

# areté

2020

The Magazine of The Honors College at the University of Houston





# UNIVERSITY of **HOUSTON**

## THE HONORS COLLEGE

### **EDITOR & DESIGNER**

Martha S. Hayes

### **COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR**

Julia Brown

### **Staff Photographer/Videographer**

Brenda Cruz-Wolf

### **Staff Editor/Writer**

Jillian Holden

### **PHOTOGRAPHERS**

Dana Awad  
Joseph Grey  
Marc Hanke  
Martha S. Hayes  
Megan Mahanay  
Jack Mraz  
Kinza Muzahir  
Jesse Rainbow  
Nathan Smith  
Marina Trinic

### **WRITERS**

Cristobella Durette  
Jillian Holden  
Peter Scamardo ('19)  
David Tucker ('10)

### **THE HONORS COLLEGE**

William Monroe, Dean  
Stuart Long, Associate Dean  
Jonathan Williamson, Associate Dean  
Brenda Rhoden ('98, M.Ed. '05, Ph.D. '15),  
Assistant Dean  
Ted Estess, Founding Dean

[thehonorscollege.com](http://thehonorscollege.com)

The University of Houston is an EO/AA institution.

# A Letter from the Dean



Dear Friends,

As I write these words, I am looking out at a frozen city from a near-frozen kitchen table. The citrus trees, covered in little buds and blossoms a few days ago, are covered with icy sheets and blankets, and the outdoor cats, mother and daughter calicos, are huddled together in a makeshift shelter. Tonight, perhaps, they can be coaxed inside.

“O Wind, / If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?”  
Poet Percy Shelley’s famous question about the seasons expresses a yearning shared by human beings and all living creatures. It was a favorite of my teacher and

mentor R.J. Kaufmann. Another teacher and mentor, Founding Dean Ted Estess, strikes a similar chord in the graduation talk, “Absence and Presence.” He notes that absence can often make one more intensely present: The experience of absence allows you to “see yourself and the ones you care about more clearly, more deeply — and more gratefully.”\*

An annual such as *areté*, one that explores salient features of the prior year, would seem blinded indeed should it pretend ignorance of absence and winter; but it would also appear shallow if unaware of the relationship between absence and presence, winter and spring. One of our convictions about an Honors College education is that it makes available poems and stories, reasonings and revelations, insights and intuitions, observations and hypotheses that can be used as “equipment for living,” in good times and in bad.

In the admiring words of one of our alumni — a National Merit Scholar who moved down from Indiana and never left — Houston is a “scrappy” kind of place; and certainly the city, the University, and the Honors College have confirmed that observation. In the face of challenge, loss, and forced separation, the students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends of the College have responded with positivity, care, imagination, and support. The good work that we celebrate here has persisted in spite of the hardships of the past year. *areté* is the place where we tell those stories.

And there have been significant milestones on our Honors journey. The successful UH Speech & Debate program, housed in the Honors College for the past 10 years, was enhanced with the appointment of Assistant Director Rob Glass. With the help of Provost Paula Myrick Short and scholarship support from the Lerner Family, we expanded the Office of Global Engagement and Special Programs with the appointment of Associate Director Adrian Castillo and added a minor in global engagement and research.

We also added a minor in Data & Society, and Director Dan Price is currently leading a search for a full-time faculty member to support the interdisciplinary program, which includes the Community Health Worker initiative (CHW). The CHW training program received a \$250,000 grant from the city of Houston through the CARES Act, and Mayor Turner expressed his enthusiastic endorsement of the program at the virtual graduation. With the help of friends in University Advancement, Hannah Barker and Russell Dunlavy, the College received a half million dollars from Edith and Robert Zinn. We have decided to use a portion of that generous gift to support Zinn Scholars who will be participating in the programming offered by our seven interdisciplinary minors, which also include Medicine & Society, *Phronêsis* (Politics and Ethics), Leadership Studies, Energy & Sustainability, and Creative Work.

The Office of Undergraduate Research became OURMA, the Office of Undergraduate Research and Major Awards; and Ben Rayder was appointed its first director. The office sponsored our first virtual Undergraduate Research Day and secured a substantial new Mellon Foundation grant. The Honors College faculty is smaller than many departments, yet four of our number received prestigious University-wide awards: David Rainbow for Teaching Excellence, Dan Price for Community Engagement, and David Shattuck for Distinguished Leadership in Teaching Excellence; Associate Dean for Undergraduate Research Stuart Long was recognized with a John and Rebecca Moores Professorship.

Two important co-curricular programs began in 2020: *FrameWorks*, an interdisciplinary journal featuring faculty-mentored essays written by undergraduates, and the Justice Through Community service-learning programs led by Honors faculty and financially supported by alumni. We were able to take students on a service away excursion to the San Antonio area

and on learning away and abroad experiences to D.C., Los Angeles, and Egypt before the Covid-19 virus ended travel for the year.

As always, we are immensely proud of our alumni, and this month we feature Safa Ansari-Bayegan and Jeffrey Lerner, both of whom are inspiring others and making a difference in the world. Even in a pandemic year there were many, many examples of achievement, generosity, servant leadership, and true Honors education; we are telling just a few of those stories here.

Students, alumni, and friends: We who work in the Honors College see you; and we are proud of you. You matter to us; we miss you; and we look forward to being with you again.

Warm regards,



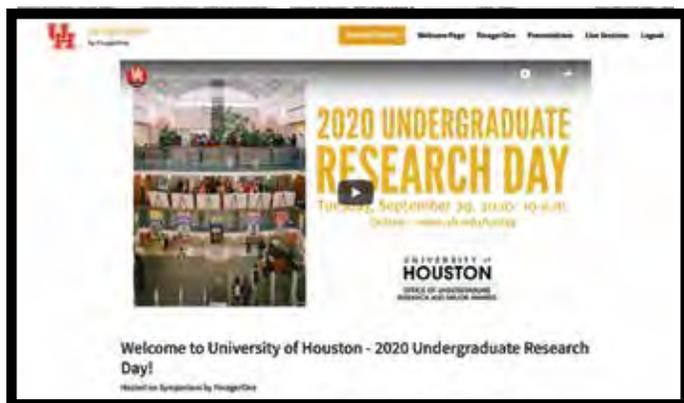
William Monroe,  
Dean, The Honors College

\*Ted's talk is available in *Be Well: Meditations on Graduation*. Send an email to David Tucker at [dptucker@uh.edu](mailto:dptucker@uh.edu), and we will make sure you receive a copy.

