, but a state of mind — something that Steve and Melinda Winn not only embrace but also hope to preserve for future generations. The generous gift of the Winn Family Foundation will create and support a new field station in Dripping Springs. Our field station network is dedicated to understanding ecosystems across our state, studying interactions between living things and their natural environments.

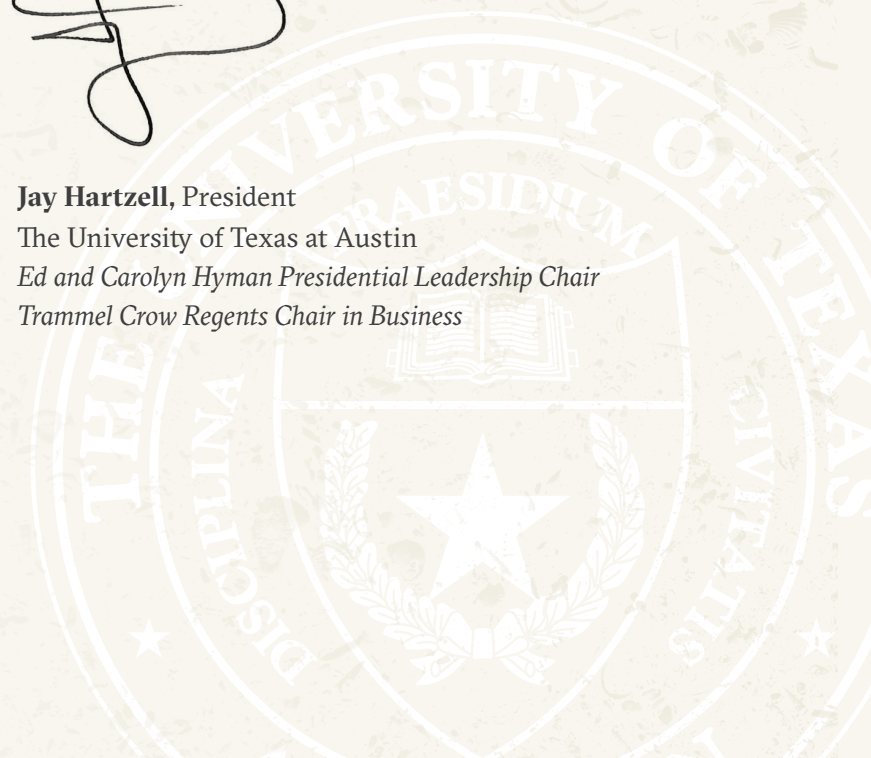
UT is committed to conservation through education not just for students, but through outreach and programming for everyone. We want to remind people that although Texas can seem almost invincible, we need to be wise stewards of this iconic place. Through generous gifts like those of the Winn family, we can make sure that generations of Longhorns will enjoy all that Texas has to offer.

In this issue you will also read about the research fund established by Bob and Kathy Smith. Cancer has touched their lives in a very profound way and has

influenced their desire to increase medical research and education at the Dell Medical School Department of Oncology and the UT Austin Livestrong Cancer Institutes. It is a reminder that difficult times may offer us a way to create a better life for others.

The generosity of these two families is only a small sample of the transformative gifts that are an investment in the future of our University. The passions and interests of Longhorns, friends and families continue to inspire excellence on the Forty Acres. Thank you for your dedication and commitment to UT Austin.

Jay Hartzell, President
The University of Texas at Austin
Ed and Carolyn Hyman Presidential Leadership Chair
Trammel Crow Regents Chair in Business



Cheering Them On

The University of Texas at Austin's tagline — **What starts here changes the world** — are words to live by for Lisa Hannusch, B.S. '86, who adds her personal twist to the sentiment. "It's what starts here," she says, with her hand over her heart.

Lisa Hannusch and her wife, Lisa Richardson, MPA '15 — collectively known as "The Lisas" — both put their whole heart into UT and always have their philanthropic endeavors for the University top of mind. As a couple for nearly 30 years, they are thoughtful legacy donors for Texas Athletics. In addition to including UT in their estate plan, they support women's sports at UT with their annual donations and capital projects. With a how-can-we-help attitude, The Lisas are giving female athletes opportunities that start here, setting them up while at UT and after to discover new ways to change the world.



Photos by Sloan Breeden

To Learn and Grow

Although Lisa Hannusch and Lisa Richardson came to be part of Longhorn Nation in different ways, they both possess a fierce dedication to UT. Lisa H. is a native Austinite who began her love affair with Longhorn sports as a child, making memories of pep rallies and bonfires and thrilling to the sight of the lit Tower. “My dad went to UT, and it was just instilled in us to be Longhorn fans,” she says. “As a kid, I looked forward to getting autographs from the players. Those athletes were my heroes.”

When she became a Longhorn herself, Lisa H. worked hard to make her own way through college, showing her school spirit as a trumpet player in the Longhorn Band and playing intramural sports. “In my mind, it is critical to be involved in team-related activities. Learning and growing is more than just academics; being part of a team teaches you life lessons that last,” she says.

She made ends meet as an EMT, taking on 24-hour shifts while balancing classes and homework on her days off. “She is one of these super-driven, motivated people,” says Lisa Richardson of her wife. “Nobody was going to tell her she couldn’t do something.”

Lisa H. professes that putting herself through school helped make her what she is today. It was a tough path that gives her insight into the rigorous demands on UT’s hardworking student-athletes, which motivates her giving today. “It was a challenge for me to balance working while going to school,” she says. “These athletes already have a full-time job — to be elite.”

