

# CADENZA

THE MAGAZINE OF THE REAUD HONORS COLLEGE AT LAMAR UNIVERSITY  
VOL. 3 | SUMMER 2019







# THANK YOU *Mr. Reaud*

The students of the Reaud Honors College would like to extend their gratitude to Mr. Wayne Reaud. Thanks to Mr. Reaud's generosity, the Honors College has the support it needs to develop its future projects and plans. His donation has provided students with significant educational opportunities, enabling the Reaud Honors College to make an even greater impact on students' lives. Thank you for helping to provide a quality education and college experience to hundreds of students every year.

## A MESSAGE FROM *The Dean*

The Reaud Honors College continued to see significant programmatic advances this year. In addition to our ongoing operations, the College has taken its participation in Partners in the Parks to the next level, and our digital literacy initiative featuring ePortfolios has become institutionalized with the shift from the old Honors points system to a new focus on Honors experiences.

You can read about these developments in the feature articles in this issue of *Cadenza*. Furthermore, Model United Nations has returned to Lamar with the formation of a Reaud Honors College team; the team participated in the Texas conference in February and will travel to the national conference in Washington DC this

November. We have also started planning for the University's Centennial Celebration in 2023, which will coincide with the 60th anniversary of Honors education at Lamar and the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Honors College. Finally, I had the honor

of being invited to speak in Bolivia on "Human Development and Higher Education" at the La Paz, Cochabamba, and Santa Cruz campuses of the Universidad de Aquino Bolivia (UDABOL), where

I talked about the Reaud Honors College experience. Looking ahead, the 2019-2020 academic year promises even more exciting developments for the Reaud Honors College and Lamar University.





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COVER PHOTO: Emmalee Calvert at Partners in the Park (see feature article)





## BRINGS PASSION FOR LEARNING TO REAUD HONORS COLLEGE

Cristian Bahrim, professor of physics, wants to make an impact in his field. With 10 years of research to launch his career, he found it was teaching where he felt he made the most impact. Bahrim said he enjoys being able to interact with hundreds of students from various walks of life.

"Before Lamar, I was a research assistant, first in Romania in the institute of atomic physics in the laser department," Bahrim said. "I did research in Paris; I did research in Kansas City – my career was researched oriented for 10 years, and I found that no matter how cutting edge your research is, you are always going to work in a very closed environment. If you want to have a bigger impact on people in academia you must turn to teaching, and maybe you can be inspiring for them (the students)."

Born in Bucharest, Romania, Bahrim graduated from the University of Bucharest in 1991 with both a bachelor's and master's degree in physics. He earned his PhD in physics from the University of Paris-Sud in Orsay, France in 1997. From 1998 to 2001, he was a post-doctoral researcher at Kansas State University. In 2001, he moved to Beaumont, Texas, and became an Assistant Professor at Lamar University. In 2008 he was tenured and promoted to Associate Professor. In 2013, he acted as Interim Chair of the Physics department. He also holds a faculty appointment in the Phillip M. Drayer Department of Electrical Engineering.

Bahrim is an integral part of undergraduate research at Lamar University. He specializes in teaching University and College Physics, Optics and Photonics, and Modern Physics. His research interests include atomic collisions and interactions, and the

interaction between light and matter, among other topics. In addition to his position as an honors professor, Bahrim is also Assistant Director for Lamar University's Office of Undergraduate Research. Bahrim mainly supervises the Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) component of the Office of Undergraduate Research and is in charge of the organization's Texas STEM conference at Lamar, as well as sharing responsibility for reviewing students' Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship [SURF] proposals and the applications for Undergraduate Research Grants. When students submit for state awards from the Texas University System or other academic settings, it is also Bahrim's job to review those applications.

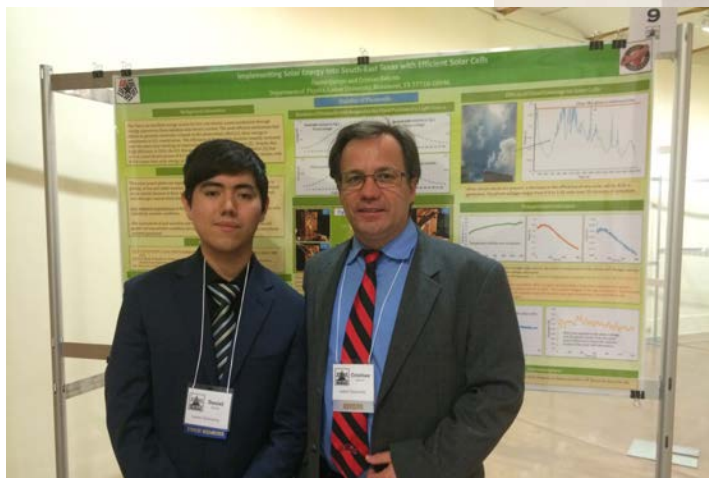
Barhim said he loves learning, and not just about physics. He has traveled in the U.S., China, Japan, France, Romania, and many other European countries. To him, travel is linked with science, history, and literature. "Traveling is related to literature, which is one of my hobbies," Bahrim said. "Literature is another way to travel that's not tied to geographical location." Bahrim's interest in history comes from his family heritage.

One of his ancestors was a knight and this, along with other historical information, has always fascinated Bahrim. In addition to reading history and literature, Bahrim loves to listen to music. Two of his favorite artists are Mozart and Elvis Presley. Bahrim's desire to understand the physical world through physics expands to a desire to understand different cultures through travel, history, literature, and music – his interests are truly interdisciplinary.

Bahrim has brought his passion for research and understanding the physical world to his Honors University Physics II course, in which honors sophomores have to complete a six-week physics research project. Each student then gives a 10 to 15 minute presentation in class. At the end of the semester the Dean of the Honors College, Kevin Dodson, sits in on the class and watches the students' presentations. This is essentially a mini research expo composed of their projects. Bahrim has found that having his students complete an in-depth research project in his University Physics II class exposes undergraduate students to a world of undergraduate research they did not know is available to them. "At the beginning of the semester they know they have the chance to go beyond just getting full credit for the class and can be eligible for submitting to the conference," Bahrim said.

