

2022 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS AWARD



THE HIGHEST HONOR BESTOWED

Twelve Aggies have been selected as the 2022 recipients of the highest honor bestowed upon a former student of Texas A&M University, the Distinguished Alumnus Award. Texas A&M University and The Association of Former Students are proud to welcome as Distinguished Alumni:

- Travis Logan Smith, Jr., Class of 1898
- General Joe Ashy '62
- Thomas W. Powell '62
- Dr. Joe R. Fowler '68
- Bill Mahomes '69
- Mark Fischer '72
- Clifton L. Thomas, Jr. '72
- Mark W. Albers '79
- Gregory Cokinos '79
- Bill Jones '81
- Dr. Jimmy Williams, Jr. '83
- Elaine Mendoza '87

Since the inception of the award in 1962, only 318 of Texas A&M's over 565,000 former students have been recognized with the Distinguished Alumnus Award. One of this year's recipients is being honored posthumously.

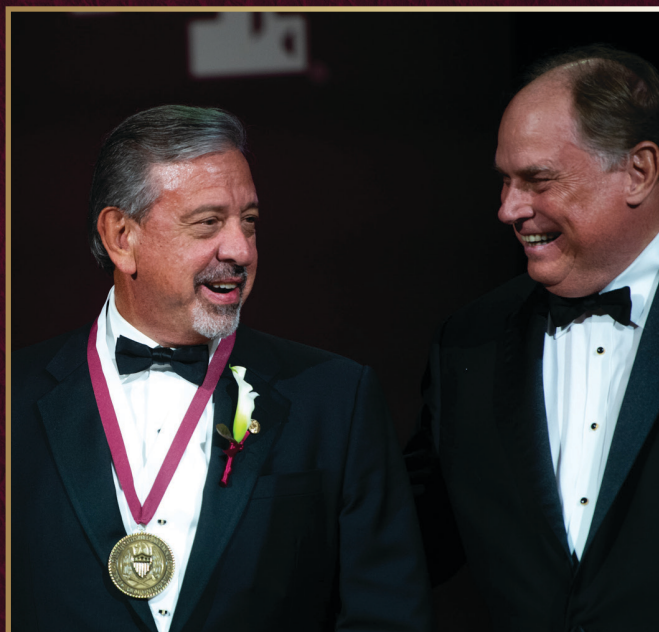
Awarded jointly by Texas A&M and The Association of Former Students, this honor recognizes those Aggies who have achieved excellence in their chosen professions and made meaningful contributions to Texas A&M University and their local communities.

Dara G. Hegar '95, The Association of Former Students' 2022 Chair of the Board, said, "Our 2022 Distinguished Alumni highlight the remarkable impact Aggies make on their communities and on the world. The way they have lived their lives reflects honor and distinction upon the worldwide Aggie Network and leaves an outstanding legacy to which all Aggies can aspire."

Association President and CEO Porter S. Garner III '79 echoed Hegar's sentiments and offered his congratulations on behalf of The Association of Former Students.

"Fewer than one-tenth of one percent of Texas A&M's 565,000 former students have been recognized with the Distinguished Alumnus Award. The 2022 Distinguished Alumni belong in that exceptional group of Aggies because they exemplify excellence, integrity, leadership, loyalty, respect and selfless service. They inspire us all by their example."

To see and read about all past honorees since 1962, please visit our Tribute Wall at [AggieNetwork.com/Tribute](https://aggienetwork.com/Tribute).



NOMINATE A GREAT AGGIE

Each year's list of Distinguished Alumni is drawn solely from nominations that are submitted to The Association of Former Students. If you know someone who excels in their career, military service, community or support for Texas A&M, please consider nominating them. They cannot be selected if they are not nominated.

Nominations are accepted from January through August, and each must include a short biography, a letter of nomination and three letters of support. Posthumous nominations are welcome.

Once submitted, a nomination remains current for five years. Up to 12 recipients may be selected annually by the anonymous selection committee, which includes five former students appointed by the chair of The Association's Board of Directors and four faculty members appointed by A&M's president.

