

# Endowment Report 2023



*A glimpse at your  
impact on Abilene  
Christian University*





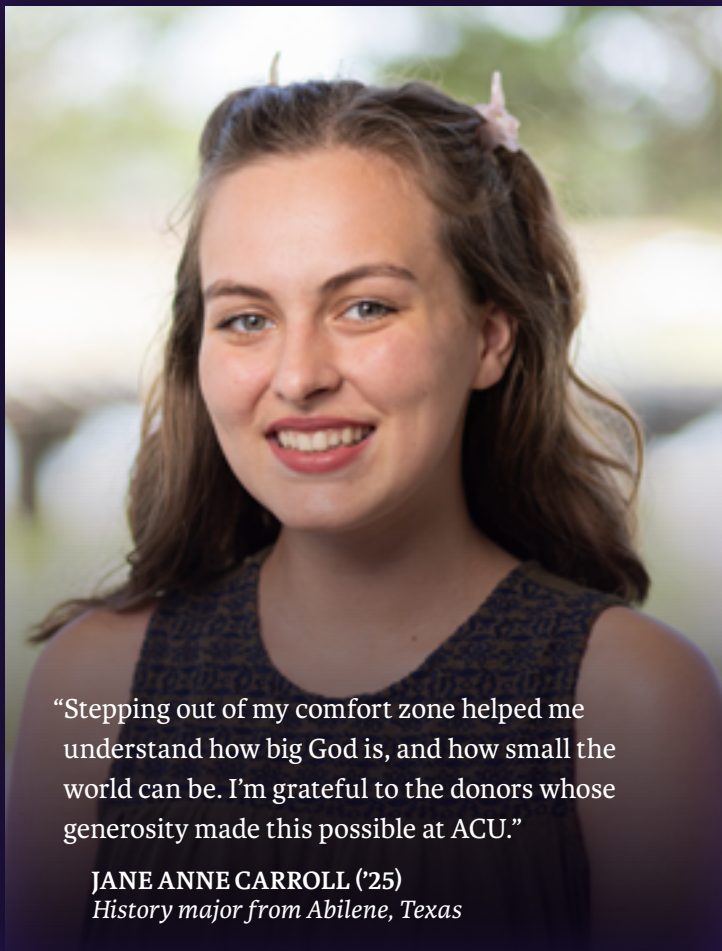
**“Scholarships are the reason I’m able to be here. More than that – they allow me the time and freedom to engage in unique opportunities here that I might not have had the ability to experience.”**

**BRYAN CAMPBELL ('24)**  
*Business management major from San Antonio, Texas*



**“My time at ACU has been so special. Scholarships made it possible for me as a first-generation college student, and they enabled me to be shaped in the classroom, on campus and in the mission field.”**

**CHELSEY POWERS ('23)**  
*Nursing major from Roanoke, Texas*



**“Stepping out of my comfort zone helped me understand how big God is, and how small the world can be. I’m grateful to the donors whose generosity made this possible at ACU.”**

**JANE ANNE CARROLL ('25)**  
*History major from Abilene, Texas*



**“I love the community and Christ-centered atmosphere I’ve found at ACU. Because of your generosity, students are able to be blessed by and learn from opportunities to spread God’s love and deepen their faith.”**

**HENRY IBANE ('25)**  
*Financial management major from Sao Paulo, Brazil*

# ENDOWMENT BY THE NUMBERS

## Fiscal Year 2023



**580** people made  
**1,533** gifts and pledges to  
**252** endowment funds.



**915** endowments funded  
**2,840** scholarships.



**\$34 million** was  
committed to the endowment.



**\$94.6 million** has been given  
to ACU through estate  
gifts since 1982.



**222** operational endowments  
supporting faculty, staff,  
research, facility maintenance  
and athletics equipment.

**W**hen Emely Hernandez was looking at colleges as a high schooler from the small town of Shullsburg, Wisconsin, she knew she wanted a Christ-centered education.

She had family in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, so Abilene Christian came onto her radar. She liked what she read about it, but it was the tour that helped put ACU over the top.

“I knew when I toured ACU that this was the place for me,” Hernandez said. “I knew I could find the community I was looking for from everyone I met that day – from the faculty to the student tour guides.”

