

Dr. Diane E. Austin, Director School of Anthropology,

This letter is written mostly to clarify in my mind, and in the minds of family members, why we would fund an endowment to the University of Arizona School of Anthropology. The family, all Wildcats, are supportive.

I grew up in Tucson and had the opportunity to attend the University of Arizona in the 1960's. After graduating from the Business College, I moved to LA and landed a job as a management trainee in retail. After a time, I realized the world of business and Los Angeles were not for me, and I entered graduate school in Anthropology at the U of A. Anthropology was a subject that enamored me since childhood after reading library books by Roy Chapman Andrews on his Mongolian paleontology expeditions. One of my greatest thrills in life, decades later, was standing on the Flaming Cliffs in the Gobi, perhaps on the same spot where Chapman once stood, overlooking the vast expanse of desert.

While pursuing a graduate degree, I enrolled in a teacher certification program in the College of Education and received my M.A. degree and teacher certification.

During 25 years of teaching high school the two major subjects I taught were Economics and Anthropology, reflecting my undergraduate and graduate training.

In the mid 1980's I was accepted to a Fulbright South Korea Summer Grant for high school teachers and college professors. According to Fulbright, my background in anthropology was instrumental in my successful application. The South Korean experience opened many doors in education.

In 1999, after retiring from teaching, I started a political consulting firm in Phoenix. While a teacher I had worked in politics in volunteer and paid positions since the late 1970's. As a political consultant I worked on hundreds of campaigns from school board to president, along with initiatives that funded public education K-12, community colleges and universities. A decade ago the political consulting firm was merged with a much larger advertising agency headquartered in Phoenix.

Anthropology is often thought of as an "exotic" or perhaps academic major or degree. Not necessarily so. In conversations with two clients of the agency, we found that we three shared something in common, a **graduate degree in Anthropology** – I from the U of A, a branding and digital executive from the University of London and a medical researcher from the University of Utah. Very recently a friend from the Fulbright grant days was interviewed in the Washington Post and referred to his private school anthropology teaching experience in the Washington D.C. area. He has a graduate degree in Anthropology from George Washington University. I, my friend and two clients are not anthropologists or academics but have all pursued successful and varied career paths after graduate school. And all four of us have traveled the world through our vocations and avocations.

Anthropology, in all its varied disciplines, is an important field of endeavor, especially in today's ever increasingly turbulent world. The anthropological perspective, with its global and holistic perspective, is more important today than ever.

My wife, Connie, a fellow public-school teacher, took graduate courses at the University of Arizona. Both our daughter and son, along with our daughter-in-law, graduated from the University with honors. On a personal level, I do not know what my life would have been without the U of A, but certainly it would not have been as fulfilling.

The Kaasa Family Endowment is not an enormous amount of money, but continuing in perpetuity, we know it will make a difference over the years. The family chose to fund an endowment because it is time to give back. We hope that other Wildcats will be encouraged to do the same, helping secure the great legacy of the University and the School of Anthropology.

Bear Down!

Gary Kaasa