Success Ain’t Misbehavin’ for UHD’s First Musical

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UHD Cast Creates First Musical Success; Former Student Directs ‘Ain’t Misbehavin’’

UHD’s first musical production, “Ain’t Misbehavin’,” was a hit with audiences, and director Tony Glover was at home after the show’s last performance when a cast member called.

“(The caller) said, ‘Mr. Glover, I just wanted to thank you for believing in me when I didn’t believe in myself’. . . . Things like that make you go ‘Wow!’” Glover said.

Glover understands the sentiment as a student and as a teacher. A few years ago, he was a UHD student on the same stage before a theater scholarship took him to New York. He has since performed at the Alley Theatre, Superman, Houston Grand Opera and the Ensemble Theater. “I think I’ve been on every stage in Houston,” Glover said.

“Ain’t Misbehavin’” had a successful two-week run at the O’Kane Theatre. The classic musical features the songs of American jazz pianist and composer, Thomas “Fats” Waller, including “Honeysuckle Rose,” “The Joint is Jumpin’” and “Ain’t Misbehavin’.” Ticket sales benefited the University’s endowed drama scholarship fund.

“It was so much fun. I was so honored to be asked to come back. It’s where I got my start,” Glover said.

Thomas J. Lyttle, drama professor and theater director, said he has waited more than 30 years to stage a musical at UHD. He held auditions for a musical some years ago and seven students showed up - only one of whom could really act, sing and dance, Tony Glover. The low turnout combined with the cast’s musical ability required a quick program change, and the group staged the non-musical “Waiting for Godot” instead.

However, UHD’s student body has changed and grown. “UHD has reached the size (nearly 13,000 students) that we can draw multi-talented students, and this show demonstrated their outstanding abilities,” Lyttle said. Nearly 100 students turned out this time to audition for the musical and the theater’s one-act plays.

“What I really love is that the cast is non-traditional because UHD and the UHD theater are non-traditional,” Glover said. The musical is typically cast with African Americans. UHD is diverse, and it is educational theater. “It was wonderful. A variety of people came in and auditioned, got cast and they did the show well,” Glover said. “We created a show where everyone in the cast is a star.”

The cast had some challenges. The show really is a period musical with only 10 to 12 spoken lines. Cast members had to do some research. The ensemble cast of eight included UHD students Lindsey Bell, Josh Jackson, Emil G. Niz, Martina Sandoval-Murphy, Michael Schultz and Samantha West. UHD students Ornella Ashcraft and Ashley White played club patrons. Phillip Hall was the musical director.

“One of the first things I told them (the cast) was that ‘can’t couldn’t be in their vocabulary,’” Glover said. “They were very teachable. Joshua Jackson is an amazing talent. He’d never done a show before in his life. He’s a football player from Bellaire who knocked the socks off of everybody.”

Lyttle said the production showed the cast members at their best. “They realized how hard it is to be in the entertainment business,” he said. The students were still taking classes and had papers and projects due. Some had jobs and family obligations as well as eight performances a week. “I think some of them were burning the candle at three ends. They handled it amazingly well,” Lyttle said.

Glover said he talked with Lyttle a year ago about directing and the value of having someone from outside the university with experience in the entertainment industry provide the students with insights into performing.

“My whole idea was to make sure they were prepared and had some idea what it is like in the real world,” Glover said. He enjoyed the opportunity to direct at UHD and work with the students.

“It’s a challenge and a gift. I treasure every opportunity because people did it for me,” he said.
UHD's President Named to Hispanic Business Magazine's Top 100 Influentials List

UHD President Bill Flores has been named to the national Hispanic Business 100 Influentials 2009 list.

"I am honored to be selected as part of this very impressive group and for the recognition that it brings to the University of Houston-Downtown," Flores said. "We are working to make this University the best place for Hispanics and all Houstonians."

Flores is one of eight individuals honored in the magazine’s education sector. Others honored in this year’s listing include Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, Anchor of CBS’s “The Early Show” Maggie Rodriguez, St. Louis Cardinals 1st Baseman Albert Pujols and President and CEO of the Hispanic Scholarship Fund Frank Alvarez.

Honorees are selected from various professional areas. To view this year’s honorees, point your Internet browser to http://www.hispanicbusiness.com/rankings/. To see the honorees in education, go to http://www.hispanicbusiness.com/top100influentials?cat=Education.

When recommending Dr. Flores as UHD’s president, UH Chancellor Renu Khator said, “We are very fortunate to have found a leader of Dr. Flores’ caliber who is an excellent fit with the vision and mission of UHD. He has a depth of experience in every category of specific interest for us.”

Prior to joining UHD, Dr. Flores served as Deputy Secretary for the New Mexico Higher Education Department. He was appointed to the post by New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson in May of 2007. He became Interim Cabinet Secretary there in April 2009. Gov. Richardson has described Dr. Flores as “one of the great educators not just in New Mexico but around the country.”

From 2001 to 2007, Dr. Flores served as Executive Vice President and Provost of New Mexico State University. In 2003, he served as Interim President for one year. During Dr. Flores’ tenure as provost, the university increased student enrollment; expanded distance education programs, including online degrees; opened a center in Albuquerque; and dramatically increased fundraising. He served as Dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Cal State Northridge and, earlier, as associate dean of the School of Social Sciences at Fresno State. Dr. Flores taught at Cal State Fresno, Santa Clara University and Stanford University where he also served as Associate Director of the Inter-University Program for Latino Research. He has extensive service in community-based agencies, including as Executive Director of the Gardner Community Health Center in San Jose. He has conducted research projects in voting rights, community empowerment, higher education policy and violence prevention. He co-edited the book, Latino Cultural Citizenship. Born in San Diego, Dr. Flores attended the University of California in Los Angeles where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science in 1970. He received his Master of Arts in Political Science from Stanford University in 1971 and his Ph.D. in 1987 also from Stanford University in Social Theory and Public Policy, with a focus in organizational behavior and health care research.

UHD Invites Facebook Friends, LinkedIn Connections

UHD has increased its presence on social networking sites including LinkedIn and has launched an official Facebook page which can be accessed at www.facebook.com/uhdowntown.

Odds are you have some knowledge of Facebook or similar web-based sites. Facebook enables individuals, groups, organizations, businesses and universities to create networks of contacts to share information. Facebook has its origins at a university and takes its name from the slang term students used to describe the directory with photos, the “facebook,” students received to help them identify their classmates.

The idea of interactive communication or social networking has become extremely popular. Originally limited to students at one college, Facebook has expanded to allow anyone over the age of 13 who observes the site’s rules of conduct. During its growth, it has been banned in some countries, and it has been the subject of privacy and intellectual property lawsuits. Nonetheless, Facebook now has more than 300 million users throughout the world.

"Our president, Dr. Bill Flores, is on the forefront of using social media for educational communication," said Sue Davis, executive director of UHD Public Affairs. "He is extremely tech savvy, and he sees social media playing an important role in UHD’s future. We encourage everyone with an interest in the University community to visit UHD’s Facebook page and become fans."

