



Advancing Excellence

Update From the Development & Alumni Office
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The University of Texas at Austin
Jackson School of Geosciences

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ON THE COVER

The 2019 GEO660 field camp on the Sawtooth Mountains in western Montana on a butte above the Sun River



DEAR JACKSON SCHOOL FRIENDS,

The face in the picture has changed! I am profoundly honored to be the new dean of this legendary school and to have the privilege of working with so many talented people and such loyal friends and alumni. I applaud the stellar leadership of former Dean Sharon Mosher, who led wisely over a decade that saw the Jackson School firmly establish itself in the highest echelons of geoscience research and education. The torch has been passed, and I can assure you that a passion for excellence still burns brightly at the Jackson School of Geosciences!

I started on the job five weeks before the COVID-19 pandemic stood university life on its head. The pandemic has impacted virtually everything we do: how we teach, how we conduct work in our labs, how we interview faculty, how and whether we go out in the field. We have virtual business offices, virtual seminars, virtual staff and research group meetings, virtual graduation, even virtual happy hours!

Throughout the pandemic, students have been greatly impacted: their daily routines evaporated, their friends scattered, their labs were (temporarily!) shuttered, and for some it was a struggle to work from home. Thanks to all of you who answered the Jackson School's Hornraiser call for emergency student support. You helped us keep students in their apartments, fed, and supplied with the technology necessary to learn online. Your support let them see the true meaning of the Longhorn Nation.

As the pandemic rages, the national reckoning with racism gives us pause to think hard about the field of geosciences—the least diverse of the physical sciences—and to consider ways to open our discipline to a much broader, more representative, demographic. It has been demonstrated that diversity brings great intellectual value to science, and helps move that science more quickly to useful



applications for society. To attract diverse students, Jackson School programs reach across the arc of our educational system, from high school through professional employment. Students are at the heart of our school, and our greatest obligation is to create an intellectual and humane environment that helps them thrive, now and throughout their lives.

In this issue, you will read about our newest student fellowship, that will help the Jackson School attract the best and the brightest. The Munib and Angela Masri Graduate Fellowships Endowment that will enable Lebanese, Jordanian and Palestinian students to pursue a graduate education at the Jackson School, expanding our global student footprint throughout the Middle East. Knowledge, peace and friendship grows when we open our doors wide! For all of us, the last six months have felt a bit like "Mr. Toad's Wild Ride." But, your trust in the Jackson School, your generous support and your friendly embrace of all of our students make the road smoother for everyone and I know we will thrive. Thank you all so very much!

Stay healthy!

Claudia Mora, Dean



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A LASTING GIFT TO BRING THE WORLD CLOSER

Munib R. Masri made the long journey from the Palestinian city of Nablus to The University of Texas at Austin nearly 70 years ago.

He came with \$200 in his pocket and little else, and likes to joke that he left with a wife (a Texan), a baby, a car and \$30. But in reality, he knows that he left with so much more.

"I believe in Texas," Masri said. "This is my university and without it I would never have been anything."

Masri, who earned his bachelor's degree in geology from UT in 1955, credits the experiences and education he received at UT with helping launch a remarkable career that began in the oil and gas industry and grew into positions and works of national and international significance.

Now he wants to ensure that Palestinian students and others from the region have the same opportunities he had, while strengthening ties between his alma mater and his homeland. That's why the Munib and Angela Masri Foundation, the philanthropic organization he founded with this wife, has pledged \$10.5 million to create an endowment for graduate education at the UT Jackson School of Geosciences.

The gift, which marks the 50th anniversary of the foundation, establishes prestigious Masri graduate fellowships at the Jackson School. The fellowships are for students from Palestinian, Jordanian and Lebanese universities and support education and research in water, land use, energy, climate and environmental resilience. In honor of the gift, the Jackson School is naming its courtyard on the East Mall "The Munib and Angela Masri Family Courtyard."

