



# SKYLINE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-DOWNTOWN

The Next  
50 Years

Before he passed, longtime University of Houston-Downtown Art Professor Floyd Newsum said, “An artist should not limit themselves to one medium,” that they should instead, “Dare to do other things.”

For our beloved Floyd Newsum, other things meant quite a lot: serving the community, speaking truths, and striving, always, to be better at your life’s work, whatever that may be. We dedicate this issue of Skyline to Newsum, a man who didn’t just embody the Gator spirit—he created it. Through his art, social work, teaching, and mentorship, Newsum shaped what we now think of as the ideal UHD Gator: kind, driven, civic-minded, determined to use whatever gifts they’ve been blessed with to uplift everything, and everyone, they meet.

We miss you, Floyd. May all Gators follow your example and dare to do more.







# SKYLINE

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-DOWNTOWN

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**Skyline**

**The Magazine of the University of  
Houston-Downtown**

Winter 2025

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Thanks to the Houston History Research Center,  
Houston Public Library, for archival images on  
page 21. Please see [www.uhd.edu/skylinecredits](http://www.uhd.edu/skylinecredits) for  
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Many thanks to Library Services Executive  
Director Lisa Braysen and University Archivist  
Bryan Salazar for their assistance with the  
University Archives and Special Collections of the  
W.I. Dykes Library.

Special thanks to Michael Manuel and  
Gabriel Morales for their design support.

Skyline is published by the University of  
Houston-Downtown Division of Advancement  
and University Relations.

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Cover photo: Sam Negrete  
Photo: Mitchell Loper

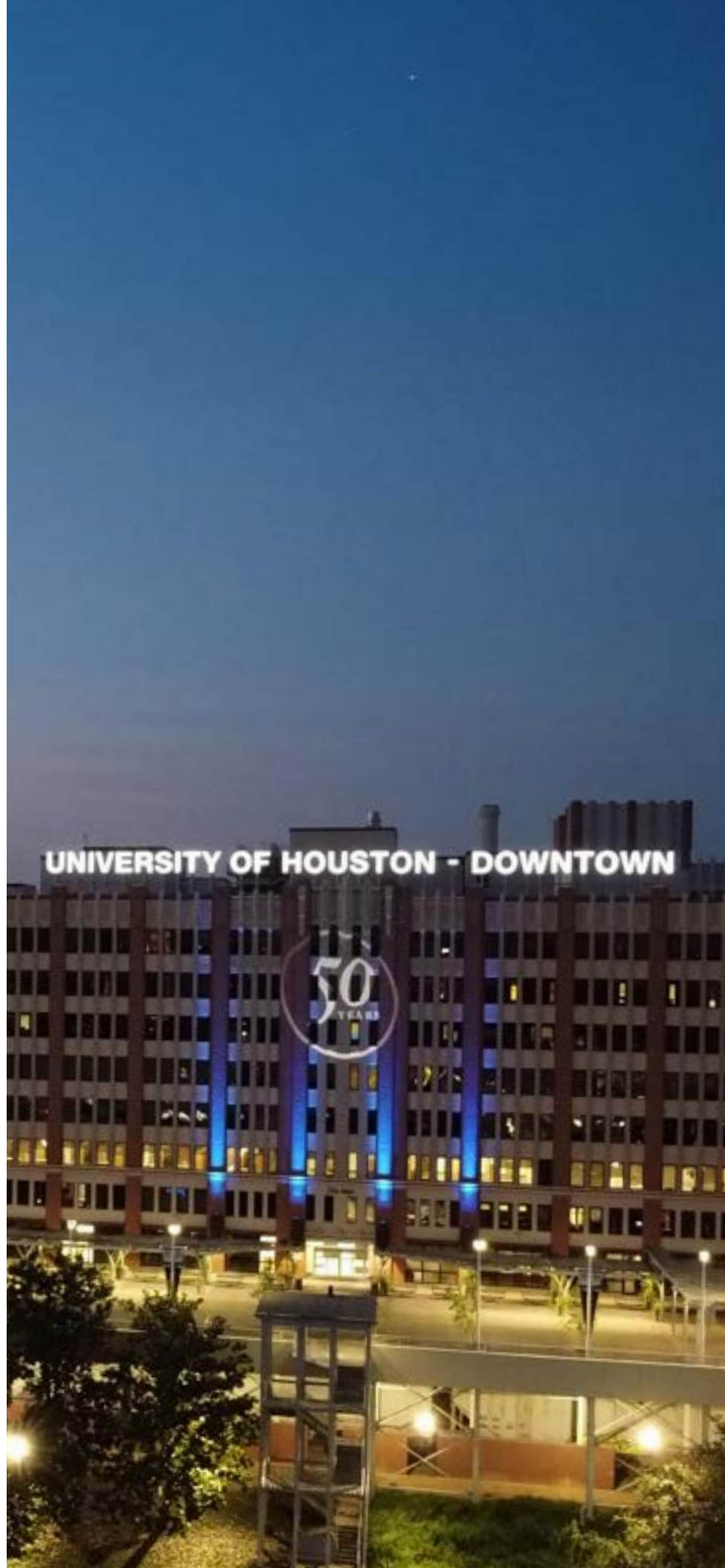




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While reflecting on our 50th Anniversary year, I am reminded of the importance of milestones and celebrations in the life of a university. Recognizing a milestone ushers us into a deeper appreciation of our accomplishments while inspiring us to reset the bar of excellence to ensure continued progress. That was the theme of our 50th year—building on our past, shaping our future.

In looking back, we found a milestone within a milestone. The year 2024 doubled as UHD's 50th Anniversary and the Scholars Academy's 25th Anniversary. Founded in 1999, the Academy engages students in multiple high impact practices with an emphasis on undergraduate research,

hands-on experience, and community service. Over the years, the Academy has achieved a 94% immediate employment rate for alumni—a clear measure of excellence.

Now, as we look ahead, we seek to push high impact practices

into every field of study, equipping all students with the essential skills for success in today's dynamic world. Our

Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), entitled "Transferable Skills for the 21st Century," is a collaborative effort to forge an increasingly dynamic academic environment that optimizes both current student success and post-graduate achievement.

That dynamic environment will unfold on a growing campus. With the North Houston Highway Improvement Project now on the horizon, plans are underway for a future UHD that is no longer separated by the interstate but is pedestrian friendly with less concrete and more green space. Designed for both resident and commuter students, this campus will be one through which our students become a vital part of Houston's urban core, learning, living, dining, working, and serving in the heart of our city.

As the pages of this magazine affirm, we are well on our way to leaving a gift to the next generation—an anchor institution, addressing the needs of a dynamic, ever-changing society. Thank you for joining me in this great work.



Loren J. Blanchard, Ph.D.

President, University of Houston-Downtown



Photo: Colt Melrose Photography  
Facing page photos: Nicki Evans

Opposite:  
Dr. Mary Jo Parker has led  
the Scholar's Academy and  
its students for 15 years.





# The Future, Revealed

## *UHD 2050 to Expand Footprint and Academic Offerings*

*By Hayden Bergman*

In Floyd Newsom's oil and acrylic work, "The Journey Never Ends," the late UHD art professor explores and reflects upon the cycles of life—how they come and go, how they rise and eventually fall, only to rise and fall once more in a way that, as the title states, never ceases. Now, as the metaphorical sun sets on the university's 50th year, it seems worthwhile to look to our future, and to forecast what the next stage of the UHD journey has in store.

As you might imagine that future will present challenges both physical and not. How, for example, will UHD deal with the coming changes to be wrought by artificial intelligence? How do we address the growing student population, one that will demand more physical space, upgraded student services, and, yes, housing? And, of course, the bayous and railroad aren't going anywhere. How, then, can UHD further integrate with the rest of downtown Houston?

The answers to these and other questions will decide the future of UHD.

To ensure such answers are both innovative and inclusive, a group of stakeholders from every

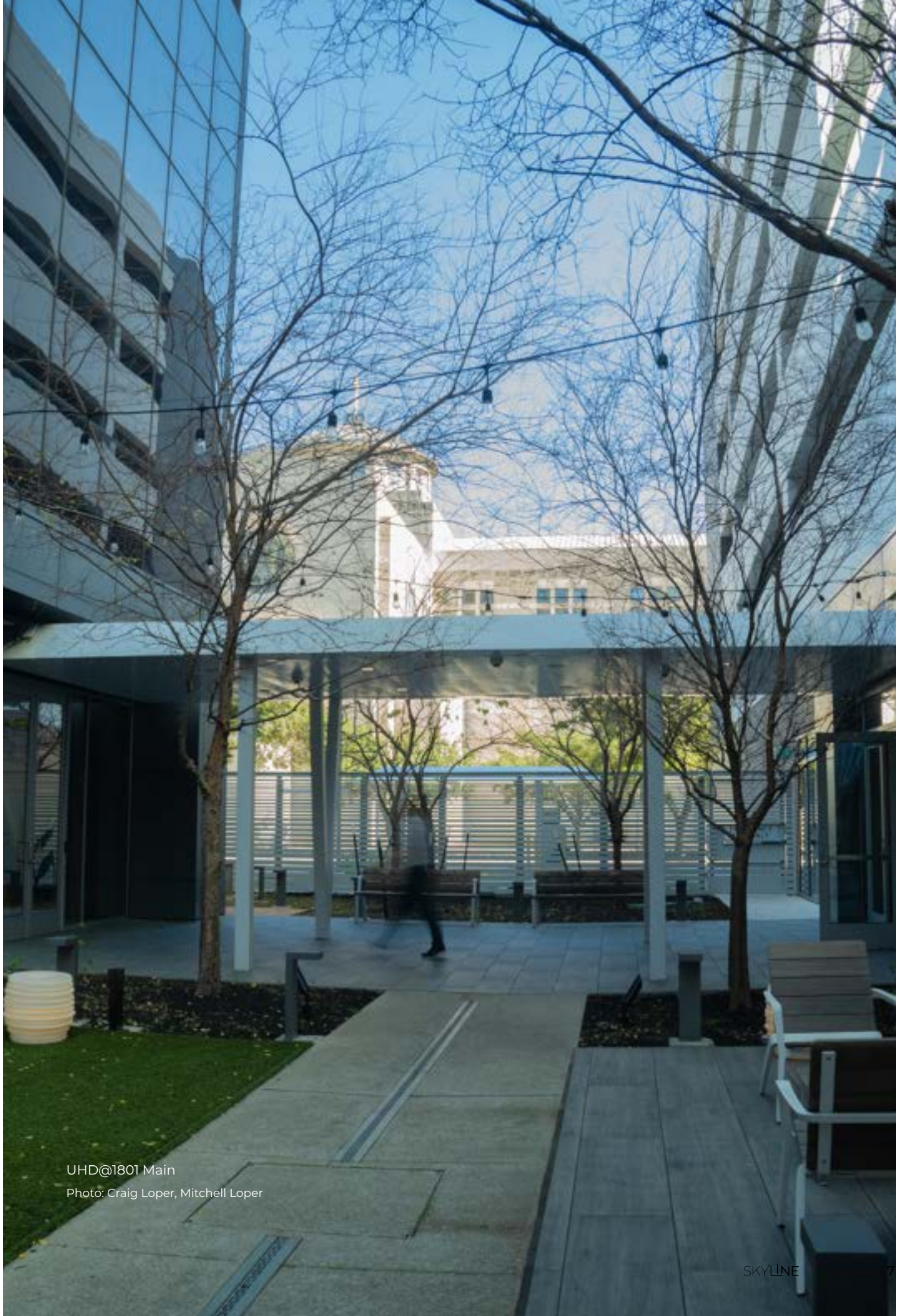
department and division at the university, along with Huitt-Zollars, a national engineering and architectural firm, developed a comprehensive plan for campus and academic program expansion. Its name? UHD 2050.

