2021 Year in Review

John M. O’Quinn Law Building Preview
DEAN’S NOTE

As 2021 comes to an end, I am filled with deep gratitude for all our blessings. The new John M. O’Quinn Law Building is rapidly on track for completion by summer 2022. The Law Center’s entering class is one of the strongest academically and most diverse in the Law Center’s history. We have endured another COVID-19 pandemic year, returned to in-person instruction, and re-learned the importance of resiliency and flexibility. While the pandemic seems to be lingering, we remain careful and have maintained a strong sense of community among our students, faculty, alumni, donors, staff, or friends.

As I reflect on the past year, I look with great expectation and enthusiasm for the upcoming 2022 year. I am personally very thankful to have served as the Law Center’s Dean for almost 7 ½ years. I am proud to see our students thrive in ever-changing circumstances, our faculty for their thought leadership and nationally recognized scholarship and our alumni for their dedication, expertise, philanthropy, mentorship, and service as exemplars of the power of a legal education.

It is because of each of you that we have had a successful year and that 2022’s horizon is bright as we prepare for major milestones.

Please enjoy the “Year-in-Review” edition of Briefcase magazine which highlights many of the great things that happened at the Law Center in 2021. I hope this annual update will bolster your pride in your alma mater and engagement with the Law Center as we enter a crucial new chapter in 2022.

Sincerely,

Leonard M. Baynes
Dean and Professor of Law
The excellence of several University of Houston Law Center specialty programs was recognized among the best in the country in the U.S. News & World Report’s annual survey released in March. The law school’s Health Care Law was ranked fifth, Intellectual Property eighth, No. 11 for the part-time program and No. 20 in Environmental Law.

“I am delighted that the University of Houston Law Center has achieved eight specialty law programs ranked in the top 50 in the recent U.S. News rankings, and four of those programs are in the top 20,” said Dean Leonard M. Baynes. “This was part of the Law Center’s strategic plan to increase the number of the Law Center’s top specialty rankings. One of the key features about the Law Center is that it has deep and excellent expertise in a wide variety of legal specialties, which ultimately provides our students a diversity of legal educational and job opportunities. There are not many other law schools who can highlight that they have eight unique legal specialties that are ranked in U.S. News top 50.

“We are also highly ranked on other ranking organizations like the top 30 Go-To Law Schools demonstrating that our students compete at the highest levels and are employed at jobs at the largest 100 firms in the nation. Moreover, for the past six years in a row, the Law Center has received the Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award and has been recognized for its diversity by Insight into Diversity Magazine.”

Rankings included:
- No. 5 in Health Law
- No. 8 in Intellectual Property
- No. 11 Part-time Program
- No. 20 Environmental Law
- No. 42 in Trial Advocacy
- No. 43 in International Law
- No. 45 in Contracts/Commercial Law
- No. 46 in Legal Writing (A 55-point increase from 2020)

The Law Center’s overall ranking was No. 60.

In a statement by U.S. News, the rankings, “evaluate institutions on their successful placement of graduates, their faculty resources, the academic achievements of entering students, and opinions by law schools, lawyers and judges on overall program quality.”

“The Law Center is an excellent law school with well-credentialed faculty, students with high median GPAs and LSATs scores, very talented and hard-working staff, and outstanding alumni,” Baynes said. “Our goal remains steadfast which is get even better and be even more recognized because rankings success is wonderful, but we all know that it doesn’t capture the full inherent excellence of the Law Center.”
Students from underrepresented backgrounds often choose schools like the University of Houston Law Center, according to an article by U.S. News & World Report. The article reported that of 685 enrolled students in 2020, 37.1 percent of Law Center students are from minority backgrounds.

“I am delighted that the Law Center has one of the most racially and ethnically diverse student bodies in the country,” said Leonard M. Baynes, Dean and Professor of Law. “Many thanks to the faculty and staff for creating an environment which is inclusive to all irrespective of background.”

The Law Center moved up to No. 30 in 2021 after being ranked No. 34 in 2020.

“The University of Houston Law Center is an excellent law school that provides students with an outstanding legal education and as is evidenced by the most recent “Go-To Law School Report.” The Law Center provides our graduates the same corporate law employment opportunities as students who attend the most elite law schools,” said Dean Leonard M. Baynes.

Law.com describes its methodology for the annual report as follows: “The Go-To Law Schools report ranks the top 50 law schools by percentage of 2020 juris doctors who took jobs at the largest 100 firms by lawyer head count—as identified in The National Law Journal’s annual survey of the nation’s 500 largest law firms.”

The University of Houston Law Center placed in the top 50 law schools in the nation in rankings published by the legal website Above the Law. The Law Center came in at No. 47.

According to Above the Law, the rankings’ methodology prioritizes employment outcomes most of all. Other factors include the quality of jobs, education costs, a school’s ability to place students on a career path that enables them to eliminate debts, full-time and long-term jobs that require bar passage and debt-per-job ratio – “a comparison between the indebtedness of a school’s graduates to the number of actual legal jobs” they are hired for, and Supreme Court clerkships and federaljudgeships.

UH LAW CENTER CLIMBS IN LAW.COM’S LATEST “GO-TO” LAW SCHOOL RANKINGS

UH LAW CENTER LANDS ON ABOVE THE LAW’S TOP 50 LAW SCHOOLS LIST
Four University of Houston Law Center Mock Trial Team members won the first TEX-ABOTA Showdown Trial Advocacy Competition in November, beating out every other law school in the state of Texas.

UHLC students Laura Gomez Duarte, Brett Hargis, John Herrman and Alejandra Rodriguez secured the win for the Law Center. The team was coached by Judge Christine Weems of the 281st District Court and Director of the University of Houston Law Center’s Mock Trial Program, and Ryan MacLeod of Kherkher Garcia LLP. Additionally, Gomez Duarte was named “Best Advocate” in the competition.

“What makes what these four students did so impressive is that all four of them did this on the heels of competing in another tournament,” said Weems. “The problem was released on September 14, six weeks before this tournament. All four students were preparing for other tournaments, so we didn’t really get to work on the problem until they finished their other competitions. They all agreed to immediately transition over to prepare in only half the time the other teams would have had to get ready. Clearly, their hard work and commitment paid off because they beat the competition and came out on top.”

During the mock trial, students were evaluated by actual judges who participated in most rounds. The final round included Texas Supreme Court Chief Justice Nathan Hecht. All 10 Texas law schools competed in the mock trial competition, and UHLC defeated the South Texas College of Law–Houston in the final round to claim the title of “Best in Texas.”

TEX-ABOTA, which is the Texas Chapter of the American Board of Trial Advocates, is comprised of lawyers and judges who are dedicated to the preservation and promotion of the civil jury trial right provided by the Seventh Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The organization has 14 chapters across Texas and several committees.

The Law Center Mock Trial Team is part of the Blakely Advocacy Institute and competes in a number of prestigious mock trial competitions across the nation. As part of the team, members gain a heightened understanding of the rules of procedure and evidence, as well as develop strong courtroom skills and persuasion techniques. Participating in mock trials is highly beneficial for aspiring attorneys in any kind of practice since every area of law is predicated on some degree of advocacy. The mock trial gives students the practice of going toe-to-toe with other advocates and articulating their arguments before a judge.

“Winning this competition is a tremendous, and significant, accomplishment for our students, our coaches and our advocacy program,” said Jim Lawrence, Executive Director of the Blakely Advocacy Institute at the Law Center. “To put it in perspective, Texas mock trial competitions are as competitive as Texas high school football.”
The University of Houston Law Center Class of 2021 was celebrated for overcoming societal obstacles while in the pursuit of a legal career during a socially distanced, in-person convocation ceremony held in May at TDECU stadium. The ceremony was also livestreamed to a crowd of approximately 500 people. Among the graduates were 218 J.D. recipients and 54 LL.M.s, with some receiving both degrees.

“Graduates, you are making history as the class who has shown its resilience in rising to the challenges of our day,” said Dean Leonard M. Baynes. “Over the course of the past 15 months during the pursuit of a legal education, you have exhibited the qualities necessary for success: tenacity, intellectual rigor, and focus. Yet relying on our intellect alone is not enough. Our times call for kindness, compassion and understanding.

“In a country and state with so many people of so many backgrounds, it is important for us to think about each other before we act. Lawyers lead and have been at the forefront of civil rights, women’s rights, marriage equality, immigration reform, tort reform, tax reform and deregulation. Ultimately as lawyers, you will seek justice for your client whoever he, she, or they may be.”

The Hon. Alvaro De la Cruz Jr., a student regent and 2021 graduate of the University of Houston-Victoria, encouraged graduates to take pride in their journey and the education they received.

As a sign of the times in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, additional speakers delivered their speeches through the Law Center’s first-ever video wall.

Chelsea Klumpp, the speaker for the J.D. class, applauded the effort it took for members of the Class of 2021 to complete their legal education.

“It goes without saying that this year and this experience has been nothing like what we thought it was going to be when we started law school,” Klumpp said. “Our class rose to the occasion.”

The LL.M. class speaker was Brett Dyer Salazar, who commended his classmates for being a tight-knit group amidst a virtual learning experience.

“Despite the pandemic context, I feel like we became a family - a great, diverse family with traditions from Pakistan, Venezuela, Peru, Brazil, Ukraine, Russia, Poland, Jordan, Colombia and other countries,” Salazar said.

Graduates selected Professor Meredith J. Duncan, the George Butler Research Professor of Law, as the faculty speaker. She encouraged to always be mindful of why they chose to attend law school.

“You didn’t just survive law school, you thrived through law school,” Duncan said. “I have great hope in our legal profession because in large you’re joining us.

Graduates were also embraced into the Law Center’s network of alumni.

“Let me welcome you with open arms to joining your Law Alumni Association,” said UH Law Alumni President Victor Wright via video. “We look forward with great excitement and anticipation to you joining us to taking the Law Center to even greater heights.”
Members of the federal judiciary and University of Houston Law Center students and professors networked in small group settings during a Judicial Lunch-and-Learn program held in March on Zoom. The virtual gathering was hosted by the Law Center’s Career Development Office.

“I’m delighted the Law Center had this event, and we look forward to interacting with many more judges in the future,” said Dean Leonard M. Baynes. “We hope to have our students pursue judicial clerkships, and we would like to have more UH Law Center alumni serving as judges. This was a great opportunity to have conversations with judges and we thank all of the judges who participated.”

In his welcoming remarks, U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas Judge Jeff Brown ’95 outlined some of the advantages of attending the Law Center and pursuing a legal career in the Houston area.

“I thank my colleagues on the bench and all of the students and faculty at the Law Center for joining us,” Brown said. “I’m very proud to be an alumnus of the Law Center’s Class of ’95.

“There are a lot of advantages to attending the Law Center, and one of them is the City of Houston itself - the legal market that it has, the industry that it has and the judiciary. The Southern District has a lot of judges based in Houston, and the state bench too. That’s a real advantage for internships and programs like this.”

Texas State Senator Paul Bettencourt said the impact of the severe winter weather across Texas in February was the result of poor preparation, and he pointed to solutions that he believes will ensure such hardships never occur again.

Bettencourt was one of several speakers at the University of Houston Law Center’s 3rd Annual Denney L. Wright International Energy Conference, held in April in conjunction with the Houston Business and Tax Law Journal’s 21st Annual Symposium. The event was held virtually, and attendees received 5.5 hours in Texas continuing legal education credit. More than 320 people from 12 different countries tuned into the conference.

“We have to fix it and we will fix it,” Bettencourt said. “Texas is too big of a state to have an unreliable grid - we’ve got too much economy, too many lives are at risk.”

The conference’s opening panel discussed the tax and energy investment climate in Mexico. Another panel, “When the Going Gets Tough the Tough Get Going: Brazil Oil & Gas Thrives Despite the Pandemic,” featured Norman Jacob Nardoff, special counsel for Mayer Brown in Houston and an adjunct professor at the Law Center, and Leonardo Duarte Alves, an associate at Mayer Brown’s office in Rio de Janeiro.

Sponsors included BakerHostetler, Bracewell, ExxonMobil, Mayer Brown, Skadden, Thompson & Knight and White & Case.

The conference is named for Professor of Practice Denney Wright. After a 42-year career as senior tax counsel with ExxonMobil, Wright joined the Law Center’s faculty in 2017 after serving as an adjunct professor for 20 years, and he made it a priority for the school to host an annual event that crossed international borders.
International law scholars discussed how the COVID-19 crisis led to a decline in trade across the world and emphasized the need for greater collaboration amongst regions and nations in future emergencies during a virtual presentation hosted in April by the University of Houston Law Center’s Initiative on Global Law and Policy University of Bologna Center for Latin American Studies. “International Trade in the Time of COVID-19,” was the fourth event in a six-part series, co-sponsored by the American Society of International Law-Latin America Interest Group.

The webinar series was co-organized by GLPA founding director Elizabeth Trujillo, the Law Center’s Mary Ann & Lawrence E. Faust Professor of Law, and Sabrina Ragone, a Professor of Comparative Law at the University of Bologna.

The webinar’s keynote speaker was Gabrielle Marceau, senior counsel to the Research Division of the World Trade Organization, and a professor at the University of Geneva. Boston College of Law Professor Frank García served as the moderator and as a discussant with Trujillo.

In Marceau’s wide-ranging remarks, she touched on how the WTO has responded to the pandemic and its role as a “transparency hub,” the need for cooperation amongst nations and for public private partnerships for the production and distribution of medical goods and vaccines. She also discussed multiple international proposals that gather different actors, placing an emphasis on sustainability.

“We cannot aside the simple point that this pandemic was caused by the way we live,” Marceau said. “We need to deal differently with nature and the environment. The crisis seems to have shaken up governments so that they realize that we need to take action, because this is really a global problem that shows that all humans are equal.”

In Trujillo’s remarks, she said many current challenges were in existence before the pandemic, such as the rise of increased protectionism, and the need to recalibrate our relationship with international trade on areas such as sustainability, energy, the digital economy, intellectual property protections and regulation.

