

Harvey/UHLC Aftermath

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UH Law Center re-opens, reaches out to community in aftermath of Hurricane Harvey [More...](#)

Sept. 14, 2017 —The University of Houston Law Center students and their professors were back in the classroom on Sept. 5, but they continue to help classmates and other flood victims struggling to deal with the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey.

Unlike Hurricane Katrina, which forced the closure of both New Orleans law schools — Tulane and Loyola New Orleans – for the entire fall, 2005 semester, the University of Houston Law Center sustained just minor water intrusion during Hurricane Harvey. The University of Houston was closed for only one week.

"I'm very happy to welcome students, faculty and staff back to the Law Center and provide nourishment to them," said dean Leonard M. Baynes during a back-to-school breakfast.

"Classes have resumed without a hitch and no mere hurricane is going to stop the Law Center's mission. We are here for all of you and welcome you with open arms."

Students, faculty and staff were welcomed back with comfort food like doughnuts and pizza.

"My heart goes out to our whole community. It may take time for us to recover some sense of normalcy. At times like these, it is important for us to be kind and patient with each other and focus on the bonds that bring us together. We are all Houstonians, and we all love UHLC," Baynes added.

As students recounted their stories from the storm, many expressed gratitude for emerging from Harvey with minimal to no property damage.

But not all students were as lucky. John Hebert, a first-year-student, recounted how water breached his family's home in Pasadena.

"It was chaos. We put all of our sheets and linens against the door because water was already coming in through the back of the house," he said. "We basically tried to make a barricade, but it seeped through the bottom. The water eventually got about ankle-high. I've seen it flood in Pasadena before, but never like that. I'm just thankful because I know there were people who had water get chest-high in their home and people who lost everything."

The Law Center has established a Harvey Resource Page on its website. Faculty, staff, and students completed surveys to assess Harvey's impact. Every student, full-time faculty and staff member were accounted for after the storm.

"I would not feel comfortable until I knew that all the students were safe," said Sondra R. Tennessee, associate dean of Student Affairs.

According to the surveys, most Law Center students were not impacted by Harvey, but 23 percent reported minor losses and three percent suffered major damages.

The survey also indicated that 73 percent of students sheltered in place, and 27 percent evacuated their dwellings.

Given the Law Center was able to re-open so quickly after Hurricane Harvey, our students, faculty, staff, students and alumni are participating in a number of Harvey-related benefits, including the Student Bar Association's [Harvey Student Relief Fund](#).

The Hispanic Law Student Association, the Public Interest Law Organization, and other student groups are gathering school supplies and other items for children and their families who were devastated by Harvey.

The contributions will serve the students of the five high schools participating in the Law Center's Street Law program: the High School for Law and Justice, Milby High School, KIPP Academy Northeast, Chinquapin Preparatory School, the Young Women's College Preparatory Academy, as well as additional schools that benefit low-income students.

Clinical Associate Professor Geoffrey Hoffman, director of the Law Center's Immigration Clinic, led several volunteering efforts assisting flood victims with pressing legal questions.

"The most urgent needs are going to be lost documentation like a green card or work authorization," Hoffman said. "Another urgent need is if somebody is undocumented and they may be afraid of deportation and how to deal with those issues. We're also trying to direct immigrants to FEMA, and determine if they're eligible or not."

Students, faculty and staff first volunteered at the George R. Brown Convention Center in partnership with the Tahirih Justice Center. They later helped evacuees at the NRG Center where Hoffman volunteered alongside Baynes, Janet Beck, a visiting clinical assistant professor at the Immigration Clinic, and Lone Star Legal Aid.

Third-year students Danny Avila, Rebecca Chavez, Allie Trujillo and 2L Gloria Jauregui, among other students, volunteered on behalf of the Law Center.

"A famous quote I've been told is, 'the rent you pay to be on this planet is service.' We should take any opportunity we have to serve the community," Avila said.

"As a student attorney with the Immigration Clinic, I have a passion for helping immigrants," Chavez added. "This is my way of helping them in their time of need."

Alumni working with Lone Star Legal Aid included Robert Hand '11, John Hwang '16, Esther Kim '16, Sylvia Mayer '93 and Jeannie Nguyen '17. On Wednesday, Hoffman and other volunteers participated in an effort sponsored by Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston.

While Harvey has produced an overwhelming show of support for flood victims, the Law Center has long shown an interest in investing in the community.

“Lawyers are presented with many opportunities and it is important for us to give back. We set the standard of leadership in our communities,” said Baynes, “At times like this, it is ever so important for attorneys to reach out to serve their communities. It is a blessing that the Law Center is able to provide service to the greater Houston community during this time of need.”

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About the University of Houston

The [University of Houston](#) is a Carnegie-designated Tier One public research university recognized by The Princeton Review as one of the nation's best colleges for undergraduate education. UH serves the globally competitive Houston and Gulf Coast Region by providing world-class faculty, experiential learning and strategic industry partnerships. Located in the nation's fourth-largest city, UH serves more than 43,700 students in the most ethnically and culturally diverse region in the country.

About the University of Houston Law Center

The [University of Houston Law Center](#) (UHLC) is a dynamic, top tier law school located in the nation's 4th largest city. UHLC's Health Law, Intellectual Property Law, and Part-time programs rank in the U.S. News Top 10. It awards Doctor of Jurisprudence (J.D.) and Master of Laws (LL.M.) degrees, through its academic branch, the College of Law. The Law Center is more than just a law school. It is a powerful hub of intellectual activity with more than 11 centers and institutes which fuel its educational mission and national reputation. UHLC is fully accredited by the American Bar Association and is a member of the Association of American Law Schools.