Lisa Richardson didn’t spend her undergraduate years on the Forty Acres, but she was born in Texas and has long been a Longhorn fan. She came to UT for her master’s degree in public affairs as a member of the inaugural class of



BY THE NUMBERS

- <2 percentage of high school athletes who receive an athletic scholarship
- 266.7 number of full scholarships NCAA rules allow UT to provide
- 575 number of student-athletes at UT
- <2 percentage of NCAA student athletes who turn pro
- 16.4 percentage of female professional athletes in US
- 83.6 percentage of male professional athletes in US

Lisa Hannusch shows her admiration of the Longhorn Band with a visit to the famous drum, Big Bertha. With her gifts to the Longhorn Legacy Fund and the Big Bertha Centennial Fund, which helped Big Bertha retire to the Frank Denius Family UT Athletics Hall of Fame in October 2022, Lisa H. helps keep LHB traditions alive.



“We want to provide others with opportunities to learn, grow and become the best version of themselves.”
— The Lisas

the executive leadership program at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs.

“Being part of that class was a life-changing experience and made me a much better person and a much better leader,” she says.

Lisa H. oozes with pride, both for her wife’s achievements and for the University. “She was a leader among leaders, and I could just see her gaining confidence,” she says. “After she graduated, I bought her a coffee cup that says ‘You’ve earned your horns.’ Becoming a Longhorn makes everyone a better person,” she says with a knowing grin.

Boasting of each other’s accomplishments and encouraging one another to shine — the way The Lisas support each other is the same spirit they bring to their desire to help UT’s female student-athletes.

In 1972, Title IX opened many doors for girls and women to participate in sports in high school and beyond, but now, more than 50 years later, opportunities for female athletes still lag far behind those of their male counterparts.

“As women, we have to fight harder, to push harder,” adds Lisa H. “There is a glass ceiling out there. The only way we can break through it is by holding each other up.”

With a dedicated burnt orange section of their closet, The Lisas always give their favorite color priority, whether they’re visiting the Hall of Fame, attending UT sporting events, campus meetings, or devoting countless hours as volunteers.

Leveling the Playing Field

“Many people think student-athletes get a full ride, but the NCAA doesn’t allow enough scholarships to cover all of our athletes,” says Lisa R. “And for those who do have a scholarship, not everything is paid for, especially when you consider how the student-athletes train year-round. Our goal is to provide them with the extra support they need.”

One of the ways The Lisas provide that extra support is through gifts of money and time to Texas One Fund, UT’s official NIL collective. Since July 2021, student-athletes have been able to monetize their name, image and likeness, better known as their NIL. As a board advisor and executive of Texas One Fund, Lisa H. helps identify NIL opportunities that engage student-athletes in activities aligned with their personal brand. “NIL is an opportunity for student-athletes to better position themselves — both in the present and for the future — as they earn money, expand their personal brands and learn new skills.” she says.

Working closely with the student-athletes, Lisa H. sees firsthand how they strive to be #1 in their sports — in every game, every tournament, every season. The Lisas believe supporting UT’s student-athletes is a way to repay them for the incredible energy they bring to the city of Austin. Longhorn spirit and pride extend far beyond the campus, creating a sense of community that elevates us all, as evidenced by changes Lisa H. has witnessed on campus and throughout her hometown.

“UT has a medical school now,” she says. “A *medical school!* Think about all the things UT does that help this whole city. Our medical school isn’t just training doctors. It’s bringing world-renowned medical professionals to Austin for the betterment of the entire community. In the same way, student-athletes give us something to cheer for and get behind. They’re providing camaraderie for us to build a community of fans.”

As Austin and the University flourish, The Lisas will continue to provide resources needed for Texas Athletics to do the same. ■

PATHWAY to the PODIUM

Chasing down an Olympic dream takes more than exceptional talent. It takes time and money — and large quantities of both. A high-performing student-athlete can spend about 20 hours a week training, not including the hours spent in physical therapy and recovery. Add in a minimum of three hours a day for classes and even 90 minutes for homework and studying, and a student-athlete is facing a 42+-hour week just for day-to-day performing, even before travel and competitions.

Donors play an enormous role in fueling a student-athlete’s future. “All athletes are looking to further their dreams,” says Edrick Floréal — better known as “Coach Flo” — who represented Canada in the 1988 and 1992 Summer Olympics and joined Texas Athletics in 2018. “Student-athletes consider the quality of life that a university can afford them. They are looking for top-notch facilities and resources to help them perform at the highest level.”

Beyond scholarships, donor support helps cover many costs, such as travel expenses, providing safe, comfortable accommodations, and resources like counseling, tutors and mentors to fulfill student-athletes’ psychological, emotional and academic needs.

At UT, the investment in student-athletes has paid off royally. In 2024, seven coaches and 30 former and current Longhorns (11 men, 19 women) went to the Olympic Summer Games in Paris, where they earned 16 medals: six gold, seven silver and three bronze.

Among those 19 women Longhorn-Olympians were two of Coach Flo’s trainees: Tara Davis-Woodhall, B.S. ’21, gold medalist in long jump, and Julien Alfred, B.S. ’23, gold medalist in the women’s 100m and silver medalist in the 200m. Julien’s achievements make her the first Texas track and field athlete to win a pair of individual medals since 1992. Tara, Julien and all the other Longhorn Olympians have brought great pride to the Forty Acres, and the benefits of being UT alumni will take them far.