"The globalization of science and industry requires our students to develop broad sensibilities and to be able to build successful relationships across cultural and geographic boundaries. We hope those skills and friendships begin here at the Jackson School of Geosciences," said Jackson School Dean Claudia Mora. "International graduate students like the Masri Student Fellows bring social and cultural diversity to the Jackson School, and enrich the research and learning environments with new ideas and

expertise. We are grateful to the Masri family for creating this special opportunity for us to embrace students from this very special part of the globe."

Masri's decision to attend UT began with a chance encounter with two aid workers at his high school in Nablus. The two men, Texans, told the young Masri that Texas was a great place to go to college, particularly the University of Texas. Their words made an impression on the young man looking to further his education.

"They told me, 'If you want to get the best education, go to Texas.' I didn't know they were bragging at the time," Masri said with a laugh. "But I tell you, the hospitality and the way I felt in Texas – it was another home to me."

At UT, he met and later married Angela Kegler, who came to Austin from her home in Wink, Texas. Kegler was from an oil and gas family – her father worked at Humble Oil and Refining Co – and was studying petroleum geology at UT before graduating from Sul Ross State University, where she and Masri had moved while he earned his master's degree in government. Early in their marriage, Kegler, now Angela Kegler Masri, would put her geology skills to use working alongside Munib in Jordan where they carried out the geological mapping of the Transjordan region.

Masri spent decades in the energy and water sectors, founding Edgo, a leading oil and gas services company that operates throughout the Middle East. He also co-founded and served for 20 years as chairman of the board of PADICO, a Palestinian development and investment company that established numerous subsidiaries focused on developing the infrastructure of the region, including telecommunications, a stock exchange, industrial parks, tourism and hospitality, real estate development and other ventures employing thousands of people.

Along the way he has committed his life to a peaceful two-state solution between Palestinians and Israelis, as well as philanthropy, with a particular focus on working with foundations and organizations that promote the development and well-being of people in the wider Middle East.



Masri envisions a legacy of helping to establish a better connection between the two regions that played such an important role in his life. In addition to the Masri Graduate Fellowships, his plans include a new campus on his property in Nablus where, in the shadow of a clock tower reminiscent of the UT Austin campus, students and educators from his homeland and alma mater could gather to conduct research, share their scientific discoveries and build friendships and understanding.

"I want to bring Texas to the Middle East and I want to take the Middle East to Texas," he said. "This could create understanding and help the Texan people and, more widely the American people, to understand our culture."

TOP: MASRI FAMILY.
BELOW: MR. MASRI GREETING GREER GARSON AS SHE VISITS THE UT CAMPUS FOR A SCREENING OF "STRANGE LADY IN TOWN."



LIBRARY FUND IN HONOR OF DENNIS TROMBATORE

Dennis Trombatore was the Head Librarian for the Walter Geology Library and the Tobin International Map Collection at The University of Texas at Austin since 1985. Dennis developed a world-class geosciences library that is renowned throughout the country and was widely respected by the geoscience and librarian community nationwide. He was an integral part of our college, providing a wealth of information, research, and instruction. He was a fount of knowledge with a savvy perspective on our changing media landscape and the implications for the people who learn and do research here at the Jackson School and in the geosciences. He threaded his expertise and kindness throughout our entire school community. He not only brought an immense knowledge,

but he treated each and every person entering the library as a true guest and strove to have all exit with more knowledge than when they entered.

In 2018, he was awarded the Jackson School of Geosciences highest honor, the Joseph C. Walter Excellence Award, recognizing his demonstrated excellence in all of the areas of the School—research, teaching, service, professional activity, and administration. Nationally, Dennis was honored by American Geosciences Institute (AGI) with the 2012 William B. Heroy Award for Distinguished Service. He was a long-time member and Chair of the GeoRef Advisory Committee and represented AGI on the GeoScienceWorld Publisher's Advisory Council, helping strengthen the relationship between the two organizations. When we established GeoScienceWorld, Dennis's advice and counsel was invaluable.

