

TEXAS★LEADER

PLANNING TO CHANGE THE WORLD



HONORING
A FATHER'S
LEGACY

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Chain Reaction

Van and Thomas Truskett on the
power of philanthropy

Summer 2023



TEXAS
The University of Texas at Austin

PHOTO: MARSHA MILLER



From *the* President

Achieving a milestone provides both an excellent moment to look back at what has been accomplished and a time to look forward and set goals for the future.

Since the public announcement of our What Starts Here campaign a little over a year ago, we hit a significant milestone: crossing the \$4 billion mark on the way to our historic goal of \$6 billion. Both the journey to this milestone and the pathway to our ambitious goal are made possible by donors like you, who empower The University of Texas at Austin to change the world through our students, graduates and discoveries.

Your support has given us the ability to seize new opportunities and elevate our teaching, research and service missions. As never before, we are able to attract top talent, like Van and Thomas Truskett, featured in this issue's cover story. Your legacy is in good hands as the UT stars of today spark innovative ideas, find ways to make a positive impact and, of course, create lasting friendships. Collectively, this talented group is strengthening UT's ability to improve health care, producing inspiring research and finding new ways to serve.

The stories in this issue of Texas Leader illustrate the creative and thoughtful interests of our donors, who pass their enthusiasm to a new generation

of Longhorns. As the passions of the alumni pair with the talents of our current students and faculty, we see unprecedented opportunities for discovery, learning and growth.

We are utilizing our collective strengths as we work to surpass our current campaign goals. We hope you will continue to engage in the exciting times that impact and energize our campus.

Thank you for your support—it makes a difference for our students, who in turn, will make a difference in the world.

Hook 'em!

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Jay Hartzell.

Jay Hartzell, *President*
The University of Texas at Austin

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TEXAS LEADERSHIP SOCIETY LUNCHEON
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Mark your calendar and join us for this special event. For more information, please email giftplan@austin.utexas.edu or call 800-687-4602.



Chain Reaction

Both as UT students and as faculty and staff, Van and Tom Truskett have seen the power of philanthropy.

Photos:
Sloan Breeden

Van and Tom Truskett (both B.S. '96) met in the summer of 1994 as chemical engineering students in the Cockrell School of Engineering — a connection that “made that class even more eventful and interesting and fun,” Van remembers.

When the continuation of their academic journeys took them far from the Forty Acres — Van to Johns Hopkins, and Tom to Princeton — they continued their relationship with a lot of commuting. Eventually, their career paths led them back to The University of Texas at Austin in 2002. Now, the couple’s planned gift for unrestricted use by UT’s McKetta Department of Chemical Engineering reflects their deep understanding of the contribution donors make to scholarly pursuits.

Van grew up in Austin with dreams of studying at UT. “I have always been aware of the community that UT provided to Austin,” she says. “When I got accepted here, it was an amazing day.”

In her role as the executive director of the Texas Innovation Center, Van works with researchers at the intersection of technology, commercialization, innovation and entrepreneurship. “There’s so much impactful research happening at the University,” says Van. “I am passionate about working with faculty and students. It’s energizing and inspirational to see how people transform when their research takes a practical form that people can adopt in their everyday life,” says Van. “Donor support gives researchers the freedom to be bold and daring, which takes the University’s research efforts to the next level. Without donor funding, UT wouldn’t be where it is today.”

Van is excited about Austin’s growing reputation as a hub of transformational research. “Right now is a historic time to be in this city,” she says. “The venture capital community is growing, and President Jay Hartzell’s strategic plan puts a lot of emphasis on bringing awareness to UT Austin as a hub for innovation and transformative research.”

Tom’s hometown is Longview, Texas, and he also grew up knowing UT was his destination of choice, just as it had been for his older brother. “I was very interested in learning about the world and scholarship and academia,” he says. “I wanted to be at a place that was big enough that you could fully immerse yourself and take in everything a big university had to offer.”

Despite the size of the University, Tom benefited from individual attention from his professors. “I got my start here as an undergraduate researcher. A professor pulled me aside and offered me the chance to do research in his lab. He told me, ‘There’s a real opportunity for you to go out and see the world and become an outstanding scholar and build a career in helping students advancing research.’”