214 current and former UT student-athletes have won

178 Olympic medals:

98
GOLD

53
SILVER

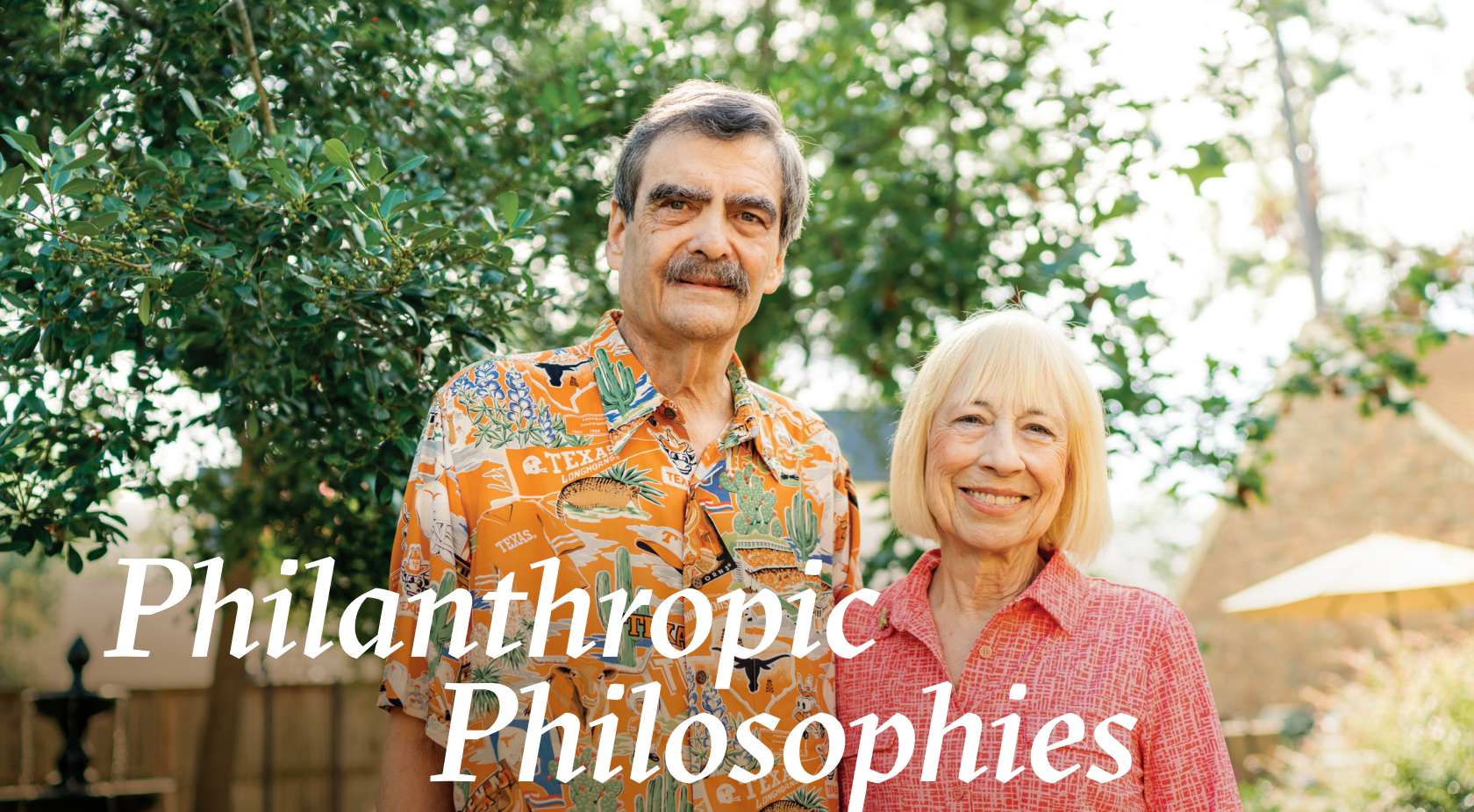
27
BRONZE

◀ Coach Floréal helped Julien Alfred fine-tune her natural gifts on her way to Olympic gold. Photo by Texas Athletics

“Gifts like those provided by The Lisas give student-athletes access to UT that might not otherwise be available,” says Christine Plonsky, executive senior associate athletics director/chief of staff, “and a UT degree will change the arc of their lives long after their days of competing are behind them. That is the essence of what donors like The Lisas believe in and are inspired by. They pay their personal success and philanthropy forward to help young people realize their academic and athletics dreams.”



To learn how you can support Texas Athletics through your will or estate plan, contact giftplan@austin.utexas.edu or call 512-475-9632.



Philanthropic Philosophies

As students at The University of Texas at Austin, Louise Richman, B.A. '69, and Dennis Griffith, B.S. '70, had experiences that shaped their philanthropic philosophies. Their happy memories of UT have inspired them to show their support for future Longhorns in multiple ways. "We didn't have children, so now we're adopting the entire University," Dennis jokes. They have created the Edgar Dennis Griffith and Louise Talley Richman Chair for Chemical Engineering in the McKetta Department of Chemical Engineering, as well as the Louise Richman and Dennis Griffith Endowed Scholarship for the Longhorn Band.

The Difference Donors Make

Louise majored in Romance languages in the College of Liberal Arts. She remembers how tight money was for her then. "Every day for lunch, I spent 25 cents for a cheese enchilada and a cup of coffee." Her work-study assignment with the Office of Financial Aid helped her realize others also had financial struggles, giving her insight into the needs of students and the generosity of donors who supported students' academic goals. "I got to see where the scholarship money was coming from," Louise recalls. "I was always so impressed by the donors' generosity. Oh, the hundreds and thousands of students those scholarships helped! And I was envious. I wanted to do that someday too."

Dennis was destined to study chemical engineering at UT. He followed in the footsteps of his father, who was a graduate school classmate of Johnny McKetta, the department's namesake since 2012. Dennis joined the Longhorn Band in his sophomore year and was treasurer of the Student Engineering Council, a position that opened his eyes to how important support was to cash-bare organizations and the significant impact even a few dollars could make. "We had a common room in the basement of Taylor Hall. As treasurer, I helped bring in vending machines and one of the very first microwave ovens. I mean, this was new high technology!" Dennis recalls.

