Michael Johnson Chair in Geological Sciences

In the summer of 2006, Michael Johnson and his wife, Judy, decided to make a legacy gift to the College of Arts and Sciences. It would fund an endowed chair in the Department of Geological Sciences. Johnson wanted to make a gift that would have a significant impact on the department that had made a major difference in his life.

When Frank Ramos, an isotope geochemist, joined the department faculty in 2008, he added a new dimension to the department. One of Ramos’ goals was to upgrade the department’s lab facilities so they could be used by other NMSU departments and outside universities.

Johnson could not be more pleased. “My original purpose in endowing a Chair for the Geology Department at NMSU was to make a step change in the academic heft and credibility of the department and take it to the next level in research and teaching abilities,” Johnson said.

As the department acquires a new Multi-collector Inductively Coupled Mass Spectrometer for its lab facilities, this vision is being realized. The instrument is funded through a $500,000 Major Research Instrumentation grant from the National Science Foundation, an additional $300,000 from Michael and Judy Johnson, and $215,000 from NMSU’s College of Arts and Sciences.

“My vision was to focus on geochemistry, a field I loved and one that represents many interdisciplinary opportunities for the department to grow. With the selection of Dr. Ramos to fill the Chair, I felt the progress would be assured and he has not disappointed me,” Johnson said. “The additional grant funding and equipment acquisitions (geochemistry is an equipment intensive field for research and teaching) will allow NMSU to make that leap in research capabilities and reach the next level of academic excellence, exactly as I had hoped when it all started.”
Endowments: Making a Difference Now and In the Future

Financial gifts have an impact, and when a gift grows each year, the outcome is grateful for your decision to create an endowment, and here’s why: Yearly earnings from endowments enable us to continually support students, faculty and programs across our campuses. From geology to water resources and talented professors to improving buildings, endowments have an impact each and every year.

In the past year, NMSU received over five million dollars for scholarships, professorships, academic chairs, research and facilities from endowment earnings. That’s a lot of impact. The performance of the pooled investment fund was 14.5 percent for the last fiscal year and 7.4 percent for the last three years. Our 10-year performance has been 6.8 percent. Our endowment fund continues to grow through your strong giving and commitment to NMSU, allowing us to have an impact now and in the future.

Graduate Awards Fund Student’s Dreams

Graduate student Marisa Thompson

Potter enrolled in New Mexico State University in January 2009 to pursue a master’s degree. While exploring options for her course of study, she decided that the Horticulture program in the Department of Plant and Environmental Sciences was the best fit. It is such a good fit that when she completed her master’s, she moved right into the doctoral program.

She is a graduate research assistant for NMSU Extension Pecan Specialist Richard Heerema. Together with other researchers, they are exploring floral development on pecan trees hoping to gain further insight into the alternate crop bearing cycle of pecans. Her tentative thesis title is “Unfolding the Mysteries of Flowering Behavior in Pecan One Gene at a Time.”

J. Paul Taylor Professorship

J. Paul Taylor is very proud of his many connections to his alma mater, New Mexico State University. He earned three degrees and was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws by the university as a tribute to his 30-year career in public education.

He followed that with an 18-year career as the state representative for district 33 in the New Mexico legislature. Those combined 48 years of service to the citizens of the state have made him a living legend. In 2003, Eula Fern Thompson, Olivia Ogas and others put in motion plans to fund a professorship in the College of Education. Then College Dean Robert Moulton supported this initiative, recalling his first association with J. Paul Taylor. “He continues to care about the children of New Mexico and that inspires me to do all I can do in my position to further his commitment to strengthening the early care and education system to better serve our families and children,” she said.

For more information on these, or other endowments, call the NMSU Foundation at 575-646-1613.