Often, the idea of undergraduate research is overwhelming to students. Undergraduates sometimes find it difficult to realize the value they bring to the academic world. Completing these physics projects have enabled these honors sophomores to realize of just how much they are capable. "I think it's beneficial for both the students and us as faculty," Bahrim

*"I am very pleased to collaborate with Dr. Dodson and the Reaud Honors College. I am hoping that we can continue in the same way because it has really helped students get involved earlier as sophomores in undergraduate research."*



**"If you want to have a bigger impact on people in academia you must turn to teaching, and maybe you can be inspiring for them."**

said. "For them it's obvious because they get to practice professionally, and it is beneficial to us because it advertises our school."

In teaching a course in conjunction with the Honors College, Bahrim has been able to incorporate undergraduate research into the classroom in an engaging way. "I am very pleased to collaborate with Dr. Dodson and the Reaud Honors College. I am hoping that we can continue in the same way because it has really helped students get involved earlier, as sophomores, in undergraduate research," Bahrim said. "It allows us to spend more time with them to train them better, and every time they present they impress."

Many of Bahrim's honors physics students go on to present research at various conferences. The project due at the end of the University Physics II class is the stepping stone that enables them to present their first research project. "Based on the quality of the project, besides the grade they receive, they basically put themselves in the position of being eligible to attend the National Collegiate Honors Conference, the Great Plains Honors Conference, the Undergraduate Research Expo at Lamar," Bahrim said. Some of our students can travel,

some cannot, so we try to satisfy all situations."

In the fall of 2018, six of Bahrim's university physics honors students participated in the International University Physics Honors Competition. They formed two teams and worked on two different projects. One team, consisting of Nathan Rose, Cody Sasser, and Frederick Donahey, won a silver medal. The second team consisting of Leslie Jester, Andrew Duran, and Ariali Soto won fourth place. Out of 20 students in the fall 2018 class, 16 completed projects, six competed in the presentation, and two students did both the project and the competition.

On April 1st, Bahrim traveled to Austin with mechanical engineering honors student Daniel Quispe to participate in the Texas Undergraduate Research Day at the Capitol. Quispe and Bahrim presented a poster on "Implementing Solar Energy into South-East Texas with Efficient Solar Cells." Quispe's project is sponsored by the Office of Undergraduate Research with a Research Award for the 2018-2019 university year.

Two other students who were in the University Physics II class with Quispe in the fall of 2018 also

presented research in April. Chemical Engineering students Tyler Martin and Luke Nguyen attended the Great Plains Honors Conference. Tyler's project was on Triboelectric Effect and Luke Nguyen's project was on "Interatomic Potentials and Chemical Stability in Hydrocarbons. All of these projects came from Bahrim's Honors University II class. "Running Honors projects is an excellent way to plant the seeds for doing undergraduate research under our grants and SURF program later in our students' career," Bahrim said. "It is a way to research at a level of professional maturity under one instructor. In these research projects students learn how to better elaborate on their ideas and disseminate them."

Bahrim is making an impact in his field by teaching the physicists of tomorrow. Most recently, Dr. Bahrim received the 2019 Mentor Award in the Physics and Astronomy Division from the Council of Undergraduate Research. In providing his students the opportunity to work on undergraduate projects, Bahrim has not only given them a chance to perform their own research, but also to travel, win awards, and develop both as scholars and professionals. ■



# FAST FRIENDS THROUGH *Philanthropy*



**M**adison Marino, economics and finance major from Vidor, and Sakurah Fisher, psychology major from Port Arthur, met their freshman year. Watching them interact, four years later, one can easily tell their time in college has made them fast friends. Both have accomplished much in their time at Lamar. Their love for philanthropy and interests in the same student organizations brought them together early on during their time at the university.

Fisher and Marino entered Lamar University in the fall of 2015, and first encountered each other at an honors meeting. They were able to get to know each other on a weekend trip they took as members of the Rotaract Club, and became even closer when they both joined the same sorority, Alpha Delta Pi. They have loved their time at Lamar, and are eager to continue their education to pursue their ultimate goals.

Despite not having the same majors, their common interests have led to Fisher and Marino being involved in many of the same student organizations. Both are active members in the Reaud Honors College, Rotaract, and Alpha Delta Pi. Rotaract is a college organization sponsored by the Rotary club that focuses on humanitarian and community service issues. Like the Rotary parent club, Rotaract gives college students the opportunity to give back to their community and has always seen strong participation by Reaud Honors College students. Through Rotaract, Fisher and Marino have been able to meet Rotary members in their community. Fisher was President of Rotaract for the 2016-17 academic year and Marino was president the following year, 2017-18. With Lamar's Rotaract club, the two worked on a water-well initiative and raised donations to increase the supply of clean water in Nicaragua.

Fisher and Marino are highly involved in Greek life at Lamar University. Marino rushed Alpha Delta Pi in 2015, followed by Fisher in

Fall 2016. Marino was Vice-President for the 2016 to 2017 academic year, and Fisher was Vice-President the following year. Through Alpha Delta Pi, Marino and Fisher were able to participate in the Ronald McDonald House in Galveston, a charity that provides aid and shelter to children and families.

"Alpha Delta Pi's philanthropy



**"I definitely want to pursue graduate school. There's just a lot of things that Lamar provided that really inspired me to want to keep going with my education."**

- Sakurah Fisher

work is with the Ronald McDonald House Charities, and our house that we support specifically is in Galveston," Fisher said. "A lot of the children are burn victims, and they and their families stay at the Ronald McDonald

house, where everything is paid for. So we go and we cook for the families and read stories to the children. We also have fundraisers here on campus and get the community involved to raise money and awareness."

"One of the unique things about our chapter is that we're the only chapter that sponsors the Galveston house and so we'll go there at least once a month and visit with a lot of the children and or families that are staying there," Marino said. "And what's really cool is that some of our sisters are bilingual too. There's a large Hispanic population that stays in the Ronald McDonald house in Galveston and so they're able to kind of bridge the gap for girls that do go."