Photo by
Lauren Marek

Meeting Up — and Meeting Goals

Dennis and Louise met on a blind date, invited to dinner by mutual friends. They quickly felt a connection and discovered they shared similar backgrounds, including both being born at St. Joseph Medical Center in Houston. Shortly after they met, Dennis took a job in Saudi Arabia, and five years into their relationship, the couple married while Dennis was on leave. "We honeymooned in London and Paris," says Louise. "I took one plane back to Houston; Dennis took another back to Saudi Arabia."

Despite that early separation, the couple has been together in every other respect, supporting each other in their personal interests throughout their 41 years of marriage. Louise has cheered on Dennis, who plays French horn as a member of the Longhorn Alumni Band, and Dennis has encouraged Louise's interest in municipal affairs, including serving as mayor of Spring Valley Village, Texas, from 1994 to 2002.

Dennis and Louise also see eye to eye on their philanthropic goals; a conversation with members of UT's Gift and Estate Planning team helped them develop an action plan to achieve their objectives.

"We all make choices about what to do with our money," says Louise. "Dennis and I have talked about our philosophy with respect to philanthropy and donations. My overall thought is that you can always give a little bit to an organization, no matter how little you have. Dennis emphasizes educating future leaders of Texas industry and government. The gift officers we spoke with were very helpful and strategic in merging our thoughts and coming up with a plan that was very satisfying for both of us."

For Dennis and Louise, making a difference to others makes a difference to them. The couple takes great satisfaction in knowing their gifts are having an impact now and will continue to do so in the future. "We're enjoying the benefits of our great education," says Dennis, "and we really want to pass that same opportunity to future generations. Our real goal is to inspire others to support the University too." ■

"We're enjoying the benefits of our great education, and we really want to pass that same opportunity to future generations." — Dennis Griffith



A performance by the Longhorn Band at the 2024 Texas Leadership Society luncheon stirred a lot of emotions for Dennis. As a member of the Longhorn Band in the 1960s, he helped wrangle Big Bertha, the world's largest bass drum. "Back in the day, I often hauled her to events behind my car," he recalls. In 2014, he coordinated 20 drum wranglers to accompany Big Bertha to London, England, where she led the Longhorn Band in the New Year's Day parade.

When Big Bertha retired, Dennis and Louise stepped up to help pay for Big Bertha II, which Dennis presented to the University during the halftime show on October 15, 2022. "That was a really exciting opportunity," says Dennis, who is proud of the role chemical engineers have played in the Longhorn Band's history. In 1900, Dr. Eugene P. Schoch, the University's first faculty member in the chemical engineering department, founded the band with fellow professor H. E. Baxter. Dr. Schoch bought the Longhorn Band's first instruments at a pawn shop so his industrial chemistry lab students could learn to play and march together.



This year the band celebrates its 125th season! Scan this QR code to learn more or visit giving.utexas.edu/backtheband

FROM *the* GROUND UP

Solutions to widespread environmental problems are waiting to be discovered, right here in the heart of Texas.

A state as vast as Texas must contend with myriad environmental issues.

Water quality and shortages, damage caused by invasive species and the impact of population growth all affect the people and the land itself. But with the wealth of bright students, researchers and scientists found at The University of Texas at Austin, solutions are within reach. Steve Winn, B.S. '69, thinks it's time to act on the environmental concerns facing Texas and beyond and has provided UT researchers with a very good place to start.

Steve and the Winn Family Foundation have given UT a remarkable gift: access to more than 1,000 acres near Dripping Springs and the financial backing to build a state-of-the-art field research station onsite. The Hill Country Field Station will be the seventh facility in the Texas Field Station Network, joining Brackenridge Field Laboratory, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Marine Science Institute, McDonald Observatory, Stengl Lost Pines Biological Station, and the White Family Outdoor Learning Center.

"Field stations are a crucial element in understanding ecosystems and how they're changing," says Steve. The Hill Country Field Station will offer a biodiverse living laboratory that includes savannahs, creeks and grottos. Here students and faculty researchers will have the opportunity to study the environment, test theories, and ultimately develop solutions that will change the world.

Photo by
Cory Ryan
Photography



First Steps

Steve knows how important initial steps are toward reaching goals. In 1965, he left his home in Dallas to study electrical engineering at The University of Texas at Austin. In those days, that was as close as the University offered to a degree in computer science, his true interest. He faced the problems that plague freshmen: homesickness and financial issues. “My parents paid my \$500 tuition and drove me down to UT one time. I had to hitchhike back at breaks. They were not helicopter parents,” he recalls. As for staying afloat, it was a challenge Steve met with characteristic grit. “I discovered this treasure in empty Coke bottles. You could sell them for two cents each, so just about anything I could do to scrape by at UT, I was doing.”

▲ **Melinda and Steve Winn prioritize investments in Texas biodiversity and natural resources.**

After graduation, Steve put his education to work at Computer Language Research, a tax and compliance software company his father had begun. In 1998, the father-son team sold the company for \$325 million, giving Steve a launchpad for further entrepreneurial ventures. That same year, Steve founded his own company, RealPage, a property management software company. He eventually landed on the Forbes List, earning an 8 out of 10 in the “self-made” category.

Steve’s success in business can be attributed in part to his father’s advice — “If you’re riding a horse and the horse stops walking, get off the horse” — and to an early IBM computer game that shaped his entrepreneurial acumen. In his teens, Steve, with his father, spent countless hours playing a game that challenged them to run a company by allocating funding to marketing, production and other categories. The computer then provided a quarterly report based on the players’ decisions, giving them a chance to tweak the variables as they aimed for success. That game sharpened Steve’s capacity to analyze patterns and improve on past decisions. He is hopeful researchers at the Hill Country Field Station will take a similar approach to the serious business of conservation efforts.

