

BRIEFCASE



UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON LAW CENTER



2025 YEAR IN REVIEW

Breaking Records, Building Futures

Historic incoming class joins nation's #9 ROI law school

BRIEFCASE



2025
Volume 43
Number 1

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Blakely Advocacy Institute

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Health Law & Policy Institute

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Dean Leonard M. Baynes

DEAN'S NOTE

With another year behind us, I am filled with gratitude and pride for the accomplishments of the University of Houston Law Center, our students, faculty and law alumni. UH Law celebrated many historic events and milestones in 2025.

First, we welcomed an incoming J.D. class with the highest academic credentials in the Law Center's history. The class had a 3.79 median GPA and a median LSAT of 163. The J.D. class was comprised of 219 full-time and 30 part-time students. In addition to J.D. students, UH Law welcomed 44 new LL.M. students, including nine from the U.S and an international community spanning 18 additional countries.

Second, our Pre-Law Pipeline Programs celebrated its 10th year anniversary in 2025. Since its inception in 2015, the initiative has supported more than 500 first generation and low-income students by providing access to law school preparatory courses, LSAT study, and mentorship. Participants in our award-winning, race-, ethnicity-, and gender-neutral program have increased median LSAT scores by 6-14 points. The program is complemented by the *Aspiring Lawyer* online magazine. The third issue, to be published in early 2026, offers insights and advice for anyone wishing to pursue a legal career. Resources like these create new pathways for all students.

Third, UHLC's International Energy Lawyers Program (IELP) marked the 10-year anniversary of its first graduating class. The program, a partnership between UH Law Center and the University of Calgary Faculty of Law, offers participating law students the opportunity to earn both U.S. and Canadian law degrees in four years, making them eligible for bar membership in both nations.

Fourth, six trailblazing UH Law alumni judges offered inspiration and insights to law faculty, alumni, and students at the 2025 Judicial Pioneers Heritage Celebration. The pioneers honored included the Honorable Raul A. Gonzalez (J.D. '66), Honorable Juan F. Vasquez (J.D. '77), Honorable Vanessa D. Gilmore (J.D. '81), the Honorable Evelyn Keyes (J.D. '87), Honorable James F. Kovach (J.D. '91) and Honorable Frances Bourliot (J.D. '07).

Fifth, the University of Houston Law Center has been recognized for delivering substantial value to its graduates, earning the No. 9 spot for return on investment (ROI) among the nation's almost 200 ABA-accredited law schools according to analysis highlighted by the *American Bar Association Journal*. The study was conducted by LawCrossing, a leading legal industry job search platform that aggregates employment listings from law firms, corporations, government agencies, public interest organizations and courts. ROI was measured by analysis of student outcomes of bar passage, median starting salary, and employment after graduation.

In 2025, we celebrated three years in The John M. O'Quinn Law Building. It remains the newest law school facility in the state, making the cover of *PreLaw Magazine* as one of the best law school buildings in the nation, and is an impressive space that we are proud to call home. It is a place where faculty scholarship drives ideas forward, students engage in rigorous learning, and the community comes together. While the future of legal education continues to evolve, our commitment to excellence and our mission is unwavering. We are proud to provide a world-class legal education and extend our impact in Houston, Texas, and beyond.

I am grateful for the strength and impact of our Law Center community. With your support, we can continue to do remarkable things together in 2026 and empower students to shape a better world through the law.

Sincerely,

Leonard M. Baynes

Dean, Hugh Roy and Lillie Cranz Cullen Distinguished Chair, and Professor of Law



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Masaru Takiguchi
Japanese, b. 1941



Orbit II, 1968
Cypress wood, acquired in 1970

Takiguchi began sculpting at a very young age, experimenting with wood that his father would bring home for the family's hearth. Over time, his technique evolved in his native Japan for masterfully carved wood sculptures. It has an elegant continuity and simplicity from that time on in both its beginning or end. The sculpture is one of the first works acquired for the collection. For more information, visit publicart.uh.edu.

Public Art
University of
Houston System

RANKINGS



TWO UH LAW CENTER PROGRAMS LAND IN TOP 10 IN U.S. NEWS RANKINGS

The University of Houston Law Center's Part-Time and Health Law programs are among the top 10 in the country according to the 2025-2026 U.S. News & World Report rankings released in April.

The part-time program rose three spots to No. 5 while Health Law took the No. 9 spot. Nine specialty programs continued to rank in the top 50. The UH Law Center is ranked No. 30 among U.S. law schools with most graduates working at Big Law firms, and the school's overall ranking is No. 63, up five points from last year.

"We are pleased to make steady progress towards our goal of being among the top 50 law schools in this highly competitive field," said Dean Leonard M. Baynes. "While we recognize there is more work to be done to improve our standing in the U.S. News rankings, let us not lose sight of the excellence that inherently defines UH Law."

Top 50 Nationally Ranked UH Law Center Programs include:

- Part-Time Law Program (No. 5)
- Health Care Law Program (No. 9)
- Intellectual Property Law Program (No. 12)

- Legal Writing Program (No. 15)
- Dispute Resolution Program (No. 23)
- Trial Advocacy Program (No. 29)
- Law schools with Most Grads at Big Law Firms (No. 30)
- Environmental Law Program (No. 36)
- Tax Law Program (No. 41)

The methodology for the U.S. News law school rankings included factors such as LSAT score and GPA, peer assessment, lawyers and judges' assessment, employment 10 months after graduation, and first-time and ultimate bar passage rates.

"We remain focused on our mission to enroll the best and brightest students of all backgrounds and help them achieve big dreams by providing high quality legal education that is both affordable and accessible. We remain focused on hiring faculty who are world renowned scholars and terrific teachers. We remain focused on serving our communities with accessible clinical programs for indigent clients and excellent continuing legal education programs on important legal issues," Baynes said.



#9

U.S. Law Schools For Return On Investment (ROI)

LawCrossing



UH LAW CENTER AMONG TOP 10 NATIONALLY FOR RETURN ON INVESTMENT, ANALYSIS FINDS

The University of Houston Law Center was recognized for delivering substantial value to its graduates, earning the No. 9 spot among the nation’s top law schools for return on investment (ROI), according to an analysis highlighted by the American Bar Association Journal in December.

The study, conducted by LawCrossing, a leading legal industry job search platform that aggregates employment listings from law firms, corporations, government agencies, public interest organizations and courts into a single database, measured ROI using three categories: cost analysis (55%), employment outcomes (30%) and bar passage (15%) to come up with a ROI score.

Using data from the Class of 2024, the Law Center had an employment rate of 94.62%. The median starting salary for Law Center graduates was \$115,000 and the bar passage rate was 88.63%.

“We are pleased to have confirmed what we already know and that is the UH Law Center is an excellent law school, which provides a top tier return on investment for our students,” said Dean Leonard M. Baynes. “By enrolling at UH Law, each student will achieve best value from an affordable tuition while enhancing their opportunities to pass the bar exam on their first try, to secure their dream job, and for the most part secure a six-figure starting salary — that is an excellent return on investment placing UH Law among the top 10 law schools nationwide.”

HOUSTON LAW REVIEW CLIMBS NATIONAL RANKINGS, SECURES NO. 2 SPOT IN TEXAS

The Meta Rankings listed the University of Houston Law Center’s Houston Law Review at No. 51 in its 2025 edition released in August. This marked a two-spot improvement from 2024, and made the Houston Law Review the second-highest ranked law review in Texas.

“This ranking is a testament to more than six decades of student-led excellence and the long arc of institutional and alumni support that helped build the journal’s reputation,” said Dean Leonard M. Baynes. “From its humble beginnings to its national standing, the Houston Law Review embodies the ambition, discipline, expertise, and thoughtfulness we aim to instill in all our students.”

The Houston Law Review, founded in 1963, is known for its scholarship and programming, including its signature Frankel Lecture Series, which brings prominent speakers and leading scholars from across the country to the Law Center.

Over its 60-year history, the Houston Law Review has earned five Outstanding Law Review Article Awards from the Texas Bar Foundation, the Joan Garfinkel Glantz Award, the Jones Day Award and the Susan Godfrey L.L.P. Award.

UH LAW CENTER NO. 34 IN ABOVE THE LAW 2025 RANKINGS



The University of Houston Law Center is among the top 50 law schools in the country, according to rankings by Above the Law published in July. UHLC came in at No. 34.

The score was based on multiple factors, including job quality, employment rates, projected costs, and first-time bar exam passage. It was calculated using data collected last year from the 194 law schools approved by the American Bar Association.

“It’s exciting to see our progress reflected, and we remain focused on giving our students the tools they need to thrive in today’s legal world,” said Dean Leonard M. Baynes.

“The (Above the Law) Top 50 Law School Rankings prioritize the one thing that really matters: outcomes,” the publication said in a statement.

UH LAW CENTER RANKED AMONG NATION’S BEST FOR CAREER OUTCOMES BY NATIONAL JURIST



The National Jurist, a leading news source focused on legal education, gave the University of Houston Law Center an “A” grade in its Best Schools for Law Firm Employment rankings released in September

UHLC was one of 12 law schools nationwide out of almost 200 law schools, and one of three in Texas, to receive an “A” from the National Jurist.

“This recognition from the National Jurist reflects the dedication of our faculty, staff, and alumni in preparing our students to excel in a competitive legal profession,” Dean Leonard M. Baynes said.

National Jurist awarded the grade based on the three-year average for law firm employment, salary average, and the percentage of alumni recognized as Super Lawyers. The Super Lawyer status is based on the individual lawyer’s professional performance and only contains the top 5% of lawyers in each state.

LLM GUIDE HIGHLIGHTS UH LAW CENTER FOR AFFORDABILITY AND THREE SPECIALTY PROGRAMS IN TOP 10 LISTING



The University of Houston Law Center was named a top 10 best budget school in the U.S. for an LL.M., according to LLM Guide. It also placed in the top 10 for energy law, global law and health/medical law LL.M. offerings.

“I am thrilled that LLM Guide has once again recognized the University of Houston Law Center as a lower cost-high quality program,” said Karen Jones, executive director of Global and Graduate Programs at UHLC. “The cost of living in Houston compared to other major cities in the U.S. is also a major plus for those considering the overall cost of pursuing an LL.M.”

“With our incredible faculty, the ultra-modern John M. O’Quinn Law Building, and continued recognition of top 10 programs, UH Law Center is a great place to pursue an LL.M. degree,” she added.

The publication added that Houston, known as the “Energy Capital of the World” and a major hub for the oil and gas industry, is an ideal location to pursue an LL.M. in energy law.

The entry read: “With over 5,000 energy firms in the region, Houston

provides a dynamic environment for studying the intersection between energy, law, and policy.”

For LL.M. students interested in global law, LLM Guide referenced the Center for U.S. and Mexican Law and how it enables students to study comparative and international law. It added that the program will help participants “develop an understanding of the global implications of various public and private sector activities. The city of Houston itself has substantial global connections.”

The health law LL.M. program was cited for its research, workshops and courses like “Biotechnology and Law,” “Health Privacy,” and “Genetics and the Law.”

“Studying in Houston may be beneficial,” said LLM Guide about the Law Center. “America’s fourth-largest city is a leader in health care, energy and international business, so prospects for employment locally are expected to be good.”

LLM GUIDE, located in Berlin, Germany, was established in 2001. It serves as a directory for LL.M. programs around the world.

BRIEFLY NOTED

‘PRIVACY IS SAFETY,’ CYBERSECURITY EXPERT WARNS AT UH LAW’S DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WEBINAR



Smart technologies are being used as tools of surveillance and control in domestic violence situations, according to a presentation at the “Domestic Violence Awareness: A Survey of Critical Issues for Family Law Practitioners” webinar in October.

“As fast as tech changes, laws can’t keep up,” said tech and cybersecurity expert Stephen Bradley. He listed technologies that abusers can use to manipulate their victims: wireless trackers, smart television sets, smart watches, and other items.

The event also addressed how changing laws and immigration-related issues intersect with domestic violence cases. Clients who are not U.S. citizens can pose unique challenges for attorneys representing victims of family violence.

Immigration concerns have heightened in recent months, with undocumented clients often worried applying for a protective order or other relief could draw attention from immigration enforcement officers, Josephine Sorgwe, director of immigration and civic engagement at BakerRipley said.

One key takeaway shared at the event was that safety and self-care are critical. “I don’t want to scare anybody, but (this) is an opportunity to think about safety and what we do,” said Maisha Coler, chief executive officer at Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse.



L to R: Danielle M. Conway (AALS President-Elect), dean of Penn State Dickinson Law; Leonard M. Baynes (AALS Executive Committee Member), dean of University of Houston Law Center and Stacy Leeds (AALS Executive Committee Member), dean of Arizona State University Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law at the House of Representatives session held at the 2025 Association of American Law Schools Conference.

DEAN BAYNES APPOINTED TO ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN LAW SCHOOLS’ EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

University of Houston Law Center Dean Leonard M. Baynes was selected to serve a three-year term on the Executive Committee of the Association of American Law Schools. The announcement was made during the 2025 AALS Annual Meeting.

“Higher education and law schools, in particular, are facing challenging times in trying to balance First Amendment freedom of speech while maintaining a welcoming environment for all irrespective of their background,” he said. “At times like these, the association’s core values, and mission provide a shining star for us to follow. I am excited to serve as a member of the AALS Executive Committee, along with my peers, to help chart a path forward consistent with our values and mission.”

Baynes, who holds the Hugh Roy and Lillie Cranz Cullen Distinguished Chair, said that he is committed to making legal education accessible for all.

Founded in 1900, AALS is a learned society and a nonprofit organization with a mission to advance legal education through excellence in teaching and scholarship.

UH LAW CENTER'S GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INTEREST TABLE TALK CONNECTS STUDENTS TO PUBLIC SERVICE CAREERS

The University of Houston Law Center's Career Development Office's 2025 Government & Public Interest Table Talk brought together students, alumni, and representatives from about 50 local, state and national government agencies and nonprofit organizations to discuss internship and employment opportunities in the public sector.

"This career fair is the source of the first legal internship for a lot of our 1L students," said Bill Powers, director of judicial clerkship and externship programs. "It's their chance to speak to professionals from a wide variety of legal practices and a gateway to make connections."

Some of the organizations included Houston Methodist Hospital, the U.S. Marine Corps and the Harris County District Attorney's Office.



Artist Sarah Welch (pictured in the blue dress) in front of her temporary mural, "Commute," formerly displayed on the Main Street Marquee in Downtown Houston.

UH LAW CENTER ALUMNI AND STUDENTS HELP HOUSTON ARTIST SECURE A COPYRIGHT SETTLEMENT AGAINST WARNER BROS., DISCOVERY AND TLC

When University of Houston MFA student and artist Sarah Welch spotted her mural, "Commute," in an episode of the reality TV show "Bad Hair Day"— used without her permission — she knew something was off.

What began as an upsetting discovery quickly became a valuable lesson in copyright law, for Welch and a team from the Entertainment Law Clinic. Together, they took on Warner Bros. Discovery and TLC and secured a favorable settlement through the Copyright Claims Board, the Entertainment Law Clinic announced in 2025.

"The students I worked with were exceptionally strong-willed, patient and generous with their time. They made the process far more accessible for me and made sure I understood what was happening at every step of the way," she said.

Welch was represented by Madison Moehlig (J.D. '23), Jordan Marget (J.D. '24), Bailey Pruitt (J.D. '24), Matthew Frost (J.D. '24), Benigno Solis (J.D. '24), and Class of 2025 members Rachel Regner and Sarah Wickell. Co-professor Erin Rodgers and clinic volunteer Daria Adler also contributed.