In Fall of 2018, the two embarked on another large project together. Both are interested in helping the disadvantaged and improving the community on a global scale. This passion for politics led them to present at the Texas Model UN Conference at Lee College. Model UN is an organization that allows college students to practice debating in a political atmosphere. Marino and Fisher won the Conference award for outstanding position paper in General Assembly 3. "This was definitely something I've been wanting to do for a while, so I'm glad I got to do it with Madison," Fisher said.

"I see myself going into politics, and so it gave me a better understanding of different countries'





perspectives that I didn't necessarily have before," Marino said. "We were talking with China, and Kuwait, and different countries, not necessarily knowing their complete perspective on what their country's ideology or perspective would be. But it did give us a better understanding of different things that they've done in the U.N., such as declarations and different committees and things that they've already started." Fisher characterized it as "an eye-opening experience."

In addition to their extensive involvement in student organizations, they have also prepared themselves well for life after college through jobs, internships, and various other experiences.

Fisher's formative experiences at Lamar have been the independent research she was able to conduct through the McNair Scholars Program, the research she completed with both the Biology and Psychology Departments, and her internships at the Columbia University Medical Center and the Nathan Kline Institute for Psychiatric Research in New York through the Beck Fellowship. Fisher spent her early years in Tokyo, Japan, where she noticed a lot of stigma surrounding mental health issues. This inspired her to use her McNair research to examine international students and record how those students deal with stress and depression. At Columbia, Fisher continued exploring the medical field, and worked with researchers to collect data from brain images of schizophrenic patients.

"It was a very challenging experience – very different from what I'm used to at Lamar," Fisher said. "I had never experienced having to utilize this sophisticated software and brain imaging tools, so there was a lot that I had to learn during my time there. But it was definitely an eye-opening experience, and I know I definitely want to pursue graduate school. There's just a lot of things that Lamar provided that really inspired me to want to keep going with my education. The

main project I did at Columbia was to work with schizophrenia patients and to collect data from brain images to create a brain model. And it shows different cortexes of the brain that are connected. And mainly I was looking at the visual cortex in the back of the head and how it connects to the motion cortex."

Fisher has also participated in two Study Abroad Programs at Lamar University, one in Italy and one in South Korea, which further stoked the passion she has for learning about other countries and cultures.

Madison Marino has spent much of her time at Lamar preparing for the possibility of entering the political sphere. In 2016, she represented Lamar University at the Democratic National Convention, and interned with CNN onsite.

"I would say the Reaud Honors College has really been a stepping stone into everything else that I've been able to do at Lamar University," Marino said. "One of the first things that I found when I was a freshman in the fall was the Washington Center campaign. I, along with a couple of other students, applied to attend either the Democratic National Convention or the Republican National Convention. And after I applied, I was then selected by Dr. Dodson and other committee members, and I was able to attend that convention in Philadelphia."

Marino said the experiences she had interning with CNN and attending the DNC confirmed her desire to work in politics.

"I spent two weeks working directly, interning at CNN and visiting with other legislators and people that were attending the DNC. So that was really my stepping stone but honestly a lot of the other opportunities I've been afforded have all been through the honors college," Marino said.

Following the political path she forged her freshman year, Marino has been involved in the Student Government Association since her

sophomore year in 2016 and served as SGA president her senior year.

"I've always really cared about people and I've always cared about people who can't necessarily speak for themselves or act on their own behalf," Marino said. "I really believe in the political process and people empowering other people, so I got involved with SGA coming in as a sophomore and serving as the College of Business senator. I stayed involved and enacted a lot of projects and initiatives that improved student services on campus."

In her activities in SGA, Marino has proved time and again that she cares about big-picture problems. Her presidency has focused mainly on issues such as student hunger, safety on campus, and research accessibility.

"Last year when I decided to run for SGA president, one of my goals was to enact a program called Swipe out Hunger, which mitigates food insecurities on campus," Marino said. "What that looks like is it allows



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- Madison Marino



students to donate parts of their meal plans back to other students. In that way, we have cardinals serving other cardinals, and we're able to eliminate some of the vast food insecurity issues that students are facing all across the community and the university.

"So we've been able to do a lot of things this semester that previous other SGAs have not really been able to do or be involved with. I'm really proud of the leaders that we have in SGA and the things that we've been able to accomplish this year."

Marino has also worked as a file clerk for the Mehaffy Weber Law Firm, which gave her a glimpse into what life as lawyer would look like. She has also worked with the Student

Advisory Board to the Board of Regents of the Texas State University System.

After graduation, Fisher plans to go to graduate school. She is a nominee for the Rotary Global Grant Scholarship. If she is accepted she will be studying international peace and security at Korea University with an emphasis in human rights and conflict resolution. She plans to earn a PhD in clinical psychology in order to do research on the psychology of refugees and displaced peoples. In the long term, Fisher can see herself working in either an intergovernmental organization or non-governmental organization focusing on humanitarian efforts.

Marino also plans to pursue more schooling. She will be attending law school at either the University of Houston or Southern Methodist. After she finishes schooling, she would like to work in the field of corporate law, and deal with situations such as mergers and acquisitions. She hopes to continue having an impact in the political world and can see herself running for political office later in life.

As can be seen from their long-term goals, Fisher and Marino both have big plans. Their ambition and desire for global change have placed them not only on a path towards achieving their goals but also to remaining lifelong friends. ■







# E-PORTFOLIOS:

## INNOVATION IN DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

**The Reaud Honors College is preparing students for the future by integrating new leading-edge pedagogy with its Digital Literacy Initiative.**

As of fall 2017, every student entering the Honors College will have to complete an ePortfolio, a personal website that serves as a digital portfolio, upon graduation. The Reaud Honors College believes students should have a meaningful college experience that goes beyond the classroom, and that their experiences should be shared with the world. The ePortfolio allows students to present themselves as professionals to potential employers while learning digital literacy, responsibility, and citizenship. In addition to serving as a personal and professional platform, the students' websites are used to document Honors experiences, coursework, and high-impact learning experiences.

In November of 2018, Tilisa Thibodeaux, the College's Director for Digital Literacy at the Reaud Honors College, and Honors students Jack Dolce (a Business and Pre-Optometry Major from Port Neches), and Emily Robinson (an English Major minoring in Communications from Conroe) to the National Collegiate Honors Council Conference in Boston. Dolce and Robinson hosted a table on ePortfolios in NCHC's Idea Exchange, an event where students from honors colleges and programs around the country can present their ideas and learn from others.

