

UHD magazine

Spring 2019

A photograph of three healthcare professionals, two women and one man, walking on a city sidewalk. They are all wearing blue scrubs. The woman on the left has long dark hair, the woman in the middle has blonde hair and glasses, and the man on the right has dark curly hair and a stethoscope around his neck. They are walking past a Metro train with a red and white exterior. The sidewalk is lined with green stanchions and white ropes. The background shows a city street with other vehicles and buildings.

**Great Name.
Downtown Address.**





Vinatown Dragon

By #ARTKUNGFU

“Art is standing with one hand extended into the universe and one hand extended into the world, and letting ourselves be a conduit for passing energy.”

Albert Einstein



UHD TAG
THANK-A-GATOR 



**Fellow Gators
Helping Future Gators
THANK YOU!**

#UHDThankAGator

UHD TAG
THANK-A-GATOR 



**Gator Generosity
YOUR Alumni Legacy.**

#UHDThankAGator

*UHD Students Manuel Soto, Natalie Flores,
Amani Byaale, Fabian Strauss & Dr. Muñoz*

From The President's Desk

Welcome to our spring 2019 issue of UHD Magazine.

The year 2018 was filled with significant milestones attributed to the continued growth of the University of Houston-Downtown (UHD).

This issue introduces our new Registered Nurse to Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program (RN to BSN), which inaugurated its first cohort of nursing students this past fall. The magazine also features another first for UHD, our Greater Texas Foundation Scholars Program, which offered more than 40 graduates of Texas Early College High Schools from across the state the opportunity to Finish UHD Strong. You're also invited to meet two siblings who decided to pursue their UHD degrees later in life. And, our cover story and magazine theme, Great Name, Downtown Address, offers a brief history lesson on UHD's historic significance and how our University contributes to Houston's growth across numerous industries.

As you drive along I-10, you will notice UHD's new addition to Houston's skyline, the College of Sciences & Technology Building.

We also recorded a significant enrollment increase with now more than 14,000 students attending UHD. We celebrated the grand opening of Houston's first university e-Sports Center and hosted two very important debates with candidates running for U.S. Congress and Texas Senate District 6. Our University also welcomed new deans, Dr. Scott Marzilli in University College and Dr. Charles Gengler at the Marilyn Davies College of Business. And, we announced Dr. Eric Carl Link as the University's new Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic & Student Affairs. (Learn more about Dr. Link in this issue on page 10.)

Another 2018 highlight included UHD meeting (and exceeding) our 2020 Capital Campaign goal of \$25 million. But, we won't stop there. There's so much more we can achieve in the next two years to further our record-setting goal. I also want to thank our alumni and donors for their continued generosity to make UHD an educational force in our city and state ... affordable, accessible and achievable.

These accomplishments of the past year are indicative of the University's upward trajectory, which reflects the "can do" spirit of the UHD Community, Houston and of Texas.

With your continued support, we are setting sights on making 2019 another historic year at UHD.



Dr. Juan Sánchez Muñoz
President, University of Houston-Downtown



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UHD Magazine is available at UHD.edu/magazine

UHD Nursing



UHD Nursing: First In Class

By Sheryl E. Taylor

THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-DOWNTOWN (UHD) IS ANSWERING THE CALL.

Through an innovative partnership with Houston Community College (HCC), the University enrolled the first cohort of nursing students into its Registered Nurse to Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program (RN to BSN) at UHD. The program offers a seamless, cost-effective degree plan that is achievable in minimal time—in two semesters.

“We feel the pressure. We have to do something,” said Dr. Linda Dune, director of the nursing program and associate professor of nursing.

The Texas Education Coordinating Board recognized that UHD’s nursing program model would fill a unique niche in the city while setting a precedent in the Texas Medical Center (TMC).

In fact, UHD’s RN to BSN students can study where they work ... in the heart of the TMC at Houston Community College’s Coleman Campus.

“We’re able to admit students who normally would not have completed their bachelor’s degree (in nursing) and offer them a way to seamlessly earn a BSN without changing familiar classrooms or support. And, we are in the Texas Medical Center. We are right here where many of our students are working.”

According to Dune, the governing bodies in education, the AACN and magnet hospitals have found that patient outcomes are significantly improved if they are cared for by a BSN nurse. Students can be jointly enrolled in the program by attending community colleges to complete their associate’s degrees while simultaneously working on their core courses at UHD. The curriculum is designed so that the students may enroll in courses that provide a full-time BSN program with no more than three courses offered one day per week, which enables them to maintain

a work-life balance. The BSN courses are taught by three UHD faculty members: Dr. Song Ge, Dr. Tyrone Sharp and Dune. In the near future, an online program option may be available.

As part of their experience, students do a Capstone project during their final semester. In their first year, students select and volunteer for a neighborhood agency of their choosing. Through their volunteering efforts, they learn about the needs of that chosen agency and create a plan in collaboration with the community entity. Upon graduation, these new nurses become agents within their own communities. In return, these community entities will recognize that these BSN nurses are already engaged in the community and may be available to provide for its health care needs.

“UHD’s mission and vision is closely aligned with helping communities, so we’ve developed a model that fits with our mission and vision,” Dune said beaming. “There aren’t enough nurses in the school systems, and there aren’t enough nurses matching the cultural backgrounds of patients within hospital settings. We are much more than just an RN to BSN nursing program, we are here for the community.”

The program not only meets a need in the industry and communities, it also provides more career advancement opportunities in the nursing field.

“The BSN is extremely marketable,” said Dune. “This degree offers career options for students in areas they’ve never done before. They may choose to remain at the bedside providing care to increase the patient progress through the illness continuum or become case managers, researchers, advance practice nurses, nurse practitioners and much more; their opportunities are varied and wide ranging.”

“We (UHD) are the new day,” Dune added. “This is just one of the UHD programs that provide bachelor’s degrees in the community where the students live and work.” **UD**

Great Name. DOWNTOWN ADDRESS.

By Sheryl E. Taylor

At 44 years young, the University of Houston-Downtown (UHD) has always been poised to be so much more than the University famously located at Downtown's edge.

UHD's past, present and future lends itself from historic beginnings to exponential growth to an institution that has changed the lives of students and communities beyond its doors.

UHD Marks The Spot

When you think back on your college years, you learned and knew every nook and cranny of your home away from home.

Former and current UHD students, alike, may not know that **UHD proudly sits at the birthplace of Houston.**

In 1836 ... just months after the Republic of Texas won its independence from Mexico, two New York real estate developers, the Allen brothers—purchased 6,642 acres of coastal prairie and settled the town of Houston on the banks of the Buffalo Bayou.

Not quite 100 years later on April 18, 1930, the Merchants & Manufacturers Building ... touted as “a modern miracle of constructive genius”—14 miles of floor space, 11 acres of offices, 17 miles of steel and 2 million feet of lumber ... and 40,000 window panes—opened its doors. The M&M Building offered impressive features under one roof—convenience stores, private and general offices, wholesale and retail displays, garage space for 400 cars, and distribution and warehouse areas, clubs and lounges.*

Today, the M&M Building is known as UHD's One Main Building where thousands of people walk through each day. If you take a moment, you will notice relics of the past that are part of the building's charm ... such as the original brass U.S. mailbox on the third floor or a steam boiler (circa 1922) on the first floor.