# OURMA

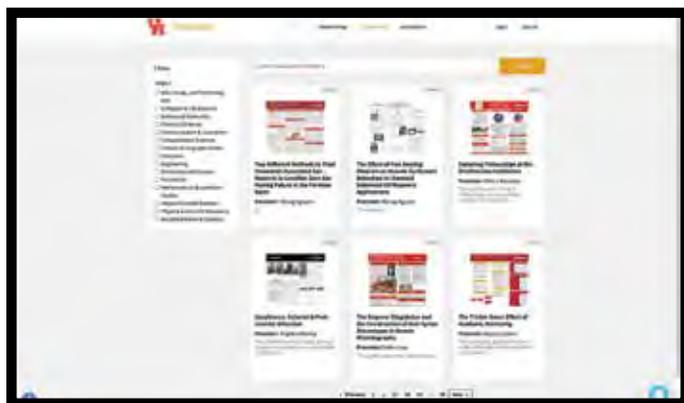
Undergraduate Research and Major Awards

## Undergraduate Research Day Flourishes in Virtual Format



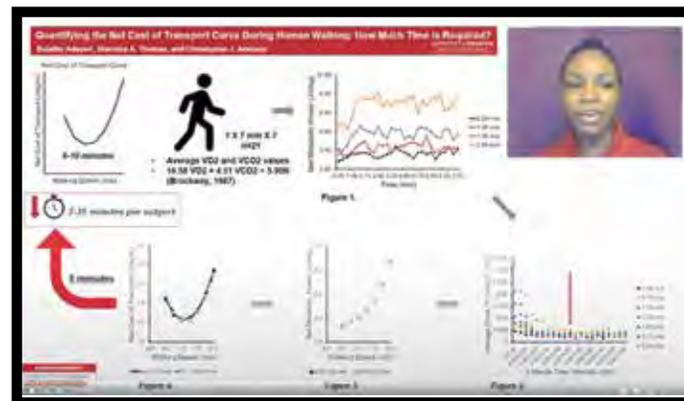
By Jillian Holden

The 15th Annual Undergraduate Research Day was hosted virtually for the first time September 29, 2020, showcasing the knowledge and talent of students with over 260 posters from 280 presenters across a wide range of majors and colleges at the University of Houston via ForagerOne's Symposium platform.



Welcome remarks were given on Symposium by Stuart Long, associate dean of undergraduate research and the Honors College, and presenters were Provost Paula Myrick Short, Amr Elnashai, vice president for research and technology transfer, and Brittini MacLeod, associate director for the Office of Undergraduate Research and Major Awards.

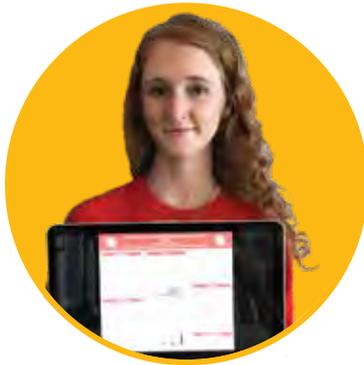
“As Provost, I am delighted to see the outstanding rigor of the research and scholarship of our students,” Paula Myrick Short said. “Even from the challenges that we have faced this year, our students have come through and are presenting outstanding work here at Undergraduate Research Day.”



Participants included students from the 2019 and 2020 Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) Program, the 2019 and 2020 Mellon Research Scholars Program, Provost's Undergraduate Research Scholarship (PURS) recipients, and others who conducted research under the guidance of University of Houston faculty during the past year and a half.

“Despite the challenges that we have seen this year, the students at the University of Houston have, as usual, shown tremendous resilience and character,” MacLeod

said, noting that although there were no live presentations this year, many students posted videos and all had a comment session open for questions and positive remarks. “I am incredibly proud to support the undergraduate research endeavors at this institution,” she said.



Three students were specifically highlighted by Provost Short for their dedication and hard work. **Shana Hardin**, a spring 2020 PURS recipient who was mentored by Ling Zhu, was praised for her presentation titled, “Factors that Determine Women’s Electoral Success in Running for Congress,” that strove to understand why men still hold the majority of Congressional seats despite women’s increased political involvement.

**Vincent Laroche**, mentored by Benjamin Rayder and Steven Vetts of the Technical University of Brunswick, presented his research: “Analyzing Bulk Solid Properties for Elongated Particles of Biomass and Recyclable Material.” Vincent is a Houston Scholar, a spring 2020 PURS recipient, and a 2020 SURF Fellow. He presented a second poster with Di Yang titled, “Development of a flow visualization model using the transport tube method for application in vertical axis wind turbine analysis.”



Ralph Metcalfe mentored **Benjamin Diaz Villa**, who is a member of the Houston Scholars, a fall 2019 PURS recipient, a 2020 SURF Fellow. His project, “Numerical Study, a Rotating Disc, a low Reynolds Number,” focused on the noise pollution emitted due to the increase of drones.

More than 2,200 people have visited the virtual event, and over 1,000 comments have been made on students’ posters so far. “I have seen many of the projects, and they are just outstanding,” Amr Elnashai said. “Thank you for the tremendous effort and creativity you have shown in creating your projects.”

Individuals could view or comment on posters by visiting [www.uh.edu/urday](http://www.uh.edu/urday) through the fall 2020 semester. Please save the date for the next Undergraduate Research Day, which will take place virtually via Symposium beginning on April 1, 2021.

# OURMA

Undergraduate Research and Major Awards

## Undergraduate Humanities Research Program Grows with New Mellon Foundation Grant

By Jillian Holden

University of Houston undergraduate Paulina Ezquerro is researching the cultivation of moral and intellectual virtues – compassion, kindness, courage, and curiosity. In other words, the qualities that make us better people and better thinkers. A deeply philosophical question, Ezquerro never knew philosophy could even be a career until her first semester at UH. Now it's her passion.

“That topic is so interesting and personal to me. I’m not doing the work for the sake of just passing a class, but I genuinely care about the person that it makes me and what it means for society,” said Ezquerro, a member of UH’s Mellon Research Scholars Program.

A new \$500,000 grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to the University of Houston builds on the initial grant in 2017 that established the program and will support an additional 60 undergraduate humanities students over the next three years.

The Mellon Foundation’s awards in higher learning support universities

and programs that embrace equity in higher learning, with a focus on historically underserved populations. The Mellon Research Scholars Program seeks to contribute to this mission

preparation program and a full-time, faculty-mentored summer research experience. The scholars also participate in faculty-led seminars and receive holistic mentorship throughout the year-long program.

Rikki Bettinger, program manager in the Office of Undergraduate Research and Major Awards, and Stuart Long, associate dean of undergraduate research and the Honors College and professor of electrical and computer engineering, will oversee the grant.

“We know the value of this program in shaping the undergraduate experiences of our scholars and preparing them for graduate study. In addition to the generous funding and tailored independent research experience, I am most excited to continue the multidisciplinary mentorship this program affords our students,” Bettinger said. “To date, faculty and staff mentors and seminar leaders have come from over 15 departments, programs, and centers across UH.”

Prior Mellon Research Scholars, like Manuel Martinez Alvarenga, are now pursuing advanced degrees at top-ranked schools across the United States



by preparing undergraduate students from backgrounds underrepresented in the academy for graduate study in the humanities.

“As a Mexican woman, I’m very underrepresented in the field of philosophy. When I see young immigrant girls who don’t really know what they want to do, I want to be a pioneer in this field and open up doors for girls like me who didn’t grow up in academia,” said Ezquerro.

Mellon Research Scholars participate in an intensive graduate school



*In many ways, my experience with the Mellon program was a life-changing experience because it gave me the tools to make where I am now possible.*

*- Manuel Alvarenga*

in programs including philosophy, history, and creative writing. A native of El Salvador, he came to UH from community college, but never dreamed of pursuing graduate school. Crediting his UH professors for direction and encouragement, he was accepted into the second cohort of the program in 2019. His research examined how Central American communities have contributed to the social, economic, and cultural complexity of Houston.

