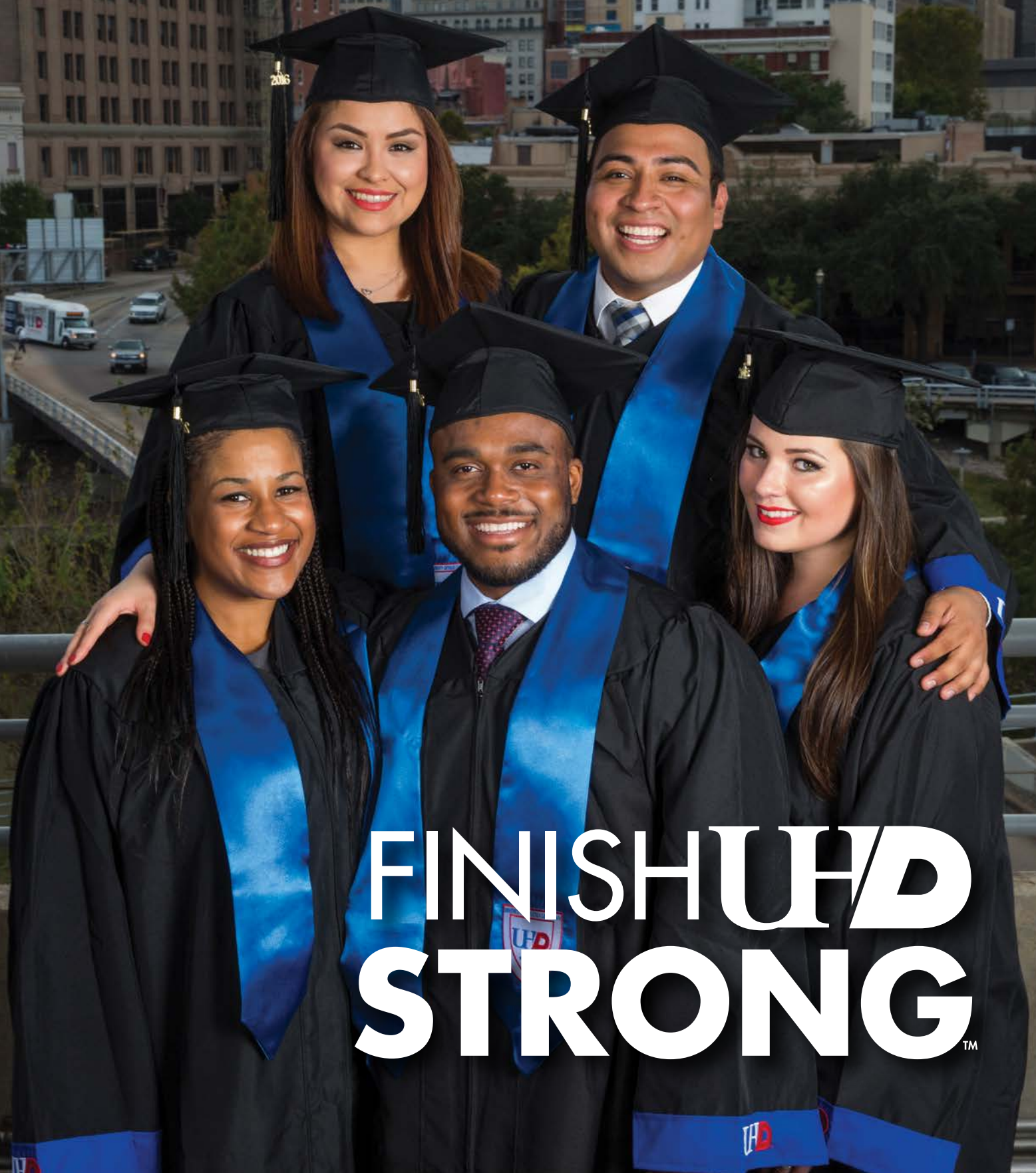


UHD magazine

Winter 2016



**FINISHUHD
STRONG™**





RAINBOW CONNECTION

While blue is the University of Houston-Downtown's primary color, Gators turned all shades of green, pink, yellow and red during Homecoming 2016. Students gathered on the South Deck to celebrate Gator Pride and strut their stuff during the P3 Paint Dance Party. The spectacle featured music, dance moves and a multitude of colors sprayed onto students.

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UHD MAGAZINE STAFF

Elisa Crossland, Executive Director of University Relations

Mike Emery, Director of Communications

Meghan Sellers, Manager of Graphic Communications

Toni Carter, **Shannon Wright**, **Merrilee Cunningham**,

Sheryl E. Taylor Writers

Dane Classen, Graphic Designer

Thomas B. Shea, Photographer

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For more information about UHD, contact:

Division of Advancement and University Relations

University of Houston-Downtown

One Main Street, Suite S990

Houston, Texas 77002

713-226-5261

universityrelations@uhd.edu

www.uhd.edu

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

What a year. In 2016, we experienced a presidential election (won by a Washington outsider) and a Chicago Cubs World Series victory. Those two events alone were once considered impossible, but in 2016 they happened. Of course, the year provided me with another experience that I never considered would happen.

It all started in February of last year when the University of Houston System Chancellor Renu Khator asked me to step into the role of Interim President for this institution. I didn't think twice about the assignment. When someone as experienced and respected in higher education as Chancellor Khator offers you an opportunity, it's an honor and a compliment. So, I packed up a few items from my office at the University of Houston Law Center, where I've taught since 1982, and headed a few miles east to UH. Because the semester had begun, I continued teaching my law students. Fortunately, it was my Higher Education Law Seminar, which turned into a clinic with real-life applications.

Admittedly, I did not see myself leading an institution of higher education at this point in my career. It was something I might have done a few years earlier, but at this stage in my academic journey, I am committed to my research and teaching. Still, I rolled up my sleeves and got to work immediately.

I arrived on campus to find a cabinet that was ready and willing to assist me and more importantly, committed to this institution and its students. It is truly a joy – and an education – to work alongside professionals such as Johanna Wolfe, vice president for Advancement and University Relations; David Bradley, vice president for Administration and Finance; Ivonne Montalbano, vice president for Employment Services and Operations; Ed Hugetz, interim senior vice president for Academic and Student Affairs and provost; and Tomikia LeGrande, vice president for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. All of these folks are dedicated to UH's success and have become dear friends during my time here. (Naming Dr. LeGrande to be a UH vice president was one of the easiest decisions I have ever made, and her inclusion in cabinet meetings improved our game.)

I've also met many other wonderful people on campus including talented faculty and staff members ... and of course, the wonderful students who make each day here particularly special. In my office alone, I have student workers who excel in the classroom. They also volunteer to assist political refugees and beautify the city. All I have to do is walk through the door to be inspired by their selflessness and dedication.

Another thing I discovered when I arrived here was that I absolutely love this university.

UHD is a rare find in today's academic world. Its students are a true reflection of the community. When you talk about urban diversity, you can't omit Houston from that conversation. And when you mention Houston, you have to bring up UHD. This University IS Houston.

During my year at UH, I've been blessed to watch it grow. Among its most notable areas of growth are its student success initiatives such as #UHD2020, which helps our freshmen get off to a solid start. We also have acquired land to build programs and new facilities. UHD welcomes thousands of people to campus every year. These visitors explore our bike paths, and attend our events (including televised political debates). They also participate in cultural gatherings that are housed in our magnificent Welcome Center, framed by the best panoramic vistas in the city. Our alums are taking their place in the leadership of the city and running its businesses and organizations.

And, I've been fortunate to take center stage at Minute Maid Park in front of thousands of graduates and their family members ... something I NEVER imagined would happen to me. As a fan of rock music, I've wondered what the Rolling Stones must feel like when they perform in stadiums before throngs of fans. In 2016, I found that out, but I must admit that my experience might be a bit more rewarding. No offense to Mick Jagger or Keith Richards.

Yes, it's been quite a year for me and one I will never forget. As you read this issue of UH Magazine, I hope you too are inspired by this institution. I also hope you share the stories in this issue with others. Some used to say that UH is Houston's best kept secret, but in 2016, I found out that's no longer the case. People are noticing us, but all of us must do our part in spreading the word. I know I will. And I will always be grateful for this opportunity.

Thank you all for your support in 2016, and let's work to make 2017 even better for UH.

