





# FROM THE DEAN

WE RECEIVED  
ONE OF THE  
LARGEST GIFTS  
TO A PUBLIC  
UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF  
SOCIAL WORK  
TO DATE.

By now, you know the good news. Thanks to a generous gift from UT Regent Steve Hicks, we are now the Steve Hicks School of Social Work at The University of Texas at Austin.

You may be wondering what this means. Well, it means:

- That we are recognized for 67 years of social work education at the flagship university of the UT System.
- That someone who is not a social worker respects our profession and values the positive change that we are making in our communities.
- That we received one of the largest gifts to a public university school of social work to date.
- That we are the only named school of social work in the top 25 public universities in the nation.
- That our standing as a top-ranked school of social work is no longer the best-kept secret on campus.

None of these would have been possible without you and the work you continue to do every day. As Mr. Hicks said in his remarks the day of the announcement, “We are sitting here on this beautiful day, but it is not a beautiful day for everyone. We have people in this very community that are suffering from addiction, alcoholism, domestic violence ... the people who are holding their hands and helping them are social workers. And we train, from what I’ve learned, the best social workers certainly in this state, and maybe even in the country. For that, I express my appreciation, and I really look forward to being a part of that legacy.”

I invite you to learn about the details of Mr. Hicks’ gift impact on our school in the following pages. But I want to say, again, that none of these would have been possible without you. I am grateful for every one of you, for the difference you make in the world, and I am excited about what we will accomplish together in the future.

Luis H. Zayas  
Dean and Robert Lee Sutherland Chair  
in Mental Health and Social Policy



the **utopian**

The Utopian is published for alumni and friends of The University of Texas at Austin Steve Hicks School of Social Work.



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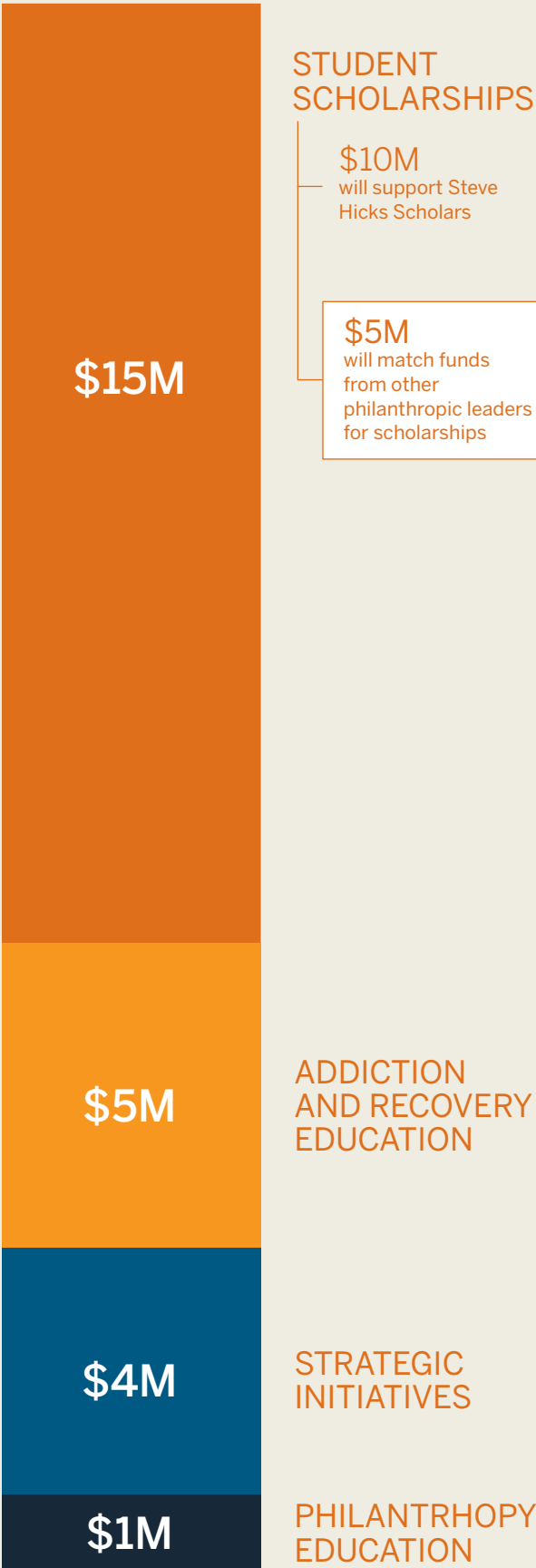
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# STEVE HICKS’ \$25M GIFT AT A GLANCE

