

# UHD magazine

Spring 2020

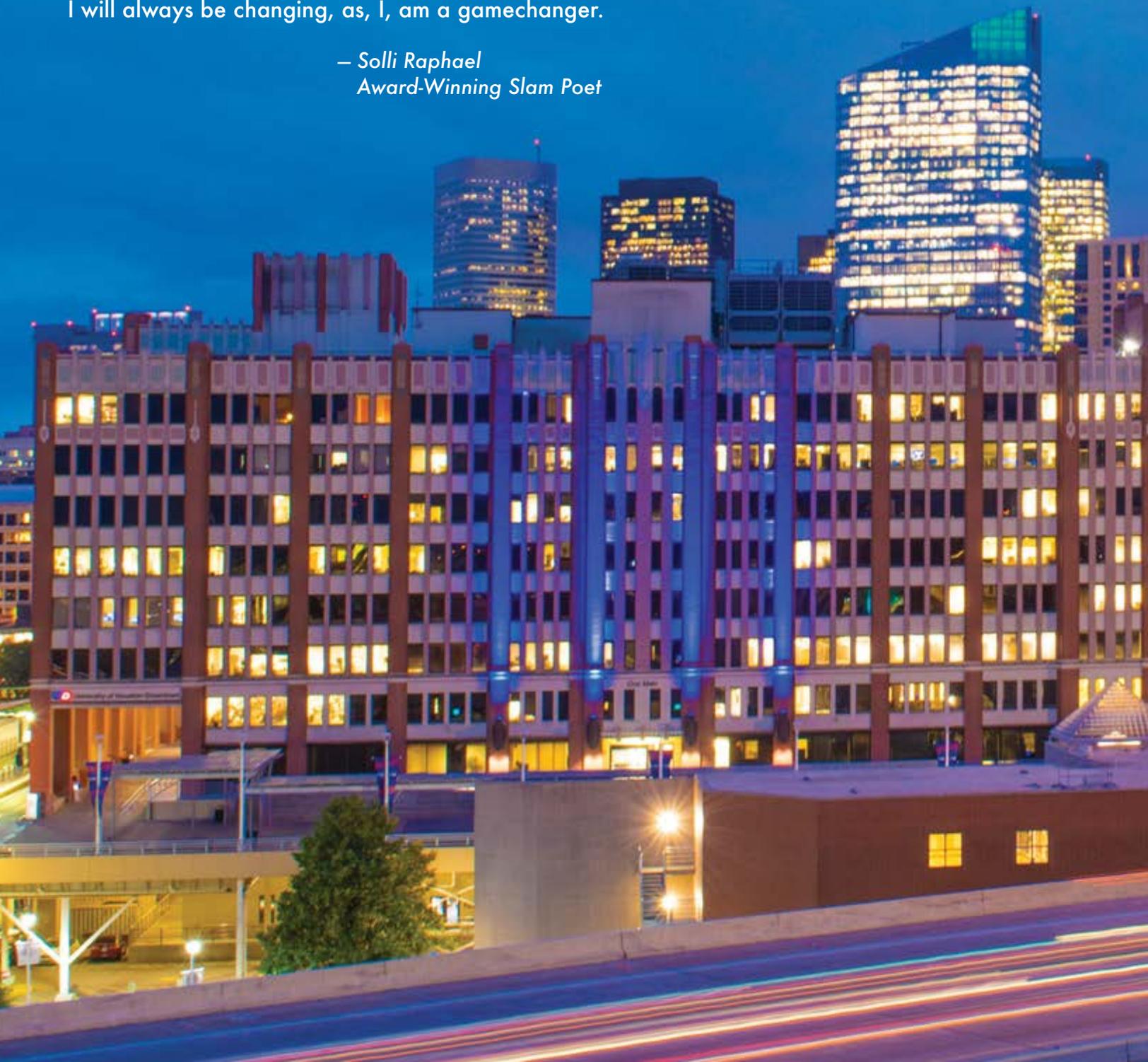


## Game Changers

## GAME CHANGER

I am the lightning that makes thunder—rumble.  
I am the space—outside of the box.  
I am the magnetic field between the moon and the sea.  
I am the quality—in equality.  
I am the reality, of my own big dreams.  
I am the curve of the world, that I can only just see.  
... I am a gamechanger.  
And no matter how much you change,  
No matter how much the world changes,  
No matter how much change changes.  
I will always be changing, as, I, am a gamechanger.

— Solli Raphael  
Award-Winning Slam Poet







# From The President's Desk

**W**elcome to UHD Magazine's Spring 2020 issue.

The New Year offers opportunities to achieve new milestones and build upon the significant contributions we are making to our region.

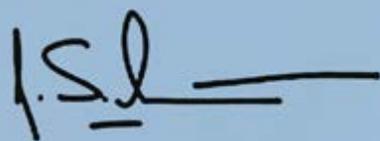
Last year was certainly filled with achievements, as UHD welcomed its largest freshman class—nearly 1,600 new Gators. These freshmen were part of our University's record fall enrollment of more than 15,000 students. This accomplishment is one of many indicators that UHD is increasingly becoming a university of first choice for many seeking to impact their lives and careers. It also speaks to the talents and dedication of our University Community and its commitment to growing UHD's economic impact and academic efficacy.

In addition to the consistently improving academic performance metrics at UHD, a recent Economic Impact Study further evidenced the substantial role of the University in the region's prosperity. (See Deep Impact, page 24.) According to this study, the University added \$2 billion dollars to the regional economy during fiscal year 2018—a more than 60 percent increase since the previous study was conducted in 2014. And, our alumni generated \$1.8 billion dollars of income in our region. That number is indeed impressive and demonstrates the importance of UHD—to produce successful graduates who significantly contribute to our region.

UHD's storied past, present and future are embedded in its spirit to create leaders and trailblazers who are making a difference in the world around them. This issue of UHD Magazine, themed "Game Changers," features proud Gator graduates who kicked off a new Alumni Campaign celebrating how they are making an impact in our community. (See Gators About Town, page 10.)