After completion of his master’s and doctoral degrees, Tom returned to UT as an assistant professor and became chair of the McKetta Department of Chemical Engineering, a position he held from 2013 to 2021. The experience gave Tom insight into the possibilities that donor funding makes reality. “State funding supports the

core mission of the University and essential functions,” he explains. “But what makes things happen are the other resources that unlock time and opportunities — graduate fellowships and scholarships, for example, or even a new class that would not be offered except for a donor’s generosity.”

With their long connection to UT, both Van and Tom are excited about what the future holds — for students, for researchers and for the city they love. “Donors give students access to a future that we can’t even imagine today,” says Van. Tom adds, “Those resources can help nudge somebody in the right direction and open up opportunities for them to transform the world,” he says. “And it’s all because of someone’s decision to make a gift.” ■

“Donor support gives researchers the freedom to be bold and daring, which takes the University’s research efforts to the next level.”

— VAN TRUSKETT



A Place to Call Home

More than 5,000 miles from his hometown, Bjorn Billhardt found everything he was looking for.

Austin-based entrepreneur Bjorn Billhardt (B.A. and BBA '97) believes in the power of The University of Texas at Austin to shape lives. To say thanks for the opportunities he received on the Forty Acres, Bjorn has made a planned gift of shares in his company, Abilitie. His gift will support the Plan II Honors Program and the School of Undergraduate Studies, where Bjorn received the foundations upon which he has built his life. "The University of Texas at Austin opened my eyes to the world and made me who I am today," says Bjorn. But if not for actor-singer David Hasselhoff, Bjorn might never have been a UT graduate.

Growing up in Hamburg, Germany, Bjorn loved watching "Knight Rider"—the TV show that starred Hasselhoff and a talking car named KITT as a pair of California crime fighters. The show's spectacular scenery motivated Bjorn to apply to a high school exchange program.

"I specifically applied to California because I wanted to be at the beach where David Hasselhoff and his car were at home," recalls Bjorn.

In a major plot twist, Bjorn was accepted to the exchange program, but was told his host family was in Pflugerville, Texas. After he dried his tears, Bjorn realized it might be his only chance to spend time in the U.S., so he accepted the opportunity.

While attending Pflugerville High School, Bjorn took part in a drama production in which he was improbably cast in the role of a Japanese soldier. The students performed in a University Interscholastic League drama competition, and Bjorn's acting—with a believable Japanese accent, in the words of one of the judges—earned an honorable mention. This led to an



"The University of Texas at Austin opened my eyes to the world and made me who I am today."

invitation from UT's Department of Theatre and Dance to attend a summer camp. Bjorn eagerly extended his American adventure.

"That summer, I lived in the Quad and got familiar with UT," says Bjorn. "At that point, there was no question where I would go to university."

After he completed high school in Germany, Bjorn returned to UT to study theatre. It was 1993, and because international money transfers weren't easy, Bjorn arrived with \$5,000 his mother had sewn into his jeans pocket. It was all the money his parents were able to contribute to his four-year education.

"I was the recipient of scholarships from day one at the university and wouldn't have been able to stay without those," Bjorn recalls. "Every semester was a high-wire act because if I didn't get a scholarship, I also wouldn't get the in-state tuition."

After a year, Bjorn decided his professional future would not be in theatre, so he explored other options. He visited the office of the Plan II Honors Program, a four-year interdisciplinary arts and science honors major, and there his life took another unexpected turn.

"I had no idea what Plan II was, but a wonderful counselor explained the program patiently," Bjorn remembers. The same counselor gave him guidance on how to complete and submit his application to meet the last-minute deadline.

"That type of flexibility and ability to help out—that's a very Texan thing," says Bjorn. "This we'll-make-it-happen attitude makes Texas unlike any other place in the world. In Plan II, I had such an amazingly broad-based education, learning everything from philosophy to

physics to accounting with incredibly bright students in an environment where academic rigor and competitiveness were infused with a laid-back attitude and Texas friendliness."

After graduation, Bjorn went on to earn his MBA at Harvard. But when it came time to put his education to work, he turned to two of his Longhorn friends to start his first company, Enspire, a digital learning design service.

