

CADENZA

THE MAGAZINE OF THE REAUD HONORS COLLEGE AT LAMAR UNIVERSITY.
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Honors Cardinals: Then and now



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COVER PHOTO:
Feature Twirler Kristin Hebert is among the Reaud Honors College students and alumni who are enriched by LU's music programs.

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By MEGHAN RAPP, REAUD HONORS COLLEGE COORDINATOR

Honors Scholars Day

Inaugural showcase of everything honors inspires LU and SETX communities.



College of Business students **Emily Alvarez** and **Taliah Belcher** (above, from left) teamed up to present their Study Abroad experiences at the inaugural Honors Scholars Day. Alvarez talked about touring multinational companies in Alicante, Spain, while also exploring Spanish cuisine and culture during trips to Alannia Costa Blanca and other regional cities. Belcher shared her research in Spain, Sweden and Germany that explored the impact of militarization on the financial and economic growth of highly militarized countries.

ALL PHOTOS BY MEGHAN RAPP

Last fall, the Reaud Honors College hosted the inaugural showcase of everything honors! On October 21, 2022, our Cardinal community explored what honors students have created during their time at LU. These experiences included collaborative engagements with Partners in the Parks, Study Abroad, Center for Resiliency, O.U.R., McNair, Stepping Up Civic Leadership, LU student organizations and more.

Featured here is an overview of our inspiring presentation speakers, booth leaders and volunteers. View full photos and details in our Facebook album: click on the QR code, select *Photos > Albums > Honors Scholars Day Fall 2022*.

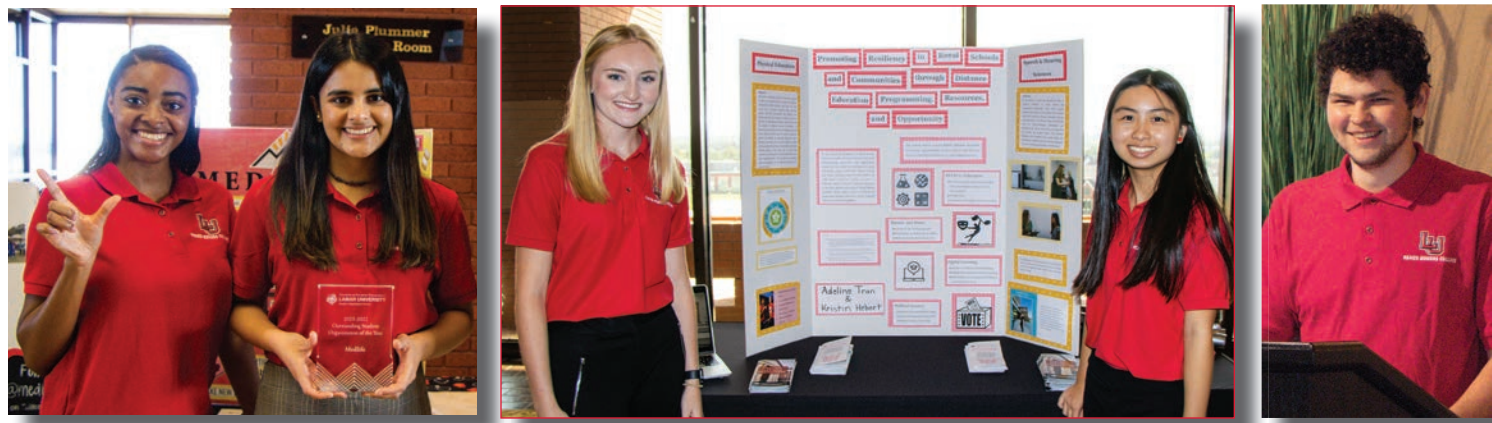
The Reaud Honors College is proud of our student participants whose contributions fulfilled our college mission to imagine, innovate, impact and inspire each other and our LU community.



(Above) **Vishal Mundodi** and **Britney Brevell** applied lessons in tropical watershed ecology and marine biology while studying abroad in Belize. They shared their research of watershed biomes in the Maya Mountains pine ridge, rainforest and savanna, and adventures snorkeling the Mesoamerican coral reef system, the world's second largest.

(Below, from left) Sharing their experiences in ... LU Lead: **Jaelan Sherman**; Student Government Association (SGA): **Angelie Bautista**; and Partners in the Parks-Crater Lake: **Lily Yoder**.