UH LAW STUDENTS CHANNEL CONTRACTS CASES FOR HALLOWEEN FUN



From L to R: Professor Elizabeth Trujillo stands to the far left of the winners of UH Law’s contracts-inspired costume contest for UHLC students– Skyler Bohnert who won third place; Imaan Karachiwalla and Tara Porras who took second place; Erin Eldridge and Madison Arora who scored first place with Professor Aman Gebru.

University of Houston Law Center professors Aman Gebru and Elizabeth Trujillo combined Contracts law and Halloween creativity for a Contracts-themed Costume Contest and Review Session in October.

This UHLC tradition has an educational purpose. “While a lot of fun, the primary purpose of the contest was to review the core concepts and cases covered in our contract classes” said Gebru, assistant professor of law who started the contest four years ago.

This year’s contest featured 23 participants and 15 costumes. Each student with a costume or those guessing in the audience had to explain the rule of law behind their costumes.

UHLC DUO WINS TRI-LAW SCHOOL NEGOTIATION COMPETITION WITH TEAMWORK AND ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION TECHNIQUES

University of Houston Law Center students Rebecca Heaton and Katelynn Nichols won the top prize in May at the inaugural 2025 Tri-Law School Negotiation Competition. Held in April, the competition included two virtual rounds over Zoom and a championship at South Texas Law. Three schools — South Texas Law, Texas Southern University’s Thurgood Marshall School of Law, and the UH Law Center — participated.

“[Alternative Dispute Resolution] has helped me develop my skills as an advocate,” said Heaton. “The majority of disputes settle outside of court. Therefore, it was important to me that I learn how to advocate outside of the courtroom.”

The students used core ADR principles to win this competition, emphasizing their collaboration and creative solutions.

“I think that approaching negotiations with that mindset helps set the tone,” Heaton said. “However, it was also important for us to understand when not to make concessions. Negotiations are everywhere, even if we don’t realize it!”



The University of Houston Law Center student-team comprised of Rebecca Heaton (L) and Katelynn Nichols (R) after winning the top prize at the 2025 First Tri-Law School Negotiation Competition.

UH LAW CENTER BLACK HISTORY MONTH SPEAKER DR. RUTH J. SIMMONS CALLS FOR COURAGE IN A DIVIDED TIME

Dr. Ruth J. Simmons, a trailblazing academic leader, said different groups must join forces in service of “an overridingly important common project: a thriving democracy,” at the University of Houston Law Center’s 2025 Black History Month Lecture.

“We must come together to come up with sensible policies and make it possible to move forward together,” said Simmons, a Distinguished Presidential Fellow at Rice University, adviser to Harvard University on HBCU initiatives, author and president emerita of Prairie View A&M, Brown University, and Smith College. “It’s work we have to do for the survival of the country.”



Dr. Ruth J. Simmons

VAIL CONFERENCE ADDRESSES CHANGES IN IMMIGRATION LAW FOR LEGAL ADVOCATES

The University of Houston Law Center’s 2025 Joseph A. Vail Immigration Conference brought together legal experts, advocates, and educators to address critical issues involving immigration law, enforcement and asylum.

“I’m more convinced than ever that as immigration advocates, we will only achieve any of our goals through collaboration, community, and solidarity,” Anna Cabot, director of UH Law Center’s Immigration Clinic.

The conference featured three key panels:

- Taking the Law into Its Own Hands: Texas’ Foray into Immigration Law, Policy and Enforcement
- Turning Away the Huddled Masses: Closing the Border and Forbidding Access to the Asylum System
- Now What: Loper Bright and the Future of Immigration Appeals

The presentations and discussions highlighted the enduring legacy of Joseph A. Vail, founder of the Law Center’s Immigration Clinic, for his tireless work for immigration reforms.

“The three decades that Joe Vail spent providing legal assistance to vulnerable immigrants and issuing legal opinions underscore his unwavering commitment to the principles of justice and equality for all,” said Wafa Abdin, a practitioner and an adjunct professor with the Law Center.



Anna Cabot, director of UHLC’s Immigration Clinic, delivers opening remarks at the 2025 Joseph A. Vail Immigration Conference. Seated for the “Planning for a New Administration” panel (L to R): moderator Zenobia Lai and panelists Cesar Espinosa, Amrutha Jindal, and Kristin Etter.

REGIONAL AALS WORKSHOP AT UH LAW CENTER PROVIDES FUTURE LEGAL PROFESSORS A ROADMAP INTO ACADEMIA



From top to bottom – Dean Emeritus Douglas Sylvester of Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law, UH Law Dean Leonard M. Baynes, Christopher K. Odinet, Texas A&M University School of Law; second row: Professor Martin Edwards, University of Mississippi School of Law, Professors Meredith J. Duncan and Peter Salib with UHLC, and Dean Patricia Roberts of St. Mary's University School of Law; and bottom row: Professor Emily Berman with UHLC, Professor Orly Mazur of SMU Dedman School of Law, Professor Victoria Mather of St. Mary's University School of Law, Kyle Velte with University of Kansas School of Law and Dean Robert Ahdieh of Texas A&M University School of Law. Missing: Steve Clowney, University of Arkansas School of Law.

The University of Houston Law Center hosted aspiring law professors from across the region for the Association of American Law Schools Southwest and Big 12 Faculty Pre-Recruitment Workshop in August. The event, “So, You Want to Be a Law Professor?” offered panel discussions – covering everything from the hiring process to insights for effective teaching and research, networking, and interviews with law school representatives.

“Law school is about educating students of every background and helping them excel,” said University of Houston Law Center Dean Leonard M. Baynes. “That’s why we need great law professors. We want to make sure there are many law professors from a wide range of professional backgrounds to help all our students learn, develop and grow.”

The event was co-convened by ASU Sandra Day O’ Connor College of Law, Baylor Law School, SMU Dedman Law School, St. Mary’s University School of Law, Texas A&M University School of Law, Tulane Law School, University of Arkansas Law School, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, William H. Bowen School of Law, University of Cincinnati College of Law, University of Kansas Law School, University of Mississippi School of Law, University of Oklahoma College of Law, and University of Utah S.J. Quinney College of Law.

The workshop also partnered with regional and state bar associations, including the Austin Bar Association, Dallas Bar Association, Houston Bar Association, Houston Young Lawyers Association, San Antonio Bar Association, Tarrant County Bar Association, and the Utah State Bar.

EXPERTS SAY U.S. TAX REFORMS FACE CHALLENGES DRIVEN BY POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY

International energy and tax law experts gathered at the University of Houston Law Center for the 7th Annual UHLC Denney L. Wright International Energy Tax Conference and the 25th Annual Houston Business and Tax Law Journal Symposium in February. The event explored the global impact of proposed tariffs, regulatory changes, investment challenges in the energy sector and policy shifts, including U.S. tax reform and international dispute resolution.

A highlight of the conference was a panel on the future of U.S. tax policy as it pertains to the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022. Moderator Jenny Speck of Vinson & Elkins LLP led the discussion with panelists including John R. Lehrer II of BakerHostetler, Barbara de Marigny of Baker Botts, and Ivan Thomann of bp.

Lehrer noted ongoing tax reform negotiations in Washington.

“While many initially anticipated reforms in the first quarter of

the year, shifting political and economic factors now suggest these changes may be delayed until the third or fourth quarter,” he said. “I think everybody feels confident that there is something that is going to happen. We’re just not sure what.”

Another panel on clean energy tax policy in North America featured experts from Canada, Mexico, and the U.S.

Eduardo Canales, counsel at Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP, provided key insights into Mexico’s policy changes following its national election.

“What we’ve seen in these few months after the new president took office is an aggressive move to actually enact a lot of the ideological policies that the prior administration was not able to because of several constitutional and legal challenges,” Canales said.

UH LAW CELEBRATES STUDENT SUCCESS AND DONOR SUPPORT AT “FUEL THE FUTURE” EVENT

The University of Houston Law Center’s 2025 “Fuel the Future” Scholarship Luncheon in October brought together students, benefactors, faculty and alumni to recognize the impact of scholarships and those who make them possible.

“This is a school where dreams come true. We give students the power to control their lives and move their destiny to places they may have never imagined,” said UH Law Dean Leonard M. Baynes, emphasizing the importance of scholarship support to UHLC’s core mission of access and opportunity.

Two 3L students and multiple scholarship recipients, Katherine Brooks (B.A. ’06) and Kaneez Sayal shared their personal stories and the impact of scholarships on their lives.

Alumna Shannon Wright (J.D. ’22), who received the Dean’s Merit scholarship and another, also shared how the support allowed her to focus on her studies and growth. Now an attorney, Wright has established her own fund.

“Without knowing me, someone said, ‘I believe in you,’ which enabled me to believe in myself,” she said. “It is the greatest gift to be able to pay that forward to current students and future students for many years to come.”



University of Houston Law Center scholarship recipients with UH Law Dean Leonard M. Baynes at the luncheon. L to R: Kaneez Sayal, 3L; Dean Baynes; Alumna Shannon Wright (J.D. ’22) and Katherine Brooks, 3L.

ERWIN CHEMERINSKY OF UC BERKELEY LAW WARNS AGAINST GROWING EXECUTIVE POWER AT 2025 ROSENBERG LECTURE



UC Berkeley Law School’s Dean Erwin Chemerinsky presents the keynote to a packed room and virtual audience at the UH Law Center’s 2025 Yale L. Rosenberg Lecture.

The U.S. faces an increasingly fragile democracy due to the steady expansion of presidential authority, and the decline of the other two branches of government, according to constitutional law scholar Erwin Chemerinsky, who was the featured speaker at the Yale L. Rosenberg Lecture in March.

The UC Berkeley Law School dean delivered a talk titled “Constitutional Separation of Powers,” where he outlined the erosion of checks and balances across all three branches of government.

He reminded the audience that the framers of the Constitution in 1787 wanted a functional system of government and intentionally established three distinct branches with unique powers and responsibilities – the legislative, executive and judicial.

“American history shows that when we abandon the structure the framers intended, it often leads to disaster,” Chemerinsky said.

Chemerinsky traced the roots of today’s expanded executive power back to pivotal moments in the 20th century, including the Great Depression, World War II, and the Cold War. These crises, he said, led to greater reliance on federal authority and helped establish a long-term pattern of expanded presidential control.

UH LAW STUDENT JAHNAVI ARUN WINS NATIONAL HEALTH LAW SCHOLARSHIP

University of Houston Law Center second-year student Jahnavi Arun has been awarded the Michael F. Anthony Health Law Scholarship by the American Health Law Association. The scholarship recognizes law students who have demonstrated exceptional academic achievement and strong commitment to advancing health law.

As part of the award, Arun attended the AHLA Fundamentals of Health Law Conference, held in November in Chicago, where she connected with attorneys, compliance officers, and policymakers from across the country.

For Arun, who entered UHLC with a passion for health care policy, the award marks another step toward her goal of becoming a healthcare attorney. “After seeing how systemic and socioeconomic factors shape health outcomes, I realized I wanted to address those issues from a legal policy perspective,” she said.



Jahnavi Arun, a second-year student at the University of Houston Law Center, is merging her passion for health care, policy work and the law.



UH LAW CENTER STUDENTS WIN AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION'S NATIONAL ARBITRATION COMPETITION

Four University of Houston Law Center students emerged as the No. 1 arbitration team in the country, winning first place at the American Bar Association tournament in Chicago in January. The team included 3L Orly Golub, Anthony Lane, a second-year student, 3L Gunnar Osteen and 3L Jacob Parsont.

“We attended the national arbitration tournament last year but didn’t make the semifinals, so getting a second chance and making the most of it was a great feeling,” Parsont said. “It’s also special because you always want to win for your coaches who put in endless hours of work outside of their regular jobs to help you prepare and improve. We can’t compete or even begin to think about winning without our incredible coaches, Judge Christine Weems and Adam Robertson.

“Arguing in front of an arbitration panel, rather than a jury, involves more legal arguments and presented a new challenge for me,” Golub said.

“It feels nice to be able to call myself a national champion,” Lane added. “It means something to have contributed to that win.”

UH LAW CENTER SBA PRESIDENT DUNCAN REEDYK HELPS RALLY SUPPORT FOR HARRIS COUNTY COURT EXPANSION

In February, the Harris County Commissioners' Court voted 3-1, with one abstaining, to request that state lawmakers create five new civil district courts to meet growing legal demands.

Ahead of the vote, Judge Beau A. Miller, presiding judge of the 190th Judicial District Court, invited University of Houston Law Center Student Bar Association President Duncan Reedyk to speak at the Commissioners Court meeting alongside SBA presidents from South Texas College of Law Houston and Texas Southern University's Thurgood Marshall School of Law. Reedyk was instrumental in getting all three local SBA presidents to participate.

"Bringing all three Houston law schools together was crucial, not only for the greater good of the Houston legal community but also to bolster the proposal's significance before the Commissioners," Reedyk said. "A unified front, with UHLC, STCL, and TMSL speaking together, sent a far more powerful message than just one or two law schools advocating alone."



UH LAW CENTER, HOBBY SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS HOST WEBINAR ON NAVIGATING POLICY CHANGES IN A NEW POLITICAL ERA

Legal and policy experts gathered in March for a webinar titled "Key Policy Considerations for the Administration" to explore the administration's impact on the economy, higher education, immigration, energy and the environment.

The half-day virtual event featured more than 15 faculty members from the Law Center, the Hobby School of Public Affairs and other academic institutions.

"In this rapidly evolving moment of transition, it is crucial that we bring together scholars and experts to engage in thoughtful and strategic

discussions about the key policy challenges facing our nation," said Dean Leonard M. Baynes.

Topics included policy discussions on energy and the environment, higher education, immigration and trade and the economy.

"These discussions are a reflection of the range of critical policy topics that we draw on at the Hobby School to foster a comprehensive dialogue and inform stakeholders of the policy outlook," added Hobby School Dean Jim Granato. "This collaboration aligns with our commitment to contribute to conversations on leadership and the most complex issues of the day."

EXPERTS SHARE LESSONS FROM PANDEMIC-ERA POLICY SHIFTS AT 2025 FRANKEL LECTURE

The expansion and reversal of federal benefits related to the COVID-19 pandemic in the U.S. show how vulnerable U.S. public policies are to hidden power dynamics. National health law and policy expert Sam Bagenstos made this point during the Houston Law Reviews' 2025 Frankel Lecture, "COVID and the Great Retrenchment," at the University of Houston Law Center in October.

Bagenstos, former general counsel for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services who worked on policy issues during the pandemic, noted that these measures had real-world impact and briefly moved the U.S. closer to universal coverage: child poverty dropped by 46% in one year, three rounds of stimulus payments helped lift 11.7 million Americans out of poverty, and the number of American's without health insurance plummeted to a historic low of 7.7%.

But the permanent change that many predicted never materialized.

"If the choice, because of budgeting constraints, is lots of benefits on a short-term basis, or a smaller number on a long-term basis, maybe focus on the smaller number," Bagenstos said, adding that empowering beneficiaries was equally important.

After Bagenstos' keynote, the audience heard from respondents Abigail R. Moncrieff, associate professor of law and political science and co-director of the Center for Health Law and Policy at Cleveland State University College of Law, and Andrew Hammond, professor of law and Harry T. Ice Faculty Fellow at Indiana University Maurer School of Law.