For their table, Dolce and Robinson put together a poster on ePortfolios with quick response codes so people walking by could scan the code with their mobile devices and go straight to different students' websites. According to Robinson, their presentation was very well-received.

"The people that had not heard of the idea seemed really interested and those who have something similar at their school discussed the differences and similarities between the eP and their program. I think that we had some great conversations," Robinson said.

Both Dolce and Robinson serve on the College's ePortfolio Student Advisory Committee, along with fellow Honors students, Naomi Raczko, (a Nursing major from Beaumont), Fizzah Khan, (a psychology and pre-med major from Port Neches), Zoey Henderson (a Music Education major from Baytown), Joissy Grimaldo (a Chemical Engineering major from Houston), Samira Ahmed (a Biology major from Port Arthur), and Daniel Quispe (a Mechanical Engineering major from La Porte). The Student Advisory Committee is a critical component of the Digital Learning Initiative and meets every semester to advise Thibodeaux. They inform her of concerns students may have and share any ideas they have on how to enhance the program. Committee members are also helping to shift the Honor's points system to Honor's experiences, share insights about the new Leadership Community, and build out the ePortfolio capstone and presentation. Every year, four new students are added to the committee, in order to maintain a constant flow of new ideas and perspectives. As students graduate, there will be new ones to replace them.

Jack Dolce, as a member of the Student Advisory Committee, also serves as Digital Literacy Research Assistant. The Digital Literacy

Research Assistant works for Thibodeaux and helps her coordinate the digital literacy initiative. He also helps teach students how to build and use their ePortfolios, or personal websites. "An ePortfolio is a platform that can be used by students to enhance their college experience through professional development, digital literacy, and personal reflection," Dolce said.

Through ePortfolios, students develop digital literacy and responsible digital citizenship, in addition to giving students creative control over their portfolios. Students use website building platforms such as Wix, Wordpress, Weebly, Squarespace, and any other of their choosing. They can also format the website however they see fit, and put the information they think is most relevant to them and their future.

"Students may use any website platform. There is no restriction on how you make it; the whole idea is COVA-choice, ownership, voice, and authenticity," Dolce said. "So you can implement that however you want. There is no dictating how you should build it, what it should look like, that's entirely up to you. That flexibility and creativity is what makes it unique."

Choice, Ownership, Voice, and Authenticity, or COVA is a key element of Thibodeaux's pedagogical approach towards working with her students, particularly in relation to ePortfolios. Thibodeaux, along with her co-researcher and author Dwayne Harapnuik, a clinical instructor from Canada, created an eBook that focuses on creating significant learning environments and the COVA learning approach. "We [Thibodeaux and Harapnuik] developed the COVA learning approach to give our learners

the freedom to choose how they wish to organize, structure and present their experiences and evidence of learning,” Thibodeaux said. “We give them ownership over the selection of their authentic projects and the entire ePortfolio process — including selection of their portfolio tools. We use the ePortfolio experiences to give our learners the opportunity to use their own voice to revise and restructure their work and ideas. Finally, we use authentic or real-world learning experiences that enable students to make a difference in their own learning environments.”

Through the creation of an ePortfolio, students develop digital literacy and take agency over their education. For some students, the thought of creating a website can be quite intimidating. Thibodeaux frequently meets with students to help them overcome this intimidation and build their websites with confidence. Once they have the tools they need, many students are surprised by how helpful having a digital platform can be for them. “Personally, I think it will be a great tool for showcasing my campus involvement when applying to optometry schools,” Dolce said. “It will serve as an additional resume-like platform that profiles me on a more personal level.”

The ePortfolio program is still new to the Honors College, but it will be an integral part of future Honors students’ experiences. Currently, in order to

**“We developed the COVA learning approach to give our learners the freedom to choose how they wish to organize, structure and present their experiences and evidence of learning.”**

— Tilisa Thibodeaux

graduate with Honors, students must document their learning experiences on their ePortfolios, such as participating in a Study Abroad program or having an Internship.

“We are revising and restructuring

honors points towards focusing on authentic learning experiences,” Thibodeaux said. “The [student] council is also serving the purpose of helping me build out an ePortfolio capstone and presentation. Your capstone pulls together all your experiences over four years and pulls it into one reflective piece.” Instead of recording and tabulating a certain number of points, students will present their ePortfolios as evidence of having spent their four years in college having meaningful and impactful experiences. These experiences can consist of everything from attending an art show, to working at a math camp, to presenting at a research conference.

ePortfolios are starting to be integrated into a student’s classroom experience as well. Bianca Easterly, assistant professor of political science, has Honors students in her American Government I class create a section on their ePortfolio for their final project in addition to their end of semester paper, which analyzes and proposes a solution to a problem in local government. “Instead of PowerPoint Presentations for their course projects, POLS 2301 American Government I Honors students will present their local government problem analysis essay in their ePortfolio at the end of the semester,” Easterly said.

In the past, Honors American Government I students have come up with solutions to problems such as repairing roads affected by Hurricane Harvey in Bridge City, reducing the water and sewer budget in Port Arthur, and bringing new life into downtown Silsbee. Integrating ePortfolios into the class allows students to highlight how they used their problem-solving skills while pursuing their undergraduate degree. “Using ePortfolios for this type of project enables students to creatively document their participation in and contribution to the public policy process as well as demonstrate their ability to analyze, think critically, and solve problems,” Easterly said.

Through ePortfolios, students

**“The whole point is connecting their passion to their purpose.”**



are able to reflect on their time at Lamar and show the world what exactly they have accomplished during their time here. “The whole point is connecting their passion to their purpose,” Thibodeaux said. “Students



ask themselves, what is my passion, what do I have to say to the world?" Putting together a digital portfolio places everything students do at Lamar, including research, planning and attending events, study abroad, internships, and much more into perspective.