Dr. Flores maintains a presence on the social media sites at the following web addresses:

‘View from the Bayou’ Blogpost: http://uhdprez.blogspot.com/
Facebook: http://profile.to/williamvflores/
LinkedIn: http://www.linkedin.com/in/williamvflores
Twitter: http://twitter.com/williamvflores

The University also has a presence on LinkedIn, a site devoted to creating and expanding business contacts or connections. The site is especially helpful for people researching companies, seeking employment or employees or creating a group of connections with similar backgrounds or interests. UHD’s Career Services Office and alumni have created groups. Register as an individual at www.linkedin.com and search on UHD for connections.

The UHD Public Affairs Office is committed to delivering the University’s messages regarding the quality, educational opportunities available at UHD and the outstanding accomplishments of our students, alumni, faculty and staff. The Public Affairs Office will use all the available tools to effectively communicate the University’s messages. Social networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn are important means of reaching out to the community.
Student Veterans Find Home, Help from New Veterans Services Coordinator

UDH Freshman Josh Brown felt out of place when he returned to the classroom last fall for the first time in years. Trading the Iraqi desert and its 130-degree war zone for an air-conditioned classroom was disorienting to the 25-year-old U.S. Army veteran. Adding to his anxiety was his failed attempt at college earlier in his life.

“From Iraq,” Records said. He had to figure common ground when I first came back “I was older and had a hard time finding the group. the SVO. Today he’s a UHD staff adviser for various GI bills and receive the benefits knows how tough it can be to navigate the time in his life. The Army Ranger veteran lucky that it fell in his lap at the right hold the newly created position and feels great,” Brown said. “Mike and I got my GI benefits.

“Having the office here on campus is veterans organizations to campus next and Itzel Nunez watch UHD Veterans Services Coordinator Mike Records check out the group’s cotton candy machine before the university’s Crossroads Festival.

“I was intimidated in the beginning,” Brown said. “I knew absolutely nobody.”

Veterans Services

The first thing he looked for on campus was a veterans office, and people pointed him to Mike Records, UHD’s first Coordinator of Veterans Services. Opened in the Registrar’s office at the beginning of the fall 2009 semester, Veterans Services is UHD’s headquarters for some 300 student military veterans eligible to receive GI benefits.

“Having the office here on campus is great,” Brown said. “Mike and I got my GI Bill paperwork started, and everything was explained.” Before he knew it, Brown had joined the SVO – Student Veterans Organization – and become an officer in the 30-member group.

Records, himself a summer 2009 UHD criminal justice graduate, is the first to hold the newly created position and feels lucky that it fell in his lap at the right time in his life. The Army Ranger veteran knows how tough it can be to navigate the various GI bills and receive the benefits due following service in the U.S. military. Last year when he was a senior, he started the SVO. Today he’s a UHD staff adviser for the group.

“I was older and had a hard time finding common ground when I first came back from Iraq,” Records said. He had to figure things out for himself when he was a student, and he recognized the need to have some kind of hub where veterans could find answers.

“I try to steer them to the right place,” Records said. “From my experience, the majority of vets have a disability of some sort, most of them unseen.” While his office does not determine eligibility for GI benefits, Records knows what it takes to find out and then submit all the right paperwork at the right deadlines. He refers student vets who need help with things like medical evaluations and eligibility issues to Veterans Affairs or agencies that offer help and support.

“I let them know I went to Iraq and receive compensation for my injuries from the VA,” Records said. “I know and have an idea of what they’re going through. Some go to school full time but many have family and kids. I try to make them aware of everything they’re not only eligible for but also deserve.”

G.I Bill

Since the August passage of the Post 9/11 G.I Bill, more veterans can afford to pursue higher education after leaving the military. The bill provides money to pursue undergraduate degrees and vocational and technical training, and unlike previous benefits, it provides living expenses regardless of the hours pursued, Records said. With the depressed economy, the new bill makes a college degree even more attractive to returning veterans. Already the new bill has spurred a lengthy waiting list as anxious veterans wait for government checks that have yet to arrive. One UHD student veteran was prevented from registering for the spring 2010 semester because of overdue government funds, Records said.

“It’s still backlogged,” he said. “Students are still expecting money from the government and the university is still expecting money from the government.” He said Student Accounting has been helpful in trying to work out individual payment issues.

Emergency Checks

December 2009 UHD sociology graduate and U.S. Army veteran Sandy Reyes, also an SVO officer, said he first heard of the government’s issuance of emergency checks to stem the backlog through a UHD e-mail from Records. It was full of up-to-date and accurate information and calmed the financial fears he and other UHD vets were feeling. “Mike is very active in helping us out and letting us know what’s going on. It’s really critical to have him here and know that he is a veteran and knows the system. He’s holding the same leadership capacity as he did in the military, but now he’s out of uniform. He’s looking out for the rest of us.”

Veteran enrollment is expected to continue to increase each semester as awareness of the revised education benefits grows.

Registrar Cynthia Santos saw the need for UHD to have someone dedicated to student veterans full time and proposed the coordinator position after news of the new GI Bill filtered out earlier this year. Records already worked for her office in a student capacity, but she knew he had career goals in the criminal justice field. “I didn’t imagine he would stay in higher education,” she said. “To me, all the stars aligned.”

Records considers the coordinator’s post a service-related job and loves the diversity of his duties and his ability to move fellow veterans in the right direction. Veterans Services recently organized a Veterans Day luncheon with speakers from the Texas Veterans Land Board and the Houston Office of Veterans Affairs. He plans to bring more veterans organizations to campus next semester, and he and Santos ultimately would like to establish a veterans lounge area.

“From my own experience, I had a hard time going into crowded spaces when I came back,” Records said. His reconnaiss ance/surveillance unit was attacked in Iraq, and Records’ back was broken for the second time. He suffered shrapnel wounds, nerve damage and traumatic brain injury (TBI) – injuries that continue to bother him. “You just deal with it,” he said.

Disabilities

Records made the transition from battlefield to classroom successfully, and now his goal is to be there for other vets facing the same challenges. His efforts already are paying off. Membership in the SVO continues to build as the student group sponsors academic mentorship programs, veteran support funds and flexible meetings that cater to students from a wide range of backgrounds, ages and life situations.

For students like Brown, Veterans Services and the SVO provide a solid backup team to a new goal – earning a college degree. Brown now embraces the classroom and the learning. He’s glad of his military experience, but his job now is less hazardous and more rewarding. “You don’t have to worry about a mortar or about anything other than taking notes so you can pass the next test,” Brown said.

“Being in that environment (in Iraq) and coming to this environment is heavenly. I really appreciate going to college.”

Veterans Services can be found within the UHD Registrar’s Office (N-3300), One Main Building. Its Web site is www.uhd.edu/veterans. Call 713-221-8622 for more information.