From L to R: Andrew Hammond, Harry T. Ice Faculty Fellow and professor at Indiana University Maurer School of Law; Abigail R. Moncrieff, associate professor and co-director of the Center for Health Law and Policy at Cleveland State University College of Law; and Sam Bagenstos, the Frank G. Millard Professor of Law and the Arlene Susan Kohn Professor of Social Policy at the University of Michigan, engaged in a robust discussion about what the pandemic-era benefits expansion and their rapid rollback say about the fragmented U.S. approach to public policy.

The lecture and subsequent discussion reinforced the idea that pandemic-era expansions, and their rapid rollback reflect the challenges of sustaining social policy in a fragmented system. Speakers agreed that lasting reform requires not just good ideas, but attention to power, politics, and practical implementation.

The 30th Annual Frankel Lecture was hosted by the Houston Law Review and sponsored by The Frankel Foundation.

UH LAW CENTER SECURES HICKS THOMAS LLP AS TITLE SPONSOR OF ACCLAIMED MOOT COURT NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

The University of Houston Law Center's premier advocacy competition has a new name: The Hicks Thomas LLP Moot Court National Championship. Houston-based Hicks Thomas LLP, a top litigation boutique founded in 1997, has signed on as the exclusive sponsor.

"We are honored to partner with the University of Houston Law Center," said John Thomas, partner at Hicks Thomas. "This competition embodies the rigor, creativity, and mastery of argumentation essential to success in the legal profession—values that define our firm."

Hosted last January at the Bob Casey United States Courthouse, the championship brought together the nation's top 16 moot court programs. Seton Hall University School of Law took home the championship and Best Brief award, with Emma Taylor and Christopher Frey as team members. Garfield McIntyre Jr. of the University of Georgia School of Law earned Best Speaker honors.

"This partnership allows us to continue offering a world-class experience for aspiring advocates," said Amy Hawk, Director of the Blakely Advocacy Institute. "We're grateful to Hicks Thomas LLP for helping us prepare the next generation of exceptional legal talent."



Members of the winning team from Seton Hall University with competition judges (L to R): Emma Taylor (student), Hon. Jennifer Walker Elrod (Chief Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit), Hon. James E. Graves, Jr. (U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit), Hon. Scott A. Brister (Chief Justice, Fifteenth Court of Appeals), and Christopher Frey (student).



CURRENT U.S. IMMIGRATION TRENDS MIRROR LIMITING PAST, SAYS EXPERTS AT UH LAW CENTER WEBINAR

In August, the University of Houston Law Center hosted a webinar titled “The History of U.S. Immigration,” which brought together a panel of immigration scholars to examine the evolution of American immigration laws and how past policies continue to exert influence today.

“We study history, so we don’t repeat the mistakes of the past,” said UH Law Dean Leonard M. Baynes, who served as both the moderator and a presenter during the event.

In addition to Baynes, the virtual panel included Kevin Kenny, a professor of history at New York University; Gabriel “Jack” Chin, chair and professor of law and director of clinical legal education at the University

of California-Davis School of Law; Bryan Stone, professor of history at Del Mar College; and Daniel Morales, UHLC associate professor of law.

UHLC Professor Morales stressed the role of historical context in shaping legal thought. “Law tends to preserve the status quo. Reading good history helps challenge that bias,” Morales said. “It reminds us that the current system wasn’t inevitable—it was created by people who made choices, and we can make new ones.”

The panel made clear the enduring impact of immigration policy on American identity and highlighted the need for historical awareness when considering future legislation and policy.

UH LAW CENTER GRADUATES RATED ‘MARKET-READY’ AMID INDUSTRYWIDE SKILLS GAP CONCERNS

While a national report released in July warned of a “practice-skills gap” among new lawyers, University of Houston Law Center graduates earned strong praise from employers for their preparedness to enter the profession.

An independent survey, conducted through the unaffiliated technology platform Qualtrics, gathered anonymous responses from legal professionals with hiring authority. Respondents represented a cross-section of employers: 60% from Houston-area law firms, 30% from firms across Texas, and 10% from the state’s top firms. The response rate was 65%.

Employers praised graduates’ “resilience and adaptability” and noted the school’s “great exposure to Houston’s legal market,” which they said makes students “market ready.” Others lauded their skill in handling clients and producing high-quality legal work.

UH Law Center Dean Leonard M. Baynes said the feedback reflects the school’s emphasis on both theoretical and practical skills.

“Our graduates’ strong performance in this independent survey reflects the University of Houston Law Center’s commitment to preparing attorneys who are ready to meet the demands of law firms, and specifically

Houston, one of the largest legal markets in the U.S.,” Baynes said. “We’re proud that employers recognize what we all know, and that is our students have resilience, practical skills, and a client-centered approach, all essential qualities for succeeding in today’s legal profession.”





FIFTEEN YEARS IN, IS THE ACA BUILT TO LAST? HEALTH EXPERTS WEIGH IN AT UH EVENT

The University of Houston Law Center’s Health Law & Policy Institute and the Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine hosted “Health Coverage at a Crossroads,” a virtual panel on key developments in the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid regulation. The experts discussed how policy changes and health law debates shape real-world health outcomes for millions of Americans at the November event.

“When we ask who deserves publicly funded healthcare and on what conditions, we’re really revealing the values we want to prioritize,” said Professor Jessica Lind Mantel, director of UHLC’s Health Law and Policy Institute.

The ACA reshaped the U.S. insurance market, and as the nation enters the law’s 15th year amid shifting federal policies, assessing its future direction has become increasingly important. Speakers included Mantel, Dean Leonard M. Baynes, Kenneth W. Janda, Katie M. Keith, and Dr. Brian C. Reed.

Topics discussed included enrollment gains, policy shifts, and the philosophies shaping U.S. health law. With subsidies set to expire and major changes anticipated, panelists agreed the coming year will be pivotal for the ACA and those who rely on it.



UH LAW CENTER MARKS CONSTITUTION DAY 2025 WITH A PUBLIC VIDEO SERIES EXPLORING THE AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

To celebrate Constitution Day, the University of Houston Law Center released Dean Leonard M. Baynes’ video series and a one-page educators’ guide on constitutional amendments as free educational resources for teachers, community groups, and the public in September.

“Our Constitution is the backbone of our democracy, and understanding the constitutional amendments is essential for every American,” Dean Baynes said. “We are delighted to make these resources widely available as part of our commitment to public service and legal education.”



Luke Filyk

1L at University of Houston Law Center



Patricia Padrinao

City University of New York School of Law '23

Assistant District Attorney at Brooklyn District Attorney's Office



Mustapha Nyallay

George Washington University Law School '20

Associate Attorney at the Hodge Law Firm



Alejandra Garcia Castro

Baylor University Law School '22

Associate Attorney at Husch Blackwell

Former Law Clerk to the Honorable E. Lee Morris of the US Bankruptcy Court

UH LAW CENTER MARKS 10 YEARS OF PAVING THE WAY FOR ASPIRING LAWYERS WITH ITS PRE-LAW PIPELINE PROGRAMS

Celebrating Ten Years of Social Mobility through the Power of Legal Education

The UH Law Center Pre-Law Pipeline Program is 10 Years Strong

The University of Houston Law Center celebrated a decade of its Pre-Law Pipeline Programs this summer. Since 2015, the initiative has supported over 500 first-generation and low-income students by providing access to law school preparatory courses, LSAT study, and mentorship.

“When we first launched, our goal was to level the playing field for students with limited access to legal education. Today, our graduates are thriving,” said University of Houston Law Center Dean Leonard M. Baynes.

Participants have seen improvements in their LSAT scores and received more than \$11.6 million in scholarships. The program reaches over 150 undergraduate programs across the nation.

“Often, it takes belief from others before we can believe in ourselves,” said Mariesha Keys (J.D. '19), program director. “Someone believed in me, and I believe in each student.”

Now, the race-neutral, gender-neutral, and ethnicity-neutral programs continue to provide pathways and opportunities for all students to attend law school.

This year’s theme, “Pressing On: The Journey to the Legal Profession,” reflected the determination required to begin a career in law.

Thirty-eight students from 14 colleges and universities participated this summer.



Health Law & Policy Institute Director Jessica Mantel with University of Colorado Law Professor Govind Persad and HLPI Research Scholar Erica Patterson at the University of Houston Law Center.

ALLOCATING LIFESAVING CARE: EXPERT DIGS INTO THE ETHICS OF MEDICAL SCARCITY AT UH LAW DISCUSSION

The University of Houston Law Center’s Health Law and Policy Institute Speaker Series hosted an interactive presentation by Professor Govind Persad of the University of Colorado Law School. The event, focusing on how societies should share lifesaving medical care when resources run short, was in November.

Persad, a nationally recognized bioethicist, opened by examining health status and age as key factors in allocation decisions.

“I actually do think somebody who has stage 4 cancer should get lower priority for a transplant,” he said. “If you have advanced cancer, you have poor odds of a treatment working, of surviving for a long time, and, even if it does work, you’re going to be in pain and have various pretty severe functional limitations.”

He stressed that allocation policies should avoid worsening existing inequities and that individuals facing socioeconomic disadvantages often have medical conditions that shorten their lives.

Adjusting policies to account for this, he suggested, could counterbalance unfairness built into predictors like age or comorbidities. However, he cautioned that U.S. antidiscrimination law may restrict such efforts, as courts frequently favor maximizing medical benefit.

Persad concluded by reminding attendees that fair allocation is not just about survival, about deciding which injustices society is willing to accept, and which it cannot.

UH LAW’S ONLINE LL.M. PROGRAMS OPEN DOORS FOR LEGAL PROFESSIONALS NATIONWIDE

The University of Houston Law Center expanded access to its nationally recognized LL.M. programs by offering online learning opportunities this summer. Synchronous distance education, or SDE, allows U.S. lawyers to earn an LL.M. from anywhere by using video conferencing technology to help them participate in live, interactive classes.

UH Law allows students to choose from a variety of high-ranking concentrations, including health law, ranked ninth in the nation, and intellectual property law, ranked 12th. The SDE format allows students to receive the same competitive education and networking opportunities as their in-person peers. While some classes may require some in-person exams in Houston, most coursework can be completed from the convenience of students’ homes.

“People have busy lives with work, family, and other obligations, and need flexibility,” said Karen Jones, executive director of Global and Graduate Programs at UHLC. “The commute to campus can be a deterring factor. Having an online LL.M. option allows for flexibility, convenience, and peace of mind.”



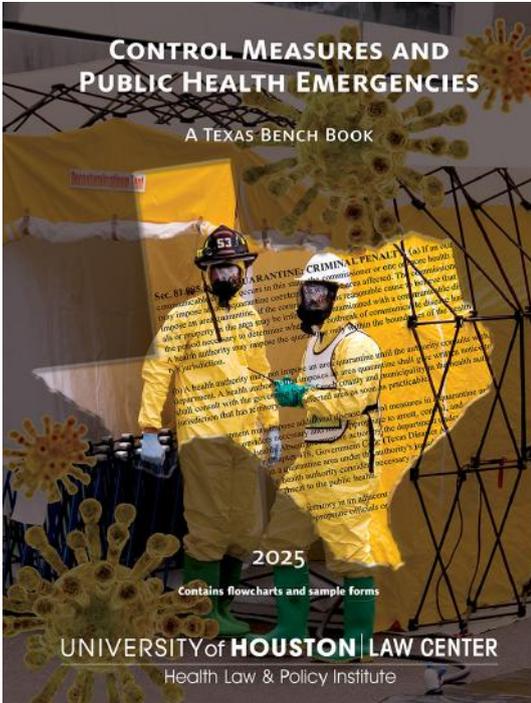
STEP INTO ART: UH LAW UNVEILS INTERACTIVE ART EXPERIENCE

University of Houston Law Center partnered with the Public Art University of Houston System in May to launch a self-guided audio tour that brings law, creativity and new-age technology together.

“As visitors get to learn more about the artists and what their artwork represents, they will hopefully gain a deeper understanding of how law and art intersect,” said UH Law Dean Leonard M. Baynes.

The UHLC collection features intriguing sculptures and thought-provoking wall art, including a bronze statue of Albertus Magnus, a German Dominican friar/scientist/teacher considered to be one of the best medieval philosophers, by Gerhard Marcks; a painting showcasing Scott Street and Third Ward called “The Line” by Houston-based artist Rick Lowe; and the “Arty-Fax Series” of paintings by Roland J. Bernier, Jr.

Each piece of art includes a sign displaying the artist’s name, a brief description and a QR code. Scanning the code unlocks an audio experience that delves into the meaning behind the piece.



UH LAW CENTER RELEASES UPDATED TEXAS BENCH BOOK AS A GUIDE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH CRISES

The University of Houston Law Center’s Health Law & Policy Institute (HLPI) released an updated digital edition of the “Texas Bench Book on Control Measures and Public Health Emergencies,” a critical legal resource for Texas judges, public health officials and emergency planners in July.

“As we learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, resources like this are crucial,” said HLPI Director Jessica Mantel. “That’s why I’ve prioritized updating the Texas Bench Book—so it’s accessible before the next public health emergency.”

The 2025 Texas Bench Book reflects the latest legislative changes and evolving emergency protocols under Chapter 81 of the Texas Health and Safety Code.

“This Texas Bench Book is more than a reference — it’s a practical guide for navigating legal decisions during rapidly unfolding public health emergencies,” said Erica Patterson, research scholar at HLPI and editor of the 2025 edition.

Features include revised appendices with user-friendly flowcharts, updated judicial forms and venue references to aid legal accuracy and practical application.

UHLC STUDENT SAVANNAH WITTE WINS GLOBAL AIEN STUDENT WRITING COMPETITION

Savannah Witte, a third-year student at the University of Houston Law Center, won the top prize in the Association of International Energy Negotiators’ annual Student Writing Competition in spring 2025. Her winning paper “Uncontrolled Flaring: The True Story of the Wild West” was published in the Journal of World Energy Law and Business.

She also had the option to attend – with complimentary registration and accommodations – either the Ninth Annual International Energy Summit (IES) in Istanbul, Turkey or the Model Contracts Workshop in Bali, Indonesia. Witte chose the workshop held in September.

“I chose the AIEN Model Contracts Workshop because it offers a unique opportunity to enhance my understanding of energy contracts in a global context while expanding my professional network,” Witte said. “This experience will allow me to deepen my expertise and gain practical insights that will be instrumental in shaping my future legal career.”

As the 2024-2025 winner, she also won a complimentary one-year AIEN student membership.



Savannah Witte, a third-year student at the University of Houston Law Center



New UH Law Center J.D. students gather with Dean Leonard M. Baynes, law faculty and staff at the 2025 Professionalism Dinner.



UHLC Assistant Dean for Admissions Pilar Mensah addresses law students at orientation.



From L to R: UHLC Associate Dean Greg Vetter, Alumnus John Ngunjiri (J.D. & LL.M. '21), Houston Bar Association president Daniella Landers, UH Law Dean Leonard M. Baynes, Judge Michael Gomez (J.D. '00) at the 2025 Professionalism Dinner.



UH LAW CENTER WELCOMES RECORD-SETTING INCOMING CLASS FOR FALL 2025 SEMESTER

The University of Houston Law Center's entering J.D. class in August had the highest academic credentials in the Law Center's history. The overall median LSAT is 163 and the median undergraduate GPA is 3.79, the strongest in more than four decades. The J.D. class is comprised of 219 full-time and 30 part-time students.

UHLC also added 44 new LL.M. students, including 35 from abroad and nine from the U.S.