(OPPOSITE PAGE (Top row, from left) MedLife with its Outstanding Student Organization of 2022 award: Deidre Dages and Amber Maredia; Center for Resiliency student project directors for distance education programming to benefit West Sabine ISD in rural Sabine County: Kristin Hebert and Adeline Tran; and SURF Fellow David Matherne, who presented his research on heliospheric storms.

(Second row, from left) College of Engineering Internships/Co-Ops: Melody Youwakim; Biomedical Engineering Club: Luke Sodalak.

(Third row, from left) LU Speech Team: Drake Rothenberger and Toni Lopez Maldonado; LU Women in STEM: Stephanie Barron.



(Fourth row, from left) Along with presenting her McNair research on the challenges to certification for Black American Sign Language interpreters, Meikayla Mixon also volunteered as an ASL interpreter during one peer's presentation; Honors Scholars Day volunteers Austin Knowles and David Labouve; volunteers Gladys Oliva Guillen, Estrella Balderas, Kathy Nguyen and Jordan Nelson.

THIS PAGE (From top left) Lamar Undergraduate Research Association (LURA): Morgan Luke; Partners in the Parks-Alaska: Sheridan Kees; Society of Asian Scientists & Engineers (SASE): Catherine Twing and Alexa Heng; Model United Nations: Maissa Salibi and Tomisin Egbewale.

(Top right) McNair Scholar Jennifer Zarate, who presented her research on gut microbiota and Hashimoto's Thyroiditis, an autoimmune condition that attacks the thyroid gland. She also traveled to Puerto Rico in October to present her research at the SACNAS NDiSTEM Conference.



Presidential Scholars:

This year, the Reaud Honors College hosted Lamar University's first Presidential Scholars Banquet, joined by special guests President Jaime Taylor, First Lady Stacy Taylor and Senior Associate Provost Samuel Jator.

Due to their exceptionally strong academic records, Presidential Scholars receive a full scholarship for four years covering tuition, fees, room and board, and books, and are proud members of our Reaud Honors College community.

At the banquet, Reaud Honors College Dean Tilisa Thibodeaux honored these distinguished students with these words: "As Presidential Scholars, you are learners first and foremost, but also serve as researchers, global citizens, volunteers, campus leaders and interns, and are well prepared for graduate school and your future career."

"You are some of the most giving, spirited and appreciative students at Lamar University. You represent the top tier of students at Lamar, more specifically, the top 1% of scholars on this campus."

Presidential Scholar and Biology Pre-Med junior Sid Patel shared his academic journey in the keynote speech. He revealed how his Indian heritage instilled in him values of determination and persistence that fueled his fascination with medicine. His younger years spent exploring Houston's Museum of Natural Science and learning how to treat sports injuries at a UT-Austin sports medicine camp led him to bring that love of medicine to LU. He began by organizing an on-campus blood drive as a Texas Academy student and vice president of student council. As a Reaud Honors College student, he now works on research focused on the neurology of Alzheimer's disease.

Such academic triumphs often require students to make failure your friend. "No successful person becomes a success without failure. It's impossible. There's no such thing as a life without setbacks, mess-ups and flat-out face plants. If everything worthwhile is uphill (and it is), it's inevitable that somewhere along the way your foot is going to slip or the ground is going to shift beneath you, no matter how careful you are with your steps," Dean Thibodeaux said, before encouraging students to follow a maxim by thought leader John Maxwell: Get comfortable with failure, get clear about failure and get prepared for failure.

A great time was had by all! We look forward to continuing this tradition in the years to come.



Inaugural Banquet

Honored Special Guests



At the inaugural Presidential Scholars Banquet, Presidential Scholar and Keynote Speaker Sid Patel shared a meal with Reaud Honors College Dean Tilisa Thibodeaux, President Jaime Taylor, First Lady Stacy Taylor and Senior Associate Provost Samuel Jator.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY LAMAR UNIVERSITY AND REAUD HONORS COLLEGE



Alumna Focus | Ms. JENNY ACHILLES

Changing the Lens

Experiences in El Salvador and at LU helped crystallize the best path to giving back.

At first glance, Jenny Achilles' professional and educational career consists of a colorful and inexhaustible array of experiences, in and out of the United States, that have converged into an unlikely career in nonprofit work. Her journey beginning as early as her time at Lamar University, however, tells a story of a continued tradition to keep on giving.