Michael A. Olivas



"I'm very grateful to the Board of Regents and Chancellor Khator for this remarkable opportunity to be part of this dynamic institution and system to further set a standard of educational excellence that will serve as a model for the country."

Sole Finalist Named for UHD President

By Sheryl E. Taylor

The expectations for the University of Houston-Downtown's sixth president are clear—propel the University to new levels of growth, success and excellence in every facet of the Gator community. After a national search, UHD selected a sole finalist for the position of president to do just that—take UHD to new heights.

“University of Houston-Downtown plays a vital role in our UH System's overall delivery of higher education resources to this region, so we're fortunate to have an experienced educator and inspiring administrator of Juan Sanchez Muñoz's caliber to lead this institution,” said University of Houston System Chancellor Renu Khator.

Meet Juan Sanchez Muñoz

Muñoz joins UHD from Texas Tech University (TTU), where he presently serves as senior vice president for Institutional Diversity, Equity, and Community Engagement; and vice provost for Undergraduate Education & Student Affairs. In this position, he oversees more than 40 units and departments including the TTU Ethics Center; Center for Active Learning and Undergraduate Engagement; Teaching, Learning and Professional Development Center; Counseling Center; Career Center; University Advising; Women's Studies; Military & Veterans Programs; Support Operations for Academic Retention; and the Office of Academic Engagement.

At TTU, he also serves on the President's Administrative Council; President's Executive Cabinet; Provost's Staff; Provost Council; Academic Council; and the current TTU Strategic Planning Committee as subcommittee chair. He has served on the hiring committees of virtually every academic dean, including that of the law school. Muñoz also holds an appointment as professor in the College of Education's Department of Curriculum & Instruction.

Prior to joining Texas Tech, Muñoz was a faculty member in the Department of Secondary Education at California State University, Fullerton. His research interests examine the education of at-risk students and the learning needs of ethnically and linguistically diverse students.

“I'm very grateful to the Board of Regents and Chancellor Khator for this remarkable opportunity to be part of this dynamic institution and system to further set a standard of educational excellence that will serve as a model for the country,” Muñoz said.

He received a Bachelor of Arts in psychology from the University of California, Santa Barbara. After returning from military service in the U.S. Marine Corps during the Gulf

Crisis, he attended the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), where he earned a Master of Arts in Mexican-American Studies with an emphasis in literature. He completed a Doctorate of Philosophy in Curriculum & Instruction from UCLA's Division of Urban Schooling. Prior to attending UCLA, Muñoz was a secondary school teacher; an instructor in the California Community College system; and an adjunct faculty member at several colleges in California.

“He will bring energy and passion to this role, as well as the leadership experience necessary to help UHD continue on its upward trajectory,” said UHD Interim President Michael A. Olivas. “I've learned firsthand that this is a very special university. I have come to love this institution, especially its remarkable students, as he will. I look forward to his arrival, and all of us will support him during this transition.”

Fast Facts on Juan Sanchez Muñoz

- ▶ Graduate of the Harvard Management and Leadership in Education Institute, Texas Governor's Executive Leadership Program, and University of California, Berkeley Center for the Studies in Higher Education Executive Leadership Academy
- ▶ 2015 Military Order of the Purple Heart Special Recognition
- ▶ Four-time institutional recipient, Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award
- ▶ Texas Diversity Council Diversity First Award
- ▶ Serves on: Board of Directors for the Louise Hopkins Underwood Center for the Arts; South Plains Workforce Development Board; and Boys & Girls Club of America Alumni Board
- ▶ Served on: Board of Directors of the Covenant Health System; City of Lubbock Civil Service Commission; and Texas Lyceum Alumni
- ▶ Author of more than 96 book chapters, academic articles and conference presentations
- ▶ Contributing editor of the seminal compilation, “Handbook of Latinos and Education”—received the coveted American Association of Educational Studies' prestigious Critic's Choice Book Award
- ▶ Recognized through numerous certificates of commendation from local, state and congressional offices for community service
- ▶ Appointed by Texas Governor Rick Perry in 2008 to the Board of Directors for the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, where he currently serves as vice chairman
- ▶ Muñoz and wife, Zenaida Aguirre-Muñoz, Ph.D.—associate professor and assistant director for the TTU's Center for Leadership in Education—have three sons, Joaquin Diego Muñoz, Cruz Santos Muñoz and Juan Amado Muñoz.

GATOR BITES

The Great Debate

Harris County Sheriff Candidates Ron Hickman and Ed Gonzalez, a UHD alum, squared off in a debate on Oct. 13 in the Wilhelmina Cullen Robertson Auditorium. The event was streamed live by KTRK ABC 13 and KXLN Univision 45. Award-winning reporter Ted Oberg and Univision anchor Rebecca Suarez served as moderators. UHD students had the opportunity to pose questions to both candidates during the debate. “The opportunity for students to see and participate in a live debate between candidates for the position of Sheriff of Harris County was very exciting,” said Barbara Belbot, chair of UHD’s Criminal Justice Department. “It’s one thing to read a debate transcript or a news article about candidates, but it’s another thing entirely to be in the room when they explain why they’re the best person for the job and debate about how best to improve our criminal justice system.”



Recent Rankings

UHD earned a place on several national rankings. The University ranked third on College Choice’s list of 50 Safest Large Colleges and Universities in America. “UHD is one of the safest campuses in the country and boasts a highly involved on-campus police department,” College Choice reported.

UHD’s online offerings also received accolades, including a No. 1 ranking on Affordable School’s list of 20 Affordable Online Bachelor’s Degrees in Finance. The University also was recognized by OnlineColleges.com. UHD ranked No. 4 in the country for Best Online Colleges for Finance and No. 2 for Best Online Colleges in International Business. And, for the second consecutive year, the College of Business’ Master of Business Administration program was ranked No. 1 in the Houston Business Journal’s round-up of “Largest Area MBA Programs.”

New Student Affairs, Enrollment Management Leadership

In fall 2016, Tomikia LeGrande was named vice president for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. LeGrande previously served UHD as the division’s associate vice president. LeGrande has more than 13 years of higher education experience, including leadership in the areas of student affairs, enrollment management, strategic planning and budgeting, project management and change management. Before arriving at UHD, LeGrande’s talents were utilized at Winston-Salem State University and North Carolina A&T State University.

“Since her arrival, Dr. LeGrande has been an invaluable addition to UHD,” said UHD Interim President Michael A. Olivas. “She has a clear vision for enhancing student success on campus and brings energy and enthusiasm to her role. I applaud her dedication to our students and look forward to her continued service to our University.”

Reaccreditation Process Complete

UHD successfully completed its reaffirmation of accreditation process for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). For two years, members of the UHD community participated with SACSCOC evaluations, site visits and requests for data. In December 2016, SACSCOC officials informed University administrators that UHD successfully completed its

reaccreditation requirements – with no recommendations. “This is big news for UHD and a testament to the diligence of our reaccreditation team and entire campus community,” said Michael A. Olivas, UHD interim president. “Emerging from this process with no recommendations from the SACSCOC board shows that we’re doing many things right. It’s yet another reason to be proud of UHD.”



Gators Take a Stroll to the Polls

Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner and hip hop artist/activist Bun B were among the special guests who arrived on campus for Walk 2 Vote. The Student Government Association-led civic engagement initiative was aimed at motivating students to vote and culminated in a mass procession from UHD’s Shea Street Building to the Harris County Tax Office to cast ballots. UHD has hosted Walk 2 Vote since 2012, and the event continues to get bigger and better each year. The actual walk is just part of the initiative. In the weeks leading to Election Day, UHD students work to encourage voter registration and voting in Houston.

Award-Winning Author

Daniel Peña, assistant professor of English, earned the Pushcart Prize in Literature for his short story, “Safe Home.” The plot revolves around a pilot in South Texas, who becomes part of the Mexican drug trade. Peña joined UHD’s faculty in August 2016. “This place is like a dream to me,” he said. “I love UHD and my colleagues here. I love my students and how creative writing is valued. What’s happening at UHD is a really special thing.”

Educational Memoir

The life and accomplishments of former U.S. Secretary of Education Lauro Cavazos are documented in “A Kineño’s Journey: On Family, Learning, and Public Service.” Gene Preuss, associate professor of history, collaborated with Cavazos on this memoir. The book was published by Texas Tech University Press. The writing partnership not only yielded the book but a lasting relationship between Preuss and Cavazos. “The subject of my research is now my friend, and I am very grateful,” Preuss said.



