

# Ackerman Center Leadership Dinner

November 17, 2019







# ACKERMAN CENTER Leadership Dinner

On November 17, 2019, the Ackerman Center honored former UT Dallas Provost and current Scholar in Residence Dr. Hobson Wildenthal with the inaugural Edward M. Ackerman Leadership Award at a dinner benefiting the Ackerman Center endowments that fund the year-round activities of the Center, including graduate student research and public outreach activities.

The Edward M. Ackerman Leadership Award is presented to an outstanding individual or group who has demonstrated exceptional leadership and commitment to promoting the education and increased awareness of the Holocaust and related human rights issues. This leadership inspires or empowers others to become involved and engaged in ways that echo the mission of the Ackerman Center for Holocaust Studies: “Teaching the Past, Changing the Future.”

Director of the Ackerman Center, Dr. Nils Roemer, (below) opened the dinner with a heartwarming tribute to the center's long-time supporter and friend of blessed memory, Mr. Edward M. Ackerman: “Ed Ackerman was a singular individual. His immense



love for our students and Center was truly inspiring. He was a constant driving force who spurred transformational change at UT Dallas. Always wondering what was coming next, Ed motivated us to look toward the future and do everything we could to increase the Center's impact for students and our community. It is only fitting that this award, which will honor other leaders in our community for years to come, is named in his honor.”





Eddie Ackerman (left), Advisory Board member and son of Edward M. Ackerman, served as dinner chair alongside his wife, Beth. He gave a speech during the celebration, stating that: “Dr. Wildenthal has been integral to the development of so much at this University. As provost, interim president and executive vice president of UT Dallas, Dr. Wildenthal has given so much to our students, faculty and community throughout his life. Among his many accomplishments was the creation of the Ackerman Center for Holocaust Studies. Dr. Wildenthal and my father made a great team. Along with the center’s leadership over the years, they built a program that is truly to be admired.”

Chancellor for The University of Texas System, James B. Milliken, gave an impassioned speech about the importance of Holocaust scholarship. He remarked, “Studying the Holocaust reminds us that the values and traditions we hold dear cannot be taken for granted – they must be actively and energetically nurtured and protected, by us. We must remember what can happen when we fail in that responsibility – when we are silent or indifferent to the suffering and oppression of others.”

Ackerman Center Advisory Board member John H. Massey (right), hosted the dinner alongside his wife, Libba. During the program, he announced that the dinner had raised more than \$1.1 million dollars. As a special surprise, he also announced that the Hillel A. Feinberg Chair of Holocaust Studies had been elevated to a Distinguished Chair. Dr. David Patterson currently holds the chair and is one of the most widely-published scholars in his field and a deserving recipient of this esteemed honor.



Rabbi David Stern (top right) provided the blessing for the dinner. Dr. Sarah Valente (bottom right), former Selwin Belofsky Fellow and current visiting assistant professor at UT Dallas, spoke of her experience at the University, remarking, “As I teach courses in history and literature of the Holocaust and on human rights to a new generation of students, I see on a daily basis the ripple effect that the Belofsky Fellowship creates ... and I feel such great joy knowing that Mr. Ackerman’s generosity and vision, and Dr. Wildenthal’s exceptional leadership will continue to positively impact generations to come.”



When accepting the award, Dr. Wildenthal downplayed his early efforts on behalf of the Holocaust Studies Program, and expressed his personal gratification from working with the center:



“Doing this particular job turned into one of the most rewarding experiences of my life,” he said. “The education I received from Zsuzsanna and the great intellectuals who visited UT Dallas for the Burton C. Einspruch Lecture Series has been of immense personal value to me. I feel that I should have been paying tuition all these years, rather than being honored.”



*Nearly 300 supporters of the Ackerman Center were in attendance to honor Dr. Wildenthal.*