The issue also introduces our student leaders who are committed to civic engagement and community service. And, you will meet our award-winning Scene Investi-Gators team and learn how the generosity of our donors empowers the lives of our students.

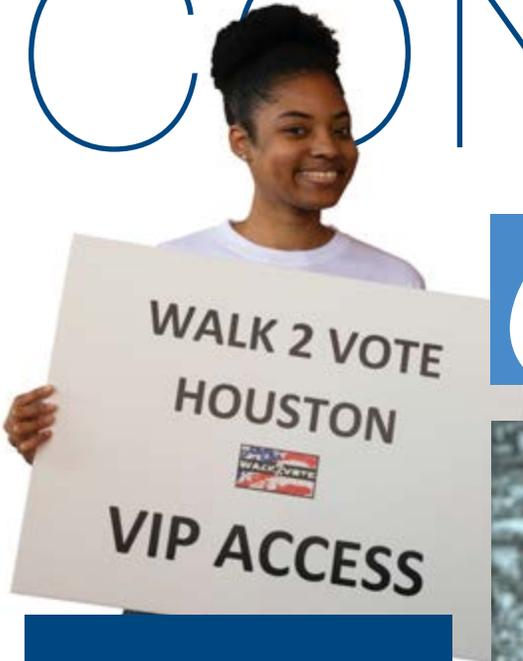
It's a new decade and in many ways a new "game" as the higher education landscape in Texas is evolving to meet the demands of the state's workforce. No matter the stakes ... and no matter how much the game changes, Gators play to win. We will continue to produce talented graduates ready to help grow our community, improve lives and serve our city and state.



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



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 [UHD.edu/magazine](http://UHD.edu/magazine)

# WE *The People*

By Sheryl E. Taylor

**D**o you remember the first time you learned about the Constitution of the United States in a history class or being taught to memorize its first sentence? Here's a gentle reminder:

“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

In Dr. Christina Hughes' upper-level Political Science 4390 course, students are learning how to create a constitution for the fictitious country Tubdub, (Temporarily Underdeveloped But Definitely Upward Bound).

During Hughes' time as a lecturer, researcher and graduate student at the University of Houston, her favorite class was the simulation course “Principles of Constitutional Design” taught by Dr. Donald S. Lutz. Ironically, it was Lutz who encouraged Hughes to forgo law school, even though she was already accepted, and pursue political science. She eventually joined UHD after an invitation from fellow graduate school colleague Dr. David Branham, professor and chair of Social Sciences at UHD.

**“I fell in love with the students here,” said the assistant professor of political science in the College of Humanities & Social Sciences. “I’m also a first-generation college student. I feel like I have more in common with our students and that I can make a difference at UHD.”**

In the simplest of terms, the course is described as a simulation and diplomacy course. The class functions as a constitutional convention where students are assigned to Tubdub islands, which have a multi-ethnic population, varied religious denominations and political party platforms. The students also are provided documents containing the islands' history, geography and economics as well as early founding documents—everything one would need to know to write a constitution.



**“I wanted to learn how the conventions that lead to entirely new forms of government are conducted. What is argued? Why is it argued?” said Jesse Uppal, senior criminal justice and political science major. “The concept of nation building by way of constitutional design is one of the best methods**

**when studying entire demographics of people. I think that knowing how a group of people create documents that will govern hundreds of thousands is key to unlocking relations with foreign countries.”** Uppal’s post-UHD plans are to attend law school and pursue a career in politics.



In addition to lectures, the class hosts a constitutional convention where students are given prompts from Hughes, such as “What do you want your political institution to look like?” or “How complex do you want your political institutions to be? (presidential, parliamentary, or unicameral (single

legislative chamber, i.e. England) or bicameral (two legislative chambers, i.e. House of Representatives and Senate).” Within this unmoderated caucus, ideas are brought forth and debates ensue about parliamentary procedures.

“Per Lutz, the more factions you have in your country, the more diversity you have ... the more complex your political institutions need to be. You need to protect all your political minorities from the political majority, which ensures all that complexity protects everyone,” said Hughes. “The U.S. Constitution is used as a baseline in the course since it’s the oldest living democracy.”

Along with Lutz’s book, students also are assigned portions of The Federalist Papers (a collection of 85 articles and essays written by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay under the pseudonym “Publius” to promote the ratification of the United States Constitution) as well as comparative literature in politics and theory (Aristotle, Hobbes, Shaw, Locke and Rousseau) and American government.

**“Countries can become chaotic when governments enter a crisis. By understanding the framework of how a government should work can help avoid those crises,”** said Grant McFarland, senior political science major. **“Learning and comparing how models of government are designed and the complexity of the crises they face has made this course intriguing and captivating.”**

The class’ final project is to write their own constitutions and federalist papers defending why their constitution is best for this fictional country.

“It’s really a cool class,” Hughes emphasized. “In political science courses, we teach them about American government and other political institutions that exist. This class takes every political science concept they’ve learned and puts it into practice, seeing how it works and what it all means. And, along the way they’re learning parliamentary procedures.

**“I love UHD ... it’s allowed me to create and offer new classes that encourage and teach my students to make the world a better place.”** UHD

# GATOR CULTURE ENCOURAGES CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

By Emily Conrad



The culture of UHD Gators is comprised of standout leaders who are committed to community and civic engagement. The University hosts classes and organizations that offer service opportunities to give back and to improve lives.

For University of Houston-Downtown student Alan Modrow, many of his peers are interested and invested in shaping the communities they come from through service work and political engagement. They naturally begin their involvement in community engagement and political deliberation while at UHD.

**“Because UHD is in the heart of the city, it is inevitable for us to have an impact in our community,” Modrow said. “Students at the University of Houston-Downtown care about their communities and their city. Gators come from all across the city, so who better to ask about how their communities can be served. UHD is community-driven, and the students are the gold standard of resilience. UHD cares about Houston because we are Houston!”**

In 2018, the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) released its latest findings after analyzing 1,000 schools and 10 million students over a six-year period to determine the voting patterns on college campuses. The NSLVE results were not surprising to UHD.