A Stately Visit

Texas Secretary of State Carlos Cascos visited UHD to speak to students on the importance of voting on Sept. 15, 2016. David Branham, associate professor of political science, assembled a group of students to meet with Cascos. “I’m here to remind voters and future voters that every vote does count and every vote matters,” said Cascos. “As the state’s chief election officer, it’s my responsibility to inform you of the options and resources available to help you exercise your right to vote.”

STARTING STRONG

Gators' Academic Journeys Begin with #UHD2020

By Mike Emery

The transition from high school to college can be challenging. Students must adapt to new modes of instruction, a different campus and classmates from all walks of life. To help First Time in College (FTIC) students adapt to a new learning environment and overcome any first semester hurdles, the University of Houston-Downtown launched #UHD2020. This initiative is aimed at helping students succeed during their first year at UHD and providing them with resources that will assist their academic endeavors.

Among the main components of #UHD2020 is **Gator Gateway**, an extensive five-day orientation on campus. Students were introduced to classmates, explored the campus, experienced university lectures in UHD classrooms and met mentors. Student participants also learned what it truly means to be a Gator by contributing to community engagement projects.

Other aspects of #UHD2020 included **Gator Ready**, which provided FTICs the opportunity to register for classes, meet with advisers, set up UHD email accounts and learn about financial aid and scholarship requirements.

"We've changed the first year experience for students," said Faiza Khoja, associate vice president for Academic Affairs. "From proactive mentoring and advising to developing a cohort model, we are reshaping the process in which students arrive to our University. It's all about helping them start on the right foot and ultimately reach their goal of graduating."

In short, #UHD2020 is about helping students start strong and ultimately finish strong.

Meet members of the #UHD2020 cohort – all students in UHD's Honors Program – who entered the University through Gator Gateway and are now excelling in the classroom and on campus.

Cynthia Andrade

Family is important to Cynthia Andrade.

When it came time to select a university, Andrade, a first-generation college student, elected to stay in Houston to remain close to her mother and grandmother. She selected the University of Houston-Downtown and soon discovered an extended family of faculty and friends committed to helping her succeed on campus.

"I chose UHD because it's close to home, and its tuition is very affordable," she said. "Since arriving on campus, I feel like I'm part of a family. Everyone cares about each other and wants everyone to succeed."

A native Houstonian, Andrade graduated from YES Prep Southwest. Before graduating, she was accepted to five other universities, but was quick to select UHD. During the summer Gator Gateway orientation, Andrade knew right away that she made the right decision.

"It showed me what being a student at UHD is like," said Andrade, a business major. "I learned what the classroom environment is like at a university. It reinforced basic classroom etiquette ... being prepared and being on time."

No one had to tell Andrade twice to be ready for class. As a little girl, she pretended she owned her own company and held employees (imaginary or not) to high standards. Andrade also was ready for UHD's culture of community service.

During Gator Gateway, Andrade and her Gator peers were provided with opportunities to impact the community including a volunteer event for aniMeals on Wheels (providing pet food to seniors who are unable to shop for their dogs or cats).

Andrade excelled during her first semester at UHD and has advice for future Gators. She said that students should take advantage of everything UHD has to offer, including its events and student organizations. Most importantly, she recommends that new students embrace UHD's multicultural environment.

"Don't be shy," she said. "Be open to different cultures, and understand that other kinds of students attend this university ... but we're all Gators."

“Don’t be shy. Be open to different cultures, and understand that other kinds of students attend this university ... but we’re all Gators.”



Cynthia Andrade

Alfred Grimaldo

Alfred Grimaldo just might make his way from One Main St. to Broadway. A graduate of Lamar High School, Grimaldo is an aspiring performer and is honing his talents at the University of Houston-Downtown.

During his first semester, he enrolled in Acting 1, which further fueled his passion to perform.

“It was interesting to see the differences between my own interpretation of what acting is and how it’s taught,” he said.

Grimaldo isn’t the first in his family to attend college, but he holds the honor of being the first in his family to attend UHD. His parents graduated from the University of Houston, and his older brother is enrolled at Pepperdine University in Malibu, California.

“I didn’t want to go to an out-of-state school and found myself

interested in UHD because it was very accessible,” he said. “Once I received a letter informing me that I was accepted into the Honors Program, it made sense to come here.”

He credits faculty such as Mari Nicholson-Preuss, director of UHD’s Honors Program; Chuck Jackson, associate professor of English; and Tammis Thomas, professor of English, for making his first semester successful.

Grimaldo also is quick to praise UHD’s warm environment for making his first semester so special. “Enthusiasm fills the air wherever you go on campus, so it’s not hard to succeed at this university,” he said.

“It’s very clear that everyone loves being here,” he said. “You see that in the hallways and the classroom. Also, everyone is very inviting and supportive. It’s a community here.”

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Alfred Grimaldo



"It's very clear that everyone loves being here. You see that in the hallways and the classroom. Also, everyone is very inviting and supportive. It's a community here."

"Everybody's here to help you. You can't find that kind of community anywhere else."



Joshua Baffoe

“I’ve met a lot of people who make me smile and make me laugh. I’m lucky. There are many amazing people on campus, and they’ve made my first semester very special.”

Joshua Baffoe

When selecting a university, Joshua Baffoe wasn’t concerned with how he’d get to class. Before graduating Sharpstown High School, he won a Chevy Sonic as part of a drawing during Academic Signing Day. Even with a brand new car, Baffoe still had to navigate some bumpy roads.

He admits that his first few college grades were less than satisfactory but credits UHD’s faculty for taking the time to help him rise above any challenges.

“It’s a tight-knit community,” said Baffoe, who is majoring in biology and physical science. “My professors were very kind. I asked them how I could improve, and they worked with me. I then started improving.”

A winning attitude also helped the freshman overcome early semester adversities. Baffoe is an avid soccer fan and player. He’s a striker for UHD’s club team, so he’s well aware that a coach can only do so much to win the game. Ultimately, the players must deliver, and Baffoe did just that.

“It’s all about improvement,” Baffoe said. “It’s your mindset. You just have to tell yourself that you can do it. When you stumble, you just have to learn from it and get back up.”

Although he faced a few challenges, Baffoe said that UHD provided him with a perfect introduction to college life. Like his fellow freshmen, Baffoe participated in the first Gator Gateway orientation program. The five-day introduction to UHD was particularly effective in the transition from high school to college.

“It was very helpful,” he said. “We learned simple things like how to log on to UHD computers, but all of that was important. Even the smallest things that we experienced during Gator Gateway were very important for the fall semester.”

Baffoe isn’t the first in his family to attend UHD. His brother John Baffoe is a senior majoring in physical science. Both were born in Ghana but moved to Houston as children. The city has been a happy home for Baffoe and his family, although he said that it’s much hotter than his African birthplace.

Baffoe’s dream is to play soccer for his favorite team, Arsenal Football Club in England’s Premier League and possibly apply his education to a career as a team’s physical therapist.

Baffoe has a ways to go before reaching these goals. Still, he’s confident that UHD is the best place to begin his professional and academic journeys.

“Everybody’s here to help you,” he said. “You can’t find that kind of community anywhere else.”



Archie Gayle

Archie Gayle

Archie Gayle has a knack for storytelling. This fall, he started a new chapter in his life as he entered college as a University of Houston-Downtown freshman.

Gayle, a creative writing major, wasn’t a stranger to campus. His mother introduced him to UHD while she was earning her undergraduate degree. Now, they’re both Gators as she’s currently pursuing a master’s degree.

“I always thought UHD seemed like a fun environment,” he said. “It’s a very close community of faculty and students. It didn’t seem like the universities I saw on TV. And it didn’t seem like the colleges people told me about with big classes and how professors didn’t interact with the students. I also noticed that all of the faculty knew my mom.”

Although Gayle already knew that students work closely with their professors, he learned firsthand that faculty are readily available. Among his favorite professors are English faculty members Chuck Jackson and Jane Creighton.

“They’re both my favorite professors because they give me tasks that help me become a better writer,” Gayle said. “I’m learning that the best way to be a better writer is to write as much as possible.”

Gayle has learned, however, that sheer confidence often is the key to overcoming campus challenges. One of his early hurdles at UHD was composing a five-page essay. After struggling with its direction, he took a deep breath and plowed through it effortlessly.

“The biggest challenge for myself is getting out of the mindset that I can’t do certain things,” Gayle said. “Once I remove the fear and anxiety, I’m able to be productive.”