Achilles began her education with her sights set on a career in journalism. After graduating with a Bachelor's in Communications from Lamar University in 2003, she did just that, beginning a professional career as a news reporter for *Port Arthur News*. After seven months, Achilles changed her path and pursued her Master's in Journalism at the University of Texas-Austin.

She was soon drawn away from her studies, as she earned a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship that required her to study in El Salvador for a year. Achilles experienced the world anew and began to question her place in the world of journalism.

"I came to realize that the investigative journalism I most respected, because I was looking for my place in the world, is not the kind of journalism I'm good at," Achilles said. "Investigative journalism is not the only way, but it was the way that I had in mind for journalists to help change the world."

Her time in El Salvador allowed Achilles to change the lens in which she viewed the world and look beyond the congested streets associated with urban life to see the natural beauty of



Jenny Achilles (Class of 2003) gives back to her Texas community by helping remove the barriers that challenge low-income and minority students from pursuing postsecondary education. Her dedication to serve others started at LU. Achilles (inset, center) lent a hand every summer as a peer advisor, in addition to serving as a LU Ambassador and a Redshirt.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY JENNY ACHILLES



San Salvador, the city where she conducted her studies.

"Behind the buses, there was a volcano with gorgeous flowers on it, and I could change what I was focusing on because they were both parts of my view," she said. "I could think about the buses and cars when I was riding the bus on the way to school, or I could think about all the gorgeous flowers along the way."

Achilles graduated with her master's in 2004 and decided to change one student at a time, as a Study Abroad Advisor. She credits her time at Lamar University and in El Salvador for cultivating an empathetic point of view that extends beyond herself and reflects a long family tradition of giving back.

"I was active in a lot of student groups and leadership opportunities at Lamar University," she said, which included her service in the *University Press*, Honors Student Association and as an LU Ambassador.

As a student research assistant for the Honors Program, she provided the background research that culminated in the publication "The Road Less Traveled: The Lamar University Honors Program and the Path of Excellence," which covers the 50-year history of the Honors Program, from 1963-2003. Achilles said that the work she did researching for the project allowed her to see the impact giving back had on herself and the community at large.

"Learning that Dr. Dale Priest was a member of the first cohort of students brought a sense of continuity and legacy to the forefront of the research. I studied under Dr. Priest as a freshman in the Honors Program; it was meaningful to know that he had done the same and continued his dedication to the program as a professor," she said. "Similarly, Dr. John W. Storey, the first official Director of the Program in



In Spring 2003, Jenny Achilles (far right) traveled to Spain to help University of Granada students clean up a petroleum spill on the beach in Galicia. That experience inspired her to study in El Salvador for a year.

1976, was still an honors professor when I was in the program."

This tradition of giving back is nothing new to Achilles, however, as her grandfather, Robert F. Achilles, a former Regents' Professor at Lamar University, was instrumental in the construction of the Communication Disorders department, now known as Speech and Hearing Sciences.

Achilles' journey tells a story of a continued tradition to keep on giving.

The sense of community Achilles experienced on Lamar University's campus and in El Salvador has been a guide during her new career with the Trellis Foundation.

After earning her Master's of Public Affairs and completing the nonprofit management portfolio program at UT-Austin in 2013, Achilles began her work with the Trellis Foundation, a nonprofit organization that focuses on improving postsecondary attainment for low-income students and students of color in Texas through grants.

"When I started at the Trellis Foundation, my lens was more focused on meeting individual student needs



One of Achilles' favorite memories at LU was her grandfather handing Jenny her diploma. Robert F. Achilles was instrumental in the construction of what is now LU's Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences. Also shown above is her grandfather's Regents' Professor medal, TSUS's highest faculty honor.

through scholarships and advising," she said. "Now I understand the interplay of economic and racial segregation, and how they influence all parts of a person's life."

By challenging the long-standing barriers that can disadvantage low-income students and students of color, Achilles is not only changing the lens through which she sees the world, but also changing the way entire communities see the world.

"I'm grateful for the Lamar University community, and the way that it's helped make me the successful individual I am today," she said. "Lamar really did shape not only my career opportunities, but also helped me financially, and it also added more resources and more perspectives and lenses to how I approach things intellectually."