The plan will expand the physical footprint through new construction and land acquisition and ensure a dynamic learning environment, one that will equip Gators with the skills they need to thrive as leaders in the 21st century.

### **CAMPUS EXPANSION**

The first stage of UHD's growth is the "The Launchpad," or UHD@1801 Main. With a focus on post-degree progress, the space will house a Career Center Annex, Continuing Education Office, and the Office of Alumni Relations. A new Idea Hub and Entrepreneurship Center is being discussed to bring together students, faculty, staff, and community members to explore ideas, prototypes, and business plans. Occupying the entire tenth floor of 1801 Main, it will also house the Center for Crime, Urban Research, and Education (C-CURE), an initiative that acknowledges UHD's history in Criminal Justice education while positioning the university as a leader on urban issues.

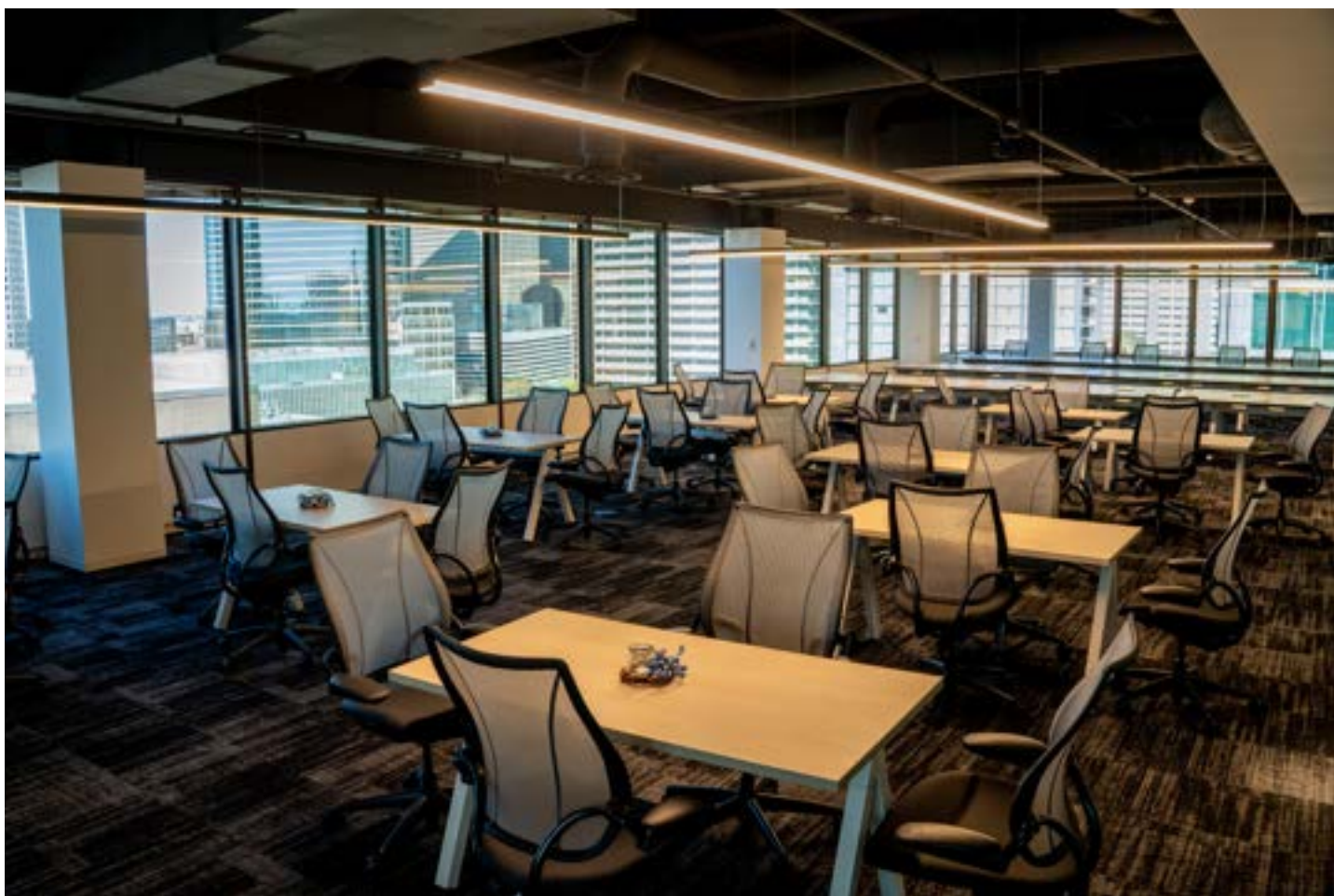




UHD@1801 Main

Photo: Craig Loper, Mitchell Loper





Meeting rooms like those pictured will promote collaboration between alumni and current Gator students and staff, as well as provide space for programming related to the UHD Center for Crime, Urban Research, and Education.

Photos: Craig Loper, Mitchell Loper





After The Launchpad, a litany of facilities enhancements and expansions will unfold, and the list is almost exhausting to write: campus entryway arches, bridges that span the bayous and Travis to connect with the Theater District, a Performing Arts Center, active green spaces, competitive sports facilities, and student housing, a fundamental piece of not only growing the student population but creating campus community. By 2050, the university will be able to provide student housing for more than 4,000 students.

On their own, each of these projects would be exciting. Considered together, they form a bold, durable, and malleable response to the challenges to come and ensure that the campus will remain a welcoming place in support of academic excellence and student success.

“The future ain’t what it used to be,” said Yankees great Yogi Berra, but he’s only halfway right—at UHD, the future isn’t what it was...it’s better.

## ACADEMIC EXPANSION

In his 2024 State of the University address, President Blanchard articulated the impetus for UHD 2050, as he spoke directly to the students in attendance: “You are the reason we exist and the reason we serve... Let no one tell you that you are not a representation of greatness. I stand here today to tell you that you are, and you represent the hope and promise of this university.”

How, then, will UHD develop academically to fulfill that promise? The answer is manifold.

First, the Academic Master Plan will serve as a dynamic roadmap to inform and support the development of new programs. A living document, the plan will be updated annually through a process that is both collaborative and highly visible to faculty, staff, students, and external stakeholders. Grounded in a set of shared principles, the plan provides clear structures that will guide faculty from ideation to program launch and beyond.

And it’s already borne fruit, as a Master of Educational Leadership, a Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity, and a Business Intelligence graduate certificate have been set in motion, with a Bachelor of Arts in Translation and a Master of Social Work to come. More than 10 additional programs are outlined in the plan as

well, including programming in engineering technology, green technology, computer science, and artificial intelligence—all aimed at addressing growing needs in the workforce.

*“The Academic Master Plan and the QEP are vital pieces of our approach to ensure student success at UHD. Combined, they form a comprehensive pathway where all Gators are equipped with skills that will take them anywhere.”*

— Deborah E. Bordelon, Ph.D., Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs & Provost

The other means of fulfilling students’ potential is the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), which is currently in development. A comprehensive initiative that addresses both academic and extra-curricular offerings, the QEP will equip all Gator graduates with the skills necessary for success in today’s (and tomorrow’s) dynamic world. Adaptability, communication, professionalism, and leadership are just a few key skills that will be addressed and developed from the day students set foot on campus to when they cross the commencement stage.

Ultimately, UHD 2050 is about much more than buildings and programs. It’s about affirming, and reaffirming, the university’s commitment to its core values: increased opportunity, socioeconomic mobility, and academic excellence. By embracing the challenges of the future, UHD will not only serve its students but also drive the growth of the city of Houston, and it is this vision—the one articulated in UHD 2050—that ensures that UHD will continue to be a catalyst for positive change in the decades to come. 🦖

# Marilyn Davies Leads the Pack

BY MARIE JACINTO

## “I’m in the Marilyn Davies College of Business.”

It’s a sentence heard from many incoming freshmen, spoken with pride to be affiliated with the college, although they might not know that its name represents the largest gift in UHD history, a \$10 million endowment to support the college’s programs, faculty, and student services. Most importantly, it represents Marilyn Davies’ passion for UHD.

When asked why a culture of philanthropy matters, the native Houstonian doesn’t miss a beat. “When you’ve done well in life financially, it is generally in the second half of your life that you decide to give. People want to assure their children’s college education and their own financial futures are secure,” said Davies, “but after that, there’s an obligation to give back and help others.” Davies also recommends that donors pay attention to how their gift is used and remain engaged with the recipient organization.

Davies’ relationship with UHD began with summer school at UHD’s predecessor, South Texas Junior College. Later, she grew to admire the institution as both her brother and her son earned their bachelor’s degrees from UHD. A Gator to the core, her son went on to earn his master’s degree at UHD.

She graduated from Texas Tech University in 1970 with a B.S. degree in Mathematics and began her career in computer sales, then the oil and gas industry. In the 80s, Davies purchased the assets of Bailey Banks Seismic, becoming CEO. In 1991, Davies started her own data brokerage business to market seismic data to

energy companies. The company is the proprietor of the Professional Geophysics Inc. database that includes data related to exploration areas and basins across the U.S.

Although Davies remains a busy executive, she is often on the UHD campus. She serves on the President’s Leadership Council and received UHD’s Excellence in Leadership Award this year, which, going forward, will be named in her honor into perpetuity: the Marilyn Davies Excellence in Leadership Award.

Davies’ immense generosity helps Gators achieve their dreams in business, whether they’re first-time students or returning to further their education.

Photo: Craig Loper





## Dear UHD Family and Friends,

For the last 50 years, philanthropy has been at the heart of UHD's mission to put our remarkable students first in all we do, from the moment they receive their acceptance letter to the day they cross the stage at commencement. Together, we and generous donors, such as those listed here, will help them open their minds, transform their futures, and, ultimately, reshape the world. Under the steady leadership of President Blanchard, every investment in UHD—whether for student scholarships, academic programs, or emergency grants—honors our unwavering commitment to



providing the highest quality education to all Gators.

