



PHILANTHROPIST
EXTRAORDINAIRE
On top of his financial
planning company,
Tonkinson has given
generously to UM's
medical and music
schools.

Getting More by Giving Back

RICK TONKINSON, MBA '84, MPA '85
PRINCIPAL, RICK TONKINSON & ASSOCIATES,
CORAL GABLES

MIAMI, RICK TONKINSON SAYS, is like a frontier town, driven by an entrepreneurial spirit. Unlike such older cities as Boston and New York, "it depends on small business owners, and I feel motivated to be a part of that," he says.

The founder of Coral Gables-based financial planning advisory firm Rick Tonkinson & Associates wasn't always an entrepreneur. He earned his graduate degrees in business administration and public administration "the hard way," he says, attending night school for three years and devoting

about 30 hours a week to his studies while also working a full-time job.

Before launching his firm in 1991, Tonkinson had an eclectic work history. He worked in banking as an asset-based lender and a trust officer. His banking experience made him realize how little access most working-class people had to the kind of quality financial advice so important for good retirement planning, so once again he returned to school, earning his Certified Financial Planner (CFP) credentials in 1991 and becoming a Chartered Life Underwriter (CLU) in 1993. Today, his firm focuses on providing quality financial advice and service to working people, especially employees of Florida Power & Light Co., AT&T and teachers. It does so with a strong UM representation, including Tonkinson's wife, Margarita (MPA '86), and son, Steven, and student interns.

Tonkinson has also turned some of his attention to philanthropic efforts. The former Peace Corps volunteer is a trustee of the Cleveland Orchestra, a board member of the Diabetes Research Institute and a member of the University of Miami Citizens Board. A conference room in the School's new Miguel B. Fernandez Family Entrepreneurship Building will be named for him in recognition of the gift he's given toward its support, and the University's medical and music schools have also benefited from his generosity.

"I believe there are givers and takers in life, and that the more you give, the more comes back to you," Tonkinson says. "I get particular satisfaction from being able to help the University of Miami. It's such a special place, and it's been part of our family's life since we came here in 1981. Much of our success stems from what I learned there, and I'm happy to be able to give something back in return."

— Michael J. McDermott