BRIEFCASE

John M. O’Quinn Law Building Opens

75th Anniversary
A new era begins

UH Law Center
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
As we approach the end of 2022, the University of Houston Law Center has much positive momentum to reflect on going into 2023.

First, the Law Center achieved its decades-long dream and moved its excellent educational opportunities into the ultramodern John M. O’Quinn Law Building in the fall semester. It is the newest law school building in the state of Texas and one of the four newest in the nation.

The new building is a five-story, 180,000-square-foot cantilevered structure housing leading legal faculty and producing future practice-ready advocates.

Second, the Law Center also marked its 75-year anniversary, commemorating the occasion with a historical microsite and celebratory social media campaign, remembering the contributions of alumni, faculty members, students and others.

Third, although the Law Center has undergone many changes in 75 years when it first opened in converted WWII military barracks, we remain steadfast to our mission of educating the next generation of talented lawyers, and our faculty are still excellent teachers and top-notch legal scholars.

Fourth, our student body is much more diverse than 75 years ago. Teaching law has evolved from the purely Socratic method of teaching, and technological advancements have drastically altered the classrooms and day-to-day practice. But through this change, the Law Center remains steadfast in providing our students the very best legal education as during past eras.

Fifth, our students’ ambition and determination to achieve their dreams remain similar to the 28 individuals who made up our very first graduating class in 1950. In the next 75 years, I am confident that the Law Center is well-positioned to make a continued meaningful impact on the various communities it serves.

You can read more about our 75th anniversary, the grand opening of the John M. O’Quinn Law Building and the latest happenings with Law Center faculty and alumni, and more in this addition of Briefcase magazine.

I want to thank all of you for celebrating with us this special and successful year for the Law Center.

Sincerely,

Leonard M. Baynes
Dean and Professor of Law
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dean’s Note</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rankings</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briefly Noted</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Gala</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75th Anniversary</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty News</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni News</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity, Equity &amp; Inclusion</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Memoriam</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday Coffee</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upcoming Events</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Multiple University of Houston Law Center specialty programs were among the best in the country, according to results of the U.S. News & World Report annual survey released in March. UH Law’s three national top 10 programs are:

- No. 6 in Intellectual Property and Information Law
- No. 7 in Health Law
- No. 9 in Part-time program

For the second consecutive year, a total of eight UHLC specialty programs are among the Top 50 in the country. The Law Center improved its overall ranking to No. 58, up 2 spots from a tie for No. 60 in 2021.

“I am pleased that UH Law Center has three top 10 specialty rankings and eight specialty rankings in the top 50 as well as moved up two points to 58 in the overall rankings. We all know that UHLC is an excellent law school. It is nice to know that this is confirmed by U.S. News & World Report,” said Dean Leonard M. Baynes.

Other top 50 UHLC rankings include:

- No. 21 in Environmental Law
- No. 31 in Trial Advocacy (an 11-point increase from 2021)
- No. 44 in Business Corporate Law (an eight-point increase from 2021)
- No. 47 in Dispute Resolution (a five-point increase from 2021)
- No. 49 in Tax Law (a four-point increase from 2021)

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.”

John M. O’Quinn Law Building
UH LAW CENTER RANKS 27 IN 2022 ‘GO-TO’ LAW SCHOOL LIST

Law.com selected the University of Houston Law Center as one of the top 30 law schools in the nation when it comes to sending graduates to associate positions with “Big Law.” The Law Center moved up three spots to No. 27 from its No. 30 ranking in 2021. It is the highest UHLC has ranked since the list began in 2010. UHLC also moved up to the No. 2 ranked go-to law school in the state of Texas.

The rankings are based on the employment success of the class of 2021 who secured associate attorney positions with the top 100 law firms that are considered to be among the largest and most prestigious in the country.

“I am very proud that the Law Center moved up to number 27 in the nation in Law.com’s Go-To rankings,” said UH Law Center Dean Leonard M. Baynes. “These rankings reflect what we know about the spectacular service that our Career Development Office (CDO) provides to our students as well as the talent, capability, perseverance and grit of our students. I am delighted that more employers recognize that they get the whole package when they hire University of Houston Law Center students.”

“Law.com defines its methodology as: “The Go-To Law Schools report ranks the top 50 law schools by percentage of 2021 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.”

UH LAW CENTER RANKS IN ABOVE THE LAW’S TOP 50 LAW SCHOOLS LIST FOR 2022

Above the Law named the University of Houston Law Center to its nationally ranked Top 50 Law Schools list in July, moving up the UHLC three spots to No. 44.

According to the legal website Above the Law, the annual rankings prioritize employment outcomes, and those on the Top 50 list are “schools most likely to see you gainfully employed.” Schools are assessed for the following components: quality of jobs, employment score, education cost, debt-per-job ratio, Supreme Court clerkships and federal judgeships.
What do the Second Amendment, school prayer and abortion rights have in common? According to Melissa Murray, a leading scholar in family law, constitutional law and reproductive rights and justice, read together, they point to the Supreme Court’s embrace of a jurisprudence of masculinity.

Presented at the 27th Annual Frankel Lecture in November sponsored by the Houston Law Review, Murray, who is the Frederick I. and Grace Stokes Professor of Law at NYU School of Law, outlined what she referred to as the U.S. Supreme Court’s jurisprudence of masculinity. As she explained, three of the Court’s recent rulings — New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen, Kennedy v. Bremerton School District and Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization — reveal the Court’s prioritization of rights that code “male” and the men who would exercise them.

The jurisprudence of masculinity is “a jurisprudence that prioritizes and protects rights that are coded and understood as male as well as the men who would exercise those rights,” said Murray.

“But the jurisprudence of masculinity goes beyond merely characterizing certain rights as male,” Murray maintained. “It operates by fundamentally recasting core assumptions and constitutional laws in ways that privilege and prioritize men.”

“These cases and the jurisprudence of masculinity that they reflect have utterly transformed the landscape of constitutional law,” said Murray. “Specifically, I argue that the jurisprudence of masculinity enlists the legal landscape for the protection and prioritization of men’s rights by reorganizing the public-private divide, recasting the nature of men’s and women’s bodies, and recharacterizing the relationship between the state, individuals and rights and regulation.”

A hallmark of UH Law Center’s Frankel Lecture series is the space it creates for dialogue among legal academics on difficult issues. As such, Reva Siegel, Nicholas deB. Katzenbach Professor of Law at Yale Law School, and Helen Alvaré, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Robert A. Levy Endowed Chair in Law and Liberty at the George Mason University Antonin Scalia Law School, each offered their insights and perspectives on Murray’s lecture.

Alvaré said she agrees “that we should be very attentive to the possibility of sexism in originalist inquiries into the Constitution, including among the arguments in favor of pro-life laws.” However, she maintains that “sexist originalism does not at all characterize the Dobbs holding.”

Siegel agreed that these questions were fraught and hotly debated but argued that it was important to continue discussing these issues, as the Frankel Lecture does, regardless of differing views. “I really do believe that the first, most urgent question for us as a nation is to find ways of talking to one another, whether it’s in this room, in politics or over your Thanksgiving dinner with your family,” said Siegel.
The University of Houston Law Center earned the 2021-2022 American Bar Association (ABA) Competitions Champion award in November. Recognized for outstanding skills executed in four Law Student Division competitions, UHLC earned top scores overall, defeating 281 law schools that participated.

In 2022, more than 1,300 students virtually took part in one or more of the practical skills competitions hosted by the Law Student Division. Split into categories of Arbitration Competition, Negotiation Competition, Client Counseling Competition and National Appellate Advocacy Competition (NAAC Moot Court), law students were able to apply classroom skills learned, gaining real-world experience and preparation for the courtroom.

“This is the first time the Law Center has won this award, and huge credit goes to our directors, incredible students and individual team coaches,” Blakely Advocacy Institute Executive Director James Lawrence said. “Their collective hard work and dedication are a driving force for our teams’ success.”

Nine teams from UHLC participated in the competition, posing a threat in all four categories. Second place was achieved by Autumn Brehon and Libby Spann in the Client Counseling National Finals. Tiffany Penner, Emory Powers and Piper Replogle advanced to the semifinal round of the NAAC National Finals.

Results were compiled from ABA law student competitions held throughout 2022, awarding the law school with the highest composite point total as Champion. Volunteer attorneys and sitting members of the bench joined as judges for the competitions.

The 2022 Community Service Day in September was an opportunity for the entering class at the University of Houston Law Center to bond with classmates, faculty and staff while participating in service projects.

Volunteers spent time at the Houston Food Bank packing boxes for the Senior Box Program, which provides meals to low-income seniors. The UH Law Center team packed 630 boxes, equaling more than 22,000 pounds of food and over 18,000 meals. Meals that will help improve the health and nutrition of seniors across the Houston community.

“Each year the Law Center encourages the entering class to volunteer. It is important for our students to learn about the needs of our community and get to know each other,” said Dean Leonard M. Baynes.

Lauren Simpson, University of Houston Law Center Clinical Associate Professor of Lawyering Skills and Strategies, also conducted a Community Service Day project with sorting, packaging and labeling native plant seeds from wildlife habitat gardens. These seeds will be available for free to all Law Center students, staff and faculty throughout the year at the Law Center Library.

Simpson has been selected by the Student Bar Association as the Outstanding Professor of the Year for the Law Center’s part-time program a record of five times. Outside of the classroom, Simpson has a passion for wildlife habitat gardening and pollinator conservation.

“We are very proud to have Professor Simpson on the Law Center faculty and appreciate her sharing her expertise with our volunteers. Many thanks to everyone for their time and support of these community service projects,” Baynes said.
HEAD OF THE USEA SAYS ENERGY TRANSITION IS NECESSARY BUT WILL TAKE TIME AT UH LAW CENTER’S 6TH ANNUAL NORTH AMERICAN EENER CONFERENCE

The global importance of addressing climate change and shift toward carbon neutrality are “never going to change,” said Sheila Hollis, Acting Executive Director of the United States Energy Association. But it’s “not an overnight job” either.

Hollis gave a multifaceted presentation on the state of energy around the globe as the keynote speaker at the UH Law Center’s 6th Annual North American Environment, Energy, & Natural Resources Conference in June.

Energy may be “much brighter and sunnier,” and greener by 2030, but it could be closer to 2050, Hollis estimated.

“It all takes time, money, and commitment” to close plants, improve existing plants, and build the new infrastructure necessary to serve renewables and the like, she said.

In her keynote address, Hollis discussed everything from global energy consumption and international gas prices to global coal trade and lithium reserves.

The virtual conference, “Staying Balanced in the Pivot: Legal Challenges of the Carbon Transition” was co-sponsored by Blank Rome LLP, the University of Calgary Law School, and the University of Houston’s Center for Global Law and Policy for the Americas.

2021 was the “fastest year-on-year growth since the 1970s” for renewable electricity generation, according to Hollis, with China “so far out in front” of other countries, accounting for almost half of the global increase in renewable electricity.

In the U.S., electricity generation in 2021 was a mix of natural gas (37%), coal (23%), renewables (21%), and nuclear (19%), according to data presented by Hollis from the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

Energy generation from renewables is projected to increase to 44% of total energy production by 2050, according to the EIA data, while natural gas and nuclear energy production are estimated to dip only slightly, to 34% and 12% of U.S. energy generation, respectively.

“No matter how much we want to go to a low carbon future, it’s difficult to initiate new nuclear plants and to keep existing ones licensed and going,” Hollis said.

Energy is an incredibly complex issue, as Hollis’ presentation showed, with many moving parts including production, generation, and consumption, not to mention the political and cultural climates that can each play a role in a project’s success or failure.

“Everything is dependent on energy, whether there’s a war or a lockdown on certain types of energy,” Hollis said. “This three-dimensional chess game is being played all over the world as to who gets the energy, and where does it come from.”

UH LAW CENTER’S JUVENILE AND CHILDREN’S ADVOCACY PROJECT AND CENTERPOINT ENERGY’S LEGAL DEPARTMENT JOIN FORCES ON A JUVENILE RECORD-SEALING INITIATIVE

The Juvenile and Children’s Advocacy Project (JCAP) at the University of Houston Law Center announced its first corporate partnership with CenterPoint Energy in January. CenterPoint Energy’s legal department, as well as outside counsel, are working with JCAP on a pro bono juvenile record-sealing program. The program’s goal is to improve the lives of young individuals so that they no longer encounter barriers when they apply to college, enlist in the military, obtain financial aid, secure housing, request other public benefits, or seek employment.

“As a leading advocate for juvenile justice in the Houston area, JCAP extends its gratitude to CenterPoint Energy for its incredible support of this critical work,” said Katya Dow, founder and legal programs director, JCAP and professor of practice.

CenterPoint Energy’s legal team includes attorneys Monica Karuturi, Shane Kimzey, Pooja Amin, John Price, Stephanie Bundage, Mickey Moon, Shannon Terry, Darrell Williams and several staff members who are providing pro bono juvenile record-sealing services for families in Harris County.

CenterPoint’s outside counsel, Cynthia Mabry and Rob Shearer of Akin Gump; Christy Ho, Brooksie Boutet, Xperanza Uviedo, Joel Montgomery, and Tien Hunter of Shipley Snell Montgomery; and Jim Barkley and Tyler Murray of Baker Botts are also providing support to represent juvenile clients referred by JCAP and Houston Volunteer Lawyers.

CenterPoint Energy’s legal department also provided funding for the development of education and outreach tools to enhance JCAP’s ability to increase its impact in the greater Houston area.
Clinical Supervising Attorney R. Parker Sheffy appeared before the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans on behalf of a University of Houston Law Center Immigration Clinic client last summer. The client, a victim of severe persecution in Uganda, was seeking asylum, withholding of removal, and protection under the Convention Against Torture. After a lengthy process before the administrative immigration system, the Clinic brought suit on behalf of the client to the federal court of appeals.

“The Clinic’s representation in this matter reflects our ongoing commitment to providing pro bono representation for individuals with complex federal litigation claims, and demonstrates the unique opportunities UHLC Immigration Clinic students have to litigate at the highest levels of our federal court system” Sheffy said.

The UHLC Immigration Clinic specializes in representing clients with wide-ranging immigration issues, including asylum on behalf of victims of torture and persecution who are fleeing civil war, genocide or political repression, immigrants who have been the victims of domestic violence, human trafficking and crime within the United States, unaccompanied children, among many others, including before both the U.S. immigration system and before U.S. federal courts.

“We are providing necessary expertise toward helping fulfill the overwhelming need for representation of foreign-born Houstonians before federal courts, representation that is extremely scarce for indigent individuals generally and otherwise functionally unavailable within Greater Houston,” Sheffy said.