Today, there are many ways for alumni and friends like you to lend your support. I encourage you to explore UHD's strategic priorities and giving opportunities at [www.uhd.edu/future](http://www.uhd.edu/future).

Whether through scholarships, programmatic support, or new initiatives, your generosity

ensures a brighter future for our students, our university, and our community.

On behalf of our students, faculty, and staff, thank you for helping us make a lasting difference. Together, we are truly a force for the future.

With gratitude,

Javier "Jay" L. Zambrano  
Vice President for Advancement and University Relations  
University of Houston-Downtown

With gratitude, the University of Houston-Downtown acknowledges all our individual donors. This publication lists names of donors who made gifts, pledges, and in-kind donations from September 1, 2023 to August 31, 2024.

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*list continues on page 34*





Defying

# *the* Odds

**LUCIA ROMO**

*By Marie Jacinto*

**ANDY BERRIOS**

*By Hayden Bergman*

**PATRICK CABALLERO**

*By Debra McGaughey*

Gator grit is real. Not that attending college isn't a challenge for most undergrads across the nation, but UHD students often have additional struggles along with work and family obligations. It takes heart and soul, desire and determination, courage and brains to overcome the odds and succeed with diploma in hand and a promising future ahead.

The following three profiles are about so much more than student success—they are about the passion that defines these exceptional Gators who, like thousands of other UHD students and grads, are making a difference in our communities.



## LUCIA ROMO

She's the mother of five—from a 4-year-old to a freshman at Texas Tech. She's a student at UHD Northwest, currently teaching third grade through the Gators2Teachers program. She's President of the Be a Teacher Club and Associate Dean of Community Engagement of DAIR to Teach. The best part? She graduates in May 2025 with a bachelor's degree in Urban Education for Early Childhood through Grade Six with Bilingual Supplement.

Meet Lucia Romo.

How does she manage it all? When asked, Romo just laughs. "Color coding. I'm juggling five schedules along with my own, so I color code my kids on my planner. My days are planned by the hour."

With hopes to secure a contract at Klein ISD next fall, Romo personifies student success. But the road to becoming an elementary school teacher was never direct, nor certain.

"Teaching has always been my dream, but then marriage and kids happened. In 2016, I started taking a few courses, but I didn't know if I would make it. I am first generation and the child of immigrants." The unexpected death of her father took an emotional toll, and she took a couple of semesters off. "I had a hard time. Thankfully, Lone Star College-University Park professors guided me through the reset. After earning my Associate of Arts in Teaching, I knew I wanted something more and that becoming a teacher was attainable."

She began her studies at UHD in 2022 as a transfer student. She found the faculty to be great mentors, not just as professors but also as well-rounded human beings. She particularly credits Dr. Steven White and Professor Johanna Byrd Moye, the advisor for the Be a Teacher Club. Romo also calls Professor Catalina Lugo "an angel." She's the faculty member who preps students for the state exam for the bilingual component, which Romo has already passed. "Her emotional support makes all the difference."

Starting last fall, Romo began participating in the new Gators2Teachers program, giving her an entire year of student-teaching experience in the classroom. Unusual for a residency program, she's also getting paid.

"Over time, my dream started feeling real. Teaching is something I am passionate about that really gives me my drive. I'm loving every step of the way."



Photo: Andy Berrios

## ANDY BERRIOS

In the blisteringly fast-paced world of data science, algorithms are trained and retrained, able to predict everything from stock prices and earthquakes to customer preferences and crime rates. The pace is, for many, much too quick. Not so for Andy Berrios, a current student in UHD's Master of Data Analytics (MSDA) program and one of our newest alums (Computer Science, '24)—for him, it's just right.

By his own admission, however, this wasn't always the case. As the son of Honduran immigrants, he had many false starts on his educational journey. "I dropped out of college twice before my time at UHD," Berrios said. "I just never felt capable of completing a college degree." These academic anxieties were compounded by financial



ones as well, and he didn't make much progress beyond his associate degree.

That changed when he discovered a bevy of scholarships (the Lone Star Scholarship and the Texas Transfer Grant, among them) for which he qualified. Berrios applied, and, perhaps to no one's surprise but his own, he was granted funds that relieved his financial burden and allowed him to reach his full potential.

After earning a bachelor's degree, Berrios landed a role as a data scientist at Kellogg's (a position he still holds), where he quickly became immersed in the challenges of working with large datasets. His current project, for example, involves creating a machine-learning model to predict which customers are most likely to pay their bills late.

The project is complex, involving thousands of variables and a decision-tree algorithm. For



Photos: Mitchell Loper

Berrios, it's fascinating. "It's a great opportunity to apply my skills to a real-world problem," he said. "And it's also a way to help companies improve their operations."

Outside of the classroom, Berrios was, and still is, dedicated to his professional development, so much so that he helped lead two student organizations on campus: the UHD chapter of the Computing Alliance of Hispanic-Serving Institutions as a student advocate, and as the leader-in-residence of the Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities.

His best piece of advice for Gators? "Enjoy your time, join clubs, attend events, make friends. But also prioritize your success outside of the classroom by developing yourself professionally."

## PATRICK CABALLERO

Rose Caballero looks deeply into the eyes of her son, Patrick, and studies his expressions intensely. Her face is a mere five inches from his, a distance so close that it seems at once uncomfortable but also extremely loving and moving.

"Patrick, I'm here. What do you want her to know?" she asks.

Ms. Caballero takes a few moments to listen to her son speak, then shares with a visitor the message he cannot easily say for himself: He wants to go to the University of Houston-Downtown's graduate school to get his master's degree. He just hasn't decided which program it will be.

Caballero, 44, is the embodiment of determination against great odds. He has Huntington's disease (HD), a rare, inherited, progressive, and incurable neurodegenerative disease that affects the brain and nervous system. He was diagnosed with it when he was 33, his mother says, after having car accidents he could not explain.

There are about 41,000 people in the U.S. with HD, according to the Huntington's Disease Society of America. These days, Caballero experiences involuntary muscle movements and has difficulty speaking and standing.

But none of these symptoms stopped him from getting college degrees. Caballero was one of more than 1,200 UHD graduates at NRG Stadium in May 2024. He was wheeled across the

stage wearing his UHD gown and stole; fashionable, pink suede loafers; and a smile as wide as the sea of attendees in the audience who cheered him on. Caballero received a Bachelor of Arts in English through in-person and hyflex classes.

"I was so excited because I accomplished it. It was validation," he says proudly.

"To see Patrick succeed and graduate from UHD is a beautiful reminder of why we do what we do," says Dr. Janina Arrington, UHD's Assistant Vice President for Student Success. "We are so proud of him."

Caballero has a long history of high achievement. He began reading at age 3, and finished his schoolwork before his classmates, his mother says. He started taking piano lessons at 10 and taught himself to play the clarinet, flute, baritone, and cello.

He is a poet, reads dictionaries for fun, loves to infuse long words into his essays, and taught himself to speak four languages fluently: German, French, Korean, and Mandarin Chinese.

A 1998 graduate of Clear Creek High School in League City, Caballero started as a music major at the University of Houston. He also received an associate degree from San Jacinto College in 2008.

Caballero's passion for education never waned. In 2010, he enrolled in both a theological seminary and UHD. But in 2013, he was officially diagnosed with HD. The realization led him to depression, and he eventually dropped out.

For the next nine years, Caballero used his extraordinary intelligence to discover all he could about his illness. Then, in 2022, he heard a sermon by Bishop T.D. Jakes on TV and told his mother he could do it.

"Do what?" his mother asked.

"Go back to school and complete my degree," Caballero replied.

In August 2022, Caballero returned to UHD. "As a student, I have significantly grown both as a writer and critical thinker," he says.

Today, Caballero is an ambassador and leader in the HD community, and he encourages others with HD to keep striving and reaching higher. And he is proud to be a UHD Gator.

"If you start something, you should finish it," he says. "It's all in a person's mind. As for me, I always want to be the best." 🦋

Opposite page: Caballero refuses to let his rare condition stop him from achieving his goals.



# LOVE YA, TOMORROW

UHD's Center for Urban Agriculture  
and Sustainability Takes Action Today

BY MARIE JACINTO





Top: Dr. Lisa Morano  
 Middle: Pedro Rodriguez Navarro,  
 Abdulrahman Omar, Delwin Sunil,  
 and Isaac Mendoza  
 Bottom: Jessica Gutierrez De La Paz

Photos: Top, Nicki Evans.  
 All others, Marc Williams.

*“In our obscurity—in all this vastness—there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves. It is up to us.”*

– Carl Sagan

Although the famous astronomer’s words are not the vision statement for UHD’s Center for Urban Agriculture and Sustainability (CUAS), they very well could be. Dr. Lisa Morano, Professor of Biology and Microbiology and Director of CUAS, understands that solving sustainability issues at the local level is as important as addressing problems through federal policy.

“Supporting a healthy planet is not only important for the creatures we share the planet with, but it is also ultimately linked to our own health—both now and for future generations,” said Morano. That’s why she and the CUAS staff, Adriana Penabad, are working to create sustainable neighborhoods throughout Houston by engaging UHD faculty and students through research; on-campus experiential learning opportunities, including recycling and gardening programs; and public conversations.

For instance, the CUAS organized 100 UHD volunteers to serve as Recycling Ambassadors during Discovery Green’s Earth Day Houston last April. Volunteering in two-hour shifts, the Ambassadors showed attendees how to sort their waste as reusable, recyclable, or compostable, meeting the challenge of a waste-free event by diverting 90% of the event’s waste from landfills. At the same time, Associate Professor of Design Natacha Poggio showcased her students’ artwork addressing environmental activism at the Water Works Festival at Discovery Green. Poems written by students in Dr. Laura Cesarco Eglin’s creative writing class were also featured.

As part of UHD’s Earth Month and 50th Anniversary observances, Morano presented “From Information to Action: Sustainability Across Houston” at UHD and moderated the panel that included environmental journalist Ana Bueno; Jaime González of the Student Conservation Association; Naomi Kuo, a local mixed media and social practice artist; and Steve Stelzer of the Citizens’ Environmental Coalition (CEC).

Last October, UHD hosted the 11th Annual Greater Houston Environmental Summit, organized by the CEC, to promote sustainability and environmental education. “Exposing students to real-life issues helps provide context for what they’re learning, and it introduces them to valuable connections in the local environmental community,” said Morano. “Hosting the summit was an honor, allowing us to show off our campus (especially the College of Sciences and Technology building, the first LEED Gold building in the University of Houston System) while driving change and commitment to sustainability in the Houston region.” 🌱



# World Series Dreamin'

*Gators Have a Sparkling Season on the Diamond*

by Hayden Bergman



Seasons, as is their wont, come and go. Not so for UHD's 2024 baseball season. That season will stay, if only in the minds of the players, parents, and coaches who participated, along with the minds of every Gator who was rooting for them during their run to the National Collegiate Baseball Association (NCBA) Division II World Series.