UHD students' registration and voting rates were higher than the national average. In 2018, 50 percent of these students voted compared to the national average of 39.1 percent. The data also showed that voting rates skyrocketed among all ages and groups from 2014 to 2018. The voting rates for UHD students rose 31.4 percent in those four years.

Dr. Windy Lawrence explained that these high levels of civic engagement at UHD did not just happen by chance. Efforts by the University's Center for Public Deliberation (CPD) and the Student Government Association (SGA) for the past decade have planted the seeds to promote student involvement in encouraging others to vote.

"Under my founding directorship, students, faculty, staff, administrators and community members have worked to make the Center for Public Deliberation a pioneering leader at our University and a national model for other universities and colleges that are committed to civic engagement," said Lawrence, director of CPD.

The CPD has been nationally and regionally recognized for its innovative efforts in student engagement. Since 2008, it has hosted campuswide public deliberations on national issues to provide opportunities for students and the community to join in a public discourse.

**"Political deliberation is central to creating student civic agency," emphasized Lawrence, UHD associate professor of communication studies. When students feel urgency to change 'their own agency', they understand that their voice is a critical part of creating the best decisions in our democracy."**

In 2012, the University's SGA founded Walk2Vote—a student-led initiative focused on registering students to vote and walking to the polls to participate in early voting. Walk2Vote is now a nationwide event at many university campuses.

Amid much fanfare and celebration, Walk2Vote's most visible part is when SGA and participants walk together to cast their votes. However, much of the hard work is done months in advance.

SGA president Shay Tatum leads the effort to organize voter registration and provide opportunities for students to meet and interact with the organization on campus.



**"The Student Government Association and its officers make a concerted effort to ensure every student on campus is a registered voter," Tatum said. "We have registered more than 7,000 students to date, and it's not only our civic duty, but our responsibility as citizens of this UHD community."**

CPD and SGA's most recent initiative is "Meet & Greet The Candidates," which has become a University fixture since 2016. Hosted on the same day as Walk2Vote, local candidates join UHD students on campus for a roundtable discussion shortly before students vote. This event gives students the chance to candidly speak one-on-one with candidates. For many students, this opportunity may be their first introduction to a political candidate.

National studies have shown that students who become involved with civic engagement and voting during college tend to stay involved for the rest of their lives.

UHD student Gerri Valle further explained that for students to be involved, they need to be included.

**"If we want to involve more young people in politics, they have to feel a connection," Valle said. "One way to do this is through public deliberation." UHD**

# GATORS ABOUT TOWN

By Sheryl E. Taylor

**I**t all began with seven new billboards for Houstonians to view on their daily commutes along the city's bustling freeways.

Thanks to UHD's new alumni marketing campaign, the University is celebrating the accomplishments of its Gator Alumni—now more than 51,000 strong.

This past fall, seven alumni debuted in the yearlong campaign. Spring 2020 will feature an additional five.

**“This campaign brings together the diversity, breadth of experience and professionalism of our alumni—from entrepreneurs and public servants to leaders of successful companies and organizations in Greater Houston,” said UHD President, Dr. Juan Sánchez Muñoz.**

According to Elisa Olsen, executive director of University Relations at UHD, one of the best ways to show the value of an institution is through prospective and current students and alumni. Olsen also emphasized that great care was taken to ensure the billboards are positioned in areas throughout the city and not just Downtown Houston.

“In selecting where to feature the billboards, we were very deliberate in choosing areas where our students are represented,” Olsen said. “We want to highlight the successful professionals who graduated from UHD to the broadest audience possible.”

In addition to the billboards, the campaign also features videos, webpages, articles, social media and photography. There are future plans to expand the campaign to other media.

This campaign further validates the overall impact of UHD in the region. Recently, the University completed an economic impact study for fiscal year 2018. In addition to adding \$2 billion in income to the regional economy, the study also spotlights UHD's value to its students. For every dollar students invest in attending UHD, they will receive a cumulative value of \$6.20 in higher future earnings—a 6-to-1 return on investment. [See “Deep Impact” story on page 24.]

“Our alumni contribute \$1.8 million in added income to our region. It's one of the reasons UHD exists ... to produce dynamic graduates who contribute significantly to our region's prosperity,” said Muñoz. **UHD**



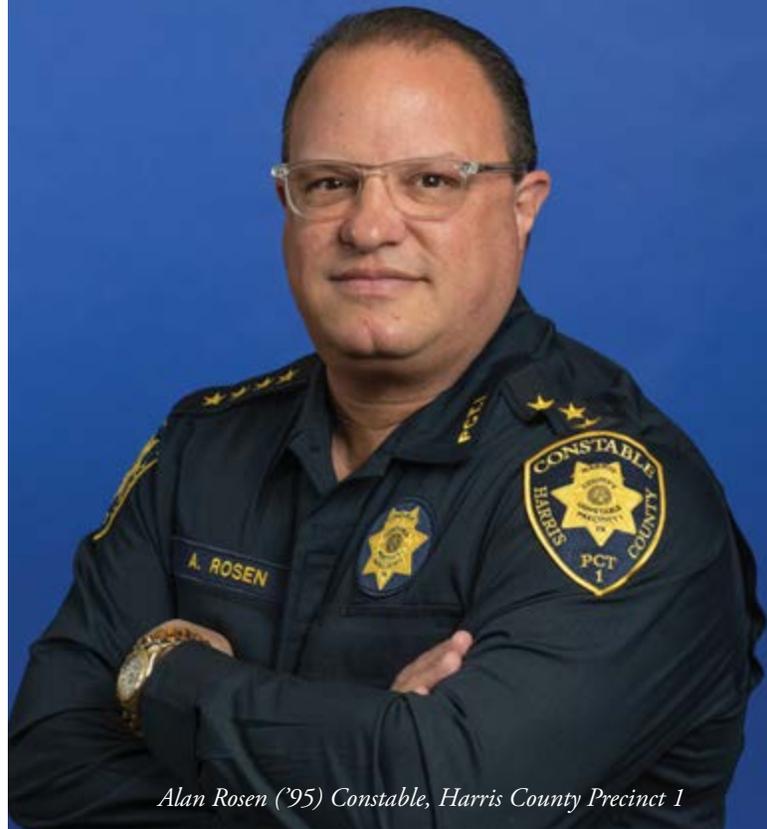
*Julie Voss ('17) Executive Director, Susan G. Komen Houston*