The Association sincerely requests your help in recognizing Texas A&M's best.

📅 **2022 deadline:** Aug. 3. Visit tx.ag/DANominations.





Travis Logan Smith, Jr., Class of 1898

“Mr. Smith devoted his time, talents, money and boundless energy to the welfare of Texas A&M,” said grandson Bruce Smith ’67.

Travis L. Smith Jr., Class of 1898, enrolled at A&M when he was only 15, after personally petitioning then-president Lawrence Sullivan Ross for admission into the sophomore class. Smith honored Ross’s generosity by earning a degree in civil engineering in only three years, just short of his 18th birthday. Smith led in the Corps of Cadets as a first lieutenant and staff adjutant. He became one of the original Ross Volunteers, both serving Ross during his lifetime and presiding over Ross’s 1898 funeral.

After graduation, Smith embarked on a prolific career. It is thought that he founded 18 companies in his lifetime. Whether as a civil engineer, surveyor, airplane engine manufacturer, oil driller, aerial crop-duster or anything else, Smith served those around him, especially those in financial need.

He was generous to a fault, even when it wasn’t in the best interest of his business. When developing real estate, Smith would often sell lots for less than they were worth to make them more affordable to prospective land owners. He once constructed student housing near campus, employing primarily students and World War II veterans. He then deeded it to The Association of Former Students, stipulating that when it was sold, the profits would go toward scholarships. Smith also created two Presidents’ Endowed Scholarships.

Aggie community was important to Smith. He served as a Class of 1898 Class Agent. He founded the Sul Ross Group, originally composed of Aggies who had been students during Ross’s tenure, and served as the group’s permanent president until his death in 1972. Smith is remembered by many former cadets as a generous benefactor and mentor.

Smith’s Aggie legacy has continued in his 11 direct descendants who are Aggies and many other family members who attended Texas A&M.

**“FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS
I HAVE KNOWN OF HIS
UNBELIEVABLE ENERGY,
DIVERSIFIED INTERESTS,
GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS
AND, MOST OF ALL, HIS
ENORMOUS GENEROSITY.”**

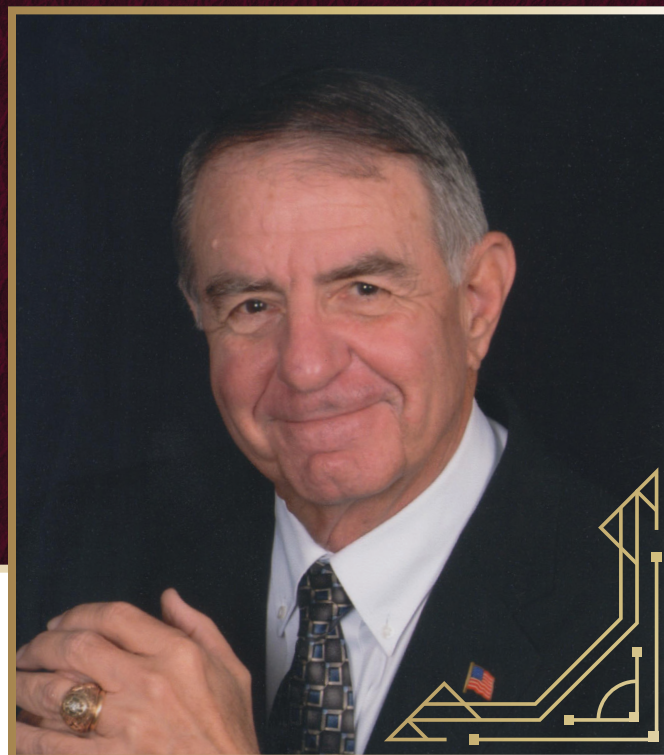
— MAJ. GEN. THOMAS
G. DARLING ’54



General
Joe Ashy '62

**“GENERAL ASHY’S
REPUTATION FOR INTEGRITY
AND SELFLESS DEDICATION
TO SUPPORTING AMERICA’S
WARFIGHTERS COMBINED
TO SET THE HIGHEST
POSSIBLE STANDARDS FOR
MILITARY AND INDUSTRY
INTERACTIONS.”**

**— LT. GEN. BRUCE
“ORVILLE” WRIGHT**



According to General Joe Ashy '62, the saying, “We are the Aggies, The Aggies are we,” “highlights the imperative that Aggie excellence demands ‘us’ (rather than ‘me’) to selflessly serve for the greater good. Our unity and collective spirit are what make us transcendent and distinctive!”