Coming into the season, Head Coach Scipio Spinks (former Houston Astros and St. Louis Cardinals pitcher) expected a challenge, as his team was inexperienced. "My last team, I had coached them for two and a half, three years," he said. This year? "It didn't look good."

After practices and exhibition games in the fall, things came together, and by the time Texas Christian University (TCU) came to town, Spinks thought the team had found its way.

Still, he wasn't sure.

After winning the series two games to one, though, he knew he had something.

After the TCU win, the team entered the regional playoffs, where they posted wins against highly ranked Arkansas and Arlington Baptist University. And just like that, Spinks' vision for the season was

a reality: They were headed to Alton, Illinois, the site of the NCBA World Series.

Awaiting them was their toughest challenge yet: The Ohio State University (OSU).

## THE WORLD SERIES

OSU, with its superior depth, was one thing. Combine that with a rowdy stadium atmosphere, and the environment was enough to overwhelm. "The music was so loud, we had to scream at each other to hear," said Capulong, an Accounting major and pitcher on last year's team (he helped coach this year as he had exhausted his NCBA eligibility).

Spinks said that, even though he knew some guys were nervous, he wasn't worried: "A few of the guys were a little jittery. I could see it. I always put my hand on their chest to feel their heartbeat, and I tell the guys whose hearts are really thumping, 'If it wasn't beating, there'd be something wrong.'" Drawing on his MLB experience, Spinks said this kind of mental work helps players control their anxieties.

His tactics worked, as UHD immediately gained a three-run lead on the Buckeyes. After OSU put up two runs in the third, the game went scoreless for two more innings, until the Gators broke through in the top of the sixth, bringing the run count to 4-2.

In the bottom of the sixth, the Buckeyes relied on their depth, making a timely substitution that would ultimately decide the game. With fresh legs, they loaded the bases, but not before UHD recorded two outs.

"They had 30 guys," said Spinks. "We walked in there with 12, and by the end our team was just dead tired." The fatigue showed, unfortunately, as the Gators couldn't protect their 4-2 lead.

Despite the loss, Capulong said it showed him and the rest of the team they could compete with any ball club, anywhere. For Spinks, it showed him the team's resilience, as many of the players fought through injuries during the game.

## GATOR GRIT

That resilience would be on display the next day when the Gators took on State University of New York (SUNY)-Cortland during the double-elimination tournament. This time, the game was a stalemate from the first pitch until the fifth inning, when UHD finally got a man around the bases to take a lead they would not relinquish. Final score: 3-2.



On Sunday, May 19, the team played its final game of the year: an 8-3 loss to West Chester University (WCU) that eliminated UHD from the NCBA Division II World Series competition.

While the elimination was disappointing, the season was not, said Spinks. "Many of the players matured as students and young men, learning skills like resilience, decision-making, time management, emotional intelligence, and teamwork."

And just as their season had unfolded, full of surprises and unexpected joys, it ended much the same.

After the final game, Spinks called one of his connections with the St. Louis Cardinals (where he pitched 1972-73) to let them know he and the team were in the area. "They took our boys down to the field, then sat us in box seats right behind first base."

Mark Emmert, Senior Content Writer for Cardinals Publications, said the Cardinals were delighted to host the Gator squad. "[Spinks] was one of the most popular Cardinals players of his era. It is no surprise that he has continued to be an ambassador for the sport that he played with such obvious joy."

Of course, next season will be here soon, along with new players, while the current ones will move on to internships, careers, and families. For his part, Capulong said the season will stay with every member of the team. "No one had an ego, and we all understood that we all had a part, that we all contributed...I've made lifelong friends." 🐾

Facing page :  
Hunter Hillegeist leads  
off from first base.

Photo: Kyle Capulong

This page:  
Coach Spinks and the  
Gators were given  
exclusive access at  
Busch Stadium.

L to R, back row:  
Julian Maldonado,  
Colton Jones,  
Jonathan Ruiz,  
Julian Chapa,  
Hunter Hillegeist,  
Chance Thurston,  
David Garcia

L to R, front row:  
Channing Vernon,  
Marcus Gomez,  
Nathan Martinez,  
Trey Leyba,  
Dylan Suarez,  
Jose Torres,  
Leon Walker,  
Scipio Spinks

Photo courtesy of the  
St. Louis Cardinals.  
Photo: Taka Yanagimoto



# Places With a Past

The surprising histories behind UHD's building sites

**W**ith its proximity to the birthplace of Houston at Allen's Landing, the university's campus is actually tied to the earliest history of the city and remains connected to the future of the region in powerful ways.

## 1. One Main Building

(built in 1929)

Cotton warehouses and a brewery originally stood on the site of UHD's One Main Building. By the 1920s, Houston's tremendous growth in commercial activity underscored the need for a new center to connect merchants and transportation. The M & M Building was designed around a mall for merchant exhibits and included clubs, lounges, restaurants, 40 street and arcade stores, offices and suites, a parking garage, and a dock with access to two rail lines.

It opened in 1930 at a cost of more than \$6 million as the largest building in the city and the third tallest but would face bankruptcy. In 1968, it was purchased by South Texas Junior College for \$4 million. The University of Houston acquired the assets in 1974, renaming it the University of Houston Downtown College.

## 2. Academic Building

(built in 1997)

Long before there were parties on the South Deck, the site of the Academic Building was the property of the American Brewing Association with a brewery, ice factory, cold storage facility, and hotel. With Prohibition, local breweries began to convert to ice factories. The loss of profits and damage from floods did not bode well for the building's future. According to an Academic Building evacuation report: "The 1935 flood damaged brewery buildings, and in 1948 a brewery warehouse burned. A car parking lot was later built at the site."

## 3. Jesse H. Jones Student Life Center

(built in 1997)

Allen & Fulton Cotton Warehouses stood on this site overlooking White Oak Bayou in the city's early days. During the Civil War, the warehouses were converted into a Confederate prison camp. In the early 20th century, the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad Company built a passenger station at this site, directly behind the American Brewing Association building. The station was demolished in 1958, and remnants of the tracks have become part of the White Oak Bayou Greenway Trail.

## 4. Willow Street Pump Station

(built in 1902)

The Willow Street Pump Station may be the oldest building on the UHD campus, but another structure, Allen's Steam Saw Mill at the confluence of White Oak and Buffalo bayous, was originally on the site. That's why a nearby street is still called Steam Mill Street.

The Willow Street Pump Station was Houston's first waste and sewage treatment facility, helping pave the way for federal money to support the creation of the Houston Ship Channel. UHD bought and rehabilitated the structure in 2003, updating it for contemporary use.

## 5. Commerce Street Building

(built in 2004)

From 1900 until 1919, Flaxman Dry Goods and Notions, a part of Houston's thriving commercial area with access to the rail and docks on the bayou, stood on this site. In time, the area gave way to other businesses. In 1961, the Continental Houston Motor Hotel was built on the site, later becoming the Harley Hotel. From 1982 until 1991, the building provided on-campus housing as the University of Houston Downtown Center. The 200-room dormitory was demolished in 1993, paving the way for the construction of the current building to house the College of Public Service.



## 6. Marilyn Davies College of Business Building

(built in 2007)

One of Houston's earliest economic drivers was the railroads, so it is only fitting that UHD's Marilyn Davies College of Business (MDCOB) stands on the site of a former warehouse that served the railroad. By the 1890s, the Southern Pacific/Hardy Railyards were immense, spanning from Vine Street to Hardy Street. Railroad traffic decreased after World War II, and the railyards were demolished sometime after 2007, giving rise to the transformation of Hardy Yards into a 50-acre mixed-use development.



## 7. College of Sciences and Technology, Wellness & Success Center

(built in 2023)

UHD's two newest buildings are on a site that was once home to Allen and Fulton's mid-19th century cotton yard and warehouse, as well as the M.K. & T railyard warehouses.





# A Timeline: 50 Years of UHD

In 2024, we celebrated the University of Houston-Downtown's 50th Anniversary. For half a century, UHD has stood out as a place of caring, learning, and leading. UHD's collaborative, experiential approach to education, alongside its culture of care, have long been hallmarks of a UHD education, allowing generations of scholars to gain the skills they need for success in their careers, communities, and beyond.

As we looked back on 50 years of history, we celebrated with a series of events and, at the same time, planned ahead for growth for the next 50 years. As we wrap up the year that was, we take another look at the milestones along the way and the celebrations that made up our 50th anniversary year.

## 1974

The University of Houston acquires the assets of South Texas Junior College and opens the University of Houston Downtown College (UHDC).

Dr. W.I. Dykes, who was president of South Texas Junior College, is named interim president of the newly formed UHDC. Dr. Dykes was one of the first professors at South Texas Junior College in its inaugural year. The library in One Main Building is named for him.

The first four-year degree awarded at UHDC is a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice.



## 1975

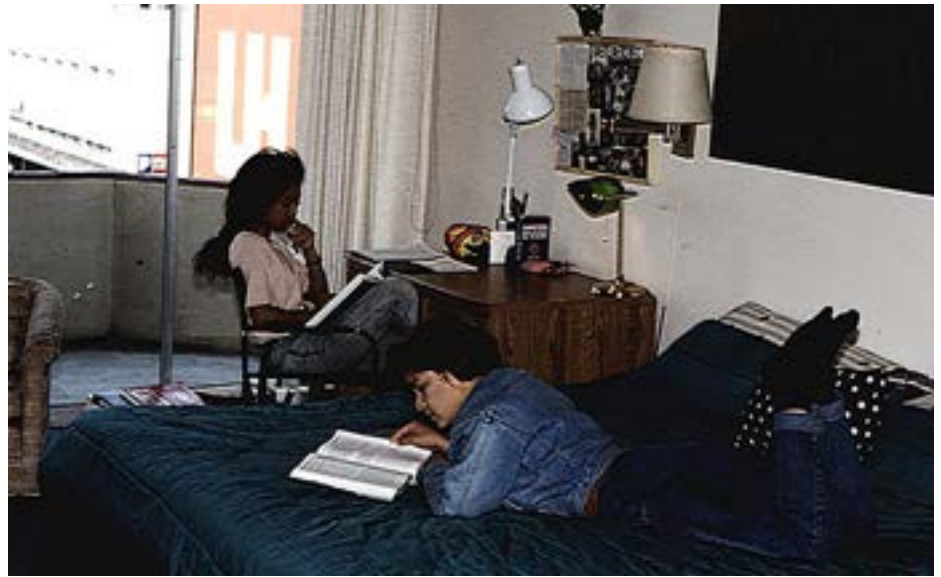
Dr. J. Don Boney, an educator and former head of both the Houston Independent School District and Houston Community College, becomes the chancellor of UHDC after Dr. Dykes retires. He serves from 1975 to 1979.



