

*Distinguished  
Alumni*

AWARDS

*6:30 p.m.*

*Friday, June 5, 2026*

*Live Oak Ballroom*  
*Richard W. Setzer Student Center*



*Lamar University  
Distinguished Alumni Awards  
Friday, June 5, 2026*

*Lamar University  
Alma Mater*

**Lamar, to you we're singing,  
Voices raised on high.**

**We will forever love you,  
Laud you to the sky.**

**We will ever need you  
As our guiding star.**

**To us, you'll always be  
Our glorious Lamar.**

*Written and Composed by Gilbert R. Smartt, professor of mathematics, 1951  
Arranged by Reese Maltsby, professor of percussion, 2023*

**Reception**

Welcome..... Shannon (Copeland) Figueroa '02, '03, '07  
*Director of Alumni Affairs*

Invocation..... Christopher Graham '90  
*President, LU Alumni Advisory Board*

**Dinner**

Special Recognition..... Juan J. Zabala '07  
*Vice President for University Advancement*

Lamar University Update ..... Jaime R. Taylor  
*President*

**Presentation of 2026 Distinguished Alumni Awards**

Brian Babin '73

Jane (Crandall Knott) Fitch '78

Thomas E. Long '79

James Robert "Bob" McLendon '64

Closing Remarks ..... Shannon (Copeland) Figueroa '02, '03, '07  
*Director of Alumni Affairs*

Alma Mater.....

# Recipient Biographies



## *Brian Babin, D.D.S.*

Brian Babin, a longtime Southeast Texas resident and member of Congress, has represented Texas' 36th Congressional District since being sworn into office in January 2015. The district includes Chambers, Liberty, Hardin, Tyler, Jasper and Newton counties, as well as portions of Jefferson County and southeastern Harris County.

Born in Port Arthur and raised in Beaumont, Babin earned a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Lamar University (LU) in 1973. While attending LU, he worked multiple jobs to finance his education, an experience he has credited with shaping his work ethic and commitment to personal responsibility. During that time, he also met his wife, Roxanne (Richardson) '71, whom he married in 1972.

Babin went on to earn his dental degree from the University of Texas Dental Branch and practiced dentistry for 35 years in Woodville, Texas. As a small business owner and healthcare provider, he gained firsthand experience with issues affecting working families, medical professionals and entrepreneurs.

In addition to his civilian career, Babin served in the U.S. Army Reserve and the Texas Army National Guard as an airborne artilleryman before commissioning into the U.S. Air Force, where he was stationed overseas. His military service has informed his focus on national security and support for veterans.

In Congress, Babin serves as chairman of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology and is a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. His legislative priorities include space exploration, energy independence, infrastructure development and fiscal responsibility, with a focus on supporting the economic and strategic importance of Southeast Texas, including the NASA Johnson Space Center and the region's energy and port industries.

Babin served as a commencement speaker at LU in 2024 as LU celebrated its centennial, he has spoken on campus many times about important issues, and has been a strong supporter of Lamar University students by offering mentoring and hosting students for impactful internships.

Babin and his wife Roxanne reside in Texas and have five children and 17 grandchildren.

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*Jane C.K. Fitch, M.D.*

Jane C.K. Fitch was born in North Carolina in 1956. She attended Duke University before transferring to Lamar University (LU), where she completed her Bachelor of Science in Nursing in 1978. At LU, she served as class president and Student Nurse Association president, graduating *cum laude*. She received the Fontenot Scholarship, leadership awards, and was inducted into Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society and Phi Lambda Pi Honor Society.

Following graduation, Fitch began her career as a cardiovascular intensive care unit nurse at St. Elizabeth Hospital in Beaumont. She later moved to Houston to pursue nurse anesthesia training affiliated with Baylor College of Medicine, where she earned recognition as an Outstanding Student Nurse Anesthetist. She practiced as a certified registered nurse anesthetist specializing in cardiovascular and thoracic anesthesia.

Fitch continued her education at the University of Texas Medical School at Houston (now McGovern Medical School), earning her medical degree with honors in 1988 and induction into Alpha Omega Alpha National Medical Honor Society. She later completed a residency in anesthesiology and served as chief resident at the University of Washington, followed by a fellowship in cardiovascular and thoracic anesthesiology.