Perhaps it’s no surprise that Hernandez, now a senior social work major, finds herself also working as a tour guide, helping high school students make the decisions that she once made.

“I really love ACU and what it stands for, and so I want to be able to show that to other students by telling my story,” she said. “I let prospective students know they can find their place here at ACU.”

Finding a place on campus to belong is a constant theme for Hernandez. Ever since her sophomore year, she has participated in Wildcat Week, the week before classes start each fall semester when new students get oriented, acclimated and plugged in to ACU. Her own Wildcat Week experience as a freshman came in 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic, which limited the activities her class could do. So, she has worked every year since then – this August as a student director – to help freshmen find a place to belong.

Hernandez is grateful she’s found her place on campus, and she’s thankful for the support she’s received that helped give her those opportunities. She’s the recipient of an Onstead Opportunity Endowed Scholarship, which provides support to students with financial need. That support allows her to focus on her studies and all the different ways she’s involved on campus instead of worrying about how she will afford college.



The Onstead Opportunity Scholarship Endowment was established in 2018, and since then the fund has grown into one of ACU’s largest scholarship endowments with over \$15 million while distributing more than \$600,000 in awards to 229 students. It was created thanks to the generosity of longtime ACU supporter **Kay Onstead**.

Neither Onstead, nor her late husband, **Robert**, attended ACU, but early in their marriage, the couple met a group of ACU alumni at their church in Houston.

“Bob and I were so impressed with the ACU graduates we met early in our marriage – we knew it must be a special place,” Kay said. “Eventually, our own children attended ACU, where they made lifelong connections and built a strong foundation for their future.”

The Onsteads began a tradition of giving generously of their time and resources to support ACU’s mission, which continues to this day, totaling more than \$59 million in lifetime giving to various programs, facilities and scholarships, and includes the recent gift to name the Onstead College of Science and Engineering at ACU.

The support Hernandez has received is a constant reminder to keep working hard. Her program in the Department of Social Work will allow her to complete her undergraduate degree in May while also earning several credits of graduate studies. She then plans to earn a master’s degree and either work in social work or perhaps teach.

No matter what she ends up doing, she hopes to be in a position one day to pay forward the generosity she has received.

“I hope that’s something I can do someday – to pour into students to help them pursue and live out their dreams,” Hernandez said.

For someone with a heart for helping students find their place on campus to belong, Hernandez’s desire to give back is much more than a dream. It has already begun.

## OPERATIONAL ENDOWMENT SPOTLIGHT

### *Ed and Edna Brown Forensic Endowment*

**W**hat is the right thing?

That is one of the most important questions that **Dr. Edward M. Brown ('49)** posed to his students when nudging them to analyze complex issues in the world.

For Brown, the answer was easy: being a source of wisdom and inspiration for others to see far beyond what they can become and seek improvement in all areas of their lives.

Students on the ACU debate team continue to answer Brown's question as they have continued to excel on a national stage under the leadership of coach **Sheila (Prickett '87) Ritchie**, college associate professor of communication and former student of Brown.

The sense of belonging and community that inspired Ritchie as an undergraduate debate student continues to motivate her as the team's coach. She has helped maintain a culture of driving action with ethics, growth, learning and promoting self confidence, and she continues to be for her students what Brown and his wife, Edna, were to her.

ACU students have competed in debate and forensics competitions for more than nine decades. **Dr. Don H. Morris ('24)**, who later became ACU's seventh president, was the first debate coach in 1928. The team saw many coaches throughout the years and established a great presence in the '60s under Brown's leadership.

Brown served at ACU for 38 years, beginning as an instructor in the Department of Communications in 1956, and he also was coach of the debate team from 1954-76. He became vice president for academic affairs in 1976 and chairman for the department in 1982.

In order to share the Browns' passion for learning with future generations, the Dr. Ed and Edna Brown Forensic Endowment Fund was created in 1991 to support the forensics program and communications department. Over the years, the endowment has been used to provide

ACU's 2022-23 debate team was ranked No. 2 in the nation by the International Public Debate Association, marking the third straight year it achieved a top 5 ranking.



student scholarships as well as travel funds and support for the debate team.

The support is clearly paying off for the debate team, which was ranked No. 2 in the nation last year by the International Public Debate Association and has been ranked within the top five for the past three years. Students on the team continue to receive awards and accolades for

their successful performances in competitions.