Ashy is one of only 10 Aggies to rise to the rank of four-star general in the U.S. military. He began his 35-year military career as a fighter pilot in the Air Force after four years of ROTC with the Corps of Cadets. By the end of his service, Ashy was concurrently serving as the commander of North American Aerospace Defense Command, U.S. Space Command and Air Force Space Command. Included in his many military decorations are the Silver Star, two Distinguished Flying Crosses and the U.S. Defense Distinguished Service Medal with cluster. General Ashy’s command touched the lives of countless U.S. and global coalition partner members.

After retirement from the military, Ashy founded aerospace consulting company Ashy and Associates LLC, where he served as president and CEO. He was appointed to the Independent Strategic Assessment Group, which advises the Air Force in the areas of air, space, cyber, and command and control. Appointed as a senior fellow by the Department of Defense, Ashy mentored up-and-coming U.S. flag officers through the Capstone and Pinnacle programs. During his 18 years of involvement with these programs, Ashy also led U.S. delegations to over 120 countries.

Ashy has been closely involved in Texas A&M’s Sul Ross Group, which includes Aggie former students of 55 or more years from graduation. Ashy served as the group’s president during the 2021-22 term.

Ashy has been married to his wife, Sue, for 61 years. They have a daughter, Karen, and a granddaughter, Maj. Kristin Clinger '09. Ashy’s Aggie family includes his late father, Joe Ashy '29, his brother, Dr. Thomas Ashy '64.



Thomas W.
Powell '62

“Honors,’ in my way of thinking, are not what I may have done or accomplished, but what I have received,” said Thomas W. Powell ’62. “When I think about Texas A&M and honors, I think about the honor I received by having the privilege of being a student and a member of the Corps of Cadets.”

In addition to being in the Corps of Cadets, Powell also served as a Ross Volunteer and was a member of MSC SCONA. Although Powell earned his undergraduate degree in mathematics, the majority of his career has been in business administration.

Powell has spent decades leading Powell Industries Inc. He served as president and CEO from 1984 until his retirement, as well as the company’s chairman of the board. When he first joined the company in 1964, it was a five-man family business. Currently, the company employs over 3,000 people and has expanded to international locations. This type of growth is no accident. Powell’s leadership philosophy, built on the values he learned at Texas A&M, has prioritized integrity and elevated his employees every step of the way.

In addition to his corporate success, Powell’s convictions have also led him to generously give back to others. He has established many chairs, fellowships and scholarships for Texas A&M, both at the flagship College Station campus and in Galveston. He spent 10 years on Texas A&M University at Galveston’s board of visitors, and is the namesake of that campus’s Powell Marine Engineering Complex. His philanthropic donations have served A&M’s colleges of Science, Engineering and Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences. He is also passionate about retaining first-generation college students, who he supports with a scholarship through A&M’s Science Leadership Scholars Program.

Powell and his wife, Kimberley, have two Aggie children, Holly ’85 and Michael ’88.

**“HE IS A FASCINATING
INDIVIDUAL WITH A
GENEROUS HEART AND A DEEP
LOVE FOR THIS UNIVERSITY,
AND I BELIEVE THE
DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS
AWARD WAS MADE FOR
PERSONS OF HIS CALIBER.”**