Having a professional online presence is becoming increasingly important — one of the very first thing employers do when looking at a potential employee is to google their name. Having a personal website allows the student to be seen as a whole person, an individual with her or his own story. A resume tells what a student has done, whereas an ePortfolio will show you why they did it and what they took away from each experience. ■

**"Using ePortfolios for this type of project enables students to creatively document their participation in and contribution to the public policy process as well as demonstrate their ability to analyze, think critically, and solve problems."**

-Bianca Easterly

## ePortfolio Links

Emily Robinson

English, Communications Minor



*"The ePortfolio allows me to express myself while keeping track of the activities I participate in on campus, allowing me to integrate my voice and style into an online resume that I can use as a tool during future job endeavors."*

Naomi Raczkovi

Nursing



*"Having an ePortfolio has given me the opportunity to stay organized in a fun and creative way...while also building a digital resume for my future."*

Daniel Quispe

Mechanical Engineering



*"The dedication required to maintain an active ePortfolio drives me to become more thoughtful about the professional events I attend. This dedication motivates me to engage with the speakers...and the students attending...[while] gaining new knowledge about my major and career interests."*

Fizzah Kahn

Psychology, Pre-Occupational Therapy



*"My ePortfolio allows me to document, reflect, and learn from my educational and social experiences. I am encouraged to expand my work ethic, leadership skills, and knowledge as they all contribute positively towards my future career."*

Jack Dolce

Management, Pre-Optometry



*"My ePortfolio serves as a platform for documentation of and reflection on the activities that I participate in, which will prove beneficial when applying to optometry school by showcasing my accomplishments in a creative way."*

Samira Ahmed

Biology, Pre-Dental



*"The ePortfolio gives me the opportunity to collect all of my memories and achievements through college in one designated place, which can be used to my advantage in the future."*

Note: You can use a QR code reader on this photo to check out the actual ePortfolios of the students.



REAUD HONORS COLLEGE

Hosts First Partners in the  
Park Program in Texas

# BIG BEND

ADVENTURE

“One thing that I will always remember is when we would reach the top of a hike, and we’d be so high in the air and surrounded by the rest of the mountains.”



**T**he Big Bend in West Texas has been described as a place of haunting, natural beauty. West Texas is often associated with cowboys and tumbleweeds. However, the Big Bend National Park is a reminder of the stunning beauty that exists in the far reaches of Texas.

This past winter, four Reaud Honors students welcomed in the New Year in the Big Bend region of Texas as participants of the Partners in the Parks Program. Emmalee Calvert (Dietetics major from Dripping Springs), Emma Walther (Interdisciplinary Studies major from Port Arthur), Jared Richards (Mechanical Engineering and Physics major from Nederland), and Grace Harmond (Forensic Chemistry Major from Lake Jackson) explored the region with students from across the United States. This was the first Partners in the Parks Program to be hosted by Lamar University and the first time the program has come to Texas.

Partners in the Parks is an experiential honors program that gives students the opportunity to learn and gain experiences outside of the classroom in situations in which they might not otherwise find themselves. The program started in 2007 with a centennial grant from the National Park Service. Since then, Partners in the Parks has grown, with 11 projects in 2018 and an international project in Costa Rica proposed for 2019. Lamar University was active in establishing the Partners in the Parks Program, and Lamar Honors students have been involved with the program every year from its inception.

To the students who have participated in the program, it is much more than just an educational opportunity. “Partners in the Parks is a chance to get a week in nature and a chance to connect with new people, often away from the temptation of the outside world... It’s a chance to breathe, to simply enjoy what’s around you,” Calvert said, Honors student and

Partners in the Parks Program veteran. For Calvert, a week spent hiking and exploring is a much needed break from the rigors and concerns of the semester.

Walther said she enjoys Partners in the Parks trips because “they give us opportunities to see and explore all these places that we wouldn’t always have access to. And we get to do that while meeting and getting to know other honors students from around the country.”

Nine students in total attended the Big Bend trip. In addition to the four Lamar Students, Adam Butler, Andrew Cuevas, and Daniel Cuevas from Southern Adventist University, and Charles Carrington and Conor Fox from the University of Florida went on the trip.

“I know it’s the friendships I made that made the trip as great as it was,” Walther said. “Other than that, one thing that I will always remember is when we would reach the top of a hike, and we’d be so high in the air and surrounded by the rest of the mountains — It’s just so different from southeast Texas and I’ll never get over how that looks.”

Planning the first Partners in the Parks trip in Texas was a group effort. Rebekah Maxwell, coordinator for the Reaud Honors College at Lamar University and Ryan Button, Assistant Director of the Honors Program at Tyler Junior College, as members of the Partners in the Parks National Committee wrote and submitted the proposal for the Big Bend National Park trip. Button and Maxwell met at the National Collegiate Honors Conference in Atlanta in 2017. Reagan Minkel and Meritt Minkel from Tyler Junior College also helped plan and lead the trip, and were integral to its success.

Even though Lamar University students have participated in Partners in the Parks since its beginning in 2007, this was the first time Lamar had sponsored the program. Lamar University staff were responsible for the organization and execution of the



trip. This was also the first time that a Partners in the Parks alum has revisited the program as a leader. Rebekah Maxwell went on her first Partners in the Parks trip in 2009 to Acadia National Park in Maine. This was her first time leading a Partners in the Parks trip. Maxwell said participating in this program was one of her favorite experiences in her undergraduate career, and she enjoys being able to give back to the program that has impacted her so much.

In addition to being the first Partners in the Park Program in Texas, and the first one hosted by Lamar, the trip had the added hurdle of taking place just four days after the government shutdown on December 22nd. All national parks were closed, including Big Bend. The Honors students and their leaders had an

unexpected lesson in adapting to changing situations. The original program had the students spending most of their time in the Big Bend National Park, but that was no longer possible.

“For over a year we planned for Big Bend and we had to change that within five days,” Maxwell said. “Bill Atwill, a member of the Partners in the Park national committee, often says that when the plans fall apart, the adventure begins. We remembered that all throughout the week. Students were surprised both by the beauty of the West Texas region and by the close friendships they made throughout the trip.”

Originally, the plan was to spend each night camping in the Big Bend National Park, but due to the shutdown the students had to set up camp in the Davis Mountains State Park, just a little more than an hour and a half from the National Park. They traveled to Big Bend during the day and spent their nights in Davis. While this may seem like an inconvenience at first, it allowed the students to see much more of Texas than was originally planned,

including the towns of Marfa and Terlingua.