“In the last four years, an ‘America-first’ policy, made America withdraw from some of these agreements and globalization in general,” Trujillo said.

Trujillo discussed specific trade issues that need updating to better address future global emergencies, especially around subsidies and the national security defense in trade. “We also need to change the narrative around trade. We need to make it more palatable to citizens so they understand that trade is a tool to help people improve their lives, to create access to vaccines for example—that trade is be part of the solution and part of their daily lives.”

Haitian man suffering mental illness was released from an Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention center this year through the diligence of Clinical Professor Geoffrey Hoffman, students from the University of Houston Law Center’s Immigration Clinic and attorneys from Baker Botts and American Gateways law firms.

“Our client was only days away from being physically deported, but we went to the Supreme Court and received a wonderful and thoughtful opinion from Justice Sotomayor written in dissent,” Hoffman, director of the Immigration Clinic said. “I am so honored to work with talented law students, colleagues and fellow attorneys who all pulled together. He will now be released, and that is due to all the team members’ efforts.”

Arguing that the immigration appellate board erred when remanding an immigration judge’s initial decision to grant deportation relief, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor stated that if forced to return to Haiti, the deportee would be targeted for “cruel and dehumanizing mistreatment” because of his schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and psychosis.

“His release from ICE custody is an enormous victory for our client and Clinic,” Immigration Clinic Clinical Supervising Attorney Parker Sheffy said. “But it truly underscores the enormous hurdles immigrants must overcome to prevail within the current immigration system.

“From this case, I learned the complex and interesting nature of Immigration Law,” 2L Aletsey Hinojosa said. “However, protecting our clients and achieving social justice makes it all worth it.”

Hoffman and Sheffy will continue working with students and pro bono partners on his Fifth Circuit case.
The University of Houston Law Center presented its 2021 U.S. Supreme Court Update continuing legal education webinar, which featured wide-ranging discussion on several cases involving antitrust law, criminal law, voting rights among other topics. Speakers at the August event included Law Center professors and a graduate who provided insights on Supreme Court developments to an audience of nearly 300.

Alex Roberts ’06, a partner at Beck Redden LLP, presented the NCAA v. Alston antitrust case. In Alston, student athletes challenged NCAA rules limiting compensation in the form of educational benefits and compensation unrelated to attendance. The Court agreed with student athletes regarding restrictions limiting educational benefits. Roberts suggested that elite colleges will begin offering athletes more educational benefits, while student-athletes are eligible to be compensated for their name, image and likeness.

“Amateurism may be a relic of the past in the not-too-distant future,” Roberts, president of the UH Law Alumni Association, said.

Associate Professor of Law and Business James D. Nelson, summarized Fulton v. City of Philadelphia, a case involving the law of religious liberty. Nelson said he expects that organizations seeking to discriminate against LGBTQ foster families will scour regulations for individualized processes within the law to boost their chances of getting a religious exemption under Fulton.

Law Foundation Professor of Law Seth J. Chandler discussed California v. Texas, another case in the continuing battle on the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act.

Associate Professor Daniel Morales covered two cases that reflect broader trends regarding immigration law, Johnson v. Gazman Chavez and Niz-Chavez v. Garland.

Associate Professor Emily Berman discussed AZ Republican Party v. DNC and Brnovich v. DNC. These cases explored whether Arizona’s law violated the voting rights act.

UH LAW CENTER’S ANNUAL SUPREME COURT UPDATE HIGHLIGHTED CASES ON AMATEURISM IN COLLEGE SPORTS, VOTING RIGHTS AND MORE

After 17 months of remote learning as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the University of Houston Law Center opened its doors again in Fall 2021 for instruction on campus.

“I am delighted that the Law Center is able to offer students face-to-face instruction,” said Dean Leonard M. Baynes.

“Having started off law school on campus, it’s a fantastic feeling to be able to return and be amongst my colleagues on campus after over a year on Zoom,” said 2L student Danielle Giaccio. “I was vaccinated in early 2021 in hopes that a return to campus would become a reality, and I’m happy to see that goal come to fruition for the UHLC family.”

There are 245 students in the entering J.D. class. The Class of 2024 includes 209 full-time students and 36 part-time students who had a median GPA of 3.64 and median LSAT score of 161. More than 38 percent of the class comes from underrepresented backgrounds.

The Law Center’s LL.M. Class of 2021 consists of 36 students including natives of Bolivia, Colombia, France, Ghana, India, Honduras, Mexico and the U.S.

University of Houston Law Center Beirne, Maynard & Parsons, L.L.P. Professor of Law Douglas K. Moll leads a course in Secured Financing during the first week of classes of the Fall 2021 semester.
UH LAW CENTER’S CRIMINAL JUSTICE INSTITUTE SEES CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP

Professor Sandra Guerra Thompson stepped down as director of the University of Houston Law Center’s Criminal Justice Institute in August and has been succeeded by Associate Professor of Law and Political Science Zachary D. Kaufman and Associate Professor David Kwok, who serve as co-directors.

“I thank Professor Guerra Thompson for her leadership and 18 years of service as director of the Institute,” said Dean Leonard M. Baynes. “Her hard work and efforts elevated the Institute to its high level of prominence today.

“Under Professor Kwok and Professor Kaufman’s leadership and building on Professor Guerra Thompson’s accomplishments, I am confident that the UH Law Center Criminal Justice Institute will reach additional levels of prominence and gravitas.”

Guerra Thompson, the Newell H. Blakely Professor of Law, teaches Criminal Evidence, Criminal Law, Evidence, and Hot Topics in Criminal Law and Procedure. Her research on crime labs culminated in a 2015 book, “Cops in Lab Coats: Curbing Wrongful Convictions through Independent Forensic Laboratories.”

“For so long, the Criminal Justice Institute has brought national attention to the UH Law Center through outstanding criminal law conferences, symposia, and clinics,” Guerra Thompson said. “Now Professors Kaufman and Kwok, two nationally recognized scholars, will bring fresh perspectives from their specializations in international criminal law and white-collar crime, respectively.”

Kaufman, who joined the Law Center’s faculty in 2019, writes and teaches in the areas of criminal law, international law, and international justice and atrocities. He is a life member of the Council on Foreign Relations and serves as both co-chair of the American Society of International Law’s Human Rights Interest Group and secretary of the Association of American Law Schools’ International Human Rights Section.

Kwok, who holds the George Butler Research Professorship, teaches and writes in the areas of white-collar crime, whistleblowers, public policy, and law and the social sciences. He joined the Law Center faculty in 2013.

“It is a testament to Professor Guerra Thompson’s expertise and effectiveness that it takes two people to follow in her big, bold footsteps,” Kaufman said.

“It is a privilege to take on this new role with the Criminal Justice Institute,” added Kwok. “Under Professor Guerra Thompson’s leadership, CJI has helped deploy academic expertise throughout Houston and beyond. I hope to continue this legacy of compassion, fairness, and excellence in pursuing these ideals of criminal justice.”

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UH LAW CENTER WORKSHOP ADDRESSES LEGAL STEPS AND RESPONSES FOLLOWING WINTER STORM URI

With an emphasis on issues such as landlord-tenant law, homeowners insurance, disaster remediation contracts, liens and FEMA, the University of Houston Law Center’s virtual continuing legal education seminar, “Winter Storm Uri: Legal Issues After the Thaw” gave insight and ideas on how to best prepare or recover from a severe winter weather event. The May event’s first panel, “After the Thaw: Landlord Tenant Issues Following a Disaster,” was led by Lone Star Legal Aid Director of Litigation Richard Tomlinson and Houston Volunteer Lawyers staff attorney Leesa Everitt, who discussed the nuances and conflicts of common law regulations that govern the rental of commercial and residential property.

Jon-Ross Trevino of Lone Star Legal Aid led the second panel, “Consumer Credit & Debt After Winter Storm Uri,” which provided resources for clients and consumers in disasters, such as weekly credit reports, FEMA assistance and Public Utility Commission emergency orders.

The third panel was led by Meghan Smolensky, Equal Justice Works Fellow in the Disaster Resilience Program and a staff attorney in the Disaster Relief Unit at Lone Star Legal Aid, who spoke about “Homeowners Insurance and FEMA, Contractors and the RCLA.”

Ta’Mara Foster, general law practitioner in the Disaster Relief Unit and staff attorney at Lone Star Legal Aid, presented the final panel and discussed the Texas Deceptive Trade Practices Act (DTPA), giving a brief background of its intent to protect consumers against misleading and deceptive business practices, as well as the differentiation of mechanic’s liens.

The workshop closed with a conversation between Foster, Smolensky and Law Center Professor of Practice and Consumer Law Clinic Director Ryan Marquez, who discussed challenging mechanic’s liens, DTPA action and breach of warranty and the importance of ensuring a contractor’s validity before hiring.

“We as attorneys have a very special skill that others lack, and even some of this is difficult for us,” Marquez said. “For people who are going through these types of disasters, whether it be the winter storm or Hurricane Harvey, they really do need some representation.”
MEXICAN OFFICIALS, SOME OF WHOM ARE GRADUATES FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON LAW CENTER, DISCUSSED A WIDE RANGE OF TOPICS DURING THE “HOUSTON GOES GLOBAL: A PROFILE OF MEXICAN DIPLOMACY” CONFERENCE PRESENTED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON LAW CENTER’S CENTER FOR U.S. AND MEXICAN LAW. ALFONSO LÓPEZ DE LA OSA EScriBANO, DIRECTOR FOR THE CENTER OF U.S. AND MEXICAN LAW, BEGAN THE WEBINAR BY NOTING THAT MEXICAN DIPLOMACY IS AMONG THE MOST ACTIVE AND DYNAMIC IN THE WORLD.

AMONG THE TOPICS DISCUSSED WERE:

• USMCA COMPARATIVE ASPECTS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES,

• INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND GOVERNANCE: SPECIAL MENTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND U.S.-MEXICAN POLICIES,

• MEXICAN WOMEN IN THE WORLD: DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS.

MARÍA CRISTINA ORPOZa ZORRILLA, WHO WORKS IN THE MEXICAN EMBASSY IN ONTARIO, DELIVERED A PRESENTATION ON THE PUBLIC DIPLOMACY GOALS OF THE USMCA FROM NEGOTIATION TO IMPLEMENTATION.

“We had to keep it trilateral,” Zorrilla said. “That was the main message when we started negotiating. Our public diplomacy effort was to underscore the benefits for the three countries – Canada, the U.S. and Mexico.”

In the second panel, Miguel Angel Reyes Moncayo of the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs detailed aspects of climate change policy in Mexico, focusing on the guidelines of the Paris Agreement adopted in 2015.

“Mexico is among the top 20 countries with the highest emission rates out of the 159 nations considered by the U.N. Even though the first 10 emitters are responsible for about two-thirds of global emissions, Mexico has also taken its responsibility to reduce carbon emissions and achieve the global goal of zero emissions in the long-term. Mexico is a very active actor in the international leader on the multi-lateral level.”

In the final discussion, Alicia Kerber of the Consul General of Mexico, discussed how women are often relegated to advisory or assistant roles in the diplomacy arena.

“Seen as a traditionally male domain, existing power structures within the diplomatic infrastructure reinforce gender inequality and discriminatory practices, making it difficult for women to enter diplomacy at the highest position,” Kerber said.

“In the field of international relations, we have witnessed big changes and great paradoxes. While all these changes are happening, there is one issue that does not seem to advance as much as we like – gender equality in the world of diplomacy and international organization.”

Additional sponsors for the event were the Consulate General of Mexico in Houston and the Mexican Secretariat of Foreign Affairs.

PSYCHOLOGY EXPERT CONVEYED ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF CHILD TRAUMA RECOVERY IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM DURING UH LAW CENTER WEBINAR

Baylor College of Medicine Clinical Assistant Professor Megan A. Mooney relayed practical ways to support healing and recovery from the adverse effects of childhood trauma in her virtual presentation, “The Essential Elements of a Trauma-Informed Juvenile Justice System” hosted by the University of Houston Law Center’s Juvenile and Children’s Advocacy Project (JCAP). The March event included more than 120 attendees.

“Trauma is essentially not being in control of bad things that have happened to us,” Mooney said. “These things happen and are forced upon our body; we don’t get any sense of control.”

The majority of children in the juvenile justice system setting have experienced some form of trauma, neglect or maltreatment. JCAP’s mission is to reduce juvenile crime and delinquency, and to improve the long-term educational success rates and life outcomes for socially and economically disadvantaged youth by disrupting the school to prison, or community to prison pipeline through the provision of legal, educational, and social support services. JCAP works toward this mission through three primary programs: direct representation for dual-status youth in the juvenile justice, criminal justice and child welfare systems, juvenile record sealing, and education rights representation.

“Healing occurs within relationships,” Mooney said. “We in our connections to young people have the capacity to be healing agents in whatever role that maybe be, and without those relationships, children or adults cannot heal.”

Mooney is an affiliate member of the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, adjunct assistant professor at UTHealth Sciences Center at Houston and a licensed psychologist.
For Autumn Brehon, a second-year law student at the University of Houston Law Center, life meant getting up at three in the morning for a part-time job to support her education. Unfortunately, that meant the focus on studies suffered.

However, after receiving a scholarship, she was able to cut back her hours and get on the Dean’s List. “I would not be able to do everything that I do if I had to work more hours,” she said.

Brehon is one of the countless examples of students who have benefited from annual scholarships. To attract and retain top students and promote a more diverse student population, the UH Law Center is making a large, concerted effort to increase the number of scholarships through its new Fuel the Future Initiative.

UH Law Center officially launched Fuel the Future, a new plan to help raise money for scholarships, with a virtual celebration in October. The event included a presentation by Dean Leonard M. Baynes, talks by donors and testimonials from current students. The goal of Fuel the Future is to raise $10 million by 2025, and it has already raised $1.6 million.

Dean Baynes spoke of the importance of diversity in that Fuel the Future will help support scholarships for students from underrepresented backgrounds and presented an overview of the UH Law Center’s DEI Pipeline Program. “We want to fuel the future because what law schools, and education in general, do is provide this powerful mechanism for social advancement and civic engagement,” he said.