Alvarenga graduated from UH this summer with a degree in history and is currently a doctoral student at Indiana University, Bloomington. A self-titled “history fanatic,” he said the Mellon program allowed him to pull from his own experiences as a Salvadorian who witnessed the effects of migration firsthand. Before moving to Houston at 12, his father traveled back and forth to the United States for work for years.

“It led me to think, let’s explore the development of the Salvadorian community in Houston over time, which is really something that hasn’t been explored in great detail,” he said. “In many ways, my experience with the Mellon program was a life-changing experience because it gave me the tools to make where I am now possible.”

The Office of Undergraduate Research and Major Awards (OURMA) and the Honors College provide additional program support for the Mellon Research Scholars Program. The grant contributes to OURMA’s efforts to increase the number of students in humanities fields participating in undergraduate research at the University. OURMA provides opportunities for faculty-mentored research experiences and guidance for students applying to competitive fellowships and major awards for all UH undergraduates. Two Mellon Research Scholars were selected for Fulbright U.S. Student Programs for the 2020-2021 year.

“It is such an honor to receive another gift from the Mellon Foundation for these remarkable student scholars,” said Eloise Brice, vice president for University Advancement. “This handsome grant allows us to support and celebrate ever more diverse voices and is a real testament to the amazing work of all involved.”

# COUNTER STORIES

## COUNTER STORIES

*“Counter stories are a way to fill the gaps,” Professor Christine LeVeaux-Haley said, “to tell the stories that are not told, so that we have a fuller picture of history and thus the present.”*

By David Tucker

In July 2020, the Honors College issued a call for community-oriented initiatives focused on alleviating racial injustice and inequity. The program was named Justice Through Community (JTC), and the JTC grants, suggested and supported by Jane Lerner, made available resources for four programs initially (see page 26).

One of the inaugural awardees for the JTC is the Counter Stories project, led by Professors Christine LeVeaux-Haley, Alison Leland, Irene Guenther, and four Honors College students – Kelly Nguyen, Trinity Avie, Fayha Iqbal, and Shyenne Lucas.



The project’s first story is that of Lynn Eusan, the co-founder of the African American Studies program at UH and a charter member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority on campus. She was also voted, in 1968, the first African American homecoming queen at the University of Houston. In the fall of 1971, she was brutally murdered, and it remains a cold case to this day. Lynn Eusan Park on the University of Houston’s campus was named in her honor.

A counter story about Lynn Eusan tells of her fierce determination and activism in the face of racism, violence, and hate. This project seeks to fill those gaps. Telling Lynn Eusan’s untold story is the first step in a larger project to, as Professor Guenther says, “inspire us all to confront our painful past, to lead our communities with the same grace and dignity and determination, and to work towards a reality in which the words of the Constitution ring more true for everyone.” The counter stories project seeks to fill in some of the gaps in our collective story.



# Social Engagement as Creative Work

## ART CONGRESS

By Jillian Holden

Honors College Creative Work Director Robert Cremins, Professor Michelle Belco, and Honors College staff member Victoria Jupp are collaborating with two local high schools in the Houston Independent School District (HISD) to create a four-day virtual art festival. The students are asked to envision how creative citizens can make a difference. By sparking a motivation to make a difference, the program is centered on civic participation and an expansion of student ambition and creative vision.

Cremins' new course, Social Engagement as Creative Work, includes a service-learning component driven to transform artistic and community goals into accomplishments that have everlasting effects. The course is designed to strengthen social justice through civic engagement to promote the community quality of life through both political and non-political processes.

The Art Congress takes a unique approach to teaching civic engagement in HISD high schools by simulating the election process. The audience favorite is chosen by a general assembly allowing students, their families, and friends to participate in voting, a core principle of American government.

"By viewing citizenship and voting through a creative lens, students have an opportunity to see an intersection between art and politics," Belco said. "Through this initiative, we hope to inspire a new wave of creative citizens to achieve social justice in the community."

Art Congress favorites will be shown to local government leaders such as Senator Borris Miles to illustrate students' interpretations of creative citizenship as well as showcased in the Honors College.

"As creative leaders on campus as well as in the community, this civic engagement experience allows Honors students to develop a wide variety of professional and personal skills," Jupp said. "It encourages active engagement and critical thinking on issues facing their personal and professional lives."



# NEW

# Data & Society MINOR

By Cristobella Durette

Students who want to critically engage with questions related to data science and how data is used in society now have the option of the new Data & Society minor, which was first offered to all UH students starting in fall 2020.

Although housed in the Honors College, the Data & Society minor is open to all majors and to non-Honors students. The course of study is intended to provide students across disciplines an understanding of what drives data science questions — regardless of their technical skill in data analytics.

“Anyone who is looking toward having intelligent things to say about how data is used in our society based on some acquaintance with techniques, but not necessarily mastery, should come and see (the program’s offerings),” said Dan Price, director of the Data & Society program and clinical associate professor in the Honors College and the College of Medicine.

The minor requires 15 hours of coursework structured as five three-hour courses. Two courses, Principles of Data and Society and Data and Society in Practice, comprise a mandatory six-hour sequence that participants take before electives within the minor.

“The idea behind that two-course sequence is to prepare students with a set of theoretical perspectives and background understanding of a set of tools and approaches that are used in data

science,” said Andrew Kapral, director of Engaged Data Science at the Hewlett Packard Enterprise Data Science Institute.

Kapral will work with Price to connect the work of students in the Data & Society minor to engagement programming through the Engaged Data Science Program. A minimum of one visiting assistant professor and potentially additional lecturers will be hired to teach courses for the minor.

The minor is already partnered with entities on and off campus, including the Office of Undergraduate Research and the Pharis Fellowship, to allow students in the minor to engage in experiential learning and research opportunities outside of the classroom.

“It (the fellowship) would be adjacent to the minor,” Price said. “It’s not part of the minor requirements, but it helps kind of structure how we’re doing things. We have a lot of existing stuff in health and education with HISD and some of the other folks out in that community space, but we’re not limited to that.”

The interdisciplinary and project-based approach of the minor gives students the tools to begin their own research projects.

“We (the program) will use those first courses to focus students on existing projects, and as they transition to the second course and to the elective part of the minor, they’ll be set up to begin their own research projects and weave their own research in Data and Society,” Kapral said. “We’re hoping that students choose to do some independent research as part of the minor.”



*This article was first published in The Daily Cougar, March 3, 2020.*



# FRAMEWORKS

*A Journal of Undergraduate Research  
in the Interdisciplinary Humanities*

By Max Rayneard

For the length of the 2019 / 2020 academic year and deep into the summer, an intrepid cohort of students worked hard to set the standard for a new interdisciplinary humanities initiative in the Honors College. FrameWorks is a co-curricular faculty mentorship and peer-support program that guides students as they conceive, research, write, present, and refine article-length essays on the topic of their choosing. Housed in Creative Work and with support from the Office of Undergraduate Research and Major Awards, FrameWorks aims to raise the profile and quality of undergraduate humanities research and to provide professionalization opportunities for ambitious scholars. The jewel in the program's crown is a journal dedicated to their efforts, *FrameWorks: A Journal of Undergraduate Research in the Interdisciplinary Humanities*, the first edition of which (fall 2020) features nine quality articles.