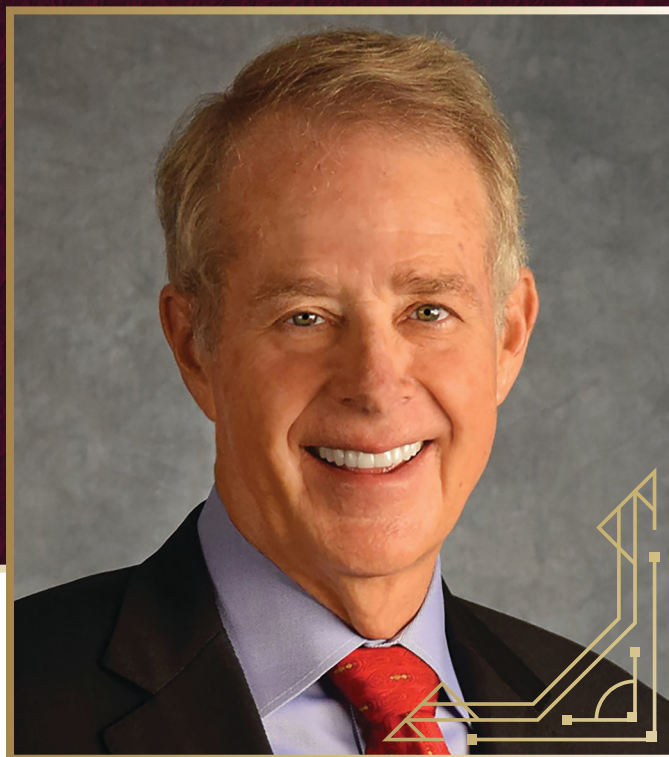
— MEIGAN ARONSON



Dr. Joe R. Fowler '68

**“JOE IS UNIQUE IN HIS
GIFTS AND TALENTS, IN
HIS HUMILITY, AND IN HIS
QUEST TO BUILD UP ALL
THOSE AROUND HIM.”**

— JAMES M. DONNELL '82



“The essence of Texas A&M is the Aggie Spirit,” said Dr. Joe R. Fowler '68. “In my mind, this means competence in your chosen work, a desire to get the job done correctly, caring deeply about others, and being willing to pitch in and help others who need your help.”

Fowler holds three degrees in mechanical engineering, all from Texas A&M, and all earned with honors. He was a member of the Corps of Cadets, American Society of Mechanical Engineers and the Student Engineers' Council. As a graduate student, he discovered a love for engineering consulting, which would eventually become his life's work.

After earning his doctorate, Fowler co-founded Stress Engineering Services Inc. In 1984, he was named president of the company, and would continue to hold that title until 2016. Stress Engineering was twice named to the Aggie 100, and won “Best Place to Work” awards in Texas, Ohio, Houston, New Orleans and Cincinnati. In 2012, Fowler was selected by Ernst and Young as a regional winner in their Entrepreneur of the Year contest.

When he was an undergraduate, Fowler relied on a scholarship from a former student to assist with his expenses; and it is now important to him to pay that investment forward. He and his wife, Linda, have supported 35 Aggies through endowed scholarships. In addition, they have given a number of scholarships to students at their local church who are pursuing higher education. Joe and his brother, Don Fowler '66, endowed the Fowler Lecture series in 2001, and Joe himself has returned as a guest lecturer for many different engineering classes.

All three of Joe and Linda's children are Aggies who met their spouses at A&M: Jodi Malanga '90 (John '89), Rob Fowler '92 (Barb '92) and Amy Shawver '96 (Robert '95). Five grandchildren and Joe's two older brothers are also Aggies.



Bill Mahomes '69

Texas A&M taught Bill Mahomes '69 that, "I was tougher and more resilient than I knew. That life may or may not have always been fair, but how I respond and feel about it is the real test, not the action itself."

As the first Black student to complete four years in the Corps of Cadets, Mahomes experienced his share of tests. Growing up in Lindale, Texas, he attended segregated schools before coming to the recently integrated Texas A&M. He was the first in his family to attend college, and at the time, he struggled with a speech impediment. However, Mahomes was determined to uphold A&M's values, even when others didn't. He graduated with a finance degree, participating in the Cadet Honor Council among other student organizations. Mahomes went on to earn his Juris Doctor from the University of Texas in 1972, serving as vice president of the Student Bar Association while there.