**“My degree from UHD has changed my life.** It has allowed me to be more than a fundraising professional. I already had a strong background in philanthropy, so I took classes that would strengthen my abilities in other areas such as finance and management. Nonprofits are my calling. I love helping people. Thanks to UHD’s nonprofit management program, I’m able to make a difference in the lives of others. For that, I am particularly grateful.” [Learn more at uhd.edu/julievoss](http://uhd.edu/julievoss)

## “Pursue your dreams ... go for what you want.”

If you have to hit the snooze button in the morning when you go to work, you aren't in the right field. You deserve something that doesn't feel like a job, but is a mission that you are passionate about. When you love going to work ... you will never work a day in your life. I believe that we need to find what we care about and what drives us. And, that's what UHD did for me ... I found my dream job.”

Learn more at [uhd.edu/alanrosen](http://uhd.edu/alanrosen)



*Alan Rosen ('95) Constable, Harris County Precinct 1*



*Ruby Muñoz Dang ('94) Partner, GH&A Asset Management Firm*

## “It was a perfect fit.”

There were people who looked like me and students I could relate to. I felt that I could succeed at UHD. I look at this University and see myself in the faces of the students. In fact, I met a recent graduate and am now trying to help her further her career. UHD gives you the tools for success, but also inspires you to help others succeed. That's what makes it a gem in our city.”

Learn more at [uhd.edu/rubydang](http://uhd.edu/rubydang)



*Jay T. Norcross ('17) President, Kiewit OGC Engineering*

**“UHD is a hometown university.** Entering college at a later age as a non-traditional student, who had been working for many years, was the right time for me. One of the great things about UHD were the options and flexibility it offered. I was able to craft my degree exactly as I wanted it to be to get the most out of it. I received a very well-rounded education at UHD. I’m a better communicator, stronger writer, more effective critical thinker and a more complete professional.” [Learn more at uhd.edu/jaynorcross](https://www.uhd.edu/jaynorcross)

**“I grew up in a community that was adjacent to the University of Houston-Downtown.** I soon realized that it was possible for someone like me to go to college. I remember landing on the third floor of the One Main Building at UHD and there were people who provided what I needed to make the best decisions for my studies. For a non-traditional student entering a brand new world, I knew I chose the right place ... I felt at home.” [Learn more at uhd.edu/edgonzalez](http://uhd.edu/edgonzalez)



*Ed Gonzalez ('00) Harris County Sheriff*



*Mariselle Quijano ('95) Owner/Operator, McDonald's Restaurants*

**“My parents made it clear that I was going to college.**

They stressed that you never know what the future can hold and what can happen in life. When you have a college degree, no one can ever take that away from you. ... It will always give you something to fall back on. The relationships with my professors were important to me. At UHD, you weren't just one of the students in a crowd—the professors were always there. What you learned was very important to them.” [Learn more at uhd.edu/marisellequijano](https://www.uhd.edu/marisellequijano)

**“Before I graduated from UHD, I had a job that paid a couple of dollars an hour.** As soon as I earned my business degree, I became successful ... mentally and financially. By learning from international professors, I was able to grow and expand my business in the city I live in and conduct business all over the world. If you’re getting ready to graduate, don’t be afraid of any industry. I used my experience and my UHD degree to enter a globally-dominated industry ... and now I’m at the top of that industry.” [Learn more at uhd.edu/marcusbowers](http://uhd.edu/marcusbowers)



# UNITED *for* SUCCESS

**MORE STUDENTS** from low-income families will gain access to a college education thanks to a new partnership between UHD and the **United for College Success Coalition (UFCS)**. A letter of intent signed by UHD President, Dr. Juan Sánchez Muñoz and UFCS member schools (KIPP Public Schools, IDEA Public Schools, YES Prep Public Schools, Houston ISD, Spring Branch ISD, One Goal Houston, Harmony Public Schools, Young Women’s Preparatory Network, Uplift Education, Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD) will work together in providing students with pathways to college graduation and a transition into a successful career. “Every year, over 400 of our high school graduates make UHD their school of choice,” said David Johnston, HISD assistant superintendent. “It’s exciting to see how many of them excel in their studies and in their career fields. Through this new partnership, we’ll see even more student success stories.” **UFD**



## EXPLORING URBAN TEXAS

**WHAT BETTER LOCATION** for a discussion on “**The Future of Urban Texas**” than Houston’s premiere urban University? UHD joined forces with the Texas Tribune for the second time in three years to present a forum exploring issues affecting Texas cities. The November event was moderated by members of the Texas Tribune’s editorial team and CEO Evan Smith. Special guests included Texas legislators Rep. Diego Bernal, Sen. Paul Bettencourt, Rep. Garnet Coleman and Rep. Celia Israel. Other featured panelists included mayors, Sylvester Turner (Houston) and Steven Adler (Austin). **UFD**



*Texas Tribune Evan Smith, Austin Mayor Steven Adler & Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner*

# A NATIONAL CONVERSATION ON EDUCATION

**UHD WAS FRONT AND CENTER** for a conversation on education. In September, the University partnered with NBC Learn and local affiliate KPRC Ch. 2 for “**Education Now Houston.**” The live event was streamed across the United States through NBC News and broadcast locally on KPRC. Houston-area education leaders shared their thoughts on issues such as the 21st century classroom, the state of Houston schools, supporting underserved students and other topics. NBC’s chief education correspondent Rehema Ellis moderated the event, and UHD’s own Dr. Ron Beebe, professor of educational research, contributed his expertise to the program. **UHD**