The Immigration Clinic is preparing law students to be future immigration advocates by instilling a deep substantive knowledge of immigration law and processes, as well as how to be competent, ethical lawyers.
University of Houston Law Center alumna Nikita Westberg ’21 is currently working as a U.S. Air Force Judge Advocate at Luke Airforce Base in Arizona. She is Chief of Legal Assistance assisting active duty and retiree clients with legal questions, drafting wills and powers of attorney. Westberg was the first student to sign up for the Law Center’s Military Justice Clinic in 2020. The clinic provides law students with an opportunity, under the supervision of faculty and experienced military defense attorneys, to represent service members facing criminal charges. Students are assigned to defense teams and help lead clients from intake through adjudication of the case under terms of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Five of the clinic’s inaugural students have also been accepted into the JAG Corps.

“The clinic is a great way for students to show that they are serious about future service in the JAG Corps,” said Military Justice Clinic Adjunct Professor and Army Reserve Lieutenant Colonel Jason Marquez. “Receiving a commission is a highly competitive endeavor and having a track record of service to country and our service members is important on a candidate’s resume.”

Clinic students take three units, eight hours a week and clients are based all around the world. Marquez says that the remoteness of the pandemic really lent itself to the work they do in supporting service members abroad. That real-world training, working with clients in need, was what gave 1st Lt. Westberg a taste of the JAG Corps.

“The Military Justice Clinic was my first experience in defending people who had served,” said Westberg. “It’s protecting the rights of service members who are on trial and making sure that both sides follow the rules.”

“From day one, Nikita struck me as even tempered and extremely thoughtful,” said Marquez. “She took new students under her wing, helped them apply for jobs. She has a heart for serving others. Putting others before self is really what this is all about.”

There is a history of Naval Service in Westberg’s family with her father who is a veteran, and her sister who is currently serving. They were surprised and excited when Westberg followed in their footsteps. While Westberg did her undergrad in genetics, she had a strong desire to serve her country.

Westberg said she is grateful for that support and the guidance of Marquez. “Professor Marquez taught us the importance of having empathy in understanding that these are people, and you never really know what’s going on in their lives,” said Westberg. “He’s one of the best mentors I’ve ever had.”

The Military Justice Clinic was established when Marquez was on active duty and working with law students on a capital murder case. He saw firsthand how students could benefit from a defense team and learn a great deal from exposure to the military criminal justice system. The clinic takes between three and five students per semester.

Beginning this spring semester, criminal appeals will be added to the University of Houston Law Center clinic program. The Death Penalty & Criminal Appeal Clinic is spearheaded by Clinical Supervising Attorney Jeffrey R. Newberry as well as David R. Dow, Cullen Professor at UH Law Center and founder of the Texas Innocence Network, an organization that uses UH law students to investigate claims of actual innocence brought by Texas prisoners. Clinic students will explore the substantive law, investigative techniques and post-conviction appellate remedies applicable in capital and non-capital cases. Through this program, law students work on actual cases, and their coursework will be used as part of a defendant’s court filings.

With the addition of non-capital appeals, the clinic will expand its capacity and will take on cases in the Harris County Criminal Court District.

Students in the previous UHLC-based death penalty clinic, assisted in the representation of inmates facing execution. Capital case representation will continue as an integral part of the Death Penalty & Criminal Appeals Clinic.

For more than 20 years, Dow and his team have represented over 100 death row inmates at every stage of their state and federal appeals.
STUDENTS FROM MONTERREY VISIT UHLC AND EXPERIENCE INTENSE ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL LAW COURSE

Twenty students and a faculty member from the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León (UANL) in Monterrey, Mexico visited the University of Houston Law Center in August to participate in the 2nd International Energy and Environmental Law Summer Course. The two-week intensive summer course allowed students to study energy and environmental law and be introduced to multifaceted legal avenues. The course was taught by Professors Victor Flatt and Julian Cárdenas and faculty member Ricardo Colmener.

“The fields of law studied in Mexico at the bachelor’s degree level are not as specialized as the niche of energy law. However, after seeing energy law and environmental law in action, it is really amazing,” UANL bachelor’s student Frieda Arreola noted. “I am very thankful for being a part of this because I got to see a part of law that I didn’t know of.”

Since 2014, the Law Center has worked with UANL on international energy law and international dispute resolution education in the energy sector at the UANL LL.M. program. The EENR summer program provides students at the Bachelor in Laws degree level with a unique exchange program centered on international energy and environmental law and broadens their career opportunities.

“Being at UH and being in the Energy Capital of the World helped me learn where I want to focus my skills and what I want to learn,” Arreola said.

The first edition of the summer course took place in 2019. After Covid restrictions were lifted, the Law Center offered a second course where students were able to visit the Houston campus and gain hands-on experience in education and career development.

Students visited the General Consulate of Mexico in Houston, hosted by Consul Alicia G. Kerber and met with the International Arbitration Team of Locke Lord Houston Office, including Paul Neufeld, Enrique Jaramillo and Professor Ann Ryan Robertson. The class also visited the Houston Museum of Natural Sciences and participated in a final career panel on international law that was hosted at UH Law Center with panelists from the law firms Reed Smith and Eversheds Sutherland, including Danny Avila, Benjamin Antillón, Rodrigo González and Maria Cristina Ortegon.

“The University of Nuevo León puts in the effort to build relationships with UH and helps you to see how the law system works in the U.S., especially in Houston — the Energy Capital of the World,” Arreola said. “This allows you to see a lot of the culture and the field you are pursuing in unique ways.”

UH GLOBAL LAW AND POLICY FOR THE AMERICAS WEBINAR EXAMINES LESSONS FROM THE PANDEMIC

Legal scholars from around the world virtually convened with the University of Houston Law Center for a wide-reaching panel on “Global Challenges, Local Solutions: Supply Chains, Sustainability, and Governance,” offering insights and action steps to some of today’s pressing issues.

The event on March 10, 2022, was sponsored by UH Global Law and Policy for the Americas (GLPA), Houston Journal of International Law, and the University of Bologna Center for Latin American Studies as a follow-up discussion to last year’s GLPA six-part webinar series on Constitutionalism, Trade, Social Justice, and Sustainability in the Americas: Lessons from the 2020 Global Pandemic.

“We as a global community and as a country have faced many new challenges in dealing with the pandemic. There are many lessons to be learned around global health and its impact on other areas of law,” said Elizabeth Trujillo, the Mary Ann & Lawrence E. Faust Professor of Law at the UH Law Center and Founding Director of GLPA. Professor Trujillo stressed the need for closer examination of the intricate relationship between global and local policies in addressing these challenges so that solutions may be better coordinated among various levels of government world-wide.

“For this reason, GLPA has wanted to embark on this research on the lessons we can learn from the global pandemic for global governance and international law so we may better understand how to deal with future challenges like climate change, commerce and trade, human rights, and social justice.”
UH LAW CENTER ASSOCIATE DEAN TENNESSEE RECEIVES EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION AWARD

The Houston Lawyers Association named University of Houston Law Center Associate Dean Sondra Tennessee recipient of the 2022 Roberson L. King Award in May. The annual education award recognizes individuals who empower the community through education and service to today’s legal scholars and tomorrow’s legal icons. For more than 25 years, Tennessee has been an integral part of the Law Center. As the Associate Dean of Alumni and Community Relations, she leads the engagement efforts with alumni, businesses and the community. Tennessee also oversees career development and endowment and other named scholarship awards for the Law Center students.

Active in the legal education field, Tennessee has held leadership roles in several national organizations, including the Law School Admissions Council, where she was a former board member and past Diversity Committee chair. At the American Bar Association, Tennessee serves on the Commission on Lawyer Assistance, which seeks to improve mental health for lawyers, judges, and law students across the country.

“I was truly honored to receive Roberson King Award,” said Tennessee. “Working at the UH Law Center has given me the opportunity to support so many incredibly smart and talented students and alumni. It is exciting when your work is your passion. What is even more exciting is to be recognized for it. This award is a challenge to me to continue to work hard for not only the UH Law Center community, but the community at large.”

Founded in 1955, the Houston Lawyers Association was created at “a time when African American lawyers could not join the Houston Bar Association.” King, one of six founders of the HLA, helped establish its mission to ensure equality and excellence in the strive for justice. Honorees were recognized during the HLA Scholarship and Awards Gala held in May 14, 2022. □

UHLC APPELLATE CIVIL RIGHTS CLINIC FILES AN AMICUS BRIEF IN TRANSGENDER CARE CASE

The University of Houston Law Center’s Appellate Civil Rights Clinic joined the ACLU and ACLU of Texas, Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, and Baker Botts L.L.P. in supporting transgender teens litigating to block Texas from investigating parents who provide gender-affirming care.

The ACLU, Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, and Baker Botts L.L.P. are representing the plaintiffs in the case: a transgender child, their parents, and a clinical psychologist.

The UHLC Appellate Civil Rights Clinic is representing the Texas American Federation of Teachers, Association of Texas Professional Educators, Texas Classroom Teachers Association, Texas Association of Secondary School Principals, Texas Counseling Association, Texas School Nurses Organization and 13 individual Texas teachers.

The Appellate Civil Rights Clinic filed an amicus brief in August on behalf of the six statewide educational organizations in Doe v. Abbott before the Third Court of Appeals in Austin.

Under existing Texas law, educators who suspect child abuse must report it immediately to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. The clinic’s brief argued that this already- imprecise mandate will only cause confusion and misreporting if applied to gender-affirming care. Educators will also face conflicting state and federal legal requirements since various federal statutes protect minors with gender dysphoria, which is defined as distress resulting from an incongruence between one’s sex assigned at birth and one’s gender identity. Above all, the directive will compromise education by weakening the trust all students place in their teachers.

“Texas’ new directive places educators in an impossible position,” said Martin J. Siegel, Appellate Civil Rights Clinic Director. “Forcing them to turn in their own trans students as child abuse victims, and their parents as criminals, will damage the relationship teachers have built with their students, which can only impair learning.” □
The 2022 University of Houston Law Center Commencement ceremony was held at the Fertitta Center in May.

U.S. Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, U.S. Representative for Texas’ 18th Congressional District delivered a Certificate of Congressional Recognition which read in part, “I take great pride in recognizing University of Houston on the occasion of their Spring 2022 Commencement Ceremony. University of Houston’s unwavering contribution to our scholars, and community, reflects the strong pride that is the Spirit of Houston and the Great State of Texas.”

Also present were several judges, some of whom have served or currently serve as adjunct professors at the Law Center, including U.S. Magistrate Judge for the Southern District of Texas-Galveston Division Judge Andrew Edison, 281st Civil Court Judge Christine Weems, and former Professor and 387th District Court Judge Janet Heppard ’93.

University of Houston Vice Chancellor and Vice President for Governmental Relations Jason Smith and UH Law Alumni Association President Alex Roberts ’06 were also guests.

As 2022 marks the Law Center’s 75th Anniversary, Dean Leonard M. Baynes spoke about the changes that the law school has made along the way, especially to its student body.

“We have come a long way from our humble beginnings in converted World War II barracks with a graduating class of 28 white men,” UH Law Center Dean Leonard M. Baynes said in his opening remarks. “You were one of our most diverse classes, with 54% women and 36% of students from underrepresented backgrounds.”

The UH Law Center Class of 2022 speaks at least 23 languages other than English, and many are former teachers, professors, entrepreneurs and business owners. Several UH Law Center graduates have been an active part of the community, from political activism to social justice volunteer work.

Dianne Ralston, Chief Legal Officer and Corporate Secretary of Schlumberger Limited and 1994 Law Center graduate, gave the 2022 commencement address.

“You should be immensely proud of reaching today’s milestone against so many unique challenges. Your agility and resilience are truly inspiring,” Ralston said. “Take pride in what you have accomplished so far and let it fuel you for the next leg of what I know will be an incredible journey.”

“Your future success in a legal profession — whether in private or public service, whether in academia or the corporate arena — will require you to balance what will seem to be competing interests and priorities.”

J.D. and LL.M. graduates at the 2022 ceremony in May
University of Houston Law Center hosted three continuing legal education (CLE) events covering updates in the U.S. Supreme Court this fall semester. Beginning with “Abortion after Dobbs: The New Legal Battleground,” which examined the new landscape for abortion law in the United States. UHLC next evaluated “West Virginia v. EPA,” which analyzed the EPA’s new limitations to regulate greenhouse gas and finished the three-part series with “Law and Religion,” delving into the complexities of the First Amendment and religion.

Professors Emily Berman and Seth Chandler discussed abortion law changes after Dobbs v. Jackson. With Dobbs, the Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right to an abortion granted in Roe v. Wade and shifted the power back to the states to regulate.

The constitutional law experts noted that the checkerboard abortion regulations across the United States have created conflict between federal and state laws and uncertainty for the medical profession.

In a second session, environmental law professors gathered to discuss the EPA’s new limitations to regulate greenhouse gas. Moderated by Professor Tracy Hester, environmental scholars reviewed the West Virginia v. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) decision.

The panelists discussed what the court decision really means for greenhouse gas regulation going forward at any level, federal or state, and what the impacts could be for the regulation of other sectors.

The final Supreme Court CLE session focused on “Law and Religion.” The panel, moderated by Dean Leonard M. Baynes, included Professors Emran El-Badawi (UH Middle Eastern Studies), Seth Chandler (UH Law Center), Valorie Vojdik (University of Tennessee School of Law), Sam Levine (Fuchsberg Law Center) and Marc DeGirolami (St. John’s University School of Law).

The speakers discussed alternate perspectives on the Supreme Court’s evolving approach to the establishment clause and the freedom of religion. Centered around the First Amendment, which states that Congress is not to make any law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting its free exercise, the conversation delved into the political nature of the justices and the religious history of the United States.

An intellectual property law expert examined some consequences for trademark law dissociating the connection between reputation and quality during the 29th Annual Fall Lecture hosted by the University of Houston Law Center’s Institute for Intellectual Property & Information Law (IPIL) this November. The Fall Lecture is sponsored by the Houston Intellectual Property Law Association (HIPLA).

James Gibson, the Sesquicentennial Professor of Law at the University of Richmond School of Law, served as the lecture’s guest speaker with his presentation on “Uncoupling Trademark & Reputation” given at The Houston Club downtown.

As part of the talk, Gibson discussed how the quality of a company’s goods and services, as expressed by trademark law, is only one input into a company’s reputation. He cataloged the impacts of other reputational inputs such as product ratings, advertising, marketing and influencers, all of which are commonly used with increasing distortion.