Beginning in the fall of 2019, undergraduate writers, or FrameWorks Fellows, were challenged to interpret the first of the program's annual themes, "Wall." Meeting in peer-workshops and individually with supportive faculty mentors, they completed scaffolded tasks, from refining topics, to annotating bibliographies, to producing multiple written drafts.

In the spring semester, the FrameWorks Fellows submitted their articles to the editorial board and presented their research at the first annual FrameWorks Symposium, a well-attended digital event. Thereafter, they dedicated themselves to addressing board suggestions and to finalizing their articles for publication in *FrameWorks*.

The range of articles in the journal is a testament to the diversity, ingenuity, and talent of undergraduate thinkers at the University of Houston. Paulina Ezquerra's article, "Reading Kafka in the Age of Trump" was awarded the inaugural FrameWorks Prize for Excellence in Humanities Research. Mentored by Rob Zaretsky, Ezquerra read Kafka's *The Castle* as a contemporarily resonant immigration narrative in which the protagonist, K, a new arrival, is subject to a system that will not legitimate his presence and locals who will not accept him. Special mention was awarded to Ayania Hicks for "Breaking Artistic Boundaries: Zora Neale Houston and the Harlem Renaissance." Mentored by Marina Trninic, Hicks read Hurston's short story "Sweat" as evidence of a radical refusal to sanitize African American experience for the sake of mainstream acceptance.

Other articles offer profound insights on topics such as Houston's iconic murals, Joe Sacco's comics journalism from Palestine, Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* and existentialism, transgender representation in film and television, Russian claims to Eurasianism, the art of mourning on the U.S. / Mexico border, and Nietzschean "inpsychation."

The second cohort of FrameWorks Fellows is currently working on articles that interpret the 2020 / 2021 theme, "Unknown." Applications for the third iteration of the program open spring 2021.

# Successful Marketing Entrepreneur and Honors Alumnus has Inspiring Words for Students Today

By Peter Scamardo

As students across the country adjust to academia under the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, many are dealing with anxiety at the same time. Yet Honors College alum and ENTRE Institute CEO Jeff Lerner reminds students that now is the time to focus on the things they can control.

“This is not a time for anxiety; this is a time for creative thinking and disciplined execution,” Lerner said.

Lerner, a piano player and former music theory and composition major in the Moores School of Music and the Honors College, had his world shaken in 2007 when he decided to make the jump from piano player to restaurant owner. The ensuing Great Recession of 2007-08 saw Lerner lose his restaurant and half a million dollars in debt.

Looking for a way out in a desperate time, Lerner turned to internet marketing.

Lerner, who says he has always had an entrepreneurial spirit, found a new home. In 18 months, he was able to clear his debts, and in 10 years surpassed \$10 million in sales, according to an article about Lerner on Medium. Then, in 2018,

Lerner said he took his “first breath in 10 years,” and looked at where the internet had taken him.

“In what can best be described as the positive equivalent of an existential crisis, I suddenly knew that I was supposed to start teaching others about the opportunities of the digital economy as well as what it really takes to be a successful entrepreneur,” Lerner said.

The decision links back to Lerner’s favorite class at UH, the Human Situation, specifically Professor Charlie Scott’s discussion section. “It was the first class where I ever realized I had a unique voice in this world that could be accepted and respected by people, if I worked hard to develop it.” Lerner said some view his business as an alternative to establishment education, but as a high school dropout, he knows college is an important tool to prepare for a variety of future challenges and careers.

Having that confidence and the proven track record in internet marketing, Lerner founded the ENTRE Institute. ENTRE is an online platform that focuses on curating and filtering excess information about how to build an online business.

As Lerner puts it, many internet businesses focus on short-term payoff and are usually scams. Instead, ENTRE looks at digital real estate to show people what to focus on if they want to build a business that can lead to financial and time freedom.

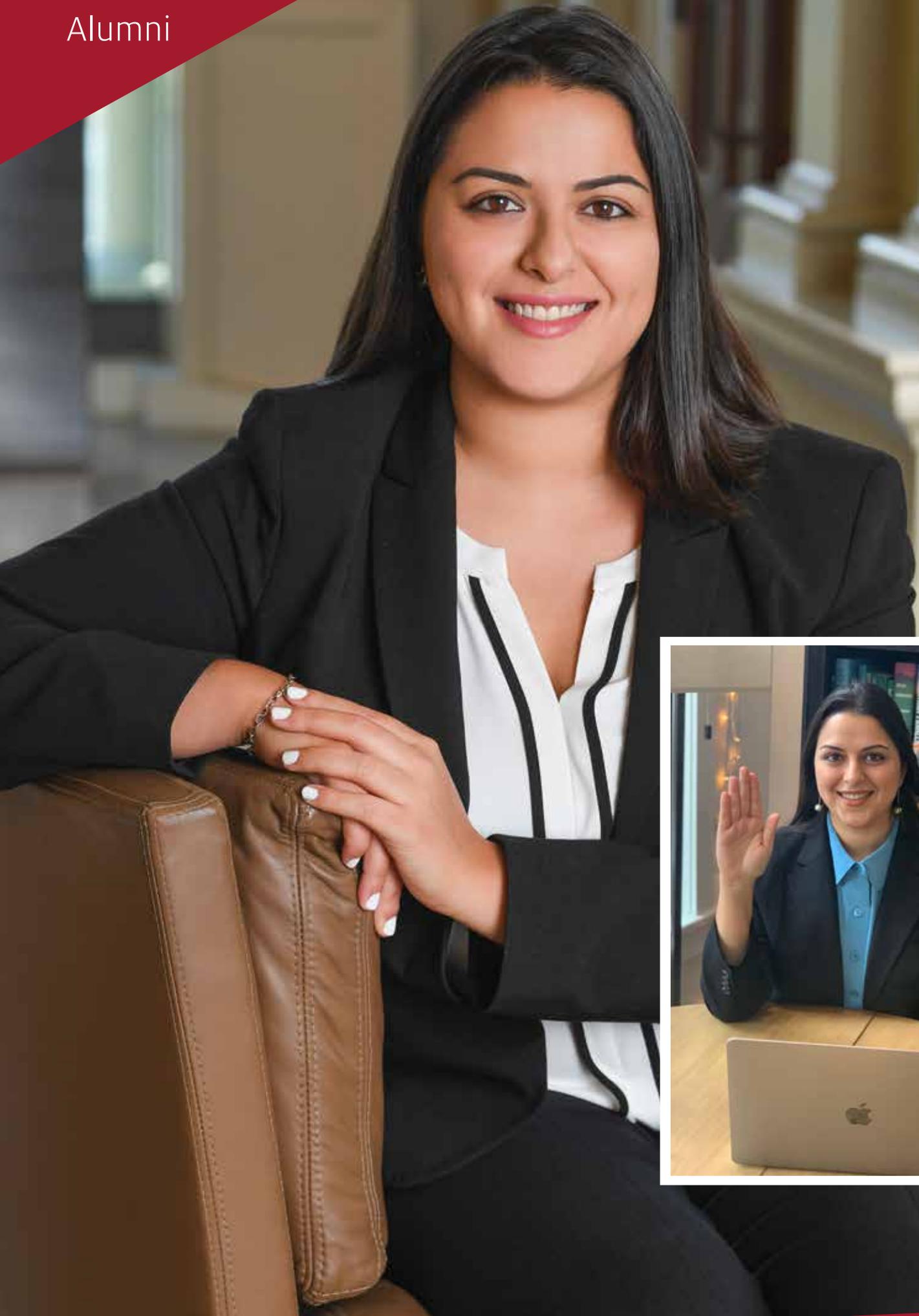
Even with COVID-19 cases increasing by the thousands every day, Lerner believes the “collective depression, anxiety, distraction, loss of momentum, disempowerment, and fixation on things we can’t control will be viewed by history as a far greater producer of suffering than the virus itself.” His advice to everyone suffering this way: Continue to push yourself.