“We ended up kind of making our own plan for parts of the trip as it went along, because things were different on account of the government shutdown. We ended up staying in a completely different park and we explored a lot more of the surrounding towns than I expected,” Walther said.

The students took advantage of the beautiful landscape through the entire region. One day, while driving from Davis Mountains to the Big Bend Park they drove two hours out of their way in order to enjoy the natural scenery.

“The Big Bend area is vast and pretty unfilled, but I learned to appreciate the long drives through those areas almost as much as those areas. They were filled with conversation and awe-inspiring scenery,” Calvert said.

Adapting to failing plans was a big theme for the trip. Honors students tend to be planners, people who like to know what they are doing and when they are doing it. The government shutdown forced them to get outside of their comfort zone and learn how to adapt when the organizers were

forced to change plans. On the last night of the trip, the students reflected on what they had learned from the trip. Maxwell said she was surprised and pleased by how many students said that what they had learned from the past week would be applicable to other areas of their lives. A key theme for most of them was letting go of control and simply enjoying being in nature, especially when things do not go according to plan.

“The trip wasn’t anywhere close to what I expected, but a lot of that is due to Big Bend being closed during the government shutdown,” Harmond said. “We experienced so much more than just the one National Park, allowing us to experience so much of the culture that West Texas doesn’t share with the coast.”

Honors students tend to have big dreams and detailed plans on how to get there. As these students learned under the stars at Big Bend, sometimes the most important thing to prepare for is the unexpected. ■







The Reaud Honors College has proposed a second Texas based trip to the Big Thicket National Preserve for fall of 2019. The Big Thicket is less than an hour drive from Lamar University and contains nine different ecosystems, including bayous and pine forests. Despite both being in Texas, The Big Thicket and Big Bend Parks have entirely different plant life, animal life, and weather. This trip would allow Lamar to showcase the often forgotten beauty and diversity of the Southeast Texas region.





# PHI KAPPA PHI



The Lamar University Chapter 95 of the National Honors Society of Phi Kappa Phi inducted 17 honors students into membership in December 2018. Admission is exclusively by invitation, with only the top 10 percent of seniors and the top 7.5 percent of juniors eligible for membership in this prestigious organization. Founded in 1897 at the University of Maine, Phi Kappa Phi is the nation's oldest and largest collegiate honors society with chapters on over 300 campuses. With membership drawn from all university disciplines, its mission is "to recognize and promote academic excellence in all fields of higher education and to engage the community of scholars in service to others." To advance these goals, Phi Kappa Phi makes a variety of awards supporting graduate study, study abroad, career development, and literacy programs. Lamar honors students have been recipients of these awards in the past.

## *Inductees:*

ROBERT ADAMS, LOGAN BROWN, EMMALEE CALVERT, JORDAN CURL, JACKSON DOLCE, KAILY GARCIA, MADISON HAMBY, OMAR HAMZA, VERONICA HOBBS, AFSANA ISLAM, GOVIN KAGGAL, KAYLA PAINTER, EDWARD PETIT, OLIVIA RAMSEY, CASEY SMITH, CHYANN SMITH, AND MELISSA TORRES.





# PHI BETA DELTA



The Reaud Honors College has always had a strong relationship with Lamar's Beta Xi Chapter of Phi Beta Delta and now serves as its new home on Lamar's campus. Phi Beta Delta is the first honor society dedicated to recognizing scholarly achievement in international education across all disciplines, seeking to recognize the efforts of international students and scholars, to advance international programming in higher education, and to establish a network of faculty, students, and staff working on international projects. Honors Coordinator Rebekah Maxwell has served as Beta Xi Chapter President for the past two years and Honors student Casey Smith served as Secretary-Treasurer this past year. Two Reaud Honors College students – Robert Adams and Kaily Garcia – were honored for their international scholarship by being inducted into the Society. Since its founding at California State University in 1986, Phi Beta Delta has grown to over 180 chapters. Lamar University's Beta Xi Chapter was chartered in 1991 and now boasts more than 50 members.



# HONORS BRIEFS

## RECOGNITIONS:

Cesar Delgado (English, Port Arthur) and Omar Hamza (Biology/ Pre-med, Port Neches) were recipients of the 2018 Beck Fellowships, a full-ride scholarship that includes a stipend for a summer research project. Delgado will use the fellowship money to travel to Tijuana, Mexico, and spend four weeks interviewing former servicemen residing at the Deported Veterans Support house — an organization that helps veterans become self-sufficient — for an oral history report. Hamza will use the fellowship money to work at Al-Zaatari Camp in Jordan, where more than 80,000 Syrian refugees reside, as well as shadowing Dr. Hend Azahry, a mental health researcher at Michigan State University and member of the Syrian American Medical Society, and Dr. Richard Mollica, a psychiatrist and director of the trauma center at Harvard University.

Hannah Abdullah will attend the Discover Dental School: Summer Scholars' Program at Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine in New York this summer.

Hope Flores was named History Student of the Year at Lamar University.

A team composed of Honors students Cody Sasser, Nathan Rose, and Frederick Donahey received a silver medal at the University Physics Competition, an international contest for undergraduate students, for their paper on "Sending a Light Sail Propelled Nanocraft to Alpha Centauri."

Aurora Maldonado and Katey McCall will attend the NEW Leadership Texas 2019 Summer Institute in Austin, with support from a McMaster Grant-in-Aid. NEW Leadership™ Texas is a six-day non-partisan intensive residential program that brings together college women from across the political spectrum to discuss the roles of women in leadership and politics. The program exposes participants to new ideas and opportunities as they consider their future careers.

The following Honors students were recipients of SURF Grants from Lamar's Office of Undergraduate Research: Jennifer Caltzontzin (Speech and Hearing Science), Donna Fleming (Chemistry and Biochemistry), Madison Hamby and Alyssa Kelley (Psychology), Ali Hamza (Political Science), Hannah Meyer (Music), Melissa Torres (Speech and Hearing Science), and Himani Vithanage (Political Science). Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowships include a stipend and housing allowance for summer residence in the dorms.