Thomas Hetherington, a 1998 graduate of the UH Law Center and UHLC Foundation President, gave $250,000 to jumpstart the initiative. “It’s compelling to read the stories of these law students,” he said. “When you see the impact you have, you too will be very happy that you were part of it.”

Finnegan said he approached his firm about a match program for the new building efforts, but the more the firm started looking at the school, they became interested in their scholarships and diversity. This further demonstrated the importance of having scholarships available.

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UNIVERSIDAD ANÁHUAC STUDENTS WIN UH LAW CENTER’S FIRST-EVER BILINGUAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION COMPETITION

Students from Mexico’s Universidad Anáhuac secured a first-place finish in the University of Houston Law Center’s inaugural Bilingual Dispute Resolution Competition. A team featuring students from the Law Center was the runner-up.

The tournament, held virtually in April, was developed by Karen L. Jones, executive director of Global and Graduate Programs, Jim Lawrence, executive director of the Blakely Advocacy Institute and director of the A.A. White Dispute Resolution Center, and Alfonso López de la Osa Escrivan, director of the Center for U.S. and Mexican Law.

Final round judges included Al Amado, an international law consultant and counsel, Alicia Kerber, the Consul General from Mexico in Houston, and López de la Osa Escrivan. The competition was created in part to train bilingual English-Spanish future attorneys in a global environment where cross-border legal employment is on the rise.

Universidad La Salle in Mexico was also a participant in the competition. Littler provided sponsorship for the event.

The competition was created in part to train bilingual English-Spanish future attorneys in a global environment where cross-border legal employment is on the rise. The event was supported by UH Provost Paula Myrick Short.
Andrew Cobos may have graduated from the University of Houston Law Center and Bauer College of Business in 2011, but he hasn’t forgotten the impact of those schools on his life. This year, the Cobos Law Firm gifted a generous $25,000 scholarship to the Law Center and another $25,000 to UH’s Bauer School SURE™ program. The law scholarship will go to a first-generation student as part of the UH Law Center’s Fuel the Future Initiative, which empowers social equity and access to legal education through philanthropic support.

“Many thanks to UH Law alumnus Andrew Cobos for giving a very generous gift to the UH Law Center in order to support student scholarships,” Dean Leonard M. Baynes said. “Fuel the Future!”

The other gift goes to the SURE™ program – which stands for Stimulating Urban Renewal through Entrepreneurship. It empowers entrepreneurs in under-resourced communities, like Houston’s Third Ward, teaching them essential business skills such as record-keeping, taxes, marketing, and financial management.

Investing time and talent in students and other small businesses is important to Cobos because of the time and talent UH educators gave to him and his attorneys at Cobos Law Firm. He believes that’s what gave them the skills necessary to be better advocates and he wants to repay that gift.

“The most important thing that my firm can do is give back to assist others along their educational journey,” Cobos said.

These gifts – totaling $50,000, establishes both scholarships. Cobos intends to develop and grow his firm’s relationship with the Law Center and the SURE™ program. To date, over 1400 entrepreneurs have been trained and 600 small businesses launched in under-resourced communities with the assistance and guidance of the SURE™ faculty.
U.S. DOE OFFICIAL DESCRIBES NEW ENERGY JUSTICE INITIATIVE AT UH LAW CENTER’S 5TH ANNUAL NORTH AMERICAN ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY, & NATURAL RESOURCES CONFERENCE

Shalanda Baker discussed aspects of the Biden administration’s approach to energy policy during a virtual University of Houston Law Center presentation in May. Baker, the first-ever Deputy Director for Energy Justice & Secretary’s Advisor on Equity, was the keynote speaker at the 5th Annual North American Environment, Energy, & Natural Resources Conference, “Energy, & Natural Resources Conference, Environmental Social Governance (ESG): Major Mover Towards Sustainable Energy Future.”

Baker discussed the Justice40 Initiative, which promises that 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain federal investments, including investments in clean energy, energy efficiency, sustainable housing and more, must flow to disadvantaged communities.

“Energy justice is about enhancing energy democracy,” Baker said. “We’re at a crossroads. We can keep relying on what got us into this injustice, or we can choose a harder pathway but one that is more just and makes our communities more resilient.”

Baker discussed the origins of her involvement in fighting for energy justice and how communities of color are disproportionately affected by pollution and energy injustice, and the difference between energy burden and energy insecurity. Energy burden is the percentage of household income that goes to energy costs, while energy insecurity is defined as lacking reliable access to uninterrupted energy sources at an affordable price.

“The higher the burden, the higher the insecurity,” she said. “One in three Americans experiences some sort of energy insecurity.”

Baker has spent over a decade researching the equity dimensions of the global transition away from fossil fuel energy to cleaner energy resources. In 2016, she received a Fulbright-Garcia-Robles research fellowship to study climate change, energy policy and indigenous rights in Mexico.

The conference began with a panel titled, “ESG Facts and Figures and the Renewable Bump.” Speakers included Ramanan Krishnamoorti, the Chief Energy Officer of UH, and Blank Rome attorneys Joan Bondareff and Stacy Louizos.

Another panel titled “The Status in Canada and Mexico,” featured Elizabeth Trujillo, Chair of the UH Global Law and Policy for the Americas and UH EENR affiliate.

Dean Leonard M. Baynes moderated a panel that discussed ESG and the Future of the Energy Business. Other panelists included Kay McCall ’84, Executive Director, Energy Renewable Alliance; Niko Lorentzatos ’95, Executive Vice President and General Counsel, Oasis Petroleum; William E. Turcotte ’89, Senior Vice President, Gen. Counsel and Corporate Secretary Noble Holding Corporation plc; and Kason Kerr ’09, Vice President and General Counsel, Ultra Petroleum.

The final panel, “Connecting the ‘Social’ to Environment and Climate,” featured Sophia Lee, and Susan Bickley ’84 from Blank Rome, Law Center professor Gina Warren and student Shreya Patel.

The event was hosted by the Law Center’s Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Center. Sponsors included Blank Rome, LLP, UH Energy, the Energy Transition Governance and Law Project (funded by the European Union and with the University of Lyon III), the Law Center’s Initiative for Global Law and Policy (GLPA), the University of Calgary Faculty of Law, the Universidad Nacional Autonoma De Mexico (UNAM), Universidad Tecnologica de Monterrey, and the Universidad Anahuac.

UH LAW CENTER RECEIVES $300,000 GRANT FROM TEXAS ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOUNDATION FOR CLINICAL WORK ON LANDLORD AND TENANT ISSUES

The UH Law Foundation was awarded funding that will benefit the Consumer Law Clinic at the University of Houston Law Center.

The ERAP 1- Housing Stability Grant Funding will cover a 17-month period that began in May and will end on Sept. 30, 2022. The purpose of the grant is to provide legal information and representation for Harris County residents facing housing instability due to COVID-19. The funding will be used to assist with evictions in Justice of the Peace and county courts and rental assistance applications for tenants.

“COVID-19 has affected many people financially, physically, and emotionally,” said Law Center Professor of Practice and Consumer Law Clinic Director Ryan Marquez. “With the CDC moratorium likely ending, they could be facing a possible lack of housing. We hope we will be able to assist these people to at least quell the house instability they face.”
STUDY BY PROFESSOR HAWKINS, 3L PENNER ANALYZES ADVERTISING PRACTICES IN THE LENDING INDUSTRY

An article authored by UHLC Law Center Professor Jim Hawkins and student Tiffany Penner that was published in the Emory Law Journal in September indicates that the payday lending industry often targets Black and Latino communities in advertising their products, while the mainstream banking industry targets white consumers.

In “Advertising Injustices: Marketing Race and Credit in America,” Hawkins and Penner present two empirical studies they conducted on lenders in Houston, which verified these disparities in online advertising.

The study found:
- While African Americans make up only 16% of auto title lending customers and 23% of payday lending customers, 35% of the photographs on these lenders’ websites depict African Americans.
- 77% of the advertisements at physical locations of auto title and payday lenders in the study targeted racial minority groups.
- 30% of mainstream bank lender websites featured no African American models and almost 75% featured no Latino models.
- In contrast, only 3%—a single bank’s website—did not feature a white model.

News articles citing Hawkins and Penner’s scholarship, examine how loan lenders are maximizing their profits by requiring high interest rates during the COVID-19 pandemic when many people have been in difficult financial positions.

Hawkins and Penner examined two important negative consequences that emerge from targeting African Americans and Latinos for payday and title loans while pictorially excluding them from mainstream banks. The first consequence is that the advertising works, and African Americans and Latinos are more likely than white customers to use high-cost credit. They also found that advertising forms societal norms and expectations of where people “fit.” This in turn, according to the study, creates a “self-sorting” effect and contributes to racial disparity in credit access.

The goal of the study is to achieve a positive impact that will change the way lenders advertise. Specifically, it is encouraged that financial institutions to eliminate discriminatory marketing that omits certain racial groups.

UH LAW CENTER PANEL ANALYZED HOW CUSTOMS CAN SUPERSEDE LEGAL METHODS IN PRESIDENTIAL TRANSFERS OF POWER

Experts from the University of Houston Law Center and a guest speaker from the UH Hobby School of Public Affairs discussed the presidential transfer of power in a continuing legal education session that was held virtually in February.

The opening speaker was Dr. Richard Murray, the Director of the Center for Public Policy’s Survey Research Institute and Lanier Chair in Public Policy at the UH Hobby School of Public Affairs. He provided a historical perspective of previous presidential transfers of power.

“The emergence of traditions have been powerful since the 1890s,” Murray said. “What really improved the process was the loser conceded. In 1896, two days after a hard-fought election, William Jennings Bryan telegrammed William McKinley congratulating him, wishing him the best and established a terrifically important tradition in American politics.

The second speaker, Associate Professor of Law Daniel Morales, discussed the racial implications of the fatal Jan. 6 storming of the Capitol building in Washington D.C. that took place during a joint session of Congress to certify the presidential election’s electoral votes. He reflected on what he thought were some of the deeper forces that caused the violence.

“We are in the midst of an incredible transition,” Morales, the George A. Butler Research Professor, said. “In recent history, Barack Obama became president in 2008. For a lot of America, it felt really good to see an African-American man take a position of power. Nonetheless, I think at this point it’s undeniable that having that in some people’s minds was deeply distressing.

The following speaker was Associate Professor Emily Berman, who teaches Constitutional law, foreign affairs law and national security law. Berman discussed a trend she referred to as “policy whiplash,” which results from the more frequent unilateral exercise of power by the executive branch to form policy.

Law Foundation Professor of Law Seth Chandler, who specializes in Constitutional law and the application of mathematics and computer science to law, discussed several areas where he believes change is needed from an election security and Constitutional standpoint.

The final speaker, Cullen Professor of Law David R. Dow, discussed several episodes in Constitutional history that are germane to the impeachment trial of Trump which concluded on Feb. 13. He addressed the 1876 impeachment trial of Secretary of War William Belknap, an instance where Congress acted, and the resignation of former President Richard Nixon, where Congress did not act. He also examined the 1992 impeachment trial of former U.S. District Judge Walter Nixon, who was convicted by the Senate and appealed his case to the Supreme Court.
University of Houston Law Center faculty, students and staff examined “Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption” by Bryan Stevenson during a virtual discussion held in April. The award-winning book tells the powerful story of Stevenson’s work as a lawyer representing death row clients in Alabama.

It marked the inaugural event of “UHLC’s One Book, One Community Project,” an initiative launched by the Law Center’s Diversity and Inclusion Committee. The Diversity and Inclusion Committee was co-chaired by Professor Meredith J. Duncan, Assistant Dean of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Metropolitan Programs and Clinical Professor Geoffrey Hoffman, director of the Immigration Clinic.

The primary goal of UHLC’s One Book, One Community Project is to provide students, staff, and faculty a shared encounter with race, ethnicity, and legal justice issues, engendering greater awareness and understanding as well as conversations, both informal and formal.

Introductory remarks were provided by Cullen Professor of Law David R. Dow, the founder of the Texas Innocence Network. Dow has represented more than 100 death row inmates in their state and federal appeals.

“The question of the death penalty is the most important ethical question in contemporary American law,” Dow said. There are other important questions having to do with re-distribution of wealth and healthcare, but the most important question in contemporary Constitutional law is the morality of capital punishment and whether the state should be engaged in executing its own citizens. All of the reasons attached to the “yes” and “no” answer to that question are addressed in the course of Bryan Stevenson’s book.

“The title of the book is ‘Just Mercy.’ Just is an extremely interesting word in the English language. It can be a noun, adverb and an adjective. Any one of those uses of the word ‘just’ makes sense in the context of Bryan’s book. It can be, “only mercy.” Or it can be that, “mercy is what justice requires.” Or it can be that mercy is just in this particular case. What to me is one of the most extraordinary things about the book, is that by the time you get to the end of it, it’s not clear which of those meanings he means, or maybe he means all of them in the title.”

Following Dow’s remarks, attendees went into breakout rooms for additional discussion of the book.

The event closed with remarks from Dean Leonard M. Baynes.

“I want to thank the Diversity and Inclusion Committee for organizing this event,” Baynes said. “I was most impressed with the students. They did an excellent job of asking incredible questions and thinking deeply about issues of the death penalty presented in the book.

“This project is a great way for us to educate each other and learn from each other. To advance the legal challenges to capital punishment is going to require advocacy, fearlessness and continued conversations where we listen to each other.”
Invited guests were treated to a preliminary viewing of the University of Houston Law Center’s new John M. O’Quinn Law Building in November. During the event, attendees listened to remarks from UH President Renu Khator, Dean Leonard M. Baynes, government officials, and other prominent UHLC alumni who were involved in the project.

Dean Baynes opened the preview, saying how the new building has been a decades-long dream of alumni, faculty, staff and students, and $93 million was raised for the project. In addition to continuing to provide students with an excellent legal education and serving as a hub for innovative research and legal scholarship, the new building will enable UH Law Center to expand on its role to serve the needs of underrepresented Houston residents through its clinics, which provide free legal services to the community.

