



ANDREW DAVIS TUCKER

Mason's mark

Gift from alumnus helps UGA students become public leaders

by Emily Williams

Keith Mason (BBA '82, JD '85) always has harbored a passion for politics, watching Georgia's public leaders—many of whom attended UGA—with admiration from his childhood home in Snellville. So when Mason was ready to attend college, he already had his eye on the University of Georgia.

“Being on campus—the same campus that produced so many great leaders—was awe inspiring to me,” Mason says.

And when he wanted to give back, Mason chose to support the institution that he credits for much of his success. His gift of \$500,000, which supports programs in law, business and political science, aims to recreate some of the experiences he had as a student.

A finance major, Mason excelled in his business classes and filled his spare time with leadership roles in various social and professional student organizations where he developed lifelong relationships with other students and alumni. He was inducted into multiple student organizations such as Blue Key, Omicron Delta Kappa, Phi Gamma Delta, Gridiron and Sphinx.

After graduation, Mason enrolled at UGA's law school. During the summer before law school, he landed an internship with the Coca-Cola Company under the tutelage of Earl Leonard (ABJ '58, LLB '61), an executive who became a mentor and close friend.

UGA alumnus Keith Mason made a gift to UGA that created scholarship programs in law and political science, as well as a lecture series in business.

Over the years, he also developed close relationships with other UGA alumni in the business and public sectors. Mason was inspired by the dedication and service demonstrated by friends including retired chairman and CEO of Synovus Jim Blanchard (BBA '63, LLB '65) and Aflac CEO Dan Amos (BBA '73).

"My business and legal education, along with campus leadership experiences, have been invaluable to my career," he says.

Mason served as chief of staff for former Governor Zell Miller (AB '57, MA '58) and was the political architect of the lottery, which established the HOPE Scholarship. He later joined former President Bill Clinton as deputy assistant for intergovernmental affairs. He served as chairman of the board of the Georgia Ports Authority. Now an attorney at McKenna Long & Aldridge in Atlanta, Mason specializes in business strategy and public policy issues, striving to maintain a balance between work and a myriad of service commitments.

"Keith is [an] exemplar of an active, engaged alumnus," says UGA President Emeritus Chuck Knapp, who has watched Mason's career over the last 25 years. "He gives his time, he gives his treasure and his emotional energy. He has been a solid adviser with the best interest of the university at heart."

Mason has held many volunteer and advisory roles at UGA, including as a trustee on the UGA Foundation board, the board of visitors for the School of Public and International Affairs (SPIA) and the Russell Foundation Board. He donated his personal papers and campaign memorabilia to UGA's Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies.

But he also wanted to give back financially.

At the Terry College of Business, Mason endowed the Mason Public Leadership Lecture series, which brings to campus leaders who are successful in both business and public service. Speakers have included U.S. Senator Saxby Chambliss (BBA '66), former Virginia Governor Mark Warner and former U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin.

He also endowed the Keith Mason Law Scholarship at the School of Law and the Zell Miller Scholarship for Public Leadership—named in honor of his mentor and friend—at SPIA. The Miller Scholarship, given to graduate teaching assistants, is a personal acknowledgment of Mason's gratitude to Miller, symbolizing Miller's record as a graduate student in political science who also taught UGA classes.

Both scholarships were inspired by the Leonard Leadership Scholars Program, a two-year leadership development curriculum for Terry College undergraduates that was created with a gift from Earl and Bebe (ABJ '63) Leonard.

"I hope that the lectures provide some exposure and inspiration to students to think beyond just their business career," Mason says, "and that the scholarships will help contribute to the development of strong UGA-educated,

business sector public leaders like Earl, Jim and Dan in our state."

Fisher Law (BBA '13), a second-year law student from Cartersville and recipient of the Keith Mason Law Scholarship, was a Leonard Scholar during his undergraduate years. The program gave him perspective on how a law degree can enhance a career in public service, and the Mason Scholarship made it financially realistic for him to attend law school, he says.

Jordan Tobias Long (MPA '14), from Philippi, W.Va., is a student in SPIA's Ph.D. program in public administration and policy and the first recipient of the Miller Scholarship for Public Leadership.

"This scholarship [allows us to] develop leaders, change agents and scholars for the next generation," Long says. "It has allowed me to be here, to study with the best."

Like those who came before him and made an impression on his life, Mason is paying it forward through a gift that's helping to shape the next generation of public leaders in Georgia.

"That is just a part of my core," he says, "to be able to have some positive influence on other people."

—Emily Williams is director of communications for UGA's Office of Development.

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Christopher "Chip" George (left) and Fisher Law are recipients of the Keith Mason Law Scholarship at UGA's School of Law.