It would be hard to overstate how much Pat Oles, McCoy Professor of Excellence, has meant to the McCoy College of Business.

Each Tuesday morning of the fall and spring semesters for the past eight years, he has led the entrepreneurial studies class taught by Dr. James Bell at McCoy. The class invites entrepreneurs to share ideas, insights and business lessons with students.

“Our charge to all of our guest speakers is ‘tell your story.’ Try and convey to these young students what is involved in building, growing and developing a business,” says Oles, president and CEO of Barshop & Oles Company. “I have to tell you, Tuesdays are my best days every week.”

The range of speakers is broad, from young innovators still working to launch their ideas, to business titans, like San Antonio Spurs owner Peter Holt and Hines McCoy and Meagan McCoy Jones, of McCoy’s Building Supply.

“We also put a lot of emphasis on bringing back Bobcats, bringing back Texas State grads,” he says. “Of course they have that special relationship to the students, since they were in those same seats not long ago.”

His own story began in fall 1978. As Oles was preparing to leave Austin for an investment job in New York City, he got an unexpected offer to join the staff of newly elected Texas Gov. William Clements.

He passed up the promising Wall Street opportunity, but Oles says he learned more about the business from the governor than he would have learned in New York.

“In fact, he was a better businessman than he was a politician,” Oles said. “I had the great opportunity to travel the state with him and meet some really great people… in business and politics, government and academia.”

One of the people he met was Sam Barshop, San Antonio businessman and founder of La Quinta Inns. Barshop encouraged Oles’s friend to try a career in real estate, leading Oles to start his first company.

In 1983, they merged their companies and went on to develop own and/or manage more than 5 million square feet of shopping centers, industrial and office properties and master planned projects in Texas, including the highly acclaimed Central Park in Austin and Northbrooks in San Antonio.

“He was truly a great man. Very interested in higher education, very generous with his time and his treasure, a great philanthropist,” Oles says of his late friend, partner and mentor.

It was Barshop, along with Dr. James Bell, who created the entrepreneurial studies class 18 years ago at the behest of University President Jerome Supple and former business college dean Dr. Paul Gowens.

The first class had only 10 students. Today, it has grown to almost 200 students, while entrepreneurial studies has grown from a single class into its own concentration.

Bell points out that while Barshop was an instructor for the first decade, Oles has always been a vital part of the class. As he retired, Barshop personally tapped his partner to take charge.

“He and Sam Barshop were the ‘bookends’ (with Mr. B) always speaking first, followed by all the other speakers, and Pat was always last – giving meaning to Barshop & Oles Company,” Bell says.

More than that, Oles is unfailingly generous in his support of McCoy College and the university. He and his wife, Julie, are benefactors of the college, and Oles serves on the McCoy College Development Foundation. He also enjoys participating in events such as the Honors Math Camp and most recently the Matt and Jodi Edgar Texas State Undergraduate Business Plan Competition.

Oles says he’s been privileged to have the support of everyone within McCoy College and throughout Texas State University.

“We’ve had great support from President Trauth and Dean Smart. That means the world to us,” Oles says. “We know they really care about the entrepreneurial studies program, and they’ve given us resources and the support we need for the program to continue to grow.”

For more than a decade the McCoy College of Business Foundation has been a well-spring of opportunity and support for both students and faculty.

Since it was established with Emmett and Miriam McCoy’s gift in 2004, the foundation boasts a total of 64 endowments, including nine established this year. 26 scholarships, endowed chairs and professors, and much more.

Dr. E. E. Payne, executive director of the foundation, worked closely with the McCoy family to establish the foundation. At the time, Payne was serving as CEO of Financial Industries Corporation and volunteering as the liaison between Texas State and the McCos.

“Emmett was a hard-nosed businessman,” Payne says. “He was amenable to considering a major gift to Texas State; however he said I’m not so sure I want my name associated with Texas State. Are they a quality institution?”

From that point Payne suggested they meet one day each week to talk about the university, the college of Business and the quality of the institution.

“A couple of meetings, Emmett said ‘Gene, that’s enough. I now feel very good about the quality of Texas State,’” Payne recalls.

Not only were the McCos on board, they offered to donate a larger sum than Payne and Texas State originally anticipated — $20 million. In an act of lasting generosity, they also made the entire sum eligible to be used as matching funds for future donations.

The matching program doubles a donor’s gift when it’s made toward specific, eligible endowments within McCoy College.

“When you tell people you’re going to double their gift, it really encourages donations,” Payne says.

The impact is clear when you compare the level of fund-raising prior to the McCoy College’s creation to what’s happening today to see how the McCos’ gift has motivated others to get involved.

“If you look at the years before (the foundation), $50,000 in a year was a big year,” Payne said. “Since 2004 the fact we’ve raised from outside is a quarter of a million dollars. It just puts us in another category.”

Pat Oles, one of the foundation directors, says the impact of the McCoy donation has been far greater than just the name on the building and of the college.

“It was an absolute game changer,” Oles said. “It’s made such a difference in what the college is able to provide, but also in how the college is perceived.”

Gifts to the foundation support chairs, professorships, undergraduate scholarships and graduate fellowships, as well as faculty and student development programs. And

for students in the Student Managed Investment Fund program the foundation is a client with a portfolio worth approximately $550,000. Each year the foundation investment committee recommends a disbursement amount. From 2004 to 2015, approximately $7 million has flowed into the college for program enhancement.

Dedicated and focused leadership from both the Texas State Regents and the McCoy family, combined with the Board of Directors and the board of directors for the foundation has seen the foundation grow to more than $36 million in assets in 2015.

According to the foundation’s annual report to the Texas State University System Board of Regents, McCoy College has moved from the bottom quarter to the top-quarter of AACSBC accredited business colleges in terms of total endowment size.

Payne’s history with Texas State goes back more than 40 years. In 1974 he began a seven-year stint as Vice President for Finance and Administration at Southwest Texas State.

“The quality of education here has always been high, he says, but the McCoy gift provided the resources necessary to elevate the college, and by extension the university, in terms of national recognition.

“We have joined the elite,” Payne said. “If you get a degree from Texas State you benefit from the fact that the McCoy College of Business has been acknowledged itself up to the next level.”