

Tulane receives nearly \$6 million from the estate of alumnus Gaylord Bickham

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The \$5.56 million gift from the estate of alumnus Gaylord Mouton Bickham creates an endowed chair in European history and an endowed scholarship fund at the School of Liberal Arts as well as support for the School of Medicine. (Photo by Kenny Lass)

Tulane University has received a \$5.56 million gift from the estate of Gaylord Mouton Bickham, an alumnus and lifelong resident of Franklinton, La. The donation

creates an endowed chair in European history and an endowed scholarship fund at the School of Liberal Arts as well as support for the School of Medicine.

Bickham, who died in 2021 at age 87, graduated in 1956 with a bachelor's degree in history from Tulane's College of Arts and Sciences and was a member of Sigma Chi Fraternity. He owned and managed the Bickham Oil Co. in Franklinton and was a member and director of numerous business, civic and religious institutions in the Washington Parish town.

"Gaylord Mouton Bickham's extraordinary generosity reflects a lifelong commitment to education, community and the values he cherished both at Tulane and beyond," Tulane President Michael A. Fitts said. "His legacy will help future generations of students and scholars, fueling academic excellence in the liberal arts, advancing historical scholarship, and supporting innovation in medical education and research."

A witty and brilliant conversationalist, Bickham was passionate about history, enjoyed traveling throughout the U.S. and Europe, and was active in animal rescue causes. He was also a regular patron of the classic Creole restaurants of New Orleans, a city he continued to love and visit throughout his life. His family has deep roots in Franklinton, where his father, Mouton Bickham, had been mayor. Survivors include numerous cousins.

"Gaylord was a wealthy man who understood the advantages he was born with," said Ginger Marks of Shreveport, a cousin and retired high school history teacher whose career Gaylord encouraged. "He left other estate gifts that included scholarships to help less fortunate young people, but his love of truth inspired his bequest to Tulane."

Bickham's bequest establishes two significant endowments at the School of Liberal Arts:

The Mouton and Leatrice Bickham Memorial Chair in European History: With \$3 million allocated to this endowed chair, named in honor of Bickham's parents, the fund will be used to support the salary and other expenses associated with the holder's academic work and research.

The Gaylord Mouton Bickham (A&S '56) Scholarship in Liberal Arts: Funded with \$1 million, this endowed scholarship delivers financial support to undergraduate students pursuing majors in the School of Liberal Arts.

“Gaylord Bickham maintained a love of Tulane’s Department of History throughout his life. This bequest to endow a chair in European history ensures that we maintain the very strongest faculty in a crucial field,” said Brian Edwards, dean of the School of Liberal Arts. “By endowing a scholarship for undergraduates at the same time, Bickham helps guarantee that the next generation of students can pursue a liberal arts education as the foundation for lives and careers that matter. This is visionary philanthropy that represents a powerful statement about the value of the liberal arts in general, and the humanities in particular, at a time when their champions are especially valued.”

In addition, more than \$1.56 million of Bickham’s gift benefits the School of Medicine, providing unrestricted resources to address immediate priorities and initiatives across medical education, research and patient care.

“Gaylord Bickham’s remarkable gift will have a lasting impact on the future of medical education and research at Tulane,” said Dr. Lee Hamm, dean and senior vice president at the School of Medicine. “His generosity provides critical, flexible support that will enable us to advance innovative programs, support our students and faculty, and address the evolving needs of health care. We are profoundly grateful for his forward-thinking commitment to Tulane.”



Gaylord M. Bickham