“We're going to have a world-class building that will be reflective of the character and caliber of the Law Center,” he said.

Baynes also thanked the John M. O’Quinn Foundation and their trustees Rob Wilson and Mike Lowenberg for their partnership and for allowing UHLC to recognize John by naming the building in his honor.

The John M. O’Quinn Law Building will be the newest law school building in the state and one of the newest in the country. At approximately 180,000 square feet, it will feature amenities such
as an outdoor terrace, meditation room, convenience store, courtroom and more.

President Khator presented a behind-the-scenes glimpse of how the dream started becoming a reality.

“This day wouldn’t have arrived without a journey,” she said.

She said the old building didn’t suit the esteemed nature of the Law Center, and it was agreed that a new building was necessary. After receiving $10 million from Cornerstone Club members, the Law Center was able to approach the state legislature about the project. President Khator thanked state officials for seeing the vision and supporting the project.

“It was not an easy thing,” she said. “It took many votes to get it passed.”

The next speaker was State Senator John Whitmire, dean of the Texas Senate, who celebrated the bright future the new building will provide for students.

“You’ve established a facility on campus that will serve students for years to come,” he said.

Whitmire also publicly presented a challenge to the Law Center to not only help prepare future lawyers, but also to increase giving the community a sense of representation, specifically people in underserved communities who are facing legal troubles and need an attorney.

State Senator Royce West followed with remarks and shared that his grandson is currently a UH undergraduate student and he’s excited that he will witness history with the new building.

“As leaders, we need to make sure the ship is steady and we’re going in the right direction,” he said. He also echoed Whitmire’s emphasis on supporting the community.

State Representative Armando Walle then spoke, citing the importance of diversity and providing opportunities for kids to pursue an education and achieve excellence.

“Academic achievement and diversity go hand-in-hand,” he said.

A project eight years in the making, Bill Jackson, partner at Kelley Drye & Warren and Cornerstone Club donor, discussed how its success involved a commitment to the large vision. He said the old facilities have held them back, so this was the one thing everyone could coalesce behind.

“At the end of the day, this is a remarkable undertaking for the Law Center,” he said. “Houston is the city of the future. The Law Center is a reflection of that.”

Dean Baynes concluded the event by recognizing government officials, members of the legislature, the Cornerstone Club members, donors and the UH Law Foundation. He also emphasized the importance of looking forward into the future and mentioned the Law Center’s upcoming 75th anniversary next year.

“When we first started this effort, people felt we wouldn’t raise $1 million,” he said. “It shows the power of philanthropy. It shows the power of having a vision.”

The new John M. O’Quinn Law Building is scheduled to open in summer 2022.
John M. O’Quinn Law Building Preview
Briefcase 2021

UH LAW CENTER PROFESSOR EMILY BERMAN AWARDED FOR OUTSTANDING WORK ON GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT

University of Houston Law Center Professor Emily Berman in January became the first annual winner of the Excellence in Oversight Research Award by the Levin Center at Wayne State University Law School. The accolade honors Berman’s Boston College Law Review article, “Weaponizing the Office of Legal Counsel,” as the year’s most outstanding work on government oversight.

The article argues that the Justice Department’s Office of Legal Counsel (OLC) issues legal opinions, which govern executive branch actions that effectively advantage the executive branch in its interbranch conflicts with Congress. It identifies and explains OLC’s role in oversight matters and identifies ways that OLC’s opinions are used in oversight disputes to favor the executive branch over Congress.

Berman notes that OLC’s institutional design guarantees its separation of powers opinions will paint a pro-executive view of the law. These executive-friendly analyses not only influence the actions of executive officials, but also impact the legal and political debate about oversight issues outside the executive branch. Berman presents various ways in which Congress could take a stand and fight back.

Emily Berman, an Associate Professor at the University of Houston Law Center

UHLC PROFESSORS SELECTED FOR FACULTY FELLOWS AWARDS BY UH’S HOBBY SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

University of Houston Law Center faculty members Renee Knake Jefferson and David Kwok were announced as recipients of the Faculty Fellows Awards in April. The 2021-2022 Faculty Fellows Awards are presented by the Elizabeth D. Rockwell Center on Leadership and Ethics at the Hobby School of Public Affairs.

Knake Jefferson, the Joanne and Larry Doherty Chair in Legal Ethics and Director of Law Center Outcomes and Assessments, was selected for her research project, “Mentored: The Ethical Obligations of Leaders.” Knake Jefferson’s work was inspired by her mentor and friend, the late Deborah Rhode, who was the second tenured female law professor at Stanford Law School and the most-cited legal ethics scholar in the nation.

Her resulting article on the ethics of mentoring will include an analysis of the ethical obligations of leaders to mentor, examples of good and bad mentoring, and implications for women, especially female minorities, seeking mentorship in pursuit of leadership roles.

“I’m honored to be selected as a recipient of the Rockwell Fellows Award,” Knake Jefferson said. “It is inspiring and humbling to receive an award named after a pioneering female leader who was a mentor to many and whose generosity will now support a research project.

Berman joined the Law Center faculty in 2014, and teaches Constitutional Law, Foreign Relations Law and National Security Law. Her research and scholarship examine the unique separation of powers challenges that arise in the constitutional, statutory and regulatory regimes governing national security policy.

Kwok, who teaches and writes in the areas of white-collar crime, whistleblowers, public policy, and law and the social sciences, was picked for his submission titled, “Anomalous Fraud Punishment.” Kwok’s project builds on his previous work on white collar crimes and explores the complex relationship between ethics and civil and criminal laws regarding fraud.

The goal of the project is to systematically identify anomalies in the hierarchy of fraud and punishment and to answer the question: “Are there significant areas in which the punishment regime deviates from the standard expectation?” His research will also result in an article on anomalies in which fraud is regulated and deterred.

“I am delighted at the privilege to work with the Hobby School as a Rockwell Fellow in the upcoming year,” Kwok said. “Elizabeth Rockwell’s priorities of honesty, trust, and open communication are sorely needed in today’s polarized environment. I can think of no better partner in studying the challenges of fraud and deception through the interplay of legal regimes, ethics, and leadership.”
The University of Houston Law Center’s clinical faculty gained a new member with the addition of Lucas Aisenberg.

“Lucas was hired after a nationwide search,” said Geoffrey Hoffman, Director of the Immigration Clinic and a Clinical Professor. “His application for the position was most impressive. I look forward to working with him helping our clients and teaching our students.”

Prior to joining the Law Center, Aisenberg was a staff attorney at Catholic Charities Community Services Unaccompanied Minors Program in New York City. In this role, he provided direct representation to unaccompanied minors detained in Office of Refugee Resettlement shelters, as well as non-detained clients in Immigration Court and before the New York and New Jersey Asylum Offices.

In his new position as Clinical Supervising Attorney, Aisenberg will supervise Immigration Clinic students on pro bono asylum cases and will provide direct representation to adult immigrants and unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in the U.S.

“I’m humbled by the opportunity to work with the Immigration Clinic and continue to represent those who were forced to flee their homes and look to our country as a place of safety,” Aisenberg said. “I look forward to working with our clients, as well as with my colleagues and law students, in providing representation to those in our community who need our assistance.”

Aisenberg received a B.A. in Political Science at UH and his J.D. from the St. Thomas University School of Law in Miami Gardens, Fla. He was born in Argentina, and relocated to the U.S. as a child.

Christopher Heard was appointed by Dean Leonard M. Baynes as the Director of University of Houston Law Center Clinical Programs.

“I am delighted that Professor Heard is taking the reins of the Law Center’s Clinical Programs,” Baynes said in August. “Since Professor Heppard’s election as judge in January of 2021, Professor Heard stepped in as a natural leader even without the title of director. When it was time to choose the next director of UH Law’s Clinical Programs, Professor Heard was the clear choice.

“I am very grateful that he has taken on this role, and I look forward to future success of our clinical programs under Professor Heard’s leadership.”

Heard joined the Law Center in 2016 as a Visiting Assistant Professor. He was elevated to a Clinical Assistant Professor in 2017 and a Clinical Associate Professor in 2020.

Throughout the entirety of his Law Center tenure, Heard has served as Director of the Entrepreneurship and Community Development Clinic, where he supervises and trains law students representing entrepreneurs, small businesses, and nonprofit organizations in connection with transactional business law matters. He will maintain these responsibilities in addition to his new role.

“I am honored by this exciting new opportunity to lead UH Law’s Clinical Programs,” Heard said. “Our clinical program’s faculty, staff, and students are exceptional. I look forward to working with them in this new role as we pursue the clinical program’s dual mission of helping facilitate student success though experiential service learning and providing first-rate pro-bono legal representation to our clients.”

Prior to joining the Law Center, Heard was Senior Counsel at Bracewell LLP in Houston where he represented lenders and borrowers in connection with the structuring, negotiation, and documentation of a wide array of commercial lending transactions. He was recognized as a Thomson Reuters Texas Super Lawyers Rising Star in 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016. Professor Heard received a B.A., magna cum laude, with majors in Economics, Philosophy and Psychology from Vanderbilt University in 2001 and a J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center in 2004.
University of Houston Law Center Professor Jessica Roberts’ article, “GINA, Big Data, and the Future of Employee Privacy,” which was featured in the Yale Law Journal, was reviewed on the scholarship website JOTWELL. University of Tennessee College of Law Associate Professor Bradley Areheart co-wrote the article with Roberts.

The focus of the article is how the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA) offers a blueprint for preventing employers from breaching employee privacy. It was reviewed by St. Louis School of Law Professor Matt Bodie.

“Areheart and Roberts have staked a claim for GINA as a model for how employee privacy might be protected in other areas of their lives,” Bodie wrote in his review. “Their article is a terrific contribution to our understanding of the future of employment.”

In the piece, Bodie noted that Roberts and Areheart examined federal courts during the statute’s first decade, unearthing 48 unique GINA cases, 26 of which involved terminations. However, in most cases, gaffes such as voluntarily disclosing genetic information or an inability to prove the employer possessed genetic information cost the plaintiffs their case.

Roberts is the Director of the Health Law & Policy Institute and the Leonard H. Childs Professor of Law. Her scholarship has been featured three times on JOTWELL, a journal centered on reviews of scholarship relevant to law.

Bodie’s review marks the 15th instance a member of the Law Center faculty was highlighted in JOTWELL.

University of Houston Law Center Associate Professor of Law and Political Science Zachary D. Kaufman was elected as a Life Member of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR).

“I am honored, thrilled, and grateful that the Council on Foreign Relations has elected me as a Life Member,” Kaufman said. “As the world faces so many international challenges, from genocide and inequality to COVID-19 and climate change, I look forward to contributing to CFR and exchanging ideas with my distinguished colleagues.”

“I am very proud of Professor Kaufman’s election as a life member of the Council on Foreign Relations,” added Dean Leonard M. Baynes. “It is a well-deserved honor. Professor Kaufman is an exceptional scholar in the areas of criminal and international law. In the two years that he has taught at the Law Center, he has written compelling law review articles in top law reviews. He also has been an extraordinary law school teacher who is beloved by his students.”

Founded in 1921, the Council on Foreign Relations is an independent, nonpartisan think tank specializing in U.S. foreign policy and international affairs. According to CFR, “individual members include many of the most prominent leaders in international affairs who come together to engage in nonpartisan conversation on the most salient policy and governance issues of the day.”

Kaufman’s previous roles with CFR include his time as a Term Member from 2013 to 2018 and as an International Affairs Fellow on the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff from 2016 to 2017. Kaufman joined the Law Center’s faculty in 2019. He teaches Criminal Law, International Law, and International Justice and Atrocities.
Law Center Assistant Professor Andrew C. Michaels was one of four University of Houston scholars who secured a $749,857 grant from the National Science Foundation for a Designing Accountable Software Systems funding opportunity. The grant, distributed over three years, supports a project that aims to create an accountability benchmark and software scoring toolkit for public policy algorithms.

Named the Community Responsive Algorithms for Social Accountability, or CRASA, the project seeks to establish a model for accountability that can be applied across a comprehensive range of public policy algorithms. It will be conducted through a community-based participatory research program focusing on Harris County, Texas, and will incorporate input from stakeholders in local government and the legal community and industry. Funding began October 1.

In addition to Michaels, CRASA is being developed by principal investigator Ryan Kennedy, a UH political science professor who specializes in computational social science and democracy, and co-principal investigators Ioannis A. Kakadiaris, a UH computer science professor whose expertise is in biometrics and pattern recognition, and Lydia Tiede, a UH political science professor whose focus is judicial politics and legal reform.

At the Law Center, Michaels specializes in intellectual property and statutory regulation.

“The work is important because the use of algorithms in law and public policy has expanded dramatically in recent decades,” said rising 3L Emory Powers.

Students also pointed to the tremendous support they receive from Law Center faculty in advancing their goals. Alexxa Leon, a rising 3L, recounted receiving a book on academic legal writing from Professor Meredith J. Duncan, with a note encouraging her to enter the Houston Law Review Write-on Competition, where she now serves as Senior Articles Editor.

To Nhy Huynh, a rising 3L, described how the ethnic and gender biases she faces have fueled her success and motivated her to become first in her class.

“I would never know what was waiting behind the door if I did not have the courage to knock,” Huynh said. “I knocked, and the Law Center answered with a very generous scholarship for me.”

Additional speakers included Law Center alumni Reginald Garrett ’05 and Barbara Quackenbush ’75, who described the impact of giving and receiving scholarships have had on their lives.

For additional information on supporting DEI Initiatives at the Law Center, please contact the Office of Development.

Current students and alumni delivered testimonials on the profound impact scholarships made on their legal education at the University of Houston during a Diversity Equity and Inclusion Leadership Forum & Conversation hosted by Dean Leonard M. Baynes and Associate Professor Tony Chase. The virtual event held in June garnered an audience that featured attorneys, judges, legislators, Law Center alumni and faculty members.

In his opening remarks, Baynes announced his goal of making the Law Center "a harbinger of what can be possible with diversity."