Now more than 180 years later, the One Main Building is a reminder of Houston's beginnings nestled at the confluence of the White Oak and Buffalo Bayou—known today as Allen's Landing, which is now designated as a historical city park.

And the rest is UHD History...

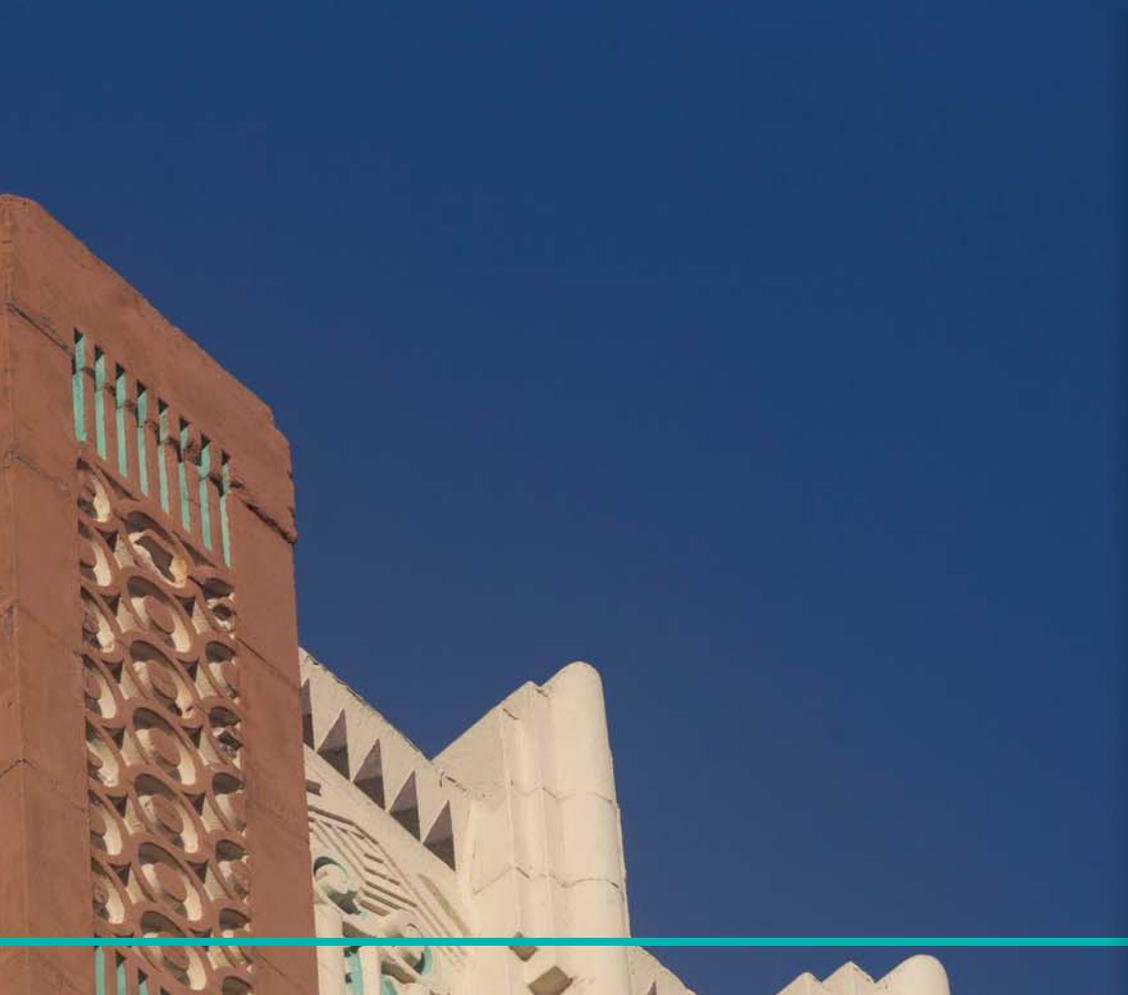
Gator Students

With a **student body totaling more than 14,000** traversing between

six—soon to be seven— campus buildings and UHD Northwest, students have access to varied amenities and career opportunities in the most populous city in the Southern United States—just a rail away are Fortune 500 companies, museum and theater districts and the Texas Medical Center—the largest medical complex in the world.

The not-so-average UHD student population [**Median**





Age: 28 is a reflection of Houston’s rich cultural and ethnic diversity. In fact, the University is nationally recognized as a Minority-Serving Institution, Hispanic-Serving Institution and Military-Friendly School.

A steadily increasing alumni base, now at over 50,000, includes public servants in city and state agencies, elected officials, Houston area educators, leadership in law enforcement and commerce, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, professionals in the data science and medical industries, CEOs ... and the list goes on.

Fine Faculty

From exceptional faculty come successful students [**Student-to-Faculty Ratio: 20 to 1**]. Mirroring our student population, UHD’s diverse faculty, who hail from all over the globe, bring the finest scholarship in research and teaching to UHD. Students have the privilege of learning from a world-renowned art professor, award-winning authors and scientists, Corporate Fellows in business and even a Houston Poet Laureate.

This dedicated legion of educators seeks to ensure that each and every UHD student leaves their alma mater equipped with mastery of their field of study in the five colleges [**College of Public Service, College of Humanities & Social Sciences, University College, College of Sciences & Technology, Marilyn Davies College of Business**].

On The Horizon

The growth of UHD is imminent.

Changes are happening in the University’s environmental and academic footprint [**\$73M College of Sciences & Technology Building**], with new degree program offerings [**Data Science, Nursing**], expanding student programs and extending its reach of community engagement endeavors. **UHD**

** “40,000 Window Panes: The Story of the Merchants and Manufacturers Building”*



Lowest tuition rate in Houston and one of the lowest in Texas



3,000+ graduates annually



Gator Alumni is more than 50,000 and counting!



**44 bachelor’s degrees
8 master’s degrees
15 undergraduate & 3 graduate degree completion programs**



**60% Female
40% Male**

New Successor Named

Dr. Eric Carl Link has emerged as the new provost and senior vice president for Academic & Student Affairs. Link, who served as Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences at Purdue University Fort Wayne, officially joined UHD on January 14.

“The University of Houston-Downtown is a true 21st century institution that is dedicated to student opportunity and success and deeply intertwined with the great city of Houston,” Link said. “I am humbled and grateful for the opportunity to join the UHD team, and I look forward to working with President Muñoz and the entire UHD community as the institution establishes itself as a premiere metropolitan institution where students and faculty work together to meet the needs of a global society.”

Dr. Link’s career in education spans more than 20 years and includes leadership and faculty roles at his former institution, the University of Memphis, and North Georgia College & State University.