Gibson, founder and former director of the University of Richmond Law School’s Intellectual Property Institute, is an accomplished scholar and is frequently quoted in the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, National Law Journal, Slate and Chronicle of Higher Education.
Judge Marcia A. Crone ’78 outlined the options, opportunities, and objectives defining the legal profession today, encouraging Law Center students and alumni to embrace personal and professional growth, diversity, and career opportunities at this year’s Justice Ruby Kless Sondock Jurist-in-Residence Lectureship.

Held on Feb. 11, 2022, the Jurist-in-Residence program allowed UH Law Center students, faculty, and the Houston legal community to learn in-person from a sitting judge. Crone currently serves as a federal district judge for the Eastern District of Texas where she oversees cases in the Beaumont and Lufkin divisions.

“We want to have more UH alumni as judges, and she is a role model for so many to make sure that happen,” UH Law Center Dean Leonard M. Baynes said.

“The University of Houston Law Center changed my life,” Crone said. “The opportunities afforded me here were unparalleled. The legal education I received on this campus enabled me to reach my objectives.”

As the UH Law Center “Continues to embrace diversity,” Crone encouraged listeners by detailing her own unique background.

She was raised in Dallas by her adopted parents, and only years down the road did she finally meet her birth mother and learn about her birth father.

Crone said that the process of learning about her family’s history taught her the truth of Ella Fitzgerald’s saying that “it isn’t where you came from, it’s where you’re going that counts.”

“We have more diverse judges, and I’ve seen a lot of litigants from all different backgrounds. I think it’s good,” Crone said. “When you have a certain background, that helps you have perspective on what your clients are going through.”

“No matter your background, obtaining a law degree offers outstanding opportunities for all,” she said.
The University of Houston Law Center celebrated 75 years of educating legal minds in 2022. It also entered a bold new chapter in August 2022 with the opening of its fourth home, The John M. O’Quinn Law Building.

The striking icon, features views of the Houston skyline, reflecting the Law Center’s prominence and dramatic progress from its humble beginnings.

1940s
In its infancy, the Law Center was first known as the University of Houston School of Law. It consisted of a converted World War II wood barracks on the north side of the UH campus under the deanship of A.A. White, a respected Dallas attorney. White was selected for the role in August 1947.

Accompanied by Edison E. Oberholtzer, UH’s first president, years later White remembered his first time viewing the facility.

“The first act I recall doing was to get mud out of my shoes,” he said. “President Oberholtzer and I had gotten mud over our shoe tops when we made our maiden voyage to give me, the newly employed dean, my first look at our law school quarters.”

Under challenging and unique circumstances, White’s words and expectations from that time can be applied to the Law Center’s limitless future in 2022 and beyond.

“It is seed–planting time,” White said. “A time for bending the twig, a time to dream dreams and to see visions.”

The school graduated its first class in 1950 — a group of 28 with each alumnus passing the bar exam on their attempt. White said of the cohort, “They were deadly serious about their education. A mere handful were the ‘law school,’ and they had a sense of making history.”
“We were the first class, and we wondered whether we were up with other law schools,” said class valedictorian Eugene J. Pitman ’50. “Three years later we took the bar. I finished second in the state. I thought that was a pretty good indication.”

The law school’s time in the barracks was short-lived. In the fall of 1950, instruction resumed in the basement of the M.D. Anderson Library. With air conditioning, improved lighting, and an increased capacity for classroom space and faculty offices, the relocation was considered a significant upgrade from the crowded barracks.

1950s
The law school was accredited in 1953. Following White’s resignation in 1956, Newell Blakely, the third full-time professor in the Law Center’s history became the school’s second dean. Lovingly referred to as “The Blake,” Blakely was frequently compared to Professor Kingsfield, a fictional contracts professor at Harvard Law School in the 1973 film “The Paper Chase.” Like White, Blakely’s emphasis was to add outstanding faculty. He urged faculty members to seek advanced degrees to enrich their backgrounds, and they began fanning out across the country for LL.M. degrees.

While viewed as an elite part of the University of Houston, Blakely was challenged by seeking the approval of the American Association of Law Schools, an effort that would stretch into the next decade and another dean’s tenure.

While Blakely and White fought battles for respect, the law school student body began taking on a life of its own. Graduates were spreading across the city and state, becoming judges, district attorneys, state representatives and corporate attorneys.

Blakely resigned as dean in 1965. He kept a prominent role at the law school in another capacity.

Continued on p. 20
EENR Professor Emerita Jacqueline Lang Weaver’s dynamic style engaged her students.

1960s

Until the 1960s, class sizes rarely had more than 50 students. By the late 1960s, class sizes soared to about 150 students. Once again, conditions became crowded, and the goal of the era became to build a new facility for the expanding law school.

At the time, President Lyndon B. Johnson had secured passage of the Higher Education Facilities Act (HEFA), which provided building funds to colleges, but not law schools. Neibel traveled to Washington D.C. to lobby for changing the bill to include law schools but was unsuccessful. Upon his return to Houston, he called Jack Valenti, a Houstonian who was serving as a special assistant in the Johnson administration.

“Valenti called President Johnson. Johnson called the Department of Education, and eight hours later the UH law school was the first in the country to receive a HEFA grant, doubling the building budget overnight,” Neibel recalled.

Groundbreaking began on the school’s third facility in 1969. That same year it was re-named the Bates College of Law after Col. William B. Bates, an attorney who was a former chairman of the University of Houston Board of Regents and the law school founding committee.

In addition to the facility, Neibel’s goal as dean was to expand the school’s reputation and attract faculty and students from across the country, a vision that would flower in the decades to come.

1970s

A booming legal market and a new facility ushered in a new era for the Bates College of Law to start in the 1970s. By the mid-70s classes swelled from about 150 students in size to 300. The period also represented a sea of change for the school in diversity. James M. Lemond, the school’s first African American, graduated in 1970. That same year, the Black Law Students Association, and a chapter of the Chicano Law Students Association — now known nationally as the

Continued on p. 22
Since the 2000s and beyond, the diversity of the Law Center’s student body has greatly increased.

Dean Leonard M. Baynes is the first African American dean in the Law Center’s history.

Law Center Alumna Ruby Kless Sondock made history as the first woman district court judge in Harris County and first woman to serve on the Texas Supreme Court.

Clinical Professor Geoffrey Hoffman and law students work on a case that went to the Supreme Court of the United States.

For nearly 30 years, consumer law Professor Emeritus Richard M. Alderman served the public by providing free legal education classes to the public through the People’s Law School.

Since the 2000s and beyond, the diversity of the Law Center’s student body has greatly increased.

The new John M. O’Quinn Law Building opened in August 2022.

“We have to be prepared for the next 75 years to make sure that we are equipped to teach the next generation of leaders.”

– UH Law Center Dean Leonard Baynes
In 1985, as an indicator of its growing stature, the Law Center became the 67th law school in the country to be awarded a chapter of the Order of the Coif, the oldest and most prestigious legal honorary society in the U.S. The honor is based on the excellence of faculty and students. By the end of the decade, the legal market had become saturated. However, the Law Center prepared students for the downturn with its specialized programs like intellectual property and health law. Many other enterprising graduates found a creative use for their J.D., as some alumni established executive search firms, dispute resolution centers and software companies.

1990s
Knauss resigned from his post in 1993. Stephen Zamora, a professor of international business and trade law who had served on the faculty for nearly 20 years, was his successor. Zamora marked the first Hispanic dean in the Law Center.

“When I arrived as a young professor in 1978, the law school already had a strong local reputation,” Zamora recalled. “But it evolved into an institution with a national reputation and influence. Founding Dean A.A. White and I shared one thing in common: We both have believed that the heart of an outstanding law school lies in its faculty.”

Zamora added, “White and the founders of the law school paved the way for the Law Center, a community that is larger than the sum of its parts, to continue to influence people’s lives profoundly, positively and with a touch of greatness.”

Zamora’s deanship gave the Law Center a global flair. An authority on international and Mexican law, Zamora was the founder of the Center for U.S. and Mexican Law. He also served as director of the North American Consortium on Legal Education.

“He was so supportive and a very good administrator,” said Sondra Tennessee, who serves as the associate dean for alumni and community relations. “The North American Consortium on Legal Education was a program that provided opportunities for students to study in either Mexico or a university in Canada. Likewise, students from Canada and Mexico could come to the Law Center.

“Creating those opportunities for students to learn more about the legal experience broadly in different countries — that really was something that Dean Zamora was interested in. He wanted to make sure that people didn’t only focus on the U.S. and that they focused globally. Their impact was broader than just here.”

Zamora’s time as dean ended in 2000, but he would teach at the Law Center for another 14 years.

2000s
Nancy B. Rapoport became dean in 2000, the first woman to hold the position in Law Center history. During her tenure, she orchestrated an impressive hiring program that added several excellent faculty members while significantly building both the Law Center’s endowment and operating gifts.

Rapoport was also at the helm of the successful, but arduous recovery from Tropical Storm Allison in 2001. The storm flooded substantial portions of the building and left the O’Quinn Law Library under 12 feet of water, destroying hundreds of thousands of volumes.

Professor Sandra Guerra Thompson, the Newell H. Blakely Chair, who...
Every student passed the bar exam in the first graduating class of 1950.

had been appointed associate dean for academic affairs six months prior, found herself on the front lines of the response to the natural disaster.

“We were about to start summer school,” Thompson recalled. “It was June 7, 2001. Back then, the part-time class started at the beginning of summer. We were about to welcome them for the first time, and we had no building to welcome them to. Apart from securing it and beginning the remediation, my role was to figure out where we were going to teach these classes.”

In addition to part-time courses beginning, there was also the matter of recent graduates preparing for the bar exam at the end of July. Law schools must certify J.D. recipients to sit for the exam, which requires an administrative process for each graduate.

“Certifying the students for the bar required going into the Law Center and getting into the files,” Thompson said. “Our staff was told they were not to enter that building because there were mold concerns. They could have just left the students hanging. But instead, they put on waders and brought flashlights. They went in there and got every student certified for the bar against the dean’s orders.”

Thompson also recalled the generosity of the local legal community who offered classroom space and other resources for displaced Law Center faculty and students.

“We will forever be grateful because they helped us to get through,” Thompson said. “That was really the story for me. We never went offline because our IT department is so great, and they also went in floodwaters to rescue the server. We never missed a day of instruction. Everything got rebuilt; the summer school kept going. It was because the school at the end of the day was not a building. It was the people and the community, and that is what sustained us.

“Years later when Katrina hit, we did the same thing for one of the New Orleans schools as well because we knew what they were going through.”

Rapoport would leave the Law Center in 2005, to be replaced by Raymond T. Nimmer in 2006, who was serving as interim dean at the time of her departure.

When a committee of alumni and faculty members dutifully completed their nationwide search, Nimmer’s name topped the list of nominees submitted to former UH Provost Donald Foss. Late in the spring semester, Foss seconded the committee’s motion — and made Nimmer the eighth permanent dean in the school’s history.

Nimmer was a recognized authority on commercial law, information law and intellectual property law, and was the Leonard H. Childs Professor of Law. He previously served as associate dean from 1978 to 1985 and as interim dean from 1993 to 1995. He also served as co-director of the Law Center’s Intellectual Property and Information Law Institute.

Nimmer’s time as dean was marked by increased faculty, revised curricula, improved rankings, international outreach, a tripling of scholarship funds and a revitalized alumni organization. Throughout his time on the Law Center faculty, he was a strong advocate for the Law Center’s premier student-produced publication, The Houston Law Review.

“I took the job for a simple reason: because I believe our school is on the cusp of greatness, and I want to help make it happen,” Nimmer said at the time of his hiring. “I’ve heard people criticized at other schools for

Continued on p. 25
DEANS THROUGH THE DECADES

From its inception in 1947, UH Law Center’s 9 deans have led the school to excellence.

Dean A.A. White
1947 – 1956

Dean Newell Blakely
1956 – 1965

Dean John Neibel
1965 – 1976

Dean George W. Hardy III
1976 – 1980

Dean Robert L. Knauss
1980 – 1993

Dean Stephen Zamora
1993 – 2000

Dean Nancy Rapoport
2000 – 2006

Dean Raymond T. Nimmer
2006 – 2013

Dean Leonard M. Baynes
2014 – Present
aiming too high. That’s a criticism I will willingly accept, because I think it’s important to constantly strive to improve your situation.”

2010s

Nimmer is remembered by some of his colleagues for his clairvoyance. In 2009, the Law Center’s entering class decreased by about 50 students. This proved to be significant when applications declined nationally in 2011, partly because of the Great Recession and the subprime mortgage crisis.

With the Law Center’s strengths in environment, energy and natural resources law, Nimmer helped establish a partnership with the University of Calgary Faculty of Law — the International Energy Lawyers Program. The program allows students to spend their law school experience in Calgary and at the Law Center and gives them the ability to earn a J.D. in Canada and the U.S.

“The vision has to be that we have large numbers of foreign lawyers coming here and our students and faculty going to schools in other countries,” Nimmer said.

Professor Emeritus Richard Alderman, who served as associate dean for academic affairs during Nimmer’s deanship, remembered Nimmer for his adaptability.

“With each changing direction, Ray succeeded,” Alderman said. “Ray knew only how to succeed. He was not your typical law professor, but Ray wasn’t a typical anything. Ray did what he wanted to do and seemed to always want to do something different.

“We often discussed various issues, and I was so impressed with his knowledge, his inquisitiveness and his quick comprehension of what we were looking at. His ability to quickly synthesize, organize, digest and coordinate information was astonishing.”

After a seven-year tenure, Nimmer resigned in 2013 and returned to the classroom.

Nimmer’s successor, Leonard M. Baynes, was announced as the ninth dean in Law Center history in April 2014. Baynes previously served as a professor at the St. John’s University School of Law and made Law Center history as the first dean of African American descent.

Among his first orders of business was establishing the award-winning Pre-Law Pipeline Program. The program is designed to increase diversity among law school applicants and to provide first-generation students from low-income and underrepresented backgrounds an opportunity to seriously consider a legal education. Since its inception, it has grown in class size and stature and has produced law school graduates at the Law Center and other law schools around the nation.

He instituted a voluntary Community Service Day during which incoming first-year students, faculty and staff fan out across the city to work on public service projects. He also has increased the number of scholarships and opportunities for students to serve in school-funded, public service internships at home and abroad.

Baynes’ deanship also accomplished a decades-long goal for the Law Center community by delivering a new state-of-the-art facility. A recurring theme throughout Baynes’ deanship has been, “a world-class law school in a world-class city requires a world-class building.”

The Law Center complex never fully recovered from the severe flooding in 2001, and more recent severe weather events such as Hurricane Ike in 2008, Hurricane Harvey in 2017 and numerous other instances of flooding underscored the facility’s vulnerability.