# Making AN IMPACT

**As UHD PRESIDENT**, Dr. Juan Sánchez Muñoz says, “Great universities host great conversations on issues affecting the community.” That was indeed the case during the **Hispanic Impact Summit: The State of Hispanics in Houston**. Presented by the Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and hosted at UHD, the event provided a look into Houston’s Latino communities and their impact on the regional economy. It also featured more than 300 leaders in business, academia, government and public service presentations, dialogues and panel sessions. **UHD**



# GATOR GRIT

SPEAKER SERIES

# BIGGER & BETTER



*Henry Cisneros, Precinct 2 Commissioner Adrian Garcia & Dr. Muñoz*

**THE SECOND YEAR** of UHD's Gator Grit Speaker Series featured a range of guests sharing insights on their personal journeys to success. 2019 speakers included Former U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, U.S. Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of African Affairs Tibor Nagy, state legislators Sen. Carol Alvarado and Rep. Christina Morales, former U.S. Housing & Urban Development Secretary Henry Cisneros, and alumnus and entrepreneur Marcus Bowers ('11). The series also featured recent alums from the College of Sciences & Technology, including Dr. Karina Vázquez-Arreguin, Isaac Valdez, Dr. Valerie K. Jordan and Karla Alvarez who served on a panel for "Gator Grit in STEM: Salute to Stephen Hawking." UHD's Gator Grit Speaker Series debuted in 2018 and highlights regional leaders, who demonstrate courage, resolve and tenacity. 



*Dr. Muñoz & Marcus Bowers ('11)*



# Wellness & Success C E N T E R

**THE START OF A NEW YEAR** also marks ongoing planning and development for the new UH Wellness & Success Center.

The Center will provide enhanced recreation areas for fitness classes and other related activities. In addition, it will offer student support and success initiatives, such as academic workshops, programs and special events. The facility will be located west of the College of Sciences & Technology Building, north of I-10.

The approval of the Center is thanks to state lawmakers who authorized support of the facility during Texas' 86th Legislative Session. The University of Houston System Board of Regents

and UH students voted to approve this project. The official targeted completion date for the Center is July 2022.

UH President, Dr. Juan Sánchez Muñoz noted the efforts of State Rep. Borris Miles and UH alumna and State Rep. Mary Ann Perez, who authored House Bill 1277 and was influential in its passage.

**“This is the first time in 35 years that our Legislature has approved such a fee to fund a project of this magnitude on our campus,”** Muñoz said. **“The Wellness & Success Center will continue to make our University a major player in recruiting and retaining future and current Gators.”** UH



# MODERN MEDICINE

**UH STUDENTS** Maria Mendoza-Mora, Noelia Jimenez-Fuentes and Daniel Rivera all share the same dream of helping others through modern medicine. Mora, a senior, along with juniors Fuentes and Rivera, have put those plans into motion by shadowing Dr. Carlos Moreno at his UT Physicians Family Medicine office in the Texas Medical Center. Moreno, the C. Frank Webber, M.D. Chair of Family Medicine at UTHealth, is a nationally recognized leader in his profession as well as chair of the Department of Family & Community Medicine at McGovern Medical School at UTHealth. **“One of the most important values I was taught was the importance of giving a helping hand to those students wanting to enter medicine,”** Moreno said. **“I want to inspire them as they pursue their future goals.”** UH

# Faculty Bites

**DINOSAUR DISCOVERY** Films such as the “Jurassic World” series featured a range of large prehistoric creatures, but *Kwanasaurus* has been absent from their plots. That’s because the significantly smaller reptilian herbivore was only recently discovered by researchers **Dr. Jeffrey Martz**, UHD assistant professor of natural science, and Bryan Small of Texas Tech University. Their discovery, named *Kwanasaurus williamparkeri*, is a small “dinosauromorph” that existed in Colorado over 200 million years ago—the oldest known dinosaur relative to have lived in Colorado. Their research was released in the online journal, PeerJ.

**ON FILM** The Black Film Center/Archive at Indiana University Bloomington awarded **Dr. Charles (Chuck) Jackson** a visiting research fellowship to study the films and papers of the Jessie Maple Collection [1971-1992] thanks to his research proposal, “Just Microphysiognomies: Jessie Maple’s Close-Ups.” The associate professor of English’s research asked how a pivotal career change from a bacteriologist to a filmmaker might have enhanced Maple’s scholarly understanding of the use of a movie camera.

**THE DEMOCRATIC DIALOGUE** Professor of Political Science and Social Sciences and former UHD President, **Dr. William (Bill) Flores** co-edited “Democracy, Civic Engagement, and Citizenship in Higher Education: Reclaiming Our Civic Purpose” (Lexington Books). The book, co-edited with fellow academic Dr. Katrina Rogers of Fielding Graduate University, features university/college presidents’ examinations of the importance of academic leadership in creating a more active citizenry.

**BAT RESEARCHER** The Bayou City is home to some impressive bat colonies, but UHD researcher **Dr. Amy Baird**’s latest discovery spreads its wings more than 2,000 miles away. Baird, associate professor of biology, collaborated with Texas A&M University professors Dr. Jessica E. Light and Dr. John W. Bickham (Dr. Baird’s father) to discover the Nicaraguan bat species *Rhogeessa permutandis*. Recently, their findings were documented in a publication dedicated to late friend and fellow scientist Dr. Robert J. Baker — “From Field to Laboratory: A Memorial Volume in Honor of Robert J. Baker.”