At the Annual Toast to Leadership Awards Banquet, Honors students swept the student awards. Cade Johnson was named the recipient of the C. Robert Kemble Award, Madison Marino received the Bess Gentry Award, and Raegan Minaldi received the Ann Shaw Leadership Award. Additionally, Honors students Roshney Ali, Cade Johnson, Serene Kaggal, Victoria LaFleur, Alexis Locke, Madison Marino, Daniel Pemberton, Natalie Sfeir, and Jennifer Watters were named Seniors of Significance.

## LAMAR UNIVERSITY STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

For the third year in a row the Executive Committee of the SGA consists entirely of Reaud Honors College students. Edward Doan, a Biology/ Pre-med major, was elected Student Government President; Jackson Dolce, who is majoring in Finance, was elected Vice President; and Graphic Design major Haya Alani was elected Secretary/Treasurer. Rising sophomore and English major Kaily Garcia was also elected Sophomore Class Senator.

## NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Five Honors students have been accepted to present at the 2019 Annual Conference of the National Collegiate Honors Council this coming November in New Orleans. Katherine Correa and Madeline Hiebert will be presenting an innovative Honors topics course, The Poetry of Perception, at the Idea Exchange, while Samira Ahmed, Jackson Dolce, Fizzah Khan will appear on a panel devoted to the Reaud Honors College ePortfolio initiative. The Conference theme is "Disrupting Education."



## LU AMBASSADORS

Viviana Denova, Ali Hamza, Adelin Hernandez, Osha Jones, Fizzah Khan, Ayokunle Oni, Cade Pellerin, Maissa Salibi, Tiffany Tran, and David Williams were all named 2019-20 Lamar Ambassadors. Known as “The Face of Lamar University,” the LU Ambassadors have a rich tradition of promoting service to Lamar University and to the community at large. Ambassadors represent the Lamar University student body at official university events and work to promote university pride among students, prospective students, alumni and friends of Lamar University.

## TEXAS MODEL UNITED NATIONS

At the beginning of February, Reaud Honors College students participated in the Texas Model UN Conference hosted by Lee College in Baytown. Ali Hamza, Tiffany Tran, Brendon Camp, Madison Marino, and Sakurah Fisher represented Israel, while Omar Hamza, David Williams, Cade Pellerin, and Maissa Salibi represented Iran. Madison Marino and Sakurah Fisher won the award for outstanding position paper General Assembly 3. Tara Hoch, a Model UN veteran and Honors alumna, said “Model United Nations is such a rewarding activity. It builds a variety of skills like public speaking, persuasion, and diplomacy.” Hoch said the students, “did a remarkable job representing their countries and the Reaud Honors College; they have set the standard for the future of this organization at LU.” Preparations are already underway for the Honors College to send a team to the National Model United Nations Conference in Washington DC in November.



## KATEY MCCALL NAMED STUDENT REGENT

Reaud Honors College student Katey McCall has been appointed by Governor Greg Abbot as a Student Regent on the Texas State University System Board of Regents. Katey is a junior majoring in political science and minoring in legal studies, and she plans to attend law school upon graduation from the Reaud Honors College at Lamar University. McCall said that she will seek “to come across with what students want and represent their needs” in the TSUS Board. Katey is one of ten Student Regents appointed by the Governor and will serve from June 1, 2019 until May 31, 2020. This is only the second time in Lamar’s history that a student from the University will serve as a Student Regent on the TSUS Board of Regents.

## STEPPING UP: THE REAUD HONORS COLLEGE’S CIVIC LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The new assignments have been announced for the College’s Stepping Up Program: Mental Health America - Emma Walther; Seafarer’s Center - Tiffany Tran; Junior Achievement - David Adams; Art Museum Southeast Texas - Umera Ahmed; Boys Haven - Aurora Maldonado; Stable Spirits - Grace Granger; Some Other Place - Mackenzie Savage; Salvation Army - Michael Whitman; Family Services of SETX - Fizzah Khan; TAN - Adeline Hernandez; Samaritan Counseling - Madeline Hiebert; and SETX Food Bank - Josef Kalathra. In all, twelve Honors students will serving as non-voting members on the boards of twelve local non-profit organizations. Current student Casey Smith has been named a permanent member of the Beaumont Heritage Society’s board, and alumnus Carlos Caballero (2018) is now serving as a full member on the board of the Community Coalition.

## GREAT PLAINS HONORS COUNCIL ANNUAL CONFERENCE

In April, Kaily Garcia, Ali Hamza, Tyler Martin, Luke Nguyen, and Kayla Painter presented their research at the 2019 Annual Meeting of Great Plains Honors council in Tyler Texas.







## 2018 - 2019 HSA OFFICERS

Front Row: Emmalee Calvert, Makenzie Sattler, Natalie Sfier, Serene Kaggal, Kayla Painter

Back Row: Yen Vu, Omar Hamza, Casey Smith, Ali Hamza



## 2019 - 2020 HSA OFFICERS

Front Row: Fizzah Khan, Emmalee Calvert, Makenzie Sattler, Tiffany Tran, Madeline Hiebert, Nyah Sciarilla, Hannah Abdullah

Back Row: Umera Ahmed, David Williams, Cade Pellerin, Aziz Shaaban, Brody McBee, Casey Smith, Samira Ahmed





## 2018 - FALL GRADUATES

Kender Myers and Linda Pham

Not Shown: Mackenzie Hudson, Trent McGee, Xin Wei, Kloe Wosley



## 2019- SPRING & SUMMER GRADUATES

Front Row: Madison Marino, Hannah Ross, Thanh Tsan, Alexis Locke, Charissa Mathew, Hannah Roussell, Sakurah Fisher, Nasim Abedelwahab, Kimberley Brooks  
Middle Row: Hannah Carlson, Olivia Ramsey, Roshney Ali, Taylor Marshall, Victoria LaFleur, Serene Kaggal, Natalie Sfeir, Jennifer Watters, John Vincent, Madison Demel  
Back Row Row: Johnny Frazier, Emily McCall, Nicholas Johnson, Nathanael Paine, Joshua Bonnette, Daniel Pemberton, Tristen Harris, Christopher Huddleston, David

Quispe, Cade Johnson, Joshua Ortego, Thomas Norris, Rachit Yadav

Not Shown: Robert Adams, Aleksander Allen, Kristi Barnes, Deanna Pina

CONGRATS  
GRADS



# STRUCTURED MENTORING

As part of its structured mentoring program, the Reaud Honors College hosted alumnus and Houston attorney Mr. Brandon Still, who talked with Honors Students interested in going to law school. Still discussed the process of preparing for, applying to, and choosing a law school, as well as the various types of careers in the legal profession. Still maintains that one of the reasons he has been so successful in his field was that he was able to interact with real lawyers as an undergraduate. "One thing that was really valuable to me was knowing professors at Lamar who were lawyers," Still said. "I feel really fortunate that I ended up on the path I ended up on."