In 2018, the “More than Bricks” building campaign was established, with the first phase of its fundraising goal being $10 million. Enthused by the prospects of an upgraded facility, Law Center alumni quickly helped the school reach that milestone in January 2019. By October 2019, $78 million had been raised toward the approximately $93 million facility thanks to the Texas Legislature and support from the UH administration.

Raising the final funds would come from one of the Law Center’s most ardent and successful alumni — John M. O’Quinn, a 1967 graduate. O’Quinn passed away in 2009, but the foundation bearing his name would help the Law Center cross a meaningful finish line.

An accomplished attorney and philanthropist, O’Quinn’s generosity was not confined to just the Law Center, as his support can be found across the UH campus.

“John O’Quinn was an exceptionally talented lawyer and a very passionate alum. During our several conversations, he expressed his commitment to raising the rankings of the Law Center by building a new home for it,” said Renu Khator, president of the University of Houston. “He had already been a generous donor to both the Law Center and UH Athletics, and it gives me special joy to know that the new law building will carry his name.”

“John M. O’Quinn arose from humble beginnings, and through the power of his UH legal education, he became one of the nation’s top trial lawyers, winning more than $21 billion for his clients,” Baynes added. “During his life, he routinely gave back to the Houston community by supporting education, hospitals and programs that enrich the lives of underserved communities. Having his name permanently on our new building will inspire our students that they too can overcome their life circumstances, be outstanding trial lawyers and give back to their communities.”

2020s

Throughout Baynes’ deanship, his signature mantra has been, “The Power of a Legal Education.”

“The power of a legal education is learning to think like a lawyer,” Baynes said. “This means that you learn to write precisely, analyze rigorously, advocate persuasively and uphold the highest standards of professional conduct. A UH Law Center education empowers graduates to secure justice for clients, advocate for those in need and help set right some societal wrongs.”

As the Law Center turns 75 and celebrates a new facility, Baynes believes that while the school has made a multitude of accomplishments and progress, some things have not changed.

“The school remains very much the same,” Baynes said. “We have the same values. We have the same interests and want to be the best we can be. This law school makes a difference in changing students’ lives, and it has done this since its inception 75 years ago.”

“The students today share the same story. They’re here to improve their lot in life. They’re here to make a difference and find justice for their clients. It’s the story of the University of Houston Law Center.”
After decades of dreaming of a modern, all-above-ground facility, the University of Houston Law Center celebrated the culmination of tremendous efforts to bring the John M. O’Quinn Law Building into reality with two celebration events in September.

University of Houston and UH Law Center leaders, alumni, government officials and others involved in the building project gathered Thursday evening, Sept. 22 for the ribbon-cutting of the new nearly $93 million, 180,000-square-foot building on the University of Houston campus.

University of Houston Law Center Dean Leonard M. Baynes welcomed guests to the momentous occasion by noting that “This university encourages us to dare to dream.”

Baynes reminded attendees that it was the collective commitments and philanthropy of UH Law Center donors, alumni, faculty, students, staff, UH leadership and members of the legislature that brought this building to life.

Founded in 1947, the UH Law Center has a growing network of more than 17,000 alumni worldwide. Today, the UH Law Center is among the top-tier law schools in the nation with three specialty law programs (intellectual property, health law and part-time) ranked in the Top 10 nationally by the U.S. News & World Report.

“The Law Center stands on the excellence of the foundation built over the years. Now that excellence has found a fitting home. Let’s focus on what is next for the Law Center because our golden days are still ahead of us,” said Renu Khator, University of Houston President.

In addition to the J.D. and LL.M. degree programs, the UH Law Center houses nationally recognized clinics, specialty institutes, pre-law pipeline initiatives and career services.

The ribbon-cutting was followed by a Celebration and Dedication Conference on Friday, Sept. 23 with some of the most notable names...
in bar association leadership, the judiciary, law firms, legal employers and academia joining the University of Houston Law Center to commemorate the opening of the new building.

Remarking on the achievements of the UH Law Center, Dr. Robert H. McPherson, Interim Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost for the University of Houston said, “The John M. O’Quinn Law Building is a magnificent addition to campus and continues a tradition of excellence that began 75 years ago when the UH Law Center was founded. I’ve long said that this outstanding law school is a crown jewel at the University of Houston. Now, that jewel’s value is enhanced for students, our institution and the state of Texas.”

Alex B. Roberts ’06, President of the University of Houston Law Alumni Association, noted the transformational change of having a new building, which was designed by the women-owned architectural firm, Shepley Bulfinch and constructed by Austin Commercial.
Erwin Chemerinsky, President of the Association of American Law Schools, Dean and the Jesse H. Choper Distinguished Professor at UC Berkeley School of Law was the luncheon speaker focusing on the turbulent state of U.S. democracy during the University of Houston Law Center’s new John M. O’Quinn Law Building and Dedication Conference in September.

“No form of government lasts forever. Democracies are there until they are not,” Chemerinsky said to the conference’s gathering of lawyers, academics, alumni and law students.

Chemerinsky focused his remarks on three key points: the evidence that our democracy is in crisis, the structural problems embedded in the original drafting of the constitution in 1787 and how law schools and legal academics can address this crisis.

Evidence that our democracy is in crisis, Chemerinsky noted, was the low public confidence in the U.S. government, including the President, Congress and the U.S. Supreme Court.

Chemerinsky said the choices made in 1787 as to slavery and race gave the United States “bad bones for the government that followed.”

The role academia can play in promoting democracy is twofold. First, the research centers at law schools are key to bringing people together to discuss the issues. Second, law schools exist to train future lawyers who can make tremendous advances in the quality of the legal system during their careers.

Chemerinsky’s advised law students to “fight harder, fight better than we ever have before” to make a difference.

“There is a crisis of democracy, but it is not irreparable. It is up to all of us, law professors, lawyers, law students and all of society to work to find a solution,” Chemerinsky said.

President of the American Bar Association Deborah Enix-Ross served as the closing speaker and reemphasized the role of legal professionals in promoting democracy.

“Lawyers are uniquely positioned to make a difference, and we must lead the way in promoting civic civility and collaboration,” said Enix-Ross.

Enix-Ross also noted that students play an important part in our community. “The Law Center has one of the highest percentages of ABA law student members in the country. Law students are well positioned for not just a career in the law but a calling to improve our world and bring justice and freedom to more people.”

The conference’s theme, “Legal Education and the Legal Profession in Promoting Democracy and Community in the 21st Century,” was discussed from different perspectives across the bar, the judiciary, law firms and legal employers.
The ultramodern nearly $93 million John M. O’Quinn Law Building was designed by the women-owned architecture firm, Shepley Bulfinch. The five-story, cantilevered building has dedicated spaces for instruction, research, legal clinics and events. At approximately 180,000 square feet, the facility includes a multi-level library, a meditation room, a courtroom, commuter showers with changing rooms, an outdoor terrace, student lounges, an advocacy skills lab and a convenience store.
Laura Oren ’80, University of Houston Law Center Professor Emerita and alumna, presented at a commemoration event on Thursday, Nov. 17 for the 1977 National Women’s Conference in Houston.

Oren, a former president and co-founder of the Houston Area Feminist Federal Credit Union, attended the 1977 event and represented the credit union with a table in the exhibit hall at the conference.

“At a time when single women and married women both often were denied their own credit, HAFFCU was an integral part of the thriving feminist environment in Houston,” said Oren. “A typical credit union is based on a common bond usually with an employer or a union. What was innovative about the HAFFCU is that we established that members of feminist organizations shared a common bond in the belief of equality.”

More than 2,000 delegates from 50 states and six territories gathered in Houston for the historic conference, which was “the largest political conference of women in the United States since the Women’s Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848,” according to The Heritage Society.

Hosted in Houston, the 1977 conference was the U.S. component to the United Nations’ International Women’s Year official conference held in Mexico City in 1975.

Oren joined a prominent panel of presenters, including Nancy Beck Young and Leandra Zarnow, co-directors of the University of Houston’s Sharing Stories from 1977, an ongoing oral history project to document the conference.

“The University of Houston will be discussing campus connections to this storied conference, and students will be conducting interviews of the 1977 conference attendees,” The Heritage Society’s executive director, Alison Bell said in a press release.

The 45th anniversary event was hosted by former Mayor Annise Parker, The Heritage Society and the Houston Suffragists Project.

The Association of American Law Schools’ Alternative Dispute Resolution Section selected for its 2021 Article of the Year the paper “Perceptions of Settlement.” The paper was co-written by University of Houston Law Center Assistant Professor Jessica Bregant and University of Illinois College of Law Professors Jennifer Robbennolt and Verity Winship.

Using survey and experimental methods from psychology, the article explores public perceptions of settlement compared to other case outcomes such as jury verdict.

“Settlement is by far the most common outcome of legal disputes, but little is known about how the public thinks about settlement or what they infer about a dispute that has been settled,” said Bregant.

This article, which is the first piece of an ongoing project, examines one aspect of lay perspectives — inferences about responsibility.

“We find that people think settling defendants are just as likely to be culpable as defendants who lose at trial, even when no information about the settlement is provided. As important as that finding is by itself, it represents just the beginning of this project, and we’re thrilled that our colleagues are as excited about the work as we are,” added Bregant.

The paper was also published in the Fall 2021 volume of the Harvard Negotiation Law Review.
The University of Houston Law Center held its annual Dean’s Awards Ceremony in April to recognize the achievements of law faculty, students and staff. The event was held virtually and was co-hosted by UH Law Center Dean Leonard M. Baynes and Associate Dean of Law Alumni and Community Relations Sondra Tennessee.

“We are very proud of your accomplishments and want to congratulate all of you because you make us who we are,” Baynes said. “We are here to educate the next generation of attorneys and to make sure that they have the skillsets to do well in their careers; our Law Center does an excellent job of doing that.

“I congratulate our faculty; they are top notch, and many are published in the Top 30 Law Reviews; They are also compassionate, talented, multiple award-winning individuals, and I congratulate our staff for making the Law Center operation run efficiently and effectively. Without our staff, the Law Center would not be able to accomplish anything.” I congratulate the student award winners for their exceptional academic performance.

LEX Awards recognized students who ranked highest in courses that included Constitutional Law, Contracts, Procedure, Property, Torts, Lawyering Skills and Strategies and Intro to American Law.


Awards were also garnered by students for receiving top grades, engaging in successful interviews, volunteerism and extracurricular activities, and writing compelling seminar papers.

Five distinguished law faculty and staff awards included:

• 2022 Ethel M. Baker Faculty Award: Professor of Practice Ryan M. Marquez

• 2022 Staff Award: Assistant to the Dean Luana Gearing, Executive Administrative Assistant T. Michelle Spencer

• 2022 Order of the Barons Professor of the Year: Sapna Kumar, Professor of Law, John Mixon Chair and Co-Director for the Institute for Intellectual Property and Information Law

• 2022 Student Bar Association Professor of the Year – Full-Time: Meredith Duncan, Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Metropolitan Programs and Alumnae College Professor of Law

• 2022 Student Bar Association Professor of the Year – Part-Time: Clinical Associate Professor in Lawyering Skills & Strategies Lauren Jansen Simpson
UHLC PROFESSOR VALERIE GUTMANN KOCH NAMED 2022 HEALTH LAW SCHOLAR

University of Houston Law Center Assistant Professor Valerie Gutmann Koch was named a 2022 Health Law Scholar by the American Society of Law, Medicine and Ethics and the Center for Health Law Studies at Saint Louis University.

“I am thrilled to be able to workshop this project with a wonderful community of scholars, and I am grateful for the opportunity to join this community of current and past Health Law Scholars,” Koch said. Each year four scholars across the nation are selected to participate in a workshop, which provides a forum to discuss in-progress scholarly research on health law or bioethics literature with a panel of experts.

Koch is co-director of the UH Law Center’s Health Law & Policy Institute, a leading health law program at the forefront of legal education and health care policy analysis. During the last 20 years, HLPI has had more scholars selected for this prestigious workshop than any other health law program in the country. Koch joins UHLC’s previous honorees Leah Fowler (2021), Jessica Mantel (2014), Jessica Roberts (2010) and former faculty member Barbara Evans (2007).

UH LAW CENTER HEALTH LAW PROFESSOR FOWLER EXAMINES FEMTECH PRIVACY ISSUES SURFACING POST-DOBBS

Roe v. Wade’s reversal, by way of the Supreme Court’s Dobbs decision, inadvertently drew attention to the work of consumer health technology researcher Leah Fowler, Research Assistant Professor at the University of Houston Law Center’s Health Law & Policy Institute.

“I’m really interested about where consumer health technologies we use every day intersect with the law,” said Fowler. “There’s a breakdown in how people understand their rights and what their rights actually are.”

Specifically, Fowler’s research examines the accuracy, efficacy and privacy of healthcare technology — including femtech tools such as period and fertility tracking apps. Femtech products are defined as a category of consumer technologies that address an array of “female” health needs.

Fowler’s expertise on this front has been much sought after following the June Supreme Court decision that prompted widespread concerns about the security and privacy of femtech. For instance, following the Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization ruling, calls for users to delete their femtech apps started popping up across the internet.

Period and fertility tracking apps hold some of the most “wildly intimate” information about the human body, according to Fowler, from the date of a user’s last menstrual cycle to an ovulation window, even including further details that could point to a potential or past pregnancy. In the wrong hands, some advocates say this information could be used against consumers, especially in regions where individuals aiding or performing abortions have the potential to be sued by private citizens.

Fowler’s forthcoming work “Femtechnodystopia,” in partnership with Michael R. Ulrich of Boston University School of Public Health, concentrates precisely on this intersection, imagining a multifaceted approach to safeguarding the benefits of femtech from the potential harms in a post-Roe world.

While Fowler’s scope of research extends beyond the femtech realm, she said that this subset of healthcare technologies may be garnering more attention because they “[make] concrete a lot of the issues that are common across health technology.”

So, is it time to delete femtech apps? Not necessarily. It depends on the product, Fowler said, adding that she hesitates to advise people to delete an app they find useful, “especially in the absence of evidence these are being currently used to prosecute people.”

Generally, it can be more helpful to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of “how much utility does this product give you versus what are you willing to give up in exchange for it.” Additionally, Fowler recommends checking privacy policies for phrases like “does not engage in third-party sharing” or “data stored on device” instead of in a cloud.

“Whatever calculus you’re making for a period and fertility tracking app, take that same type of analysis to other apps you download to your phone and every other type of technology you use,” Fowler said.
TWO UHLC PROFESSORS’ RESEARCH RECOGNIZED BY PEER-REVIEW SITE JOTWELL

Legal website Jotwell featured publications by the University of Houston Law Professors Kellen Zale and Victor Flatt this fall. Jotwell is a publication that provides space for legal academics to identify, celebrate and discuss the best and latest legal scholarship.