In his distinguished legal career, Mahomes has spent over 30 years specializing in public finance, real estate and commercial transactions. He is the former managing partner, president and director of Mahomes Bolden PC, and is currently a partner at Bracewell LLC. He is also the general counsel and executive vice president for Vista Bank. Some of his most notable clients include the city of Dallas, DFW International Airport and the Texas Turnpike Authority.

Mahomes has served on the boards of over 25 different civic and charitable organizations, including the Salvation Army, the Dallas Legal Service Corp., the Bethlehem Foundation and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas. In 2015, Mahomes was appointed to The Texas A&M System Board of Regents, where he continues to serve. He was reappointed and named vice chairman of the board in 2021.

Bill and his wife, Pam, have two children.

**"BILL IS A WONDERFUL
EXAMPLE OF AN AGGIE
THAT HAS SPENT HIS LIFE
PERSONIFYING THE CORE
VALUES OF TEXAS A&M.
DESPITE ALL HIS SUCCESS AND
RECOGNITION, HE REMAINS
EXCEEDINGLY HUMBLE."**

— BILL CARTER '69



Mark
Fischer '72

**“WHILE HIS BUSINESS
SUCSESSES ARE IMPRESSIVE
AND NOTEWORTHY, HIS
GREATEST ATTRIBUTE IS HIS
ENGAGING SPIRIT FOR LIFE AND
HIS DESIRE TO HELP OTHERS.”**

— LIAS J. “JEFF” STEEN '80



If Mark Fischer '72 were to share some advice, he would say, “Make a difference, and be a master of your own destiny. Always remember, in the middle of difficulty lies opportunity, so embrace complexity to arrive at the best outcome.”

Originally, Fischer wanted to become an astronaut. In 1968, when he was a freshman at Texas A&M, the United States was engaged in the space race, and Fischer thought that acquiring an aerospace engineering degree was the best way to join this exciting new field. He did graduate in aerospace engineering; but by 1972, he had decided to turn his attention to the energy sector instead.

Fischer started his career with Exxon, and in 1988, he founded his own oil and gas company, Chaparral Energy. The company operated in 13 states under Fischer's leadership. It was recognized by the Aggie 100 four times, the Oklahoma City Metro 50 award eight times, and was recognized as one of the best places to work in Oklahoma City. Ernst and Young named Fischer an Entrepreneur of the Year national finalist in 2012. Fischer served as Chaparral's CEO and chairman of the board until his retirement in 2017. Additionally, Fischer owns and chairs the boards of six other companies: Dippin' Dots, Pointe Vista Development, SuMark Pharmacies, Doc Popcorn, Resource Oil and Gas and Skybridge Development.

Recently, Fischer and his wife, SuSu, co-chaired A&M's Lead by Example campaign, which raised over \$4.25 billion in support of Texas Aggies. Fischer has served on a number of nonprofit boards, including the Boy Scouts of America, and he chaired the board of The Association of Former Students in 2019. The Fischers have sponsored Habitat for Humanity and Big Brothers Big Sisters, as well as the Zachry Engineering Complex's Fischer Engineering Design Center.

The Fischers have two children, Scott and Christy '04, and three grandchildren. Two of Mark's brothers are Aggies as well.



Clifton L.
Thomas, Jr. '72

"I always want to be that business person who is successful, but does it the right way," said Clifton L. Thomas, Jr. '72 — and the core values at Texas A&M have helped him to do just that. "The core values are more than words — it's the way you live your life."

Thomas came to Texas A&M as a football recruit under coach Gene Stallings '57. Football taught Thomas how to treat people right, manage adversity and work extremely hard, as well as how to build a team and be accountable to those teammates. He graduated with a degree in physical education, having married his high school sweetheart, Cathy, along the way. After a few years coaching high school football, he decided to change fields, and he took a job as manager of a small Exxon distributorship in Hope, Arkansas.

In 1981, Thomas purchased his own Exxon distributorship in Victoria, Texas, creating Thomas Petroleum and C.L. Thomas Inc. Thomas and his team had great success, becoming one of Exxon's and Chevron's top distributors. Thomas Petroleum grew to 36 wholesale terminals in 23 states, 230 dealer accounts and 165 Speedy Stop Stores with about 3,100 employees. In 2012, Thomas sold 143 Speedy Stop Stores to 7-11. Thomas currently owns and operates 23 Speedy Stop Stores and co-owns Pilot Thomas Logistics.

