

## WSU News

February 09, 2022

# Estate gift from the late Richard 'Dick' Smith will fund \$11 million in scholarships at Wichita State, KU

By Strategic Communications



An estate gift from the late Richard "Dick" Smith will fund \$11 million in scholarships at Wichita State and the University of Kansas.

A bequest from the estate of Richard "Dick" Smith will provide about \$5.5 million each to Wichita State University and the University of Kansas to endow full-ride scholarships for students at each university.

A longtime resident of Wichita and the founder of Range Oil Co., Smith died in January 2021 at the age of 87.

The estate gifts were announced at a news conference on Feb. 9 attended by WSU President Rick Muma and KU Chancellor Douglas Girod, as well as Smith's widow, Sondra Langel. Elizabeth King, WSU Foundation president and CEO, and Dale Seufferling, president of the KU Endowment, also attended.

At Wichita State, undergraduates from any field of study will be eligible for the Richard "Dick" Smith Scholarship. At KU, his alma mater, Smith specified that the gift be divided equally between scholarships for undergraduates across the university and students studying geology, in which he earned a bachelor's degree in 1954.

Smith also specified that the scholarships at both institutions cover all expenses related to college, including tuition, fees, books and housing. These full-ride scholarships are considered among the most prestigious a university can award.

"Kansas families: that's who benefits from this gift," Muma said. "While it's a rare and precious opportunity for Wichita State and KU to receive a gift as sizable as Mr. Smith's, it's Kansas families who will ultimately benefit from Dick's generosity and the relationships that are fostered through our partnership with the WSU Foundation."

In his remarks, Girod expressed gratitude for the gift and lauded Smith's legacy of philanthropy and support for higher education.

"This remarkable gift will create opportunities for KU and its students for generations to come," Girod said. "It also reinforces the educational partnership between Wichita State and KU as both strive to create a stronger Kansas through higher education."

Langel described her late husband as a man with an extraordinary zest for life and someone who believed strongly in the power of education.

"Dick believed that a college education could have an incomparable impact on the direction an individual's life could take," Langel said. "His family and friends join in celebrating the opportunities his scholarships will create for thousands of young Kansas students."

Smith's children, Peter and Susan Smith, were unable to attend the event but said in a statement: "We are very proud of our dad and his caring, thoughtful and supportive gift to the students of WSU and KU. We are excited about what the well-deserving recipients will accomplish."

Born in Oklahoma City, Smith founded Range Oil Co. in Wichita in 1964. He was a highly regarded member of the oil and gas industry. He served on many boards of charitable and civic organizations of Wichita through the years, including the board of Wesley Hospital for 23 years.

Seufferling noted that Smith had a multi-decade history of contributions to KU in the areas of geology, the arts, athletics and the KU-School of Medicine at Wichita.

“He was proud of his alma mater and wanted to provide today’s students the kind of educational opportunities that helped him be successful.”

At Wichita State, Smith primarily supported the fine arts and athletics.

“We are deeply grateful for the friendship both Dick and Sondra have given to Wichita State,” King said.

“With these impactful scholarships, Dick’s legacy is everlasting.”