Professor Zale’s research titled “The Anti-Tenancy Doctrine,” written with Professor Sarah Schindler from the University of Denver Sturm College of Law, focuses on how the law has failed renters. The paper was reviewed by Professor Serena M. Williams from Delaware Law School.

“Their article surveys various areas of the law that differentiate between a renter and a homeowner when determining a party’s legal rights,” wrote Williams in the review. “Those differences are often made without any consideration of whether a distinction should exist, leading to anti-tenancy bias.”

Williams noted that Professor Schindler and Professor Zale identified five distinct causes for why renters and owners are treated differently: classism, racism, consumerism, NIMBYism and the influence of classical liberalism.

The article finishes, Williams added, by inviting a conversation around responding to anti-tenancy and offering suggestions for future scholarship on Anti-Tenancy Doctrine.

“For many, homeownership is not an option. Thus, we will need to shift our thinking about rentership, and homeownership to ensure that housing status is not the determinant of legal rights,” wrote Williams.

Professor Flatt’s article titled “Disclosing the Danger: State Attorney Ethics Rules Meet Climate Change” about the intersection of scientific and legal ethics was reviewed by Professor Laurel Terry from Pennsylvania State University’s Dickinson Law School.

“The strengths of this article include its easy-to-understand summary of national and intergovernmental climate change reports and its use of two fact patterns to anchor the legal ethics discussion,” wrote Terry in the review.

By the end of the review, Terry emphasized the importance of climate change for the legal community, “The time has come for all lawyers to consider not only how climate change might affect their personal lives, but how it could affect their professional lives and lawyer regulation.”

UH LAW CENTER PROFESSOR SAYS LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS SHOULD FACE CRIMINAL PENALTIES FOR ‘POLICE BYSTANDERISM’

While the U.S. Department of Justice this year updated its policy requiring federal officers to intervene if colleagues are using excessive force, Zachary D. Kaufman, an associate professor of law and political science and co-director of the Criminal Justice Institute at the University of Houston Law Center, argues that this “necessary, overdue initiative … doesn’t go far enough.”

In a forthcoming law review article on police bystanderism titled “Police Policing Police,” Kaufman states that the “police killings of George Floyd and at least 1,930 other Black Americans since 2015 amplified a racial reckoning and intensified demands for meaningful, overdue police reform.”

The DOJ policy, which took effect July 19, is the first time in 18 years that the federal use-of-force policy has been updated. However, as Kaufman emphasized in a June op-ed in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the directive falls short in multiple ways. Among other things, it applies only to federal law enforcement, not the employees of the more the 18,000 state and local police departments across the United States.

Many high-profile cases of misuse of police force have involved such non-federal officers. Through his research, Kaufman found that more than half of U.S. states have no law mandating an officer’s duty to intervene. In the appendix to that article, Kaufman presents a model statute that legislatures could enact or use as a basis for strengthening their existing laws.

“I propose that Congress and all state legislatures enact criminal laws mandating police peer intervention,” Kaufman writes. “Introducing criminal liability for inaction could prod officers to stop their peers’ serious misconduct and promote accountability for those officers who remain bystanders.”

Another deficiency of the DOJ policy, Kaufman argues, is that it is less effective than a law would be. Kaufman notes that the Minneapolis Police Department had an officer duty to intervene policy in place when three police officers stood by while fellow officer Derek Chauvin killed George Floyd.

“We need an external check on police through criminal prosecution and punishment,” Kaufman argues. “Given the scourge of police misuse of force in the United States, a legally enforceable officer duty to intervene should be universal.”

Kaufman’s scholarly research on bystanders and upstanders earned support from the University of Houston’s Provost’s 50-in-5 Award in 2019 and the Small Grants Program in 2022. He is writing a series of articles, essays and op-eds about bystanders and upstanders that will culminate in his next book, tentatively titled “The Law of Politics of Bystanders and Upstanders,” under contract with Cambridge University Press.
CONNOR THOMPSON NAMED NEW EENR RESEARCH SCHOLAR, BRINGS GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE SECTOR EXPERTISE

Connor A. Thompson, a seasoned researcher specifically in energy, oil and gas, and utility law, joined the University of Houston Law Center’s Environment, Energy, and Natural Resources Center (EENR) as a research scholar. Thompson assumed his role in early January and is a graduate of the University of Wyoming School of Law, where he focused his studies on oil and gas law, environmental law and water law and was named the Salt Creek Scholar in 2019. While at the University of Wyoming, Thompson externed for the Honorable Alan B. Johnson at the U.S. District Court for the District of Wyoming and interned at the Wyoming Attorney General’s Office.

“I grew up in Wyoming, where the energy industry and enjoyment of the outdoors are two major components to everyday life,” Thompson said. “These two components played a critical role in shaping me as an individual.”

After graduation and before taking this new position, Thompson worked in private practice assisting government entities and private sector parties in understanding and managing rules and regulations involving carbon management.

“This position was created in order to facilitate EENR legal research connected with the new Carbon Management Center at the University of Houston,” said Professor Victor Flatt, Faculty Co-Director of EENR. “Connor’s experience makes him an excellent fit for the position.”

Thompson previously worked for Smithyman & Zakoura, Chartered, a boutique firm specializing in energy and utility law in Overland Park, Kansas. His work at the firm involved representing clients in oil and gas lease disputes as well as matters involving natural gas and electric service. This involved work in the courts, Kansas Corporation Commission and the legislature.

When it comes to his goals in his new role, Thompson hopes to provide valuable research to advance the development, commercialization and implementation of carbon capture, utilization and storage technology throughout the United States.

“I am most looking forward to working in an exciting and rapidly evolving area of the law, which increasingly is impacting many diverse areas of the economy and is garnering attention nationally and globally from the public, governments and industry,” Thompson said.

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON LAW CENTER NAMES PROFESSOR JULIAN CARDENAS AS THE DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR U.S. AND MEXICAN LAW

Research Assistant Professor Julian Cardenas was appointed this fall as the Director of the Center for U.S. and Mexican Law at the University of Houston Law Center.

The Center for U.S. and Mexican Law, established in 2012, is the first independent research center in the United States dedicated to the study of Mexican law and legal aspects of U.S.-Mexico relations.

“I am delighted that Professor Cardenas has agreed to take on the directorship of UH Law’s Center for U.S. and Mexican Law. Texas is a border state, and our nation’s relationship with Mexico is crucial to both countries’ mutual success. The law faculty, lawyers and law students will benefit from learning and understanding each other’s laws. The Center is designed to facilitate understanding and comity in the legal community on both sides of the border. Professor Cardenas has the educational background, skill set and temperament to move the Center for U.S. Mexican Law forward to new heights,” said Leonard M. Baynes, Dean of the UH Law Center.

“I receive this appointment with great honor. It represents an extraordinary opportunity to continue the long-standing contribution of the Center to students, academics, practitioners and institutions involved in the bilateral relations between the U.S. and Mexico,” said Cardenas.

Founded by the late UH Law Center Professor Stephen Zamora, the Center for U.S. and Mexican Law provides cross-border education and critical study of legal aspects of U.S.-Mexico relations. Current matters of relevance include immigration, energy transactions, international trade, labor and health regulation.

“The Center covers a broad variety of regulatory topics, however, during 2023 and 2024, a review and assessment of the Mexican Energy Reform would be fundamental, after a decade of the return of U.S. investments in the power and hydrocarbons sector in Mexico,” emphasized Cardenas.

Based in Houston, a gateway between the two countries, the Center for U.S. and Mexican Law collaborates with multiple prestigious Mexican institutions including the National Hydrocarbons Commission and PEMEX. One of the Law Center’s longest partnerships is a unique 30-year relationship with the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The UH Law Center provides scholarships each year toward LL.M. degrees for Mexican Foreign Ministry Scholars and in turn UH Law Center students serve as summer interns at the Office of the Legal Adviser in México City.

As the director, Cardenas will work with UH Law Center Dean Leonard M. Baynes and Karen Jones, the Executive Director of UH Law’s Global and Graduate Programs. The goal is to extend the Law Center’s footprint in Latin America by providing educational and training opportunities for legal professionals. In addition, Cardenas will continue to teach courses at the UH Law Center in the areas of transnational energy transactions and arbitration.
University of Houston Law Center alumni Jaime E. Esparza ’83 and Alamdar S. Hamdani ’99 were nominated by President Joe Biden to serve as United States Attorneys in the Western and Southern Districts of Texas respectively.

Esparza and Hamdani are among several recent judicial and Department of Justice nominations announced by the Biden-Harris administration on Friday, Oct. 14.

The White House stated in a release that the “individuals were chosen for their devotion to enforcing the law, their professionalism, their experience and credentials, their dedication to pursuing equal justice for all, and their commitment to the independence of the Department of Justice.”

Hamdani, who was sworn into office in December, will be the first Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) to serve as a U.S. attorney in the state of Texas, according to an announcement from the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association.

Since 2014, Hamdani has served as an Assistant United States Attorney in the United States Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of Texas, where he focuses on international and domestic terrorism matters. The SDTX headquarters are in Houston with branch offices in Galveston, Corpus Christi, Brownsville, McAllen, Laredo and Victoria.

For the last six years, Hamdani has taught a course on terrorism and law as an adjunct professor at the University of Houston Law Center. Hamdani received his J.D. from the University of Houston Law Center in 1999 and his B.B.A. from The University of Texas at Austin in 1993.

Esparza, who also took the oath of office in December, now serves as the top federal prosecutor for the Western District of Texas, which has headquarters in San Antonio with additional offices in Austin, El Paso, Del Rio, Midland, Waco and Alpine/Pecos.

From 1993 to 2020, Esparza served as a District Attorney for the 34th Judicial District of Texas located in El Paso. He received his J.D. from the University of Houston Law Center in 1983 and a B.B.A. from the University of Texas at Austin in 1979.

University of Houston Law Center alumnus Jim M. Perdue Sr. was celebrated as one of the best trial attorneys in the country as a 2022 inductee into the Trial Lawyer Hall of Fame. The event honoring legendary trial lawyers was held in Las Vegas on April 6.

The hall of fame is located within the Temple University James E. Beasley School of Law in Philadelphia. Perdue has contributed to the legal profession for nearly six decades as a lawyer and adjunct professor at UH Law Center.

“Joining the short list of legendary trial lawyers in the Hall of Fame is personally humbling, but more importantly, it affirms that our university and law school is achieving the recognition it has long deserved. Any honors bestowed on me belong to the institution that gave a poor boy, from a hardscrabble neighborhood on the ship channel, the foundation in education, discipline and drive to excel and succeed,” said Perdue.

Forbes magazine named Perdue the “King of the Malpractice Lawyers” in 1989, and over the span of his career, he has tried over 200 jury trials, lectured around the country, and delivered more than 400 presentations on varied topics such as the psychology of jury persuasion, special issue submission, substantive law of malpractice and product liability, and trial strategy and technique.

Perdue is an enthusiastic proponent of UHLC and the University of Houston as a whole. His course on the art of storytelling in the courtroom remains a favorite among students and alumni.

Working alongside his son, Jim M. Perdue Jr., ’93 at Perdue & Kidd, he is also a dedicated supporter of the Blakely Advocacy Institute and member of the Inner Circle of Advocates, as well as a diplomate of both the American Board of Trial Advocacy and the American Board of Professional Liability Attorneys.
Charles "Al" Hammaker is serving a two-year term on to the Galveston County Water Control & Improvement District No. 12 (GCWCID 12) Board of Directors. His role will be to evaluate and assist in administration and operation of the district’s water supply.

“I received a request from the president of the board to replace a director who had resigned from the board,” Hammaker said. “The president felt the board needed a representative from Clear Lake Shores, and he wanted that to be me.”

A 1986 graduate of the Law Center, Hammaker began his legal career with the midsized firm Hutcheson & Grundy. Merging with Gardere Wynne Sewell LLP, Hammaker rose to partner and remained in position until 2004 before joining a small boutique law firm specializing in securities law that has since been taken over by the national firm Bressler, Amery & Ross, P.C. where he focuses primarily on securities arbitration through the Federal Industry Regulatory Authority as well as various litigation.

Selected to serve as one of five board members to provide direction and guidance in wastewater resolution, water conservation and legal responsibilities, Hammaker’s term officially began on February 14, 2022, and he hit the ground running, addressing district challenges with unique approaches and ways of resolution and prevention.

“The normal consumer only really sees the water and sewage bill … but it is a lot more involved than that,” Hammaker said. “You have to supply potable water to everyone on a 24/7 basis.

“We provide drinkable water, proper sewage and also handle drainage within our boundaries, even overseeing the fire department in Kemah, handling their contracts for purchase of fire vehicles and monitoring response time.”

GCWCID 12 also issues bonds secured by tax revenue, incurs debt, levies taxes, obtains easements and exercises eminent domain when necessary, and Hammaker works through the board to prepare the district for disasters, currently working to provide generators that will survive freezes, proper water connections and necessary water management for industrial buildings and apartment complexes.

“Our district covers 1,200 acres of land and includes all or portions of the cities of Kemah and Clear Lake Shores and a lot of unincorporated areas,” Hammaker said. “In short, we supply and store water for domestic, commercial and industrial uses and oversee the operation of the sanitary system.”

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STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP NAMED IN HONOR OF UH LAW CENTER ALUMNUS MUHAMMAD AZIZ ’04

University of Houston Law Center alumnus Muhammad “Mo” Aziz ’04 and his wife Erin established a second scholarship that will provide full tuition to a deserving UH Law Center student.

Aziz announced the start of the scholarship during the 45th Annual UH Law Gala celebration in May 2022 saying, “I am proud of my UHLC degree, my career accomplishments, and hope to make these dreams possible for those behind me, too.”

A partner at Abraham, Watkins, Nichols, Agosto, Aziz & Stogner since 2006 and a highly accomplished attorney, Aziz was recognized last year by Texas Lawyer Magazine as the “Attorney of the Year” in their 2021 Texas Legal Excellence Awards which honor legal careers impacting the Texas legal profession.

“This award is different than other achievements,” Aziz said. “It is actually from your peers, and I am very surprised to be chosen.”

Aziz currently represents over 5,000 veterans and active service members in the 3M Combat Arms Earplug Products Liability Litigation, victims of the 2021 Astroworld festival tragedy, injured workers of the 2021 LyondellBasell chemical plant explosion, and several dozen first responders injured in the 2017 Arkema Chemical Plant explosion. He is Liaison Counsel on the Plaintiffs’ Steering Committee In Re: January 24th Explosion Litigation as a result of the 2020 explosion at Watson Grinding & Manufacturing. Aziz was also appointed as the Plaintiffs’ Liaison Counsel in the Westlake Chemical Litigation as a result of explosions that occurred in 2021 and 2022.