She pursued a distinguished career in academic medicine, holding faculty and leadership roles at Yale University and Baylor College of Medicine before serving as professor and chair of the Department of Anesthesiology at the University of Oklahoma from 2001 to 2019. She also served as residency program director for a decade.

Fitch has held numerous national leadership roles, including president of the Society of Academic Anesthesiology Associations and the Association of Academic Anesthesiology Chairs. In 2014, she became the second woman elected president of the American Society of Anesthesiologists. She has lectured internationally and advised governmental and regulatory bodies.

Fitch has served as a mentor and advisor for the medical pre-professional program at LU, and is a member of the LU Spindletop Society, President's Circle, and Legacy Society.

She and her husband, John, were married in 1976 and have shared a lifelong partnership supporting one another's careers. Now retired, they enjoy traveling and remain committed to supporting education, including future gifts to institutions such as Lamar University.



*Thomas (Tom) E. Long*

Tom Long of Dallas, Texas, serves on the Texas State University System Board of Regents, having been appointed by Greg Abbott in February 2023 to a six-year term. A 1979 graduate of Lamar University with a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting, Long has built a distinguished career in energy, finance, and corporate governance.

Long is a certified public accountant and currently serves as co-chief executive officer of Energy Transfer, a role he assumed in January 2021 after serving as the company's chief financial officer from 2016 to 2020. He also serves on the board of directors of Energy Transfer LP. Long is chairman of the board of USA Compression Partners LP and serves on the boards of Texas Capital Bancshares Inc., the Texas Stock Exchange, and the Permian Strategic Partnership. He is also a member of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas Energy Advisory Council.

Prior to joining Energy Transfer, Long held executive leadership positions at several major energy and engineering companies. He served as executive vice president and chief financial officer of Regency GP LLC from 2010 to 2015, vice president and chief financial officer of Matrix Service Company from 2008 to 2010, and vice president and chief financial officer of DCP Midstream Partners LP from 2005 through 2008. Earlier in his career, he held multiple executive roles with subsidiaries of Duke Energy Corporation from 1996 to 2005.

Energy Transfer, where Long currently serves as co-CEO, ranks among the top 100 U.S. companies by revenue according to Fortune magazine and operates one of North America's largest and most diversified energy infrastructure networks, with more than 140,000 miles of pipelines across 44 states. Long's extensive experience in corporate leadership, financial management, and energy infrastructure continues to inform his work on the Board of Regents, where he supports higher education initiatives and contributes his expertise in governance, strategy, and community engagement.



*J. Robert McLendon, Ph.D.*

Bob McLendon graduated from Lamar University (LU) in 1964 with a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering, when the university was known as Lamar State College of Technology. During his time at LU he maintained an outstanding academic record.

Following graduation, McLendon joined Hughes Aircraft Company in Southern California, where he worked on early research in infrared night vision technology. While employed at Hughes, he pursued graduate studies at UCLA, earning a master's degree in electrical engineering in 1966.

He returned to Texas later that year to begin his career with Texas Instruments (TI) in Dallas. While at TI, McLendon was selected to participate in the Engineering Doctorate program at Southern Methodist University, where he earned a Ph.D. in electrical engineering. During his tenure, he led system engineering teams that developed and implemented advanced technologies for the Harpoon and Harm tactical missile systems, contributing to U.S. defense capabilities during the Cold War. He later held several leadership positions within Texas Instruments, including chief information officer and engineering manager for the Defense Systems Group. He also served as president of a computer business specializing in systems for managing high-technology enterprises. He retired from Texas Instruments in 1997.

Following his retirement, McLendon remained actively involved in both his profession and community. He served on the LU College of Engineering Advisory Council from 2000 to 2010, participated in the search committee for the chair of the Electrical Engineering Department, served on the LU Foundation Board, and the 1964 Reunion committee. He and his wife are members of the LU Legacy Society and President's Circle, and they have established two endowed scholarships at LU.