At the University of Memphis, he served as assistant and Associate Dean for the College of Arts & Sciences, as well as Chair of the Department of English. At North Georgia College & State University, he was head of the Department of Language & Literature and also served as that department’s Director of Graduate Studies, among other roles.

In addition to his experience as a higher education administrator, Link is an accomplished researcher and writer with four authored books, six edited books and more than 25 journal articles and book chapters to his name. The award-winning scholar has shared insights on humanities topics with peers and students across the globe. As a Fulbright Senior Scholar, he taught at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland and Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University in the Ukraine. Link also delivered lectures on American literature at Nanjing University, and Nanjing University of Science and Technology in Nanjing, China.

Link holds a Ph.D. in 19th and 20th century American literature from Purdue University, a Master of Arts in English Language & Literature from Southwest Missouri State University, and a Bachelor of Science in Communications from Evangel University in Springfield, MO.



The Link Family

Provost



“It’s an exciting time to be a part of UHD, and Dr. Link’s arrival is yet another reason to be optimistic about our University’s future,” said UHD President, Dr. Juan Sánchez Muñoz. “I look forward to working alongside him in growing our University.”

“It’s an honor to be a part of the UHD family, and we are looking forward to living and working in the vibrant city of Houston,” said Eric’s wife, Laura Link.

Dr. Link will succeed Ed Hugetz as UHD’s provost and senior vice president for Academic & Student Affairs. Hugetz was appointed as interim provost in 2013 and helped steer the University through its recent reaffirmation of accreditation process by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges among other institutional initiatives. [UHD](#)



eSports Center

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UHD's eSPORTS CENTER ushered in a new era marked by offering innovative pathways to increasing student engagement.

With a grand opening in the fall, the Center now is ready for students to play individually or in groups. The venue will host open play throughout the spring semester with the option for competitive play.

Multiple news outlets, including Houston Public Media, KTRK-ABC13 and KRIV- Fox 26 covered the grand opening.

The Center sets the stage for players to hone their skills, down to the professional gaming chairs and headsets. Games to be played will likely include Overwatch, Dota 2, League of Legends, Heroes of the Storm, Smite, Fortnite and others.

UHD's president, Dr. Juan Sánchez Muñoz, hopes to see an eSports team emerge in the near future to eventually compete against other universities. **UFD**

iHOLA! ... New Spanish Concentration

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UHD's COLLEGE OF PUBLIC SERVICE answers the call from a needed demographic in the nation's fourth largest city with a new Spanish concentration for its Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program. This concentration is specifically designed for high school Spanish teachers who are interested in teaching dual credit or Advanced Placement Spanish courses.

"Houston has one of the country's largest and most vibrant Spanish-speaking communities, and the need for advanced instruction in Spanish language and Latino/Hispanic culture at the high school level has been growing for a long time," said Dr. William Nowak, associate professor of Spanish.

This graduate program consists of 36 hours of graduate coursework (12 courses), which includes six courses in Spanish and six courses in Urban Education. Students can complete the MAT with the Spanish concentration in just two years, including summer sessions.

"With this degree, Spanish teachers will have the competency needed to deliver instruction that truly equals the college-level credit expected in high school courses," added Nowak. "It will also give our successful graduate students the credentials that are required to teach Spanish at the junior or community college level." **UFD**

GRANTING Future Pathways

STUDENT SUCCESS AND COMMUNITY SERVICE are among the hallmarks of UHD. While a university's academic expertise is essential in developing programs that help students and Houstonians, the institution's reputation, outreach and teaching also benefits from grants. During FY2018, UHD posted a record number of grant submissions from faculty and staff members—an improvement of 30 percent over the previous year. Award dollars also were on the rise, increasing by 47 percent from 2017. The most notable grants received in 2018 included:

Howard Hughes Medical Institute \$1 million grant to enhance diversity in STEM education. UHD was the only institution in Texas to receive this grant in 2018.

Houston-Galveston Area Council \$1.1 million grant supporting a partnership with the Housing, Entrepreneurship And Readiness Training (H.E.A.R.T.) Program to help adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities rejoin the workforce and continue to recover from Harvey.

Title V \$2.7 million grant supporting UHD's "Accelerated Transfer Program" aimed at providing students with enhanced advising, coaching and clear pathways toward bachelor's degrees.

"These awards are impressive for their support of our partnerships with area agencies and organizations aimed at serving our community," said UHD President, Dr. Juan Sánchez Muñoz. "They also reflect our University's vision for the future." UHD



UHD/H.E.A.R.T. Student Alex Caputo & Instructor Holly Rogers

Winning

HOUSTON DID NOT HAVE A TEAM in any of this year's NCAA conference football title games, but a local student came up as one of the weekend's biggest winners. UHD student Alberto Reyes was among the winners of the 2018 Dr. Pepper Tuition Giveaway. During the PAC-12 championship game in Santa Clara, California, Reyes competed in the Tuition Throw (tossing a football from the five yard line into a giant Dr. Pepper can located in the end zone). When all was said and done, Reyes successfully bested his competitor (with 15 completed passes) and earned \$100,000 to apply toward college tuition. He plans to apply his winnings to a graduate degree in accounting.

The senior business major was selected as a Dr. Pepper Tuition Giveaway finalist based on a video submission. In Reyes' video, he explains his passion for helping others

while strolling through the UHD campus. The Marilyn Davies College of Business student also mentions that he's the son of immigrants and wants to help others in underserved communities better manage their finances.

"I strongly believe that teaching financial literacy will help families in my community and all around the country live better lives and focus on the things that matter." UHD

Check out Reyes' Dr. Pepper Submission Video at bit.ly/AlbertoReyes_DrPepper

Photo Courtesy of Dr. Pepper

Communicators ON PATROL

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UHD CRIMINAL JUSTICE STUDENTS are putting their skills as translators to good use.

Through a partnership with the Houston Police Department (HPD), these students are earning internship credits as Communicators on Patrol. HPD launched this initiative to utilize volunteer translators who will accompany officers as they patrol their beats.

“There are a number of bilingual HPD officers, but in a city this size, there’s certainly not enough,” said Beth Gilmore, coordinator of UHD’s Criminal Justice Internship & Career Services Program. “Our students will help fill that void and build trust with officers.”

Student Ronald Restrepo, an aspiring police officer, was among the first Gators serving as a Communicator on Patrol.

“This is a great opportunity for students at UHD, especially if they are planning to become police officers,” Restrepo said. “The internship opens doors to experience actual police calls. They are real and not simulated, which makes this program extremely rewarding.”



HPD Chief Art Acevedo

The new program was announced by Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo during a June press conference.

“When people are the victims or witnesses of a crime, we want to make sure we get the information right,” Acevedo said. “We also want to break down barriers and communicate effectively.” **UFD**



Ronald Restrepo

Global EXCHANGE

THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-DOWNTOWN was the site of an international exchange of ideas on higher education and academic research. UHD community members, scholars and students from the Mexican state of Tamaulipas participated in the Binational Conference, “Building Bridges Through Academic Excellence.”