UHD’s Student Veterans Organization members took advantage of the fall weather to meet on the South Deck. Membership is open to all veterans. From left, senior and SVO webmaster Mindy Brown, sophomore and new member Latashia Seward, alumnus and UHD Veterans Services Coordinator Mike Records and SVO media relations officer Josh Brown (no relation to Mindy Brown).
Fall Family Festival

The Office of Student Activities and Events drew the largest crowd yet to its fourth annual Fall Family Festival for a sunny Saturday on UHD’s South Deck. Designed for students, their families and children, the event included a kids’ costume contest, raffles, a hot dog eating contest, food, an arts and crafts show, a magician, music and a popular sumo wrestling booth sponsored by the UHD police department.

Flores: UHD Uniquely Poised to Meet Houston’s Educational Needs

In the next 50 years, universities will change dramatically to meet the demands of a changing student body and a changing society, and UHD President Bill Flores says UHD is uniquely poised to succeed in serving the needs of Houston and its students.

During the fall convocation in September, Flores said, “We can all work together so that UHD becomes a university that students apply to as their first choice, one that counselors suggest first, one that parents urge their children to attend and one that employers choose when they encourage their employees to obtain a degree.”

In the past few months, Flores, who became UHD’s fifth president in August, has continued to share that vision while working with faculty, staff and students to chart UHD’s future. His speech, given Sept. 3 during the week when the Internet turned 40, looked at future trends.

Those trends show that Houston will become the nation’s third largest city in the next decade, surpassing Chicago. That growth will create a greater demand for higher education in Houston, he said.

Right now, Houston has only 10 institutions of higher learning compared to more than 40 in Chicago. They also show that by 2020, 60 percent of all college students will take courses online and half will complete their degrees online.

“UHD has unparalleled potential,” he said. “We will grow in size and we will expand to other areas through learning centers. We will expand dual-credit offerings to high school students throughout the city and we will develop more fully online degrees. And we will add more master’s degrees.”

Flores has engaged the University’s leadership in a conversation based on the book, “Good to Great,” by Jim Collins. Groups are working to consider what UHD can be best at and how those choices will define and build an institution that is responsive to the Greater Houston Community.

“Let us undertake a campaign for greatness so that we can all say, ‘Yes, at UHD, we are making a name for ourselves,’” he concluded.

To view the convocation address on the Web, go to http://www.uhd.edu/presidentsoffice/videoconvocation09.html

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UHD Safe Zone Provides Support, Gives Voice to Hidden Community

Moving from the traditionally conservative Midwest to a campus in the heart of the fourth largest city in the nation, UHD’s John Hudson expected to find well-established organizations to represent the estimated 1 in 10 people who consider themselves lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT).

His former campus has an office for LGBT students, and discourse on sexuality issues is frequent and not unusual. At UHD, the silence was frightening, he said.

“I realized we had to do something to address the terrible silence as far as LGBT issues, because an atmosphere of silence hampers students. One of our challenges is the fact that we’re known as a commuter campus. People come here and there’s not a sense of community,” said Hudson, assistant professor of English. “I worked with some students my first year here (2007) and got a former LGBT group going again, but they all graduated.”

Hudson talked with faculty and staff about forming a UHD Safe Zone to provide a comfortable environment where individuals of any sexual orientation could find support, a listening ear and a non-judgmental haven. Modeled after Safe Zone Foundation programs on campuses nationwide, the UHD Safe Zone trains faculty and staff to support LGBT students and to confront “ignorance, hatred and apathy.” Most campuses around the nation started their Safe Zones through Student Affairs via residential and dormitory programs, but UHD doesn’t have dorms.

“We’re late getting started, but we have good momentum,” said UHD’s Doug teDuits, assistant vice president of employee training and campus relations/affirmative action officer. He and Hudson conducted two-hour Safe Zone training sessions in August and October and more are planned. So far, about 50 UHD faculty and staff completed Safe Zone training, and they identify their Safe Zone support for LGBT students with colorful block letter stickers on their doors. A leadership committee of Safe Zone allies continues working on ideas to ultimately get more student involvement.

Help and Support

“We’re all here to offer help and support and to let people know they’re not alone,” teDuits said.

“The Safe Zone gives these students a network of people — if they need to talk to somebody there will be somebody willing to listen,” Hudson said. “With these stickers, we send a message that homophobia and heterosexism are not welcome on campus.”

Hudson and teDuits drafted a 25-page manual that includes definitions of terms, campus and city resource contacts and a host of information for anyone wanting to learn more about what he calls an invisible population. The manual and stickers use the longer acronym of LGBTQ, with the ‘Q’ standing for queer, a word once considered offensive but used in this context as one of power and strength. For Hudson, the ‘Q’ means questioning.

“Our society pushes people to decide and declare that you’re straight or gay,” Hudson said. “The reality is, throughout one’s life, people may have thoughts or ideas that make it hard for them to know.” The Safe Zone manual says heterosexism is the assumption that everyone is heterosexual or should be. Homophobia is the strong and irrational fear of same-sex relationships, the kind of fear that can lead to harassment, discrimination and even violence against those believed to be LGBTQ.

Hudson says the stickers themselves are opening up lines of communication with students, who ask, “What’s a Safe Zone? What does LGBTQ mean?” He’s aware of student curiosity from the two courses he’s taught at UHD with LGBTQ themes. In English 4390 Studies in Language and Literature, Hudson’s class looked at LGBTQ representation in America. Students first laughed when they watched a 1962 boys’ health education film called “Boys Beware.”

Stereotypes

“The stereotypes were so outrageous,” Hudson said. After some discussion, the class watched the same film again and didn’t laugh. “In spite of our assumption we’ve made progress — and we have — but those same stereotypes they laughed at as archaic and ‘aren’t we a better society,’ many of those same stereotypes are still with us today.”

Hudson says his efforts to launch the UHD Safe Zone and engage faculty and staff in discussion have received nothing but support throughout the university community. From UHD President Bill Flores, already familiar with Safe Zone programs on other campuses, to UHD police who sent a representative to the first meeting, Hudson has found interest and open minds.

It gives him hope that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students ultimately will take the initiative and develop their own peer Safe Zone program and become a visible and active population at UHD.

Sustainability

UHD’s Sustainability Council sponsored a series of sustainability-oriented events including crocheting classes, a soap-making demonstration and a Sustainability Day with a water education booth, a farmer’s/craftsmen’s market and panel discussion. The council also hosted a brown bag lunch series featuring films on environmental issues.
UHD Awarded Nearly $1 million for Program to Train Future High School Science Teachers

High schools nationwide face a dwindling pool of well-trained and committed science teachers, and the shortage is especially acute in Texas. However, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has a plan to increase high school math and science teachers certified through higher education programs, and UHD has received an $889,010 National Science Foundation grant to fulfill that mission.

The funds will provide scholarships for about 30 undergraduate students in the UHD Scholars Academy to complete degrees in the sciences along with coursework required to earn Texas certification for secondary school teachers. Named the national Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program for the co-founder of Intel and inventor of the integrated circuit, it is designed to attract the next generation of science teachers across the country.

