

# The University of Texas System Administration



## Have Fun, Do Your Best, Push the Boundaries

*Advice for life, philanthropy*



**Fallon and Robie Vaughn with Lola**

This couple believes we should have fun while doing the best we can. "That philosophy applies to just about everything in life," says Robie.

When Robie Vaughn was a young teenager growing up in Dallas, Texas, he was fascinated by the U.S. space program. "It was the first big request I remember asking my father," Robie says. "I wanted to go to Cape Canaveral so my Dad and I could watch Apollo 11 blast off." They went and witnessed history-in-the-making as Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, and Michael Collins fearlessly ventured into the unknown and became the first humans to stand foot on another celestial body. It was, says Robie, "a little like watching Columbus sailing out of Portugal to discover the New World."

Robie's thirst for exploration and adventure has never slackened. He has climbed six of the world's Seven Summits and has plans to ascend the final mountain—Mount Kosciuszko in Australia this year. He has hurtled himself down icy slopes, lying headfirst and face-down atop a sled, winning medals and restoring skeleton to the Olympic Winter Games. He has roped cattle, run marathons, competed in the Hawaiian Ironman World Championship and has written books about skeleton and his dad. Now, he heads up companies that explore the earth's depths in search of oil and gas and new sources of energy. Robie still pines for space, however. He joined the Virgin Galactic Founders' Club in hopes that, one day, he would board a rocketship bound for the heavens.

His wife, Fallon, will no doubt be buckled in right beside him. Also a Dallas native, Fallon is as much a daredevil

competitor as her husband. In 1986, she joined her husband on a skiing expedition of Mustagh Ata, the second highest of the mountains along China's Tibetan Plateau. As a member of the USA Skeleton National Team from 1999–2002, she too experienced the adrenaline rush that comes with sliding 70 miles per hour down an icy chute. She plays and competes in tennis and also qualified for the USGA Women's Mid-Amateur and Senior Golf Championships in 2006 and 2012, respectively.

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If they are compatible as explorers and athletes, however, Robie and Fallon Vaughn are equally as well-matched when it comes to their philanthropy. In Dallas, the couple attends many charitable events and has helped raise money for causes ranging from cancer treatment for children to science education to protecting the environment. The Vaughns give generously to their alma maters (Robie graduated from The University of Texas at Austin, Fallon from Arizona State University and the American Graduate School of International Management) and they are active members of the Culver Educational Foundation, which provides support to the Culver Academies, a well-known college preparatory boarding school located in Culver, Indiana. Robie is a graduate of the Academy, as was his father and he and Fallon's children—son Robert Carl Vaughn, Jr. and daughter Browning Cameron Vaughn—are also both graduates of The University of Texas at Austin.

"We've always been inspired and involved—in athletics, business, education and philanthropy," says Robie. "We try to lead by example. We want to show that you can have fun while trying your best. That philosophy applies to just about everything in life."

Leading by example includes accepting leadership positions in The University of Texas System's member societies. Robie became a member of the Chancellor's Council in 1983.

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He joined the Chancellor's Council Executive Committee (CCEC) in 1997. Then, when he and Fallon established the *Robert C. and Fallon B. Vaughn Chancellor's Excellence Endowment* in 2012, they became members of the Ashbel Smith Circle. Robie and Fallon's son continues the tradition. He is a member of the Chancellor's Centurions. "We want to support the Chancellor, his staff and the UT System mission," Robie states. "If and when we are called upon to help, we want to do the best we can."

Robie, for example, recently joined the CCEC Nominating Committee, which is charged with identifying individuals who may be qualified for CCEC membership. It's an opportunity for Robie to use his considerable reach within Texas to recruit candidates who would like to learn how to best advance the UT System's mission.

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"Tapping into that community is important," Robie says, noting that people in smaller, more rural communities are often just as eager as those from more metropolitan areas to support an educational system that does so much for the state. "The challenge is finding these individuals and getting them involved."

One way to encourage participation is to inform potential supporters about the amazing experiences and life-changing discoveries that occur daily within each of the institutions that comprise the UT System. From advancements in disease prevention, to creating technological devices that bolster homeland security, to probing the universe to define dark energy, these and other pursuits that "push the boundaries" are all "very inspirational," says Robie. Sharing these stories can help shore up the support the UT System needs to preserve the learning and working environments that spur such innovation.



**Still Stargazing**  
The Vaughns want to support the work that will unlock the secrets of space.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the pioneering work undertaken by the UT Austin McDonald Observatory is what most captivates Robie (he and Fallon are members of the Board of Visitors for the Texas Astronomy Program). He points to two projects, in particular, that will help to unlock the secrets of space.

One project uses the Hobby-Eberly Telescope to collect data from galaxies that are light-years away, known as HEDTEX. The data will help scientists "map" the universe which will help reveal the true nature of dark energy. The second project is the construction of the GMT—Giant Magellan Telescope—which is being built in the mountains of South America. "When finished, we'll be able to learn more about planets that revolve around other stars in the universe," Robie explains. "The GMT is the next generation of exploration tools mankind needs to continue expanding our understanding. I love the leadership of UT in these areas."

The Vaughns understand how crucial their support is in helping the UT System maintain its position as a leader in scientific education, exploration and discovery. For that reason, as lifetime members of the Chancellor's Council, the Vaughns plan to support UT System initiatives for as long as they are able. "If one is a fan of the State of Texas, and is interested in meeting the challenges and opportunities before us in the coming decades, then you will want to support the UT System and its mission of advancing excellence in education, health care, and research," Robie says.