Prior to entering the EMBA program, Laurie had spent 19 years in grain trading and logistics for barge transportation with CGB Enterprises, Inc. After earning her EMBA, she and three partners formed Seneca Transportation, a transportation-trading firm, in 1999. “My EMBA gave me the skill sets, and just as importantly, the confidence to form Seneca Transportation,” she says. In 2012, she returned to CGB Enterprises as Trading Manager for Barge Trading. “The company had grown tremendously and I now had the opportunity to use managerial and leadership skills that I learned in the EMBA program,” she says.

Laurie’s Olin experience has extended well past her time in the EMBA program. “After earning my EMBA, I returned many times to take continuing education classes. One of the best was the Olin Women’s Leadership Forum,” she says. “There was a real ‘ah-ha’ moment for me where I realized that a lot of women did not have the kind of mentors and choices that I had in my career.” The experience opened her eyes to the challenges many women face in the workplace and led her to challenge senior leadership at CGB to do more to bring women into management and leadership roles.

Laurie retired from CGB at the end of 2016, but continues to work part-time as a project manager for the company’s Women’s Mentoring Program. “One of the most rewarding parts of my career has been the ability to ‘pay it forward’ by helping other women succeed in their business careers as well,” she says. Over the last four years, she also has mentored Carolina Feijo, an undergraduate student in the Olin Business School. It’s been a high point of her volunteer engagement with the university, which has included serving as Chairperson of the EMBA Board, Chairperson of the Campus Engagement Committee of the Alumni Board of Governors and as a member of the Olin Alumni Board.

In addition to her volunteer leadership and many lifetime gifts, Laurie and her two daughters, Hattie and Hannah, have established The Hiler Family Scholarship in the Olin Business School through a gift in her estate. “My daughter, Hattie was a Moog Scholar at WashU,” says Laurie. “The scholarship was a wonderful financial gift that enabled her to connect with students who had similar academic interests as well as students from other scholarships. Endowing the Hiler Family Scholarship through my estate plan will ensure that women attending Olin will have the same ability to connect with other students and see perspectives and interests different from their own.

“My hope is that they too, will find the Olin experience rewarding and “pay it forward” after they graduate and begin their career in business.”

Like Laurie, you can support Washington University through a combination of lifetime and planned gifts. For information, contact the Office of Planned Giving at 800-835-3503 or plannedgiving@wustl.edu.
Jim and Cathy met while working at Monsanto – Jim in marketing and global business management and Cathy in production scheduling, manufacturing and international trade compliance. As his career progressed, Jim chose to pursue an Executive MBA (EMBA) at Washington University. Reflecting on his time at Olin Business School, Jim focuses on the people and the resulting relationships that shaped his EMBA experience.

“It was a very intensive program and I was fortunate to be part of a dynamic and very collaborative six-person team,” he says. “Many of us continue to meet every three to five years despite being spread across the country.”

He also credits the outstanding faculty, particularly Jim Little and the late Dean Kropp for the strength and success of the program. “The beauty of the EMBA program is that it attracts the most challenging student base a professor will have, which in turn attracts the best and brightest faculty,” says Jim. “Dean Kropp had a brilliant mind and was an outstanding teacher. Jim Little was another great professor and a key person responsible for expanding the EMBA program globally.”

The EMBA program was the first step in what has become a 25-year relationship with the university. Jim’s volunteer roles include serving as Olin Alumni Board President, EMBA Alumni Board President, Eliot Society Membership Committee, Class Reunion Chair and Olin Golf Outing Chair. In addition, he was instrumental in merging the Olin and EMBA alumni boards in 2015. He recently became a member of the Washington University Alumni Board of Governors (ABG).

“Getting involved with the ABG has given me a new appreciation for the dynamic nature of Washington University and the many areas where the university is excelling,” he says.

As Vice President and Wealth Management Advisor with Merrill Lynch Global Wealth Management for the past 13 years, Jim understands the value of planning and works closely with clients to develop robust financial and estate plans. “It behooves me to walk the talk,” he says with a laugh. Jim and Cathy’s generous support includes an unrestricted gift through their revocable living trust to support the Olin Business School. Reflecting on their motivation for making a planned gift, Jim says, “Washington University has had such a positive impact on our lives. Our unrestricted gift simply reflects our desire to support the university in its continued ascent as one of the world’s great educational institutions.”
Will Tax Reform Affect Your Charitable Giving?

Federal legislation enacted at the end of 2017 introduced fundamental changes to the American tax system. Only a few of these changes, however, directly affect charitable giving. Following are some questions and answers that may be helpful as you consider your current and future philanthropic giving.

How can I maximize my giving in light of the increased standard deduction?

Under the new tax law, the deduction for state and local taxes is capped at $10,000 and other deductions are reduced or eliminated. In addition, the standard deduction has increased to $12,000 for individuals, $18,000 for heads of households and $24,000 for married couples filing jointly. As a result of these changes, fewer donors will itemize their deductions and will therefore no longer receive an income tax benefit for charitable gifts. One way to retain the benefits of itemization is to bunch gifts and make them every two or three years. For example, Eliot members may pre-pay their membership by making a larger gift in one year that exceeds the standard deduction. Such a gift would be applied to their membership for the current year and the following year or two.

How does the new law affect deferred gifts?

Under the new law, the federal estate tax exemption has almost doubled from $5,600,000 to $11,800,000 for individuals and to $22,360,000 for married couples, which means that many donors will not receive any tax benefit from charitable gifts made upon death. There may be benefits to accelerating deferred gifts (such as ones made through a will, trust or beneficiary designation) into lifetime gifts if the amount is sufficient to generate a tax deduction. For example, life income gifts, such as a charitable remainder trust, may generate a lifetime deduction that will exceed the standard deduction. At the same time, life income gifts have many benefits beyond the tax deduction, such as avoiding capital gain and potentially increasing income.

Can I still make tax-free charitable gifts from an IRA under the new law?

Yes, as long as you are at least 70 1/2 years old and have an IRA, you can continue to make tax-free charitable gifts up to $100,000 directly from your IRA. This giving opportunity is particularly beneficial for donors who are not itemizing deductions. The tax-free charitable rollover is not included in your income and you can still take the standard deduction. Please remember that tax-free charitable IRA gifts must transfer directly from your IRA to Washington University. To learn more click here.

To learn more about ways to enhance the tax benefits of your charitable giving, please contact the Office of Planned Giving at (800) 835-3503 or plannedgiving@wustl.edu.

This article is intended for informational purposes only. Please consult a tax or legal advisor about your specific situation.
The Robert S. Brookings Partners recognizes individuals who have chosen to support Washington University through estate gifts, life income plans or other planned gifts. The generosity of these donors helps ensure the continued excellence of the university for generations to come. For information or to notify us of a gift in your will, trust or other planned gift, please contact the Office of Planned Giving at 800-835-3503 or 314-935-5373.