**SOLIDARITY SOCIAL WORK** Working directly with immigrant families and individuals from countries such as Mexico, Honduras, Africa and countless others arriving to the United States under challenging circumstances, **Dr. Dawn McCarty** has documented some of their stories in the new textbook “Solidarity Social Work Practice: Serving New Immigrant Populations” (Kendall Hunt). The book offers a look into the lives of immigrants who McCarty has served and also offers insight into the social work practices she applies in the field. **UFD**



**UHD HAS BEEN NAMED** a national recipient of the **2019 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award** from INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine, the largest and oldest diversity-focused publication in higher education. In 2018, UHD demonstrated its ongoing commitment to enhancing diversity and inclusion with the appointment of its first diversity officer; launching of its Center for Latino Studies; and leading the effort to reinstate the Texas Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education. *Photo: UHD hosted Texas Association Diversity Officers in Higher Education. UPD*

## CLUB SPORTS TEAMS

# CREATING EXCITEMENT

**UHD's CLUB SPORTS TEAMS** are a source of Gator pride and have created many memorable moments to cheer about.

Since last April, the UHD Sports Field—near the College of Sciences & Technology Building—has served as home to the Gator soccer teams. Additionally, the nationally ranked Men's Baseball Club team now has a batting cage to hone their skills as they defend their championship title.



UHD Student Selena Mendoza

UHD's Club Sports program, which began in 1997, has built a winning reputation with several teams earning conference championships.

The **Women's Volleyball** team has been a dominant force in league play, capturing nine conference championships, including a title in fall 2019 and finishing the season with a perfect 9-0 record.

Both the **Men's and Women's Soccer** teams have enjoyed their share of success on the field. The men's team swept through its competition with a 6-0 record and earned the 2019 conference championship. In total, the team holds six conference titles. The women's team claimed the division title in 2018.

Not to be outdone, the 2019 **Men's Baseball** team won the Lone Star Division Championship and is ready to defend their title. These Gators finished the last season with a No. 14 National Club Baseball Association ranking.

The **Men's Wrestling** team also competed in several 2019 competitions and interest continues to grow the program.

UHD also offers a variety of intramural sports leagues including flag football, basketball, volleyball, tennis, dodgeball, badminton, bowling, kickball and soccer. **UPD**



# DEEP IMPACT

By Mike Emery

**T**he University of Houston-Downtown (UHD) has had a significant effect on its home city and the Lone Star State for quite some time.

How significant?

According to a recent economic impact study, the University contributed \$2 billion to the region's economic growth during fiscal year (FY) 2018.

“This report reveals much about the importance of UHD in the community,” said UHD President, Dr. Juan Sánchez Muñoz. “The University not only supports the academic aspirations of many Houstonians, it is a driving force in this region's economy. This is due in part to the efforts of our institution's faculty, staff, students and alumni—all of whom strengthen the Greater Houston area through innovation and ingenuity.”

**Conducted by the labor market analytics firm Emsi, the report indicated that the institution has supported more than 19,000 jobs regionally. And with thousands of Gator graduates comprising the regional workforce, UHD's alumni contributed a net impact of \$1.8 billion to the Greater Houston's economy.**



With an alumni base of more than 51,000, UHD grads can be found in leadership roles throughout the region. The University has produced sheriffs, executives, scientists, teachers, artists, entrepreneurs, and other professionals who inspire Houstonians and support the region's growth.

**“These alumni make a significant contribution to our region,” Muñoz said. “That is not only incredible, it’s one of the very reasons UHD is here ... to produce successful graduates who contribute to the region’s prosperity.”**

Additional findings from this report offer insight into UHD’s benefits to taxpayers. According to Emsi’s findings, taxpayers receive \$10.20 for every dollar of public money invested in the University. Likewise, UHD provides citizens with tax revenue totaling \$440.5 million as a result of students’ earnings and increased business output.

UHD’s day-to-day operations also are key contributors to the region’s economy. The University’s 1,300 faculty and staff members and its institutional expenses (related to facilities, supplies and professional services) deliver a net impact of \$154.9 million to the region.

The University’s impact extended beyond the region during FY2018, providing Texans with \$21.30 for every dollar invested in the institution.

Students were among the primary beneficiaries of UHD’s economic output. Emsi’s report stated that FY2018 students could collectively earn \$1.3 billion during the course of their professional careers. This sum translates as a return of \$6.20 for every dollar they’ve invested in their education.

Overall, UHD’s affect on the regional economy has grown by more than 60 percent since the study was last completed in 2014.

**“The data collected in this report is impressive and speaks volumes about UHD’s considerable value to Houstonians and to Texans,” Muñoz said. “This is an emergent University with hard-working students and equally industrious employees. Its role in the region will continue to grow, and so will its overall impact on the economic landscape of Houston and surrounding cities.” UFD**

# Crime Fighters

By Mike Emery

When a crime occurs, law enforcement professionals must meticulously inspect evidence and the surrounding environment. The process is painstaking, as any misstep may affect the outcome of a police investigation.

As early as their freshman year, UHD criminal justice students are being trained for crime scene investigations (CSI). They're also testing their skills at regional competitions.

Credit student organization Scene Investi-Gators (based within the College of Public Service) for engaging these aspiring practitioners. The group, guided by criminal justice faculty members Dr. Elizabeth Gilmore and Kevin Buckler, is part of a University-wide initiative to engage first-time-in-college students in their respective academic disciplines. Gilmore founded the organization and serves as its primary adviser, using her expertise in crime scene investigations to guide students.

**“The group meets regularly and engages in a series of practicums and lectures to learn the process of crime scene investigations, which covers the documentation, collection and preservation of physical evidence,” Gilmore said. “This process is performed chronologically and very methodologically, similar to how one documents a scene. It’s excellent preparation for future law enforcement professionals and a great way for students to bond with one another while learning.”**

During the fall 2019 semester, the Scene Investi-Gators ventured to the Southwestern Association of Criminal Justice (SWACJ) Annual Meeting in Houston and participated in a CSI competition. Competitors included colleges and universities from throughout the region.

In preparing for the contest, students engaged in mock investigations complete with simulated evidence (bullet casings, fake blood) and weekly meetings with Gilmore and Buckler.