"I'm a Cardinal, and I'll always be that. Even though I went on to earn two master's degrees from UT-Austin, in my heart, I'm always a Cardinal." ✦

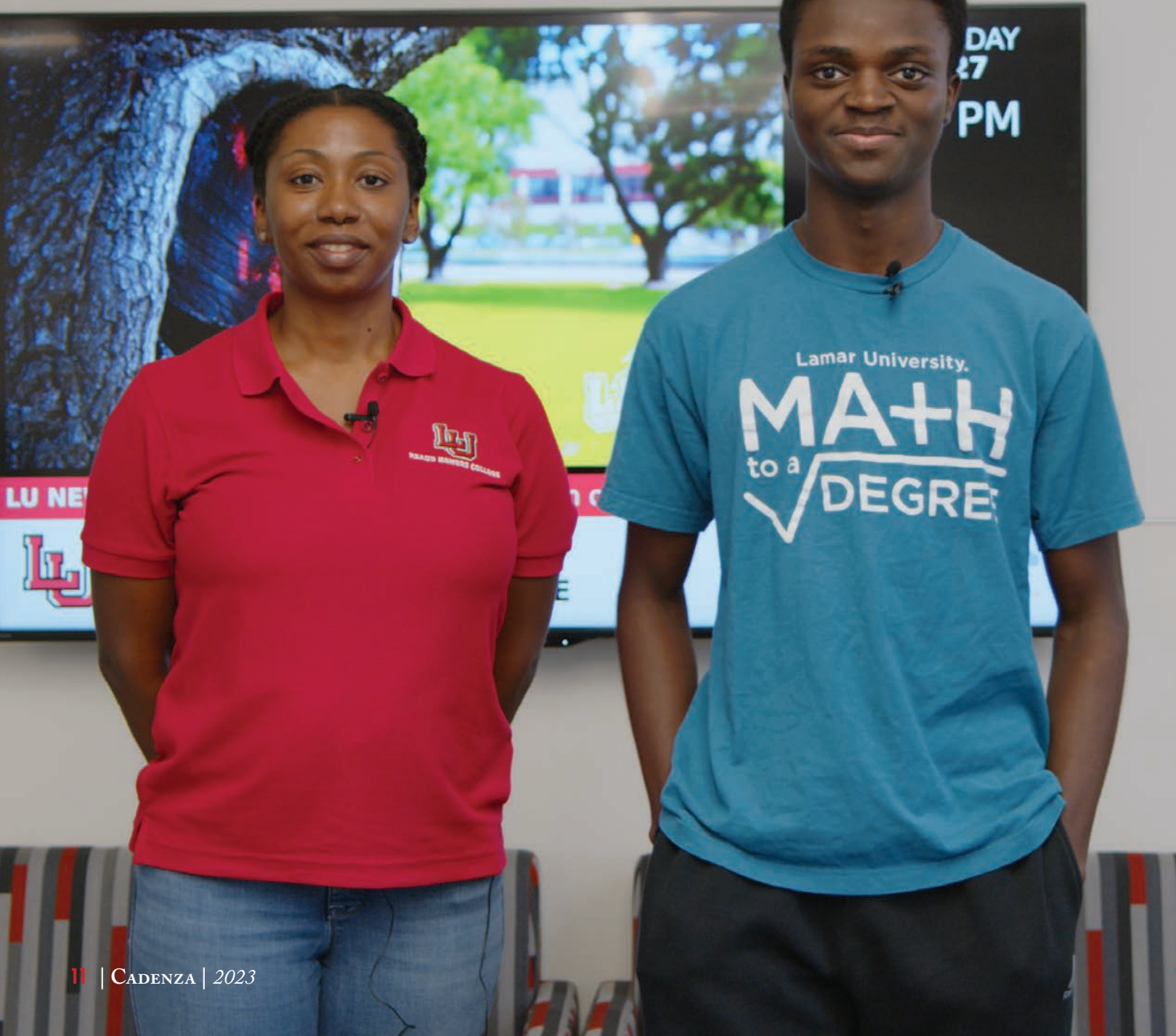
By SERGIO MENDEZ, REAUD HONORS COLLEGE STUDENT

Faculty Profile | DR. BIANCA EASTERLY

Leaps of Faith

Dr. Bianca Easterly stands with Tomisin Egbewale, a Computer Science student who she collaborated with to better educate rural schools about the challenges facing college students while voting in Texas elections. Easterly's honors students credit her excellence as a teacher because she applies political science concepts to the real world.