"The time has never been more important than now," Chase added. "There are so many ways to lead in this regard, including offering jobs and mentorship to diverse graduates or financial support to the school."

While a 2019 American Bar Association survey noted that only 36 percent of lawyers are female, women represent more than 50 percent of the Law Center’s student population. More than 36 percent of the Law Center’s students are underrepresented minorities. In acknowledging these successes, Baynes encouraged attendees to think about diversity in terms of leadership and preparing the next generation of leaders to promote diversity, equity and inclusion.

Law Center students identified the diverse student body, low cost and financial support as influential to their enrollment at the Law Center instead of other law schools from across the country. They noted diversity, equity and inclusion as instrumental to their success, not only within the school itself, but within Houston as well.

“They should reflect the community it serves,” said rising 3L Emory Powers.

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Law Center Assistant Professor Andrew C. Michaels has served as an Assistant Professor of Law at the University of Houston Law Center since 2018.
University of Houston Law Center professors and graduates who bolstered the school’s reputation in the business and legal communities were recognized during a virtual awards reception held in May that was hosted by the UH Law Alumni Association.

“I am delighted that we were able to recognize alumni and faculty achievements at the virtual Law Alumni Association Annual Meeting,” said Dean Leonard M. Baynes. “One very important aspect about the Law Center is that we have very engaged, accomplished and talented alumni and faculty. I know that it was hard for the Awards Committee to decide among such talented nominees.

“We usually distribute these awards at the annual Gala, which was unfortunately cancelled this year due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. I am delighted that we were able to recognize their achievement at this year’s virtual annual meeting.”

Award recipients included:

**Dean’s Award**
Rosland Fisher McLeod ’96
*For outstanding loyalty and dedication to the University of Houston Law Center.*

**Corporate Sector Achievement Award**
Brad Tucker ’79
*In recognition of exceptional achievement and legal excellence in the corporate and business communities.*

**Pro Bono/Community Service & Leadership Award**
Laura Gibson ’84
*In recognition of an alumnus that has dedicated substantial service to the community as a volunteer and leader.*

**Faculty Distinction Award**
Professor Sandra Guerra Thompson
*In recognition of a member of the Law Center faculty that has distinguished themselves in their field of expertise.*

**Law Gala & Auction Award**
Bracewell LLP and Yvonne Ho ’06 and Allen Rice
*In recognition of exceptional volunteer service and leadership to the UH Law Gala by an alumnus.*

**Public/Non-Profit Sector Achievement Award**
Anna Archer ’06
*In recognition of exceptional achievement and legal excellence in public service.*

**Honorary Alumni Award**
Honorable Christine Weems
*In recognition of exemplary service and dedication to the Law Center by a lawyer that is not an alumni.*

**Private Practice Achievement Award**
Sofia Adrogue ’91
*In recognition of exceptional achievement in and legal excellence in private practice.*

**Diversity and Inclusion Award**
Amira Love ’07
James E. Payne ’93
*In recognition of significant commitment of an alumnus to diversity and inclusion by fostering a more diverse and inclusive legal community.*

**Rising Star Award**
Stephanie Eberhardt ’13
Jessica E. Schaffner ’14
*In recognition of outstanding achievement and notable commitment to the UH Law Center by alumni graduates from 2010-2020.*

**James M. Roach Law Fund Volunteer Award**
Professor Lauren Jansen Simpson ’94
*To a volunteer alumnus that has demonstrated extraordinary commitment to raising funds for the UH Law Center.*

**President’s Award**
Cynthia M. Mabry’10
*In recognition of outstanding commitment, service, and dedication to UH Law Center students and alumni.*

**Alumnus of the Year**
Thomas F.A. Hetherington ’98
*In recognition of exceptional and continued achievement and noteworthy contributions to the legal profession by an alumnus.*
Gov. Greg Abbott appointed 36-year veteran trial lawyer, Ricky Raven, to the UH system’s Board of Regents. Raven joined newly reappointed members, Tilman Fertitta and Beth Madison, and six other members along with a student regent. The governing body oversees four universities – University of Houston, University of Houston-Clear Lake, University of Houston-Downtown, and University of Houston-Victoria. Raven is senior vice president and deputy general counsel for Allstate Insurance. He graduated from the University of Houston with a Bachelor of Science and a Juris Doctor degree.

“To say that I’m thrilled would be an understatement,” Raven said. “I spent 7 consecutive years of my life here, I grew up and became a young adult here. The University of Houston has a very special place in my heart.” Raven didn’t just attend university for classes, he lived on campus as both an undergrad and a post graduate student. While living at Taub hall he supported students as a resident advisor during law school.

After graduating in 1986, Raven began his legal career as an assistant district attorney in Harris County. He later moved into private practice and has first-chaired more than 120 jury trials to verdict. Over the years Raven has represented major chemical companies in federal litigation; successfully defended a large shopping mall owner in a criminal prosecution; and conducted internal investigations for several Fortune 100 corporations. He’s excited to bring this extensive law and life experience to this role.

“Ricky will bring energy, enthusiasm, and a fresh perspective to the board,” said Renu Khator, chancellor of the University of Houston system. “We are very fortunate to have such talented individuals as Ricky volunteering their time and intellect to keep the UH System on track and moving forward.”

That energy and enthusiasm has served Raven well in his memberships at the International Association of Trial Lawyers, the American Board of Trial Advocates, the International Association of Defense Counsel, and the State Bar of Texas. His passion for education shines through in his appointment on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the board of the University of Houston Foundation and as a member of UH’s Board of Visitors. Raven’s dedication to UH has continued long after his graduation, which is why this appointment means so much to him.

Raven will serve on the Board of Regents until Aug. 31, 2027. He lives in Sugar Land with wife Felicia, also a UH graduate, and they are proud parents to sons James and Philip.

Three University of Houston Law Center graduates were among the highest-scoring test takers of the February bar exam.

In the February bar exam, Emily Seaman Hoy ’20 recorded the second-highest score and Nicholas Kacal ’20 placed third, the two best scores of all Texas law schools.

“This showing is particularly impressive, given that this was the first administration of the UBE, and the test takers were faced with Winter Storm Uri and its aftermath,” said Dean Leonard M. Baynes.

On the makeup administration of the exam in March, Julie Le earned the second-highest mark.

“In trying circumstances, these Law Center graduates thrived,” said UH Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost Paula M. Myrick Short. “This result is a credit to the Law Center’s quality instruction and the perseverance and determination of its alumni.”
FORMER HALLIBURTON CEO AND UH LAW CENTER ALUMNUS THOMAS CRUIKSHANK RECOGNIZES KEY ROLE LEGAL EDUCATION PLAYED IN SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS CAREER

UH Law Center alumnus Thomas H. Cruikshank said he often employed his legal training as he guided multinational corporation Halliburton to new heights. Now, at age 90 as he looks back, it’s clear that the part-time evening law program at UH served him well as he built his path to becoming the CEO of one of the world’s largest providers of products and services to the energy industry.

“Nothing else can equal their importance,” he said Cruikshank in contemplating the role his legal education from the University of Houston played in his illustrious 50-year business career.

**Where it all began**

From an early age, Cruikshank knew he wanted to be a Certified Public Accountant. He started out on that path by pursuing an undergraduate degree in economics and business administration at Rice University. While there, he took a course in business law that convinced him a legal education would be an excellent addition to his accounting career plan.

At that time, military service was still mandatory, and so Cruikshank found himself in a position to be drafted. He made up his mind to complete law school first and then fulfill his military service. Next stop on his legal journey was the University of Texas’ Law School, where it all began.

True to his word, after he qualified for the bar in 1955, Cruikshank entered Navy Officer Candidate School in Newport, Rhode Island. It was a busy time because he also got married and began attendance at the Navy Supply Corps School in Athens, Georgia before being assigned to the Navy Area Audit Office in Los Angeles.

When his time in the service was done, he made his way back to Houston, in late 1958, to work again for Arthur Andersen & Co. as a manager in the tax department. It was during this time that his legal degree became the center of his career, as he joined Vinson & Elkins as a lawyer on January 2, 1960. While there he performed some services for the construction firm Brown & Root, then a subsidiary of Halliburton for which he later also did work. He went on to join the Halliburton ranks as vice president of corporate development in 1969 – a role that set him on the path toward executive leadership.

**Making an impact at Halliburton**

During his time at Halliburton, Cruikshank worked closely with the CEO and spent a year as president of one of its subsidiaries. He returned to corporate headquarters in 1981 as President and became CEO himself in 1983, a position he held until his retirement in 1996. He was succeeded by The Honorable Richard (Dick) B. Cheney - who later served as the 46th Vice President of the United States.

During his tenure at Halliburton, Cruikshank recalled that having a legal and ethical perspective was vitally important when making business decisions.

“I felt my original assessment that legal education and experience would be a good supplement to my accounting career was proven as accurate,” he said.

Cruikshank believes the most notable accomplishment of his Halliburton team was adjusting to the economic environment of the 1980s. “Those were difficult years in our industry due to a recession that hit our construction business and a drop in oil prices,” he said. “As a result, our employment would drop from 117,000 in late 1981 to 47,000 by 1996.” Cruikshank and his team consolidated and restructured the company’s many oilfield service units and instituted a much more efficient operating system. It resulted in a substantial improvement in operating profit and a boost in the market price of the stock.

In addition to his time at Halliburton, Cruikshank brought his strong business acumen to the Board of Directors for several high-profile public companies, including The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company, The Williams Companies, Inc., Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc. and more.

**Advice for today’s law students**

One of the most important lessons Cruikshank learned during his practice of law was that it is very much a personal service profession. Client service was a top priority for him, and he always made it a point to return clients’ calls as soon as possible to ensure they knew he was there for them. He noted this is particularly important when working for a law firm. If a more structured environment is preferred, then joining a corporate or governmental legal department should be considered. Many attorneys also occupy elected offices.

As Cruikshank looks back, he urges those who wish to follow the legal path to take their oath and obligation seriously, with the ultimate mission of serving the public good and not just their own interests.

“The country needs to continue its founding principles of protecting all citizens’ rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” he said. “Nothing else can equal their importance.”
ROBERTS ’06 SUCCEEDS WRIGHT ’98 AS PRESIDENT OF UH LAW ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, 2021-2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS APPROVED

The UH Law Alumni Association welcomed Alex B. Roberts ’06 as its new president for the 2021-2022 term during a virtual annual meeting held in May. Roberts, a partner at Beck Redden, replaces Victor Wright ’98, director of global labor and employment at KBR.

“We thank Victor for working tirelessly for the Law Center and the Law Alumni Association for the two years he’s been at the helm, and well before that during his term of service on the board,” Roberts said. “Victor has been a great leader and has met the challenges of the pandemic. Some of the wonderful things he accomplished in that time were expanding mentoring programs by making more mentors available to law students and new graduates.

“Victor increased our effort at diversity and inclusion across the alumni spectrum. He has increased alumni engagement, volunteerism, expanded alumni outreach into new regions of the country. And of course under his watch we have supported the Dean ably in getting this new building built.

Roberts said he hopes to continue Wright’s work in encouraging alumni to become mentors and to pursue opportunities to be mentored.

“When I was at the Law Center I was a young, naive first-generation law student who knew nothing about practicing law and knew very little about the city of Houston,” Roberts said. “I was aided tremendously by law professors like Lonny Hoffman, John Mixon, Craig Joyce and Robert Ragazzo. I was also aided by many alums like Judge Gray Miller and Judge Jeff Brown. One of the strongest assets of this school is the alumni network and the willingness to sit and listen to students.

“The time is right to emphasize mentorship. Coming out COVID, so many lawyers and law students have suffered because they have lacked the in-person connection we have benefitted from. There is a year missing in many people’s lives; they will greatly benefit from mentorship.”

In addition to Roberts and Wright, serving as ex officio (immediate past president), officers include:

• Kris Thomas ’83 – President-Elect
• Kate Blaine ’03 – Vice-President
• Michelle Gray ’11 – Secretary

Directors include:

• Rehan Alimohammad ’01
• Jeff Andrews ’05
• Alison Chen ’03
• Yvonne Ho ’06
• Kimberly D. Levi ’93
• Brian Melton ’99

• Judge Ravi K. Sandill ’01
• Robert Sergesketter ’95
• Harve Truskett ’08
• Richard Whiteley ’99
• Staci Wilson ’09

UHLC GRADUATE JUAN VASQUEZ ’77 RELAYS TRIALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF FIRST HISPANIC TAX COURT JUDGE IN NEW BIOGRAPHY

University of Houston Law Center alumnus and adjunct professor Juan F. Vasquez vividly conveys his trials of discrimination, poverty and manual labor in a biography that has been published by the American Bar Association.

“From the Texas Cotton Fields to the United States Tax Court: The Life Journey of Juan F. Vasquez” acknowledges the adversity and challenges faced on Vasquez’s trek to becoming the first Hispanic judge on the U.S. Tax Court.

Written by his wife, Mary Theresa Vasquez, and Anthony Head, it spans his childhood in San Antonio, where he was born to a working-class family and raised by his grandparents, to the challenges faced as he pursued a career in law, emphasizing the importance of family, community and opportunity.

“Having my biography published makes me humble and reflect my accomplishments,” Vasquez stated. “It encourages me to do more outreach to all students to inspire them that they too can achieve the American dream through determination, hard work and perseverance.

“Being part of this class has given me the opportunity to give back to the University. I have hired some of my students as law clerks, interns and externs for my chambers at the United States Tax Court in Washington, D.C.”

He has taught Tax Controversy and Litigation at the Law Center in collaboration with his son, Juan Vasquez, Jr., a 2001 graduate of the Law Center and a partner at Chamberlain Hrdlicka’s Houston office, since 2008.
UH LAW CENTER ALUMNUS WILSON ’77 ENJOYING RIGORS OF APPELLATE WORK AFTER APPOINTMENT TO 14TH COURT OF APPEALS

After spending several years as a partner at Susman Godfrey, Randy Wilson, a 1977 graduate of the University of Houston Law Center, has returned to a familiar role as a judge. He was appointed to the 14th Court of Appeals on Dec. 21, 2020 by Gov. Greg Abbott to replace Tracy E. Christopher, who was elevated to Chief Justice. Part of his responsibilities include reviewing appeals from court verdicts and orders as well as jury verdicts from 10 Texas counties of various categories of the law, such as civil, criminal, family, probate and business. Wilson also rules on original proceedings, such as requests for mandamus, and opines on cases.