"This extraordinary group of students joins the Law Center at a significant moment for our institution, as we continue to strengthen our academic profile and broaden our impact in the legal profession," said UH Law Center Dean Leonard M. Baynes.

The new students participated in two days of orientation events. From student panels to career guidance and networking, the programs gave students a chance to see what their life as law students and future lawyers will look like.

The orientation concluded with the annual professionalism dinner, where alumnus John Ngunjiri (J.D. & LL.M. '21), the featured speaker, shared his personal story about the struggles and rewards he experienced during law school. He encouraged students to embrace both resilience and balance.

"The moment you are standing in is a culmination of many years of hard work, late nights, and sacrifices," Ngunjiri said. "Over the next three years, I challenge you to develop a pride in your new profession, to desire to make a difference, and to learn the rule of law as an abstract principle. It starts now."



George Buckley is the recipient of the Second Annual Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Center Student Scholarship Award.

UH LAW CENTER STUDENT GEORGE BUCKLEY WINS EENR STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

George Buckley was the recipient of the Second Annual Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Center Student Scholarship Award. In addition to winning the \$10,000 scholarship, Buckley presented his paper at the 9th Annual North American Conference: “Rewiring the Future: How Technology, Policy, and Investment Are Empowering the New Electricity Era” in April.

Buckley’s winning article was titled “America the Sustainable: FERC’s Ability to Support Clean Energy Questioned in the Wake of Shifting Agency Authority.”

As a Houstonian, Buckley’s passion for renewable energy and federal regulation stems from the region’s ties to the energy industry.

“This city is heavily invested in oil and gas, which is a very important part of the national economy,” Buckley said. “My interest in sustainability doesn’t come out of a desire to end the use of petroleum-based fuels, but rather, a recognition of the potential that exists in alternative fuels. Often the narrative is very black and white when it comes to renewable vs. non-renewable energy, but I don’t see it that way.”

5TH CIRCUIT JUDGE URGES 2025 UH LAW CENTER GRADUATES TO EMBRACE NEW POSSIBILITIES



5th Circuit Judge Irma Carrillo Ramirez, the keynote speaker for the commencement, shared her personal story and urged graduates to dream big.

The UH Law Center’s May 2025 Commencement, held at the Fertitta Center, included 243 J.D. recipients and 49 LL.M. graduates. The keynote speaker was Judge Irma Carrillo Ramirez, the first Latina woman to serve on the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

“What I want to say to you on your graduation day is this: Dare to dream what you cannot yet imagine,” Ramirez said.

Ramirez offered the graduates three pieces of advice: identify your passion, plan but remain open, and never give up.

“Ask yourself why you wanted to be a lawyer,” she said. “Find that passion and follow it. There will be career opportunities along the way that will lead in a direction you did not expect.”

UH Law Dean Leonard M. Baynes told the graduates that their legal education could open doors to many rewarding paths.

“Your law degree provides you with a wide range of career opportunities. We are proud of you, we enjoyed teaching you, and we look forward to following your successful careers,” he said.

UHLC COMMUNITY JOINS DEAN BAYNES FOR CONVERSATION ON PROGRESS AND GROWTH

Students, faculty, and staff joined University of Houston Law Center Dean Leonard M. Baynes for a lunch-time heart-to-heart at the beginning of the fall semester.

Dean Baynes highlighted the University of Houston Law Center's national achievements, including four programs ranked in the top 15, strong employment outcomes with 94.6% of graduates working within ten months, and \$8.5 million raised toward a \$10 million fundraising goal. Students cited the school's growing reputation, supportive environment, and momentum as key reasons for choosing UHLC, reflecting the institution's continued rise in academic excellence and opportunity.

Assistant Dean Monica Mensah, who oversees student affairs, encouraged participation in the First-Gen Student Organization.

"You don't know what you don't know," she said. "It helps to be around people who know some things and don't know other things. You can help each other."

Dean Baynes ended the discussion by thanking attendees and reaffirming UHLC's mission. "We're here for students, they are the lifeblood of the Law Center," he said. "All of us together can make a difference."



HEALTH POLICY EXPERT DISCUSSES HOW BETTER INVESTMENTS CAN IMPROVE U.S. HEALTH OUTCOMES



Elena Marks, senior fellow at Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy, speaks at the UHLC Health Law and Policy Institute's Speaker Series.

The U.S. spends more on health care than most developed countries, but its outcomes are among the worst. But there is a solution, according to Elena Marks, who delivered remarks at this spring's Health Law and Policy Institute's Speaker Series.

"The U.S. spent \$4.9 trillion on health care in 2023, yet we are still seeing decreases in life expectancy and decreases in overall health," said Marks, who is a senior fellow at Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy and the former CEO and founding president of the Episcopal Health Foundation.

Marks separated the health care system into three parts: downstream, midstream, and upstream. Downstream interventions, such as hospital care and emergency services, are necessary but expensive. Midstream covers private and public health care as well as waivers and programs across the nation to reduce the cost. The upstream health care system emphasizes public health and long-term health, where Marks said should be prioritized more.

"Health is the outcome we're going for," Marks said. "We know what the drivers are. We have enough money to do it right. Moving upstream is the way to make quality and cost align."

FROM THE CLASSROOM TO PARIS: UHLC STUDENTS DELIVER POWERFUL PERFORMANCES AT INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL CONTESTS



UHLC third-year students Sarah Shireen Moinuddeen and Kourtney Phillips, were the only U.S. team to advance to the quarterfinals in the 2025 Cross-Examination Moot Competition in Paris. This global competition focuses on cross-examination in international arbitration.

The University of Houston Law Center's advocacy programs celebrated a standout fall semester. The school's moot court, alternative dispute resolution (ADR), and mock trial teams brought home awards for written and oral advocacy, professionalism, and overall team performance.

"Our law students hone their advocacy skills, discipline, and confidence in these advocacy competitions," said Amy Hawk, executive director of the UH Law Center's Blakely Advocacy Institute. "These are essential qualities that will help our students excel as effective, poised, and impactful attorneys in their future legal careers."

Leading these accomplishments was UHLC's strong showing at the 2025 Cross-Examination Moot Competition in Paris, one of the world's premier contests for student advocates. Third-year students Kourtney Phillips and Sarah Shireen Moinuddeen advanced as the only U.S. team to reach the knockout stage, finishing as quarterfinalists after ranking second overall in the general rounds. The team was coached by Ann Ryan Robertson (UHLC J.D., '77 and LL.M. '05) and Jim Lawrence (ret. BAI Exec. Director, UHLC '07).

Phillips scored one of the event's top distinctions: Best Cross Examiner of the Competition, an honor that includes a prestigious internship in Paris at Gaillard Banifatemi Sheldaya Disputes, an international law firm specializing in arbitration.

The competition drew more than 40 teams from universities across Europe, Asia, Africa, and North America.

Other advocacy wins for UH Law students include:

- The ADR team advanced to the semifinals at the ABA Regional Arbitration Competition hosted by South Texas College of Law Houston in November. Team members Taryn McDonald (3L), Ariana Taboada (3L), Alicia White (3L), and Katie Nichols (2L)

earned praise for their strong advocacy under the guidance of coaches Anya Bolshakov (J.D. '20) and Foster Baird (J.D. '20), with support from alumni coaches Cawlyn Robinson (J.D. '22) and Trinity Buchanan (J.D. '25).

- The Mock Trial team also secured notable achievements this fall:
 - o At the All Star Bracket Challenge in October, the 3L team of George Buckley, Therese Eamiguel, Lauren Gonzales, and Koosha Jamali earned Honorable Mention, and Buckley was named an Outstanding Advocate.
 - o Later that month at the St. John's Peter James Johnson National Civil Rights Competition, Alyssa Galvan (3L), Mauricio Garcia (3L), Aven Lathrop (3L), and Maddie Suttles (2L) finished as quarterfinalists.
- In November, UHLC fielded two mock trial teams at Premiere, a tournament intended to serve as the inaugural interscholastic competition for participating law students, and both teams returned with awards.
 - o The team of Sydney Edwards (3L), Jacob Resendiz (2L), Kadeem Richards (2L), and Zachary Wood (2L) earned second place, with coaches Andy Rubenstein and Spencer Packard (J.D. '21) receiving the Best Judge award.
 - o The second team, with Alicia Davila (2L), Jaime Gutierrez (2L), Jephry Medena (2L), and Will Tagliareni (2L), was named Most Professional Team, and Gutierrez was recognized as an Outstanding Advocate. The team was coached by Maurice Sayeh and Kathryn Laflin (J.D.'19).

UH LAW CENTER EVENT ADVISES INTERNATIONAL LAWYERS ON HOW TO NAVIGATE THE U.S. LEGAL MARKET

The University of Houston Law Center and global law firm Curtis, Mallet-Prevost, Colt and Mosle LLP hosted the “Foreign Lawyers Roundtable” in March to provide guidance and connections for foreign-trained attorneys pursuing or considering a J.D. or LL.M. degree.

The roundtable discussion featured experienced legal professionals from across the world who shared their insights about navigating the U.S. legal market. Panelists shared personal stories and experiences that shaped their career journeys. The key message of the evening was that while the path for foreign-trained lawyers can be challenging, patience, perseverance, networking, and adaptability are the keys to success.

“About 90-95% of our students in the LL.M. program are foreign lawyers,” said Karen Jones, executive director of Global and Graduate Programs at UHLC. “Our students represent 21 countries and speak 15 different languages. We are very proud of the internationalization of our students.”



Panelists Enrique Jaramillo, a legal counsel at Curtis, Mallet-Prevost, Colt and Mosle LLP; Tania Albuja, senior associate at Nelson Mullins; Audrey Guaqueta, general counsel and corporate secretary at Ecopetrol U.S.A. Inc. and Darya Shirokova, assistant director of the Institute for Transnational Arbitration, share insights and answer questions at the event.

UH LAW FACULTY ANALYZE SCOTUS RULINGS FROM 2024-2025 TERM



The University of Houston Law Center hosted a virtual CLE seminar titled “2025 U.S. Supreme Court Update” in August, bringing together faculty to share insights about a wide range of major rulings, including birthright citizenship, parental rights, workplace protections, and voting rights.

“This term was packed with rulings that affect not just the legal landscape, but everyday lives,” said UH Law Dean Leonard M. Baynes, who moderated the roundtable discussion.

Law Foundation Professor Seth Chandler examined *Trump v. CASA*, where the Court avoided ruling on birthright citizenship under the 14th Amendment, instead curbing federal courts’ use of universal injunctions. Class action suits remain a path to challenge federal policies, though procedural hurdles exist, he said adding “The story is not done yet.”

Professor David R. Dow analyzed *Mahmoud v. Taylor*, a parental rights case involving a Maryland school district’s reversal of a policy letting families opt children out of LGBTQ-inclusive lessons. He highlighted themes of religious accommodation, parents’ authority, and cultural tensions.

“On both of the first two themes, the Supreme Court is not really doing anything unpredictable or radical,” Dow said. “The third theme is a new issue...when it comes to the application of the Free Exercise Clause to this new domain - LGBTQ+ issues - it is potentially extremely significant and could replicate itself in additional contexts in the coming years.”

Assistant Professor Laura Portuondo reviewed *United States v. Skrametti*, upholding Tennessee’s ban on gender-affirming care for minors. She warned the decision could narrow sex equality doctrine, influence reproductive rights litigation, and that unresolved questions could lead to future challenges.

Other cases discussed included *Ames v. Ohio Department of Youth Services*, where Professor Emily Berman highlighted the Court’s unanimous stance that discrimination claims apply equally to all groups; and *Louisiana v. Callais*, a redistricting case which could redefine Voting Rights Acts enforcement, according to Assistant Professor David Froomkin, an expert in constitutional and election law.

Forging Interna

UH Law and the University of Calgary Coll

The International Energy Lawyers Program (IELP), a pioneering dual-degree initiative sponsored by University of Houston Law Center and the University of Calgary Faculty of Law, celebrated its 10-year anniversary in 2025.

Since graduating the first class in 2015, the program has prepared lawyers to practice in two countries, two legal systems, and two of North America's most influential legal markets.

Built on Energy, Expanded for Global Practice

Launched in 2012, the International Energy Lawyers Program grew out of a shared recognition that energy law had become global. By partnering with schools in Houston and Calgary — two of North America's most influential energy centers — the program was designed to prepare lawyers who could navigate cross-border

legal, regulatory, and commercial challenges in an increasingly interconnected energy market.

"They're both dynamic cities, they're both global cities, and they're both cities known for energy and oil and gas," said University of Houston Law Center Dean Leonard M. Baynes in a press release announcing the program's launch.

From the beginning, program leaders emphasized that the IELP was not simply an academic exchange but a long-term commitment to global legal education. "The obvious thing that we share is the energy focus [of] the two economies. But what really underlies that is the spirit of optimism and dynamism," said Calgary Dean Ian Hallaway in the same article. "The fact that our two law schools have come together embodies that dynamism that characterizes the two sister cities."



Calgary

International Lawyers: *Laborate on Cross-Border Legal Education*

Preparing Transnational Lawyers for Diverse Careers

Over time, the scope of the program has expanded alongside the careers of its graduates. According to Karen Jones, executive director of Global and Graduate Programs at UHLC, the goal has always been to produce transnational lawyers capable of operating across borders and practice areas.

“What we have found is that students who go through the program, while some of them stay in energy, others end up going into other sectors,” Jones said. “We have had students go on to become professors, work in major law firms and some who have opened their own practice.”

That evolution has prompted program leaders to rename the initiative the International Environmental Lawyers Program, reflecting the

broader scope of careers graduates now pursue and the expanding intersection of energy, environmental regulation, and global policy.

A Dual-Degree Path Across Borders

To achieve that goal, the IELP offers a rigorous four-year academic pathway culminating in dual Juris Doctor degrees from UHLC and Calgary. Students spend two years at each institution, immersing themselves in distinct legal systems, professional cultures, and regulatory frameworks while building an international professional network.

Upon graduation, students are positioned to pursue the bar in both the United States and Canada, a credential that gives them



Houston

10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

a competitive legal edge. The program delivered on that promise in 2015, when its first graduates earned dual J.D. degrees with an emphasis in energy law, affirming the viability and value of the partnership.

“From the start, the goal was to build something that would endure,” Dean Baynes said. “Ten years later, it’s incredibly rewarding to see how successful the program has become and the impact our graduates are having. We wanted to prepare lawyers who could think and practice globally, and the IELP has done exactly that.”

Graduates Making an Impact Across North America

Over the past decade, the IELP has graduated 24 students who now work in law firms, corporations, and government agencies across North America. Their careers span energy transactions, regulatory compliance, litigation, mergers and acquisitions, and policy work, reflecting the breadth of training the program provides.

Among the program’s earliest success stories is Andrea James, one of the three graduates from the inaugural class. After co-founding her own firm, Jamesco, in Calgary, James has built a thriving practice handling complex, cross-border legal matters. She credits the IELP with expanding her professional network and preparing her for a career that spans jurisdictions and practice areas.

“The program gave me the opportunity to network quite extensively when I was in Texas. Upon returning to Canada, I had access to several clients,” she said in a recent UHLC story. “I was able to leverage that into a very successful practice quite early in my career and ended up hanging my own shingle.”

Another standout alumnus is Barrett Schitka, also from the program’s first cohort, who now serves as counsel in the Mergers & Acquisitions practice at Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP in New York. In his role, Schitka focuses on complex mergers, acquisitions, and the advising of clients across industries, including oil and gas — a testament to the versatility of the training he received through the IELP.