PHOTO BY MEGHAN RAPP; BIANCA EASTERLY HEADSHOT COURTESY BIANCA EASTERLY



An incredible turn of events led Bianca Easterly, associate professor in the Department of Political Science, to follow her passion. After a decade of teaching at Lamar University, Easterly speaks wonders about her career and journey that brought her to Beaumont.

Easterly's passion for working in the public sector was not always her vision for her career. She began her undergraduate career at the University of Illinois-Chicago as a Biochemistry major with a French minor. But after taking a few classes, she realized the STEM field was not a good fit and switched to a French major her sophomore year. After studying abroad in Avignon, France, her senior year, Easterly considered taking a break from school once she graduated with a Bachelor's in French and minor in Criminal Justice in International Relations. An elevator ride took her life to a different level.

While waiting for the elevator, she read a flier explaining her university's public administration program that reignited her love for government. She had first engaged with the public sector as a junior during the 2000 U.S. Presidential election. She found herself excited to light that spark again. She continued her education and earned a Master of Public Administration in 2004.

She applied her knowledge of public policy to private and public sector jobs, including working at the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Services Research and Development Service. To advance her career, she obtained a doctoral degree in Political Science from the University of Houston in 2013.

That spring, Easterly was working on her dissertation, "Institutional Responsiveness in Subnational Policymaking: An Examination of Sex Offender Registration and Community Notification Laws." She said that while pursuing her doctorate, she aimed to

return to federal service as a social science analyst. She never guessed she would be working at Lamar University that fall, and the Reaud Honors College by 2015.

Lamar University sought a professor who could teach both Political Science undergraduate courses and Master of Public Administration courses. Easterly's academic background coupled with public sector work provided valuable experience LU appreciated. Her passion for teaching and research earned Easterly the job before she finished her dissertation later that spring.

As she embarks on her 10-year anniversary this fall, Easterly described how she felt on her first visit to the campus, on Valentine's day, saying, "It was meant to be."

An elevator ride took her life to a different level.

One of her favorite courses to teach in the honors college is Honors American Government. With its focus on the constitution, interest groups and political parties, she hopes students walk away from the course being more aware of the political world around them.

Easterly is also the first honors professor to feature student e-Portfolios on the college website. Inspired by Dean Thibodeaux's encouragement during an honors retreat that professors apply e-Portfolios to their classes, Easterly shifted from assigning her class research project as an essay to a visual presentation on students' websites to allow for better engagement. "The e-Portfolios are an excellent idea for students to walk away with a product they can revisit and share as a way of marketing their well roundedness," she said.

She enjoys how honors connects her with all kinds of students, including those she would not normally encounter in her department, such as Computer Science sophomore Tomisin Egbewale. Last summer, she mentored Egbewale in support of a USDA Grant for rural schools awarded to the Center for Resiliency. Egbewale described their collaboration to present educational programming on college voter participation in Texas elections as the "best experience."

Easterly laughs as she recalled how Egbewale "took it to another level" as they traveled across Beaumont and all over campus to create visually appealing videos for rural schoolchildren to watch. Egbewale and friends filmed scenes in the Jefferson County election barn and at the Reaud Honors College's classrooms, lounge and ping pong room.

Dr. Easterly's passion for political science often allows students to branch out beyond a typical classroom setting and apply the concepts to the real world. For her Honors American Government course, students must research a real city with a problem to solve and present solutions three other cities implemented to resolve the issue. As one of her students, I focused on food insecurity in Nederland, Texas. My research opened doors for me because my ability to present in front of judges and learn from the critiques earned me my first award at Lamar University—the Dr. Mary Scheer Prize for outstanding research conducted in Southeast Texas. I owe my newfound love for research to her.

Dr. Easterly's words often ring in my ear whenever I consider taking on an opportunity: "You always have to try new things because you never know if you can be successful unless you take that leap of faith."

Hitting the High Notes

Showcasing LU's musical genius through the Centennial Generation of Southeast Texas.

By DANIELA CONTRERAS,
REAUD HONORS COLLEGE STUDENT



As Lamar University's Centennial Generation prepares for the grand celebration of our shared history this September, an omnipresent conductor is present: music. In the university bands' musical tributes throughout the 100th anniversary year, we see history as told through music. In reality, music has prepared all of us for the moment at hand.

Drum Major Jacob Murphy is among the Reaud Honors College students who helped kick off LU's Centennial when he played his tribute in the Wind Symphony this spring. The Business Management senior, who graduated this spring, shared the stage with the past, present and future of Lamar Music, playing with both local high school students and Lamar University alumni.