Aziz was regaled for his success in representing over 1,300 victims and survivors in the One October Las Vegas Shooting Litigation, which resulted in a global settlement of over $800 million.

“I am very passionate about my work,” Aziz said. “The heart and effort I put into it is very rewarding, and helping my client is what really drives me.”

His catastrophic personal injury cases include product liability, refinery/chemical plant explosions, commercial vehicle accidents, construction accidents, and wrongful death. Aziz’s caseload is diverse and often high-profile due to client appreciation and legal success.

“I am honored, surprised, and humbled to have been selected by fellow attorneys,” Aziz stated. “A lot of good lawyers that I have looked up to in my career have earned this, and it means a lot for me to be chosen as well.”

Board certified in Personal Injury Trial Law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization, Aziz has secured over $800 million in settlements and verdicts during his time at the firm, expanding his practice to include multi-district litigation, representing clients nationwide in claims against major corporations.

“The firm gives me a platform to do things I wouldn’t have been able to do on my own,” Aziz said. “It presents me with unique opportunities to get involved with both local and national recognition, prompting me to expand my horizons.”
Latham & Watkins promoted University of Houston Law Center alumna Monica White ’12 to partner in January, recognizing her diligence and transparency in client relations.

“Knowing that all those late nights and sacrifices had paid off is kind of surreal,” White said. “It feels amazing, and having people celebrate with you is a good energy, making me feel very optimistic about this next chapter in my career.”

White notes that as a partner, the dynamic within the firm has shifted. She now plays a pivotal role, directly interfacing with clients to discuss problems, present ideas and creatively configure the best possible solutions to issues at hand.

“The independence that I have to make executive decisions based on my experience at this practice makes it feel like this practice is my own,” White said. “I am no longer an associate that wants to run things by the partners but instead a partner that associates turn to.”

White, who is based in the Houston office, handles corporate transactions, specifically complex liability management transactions, advising clients on capital markets transactions in the energy industry and working with companies to develop innovative strategies and solutions to maneuver economic cycles and market uncertainty in corporate governance.

“I pride myself in being a listening ear to my clients, listening to what their business needs are and understanding their businesses,” White said. “I try not to just go in for the obvious legal answer but to teach them how to navigate different market cycles or explain how to structure a deal.”

Currently focused primarily on the energy industry, White plans to expand the breadth of her practice, moving from energy-specific deals to diversify to include a variety of industries such as working on capital market transactions to serving clients in health care, technology and business.

“The differences in language between the industries is between night and day, and it has been fascinating,” White stated. “In 5–10 years, I want my practice to have expanded and be very diverse, still in energy, but adding in different industries.”

After graduating in 2012, White began her legal career as an associate for Baker Botts, advancing to Latham & Watkins in 2017. White actively promotes diversity, equity and inclusion in law by serving on various committees and speaking out at schools, industry conferences and summits.

White grew up immersed in law, with her parents, Joseph and Myra White, working as counsel at Exxon Mobil Corporation, and her sister, Lauren Yvonne White, graduating from the Law Center in 2011.

Monica White ’12

Appointed as Magistrate Judge to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas in 2022, University of Houston Law Center alumna Yvonne Ho ’06 reflected on the responsibilities and duties of the new position and her vision for the future.

“This really feels like a dream job in some respects. It just felt like the stars had aligned, and I needed to take the shot and apply for the job,” Ho explained, expressing her gratitude for “the opportunity to actually serve as a Magistrate Judge in the United States Courthouse.”

Sworn in by Senior District Judge Ewing Werlein Jr., for whom she previously worked as a law clerk, Ho stated that she is excited to take part in making significant decisions that require her to broaden her focus beyond her prior practice as a partner practicing civil appeals at Bracewell LLP law.

“One of the greatest challenges you have [with] this job is that you never really know what is going to come through the door,” Ho said. “I am now having to learn a lot of new substantive law in areas I have never touched professionally. It is a heavy responsibility, but it keeps me engaged.”

Ho sees a variety of civil and criminal cases daily. The civil matters include pretrial motions in a wide range of commercial and personal injury disputes and appeals from social security decisions. Ho also reviews habeas petitions by prisoners challenging their convictions and sentences. During her rotations on criminal duty, Ho conducts initial appearances and detention hearings and reviews applications for warrants and criminal complaints.

“It’s rapid-fire when you are on criminal duty,” Ho said. “You are seeing people being brought into court for the first time to answer for charges, making determinations about whether they qualify for court-appointed counsel and then making really impactful decisions about detention.”

In addition to providing fair, accessible and timely resolution of criminal and civil matters within her jurisdiction, Ho is also working to pay it forward, speaking at law school and bar-related events about various aspects of the legal field, hiring a UHLC intern for the summer and mentoring her law clerks.

“I loved every minute of law school, and UH was so good to me,” Ho said. “I felt like I got a topflight legal education, and I hope that I can impart the knowledge that I gained while being a professional and now a judge … to the next generation.”

Summa cum laude graduate and valedictorian of her class, Ho is the first lawyer in her immediate family. She continues to serve on the University of Houston Law Alumni Association Board of Directors and as co-chair of the Houston Bar Association’s Gender Fairness Committee. Before taking the bench, she served on the Houston Bar Association Board of Directors and the Houston Law Review Board.

Yvonne Ho ’06

Yvonne Ho ’06 NAMED MAGISTRATE JUDGE, DISCUSSES NEW CAREER TASKS AND PAYING IT FORWARD
For Stephen Wallace, a 1983 graduate of the University of Houston Law Center, supporting future scholars at UH is about advocating for education.

Thanks to the Stephen (J.D. ’83) and Kristine G. Wallace Endowed Scholarship, the couple’s goal of supporting the UH Law Center and its students will soon come to fruition.

“We feel very strongly about fostering the careers of aspiring lawyers,” Wallace said.

Wallace studied linguistics at Rice University and received a Ph.D. in linguistics from Cornell University. After earning his doctoral degree, Wallace taught in his field for several years until enrolling at the University of Houston Law Center in 1980.

“Education has mattered a lot to me, it’s just part of who I am. And Kristine is the same way,” Wallace said. “It means a lot to us, and to help other people get the benefit of a good education is important to us.”

The Wallaces’ gifts on UH Giving Day 2022 included a generous matching gift commitment of $30,000 to match dollar-for-dollar gifts under $10,000 to the Law Center’s Scholarship & Awards Fund. These gifts will help the UH Law Center increase student scholarship support and amplify the Fuel the Future Initiative to raise $10 million for scholarships by 2025. The Wallaces’ pledge over three years totals $200,000.

“It feels good to give,” Wallace said. “We want to support education.”

Wallace said he encourages other UH Law Center alumni to “roll up your sleeves, pull out your wallets and give.”

With his strong background in linguistics, pursuing a law degree was “a logical transition” for Wallace, saying, “Law involves words.”

“There’s the written word, and there’s the whole subject of oral advocacy,” he said.

Wallace said his time at the UH Law Center was “excellent training” for his career in corporate law, citing courses like contracts, legal writing, corporations and securities law as especially valuable for his future path.

After graduating summa cum laude from the University of Houston Law Center in 1983, Wallace worked at Baker Botts for 11 years. He started as an associate attorney and left the firm in 1993 as a partner.

Following tenures as VP/Assistant General Counsel at Enron and Vice President for Legal Affairs at Transworld Oil USA, Wallace joined Westlake Chemical Corporation in 2003 where he went on to spend the rest of his career as the company’s Vice President, General Counsel and Corporate Secretary. Wallace retired from the company in 2014.

“There are a lot of things that you don’t learn in law school that you learn out in the big wide world,” Wallace said. “You’re always learning something new all the time. You’re confronted with new issues, something you’ve never heard of or thought about, or never looked into. I had a really, really interesting career.”

He said as a final remark, “As they say at UH Law Center, we need, we benefit from, we must promote, the Power of Legal Education.”

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The Fermeen Fazal Student Organization Flex Room in the University of Houston Law Center’s new John M. O’Quinn Law Building is named for respected attorney and community advocate Fermeen F. Fazal ’00.

The Flex Room is part of the student organization suite serving more than 30 Law Center student organizations. The space is located on the third floor of the new ultramodern John M. O’Quinn Law Building, which opened in August 2022.

A board member of the UH Law Alumni Association, Fazal is a passionate supporter of the University of Houston.

The University of Houston Alumni Association recognized her service and dedication to the legal community with the Corporate Sector Achievement Award in April 2022 and the Distinguished Service Award in October 2021.

For Fazal, a UHLC scholarship recipient, giving back to the University of Houston is personal.

"Any small amount of success that I have achieved in my life has stemmed from the education I received at the University of Houston,” she said in a phone interview. “I feel like it’s an obligation to give back to the school that gave me my start.”

Currently General Counsel at PMC Capital Partners, Fazal was previously Vice President, Chief Legal Officer and Chief Compliance Officer at Universal Pegasus International (UPI). Before that, she worked for a decade at Gibbs & Bruns LLP as Litigation Counsel.

“Because of the first-class legal education I got at the Law Center, I have been able to clerk for appellate court judges and practice law at prestigious firms. Because the Human Situation course at the Honors College taught me how to connect with and relate to people, I’m an approachable, trusted advisor and General Counsel at the companies I’ve worked for,” Fazal said in her October acceptance speech.

Throughout her career, Fazal has and continues to maintain an active connection to the University of Houston, the place where she not only earned her law degree but also her bachelor’s degree in biology and English literature in 1997.

“The critical thinking skills I learned as a biology major have helped me to navigate the challenges that life in 2021 has brought, including the COVID-19 pandemic. In short, the University taught me how to be a better human being. And if a school can do that, then I think it’s an obligation to give something of yourself back as a thank you for these gifts.”
QUENTIN BROGDON ’89 LEADS AS 2022 PRESIDENT OF THE TEXAS TRIAL LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

For Quentin Brogdon, the 2022 President of the Texas Trial Lawyers Association and 1989 UH Law Center graduate, trial work is more than a job – it’s a passion.

Brogdon has primarily handled civil cases, specifically personal injury cases, for the bulk of his career, many in which he felt that he “was able to make a real difference in real people’s lives.”

And Brogdon, partner at Crain Brogdon Rogers LLP in Dallas, said he “wouldn’t have it any other way.”

Brogdon, who considers himself a shy, introspective person, didn’t expect to enjoy being in front of people in a courtroom setting. But one class in his last year at the UH Law Center changed everything.

“It was only after I attended a trial advocacy class at the University of Houston Law Center that I discovered my passion for law and my passion specifically for trial work,” he said, adding that it was adjunct professor John M. O’Quinn’s presentation on expert witnesses that specifically motivated him to become a trial lawyer.

Brogdon went on to earn his law degree from the UH Law Center and a master’s in business administration from the University of Houston’s C. T. Bauer College of Business in 1989.

“During over 30 years in the practice of law, I have encountered lawyers from a myriad of different law schools,” Brogdon said. “I have never felt underprepared. In fact, I have always felt that my experience and training at the University of Houston Law Center prepared me fully for any and all challenges that I have faced since I graduated from law school.”

After working at a large commercial litigation firm and then for Harris County District Attorney’s Office, Brogdon shifted his work to personal injury cases and hasn’t looked back.

“Individuals can have their lives transformed by the outcome of a jury trial,” he said.

“Becoming president of the Texas Trial Lawyers Association is the culmination of a professional lifetime of being a trial lawyer,” Brogdon said. “The lawyers who comprise the Texas Trial Lawyers Association have more heart, more passion, and more fight than any lawyers I know. I am truly humbled and honored to be their president.”

As someone who’s dedicated his career to trial work, Brogdon said the “demise of the jury trial” is of deep concern to him, particularly for aspiring and newly-minted lawyers.

He encourages young lawyers who want to get trial experience to “make a concentrated, determined effort” to do so.

“When parties have a dispute that needs to be tried at the courthouse, they need to be able to have access to lawyers who have the experience, the abilities and the ethics to try their dispute,” Brogdon said.

UHLC ALUMNA ALISON CHEN ’03 TAKES LEADERSHIP ROLE IN AKIN GUMP’S HOUSTON OFFICE

Leading international transactional law firm, Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP named University of Houston Law Center alumna Alison Chen ’03 the managing partner in charge at the firm’s Houston office this year.

“We are so proud of Alison and her accomplishments,” UH Law Center Dean Leonard M. Baynes said. “She is an incredible ambassador for the Law Center.”

“As I step into this role, I think about how I want to lead and how I will implement the firm’s overall diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives to create opportunities for everybody,” Chen said.

Born in Taiwan, Chen moved to the United States at age 12 and grew up in Houston, always knowing that she wanted to practice law. After completing her undergraduate degree in government at The University of Texas at Austin, picking the Law Center just made sense.

“UH was a very easy decision for me,” said Chen. “There’s an entrepreneurial spirit that UH students have.”

Chen was a first-generation law student at UHLC and only pictured litigators when she thought of lawyers. After a judicial internship, 2L summer clerkships with a focus on litigation and a few moot court competitions, it didn’t feel right to her, and she shared this sentiment with then tax law Professor Ira Shepard who was a mentor to her throughout her time at the Law Center. He looked at the classes she was taking and saw that she was excelling in statutory interpretation and asked if she had ever considered tax law.

“Looking back, that was a turning point. No one ever told me that before,” said Chen. “In my third year of law school, I took a different direction and focused on the tax and corporate transaction classes he suggested. I probably owe this guy my whole career.”

Chen graduated from the Law Center in 2003 and went to New York University School of Law for an LL.M. degree in taxation. As soon as she graduated from NYU, she returned to Texas where she practiced for several years before joining Akin’s Houston office as a partner in 2015. Chen was promoted to the Houston office hiring partner for 2018–2020. She currently serves on Akin Gump’s firmwide diversity council and partnership admission committee.

In the community, Chen serves on the board of the University of Houston Law Alumni Association and the board of the Asian American Bar Association of Houston. Throughout her career, Chen is reminded of Professor Shepard’s way of mentoring and caring for his students.

“Mentoring is so important to me, and I do it by sharing my experiences and being available to younger lawyers because that’s what Professor Shepard did for me,” said Chen. “The Law Center teaches you all about contributing to your community and paying it forward.”