Thomas has contributed to A&M's strategic development through The Texas A&M System Board of Regents. During his 11-year tenure, both as a committee member and as chairman of the board, the A&M System saw a number of new buildings and renovations across campuses, from RELLIS to Kyle Field, as well as a move to the SEC. Thomas has served his broader community through positions on the boards of Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority, DeTar Hospital System, Wells Fargo bank, and The University of Texas/Texas A&M Investment Management Company.

Cliff and Cathy have three daughters, Ashlie '17, Whitney and Beth, and three granddaughters, Preslie '25, Ashbie and Sophia.

**"NO OTHER PERSON I KNOW
REPRESENTS WHAT IS
POSSIBLE WITH A DEGREE
FROM TEXAS A&M BETTER
THAN CLIFF THOMAS."**

— JOHN SHARP '72



Mark W.
Albers '79

**“MARK IS A STEADY
INFLUENCE WITH THE RARE
GIFT OF RAISING THE LEVEL
OF ACCOMPLISHMENT OF ALL
THOSE WITH WHOM HE WORKS.”**

— GEORGE N. HARRIS, JR. '85



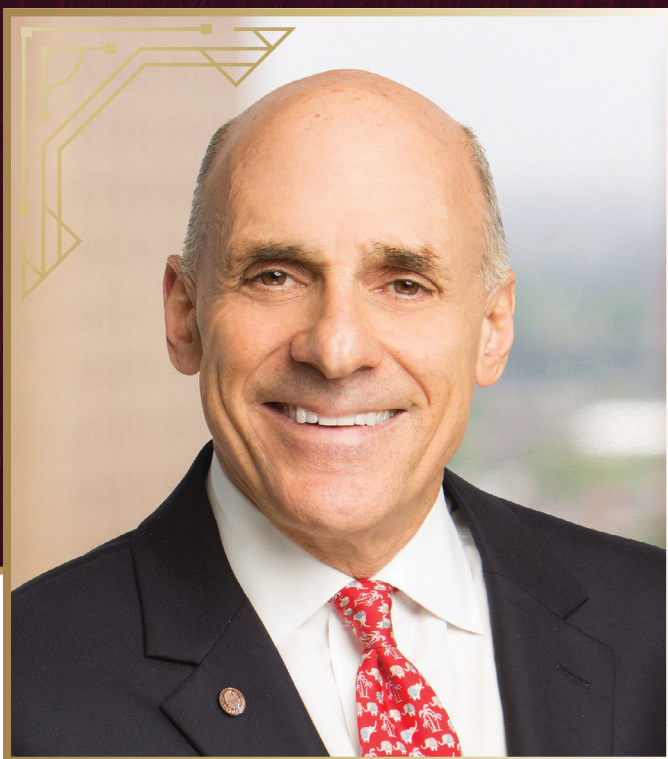
Mark W. Albers '79 believes, “We are all put here for a purpose, and that purpose is not ‘all about us.’” Rather, he says, our purpose “is found in the One who put us here in the first place.”

From the beginning, Albers knew he wanted a career in oil. He studied petroleum engineering at A&M, participating in Student Engineers' Council, Engineering Honor Society, Campus Crusade for Christ and even walking onto the football team. After graduating summa cum laude, Albers soon found a job with Exxon. It was the perfect fit. Albers remained at ExxonMobil for over 38 years, eventually working his way up to corporate senior vice president over the upstream at the company's headquarters in Irving, Texas. Albers' career took him from Australia to Africa, bringing on new supplies of energy.

While excelling in industry, Albers also found the time to stay involved in his local community. Albers is an area advisor to Men's Bible Study Fellowship over Houston and East Texas, providing leadership for about 2,500 participants. He has served on the boards of the MD Anderson Cancer Center, CEO Forum and the Grace School of Theology.