“My first experiences with criminal justice were the things I saw on TV,” said student and Scene Investi-Gators president Jessica Castillo. “But, I’ve learned at UHD that what is presented

on TV is an exaggeration. I’ve gained knowledge and skills that can make a difference in solving crimes and upholding the law.”

During the SWACJ competition, Castillo and fellow Scene Investi-Gators formed two teams. They each were presented with a mock crime scene and had to follow the appropriate investigation procedures within a set time. This protocol included securing the scene; identifying, documenting and properly handling evidence; and many other critical steps in the investigation.

Team members assumed roles reflective of those on an actual CSI team: note taker, evidence collector, sketcher, photographer and team leader. They also had to prepare a detailed report to submit to competition judges.

By the competition’s conclusion, both of the Scene Investi-Gators teams were among the top three finishers.

Scene Investi-Gators Team 1 (Esveidy Moreno, Elizet Maciel Roldan, Jessica Castillo, Mireya Rico) earned second place. Team 2 (Vanessa Limon, Jackie Amaya, Jasmin Amaya, Juanita Gonzalez) finished third. A few points separated each of the top three teams in the competition, which is impressive for the UHD teams.

“This was their first time to attend this type of contest, so to finish in the top three is great,” Gilmore emphasized. “These teams worked hard and are still working hard to prepare for the actual investigations that await them when they are law enforcement professionals.”

Beyond the competition, the Scene Investi-Gators club itself is validation for its members that they selected the right institution to provide the skills needed for successful careers.

**“I always knew I wanted to serve the public,” Castillo said. “UHD has a great criminal justice program that is located near the courts, correctional units and law enforcement agencies. And, its faculty members are excellent. I knew that if I wanted a career in criminal justice, UHD was the University for me.”** **UFD**

**DO NOT CROSS**



*UHD Scene Investi-Gators*

# BEAUTIFYING

By Mark Kramer

Celebrating collegiate pride on a university campus can come in various forms—from students proudly wearing their school’s branded gear to significant events like homecoming or commencement.

But what about a Gator named “Allen” or a sign that says, “Welcome to Gator UHD Territory”? At UHD, new visible enhancements of Gator pride are happening on campus.

## CONGREGATION OF GATORS

“Allen,” the first Gator to call UHD home, proudly guards the South Deck of the One Main Building. A new second bronze Gator at the Shea Street Building—home of the Marilyn Davies College of Business—is still awaiting a name.

**“This second bronze statue is a reminder to faculty, staff, students and visitors that UHD is indeed Gator Country. It serves as a symbol of institutional pride for the University community and is a perfect addition to the Shea Street Building,”** UHD President, Dr. Juan Sánchez Muñoz said.

## WELCOME TO GATOR TERRITORY

Last fall, UHD unveiled a new 20-by-10-foot digital sign that faces outward on the South Deck, featuring rotating welcome messages and other important information, such as registration and major events. In addition to the sign, newly designed colored banners and lamp posts frame UHD’s Welcome Center and are seen throughout campus. The Blue Light Project, unveiled in February 2019, illuminates four sconces on the historic One Main Building’s North and South Decks and the east side of the building. The One Main Building is among the city’s most storied structures. Once known as the Merchants & Manufacturers Building, the structure was the city’s largest building. Constructed in 1929, it hosted office spaces, warehouse facilities and retail outlets. Nearly five decades later, the massive complex was dedicated as a learning institution. UHD has occupied the building since 1974.

## MORE VISIBLE PRIDE

In spring 2019, an art project made Gator pride more visible at the intersection of North Main and Commerce Street. The Gator mini mural was created by Houston’s award-winning UP Art Studio in collaboration with UHD’s Office of University Relations. Other



projects complementing those at One Main, include three blue and red illuminated signs near the new athletic fields and the College of Sciences & Technology Building (CST). A full color 55-by-15-foot sign boldly resides on the corner of the Welcome Center’s façade greeting visitors to campus, while an additional large silver UHD sign located by the Jesse H. Jones Student Life Center serves as a visible landmark and a popular spot for photos.

**“We want to establish our presence on the Downtown Skyline and continue making UHD highly visible in our community,”** said Elisa Olsen, executive director of University Relations. **“These enhancements and others promote and recognize UHD as an integral part of Downtown by providing access and opportunity to Houston students.”**

## COMING SOON

These new campus enhancements are just the beginning. With the start of a new decade, there will be a new Gator mural along White Oak Bayou beneath the Willow Street Pump Station. This spring, a third bronze Gator will make its appearance in front of the new CST Building.

And, of course, more blue lights. 

# GATOR COUNTRY





# EmPower THROUGH GIVING

By Mark Kramer

**I**t was a message she will never forget. Jocelyn Mora's father was working many hours of overtime at his job to pay for his daughter's college education, as well as her brother's. She also was working extra hours to help out financially and offset the cost of tuition. She also applied for several scholarships ... and waited.

On a slow work day last August, Mora checked her email and opened a message from Dr. Charles Gengler, dean of the Marilyn Davies College of Business.

The message read: "Congratulations! You have been selected as a recipient of the Ted Bauer Undergraduate Business Scholarship."

It was a life-changing moment.

**"It's unbelievable how the scholarship has lifted a burden from me and my family," said the senior international business major. "It was the email of a lifetime. My father had been working himself to exhaustion in hopes that we wouldn't have to take out student loans. Now, he only has to focus on helping my brother, and I will be able to cut my work hours to focus on class assignments and earning my degree."**

Mora is one of 25 junior and senior business students who have received full scholarships made possible through a \$455,000 grant from the C. T. Bauer Foundation presented to UHD in May 2019.

# Angels DO EXIST

By Sheryl E. Taylor

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Some generous donors to UHD prefer to remain anonymous. For them, doing good just makes sense, and they want to make our community a better place. Recently, a Houston family with a strong commitment to STEM education provided scholarships to four UHD student scholars. This family—the husband, wife and adult children—have all studied and worked in various facets of STEM. They recognized that pursuing a STEM degree can be one of the most time consuming and challenging pathways—lab hours, outside projects and additional study time to master difficult subject matter. So, they decided to lend a hand to the next generation of STEM professionals.