“This is a unique career opportunity in science education,” said UHD Professor of Natural Science Larry Spears, the principal investigator for the grant. “Our College of Sciences and Technology (home of the Scholars Academy) will now also prepare students for teaching science. This will help to answer a critical need in our state and our nation.”

Scholarship recipients must commit to two years of teaching science in a high-need school in either Aldine Independent School District or the Harmony School of Science in Houston after graduation. In return, the students will receive annual, $8,000 scholarships. Stipends for trainees required to earn Texas certification for secondary school teachers. Named the national Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program for the co-founder of Intel and inventor of the integrated circuit, it is designed to attract the next generation of science teachers across the country.

The students will continue to work on their regular degree programs, but they’ll also take education courses that apply to state certification, including classroom observation and real work experience. Educators hope field-based programs like these will more adequately prepare students for what to expect in a teaching career.

Junior-level undergraduates and post-baccalaureates are encouraged to apply for the Noyce scholarship program. “The students that participate and finish will definitely be serious students motivated to be classroom science teachers,” Spears said. “By the time they finish, they’ve had ample contact with students and teaching that they will know whether they want to be in a classroom.”

O’Kane Gallery Presents 19th Century ‘Drawing Lessons’

The exhibit, “Drawing Lessons,” will be on display at the O’Kane Gallery in UHD’s One Main Building Feb. 4 to April 1. “Drawing Lessons” presents early academic drawings from the Permanent Collection of the Art Students League of New York. Included in the O’Kane Gallery exhibition will be more than 30 life drawings by students of Kenyon Cox, H.S. Mowbray, Frank Vincent Dumond, George Bridgeman and others.

The students who founded the Art Students League in 1875 had the primary goal of creating more opportunities to draw the live model. Life Drawing was an essential study for those interested in mural design, portraiture or illustration — all expanding fields in late 19th-century America. Modeled on the French academies, the League’s life classes required weekly full-length figure drawings, called académies. The very best of these exercises entered the League’s collection in exchange for scholarships and awards. Displayed on studio walls, the drawings inspired generations of students and reflected a desire to establish a school of national stature. These attempts to portray the human body — that universal artistic vehicle — say much about the ardor and diligence artists bring to their education.

The O’Kane exhibit is funded in part by grants from the City of Houston through the Houston Arts Alliance.
A Day of Russian Culture

UHD’s Cultural Enrichment Center sponsored “A Day of Russian Culture” in November featuring presentations, films, music, food and Russian souvenirs. On hand for the event were, from left, Vladimir Titenenko, deputy consul general, Consulate General of the Russian Federation in Houston; Saphya Tabarovskaya of the Russian Cross-Cultural Network; Nikolay Y. Babich, Consul General, Consulate General of the Russian Federation in Houston; Natalia Matveeva, UHD assistant professor; and Amy Ninetto, Rice University assistant professor.

When UHD junior Vanessa Pinon and her salsa dance team competed in Japan, they won a coveted spot at this year’s fourth annual World Salsa Championships in Florida, but Pinon first checked her UHD final exam schedule to make sure she could go to the December event.

“My final ends at 2 p.m. and I’ll have 45 minutes to get to the airport,” Pinon said. “I tell our younger dancers, you can’t just dance — you have to get a degree.”

The 21-year-old business major attends UHD full time and also runs the reKreation Dance team, training young dancers in the dynamic salsa routines that will send Pinon, partner Lauro Lopez, 22, and several other team members to Hollywood, Florida, this month to compete with the best salsa teams from around the world. Many of the performances will be televised on ESPN.

“We had three standing ovations in Japan, and we have a really good chance in Florida,” Pinon said. The dancers hope their success in Japan will help the team earn sponsorships and funding. It’s a hectic schedule, but Pinon is committed to succeeding at both — college and salsa.

The dance troupe practices Friday through Sunday in a rented studio in northwest Houston. Competitions generally take place on weekends. Pinon takes her books on the road, using every spare minute to study, and she applies the business principles she is learning to the dance team’s operation, especially principles in organizational management.

“It took a lot of hard work, with studying, practicing and managing the team,” Pinon said. “Sometimes it gets a little overwhelming. But I stay focused and try to manage my time.”

She also offers an exemplary role model to the younger dancers in reKreation, who range in age from 9 to 22. Dancers’ careers can be fleeting, and by their late 20s, injuries and life outside dance often interfere. Pinon hopes her studies and determination to earn her business degree at UHD influence the young members of her group to pursue higher learning.
University of Houston-Downtown tutors helped Crockett Elementary School reach the highest state standard in accountability as an “Exemplary School” this year through a tutoring partnership that pairs UHD students with elementary school students.

“We could not have achieved this without UHD and the impact the tutors have made,” said Crockett Elementary School Principal Elida Troutman. “UHD students inspire everyone at the school, especially the children they work with. They serve as role models on the importance of a college education as the children see them pursue their own college programs and careers.”

Crockett Elementary School, a fine arts internal charter school in Houston Independent School District, is located near downtown Houston, minutes away from UHD. The Texas Education Agency ranked it as “Exemplary” for 2009, but just three years ago it was two steps below with an “academically acceptable” designation.

Work-study

UHD students participating in a federal work-study program and students enrolled in UHD’s pre-service bilingual education teaching program team up to visit the school several times a week, working with students who need extra help. The goal of the program is to build student skills and knowledge.

UHD Associate Professor of Education Maria Bhattacharjee, who oversees the outreach, says the individual attention that students receive has made a distinct difference.

“It is really a win-win situation,” said Bhattacharjee, who works with UHD’s degree program to develop bilingual teachers.

Bhattacharjee started the partnership in the late 1990s and today it’s an important outreach component in the University’s College of Public Service. It helps students working on degrees in bilingual education fulfill course credits while gaining field experience.

About 15 aspiring teachers work individually with students in Spanish language arts and reading and the program has expanded to include 22 UHD students who tutor in reading, mathematics and science through a federal work-study initiative that pays students for community service.

Vera Munfro, Crockett Elementary School’s testing coordinator, and Bhattacharjee developed a strategy to address the school’s weaknesses.

“The results of the program have been amazing,” said Munfro. “We set a high goal for the school and made sure everyone knew the objectives. We review the objectives and assess our progress weekly.”

Tutoring

Veronica Elizondo, a UHD student majoring in general business, helps students in Jeyakara Thomas’ fifth grade class with reading, research projects and computer skills. “Working at Crockett Elementary doesn’t feel like a real job,” she said.

“Working with the kids helps put my own school challenges into perspective. The best reward is when a parent expresses how thankful they are that you helped their child.”

UHD senior Jimmy Gonzalez, a UHD student majoring in psychology, has been with the program for 2 ½ years. He has become the “go to” tutor for math and science, especially when the annual science fair comes around and when students are interested in robotics. He says the work is very satisfying.