“Pretty much everything that comes out of the trial courts in this multi-county area is going to go through the Court of Appeals,” Wilson said. “I am having to learn family law and criminal law, and it is intellectually stimulating.”

Because the courts of appeals possess only appellate jurisdiction and do not hold trials, working remotely has not posed a challenge. In fact, Wilson discovered that doing hearings via Zoom has been enjoyable, and technological advances such as audible and visible communication, screen sharing and an ease to give and receive data has made virtual hearings just as effective.

Wilson began his legal career at Susman Godfrey where he was a trial lawyer for 26 years. In 2003, then-Gov. Perry appointed Wilson to the 157th District Court in Harris County where he served for 15 years. In 2019, he returned to Susman Godfrey for a brief stint and now is back on the bench as an appellate justice.

Wilson was valedictorian of his class and a previous editor of Houston Law Review. He is board-certified in civil trial law and an elected member of the State Bar of Texas, Houston Bar Association, American Bar Association, American Board of Trial Advocates and the Texas Association of Civil Trial and Appellate Specialists.

“I loved going to law school,” Wilson said. “I managed to finish No.1, but it was a lot of work. I also taught as an adjunct professor one course on Ethics and Professional Responsibility.”

Married for 47 years with two children, Wilson works to provide opportunities for individuals struggling to turn their lives around. He has served as president and chairman for the LifeHouse of Houston and as a former board member of both the Star of Hope and Main Street Ministries.

UH LAW CENTER RECOGNIZES FIRST HISPANIC GRADUATE BONILLA ’60 WITH DEAN’S DISTINGUISHED AWARD

Tony Bonilla, a 1960 alumnus of the University of Houston Law Center and the school’s first graduate of Hispanic descent, was presented with the Dean’s Distinguished Award during a virtual event hosted in April by the Hispanic Law Alumni group and Latinx Student Association.

“We’re very honored that Tony Bonilla is one of our alums and proud of his successful career,” Dean Leonard M. Baynes said.

Professor Emeritus Michael A. Olivas also announced a gift from him and his wife, Professor Emerita Dr. Augustina Reyes of the UH College of Education, to dedicate a space named for Bonilla in The John M. O’Quinn Law Building.

“It’s so important for our students of diverse backgrounds to be able to see representation,” added Baynes. “Diversity and inclusion is part of the Law Center’s mission, and we’ve been very lucky that we’ve had Black, Latinx, Asian and women donors who have all contributed to the building. Having something named after our first Hispanic graduate is really important.”

Bonilla is the president of Bonilla & Chapa, P.C., a personal injury firm with five offices across Texas. He previously served as a member of the Texas Coordinating Board of Higher Education, the Governor’s Select Committee on Public Education and as a member of the Texas Constitutional Revision Commission.

Bonilla played a role in the creation of the LULAC Education Service Centers and served as National Chairman of the Board. He is past National President of LULAC, past State Chair of LULAC and has served LULAC and other Hispanic organizations in leadership roles.

After completing his undergraduate education at Baylor University, Bonilla pursued a J.D. at the Law Center.

“I think because of the hardships my parents experienced, they realized how important education was,” Bonilla said.
Laura Gibson, a 1984 graduate of the University of Houston Law Center, will be the next president of the State Bar of Texas. She will serve during the 2022-23 term.

“I am so proud to be a graduate of the University of Houston Law Center,” Gibson said. “I have been honored to serve on the University of Houston Law Alumni Association since 2010. I am also impressed by the leadership at the University of Houston Law Center for raising the funds necessary to build the new John M. O’Quinn Law Building that will allow us to have a building commensurate with the high caliber education that our students receive.

“I am delighted that our future students will have a strong legal foundation in a state-of-the-art building as a result of their education at the University of Houston Law Center. Without the education I received at the University of Houston Law Center, I don’t believe that my dream of becoming the next President of the State Bar of Texas could have been fulfilled.”

Gibson is a partner at Dentons, where she serves as a member of the firm’s litigation and dispute resolution practice and leads the employment and labor practice team. She has previously served as the chair of the State Bar of Texas’ board of directors. From 2015-2016, Gibson served as president of the Houston Bar Association.

“I am delighted that Laura Gibson will be President-elect of the Texas Bar,” said Dean Leonard M. Baynes. “Laura is an accomplished lawyer heading up Dentons’ labor and employment law practice. Laura has given back to the Law Center with her service as a member of the University of Houston Alumni Board. She also has been very active in the bar by previously serving as President of the Houston Bar Association and as a member of the Executive Committee of the Texas Bar Association.

“Laura is the first UH Law alumni to serve in this role since James N. Parsons III ’69, who was Texas Bar president from 1990-91. The Law Center community is very proud of Laura’s accomplishments.”

“We are so very proud of Laura and the incredible campaign she successfully orchestrated which led to achieving this outstanding election result,” added UH Law Alumni Association President Victor Wright.

“Laura is to be commended for her integrity, grace, style and empathy for others displayed throughout her campaign. We are thrilled for Laura and her family as she embarks on this journey, and she will have the UHLAA board and the entire UHLC community’s support each step along the way.”

Jennifer A. Hasley, a 1995 LL.M. graduate of the University of Houston Law Center, is now leading the Houston Bar Association. With more than 10,000 members, HBA is one of the largest metropolitan bar associations in the country.

“It is truly an honor to be serving as HBA president, but the success of the organization has always been attributable to its members,” Hasley said. “HBA members consistently stand out as lawyers, judges, and community leaders by promoting professionalism, access to justice, and public service.”

Hasley is a managing partner of Hasley Scarano, L.L.P., a firm that specializes in civil litigation, intellectual property law and professional responsibility. She received her LL.M. in Health Law & Policy after obtaining her J.D. from the University of Arizona James E. Rogers College of Law.

“We are starting the 2021-2022 bar year with the strong support of our members and a renewed enthusiasm for being back together, which is captured by our new catchphrase, ‘Stronger Together,’” Hasley said. “I will be focusing on three areas: Celebrating and serving members; emphasizing the importance of professionalism and pro bono service; and developing the new Military & Veterans Committee to establish a network of attorneys who are on active duty, reservists, or veterans from all military branches.”

According to the Houston Bar Association, Hasley is the fifth woman president in the 150-year history of the organization, and is “passionate about helping law students and young lawyers develop their skills and confidence through direct mentorship.”
Susan Bickley, a 1984 graduate of the University of Houston Law Center, was named the 2021 recipient of the Houston Bar Association’s Justice Ruby Kless Sondock Award. The award recognizes a woman lawyer or judge for a record of exceptional achievement and leadership in the law.

“I am overwhelmingly honored and surprised to have been selected to receive the Justice Ruby Kless Sondock Award,” Bickley said. “It is especially humbling to receive an award named for Justice Sondock, given her stature and trailblazing career as a woman lawyer and Justice in Texas. I only hope to be worthy of the award as I continue in my career.”

Justice Ruby Kless Sondock graduated from the Law Center in 1962. She is a pioneer in the law who graduated as valedictorian and one of only five women in her law school class. After practicing law for 12 years, Sondock was appointed a judge on the Harris County Domestic Relations Court in 1973 becoming the first woman district court judge in Harris County. Appointed to the 234th District Court in 1977, she was the first female state district judge in Harris County. In 1982 she was appointed to the Texas Supreme Court, the first woman to serve in a regular session of the court. In 2015, the litigation section of the State Bar of Texas named her a “Texas Legal Legend.”

Bickley is a Partner at Blank Rome in the firm’s Labor & Employment section, and an enthusiastic supporter of the Law Center.

“I sincerely appreciate all the work that the HBA does, and will continue to support the HBA in its good work for the community,” Bickley said. “I’m thrilled and delighted, even if feeling a little overwhelmed by this honor.”

Dean Leonard M. Baynes was one of several members of the local legal community to nominate Bickley for the accolade.

“I am very pleased that the Houston Bar Association established the Justice Ruby Kless Sondock Award,” Baynes said. “Like Justice Sondock, Susan is a trailblazer who personifies Sondock’s qualities of leadership, perseverance, achievement, excellence, and serving as a role model. Given her career achievement, her commitment to the legal community, the greater Houston community, and her alma mater, Susan is a most deserving awardee of The Justice Ruby Kless Sondock Award, and it was my honor to nominate her for this special recognition.”

Latham & Watkins invests in life-changing scholarships at the Law Center

Latham & Watkins, a leading global law firm, has committed to making available multi-year scholarships and diversity student leadership programming to UH Law Center students — a significant investment over three years.

“Gifts like this are truly transformative and inspirational,” said Dean Leonard M. Baynes. "When a law firm commits to investing in law students and potential future employees, it shows where their heart and dedication lies.”

Bill Finnegan, a Latham partner and 1981 UH Law Center alum, was instrumental in connecting the firm with his alma mater

“The stats we heard about how hard it is to compete for the best students and how hard it is to retain the best students are real,” Finnegan said. “Anything we can do to help let those students attend UH and focus on their education without worrying about a second job or how are they are going to pay for this is really meaningful, so we’re excited about that.”

Latham’s gift also includes external programming, with a Latham & Watkins Student Diversity Leadership Forum event that aims to connect students directly with the firm and help students learn more about transactional law.

Latham’s commitment to the Law Center comes out of its mission to expand learning opportunities for law students early in their careers, facilitating a more inclusive recruiting process. The firm also recently expanded its long-running Pathways Program, which helps students through law school while relieving some of the financial pressure as they begin to practice.

“Texas, in all its diversity, represents the future, and we are thrilled to support the UH Law students who will shape it,” said Abid R. Qureshi, Global Chair of Latham’s Recruiting Committee. “We want law students of every background to get to know Latham, and to learn about the work we do in transformative industries, from technology to renewable energy. We look forward to welcoming more and more UH Law students into Latham’s Texas offices over the coming years.”

Briefcase 2021

Latham & Watkins LLP

Susan Bickley '84

HOUSTON BAR ASSOCIATION HONORS UH LAW CENTER ALUMNA SUSAN BICKLEY ’84 WITH JUSTICE RUBY KLESS SONDOCK AWARD

LATHAM & WATKINS INVESTS IN LIFE-CHANGING SCHOLARSHIPS AT THE LAW CENTER
As part of Hispanic Heritage Month, the University of Houston Law Center, in collaboration with the Hispanic Law Alumni, held an online discussion this fall with prominent Hispanic judges, attorneys, leaders, and students. Featuring Chief Justice Dori Contreras ’90 and Justice Linda Yanez, both of the 13th Court of Appeals, the event highlighted the challenges and opportunities they faced due to ethnicity and their tenacity in pursuing a law degree and career success despite societal skepticism in what was a very Anglo male dominated profession.

Both mission-driven, Yanez was appointed to the Texas Court of Appeals in 1993 as the first Latina state appellate judge in the State and the first woman to serve as Justice on the 13th Court of Appeals. Contreras was the first woman to be elected Chief Justice of the Texas 13th Court of Appeals and the second Latina statewide to hold the office of Chief Justice.

“Being female and Latina were not barriers,” Yanez said. “They were my fuel, my metal which gave me the audacity to believe that I could change the course of the narrative.”

Contreras added, “When I speak to young students, I share with them that I’m no different from them and I encourage them to pursue their educational goals, but more importantly to not let life’s obstacles stop them, because we all have to confront challenges… I stress the importance of a strong work ethic, and just sticking with it. In my case being a single mother in college could have derailed me, it could have stopped me, but I found a way.”

“It is so important to take a moment like this to truly highlight our talent and celebrate our heritage and our culture,” said co-chair of the Hispanic Law Alumni Network and Court of Appeals Justice for the First District of Texas Veronica Rivas-Malloy ’01 said. “These two trailblazing justices have truly paved the way for women and Hispanic attorneys of the judiciary, and I am inspired by them.”

Eric Munoz ’06, a partner with Akin Gump law firm, also serves as co-chair of the Hispanic Law Alumni Network.

Led by Dean Leonard Baynes and streamed live via Zoom, speakers discussed questions posed by attendees and offered tips on how to prepare and overcome cultural stigmas, past and present ethnic stereotypes and how to turn the challenges of cultural differences into strengths.

Baynes mentioned how demographics are changing. This year alone, the Law Center boasts one of its largest student classes with the highest median LSAT in over a decade and the highest median GPA in recorded history. It is 55.5 percent female, almost 40 percent minority and almost 20 percent Hispanic.
The University of Houston Law Center has received the distinction of Diversity Champion by INSIGHT Into Diversity Magazine. The Law Center is the only law school in the country to receive the recognition.

According to the publication, “Diversity Champions exemplify an unyielding commitment to diversity and inclusion throughout their campus communities, across academic programs, and at the highest administrative levels.”

Additionally, the Law Center has received the 2021 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award for the sixth straight year. As a recipient of the annual HEED Award — a national honor recognizing U.S. colleges and universities that demonstrate an outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion — the Law Center will be featured in the October 2021 issue of INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine, the oldest and largest diversity-focused publication in higher education.

“It is an honor to receive the very prestigious HEED Award for the sixth year in a row and now for the first time being named a Diversity Champion, the only law school in the nation with that designation,” said Dean Leonard M. Baynes. “Many thanks to the hard work and dedication of our faculty, staff and alumni who helped us achieve this recognition. The Law Center’s mission has always been clear. We have historically provided opportunities for many first-generation college students. Our faculty teach students to be successful lawyers and instill confidence in the students despite societal barriers that they may face.

“The Law Center’s mission remains the same irrespective of the complexion or background of our students. The only difference is that we have adapted our programming to meet the needs of these diverse students to ensure that they continue to be successful.”