## Breakdown



## Matching Gift Challenge

Steve Hicks likes to say that the real secret of being a philanthropist is that you receive much more than what you give. Because he wants others to share in the joy of giving to social work, he has issued a \$5 million matching challenge to create endowed scholarships. The rules are as follows:

- **GIVE OR PLEDGE \$50,000 OR MORE**  
Complete your gift within 5 years.
- **STEVE HICKS WILL MATCH THE AMOUNT OF YOUR GIFT**  
Your name — or that of a family member, friend, or organization — will be linked to scholarly excellence at The University of Texas at Austin.

To participate in the matching gift challenge, visit [sites.utexas.edu/steve-hicks-challenge](https://sites.utexas.edu/steve-hicks-challenge) or call **512-475-6840**.

Individuals who have  
already taken the  
challenge are saying ...



I have been on the social work faculty for more than 25 years and it only keeps getting better! It has been a blessing in my life, and it has made me think how to give back. The matching challenge and the chance to stretch my dollars definitely prompted me to give sooner.

– Cynthia Franklin,  
Associate Dean for Doctoral Education

I am a proud social work graduate who received the Charles Laughton Endowed Presidential Scholarship, an honor that I cherish to this day. We hope our gift, in some small part, will help the next generation of social workers become the advocates for and voice of those in need.

– Terry Startzel,  
MSSW '85

See the full list of participants on the back cover.

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# ALL ABOUT STEVE

Get to know  
the man behind  
the gift.

BY ANDREA CAMPETELLA  
PHOTO BY MARSHA MILLER



Steve Hicks opens the door at 9 a.m. on the dot. On a muggy summer day, he graciously lets a motley crew of both art and suit types into his Old West Austin home. A castle-like exterior gives way to surprisingly airy and luminous interiors of white walls, modern art, and sleek furniture. From behind a pet gate in the laundry room, two fluffy spaniels squiggle and yap as strangers come and go, checking rooms for sound and light.

Though soft-spoken and a self-declared introvert, Hicks is ready to do his duty: a photo and video session to celebrate his gift establishing the Steve Hicks School of Social Work at The University of Texas at Austin. A few weeks after this session, Hicks joined Dean Luis Zayas and President Greg Fenves in a private event to announce the gift to social work faculty and staff — before the public announcement of September 6. Emotions ran high for everyone, and at the end of the event Hicks stood before a line of faculty and staff members who wanted to hug and thank him.

So why has this Texas telecommunications pioneer and regent of The University of Texas System decided to make, in his words, “the biggest gift I will ever make,” to social work? In answering this question, Hicks reflects on his life as a businessman, his love for UT, and how life challenges led him to discover social work and the therapeutic power of helping others

**Steve Hicks grew up around radio**, working as a part-time board operator during high school in one of his father’s stations and spinning Perry Como and Frank Sinatra records. He is best known in the telecommunications world for inventing the “local marketing agreement,” which allowed the consolidation of radio station operations and helped turn many stations back to profitability. In 1996 he founded Capstar Broadcasting Corporation, which two years later was the country’s largest radio station holding company.

**He is a proud Silver Spur** who graduated from UT in 1972 with a B.A. in government. “I got to be on the field for the games, and during the time I was in school we had 30 straight winning games! I bleed burnt orange.”

**He first experienced** the power of social work through his involvement with Austin Recovery and the Center for Students in Recovery. “I am in long-term recovery myself. That’s where you can see the backbone of social work, helping people live sober lives. It has been a miracle in my life.” He is also deeply impressed by the role of social workers in hospice care, which he witnessed personally at the death of his parents. “What they do is a true gift to people, as they help them pass on to the next life.”

“I want to be able to say that  
in my life I made a difference ...”

**He believes in** the therapeutic power of helping others. “I try to live a life of humility today, but I got to that point by being humiliated many times by making many mistakes. I have been through death and divorce and many of life’s challenges. The only answer to me in terms of my personal journey is to take whatever that experience is, learn something from it, grow from it, and try to help others.”

**His secret**, as a philanthropist, is how much he gets out of what he gives. He still remembers his feelings when a preschooler at the RISE School of Austin climbed on his lap and gave him a hug.