“I was working with a student who started out with bad behavior and often talked out-of-turn,” he said. “I told him about my own behavior in elementary school and spoke to him in soft tones to point out the consequences of his actions. We found common ground and became good friends. He became interested in the projects and started participating like everyone else.”

Gonzalez says his work at Crockett helped him decide to earn an alternative teaching certificate at UHD, and eventually he hopes to be a school counselor.

“The kids learn a lot from the tutors, but we also learn a lot from them,” said Gonzalez.

Crockett Elementary School’s curriculum focuses on reading, writing, math, science, social studies, fine arts and technology.
UHD Powerlifting Club Team Finishes Eighth at World Tournament

UHD’s Linda Okoro chalked up, grabbed the bar for a deadlift, and when the weights hit the mat she’d won all the awards in her 148-pound weight class as well as Best Lifter, Junior Women at the World Association of Benchers and Deadlifters (WABDL) World Bench Press and Deadlift Championships in Reno, Nev., Oct. 30 - Nov. 1.

Okoro, a sophomore pursuing a marketing degree, lifted 402.2 pounds or roughly the weight of the average refrigerator. John Hudson, assistant professor of English and UHD Club Powerlifting Team head coach, said the feat is akin to him lifting 800 pounds.

“I’ve done 727, which is impressive, but not otherworldly,” Hudson said. “To put it better, Linda lifting 402 at 148 is like a 148 junior male lifting 600 or more. None of the men achieved that mark.”

Okoro, 24 teammates and Hudson competed in the world championships for the first time and finished eighth against junior and adult competitors from throughout the world. The eighth place finish is a good result for a collegiate team, which by definition is limited to fielding lifters in two divisions: Teen and Junior, Hudson said. Other teams are free to field lifters in all divisions, increasing their possibilities for high individual placings which result in maximum team points. This tournament adds to the team’s growing list of achievements. The two-year-old UHD program has built a reputation for excellence with teams winning two consecutive national collegiate club team titles.

“The UHD lifters were truly outstanding ambassadors of UHD,” Hudson said. For their first trip to the world stage, he received many compliments throughout the event on the conduct, class and team spirit of the UHD lifters. Other lifters, fans and officials described the UHD lifters as polite, respectful and enthusiastic, Hudson said. The meet was successful in terms of championships won and records broken.

Many high school and community college lifters and their parents were interested in what UHD has to offer, athletically and academically, Hudson said. One especially interested lifter is a community college student in Hawaii who has been looking for a four-year university with a successful powerlifting program. The student and his father are planning to visit UHD as they consider the possibility of his transfer here for fall 2010.

“UHD Powerlifting is becoming a powerful recruitment tool in attracting students to our campus,” Hudson said. He fielded so many requests for information that he would like to have a representative from the UHD Admissions Office accompany the team to its next major event.

Team Accomplishments:
- Individual World Championships - 15 (Bench Press and Deadlift are separate events, so one lifter competing in both events can win two separate championships.)
- Individual Runner-up Finishes - 9
- State Records - 27
- National Records - 13
- Mexican National Records - 8
- Overall Best Lifter Trophies - 1: Linda Okoro (Best Lifter trophies are awarded to the lifter in a division who lifts the most according to a bodyweight formula. Linda was the Best Lifter for all Junior Women. The Junior Division is for lifters ages 20 through 25.)
- 8th in the Team Standings

Individual Results:
- Head Coach Hudson successfully defended his World Championship in Bench Press for the 308 weight class of the Master 40-46 Division with a 639.2 Bench Press. He placed 3rd in the Open Division. His Bench Press was a new Texas State Master 40-46 Record.
- Iraciel Ruiz, lifting in the 132 weight class of the Junior Division, placed 3rd in the Bench Press with 77.0 and 3rd in the Deadlift with 198.2 (this is considered an incredible weight for her bodyweight, Hudson said).
- Olga Hernandez, lifting in the 198 weight class of the Junior Division, placed 3rd in the Bench Press with 126.7 and 3rd in the Deadlift with 253.5.
- Jesus Sanchez, lifting in the 114 weight class of the Teen Division, placed 1st in the Bench Press with 215.8 and 1st in the Deadlift with 330.5.
- Tony Le, lifting in the 123 weight class of the Teen Division, placed 1st in the Bench Press with 137.7 and 1st in the Deadlift with 270.0.
- Ilian Rojas, lifting in the 181 weight class of the Teen Division, placed 3rd in the Bench Press with 314.0 and 2nd in the Deadlift with 429.7.

The Sports and Fitness Center sponsored a pep rally to send the powerlifting and soccer teams off to competitions. Team members received individual introductions and cheers from UHD’s new cheerleading squad and Gator mascot.
Gators Men’s Club Soccer Team Wins Houston Club Sports Title

The UHD men’s club soccer team has won the Houston Club Sports Conference championship two years in a row and made its second consecutive appearance in the National Intramural Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA) regional tournament in San Antonio.

The team lost to the University of Louisiana-Lafayette and Texas State University in the double elimination format. Last year the team advanced to the quarter finals. Despite the NIRSA outcome, the UHD soccer men completed the most successful soccer season in school history. The team won a second consecutive HCSC title and set team records for wins in a season. The Gators own a team record 11-game HCSC unbeaten streak and are unbeaten in 15 of their last 16 conference games. The team will go for a HCSC “three-peat” in fall 2010. Josh Rivas is the Gators’ coach.

Linda Okoro was named Best Lifter, Junior Women at the World Bench Press and Deadlift Championships.

UHD’s Erik Zuniga, left, battles a Texas State player for the ball in the team’s final game of the season in San Antonio.

For information about the UHD Powerlifting Club Team, contact Hudson at hudsonj@uhd.edu.

• Enrique Lopez, lifting in the 181 weight class of the Teen Division, placed 2nd in the Bench Press with 330.5.
• Haidil Dilber, lifting in the 259 weight class of the Teen Division, placed 2nd in the Bench Press with 418.7.
• Jose Martinez, lifting in the 123 weight class of the Junior Division, placed 1st in the Bench Press with 159.7 and 1st in the Deadlift with 303.0.
• Robert Nguyen, lifting in the 132 weight class of the Junior Division, placed 3rd in the Bench Press with 248.0 and 2nd in the Deadlift with 396.7.
• Antonio Moreno, lifting in the 132 weight class of the Junior Division, placed 2nd in the Bench Press with 259.0 and 1st in the Deadlift with 413.2.
• Humberto Teja, lifting in the 165 weight class of the Junior Division, placed 4th in the Bench Press with 255.7 and 3rd in the Deadlift with 352.5.
• Carlos Alota, lifting in the 181 weight class of the Junior Division, placed 3rd in the Bench Press with 330.5 and 2nd in the Deadlift with 512.5.
• Walden Villarreal, lifting in the 220 weight class of the Junior Division, placed 1st in the Bench Press with 396.7.
• Jose Teja, lifting in the 220 weight class of the Junior Division, placed 2nd in the Bench Press with 418.7 and 2nd in the Deadlift with 468.2.
• Joshua Friedman, lifting in the 114 weight class of the Open Division, placed 1st in the Deadlift with 264.5.
• Ivan Gamboa, lifting in the 198 weight class of the Open Division, placed 8th in the Deadlift with 369.2.
• Wilson Marnino, lifting in the 165 weight class of the Teen Division, placed 3rd in the Deadlift with 264.5.
• Stephen Truax, lifting in the 220 weight class of the Teen Division, placed 3rd in the Deadlift with 402.2.
• Robert Ramos, lifting in the 242 weight class of the Teen Division, placed 1st in the Deadlift with 374.7.
• Raymundo Sanchez, lifting in the 275 weight class of the Teen Division, placed 1st in the Deadlift with 501.5.