"We were all in different places—Boston, Amsterdam and Austin," says Bjorn. "We never once discussed where we would start the business because it was a given it would be Austin. We all had such an incredible experience at UT and in Austin, a city made for entrepreneurs. It was welcoming and friendly and nobody laughed at three 20-something-year-olds who set out to change the world with bold pronouncements and no money in the bank."

In 2015, Bjorn founded his second company, Abilitie, an organization focused on leadership development and executive education that Inc. magazine has named to its lists of Best Workplaces in America and Fastest Growing Companies in America. With so much success, Bjorn knew it was time to give back.

"I hope there will be other Bjorns, whose dream of becoming all they can be will be made possible at The University of Texas because of my contribution," he says. "If even one person benefits from my gift in the same way that I did, that would be perfect." ■

▶ **Bjorn Billhardt (B.A. and BBA '97)**

◀ **Upon his return to Germany, Bjorn made it clear to his family where he wanted to go to university.**



In my own words An Extraordinary Life

Terry Lord J.D. '66

In the fall of 1963, I was a first-year student in the School of Law at The University of Texas at Austin. It was a turbulent era, with civil rights protests across the nation and, of course, a dreadful day in American history. I remember exactly where I was on November 22. My roommate and I were with some friends in our apartment watching television, waiting to go downtown to witness President Kennedy's motorcade. I still recall seeing—and hearing—Walter Cronkite tell the nation the sad news.

I had been inspired to pursue a life of public service by President Kennedy and by my father, a Dallas police officer who was head of security when President and Mrs. Kennedy arrived at Love Field. Both men had a tremendous influence on me.

I chose to attend UT's School of Law because of its national and global reputation, and because I knew it could provide me with opportunities and a career I would be proud of. I wanted to fill my mind with as much information as I could, create my own values and be the person I wanted to be.

My three years at the School of Law were filled with optimal experiences and opportunities to learn. Beyond the classes with my outstanding professors, I went to football games and basketball games and had

such good times. I remember going to lectures at very small gatherings and meeting important people—writers and literary celebrities—and making great friends I still have to this day.

I graduated in 1966, but I didn't start my legal career right away. I got my draft notice in my final semester and I was really worried they might take me before I graduated. I didn't have to report until after I finished, but only by a week or so. Just two or three weeks out of law school, I was in an Army uniform. I went to advanced infantry training and then to Fort Benning, Ga., for six months to become a second lieutenant in the Army infantry. After that I spent six more months in intelligence school and then was sent to Vietnam for a year—1968, the worst year of the war. Law school helped me better understand tragedy and how to face difficulties in life. I was better prepared for my military experience because of the discipline I'd learned in law school.

"I feel great joy at being an alumnus of this university."

In all, I spent three years in the Army and then was finally able to start the career I'd always wanted. For about nine months, I worked in the city attorney's office in Dallas, handling misdemeanors and other traffic violations before I was hired to work in Chicago in the organized crime section of the Department of Justice. I never had tried a federal case, and

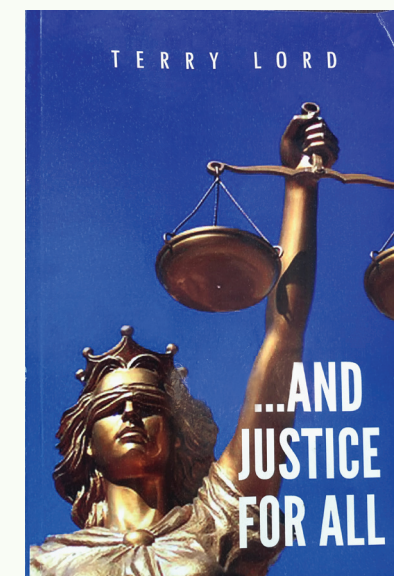


there I was, at age 27, prosecuting mob figures, using electronic surveillance, dealing with undercover agents and doing sting operations for all types of federal criminal cases. I was thrown right into that world and I learned with each case. I learned quickly because I had been to law school at UT. My education had given me the confidence to do what I needed to do.

I owe my unique career as a prosecutor to UT's School of Law. The best way I could think of to thank the University for providing me with the education I needed to have such a wonderful career was to make a planned gift. I bought some land just north of College Station in 1971, and I've had oil leases on the property since 2013. I'm leaving two-thirds of my mineral rights in oil production to The University of Texas at Austin.