Karen Jones, executive director of Global and Graduate Programs at UHLC.



Houston Young Lawyers Association
Mariame Aana presenting
University of Calgary Dean



Barrett Schitka, Andrea James and Julia Gill, from the inaugural IELP cohort, at their commencement.



HYLA Houston Delegation at the Norton Rose Fulbright firm in Canada



Association President
 a Hyla award to
 Oshionebo.



Faculty of Law Director of the Career & Professional Development Office Maryanne Forryi, UHLC Dean Leonard M. Baynes, UC Faculty of Law Dean Evaristus Oshionebo, Faculty of Law Events Coordinator Peter Desmond Dawe, UHLC's Executive Director of Global and Graduate Programs Karen Jones.

Together, alumni like James and Schitka exemplify the program's long-term impact: producing lawyers who are not only technically strong, but comfortable operating in sophisticated, international legal environments.

Strengthening Cross-Border Connections

The impact of IELP extends far beyond the classroom, as alumni and current students continue to shape global legal practice. To mark its 10-year anniversary, the two sponsors hosted a celebration that honored the program's achievements while reinforcing its mission of preparing lawyers for a globalized legal market.

The event, "Passport to Calgary," was a three-day professional exchange that brought together students, alumni, and legal professionals from both countries. Co-hosted with partners including the Houston Young Lawyers Association and the Canadian Bar Association of Alberta, the event featured continuing legal education sessions, networking opportunities, and discussions focused on cross-border practice. Topics ranged from international transactions to comparative legal systems, reflecting the program's emphasis on practical, globally informed legal education.

"The Passport Program worked to fortify relationships that currently exist between our two great nations," Dean Baynes said. "The Program was designed to highlight our shared similarities and not our differences through our mutual and shared history and very similar legal institutions – courts, law faculty, and the bar associations."

As the program enters its second decade, initiatives like Passport to Calgary focus the attention on IELP's continued commitment to preparing lawyers for an increasingly global energy market.

To learn more about the program, click [here](#), or email us at lawadmissions@uh.edu.



Hyla Houston Delegation at University of Calgary, with IELP students and Faculty of Law Dean Evaristus Oshionebo.

UH LAW PROFESSOR TRUJILLO VISITS ITALY WITH PRESTIGIOUS BRAUDEL FELLOWSHIP



Elizabeth Trujillo

Professor Elizabeth Trujillo, the Mary Ann & Lawrence E. Faust Professor of Law and Founding Director of the Initiative on Global Law and Policy for the Americas at the University of Houston Law Center, has completed a semester in residence as a 2024-2025 Fernand Braudel Senior Fellow at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy (EUI).

The Braudel Fellowship provides a framework for academics with an international reputation to pursue their research at the EUI. While there, Trujillo was affiliated with the Department of Law, where she taught, researched and continued work on her forthcoming book with Cambridge University Press, “Shattered Prisms: Using Fragmentation to Reconceptualize Trade for Sustainable Development.”

“I am honored to have received this prestigious fellowship,” said Trujillo, who joined UH Law in 2019 and received the 2024 UH Global Faculty Award.



Seth Chandler

UH LAW CENTER’S PROFESSOR CHANDLER LAUNCHES “AI FOR LEGAL EDUCATION” BLOG TO GUIDE THE NEXT GENERATION OF LAWYERS

In 2025, would a law student’s refusal to use artificial intelligence be comparable to a 1990s’ student refusing to use a computer? University of Houston Law Center Professor Seth J. Chandler argues it is and has released a new blog, AI for Legal Education, to help students, faculty, and alumni navigate this new reality.

The blog addresses the challenges and opportunities of AI, contending that students not actively using these tools risk a significant disadvantage in their studies and their careers. In his post, “If I Were a Law Student Today,” Chandler outlines a core toolkit and workflow for using AI to learn more deeply, manage information, and prepare for a legal profession that is rapidly adopting AI for research, drafting, and analysis.

While providing a roadmap for students is a key focus, the blog offers resources for the entire legal community. Chandler takes an “educator-first” perspective, showing how AI can augment—not replace—legal expertise.

UHLC PROFESSOR ANOZIE SHOWCASES ENERGY JUSTICE RESEARCH AT NATIONAL WORKSHOP

University of Houston Law Center Assistant Professor Chinonso Anozie was one of nine participants to present at the Coleman P. Burke Center for Environmental Law at Case Western Reserve University's 2025 Junior Faculty Workshop. Presenters were selected based on scholarly work in progress and future promise.

"My scholarship focuses on addressing challenges within the energy and environmental sector that reduce the barriers disadvantaged communities face in accessing energy justice," said Anozie. "This project explores how partisan gridlock hinders the development of regulatory structure that drives renewable energy infrastructure."

His presentation was titled "Beyond the Ideology of Renewables." Recruited under UH's Presidential Frontier Faculty initiative, Anozie advances his work through UHLC's Environment, Energy, and Natural Resources Center (EENR).



Chinonso Anozie

UH LAW CENTER CELEBRATES NEW FACULTY, PROMOTIONS AND SERVICE



Alison Drake



Rita Julien



Joshua Lake

The University of Houston Law Center has added three new faculty members to its ranks and promoted three professors for the 2025-26 academic year. "At the Law Center, we know that a large part of our strength as a law school lies in the caliber of our instruction. Our faculty's scholarship shapes important legal conversations, their teaching prepares future leaders of the legal profession, and their service strengthens our communities. As we continue our commitment to building a world-class law school, it is essential that we attract and retain world-class faculty," said UH Law Center Dean Leonard M. Baynes.

New faculty hires include:

- Alyson Drake; Assistant Professor of Law, Director of the Law Library, Assistant Dean for Legal Research Services, Director of the Initiative for Evidence-Based Legal Education
- Rita Julien, Assistant Professor
- Joshua Lake, Criminal Justice Clinic Director, Professor of Practice

Promotions include:

- Megan Leigh-Wilson Davis, Clinical Professor
- Alissa Gomez, Clinical Professor
- Laurel Simmons, Clinical Associate Professor
- Thomas Oldham, Emeritus Professor

UH LAW CENTER'S DAVID FROOMKIN EARNS NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR REIMAGINING THE SEPARATION OF POWERS

University of Houston Law Center's Assistant Professor David Froomkin received the 2025 Leonard D. White Award from the American Political Science Association, honoring the year's best dissertation in public administration. He earned the award for his groundbreaking work, "Structuring Democracy," which examined the legal architecture of the executive branch and how it affects public and administrative law.

"The structure of government has enormous effects on how public policy is made," Froomkin said. "[How] the relationship between Congress and the executive branch is structured [affects] how accountable executive policymaking is."

His research focuses on the role of Congress in shaping these structures through procedural design, an agenda he is now expanding in his book "Madison's Mistake: Restoring the Separation of Powers."



David Froomkin

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON LAW PROFESSOR DOUGLAS MOLL WINS PRESTIGIOUS TEACHING AWARD

University of Houston Law Center Professor Douglas Moll received the 2024–2025 Distinguished Leadership in Teaching Excellence Award from the University's Teaching Excellence Award Committee, for his outstanding commitment to teaching. A \$25,000 prize came with the award.

Moll, who has taught for almost three decades, breaks down his teaching philosophy into two questions he asks himself: "What do my students need to learn to prepare them for successful careers as lawyers? As a teacher, how can I best communicate with my students to maximize their ability to learn?"

His interest in law started in high school debate and public speaking. After a year of clerking for a federal appellate judge and two years of commercial litigation, he joined the Law Center in 1997. A nine-time Order of the Barons Professor of the Year, Moll has also been awarded the University of Houston Teaching Excellence Award twice.



Douglas Moll

STUDENT BAR ASSOCIATION HONORS UH LAW PROFESSOR GINA WARREN FOR MENTORSHIP AND TEACHING IN ENERGY LAW

The University of Houston Law Center’s Student Bar Association named Professor Gina Warren the 2025 Professor of the Year in August, honoring her dedication to student success and her impactful teaching and mentorship.

“When I first started teaching as a Visiting Professor at Duquesne, I taught what I had practiced daily — Civil Procedure and Energy Law,” Warren said. “Since then, my interest in energy law has evolved and expanded. As my students hear me say, energy touches everything we do. It drives economies, saves lives, and allows for recreation and innovation. Energy is all around us.”

Warren is an internationally recognized scholar whose work has been published in leading law journals and cited by the Supreme Courts of Texas and Colorado. She also serves as chair of the Promotion & Tenure and Non-Tenure Track Committee and advises several student organizations, including the First-Generation Organization, the Energy and Environment Student Society, the Houston Law Review, and the Student Bar Association.

“Teaching is my favorite part of being a law professor. I love learning, and I love talking to others about what I’ve learned,” she said.



Gina Warren

UH LAW PROFESSOR BRET WELLS TESTIFIES BEFORE CONGRESS ON NEEDED IMPROVEMENTS TO US INTERNATIONAL TAX POLICY

Reforming U.S. international tax laws was the focus of the testimony presented by Bret Wells, John Mixon Chair and Professor of Law at the University of Houston Law Center, before the House Ways and Means Committee in December. The committee is the nation’s oldest and most influential tax-writing body.

“In order to preserve competitive neutrality and raise much needed revenue, Congress must ensure that business profits earned within the United States are subjected to a comparable amount of taxation regardless of whether the U.S.-situs business is owned by a U.S. person or a foreign person,” he said at the hearing.

Wells, an expert on tax policy and director of UHLC’s Tax Law Program, proposed five reform measures that should be made to prevent profit shifting strategies that seek to move profits out of US-situs companies and into affiliated foreign companies located in offshore jurisdictions with low taxation.

He concluded his remarks by commending committee members for work previously done to improve the international tax system. “Even so,” he said, “more can and should be done.”



Bret Wells

UH LAW CENTER PROFESSOR JULIÁN CÁRDENAS TESTIFIES ABOUT US-MEXICO-CANADA TRADE AGREEMENT

University of Houston Law Center Research Professor Julián Cárdenas urged policymakers to protect and strengthen cross-border legal cooperation in December. Cárdenas, who also directs the Center for U.S. and Mexican Law, testified during a three-day hearing before the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative in Washington, D.C.

“The USMCA remains a cornerstone of North American economic cooperation,” he said, pointing to joint efforts like the 2026 FIFA World Cup as examples of deepening regional collaboration. “We hope this spirit of collaboration and shared understanding will guide the upcoming USMCA review process.”

Cárdenas joined scholars from New York Law School and Rice University to highlight challenges and opportunities ahead of the 2026 review of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA).

He emphasized the value of TN professional

visas for attorneys and researchers, noting that they expand access to legal education, facilitate international law exchanges and help build a skilled workforce capable of handling cross-border transactions. These pipelines, he said, strengthen economic competitiveness and reinforce rule-of-law principles across all three nations.

Cardenas also stressed the need to safeguard USMCA provisions that support supply-chain integration and reduce trade barriers, especially as technological changes and global economic shifts demand resilient and predictable frameworks. With trilateral trade nearing \$2 trillion annually, Cárdenas argued that maintaining stability is essential for continued growth and innovation.

Looking ahead, he noted that UH will host an international conference on the 2026 FIFA World Cup and North American cooperation.



UH LAW PROFESSOR MALEAHA BROWN TAKES NATIONAL LEAD ON VIOLENCE PREVENTION AS CHAIR OF ABA COMMISSION

More than 10 million adults experience domestic violence in the U.S. For UH Law Center’s Clinical Associate Professor Maleaha Brown, that statistic drives her mission. Recently appointed chair of the American Bar Association’s Commission on Domestic and Sexual Violence, Brown guides policy initiatives and strengthens resources for survivors nationwide.

“[This] is a full-circle moment for me,” Brown said. “[I] relied on the commission’s resources when I represented survivors as a legal aid attorney. I now have the opportunity to guide the commission’s policy initiatives and build on its 30-year legacy of advocacy and leadership.”

As chair, Brown has prioritized forms of violence that are often overlooked but deeply damaging, including economic abuse and harm to pets; factors that frequently trap survivors in dangerous situations. Under her leadership, the commission successfully introduced Resolution 504, urging stronger legal protection for survivors with pets. “I know all too well the many barriers that keep survivors from leaving abusive relationships,” she said when presenting the measure.

Looking ahead, Brown plans to expand advocacy around economic abuse and promote trauma-informed, survivor-centered practices among lawyers and judges.

At UHLC, she teaches Lawyering Skills and Strategies and Family Law, bringing her expertise and commitment into the classroom while continuing to elevate national conversations about protecting survivors.



UH LAW CENTER PROFESSOR BREM PUBLISHES NEW GUIDE TO HELP STUDENTS EXCEL AT LAW SCHOOL

University of Houston Law Center Professor Katherine Brem has authored a new book, “What You Need to Know, When You Need to Know It: A Modular Orientation Course to Start Law School with Confidence”, published in December by West Academic. The interactive course is designed to help incoming law students navigate the transition into legal education with clarity and confidence.

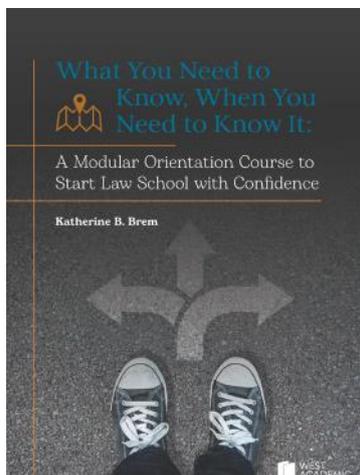
“Beginning law school is an exciting and transformative time, but it can also be overwhelming,” Brem said. “My goal is to give students a clear understanding of how law school works, how lawyers think, and how they can thrive academically.”

An award-winning instructor in UHLC’s Lawyering Skills and Strategies program, Brem created the course to demystify the often-intimidating start of law school. Drawing on her experience in legal pedagogy and the classroom, she provides practical, accessible guidance to equip students with essential skills from day one.

The course uses short videos, self-check questions, and step-by-step modules to introduce foundational concepts, including how to read and brief cases, navigate the Socratic method, analyze legal problems using IRAC, and prepare strategically for exams and the law school grading curve. Each module is progressively built to help students learn to think and communicate like lawyers.



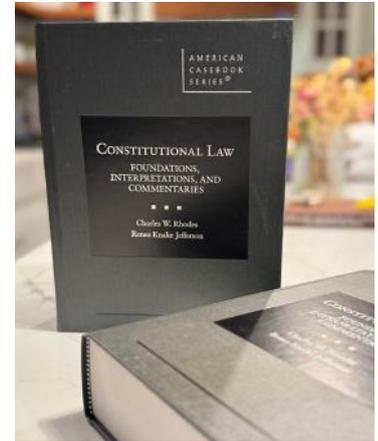
UH Law Center Professor Katherine Brem is an award-winning educator in the UHLC’s Lawyering Skills and Strategies program.



Learn how to navigate law school with Professor Brem’s new interactive course “What You Need to Know, When You Need to Know It: A Modular Orientation Course to Start Law School with Confidence,” published by West Academic.



UH Law Center Professor Renee Knake Jefferson specializes in legal and judicial ethics scholarship.



Discover how foundational constitutional principles influence modern legal debates in “Constitutional Law: Foundations, Interpretations, and Commentaries,” co-authored by UH Law Professor Renee Knake Jefferson and University of Missouri Professor Charles Rhodes.