More than 100 international visitors converged on UHD for this three-day event that featured presentations on computer science, data science, information technology, logistics, supply chain management and other academic disciplines.

“Houston is a global community, and our institution is among the most diverse in the state,” said Faiza Khoja, associate vice president for academic affairs. “It’s a natural fit to spotlight the talents of global scholars at UHD. The Binational Conference will help UHD develop a symbiotic relationship with these international institutions and immerse our guests in the culture of our city and our University.”

The conference was made possible following a 2017 meeting between UHD President, Dr. Juan Sánchez Muñoz and the Honorable Héctor Escobar Salazar, secretary of education in the State of Tamaulipas, with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) focused on supporting collaborations between UHD and institutions of higher education in the Mexican State of Tamaulipas. **UFD**

The Great Debates

UHD SERVED AS THE HOST site for two fall debates featuring candidates running for Texas Senate District 6 and candidates for U.S. House of Representatives Districts 2 and 29.

Both events were presented by KTRK ABC13 and Univision 45 KXLN and also were streamed live online.

Candidates running for Texas Senate District 6 are Democrats Carol Alvarado, Ana Hernandez and Mia Mundy. The District 6 senate race will fill the void left by Sylvia Garcia, who vacated her seat to become one of the first Latinas elected to the U.S. House of Representatives this fall.

This event is the second debate hosted at UHD this year. In September, the University hosted debates in collaboration with ABC13 and Univision 45, with candidates for U.S. Congressional Districts 29 (won by Garcia) and 2 (won by Dan Crenshaw).

These events marked the fourth major debate in three years at UHD. In 2015, the University hosted candidates for Houston mayor and in 2016, Harris County Sherriff candidates debated on campus.

“I’m proud that our institution ... and especially our students ... play a role in these critical conversations that promote civic engagement and an informed and educated citizenry,” said Dr. Juan Sánchez Muñoz, UHD President. **UFD**



Texas Senate District 6 Candidates:
Carol Alvarado, Mia Mundy & Ana Hernandez

Now Showing: Gator Pride



Houstonians are noticing a touch of blue

—emanating from the One Main Building—along the Downtown skyline ... all in the name of Gator Pride.

In recent months, school spirit is being reflected through other pride enhancements, including Allen, the bronze gator that welcomes UHD community members and visitors to the South Deck. This statue has proven to be a popular photo locale for graduating Gators and their families, visitors and students for selfies and group pictures.

Two illuminated UHD logo installations also made their debut near the future College of Sciences & Technology Building. These blue and red signs, which welcome students and visitors, can be viewed from the nearby hike and bike trails along White Oak Bayou.

These recent additions to campus are just the beginning. More amenities celebrating Gator Pride are on the way—large UHD letters near the Girard Street Building’s parking garages and a bronze Gator companion for Allen located at the Sciences & Technology Building. **UHD**

COMIC
[BOOK]
RELIEF



Gator
CON 2018

FOR ONE DAY during the fall semester, the University of Houston-Downtown was transformed into super hero central. The first annual Gator-Con offered the UHD community an opportunity to celebrate creativity and popular culture through panels, movies, video games, a cosplay contest and more.

This daylong event, coordinated by faculty, staff and students, including the student organization Fandom UHD, featured panels focused on student projects: graphic novels addressing social issues; the business of comics, toys and gaming; Harry Potter and higher education and other topics. One of the event’s highlights was “The Great Debate:

Marvel vs. DC” featuring faculty and students engaging in civil discourse. The panel was moderated by FOX 26 reporter Isiah Carey.

“I think an event like Gator-Con is important because it allows students, faculty and staff to come together and celebrate their passions for all things pop culture,” said Dr. Krista Gehring, associate professor of criminal justice and author of the comics series, *CrimComics*. **“It allows members from the community, like the various exhibitors and vendors, an opportunity to interact and engage with the UHD community in a way they may not have been able to before.”** **UHD**



BEAM ME UP

A WHITE CONSTRUCTION BEAM blazoned with the University of Houston-Downtown logo was hoisted to the top of the future College of Sciences & Technology (CST) Building as well-wishers cheered.

Special guests, including Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner, joined UHD community members at the construction site to sign the final beam and offer insights on the significance of this new addition to campus.

“In this city, we’re not just building a city for today; we’re building a city for our future,” Turner said. “In building

communities, you must have great facilities. The expansion that is taking place here today helps fulfill the dream of building a complete community in Downtown Houston and the Near Northside.”

In addition to Turner, dignitaries attending this event included Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis; Houston City Council member Mike Knox (’99); Texas Rep. Alma Allen; Harris County Sheriff Ed Gonzalez (’00); Steve Durham, executive vice president and collegiate team leader at Kirksey Architecture; Tom Vaughn, CEO of Vaughn Construction;

and University of Houston System Regents Dr. Durga Agrawal and Gerald McElvy.

UHD’s new \$73 million College of Sciences & Technology Building will include laboratory spaces, computational classrooms, a first-floor commons area and lobby, an expansive multipurpose room and a full-service café.

“Great universities succeed because of great communities and great partnerships,” said UHD President, **Dr. Juan Sánchez Muñoz.** **“The seeds of success have already been sown in this College and in our students.”** **UHD**

Gator Bites



Food For Change

TUITION AND TEXTBOOKS are just a few of the expenses that college students must incur. They also must budget for school supplies, laptops, cell phones and other tools to support their studies.

And, of course, students must afford food.

Food insecurity—or lack of access to fresh, nutritious food options—is prevalent at universities across the nation. According to the Center for Law and Social Policy, between 20 and 33 percent of American college students experience food insecurity. Students at the University of Houston-Downtown (UHD) are not immune to this problem, and the institution has created a solution to support food insecure students.

Over the past year, UHD has offered food scholarships to students. This semester, 300

students are currently participating in the program, and received \$60 per each credit hour taken during the semester. Scholarship recipients are provided a card that is redeemable at the University's second-floor Food for Change Market—a small store, operated by current UHD students and staff volunteers, providing fresh produce and non-perishable items donated by the Houston Food Bank.

There are two primary goals for the scholarships and pantry: to alleviate food insecurity among students and help them succeed at UHD.

UHD staffers Courtney Lundgren, director of enrollment communication and client relationship management and Tremaine Kwasioku, director of student activities, oversee the scholarship program and market.

The scholarship, which is entering its third year, was developed in 2016 following on-campus surveys and officially kicked off in 2017 to aid students recovering from Harvey. Data from the surveys reflected that students were lacking in healthy eating habits and access to fresh food, Kwasioku noted.

“We’re tracking students in the program to determine whether this scholarship not only feeds students and their families but helps them perform better academically and graduate,” he said.