## 1980

Dr. Alexander F. Schilt serves as UHD's second president. After his tenure at UHD, he becomes the president of Eastern Washington University and returns to Houston in 1989 to become Chancellor of the University of Houston System.





## 1981

At the heart of the university are the O'Kane Gallery and the O'Kane Theatre. Since the late 1970s, these UHD mainstays have given students the opportunity to hone their artistic skills and participate in the creative process.

## 1983

UHDC officially shortens its name to the University of Houston-Downtown (UHD). UHD is the fastest-growing campus in Texas and by 1984 boasts a student population of 7,339 students.

## 1987

Under the guidance of poet and faculty member Lorenzo Thomas, the first issue of *The Bayou Review*, a student-run literary and arts magazine, is published. *Bayou Review* continues to be published biannually, featuring works from a diverse group of writers, poets, and visual artists.







1988

Dr. Manuel Pacheco becomes the third president of UHD. Under Pacheco's leadership the university's two academic divisions are expanded into three colleges: College of Business; College of Science, Math & Technology; and College of Humanities and Social Sciences.



1992

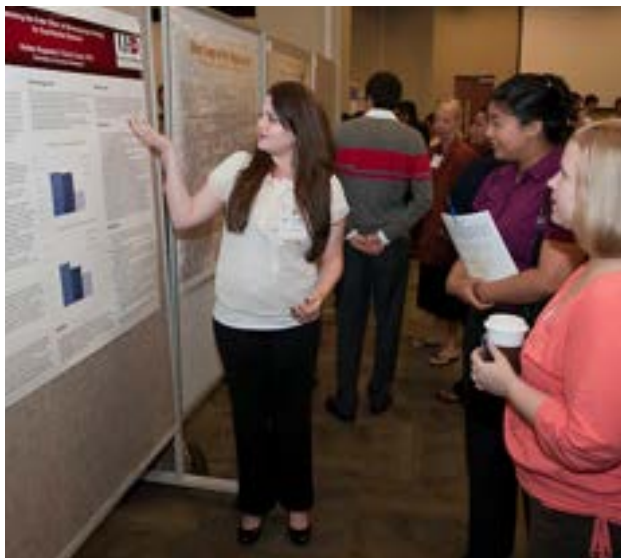
Dr. Max Castillo is named UHD's fourth president. His 17 years at UHD result in the expansion of UHD's physical campus with four new buildings, increased enrollment, and faculty growth.

1991

UHD adds a fourth college to the existing three academic units: University College.



Photo: UHD Jazz Artist in Residence Robert Wilson speaks with members of the UHD Civic Jazz Orchestra, now known as the Houston Civic Jazz Orchestra. Wilson founded the organization in August of 1991.



## 1994

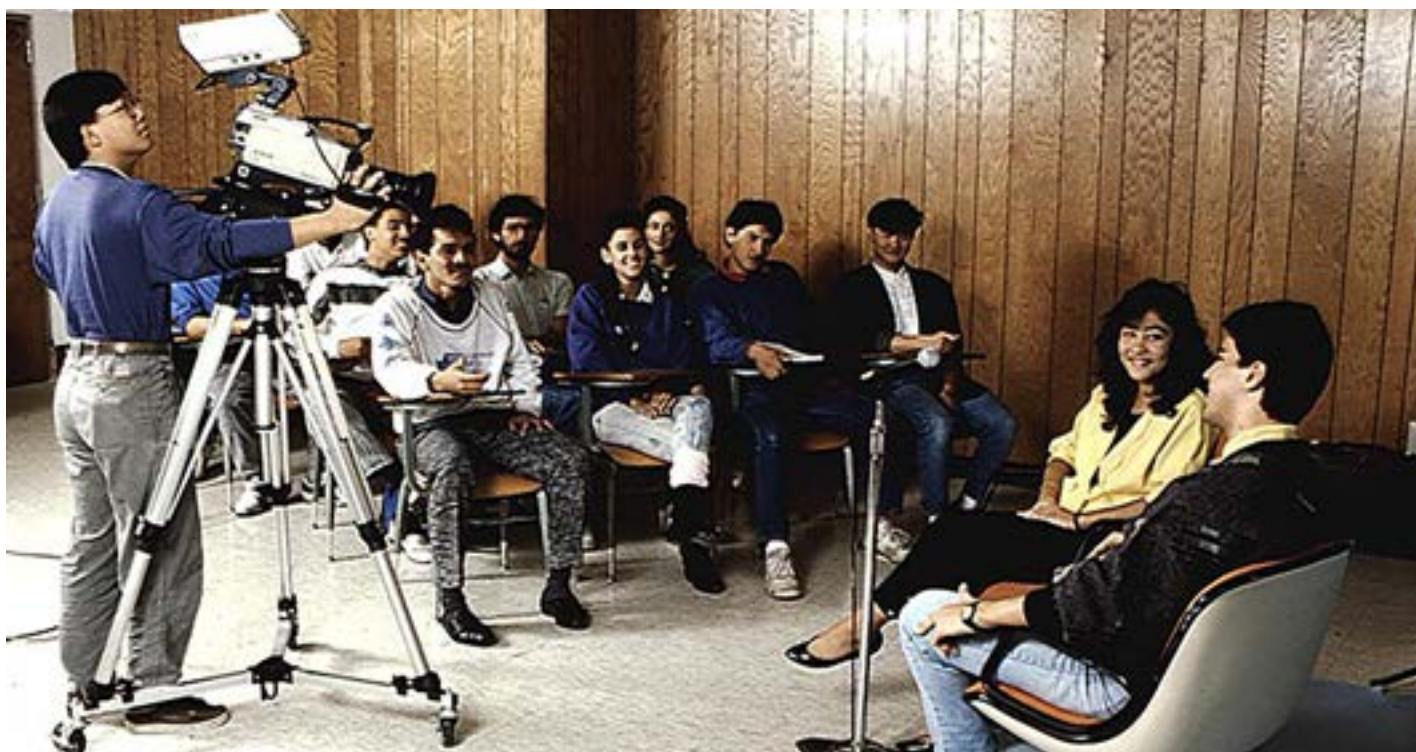
UHD expands its physical location for the first time with the addition of two new buildings: the Academic Building and the Jesse Jones Student Life Center.

## 1997

Starting with UH Fort Bend and expanding to include a location at North Harris County Community College (now Lone Star College), UHD begins offering distance learning and distance degree programs. Today, 20 degree programs are offered by UHD at its UHD Northwest Campus.

## 1999

UHD's Scholars Academy, an academically competitive program in the College of Sciences and Technology, is created. The program has awarded more than \$7 million in scholarships to more than 1,500 undergraduates for at least one semester of coursework.







## 2000

During the 2000-2001 academic year, UH D is authorized by the State of Texas to offer graduate degrees.

Master of Science in Criminal Justice is UH D's first graduate degree.

## 2003

UH D purchases the Willow Street Pump Station, one of Houston's oldest buildings, to provide additional meeting and event space for the university and surrounding communities.

## 2004

The City of Houston opens its first light rail line on New Year's Day 2004, which travels from UH D to Reliant Park along Main and Fannin Streets. The light rail continues to provide UH D students and employees with public transportation.

UH D expands on the site of the razed University of Houston-Downtown Center at the corner of Main and Commerce streets with the new Commerce Street Building, housing the newly created College of Public Service.



Financial Aid

College Relations







## 2007

UHD enrollment climbs to a record 11,793 students.

The Shea Street Building greets students as the new home of UHD's College of Business.

## 2009

Dr. William V. Flores is named the fifth president of UHD. He leads efforts to transition UHD from an open-admissions institution to one with freshman and transfer admission standards and increased online offerings. He launches new undergraduate and graduate degrees, specifically an MBA program.

## 2010

UHD Northwest begins operations at Lone Star College-University Park, providing students the opportunity to complete their UHD degrees at that location.





## 2016

Dr. Michael A. Olivas takes the helm as interim president at UHD. He plays a major role in projects that transform the university, including a \$10 million gift that named the Marilyn Davies College of Business, the purchase of a 17-acre land parcel north of the One Main Building, and articulation agreements with Houston Community College and Lone Star College.



## 2017

Dr. Juan Sánchez Muñoz is selected as the sixth president of UHD. During his tenure, UHD posts its largest enrollment in school history – more than 15,000 – and its highest graduation and retention rates. UHD launches new academic programs, including Data Science and Nursing.

Hurricane Harvey ravages the university. The downtown campus sustains millions of dollars in damage. But because of “Gator grit,” UHD perseveres and is restored.

## 2019

UHD’s College of Sciences and Technology Building opens. This laboratory building features science on display and is the first LEED Gold building in the University of Houston System.







2020

Dr. Antonio D. Tillis serves as the University of Houston-Downtown's interim president from June 2020 through March 2021. He launches several new initiatives, including an internship program with the city of Houston.

UHD shuts down in response to COVID-19 epidemic. It successfully pivots to online-only classes from February 2020 through March 2021.

2021

Dr. Loren J. Blanchard is named the seventh president of the University of Houston-Downtown on March 15, 2021.

Dr. Blanchard launches the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan: A New Paradigm, with student success as the university's number one priority.

Under Dr. Blanchard's leadership, the university receives more than \$30 million in awards from public and private funders who support its vision, recognize its progress, and believe in its potential.

2023

Expansion of the university's campus continues with the opening of UHD's Wellness & Success Center. The 75,000 square foot facility includes a bouldering wall, indoor running track, and three courts for basketball, volleyball, and/or badminton.



## 2024 UHD's 50th Anniversary Year

January 2024 saw the launch of UHD's 50th anniversary year with a student-focused kickoff event and "An Evening of Jazz" with the Houston Civic Jazz Orchestra (originally founded as the UHD Civic Jazz Orchestra).

What followed was a series of lectures, performances, and other special events capped in the fall by the 50th Anniversary Gala and an unforgettable concert by jazz great Terence Blanchard.

UHD pulled out all the stops for its 50th Anniversary Gala, held at the Hilton Americas-Houston on Saturday, October 12, 2024, and emceed by Khambrel Marshall. Nearly \$300,000 was raised at the event to support scholarships, helping future generations of Gators achieve their academic dreams.

UHD students stole the show. During the black-tie dinner-dance, students Angie Monterosso and Precious Meneru shared their stories, underscoring the life-changing impact of UHD scholarships. The UHD Concert Chorale opened the evening with a beautiful rendition of "America the Beautiful," and students surprised guests with a "flash mob," bringing guests to their feet dancing to the music of the David Caceres Band.



