

\$2 million gift strengthens Barrett honors students' paths beyond college

By Luz Capiral, ASU News
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What happens when a venture capitalist known nationally for his work in honors education gets an up-close look at [Barrett, The Honors College](#)?

In John H. Martinson's case, he was impressed enough to say Barrett is "like adding a ninth Ivy League school" and to make a \$2 million, five-year investment in its students and faculty.

The gift, part of [ASU's Changing Futures campaign](#) to inspire tomorrow's game changers, creates three initiatives: awards recognizing exceptional student achievement; expanded entrepreneurial and technology-focused thesis opportunities; and support to help students prepare for careers and graduate and professional school.

Support for faculty who guide and mentor students is also part of the gift.

"They're the continuing force within Barrett," Martinson said, adding that faculty shape thousands of students' lives and careers.

"Barrett is deeply grateful to John Martinson for his extraordinary investment in honors students and the future of honors education," said Tara Williams, dean of Barrett, The Honors College. "With his remarkable knowledge of the national honors landscape, he is helping drive innovation across many honors colleges and programs. At Barrett, Mr. Martinson's support will recognize students who pursue excellence with curiosity and purpose; expand entrepreneurship and technology thesis pathways; and help students build the skills, networks and confidence to thrive beyond college."

Martinson also pointed to Barrett's multiyear residential community and its emphasis on experiential learning, including internships, research, study abroad and cooperative education, as reasons he chose to invest.

"I think Barrett is out in front and providing all of those," Martinson said. "My gift is going to further boost it on the entrepreneurial side."

He said the gift is meant to help students make the most of the later years of their honors experience.

“I’m focused on how we can assist upperclassmen and help particularly propel them into the next phase beyond honors,” he said.

That includes recognizing top students and preparing them for what comes after Barrett.

“I’m looking to recognize the super achievers, the top of the top, who’ve taken advantage of all the programs and also done well academically,” Martinson said. “But I’m also aiming to assist Barrett students as they go on to the next area.”

Recognizing excellence in honors

The John H. Martinson Excellence in Honors Awards will give 20 Barrett students each year \$5,000 for achievement across academics, honors coursework, undergraduate research, thesis projects, leadership, service and community engagement.

Recipients will be celebrated each spring at the Celebrating Honors Symposium, a showcase event where Barrett students present their thesis work to fellow students, faculty and guests, alongside the faculty mentors who guided their work. Martinson said the awards are meant to build enthusiasm in the junior and senior years, and highlight role models within the Barrett community.

Turning thesis ideas into real-world work

To help students transform ideas into ventures and technology-based solutions, the gift creates the John H. Martinson Entrepreneurial Thesis Pathway Fund.

Through the Founders Lab in the [W. P. Carey School of Business](#), interdisciplinary Barrett teams develop business concepts, identify product-market fit and build market traction with guidance from faculty, industry experts and entrepreneurial mentors.

The fund also expands the Applied Technology Thesis Pathway, which lets students from any major develop solutions to real-world challenges in areas including artificial intelligence, software development, cybersecurity, user experience and analytics.

Preparing students for what comes next

Students preparing for careers or graduate and professional school will get added support through the John H. Martinson Beyond Barrett Fund.

That support includes MCAT and LSAT preparation, leadership and professional networking courses, industry exploration experiences and life-prep programming covering practical skills such as financial literacy, professional communication and negotiation. Martinson said the goal is to help students beginning their careers “get off to a fast start.”

Asked what he would like to hear someday from a Barrett student who benefited from his support, Martinson said he hopes it helped them “channel their talents and energy into areas where they can be quickly productive, successful and contributing.”

He also said he hopes they feel equipped in their career or chosen field to enjoy a full life, start a family, buy a home and give back to their community.

Changing Futures campaign

This investment is part of ASU’s [Changing Futures campaign](#). Fueled by philanthropic investment and unique partnerships, the campaign focuses on six key areas: enhancing education access, developing leaders, promoting sustainability, strengthening communities, advancing health and developing impactful technology.

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image

Content for Commitment: Honors Nonresident Enrollment Social Media Campaign

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Campaign Overview

In a world of technology, students have many ways to connect with each other. However, not all students have the same access to technology. Some students may not have a computer or internet access at home. This campaign aims to provide these students with the resources they need to succeed in their college courses. The campaign will focus on creating social media content that is both informative and engaging, and that is tailored to the needs of nonresident students. The content will be shared on various social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The goal of the campaign is to increase the visibility of the Honors Nonresident Enrollment Social Media Campaign and to encourage more students to participate in the program.



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The Background

The background of this campaign is the fact that many students who are nonresident students face many challenges when it comes to attending college. One of the biggest challenges is the cost of tuition and housing. Many students who are nonresident students do not have the financial resources to attend college. This campaign aims to provide these students with the resources they need to succeed in their college courses. The campaign will focus on creating social media content that is both informative and engaging, and that is tailored to the needs of nonresident students. The content will be shared on various social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The goal of the campaign is to increase the visibility of the Honors Nonresident Enrollment Social Media Campaign and to encourage more students to participate in the program.

The Data

Statistics show that social media is a powerful tool for reaching students. In fact, 70% of students use social media to stay connected with their friends and family. This makes social media a great way to reach students and provide them with the resources they need to succeed in their college courses. The campaign will focus on creating social media content that is both informative and engaging, and that is tailored to the needs of nonresident students. The content will be shared on various social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The goal of the campaign is to increase the visibility of the Honors Nonresident Enrollment Social Media Campaign and to encourage more students to participate in the program.



Megan McComb, a spring 2026 graduate of Barrett, The Honors College, at the spring 2026 Celebrating Honors Symposium. Courtesy photo

Text image(s)



John H. Martinson