His familiarity with campus certainly helped him during his first semester at UHD. He also credits Gator Gateway for preparing him for his freshman semester, particularly connecting him with fellow students and friends. These relationships already have impacted his college experience.

“I’ve met a lot of people who make me smile and make me laugh,” he said. “I’m lucky. There are many amazing people on campus, and they’ve made my first semester very special.”

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"It made things easier. I see the same faces every day, so when I need help I can always turn to my friends."

Jose "Angel" Lopez

When interviewed for this article, Jose "Angel" Lopez admitted that he had yet to declare a major. He predicts, however, that he will focus his academic energies on a creative discipline if not philosophy.

Lopez is an avid music fan and can be found studying on campus with his earbuds on, listening to indie-rock bands like Daughter, The Head and the Heart and others. The native Houstonian would like to work in the music industry but also is discovering his talents as a writer.

Credit UHD for helping Lopez become more interested in courses that promote both critical and creative thinking. Of course, the faculty have helped bolster his enthusiasm for learning.

According to Lopez, his experience at UHD is quite contrary to what he was expecting.

"In high school, my teachers told me that college professors would be mean and wouldn't care," Lopez said. "But here, they do care. When I ask questions, they want to help. Everyone is super nice.

Knowing that they want me to do well and are passionate about what they teach is very reassuring."

Lopez is the first in his family to go to college, and his parents are pleased that he chose to stay in Houston. He recalls their excitement when he graduated from Yes Prep Gulfton and hopes to help recreate those emotions when he earns his UHD degree.

Although mom and dad are happy that he's at home, Lopez spends much of his time on campus in the Honors Lounge or the Welcome Center. At either location, he's studying and socializing with his friends, many of whom he met during Gator Gateway.

While the summer orientation program helped familiarize Lopez with UHD, he said that making friends during that experience was very helpful to his first-year success.

"It made things easier," he said. "I see the same faces every day, so when I need help, I can always turn to my friends."

FINISHING UHD STRONG



Meet five Gators who are finishing UHD strong. Freddy Gonzalez, Seline Rios, Jason Dawkins, Erica Davis and Hope Bell earned their undergraduate degrees last fall and credit the University, its faculty and resources for helping them cross the finish line.

Freddy Gonzalez Education

"The faculty and students are like a family here. If it wasn't for my professors and the resources on campus, then I may not have finished UHD."

Seline Rios Spanish

"I was part of the Dance Team, which required good grades. And I am competitive, so I want to perform well in everything I do to make my family proud."

Jason Dawkins Accounting

"I received a second chance at a first-rate university. I wanted to finish strong. I looked for the best opportunity and found it at the University of Houston-Downtown."

Erica Davis Applied Administration

"UHD is very supportive of non-traditional students. I work full-time and attend school full-time ... and I'm a parent. The availability of classes and consistent support was key to me finishing strong."

Hope Bell Geosciences

"Being involved in organizations at UHD has helped me finish strong. I've been able to connect with other students and network. Getting to know people has helped me flourish here at UHD."

FACULTY STRONG

Picture Perfect: Art of Floyd Newsum Part of National Landscape

By Mike Emery

Floyd Newsum and his painting "Contemplating Success" is on view in UHD's Commerce Street Building.



Floyd Newsum wasn't born in Houston, but he's very much a part of the city's creative fabric. The veteran University of Houston-Downtown (UHD) art professor has groomed student artists for 40 years and continues to contribute works to both the campus and the community.

His work touches art patrons through local exhibitions and in national museums. Last fall, Newsum's talents reached even more people as his art was featured in the historic opening of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC).

"The formal opening of this museum attracted thousands of people," he said. "It was overwhelming but, very gratifying. It was more than an experience ... it was an enlightenment."

Newsum's versatile talents have produced paintings and installations that inspire and inform audiences. Works are born

from his perspectives on issues affecting the national landscape and the African American community. The painting on view in NMAAHC, "After the Storm CNN," is evident of Newsum's keen eye. This painting, which captures the disorder following Hurricane Katrina, features a chaotic collection of random objects, houses, people, a ladder and animals against a dark background.

Although Newsum was far from Katrina's wrath, he found himself closely connected with its aftermath. His place of worship, Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church, housed evacuees, and the artist worked as a volunteer to help them. His experience watching the storm on television and assisting those who lost homes motivated the creation of "After the Storm CNN" and another painting "More Than a Storm."

In the days following the storm, Newsum transported evacuees who found refuge at the Astrodome to his church. While driving people, he encountered people who lost everything, as well as

others who were in need of medical or psychological services. “We had some tense situations during those rides,” he said. “I was compelled to create these paintings, because I became part of this tragedy. The ladder became a symbol of rescue for those in New Orleans, and our church became a symbol too. It became very personal for me.”

At first glance, “After the Storm CNN” appears abstract, but tells a compelling story that makes it a natural fit for NMAAHC. The Smithsonian acquired “After the Storm CNN” and another work “Sirigu, Janie’s Apron” (named for his grandmother and celebrating the creative spirit of women in Ghana) in 2010.



“There is so much to digest and comprehend, because it takes visitors from the worst parts of African American history to wonderful art,” he said. “This museum was a long time coming, and I am proud to be a part of it.”

Newsum developed his artistic talents while growing up in Memphis. He found inspiration in the works of artists Charles White, David Driskell, Alma Thomas and others.

He attended the Memphis College of Art, where he earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts. For his graduate studies, he headed north to Temple University in Philadelphia. After earning a Master of Fine Arts, he found his way to UHD to begin his teaching career. He joined the University’s faculty in 1976 and has worked tirelessly to inspire students and help them hone their creative skills in One Main Building’s 11th floor studios.

“Students are the lifeblood of this university,” he said. “I like sharing with them and watching as they learn and grow as artists.”

He also has included students in the installation and creation of his own works. Students assisted Newsum with his public installations “Planter and Stems” (located along the Main Street rail line) and “Ladder of Hope” (suspended from the ceiling of the Acres Home Multi-Service Center). Students also worked with Newsum on the series of paintings hanging in UHD’s Commerce Street Building.

“I like how these works communicate to everyday people,” he said. “Many people may not go to a gallery or museum that often, but they can still see the work because they’re on their way to work or just walking down the street. That’s what I like about public art. I’m able to share it with everybody.”

While he loves to create works, Newsum also likes to encourage other creative minds.

Roman Bible is a senior humanities major who studied under Newsum in a painting course. He particularly appreciates Newsum’s firm critiques that have helped expand his understanding of art.

“He pushes me out of my comfort zone,” Bible said. “He encourages all of his students to break away from what they’re used to doing, so they have an appreciation for other styles of art. All of us become better artists because we gain an appreciation and understanding of doing things differently.”

Chad Holcomb-Love agrees. His wife Leigh Ann Love previously studied under Newsum and highly recommended the professor. Holcomb-Love, a business major, admits that his skills have evolved from “zero to a whole lot better” since working with Newsum.

“His feedback and the way he encourages students makes them feel like there’s nothing they can’t do,” Holcomb-Love said. “He’s super supportive, but he’s also very critical. He’s tough at times because he wants students to excel.”

One might say that the classroom is like a second canvas for the acclaimed artist. But instead of creating new works, he’s merely helping UHD students find new talents and discover hidden skills. For Newsum, that is just as rewarding as having his work on view at the Smithsonian.

“I tell students to keep practicing their craft,” he said. “It’s about more than just the practice of painting or drawing. I’m just glad that I can work with these students and help them realize their talents, and hopefully, see their dreams of becoming artists come true.”

COMMUNITY STRONG

Critical Thinking, Community Engagement Shaping Classroom Experiences

By Mike Emery



Business Cornerstone students learn about teamwork while volunteering at the Houston Food Bank.

It's a Saturday morning, and more than 500 University of Houston-Downtown students aren't at home resting from a long week of school and work. Instead, these Gators – all clad in blue – are filing into the Houston Food Bank. They're contributing their time and energies to help feed Houstonians in need.

Their presence is part of UHD's Business Cornerstone course – offered through the College of Business – and is a prime example of the institution's commitment to service learning and community engagement. It's among the offerings at UHD in which the community becomes a living, breathing classroom.

During the food bank visit, students sort food (all bagged and canned), package it in boxes and prepare it to be delivered to Houstonians in need. Students work up a sweat in the food bank's warehouse facility. Still, no one is inconvenienced. In fact, these students are having a great time while taking direction from the Houston Food Bank's staff.