Floyd Newsum III, Janice Newsum, Dr. Blanchard, and Mary and Brian Rollins at UHD's 50th Anniversary Gala



UHD alums honored were:

*Dr. Aubrey McKenzie Jones,  
Alum on the Rise Award.*

*Dr. Krisshundria James,  
Alum Entrepreneur Award.*

*Sheriff Ed Gonzalez,  
Golden Gator Award.*

*Dr. Liza Alonzo,  
Golden Gator Award.*

*Chinaecherem Eze Coleman,  
Distinguished Alumnus Award.*

*Roy L. Jackson Sr.,  
Distinguished Alumnus Award.*

*Laura Dupree,  
Distinguished Alumnus Award.*

Marilyn Davies received the Excellence in Leadership Award, and, going forward, the award will be named in her honor into perpetuity: the Marilyn Davies Excellence in Leadership Award. The 2024 Corporate Partner of the Year Award went to Voya Financial.



Dr. Blanchard and Marilyn Davies



HCC Vice Chancellor Remmele Young,  
Laolu Davies-Yemitan, Khambrel Marshall



Dr. Liza Alonzo, Lenora Sorola-Pohlman,  
Dr. John Cisneros



UHD students lead the line dancing at the gala

On November 9, UHD presented “TERENCE BLANCHARD LIVE FOR UHD: Film Scores, Jazz and Beyond” at UH’s Cullen Performance Hall, featuring NEA Jazz Master, composer, and trumpeter Terence Blanchard; his band, The E-Collective; and student musicians from the UH Moores School of Music. With montages of the featured films on screens above the musicians, it was Terence’s music—from his scores for movies from “Mo Better Blues” to “Harriet”—that enthralled the audience from beginning to end.

That’s UHD’s year of celebration for its 50th Anniversary in a nutshell. Let’s raise a glass to the next 50 years!



Javier “Jay” L. Zambrano,  
Dr. Aubrey McKenzie Jones, Gabriela Smith



Terence Blanchard (Photo: Luz Castilla Hincapie)



Dr. Blanchard, UHS Chancellor Renu Khator,  
and Dr. Suresh Khator at the gala



Terence Blanchard and The E-Collective (Photo: Luz Castilla Hincapie)



Dr. Blanchard



## SUSTAINERS

*continued from page 11*

Max Castillo  
Dahlia Chaudhury  
Guillermo Cintron  
Cynthia N. Colbert  
Martin B. Cominsky  
Garret J. Etgen  
Goya Foods of Texas  
Deltra W. Hayes  
Jose Hernandez  
Karen B. Henderson  
Edward T. Hugetz  
Stormy and David C. Hull  
Family Fund  
Interfaith Ministries  
Hugh R. James  
Johnson Lumpkin Giving Fund  
Harold and Sally Maddocks  
Jose A. Marin  
Mary H. O'Truk  
The Mockingbird Foundation  
Andrea R. Shiloh  
SIM Houston  
Timothy J. Sykes  
Patrick J. and Kathleen M. Whelan  
Charitable Fund

Avenue Community Development  
Corporation

Claudia Baba  
Stephanie J. Babb  
Darlene M. Banks  
Courtney D. Banks  
Patricia G. Barnes  
Michael Barry  
Frank Bash  
Gerald A. Bass  
Jacqueline Batiste  
Tahisha Bazile  
Cora Beach  
Susan L. Beane  
Ana-Lisa B. Becerra  
Ronald S. Beebe  
Rocio Beiza  
Chris A. Bell  
Hector X. Beltran  
Eduardo A. Beltran  
Sylvia K. Bennett  
Naomi K. Berger-Perez  
Adrian Bermudez  
Swapn Bhattacharjee  
Tracie D. Bibbs  
Samuel H. Bible  
James J. Bishop  
Black Caucus of the American  
Lib. Assoc.

Ashley G. Blackburn  
Jennifer E. Bloom  
J.B. L. Bobbitt  
Stacie M. Boisseau-Moody  
Johan S. Bolivar  
John S. Bonario  
Vanessa L. Bongard  
Deborah E. Bordelon  
Whitney E. Botsford-Morgan  
David P. Branham  
David Branham Sr.  
Lisa M. Braysen  
Glynn S. Brewer  
Angelina Brown  
Amy R. Buck  
Wendy A. Burns-Ardolino  
Maria T. Cadena  
Joel Calix

Delois Campbell  
Brooke Campbell  
Carol L. Campbell  
Julio C. Canedo Soto  
Cecilia Capulong  
Diane J. Carpenter  
Maria R. Carrillo  
Theresa A. Case  
Mario Castillo  
Esther E. Castro  
Patricia Caver  
Luis R. Cedenio  
Amirali Moeini Chaghervand  
Youn-Sha Chan  
Jereann Chaney  
Liboria J. Chavez  
Kai-Cheng Chen  
Premalatha Chinnasami  
Raquel P. Chiquillo  
CM Electric Service  
Dinah A. Cohen  
Rachelle Conley  
Hiram A. Contreras  
Alfred D. Cooper  
Danya M. Corkin  
Jennifer A. Cornavaca  
Amber W. Countis  
Jackson T. Crawford  
Travis S. Crone  
Edmund P. Cueva  
Shannon M. Cunningham  
Mark L. Curran  
George A. Davis  
Scott W. Davis  
Casey J. Davis  
Katherine Day  
Austin J. Dejan  
Albert DeJesus-Rivera  
Ermelinda G. Delavina  
Prakash S. Deo  
Julie V. Dinh  
Georgina Dobek  
Kevin Dorsey  
Janet Dyer  
Vanessa A. Eastmond  
Isaac J. Elking  
Anne W. Engerrand

David Epstein  
Mehdi Esmaceliyan  
Ana G. Esparza  
Maria E. Estrada  
Louis D. Evans  
Exxon Mobil Foundation-Educational  
Huandong Faris  
Said M. Fattouh  
Lucas J. Fedell  
Colin W. Fletcher  
Maria T. Flores  
April N. Frank  
Sangeeta Gad  
Sonja Gaddy  
Gamma Alpha Omega Sorority Inc.  
Francisco J. Garcia  
Roland Garcia  
The Honorable Sylvia Garcia  
Rose M. Garza  
Amanda Garza  
Thomas J. Genoso  
Audrey J. Gilbreath  
Kimberly R. Gleason  
Maggie Goergen  
Thomas Goleman  
Heather H. Goltz  
Marcus Gomez  
Mercedes C. Gonzales  
Lynn Goode  
Jose Gracia  
Janusz Grebowicz  
Jack W. Griffin  
Angel R. Griffin  
Chandler B. Grivetti  
Stephen M. Guerra  
Thali Guerrero  
Bernice Guillen  
Crystal R. Guillory  
Omprakash K. Gupta  
H. E. Butt Grocery Company  
Rebecca J. Hamilton  
George L. Hampton  
LoShone F. Harvey  
Mahmud Hasan  
Lana Hayes  
Trent Heisser  
Mary A. Henderson

## FRIENDS OF UHD

**\$100 to \$999**

Selena A. Ables  
William D. Akers  
Sallie C. Alcorn  
Brenda Aldridge  
Darlene Alexander  
Syed A. Ali  
Franklin S. Allaire  
Liza M. Alonzo  
Robert G. Alonzo  
Jo Jean Anderson  
Raymond J. Anderson  
George W. Anderson  
Cynthia L. Andrews  
Quentin L. Arceneaux  
Edith Arredondo  
Carolyn Ashe-Butler  
Fannie Augustine

Susan M. Henney	Krystal D. Leblanc	Bridget H. Mueller	Incashiya D. Rawls
John P. Hernandez	Thomas R. Lee	Mitsue Nakamura	Stefany Records
Belinda A. Hernandez	Megan L. Lee	Jordan K. Napoleon	Timothy A. Redl
Brett D. Hobby	Emily B. Leffler	Mohamad R. Nayeypour	Vanessa Reed
Kevin H. Hoffman	Kionna R. LeMalle	Nathan R. Neale	Peter Ren
David Hoffman	Paul L. Leung	Bryan T. Nguyen	Rick J. Reyes
Albert F. Holden	Joel A. Levine	Nicole M. Nicholas	Rebecca C. Reyna
Don A. Holmes	Patti Lewis	Sharon A. Noel	Sandra Ridgeway
William Howze	Spencer W. Lightys	Rafael Nolasco	Ruth R. Robbins
Billy Hoya	P. J. Lipp	William J. Nowak	Cheryl L. Robertson
Judy Hoya	Todd C. Litton	Natasha B. Nowlin	Vida A. Robertson
Wan-Yen Huang	Zishang Cathy Liu	NRG Energy, Inc.	William F. Robinson
Michael A. Humphries	Cecilia Longoria	Leander J. Obregon	Gerardo Rodriguez
Scott Humphries	Jack P. Lowndes	Nadia Offord	Julio A. Rodriguez
Wajid Iqbal	Larry Lundstrom	Ikenna Ogbaa	Elvira R. Rodriguez
Marie L. Jacinto	Lisa M. Lyle	Valerie Cassel Oliver	Vanessa P. Rojas
Lauren D. Jackson	Suzanne Lyons	Cora L. Olorunnisomo	Reyna Romero
Thomas A. Jackson	Youlanda W. Mack	John L. Ondrey	Michael A. Rossi
Jeffrey M. Jackson	Michael H. MacKin	Arrianna O'Quin	Lauri S. Ruiz
Paula J. Jannett	David J. Maldonado	Winnie C. Ortiz	Miguel Ruiz
Sripriya Jayasankar	Mark W. Mallett	Sharon M. Owens	Timothy P. Rychlec
Raymond Jenkins	Michael W. Manuel	Olufunke A. Oyesanya	David B. Ryden
Ann S. Jennings	Bonnie C. Mar	Barbara Paige	Michele J. Sabino
Ikea M. Jernigan	Marathon Oil Company Foundation	Hope Pamplin	Blanca N. Saldana
Ben Johnson	Vanetta C. Marsh	Xyanthine O. Parillon	Amelia Salinas
Kenneth S. Johnson	Rosalinda Martinez	Serena Parke	Guadalupe A. Samudio
Kevin J. Johnson	Luis A. Martinez	Hitesh K. Patel	Selena Samudio
Ruth M. Johnson	Karim R. Masri	Texas Children's Pediatric	Diana L. Sanchez Ayala
Lisa I. Joyner	Chetiqua E. Matthews	Terry Pelz	Jermal D. Sanders
Karen C. Kaser	Daniel M. Maxwell	Reyna Pena	Jermal Sanders
Ralph G. Kauffman	William McDowell	Cristal Pena	Rashaun Sanders
Gregory Kehrier	Debra A. McGaughey	Diana K. Pence	Leeanna L. Santos
Sara Kellner	Lisa B. McGonigle	Kimberly Perry	Justin A. Sarabia
Shelley W. Kennedy	Ahmed Megahed	Lorraine Peterson	Thomas J. Savitsky
Donald K. Kesterson	Delia Melendez	Petroleum Accountants of Houston	Dagmar S. Scharold
Donna C. Kohlhausen	Diane M. Miller	Michael R. Pettiette	Rhonda L. Scherer
Jacqueline A. Kortz	Zeenat K. Mitha	Franklin Phan	Beth B. Schneider
Vidyasagar R. Kuppireddy	Lupita Montes	Vanessa D. Pigeon	Garold D. Sears
Tremaine W. Kwasikpui	Michelle Moosally	Irma Placencia	Richard Sebastiani
Ruby Lacour-Tyler	Jimmy Morales	Bernardo E. Pohl	Hossein A. Shahrokhi
Hugo A. Lagarda Herrera	Christina Morales	Lucille V. Pointer	Sawsan I. Shatleh
Kimberly L. Lambert-Thomas	Erica C. Morales	Danielle Ponton	Shell Oil Company Foundation
Vicki C. Lane	Lisa and Kevin Morano	Richard C. Powers	Katherine A. Shoemaker
Deanna Laster	Lisa D. Morano	Christian D. Purdy	
Ana A. Laurel	Cecil Mosqueda	Rebecca R. Quander	
Iride V. Lazo	Kelsey L. Mosteller	David Rainey	
Cengage Learning	Gladis Moya	Rupak Rauniar	

*list continues on page 48*



## 2024 FACULTY AWARDS

# Celebrate Excellence

Since his 2024 State of the University address, Dr. Blanchard has spoken extensively about UHD's "three E's": Excellence. Engagement. Expansion. UHD's faculty embody two of those E's on a daily basis, mirroring excellence in the classroom through focused teaching and exceptional service-learning opportunities while remaining engaged in the community. The following educators were honored by their peers for exhibiting these qualities at the highest level in teaching, research, and service.