Restoring the Land — and Hope

The Hill Country Field Station will give UT researchers and students — particularly those in the College of Natural Sciences — the opportunity to gather hands-on data and have meaningful learning experiences beyond the classroom. “Long-term access to protected spaces allows scientists to tackle the most pressing ecological and hydrological problems of our time and lets students experience learning about natural resources in ways they carry with them over a lifetime,” says David Vanden Bout, dean of the College of Natural Sciences.

The field station will also provide students and researchers with a chance to test theories as they gain insight into possible solutions. It is a living laboratory where real-time experiments can help them monitor developments in our changing environment.

“Effective adaption is going to require the best knowledge and facts that can be gathered, and that takes research in the field. We’re going to test different approaches to restoration,” says Steve. “For example, there are inexpensive ways to restore land that will eliminate the invasive species of grass that have crowded out the biodiversity of grasses we need. When we do that, we will see birds come back, insects come back — these are things that will happen through well thought-out scientific restoration plans.”

“What starts here is going to change the world, and I trust The University of Texas to invest in our youth and to invest in research.”

— Steve Winn

Communication will play a pivotal role in the Winn family’s vision for the future of the Hill Country Field Station, and collaboration beyond the College of Natural Sciences is part of the master plan. Students from the Moody College of Communication will gain valuable experience by translating scientific findings into information aimed at the general public.

“Outreach becomes mission critical,” says Steve. “Research is not going to make a difference unless you can communicate findings to the rest of the world at scale.”





Part of the Winn family's outreach efforts include hosting schoolchildren at the property's 1.5-acre working farm — a fully organic facility that uses bio-intensive agricultural methods. There, the students can participate in harvesting crops and preparing healthy meals. "We hope this will be a place that inspires children and young adults to better understand the importance of diverse ecosystems to the sustainability of our planet and the life we enjoy here," says Steve. "I am a huge believer in the ability of planetariums, museums and educational institutions to capture imaginations at a time when young minds are most open and help change the direction of people's lives."



The Hill Country Field Station isn't the first of the Winn Family Foundation's gifts to UT. Steve has supported the construction of the Cockrell School of Engineering building, provided McDonald Observatory with funds needed to build the giant Magellan telescope, given research grants and much more. As a proud alumnus of UT, Steve remembers where he came from while he continues to keep a firm eye on where the world is headed.

"I am optimistic technology will solve environmental problems once enough capital is directed into the solution," he says. "Capital is a scarce resource, so allocating where it's going to produce the most benefit for humanity is critically important. What starts here is going to change the world," emphasizes Steve, "and I trust The University of Texas to invest in our youth and to invest in research." ■



◀ **An organic farm at the Hill Country Field Station explores sustainable and responsible use of resources through biodynamic agriculture. Photos by Cory Ryan Photography and Adrienne Leyva**



An Eye on Nature

Educating the community on the importance of plant conservation and land restoration is part of the mission of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, a botanic garden and research facility within the Texas Field Station Network. With the help of the Winn Family Foundation, the Wildflower Center is investigating the use of advanced technology to study plants and animals and share knowledge gained with the public.

The Winn Family Foundation has provided high-tech cameras to help researchers at the Wildflower Center track pollinators — birds, bees and butterflies — and capture images designed to capture imaginations. The technology originates from Cosm, one of Steve Winn's entrepreneurial ventures. Cosm is the company leading experiential media and immersive technology, redefining the way the world experiences content across sports, entertainment, immersive art and education. The Cosm cameras record full field-of-view images at 12K resolution and 120 frames per second, providing a level of detail never before possible. The technology can then interface with computers to tag image sequences, allowing researchers to follow a tagged object, like a bee or other pollinator, around the field of view with enormous precision.

"The Winn family's gift of Cosm equipment helps us to characterize how plants grow and bloom, and how pollinators interact with these plants in a new and immersive way," says Shalene Jha, assistant professor of integrative biology at The University of



Texas at Austin and director of academic research at the Wildflower Center. "Using this equipment, we can better understand the dynamics of plant flowering as well as the fine-scale interactions between plants and the insect pollinators they need for reproduction."

Additionally, the cameras are helping create nature fans with close-up images and video on a different level.

"Cosm is helping us create inspiring experiences for viewers," says Shalene. "The technology reduces barriers and opens opportunities. Not everyone can walk out into a field at the Wildflower Center and crouch down to see a pollinator visit a flower."

Using technology to bring nature into focus goes beyond creating beautiful images. It can create long-lasting connections, which are vital for ensuring people participate in the protection of our shared environment.

"We're not conducting research just for the sake of it," says Shalene. "We're conducting research to help people better understand the value of nature. Steve and the entire Winn family are passionate about having an impact on communities and reaching broader audiences to engage them in conservation. Who else can we bring to the table? Who else can we ensure has a profound experience with nature? By studying biological processes and celebrating what they provide us as humans, we can inspire the broader community to conserve these organisms."





Finding Allies

Kathryn Smith's connection to UT began in her childhood home in Tyler, Texas, where her father installed a doorbell that chimed the opening bars of "The Eyes of Texas." The sound was a frequent reminder of her father's love for all things Longhorn. The connection she feels to the Forty Acres today, however, lacks such whimsy.

When Robert, Kathryn's husband of 41 years, was diagnosed in March 2022 with two rare forms of cancer, the Smiths turned to Dell Medical School. There they found a strong ally in oncologist Dr. William Matsui. Throughout the Smiths' ongoing journey, Dr. Matsui has offered more than medical advice; he has provided

emotional and psychological support and strategies on how to navigate the multiple challenges that accompany illness.