• Aranbo Garcia, lifting in the 132 weight class of the Junior Division, placed 3rd in the Deadlift with 352.5.
• Walden Cardenas, lifting in the 148 weight class of the Junior Division, placed 2nd in the Deadlift with 468.2.
• Raul Hernandez, lifting in the 165 weight class of the Junior Division, placed 2nd in the Deadlift with 380.2.
• Marvin Fuentes, lifting in the 181 weight class of the Junior Division, placed 4th in the Deadlift with 413.2.

The UHD men’s club soccer team won the Houston Club Sports Conference Championship for the second year in a row. With that finish, the team also earned its second appearance at the National Intramural Recreational Sports Association regional tournament in San Antonio. The team did not advance, but set win records for the season.
Best Friends from UHD and Texas A&M Share National Science Foundation Grant to Study Why Women Leave the Sciences

Anne Rinn, assistant professor of psychology

As a college undergraduate math major, Anne Rinn often felt uncomfortable in class. Even though she had a 4.0 average and was good in the subject, she was surrounded by male students and male professors. When classes broke up for group work, she seldom found a woman partner.

“I was outnumbered,” Rinn said. “Nobody was mean or sexist—I just didn’t feel comfortable.”

She dropped math. Now the UHD assistant professor of psychology has won a nearly $500,000 National Science Foundation grant to research why many women like herself leave science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) degree programs and careers. She will share the research project with her best friend, Kathi Miner-Rubino, assistant professor of psychology at Texas A&M University.

The joint Texas A&M — UHD project will include research on students from each institution. They are two very different universities; the former is a predominately white, research university and the latter is a minority-serving, predominately undergraduate university. Rinn and Miner-Rubino believe a comparative evaluation of how educational climate affects women in these different educational environments will add value to their research.

Looking at Barriers

“We are looking at barriers that should not exist in this century,” Rinn said. “Women professionals can have a major impact on STEM fields, and we want to see why they are leaving.”

Next semester, four UHD undergraduate students in psychology will collect data and assist with the research for the grant as part of a special projects course. Besides gathering, analyzing and recording data, the students also will present reports at UHD’s annual Student Research Conference next semester, and at least two of the students will submit results for publication.

Besides her own exodus from mathematics, Rinn was inspired to apply for the grant soon after she joined UHD’s College of Humanities and Social Sciences two years ago. “There are so many talented young women at UHD, most of them majoring in traditionally feminine fields like education and psychology. I started to wonder why these bright women weren’t majoring in male-dominated fields.”

The study, called “The Influence of Educational Climate on College Women’s Attrition from STEM Fields,” will examine how educational climates, perceptions, aspirations, performance, demographics and resources affect the underrepresentation of women in these professions. Miner-Rubino is principal investigator and Rinn is co-principal investigator for the three-year study.

Educational Climate

The National Science Foundation reported in 2004 research that despite an increase of women earning STEM degrees, the number of women practicing in the fields was still relatively small — 21 to 35 percent. A separate 2004 report by University of Minnesota Professor in History of Science and Technology Sally Gregory Kohlstadt found that women, especially women of color, leave STEM fields at a significantly higher rate than men.

NSF’s Research on Gender in Science and Engineering program supports efforts to understand and address gender-based differences in STEM education and workforce participation through research, the diffusion of research-based innovations, and extension services in education that will lead to a larger and more diverse domestic science and engineering workforce.

Once Rinn and Miner-Rubino begin collecting research results, they hope to come up with specific ways to encourage and promote women in STEM programs and careers. Working with university administrators to provide seminars and special opportunities like scholarships or mentoring programs would be a few fairly quick ways to perhaps start changing the statistics one woman at a time.

“One we finish this, we’d like to look at the transition from undergraduate to graduate school,” Rinn said. “What prevents women from going into graduate school or makes them become math teachers rather than mathematicians?”

They hope to study women with doctorate degrees in STEM fields to track the support, resources and facilities that helped push them to the next level.

UDH Accounting Majors Have Strong Presence in Houston CPA Society

Senior accounting major Dung “Diane” To already knows top executives from many of Houston’s biggest CPA firms. Classmate Delbra Cervantes, also a senior accounting major, is working toward her second auditing degree, the number of women practicing in the fields was still relatively small — 21 to 35 percent. A separate 2004 report by University of Minnesota Professor in History of Science and Technology Sally Gregory Kohlstadt found that women, especially women of color, leave STEM fields at a significantly higher rate than men.

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Testing Director Receives State Award for Commitment to UHD, Students

When Po-Chu Anges Leung moved to the United States from her native Hong Kong in 1982, she could not speak English. She enrolled in UHD’s English Language Institute to learn the language, and she also earned her General Educational Development (GED) certificate so she could attend college here.

Leung eventually became UHD’s director of testing services and now, nearly 30 years later UHD is like family to her. In September 2009, she became only the sixth person in the state to earn “The Cathy Erwin Humanitarian Award” presented by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) GED Unit and The UT Scoring Center, a state honor recognizing someone who has gone above and beyond on the job, often in the face of personal struggle.

Leung Met Erwin

The award is named for Erwin, a longtime TEA employee who helped centralize GED scoring and establish a state database. Before her death, she had personally presented Leung with the Outstanding GED Chief Examiner award in 1996.

“For her to get this humanitarian award in Cathy’s honor is something Cathy would have wanted,” said Paris Ealy, GED State Program Administrator. When Leung was on medical leave for a chronic kidney condition, even after surgery and blood transfusions, Leung insisted on taking the state’s annual training to keep UHD’s Testing Services up to date, prepared for recertification and in compliance with any state changes. When she was too ill to travel to the annual training conference and when Hurricane Ike intervened, Ealy delivered the training to Leung’s home.

“She put her job, the students she serves, the people she tests and her staff as her main goal, even with personal struggles,” Ealy said. “It was overwhelming to me.”

More than 500 GED chief examiners and examiners throughout Texas are eligible for the award Leung received for her commitment to UHD and its students.

“I was so shocked,” Leung said modestly. “I had tears – I didn’t know how to respond.”

She was thrilled for the recognition the state’s highest GED honor brought to UHD.

