Memorandum

To: Board of Directors, University of Houston System
Texas Legislators, Gulf Coast Region

From: William V. Flores, Ph.D., President
University of Houston-Downtown

Re: UHD Celebrates a Year of Accreditation, Community Service Honors and Empowering Grants

As we embark upon a new academic year, I am pleased to reflect on the successes and accomplishments of the past twelve months. From long-awaited accreditation in our College of Humanities and Social Sciences to multimillion-dollar grants that provide enhanced support and scholarships for our undergraduates, we experienced a great year of “Major Opportunity.”

**UHD Recognized Nationally for Community Service:**
While we exist to equip students with strong academic instruction and high-impact experiences, we also encourage the application of that learning to better the community. As a result of the thousands of hours our students devoted giving back to Houston, the Corporation for National and Community Service recognized UHD with the 2012 President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll with Distinction. We were among only 110 universities in the country and the only public university in the State of Texas to receive this auspicious honor. This award is the highest federal recognition a university can receive for community service, and is a testament to the altruism and dedication of our students.

**Social Work Program Receives Full Accreditation:**
Secondly, I am most proud of the hard work and excellence of our social sciences faculty, which resulted in full accreditation of our social work program in June. An initiative that began at UHD in 2006, this accomplishment reflects the academic integrity and contribution to the community that are hallmarks of the nation’s top social work programs. With this accreditation by the Council on Social Work Education, our students are eligible to sit for state licenses following graduation and can enter the workforce with the confidence and exceptional training this recognition implies.

**$3.2 Million Grant Enhances Support Systems for Minorities:**
Thirdly – as nearly 70 percent of our student body are minorities – a recent $3.2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education will greatly enhance educational opportunities for these students. This five-year grant also will help us increase support systems for first-generation, first-year Hispanic and minority undergraduates. This distinguished recognition will augment Project Star (Student Transition and Retention), which seeks to increase student achievement, persistence and graduation rates. This grant speaks directly to our mission at UHD where more than 60 percent of our students receive financial aid and approximately 60 percent of our
graduates are the first in their families to attend college. Of note, UHD was one of only 19 institutions in the nation and three in Texas to receive this Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) grant.

**$2.4 Million Grant Expands “Upward Bound” Program:**
Similarly, UHD received a $2.4 million, five-year grant to grow our “Upward Bound” program, currently in its 31st year. These funds, also from the U.S. Department of Education, will enhance the program, which assists first-generation, low-income, college-bound students with the academic and life skills necessary to graduate from high school and succeed in college. To date, our program has provided nearly 3,000 students with training in mathematics, laboratory science and literature that is vital to the future success of these teenagers. Our dedicated Upward Bound team is to be commended for their unwavering dedication to preparing these minority students for college life and professional achievement in the community.

**$2 Million Gift from Taiwanese Entrepreneur Creates Scholarships:**
Finally, I’d like to highlight the $2 million gift Taiwanese entrepreneur Dr. Yung-Fa Chang gave to UHD, as well as the opportunities this gift will ensure. An established donor to our university, Dr. Chang provided these funds to establish need-based scholarships so that students can complete their education and graduate free from debt. This gift – in addition to the $200,000 he previously gave UHD to create a fund for scholarships and faculty exchanges – will change lives and fulfill the dreams of several hard-working undergraduates. I, along with Provost Dr. Brian Chapman and Johanna Wolfe, vice president for Advancement and External Relations, had the opportunity to travel to Taiwan in June to thank Dr. Chang and present him with a framed proclamation from the City of Houston.

These highlights represent a fraction of the notable grants, achievements and contributions attributable to UHD faculty and students over the 2011-2012 academic year. From the establishment of our MBA program in January to the international innovation award our IT department won in June, UHD is impacting lives through major opportunities. I am proud of these accomplishments and even more excited about our future strategic direction and the shared goals we are sure to realize in the coming year.