Chen attributes her success to being fair and open-minded. “Diversity is not something that’s talked to, it’s acted upon,” said Chen. “You must always encourage inclusiveness.”
ED SULLIVAN ’97 ARGUES BEFORE THE U.S. SUPREME COURT IN A LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT LAW CASE

Ed Sullivan’s career came full circle in October when the UH Law Center alumnus argued before the U.S. Supreme Court in Helix Energy Solutions Group, Inc. v. Hewitt, a case centered around whether an employee who earned six figures and was paid a daily rate is entitled to overtime pay.

As he entered the Supreme Court Building, Sullivan said he actively tried not to take it all in, instead maintaining “tunnel vision, focus on why I’m there.” Since August 2017, Sullivan has represented Michael J. Hewitt, a former Helix Energy Solutions employee who “worked a significant amount of overtime” and was never compensated for it.

At the core of the lawsuit is whether Hewitt, who was paid $963 each day he worked, was paid a salary.

The oral arguments took place on Wednesday, Oct. 12, with a decision from the court expected between January and March 2023, according to Sullivan.

For Sullivan, arguing a case before the Supreme Court was as “remote a possibility” as going to Mars. Though Sullivan’s career looks straightforward on paper — working at the Texas Attorney General’s office after law school, a clerkship with U.S. Magistrate Judge Marcia A. Crone ’78, a stint at a national law firm, and co-founding his own firm — the reality is that it was more of a winding path for the Alice, Texas native.

The metrics that typically portend post-law school success were not there for Sullivan, at least at the beginning. He lost his Law Center scholarship after the first semester. He “barely” graduated in the top half of his class and didn’t have a solid job in law school. In fact, Sullivan’s first post with the Attorney General’s office didn’t come until 10 months after graduation. Looking back at his law school performance, “you wouldn’t have guessed at the time” that Sullivan would be where he is today.

“No having a job was hard, but you have to believe in yourself,” Sullivan said. “I had a lot of that self-belief that I could do a good job if I had a chance. I was literally taping all my rejection letters to my bedroom wall in my hole-in-the-wall apartment.”

Sullivan’s strategies for making it through some of law school’s lows were “developing relationships with people” and putting himself out there. Participating in the John Black Moot Court Tournament brought out his gifts and passions, and soon Sullivan found his “real niche” in mock trial.

“I left UH with a lot of confidence I could be a trial lawyer or do appeals,” he said.

In fact, one of Sullivan’s law school friends Richard “Rex” Burch ’97 of Bruckner Burch PLLC, was one of the colleagues who helped Sullivan conduct four moot courts leading up to his argument before the U.S. Supreme Court. “It does sort of come full circle,” he said.

“Just believe in yourself,” Sullivan said. “If you don’t bet on yourself, you won’t succeed.”

UH LAW ALUMNI ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT SAYS THE NEW LAW BUILDING IS A FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION

Alex B. Roberts ’06, partner Beck Redden and President of the University of Houston Law Alumni Association gave welcome remarks during the University of Houston Law Center’s new John M. O’Quinn Law Building and Dedication Conference in September.

“The building is more than glass and sheetrock,” Roberts said on the opening of the new facility, “it’s more than a building. For the students, this is where they learn a craft. This is where they learn the profession of the law.”

A UH and UH Law Center alumnus, Roberts noted that students build their networks while at the university, meeting their future co-workers, friends, clients and even future spouses.

Bar association leadership, the judiciary, law firms, legal employers and academia gathered to commemorate the opening of the new John M. O’Quinn Law Building and to discuss the conference theme of “Legal Education and the Legal Profession in Promoting Democracy and Community in the 21st Century.”

“As a nation, we look to those trained in the law to lead our democracy and stand up for its institutions,” Roberts said. “We hope that this conversation today is the first of many like it where we can all gather in this space and explore interesting ideas about what it means to be in this noble profession that we call law.”

“We are excited to see where the law school is headed,” Roberts added and “excited to welcome you to this new home of the Law Center.”
The University of Houston Law Center and Georgetown University Law Center, in collaboration with Free Press’ Media 2070 project, explored historic and contemporary racial discrimination in all modalities of modern media. The virtual colloquium ran from Feb. 25 – 26.

The Media 2070 project, launched by the media and tech advocacy organization Free Press, is calling for media to repair the harm caused to the Black community by media institutions and government policies. As part of this effort, Media 2070, and more than 100 allied organizations and leaders, joined 25 members of Congress last year in calling for the FCC to conduct an equity audit of its historical and present-day policies and their impact on the media landscape.

Inspired by the Media 2070 project, UH Law and Georgetown Law, along with Free Press, decided to convene this virtual colloquium on race and racism in American media.

UH Law Center Dean Leonard M. Baynes said, “I am delighted that UH Law is collaborating in holding this important conference along with Georgetown Law and Free Press. The goal of the conference is to examine issues of underrepresentation of people of color in the media in ownership and employment historically leading to suboptimal programming, representations and coverage. By bringing together such impressive and knowledgeable scholars, government officials, policy makers, activists and business owners, we hope to chart a path forward to remedy this lack of representation and its negative consequences.”

“It is incumbent upon us as leaders to help and guide the community to address our own unconscious biases that impact how we learn and interact with each other,” said William M. Treanor, Executive Vice President and Dean of Georgetown University Law Center. “I, along with my colleagues, am looking forward to participating in this virtual conference and tackling issues of racial injustice and the causes at the root of racial inequities within our society.”

Joseph Torres, Senior Director of Strategy and Engagement Free Press/Media 2070 said, “We are so grateful to the University of Houston Law Center and Georgetown Law for their partnership in convening this critical discussion. The conference is an important opportunity to address how government policies exclude the Black community — and other communities of color — from controlling our nation’s communications infrastructure. This exclusion has resulted in the creation and distribution of anti-Black narratives that continue to undermine our country from fully realizing a racial justice society and democracy.”

The first day included a conversation between Dean Baynes and Cathy Hughes, Founder and Chairperson of Urban One, Inc., the largest African American-owned and operated media company in the nation.

Hughes talked about building a station for African Americans, saying “I really saw the opportunity to reach as many people as possible because my mission was to give voice to the voiceless; my community was the voiceless.”

Panelists covered topics including the history of racism in American media; assessment of historic efforts by (and failures of) the FCC, Congress, state regulators, and others to address racism; the role of the Speech Clause of the First Amendment and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment as legal frameworks; legal and policy approaches to address racial injustices, including corporate activism; and how reparations may fit into a remedial approach.
Charisma Nguepdo ’22, Adriana Young and LaTheena Thomas made history as the first African Americans to hold the position of editor-in-chief at their respective journals, the Houston Law Review, Journal of Health Law and Policy, and Houston Business and Tax Law Journal. In addition, To Nhu Huynh ’22 was the first Asian American editor-in-chief of the Journal of Health Law and Policy. Young and Thomas are currently serving as EICs.

Dean Baynes reminded the students listening that there is no right or wrong way to pursue a law degree, and each panelist spoke about how they found their way to law school.

For Lin, it wasn’t immediately obvious why law felt like the right choice. “I think I was looking for a voice … that would allow me to advocate for myself, for my family, for social issues that I thought were important at the time,” Lin said.

Olliff picked UHLC because the part-time law degree program allowed him to work using his undergraduate architectural degree.

Casares discovered that his strengths were in writing and persuasion rather than in financial analytics. “I spent a lot of my time talking to attorneys to understand what I was getting myself into,” Casares said.

Sutherland, the youngest of four, was guided by her siblings to earn a law degree because they felt it could open a world of possibilities for her. “A law degree can allow you to teach, go into business, be a traditional lawyer, be a judge, a counselor, an advisor, a politician,” Sutherland said.

At age 10, Petty met one of her mother’s classmates, famous lawyer and politician Barbara Jordan. After that her mind was made up that law was for her. “I didn’t know where I was going,” said Petty. “I figured that out in law school.”
The University of Houston Law Center was recognized in the Outstanding Diverse Organizations category in the Houston Business Journal’s 2022 Diversity in Business Awards presented in June.

The award honors organizations that have “contributed to harnessing diversity within their workforces and actively taken the lead to promote and champion the business case for diversity within the community or their industries.”

The Law Center paves forward its commitment to diversity with the Pre-Law Pipeline Program, which prepares undergraduates who are first-generation, low-income or members of groups underrepresented in the legal profession for a career in law. During the last seven years, pipeline participants have increased their LSAT scores, on average, by 11–14 points, and more than 100 students have been accepted into law school.

“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,” said Dean Leonard M. Baynes.

The Pre-Law Pipeline Program is just one of many ongoing efforts at the Law Center to promote diversity, civil rights and social justice. The Law Center also has a Diversity, Racial Justice and Human Rights Initiative, a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee and offers courses and clinical work for students centered on diversity and service to underserved communities who need legal representation.
With a career in philanthropy and service, Regina Rogers established a fund that will benefit University of Houston Law Center students for years to come with a gift in honor of Dean Leonard M. Baynes and dedicated to his commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Rogers, a 1970 Law Center graduate, said she hopes the Dean Leonard M. Baynes Scholarship for Diversity in Law will help ease some of the stresses of law school and allow future recipients to have an increased chance of success in the classroom. Baynes became the Law Center’s dean in 2014. He is the ninth dean in the school’s history and the first person of African descent to serve in the role.

“I have great admiration and respect for Dean Baynes,” Rogers said. “An exceptional role model for others to emulate, he has broken barriers and achieved great success by working hard.

“I think it is important to focus on diversity and inclusion, particularly in the field of law, because it creates a more realistic reflection of society as a whole and enables lawyers to better serve their clients. Also, a scholarship will allow a law student to concentrate on academics, and less on financial concerns.”

Baynes will match Rogers’ donation and said he is appreciative of her generosity.

“I am very humbled by this recognition,” Baynes said. “It is amazing to have a scholarship named after me, especially since it is based on one of my deep and abiding commitment to making the legal profession more diverse and equitable. Regina Rogers is amazing! She is a role model for many of us. I am deeply grateful for this honor.”

The first female member of the Board of Regents of Lamar University in her hometown of Beaumont, and also a member of the Texas College and University Coordinating Board from 1986-1991, Rogers has a long history of creating educational opportunities for underserved youth, having established the Ben Rogers “I Have A Dream” Program that has provided more than 300 college scholarships at Lamar University for Beaumont Independent School District students.

Rogers also has witnessed the impact of Baynes and the Law Center’s emphasis on diversity and inclusion.

“I particularly appreciate the Dean’s commitment to providing encouragement and motivation for law students, with special attention paid to those who come from less affluent backgrounds,” Rogers said. “They just need a little extra support, and I am pleased to help. I hope this initial scholarship will be only the beginning and that others will want to join the effort.”

The University of Houston Law Center dialogue series features Big Law partners and corporate counsel from diverse backgrounds sharing their pathway to successful careers with each other and law students.

University of Houston Law Center Dean Leonard M. Baynes and Professor Emeritus Anthony R. Chase co-convened the Dean’s Diversity Dialogue: Texas Big Law, Black Law Partner/Corporate Counsel Summit in April. Sixty-four Black attorneys throughout Texas virtually took part in the event to discuss recruitment, retention and collaboration among Texas Black lawyers. Studies show that Black attorneys make up only 4.7% of the legal profession and only 2.22% of Big Law firm partners.

“This Black Big Law dialogue is part of a series that the Law Center has organized. These dialogues are designed to push the legal profession forward on diversity, equity and inclusion. This event was terrific because it allowed us to highlight the talent that exists in our community, to get acquainted or reacquainted with each other and to ponder self-help in working together to further our collective goals,” said Baynes.

The Dialogue featured six trailblazing panelists. Shauna Johnson Clark, the first African American to serve as global and U.S. managing partner at Norton Rose Fulbright, and Regina Bynote Jones, the first African American General Counsel of Baker Hughes, shared legal expertise. In addition, the session focused on four trailblazing African American students or recent graduates who served as the first African American editors-in-chief of their respective flagship law review: Charisma Ricksy Nguepdo (Houston Law Review), Jason Onyendiri (Texas Law Review), and Kenesha Starling and Eric Williams (South Texas Law Review), who were the first African American woman and man, respectively.

Panelists also discussed glass ceilings, role models and challenges faced by Black lawyers. The group then gathered into breakout sessions to introduce themselves to each other and brainstorm how to work together and increase diversity in the legal field.

The Dean’s Diversity Dialogues continued in September and focused on ways to increase and enhance Asian American and Pacific Islander, and Latino/a/x success and representation in the legal field.
ROSENBERG LECTURE FOCUSES ON FIRST BLACK FEMALE FEDERAL JUSTICE

The topic of the University of Houston Law Center’s annual Yale L. Rosenberg Memorial Lecture was well-timed this year. Held in March, the discussion centered on Judge Constance Baker Motley, the nation’s first Black female federal justice and a new book on Motley written by Harvard scholar, Tomiko Brown-Nagin.

Justice Motley shared the same birthday as the nation’s first Black female Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson. When Jackson’s nomination was announced, she remarked on this connection: “Today I proudly stand on Judge Motley’s shoulders, sharing not only her birthday but also her steadfast and courageous commitment to equal justice under law.

“This is such a timely conversation,” said UHLC’s Dean Leonard Baynes who opened the evening’s event. “We invited you [Brown-Nagin] over a year ago, and it is amazing that it came to the fore now.”

Brown-Nagin began by sharing stories from her latest book “Civil Rights Queen: Constance Baker Motley and the Struggle for Equality.” She currently serves as the Dean of the Radcliffe Institute, the Daniel P.S. Paul Professor of Constitutional Law at Harvard Law School and is a member of the History Department at the Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Brown-Nagin explained that it wasn’t uncommon for Judge Motley to experience both race and gender-based humiliation from her peers. “She was seeking justice and equality for her clients and herself at the same time.”

Brown-Nagin also noted that diversity in every sector, including on the bench, is critical. “Inclusion is important simply because...these appointments reinforce American democracy regardless of race, gender etc. Inclusion builds confidence in government that it is fair.”

Judge Motley was the inaugural member of what is still a small number of Black female federal justices. This group includes Judge Vanessa Gilmore, a UHLC graduate and when she was sworn in, the youngest federal judge in the nation.

Judge Gilmore added to the conversation by recalling a case that Motley fought as a lawyer about a Black student named James Meredith. He was looking to study at the University of Mississippi. Motley won the case but not without having to appeal to the President of the United States to have the National Guard accompany Meredith to school so he could attend classes. “As a result, he [Meredith] went to the school, became a lawyer and a social activist,” said Judge Gilmore.

In reflection to close out the evening, Dean Baynes asked how it happens “against all odds” that someone like Constance Baker Motley could be appointed to one of the highest courts in the land. Brown-Nagin answered simply, “She was a woman who would not be put down; she would not stop, no matter the difficulties she encountered.”