**When he felt ready** to make a lifetime gift, he looked at the Forty Acres and found the School of Social Work. “Once I saw the mission of the School





Photo by Lynda Gonzalez

of Social Work and realized what the school needs — the fact that students graduate with a lot of debt — I thought it was the place where this gift could make the most impact. I want to be able to say that in my life I made a difference and helped other people.”

### He understands that the economics

of obtaining a social work degree often require taking on substantial debt: the average student leaves with \$42,000 of debt, and the average entry-level social work job pays \$35,000 a year. “It is virtually impossible for them to service their debt. I hope my gift and matching gifts going forward reduce that debt burden to something more manageable, where graduates can stay in the field they were trained for, doing what they love to do.”

**He is a businessman** who likes to see a good investment. “The fact that every social work graduate possibly affects the lives of one thousand people over their career ... it is the ultimate leverage. You graduate 200 students every year, that’s 200,000 people that this gift is going to help influence. I like the numbers; it makes sense.”

**He always roots** for the underdog. “The School of Social Work is underrecognized. You don’t see philanthropists lining up for it. It’s No. 7 in the nation, but it’s one of the most underrated schools on campus. I love underdogs, and that’s why I’m so excited about this opportunity. I think we can make it one of the schools we are proudest of. I hope to live another 15 years to watch what is going to happen.”

**He does not want to** be too prescriptive with his gift, other than dedicating more than half of it to financial support for master’s-level students. “It is for students, faculty, and the dean to decide what are the most important things that need to happen. But I am really looking forward to seeing the next 15-years’ worth of Steve Hicks Social Work Scholars out in the world.”

**His eyes light up** when he sees a white baseball cap with a burnt-orange Steve Hicks School of Social Work logo embroidered on it. He takes four, one for him and one for each of his three children. ■

# THE FIRST COHORT

## *The 2017 Steve Hicks Scholars*

Steve Hicks’ generous gift will create a permanent endowment to provide financial support to master’s-level students. An endowed gift is invested, never spent. Each year a distribution — like dividends on a mutual fund account — will be made to fund Steve Hicks Scholars. These scholars will have almost all of their tuition covered for the two years of the master’s program.

Once the process of endowing the gift is finished, by fall 2025, we will be able to offer Steve Hicks scholarships to more than one third of the students in the master’s program.

For now, we want to introduce you to the first cohort of Steve Hicks Scholars that we were able to fund in fall 2017, only a few weeks after the gift came in.



### SARAH CHAMP

**FROM:** Plano, Texas

**FOCUS:** Criminal Justice

**QUOTE:** “Social work blends my interest in both the individual and the social.”

As a double major in psychology and gender studies at Middlebury College, Sarah Champ often found herself in a bind. She enjoyed her psychology classes but could not stop thinking about the social factors that also affect individuals’ minds and behaviors. She relished her gender studies classes, but felt that each person’s individuality was cast aside for the benefit of all-encompassing categories.

It took a social worker to get her out of that bind. She was the mother of one of Champ’s best friends, and explained how social work’s person-in-environment perspective takes into account both the individual and the social. She also told Champ that, of all the mental health professions, social work is the only one with a commitment to social justice as a core value. With that, Champ was won over. After she graduates, she hopes to stay in Texas and help make reproductive health policy better.



### KYLIE YOUMANS

**FROM:** Denver, Colorado

**FOCUS:** Human Trafficking

**QUOTE:** “Working as a hair stylist, I learned about human trafficking in the beauty industry.”

Kylie Youmans always loved to do hair. She also knew that she wanted to go to graduate school for counseling, but after getting her B.A. in psychology she took a break and got her hair-stylist license. For two years, she worked at the Paul Mitchell School in her native Denver, and she felt that she was practicing counseling skills — listening to her clients’ stories while cutting their hair, and helping them work through their life issues.

Youmans also learned that the beauty industry is one of the main funnels of human trafficking in the United States — think for example of sex trade networks operating under the façade of spa services. After she gets her master’s, she wants to help victims of human trafficking recover. Some day, Youmans also hopes to combine her love for hair styling and counseling in “hair-apy” sessions. She says that when she mentions the idea to someone, they ask her to please sign them up.



### SARAH BRUNS

**FROM:** Snellville, Georgia

**FOCUS:** International Social Work

**QUOTE:** “I fell in love with the intersection between ministry and social work.”

Three years into the future, Sarah Bruns wants to be living in a developing country, working with a ministry or a church in helping meet the basic needs of a community.

