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Brady and Jeanne Foust donate \$1M to establish UW-Eau Claire scholarship

(Eau Claire, WI) – One of Dr. Brady Foust’s greatest joys in life was witnessing the development of the geography students he instructed and mentored during his nearly four-decade career at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.

“I loved watching them grow from clueless freshmen to mature responsible adults,” says Foust, a professor emeritus of geography who retired from UW-Eau Claire in 2009 as chair of the geography department. “It has been a pleasure to follow their careers over the years. I’m so proud of all of them.”

Foust’s support of Blugold students continues as he and his wife, Jeanne Foust, donate \$1 million to establish the Brady Foust Geospatial Analysis and Technology Double Major Scholarship.

The Fousts are providing \$500,000 to the UW-Eau Claire Foundation for the scholarship this year and another \$500,000 in 2022.

“It is near and dear to my heart,” Brady Foust says of the university. “I came to UW-Eau Claire in 1971 and thought I would stay a couple years and move on to another university. I fell in love with the university, I fell in love with the students, I fell in love with the city. I enjoyed every minute of it.”

Chancellor James Schmidt praised the generosity of the Fousts and for their commitment to UW-Eau Claire and its students.

“With his passion, expertise and his vision, Dr. Foust helped UW-Eau Claire’s geography department become one of the top programs in the country, preparing countless Blugolds to be innovators and leaders in the rapidly changing world of geospatial technologies,” Schmidt says. “Now, through this generous gift to the UW-Eau Claire Foundation, Dr. Foust and his wife, Jeanne Foust, are making it possible for future generations of geographers to pursue their dreams of taking geospatial technologies to the next level.”

Schmidt recalls warmly how the Fousts were among the first people to greet him when he was hired eight years ago as chancellor.

“They talked passionately about the importance of supporting the university and its high-impact practices such as undergraduate research, internships and study abroad opportunities,” Schmidt says. “They told me about the special nature of this university.”

The chancellor also credits Brady Foust with helping to reconnect emeriti faculty and other UW-Eau Claire retirees to the university.

Scholarships will begin in 2022-23

Each Foust scholarship recipient at UW-Eau Claire will receive \$10,000 a year for a total of \$40,000 over four years. Two scholarships will be available to students entering UW-Eau Claire in 2022-23 and two more to students entering in 2023-24. The scholarship fund may eventually provide four scholarships per year.

Recipients must major in the geography and anthropology department’s geospatial analysis and technology program while maintaining a 3.0 GPA.

Additionally, recipients must have a second major, with a preference for mathematics or computer science; a second major also could be in business, English, French, German, history, economics, political science, biology or art. The combination of the double major is intended to prepare scholarship recipients to be highly sought after in many career areas following graduation from UW-Eau Claire.

“Brady devoted his career here at UW-Eau Claire to his students and their success,” says Kimera Way, UW-Eau Claire Foundation president. “His and Jeanne’s gift is tangible proof that commitment to excellence and student success is a lifetime promise. We are deeply grateful that they have chosen both UW-Eau Claire and the Pablo Center as the entities where they are furthering their legacies.”

A passion for geospatial literacy

The scholarship fund reflects the couple’s belief that there is a growing need for more geospatial literacy in an increasingly interdependent world.

“You can’t understand the world without it,” Brady Foust says. “The world is interconnected and the way we interpret that world is through geospatial analysis.”

Brady Foust joined the UW-Eau Claire faculty in 1971 after finishing his graduate degree at the University of Tennessee. He spent 38 years at UW-Eau Claire, serving as the longtime chair of the geography department, which became nationally known throughout the years.

He initiated a strong geographic information system (GIS) program in the department in the early days of GIS software development. Hundreds of his former students have jobs in the GIS industry throughout the country.

After his retirement in 2009, Brady Foust was one of three founders of HazardHub, which became a leading provider of geospatial hazard data to the insurance industry. He hired multiple Blugolds at HazardHub because of their GIS expertise acquired as students at UW-Eau Claire and on the job following graduation. HazardHub was acquired by Guidewire Software earlier this month.

Jeanne Foust, a University of South Carolina graduate, had a 30-year career at Esri, the world’s leading GIS software producer, before retiring this year. During her final 20 years at Esri, she was responsible for working with international standards for the company and was a major contributor to organizations such as the International Standards Organization (ISO) and the Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC). Her work was essential to the

establishment of mapping and earth observation standards; technical interoperability of GIS platforms; and the adoption of data sharing agreements by members of the United Nations.

The couple share four children and seven grandchildren.

Pablo Center is 'jewel in the crown'

The Fousts also are gifting \$1 million to Pablo Center at the Confluence.

Brady Foust was involved in efforts to establish a performing arts center in Eau Claire starting in the early 1970s. That effort was rewarded when Pablo Center at the Confluence opened in 2018.

"I believe in the arts," Brady Foust says. "If you want to attract the creative class to Eau Claire you have to have things like the Pablo Center. It's the jewel in the crown."

In his role as department chair, Brady Foust often gave tours of Eau Claire to prospective faculty members. He showed them the beauty of Carson Park and when the downtown farmers market was constructed, that became a highlight.

"Now when anybody comes to town you show them the Pablo Center," Brady Foust says.

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The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire is a leader for academic excellence, undergraduate research, and high-impact practices in the University of Wisconsin System. More than 10,500 students are drawn to this campus where innovation, leadership, diversity and inclusion, and stewardship are core values. Average class size at UW-Eau Claire is 27 with a faculty/student ratio of 1:21. UWEC is noted for low debt for graduates and high value at a competitive tuition rate and has ranked among best public regional universities in the Midwest for 25 years. The growing city of Eau Claire is located about 90 miles east of Minneapolis, with a population of about 70,000.