“It shows my work is being recognized but also that people know the UH-Downtown Testing Center is an excellent one,” she said. Each year the Testing Center administers several different tests, over 20,000 subjects and units, to people from all over Houston. It is also one of the top 100 test centers in the country administering the most College-Level Examination Program® (CLEP) exams. Many regional GED preparation schools specifically send their students to UHD to take the test because of its professionalism, reliability and basic human kindness.

“My belief is to serve people who are willing to be served,” Leung said. “Everybody deserves a chance like I had. I like to motivate people and also want people to know they should not be treated as second-class citizens.”

She often shows the UHD students who work for Testing Services the milestones on her office wall. Her framed GED certificate is “my foundation, my stepping stone,” she said.

Even though she graduated from high school in Hong Kong, that diploma did not count toward university enrollment in the United States. After getting her GED, Leung earned her undergraduate degree from UHD in applied mathematics with a minor in piping design. She won the prestigious Red Rose Scholarship three times and graduated cum laude. Later she earned her master’s in organizational management online from the University of Phoenix.

Testing Milestones

It took Leung seven years to complete her undergraduate degree, and she had to take time off after she was diagnosed with a brain tumor in 1987.

Throughout those years, Leung said her UHD family helped and supported her at every turn. She could always count on people like UHD’s Susan Ahern, Michele Sabino, Gail Kellersberger, Lloyd Mattner, Gary Greer and a host of others at UHD.

From the moment she started taking classes here and became a student worker, she said she was treated like family. When she couldn’t speak or understand English well, people treated her with kindness. She remembers UHD’s Thomas Lyttle asking her for a rubber band, and she didn’t know what it was. He patiently found a rubber band and taught her. “Everybody was very patient to guide me – everybody was so nice to me.”

“I guess that’s why I love this university so much – I always told myself I had to give back,” Leung said.

CJ Cadets Post Outstanding Passing Rate

The cadets in Class No. 240 of UHD’s Criminal Justice Training Center uphold a growing tradition of outstanding passing rates on state peace officer exams. Just as UHD’s academy celebrated 37 years of operation, one of its latest classes over the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education (TCLEOSE) State Peace Officer License Exam with a 98 percent passing rate.

“Our current pass rates are above that for Houston, Harris County and most of the other college-based academies in the area,” said Rex White, director of the Criminal Justice Training Center and 22-year UHD employee. “We work very hard with each class to make sure everyone understands the required learning objectives are covered, and we also require higher standards from our cadets.” TCLEOSE lists more than 105 licensed law enforcement academies statewide.

In UHD’s Criminal Justice Training Center, anything under 80 is considered a failing grade on written tests; cadets wear uniforms in the classroom, undergo daily physical training and must meet physical training standards to pass the academy. The Training Center’s passing rate averaged 98.5 percent for 2009 and 97.5 percent for 2008. The November 2009 test was the first in fiscal year 2010.

Many of UHD’s Training Center graduates – UHD offers seven academies every year – obtain law enforcement jobs in the more than 220 law enforcement agencies in the Texas Gulf Coast region. But White said out-of-state recruiters also snap up UHD academy graduates “from here to Alaska to Washington, D.C.”

Cadets were scheduled to take the TCLEOSE test Dec. 8 and 9, and two new classes begin Jan. 4.

“If we do our job right, the concept here is we will have motivated the person to want to achieve,” White said. “That’s usually what we find in our cadets — they get so motivated, they go above and beyond. They want to excel.”

Social Work Advisory Board Discusses New Degree Program

UHD Bachelor of Social Work Advisory Board members met with UHD administrators in October to review the new program’s progress toward Council on Social Work Education accreditation. Participants included from left standing, Susan Ahern, dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences; Scott Dixon, director of Houston’s Child Protective Services; UHD President Bill Flores; Karen Burist-Simon, CEO of Capital Management Group; UHD alumna Mitzi Coleman, grant writer and University of Houston Graduate School of Social Work student; James Booker, Regional Director for Houston’s Adult Protective Services; and Adolfo Santos, chair of the UHD Department of Social Sciences. Seated are degree organizers Jo Daugherty Bailey, UHD associate professor of sociology and social work, and Dawn McCarty, assistant professor of social work. UHD is offering courses toward the new degree to help fill the growing need for social workers in the Houston area.
Alumni News

Like Father, Like Son as UHD Students

As a young boy, senior accounting major Paul Ferree remembers watching his father work day and night to earn a college degree at the University of Houston-Downtown and support his family. “He was getting about four hours of sleep, working all the time and going to school,” Paul said. “He didn’t really have a day off the entire time he was there.”

Paul’s father, Scott Ferree, turned to UHD for smaller classes, close working relationships with professors and preparation for landing the job of his dreams. Today, son Paul is following his dad’s lead and working toward an accounting degree at UHD after transferring from the University of Houston. Paul said his dad was his biggest influence in enrolling at UHD.

“I was just kind of treading water before,” Paul said. “My dad really encouraged me to come here.” Paul made the UHD dean’s list following his first semester here in spring 2009. “For me, it really is the smaller class size, and my teachers know who I am. When he graduates in the summer or fall of 2010, Paul hopes to land a job with an accounting firm or continue in the accounting field with his current employer, Pappas Restaurants, where he now works about 30 hours a week while taking a full course load. He calls his dad “the No. 1 role model in my life.”

“Paul has really enjoyed it,” Scott said of his son’s UHD career. “I talked to him about the small classroom environment, and he felt like he could have more success at UHD.”

Father Scott was 52 years old and struggling to raise his young family when he first entered UHD. He wanted to work in the refining and petrochemical industry; so he enrolled in industrial chemistry in 1982, while continuing to work full time. He graduated three years later in the class of 1995 with honors. He now works for Nalco Chemical Company, where he is recognized as an industry expert in wastewater treatment and in addressing difficult water system reliability and communication issues.

“The education that I received at UHD was the catalyst for everything that I have accomplished since,” Scott said. Professors like Byron Christmas, James Drey, Larry Spears and Tyra Montgomery stand out in his memory.

Keeping His Day Job, Alum Writes and Directs Independent Films

By day, UHD alumnus Billy S. Cox III is a business analyst at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. In his spare time, the screenwriter/director is working on his third movie and promoting the second one.

Despite some success and a best drama award from Cleveland’s Indie Gathering Film Festival last year, Cox said beginning moviemakers like himself should surely keep their day jobs.

“I’ve been here (MD Anderson) for six years, and I like it a lot,” Cox said. “I worked as an intern while I was in school at UHD, and they kept me on.” The 2003 Computer Information Systems (CIS) graduate learned how to write a screenplay, borrowed an old Canon, and without a budget, filmed his first flick, “Destitution,” about two years ago.

His movies aren’t easy to watch, Cox said, because they imitate life and are not politically correct. “All the films I’ve made I’ve tried to base on real life,” Cox said. “It’s a gut check.” Hence the name of his company, Gut Check Productions, formed with Producer Rodney Acevedo.