My gift to the law school is to be used at the dean's discretion. I hope to set an example so more people will think about what the law school could become. It has expanded its reputation so much since I was there. I want

its renown and growth to continue. With more gifts, the law school could continue to attract the very best professors and get the best students to study in any area that they wanted. I feel great joy at being an alumnus of this University and I want it to always be a great place where students can build an extraordinary life for themselves. ■



◀ Terry's memoir, "**...And Justice for All,**" details his career as an organized crime prosecutor, a manager of national crime initiatives involving industrial safety and health violations, immigration and customs fraud, and child exploitation; and, finally, as a legal advisor in the Balkans assisting in establishing programs to combat organized crime, corruption and human trafficking.

A Century of Caring

The Umstattd family celebrates their lengthy campus connection with a special gift.



Longhorn loyalty is known to last a lifetime.

In the case of the Umstattd family, that loyalty has lasted several lifetimes. The Umstattds have a family history with The University of Texas at Austin that spans nearly a century and encompasses four generations. Keeping that connection strong for generations to come is what motivated four siblings—Jimmy, Madelaine, Tom and Bobby—to establish an endowment supporting Dell Medical School. The Robert Greenleaf Umstattd, MD Endowed Distinguished Professorship in Anesthesiology will honor their late father and continue the family's impressive legacy.

The Umstattds' Longhorn story began with the siblings' grandfathers, both of whom were professors at UT. In 1924, maternal grandfather C. Aubrey Smith joined the accounting faculty of UT's School of Business, which had been founded only two years earlier. He was a driving force behind the establishment of the MPA degree and the Department of Accounting Advisory Council. He also wrote two books about his time at UT: "Fifty Years of Education for Business at The University of Texas" (1962) and "Sixty Years of Accounting Education on the Forty Acres" (1972).

LEFT TO RIGHT: Jimmy (BBA '79), Madelaine, mother Jeanne "Scooter" Umstattd, Tom (BBA '80) and Bobby (B.A. '75). Madelaine's son and daughter, Michael Madeley (B.S. '10) and Katherine Gautreaux (BSN '13), are members of the fourth generation of the Umstattd family to have graduated from UT. "I am already indoctrinating my three kids," says Katherine, "so maybe they will be interested in continuing the tradition."

TOP TO BOTTOM: Grandfathers C. Aubrey Smith and James Umstattd were both UT professors.



Paternal grandfather James G. Umstattd, born in Missouri in 1896, spent his early career as an educator in Missouri, West Virginia, Minnesota and Michigan before coming to Austin in 1938. Texas must have felt like home; he spent 34 years at The University of Texas at Austin within the College of Education's Department of Curriculum and Instruction, where he served as chair from 1939 to 1959. After retirement, he chronicled his life and career in a self-published autobiography, "The Odyssey of Jim Umstattd."

James' son, Robert G. "Bob" Umstattd (B.A. '46), graduated from UT at age 19 and the following year married Jeanne "Scooter" Smith (1928-2021), who was enrolled in the School of Business. Scooter didn't finish her degree at UT, but moved to Philadelphia with her new husband, who earned his medical degree at the University of Pennsylvania. Following service in the Korean War, Bob moved his growing family to New Hampshire at the suggestion of a Navy buddy. Two winters in the rugged northeast were enough to convince him to return to the warmer climes of Texas. The family first landed in Dallas, but after two years there relocated to Austin, where Bob's career as an anesthesiologist thrived from 1957 to 1987.

Scooter made her children aware that she wanted them to endow a professorship, just as had been done for her father, for whom the C. Aubrey Smith Professorship in Accounting was established in 1973 with gifts from 15 donors. "Since the passing of our father in 2000, Scooter talked about leaving some sort of philanthropic gift to a medical school, and very specifically to the field of anesthesiology," says her son Bobby. "When Dell Medical School came to be, it fit our requirements exactly."

Robert Umstattd was a member of UT's track team in 1946.

Photo: Texas Student Media/The Cactus



The Umstattd family's generous gift will create opportunities for future Dell Med graduates.