“In the fall semester alone, we had 60 to 70 percent of scholarship recipients fully utilizing their funds and our market,” Kwasioku added. “And, another 400 to 500 students expressed interest in the scholarship.” **UHD**



THE Street Art OF ARTKUNGFU

HIS MURALS ACROSS THE CITY bear the signature: #ARTKUNGFU. With a vision to create moments of beauty in an otherwise subdued landscape, prolific Houston artist and UHD student Angel Quesada has been doing just that ... for more than 25 years.

The native Texan serves as a program manager for the Folklife & Civic Engagement program at the Houston Arts Alliance where he produces ethnographic content with communities throughout Greater Houston via concerts, exhibitions and workshops as well as several original murals inspired by Houston's East End.

“My art helps fill a void in some areas of our city,” he said. “Certain communities don’t receive attention from the arts industry, and the Second Ward is one of those areas. I live and work here, so it’s appropriate that I help provide artwork for the community and its residents.”

Fascinated by the visceral power of color and metaphor, Quesada develops these ideas in his creative process and “revels in exploring the fine line that connects geometry, spirituality and the ability to see the human hand at work in a large scale context.”

He saw an opportunity to further grow his skillset and knowledge at UHD after a colleague recommended that he should complete his bachelor’s degree. Recently, the University of Houston System, based on the recommendation of UHD President Dr. Juan Sánchez Muñoz, appointed Quesada to the System’s Public Art Acquisition Committee. He also will be involved with the citywide Latino Art Now! Conference, which UHD is co-sponsoring this year.

“I’m honored to represent UHD,” said Quesada. “Being at UHD has afforded me great opportunities that align with my life and career.”

In addition to his fine arts training, he’s also a professional martial artist. In 2003, Quesada ranked sixth nationally as a practitioner of Tai Chi Chuan. 



Angel Quesada

Gator

CORRESPONDENTS

By Sheryl E. Taylor

THE MISSION:

Spread the word about the University of Houston-Downtown

Four UHD students accepted the challenge. These newly minted “Gator Correspondents” are dedicated to showcasing the good news, activities and events—through the world of social media—that shape and tell the many varied stories of UHD’s Gator Grit.



◀ Alejandra Villarreal {SENIOR}

Field of Study: EC-6 Bilingual Education {College of Public Service}

Being a Gator Correspondent ... is a commitment to helping other students discover more opportunities that are available in their own school; promoting school pride and encouraging fellow students to show their Gator pride.

My love for UHD is ... the kindness and positivity of our Gator community. UHD does an amazing job at ensuring students know that the faculty and staff are truly dedicated to our success.

FOLLOW:  [@uhd_alejandra](#)



◀ Isbah Khan {JUNIOR}

Field of Study: Mathematics & Philosophy
{Colleges of Sciences & Technology/
Humanities & Social Sciences}

Being a Gator Correspondent ... has allowed me to share my amazing experiences within the UHD community and my fellow students to encourage getting involved and building relationships.

My love for UHD is ... the many opportunities that have helped me discover my passion to help others, which has given me lifelong experiences.

FOLLOW:  [@uhd_isbah](#)



◀ **Evelyn Y. Garcia** {SENIOR}

Field of Study: English
{College of Public Service}

Being a Gator Correspondent ... is an honor!

The idea that prospective students might read our social media feeds, see all the great things UHD can offer, and decide to choose UHD is very exciting.

My love for UHD is ...very real. UHD expanded my worldview and introduced me to so many amazing and supportive professors, faculty and fellow students.

FOLLOW:  [@uhd_evelyn](https://twitter.com/uhd_evelyn)

▶ **Stephanie Tejada ('18)**
{MBA GRADUATE STUDENT}

Field of Study: Marketing
{Marilyn Davies College of Business}

Being a Gator Correspondent ... means having the opportunity to use a powerful tool like social media to convey a positive message about the University to other fellow students. It is not just about posting; it's about telling a story that highlights how UHD helps students to develop themselves professionally and personally.

My love for UHD is ... the amazing opportunities for students and the dedicated professors who love to share their knowledge and experience and are committed to developing positive student-teacher relationships.

FOLLOW:  [@uhd_stephanie](https://www.instagram.com/uhd_stephanie)



◀ **Carlos Guajardo** {SENIOR}

Field of Study: History
{College of Humanities & Social Sciences}

Being a Gator Correspondent ... means showing how UHD and fellow Gators bring the community together for future Gators and revealing the best aspects of UHD.

My love for UHD is ... rooted in the passion professors have for their students. The greatest bonds and ideas are born by creating a relationship between professor and student. **UHD**

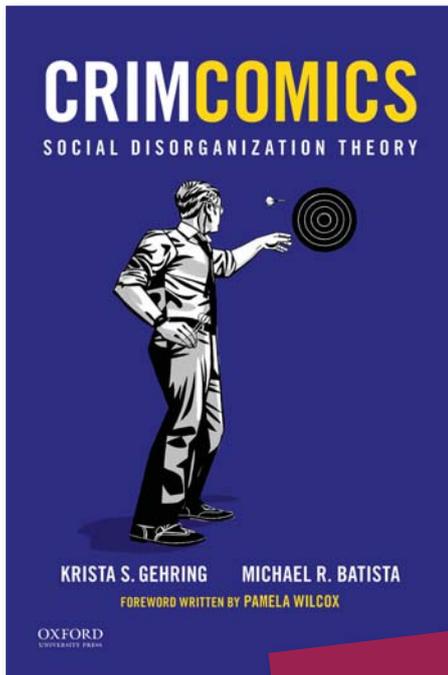
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Warning: Graphic Content

By Mike Emery

Comic books were once unwelcomed in the classroom. They were considered distractions for students ... counterproductive ... and irrelevant to curriculum.



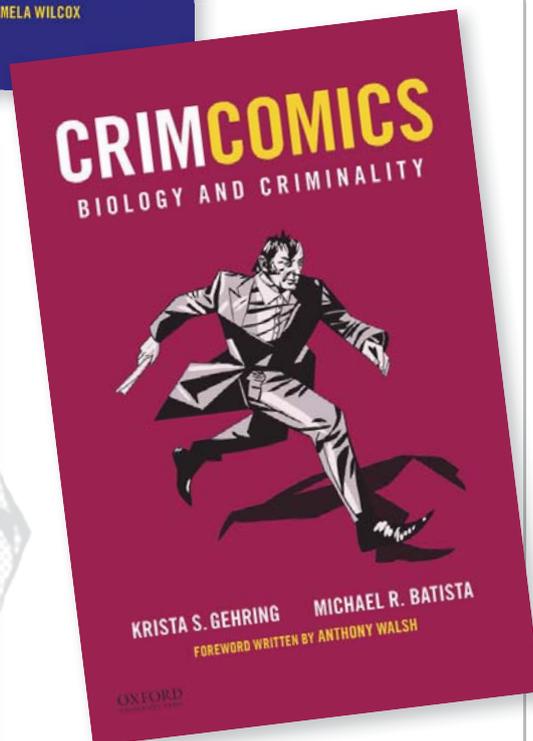
That was then.