His newest film, “Mindsight,” tracks the story of a young couple whose son is killed by a drunken driver. The main character starts to see his life play out before him, the “mindsight” of the title. He stops differentiating between reality and mindsight. The trailer and synopsis are enough to attract the curious, although the plot is not necessarily pleasant to read or watch. Cox raised money from family, friends and investors to get the $70,000 cost of making “Mindsight.” It was filmed with a Red Digital Cinema Camera, a relatively new technology that bypasses film processing and scanning negatives.

What motivates a 31-year-old college graduate with a good job to take to the streets with a camera and a story? “Out of boredom, and I met a guy from Dallas who taught me how to write a screenplay,” Cox said. “I started writing and fell in love with it. I like dramas, and I like to think about how life really is.”

“Mindsight” is on Netflix now, and Gut Check Productions plans to start filming its third offering, “H,” in Houston next spring. Cox said he always loved UHD because of its location and the faculty. “Once I arrived, I learned that the school was growing and constantly working to improve,” he said. He most appreciates the professors who pushed him to try harder and believes that people today often expect to coast along without real effort. UHD Associate Professor Charles Strain was one whom other students warned him about as “tough,” but Cox found he had just the right classroom mix to challenge him to work to the fullest. “It makes you a better person to be challenged,” Cox said. A trailer, synopsis and description of the technology used to film “Mindsight” can be found at www.mindsightmovie.com.
Two UHD graduates wrote to the UHD Alumni LinkedIn site recently after the university won a nearly $500,000 National Science Foundation grant to study why females leave STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) careers and programs. Cynthia Buchanan, a 1988 UHD graduate with an applied mathematics degree with computer science, said she routinely attended math classes with few or no other women. “It was difficult to avoid the ‘you’re a woman, you should teach’ pitfall,” Buchanan wrote. But she stuck with it and now works as a senior IT project manager at Technip in a mainly male data center work environment. “UHD was one of the few places that encouraged me to stay with the applied mathematics degree program, although the student climate was tough. My professors at UHD taught me to disregard the gender and give my all to every assignment.” Another graduate, Julie Wilcox, graduated in 1987 with a second degree in applied mathematics and computer science. She wrote that at the time she received her undergraduate degree, “Going on to a graduate or doctorate in my discipline was not financially attractive.” (see related STEM story, page 12)

Alumna Sandra Puente (’09) served as Houston City Councilmember Edward Gonzalez’s (’00) campaign manager. She also is the statewide field director for Texas ACORN.

Victor H. Loredo (’88), graduate with a BBA in Accounting, and Deyanira Zamora Loredo (’99 & ’04), graduate with a BS & MS in Criminal Justice, welcomed a precious baby girl named Victoria Susana Loredo on May 12, 2009. She weighed 7 lbs. 3 oz. and was 19 inches long.

Orlando Zambrano was a UHD political science major and finished in the Summer II session 2008. He has been accepted to Baylor Law School and will start in February. “Thank you for wanting to add me in the New Horizons, it’s very exciting. I have not yet begun law school as I decided to go to Baylor Law School and they accepted me in the spring quarter…. Since graduation I have self-prepared for and taken the LSAT, applied to several schools and am getting ready to make the move to Waco. I was a volunteer for the Clintons (Bill and Hillary) and served as a driver in both of their motorcades. I also volunteered for Councilman James Rodriguez and was an intern for the Mayor’s Office of Boards and Commissions.”

Theresa Bailey Feldmann (’88) reports she finished medical school, has been married for 10 years, has three children and resides on 14 acres in southeast New Hampshire, not far from Boston. She and her husband built a house for their family and both of their moms. “Personally, I miss Texas weather and the friendliness of the people,” she said. “Once my youngest starts first grade, it’s back to work for me.” Her family also includes three dogs, three cats and one hermit crab.

What’s new? Send us a note! Send us your email address!

Update your former UHD classmates about what’s going on in your life. Let us know about your professional jobs (job changes and promotions, business launches, awards and accomplishments), personal milestones (marriages, births, relocations) or academic achievements (advanced degrees, enrollment in graduate school). Email your information to newhorizons@uhd.edu or alumni@uhd.edu.

Email provides a direct way for us to keep you up to date on happenings at UHD and to alert you about activities just for alumni. Help us build our email list and alumni association. The association is a great benefit and membership is free. Visit the UHD Web site at www.uhd.edu and check out the alumni pages. Please send your email address to alumni@uhd.edu along with basic information about yourself. Sarah Crawford is UHD’s Director of Alumni Relations.

Help Support UHD Scholarships, Programs with End-of-Year Gift

Alumni and special friends of the university give selflessly to UHD’s annual fund each year to help provide student scholarships and other UHD needs. You can help UHD carry on its mission of access and education by sending an end-of-the-year donation. Gifts are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. There are several ways to make your gift to UHD:

- You can give by phone or by mail.
- You can give cash contributions online.
- UHD faculty and staff can give via payroll deduction.

You can make a gift of cash using your credit card by giving online at https://giving.uh.edu/uhdowntown/ via our secure server or by calling 713-221-8045. Your UHD faculty appreciates your generosity. Even though the University is closed between Christmas and New Year’s, UHD staff will be available to assist you at the phone number listed above. Thank you.
UHD Serves NW Houston with 10 Degree Programs at New Highway 249 Location

Beginning this summer, UHD will launch an ambitious schedule to bring degree programs to residents of northwest Houston at a new multi-university site that will open at State Highway 249 and Louetta.

More than 2 million residents are expected to move into northwest Houston in the next decade, and UHD is designing its center at University Park within the former Hewlett-Packard complex with an eye on providing access and opportunity. If we adopt admissions standards it will not be to exclude students, but to better develop plans to help at-risk students succeed,” UHD President Bill Flores said.

Automatic admissions standards offer students several ways to be guaranteed admission to UHD. Students would automatically be admitted to UHD who graduate in the top half of their graduating class or have a designated grade-point average or score a designated score on the SAT, ACT or a test that evaluates college preparedness (Accuplacer). Students who do not meet the automatic standards could still be admitted under individual approval with specific plans to help them succeed such as remediation courses, summer courses at UHD or courses at a community college.

Offerings will include face-to-face instruction and popular hybrid classes which blend face-to-face and online instruction.

UHD will open at the University Park site with bachelor’s degrees in criminal justice (the bachelor’s of science and the bachelor’s of arts in applied science), the bachelor’s of arts degree in interdisciplinary studies that is tied to teaching generalist certification for early childhood through grade six (regular and bilingual) and a bachelor’s degree in general business.

Beginning this fall, UHD will debut 10 additional bachelor’s degrees at the site along with a master’s of arts in teaching degree.

- interdisciplinary studies that leads to teaching generalist certification for grades four through eight;
- safety management;
- mathematics with secondary-level teacher certification;
- biological sciences with secondary-level teacher certification;
- humanities;
- social sciences;
- management;
- accounting;
- finance; and
- computer information systems.

Students can apply for admissions now for summer semester and registration for classes will begin in April. For more information, contact Louis Evans at evansl@uhd.edu or 713-221-2766.