**“We feel it’s important to make a difference in our ‘own backyard,’ so to speak. UHD is an institution that is in our area serving so many of our local population who are furthering their education to become citizens in our workforce, therefore contributing to benefit us all.”**

— Angel Donor

## PEOPLE GIVE FOR MANY REASONS ... WHY UHD?

“I think it’s gratitude, but it’s also the recognition that there are those in our community who might not complete a college degree without help,” said Johanna Wolfe, vice president of Advancement & University Relations. “I believe that Houstonians really appreciate the quality education that UHD provides. This generous family reached out to us to support students who are striving for careers in data science, medicine, computer science and other high-demand STEM fields. Their gift will make a significant difference for these students.”

The scholarship supports students who have earned an associate’s degree or significant credits at one of UHD’s partner community colleges before transferring to UHD. The gift covers the students’ full tuition for their remaining two years.

**“We have all been touched by an area of special need in our lives, either personally or in our circle of friends and family. Education is an area we believe has a profound effect on us all. Supporting scholarships, whether they are based on financial need, academic achievement or a criteria of your choosing, is a tremendous gift for those who are receiving the scholarship. It is also a rewarding experience to know you have touched another person’s life as they journey through their education and beyond.”**

— Angel Donor

**“The opportunities provided through these scholarships will change the lives of these students and their families,” Gengler added. “These grants and scholarships will help our College fulfill the high demand for talented professionals to help move Houston’s business community forward.”**

One of the first opportunities provided to this first cohort of Ted Bauer Business Scholars was a luncheon with C. T. Bauer Foundation trustees held at UHD. Darren Wolfman, chair of the Foundation, commented that she was impressed with the maturity and professionalism of the students as they shared their personal stories and expressed their thanks for the Foundation’s recognition of their academic efforts.

In addition to tuition support, Bauer Scholars also receive mentoring and peer and faculty tutoring, as well as networking and professional development.

Scholarship recipient Christian Handal is a returning college student who worked in logistics and operations in the oil and gas industry for several years.

“This scholarship allows me to prove my worth by focusing my attention on academics and then returning to the workforce with a UHD degree that prepares me to excel in my chosen career,” he said.

After graduation, Handal’s interests are guiding him toward careers in investment banking or commodities trading.

**“I have a sincere passion for success and believe that pursuing a degree will allow me to contribute more to my employer,” Handal said. “We are the future managers, directors and executives who will make the decisions that allow for economic growth. My hope is to make an impact in my career and on the lives of those around me.”**

The scholarship’s namesake, Ted Bauer, was known in Houston and throughout the nation as a forward-thinking business leader who adhered to the belief that “people are the product.” This scholarship reflects his vision and the Foundation’s commitment to invest in business students who have the potential to contribute greatly to the city’s thriving business community.

**“I can’t begin to express my gratitude to the Foundation,” Mora emphasized. “In a year, I’ll be a college graduate ready to begin my career. The confidence that I have in my ability to be successful has grown because of the faith the C. T. Bauer Foundation has shown in me.”** 



# IN THE KEY OF **G**ATORS

By Emily Conrad

**T**ucked away in a corner of the Gator Den student lounge sits a coal black Kimball grand piano with a sign posted nearby that says, “Come on Impress Me! Piano use is open to all UHD students, faculty or staff. Please remember to be courteous to others.”

And for a handful of UHD students, they definitely impress upon the ivory keys.

When he was nine years old, UHD student Malcom Cannon didn’t get exactly what he wanted for Christmas. He was hoping for a new Xbox, but instead his father gifted him a piano. Although Cannon was initially disappointed, he soon began to teach himself to play, and music quickly grew into a passion.

The Sugar Land native recently released his first album, “Trance.” After graduating from UHD, he hopes to pursue his passion for music at one of the more than 20 national conservatories in the nation.

While on campus, Cannon splits his time between classes, baseball club sports practice and, of course, playing piano in the Gator Den.

**“One of my favorite things about playing piano in the Gator Den is meeting new musicians who come to introduce themselves,” the fine arts major said. “It’s good for students who want to practice, soothing other students who may be studying, and is a stress reliever for those who need an instrument to cool down after classes.”**

On most days, there’s a small group gathered around the piano. The pianists take turns, joking with one another, listening and offering advice on notes and keys. It’s not uncommon for a passerby to hear the music segue from classical to pop to R&B to ballads as each new pianist sits down.

Student Cristian Juan explains that each person who sits at the bench has their own sound.

**“We all have different styles,” Juan said. “We play classical, contemporary, motivational, and intense. You can tell who is playing before you even walk in.”**

Pianists of all skill levels are welcome to join the bench. Student Carmen Lovo said that she loves coming to the Gator Den and listening to everyone play. Helped by her fellow Gators, she recently started learning how to play.

“They are so kind, everyone always helps me out,” Lovo said.

That spirit of collaboration is what keeps singer Nicholas Lane, a criminal justice major, coming back.

“We are all learning,” Lane said. “We love to work together.” **UFD**



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### A new mural created by students for students

graces a hallway in the historic One Main Building. The 36.5-by-7.5-foot work was made possible through the course "Special Topics in Studio Art: Mural Design & Creation," taught by Fine Arts lecturer Beth Secor. Students submitted designs for consideration, then collaborated on the mural's creation. Designs generated in the class were exhibited for UHD's student body, who selected "Aztek Revival," by senior art student Jose "Angel" Quesada. "It's a variegated design using Mexican and Mesoamerican imagery," the noted local muralist said. "It addresses something that's hopefully relatable to students and presents imagery that challenges them. I call it 'edutainment.' In this piece, there's a narrative that is as connected to the cultural identities of these students as it is to mine." **UFD**

Artist Jose "Angel" Quesada



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