

Beverage titan makes record gift to Texas Woman's University business college

Texas Woman's University receives a record \$30 million gift Merrilee Kick, a TWU alumna who is founder and CEO of the mega-beverage company, BuzzBallz

DENTON, TX, UNITED STATES, August 9, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Texas Woman's University](https://www.einpresswire.com/news/2024/08/09/texas-woman-s-university-receives-a-record-30-million-gift) has received a record \$30 million gift to support its college of business from teacher-turned-entrepreneur Merrilee Kick, a TWU alumna who is founder and CEO of the mega-beverage company, [BuzzBallz](https://www.buzzballz.com/).

"This gift affords us an opportunity to shine a huge light on the innovation and business acumen women bring to the table in our globally competitive economy," Texas Woman's Chancellor Carine Feyten said. "I am doubly pleased that this extraordinary gift comes from Merrilee, a shining example of our pioneering spirit and an alumna who has risen to the level of entrepreneurial titan."

The announcement was made during a meeting of Texas Woman's governing board, which approved a new name for the college of business in her honor on Friday, August. 9

The gift will fund an institute focused on innovation and entrepreneurship, an endowed chair,



From l to r: TWU Dean Rama Yelkur, Merrilee Kick, TWU Chancellor Carine Feyten



TWU Chancellor Carine Feyten hugs Merrilee Kick in appreciation of \$30m gift to the university

and an entrepreneur-in-residence program, each of which will also bear Kick's name. Additionally, the gift will fast-track plans to construct a new building for the college.



TWU logo

"I am profoundly moved by Merrilee Kick's exceptional generosity in making this gift and am thrilled that she shares our vision for elevating the college of business by educating primarily women in business and entrepreneurship," said business college Dean Rama Yelkur. "The Merrilee Alexander Kick College of Business and Entrepreneurship will undoubtedly add greater value and visibility, significantly amplifying our mission and impact on the future of business education."

The gift is the single largest ever given to Texas Woman's and comes a little more than a year after the Dallas-based Doswell Foundation gave a then-record gift of \$15 million to the university to establish an aviation program, which begins classes this fall.

Kick's \$30 million gift also pushed the university over its Dream Big comprehensive campaign goal of \$125 million nearly two years before it is scheduled to end. TWU plans to dream even bigger throughout the remainder of the campaign, focusing on securing support for high-priority initiatives including health sciences, athletics and the Dallas campus expansion.

A former teacher at Plano West Senior High School, Kick earned her MBA from Texas Woman's in 2009. Her master's degree thesis was the basis for the business plan that led to the creation of Carrollton-based BuzzBallz/Southern Champion, which became the only woman-owned distillery/winery/brewery combo in the United States when it launched later that year.

"My MBA from TWU enabled me to write a solid business plan for what became BuzzBallz, a billion-dollar company," Kick said. "As a former educator and child of educators, teaching the next generation is important for our future. As my parents said, 'A good teacher makes a difference.' I have had some good teachers — and parents — who really cared about me and my success, and I am committed to make that happen for others, to make the world a better place."

BuzzBallz eventually grew into a thriving business, largely on the stellar success of its sphere-shaped shatter-resistant containers, which became a signature of the company's pre-mixed cocktail product line.

Kick sold the company in May to Louisiana-based Sazerac, the world's largest privately held spirits company, and remains BuzzBallz CEO.

About Texas Woman's University

Texas Woman's University is the nation's largest woman-focused university with campuses in Denton, Dallas and Houston. Founded in 1901, Texas Woman's has built a reputation on contributions in nursing, healthcare, education, the arts and sciences, and business. TWU's inclusive culture prioritizes experiential learning, leadership, service, discovery and health and wellbeing, and national media have recognized the university as a top college for student-parents, veterans and social mobility.

About BuzzBallz/Southern Champion

The BuzzBallz/Southern Champion mission is to create fun, innovative cocktails for people to enjoy around the world with a vision to reinvent happy hour.

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