UH LAW CENTER PROFESSOR RENEE KNAKE JEFFERSON PUBLISHES COMPREHENSIVE CONSTITUTIONAL LAW BOOK

University of Houston Law Center Professor Renee Knake Jefferson and University of Missouri Professor Charles Rhodes have published a new constitutional law book, “Constitutional Law: Foundations, Interpretations, and Commentaries”, published in October.

“The book blends historical narrative of constitutional development with contemporary doctrine, offering readers a deeper understanding of how foundational constitutional ideas shape current legal debates,” said Knake Jefferson.

Topics covered include judicial review, justiciability, federalism, separation of powers, and individual rights under the First, Second, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments. The authors’ commentaries, analytical frameworks, and editorial insights help guide readers.

Knake Jefferson is a nationally recognized scholar in legal and judicial ethics, an award-winning educator, and a prolific author with five books and more than 30 academic articles. At UH Law, she teaches Professional Responsibility, Legal Methods, and the seminar Law, Leadership & Power, bringing practical and scholarly expertise directly into the classroom.

TRAILBLAZING UH LAW CENTER ALUMNI JUDGES OFFER INSPIRATION, INSIGHTS TO LAW STUDENTS

The University of Houston Law Center honored six judicial pioneers at its Judicial Pioneers Heritage Celebration held in September. The event showcased a range of professional accomplishments from the first Hispanic to serve on the Texas Supreme Court to, at the time of her appointment, the youngest judge ever appointed to the federal bench.

Their experiences cover a range of judicial posts, from Harris County Court-at-Law to the U.S. District Court bench. The six pioneers honored include:

- Frances Bourliot, Class of 2007, 14th Court of Appeals, 2019-24.
- Vanessa D. Gilmore, Class of 1981, U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas, 1994-2022.
- Raul A. Gonzalez, Class of 1966, Supreme Court of Texas, 1984-98.
- Evelyn V. Keyes, Class of 1987, First Court of Appeals, 2002-2020.
- James F. Kovach, Class of 1991, Harris County Civil Court at Law No. 2, 2018-present
- Juan F. Vasquez, Class of 1977, U.S. Tax Court, 1995-present.

Despite their wide-ranging backgrounds, the UHLC alumni shared a few common traits: Desire to serve their community, rigorous intellectual curiosity, and determination to work toward their goals.

UH Law Dean Leonard M. Baynes moderated a fireside chat with the trailblazing judges, highlighting their accomplishments and gathering their insight and wisdom for today's students.

"These judicial pioneers remind us of the power of UH Law education in transforming lives. These judges are amazing representatives of our law school and our community; they have overcome major socioeconomic hurdles that would deter most people, but they often looked beyond these obstacles. That was their superpower for success," Dean Baynes said. "I am so very proud of them. So proud that they prevailed. So proud that they are exemplars of our law school. So proud that they are able to share their wisdom and smarts with the next generation of UH Law students."

Vasquez, who worked as an accountant before going to law school, said he never considered himself a role model in law school. But along the way, he questioned why Hispanic lawyers were nudged into family and immigration law. Why not tax law, he wondered. "Give us the opportunity," he said.

Almost 50 years later, he's still going strong, spending the past 30 years as a judge in U.S. Tax Court, a position he was first appointed to by President Bill Clinton.

Keyes, too, entered law school after earlier forays into other fields —at a time when few women entered law school and even fewer became practicing attorneys, she earned two doctoral degrees, in English literature and philosophy, before answering the call to the law.

She handled complex civil litigation in private practice, but was drawn to the bench, appointed by former Gov. Rick Perry to the First Court of Appeals in 2002 and winning election several times before her retirement in 2020. "I don't think of myself as a pioneer, but I do think it's important to do what you can do," she said. "Working in law is very satisfying."

Keyes and the other speakers noted that becoming a judge isn't always easy.

"Nobody tells you, here's a judgeship. You have to work for it," Gonzalez said.

After serving as a state district court judge and judge for the 13th Court of Appeals, Gonzalez was appointed to the Texas Supreme Court and later successfully ran for reelection. He lamented the cost and politics involved in running for statewide judicial office but also recounted advice from a friend: You can't be a good judge if you're not a judge."

Role model and responsibility

Serving as the first Hispanic on the state Supreme Court "is something I'm very proud of," he said. "But it comes with a lot of responsibility."

Gilmore agreed, noting that responsibility includes accepting the mantle of role model. "I took advantage of every opportunity to speak, to let people see me," she said.

Gilmore, who retired in 2022 and now practices law in Houston, began her career with a commitment to community service, including serving on the board of the Texas Department of Commerce. Once nominated for a lifetime appointment on the federal bench, the confirmation process took 13 months.

"Representation matters," Gilmore and other judges said.

Bourliot thought a lot about being the first former public defender elected to the appellate court. It wasn't until she took office that she discovered she was the first Asian American woman elected to an intermediate appellate court in Texas.



The University of Houston Law Center brought together six inspiring alumni judges for its 2025 Judicial Pioneers Heritage Celebration (L to R): The Honorable Raul A. Gonzalez (J.D. '66), Honorable Juan F. Vasquez (J.D. '77), Honorable Vanessa D. Gilmore (J.D. '81) with UH Law Dean Leonard M. Baynes (center) and the Honorable Evelyn Keyes (J.D. '87), Honorable James F. Kovach (J.D. '91) and Honorable Frances Bourliot (J.D. '07).

“At the time I don’t think I understood the impact it had,” said Bourliot. But as she spoke at schools and elsewhere, she heard young girls say they didn’t know judges could look like she did – a young, Asian woman. “And I thought, well, I do.”

Not all of the pioneers celebrated during the event set out to serve on the bench.

“I was never going to be a judge,” Kovach said. “It was not on my radar.”

But as a commercial litigator who often represented people dealing with legal problems that seldom get attention outside of lower-level courts, he came to feel too many judges didn’t treat people with respect.

His husband encouraged him to run for judge and fix the system. Elected in 2018, Kovach became the first Democrat elected to Harris County Court at Law No. 2 in 30 years and the first openly gay person to serve in the county courts at law.

“Sometimes you have to take a risk,” he said. “It may not work out, but you’ll learn something along the way.”

A few words of advice

Bourliot agreed, with a caveat. Take the risk, she said, but also stay connected to your support network, “the people who remind you that yes, you can do this.”

And once you are on the bench, Vasquez said, “give it all you got. If you’re going to be a mechanic, a sanitation worker, be the best.” Even now, after three decades as a tax court judge, he strives to do that. “I try to learn the record better than the attorneys.”

Above all, Gonzalez said, new judges should be aware that becoming a judge isn’t like flipping a magic switch. It is, instead, something to grow into.

“The world is not black and white. There is no one-size-fits-all. My advice to a new judge would be, be open to learn.”

The event wrapped up with the dedication of UH Law’s Judicial Wall, a digital wall featuring the portraits of the honorees and other alumni judges.



Bill Jackson

UH LAW ALUM BILL JACKSON HELPS DELIVER \$2 BILLION LANDMARK SETTLEMENT INVOLVING ‘FOREVER CHEMICALS’

Bill Jackson, a 1992 graduate of the University of Houston Law Center, played a pivotal role in securing a settlement exceeding \$2 billion for the state of New Jersey in a contamination case — the largest environmental recovery ever obtained by a single state and among the largest legal settlements in U.S. history. It earned Jackson a spot on the 2025 Law360 Environmental MVPs list.

The case against DuPont and related companies involved PFAS, also known as forever chemicals. Under Jackson’s leadership as Kelley Drye’s environmental practice co-chair and lead counsel, the settlement mandates remediation of four contaminated sites, establishes a \$1.2 billion remediation fund backed by a \$475 million reserve, and allocates \$875 million for PFAS abatement, natural resource damages, and state costs. This victory adds to a series of major recoveries Jackson’s team has helped secure, totaling over \$3 billion for New Jersey.

“I am incredibly proud of the Kelley Drye trial team representing the State of New Jersey in this matter of national significance,” Jackson said. “PFAS contamination of our drinking water is a national problem, and this case will set the gold standard for all environmental and natural resource damages cases going forward.”

TEXAS GOVERNOR TAPS TWO UHLC ALUMNI FOR STATE APPOINTMENTS



Judge Katrina Griffith from the UH Law Center’s Class of 1988



Attorney Sean Gorman from the UH Law Center’s Class of 1988

Gov. Greg Abbott selected University of Houston Law Center graduates Katrina Griffith (J.D. ’05) and Sean Gorman (J.D. ’88) to serve in key state advisory roles.

Griffith, an associate judge for the Harris County Child Protection Court, will serve on the Family and Protective Services Council through February 1, 2029. The council advises the commissioner on the management and operation of the Department of Family and Protective Services.

Prior to her judgeship, Griffith practiced law privately, focusing on child welfare, family law, adoptions and the STAR Family Intervention Court. She is a member of the State Bar of Texas, the Houston Bar Association, and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

Gorman, a partner at White & Case LLP in Houston, will serve on the Texas Ethics Commission until November 19, 2027. The commission oversees campaign finance, lobbying, and ethics regulations for state officials.

He is a member of the State Bar of Texas and serves on the University of Houston Honors College Advisory Board.



Dori Contreras J.D. '90

UH LAW CENTER ALUMNA DORI CONTRERAS (J.D. '90) RECEIVES LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD FOR DECADES OF JUDICIAL SERVICE

Dori Contreras (J.D. '90), University of Houston Law Center alumna and former Chief Justice of the Texas 13th Court of Appeals, received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the State Bar of Texas' Judicial Section in 2025.

Prior to serving on the bench, Contreras specialized in civil litigation, focusing on cases involving personal injury, employment, and

contract disputes. "It was a high honor to be recognized by statewide by my peers," she said.

Contreras maintains an active legal career and now operates her own alternative dispute resolution services business. "I knew that I wanted to continue staying engaged and involved somehow. I figured mediation would be a good way to do that."

Contreras is also the immediate past president of the Texas Latinx Judges and the incoming president-elect of the Council of Chief Judges for the State Courts of Appeal.

When reflecting on her time as a Law Center student, she expressed gratitude for the school's Part-Time Program. "I am very fond of the night program because it gave me an opportunity to attend law school."

"I think it's very important because you tap into a group of people that otherwise wouldn't be able to pursue a law school education," Contreras added.

UH LAW ALUMNA MISHELL PARRENO TAYLOR RECEIVES NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR CHAMPIONING WORKPLACE JUSTICE

University of Houston Law Center alumna, Mishell Parreno Taylor (J.D. '03) was inducted as a fellow to The College of Labor and Employment Lawyers Class of 2025 in November.

"It is a personal and professional career honor to have been selected to join this group of practitioners who are part of academia, judiciary, and private practice across the country," Parreno Taylor shared.

The College of Labor and Employment Lawyers is composed of lawyers nationwide who promote achievement and advancement by setting standards of professionalism and civility through their experience.

Parreno Taylor is a partner at Akerman, L.L.P and has represented the corporation on a variety of employment law issues. She

has also served as the key negotiator in high-stakes workplace negotiations and conducts or oversees sensitive employee investigations, such as claims of harassment and inappropriate conduct.

Her passion for employment law began at UHLC. Parreno Taylor who completed both her undergraduate degree in Political Science and her J.D. at the University of Houston, credited UH Law for preparing her for the demands of national practice.

"Not only did I receive an excellent legal education that solidly prepared me to sit for the Texas and California bars," she said, "UHLC exposed me to real-world opportunities that helped me seamlessly transition to my legal career."



Mishell Parreno Taylor (J.D. '03)

FROM CIRCUITS TO THE C-SUITE: UHLC ALUMNUS BILL STEWART SHARES HIS JOURNEY

University of Houston Law Center alumnus J.W. “Bill” Stewart (J.D. ’73) sat down for a fireside chat with UH Law Dean Leonard M. Baynes in April. He shared stories and insights from his unconventional career path with students, faculty and staff.

Stewart has successfully served as an engineer, soldier, lawyer, and CEO at different times.

He earned a degree in electrical engineering from the University of Texas at Austin in 1966 before being drafted into the U.S Army. Following his military service, Stewart began working for Hughes Tool Co. as an electrical engineer in the Houston manufacturing facility.

He pursued his legal education at the UH Law Center while still working full-time. Stewart graduated with his J.D. in 1973 and started working as a lawyer in the finance department of his company and then built an in-house legal department, which he led for 12 years. Following that, he was promoted to the vice president and then president of the BJ Services Division of Hughes Tool.

In 1986, Hughes Tool Co. combined with Baker Oil Tools Inc. and the name of the company changed to Baker Hughes Inc. BJ Services became a division of Baker Hughes Inc and four years later BJ Services went public. Stewart served as chairman of the board,



J.W. “Bill” Stewart J.D. ’73 with Dean Baynes

president and CEO of BJ Services Co., by then a S&P 500 company.

Over the next 20 years, he and his management team led the company through significant growth, with revenues skyrocketing from \$350 million to \$5.5 billion. By 2010 BJ Services was reacquired by Baker Hughes. Stewart stepped down and served as a director on the Baker Hughes board until 2017.

“Legal training gave me knowledge about things I’d never get other than me going to law school,” he said. “I believe law school has been most influential in my career as a businessman and in understanding the implications of national and world events.”

Now retired, Stewart spends time on personal projects and philanthropy.



Eduardo Alvarez (LL.M. ’24)

GLOBAL ADVOCATE: UHLC ALUMNUS EDUARDO ALVAREZ (LL.M. ’24) UTILIZES DUAL U.S AND MEXICAN LAW DEGREES IN LEGAL ROLE

University of Houston Law Center alumnus Eduardo Alvarez recently was promoted to senior legal and corporate compliance manager at Access World, a large freight-forwarding company, in July. He manages diverse legal operations including transactional

negotiations, litigation strategy and regulatory compliance.

Alvarez earned his degree in law from Tecnológico de Monterrey, Mexico City Campus. While employed as an estate planning paralegal in Conroe. Alvarez began his LL.M., at UHLC. He completed the program and passed the Texas State Bar exam in 2024.

He credits UHLC for giving him a strong foundation in American law and helping him expand his professional network, which contributed to his success as an international attorney. “Something that helps me a lot in my position is that I’m licensed in the U.S and Mexico, so I understand both legal systems,” he said. “Another thing I really like about UH [is] all the doors it has opened for me.”

TWO UH LAW CENTER ALUMNI HONORED BY TEXAS STATE BAR FOUNDATION

University of Houston Law Center alumna Ruby Kless Sondock (J.D. '62), and adjunct professor and alumnus Gus Tamborello (J.D. '87) were recognized for their accomplishments at the 2025 Texas Bar Foundation dinner in June.

UH Law Dean Leonard M. Baynes expressed his appreciation to the Texas Bar Foundation honoring Justice Sondock's career achievements and Adjunct Professor Tamborello's legal scholarship.

"In the case of Justice Sondock, she was recognized for the longevity of her service to the bar and in the case of Adjunct Professor Tamborello for his service to our students and bar for his role as an academic," Baynes said. "We are very proud that these two esteemed lawyers won awards and throughout their careers demonstrated their resilience in not letting anything stop them from pursuing their dreams."

Sondock received the Outstanding 50 Year Lawyer Award.

Tamborello, an estate planning practitioner, received the Outstanding Law Review Article Award.



Audrey Sivasothy (J.D. '25)

UH LAW CENTER GRADUATE TACKLES TIMELY LEGAL ISSUES, WINS TWO PRESTIGIOUS AWARDS

University of Houston Law Center graduate Audrey Sivasothy (J.D. '25) earned the Joan Garfinkel Glantz Scholarship and the Yale Rosenberg Memorial Prize in the spring.

