

The University of Texas System Administration

AN INSPIRATION FOR GIVING

The Vision That Served as a Catalyst for Giving



Marjorie Morales

Chancellor William McRaven's speech served as the catalyst and inspiration for Marjorie to give to The University of Texas System — establishing the *Marjorie Morales Chancellor's Excellence Endowment* to provide support for the UT System in perpetuity.

When Marjorie Morales attended The University of Texas System Chancellor's Council Annual Meeting a few years ago, she was looking forward to hearing Chancellor William McRaven deliver his first State of the System speech. What she did not know is the impact it would have on her. "As Chancellor McRaven began to present his initiatives, I was extremely excited to learn about *The Texas Prospect Initiative* and his vision of collaboration with pre-K through I2 public school systems, all working together to increase the number of students entering the college pipeline." Marjorie explains, "This is extremely important because if you lack a solid foundation, it is hard to get acclimated to college and complete your education. It is crucial in preparing students for success in college and beyond."

For Marjorie, this was not only about the importance of helping Texas students make the leap to higher education, but it resonated on a personal level. "The UT System's pre-K through I2 initiatives really made an impact on me. Education was extremely important in my home. My parents moved to the US from Mexico under the US Government "Braceros"

program in the 1950s. My mother never learned English and my dad spoke broken English, but he pushed my siblings and me to go to school — pushed all five of us. We didn't have a lot of money and the school system we grew up in was a small ranching and farm community, but he told us that was not a limitation."

"That is what motivates me, seeing these projects and how the UT System is trying to fill the gap and be the leader in education, research and health care in our country."

Marjorie knew she wanted to pursue a career in computer science but looking back, her discovery came at an earlier age. "When I was young, we stayed up to watch the astronauts landing on the moon." Marjorie recalls. "I told my dad that's what I wanted to do. I was only five years old and my father said, 'If you want to do that, you better learn to never take 'no' for an answer. When they tell you 'no,' tell them you want a solution.'" Marjorie continues, "This was especially interesting because he was never involved in our school work. My dad had a second-grade education and there was the language barrier, so my parents really couldn't help us with our homework. But my father always encouraged us to go to school and underscored the importance of an education; that would be the way out — and it was."

Marjorie received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Computer Science from The University of Texas at Austin in 1985. True to her childhood dream, upon graduation she took a position with NASA Space Transportation Shuttle Operations, then Texas Instruments, in the Computer Science Research Center. Her career since then has been focused on health information technology and improving the quality and safety of patient care. She is currently the manager of Quality Improvement Analytics at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center.

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The importance of paying it forward

Marjorie's goal is to encourage others to give back. With her Chancellor's Excellence Endowment, Marjorie wants to help the UT System provide the same opportunities for future generations to experience and flourish.

Chancellor McRaven's speech served as the catalyst and inspiration for Marjorie to give to The University of Texas System, establishing the *Marjorie Morales Chancellor's Excellence Endowment* to provide support for the UT System in perpetuity. "Chancellor McRaven's vision speaks volumes. He really motivates and pushes people without being pushy," Marjorie says. "I especially admire the educational initiatives. I believe if you don't establish solid foundations in education, then it's really hard to continue. I speak from experience, since my learning was mostly on my own, so I want to support efforts for crucial change."

Marjorie's generosity has a long history within the UT family. In conjunction with UTeach at UT Austin, she established the *Marjorie Morales Endowment for Excellence in Teacher Training* that supports internships for Mathematics, Computer Science, or Science students who are bilingual in Spanish and are working with children who are considered to be at-risk in educational advancement.

Following her passion for computer science, Marjorie also established the *First Bytes Endowed Scholarship in Computer Science* that offers scholarships to students who attend First Bytes Camp (a one-week camp to enhance gender equality in technology and computing fields for high school girls), who later go on to major in Computer Science at UT Austin. This unique camp allows young women to see how computers solve real-world problems in medicine and arts, to gain hands-on programming experience, to visit research labs and to learn about the newest technologies. Marjorie has been actively involved in the First Bytes Camp every summer since 2008, taking time off work to volunteer in Austin by moderating corporate panels, as well as raising funds and awareness for First Bytes.

As a member of the UT System Chancellor's Council Executive Committee and the Ashbel Smith Circle, Marjorie especially enjoys attending the meetings and events. "I appreciate being able to come back and visit, as well as the

comradery and fellowship, meeting other members and sharing in the experience."

Her favorite part of the Chancellor's Council meetings is the opportunity to learn about the many endeavors taking place across the UT System. "I like learning about all the exciting things the system and the UT institutions are doing, especially the incredible innovations. Each year we are shown a few chosen projects which highlight different initiatives and programs – great examples of the most forward-thinking projects within the System. They are not shown to members because they are flashy, but rather with the intent to inspire us." Marjorie adds, "It is very exciting to show how much work is being done in so many important areas. That is what motivates me, seeing these projects and how the UT System is trying to fill the gap and be the leader in education, research and health care in our country."

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Marjorie's goal is to encourage others to give back. "I love UT and the UT System. I am a big supporter of everything they're doing and have done. They gave me a chance to go to school on a working scholarship. If I had not received this quality education, I would not be where I am today. It brought me to where I am, and most importantly made me who I am today, personally and professionally."

With her Chancellor's Excellence Endowment, Marjorie wants to help the UT System provide the same opportunities for future generations to experience and flourish. She emphasizes the importance of paying it forward, "The UT family gave me a chance, they invested in me. I will continue giving back to them and hopefully others will be motivated to do the same. It doesn't cost that much to help others, especially when there is so much to gain by building a solid foundation for the future."