### **1. Distinguished Faculty Award**

Windy Y. Lawrence, Ph.D.  
Professor & Director of UHD  
Center for Public Deliberation

### **2. Excellence in Service Award**

Heather Goltz, Ph.D., LCSW-S, MEd, MPH  
Social Work

### **3. Excellence in Scholarly/Creative Activities Award**

Laura Cesarco Eglin, MFA, Ph.D.  
Creative Writing - English

### **4. Outstanding Lecturer Award**

Albert DeJesus, Ph.D.  
History, Humanities and Languages

### **5. Excellence in Teaching Award**

Godwin Agboka, Ph.D.  
English

### **6. Outstanding Adjunct Award**

Margaret Mata, MA  
English

Photos: Mitchell Loper







# From the Silver Screen TO THE Digital World

FACULTY RESEARCH  
EARNS GRANT MONEY WHILE  
HONORING THE PAST

BY HAYDEN BERGMAN

**T**HROUGHOUT HIS 48 YEARS OF SERVICE TO UHD, ART PROFESSOR FLOYD NEWSUM TOUCHED AN UNTOLD NUMBER OF LIVES IN A POSITIVE WAY, PROVIDING A MODEL FOR HOW TO WORK, LIVE, AND BE IN THE WORLD.

Several faculty members in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) have followed Professor Newsum's lead, focusing their scholarly inquiries on the lives and legacies of those who have come before us. Happily, they are also in Professor Newsum's company in another way, in that national organizations are taking notice and rewarding their efforts of uncovering and preserving cultural heritage.

## THE SILVER SCREEN

Since 1965, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) has awarded billions of dollars in grants to high-quality, high-impact humanities projects that will promote excellence, wisdom, and the “lessons of history to all Americans.” Now, our own Dr. Chuck Jackson joins the prestigious group of awardees, as he earned a NEH grant to research the films of Jessie Maple, a Black American filmmaker who was one of the first to write, direct, and produce a feature-length film, “Will” (1981). This past summer, Jackson traveled to Bloomington, Indiana, to the Black Film Center & Archive, where he researched Maple’s films in an effort to add to the academic fields of archival film studies and Black film studies, along with bringing more attention to the filmmaker’s cinematography, late-1970s aesthetic and Harlem’s unique culture.

The project, titled “Jessie Maple’s Early Films: Moody Close-Ups on Harlem, 1975–81,” fills a crucial gap in film scholarship, said Jackson. “Maple might be called a small filmmaker because of the number of films she

directed, but her work represents a significant part of film history. Her work exemplifies her keen attunement to other peoples’ struggles, but the [Black Film Center & Archive] also holds important evidence of her own struggles, including her daily experiences as a camera person and as a director, fields dominated by white men throughout the 20th century (and still today).”

Maple also, Jackson said, worked outside of an established Hollywood system, preferring to take inspiration from the people and public spaces in Harlem, and she was deeply committed to the social and cultural usefulness of film. Apart from her artistic legacy, Maple also left a legacy of empowerment, as she “set a historical precedent for today’s most beloved cinematographers and directors, including Ava DuVernay, Kira Kelly, Nia Costa, and Kasi Lemmons.”

## THE DIGITAL WORLD

Since 2014, the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence (CTLE) has been driving innovation in teaching and learning through



Opposite:  
Dr. Chuck Jackson.  
His research fills a critical gap, since very little scholarly work has been done on Maple’s films.

Photo: Mitchell Loper

Left: Nautical Atlas of the World, Circular World Map of the Portuguese Hemisphere and Title Page, World Digital Library.





Left to right:  
Fabiola Vacatoledo,  
Jennifer Fuentes,  
Dr. Raquel Chiquillo,  
Dr. Gregory Dement

Photo: Courtesy of  
Dr. Gregory Dement

fostering a culture of belonging, collaboration, and continuous improvement at UHD.

This innovation often leads to the adoption of new instructional approaches and strategic initiatives that contribute to enhanced student success. On occasion, these collective efforts lead to successful bids for external grant funding. That's what happened recently as CTLE Director Gregory Dement, Ph.D., and Professor of Spanish, Raquel Chiquillo, Ph.D. collaborated as co-PIs with CTLE Instructional Designer Fabiola Vacatoledo and Online Learning Librarian Jennifer Fuentes on submission of a successful grant proposal to the Library of Congress (LOC).

The grant team's project, titled "Discovering Afro-Latino Heritage: A Reflective Story Map Project to Enhance Student Belongingness

and Learning," was awarded \$69,084 through the LOC's Connecting Communities Digital Initiative (CCDI). The story map(s) will explore Afro-Latino heritage with a focus on the trans-Atlantic slave routes to and in Latin America, the lives of enslaved Africans in the Caribbean, and the migration of Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Garifuna Afro-Latinos to the United States.

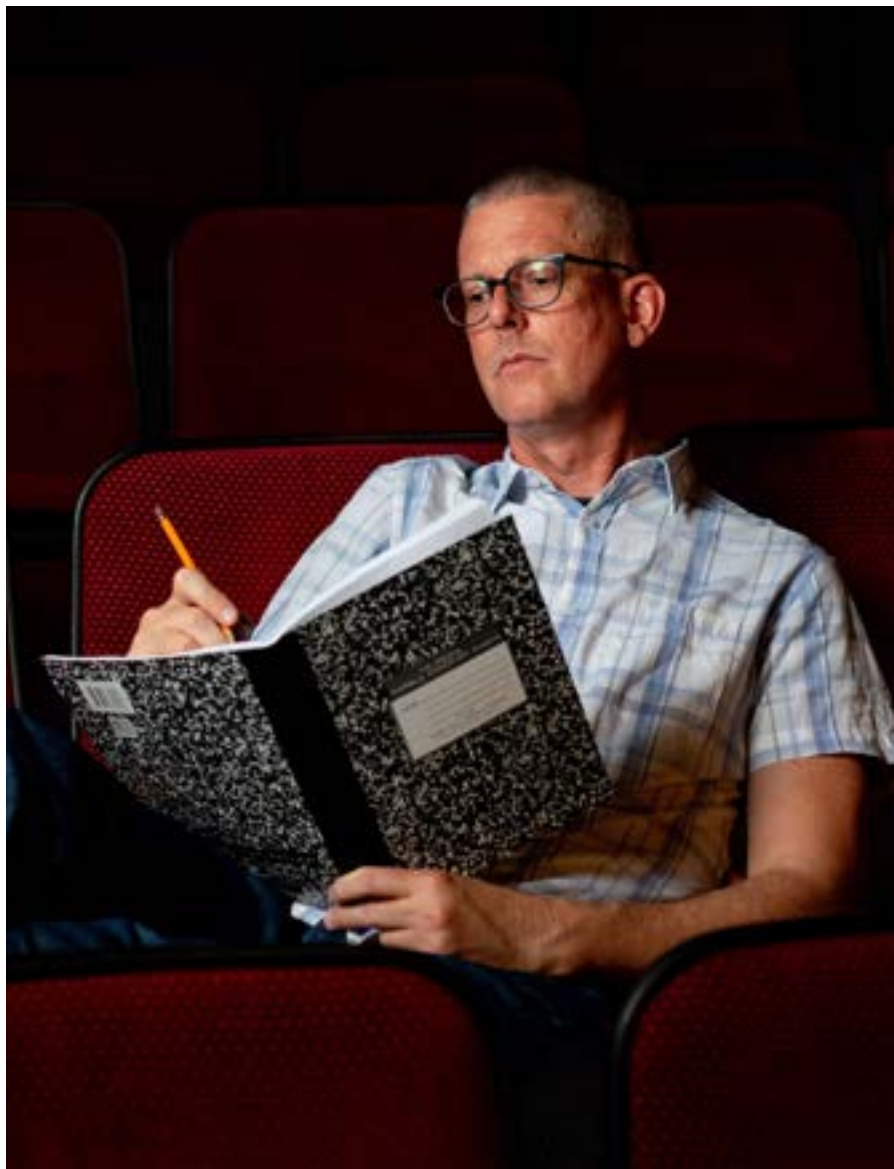
"Our goal with this project is to improve student success at UHD through the strategic use of digital and experiential learning strategies," said Dr. Dement. "By focusing on storytelling, we hope to build community and enhance our students' sense of belonging. In addition to the direct impact on target course curriculum, I am excited about the research and communication skills students will gain through engagement with this project."



For her part, Dr. Chiquillo sees the project as an opportunity to engage students in research. “I’m excited to receive this grant,” she said. “It will not only help our students participate in and learn about Afro-Latino communities but will also help their academic and intellectual confidence.”

In addition to providing a relevant and engaging resource for the broader UHD student body and community, this project seeks to enhance teaching and learning for Latin American and Latino Studies literature classes, especially those that focus on Afro-Latino writers and poets, that have had limited available material until now.

Vacatoledo hopes the story maps “lay the groundwork for more understanding, empathy, and empowerment of our Afro-Latino students



at UHD and in their communities” as a primary objective of the project is to increase students’ sense of belonging through building community. This objective aligns with giving students a voice and inviting them to share their stories. Students contributing to the Afro-Latino Story Map(s) will gain research skills, develop digital fluency, and engage in metacognition through reflecting on their own stories. Student deliverables might be submitted as narrative texts, videos, podcasts, digital maps, photographs, etc.