# Alumni News

## **DANIEL CHAND 2002**

Earned tenure in the Department of Political Science at Kent State University, where he is now Associate Professor.

## **CAROLINA RAMIREZ 2010 & KAYLEIGH ROMERO 2013**

Have been named to the Reaud Honors College's Alumni Advisory Board.

## **JENNY ACHILLES 2003**

Has been promoted to Director of Partnerships & Programs at the Trellis Foundation.

## **JOSH DASPIT 2004**

Has moved to Texas State University, where he is now Assistant Professor of Management.

## **ERIN LAGRONE 2009**

Was promoted to Senior Latent Print Examiner for the Austin Police Department.

## **JOSHUA DAVIS 2011**

Earned a MS in Public Health from Lamar University in May 2019.

## **WESLEY SMITH 2011**

Will be returning home this summer to continue his training in pediatric oncology and hematology at Texas Children's Hospital in Houston after completing his residency in Le Bonheur Children's Hospital in Memphis.

## **HONOUR HARRY 2013**

Has been named Art Director at YMM Art Space, an international art school focusing student creativity and passion, in Irvine California.

## **KAYLEIGH ROMERO 2013**

Is entering the Ed.D. Program in Instructional Systems Design and Technology at Sam Houston State University.

## **YANNI THOMAS 2015**

Earned her Master of Education at Concordia University in May 2019.

## **MEGAN HUDDLESTON 2016**

Earned her MBA from Lamar University in May 2019.

## **MICHAEL DALTON HOLLY 2016**

Graduated with an MBA from Lamar in December 2018.

## **JACOB MARTIN 2016**

Graduated with his JD from Pepperdine School of Law in May 2019.

## **SARAH TOBEN 2016**

Graduated pro bono honors with her JD from the Dedman School of Law at Southern Methodist University in May 2019.

## **SKYLAR MURPHY 2017**

Graduated with a MS in Public Health from Lamar in December 2018.

## **MOLLY ROSS 2017**

Graduated with MS in Environmental Engineering from Lamar in December 2018.

## **KAITLYN WOLFFORD 2017**

Graduated with an MBA from Lamar in December 2018.

## **TRENT MCGEE 2018**

Was appointed Assistant Band Director at Kountze ISD.

Please let us know about major events in your life so that we can keep your fellow Honors alumni up to date. You can contact us at [kevin.dodson@lamar.edu](mailto:kevin.dodson@lamar.edu).

# ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE Dr. Donna Birdwell Honors Scholarship

Lamar Honors Alumni are currently raising funds for the Dr. Donna Birdwell Honors Scholarship. As Director of the Lamar University Honors Program from 1999 to 2008, Dr. Birdwell was instrumental in the development of Honors education at Lamar University, including first proposing the establishment of an Honors College. This scholarship will create a legacy honoring Dr. Birdwell and is an investment in Lamar University and in the lives of future Honors students. We are excited about the progress already made on this scholarship.

Please consider donating to the Dr. Donna Birdwell Honors Scholarship. Donations can be made by check or credit card and can be made as a one-time donation or as multiple payments.

In order to donate by credit card, please visit Lamar's secure giving page online at [www.lamar.edu/giving](http://www.lamar.edu/giving) and click "Give Now." In the Designation dropdown box, choose "Other (please specify below)." In the "Other Designation" box reference "Dr. Donna



If you are donating by check, please reference the Dr. Donna Birdwell Honors Scholarship in your check's memo line.

Gift forms are also available from the Honors College on request.

Make checks payable to Lamar University Foundation and mail to:

*Lamar University Foundation  
P O Box 11500  
Beaumont, TX 77710*

If you need assistance with your online gift, please call the Foundation office @

409-880-2117

The effort is being coordinated by Dr. Josh Daspit,  
so please feel free to contact him with any questions at [josh.daspit@txstate.edu](mailto:josh.daspit@txstate.edu).



# *Congratulations to* **REBEKAH MAXWELL**



Congratulations to Rebekah Maxwell (2011) who is now Director of Scholarships for Lamar University. Rebekah started as our new Honors Coordinator in fall 2015 and was instrumental in the development and programmatic growth of the Reaud Honors College. As an Honors student, Rebekah was active in the Lamar chapter of Rotaract and participated in the Partners in the Parks program at Acadia National Park in Maine. She earned her Bachelor of Business Administration in 2011 as an Honors Graduate majoring in Retail Management. She then attended the University of Strathclyde in Scotland as a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar and earned her Master of Science in International Marketing. After returning to her Honors home, she became active in the Beaumont Rotary Club, the Beaumont Chamber of Commerce, and Young Professionals of Southeast Texas. As an alumna of Lamar Rotaract, she became the student organization's official advisor. Among her many accomplishments, Rebekah was instrumental in developing the Stepping Up program, the College's civic leadership initiative. She was critical in organizing the 2017 Annual Conference of the Great Plains Honors Council hosted by the Reaud Honors College here at Lamar University. She has been active in the National Collegiate Honors Council, serving on the Partners in the Parks Committee and organizing the first PITP program in Texas, which you can read about in this issue. After four years of exemplary service in which she aided in the transformation of Honors education at Lamar, Rebekah has taken on a new challenge and opened a new chapter in her career. We will miss her and wish her the best in her new position. We know that she will succeed.



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**LAMAR UNIVERSITY**

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## *Dean Dodson speaks about the Reaud Honors College experience at the campuses of UDABOL in Bolivia*



*La Paz*

*Cochabamba*

*Santa Cruz*