"We're working, but at the same time, we're having fun," said junior business major Thin Cao as he places items on a rotating conveyor shelf. "We're learning about team building and creating bonds, and it feels good to contribute to the community."

Business Cornerstone is a required sophomore level course focused on decision-making skills needed in today's workforce. All Cornerstone students are required to volunteer for the Houston Food Bank and write a paper detailing their experiences.

"Students are able to apply what they've learned in class to this experience," said lecturer Robert Irabor. "We want them to understand how they can use these concepts to benefit themselves and the community. That's the basis of this. We call it service learning."

Service learning has become synonymous with the University of Houston-Downtown. A number of courses are incorporating projects and assignments similar to this Houston Food Bank effort.

The Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning (CCESL) helps coordinate such efforts. Likewise, the center connects the UHD community with educational opportunities that impact both students and the community.

Led by Poonam Gulati Salhotra, the center's director, CCESL assists faculty in securing grants that support service learning curriculum. The center also assigns a service learning designation to course sections that incorporate community-oriented activities. Each semester, UHD offers more than 30 sections that have been identified as fulfilling service learning requirements. College of Business courses partner with Neighborhood Centers Inc. to provide tax guidance for Houstonians. Another project, "Veg Out," is based in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences' Communication Studies Program. Professors Creshema Murray and Ashley Archiopoli lead students in researching and communicating healthy eating habits. College of Sciences and Technology professors Gabriela Bowden and Meghan Minard led a service learning course that allows students to author a blog dispelling myths surrounding genetically modified organisms, artificial sweeteners, trans fats, antibiotics in food, vaccines and antibacterial soaps.

Gulati herself is no stranger to community engagement and service learning. As a microbiology professor, she led students to Houston elementary and middle schools to assist in class experiments and guest lectures.

"My students got a lot out of these experiences," she said. "They had opportunities to do new and interesting things with microbiology, and it made the subject matter more pertinent. And they served as role models for the students they taught."

Gulati also collaborated with UHD's Urban Education (UE) Department in an initiative that helped UE students become more prepared to teach science in schools. Gulati's students mentored UE students in preparing science lessons and experiments to be delivered in elementary school classrooms.

"My students would visit the classrooms to make sure the experiments ran smoothly, and they never realized how much they could impact the community as sophomores in college," Gulati said. "They felt really good about the process, and the elementary students looked up to the UHD microbiology students as 'scientists.'"

The center is aimed at connecting the UHD community with local partners for projects such as these. One way it does that is through a Community Partners Fair offering local non-profits and other organizations an opportunity to connect with UHD. Faculty, staff and students have an opportunity to meet with representatives of these groups to discuss potential collaborations.

Faculty aren't the only UHD community members who are eligible for grants through CCESL. Students also can apply for grants that support community service projects tied to coursework or conducted independently. Recently, student grants were awarded to Eisha Khan for the "Around the World Series" that spotlights cultures not often encountered on campus; and Milimar Murillo and Abigail Murillo for the project "Cosplay," which delivers costume plays for adolescents and the elderly.



Staff members also are eligible for CCESL grants. The first grants for staff members were awarded during the fall 2016 semester for work to be carried out in spring 2017.

The Center facilitates UHD's Academic Achievement through Community Engagement (A+CE) course sections that are offered to First Time in College (FTIC) students. A+CE is UHD's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), a component of the University's reaffirmation of its accreditation through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. It promotes critical thinking by using community issues.

"The primary outcome of the QEP is to stimulate students' creative and analytical skills and provoke intellectual responses to civic and societal issues that are challenging the very ethos of our community," said Faiza Khoja, associate vice president for Academic Affairs.

According to Khoja, A+CE course sections can be taught in three modes: awareness, integration and involvement. At the awareness mode, students become aware of community and social issues through coursework examining those issues. Course assignments might include a book discussion, case study, position argument, or research project. Integration engages external community expertise in the course. Students may engage with community issues through coursework enhanced with guest speakers, panels, documentaries or public deliberation events. Involvement requires students to apply classroom learning in the community. Examples include students connecting coursework with community experiences or projects that require direct engagement with the partners in the field.

Ultimately, the different modes will be analyzed based on student performance to assess which is the most effective in promoting critical thinking and learning and whether students' critical thinking skills are progressively improving. Students who complete four A+CE designated courses will earn an Engaged Scholar badge.

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The most important thing is that students will engage in learning about community issues while developing problem-solving and critical thinking skills, Khoja said.

“You need that for anything you do,” Khoja said. “Undergraduate education is about learning and applying skills. A+CE courses will help provide students the foundational skills that will be applied in careers or graduate studies.

“And our students are from the community, so they want to give back. Building civic engagement is another part of UHD’s mission. Yes, we want students to learn and earn degrees, but we also want to nurture their interests in contributing their time, energy and talents to the community.”

Many UHD students are engaged in community service or civic engagement activities outside of the classroom through involvement in student organizations. One of the most visible examples of students making a difference is Walk 2 Vote, an event aimed at inspiring Houstonians to exercise their right to vote. Led by UHD’s Student Government Association, Walk 2 Vote is

a procession from campus to the Harris County Tax Office to cast ballots. Last fall, hundreds of students and community members (including Hip Hop giant Bun B) made the trek to vote during the 2016 presidential election. That kicked off with a number of speakers, including Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner.

“Our mission is to inspire people to vote,” said student John Locke, who also serves as the chair of the local and national Walk 2 Vote initiative. “Civic engagement and getting involved in democracy are very important, but it’s not happening as much as it should. Walk 2 Vote is about encouraging citizens to participate in the process.”

Another student-led effort is UHD’s Animal Rescue Club. History professor Aaron Gillette posed the dilemma of the number of dogs and cats sitting in shelters and ultimately euthanized to his students. He suggested the idea of the Animal Rescue Club, and senior history major Travis Carter was one of its founding members. For Carter, the club was an opportunity to help with a cause he is passionate about and become more involved with the University.

“For a while, I was just showing up to classes, going home, then doing it all over again,” he said. “It was fine, but I didn’t really feel engaged with the campus. I wanted to find a way that I could contribute to this campus and to others.”

The club doesn’t necessarily rescue homeless dogs and cats, but rather creates a network of student volunteers who assist animal shelters and pet rescue groups. Activities include pet adoptions at local PetSmart and Petco stores and working with adoptable cats at a cattery in West Houston.

Although this club is not affiliated with a class, it has taught Carter a thing or two about self-confidence and organization. Last year, he coordinated the University’s first Animal Welfare Conference and has spoken to the media on the issue of homeless dogs and cats in Houston.

A former football player, Carter doesn’t find inspiration from the words of Vince Lombardi or other gridiron greats. Instead, a peace activist’s words motivates his mission.

“Gandhi’s quote, ‘A community is reflected on how it treats its children and animals’ struck a chord with me,” he said. “Those words motivate me to make a difference and help others.”

Gators definitely give back to the city in many ways. For some students, it’s part of the academic experience. For others, it’s a way of learning outside of the classroom. In either case, it’s the UHD way.

“I could not be more proud than when I hear of our students doing something to help their neighbors,” said UHD Interim President Michael A. Olivas. “At this institution, this is a regular occurrence. Our students are reflective of this great city. They continue to give back to make Houston a bigger and better place to live.”



UHD’s civic engagement was in full force during Walk 2 Vote.

UHD's Animal Rescue Club helped Travis Carter find a purpose on campus.



LEADING STRONG

UHD Alums Inspired by Commitment to Community



Houston is the home to many University of Houston-Downtown alums, who are committed to their communities. These Gators emerge from UHD with degrees and certificates, as well as pride and passion – two traits necessary in facilitating positive change.

UHD alumni occupy a range of leadership positions throughout the city. Gators are civil servants, teachers, law enforcement officers, business owners and community leaders. They serve as role models for the current generation of UHD students and for Houstonians as well.

“With more than 95 percent of UHD alumni continuing to live and lead in the Houston area, they are vital to the local economy and an important backbone to the growth of our vibrant city,” said Liza Alonzo (B.A. '04), director of Alumni Relations.

UHD Magazine salutes the many alums (more than 41,000) who have taken their talents into our communities. In this issue, we feature five esteemed UHD graduates who are indeed leading strong.