HEED Award recipients are selected on the basis of an extensive application, detailing demographics of the faculty and student body, recruitment practices, mentoring and resource programs, community outreach and other efforts designed to increase diversity.

The Law Center’s award-winning Pre-Law Pipeline Program was among the initiatives cited by the magazine. The program prepares undergraduates who are first-generation, low-income or members of groups underrepresented in the legal profession for a career in law. The initiative recently completed its seventh year of programming.

“We continue to use the HEED award application as a way to assess the Law Center’s DEI practices and take stock of our accomplishments,” said Pipeline Program Director Kristen Guiseppi. “We remain steadfast in our efforts to promote and support diversity, equity, and inclusion. Many, many thanks to INSIGHT Into Diversity for continuously recognizing our efforts and initiatives.”

“It is an honor for Insight Into Diversity to acknowledge the Law Center’s diversity efforts for the sixth time,” added Professor Meredith J. Duncan, Assistant Dean of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Metropolitan Programs, who oversees the program. “We are delighted to be recognized, not only for what we are doing here at the Law Center, but also for our deliberate efforts toward diversifying the legal profession as a whole through our Pre-Law Pipeline Programs.”

The Pre-Law Pipeline Program is just one of many efforts at the Law Center that promotes diversity, civil rights and social justice. The Law Center also has a Diversity, Racial Justice, and Human Rights Initiative, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee and offers courses and clinical work for students that promote diversity and service to underserved communities who need legal representation.
The University of Houston Law Center in October debuted a new online publication dedicated to undergraduate students nationwide interested in attending law school. Aspiring Lawyer magazine features insights, tips, success stories, and guidance for pre-law students, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds.

“I am delighted that we have established the Aspiring Lawyer magazine which will provide helpful hints and advice for students who plan to be lawyers,” said University of Houston Law Center Dean Leonard M. Baynes. “UH Law Center has always provided a pathway to the profession for law school students of all backgrounds. It’s only rational for us to produce this magazine so that as many people as possible know that a legal education is within their reach and to help them achieve their dreams.”

Baynes noted that it is often a lack of information about the career trajectory necessary to become a practicing lawyer that can keep someone from pursing a law degree. He says the magazine will be a resource that students can learn from as they navigate the law school application process and beyond.

“During my career, I’ve seen too many young people give up on their dream to become a lawyer because they think that the LSAT is too hard, or they prioritize working full time while in college and don’t focus on keeping the GPA high or don’t develop relationships with faculty who can write important letters of recommendation or don’t line anyone up who can critically review their very important personal statement, all of which are parts of the application process. They sometimes make uninformed choices that disadvantage their law school application,” he said.

The magazine is a complement to UH Law Center’s award-winning Pre-Law Pipeline Program. Now in its seventh year, the Pipeline Program has four tracks and a track record of excellence. Eighty-two scholars have been accepted to law school and have received $5,434,229 in scholarship funds. A total of 69 undergraduate schools have also been represented throughout the lifespan of the program.

Students who participate in the LSAT prep curriculum have also seen an average LSAT score increase of 11-14 points with the highest individual LSAT score increase of 27 points.

Professor Meredith J. Duncan, Assistant Dean of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Metropolitan Programs oversees the pipeline program. She says that men and women of color appear in disproportionately low numbers among lawyers and judges today.

“The legal profession is not nearly as diverse as it needs to be to best serve our communities, and here at UHLC we are proud of how our Pre-Law Pipeline Programs have been successful in increasing the numbers of qualified, diverse law school applicants from populations currently underrepresented in the legal community. First-generation students and students from ethnic or racial groups often just need the information, tools, and guidance to learn how to become lawyers.”

The institutional award was presented virtually to Associate Dean Greg Vetter, the HIPLA College Professor of Law, as the representative of the Law Center and IPIL at a HIPLA event.

Receiving the individual award was alumnus Dwayne Mason ’93, a shareholder at Greenberg Traurig.

“The University of Houston Law Center has been a national leader in diversity of student body and promotion of IP legal studies,” said HIPLA president and senior counsel at LyondellBasell Jason Sander ’04, in his congratulatory remarks. “It has produced many diverse and minority leaders in the IP community, including Mr. Mason himself. The IPIL program continues that tradition and its steadfast focus on equity and inclusion.

“The diverse student body is no accident. It is the result of the tireless work of Dean Baynes and Associate Dean Vetter, who relentlessly seek out and encourage diverse prospective students to join our intellectual property practice area.”
UH LAW CENTER DEAN BAYNES SAYS LAWS SCHOOLS PLAY A KEY ROLE IN DIVERSIFYING LEGAL PROFESSION IN LSAC PODCAST

UHLC Dean Leonard M. Baynes, a leading voice for diversity equity, and inclusion in legal education, was featured in an episode of Keeping Up to Data, a podcast by the Law School Admission Council.

“I was delighted to be invited to participate to discuss the underrepresentation of people of color in the legal profession and to discuss the Black Lawyers Matter conference,” Baynes said.

Baynes spoke with podcast host and LSAC executive vice president for operations Susan Krinsky about racial disparities in the legal profession, actionable steps to increasing diversity, and the path forward for law schools and legal employers.

The Black Lawyers Matter Conference, held for the first time last year following the tragic deaths of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, is one forum aimed at improving diversity and offering people a “toolkit” for how to achieve it, Baynes said.

The work of diversifying the legal field “has to be done by all of us,” Baynes said, including law school faculty, staff, and alumni as well as legal employers, judges, and law firms. It’s a “community-wide effort,” he said.

“Students of color need to feel welcomed and appreciated in [law] spaces, and the content of our courses and our curriculum needs to be more accessible to them,” he said.

Baynes said he believes that one reason why students of color are underrepresented in the legal field is because “deep down, a lot of people still question their capabilities and their qualifications.”

For example, he said that legal employers and law schools often look for “unicorn” applicants, meaning an “exceptional Black or Latinx candidate,” according to Baynes, which creates a challenge from the start because there are “very few exceptional candidates generally.”

This method of seeking diversity is ineffective because it essentially leads to several institutions pursuing the same group of students and they end up not getting that shiny unicorn, Baynes said. It’s an effort toward diversity, but it’s not the “right” effort.

“People need to soul-search and figure out what they really need to do to make a difference,” Baynes said. “Sometimes, if you can’t find that candidate that you’re looking for, you have to try to make the candidate. That’s why pipeline programs are so important.”

Equipping and empowering aspiring and current lawyers of color is part of what will “make our world a much more diverse place,” Baynes said.

“The fact that we have so few African-American or Latinx lawyers is something that we all should be concerned about. Especially as our society becomes more diverse,” Baynes said, adding that by 2044, a majority of citizens will be Black, Latinx, Asian-Americans and Indigenous. By that time, many of today’s law students will be in the “prime of their careers.”

“And if our legal system is not more diverse, the population’s going to feel like they are not getting justice, because there’s not going to be people like them judging them. So, we really need to do a better job at all of this.”

UH LAW CENTER FACULTY COLLABORATED ON GEORGE FLOYD INTERSESSION COURSE

The University of Houston Law Center launched a special topics course, “George Floyd and the Aftermath: Equal Justice and the Law,” for the Spring 2021 semester.

Floyd, a native of Houston’s Third Ward adjacent to the UH campus, was killed on May 25, 2020 in Minneapolis when a police officer knelt on his neck for more than eight minutes. Floyd’s death sparked nationwide protests and renewed calls for social justice.

“(George Floyd’s) death made so many Americans realize that there is still considerable disparities and inequities in our society in the areas of law enforcement as well as employment, education, health care and many other sectors,” said Dean Leonard M. Baynes.

“I am very proud that the Law Center community came together to organize this course to teach our students about race, racism and the law. But most importantly, I am glad that we came together to give Mr. Floyd’s death meaning!”

Topics and participating faculty members included:

- Dean Leonard M. Baynes, who led a lecture entitled, “What is Race, Colorism and Criminal Justice?”
- Cullen Professor of Law David Dow, founder of the Texas Innocence Network, presented on, “The Role of Race in the Criminal Justice System: The Death Penalty.”
- Newell H. Blakely Chair Sandra Guerra Thompson, director of the Criminal Justice Institute, provided a historical context for policing in communities of color.
- Royce Till Professor of Law Ellen Marrus, director for the Center for Children, Law & Policy examined the, “Cradle to Prison Pipeline.”
- George A. Butler Research Professor Daniel Morales presented on #BlackLivesMatter, #AbolishICE and Abolitionist Future.”
UH LAW CENTER 2L NGUEPDO SELECTED AS FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF HOUSTON LAW REVIEW

Second-year University of Houston Law Center student Charisma Ricksy Nguepdo was named the Houston Law Review’s editor-in-chief, the first person of African descent to earn that position.

“I recognize that my election as the first Black editor-in-chief means that I have now opened a door for other students of color to dream a little bigger,” Nguepdo said. “My hope is that through my hard work on behalf of the Houston Law Review, students who may have otherwise doubted their ability to join the Law Review will think twice about what is possible for them.”

Founded in 1963, the Houston Law Review is a legal journal published by University of Houston Law Center, providing a chance for students to improve their legal research and writing skills and offer judges and scholars a forum for new legal arguments. It has more than 1,000 esteemed alumni members, ranging from judges who served or have served on U.S. District Courts and the Texas Supreme Court to renowned practitioners and general counsel in Fortune 500 companies.

“I am very proud of the Houston Law Review for making an historic appointment of Charisma Nguepdo as its editor-in-chief,” said Dean Leonard M. Baynes. “Charisma is highly qualified for the position. She graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Penn State University majoring in African-American Studies and Criminology. She then received her masters of science from Johns Hopkins University School of Education. Before becoming a UH Law Center student, she taught for several years through Teach For America in Cleveland, Ohio and also taught at prep schools in Baton Rouge, La., did education advocacy work, and provided professional development to other teachers.

Nguepdo also was the 2020-2021 president of the Black Law Students Association (BLSA), dedicated to promoting the aspirations and needs of Black law students and influencing the legal community.

“My love of community, and my belief in giving back to my community, is what motived me to join BLSA,” Nguepdo said.

She and her brother were raised by a single mother in East Harlem in New York.

“Although my childhood was not easy, I would not change it for the world because it has shaped who I am today,” Nguepdo said.

UHLC’S PRE-LAW PIPELINE PROGRAM EXPANDS PARTNERSHIP WITH BECK REDDEN

Two participants in the University of Houston Law Center’s Pre-Law Pipeline Program were recipients of scholarships from Houston-based appellate and trial firm Beck Redden LLP.

“I am delighted about this partnership between the Law Center and the prestigious Beck Redden Law Firm to support two of the talented UHLC Pre-Law Pipeline Program scholars,” said Dean Leonard M. Baynes. “Beck Redden’s support helps to make the journey to law school more affordable for these pre-law students and serves as a model for law firms, corporations, and others who are committed to expanding diversity in the legal profession.”

Alexis Austin-Gant is a University of Houston student who will receive a Bachelor of Education in 2022. Avyan Medjeen is political science major at Concordia College in Minnesota and will graduate in 2022.

“Beck Redden has been a continued supporter of the UHLC Pre-Law Pipeline Program,” said Program Director Kristen Guiseppi. “We are very excited about this new development in our partnership and the impact that scholarships like these can and will have on our students. We look forward to celebrating Alexis’ and Avyan’s achievements in the near future.

“Beck Redden LLP is proud to expand its support of the University of Houston Law Center Pre-Law Pipeline Program by awarding two scholarships to Avyan Medjeen and Alexis Austin-Gant,” the firm said in a statement.

“These newly appointed UHLC Pipeline Program Beck Redden Scholars are remarkable women. Avyan aspires to become an attorney who specializes in international human rights and civil rights law while Alexis seeks to become an advocate for children in the adoption system. They will receive The Princeton Review’s LSAT Ultimate preparation course, study materials customized for the scholars, and LSAT/CAS fee registration for the law school admissions test.”
Building upon the momentum of the inaugural dialogue in 2020, the 2021 Black Lawyers Matter Conference was held in October with a host of speakers and panelists ready to continue advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the legal profession.

Organized after the tragic deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, the Black Lawyers Matter Conference aims to increase diversity within the legal field, one of the least diverse professions in the country, according to Dean Leonard M. Baynes, Dean and Professor of Law at UH Law Center. Held virtually in October, the Black Lawyers Matter Conference had close to 2,000 registrants from across the country.

“We can’t have justice without adequate representation,” said Baynes. “The underrepresentation of black lawyers has a long history in our society.”

Presented by the Law School Admission Council, University of Houston Law Center, and Southern Methodist University Dedman School of Law, the 2021 Black Lawyers Matter Conference covered topics including: promoting diversity in law schools and law offices, advancing anti-racist legal education, re-envisioning the hiring process, and retaining and developing new lawyers.

“The whole essence of the protests of 2020 revolved around the continued disparity and underrepresentation of African Americans, often leading to tragic criminal justice outcomes,” Baynes said, citing the fact that although black people make up about 13% of the U.S. population, they still make up less than 5% of the legal profession.

Judge Vanessa D. Gilmore, U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Texas and 1981 graduate of the UH Law Center, opened the Black Lawyers Matter Conference with a dialogue about the importance of diversity in the legal field, specifically within the judiciary.

Gilmore is the first University of Houston graduate to be appointed to the federal bench and, at the time of her appointment in 1994, was the youngest federal judge on the bench.

“Black lawyers matter because if you’re not at the table, you are on the menu,” Gilmore said.

One of the ways a lack of diversity manifests itself is through implicit or unconscious bias, according to Gilmore.

This can be particularly dangerous in the courtroom, where unchecked implicit bias can result in extreme disparities, Gilmore said, citing data from the American Civil Liberties Union that shows black men receive sentences that are 23% longer than white men.

Marcilynn A. Burke – Dean and Dave Frohmayer Chair in Leadership and Law at the University of Oregon School of Law and former associate dean and associate professor of law at the UH Law Center – moderated part of the afternoon’s keynote presentation featuring Deborah Enix-Ross, President-Elect of the American Bar Association.