To express their gratitude for Dr. Matsui's compassionate care and guidance, the couple has created The Robert S. and Kathryn D. Smith Lymphoma Research Fund, giving back to Dell Med and giving hope to future patients.

Staying Optimistic

Bob's first indication something was amiss with his health came when he had trouble seeing the ball in a game of golf, one of his favorite retirement activities. Initially he

didn't give the problem much thought, but when the condition persisted for several months, he sought medical advice. Doctors told Bob the culprit was melanoma, and that the disease would rob him of his left eye.

"We thought that was the worst that could happen," says Kathy. Unfortunately, a PET scan revealed Bob had enlarged lymph nodes, and he received a diagnosis of mantle cell lymphoma, a cancer completely unrelated to the melanoma. The bad news all landed within a two-week span. Having Kathy at his side has made a huge difference to Bob's outlook; having the support of Dr. William Matsui has helped them both.

"We have been over-the-moon happy with how Dr. Matsui has worked with us through this difficult process," says Bob. "He listens incredibly well, and he takes lots of time with us. Not all doctors have been that way."

With Dr. Matsui's help, the Smiths have developed an approach that works for them. Among their strategies is Kathy's meticulous notetaking during Bob's appointments, helping the couple keep track of treatment options. "Kathy's the designated worrier; I'm the designated optimist," jokes Bob.

Bob's optimism extends to the potential of future breakthroughs by UT researchers. With their gift, the Smiths are helping to continue research for lymphoma treatment and cures in addition to showing genuine appreciation for Dr. Matsui and his approach to medicine and patients.

Funding Medical Breakthroughs

During discussions with members of UT's Gift and Estate Planning team, the Smiths learned they could transfer ownership of their life insurance policy to the University and receive significant income tax savings. The opportunity to do so gave them an easy way to achieve their philanthropic goals.

"The policy wasn't factored into our retirement plan," says Bob. "And even though Kathy and I are both accountants, we had never thought about the positive tax benefits of making this contribution. We would have thought a lot longer and a lot harder if we had to get our checkbook out and write the same size check."

The Smiths can't heap enough praise on Dr. Matsui, and he is equally appreciative of their decision to provide the funding essential for medical breakthroughs. "Gifts like the one provided by Bob and Kathy Smith allow researchers to explore new ideas," says Dr. Matsui. "Donor funds act as a springboard for collaboration and give researchers the opportunity to take chances that can lead to breakthrough discoveries." ■

"Gifts like the one provided by Bob and Kathy Smith allow researchers to explore new ideas."



DR. WILLIAM MATSUI
Vice Dean of Research,
Dell Medical School
Robert E. Askew, Sr., M.D.
Chair in Oncology

The new University of Texas Medical Center — combining a state-of-the-art UT tertiary hospital and an MD Anderson Cancer Center with the academic and research expertise of UT Austin — will provide world-class integrated care, all centered on you.



LEARN MORE about how UT and Dell Medical School are defining the future of health and how you can help.

Kathy and Bob Smith

A Shared Gift

Encouragement from professors can make an enormous difference in a student's life. For Jerry Nast, B.A. '72, the mentorship, friendship and guidance of Dr. Oscar Weigand, a UT professor of zoology from 1961 to 1985, made an enormous difference in his life, including influencing Jerry's decision to study dentistry.

For Sona Nast, B.A. '79, MSSW '80, the professor who influenced her the most was her own father. Dr. Irwin Spear was a UT professor of botany and biology from 1953 to 1994. "He encouraged many of his female students to go to medical school and to reach beyond their expectations," Sona recalls. "That made a lasting impact on me."

No wonder, then, that Jerry and Sona are providing encouragement to future Longhorns with the creation of two endowed scholarships:

◀ Sona and Jerry Nast



The David M. Nast Endowed Excellence Fund and the David M. Nast Endowed Scholarship, named for Jerry's younger brother. By honoring his memory with a gift of education, Jerry and Sona recognize the past while helping others look to the future.

Stretching Opportunities — and Money

David Nast, Jerry's only sibling, was born with severe cognitive disabilities that prevented him from pursuing advanced educational opportunities. Jerry remembers his brother for his outgoing personality. "When we would go out to a restaurant, he'd go up to the hostess, stick out his hand and say, 'Hi, I'm David Nast,'" says Jerry. "He would have been a great social director on a cruise ship. David was a wonderful outgoing guy, as friendly as could be."

The Nasts' grandmother had established a trust fund in case David needed further care than what was provided for him at River Gardens in New Braunfels, where he lived most of his adult life. Over time, the trust grew and remained untouched.



When David passed away in 2021 at age 72, Jerry decided to use the money to make a gift in David's name as a way of honoring what could have been.

"David never had the opportunity to study something of interest to him. I wanted to support science or engineering — something that was a real intellectual stretch," says Jerry. After touring several laboratories at UT, Jerry decided to make a gift to Cockrell School of Engineering's Texas Inventionworks, a program that puts students in the role of innovators and challenges



▲ David Nast with Jerry

◀ At the 2024 Texas Leadership Society luncheon, Jerry (at right) was awed by student displays, like the one presented by biomedical engineering student Ashauntee Fairley.

▶ Texas Inventionworks lets students become innovators.



“The Texas Challenge made our money go further, so we could help more people. I want to ensure others who don’t have opportunities to pursue advanced education gain access.”

— SONA NAST

them to solve problems, develop products and ultimately launch ventures. “I knew we’d found the right home for our gift because I can barely understand what the heck these people are doing,” he laughs.

Jerry and Sona saw their gift in action when they visited with Texas Inventionworks students during the 2024 Texas Leadership Society Luncheon. Jerry says, “I enjoyed talking to the students, mostly undergraduates, who had different booths to display their projects. I really got into it!” It was the first time the Nasts had attended the annual luncheon, a perk of belonging to the Texas Leadership Society. “Being there made me proud to be a Longhorn,” says Sona.