Fast forward to 2018, and comic books—or graphic novels—have become a widely accepted art and literary form. They’ve influenced blockbuster films and hit television series, and at the University of Houston-Downtown, they are an essential part of criminal justice classes. Dr. Krista Gehring, associate professor in

the Department of Criminal Justice & Social Work, authors the graphic novel series CrimComics. Working with artist (and fellow criminal justice colleague Michael R. Batista), Gehring has created this series, which uses illustrated stories to explain criminological theories. She uses CrimComics as a supplemental text for her criminology class.

The result, she said, has proven popular and effective with students.

“When you are exploring why people commit crimes, theories can seem abstract,” she said. “Students may not understand how



these theories apply to everyday situations. Having illustrated examples of these theories helps students grasp these concepts. Plus, the students like reading them. I've had a few tell me that they have read them more than once. That speaks volumes about how helpful these graphic novels are."

Appreciation for CrimComics extends beyond UHD. The graphic novel series earned first place in the College Book Series at the 32nd Annual New York Book Show in October 2018.

"My collaborator Michael (Batista) and I were so excited just to be considered for this

award," Gehring said. "When we discovered we came in first place in the category, we were thrilled beyond belief! It's such an honor for CrimComics to receive national recognition like this! We are very grateful."

In addition to her graphic novels, Gehring developed other innovative ways to teach criminal justice topics. Last fall, she debuted the class "Popular Culture, Crime and Justice." Taught at UHD Northwest, the class uses gamification by formatting the class like a video game. When students complete assignments and quizzes, they receive experience points, which allow students to "level up." They can earn

badges for various accomplishments throughout the semester. Students also explore the depiction of crime in film, television, podcasts, video games and comic books.

"It's important to create new ways of helping students understand and embrace curriculum," Gehring said. "Engagement is important to the learning process. Different forms of media, such as comics or video games, are familiar to students, so why not use them to communicate class content?" **UFD**



Illustrations by Michael R. Batista

Sibling Rivalry

By Cynthia Gonzales

The Norcross' weren't really encouraged to continue their education beyond high school. When it was time for college, UHD Alums Jay and Zoe Norcross took two different paths.

In 1974, Zoe enrolled in Bryman College, a vocational school where she studied to be a dental assistant. Jay enrolled in another Texas university, but only stayed a semester.

"It was the socially acceptable thing to do, but I wasn't emotionally ready for it," Jay recalls. "I went one semester. I came back home and went to work."

Growing up in Dayton, Texas, the family eventually made their way to Houston, where their parents operated two small grocery stores.

Ironically, their sibling rivalry didn't surface until, as adults, they decided to attend the University of Houston-Downtown (UHD).

After the death of their mother in 2012, Zoe decided to enroll full time at UHD to complete the 30 hours she needed to graduate.

"When they evaluated my credits, I only lost three credits among all the credits I had previously earned," Zoe said. "I was told that no one ever comes in and only loses three credits."

Jay didn't realize his big sis was in school until he received an invitation to her graduation in 2013.





“All of a sudden, she was graduating from UHD,” Jay said. “My wife and I went to her graduation, and that’s when I said to myself . . . if she can finish, I can finish.”

It was then Jay set two goals for himself. The first was to complete his bachelor’s degree faster than Zoe. The second one was to earn a higher GPA.

“She never told me her GPA, but I figured if I ended up with a 4.0, I would do better than her,” he said.

Zoe, laughing at her brother, chimes in.

“He surpassed me,” she added. “When you’ve pursued a goal for 13 years, you really don’t worry as much about your GPA, just as long as you graduate.”

Both siblings earned Bachelor of Science degrees in interdisciplinary studies, with Jay graduating in fall 2017—completing his degree in four years.

Jay has spent nearly 20 years working abroad in the oil and gas industry. Presently, he is president of Kiewit OGC Engineering. Zoe works in the Family-Based Safety Services area of Child Protective Services, a position she’s held for the past five years.

Now, the Norcross’ are in graduate school. Zoe is working on a master’s in criminology at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, and Jay is enrolled at The University of Texas at Austin, working on his master’s in human dimensions of organizations.

Jay admits that he wants to make it to the finish line before his sister. “Oh, he’s going to beat me,” Zoe laughs. “I’m not in a hurry.” **UPD**





A Shared Interest of Giving

By Sheryl E. Taylor

There's intelligence everywhere, but not opportunity," said Tami Mallett.

Though neither she nor her husband Mark attended the University of Houston-Downtown (UHD), the University represents something special to them.

"The way UHD helps students who need to balance work, family and school is impressive," added Mark Mallett, senior vice president of operations and projects for Freeport LNG.

With no relationship to UHD until just a few years ago, the couple have become significant donors and volunteers.

A Shared Interest

Mark and Tami grew up three doors down from one another in Victoria, Texas; dated in high school; attended Texas A&M University; married in college; and are the proud parents of two successful adult children and grandparents to four children. At Texas A&M, Mark earned a degree in chemical engineering, while Tami majored

in computer science. Mark also earned a master's degree in engineering at Notre Dame University.

Their connection to UHD began four years ago when Tami, then vice president and Enterprise Group chief information officer at Hewlett Packard, served on the board of directors for the National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT). UHD lecturer of mathematics Sangeeta Gad, director of UHD's Houston Pre-freshman Enrichment Program (PREP) and an active member of NCWIT's local

chapter, offered Tami an opportunity to learn about the summer enrichment program for middle and high school students housed within the College of Sciences & Technology. Now retired, Tami has served as Houston PREP's guest speaker three times since 2015 and even shared the spotlight with Mark in 2016 for a joint speaking appearance.

From this, Tami and Mark have come to recognize the tremendous educational value of UHD.

“Getting a college degree is hard ... it’s a commitment of multiple years,” Mark said. “To help make that commitment easier is a positive. From the very beginning of our association with UHD, we could see that our gifts made a difference for students who needed a little extra help.”

Life’s Trajectory

They chose to make their first commitment in 2016, when they made a gift to create the Elizabeth Steen Endowed Scholarship in honor and celebration of the 50th anniversary of teaching for Tami’s mother,

a longtime educator who continues to teach mathematics at Lone Star College.

The scholarship helps students majoring in mathematics—and particularly those who have transferred from Lone Star or another community college.

Tami attributes much of the success she has enjoyed in life to the example set by her mother, a single parent who raised her family while earning two degrees.

“I saw firsthand how education changed the trajectory of my mother’s life and completely changed the course of my life. So many UHD students are the first in their families to go to college. And, the impact is not only on the student, but also on future generations. My greatest affinity to UHD is its mission to serve first-generation college students,” said Tami.

Recently, the Malletts made a significant commitment toward the new College of Sciences & Technology Building. In recognition of their six-figure gift, the entrance of the building will be named the Mark & Tami Mallett Grand Entrance.

New Beginnings

For Mark and Tami, this is just the beginning.

“We’ve got some work to do,” added Mark. “It began with honoring her mother’s accomplishments, but we plan to continue supporting UHD.”