“I have been acutely aware of challenges lawyers of color face and have faced as we try to be active, productive members of this noble profession,” said Enix-Ross, the second African-American woman to be president of the ABA in its 140-year history.

“Our ultimate objective is to create a truly inclusive workplace where black lawyers and other lawyers of color and other lawyers from underrepresented demographic groups will not have to overcome additional barriers of bias or administration,” said Enix-Ross.

“That’s a job for all lawyers, not just lawyers of color.”

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UH LAW CENTER HEALTH LAW PROFESSORS PUBLISHED IN NATIONAL COVID-19 POLICY PLAYBOOK

Faculty members from the University of Houston Law Center’s Health Law & Policy Institute shared their expertise in the “COVID-19 Policy Playbook II: Legal Recommendations for a Safer, More Equitable Future.”

Jessica L. Roberts, Director of the Health Law & Policy Institute (HLPI) and the Leonard H. Childs Chair in Law, and Leah R. Fowler, the HLPI’s Research Director and a Research Assistant Professor, co-authored a chapter titled, “Improving Data Collection and Management” with Nicolas P. Terry of the Indiana University Robert H. McKinney School of Law.

The book chapter argues that data are fundamental to good public health policies and their implementation. But with the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the collection, analysis and distribution of public health data were flawed.

The Temple University Center for Public Health Law Research, Center for Health Policy and Law, Northeastern University School of Law, Public Health Watch, Wayne State University, Indiana University, The Network for Public Health Law and ChangeLab Solutions produced the report.
The National Law Journal named University of Houston Law Center alumna Marcella Burke ’12 to its fifth annual Energy and Environmental Trailblazers list, recognizing her initiative and drive to creatively utilize the environment to meet the public’s need for affordable, clean energy.

“I have always seen the energy industry as the number one lever out of poverty globally,” Burke stated. “Texans are proud of parks and wildlife, so the energy and environmental combination was just meant to be.”

One of only 27 energy and environmental law practitioners in the U.S. named as a Trailblazer, Burke specializes in energy and environmental issues and represents companies in regulatory and enforcement matters such as a toxic environment, conventional oil and gas problems, hydraulic fueling, and solar and offshore wind development.

“Tenacity and always questioning with a ‘what-if’ mentality has inspired me throughout my career, but in government especially,” Burke said. “I have held two senior positions in the federal government and bringing a mentality of challenging the status quo to the federal government gave me an opportunity to provide a true public service and hopefully blaze trails in government efficiency and accountability.”

Burke served as senior counselor and deputy solicitor at the U.S. Department of the Interior and deputy general counsel at the Environmental Protection Agency before becoming partner at King & Spalding and developing a global Energy Transition Initiative focused on the ever-expanding market for diversified sources of clean energy.

The Trailblazer series was created by the National Law Journal to “pay tribute to some of the great minds impacting the crucial intersection of energy production and the environment,” and prompt an uprising in change among others. It highlighted Burke’s representation of the balance between clean energy and affordable energy and the essential production updates needed to make clean energy accessible to all.

University of New Mexico School of Law Professor Emerita Sherri L. Burr shared the ancestral history of Africans in America before the Civil War era in her presentation “Genealogical Research into America’s Antebellum Past: The Challenges of Finding the Enslaved, the Free, and Enslavers.”

Burr used her book, “Complicated Lives: Free Blacks in Virginia, 1619-1865,” as the focus of her talk. Part of the history of free Black people in the U.S. can be traced to two Dutch ships that arrived in 1619 in what is now considered Virginia, which eventually led to the first permanent settlement of Africans in this country.

“The first census was in 1790, but in Virginia and Maryland there were some census records that show Virginia had 1,800 free Blacks in a census taken around 1755,” Burr said. “By 1790, Virginia had 12,766 free Blacks, which included my ancestors, and Maryland had 8,000. Throughout the entire Antebellum Period, there were always more free Blacks in the South than the North.

“Once people received their freedom they were in a community with relatives, and they didn’t want to leave the territory. For others, how would they know what they’re going to? Unless they had some kind of access to knowing about other places, they tended to stay put.”

Burr said that following the Revolutionary war, many plantation owners started freeing their slaves. From 1786-1802, thousands of slaves were granted their freedom either by deed or will.

“This growing number caused consternation in the Virginia legislature,” Burr said. “In 1802, Virginia legislators passed a law requiring slaves granted freedom to leave Virginia within a year and a day of receiving their emancipation or manumission. They also passed a companion law that if free Blacks left Virginia to obtain an education in the North, they could not return to the state. That also encouraged people to keep their family close. If they sent their children away, they could not come back.”

After hearing Burr present part of her research in 2018, the Aaron Burr Association unanimously voted to acknowledge that Aaron Burr fathered two children of color with Mary Emmons and that all their descendants were legitimate members of the Fairfield Branch of the Burr Family.
Alumni, faculty, staff, former colleagues and friends remembered University of Houston Law Center Professor Peter S. Linzer for his love of life and ideas, his adamant support of younger colleagues and other fond recollections during a virtual memorial held in February.

“Peter achieved many accomplishments during life,” said Dean Leonard M. Baynes. “He had a superior intellect, he was a First Amendment absolutist, he was memorable and he had strong opinions. Peter had a strong presence at faculty meetings and he engaged in strong, lawyerly advocacy to get his points across. He will be greatly missed.”

Prior to eulogies delivered by Linzer’s colleagues, attendees reflected on their memories of him during a moment of silence.

Hon. Alvin Zimmerman ’67 was the first of several speakers to reflect on the impact Linzer made on their lives.

“Things that impressed me about Peter were his joy for life, his quirkiness and his quest for knowledge. He was a professional and expert in every field that he taught. He wrote amicus curiae briefs that were filed and accepted in the Supreme Court of the United States.

“He was one of the most fervent advocates, both trial and appellate, for the ACLU. He had this adventurous mind that seemed to be on full throttle all the time.”

Professor Emeritus Laura Oren recalled her time as Linzer’s suitemate at the Law Center, and how her exchanges with him and others covered a vast array of topics.

“I think of him most of all as a tremendous enthusiast,” she said. “He loved finding little things in the law, pointing them out and debating them. Peter had a lot of different areas of knowledge, whether it was the ability to read foreign languages fluently or history. He was enthusiastic not just for legal knowledge, but all kinds of knowledge.”

Professor Meredith J. Duncan ’93 reflected on her return to the Law Center as a faculty member, and Linzer’s willingness to help.

“I remember my first faculty meeting very well,” Duncan said. “Peter was kind enough to sit next to me, and he narrated and provided commentary throughout the whole faculty meeting. I learned very quickly what these meetings were about.

“He was always very supportive of me. All of us who knew Peter know that he was larger than life. When I picture Peter, he always had a Styrofoam cup of coffee in one hand and a stack of paper and books in the other as he was dashing through the halls. Behind all of that was a man who had a brilliant mind, who loved teaching and loved his students and loved the law.”

Professor David Dow echoed Duncan’s sentiments, and admired how Linzer would encourage and seek opportunities for junior faculty members.

“The principal lesson I take away from Peter as a faculty member is that as a colleague, you can either do your best to nurture other people, or you can ignore other people,” Dow said. “Peter was somebody who spent his entire career nurturing other people, and made other people better because of that.”

Linzer passed away on Dec. 13 from a long-term illness. He is survived by a wife, son and grandson.

Linzer joined the Law Center faculty in 1983 as a visiting professor, serving from 1984 to 2020 as a professor of Contracts, Constitutional Law, First Amendment, Torts, and Contract Negotiation and Drafting.

Linzer was a Life Member of the American Law Institute, chair of the Contracts Section of the Association of American Law Schools and a board-certified specialist in civil appellate law, Texas Board of Legal Specialization. He served for nearly a decade on the Pattern Jury Charge Committee of the State Bar of Texas and was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Eleventh International Contracts Conference held in San Antonio.

He authored many articles, book chapters and reviews on contracts, torts and arbitration and served as a contributor on legal topics to radio and television programs in both Houston and Detroit on contract and constitutional issues.
University of Houston Law Center Professor Ronald Turner passed away in June. He was 66 years old.

Turner graduated magna cum laude from Wilberforce University in 1980 and received his law degree from the University of Pennsylvania Law School in 1984.

Turner joined the Law Center faculty in 1998 and was the A.A. White Professor of Law. He was the first African-American full professor in the Law Center’s history. Before joining the Law Center, he served as a labor-management relations examiner with the National Labor Relations Board, practiced law in Chicago, and taught at the University of Alabama School of Law.

“Professor Turner was cherished by our students,” said Dean Leonard M. Baynes. “He was a noted scholar often publishing in top 30 law reviews and the author of several casebooks. He was also an excellent teacher who was able to get students to discuss complex and sensitive issues in a productive manner in his classes.”

Turner specialized in labor law, employment law, constitutional law, and taught employment discrimination, labor law, torts, constitutional law, and a course on HIV/AIDS and the law.

A former research associate at the Industrial Research Unit at the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School of Business, Turner also served as a contributing editor for the AIDS & Public Policy Journal. His numerous publications included books and articles on labor and employment law issues, AIDS, and hate speech. He was also a Visiting Professor of Law at the College of William & Mary Marshall-Wythe School of Law and was a Visiting Professor of History at Rice University.

Turner’s Law Center colleagues, and legal academics from across the country paid tribute to his teaching excellence in the classroom and his generosity outside of it.

“Ron touched many people in so many ways,” said Professor Seth Chandler. “One thing I think about is his dedication to the promotion and tenure process at the Law Center. Ron did the work it took to evaluate all candidates fairly and to write complete reports regardless of his circumstances. I am not suggesting this achievement go on his tombstone – it will be a very crowded monument indeed if all of his accomplishments are listed – but it is emblematic of his commitment to fairness and an indomitable work ethic in matters large and small.”

“As Associate Dean many years ago, I recall reading some of his student evaluations and marveling at how many students decided to practice Employment Law or Labor Law because Ron had inspired in them a passion for the subject,” said Professor Sandra Guerra Thompson, the Newell H. Blakely Chair. “I will really miss his mischievous smile as he recalled classroom exchanges and how he put students on the spot in a way that really challenged them to consider an issue from a different perspective. He could make students squirm as he challenged them to broaden their thinking, and they loved him for it. That was part of the genius of his teaching.”

“The loss of Ron Turner is a crippling body blow to all who knew, loved, and respected him for his towering employment law and critical race theory scholarship,” said Emeritus Professor and William B. Bates Distinguished Chair in Law Michael A. Olivas. “His passing also should serve as a reminder to check in on friends and colleagues. I will always regret not having done so, as I had not known of his illness.”

“The news of the loss of Ron Turner brings such grief and sadness,” said Texas A&M University School of Law Professor Michael Z. Green. “Ron’s skills and talents are unique in this community. He is one of a few people primarily focused on being a workplace law scholar but also versed in and dedicated to issues of race. He was an endless worker, and his scholarship was always interesting and insightful. He was smart and funny and when you needed him he was there for you to learn from and be advised by and to grow with as needed. May he rest in peace.”

“Ron was a great scholar and, more importantly, a great person,” said Angela Onwuachi-Willig, Dean and Ryan Gallo and Ernest J. Gallo Professor of Law at the Boston University School of Law. “He will be
UH LAW CENTER REMEMBERS PROFESSOR EMERITUS THOMAS NEWHOUSE

University of Houston Law Center Professor Emeritus Thomas Newhouse passed away on August 29 at the age of 86.

Newhouse received his B.A. from the University of Notre Dame, his J.D. from the University of Tulsa College of Law, and his LL.M. from the New York University School of Law. He was admitted to practice in Oklahoma and Texas and worked in private practice and as a public defender in Oklahoma before joining the Law Center’s faculty as an assistant professor in 1966. He was promoted to full professor in 1973 and served as Associate Dean from 1975-78 and again from 1985-88. In addition, he served as President and Director of the Industrial Relations Research Association, Houston Chapter from 1988-90, and Director of the A.A. White Dispute Resolution Institute from 1992-1997.

Newhouse taught Alternative Dispute Resolution, Civil Procedure, Family Law, Labor Law, Mediation and Mediation Clinic. He retired from the Law Center in 2002 and became an Emeritus Professor. However, he still served as Course Director for the 40-hour Basic Mediator Training at the A.A. White Dispute Resolution Center. He was preceded in death by his wife Emma Newhouse.

Several members of the Law Center faculty provided their memories of Newhouse:

“Tom was a tremendous, and active, supporter of the Law Center’s advocacy program,” said Jim Lawrence, Executive Director of the Blakely Advocacy Institute, and Interim Director of the A.A. White Dispute Resolution Center. “He would always ask me, even after he retired, “How can I help?” Students who compete in the Tom Newhouse Representing Clients in Mediation Competition won’t know the extent of Tom’s contributions to the program, but they will always be able to experience Tom’s favorite mediation guidance, “Live in the question.” He was a great teacher and a great life-guide to me.”

“Tom was unfailingly kind and supportive to me in both professional and personal matters,” said Professor Emeritus Robert Schuwerk.

“Tom was a mentor and a true friend,” said Tasha Willis, a Clinical Associate Professor, Alternative Dispute Resolution Director and Mediation Clinic Professor. “I would not be at UHLC today were is not for Tom Newhouse and Richard Alderman. I shared many amazing times with Tom and Emma. Tom, Judge Frank Evans, Judge John Coselli, Judge Bruce Wettman and I began training together in the mid-1990s. Judge Coselli and I are the only part of that team left. But I will always choose to focus not just on what they taught me, but even more on the love and laughter they brought to my life. I will miss him now and always. I pray he is with his sweet Emma now.”

The Tom Newhouse Mediation Competition is held in honor of the late Tom Newhouse and in conjunction with the National Mediator Competition. Tom Newhouse Competition Teams are presented with several fact patterns that include a summary of their side’s position and interests then given a limited time to present their position and work through the dispute with mediators (who are themselves competitors in the National Mediator Competition).
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