Growing up with a professor for a father meant education was part of the equation for Sona and her four siblings, all of whom are UT alumni. Establishing an endowed scholarship has allowed Sona to demonstrate her gratitude for the advantages she had while ensuring others

don’t miss out on all that UT has to offer. The David M. Nast Endowed Scholarship supports high-potential Texas students from low- and middle-income families, with a preference for those enrolled in the College of Natural Sciences. The gift was made as part of the Texas Challenge, a 1:1 matching program.

“The Texas Challenge made our money go further, so we could help more people,” says Sona. “I like the idea of giving that leg up to people who didn’t have the same level footing when they started UT; that spoke to my social worker’s soul. I want to ensure others who don’t have opportunities to pursue advanced education gain access.”

To learn more about the Texas Challenge, visit giving.utexas.edu/challenge. ■

A Graduate’s Gratitude

RIHANA GRAY

Dallas, TX
B.S. '24
Human ecology, minor in
management information systems



What impact did receiving the David M. Nast Endowed Scholarship make on your life and future?

Coming from a single-parent home, trying to work through college and being the youngest of seven, sustaining myself was challenging. With the scholarship, I was able to worry less about the next meal or if I could pay for rent or parking fees. I was able to be productive in the classroom and not worry about how I would make ends meet by the end of the month.

What do you want to say to your scholarship donors, Jerry and Sona Nast?

Thank you for providing me with safety, confidence and security in my academic journey. Knowing there are people in the world who care about the education of others inspires me to return the favor once I can. Your belief in my potential reaffirmed my commitment and inspired me to exceed expectations by maximizing every opportunity that fell upon me. With the scholarship, I had an enjoyable last year at UT. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for showing me that someone believes enough in me to invest in my future.

Want to set up an endowed scholarship in memory of a loved one?

Scan the QR code or visit utexas.planmygift.org/memorials-and-tribute-gifts to find out how.



Texas Leader SPOTLIGHT

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



Daniel Acosta, B.S. '68 & Patricia Acosta

Austin, TX

What are your favorite UT memories?

I was the first in my family to go to college. My first time in an airplane was from El Paso to Austin to start at UT. Starting classes in the College of Pharmacy, meeting new people, making friends, watching TV in the Texas Union, getting cans of soup from the 7-Eleven and heating them on a hotplate in my room – all good memories.

How did UT prepare you for success?

When I was drafted into the Army, my education allowed me to work as a pharmacist in a hospital in South Korea. After I completed my Ph.D. at the University of Kansas, by luck there was a faculty position open at UT's College of Pharmacy. I returned to UT as a professor; my work here allowed me to establish my career and my reputation, which opened doors to other things, like my role as deputy director of research at the National Center for Toxicological Research.

Why did you choose to give to UT?

Students have always been the center of my career. Patti got to know many of the graduate students that worked in my laboratory. We're even godparents to some of my former students' children. We know how hard it is for young people who are struggling with finances, and we both felt it was very important to help the next generation of incoming students.

What impact do you want your gift to make?

We hope our endowed scholarship will allow students to do things they might not be able to do otherwise. We have received many letters from students who have appreciated the support to go to a conference, for example. Their gratitude for the financial assistance we have provided means a lot. We hope our endowment, which we have funded through our IRA, will continue to grow and that others will also make contributions so there'll be even more financial assistance available to students.



Kristin Roberts, BBA '82 & Bob Roberts, BBA '81

Humble, TX

What are your favorite UT memories?

Kristin: I loved all my classes. It was fascinating to explore a wide range of subjects in my freshman and sophomore years, then focus on specialized topics as a junior and senior. And, of course, meeting Bob!

Bob: My first football game in the fall of 1977 is unforgettable. That was the year UT introduced the Texas Fight chant, where one side of the stadium yells "Texas!" and the other responds with "Fight!" It was also the year Earl Campbell won UT's first Heisman Trophy before being drafted as the NFL's first overall pick.

How did UT prepare you for success?

Kristin: In my senior year, I studied commercial banking and cash management. I was captivated and knew that was the area of banking I wanted to pursue. My finance classes gave me a solid foundation that propelled my career in the banking industry.

Bob: UT is known worldwide for a reason. The talent and expertise coming out of the University are unparalleled. I gained knowledge and skills at the McCombs School of Business that have set me up for life and been invaluable in my career as a real estate professional.

Why did you choose to include UT in your estate plan?

We feel a deep connection to the Longhorn community and wanted to give back to the University that means so much to us. Including UT in our estate plan is more than a financial contribution — it's a way to express our gratitude for the education and opportunities UT has provided us, even now.

What impact do you want your gift to make?

We want future students to have access to a top-tier education — especially those who might not otherwise be able to afford it. It's incredibly rewarding to think our gift will help future generations of Longhorns experience everything UT has to offer.



Leonette W. Slay, MPA '74

Birmingham, AL

What are your favorite UT memories?

My first experience with a computer was in 1972 when I and other students in my cohort had to undergo two weeks of computer training before the semester began. After a particularly difficult day, my friend and I went to the Huddle House and ate as many hamburgers and fries as we could.

How did UT prepare you for success?