Mario Salinas Activist for Civic Engagement

By Toni Carter

Mario Salinas is dedicated to empowering millennials through civic engagement. Although he speaks with a stutter, a condition caused by complications at birth, it doesn't stop him from successfully demonstrating commitment to community development and youth empowerment.

As a fourth-generation Mexican-American and advocate for the Latino community in Houston, Salinas naturally developed a passion for social and economic justice and civic participation. He worked for the city for a few years in the Mayor's Office of Public Safety and Homeland Security, but then turned his attention to getting the Latino community educated and engaged. Salinas recently served as deputy director for Mi Familia Vota Texas, a nonpartisan organization that advocates on social and economic issues that impact the Latino community.

“I was inspired to get into the field of community empowerment because as a fourth-generation Houstonian, I, along with my friends and family, have lived within the realities of huge inequities that exist within the Houston area,” says Salinas. “Some have been able to transcend those realities, some have not. Through civic engagement, I want to give young adults the tools to empower themselves and their community.”

Salinas, the first in his family to earn a college degree, graduated from the University of Houston-Downtown with a Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies in 2008. He directly credits UHD for his professional success, a solid academic foundation and great mentorship.

“UHD was the springboard that got me into this kind of work,” says Salinas. “It was the guidance and one-on-one attention from professors like Adolfo Santos, Anne Kane and Gene Preuss that led me to become a City Hall Fellow, which in turn, led me to become involved in civic engagement on a professional level. To prospective students considering UHD, if you’re looking for a diverse student body and individual attention from your professors, UHD is the university for you.”

Claudia Chavez-Pinto

Principal, Crockett Elementary School

By Elisa Crossland

Many people don’t know what they want to do with their lives well into adulthood. That was not the case for Claudia Chavez-Pinto who always knew that she wanted a career in education.

Chavez-Pinto’s calling to teach was strong. As such, she set forth on her path straight out of high school, completing her bachelor’s degree in Interdisciplinary Studies, Bilingual Education at the University of Houston-Downtown in just four years. Prior to moving into various administrator roles, she taught for five years and completed her master’s degree in Educational Administration from the University of Houston-Clear Lake. Chavez-Pinto now serves as the principal at Crockett Elementary School, a magnet school for performing and visual arts in Houston Independent School District.

“I always played and dreamed of being a teacher,” says Chavez-Pinto. “After teaching for a while, I began to feel the calling to be an educational leader.”

Now, Chavez-Pinto continues to give back to the University through a mutually beneficial student-teaching partnership between UHD and Crockett Elementary.

“The UHD students have positively impacted our community here at Crockett Elementary,” she explains. “Student teachers come here and are able to bridge their learning with the hands-on experience of working with our students. We, in turn, get the benefit of what they have been learning in the classroom.”

As a first generation college student, Chavez-Pinto was naturally attracted to UHD and attributes much of her success to the foundation of education she received as an undergraduate.

“The passionate, dedicated professors at UHD, such as associate professor Maria Bhattacharjee, who really care about developing students to be successful in their careers make all the difference,” she says. “I truly do not believe I would have received the caliber of education that I did at any other college or university.”

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LEADING STRONG

Passion for Public Service Earns Alum Spot in City Hall

Terence O'Neill

City of Houston Director of Office of New Americans and Immigrant Communities

By Shannon Wright

It was a matter of being in the right place at the right time that initially led Terence O'Neill into politics. A casual introduction to Mayor Annise Parker during her campaign for City Council led to a job offer, and it didn't take long for the City of Houston's Director of Office of New Americans and Immigrant Communities to realize that he was meant for public service.

As Director of Office of New Americans and Immigrant Communities, O'Neill makes a difference in Houston's uniquely diverse international community. In this role, he encourages the well-being of Houston's citizens from other countries and assists in their success and integration into the community.

O'Neill, a first-generation college student, earned his Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy in 2011 and credits his education at UHD for giving him the skills to think logically. O'Neill selected UHD because of the flexible class schedules that cater toward working professionals.

"UHD has some of the best philosophy professors I've ever met," says O'Neill. "Although we studied some very lofty topics, philosophy gave me the ability to solve problems pragmatically. If you can look at yourself and the world objectively and be free of your own preconceived prejudices, then you've already crossed a huge barrier, which then allows you to focus on solving problems that, in my case, help improve the quality of people's lives."



Gators Serving Our State

Two Gators are headed to Austin. In November, alums Briscoe Cain (B.A. '08) and Mary Ann Perez (B.B.A. '03) were elected to the Texas House of Representatives.

Cain was elected to represent Texas 128th District (including Deer Park and La Porte among other areas of Harris County). He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication Studies from UHD and earned his Doctor of Jurisprudence from South Texas College of Law Houston. He practices law in his hometown of Deer Park. The son of a plant operator and a nurse, Cain worked his way through college but still managed to be very involved in campus activities including UHD's Republican Club.

Perez will represent the state's 144th District (including southeast Harris County). She earned her Bachelor of Business Administration degree from UHD's esteemed College of Business and owns a successful insurance and financial services company. She attended Milby High School in Houston and like Cain, worked her way through UHD. In addition to her service to the state, Perez is a former Houston Community College trustee.

"UHD prepares students for leadership roles in the city, the state and beyond," said UHD Interim President Michael A. Olivas. "I am proud to see our alumni in public office, applying what they learned in our classrooms to serving our community. Briscoe Cain and Mary Ann Perez are just two of the many Gators who are dedicating their energies to making our city and state great places to live and work."

Both Cain and Perez shared thoughts on how UHD prepared them for public office.



"UHD challenged me and taught me how to think critically."

-Briscoe Cain



"The quality of education I obtained from the University of Houston-Downtown has prepared me both professionally as a lawmaker and business owner."

-Mary Ann Perez



GROWING STRONG

Academic, Campus Growth Deepens UHD's Footprint in Community

By Mike Emery, Toni Carter



2016 was a year to remember for the University of Houston-Downtown. From new degree programs to an expanded presence in the city, the University was indeed “growing strong.”

Among the year’s highlights was the purchase of 17 acres of land north of the One Main Building that can serve as a site for numerous amenities, including a new Sciences and Technology building and proposed Sports & Fitness Center. Other possibilities for this area include a plaza for students, ball fields and green space. This site has proven to be a game changer for UHD’s Campus Master Plan. Overseeing the plan is DesignLab in the University of Houston’s (UH) Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture and Design, which is led by UH professor Patrick Peters.

“These 17 acres are key to creating a new and stronger sense of place for the University along White Oak Bayou, where we can shape a ‘north plaza’ of public space for the UHD community,” Peters said.

Other University gains in 2016 included a strengthened presence in areas outside of the Downtown area. UHD’s off-campus centers expanded significantly. UHD Northwest, serving communities in Cypress, Tomball, Spring/Klein, Katy, Waller and The Woodlands grew its academic space by 8,137 square feet. This additional space enabled new classrooms, offices and an education resource center with computers, printers and a library.

UHD Northwest is among the University’s campuses providing educational opportunities throughout the Houston area. UHD programs and courses also are available at Lone Star College CyFair and Kingwood. The University’s presence at all three of these campuses is made possible through a partnership with Lone Star College.

“UHD has made the commitment to serving the communities in this area of Houston,” said Louis D. Evans III, executive director of Off-Campus Locations and Online Coordination. “The demand for higher education in the region has certainly warranted an expansion at this campus. We look forward to continuing to serve more students here and at our other off-campus locations.”

UHD serves 1,500 students and delivers 19 undergraduate and three graduate degree programs at its off-campus learning centers. Additionally, students can earn graduate



certificates from the College of Business at UHD Northwest.

Campus growth aside, the University also is expanding its academic offerings to prepare students for careers in both education and health care. This spring, UHD’s College of Public Service kicked off its new Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences in Early Childhood Education and Family Systems program. The degree addresses a demand for early childhood educators in the state and creates a pathway for teachers seeking opportunities with organizations, such as Head Start and Texas Rising Star.

“We have geared this program to fit the needs of young children and early childhood educators — and that’s different,” said

Beverly Alford, UHD assistant professor of Urban Education. “For many other universities, the focus is elementary school — our program will not just be focused on the kids, it will be focused on the family and the community. This is a huge differentiator and benefit of the early childhood degree program at UHD.”

