

T.W. Lewis Statement Regarding the cancellation of gift to the ASU-Barrett Center for Personal Development

The T.W. Lewis Foundation had a successful relationship with Barrett Honors College for over 20 years. Initially, we funded individual scholarships, and by 2015 we had approximately 40 active scholarship students at Barrett. In 2020, we expanded our support to include all students and created the T.W. Lewis Center for Personal Development. This center included several faculty members with courses on entrepreneurship, self-awareness, career management, and success and happiness. The program also included a full-time director, a speaker series, and a regular schedule of workshops. The purpose of the program was to “better prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of life.” Throughout this 20-year period we had a great working relationship with Barrett’s dean, Mark Jacobs, who retired at the end of the 2021-2022 academic year.

As part of its speaker series, the Lewis Center scheduled a major event on February 8, 2023, at Gammage Auditorium titled “Health, Wealth & Happiness,” featuring Dennis Prager, Charlie Kirk, Robert Kiyosaki, and Dr. Radha Gopalan. Because these were mostly conservative speakers, we expected some opposition, but I was shocked and disappointed by the alarming and outright hostility demonstrated by the Barrett faculty and administration toward these speakers. Instead of sponsoring this event with a spirit of cooperation and respect for free speech, Barrett faculty and staff exposed the radical ideology that now apparently dominates the college.

After seeing this level of left-wing hostility and activism, I no longer had any confidence in Barrett to adhere to the terms of our gift, and made the decision to terminate our agreement, effective June 30, 2023. I regret that this decision was necessary, and hope that Barrett and ASU will take strong action to ensure that free speech will always be protected and that all voices can be heard.