He knows firsthand that young people can have a tendency to take the easy route rather than challenge themselves. “You will never have more energy than you do at this phase in your life,” Lerner said, “so be the exception. Push yourself; see how much you can bear. A year of resolve at 18 will buy you five years of freedom at 60. Extra effort now feeds compounding growth; while laziness invites the natural process of decay.”





Alumni



# Honors Alumnus Advocates as Criminal Indigent Defense Counsel

By Jillian Holden

Stemming from malfeasance discovered in her first year at the University of Houston, Safa Ansari-Bayegan ('13) felt drawn toward criminal indigent defense. In Professor Alison Leland's political science class, she was prompted to read an article in the *New Yorker* about the execution of a Texas prisoner that was brought into question due to research showing reason to further examine the science substantiating the conviction.

"While at the University of Houston Honors College, I was fortunately awoken to the injustices in our criminal legal system," Ansari-Bayegan noted. "America, the country to which my family fled and started anew, prides itself on equality and the rule of law, but it has its own troubling history of racial terror, from slavery to lynching to present-day mass incarceration and state-sanctioned executions."

Spurred by the controversy surrounding Cameron Willingham's execution for the supposed murder of his three children, Ansari-Bayegan began to reexamine the criminal justice system, the appeals process, and the quality of representation for the accused. As an intern for the Texas Defender Service (TDS), a nonprofit law firm focused on the representation of Texas prisoners charged with capital murder or with a death sentence, she visited prisoners on death row and discovered a unique thread of humility, resilience, and willingness to change.

"To better represent the voices of Americans living a different experience than mine, I am learning every day how to read beyond my own privilege, even how to use it for good," Ansari-Bayegan said. "My privilege gives me a position from which to fight, and I am committed to doing so in a way that emphasizes the humanity of each individual involved."

Prior to law school, Ansari-Bayegan earned a master's degree in human rights from the London School of Economics, moving on to conduct psycho-social life investigations as a trial-level mitigation specialist on a capital trial defense team in West Texas. She researched and investigated client records, conducted hundreds of field interviews, and organized information creatively and succinctly to captivate the jury. In doing so, she realized that a law degree was necessary to properly provide a voice for her clients.

Born and raised in Houston, Ansari-Bayegan earned her law degree from Berkeley School of Law, where she was awarded both the Eleanor Swift and Francine Diaz Memorial awards for her involvement in public service. An NAACP Legal Defense Fund Earl Warren Scholar, she co-led Berkeley Law's Criminal Defense Society, participated in bi-monthly restorative justice circles facilitated by the incarcerated people inside San Quentin State Prison, volunteered in an asylum clinic, and led a court-watching trip to Mississippi.

"I chose Berkeley Law because of its public service mission, and I am so grateful to be a part of this special community," Ansari-Bayegan said. "I've had many opportunities over the last three years to contribute to public service and have been fortunate to do this work alongside such talented and compassionate classmates."

Ansari-Bayegan is one of three third-year Georgetown Law students awarded the coveted E. Barrett Prettyman Fellowship, a two-year LL.M. fellowship that will take her from classes in clinical instruction and supervision to teaching and overseeing students in three criminal justice-focused clinics. Focused on developing stellar indigent defense counsel through rigorous training in criminal trial advocacy and clinical teaching, the Fellowship awards stipends totaling \$117,000, with full benefits, in addition to full tuition and fees.

During the pandemic, Ansari-Bayegan took the D.C. bar exam in October 2020 and received exciting news that she passed in December. On the previous page, she is pictured at her virtual swearing in to the D.C. Bar this February..

"Having worked closely with indigent men and women for over a decade, I am devoted to defending the poorest and most marginalized people who are all too often pulled into our justice system," Ansari-Bayegan stated. "I am excited to apply my skills to a career in public defense."



# GOING ROGUE

with Stephanie Syjuco's Digitally Printed Flags

By Jillian Holden

In collaboration with the Honors College and M.D. Anderson Library, Blaffer Art Museum at the University of Houston is excited to present "Rogue States," a contemporary installation of 22 flags by Stephanie Syjuco. Portraying fictionalized enemy nations from Africa, Asia, Central and South America, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East, flag and country design is derived from American and European films and TV shows that conveyed these "rogue" countries as terrorist, resistant, or unstable.

Born in the Philippines in 1974, Syjuco is an innovative artist known for creating large-scale spectacles of unique cultural objects. Located now in her hometown of Oakland, California, Syjuco's projects expose overlooked and ignored issues such as citizenship, immigration, and nationality. "Rogue States" is part of a larger exhibition by Syjuco titled "The Visible Invisible," which will be held at the Blaffer Art Museum into the spring 2021 semester.

Displayed above the spiral staircase at the entrance to the Honors College, the flags are hung vertically from the ceiling in rows as a United Nations-style convention of unity and a collective anxiety

to reveal real and fictionalized foreign enemy nations through a Western lens. Steven Matijcio, Jane Dale Owen Director and Chief Curator of the Blaffer Art Museum, said that by conveying these "imaginary political avatars and hanging them in a manner reminiscent of the United Nations, Syjuco questions the real-world implications of perpetuating these shadow nations in the popular imagination.

"Their presentation adjacent to the Honors College in M.D. Anderson Library creates a provocative model to study, debate, and question in the many Honors courses that explore the relationship between politics, culture, and people," said Matijcio.

Fueled by her ongoing investigation into the power of flags and the symbol of national identity, "Rogue States" vividly conveys a rendering of certain populations invisible, while prompting an internal struggle of how that must change. Additional work by Syjuco is also available for viewing at the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture and Design and video screens across University of Houston campus.

*Take a virtual tour of "Rogue States" at [thehonorscollege.com/rogue](http://thehonorscollege.com/rogue).*

# Common Ground Teachers Institute

Thanks to a generous grant from the McGovern Foundation, the Honors College offers the Common Ground Institute each summer free of charge to participants.