Fulfilling their mother's wish gave the close-knit siblings an opportunity to do some creative thinking. "We were trying to get the most bang for our buck as far as giving a good gift to Dell Medical School," says Tom, whose brother Jimmy suggested gifting some commercial property that had been held by the family since the 1990s. The property will be sold by UT to fund the professorship. The Umstattd family's generous gift will create opportunities for future Dell Med students and a chance for them to make an impact in health care.

"We are pleased our gift will help further the development of techniques and knowledge within our father's profession," says Bobby. ■

For more information on the advantages of gifting real estate, visit utexas.planmygift.org/real-estate.



Alumna Marissa Schlaifer reflects on the importance of donors in her academic career and beyond.

Marissa was able to enhance her education beyond the Forty Acres thanks to donors whose gifts put new possibilities within her reach. “I was able to attend national pharmacy association meetings with funds provided by generous alumni,” says Marissa. “I was introduced to new ideas and people who would guide me in my career. I want current and future students to have those same opportunities.” For this purpose, Marissa established the Marissa Schlaifer Student Professional Development Endowment through her estate plan.

“It is important that students receive professional development opportunities,” says Marissa, who hasn’t missed an American Pharmacists Association conference in 35 years, and has been actively involved in the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy (AMCP), serving on committees, on the board and as AMCP President. “For me, it would be a dream to be in the position to pay for every student pharmacist to attend their chosen conference. I would not be in the job I am in today if there hadn’t been money from the college to go to that first conference.”

As a high school student in Bay City, Texas, Marissa Schlaifer (B.S. '87, M.S. '92) had limited involvement with academic clubs. At The University of Texas at Austin, Marissa took the leap into extracurricular activities thanks to the encouragement of faculty and staff. She entrenched herself in the community and culture of the College of Pharmacy and the pharmacy profession, running for national office in the Student American Pharmacists Association, Student APhA, (now the APhA Academy of Student Pharmacists) and running (albeit unsuccessfully) for the position of speaker of the house.

Marissa is currently the vice president of policy at Optum, a health services innovation company and pharmacy benefit manager. When she started pharmacy school—a path she chose because she “wanted to go into a medical field but didn’t like the sight of blood”—she could not have predicted her career path would take her to the health care policy space. “I tell student pharmacists that what you end up doing 20 years from now is likely something you don’t know exists today,” she says.

Marissa confesses that her grades didn’t put her at the top of the class; nonetheless, her commitment to her field of study earned her accolades like Outstanding Pharmacy Administration Student. “My future major professor told me to consider that award to be an invitation to consider grad school,” says Marissa. She completed her M.S. in pharmacy administration at UT in 1992 and distinguished herself in her field, earning the William J. Sheffield Outstanding Alumnus Award from the UT College of Pharmacy and being named the AMCP Distinguished Service Award recipient this year.

During her years at UT, Marissa developed another interest—a love for Longhorn football. Although she has lived in the Washington, D.C., area since 2003, Marissa still holds season tickets. She not only attends as many home games as possible, but also connects with a group of friends at away games. “I may be a little obsessed,” she laughs.

Marissa shares her joy of Longhorn football with friends.



College of Pharmacy Points of Pride

1. #7 Best Pharmacy Schools —“U.S. News & World Report”
2. Spearheading innovative research on drug addiction, cancer, toxicology, infectious disease, and mental health
3. Revolutionizing global distribution and storage of vaccines with Jurata Thin Film (juratatf.com)
4. Developing innovative 3D printing for advanced drug delivery systems
5. Reducing health disparities through practice-, population- and policy-based research



Marissa is grateful for the life and career she has had thanks to her UT College of Pharmacy education. “If not for the College of Pharmacy, I would not have the opportunities I have today. And my opportunities at the College of Pharmacy came from the donors before me,” she says. Marissa applies the same kind of dedication and commitment that got her through pharmacy school to her philanthropy. “Donors to the College of Pharmacy allow students to graduate from one of the top pharmacy programs in the country, get a great job and make decent money. To me, giving back is an obligation. If you can give back but don’t, you’re ignoring all of what was given to you.” ■

▲ **Through exemplary education and training, research and professional development, the College of Pharmacy advances discovery, innovation and patient care.**

Texas Leader SPOTLIGHT

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



Laura Gutierrez-Witt, MLS '67, M.A. Art History '84
Austin, TX

What are your favorite UT memories?

