



Celebrating 38 Years of Giving to the Nicholas School

For Chuck, T'73 and Mindy Gallegos, the Duke University Marine Lab was not only the starting point for Chuck's future career and passion, it also served as the nexus for their eventual meeting and the start of their nearly 50-year marriage. The Marine Lab is now a priority of their philanthropy.

Chuck, a retired environmental scientist and a 28-year veteran as a phytoplankton ecologist with the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC) in Edgewater, MD, recalls trips to Shackleford Island, making hammocks to laze in out of beached fishing nets, and being grounded in a skiff while collecting samples at Calico Creek. "The Marine Lab is high on our giving priorities because it set the trajectory of our lives in so many ways," says Chuck. "I had no intention of pursuing graduate school, but after getting a taste of self-directed research during the spring semester of my junior year at the Marine Lab, graduate school and a research career seemed like the only desired option."

Chuck and Mindy's time at the Marine Lab overlapped briefly in June 1972 while Mindy attended a mini-semester session with Mary Baldwin College. Their paths didn't cross then, but their respective roommates met and later made introductions – the rest is history!

The couple has been supporters of the Marine Lab Annual Fund since 1984, increasing their giving over the years and even including the Lab in their estate plans. Their involvement was from a distance until 2018 when Chuck reconnected with the Nicholas School. "I hosted a group of Nicholas School students from the Duke Conservation Society on a tour of SERC and discussed career tracks with the Nicholas alumni working there," Chuck said. "That April, we attended my 45th reunion and crashed an event for Nicholas alumni. In July, we attended our first Marine Lab alumni reunion in Beaufort and learned about current research and presentations by some amazing Rachel Carson Scholars."

Chuck and Mindy connected with their Duke regional gift officer and began planning how they could make a meaningful impact for future students who study at the Marine Lab. In the end, Chuck and Mindy decided to stretch their giving by endowing a fund to be used for undergraduates to conduct research onboard the Marine Lab's new research vessel, the *R/V Shearwater*, paying tribute to where Chuck's passion for research was born.

“We are confident that the Nicholas School has a critical role to play in solving the most challenging environmental problems our planet faces now and will face in the future. The key to its success will be continuing to inspire in young students a passion for making a difference, and the infusion of fresh ideas by a diverse, cutting-edge faculty.”

It is through the generous support of Nicholas School alumni and donors like Chuck and Mindy that we can offer Duke students incredible, hands-on opportunities that may just allow them to discover their passions too.