Just as the Early Childhood Education and Family Systems program addresses a need for educators, UHD’s forthcoming Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree will help fill a void in the health care workforce. According to the Texas Association of

Hospitals, the state could face a shortfall of 70,000 nurses by 2020. UHD’s nursing program—that is scheduled to launch in 2018—will be based in the Texas Medical Center at Houston Community College’s (HCC) Coleman campus.

In December, UHD and HCC officials signed a letter of intent to create a bridge between nursing programs at both institutions. HCC nursing students can seamlessly continue their studies at UHD.

This partnership is just one of the initiatives creating clear pathways for HCC students transferring to UHD. The institutions’ leaders also signed a letter of intent connecting their education programs and a letter of implementation focused on business programs. These agreements

complemented an overarching articulation agreement aimed at helping students navigate their way from community college into the University.

“This agreement benefits our University and HCC,” said Michael A. Olivas, interim president of UHD. “Most importantly, it will provide students with a distinct advantage, with resources dedicated to their transitions from HCC to UHD.”

Another significant area of growth is UHD’s College of Business Master of Business Administration program. With 1,067 students, the program was ranked No. 1 by the Houston Business Journal in its round-up of “Largest Houston-Area MBA Programs.”

“The College has been successful in determining the needs of working professionals, designing courses that prepare students to drive more immediate value to their employers, and delivering classes in a way that meets their objectives,” said Michael Fields, dean of the College of Business.

UHD’s MBA program began in 2012 with just 20 students. By fall 2016, its growth warranted a separate graduation ceremony to accommodate more than 200 graduates.

As UHD enters 2017, the Gator community will no doubt use last year’s momentum as inspiration to continue on an upward trajectory. According to Olivas, the sky’s the limit for the University.

“No longer are we the city’s best kept secret,” he said. “Great things are happening for UHD, and I expect that trend to continue this year and beyond.”

To the layperson, undergraduate research may seem similar to the projects high school students submit to science fairs, but it is not. These projects, often critical parts of a faculty member's research, add context and experience that is important to a student's education. To three Abramowitz Research Scholars at the University of Houston-Downtown (UHD), undergraduate research was a gateway to an unimagined world that provided the experience and perspective needed to inspire confidence and launch them to heights they had not previously dreamed possible.

The Joan S. Abramowitz Undergraduate Research Scholarship is awarded to one outstanding undergraduate student per year. The award provides \$3,000 per student, allowing them to conduct research in a laboratory at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth), Baylor College of Medicine or another local research institution during an eight-week period during the summer.

Linus Klinger 2016 Scholarship Recipient

Linus Klinger shared that he had no idea what he wanted to study when he started college. During his freshman year, he discovered a passion for research while enrolled in a biology lab taught by Rachna Sadana, assistant professor and assistant chair in the Department of Biology.

"I actually hated biology in high school," Klinger admits. "But, since I started working with Dr. Sadana, I've fallen in love with analytical processing in science, and I am now pursuing research as a career."

Klinger further refined his career aspirations while studying retinal development at Baylor College of Medicine under Ross Poché, an assistant professor of Molecular Physiology and Biophysics, during a summer internship made possible by the Abramowitz award. He plans to graduate in May with a Bachelor of Science in Biology and is now applying to both optometry and graduate schools, which he says wouldn't have happened without the

Scholarship Inspires Students to Soar to New Heights

By Elisa Crossland

support he received at UHD.

"I feel that the greatest driving force behind you as a student is a strong supporting network, and there are so many faculty members at UHD that want you to pursue your passion," he explains. "The scholarship allowed me to do research in any lab in Houston. I wouldn't have dreamt that was possible, and yet it is happening to me."

Caroline Barbosa 2013 Scholarship Recipient

Caroline Barbosa was also undecided about her academic direction when she started college. Barbosa, along with her sister Rebecca, chose to attend UHD because of its diversity, affordability and proximity to her home.

"My sister and I both attended UHD at the same time," she explains. "There are so many students at UHD who look like us, and we knew it was the right choice."

Barbosa first learned of the Abramowitz Scholarship while participating in the Scholars Academy, a program in the UHD College of Sciences and Technology (CST) that focuses on scholarship and student success for minority undergraduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) majors. Once accepted, she was mentored by Poonam Gulati Salhotra, associate professor in the Biology Department, who inspired her.

"It meant so much to know that there was someone who believed in me even

Caroline Barbosa





more than I believed in myself and would advocate for me even when I couldn't see my own potential," she says.

On receiving her award, Barbosa worked with William Margolin in the Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics at UTHealth, studying proteins that help facilitate bacterial cell division. She said that the experience exposed her to new methods and helped her develop her technical skillset in the lab.

After graduating with a bachelor's degree in Microbiology and a minor in Chemistry, Barbosa made the choice to give back to her community. She now works as a Teach for America Corps member in Houston's Marshall Middle School.

"I am currently looking at different master's programs with the overall goal of continuing to work in low-income

communities, help students in need, and help push them to be more than society tells them they can be," she explains.

Jillian Losh 2010 Scholarship Recipient

Jillian Losh knew exactly what she wanted to study in college ... theater.

But, after following her dream at another university for a year, she decided she loved theater but didn't actually want to pursue it as a career.


"I was taking a year off of school and working in a veterinarian's office when I really fell in love with doing the lab work," she explains. "I found UHD while looking for universities with good microbiology programs, and Houston seemed like a great place to be!"

Losh was mentored by Lisa Morano, professor in the UHD Biology Department, and her decision to study microbiology was reaffirmed with every class she took. Two years into her education at UHD, she was empowered by the Abramowitz Scholarship to research with Danielle Garsin in the Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics at UTHealth.

"Dr. Morano was the first person who ever told me I would make a great Ph.D. student," Losh shares. "I had never considered this for myself. The experience showed me that getting a Ph.D. is not something that was far beyond my intellectual capabilities. This was eye-opening, and it was meaningful to see a side of science that I'd never seen before."

Losh graduated in 2012 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Microbiology and a minor in Chemistry. She is currently

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A young man with glasses and a white lab coat is working in a laboratory. He is wearing blue nitrile gloves and holding a petri dish filled with a pinkish, crystalline substance. He is looking at the dish with a focused expression. In the background, there is a biosafety cabinet with a blue light. In the foreground, there is a piece of laboratory equipment labeled "MO BIO Vortex-Genie 2".

"I feel that the greatest driving force behind you as a student is a strong supporting network, and there are so many faculty members at UHD that want you to pursue your passion."

***– Linus Klinger,
UHD student***

enrolled at UTHealth in the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences working towards a Ph.D. in Microbiology and Molecular Genetics. She shared that she got a great start at UHD that positioned her for success in graduate school.

“I’m now taking classes with students from very prestigious schools, and I’ve never found that I was behind them academically at all,” she says. “Attending UHD and receiving the Abramowitz award was a great learning experience that allowed me to grow as a scientist.”

Lasting Legacy

Since 2008, eight exemplary UHD students have received awards. In addition to Klinger, Barbosa and Losh, scholars include: Sandy Gramajo, 2015; Roman Torres, 2014; Meghan Burkett Santiago, 2012; Karina Vazquez, 2009; and Claudia Jimenez Sturman, 2008.

Joan Abramowitz served on the UHD faculty for 20 years, including nine years as chair of the Microbiology Program. Upon her death in 2004, Joel Abramowitz established the Joan S. Abramowitz Undergraduate Research Scholarship in her memory. She is described by colleagues as an open, gregarious and dedicated faculty member who was foundational in connecting the Department of Natural Sciences to research institutions in Houston.

“Joan was instrumental in building connections and partnerships in the Houston Medical Center,” says Dean of the CST Akif Uzman. “Most importantly, she was a spectacular mentor to our students.”

Gulati also knew Abramowitz well, describing her as “warm and giving with a great sense of humor.”

At a reception on July 26, 2016, students

and faculty gathered to celebrate the accomplishments of the Abramowitz Research Scholars, recognize the support of the Abramowitz family, and remember the legacy of an outstanding faculty member. Among those in attendance were Joel Abramowitz, his wife Rita Berger, and Sebastian Abramowitz, their grandson.

“When the students talked about what the scholarship meant to them, I was just blown away,” says Joel Abramowitz. “If giving them a few thousand dollars has enabled them to improve their lives, that’s an incredible return on investment. It made me feel very grateful to be part of it.”