The Joan Garfinkel Glantz Scholarship is awarded to the student who writes the best paper on civil liberties. Sivasothy's paper for the scholarship was titled "Beyond Jacobson: Reconceptualizing the Constitutionality of Post-Jacobson-Era Compulsory HPV Mandates in the United States." Writing the paper allowed Sivasothy to revisit legal and ethical questions from the COVID era with a new perspective.

The Yale Rosenberg Memorial Prize is awarded for the best student paper in Civil Procedure or habeas corpus. The paper title was "Beyond ByteDance: National Security and the Rise of the Modern Bill of Attainder." The paper covers the complexity of the recent TikTok ban and how that is shaped by constitutional law.

Sivasothy's double recognition labels her as a rising legal scholar, and she credits UH Law for it. "I am incredibly grateful for the support I've received from my professors and the UHLC Community," she said. "I truly believe I'm leaving the Law Center with a strong foundation and an arsenal of tools that will serve me well as I begin my legal career."

UHLC GRAD ARMIN SALEK (J.D. 16) WINS TEXAS YOUNG LAWYERS ASSOCIATION LEADERSHIP POSITION



Armin Salek (J.D. '16) at Lone Star Legal Aid, which offered him his first law-related job in the summer after Salek's 1L year.

University of Houston Law Center alumnus Armin Salek (J.D. 16) was elected as president-elect of the Texas Young Lawyers Association in May, receiving 52.6% of the 4,053 votes cast. He will serve as president from June 2026 to June 2027.

As a part of his new role, Salek was sworn in to the State Bar of Texas Board of Directors in June to serve a three-year term.

"Winning this election means that a campaign focused on direct legal service clinics and investing in the pathway to law school resonated with young lawyers across Texas," said Salek. "It also means that I need to take that support and spend the next year learning from the brilliant public interest lawyers across our State who dedicate their time and energy to supporting our communities who struggle to access legal support for their most basic legal needs."

Salek is a longtime champion of legal education. When studying at UHLC, he participated in the Street Law program, where he volunteered as a law instructor for Houston ISD. After receiving his J.D., Salek moved to Austin, where he started the first high school legal aid clinic, earning him the Austin ISD High School Teacher of the Year and the Texas Outstanding Young Lawyer of the Year awards. He later earned a master's degree in education from Harvard and returned to Texas to advance the program.

UH LAW CENTER CELEBRATES ALUMNUS JOHN M. O'QUINN'S BIRTHDAY AND LEGACY

The University of Houston Law Center celebrated what would've been the 84th birthday of trial lawyer, philanthropist and alumnus John M. O'Quinn (J.D. '67) with a gathering honoring O'Quinn's life and vision in September.

UH President Renu Khator reflected on her early interactions with O'Quinn after she joined the University. "If you needed to know one person who loved and supported the University of Houston, that was John O'Quinn," she said.

After his tragic passing in 2009, O'Quinn's vision for the University lives on through The John M. O'Quinn Foundation and its trustees, led by President Rob C. Wilson III. "Because of that generosity, we are here in this building," Khator said. "It would never have been possible without the John M. O'Quinn Foundation."

O'Quinn's life story holds deep meaning for students. "John O'Quinn's life is proof that anyone, no matter their background can achieve extraordinary things by coming to the University of Houston Law Center," said UH Law Dean Leonard M. Baynes.



Pictured: The John M. O'Quinn Foundation's Executive Director Mick Pritchett and President Robert C. Wilson III with UH President Renu Khator, UH Law Center Dean Leonard M. Baynes, and Foundation Trustee Michael J. Lowenberg at the UHLC event celebrating John O'Quinn's life and impact.



UHLC Class of 1975 celebrated its 50th anniversary at the 2025 Golden Brunch.

2025 GOLDEN BRUNCH PAYS TRIBUTE TO UH LAW CENTER ALUMNI

The University of Houston Law Center hosted its annual Golden Brunch, a tradition honoring alumni who graduated 50 or more years ago, in May. The Class of 1975 received special recognition for celebrating their 50th anniversary.

Professor Emerita Jaqueline L. Weaver (J.D. '75) delivered a warming address, reflecting on experiences and challenges experienced by her cohort during their law school tenure. The event honored distinguished

alumni Richard Coselli (J.D. '58), Professor Emeritus John Mixon (J.D. '55), and John Jay Toomey (J.D. '51) for their contributions to society.

UH Law Dean Leonard M. Baynes provided an update on the Law Center's progress at the event. He also expressed deep appreciation to the alumni for setting a high bar for current and future students.

The next Golden Brunch is scheduled for April 20, 2026, to honor the Class of 1976 and other milestone alumni.

UH LAW CENTER ALUMNUS MARK R. MEADOR APPOINTED AS FTC COMMISSIONER

The U.S. Senate confirmed University of Houston Law Center alumnus Mark R. Meador (J.D. '11) in April to serve as a commissioner of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). Meador was nominated by President Donald J. Trump. His term will run through September 25, 2031.

The FTC promotes competition and protects consumers through enforcement and education. Meador brings extensive experience in antitrust and competition policy to the Commission. He most recently worked in private practice and served as a visiting fellow at the Heritage Foundation Tech Policy Center. He also held the position of deputy chief counsel for Antitrust and Competition Policy under Sen. Mike Lee (R-UT) and served as a trial attorney in the U.S. Department of Justice's Antitrust Division during the first Trump Administration. His career began at the FTC as an attorney in the Bureau of Competition.

He earned his law degree from the UH Law Center and holds a B.A. in philosophy from the University of Chicago.



Mark R. Meador (J.D. '11)

FROM THE CLASSROOM TO THE COMMUNITY: UH LAW CRIMINAL JUSTICE CLINIC IN ACTION

The UH Law Center's Criminal Justice Clinic may be small, but it's ambitious in scope. Since receiving a generous gift from the BeyGOOD Foundation, a charity funded by Houston native, businesswoman, and multiple grammy award-winning recording artist Beyoncé Knowles-Carter, the CJC has been growing its impact in the Greater Houston Community.

Its mission is to expand access to justice, educate and empower the next generations of criminal defense attorneys, and make a difference.

The clinic provides students with hands-on experience handling real criminal defense cases while exploring the intersection of criminal law and social issues under close faculty supervision.

From day one, students manage real cases involving misdemeanors such as assault, theft, DWI, and drug possession. Six UH Law students participated in the clinic during the fall semester.

"The goal for this semester is that you are practicing," CJC Director Joshua Lake told the students at the clinic's orientation at the beginning of the fall semester. "You will be interviewing clients. You will be talking in court. You [will] be trying a case. It depends on where the cases end up. But the goal is that you will [experience] significant parts of a real criminal practice."

Each student participating in the clinic must log 150 hours of work over the semester, balancing preparation, court appearances, supervision meetings, and coursework.

"The Criminal Justice Clinic has helped me reflect on what qualities I want to embody as an attorney," said 3L Abigail Matthew. "Working with clients of my own has helped me develop my own style when it comes to conducting client interviews and working up a case from the beginning. It's an experience you don't usually get while you're in law school and it has challenged me to hone my advocacy skills."

Menna Shakir, a 2L, gained first-hand courtroom experience in the fall. "I was nervous to go to court for the first time, especially in a county I had never been to, [but] Professor Lake practiced with me during a "mock court date" exercise, [which] helped me prepare for different scenarios," she said.

"Direct client representation has completely changed how I understand criminal law. Every case has a story behind it and understanding that story is just as important as understanding the law," Shakir added.

The classroom component of the clinic reinforces the lessons learned in practice. Each week, the students meet to discuss topics ranging from trial advocacy skills and discovery review to plea negotiations and ethical considerations. Class time also includes case rounds, which are collaborative problem-solving sessions where one student presents a problem to the class and then the group works together to examine the problem, consider goals and brainstorm solutions.

Outreach events are an important part of the Criminal Justice Clinic's work, connecting community members to the clinic's resources and services. Lake believes community involvement is integral to both education and justice.

"Entire communities experience the effects of the criminal justice system," Lake said. "Community engagement through a law school clinic serves at least two functions: it educates the public and invites them to participate in justice, and it allows students to experience the visceral ways that criminal cases impact society."

The CJC's outreach efforts in 2025, offering accessible legal support to those in need in local communities and building partnerships with community organizations, included working with Goodwill Industries of Houston and "Know Your Rights" presentations at Agape Development and Fresh Start, with more collaborations planned for 2026.

UH LAW'S CRIMINAL JUSTICE CLINIC PARTNERS WITH LOCAL GOODWILL TO BRING FREE LEGAL HELP TO COMMUNITY

The University of Houston Law Center's Criminal Justice Clinic launched its community outreach efforts with a Goodwill Houston career event, connecting directly with community members impacted by the criminal justice system.

"Our Clinic exists, in part, to educate and empower the neighborhoods and communities around the University of Houston and the greater Houston area," said Criminal Justice Clinic Director Joshua Lake. "Outreach events serve that mission by enabling us to speak directly with Houstonians, offer them free legal representation, and educate them about their rights and their options when going through the criminal justice system."

He added that the event, which focused on job opportunities and resources, was a good fit for the clinic.

"Goodwill marketed this event to their "Re-Entry" customers, who have been affected by the criminal justice system, and one of our Clinic's primary missions is to serve and empower those impacted individuals," Lake said. "We were honored to attend and to tell those customers about the legal services our Clinic offers to low-income Houstonians."

At the event, Lake and Taylor Daugherty (J.D. '23), a law clerk who works with the UHLC clinics, shared information about the clinic's pro-bono legal services and distributed flyers and business cards with contact details and answered questions.

"Our two goals were to raise awareness of our Clinic's services and to encourage people to contact us later for consultation and potential representation," Lake said, adding that about 200 people attended the September event.



UH LAW'S CRIMINAL JUSTICE CLINIC BRINGS TRIAL TACTICS TO LIFE FOR STUDENTS

Students in the University of Houston Law Center's Criminal Justice Clinic participated in a hands-on mock trial exercise in November to develop one of the most essential skills in criminal law— cross-examination.

Led by Clinic Director and Professor Joshua Lake, the exercise challenged students to think on their feet, adapt to witness behavior, and apply techniques learned in class. Over six 30-minute rounds, each student took turns questioning witnesses for a fictional criminal case. Lake and Taylor Daugherty (J.D. '23), a law clerk who supports the clinic, alternated roles as Cesar Guzman, a drug courier turned police informant, and Officer Brown, the lead investigator who arrested Guzman's associates.

The mock case involved a drug operation run by the Chavez brothers, whose network transported narcotics from Mexico to Houston. Students received a detailed police report outlining arrests, evidence, and a recovered ledger. They then prepared and conducted cross-examinations



UH Law's Criminal Justice Clinic Director Joshua Lake and Clinic Law Clerk Taylor Daugherty (J.D. '23) brought courtroom realism to class by role-playing as witnesses for the mock trial.

tailored to each witness.

"The big goal was to give them a chance to put into practice what they've been learning," said Lake. "Cross-examination is an important skill that criminal lawyers use all the time—it's a fundamental part of trial work."



UH LAW CENTER'S 2025 ORIENTATION FOCUSES ON COMMUNITY AND SERVICE

The University of Houston Law Center welcomed 219 full-time and 30 part-time new J.D. students in August. An important part of orientation week focused on giving the new students opportunity to participate in various volunteer projects.

Incoming 1Ls participated in volunteer projects across Houston, including the Houston Food Bank, BakerRipley Citizenship Forum, or the Houston Volunteer Lawyers Veterans Clinic. Others contributed to an on-campus Native Seed Packing project.

Dean Leonard M. Baynes, who spoke to the students, reflected on the impact of Hurricane Harvey, which struck Houston just a week into classes for one incoming cohort.

“When they were rained out or flooded out, they [already] knew each other and [could] rely on each other,” he said. “If you needed a couch, people would offer you a couch. All of you need your law school peers and allies as you move not only through law school, but through the law profession.”

He emphasized the importance of these experiences in building community.

“It’s important to have those strong connections with each other because that’s what’s going to get you through this and make you strong lawyers,” Baynes said.





Houston fifth-grader Montoia Murray performing her award-winning speech at the University of Houston Law Center.

YOUNG ORATOR INSPIRES UH LAW CENTER, CONNECTS COMMUNITY AND CLASSROOM

The University of Houston Law Center welcomed an extraordinary young voice to the John O' Quinn Law Building: fifth-grader Montoia Murray, the only two-time champion of Houston's annual Martin Luther King Jr. Best Oratory Competition. She delivered her 2025 winning speech to an audience of UHLC law students, faculty, staff and friends in March.

"Just like the heart needs surgery when it is damaged or weak, the heartbeat of America requires care when it is out of sync and filled with hateful rhetoric," Montoia said going through the motions of performing CPR. "C! Call on God to uphold justice ... P! Promote peace among all people. In a world fractured by division, Dr. King would implore us to build bridges, not walls. R! Righteousness living required."

Montoia started preparing for the competition asking a simple question: "What would Dr. King say if he were here today?" She and other fourth- and fifth-graders from Houston ISD elementary schools researched, wrote, and practiced their speeches about two months before the final competition. She credited her teachers at Blackshear Elementary, especially Rhonda Miller-Eaglin, for their support.

The MLK Jr. Best Oratory Competition, sponsored by Foley & Lardner LLP for 29 years, showcases talented young people in the Houston, Dallas and Chicago communities.

UH Law Center Dean Leonard M. Baynes, a long-time judge for the

oratory competition and an advocate of making legal education accessible for all, wanted to celebrate Montoia and encourage her growth. "It's really important for us to have her here to give her presentation, but also for her to see what we do," he said. "I want Montoia and others to know that law is a possible career choice."



Montoia Murray (front) with (L to R) her father, Shawn Murray, Dean Leonard Baynes, Professor Katherine Brem, Professor Amy Hawk and Scott Ellis with Foley & Lardner LLP.



UHLC Dean Leonard Baynes (center) with 2025 UH Law Gala Co-Chairs Weston (J.D. '08) and Mary (J.D. '08) O'Black, Karen White and Brian Melton (J.D. '99) (L to R).

A NIGHT IN THE FRENCH QUARTER: UH LAW GALA CELEBRATES JUSTICE AND GENEROSITY

The University of Houston Law Center Alumni Association raised \$779,000 for student scholarships, advocacy programs, faculty research, and other initiatives at the 48th Annual Law Gala and Auction held in April. The gala was attended by about 600 alumni, faculty, students, and community leaders.

The gala, which had a theme of “A Night in the French Quarter,” took place at the Post Oak Hotel in Uptown Houston. Mary O’Black (J.D. ’08), Weston O’Black (J.D. ’08), and Brian Melton (J.D. ’99) served as the event co-chairs.

The successful gala was made possible by the dedication and hard work of numerous individuals, including the co-chairs, committee members, sponsors and volunteers.

The 2024-2025 Law Alumni Association Award winners:

Dean’s Award(s): Tony Bonilla Sr. (J.D. ’60), Justice Ruby Sondock (J.D. ’62), William Y. Sim (J.D. ’69), Jim M. Lemond (J.D. ’70), Judge Phyllis Randolph Frye (J.D. ’81)

President’s Award: Mini Timmaraju (J.D. ’99)

Alumnus of the Year Award: Alan F. Levin (J.D. ’69)

Corporate Sector Achievement Award: Andrew Gratz (J.D. ’02)

Barrier Baker Award: DeAndrea C. Washington (J.D. ’09)

Faculty Distinction Award: James “Jim” Lawrence (J.D. ’07)

Honorary Alumnus Award: Benny Agosto Jr.