Though the team welcomes new students and reaches new heights every year, one thing remains consistent: the love the students have for their coaches and their passion for doing the right thing.

**Meeyah Davis**, senior biochemistry major from Teague, Texas, who has been on the team for three years, thanked the donors who continue to pour into the Brown Forensic Endowment Fund as well as Ritchie for her dedication and unwavering love for her students.

"When it comes to Mama Sheila," Davis said, referring to the nickname some students gave Ritchie this past year, "she supports us, she loves us, and she wants us to improve and be the best. She has a standard and you're going to reach that standard because she believes that you can."

The Browns' legacy continues to live on in the communications department thanks to the forensic endowment, and the debate team remains in good hands with Ritchie at the helm, creating a culture that brings out the best in the students.

"I want to be able to pass along a sense of encouragement to students that shows I believe in them," Ritchie said. "It's not about me. I don't make the team successful. All I do is cheer them on, recognize their God-given talents and support that as much as I can."

To Ritchie, the best thing – being an inspiration to students and preparing them for a life beyond what they see – is the right thing.



## WHAT IS THE ENDOWMENT?

Endowment gifts and the support they provide make an extraordinary difference in defining the strengths, quality and success of Abilene Christian University. The endowment provides the second-largest revenue stream for ACU, accounting for 20% of annual operating income in a typical year.

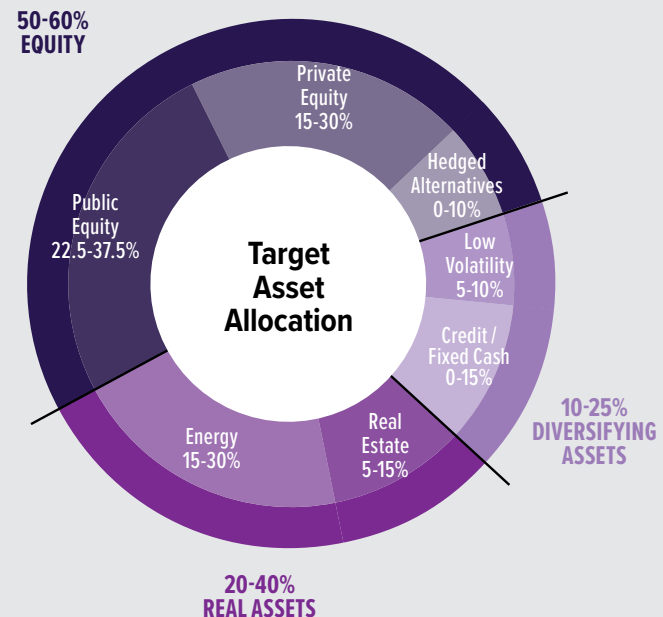
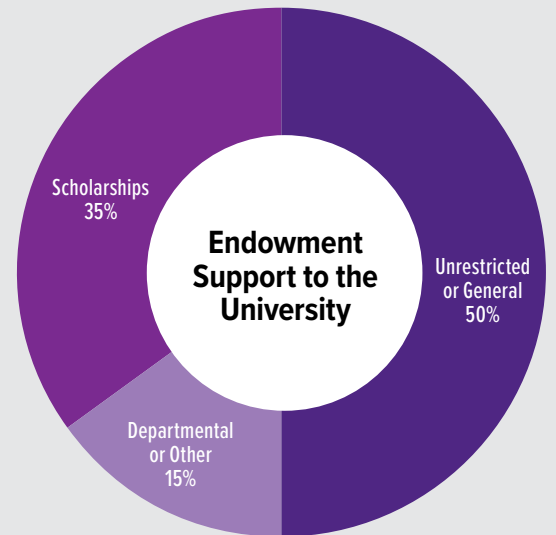
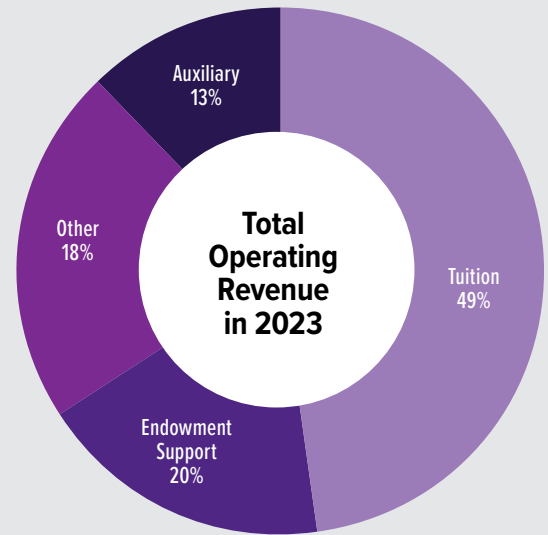
An endowment is a fund intended to benefit the university every year in perpetuity. Unlike current-use gifts, which are spent completely for immediate needs, endowed funds are invested for long-term growth, and a portion of the return on those investments is spent each year.