One of the Malletts’ passions is to create educational pathways for young adults who have aged out of the foster care system. The Malletts involvement in this initiative is through their church’s Open Table program, but they hope to engage UHD in this effort in the future

“We have the opportunity to help some really smart, bright individuals, who weren’t on the college path, find their way,” said Tami. “UHD is big enough to provide opportunities, but small enough for students to receive the care they need. The quality of students, faculty and staff is incredible ... to experience such authenticity for students’ success is unique and a draw for us.”

Though not alumni, the Malletts are now permanently part of the UHD family. **UHD**

UHD, Here We Go.

Last year, UHD announced its \$25 million capital campaign—**UHD, Here We Go**. This fall, the University surpassed its goal thanks to a \$500,000 gift from longtime supporter, The Brown Foundation. This gift will support the construction of the College of Sciences & Technology Building. Over the past decade, the Foundation has been a major supporter of UHD’s Scholars Academy, an academically competitive program promoting scholarship and success for undergraduate STEM students.

“We’re not slowing down,” UHD President, Dr. Juan Sánchez Muñoz said. “We will continue to seek out new gifts and opportunities that will support our students and grow UHD.” **UHD**

Texas Dow Employees Credit Union (TDECU) has echoed its mission to “build relationships and invest in its members and the community” through its support of UHD. Since 2015, TDECU has sponsored on-campus events for alumni, students, faculty and staff on financial literacy programming for Gators. Two years ago, TDECU was a major sponsor for UHD’s 2016 Community Engagement Luncheon, which generated both awareness and resources (\$100,000-plus) to support service learning and UHD’s efforts to make Houston a better place. In 2018, TDECU gifted UHD \$150,000 to support student success initiatives. And, in recognition of TDECU’s continuous generosity, the Welcome Center’s Tour Room is now renamed the TDECU Tour Room. **UHD**



Early Scholars: Starting UHD Strong

Sometimes it's not how you start that's most important, it's how you finish. Over 40 graduates of Texas Early College High Schools (ECHS) from across the state have made the choice to Finish UHD Strong.

By Paige Caldwell

In early 2017, UHD received a \$1.44 million grant to create the Greater Texas Foundation (GTF) Scholars Program with a goal to increase the number of ECHS graduates who successfully transition to a university and complete a baccalaureate degree.

The cohort of ECHS students benefit from peer mentoring, career exploration, community engagement opportunities and scholarship support. The program aims to help students complete their bachelor's degree in three years with limited debt.

Since its inception, program coordinator Dr. Branden Kuzmik, has spearheaded its implementation in collaboration with the Offices of Advancement & University Relations, as well as Admissions. **"It was great to see the different UHD departments work together seamlessly to make this initiative work, which ultimately resulted in more than 240 GTF applicants,"** said Kuzmik.

UHD Magazine spoke with two current scholars, psychology major Heidi Lozano and political science major Nelson Reyes—graduates of South Early College High School and Challenge Early College High School, respectively.

UHD Magazine: Having already completed an associate's degree, what was it like transitioning into courses related to your major?

Reyes: I feel like I'm learning the things I need to learn on a daily basis. I also have a network which I can access to find the help I need for any problems I might run into.

Lozano: So far, my psychology classes have been really interesting and enlightening; and I am excited to learn more. I believe I can be successful with the help of the GTF scholars program and go on to pursue my dream of becoming a lawyer.

UHD Magazine: Out of all the other Texas universities you could have qualified for under this scholarship, why UHD?

Lozano: For me, it was the small class sizes. Coming from an early college high school, we had so much support as well as a small classroom environment, so it was an ideal situation for me to transition to a school with a similar environment. I knew I would get the support I needed here, especially through this program.

Reyes: UHD was an obvious choice for me. It's affordable, and I had other friends coming here who are also participating in the GTF scholars program. Also, the fact that it's close to home is what really cemented my decision. **UHD**

NONPROFIT

The Masters of Mission

By Mike Emery

Passion and professionalism are essential at any nonprofit organization. Those traits define the students enrolled at the University of Houston-Downtown's Master of Arts in Non-Profit Management Program (MNPM).

At just five years young, the program has emerged as one of UHD's fastest-growing graduate programs—from 23 students to more than 100. It's also ranked nationally among the top online master's programs in nonprofit management. *[Source: Best College Reviews]*

Overnight success doesn't come without hard work and vision. According to program director Dr. Laila Sorurbaksh, one of the program's primary strengths is its faculty—a who's-who of local nonprofit leaders.

MNPM's distinguished faculty members include: Dr. Robert Sanborn, president and CEO of Children at Risk, Houston; Brian Greene, president and CEO of the Houston Food Bank; and Tony Van Slyke, chief financial officer of Goodwill Industries of Houston.

“These practitioners are able to provide practical advice and critical insights on careers in nonprofit organizations.”

Sorurbaksh said. “They are leading some of the most successful and productive nonprofits in our city. They bring fresh perspectives from the field to enrich our students’ education.”

The program also benefits from an advisory council, which includes Houston-area nonprofit leaders, that guides the development of the curriculum and provides input to help students succeed once they graduate.

“Through our advisory council, we're able to determine the skills required by nonprofits in our community and the types of courses that would best prepare our students for future careers,” Sorurbaksh said.

Courses in MNPM cover topics such as marketing, finance, leadership, volunteerism, management and strategic planning, among others. These subjects are helpful for students who are new to the world of nonprofits, as well as those who are already employed in the industry.

MNPM student Marcellyn Champion serves as director of Community Affairs for Houston's Bridging for Tomorrow. This nonprofit serves members of the Northwest Houston Community with a food pantry, mentoring programs for children, after-school programs and other initiatives.

“I took a class on volunteer management thinking it would help volunteer recruitment and program management,” Champion said. “During that semester, two of my colleagues and I were given the responsibility of revamping our volunteer process, including re-examining policies and procedures. I was so excited that I was able to contribute to the conversation in a thoughtful and meaningful way.”

UHD's MNPM also connects with Houston-area professionals through CenterPoint Energy's annual Power Tools Conference—a one-day event featuring panels and sessions aimed at empowering nonprofit organizations. In addition to its practical classes and community-wide conference, MNPM also offers an internship program, which places students directly into the field.

“We use many tools in preparing our students to lead nonprofits,” Sorurbaksh said. “It's important that they are successful after graduating from our program. Not only will they be tasked with making their respective organizations successful, they are responsible for making a difference in the community.” UFD

Bridging Barriers Through Books

By Mike Emery

Mastering reading is a core skill for elementary school students. Without this basic academic ability, students are unable to be successful in any other scholastic subject. This is particularly true for non-native English speakers.

No one understands this better than veteran educator and University of Houston-Downtown associate professor Dr. Maria Bhattacharjee. She knows the importance of helping English Language Learners (ELLs) keep pace with their peers.

For 11 years, Bhattacharjee has curated the University's E-Book Library, which contains children's books written and illustrated by Urban Education students. Each book is available in English and Spanish to help develop students' reading and writing skills. Best of all, the library is available at no cost through UHD's Center for Community Engagement & Service Learning.