Service to Texas A&M has remained a priority to Albers. Albers served on the boards of The Association of Former Students, the A&M System's University Lands Board, and the Engineering Advisory Board. Albers and his wife, Cindy, are Endowed Century Club members. They have funded an endowed scholarship, an endowed faculty fellowship, and classroom improvements in the new Zachry engineering complex.

Three of Mark and Cindy's four children attended A&M with their spouses: Byron '06 (Sharla '06), Amanda '11 (Scott '11), and Amy '15 (Tony '11). Their son David (Marin) graduated from Rice University. They have 12 grandchildren.



Gregory Cokinos '79

"The core values embraced by the student body and stressed in the Aggie culture have built and guided me to a more virtuous and fulfilled life, which is essential to maintaining the traditions of this great country," said Gregory Cokinos '79.

Cokinos earned his bachelor of business administration degree from A&M, quickly followed in 1982 by his Juris Doctor from South Texas College of Law. In 1989, he co-founded Cokinos Young law firm, specializing in construction, engineering and real estate law. Cokinos is the firm's president and CEO. Under his leadership, the firm has grown from three lawyers to over 85 across three states.

Cokinos has been repeatedly recognized for his contributions to his field. He was the first Houston lawyer to be inducted into the American College of Construction Lawyers, a group considered the top 1% of U.S. construction lawyers. Thomson Reuters has named Cokinos a Texas Super Lawyer every year since 2005 and one of The Top 100 Super Lawyers in Texas every year since 2007. He was awarded 2018 Lawyer of the Year by Best Lawyers and is the 2022 chair-elect to the Texas State Bar Construction Law section. In 2021, Cokinos was named *Houston Business Journal's* most admired CEO.

Never far from his beloved alma mater, Cokinos is an avid fan of all things Aggie. In 2017, Mays Business School named him an Outstanding Alumnus. Cokinos has served on the board of The Association of Former Students and was chair of the board of the 12th Man Foundation. Since 2019, Cokinos has returned to campus as a professor of construction law.

Cokinos comes from a large Aggie family — more than 30 Cokinoses have graduated from A&M since 1939. He and his wife, Page, have six children, four of whom have attended A&M: Kyle '16, Katherine '17, Carter '19 and Mary Kristen '24.

"I'VE NEVER SEEN HIM BACK DOWN, EVEN IN THE FACE OF LONG ODDS AND TREMENDOUS ADVERSITY. HE WILL NOT BE OUTWORKED. HE WILL NOT BE OUTMANEUVERED. HE WILL NOT BE DISCOURAGED."

— RUSSELL W. SMITH '03



Bill
Jones '81

**“BILL REFLECTS THE BEST OF
A&M CORE VALUES AND IS A
ROLE MODEL FOR THOSE THAT
HAVE COME AFTER HIM.”**

— JOHN D. WHITE '70



“I have tried to do all things such that anyone following me would have difficulty doing them better,” said Bill Jones '81.

From the time he entered as a student at Texas A&M, Jones has displayed a dedication to excellence. He was named Outstanding Freshman in the Corps of Cadets, and would go on to become First Brigade commander and a Ross Volunteer. Not only that, but he served off the quad as both sophomore class president and president of the MSC Fall Leadership Committee. In each of these positions, Jones strengthened his leadership skills through service to others.

After graduating with a degree in business management, Jones enrolled at Baylor Law, earning his Juris Doctor in 1985. The early part of his legal career focused on litigation, dealing with complex business cases in both state and federal courts. Jones paused his time in private practice for three years to serve as general counsel to Gov. Rick Perry '72. Now, Jones owns and is current principal of The Jones Firm, where he specializes in matters of public law and government relations. In addition, Jones manages a startup company: AFCI Texas LLC.

Jones has consistently risen to leadership — not only in his professional life, but also in his philanthropic service. Jones is a chairman emeritus of The Texas A&M System Board of Regents and a former board member of The Association of Former Students. He has served as commissioner of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Association, president of the Texas Young Lawyers Association, treasurer of the Texas Association of Business and as a member of the ERCOT Selection Committee. He is president of the Texas African American History Memorial Foundation, placing the Texas African American History Memorial on the state capitol grounds during his tenure.