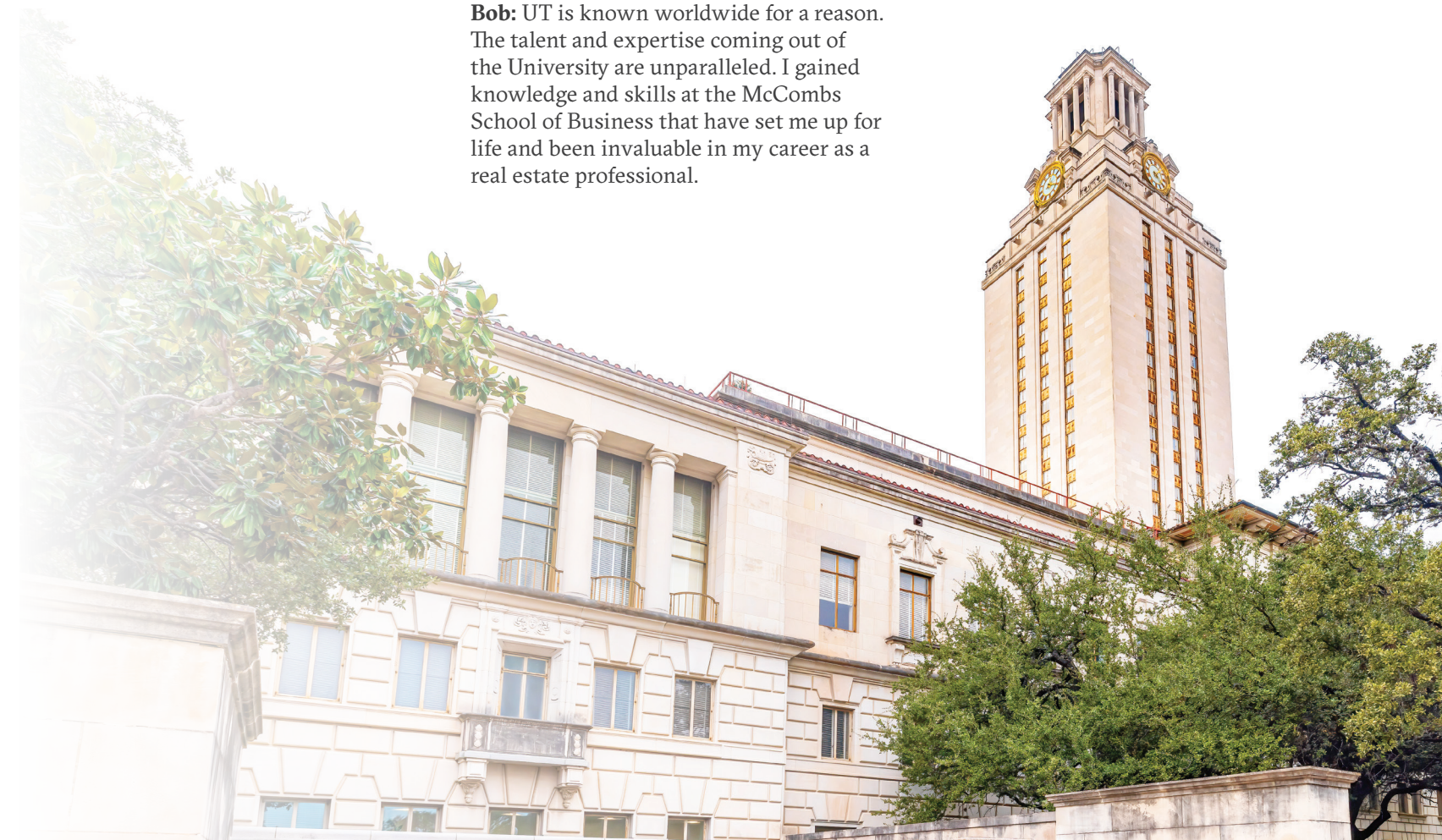
Thanks to a generous scholarship package, I was able to enroll in the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs and complete a fully funded two-year master's program. By the time I graduated, the LBJ School already had a reputation as one of the top public affairs schools in the state. Representatives from the Texas legislature called the University to recruit graduates, and I was hired right out of graduate school. The LBJ School has opened the door to many new and exciting opportunities that helped me carve a career path I may not have had otherwise.

Why did you choose to give to UT?

As a scholarship recipient, I know how even a small amount of financial aid can make a huge difference for students and their families. The experiences I had as an LBJ student were transformative. I want future students to have the same opportunities to make meaningful connections and pursue their educational dreams.

What impact do you want your gift to make?

My goal is to give students the freedom to fully engage with all the opportunities the LBJ School has to offer without the burden of financial stress. I want to help them overcome economic barriers, reach their full potential and become the next generation of policy leaders who will make a difference in the world. I hope to continue supporting LBJ students long into the future, even after I'm gone.



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Sloan Breedon

Submissions
TEXAS LEADER is published for members of the Texas Leadership Society and other alumni and friends of The University of Texas at Austin. To submit story ideas, comments, questions and address changes, please use the enclosed envelope, call us at 800-687-4602 or email giftplan@austin.utexas.edu.

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Wondering how to include the university in your estate plans? Here's the language we suggest:

I hereby direct \$_____ (or _____ percent of my residual estate) in cash, securities or other property to the Board of Regents of The University of Texas System for the benefit of The University of Texas at Austin.

This gift shall be for the further benefit of [college, school, unit]

_____ and shall be used to [purpose]

_____ *As with any decision involving your assets and/or estate, we urge you to seek the advice of your professional counsel when considering a gift to The University of Texas at Austin.*

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TEXAS LEADERSHIP SOCIETY LUNCHEON

FRIDAY, MARCH 28, 2025

11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

**AT&T Conference Center
AUSTIN, TX**

Join University leaders and students as we celebrate the generosity of you — our remarkable alumni and friends! You'll learn how your support is helping UT faculty and students change the world through their passion, research and bold pursuits.

It's not too late to become a Texas Leadership Society member and join us for this special event.

For more information, please email giftplan@austin.utexas.edu or call **800-687-4602**.