He received many other awards over the years, including the Department of Geological Sciences Distinguished Service Award in 1997, University of Texas Staff Excellence Award in 2001 and Jackson School of Geosciences Staff Excellence Award in 2006. He was a member of the Geological Society of America, the Geoscience Information Society, and was President of the Austin Geological Society. He received his B.A. and MLS from Louisiana State University in 1975 and 1977, respectively. His extensive library science career began shortly thereafter: acting as the Common Curriculum Librarian at Loyola University for three years, and the Physical Sciences Bibliographer at the Science Library of the University of Georgia for five years.

In 2019, the Dennis Trombatore Excellence Fund for the Walter Geology Library was established in the Jackson School of Geosciences by Carlotta Chernoff to honor him. In the words of Dr. Chernoff upon establishing this endowment last fall, "The endowment shall be in honor of Dennis Trombatore who has dedicated his professional career to serving geosciences students, faculty, and research scientists. His knowledge of the complex field of geosciences has greatly contributed to the teaching and research mission of the Jackson School of Geosciences. Dennis Trombatore is a scholar, trusted colleague, and friend to all who know him. It is due to his tireless efforts and dedication that I am seeding this endowment with the knowledge that many other individuals will want to contribute in his honor."

What made Dennis so special to so many of us? He would help anyone, graduate student, undergraduate student, faculty, researcher, staff who was searching for information – be it an obscure reference or support for a budding theory. If he came across something of interest that he knew you were working on, he would send you the article. He demonstrated a deep concern for the development of students, advising them in the classroom and through individual consultations as they pursued both their immediate research goals, and longer term career goals. He was always there to help – whether it was a leak in the library roof or if an emeritus faculty member was ill or in the hospital. The Walter Geology Library was a well-run ship that we can all be proud of thanks to Dennis' years of hard work and going above-and-beyond.

Dennis, without thinking, conducted himself with an amazing balance of compassion, accountability, and respect; and he quietly challenged others to do the same. He will be deeply missed.

– Sharon Mosher

"My experience with Dennis Trombatore began shortly after I arrived at UT, with an email introducing me to the Walter Library. The note was long and detailed, and I was struck by Dennis' encyclopedic knowledge of our library, its challenges and opportunities. Even without meeting him, it was clear that Dennis was a force of nature and that his work greatly benefitted the Jackson School. With the COVID shutdown, I was never able to meet Dennis in person, which will forever be my loss. After his passing, I asked Sharon Mosher, who worked with Dennis for many years, to write the following memorial to this special colleague so that his many contributions could be fully appreciated."

– Claudia Mora, Dean

To make a gift to the Dennis Trombatore Excellence Fund for the Walter Geology Library, visit www.jsg.utexas.edu and click Make a Gift, or mail gifts to Georgia Sanders, Jackson School of Geosciences, 2305 Speedway, C1160, Austin, TX 78712.



UT ROCKS

Steve and Kathy Weiner view the world differently than most. As geologists, they notice the earthly details beneath their feet. And they know the heights that a career in geology can provide. They want others to find that same satisfaction and fulfillment. Together, they have established endowments and a planned gift to support scholarships and student programs in the Jackson School of Geosciences.

Growing up, Steve and Kathy both discovered an interest in the physical world around them. Kathy was raised in Corpus Christi and describes herself as a beach girl, so her love for reefs and sedimentary rocks like sandstone and limestone is fitting. Steve, who grew up in Pennsylvania, was a bright student but found it easy to become bored at school. That changed when he took his first earth science class. The experience stuck with him.

When they became friends at UT, the two were pursuing degrees in geology—Kathy as an undergraduate and Steve as a graduate student. Steve had chosen UT over other offers because he could pursue his goals: studying coastal sedimentation and landing a job in oil and gas.

“UT checked both boxes,” said Steve. “I could study the oblique sand dunes on

South Padre Island, and I would have the opportunity to meet with many recruiters. If you wanted to work in the petroleum industry, UT was the place to be.”

Kathy added, “I knew that UT had the biggest and most knowledgeable geology department in Texas, so for me there was nowhere else to even think about going to school. Plus, my family bleeds burnt orange.”

