Mike Young does not earn his living in the field reflected on his diploma from Texas State, but when he decided to fund an endowment at the university, he returned to his major.

Young earned a degree in geography in 1971 and figured he would find work in that field when he graduated. Instead, his part-time bartending job blossomed into something bigger. “The guy I was bartending for was opening a restaurant, and he asked me to run it,” Young says. “I said I would if he’d give me some ownership. And he agreed.”

The result was Mike and Charlie’s Restaurant in Austin. After a few years, Young sold his interest in Mike and Charlie’s and teamed up with his current business partner in 1976. They have now expanded their holdings to include 10 Chuy’s Tex-Mex restaurants, seven Krispy Kremes and three other restaurants with a total of 1,500 employees. Last year, Young sold part of his interest in the company and brought in new equity partners from New York to fuel a major expansion of the Chuy’s brand. In the planning stages are new restaurants in northwest Houston and north Dallas, and four or five a year in the future.

In February he pledged $500,000 to establish the Michael R. Young Endowment to support the work of the Gilbert M. Grosvenor Center for Geographic Education in the Department of Geography. “I am so very proud to have my degree from Texas State,” says the 2007 Distinguished Alumnus. “The geography program is one of the best in the entire country, and I’m excited about its future.”

Young and his wife Diana live with their two children in Austin. ✪

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– Mike Young