



A Note from the Office of Dean Leonard M. Baynes

As we celebrate Pride Month, I find myself thinking about opening doors - not as an abstract ideal, but as a real-world practice. Few embody that practice more clearly than Kirk Dobbins (J.D. '93), one of our distinguished alumni.

During the celebration of this month, it is crucial to focus on our core values as a nation and a society, and that is that every person is valued and possesses inherent dignity and worth. Whether grounded in our nation's founding ideals that all people are created equal or in the belief held by many faith traditions that we are all made in the image and likeness of God, the message is the same: Every person deserves to be treated with dignity, respect and humanity.

Pride Month is reflection of our nation's core principles. It is an opportunity to recognize the contributions, resilience and achievements of LGBTQ+ individuals and remember our shared responsibility to build communities where everyone is valued, respected, and treated with dignity. It reminds us that the strength of our society depends on our willingness to support each other, especially those whose voices have too often been overlooked.



Kirk Dobbins (J.D. '93)

Dobbins' path to the legal profession was not a traditional one. After earning a degree in biochemistry, he planned to pursue medicine as a career. While conducting research at a sleep clinic, he became interested in the intersection of health care and law. That experience ultimately led him to the University of Houston Law Center, where he found both an outstanding legal education and a community that helped shape his future.

Today, Dobbins serves as Vice President and Regional Counsel for Kaiser Foundation Health Plan and Hospitals - a career that demonstrates how a legal education can prepare leaders to make meaningful contributions both inside and outside the courtroom.

What stands out most about Dobbins, however, is his commitment to helping others. He has invested time and resources in mentoring future attorneys and supporting programs that expand access to legal education. His involvement with the Law Center's Pre-Law Pipeline Programs, which prepares promising students from all backgrounds for the rigors of law school and the legal profession, reflects a shared belief: talent is widely distributed but opportunity is not.

Dobbins has previously described the value of UHLC's [Pipeline Programs](#) simply: "Often, it's just helpful to have someone who has done it before, talk to you and explain how they got to where they are." That willingness to show up for the next generation is, to my mind, one of the most important things a lawyer can do.

Earlier this year, he put that into practice by establishing the "[Kirk L. Dobbins American Health Law Association \(AHLA\) Travel Scholarship Award](#)." The scholarship helps UHLC students attend AHLA's two-day Fundamentals of Health Law Conference, which introduces new and aspiring health law professionals to core health law concepts and industry developments; it helps the students connect with practitioners from across the nation.

Dobbins is a member of the LGBTQ+ community and a leader in the legal profession. His career reflects both the real progress that has been made, and the work that remains. LGBTQ+ attorneys continue to face barriers in some corners of the profession, and representation in senior leadership roles and the judiciary still lags. Dobbins underlines why visibility matters: when students see someone who shares their identity leading at the highest levels, it expands what they believe is possible.

The legal profession carries a special responsibility to uphold fairness, equal treatment, and justice. Meeting that responsibility requires a sustained commitment to recognize the dignity of every person and create environments where people are respected for who they are. At its best, the law creates space for all individuals to participate fully in society and pursue their aspirations.

This Pride Month, I invite you to explore the [slide show](#) highlighting additional LGBTQ+ UH Law graduates. I hope you take time to celebrate inspiring leaders like Kirk Dobbins - whose accomplishments, generosity and example remind us that excellence and service are not limited by background or identity.

In honoring him and the broader LGBTQ+ community, we affirm a vital truth at the heart of our profession: our communities are strongest when we open doors for others and walk together.

Sincerely,

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

[Share Your Thoughts](#) with the Dean
Learn more about [Dean Baynes](#)
Follow on Twitter at [@UHLawDean](#)
[Register for Upcoming Events](#)

The University of Houston Law Center is part of a Carnegie-designated Tier One public research university and an EO institution.