Jones and his wife, Johnita '83, have three children and two grandchildren.



Dr. Jimmy Williams, Jr. '83

To Dr. Jimmy Williams, Jr. '83, Texas A&M means family. He said, "Family shapes your values, helps you to maintain your humility. They challenge you to be your best, they protect you in the most fierce manner, they honor and applaud your growth, they deeply care."

Williams knows what it means to contribute to a large family: He grew up the fourth child out of 10. He is a first-generation college graduate, and was the first in his family to study engineering. He joined the American Society of Mechanical Engineers as a student, and soon accomplished his goal of earning a mechanical engineering degree.

Williams returned to Missouri for his MBA, and stayed for a Ph.D. in engineering and public policy. During this time, Williams began a 20-year career with Boeing, eventually becoming director of research and development. Boeing honored Williams with its Black Engineer of the Year Award in 2001. Williams then moved to Alcoa, again with a focus in research and development, and later moved to Pall Corp., where he was made senior vice president of global engineering. Williams retired from industry in 2015, taking on a new role at Carnegie Mellon University as the executive director and distinguished service professor of the university's Engineering and Technology Innovation Management Program.

In addition to his notable engineering career, Williams has also served on the boards of many organizations. In 2020, he co-chaired Texas A&M's task force on diversity, equity and inclusion, with findings that directly impacted the university's current initiatives. He became the first Black chair of the board of The Association of Former Students in 2018. He also served as president of the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation board and on the boards of Innovation Works, Tech-Solve Corp. and the Washington University Alumni Association.

Williams and his wife, Valerie, have two children and a granddaughter.

**"HE IS NOT ONLY AN
OUTSTANDING ENGINEER
BUT ALSO AN OUTSTANDING
AND COMPASSIONATE LEADER
AND A GREAT EXAMPLE OF
THE AGGIE CORE VALUE OF
SELFLESS SERVICE."**

— DR. JOHN E. HURTADO '91

Elaine
Mendoza '87

**“AT EVERY STEP, ELAINE
HAS DEMONSTRATED HER
DETERMINATION IN THE PURSUIT
OF EXCELLENCE, HER CAPACITY TO
BUILD SIGNIFICANT INSTITUTIONS
AND HER WILLINGNESS TO SERVE
THE PUBLIC INTEREST.”**

— HENRY CISNEROS '68



“Throughout different aspects of life, the perseverance cultivated during my time at Texas A&M has strengthened my determination to meet challenges head on and not be deterred in resolving complex issues,” said Elaine Mendoza '87.

Mendoza earned her degree in aerospace engineering, one of a small group of women in the program at that time. As a student, she worked at the NASA Ames Research Center and participated in activities such as intramural sports. Not long after her graduation from A&M, Mendoza founded Conceptual MindWorks Inc., where she remains CEO today. Her company has led in biotechnology and medical informatics for 32 years, researching chem-bio defense, population health and developing and deploying cloud-based electronic health records.

Concurrent with her leadership in industry, Mendoza has committed much of her time to public service, primarily in the spheres of education and health care. In San Antonio, she has served on multiple education-focused boards. One, where she serves as chairman, established a city-wide pre-K education program. She has served on many state-level commissions and boards, including the Code Red Task Force, which delved into Texans' health care access. She led the COVID-19 Frontline Child Care Task Force, which connected essential workers to child care. Mendoza has been recognized for her contributions with numerous awards and honors.

Mendoza has served on The Texas A&M System Board of Regents since 2011. As chair of the Committee of Academic and Student Affairs, she worked to establish a robust set of metrics for measuring student outcomes and focused on educator preparation. In 2019, she was voted by the regents to be chairman of the board, becoming the first Hispanic chair.

Mendoza met her husband, Larry Gay '85, while they were students at A&M. They have two daughters and sons-in-law: Contessa Gay '16 and Cameron Novikoff '15, and Francesca Blissett '19 and Jordan Blissett '18.

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