The 2020 Common Ground Teachers Institute, held online for the first time in its almost 30-year history, welcomed new and returning fellows for six intensive days of readings, discussions, writing, and presentations.

Reflecting the cultural diversity of Greater Houston, the 2020 Institute fellows came from a wide variety of geographic and socio-economic areas and school districts. Participants represented schools in Aldine, Clear Creek, Cypress-Fairbanks, Houston, Humble, Galena Park, New Caney, Pasadena, Spring Branch, and Waller Independent School Districts, as well as charter schools such as YES Prep, independent schools such as Kincaid, and parochial schools such as St. Francis de Sales.

Choosing from three seminars in an interactive Zoom format, McGovern Master Teachers studied contemporary and classic works of literature, and in the process, developed new classroom materials and pedagogical approaches. After a morning of seminar discussion, fellows broke for lunch and presentations by Houston-area writers, poets, and artists. Each afternoon, they revisited their morning discussions and planned for their team presentations. These outstanding presentations consisted of critical and creative work, interpretations of the texts, and dramatic performances, and provided participants with a different perspective on virtual learning.

Fellows brought to the Institute different personal and pedagogical experiences that shaped their discussions about female characters in great drama, travel as self-discovery, and moments in history that become "inflection points."

Reflecting the cultural diversity of Greater Houston, the 2020 Institute fellows came from a wide variety of geographic and socio-economic areas and school districts.



# Washington, D.C.

## Osgood Center for International Studies

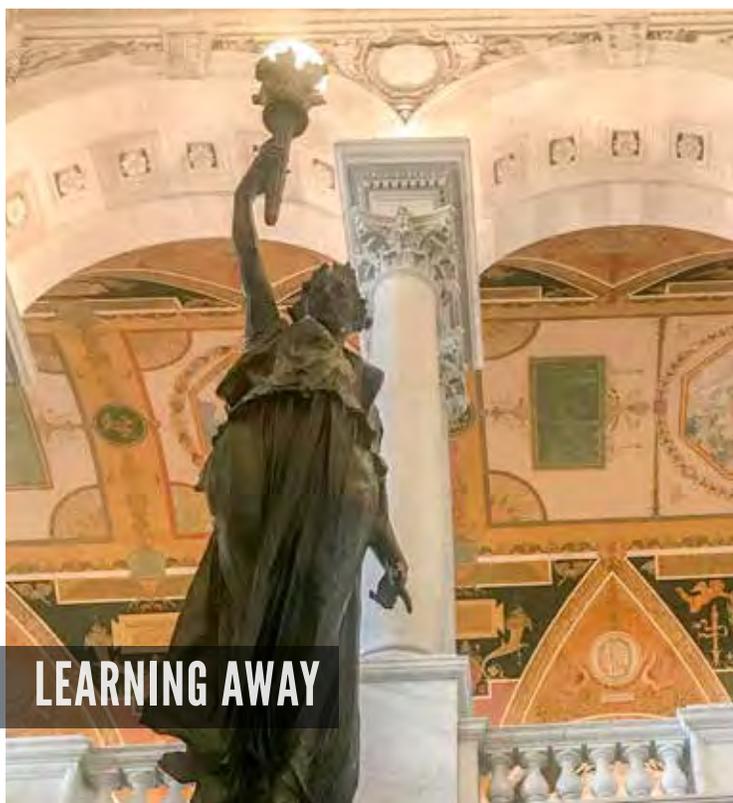
Trip leaders Doug Erwing and Alison Leland

By Isbah Usmani

The infamous city of Washington, D.C. is a place full of history, powerful people, and even more powerful stories. When first presented with the opportunity to go on this trip with the Honors college, I immediately signed up. Even though I had traveled to D.C. before, I knew this would be a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

The Osgood Center's itinerary created a unique experience. I got to not only listen to and have conversations with exclusive speakers, including former white house fellows, but also explore the city with new friends. One of the highlights of the trip was visiting the National Gallery of Art where I was able to walk through the presidential exhibit. The histories of multiple presidencies were told through portraits, and I could finally see the artistic and cultural implications of what I've learned throughout my journey in academia.

One year later, I still remember every detail from this trip. I remember walking through the Library of Congress and getting lost in the rich history. I remember the snowball fight my friends and I had in front of the White House. I remember the dinner with Professors Leland, Erwing, and all the students from the trip which was full of laughter and stories. If there is one lesson I learned from my time in D.C., it's that there is so much culture and history left to be explored, so we should take advantage of every opportunity, whether it is another city or another country.



**LEARNING AWAY**

## *We Remember*



### Jane Lerner

The Honors College lost a long-time friend in the passing of Jane Lerner. She and her husband, Ron, were impressed with the Honors College experience of their son Jeff (see page 14) and wanted to ensure that those same learning opportunities would remain a hallmark of the Honors College education at the University.

The Lerner Family Scholarships support students, faculty, staff, and programs that enhance basic coursework with high-impact practices such as study abroad, service learning, and undergraduate research. Thanks to their generosity, the Honors College will continue to enhance learning for UH students and cultivate success that lasts a lifetime.

After earning her master's in business administration and her jurisprudence from UH, she worked for more than 20 years at the prestigious Fulbright & Jaworski law firm, eventually becoming a partner. She will be remembered for her deep desire to help those in need by investing her time and energy organizing and working on projects in her community and around the world.

# Washington, D.C.

Trip leaders: Dustin Gish and Trinity Rinear

By Chris Chase

I had the honor of visiting Washington, D.C. last March with a group of cohorts, just before the world as we knew it would become forever changed by the pandemic. This was my first time experiencing our nation's capital.

Armed with our cell phones and folded-up maps provided by National Parks staff, we set about the city exploring the many sites along what is now the National Mall, based on the grand vision of French architect Pierre L'Enfant of 1791. As we trekked up and down a series of steep hills, one could not escape a humbling feeling in knowing that these were the very same paths taken by our forbearers of freedom.

As we explored the awe-inspiring artwork found in places like the Capitol Building or the Library of Congress, I was swept away by the works of 19th century Roman artist, Constantino Brumidi, namely, the "Apotheosis of Washington," a beautiful fresco depicting George

## LEARNING AWAY

Washington's ascendancy to heaven, located on the Rotunda canopy of the Capitol Dome. On this trip, I learned to look for the visual rhetoric behind the great monuments of the city. This is evinced in the deliberate positioning of certain figures, such as an exhausted Abraham Lincoln, who sits at rest after saving the Union, inside a magnificent structure built by Henry Bacon as an ode to the Athenian temple of Parthenon.

Finally, a visit to Cedar Hill, into the home of my hero, and the Lion of Anacostia himself, Frederick Douglass. Constructed between 1855 and 1859, this was the place where a great orator, author, and public figure dwelled with his family. I was moved by the sight of his small wooden desk, where I could picture him hunched over, pen at hand, burning the midnight oil.

Each stop along the way presented a new and unique learning opportunity. Thank you to everyone who helped to make this possible, especially Professor Gish. I am grateful to have been a part of this scholastic and patriotic expedition.



