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SECTION

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Freshman ethics lesson

Principle is principle, reminds William Robertson

From Colby College in Waterville, Maine, with an entering freshman class of 511 students, to such giant mega-universities as Ohio State, the University of Texas and UCLA, an annual ritual will soon begin as recent high-school graduates move into dormitories to begin college life.

The new school year also brings another ritual: renewed appeals from colleges and universities for financial support.

Millions of Americans will respond. Last year, corporations, foundations and individuals donated \$25.6 billion to U.S. colleges and universities, the Council for Aid to Education reported recently — a nearly 5 percent increase from

When people donate money to a college or university for a specific purpose — or to any nonprofit organization for that matter — and the gift is accepted for that purpose, that's how the money should be used.

the year before. Gifts from alumni — nearly 23 percent of the total — increased 6 percent. Non-alumni individuals donated an additional 20 percent, CAE reported.

According to Slate, the online magazine, last year's largest gifts to higher education included Mesa Petroleum founder Boone Pickens' \$165 million gift to Oklahoma

State University, his alma mater; eBay founder and Chairman Pierre Omidyar's \$103 million gift to his alma mater, Tufts University; and the late Ford Motor Co. heiress Josephine Ford's \$50 million bequest to the College for Creative Studies in Detroit.

Then there's the late Barbara Barrow Jacobs' \$40.6 million bequest to Indiana University

and Progressive insurance company Chairman Peter B. Lewis' \$21 million gift to Princeton University, his alma mater.

It is there my lesson in freshman ethics begins.

In 1961, the year before the Cuban missile crisis brought the world to the brink of nuclear war, my parents, Charles and Marie Robertson, donated \$35 million in A&P supermarket stock (more than \$225 million in current, inflation-adjusted dollars) to establish a new foundation. The foundation's mission was to help the United States extend freedom throughout the world. The foundation would accomplish this goal by financing a program at Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School of

Public and International Affairs to prepare top graduate students for federal government careers in international relations and foreign affairs.

My father chose Princeton because it was his alma mater (Class of 1926). Since the initial gift, Princeton has charged the Robertson Foundation more than \$330 million to support the program.

But the story doesn't have a happy ending. To our great disappointment, Princeton administrators have diverted millions of dollars from the foundation into projects and activities that have little or nothing to do with the intent of my parents' gift or the mission of the Robertson

SEE ETHICS • D5