



A Note from the Office of Dean Leonard M. Baynes

I am delighted to share exciting news from the University of Houston Law Center. This fall, we welcomed three outstanding new faculty members who brought with them a wealth of experience, scholarship, and energy that will enrich our community and elevate our mission. We have also promoted three faculty members who will continue to help our students succeed in academic initiatives, bar exam preparation, and lawyering skills and strategies.

At the Law Center, we know that a large part of our strength lies in the caliber of our instruction, and empathy and caring of our faculty. But our faculty are not only outstanding teachers, but they are also excellent legal scholars. Their legal scholarship and reputation shapes important legal conversations while their teaching prepares future leaders of the legal profession. And at the same time, their service to the legal profession, society, and the community builds the networks that strengthen our bonds as a nation. As we continue our commitment to building a world-class law school, it is essential that we attract and retain world-class faculty. Our newest hires expand our expertise in evidence-based legal education, international tax law, and criminal justice experiential education.

New Hires



Alyson Drake
Assistant Professor of Law
Director, Law Library
Assistant Dean for Legal
Research Services
Director, Initiative for
Evidence-Based Legal
Education



Rita Julien
Assistant Professor



Joshua Lake
Criminal Justice Clinic
Director
Professor of Practice

Alyson Drake

After joining the Law Center more than three years ago as an Assistant Law Librarian, Professor [Alyson Drake](#) has been hired into a new and expanded role as Assistant Professor of Law, Assistant Dean for Legal Research Services, Director of the UH Law Library, and Director of the Initiative for Evidence-Based Legal Education. She specializes in evidence-based legal education, cognitive science and experimental education. Before joining the Law Center, Drake was the Instructional Services Librarian at Fordham University School of Law, the Assistant Director of Operations & Educational Programs at Texas Tech University School of Law, and Reference Librarian at the University of South Carolina Joseph F. Rice School of Law. She has a Master of Library Information Science from the University of Maryland, College Park, and a J.D. from William and Mary Law School.

Rita Julien

With the addition of Assistant Professor [Rita Julien](#), the Law Center has strengthened its expertise in international taxation, tax policy, and energy/environmental law. She is a Presidential Frontier Faculty, a strategic initiative led by UH President Renu Khator, to recruit high-impact scholars across many disciplines whose interdisciplinary research addresses pressing societal challenges. She previously served as a visiting professor at NYU Law, which has one of the top tax programs in the nation. Her scholarship explores global tax reform, tax treaties, and European Union tax law, with a particular focus on efforts to counter base erosion, profit shifting and illicit financial flows. Julien received an LL.M. in European and international tax law from the University of Luxembourg; a Ph.D. in business law from the Vienna University of Economics and Business; and an LL.M. in taxation from Georgetown University Law Center.

Joshua Lake

Thanks to the generous support of the BeyGOOD Foundation, founded by Houston native, businesswoman, and multiple grammy award-winning recording artist Beyoncé Knowles-Carter, we hired a full-time director for UHLC's Criminal Justice Clinic. CJC Director and Professor of Practice [Joshua Lake](#) brings more than a decade of local, state and federal criminal defense experience to our students and the community. He worked at the Colorado State Public Defender's Office from 2013 to 2015 and then at the Federal Public Defenders Office from 2015 to 2022. Lake earned a J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center. His leadership strengthens the clinic's mission to expand access to justice, serve low-income Houstonians, while providing our students with valuable real-world criminal defense experience and advancing our commitment to social responsibility and engagement.

Promotions



Megan Leigh-Wilson Davis
Clinical Professor
Academic Initiatives / Bar
Prep



Alissa Gomez
Clinical Professor
Lawyering Skills and Strategies
& Pro Bono Facilitator



Laurel Simmons
Clinical Associate Professor
Academic Initiatives / Bar
Prep

We also take the opportunity to applaud and congratulate several of our excellent faculty who recently have been promoted.

Megan L. Davis

[Megan L. Davis](#) was promoted from Clinical Associate Professor to Clinical Professor. Davis is part of the Law Center's Academic Initiatives and Bar Preparation programs. She joined the faculty in 2018 after a career that included serving as a deputy city attorney, school law attorney, and nonprofit legal counsel. A UH Law alumna (J.D. '14), Davis also holds an M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction from Texas A&M University. She has served with distinction in overseeing our overall bar preparation efforts.

Alissa R. Gomez

[Alissa R. Gomez](#) was promoted from Clinical Associate Professor to Clinical Professor. Gomez teaches Lawyering Skills & Strategies and Evidence and serves as UHLC's pro bono activities facilitator. She previously led Houston Volunteer Lawyers, expanding its staff, launching the Texas Children's Medical-Legal Partnership, and earning the State Bar's Pro Bono Award. Prior to her time at Houston's Volunteer Lawyers, Gomez spent nine years as an associate and then partner at King & Spalding, LLP, specializing in complex commercial litigation. She also is a five-time Texas "Rising Star," and her scholarship now focuses on legal writing, pro bono, and civil justice reform, with recent articles published in leading law reviews. Gomez earned her J.D. from the University of Texas School of Law.

Laurel Simmons

[Laurel Simmons](#) was promoted from Clinical Assistant Professor to Clinical Associate Professor. Simmons teaches J.D. and foreign-trained LL.M. students in UHLC's Academic Initiatives and Bar Preparation programs. A graduate of Stanford Law School, she brings wide-ranging experience from federal service, private practice, and academia. Before joining UH Law, Simmons taught at University of California, Berkeley School of Law and UC College of the Law, San Francisco. She served as a law clerk for the Honorable Julie E. Carnes, then the U.S. District Chief Judge for the Northern District of Georgia, and as a Special Assistant United States Attorney in the Eastern District of Texas in both the criminal and civil divisions at both the trial and appellate level.

Emeritus Professor Thomas Oldham



Thomas Oldham
Emeritus Professor

When a faculty member retires with an outstanding career and exemplary service record, the UH Board of Regents recognizes their service with an Emeritus status. Professor [Thomas Oldham](#), who retired after 44 years of service at UH Law, joins the ranks of our emeritus faculty. He arrived at the Law Center in 1980, and taught Agency and Unincorporated Associations, Business Associations, Family Law, Marital Property and Mediation. He was a member of the American Law Institute, a Fulbright Senior Scholar to the University of Sydney in 2015, and taught at Colorado, Cambridge and George Washington law schools as a visiting professor. In 2000, he was the recipient of the University of Houston's Excellence in Research and Scholarship Award. He received his J.D. from the University of California, Los Angeles.

Conclusion

As we begin the new school year and reflect on these changes to the Law Center faculty, I note how impactful faculty are to the success of our Law Center. The faculty are the lifeblood to our mission of excellent scholarship and teaching. Through the faculty's efforts, they produce groundbreaking scholarship alongside empathetic and soul stirring teaching. In deciding who to hire and who to promote, the Law Center aims for excellence and reaffirms our commitment to preparing students for a dynamic legal landscape with broad impact.

I'm happy to welcome our newest colleagues, to congratulate our faculty who were recently promoted, and congratulate Professor Thomas Oldham on his distinguished career.

Sincerely,

Leonard M. Baynes
Dean, Hugh Roy and Lillie Cranz Cullen Distinguished Chair, and Professor of Law
University of Houston Law Center

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