

Renée D Cross

Associate Director, Hobby Center for Public Policy, University of Houston

A native Houstonian, Renée Cross is a graduate of Milby High School in the city's East End. Renée's early professional experience was working as a photographer, instructor and division manager for a national portrait company for thirteen years. With a lifelong avid interest in politics and public service, she returned to college and earned a bachelor of science degree in political science and psychology summa cum laude at the University of Houston and later earned a masters degree from the University of St. Thomas with a concentration in political science.

Renée worked as the district director in the office of a state representative for two years before joining the staff of the Hobby Center for Public Policy at the University of Houston as a researcher. Now with the Center for over thirteen years, Renée is the associate director, managing external relations, supervising professional training and internship programs, and working on research projects. Her academic interests include Houston and Texas government, politics, and history; urban politics; civic engagement and voter participation; and local demographics. In addition to serving as the course instructor for the internship programs, Renée teaches upper level political science courses at the University of Houston and the University of Houston-Downtown including Texas Politics, Urban Politics, State Government & Politics, Campaign Politics, and Participation & Democracy in American Politics. She has been quoted in publications such as the Wall Street Journal, the Chicago Tribune, the Houston Chronicle, the Austin-American Statesman and the Dallas Morning News, and has been featured on local media including KUHF radio and KPRC and Fox 26 television.

Renée's current professional and community affiliations include serving as a volunteer for the League of Women Voters of the Houston Area (former executive board member and research committee member of the League of Women Voters of Texas); an advisory board member for the Center for Recycled Art; a member of the White House Presidential Personnel Office's regional referral network; a member of the Harris County Election Division's Hispanic Voter Outreach Committee; a member of the Texas Economic and Demographic Association; and as a volunteer for Catahoula Dog Rescue and Barrio Dogs. Her other affiliations include the Woodland Heights Civic Association and the University of Houston Alumni Organization. Her previous volunteerism includes work as a governing board member and vice chair of the public policy committee for the Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County; member of Mayor White's Task Force on Houston History; member of the City of Houston's Houston Counts (Census 2010) committee; member of the Woodland Heights Historic Preservation Committee; and as a docent for the Houston Zoo. Renée is also a graduate of the Center for Houston's Future Leadership Forum and the City of Houston's Project Leadership Institute-Historic Preservation.

While renovating their 1919 bungalow in the Woodland Heights, Renée and her husband Stan began searching for replacement hardware and mission furniture at building salvage centers, flea markets and auctions throughout the country. As a result they established UrbanPickers, which specializes in craftsman and art deco era pottery and furniture, farm primitives and architectural salvage. Renée and Stan share their never quite completely restored home with their dogs Bruno, Miko and Luca and their cats Primo, Secondo, Bella, Luna and Zorro.