When Steve graduated in 1981, he landed a job as an exploration geologist with Exxon in Houston. Two years later, Kathy also joined Exxon as a geophysicist, but in a different office. Though the two had become friends at UT, in Houston they began dating and married three years later.

After raising two kids and enjoying successful careers, the Weiners retired and moved to a beautiful spot on the outskirts of New Braunfels. But their interest in geology never waned, and they are excited about what the future holds for the field. Steve and Kathy have generously supported the Jackson School of Geosciences and its students for decades.

“The Jackson School has always made us feel like family,” said Steve. “When we discussed where our gifts would go, there was never a thought about it going anywhere but to UT.”

Their gifts have created student scholarships and supported job-search training programs. They have also supported GeoFORCE, a K-12 outreach program designed to increase the number and diversity of students pursuing STEM degrees, especially geology. And recently, the Weiners established a planned gift to support their alma mater. But, as Steve shared, it’s not all about giving money.

“I volunteer as an earth science guest lecturer at area elementary schools,” he said. “After all, I was the same age when I heard the earth science lecture that changed my life. I love teaching. I love seeing the kids’ eyes light up as we talk about rivers, volcanoes, fossils, all kinds of things.”

Kathy added, “Education has always been really important to us. Sharing information about geology with younger kids in school lets them see what opportunities they could have if they major in geology.”

For Steve and Kathy, the sooner kids know about the world around them, the better.

“THE JACKSON SCHOOL HAS ALWAYS MADE US FEEL LIKE FAMILY. WHEN WE DISCUSSED WHERE OUR GIFTS WOULD GO, THERE WAS NEVER A THOUGHT ABOUT IT GOING ANYWHERE BUT TO UT.”

— STEVE WEINER

TOP LEFT: STEVE AND KATHY AT THEIR HOME, TOP RIGHT: STEVE AND KATHY NEXT TO THEIR CAR WITH “UTROKS” ON LICENSE PLATE.

PHOTOS: JACKSON SCHOOL.

EVERY GEOSCIENTIST NEEDS A PLAN



GREETINGS,

In 2020 we have learned that change can happen quickly, but in the face of exceptional challenges, our basic humanity and goodness prevail. What the year has revealed is both striking and reaffirming because, through it all, we have witnessed amazing generosity and compassion from the Jackson School of Geosciences friends and alumni.

To urge Americans to look for ways to help others in response to the COVID-19 crisis, Congress encouraged charitable giving in 2020 through specific provisions in the CARES Act. By taking advantage of these unique opportunities, only available this year, you can make a huge impact on the Jackson School and benefit financially.

THE CARES ACT: SAVE BIG AND GIVE MORE IN 2020

- The CARES Act allows all taxpayers to take a charitable deduction of up to \$300, even if you do not itemize. In plain English, if you donate up to \$300 in cash to a qualified organization like The University of Texas at Austin, your adjusted gross income (AGI) will be reduced by up to \$300—and you can still claim the standard deduction.
- For those who do itemize their deductions, the new law allows for cash contributions to qualified charities, such as the University of Texas at Austin, to be deducted up to 100% of AGI, up from 60% previously. This might be a good year to group multi-year gifts or make large cash gifts to maximize both your deduction and impact on the causes that matter to you.
- The CARES Act waives the Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) rules for Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs), but for 2020 only. Nonetheless, IRA owners over age 70½ can still give up to \$100,000 directly from their IRA to UT and pay no tax on the distribution.
- Visit <https://utexas.planmygift.org/cares-act> for additional strategies on smart ways to give in 2020.

PLANNING TO CHANGE THE WORLD

We are hearing from many alumni and friends that their financial advisors are encouraging them to review and update their estate plans before the end of 2020 in anticipation of potential changes on the horizon.

Given the economic strain of COVID-19, there could be changes in the way estates and lifetime gifts to family members are taxed, if not in 2021, then certainly by 2026. Under current law, an individual's assets will not be subject to estate tax at death unless the value of those assets exceed \$11.58M for 2020. (The same is generally true for a married couple with a combined estate of about \$23M.) Also, under current law, that threshold amount sunsets down to \$5M (or \$10M per couple) in 2026. The value of any assets over those amounts will be subject to the 40% estate tax rate at death.