I worked in the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection for 35 years. During my time there, I had the opportunity to meet scholars from around the world who came to the library to use our collections for their research or to write their next book. I got to learn so much from so many incredible individuals and make lasting friendships.

How did UT prepare you for success?

I had a wonderful career, thanks to the University. I started working at the library in September 1965 as a student worker. I was fortunate to have worked with Nettie Lee Benson, who established the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, for 10 years before she retired. She was a tremendously energetic person, and I was incredibly lucky to have her as my mentor and learn so much from her. It's because of her that I started to work in the library and the reason I stayed for another 25 years.

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

The University has nurtured me through many periods of my life, starting as a younger person, to a beginning professional and now a widow. I established my gift in part as a memorial to my late husband and to give back to the students, the teachers and the University, which has been my home for so long. I wanted to leave some token of appreciation for the community that has always taken care of me.

What impact do you want your gift to make?

We are all in this together, and I want to pay forward the wonderful gifts and opportunities I received during my time at the University. I hope my little drop in the bucket will help nurture students through scholarship support and provide experiences that so many people don't have.



Glenadine (Russell) Pfennig, B.J. '64, & Jon Pfennig, B.A. Government '64, J.D. '67
Austin, TX

What are your favorite UT memories?

Glena: Jon and I met on a blind date for the 1962 UT vs. Arkansas football game (UT won 7-3) and have attended football games ever since. We married in 1964 and have had season tickets for 58 years.

Jon: We've been there for the great national championship years—1963, 1969 and 2005. Living at Longhorn Village helps us stay connected to our alma mater through friendships and Longhorn activities.

How did UT prepare you for success?

Glena: We had outstanding professors and took advantage of opportunities for leadership experiences in service organizations and internships. I was UT's first public relations intern.

Jon: By participating in UT activities, I learned that education reaches far beyond a classroom, and I became a lifelong learner. After graduation we moved to Baytown, where I practiced law for 53 years. I eventually ran my own law firm, which was the highlight of my career.

Why did you choose to make a gift to UT?

Our planned gift through our IRA supports Moody College of Communication undergraduate scholarships in honor of our parents, who attended UT. With their financial support and our working, neither of us accumulated student debt. We are grateful that they instilled in us the value of an education.

What impact do you want your gift to make?

Glena: I was open to change throughout my 37-year career, and my degree took me in many directions. I want to provide the same opportunities for students. I want to pay it forward.

Jon: It's rewarding to give back to the University. We have had a Moody College scholarship since 2017 and plan additional scholarships from our IRAs to help future Longhorns succeed.



Patti Ohlendorf, J.D. '77, & Curtis Ohlendorf
Austin, TX

What are your favorite UT memories?

My husband and I met at UT during a computer training course. The University has always been a huge part of our family's life. We traveled to all away football games for almost 15 years and Curtis, our two sons and I went together to several bowl games, which was a lot of fun. UT continues to provide so many opportunities to enjoy lectures, sporting events, concerts, theatre and celebratory events. We've all met a lot of very interesting people through these events.

How did UT prepare you for success?

UT was a great place to meet people. You get to know and deal with many different types of people with different goals and passions, and you learn how to interact with a range of personalities. The education was stellar and the School of Law remains topnotch. The ability to meet and learn from the best faculty was a gift. Mentors also were extremely helpful. No matter what career you go into, finding someone who can give you some guidance as you navigate your career and your own personal life is very important.

Why did you choose to make a gift to UT?

When we reached the age when it was time to start taking distributions from individual retirement accounts (IRAs), we talked about our future and making decisions that were best for our family. UT has been very important to not only our work lives and careers, but also our personal lives, so it made sense to put UT among the very top of our philanthropic goals. We established a scholarship through Curtis' IRA and at some point, we'll likely plan more gifts.

What impact do you want your gift to make?

Scholarships are very important for recruitment purposes. We hope our scholarship gift to the School of Law will help recruit and retain some of the very best students, whether they have a strong financial need or whether the scholarship is given only in recognition of their great academic performance.

Cover Photo

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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