

IN MEMORIAM

WILLIAM C. POWERS JR.

William C. “Bill” Powers Jr., the 28th President of The University of Texas at Austin, passed away on Sunday, March 10, 2019 from complications from a fall the previous September and from oculopharyngeal muscular dystrophy, a rare adult-onset muscle disorder.

Powers was an esteemed teacher, nationally recognized legal scholar, and staunch believer in the value of the public research university who defended the soul of UT Austin against challenges to its mission in the early 2010s.

He served as President of the University from 2006 to 2015, the second-longest term of service in history. He was a member of the School of Law faculty for more than forty years, including six as Dean from 2000 to 2006. He taught courses in torts and a freshman philosophy seminar, connecting with thousands of students in his career.

Born in Los Angeles in 1946 to Mildred Rose (Fluke) Powers and William Charles Powers Sr., Powers was raised in Southern California. He earned a bachelor’s degree in chemistry from the University of California, Berkeley, then served for three years in the U.S. Navy, stationed mostly in Bahrain. He graduated magna cum laude from Harvard University Law School, where he edited the *Law Review*, then clerked for a federal Ninth Circuit appeals court judge before taking his first teaching job at the University of Washington. Powers joined the UT Austin law faculty in 1977 and soon became one of the nation’s foremost experts on torts.

As UT President, Powers transformed the undergraduate curriculum and implemented many of the recommendations of the Commission of 125. He set an ambitious goal to increase

UT Austin's four-year graduation rate from about fifty percent to seventy percent—as of 2018, it had risen to 69.8 percent.

Powers oversaw the establishment of two of UT's eighteen colleges and schools, the School of Undergraduate Studies and Dell Medical School, the successful completion of a \$3 billion capital campaign, and the completion or construction of thirteen major buildings.

Powers was a fierce proponent of diversity in higher education. He established a vice presidency to oversee diversity and community engagement. And, he took UT to the Supreme Court to defend the use of race and ethnicity as one factor in admissions—ultimately winning a favorable ruling in the Fisher case in 2016.

He also led burnt orange in support of Texas Athletics. A fixture at football, volleyball, and basketball games, and other Longhorns events, Powers launched the Longhorn Network in 2011. He helped the Big 12 thrive after conference realignment. And he was on the national committee that established the College Football Playoffs.

Powers' most enduring legacy as President, however, came when the University faced critics on the Board of Regents and in state government who sought to downgrade UT's fundamental mission of providing a first-class education to Texas students and engaging in world-changing research.

As a defender of the research university ecosystem, he drew broad support from faculty members and was immensely popular with students and alumni, many of whom took extraordinary measures to back him. At the height of that controversy, the Association of American Universities named Powers as its Chairman.

His honors in the legal community included the John G. Fleming Memorial Prize, the Robert B. McKay Award from the American Bar Association, and an appointment by the

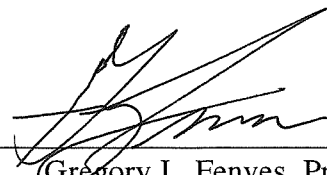
prestigious American Law Institute (ALI) as Reporter for Restatement (Third) of Torts, the most important text for practitioners in that field. From 2001 to 2005, he was the ALI's R. Ammi Cutter Reporter, reflecting the excellence of his work on the Restatement. He authored numerous other articles and textbooks and enjoyed a thriving practice as a consultant on a wide range of complex tort cases. Most recently, he served as of counsel at the Jackson Walker law firm.

During his time as Dean of the School of Law, he rose to national prominence as author of the "Powers Report," which in 2002 exposed wrongdoings at Enron and led to congressional investigations and criminal prosecutions relating to the Houston-based energy company.

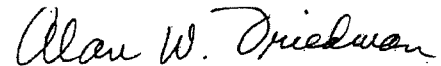
A member of Westminster Presbyterian Church, Powers loved travel, golf, crossword puzzles, wine, and most of all, time with family and friends.

He is survived by his wife of thirty-six years, Kim Heilbrun of Austin, five children and their spouses and partners: Matt Powers and Jeny Wegbreit of San Francisco; Kate Powers and Scott Puryear of New York City; Allison Powers and Oscar Useche of Lubbock; Annie Powers and George Franklin of New York City; and Reid Powers and Kelsey McManus of Austin; six grandchildren; and his sister Susan Powers.

A public memorial service was held in his honor on Friday, April 12 on the University's Main Mall.



Gregory L. Fennes, President
The University of Texas at Austin



Alan W. Friedman, Secretary
The General Faculty

This memorial resolution was prepared by Gary Susswein, Chief Communications Office at The University of Texas at Austin.