# Egypt

Trip leaders Adrian Castillo, Keri Myrick, Jesse Rainbow

By Ileagh Maclvers

After visiting Egypt, I can truthfully reiterate the sentiments of the millions of tourists who have gone before me: Egypt is a nation of sublime wonders. There is nothing like personally interacting with art and architecture that has stood, unchanging, for centuries. Photos of ancient temples and pyramids are beautiful, but something about crawling up a vertical ladder into pitch blackness or looking over the incredible landscape of Upper Egypt from a hot air balloon is simply unmatched.

One of the most memorable moments of the trip was during a visit to one of the beautiful mosques scattered throughout Cairo. The mosque's resident imam graced us with a singing voice that could only have been a gift from God. As I listened to verses of the Qur'an bounce off the walls around us, I was transported to a place of complete and utter peace.

The hundreds of memories I made on this trip, from washing my clothes in a hotel bathtub to buying spicy Doritos at The Hanging Church, represent a bright light in an otherwise tumultuous year. Months later, I feel like our trip to Egypt was an example of the stars aligning. Not only am I immensely grateful to have visited such a magnificent country, I am so thankful to have been surrounded by wonderful friends and the most knowledgeable trip leaders a student could ask for. I look forward to a time when travel can resume and all the new adventures I have yet to experience with the Honors College.

LEARNING ABROAD



Trip leader: Brandon Lamson



By Brandon Lamson

As a capstone course of the Creative Work minor, Artists and Their Regions involves an in-depth study of how place and identity influence the creative process. The theme of the 2020 Artists and Their Regions course was Los Angeles Noir, an exploration of how the city's unique juxtaposition of high and low art culture has shaped its identity as one of America's creative hubs. During our course, we explored a wide range of creative works that capture Los Angeles Noir, ranging from the noir crime novels of Raymond Chandler to the films of David Lynch and the essays of Joan Didion.

Our course culminated in a trip to Los Angeles that we took from March 9-14 to conduct field research and to work on creative projects that are inspired by, and in conversation with, the City of Dreams. During our trip, we visited various iconic Los Angeles landmarks and institutions, including the Venice Beach Boardwalk, The Hammer Museum, and downtown L.A. locales featured in the works of Raymond Chandler and Charles Bukowski. What was unique about this experience is that we were traveling on the brink of a global pandemic.

As our trip continued, the city began closing around us, illuminating the fragility of the urban landscape and contributing to our urgency to experience it fully. This was reflected in the showcase of student projects held during our last evening in the city, which included photo collages, video works, and docupoetry.



# NEW

# GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

## The Thomas Monroe Learning Abroad Scholarship Endowment



The Thomas Monroe Learning Abroad Scholarship Endowment was established to provide financial support for students undertaking learning or service abroad or away, or other place-based experiential learning opportunities offered through the Honors College. A member of the Honors College, Thomas also played on the UH lacrosse team, competed as an amateur boxer, and was active in the Sigma Chi Fraternity.

He completed a bachelor of science in mechanical engineering with University Honors in 2010. An ardent supporter of UH and Houston sports teams, Thomas met his hero Hakeem Olajuwon in the Fertitta Center at the 2019 Great Conversation.

He traveled with the Honors College on learning abroad excursions to London, York, and Edinburgh, Italy and Sicily, and Israel and Palestine. He also made an epic hike across Scotland with his father and brothers, from Inverness to Fort William on the Great Glen Way. Thomas treasured these experiences, and his family and friends established an endowment to support similar learning opportunities.

For more information about the Thomas Monroe Learning Abroad Scholarship Endowment, please contact Hannah Barker at 713.743.3220 or at [hmbarker@central.uh.edu](mailto:hmbarker@central.uh.edu).

# Justice Through Community

The events surrounding the death of George Floyd in 2020 were a stark reminder that American society has a long way to go to solve societal inequities and injustices. As an Honors College, the educational environment we create must be committed to diversity and inclusion; we must instill in our students a sense of responsibility to continue the work beyond their college years.

The grant program is open to individuals or teams of Honors College faculty and staff proposing sustainable service-learning programs focused on alleviating injustice and inequity in our city and community. The College is proud to announce the following inaugural recipients of its Justice Through Community Grants.

Professors Alison Leland, Christine LeVeaux-Haley, and Irene Guenther were funded to launch a project titled “Counter Stories: Historical Truth Telling for Social Justice,” which will work with students and community partners to record and distribute oral histories of the activists and leaders of the civil rights movement in Houston.

Professors Michelle Belco, Robert Cremins, Doug Erwing, Dustin Gish, and Max Rayneard were funded for a project titled “Addressing Systemic Inequality through Civic Engagement,” which will create partnerships between the Honors College students and high schools in the Houston Independent School District to focus attention on civic engagement and voter registration among high school seniors.

Professor Dan Price was funded for a project titled “Changing the Story After Jail.” Building on his Community Health Worker Initiative, the project will engage students and Community Health Workers with collecting emblematic stories of societal reentry with special attention to inflection points and potential places where additional support could have made a difference. Those stories and the resulting analysis will be used to aid reentry efforts.

Professors Dustin Gish and Doug Erwing were funded for a project titled “The Road to Change: An Honors Civic Engagement Initiative,” which seeks to engage students and community members in a process of reflection and achieving, through appropriate political means, a formal change to the name of the segment of Calhoun Road that runs adjacent to University property and student residences (from Wheeler Avenue to Old Spanish Trail) and, in so

doing, launching a larger societal justice conversation about whose legacies we choose to recognize or celebrate.

If you would like to support the Justice Through Community grant program, please contact Hannah Barker at 713.743.3220 or at [hmbarker@central.uh.edu](mailto:hmbarker@central.uh.edu).



# Some Upcoming Activities

The activities below are all virtual events.

April 1	UH Undergraduate Research Day	<a href="http://uh.edu/urday">uh.edu/urday</a>
April 10	The Great Conversation	<a href="http://thegreatconversationhouston.com">thegreatconversationhouston.com</a>
April 20	Office of Undergraduate Research and Major Awards Celebration	<a href="http://uh.edu/honors/undergraduate-research">uh.edu/honors/undergraduate-research</a>
May 13	Graduation Banquet	<a href="http://thehonorscollege.com/graduation">thehonorscollege.com/graduation</a>

## Evening with Honors

A virtual **Evening with Honors** began in 2020 as a monthly time for the gathering of Honors College alumni and friends to continue the tradition of lively discussion of timely and timeless issues begun during the freshman year in the Human Situation course. An email invitation is sent to all alumni. If you are not on the list, email Stacey Michael at [sdmichae@central.uh.edu](mailto:sdmichae@central.uh.edu).

## Powerful Voices Webinar Series

The **Powerful Voices Webinar Series** is part of the Honors College New Grand Challenges Forum. The monthly series offers students, faculty, staff, alumni, friends, and members of the local community with engaging conversations with compelling speakers. For a schedule, visit [uh.edu/giving/powerful-voices](http://uh.edu/giving/powerful-voices).