UH AND UH LAW CENTER RECOGNIZED WITH HIGHER EDUCATION EXCELLENCE IN DIVERSITY AWARDS

The University of Houston and the UH Law Center have long been recognized as inclusive institutions of higher education with culturally rich campus populations.

For their efforts in supporting students from all backgrounds, the University and its Law Center received their seventh Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Awards from INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine. Both join the nation’s top colleges and universities in receiving this award that recognizes best practices in campus diversity, equity and inclusion.

“Receiving the HEED Award seven years in a row speaks volumes of UH’s efforts in promoting diversity, equity and inclusivity on campus,” said Robert H. McPherson, UH interim senior vice president for academic affairs and provost. “Earning this honor is indeed a team effort and truly reflects our UH community commitment to supporting a multicultural learning environment.”

UH’s efforts in maintaining a welcoming and inclusive institution extends throughout its colleges, departments and offices, as well as the many student organizations that address the needs of underrepresented learning populations. Additionally, the University recruits and retains diverse faculty through the Office of Faculty Recruitment, Retention, Equity and Diversity and through initiatives such as the Underrepresented Women of Color Coalition and the newly founded Underrepresented Men of Color Coalition.

The UH Law Center is noted for its Diversity, Racial Justice and Human Rights Initiative. This college-wide platform includes institutes, programs, centers, clinics and courses that relate to race, social justice, immigration, diversity, inclusion, equality and related issues.

“I am humbled and honored that UH Law Center was recognized with the HEED Award for the seventh year in a row,” said UH Law Center Dean Leonard Baynes. “It is a testament to the dedication and commitment of the Law Center faculty, students and staff.”

2022 HEED Award recipients were announced in the November issue of INSIGHT Into Diversity. The HEED Award is the only national award recognizing colleges and universities for making diversity and inclusion top priorities on their campuses.

“The HEED Award process consists of a comprehensive and rigorous application that includes questions relating to the recruitment and retention of students and employees — and best practices for both — as well as continued leadership support for diversity and other aspects of campus diversity and inclusion,” said Lenore Pearlstein, publisher of INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine. “We take a detailed approach to reviewing each application in deciding who will be named a HEED Award recipient. Our standards are high, and we look for institutions where diversity and inclusion are woven into the work being done every day across campus.”
Acclaimed higher education and immigration law scholar and Professor Emeritus Michael A. Olivas died on April 22. He was 71 years old.

For 38 years, Olivas served as a faculty member at UH Law Center culminating in being named the William B. Bates Distinguished Chair of Law, Director of the Institute for Higher Education Law & Governance and Acting President of the UH Downtown Campus.

“During his tenure, Professor Olivas was an excellent teacher and role model, a renowned scholar, academic entrepreneur and institution builder, and multiple award winner. In each of these roles, Professor Olivas advanced the rule of law, legal education, and service to the community. His students cherished him, and he was a mentor and advocate for many of his former students,” said Dean Leonard M. Baynes.

In 2011, Michael served as President of the Association of American Law Schools. He also has chaired the AALS Section on Education Law three times and has twice chaired the Section on Immigration Law. In 2018, AALS honored Michael with its Triennial Award for Lifetime Service to Legal Education and the Law.

In announcing the Triennial Award, UC Berkeley School of Law Dean Erwin Chemerinsky said, “Michael Olivas richly deserves this honor. He has done so much to improve legal education, whether formally with his service as AALS President or informally in his efforts to enhance diversity in the legal academy. He has made a huge difference in many law schools and in many law professors’ careers.”

Olivas worked on the national level as a thought leader who has played a key role in shaping policies concerning legal education and immigration. Olivas was involved in crafting the Texas 10% plan after the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in the Hopwood decision resulted in the suspension for about 8 years, the use of race-based affirmative action in higher education administration in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The 10% plan allowed The University of Texas to admit the top 10 percent of students from each public high school in Texas affording students of a wide variety of backgrounds the opportunity to attend the flagship Texas university. In addition, Olivas helped craft the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which allowed unauthorized immigrants who came to the U.S. as children to regularize their immigration status permitting them to work and get an education.

A civil rights advocate, Olivas served on the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund Board of Directors for multiple terms over several decades and was on the board when he passed.

“Michael was an iconic figure in legal academia,” said Thomas A. Saez, president and general counsel of MALDEF. “His published works have made an immeasurable contribution in documenting the work of MALDEF and other Latino civil rights legal advocates. He was a brilliant, and often provocative, strategist in the fields of Latino and immigrant rights.”
UH LAW CENTER REMEMBERS LEADING TAX EXPERT PAUL ASOFSKY

Paul Asofsky, former senior advisor and faculty member with the University of Houston Law Center’s LL.M. tax law program, passed away on Friday, Oct. 28. He was 81.

“Paul helped contribute to the prominence of the Law Center’s LL.M. tax law program by bringing high-level practice experience to the classroom,” said Leonard M. Baynes, Dean of the University of Houston Law Center.

UH Law Center Professor Bret Wells said Asofsky’s reputation and influence extended nationally across the tax community, “He was instrumental in setting the objectives and direction of those reforms in 1980 … After 1980 and for decades thereafter, Paul Asofsky was viewed by everyone within government and outside of government as the most knowledgeable person on bankruptcy taxation in this nation.”

Asofsky taught courses in bankruptcy taxation and tax policy at UH Law Center. He was also an adjunct professor at New York University School of Law and was a fellow with the American College of Tax Counsel.

“Paul was an extremely bright and accomplished tax lawyer whose expertise and kindness enriched UHLC tax students for many years. He added a personal touch to his technical acumen that was unmistakable. In addition to teaching and counseling students, Paul took on a Herculean role in ensuring that the UHLC tax program maintained a relationship with its graduates. In brief, Paul was a thoughtful and valued colleague who unselfishly gave much of himself to this law school. He is already missed,” said UH Law Center Professor Johnny R. Buckles.

UH Law Center Professor of Practice Denney L. Wright also noted Asofsky’s enthusiastic support of the UH Law Center’s Tax LL.M. program, “He particularly enjoyed the student contacts and was always looking for ways to enhance the experiences of our students. He was also a great lawyer and recognized expert in tax law issues. Professor Asofsky will be missed. Our prayers are with Paul’s family, friends and colleagues as they deal with his passing.”

Asofsky worked for 20 years at Weil, Gotshal & Manges in the Houston office, where he was a partner and head of the tax group. His practice included the full range of federal and state tax issues, with emphasis on private investment partnerships, mergers & acquisitions, real estate investments and bankruptcy, and debt restructuring.

He was a founding member and former president of the Houston Tax Roundtable, a forum where senior tax partners and tax academics would workshop papers and discuss current tax issues.

Asofsky received his B.A. from Columbia University and earned his J.D. from Harvard Law School.

UH LAW CENTER REFLECTS ON ACHIEVEMENTS OF ALUMNA DEAN BROWNE C. LEWIS ’97

The University of Houston Law Center is mourning the loss of North Carolina Central University School of Law Dean Browne C. Lewis. A nationally renowned scholar and LL.M. graduate of UHLC, Lewis passed away on June 2 while attending a conference in Colorado.

“We were very saddened to learn of the sudden passing of UH Law alumna Dean Browne Lewis. She was an excellent law teacher, a well-regarded legal scholar and an accomplished academic leader. Most importantly, she was a wonderful person and an excellent mentor,” said Dean Leonard M. Baynes.

A two-time Fulbright recipient, Lewis’ research and thought leadership covered the areas of artificial intelligence, assisted reproductive technology, environmental racism and inheritance law.

Lewis earned a B.A. in political science from Grambling State University, an M.A. in public policy from the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey Institute, a J.D. from the University of Minnesota School of Law and an LL.M. in energy and environmental law from the University of Houston Law Center in 1997.
The University of Houston Law Center marked its 75th anniversary with a Roaring 2020s-themed gala, honoring the significant strides made by the UH Law Center and looking ahead to the next 75 years. More than $600K was raised for scholarships and initiatives to advance the Law Center’s mission.

Presented by the UH Law Center and the University of Houston Law Center Alumni Association, the 45th Annual Law Gala & Auction was held on Saturday, April 9 at The Post Oak Hotel at Uptown Houston. The evening started with ceremony to honor 2022 UH Law Alumni Association Award recipients.

The festive gala was complete with sparkling art deco décor and a show-stopping Ostrich feather photo backdrop. More than 500 UH Law Center alumni, faculty and friends came together to celebrate, donning their best bow ties and 1920s flat caps as well as fringe-full dresses and vintage headpieces.

“Christin and I are honored to be hosting this ‘come back’ event on behalf of the Law Center,” said 2022 Gala Chair Troy Chandler ’98. This year’s Law Gala & Auction was the Law Center’s first in-person gala since 2019.

“Tonight’s event is a huge success, and we appreciate our many dear friends, families and colleagues, and the generous friends and supporters of the Law Center,” Chandler said.

Celebrants had the opportunity to bid on a host of exceptional auction items and experiences, from an evening for 10 at Vin de Garde Wine Cellar, getaways in Rosemary Beach or in the Texas Hill Country, to an exclusive Whiskies of the World dinner with Justice Ruby Kless Sondock ’61.

But the most popular auction items by far were Albertus, an American Kennel Club-registered Labrador Retriever puppy sporting a red UH bandana, and a stay at an oceanfront villa in Punta de Mita, Mexico.

Funds raised at the gala supported UH Law Center’s Fuel the Future Initiative which moves the Law Center forward through two primary avenues, student scholarships for deserving and high-caliber students of all backgrounds and through the Law Fund.

“We have much to celebrate this year,” said UH Law Center Dean Leonard M. Baynes. “In August, we are moving into the new John M. O’Quinn Law Building. Our Law Center is a world-class law school. Houston is a world class city. We will now have a world-class building to match our great law school and the great city of Houston.”

“The new building is a major milestone in the Law Center’s trajectory,” Baynes said. “Its completion will coincide with our birth 75 years ago when the Law Center started operations in converted World War II barracks.”
We will begin accepting nominations for the 2022-2023 UHLAA Alumni Awards in January 2023.

The awards will be presented at the

**46th Annual Law Gala & Auction on Friday, May 5, 2023**

**at The Post Oak Hotel at Uptown Park in Houston**

and will include the following:

**ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR**
In recognition of exceptional and continued achievement and noteworthy contributions to the legal profession by an alumnus.

**FACULTY DISTINCTION AWARD**
In recognition of a member of the Law Center faculty that has distinguished themselves in their field of expertise.

**PRIVATE PRACTICE ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**
In recognition of exceptional achievement in and legal excellence in private practice.

**RISING STAR AWARD**
(2012 – 2022 graduates eligible) In recognition of outstanding achievement and notable commitment to the UH Law Center by a young alumnus.

**DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AWARD**
In recognition of significant commitment of an alumnus to diversity and inclusion by fostering a more diverse and inclusive legal community.

**PRO BONO/COMMUNITY SERVICE & LEADERSHIP AWARD**
In recognition of an alumnus that has dedicated substantial service to the community as a volunteer and leader.

**LAW GALA & AUCTION AWARD**
In recognition of exceptional volunteer service and leadership to the UH Law Gala by an alumnus.

**PUBLIC/NON-PROFIT SECTOR ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**
In recognition of exceptional achievement and legal excellence in public service.

**CORPORATE SECTOR ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**
In recognition of exceptional achievement and legal excellence in the corporate and business communities.

**HONORARY ALUMNUS AWARD**
In recognition of exemplary service and dedication to the Law Center by a lawyer that is not an alumnus.

**PUBLIC/NON-PROFIT SECTOR ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**
In recognition of exceptional achievement and legal excellence in public service.

**DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AWARD**
In recognition of significant commitment of an alumnus to diversity and inclusion by fostering a more diverse and inclusive legal community.

**PRO BONO/COMMUNITY SERVICE & LEADERSHIP AWARD**
In recognition of an alumnus that has dedicated substantial service to the community as a volunteer and leader.

**JAMES M. ROACH LAW FUND VOLUNTEER AWARD**
To a volunteer alumnus that has demonstrated extraordinary commitment to raising funds for the UH Law Center.

For more information on the alumni awards and nomination form, visit [https://www.law.uh.edu/alumni/](https://www.law.uh.edu/alumni/).

Questions? Please contact Hope M. Young in the Office of Law Alumni Relations at [hyoung@central.uh.edu](mailto:hyoung@central.uh.edu) or call [713.743.5099](tel:713.743.5099).
The Career Development Office (CDO) is excited to welcome two new staff members and promote two staff members to better serve our student and alumni population. Stewart Louie, J.D., Associate Director of Career Development, a native New Yorker, joined the CDO after practicing commercial litigation with mid-sized firms in New York. Katie Metallo, J.D., Associate Director for Career Development, joined the CDO after working at Oklahoma City University School of Law where she was the Assistant Director of Academic Achievement and an Adjunct Professor. Paul Klinger, J.D., was promoted from Assistant Director to Director for Career Development and supervises student career counseling. Chandria T. Jackson, J.D., was promoted from Director for Career Development to Director of Employer Relations and Development and is the primary employer liaison for the CDO.

STEWART LOUIE

KATIE METALLO
The Law Fund is the Law Center’s annual unrestricted giving program.

Gifts help increase student scholarships, recruit and retain distinguished faculty, provide nationally-recognized programs, offer career development services, and build relationships with our alumni.

To make a recurring gift, or if you have any questions about the Law Fund, please contact:

Brena Baumann-Gonzalez ’90, Senior Director of Development 713.743.0978 or bbaumann@central.uh.edu.

To give safely and securely, visit https://www.law.uh.edu/giving/law-fund.asp
Upcoming events

Joseph A. Vail Asylum Law Workshop
Friday, January 27, 2023 – 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM Central Time
CLE Credit: Texas MCLE approved for 4 hours, of which 2 hours are ethics
RSVP Now – https://law.uh.edu/events/AsylumWorkshop.asp

Dean's Distinguished 2023 Black History Month Speaker
Reginald Dwayne Betts
The Bracewell LLP Distinguished Lecturer in Racial and Social Justice
Thursday, February 16, 2023 - 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM Central Time
Save the Date

Lone Star Regional Legal Writing Conference
April 14-15, 2023
Submit Proposal to Present
https://uhlc.wufoo.com/forms/q5avaavo2ig3gs/
https://law.uh.edu/lonestar/

Yale L. Rosenberg Memorial Lecture
Janai Nelson
President and Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund
March 22, 2023
Save the Date

7th Annual North American Environment Energy and Natural Resources Conference
Thursday, April 27, 2023 - 9:30 AM - 4:30 PM Central Time
Save the Date
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CLE PROGRAMS FOR UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON LAW CENTER ALUMNI

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