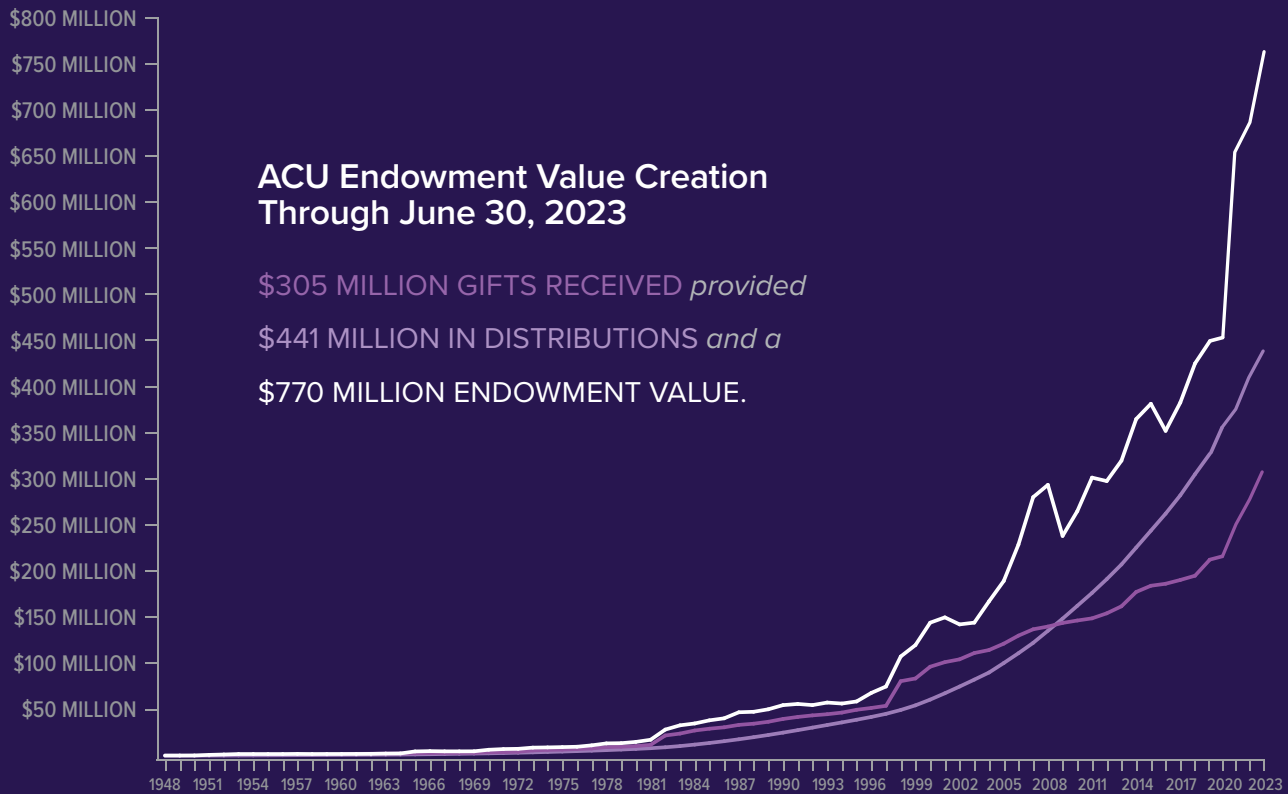
At ACU, our target distribution is 4.5% per year. The most flexible endowment gifts are unrestricted, allowing the university to use resources where they are most needed. Endowment funds cannot be redirected to purposes contrary to donor instructions. For example, a donor's gift restricted to supporting a scholarship cannot be repurposed to support departments. All such gifts honor in perpetuity the donor, the institution and those students and families who benefit from the support endowments make possible.