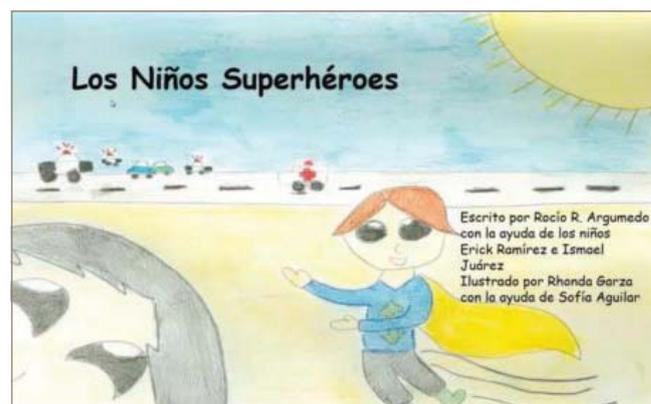


Illustration by Rhonda Garza

“Students in pre-K through second grade have a hard time finding books that are culturally meaningful to them,” Bhattacharjee said. “This is particularly true for Hispanic students whose first language is Spanish. They may be new to our country, so they do not have a firm knowledge of American culture. Reading becomes difficult because they cannot comprehend what they read. They decode what they read, but they don’t have prior knowledge regarding the new culture, so their understanding of translated stories is diminished.”

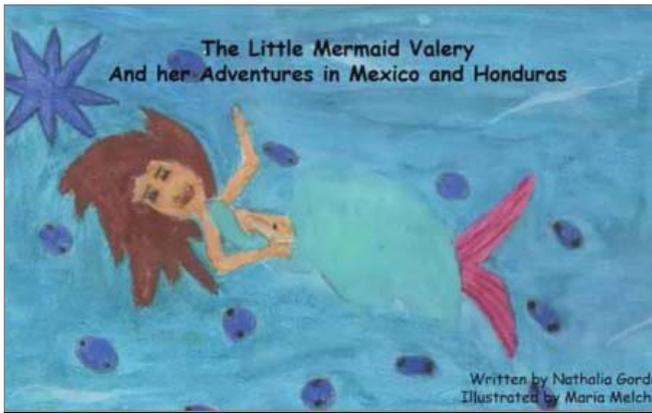


Illustration by Maria Melchor

This project recently celebrated its 11th anniversary and continues to reach the city's ELL students through a partnership with Houston's Energized for Excellence Academy.

The creation of the books begin with Bhattacharjee's students learning about the children who will be reading these books. They visit them at Energized Academy to assess their literacy level and learn about their interests. The Urban Ed students then select a topic that is meaningful to these children and begin creating text. Working in pairs, one student writes the story and the other illustrates it. Once completed, the books are digitized and placed online with audio narrations (also provided by students).



Illustration by Kasey Hernandez

Senior bilingual education major Alejandra Villareal was among the students who recently produced an E-Book. She wrote the story, "The Halloween Party/La Fiesta de Halloween," and fellow student Kasey Hernandez contributed the book's artwork. The story tells the story of two boys who embark on a trick or treating adventure and must find their way home.

For Villareal, the opportunity to author a book for children in both English and Spanish was rewarding in many ways.



Illustration by Kasey Hernandez

"It helped me understand how to create content that students could learn and comprehend," she said. "Now, I know how to help students become readers. For teachers at all levels, that's very important."

Following her experience writing the book, Villareal (and other Urban Education students) taught reading and writing to a pre-kindergarten class at Energized Academy using materials from the E-Book Library.

The E-Book project and follow-up tutoring opportunities are valuable experiences for Urban Education students, Villareal noted. More importantly, they provide Houston-area students with resources that will grow their reading skills in English and Spanish.

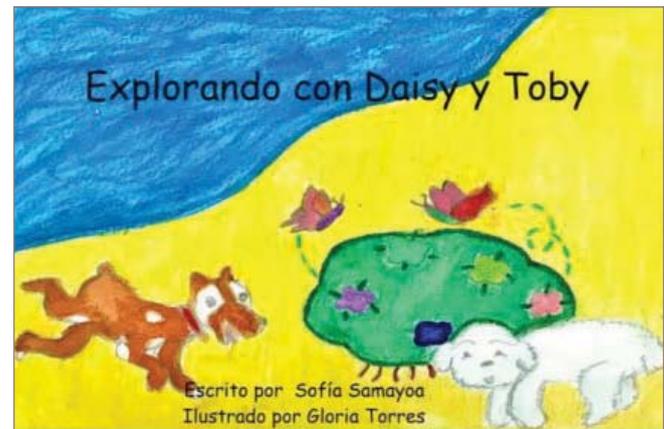


Illustration by Gloria Torres

"I take great satisfaction knowing that the book I worked on will help children in our city," Villareal said. "This was a very meaningful project for myself, Kasey (Hernandez) and our classmates ... but it will have a lasting impact on the Energized Academy students. I'm grateful to have been a part of this project and take pride in knowing that children will continue to have access to the E- Book Library for years to come." **UFD**



ADMISSION POSSIBLE

By Paige Caldwell

UHD OFFICE OF ADMISSIONS' MOTTO: POSSIBILITIES, NOT IMPOSSIBILITIES.

This belief inspired admissions staff members Spencer Lightsey and Chris Bell to share their growing musical talents with the UHD community. In 2017, they started their blues-inspired band, aptly named, Admission Possible.

For Lightsey, it all started with a homemade cigar box guitar and the Deep Purple rock classic, "Smoke on the Water."

UHD Alum Lightsey, associate director of Undergraduate Outreach & Admissions, was in search of a life/work balance. The cigar box guitar began as a science project for his daughter, but turned into a way for him to decompress. Some friends taught him how to play the hit song on it, which eventually led to him picking up the guitar followed by the bass.

Lightsey began playing in different venues around Downtown and on campus. He also sought out musicians around UHD and soon discovered Bell had an affinity for percussion instruments and the harmonica. "I love writing," said Bell, coordinator of

Graduate & International Admissions. "Years ago, I would write poems and short stories, but now I'm writing music and I'm excited about it. I look forward to continuing to do what we do."

Bell, who is also the band's vocalist, spent time living in New Orleans and Austin. His writing style is soft blues, but he also likes to dabble in Texas Swing while bringing in some tribal vibes with a Kenyan drum and a Cajón.

"Being in undergraduate admissions, you're helping prospective students position themselves for new opportunities. It's very empowering," Lightsey said. "Going to college is a life-changing decision. And that's what is great about UHD ... this University makes it possible for so many people to get an education."

Bell works with students, some of whom have been out of school for many years. He considers himself a resource, an advocate and a mentor for these students.

"It's kind of like creating music, which can be a stretch for me," said Bell. "School is sometimes a stretch for these students. I guide them through the admission process and help them find the right fit to maximize their potential. It's like finding the right style of music to tell a story." 



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