The University of Southwestern Louisiana officially received a $1 million donation Monday, creating the university's first independently raised $1 million endowed chair.

The donation was made by the family of the late Gene Brauns, a Lafayette businessman and civic leader who died in 1980 at the age of 56. The funds were used by the university to establish the Gene Brauns Memorial Chair in Business Administration.

The donation was made by Brauns' family, which includes his widow, Mrs. Jean Brauns Oudenhoven; three daughters, Karen Brauns Milan, Janet Brauns Melvin and Arlene Brauns Hargroder; and two sons, Larry Brauns and Richard Brauns.

"This is the first time that we've had the opportunity to welcome one family and thank them for a very significant gift," Nancy Richard, director of the USL Foundation, said at a reception for the Brauns' held in USL's Martin Hall.

"It is the first chair that this university has ever received. We are so excited and we are so proud."

The university has created three other $1 million chairs, but those were done through $600,000 donations to the university matched with $400,000 in state funds.

In return for their generosity, Oudenhoven was presented with a wooden chair commemorating the family's gift.

"You don't know what this means to the university, to me personally and to the community," said local oilman Alfred Lamson, who has worked to raise money for USL endowments. "This is your chair," he added as he presented the wooden chair to Oudenhoven.

"I feel that if you're going to get a chair, you ought to get a chair."

"My children and I are very proud that we can honor my husband and their father in this way," Oudenhoven said following Lamson's presentation.

"What a wonderful way to honor an individual," USL President Dr. Ray Authement said of the

Shown at the presentation are, from left, front row: Dr. James R. Lumpkin, the first Gene Brauns Distinguished Professor; Alfred Lamson; Brauns' widow Mrs. Jean Brauns Oudenhoven; and USL President Dr. Ray Authement; back row: Brauns' children, Richard Brauns, Karen Brauns Milan, Larry Brauns, Janet Brauns Melvin and Arlene Brauns Hargroder.
Chosen as the first “Gene Brauns Distinguished Professor,” has been Dr. James R. Lumpkin, Authement said. In the past, Lumpkin has occupied chairs at Baylor University and the University of Mississippi.

“Now we have him in the right place at the right time holding the Brauns chair,” Authement said. “We will continue to progress and

we will continue to attract outstanding scholars to this university because of the generosity of this family.”

Lumpkin has a bachelor’s in chemistry, an MBA in management and in 1980, a Ph.D in marketing from the University of Arkansas, Authement said.

“These are exciting times at USL,” Lumpkin said. “We see growth across the campus, we see national recognition to all areas of the campus, the college of business included.”