The university's endowment is a collection of 1,076 individual funds invested for the long term. Most of the funds have their own sets of restrictions and guidelines as to how they may be used. Some of these endowment gifts are more than 69 years old and still carry out mission-critical donor wishes that continue to be relevant, even in changing times.

## INVESTMENT PHILOSOPHY AND POLICIES

Endowment investment policies are designed to maximize long-term results at an acceptable level of investment risk. Endowed gifts are invested in ACU's pooled endowment, a globally diversified portfolio of assets including publicly traded stocks and bonds, hedged strategies, private equities, real estate and natural resources. The endowment's target asset allocation – the percent exposure to each asset class – is shown as of June 30, 2023.





## PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

The diversified nature of ACU's endowment has helped protect returns in a market environment that, during the past decade, has been characterized by significant volatility. Throughout this 10-year period, the endowment has produced an annualized return of 11.5% compared to the benchmark return of 6.3% annually.

## TYPES OF ENDOWMENT FUNDS

- **Unrestricted endowments** support the general purposes of the university.
- **Student scholarship endowments** strengthen our ability to attract and retain the most talented students, regardless of their ability to pay. Endowed financial support enables ACU to enroll one of the most diverse and selective student bodies among our peers.
- **Endowed chairs, professorships and fellowships** are a powerful vehicle to recruit and retain pre-eminent scholars by recognizing and investing in groundbreaking research, exemplary teaching and faculty leadership.
- **ACU's departments, centers and programs** (including ACU Athletics) foster environments that encourage new areas for interdisciplinary thinking and collaboration, advance innovative research and teaching, and develop leaders on and off the field. Endowed program funds provide ongoing support allowing faculty and staff, across a range of disciplines, to combine their unique expertise to inspire our students and to tackle some of the world's most pressing challenges.

*Each year since 2006, ACU's returns for 10-year periods consistently ranked in the top 10% of all university endowment returns.*

Performance as of June 30, 2023

	ACU	Benchmark*
3 year	19.4%	6.1%
5 year	13.7%	5.5%
10 year	11.5%	6.3%
5 year Stdev	12.7%	15.5%
5 year Sharpe	1.0	0.3

\* 70% MSCI All Country World Index / 30% Barclays Global Aggregate Bond Index



## GOVERNANCE

The Abilene Christian Investment Management Company (ACIMCO) is a wholly owned subsidiary of Abilene Christian University. ACIMCO is governed by a board consisting of current and former ACU trustees, the president of the university and independent members.

- Joe Lee – President, Chief Investment Officer

### ACIMCO Board

- Rick Wessel ('81) – Chair, ACU trustee, public company CEO
- Todd Miller ('62) – Vice chair, former ACU trustee, real estate private equity partner
- Mark Anthony ('86) – Investor
- Mike Calvert ('67) – Former ACU trustee, business owner
- Kyle Hammond ('83) – ACU trustee, energy executive
- Luke James ('04) – ACU trustee, healthcare executive
- Eric Oliver ('81) – Hedge fund manager
- Scott Orr ('84) – Investment and governmental relations executive
- Danny Phillips ('81) – Former ACU trustee, investor
- Jim Porter – ACU trustee, venture capital
- Mark Rich ('05) – Foundation investment director
- Doug Robison – ACU trustee, energy executive
- Dr. Phil Schubert ('91) – ACU president



## ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

To make a gift or for information  
on donating stocks and bonds, visit  
[acu.edu/give](http://acu.edu/give)

To learn more about the endowment and  
how to make a gift, please contact the  
**OFFICE OF ADVANCEMENT**  
ACU Box 29134, Abilene, Texas 79601-9134  
325-674-2659

To learn how you can support ACU through  
endowment funds in your planned giving, contact  
**THE OFFICE OF GIFT PLANNING**  
ACU Box 29200, Abilene, Texas 79699-9200  
325-674-2508  
Toll-Free: 800-979-1906  
16633 Dallas Parkway, Suite 800, Addison, Texas 75001  
[giftplanning@acu.edu](mailto:giftplanning@acu.edu)  
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