James M. Roach Law Fund Volunteer Award: Megan A. Daic (J.D. ’13)

Law Gala & Auction Award: Judge Ravi (J.D. ’01), Kelly (J.D. ’01) Sandill

Private Practice Achievement Award: Jeff Cody (J.D. ’90)

Pro Bono/Community Service & Leadership Award: Maryam Ghaffar (J.D. ’20)

Public/Non-Profit Sector Achievement Award: Alamdar S. Hamdani (J.D. ’99), Christina Beeler (J.D. ’18)

Rising Star Award (eligible for alumni who graduated in 2014-2024): Simone R. Bray (J.D. ’17)

THE 2025 UH LAW ALUMNI ASSOCIATION AWARD WINNERS



DEAN'S AWARD
Tony Bonilla, Sr. (J.D. '60)



DEAN'S AWARD
Justice Ruby Kless Sondock (J.D. '62)



DEAN'S AWARD
William Y. Sim (J.D. '69)



DEAN'S AWARD
Jim M. Lemond (J.D. '70)



DEAN'S AWARD
Judge Phyllis Randolph Frye (J.D. '81)



PRESIDENT'S AWARD
Mini Timmaraju (J.D. '99)



ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR AWARD
Alan F. Levin (J.D. '69)



CORPORATE SECTOR ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
Andrew Gratz (J.D. '02)



BARRIER BREAKER AWARD
DeAndrea C. Washington (J.D. '09)



FACULTY DISTINCTION AWARD
James "Jim" Lawrence (J.D. '07)



HONORARY ALUMNUS AWARD
Benny Agosto, Jr.



JAMES M. ROACH LAW FUND VOLUNTEER AWARD
Megan A. Daic (J.D. '13)



LAW GALA & AUCTION AWARD
Judge Ravi K. (J.D. '01) and Kelly (J.D. '01) Sandill



PRIVATE PRACTICE ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
Jeff Cody (J.D. '90)



PRO BONO/COMMUNITY SERVICE & LEADERSHIP AWARD
Maryam Ghaffar (J.D. '20)



PUBLIC/NON-PROFIT SECTOR ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
Christina Beeler (J.D. '18)



PUBLIC/NON-PROFIT SECTOR ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
Alamdar S. Hamdani (J.D. '99)



RISING STAR AWARD
Simone R. Bray (J.D. '17)

2025 LAW GALA



James and Brenda Cowen (Photo: Laura Sponaugle)



Ingrid and Willie Wood (Photo: Laura Sponaugle)



Alan and Diane Levin (Photo: Shane Dante)



Jeff and Jenifer Cody (Photo: Shane Dante)



Ted Bonilla, Tony Bonilla and Cammie Bonilla. (Photo: Shane Dante)



Sophia and Leticia Leal (Photo: Laura Sponaugle)



Weston & Mary O'Black, Dean Leonard M Baynes, Karen White, and Brian Melton (Photo: Shane Dante)



Sondra Tennessee, Justice Ruby Sondock and Annette Kuntz (Photo: Shane Dante)



Jim and Loretta Lemond (Photo: Shane Dante)



Meredith and Curtis Duncan (Photo: Laura Sponaugle)

CAREER DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

In 2025, the UH Law Center's Career Development Office (CDO) hosted a variety of professional development training, legal recruiting, and networking programs. All JD students received professionalism training through the mandatory Passport to Success *Professional Development Series* developed and presented by the CDO's JD Career Counselors. Students networked with federal judges and judicial law clerks at the *Judicial Learning Event*, with transactional law attorneys at the *Transactional Learning Event*, with alumni and other attorneys at the *UHLC Professional Mentoring Program Kick-off*, and with AM Law 200 employers at the *UHLC 1L Recruiting Showcase*. Employers recruited talented students and graduates through the *Government and Public Interest Table Talk (GPITT)*, the *Fall and Spring Small & Midsize Firm Open Houses* and through expanded offerings of the *On-Campus Interview Program (OCI)*. The CDO also hosted attorneys and recruiting professionals with the military Judge Advocate General Corps, small firms, and AM Law 200 firms who spoke with students about their careers and employment opportunities with their organizations during *Employer Connections*.

3L and Recent Graduate Hiring Initiative

CDO has continued to expand the professional development and job search support extended through the *3L and Recent Graduate Hiring Initiative*. Students who opt into the 3L Resume Book are partnered with a mentor from the Alumni Student Success Committee, who coaches them through all aspects of the job search process as they transition from student to practicing attorney. We appreciate the role the alumni mentors have played in helping students achieve their career goals.

The recent addition of the Director of Analytics position has supercharged our ability to measure student engagement with the activities that have historically led to success in securing post-graduate employment. More importantly, the Direct of Analytics has helped us identify students who will benefit from more specialized services earlier in their 3L year and give them the tools they need to advance their job search and career goals. We look forward to continuing to make our services more data driven through the deployment of the director's analytics expertise.

UPCOMING CDO EVENTS

To participate in or sponsor any upcoming CDO recruiting or networking events, follow the steps outlined below for the preferred opportunity.

Government & Public Interest Table Talk | January 30, 2026 | 12 – 2 pm

- Invites government agencies and public interest organizations to campus to meet and interview UH Law Center students.
- Recruit 1Ls and 2Ls for internships and 3Ls for post-graduate fellowships or post-bar employment.
- Register now through January 23, 2026, at <https://www.law.uh.edu/career/employer/GPITT.asp>.
- To learn more: contact the CDO Director of Judicial Clerkships & Externship Programs at wapowers@central.uh.edu.

On Campus Interview Program (OCI)

OCI: Session IV | Virtual Interviews on March 6, 2026 | 9 am – 5 pm

OCI: First Look - Resume Collect | Applications delivered June 3, 2026

- Hosting multiple OCI sessions gives employers several avenues to recruit UHLC talent through structured, pre-select interviews. Employers have the option to interview in-person, virtually, or collect resumes at a time that best meets their unique hiring needs and timelines.
- OCI: Session IV invites organizations to efficiently identify and interview top talent for internships and post-graduate positions during the Spring semester.
- OCI: First Look – Resume Collect engages AM Law 200 firms to collect applications from UHLC's highly qualified rising 2Ls for 2027 summer associate roles and Class of 2026 graduates for post-bar positions.
- Registration is conducted in Symplicity; Session IV registration opens on December 19, 2025 and registration for OCI: First Look – Resume Collect opens on March 23, 2026.
- To learn more: visit <https://www.law.uh.edu/career/employer/oncampus.asp>.

Discourse Over Disputes: A Litigation Learning Event | February 13, 2026 | 11:00 am – 1 pm

- Practicing attorneys share their insights on litigating, trying cases, and resolving legal disputes with law students over brunch.
- Attorneys in litigation, trial, appellate, or alternative dispute resolution practices are invited to attend.
- Volunteer to share your experience and insight: contact the CDO Director of Employer Relations & Development Chandria Jackson at ctjacks5@central.uh.edu.

Spring Small & Midsize Firm Open House | March 27, 2026 | 12 – 2 pm

- Law firms with 50 or fewer attorneys are invited to campus to recruit recent graduates and 3Ls for post-graduate positions and 1Ls and 2Ls for legal internships.
- Employers informally interview students and collect resumes for current or future employment opportunities.
- Employer registration opens February 2, 2026, and ends March 20, 2026.
- To learn more: visit <https://www.law.uh.edu/career/employer/Small-Midsize-Firm-Open-House.asp>

Employer Connections | Various Dates in February, March, and April 2026 | 11:30 am – 1 pm

- Employers from various legal sectors visit the Law Center to speak with students about employment opportunities within their organizations during an informal tabling session.
- Campus visits such as these support recruitment by increasing name recognition and familiarity among students.
- Visiting organizations typically sponsor light snacks or lunch.
- Express your interest in attending a session through our Employer Interest Form: <https://forms.office.com/r/BSWWTwDwy7>.

YEAR-ROUND RECRUITING

3L and Recent Graduate Hiring Initiative: 3L Resume Book and Recent Graduate Resume Book

- Highlights the diverse talent of UH Law Center recent graduates and 3L students seeking post-graduate employment.
- Interview candidates at your convenience.
- To request a copy of the Recent Graduate Resume Book or the 3L Resume Book: email the CDO Director of Employer Relations & Development at ctjacks5@central.uh.edu.

CDO Job Bank | All Year

- Post jobs for law students, recent graduates, and seasoned attorneys in the CDO Symplicity Job Bank: <https://www.law.uh.edu/career/employer/posting.asp>.

Tailored Outreach Plans and Ad Hoc Recruitment

- The CDO offers tailored outreach services and other opportunities to recruit or engage with Law Center students and graduates.
- Activate the CDO's tailored services by emailing the CDO Director of Employer Relations & Development at ctjacks5@central.uh.edu to schedule a meeting to allow us to gain insight into your immediate hiring need.

WELCOME NEW CDO STAFF



CDO team member Kaila Roberson, J.D., is now the CDO's inaugural Director of Analytics. She joined the office after serving as Senior Director of Legal Education at Kaplan North America. In her new role, Kaila tracks student employment and CDO engagement and utilizes the data to inform CDO services, including the Passport to Success Professional Development Program. Kaila also provides direct support to law students through career counseling and job search assistance for both temporary and post-graduate employment.



Ashley C. Scott, J.D., Associate Director for Career Development, returns to the CDO with over ten years of career development experience. Ashley previously served in the CDO after practicing commercial litigation in New York and D.C. and serving as a language school administrator in Peru, South America. Ashley provides career and professional development counseling to students and alumni and supports CDO programming and training. She also assists the CDO's efforts with student and alumni engagement and employment tracking by leveraging technological solutions and workflows.



Savannah Gonzales returns to the CDO as its Program Manager. She originally joined the CDO in the summer of 2021 as a part-time non-college work study student providing administrative support to the office. A native Houstonian with deep ties to the UHLC family, Savannah coordinates CDO engagement programs and supports office management, contributing to the smooth operation of our initiatives. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with a minor in Business Administration from Belhaven University.



Career Development Office
University of Houston
Law Center

IN MEMORIAM



Amy Martin, Director of Student Advisement

UH LAW CENTER REMEMBERS FORMER JUDGE AND DIRECTOR OF STUDENT ADVISEMENT

The University of Houston Law Center mourned the sudden passing of Amy Martin, director of student advisement, on Sunday, Sept. 7, 2025. Her distinguished career spanned experience as a trial and appellate criminal defense attorney, Harris County District Judge and a dedicated educator.

After earning a B.A. in psychology and sociology from Wesleyan University, Martin earned a J.D. from The University of Texas School of Law. Licensed in 2003, she built a career as both a trial and appellate criminal defense attorney. Then in 2018, Martin was elected to Harris County's 263rd District Court, where she presided over serious felony cases ranging from robbery to capital murder.

After stepping away from the bench in 2022, Martin joined the Law Center as adjunct faculty, teaching courses in appellate advocacy, legal writing, and bar preparation. In early 2025, she assumed the role of Director of Student Advisement at UHLC and oversaw academic advising, including guidance on academic policies, course scheduling, and graduation requirements. Her steady leadership and compassionate approach helped countless students navigate law school successfully and with confidence.

"Amy was known not only for her tireless work supporting our students, but also for the kindness and care she brought to every interaction," said Assistant Dean Monica Mensah, who oversees the Office of Student Affairs at the Law Center. "[Amy's] contributions to both the bench and our academic community have left an indelible mark."

DEAN'S SOCIETY

The Dean's Society is UH Law Center's premier Law Fund giving society. Members help fuel the Law Center by providing crucial and flexible support of law students, faculty, and staff.



MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS AND RECOGNITION



Receive special communications and updates about the Law Center.



Insider access to the Law Center, Dean Leonard M. Baynes, input on the Law Center's strategic direction, and invitation to Dean's Society events.



Special recognition in the Annual Report, Law Center website, and other major publications

Membership levels:

Dean's Council: \$15,000 to \$19,999

Leadership Council: \$10,000 to \$14,999

Scholars Council: \$5,000 to \$9,999

Fellows Council: \$2,500 to \$4,999

Public Interest Council: \$500-\$2,499

The Public Interest Council is for government attorneys and current/ retired judges

Dean's Society members are recognized based on their annual giving level within the society. All members are recognized in major UHLC publications.

To learn more and see who else you'll be joining as a member of the Dean's Society, click here

Meet the UHLC development team:



Miles Johnson

Associate Director of Development
mejohns9@central.uh.edu

Miles manages major gifts and partners with donors on meaningful giving

opportunities that advance UHLC's priorities. He works with supporters to align their charitable goals with the Law Center's vision, impact, and long-term success. Contact Miles to discuss strategic giving opportunities and ways to make a lasting difference.



Anu Shah ('87, J.D. '90)

Assistant Director of Development
aashah24@central.uh.edu

Anu manages the UHLC Annual Fund, which includes the Dean's Society and the 100% Challenge

Campaign. The Annual Fund empowers growth by providing flexible resources for students, faculty, staff, and the Dean's strategic initiatives. Connect with Anu to be part of the collective generosity driving UHLC's continued excellence.

2025 Holiday Coffee





UPCOMING EVENTS

In Focus: Bail Reform — Bail Reform and Backlash: Litigation, Legislation, and Experimentation

Fri, Feb 6, 2026 | Breakfast 8:00–9:00 AM | Program 9:00 AM–2:30 PM Central

In Person

Approved for **4.25 hours** of Texas MCLE credit

[Register](#)

For more information: [Bail Reform and Backlash: Litigation, Legislation and Experimentation](#)

2026 Dean’s Distinguished Black History Month Lecture

Featuring: Danielle Holley, President, Mount Holyoke College; Dean Emerita, Howard University School of Law

Tue, Feb 10, 2026 | Program 6:30–7:45 PM | Reception 7:45 PM Central

In Person & Virtual

Approved for **1.25 hours** of Texas MCLE credit

[Register](#)

For more information: [2026 UH Law Dean’s Distinguished Black History Month Lecture](#)

From Kickoff to Consensus: The 2026 FIFA World Cup and North American Cross-Border Cooperation

Friday, March 13 – Saturday, March 14, 2026 | 9:00 AM – 5:30 PM Central

In Person

[Register](#)

For more information: <https://law.uh.edu/global/symposium/homepage.asp>

Big 12 Law Deans’ Virtual Collegiate Sports Law CLE

Wednesday March 25, 2026 | 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM Central

Virtual

49th Annual Law Gala & Auction — Bond, Barristers, and Black Tie

Sat, May 2, 2026 | 6:00 PM Central

In Person

Purchase Tables & Tickets

[Register](#)

For more information: [49th Annual Law Gala & Auction](#)

SAVE THE DATE

Fifth Circuit Oral Arguments at UH Law

Mar 2–3, 2026

In Person

Big 12 Law Alumni Reception During March Madness

Fri, Mar 27, 2026 | 5:30–7:30 PM Central

In Person

2026 Spring Dean’s Society Coffee

April 21, 2026

In Person

Yale L. Rosenberg Memorial Lecture

Featuring: **Michael S. Roth, President, Wesleyan University**

Thu, Apr 23, 2026 | 6:30 PM Central

In Person & Virtual

For more information: : [The Yale L. Rosenberg Memorial Lecture - University of Houston Law Center](#)

2026 100% Challenge Kickoff

May 2026

2026 Fall Dean’s Society Reception

October 2026





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