“This is a truly collaborative project for students, faculty, CTLE, the W.I. Dykes Library, and beyond,” said Fuentes. “That not only speaks to UHD’s commitment to educational and research endeavors, but also its commitment to fostering understanding and belongingness within the Houston area.” 📖

The NEH Award allowed Dr. Jackson to return to the Black Film Center & Archive in Bloomington, Indiana, which houses Maple’s films and other materials in a small collection.

Photo: Mitchell Loper



# A Match Made on Campus

BY HAYDEN BERGMAN



Fardin Ahmed and Carolina Hernandez on UHD's South Deck.

Photos: J. Andrade Visual Arts

What, many of us have asked at one point or another (Haddaway being the most prominent), is love? Is it eros, passion, something that quickens the heart? Maybe it's more workaday, akin to overcoming obstacles with someone, beating the proverbial odds that are stacked against two people by society or personal differences. Some say that it's simply "the marriage of true minds." For UHD alumni Fardin Ahmed (Computer Science, '23) and Carolina Hernandez (Bilingual Education, '23), it's all three. They exchanged contact info during a chance meeting on campus and from there, the timeline of their relationship reads like something out of romance fiction.

They became friends.

Grew closer.

Studied together.

They then became exclusive, went to Astros games, navigated their cultural differences (he is Bengali; she is Mexican), and completed their degrees. Then, of course, they became Gators for life. And if you aren't smitten yet, hear this: Last spring, Ahmed proposed to Hernandez right here on campus, on UHD's South Deck.

That's your cue to swoon. So how did the proposal go down? "The planning spanned nearly four months," said Ahmed. "It involved selecting the perfect location, crafting the ring, coordinating with friends, and


arranging an ideal date." More than that, Ahmed called upon several members of UHD staff and faculty to pull off his matrimonial scheme.

The UHD Police Department helped friends access areas where they could watch out of sight, while other staff arranged a fake media interview, the purpose of which Hernandez believed was to document her UHD experiences as well as her career plans. Ahmed then used that as a pretense to bring Hernandez to campus that day, a day that coincided with the couple's anniversary date, March 30.

And like men the world over, Ahmed said that his nerves got the best of him. Despite his mind blanking for a moment, he got through it, and now he and his betrothed have a memory that neither they, nor the UHD community, will forget.

"Love speaks to the very human desire for connection," said Danielle Soria-Orozco, Director of UHD Alumni Relations and one of Ahmed's coconspirators on the day he proposed, "and this engagement speaks to the already established connection between our university and its students, staff, faculty, and alumni. We were thrilled to help, and I know I speak for all Gators when I wish the new couple congratulations and nothing but marital bliss."

So...

What is love? Still too tough to answer. Come to UHD, however, and you just might find out for yourself. 





Many people embark on a career path because they have a certain skill set or innate ability that lends itself to that profession. But for some, their work is truly a calling, a vocation. The ministry, the arts, social work all come to mind, as does criminal justice. The self-sacrifice, dedication, and belief in justice that unites the following four profiles is obvious. It's no surprise that those Gator attributes are part of the internal drive of these alumni of the College of Public Service (CPS) Criminal Justice program, all serving in high-stakes, high-impact law-enforcement positions in the Houston area.

# UHD's Finest Are Houston's Finest, Too

by Kay Medina



**H**enry Gonzales, UHD Adjunct Professor and Executive Director and Chief Juvenile Probation Officer of Harris County Juvenile Probation Department, started his career journey at a magnet program while attending high school. Soon after, Gonzales attended UHD, where working full-time while attending school proved to be a challenge. “When I got into college, I was ill-prepared and so there were struggles there. It was tough, but I figured out how to manage my time quickly,” said Gonzales. After working part time in adult probation, Gonzales volunteered as a mentor for youth in juvenile probation, and he soon realized how much he loved the work. Soon thereafter, he accepted a position working late nights while attending classes.

Gonzales continued to move up the ranks from Diversion Officer to a paraprofessional position

to a Probation Officer. Years later, Gonzales was given an opportunity to serve as Assistant Deputy Director in the department’s education division, a new initiative intended to merge juvenile probation with education.

Now, Gonzales applies his experience in teaching his Juvenile Justice course as an adjunct professor at UHD. “I don’t want students to just memorize things from a book, so I try to make real-life assignments. If they can apply what they are learning, it just makes a lot more sense,” said Gonzales. For students interested in criminal justice, Gonzales has the following advice: “Always do something you are passionate about. It isn’t just a job. For me, that’s been my entire career.”

**J. Noe Diaz, Jr.**, Houston Chief of Police, grew up in the small town of Harlingen, Texas. As a boy, Diaz recalls his fascination with state troop-

Behind Henry Gonzales is a work by the late UHD Art Professor Floyd Newsum. The work’s title, “Contemplating Success,” aptly describes anyone reading the profiles of these prominent Gator alumni.

Photo: Mitchell Loper



Sheriff Ed Gonzalez was honored with the Golden Gator Award at UHD's 50th Anniversary Gala and is a distinguished UHD graduate who has served the Houston community with dedication and grace.

ers, and at 5 to 6 years old, he made the decision to follow in their footsteps. "I didn't have the ability to go to college, so I went to work. I started in a state prison, and most of my formal education was on the job," said Diaz. While working, Diaz attended classes at Houston Community College and eventually enrolled as a part-time student at UHD's Police Academy. After completing the program, he worked at Harris

County Precinct Five Constable's Office before earning a position with the Texas Department of Public Safety Academy as a Recruit. After graduation, Diaz worked as a Trooper for the Texas Highway Patrol in the Katy area, followed by several years working for the state's Narcotics Division.

In 2008, Chief Diaz was appointed as a Texas Ranger and received

his undergraduate degree in Criminal Justice and Political Science from UHD in 2011. "UHD afforded me sit-down time with my instructors, and they understood I was a functioning police officer," said Diaz. "My story is a path of struggle. A path of challenge. It wasn't an easy one."

Later, Diaz served the Greater Houston area as Public Corruption Ranger, a Task Force Officer for the FBI Public Corruption Border Task Force, and finally, as the Chief of Police for Katy. In 2024, Diaz was appointed the Chief of Police for Texas' largest law enforcement agency.

When Constable **Alan Rosen**, Harris County Precinct One, graduated from UHD's Police Academy, his goal was to practice criminal law. "What better way to learn the system than to work in the system and gain an understanding of its inner workings," said Rosen. That was the plan, at least. The UHD alum instead decided to run his own specialty chemical business and manage other investments. It wasn't long, however, until Rosen decided to follow in his family's footsteps and pursue politics and a passion for law enforcement.

Rosen sold his company and, after campaigning in 2012, was elected and took office as Precinct One Constable in 2013, where he quickly made a name for himself instituting law enforcement ethics programming for every employee.

Since then, Constable Rosen has served four terms in office and compiled an extensive list of accomplishments. The agency is the first in Harris County to deploy body cameras for officers, was awarded the Law Enforcement Agency of the Year Award three years in a row by Mothers Against Drunk Driving, and, most recently, won the prestigious 2023 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award.

Currently, Rosen is playing an instrumental role in planning UHD's new Center for Crime, Urban Research, and Education. "We have a social service bend to the work that we do here," Rosen said. "It's not part of our core mission, but I sincerely believe in investing in people, and I believe in investing in people that are in need."

Harris County Sheriff **Ed Gonzalez** kicked off his long-standing role in law enforcement after earning his bachelor's degree in Criminal



Justice from UHD's College of Public Service. The native Houstonian's journey to Sheriff began at the Houston Police Department (HPD), where he quickly moved up the ranks from Peace Officer to Sergeant. In 2009, Gonzalez was elected to Houston City Council, where he represented District H for three terms, in addition to chairing the Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee. He also played a pivotal role in the creation of the Houston Recovery Center, and after his first year was tapped to lead the disaster recovery team for Hurricane Harvey. From creating the agency's first Behavioral Health Division to spearheading public safety initiatives to expanding the agency's homeless outreach and crime prevention unit, Sheriff Ed Gonzalez is a force to be reckoned with.

In 2016, Gonzalez was elected as the 30th Sheriff of Harris County, the largest sheriff's office in Texas, and reelected for a third term in 2024. Now, the Gator alum has yet another accolade to add to his list. On October 12, 2024, UHD honored the outstanding alum with the esteemed Golden Gator Award for his service and dedication to Harris County. 🦖



Chief Diaz has enjoyed facing the challenges and opportunities that come with running the state's largest police department.

Photo: Courtesy of Chief Noe Diaz



Constable Rosen was the Crime Stoppers of Houston Johnny Klevenhagen Award recipient in 2017.

Photo: Mitchell Loper



### FRIENDS OF UHD *continued from page 35*

Beth B. Schneider  
Garold D. Sears  
Richard Sebastiani  
Hossein A. Shahrokhi  
Sawsan I. Shatleh  
Shell Oil Company Foundation  
Katherine A. Shoemaker  
Syeda S. Sikandar  
SIM Houston  
Richard M. Simonds  
Erica R. Skinner  
Carina Slepian  
Quitman G. Smith  
Dana S. Smith  
Kimberley Solomon  
Danielle D. Soria  
Laila Sorurbakhsh  
Stacie T. Spikes  
Joseph L. Staley  
Kurt B. Stanberry  
Courtney R. Standlee  
Teresa M. Sterling  
Carla J. Stevens  
Wyvorna Stone-Gates  
Derek Sutherland  
Ahmed M. Syed  
Steven S. Tannous  
Bridgette Taylor  
Shannon R. Teasley-McNichols  
Rose M. Terry  
Karina Torres  
Marina A. Torres  
Mohamed A. Tounkara  
Duong H. Tran  
Eszter Trufan  
Carol M. Tucker  
Vassilios K. Tzouanas  
Lee T. Usnick  
Akif Uzman  
Linda Vaden-Goad  
Monica V. Valencia  
Charles R. Valentine  
Edward L. Vargas  
Jose M. Vazquez

Farmer Vernet  
Roland T. Vest  
Daniel Villanueva  
Jose D. Villatoro  
Elizabeth Villegas  
Dietrich M. von Biedenfeld  
Voya Financial  
Laura M. Waits  
Tracy A. Webb  
White Oak Bayou Association  
Sandy Wilkerson  
Tammy D. Williams  
Graham H. Williamson  
Sheila A. Wilson  
Tashawna Wilson  
Julie R. Wilson  
Thomas L. Winn  
Yi Yang  
Kong M. Yin  
Alma L. Zepeda

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Photo: Mitchell Loper





As we close this issue of Skyline and wave goodbye, we hope you've enjoyed the magazine in your hands, and we hope this final look at our first 50 years revealed to you some new faces, along with a few inspiring stories. Too, we hope the people and tales of Gator grit here serve as yet another reminder of what we already know: UHD is not a place. It's a promise, and it's one we'll keep for the next 50 years and beyond.





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