Bruns discovered the intersection of social work and ministry during her senior year at Georgia Southern University, where she was majoring in child and family development. She was working as a community liaison in a clinic that provided medical services to uninsured individuals. Through her church, Bruns was also working in a transitional housing program for people experiencing homelessness. She realized that social work and ministry share the same values and advocate for people who are marginalized. These experiences also cemented her passion for building relationships with clients. Her favorite part of the process, Bruns says, is discovering the individuality of each case and seeing each client as a whole person deserving of help no matter who they are or what circumstances they are in.



### AMBER PERRY

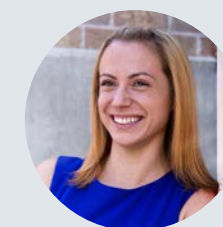
**FROM:** Katy, Texas

**FOCUS:** Older Adults

**QUOTE:** “It’s hard to imagine the frustration of someone who is not able to communicate.”

In 2016, during her senior year as a communications sciences and disorders major on the Forty Acres, Amber Perry was interning at the Austin Speech Lab. She was considering medical school, but her supervisor suggested that she looked into social work after noticing that, when working on drills with patients, Perry was always interested in learning about how their speech impediment affected their everyday lives and social relations.

She now wants to explore geriatric social work, as many of the clients she worked with at the speech lab were older adults who had suffered strokes. She noticed that it was easy for them to become socially isolated and be prone to conditions such as anxiety and depression. But most of all, Perry was touched by their work ethic and positive attitude in the midst of an often frustratingly slow struggle to recover the ability to communicate.



### THAISA HOWORTH

**FROM:** Dripping Springs, Texas

**FOCUS:** Sexual Assault

**QUOTE:** “I wanted to come back to the city I ran away from, and come back strong.”

In 2013, Thaisa Howorth moved to South Korea to teach English. She had just graduated from UT with a love for making documentaries and a major in radio, television and film. But perhaps most importantly, she was recovering from a sexual assault and felt that she needed to be as far away as possible from Austin.

Howorth was assigned to the city of Anyang, a name that she found auspicious because it happens to signify a heavenly land where joy and freedom overflow. Of her many experiences in South Korea, Howorth cherishes her discovery of running and the support she found in the members of the Seoul Flyers, a running club she joined. A friend from the club told her about social work, and eventually Howorth made the decision to come back to UT for her master’s. She wants to help sexual assault survivors recover, and is already thinking about how to bring her documentary-making skills into the process.



# TEXAS

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

## A BIG THANK YOU TO THOSE WHO HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THE CHALLENGE SO FAR.

### NEW ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIPS AND FELLOWSHIPS

**Pamela A. Ackert Endowed  
Scholarship in Social Work**  
Pam and George Ackert

**Sally and Tom Dunning Endowed  
Forty Acres Scholarship**  
Sally and Tom Dunning

**Cynthia and Christina Franklin  
Endowed Fellowship in Solution-  
Focused Brief Therapy**  
Cynthia and Jim Franklin

**Patrick Hefferan Memorial  
Endowed Fellowship  
in Social Work**  
Anne Shotten

**Andrew Pickett Mobley Memorial  
Endowed Presidential Fellowship  
in Social Work**  
Holly and John Scofield

**The Honorable Elliott Naishtat  
Endowed Presidential Fellowship  
in Social Work**  
The Honorable Elliott Naishtat

**Rad and Ashley Weaver  
Endowed Scholarship**  
Ashley and Rad Weaver

**Luis A. and Mercedes Zayas  
Family Endowed Fellowship  
in Social Work**  
Luis H. Zayas

### CONTRIBUTIONS TO EXISTING SCHOLARSHIPS AND FELLOWSHIPS

**The Adele Lorusso Memorial  
Scholarship Fund & Sheral  
Trousdale Skinner Endowed  
Graduate Fellowship in Social Work**  
Anonymous

**Susan McCartney Finnegan Endowed  
Presidential Fellowship in Social Work**  
Susan and Bill Finnegan

**John and Jennifer Gates Endowed  
Scholarship in Social Work**  
John and Jennifer Gates

**Judge Pat Shelton and Family:  
Elizabeth, Hayley, Ian and David  
Scott Shelton Endowed  
Presidential Fellowship**  
Judge Patrick Shelton

**Jeanne and Terry Startzel  
Endowed Presidential Fellowship**  
Jeanne and Terry Startzel

**The Dianne and Les White Scholarship**  
Dianne and Les White

To meet the challenge, go to [sites.utexas.edu/steve-hicks-challenge](https://sites.utexas.edu/steve-hicks-challenge)