

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UH Law Center's Immigration Clinic Celebrates 20-year Anniversary

HOUSTON, Nov. 16, 2020 – As the Immigration Clinic at the University of Houston Law Center enters its third decade of service to the community, its core mission of teaching competent and ethical future immigration attorneys continues.

"In my 10 years as the Immigration Clinic director, I have seen our clinic grow and develop in many ways," said Immigration Clinic Director and Clinical Professor Geoffrey Hoffman. "We now have four licensed attorneys and help hundreds of immigrants on an annual basis with their cases, work authorizations, appeals and in myriad ways.

"We do a lot of complex litigation involving cases on the cutting edge of immigration. We've been to the Fifth Circuit, the Supreme Court, the 9th Circuit and 11th Circuit and help people all over Texas and all over the country. Our students consistently go on to serve immigrants and other communities, here in Houston, as well as throughout Texas and the nation."

Class of 2020 graduates Paul Pierla and Anna Steele reflected on the profound impact that working in the Immigration Clinic had on them personally and professionally.

"My understanding of the practice and substance of immigration law increased substantially," Pierla said. "The practical aspects of working as an attorney, interviewing skills with regard to clients, spotting issues in applications, and new updates in immigration law were some of the topics I enjoyed the most."

"Working in the Immigration Clinic was one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of my academic career," Steele added. "Though I was deeply moved and saddened by many of the things I have heard from my clients, I used my emotions for something positive - for inspiration and motivation to do my best work on my cases."

Additional Immigration Clinic faculty include:

- **Clinical Fellow and Supervising Attorney Parker Sheffy**, who previously worked as a Fellow at the St. Francis Cabrini Center in Houston for two years providing representation to individuals with wide ranging immigration-based issues, including: asylum, special immigrant juvenile status (SIJS), family-based immigration issues, and inadmissibility waivers, among others. While in law school, he served as a law clerk in both chambers of the U.S. Congress, which included working on projects pertinent to immigration policy.
- **Clinical Supervising Attorney Josephine Sorgwe**, who supervises law students on pro bono cases involving crime victims, asylum seekers, and more. Sorgwe also provides direct pro bono legal representation to immigrant victims of crime, domestic violence, and human trafficking under a grant from the Texas Access to Justice Foundation.

- **Clinical Lecturer Rosemary Vega**, who was previously in private practice and a former partner at Tausk & Vega. She was the sole staff attorney at YMCA International Services from 2003-2005. After completing her legal education she worked as a judicial law clerk for seven immigration judges at the Houston Immigration Court through the Department of Justice Honors Program from 2000-2001.

[Click here to learn more about the Immigration Clinic.](#)

[Click here to read the 2020 Immigration Clinic Newsletter.](#)

UHLC media contacts: Carrie Anna Criado, UH Law Center Assistant Dean of Communications and Marketing, 713-743-2184, cacriado@central.uh.edu; Elena Hawthorne, Assistant Director of Communications and Marketing, 713-743-1125, ehawthor@central.uh.edu; and John Brannen, Media Relations Rep, 713-743-3055, jtbranne@central.uh.edu.

About the University of Houston Law Center Immigration Clinic

The University of Houston Law Center Immigration Clinic was founded in 1999 by Joseph Vail, a former immigration judge and UHLC professor. The clinic has since developed into one of the largest in the nation, specializing in handling asylum applications for victims of torture and persecution, representing victims of domestic violence, human trafficking and crime, and helping those fleeing civil war, genocide or political repression, as well as those facing other immigration-related matters in federal court. Clinic students are assigned a variety of cases under direct faculty supervision and are responsible for handling initial interviews through the conclusion of the case, including trial. Students also assist organizations that serve the immigrant community and give individual assistance to those held in immigration detention centers. Since inception, the clinic has served at no cost more than 2,000 individuals who otherwise could not afford legal services. Under the leadership of Clinical Professor Geoffrey A. Hoffman, clinic director since 2009, the UH Law Center Immigration Clinic has won the Community Engagement Award, a university-wide honor, and was named “Pro Bono Hero” by the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

About the University of Houston Law Center

The **University of Houston Law Center** (UHLC) is a dynamic, top tier law school located in the nation’s 4th largest city. UHLC’s Health Law, Intellectual Property Law, and Part-time programs rank in the U.S. News Top 10. It awards Doctor of Jurisprudence (J.D.) and Master of Laws (LL.M.) degrees, through its academic branch, the College of Law. The Law Center is more than just a law school. It is a powerful hub of intellectual activity with more than 11 centers and institutes which fuel its educational mission and national reputation. UHLC is fully accredited by the American Bar Association and is a member of the Association of American Law Schools.

About the University of Houston

The **University of Houston** is a Carnegie-designated Tier One public research university recognized with a Phi Beta Kappa chapter for excellence in undergraduate education. UH serves the globally competitive Houston and Gulf Coast Region by providing world-class faculty, experiential learning and strategic industry partnerships. Located in the nation's fourth-largest city and one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse regions in the country, UH is a federally designated Hispanic- and Asian-American-Serving institution with enrollment of more than 47,000 students.