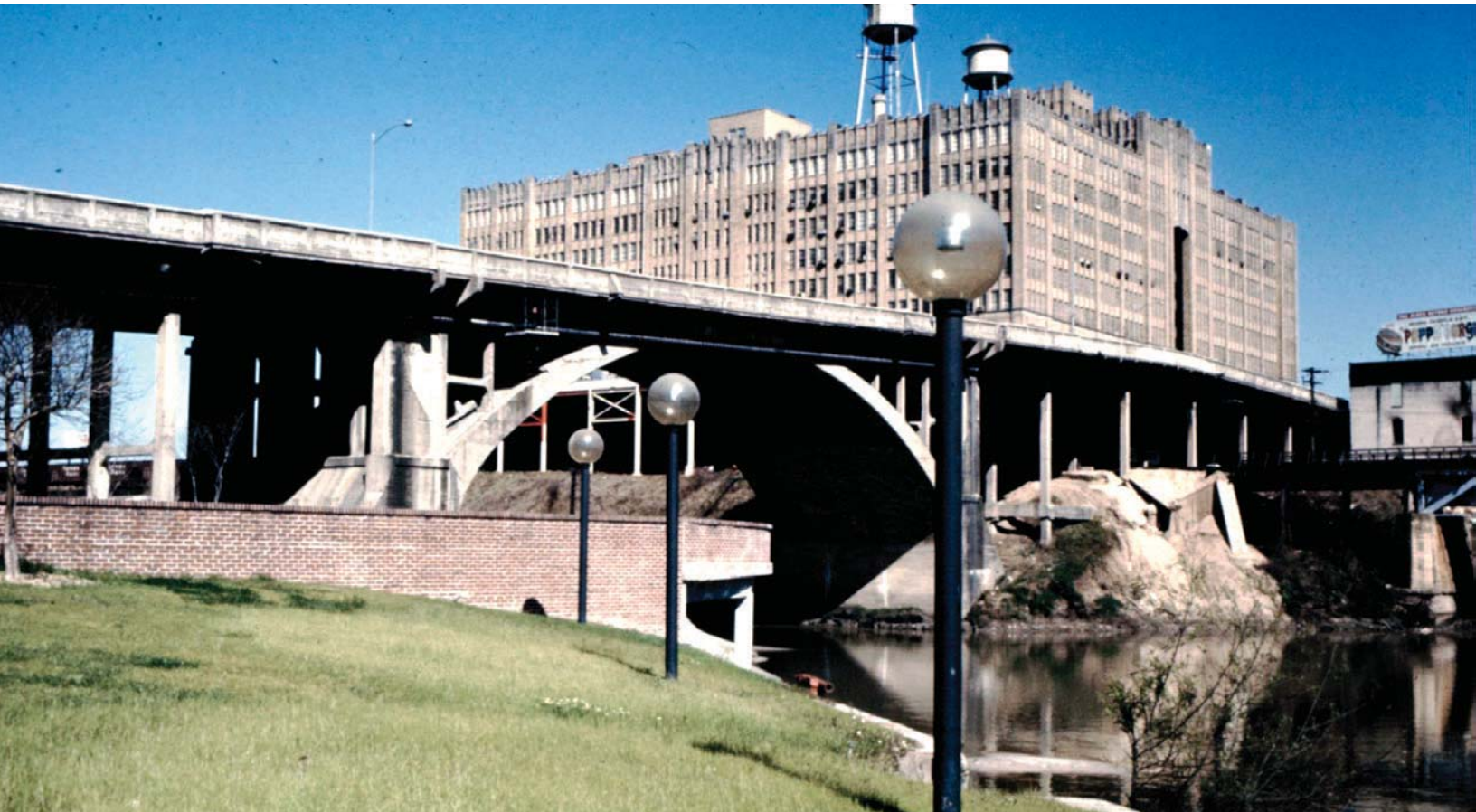
“Joan would have been overjoyed,” he adds. “Her students loved her, and the faculty loved her. She was a very good teacher, a mother, a mentor, and a spiritual leader to these kids while she was alive, and now that legacy lives on.”



UHD IN TIME

My 42 Years at the University of Houston-Downtown

By Merrilee Cunningham, Associate Professor of English



In 1974, I was hired eight days after South Texas Junior College became the University of Houston-Downtown College (en route to growing into UHD in 1979). I was brought in during a hiring spree of new professors. I was thrilled to join the faculty in the historical center of Houston as an assistant professor.

I remember that I taught many sections of English 1302, a course that I still love teaching and that I have taught for UHD as part of the Honors Program. We were all in one building then. In fact, the 10th floor where I presently office, was sublet to a long-term renter, the president of the University. It also had an apartment and briefly hosted the Faculty Club. The

Faculty Lounge was on the third floor and frequented by historians, math profs and my esteemed colleagues in English.

There were fewer than 3,000 students to be served by 108 full-time professors, so we took our time asking our commercial renters on 10th floor to vacate since we didn't need the space at first. Our relationship with Houston Community College was great, partly because, after our first year, J. Don Boney was our president as he had been theirs.

In my more than four decades here, I've seen the delivery of curriculum evolve. I took advantage of our TV studio and taught an ITV Shakespeare course for years. Students could participate at campuses throughout the greater Houston area. I realized that technology was going to make the learning experience better. I began doing research and publishing with fellow professor Ruth Robbins to see if I could play a small part in making it better.

I've taught some wonderful students who went on to get doctorates and law degrees. Some became professors here and elsewhere. One of my favorite drama students was the scholarly Luke Fedell, who now teaches for us. John Locke took my 1302 class and wrote a paper on homelessness in Houston that was the best work either I or the Mayor of Houston had seen on the subject. Recently, my former student Nancy Adossi just completed her Ph.D. It is wonderful to see her metamorphosis from a student into an esteemed colleague. My students come by to see me on occasion with a shy "Do you remember me?" and for some reason, they are always the students that I do remember. Sometimes, universities need program developers. One such program developer was professor Lisa Read, who called me into her office and wanted to know if I would help sponsor a summer program in England. That was the start of UHD's Study Abroad Program. We now have fabulous offerings every year as professors take students to study in countries all over the world. Professors Robert Wilson, Susan Baker and I took more than 100 students to Paris one summer in what was my absolutely favorite trip abroad with students. It was probably my favorite because I got to go with my family as well. Baker's day at the Louvre might be one of my favorite days in my long life. Spending

10 hours in the Louvre with an art history professor is my kind of fun.

In Homer's epics, Odysseus was both the great tactician and the great strategist. We have had both kinds of administrators at UHD — and we have needed both. Over the years, we have made friends, deals, and trades and have built buildings, programs, enrollment until we are more than even the sum of our substantial physical parts. We now have a serious campus right in the middle of town. We did this with partnerships and foresight of administrators like Chaney Anderson, Michael A. Olivas, William Flores, Max Castillo and faculty like Jeff Jackson.

The short and the long of it is that the helm of the ship of the University has been gripped by many forward-thinking individuals. One of the questions that I do ask myself is why have we let some things go undone that seem so obvious. Why have we not reached out to Rice University to create a boat house for our two crewing teams on the banks of the Bayou? Why did we not plan for two Metro train stops instead of only one, so

we could travel by rail from the One Main Building to the Shea Street Building? How can we link to the Downtown tunnels, so that working students could comfortably arrive at campus in time to take a couple of courses before or after work? But these are questions for the future at UHD.

UHD is no doubt getting better with age. Credit the cumulative work of the professors, students and administrators, and the recent implementation of new student success initiatives. Our wonderful city and community partners also are making UHD a great place to be.

Merrilee Cunningham is an associate professor of English and an award-winning poet. Her work has been published in literary journals and magazines such as "On," "Versus," "Visions," "The Ball State Review," "Renaissance and Reformation" and "South Central Bulletin of the Modern Language Association."





UHD
University of Houston
DOWNTOWN

View from the Bayou

There's a new sheriff in town. University of Houston-Downtown criminal justice alumnus Ed Gonzalez (B.S. '00) was elected Harris County Sheriff in November 2016. Gonzalez is an 18-year Houston Police Department (HPD) veteran and served on the hostage negotiation team and as a homicide investigator. After retiring from HPD, Gonzalez served on Houston City Council for three terms. During his campaign, Gonzalez returned to UHD for an October debate (pictured) with then-sheriff Ron Hickman. The event was presented by KTRK ABC13 and KXLN Univision 45 and streamed online. "It was an honor to return to my alma mater to share my thoughts and ideas," said Gonzalez. "I met a police officer in one of my classes who inspired me and that led to my career in public service. UHD set my professional career in motion."

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