TheHonorsCollege



HonorsCollegeUH



HonorsCollegeUH



UHHonorsCollege

# Welcome **NEW** Faculty and Staff

## Adrian Castillo

Adrian Castillo ('16) was named associate director of the Office of Global Engagement & Special Programs, where he helps lead the College's programs and initiatives, instilling in students cultural competency and global literacy. Castillo also serves as an adviser to the Model Arab League, Model G20, and Model United Nations teams. Previously, Castillo served as the program manager of co-curricular programs in the College, where he supported service learning and undergraduate research and global engagement. He mentored students in the Bonner Leaders program and oversaw the Houston Early Research Experience program. Castillo earned undergraduate degrees from UH in Middle Eastern studies and political science. His graduate studies are in international security and development.



## Rob Glass

Rob Glass joined the Honors College as the assistant director of UH Speech & Debate program in the Honors College. Before coming to the University, he worked with a number of high schools and colleges on the East Coast, including Stuyvesant High School, Binghamton University, Mamaroneck High School, and the University of Rochester. He is also a leading contributor to the field of data analysis and debate, including the first rigorous study of large-scale judge behaviour in debate. Glass earned his bachelor's degree in history at Binghamton University, New York.

## Ben Rayder

Rayder was named director of the Office of Undergraduate Research and Major Awards. He joined the Honors College in 2017 as director of National Fellowships and Major Awards. He raises awareness of scholarship and fellowship opportunities, while also providing support to students throughout the application process. Rayder holds a doctorate in comparative politics from the University of Bamberg and a master's in modern European studies from the University College London. He earned a bachelor's in political science and German from the College of the Holy Cross. He is an alumnus of the Fulbright Student Program, in which he was an English Teaching Assistant at a vocational school in Duisburg, Germany.



# Faculty Awards

A variety of awards have been established to recognize exemplary faculty who go above and beyond in their efforts to reach students, and whose leadership grows and sustains our curricular and co-curricular programming. The Honors College thanks the following 2019-2020 recipients for their commitment to mentorship, teaching, and service.

## 2020 TED L. ESTESS AWARD FOR ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

Stuart Long  
David Shattuck

## 2020 BEE AND KEE WONG FACULTY ENGAGEMENT AWARDS

Richard Armstrong  
Doug Erwing  
Richard Garner  
Dan Price  
Ben Rayder

## 2020 DEAN'S AWARDS FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

Debbie Harwell  
Marina Trninic

## 2020 LERNER FAMILY FACULTY FELLOWSHIP AWARDS

ROBERT CREMINS  
DUSTIN GISH  
IRENE GUENTHER  
DAN PRICE  
DAVID RAINBOW  
JESSE RAINBOW  
BEN RAYDER

## 2020 UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH MENTOR AWARD

David Rainbow

## STAFF SCHOLARSHIPS

Keri Myrick  
Trinity Rinear

## HUMAN SITUATION LECTURE AWARDS

Euripides, *Electra*  
Hayan Charara  
Tamler Sommers  
Daniel Wallace

Plato, *Crito*  
Iain Morrison  
Tamler Sommers

*The Book of Matthew*  
Jamie Ferguson  
Jesse Rainbow  
Max Rayneard

Dostoyevsky,  
*Crime and Punishment*  
Brandon Lamson  
Robert Liddell  
Iain Morrison  
Max Rayneard  
Marina Trninic  
Daniel Wallace

David Hume, *Essays*  
Johanna Luttrell  
David Mikics  
David Rainbow

Kafka, *The Trial*  
Michael Barnes  
Jamie Ferguson  
Johanna Luttrell  
David Mikics  
David Rainbow

# PROVOST'S FACULTY AWARDS

JOHN AND REBECCA MOORES PROFESSORSHIP

Stuart Long

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AWARD

Daniel Price

TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARD

David Rainbow

DISTINGUISHED LEADERSHIP IN TEACHING EXCELLENCE

David Shattuck



# HONORS in ACTION

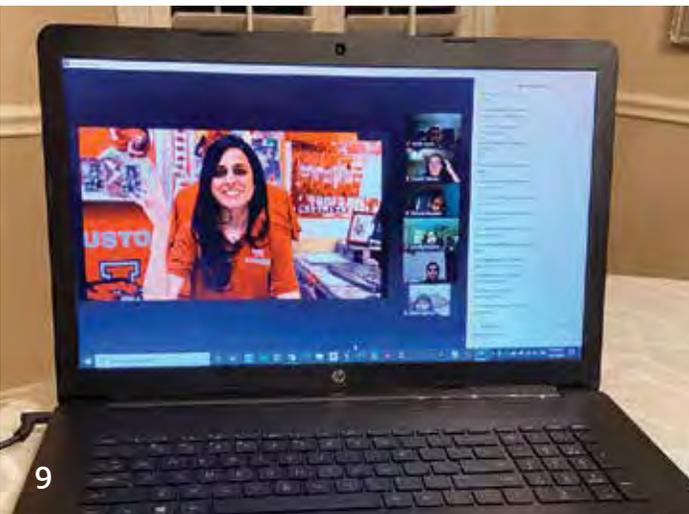


**Photos:** (1) The Honors College was honored by University of Houston Athletics along with Provost Paula Myrick Short to highlight our national ranking for student Fulbright Scholars; (2) Dean Monroe and Director of the Office of Undergraduate Research and Major Awards Ben Rayder presented President Khator and Chairman of the UH System Board of Regents Tilman Fertitta basketballs with the Honors College and the Fulbright logos on them commemorating the national ranking for student Fulbright Scholars; (3) Students gather to write letters to government officials expressing their concerns and thoughts.; (4) Club Theater is an organization of non-theatre majors who write and produce their original work; (5) A panel of colleagues lead a discussion of David Rainbow's newly published book, *Ideologies of Race: Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union in Global Context*; (6) At the Tier One Invitational, prospective

Coogs meet key College and University personnel, learn more about schools and majors, tour the campus, and compete for prestigious Tier One Scholarships by participating in group interviews; (7) Shortly after the University went online because of the COVID1-9 pandemic, the University sent this message to Houston on a billboard near the campus; (8) The Bonner Leaders continued serving the community, while social distancing; (9) The Honors Open House events also successfully pivoted to Zoom, presenting all Honors has to offer and engaging prospective students; (10-12) During the spring and summer, the College promoted the #WeAreHonors/#IamHonors social media campaign featuring students, faculty, staff, and alumni posting photos and comments sharing how they are coping and encouraging others; (13-14) The virtual 2020 graduation event celebrated 400 graduates, featuring a message from President Khator and Dean Monroe.



**#WeAreHonors**



M.D. Anderson Library  
4333 University Drive, Room 212  
Houston, TX 77204-2001

The Honors College has been rated among the top 10 in the nation by *Public University Press*.



(15) A wall showcasing faculty and student award recipients was installed during the summer; (16) Newly inducted Omicron Delta Kappa (ODK) members show off their membership certificates at the online ceremony; (17) Honors Professor Hayan Charara, chronicles Arab American experiences in a monthly Zoom event, "Evening with Honors"; (18) The 2020 Convocation featured alumni Jennifer Sullivan

(19) One of the New Grand Challenges Forum's speakers was Dennis Kennedy, founder and CEO of the National Diversity Council, speaking with Honors Professor Christine LeVeaux-Haley; (20) Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner addresses the inaugural graduating class of the Community Health Workers (CHW) externship program.