In the Dallas area, he held leadership roles in several community organizations, including serving as board president of the St. Simon's after-school program for disadvantaged students and as a board member and treasurer of the Richardson Adult Literacy Center. He also served on the vestry of his church and on the board of Parish Episcopal School. Additionally, he taught mathematics for two years at the Hockaday School.

McLendon and his wife, Susan, reside in Richardson, Texas. They have three children and eight grandchildren.



## *Past Recipients*

Gilbert T. Adams, Sr.	George A. Dishman, Jr.	Alvin L. LeBlanc	Jerry Reese III
Patricia A. Adams	Joseph F. Domino	Stephen J. Lee	Anita L. Riddle
Mike Aldredge	Phillip M. Drayer	W. S. "Bud" Leonard	Ellen Walker Rienstra
John E. Alexander	Myrna Pirnack Dunnam	Joan A. LeTulle	Rolando X. Rodriguez
Shannon Pier Allen	Vernon G. Durden	John H. Long	Clarence L. Ross, Jr.
Orlando A. Alvarez	Byron F. Dyer, Jr.	Allen J. Louviere	Lawrence L. Schkade
Christopher L. Bates	Grace Davis England	Don M. Lyle	Charles L. Schmucker
Larry Beaulieu	Wilford Flowers	William "Bill" F. Macatee	William "Bill" F. Scott
David J. Beck	Mary Jo Lampson Ford	Debra S. Maffett	Don S. Shaver
Hester Briscoe Bell	Paul D. Fregia	Becky Dickson Mason	Elaine Norman Shellenberger
James E. Bell, Jr.	Charles L. Garrett	Charles "Chuck" E. Mason, Jr.	Mary Frances Sherlock
Norman J. Bellard	Anthony D. George	Elvis L. Mason	J. "Bart" Simmons
David E. Bernsen	Keith F. Giblin	Douglas W. Matthews	Hyattye O. Simmons
E. Randolph "Randy" Best	Jack M. Gill	Susan Conn McCurry	Susan Williams Simmons
J. Angela Blanchard	Jim Gilligan	Robert "Bob" L. McDill	James P. Singletary
Brent W. Bost	H. Stephen Grace, Jr.	Frank G. Messina	Dan F. Smith
Merlin P. Breaux	John E. Gray	William "Bill" B. Mitchell	Michele Yennie Smith
Charles E. Breithaupt	Mary Honea Gray	Jack W. Moncrief	Bette A. Stead
Jack B. Brooks	Andrew Green	J. David Montagne	Robert A. Swerdlow
Keith D. Carter	Carl R. Griffith, Jr.	Ray M. Moore	Joseph V. Tortorice, Jr.
Gilbert A. Castro	Dan S. Hallmark	Stephen "Steve" F. Moore	Billy D. Tubbs
Tamerla D. Chavis	Ann Die Hasselmo	Glen W. Morgan	Edwin E. Vallery
William "Bill" C. Childs	Marvin E. Hayes	Dewey F. Mosby	Fred R. Vernon II
Rena F. Clark	Stephen C. Head	Sina K. Nejad	Homer L. Walles
Sandra French Clark	George J. Hirasaki	Larry D. Norwood	J. Donald Warren, Jr.
M. Herring Coe	Madelyn Davis Hunt	Thomas H. Odiorne	William "Pat" P. Weber
C. W. Conn	Robert "Bob" S. Jones	Paula Tate O'Neal	Julie M. Wenah
Yolanda Lee Conyers	Carmen Angelle Jordan	J. Pat Parsons	Herman T. Wilson, Jr.
Clara Brown Cooper	Sarah Pickens Joseph	Roosevelt Petry, Jr.	Milton S. Wing
Carolyn Honea Crawford	Carolyn Johnson Keating	J. Pike Powers, Jr.	Robert "Bob" J. Wortham
Charles R. Cutler	M. Celeste Kitchen	Don Pumphrey	F. Randolph Yost
Will D. Davis	Nicholas V. Lampson	Jorge Quijano	
M. Bonner Denton	Bob Q. Lanier	Charles C. Ramsey	
Joseph D. Deshotel	Larry W. Lawson	Wayne A. Reaud	



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