There are proposals to reduce the \$11.58 million lifetime exclusion—possibly to as little as \$3.5 million per person. There are many estate planning tools and gifting strategies one can implement before the end of this year to plan for potential changes in the law. In addition to minimizing or eliminating potential estate taxes for beneficiaries, many of these tools and strategies can also benefit a person immediately and/or provide for family members.

UT has a team of Gift and Estate Planning professionals with 100+ years combined experience available to consult with you and your advisors in confidence and without obligation. If you'd like to schedule a meeting or have any questions, please feel free to call me at 512-808-6018 or Katy Fendrich who works with supporters of the Jackson School in the Gift and Estate Planning office at 800-687-4602. Katy's email is kfendrich@austin.utexas.edu. Let me know if I can arrange a confidential Zoom meeting or call in the next few weeks.

Hook 'Em and Stay Safe!

Belle German

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THANK YOU
 to everyone who contributed to our HornRaiser campaign to support geoscience students in a time of uncertainty. Thanks to the generosity of 88 donors, we raised \$50,490 to help our students!



Get HookedIn

uthookedin.com

Opportunities to connect are important, especially now. That's why the Jackson School of Geosciences is excited to invite you to join HookedIn — the official networking platform for UT Austin alumni and students.

In these extraordinary times, many Longhorns are looking for additional resources. No matter where you are in your career, we are here to help you. This powerful online networking and career-boosting community provides a way for you to:

Leverage the power of Longhorn Nation

Boost your business

Post job opportunities at your company

Mentor students

Connect with other alumni

Find a new job

Join Hookedin Now!

Create an account today and grow your network. It's easy! Build your profile in less than two minutes by connecting your LinkedIn account.

DEVELOPMENT AND ALUMNI RELATIONS CONTACTS

Meet Your Development and Alumni Relations Team



BELLE GERMAN

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Belle is the Chief Development Officer for the Jackson School of Geosciences and Associate Director of the Geology Foundation. She oversees the development and alumni relations program to deliver best practices in fundraising. She is a 10th generation Texan who holds a B.A. from The University of Texas at Austin and a M.P.A. from Angelo State University. Having worked and lived abroad, she brings a global perspective to the Jackson School.



KRISTEN TUCEK

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Kristen oversees alumni and corporate relations at the Jackson School of Geosciences. In this role, she fosters life-long relationships between alumni and the university through regional and national programming, personal visits and meaningful volunteer opportunities. She also advances the mission of the Jackson School by working strategically with industry partners to maximize their philanthropic impact and to increase collaborative opportunities. Kristen has a B.S. degree in nutritional sciences from Texas A&M University and over 15 years of experience in nonprofit volunteer management.



COURTNEY VLETAS

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Courtney is the Associate Director of Development for the Jackson School of Geosciences. She has more than 10 years of experience in the nonprofit sector raising awareness and financial support for worthy causes. She provides leadership and direction in strengthening relationships and raising private resources for the Jackson School of Geosciences and the Environmental Science Institute. She holds a B.A. from the Elliott School of International Affairs, The George Washington University, Washington, D.C., and a Certificate in Nonprofit Management from The University of Texas at Austin.



GEORGIA SANDERS

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Georgia has over 20 years of experience in different aspects of development. She is responsible for overseeing the Donor Relations programs at the Jackson School of Geosciences—including planning the Evening of Thanks and the Scholars Luncheon, the annual events that recognize and thank donors. Georgia also manages the school's annual giving and crowd funding programs. She is a lifelong Longhorn and loves being on campus every day.



KATIE NGO

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Katie is an administrative assistant who supports both the Dean's office and development team at the Jackson School of Geosciences. Duties consist of processing payments, travel requests, event support, scheduling and research. Katie moved here from Portland, Oregon, joining the university in June of 2019. Prior to the Jackson School she was an administrative associate in the Department of Molecular Biosciences.