"For me, it was really rewarding to be able to see: this is our musical past, and it was obviously amazing because of how good the performance was. This is where we are today with the current Wind Ensemble performance. And this is who will be leading the future of the Lamar University music program," he said.

Murphy almost did not experience that moment. He initially thought he would not have time to participate in marching band during college, but his friend Rebecca McGarity convinced him to reconsider, and he went to a one-on-one meeting with the instructor of percussion, Dr. Francisco Perez.

"Within 30 minutes, I knew that it was right for me, and I haven't looked back since," said Murphy, adding how

(Opposite page) Kristin Hebert began her journey performing as a Cardinalette as a Texas Academy scholar and will maintain her leadership role as the Feature Twirler until she graduates as a Reaud Honors College graduate.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY LAMAR UNIVERSITY BANDS



ALUM Spotlight

This spring's Alumni Centennial Concert included performances by Reaud Honors alumni: **Michael Moreau-Monier** (Class of 2007); **Robert Hallam** (Class of 2008); **Sarah Saucedo** (Class of 2014); **John Ellis** (shown, Class of 2018); and **Todd "TJ" Senters** (Class of 2021).



grateful he is that his Cardinal days have prepared him for his next step attending the University of Texas School of Law-Austin and his aspirations to become a lawyer in intellectual property law. "Time really does fly when you're having fun. And time flies very fast in the Showcase of Southeast Texas."

Murphy's experiences in marching band helped shape his journey at LU. He was named Homecoming Senior Royalty and recognized as a leader at the College of Business through the Pearl and Aaron Rose Award and a leader at Lamar University through the Ann Shaw Leadership Award and as a Senior of Significance. Through the Reaud Honors College, Murphy expanded on his studies in Sitka, Alaska, as a scholar in the Partners in the Parks program and in Spain as a Study Abroad student. He also served leadership roles as President of Moot Court Association; Treasurer and Historian of Kappa Kappa Psi; Student Orientation Coordinator; and LU Ambassador. Beyond campus, he tutored middle school and high school students in the percussive arts and marching band in Woodville, Port Neches-Groves and Lumberton.

Murphy's decision to join marching band allowed him to demonstrate his leadership skills as Drum Major and Section Leader for the Showcase of Southeast Texas, which took him marching through the streets of New Orleans to performing in the Alamodome. His final musical

note at LU? Being recognized as Outstanding Senior of 2023 by his marching band peers.

Those peers include Reaud Honors students who will combine their musical genius to highlight Lamar University's history at the Centennial Show in Fall 2023. The man behind the show is Dr. Eric Shannon, the director of Athletic Band and associate professor in the Mary Morgan Moore Department of Music. He has taught at Lamar University since 2014 and currently conducts the symphonic band and directs the marching band and basketball pep band. The Centennial Show he crafted is a four-step movement with an opening, a slower movement, a dance piece and a reprise. Communication Journalism sophomore Maddie Sims, one of the Tuba players, said she and her fellow band mates are training piece by piece before the band performs the complete show toward the end of the season.

The show opens with "Into the Woods" from the eponymous musical and an arrangement of "Let's Get It Started" by Black Eyed Peas mixed with "It Don't Mean a Thing if it Ain't Got that Swing" by Duke Ellington. This movement highlighting the 1930s era represents Lamar University's origins. The second movement slows down the show as the 1940s arrive with "Cadillac of the Skies" from *Empire of the Sun* by John Williams. The third piece picks up the pace with a mixture of highs and lows—the '60s, '70s and '80s form a growth



Jacob Murphy concluded his senior year at Lamar University as the drum major for the Showcase of Southeast Texas Marching Band. By the time he accepted his diploma in Business Administration, his peers had recognized him as Homecoming Senior Royalty and the marching band's Outstanding Senior.

music: "I love playing music. Something about making an inanimate object sing, it's pretty special to me; it's pretty epic."

Music and chemical engineering are not a typical mix, Davis admitted, as the two use different sides of the brain. Yet in band, he uses math to follow the beat when playing his baritone. Music and engineering connect in a mathematical aspect. For him, the band allows him to continue to grow in musical knowledge and through leadership opportunities. The love and fun in music, he said, are what leads him to want to keep music in his life.

Mathematics and Music Education freshman Layton Richards is the first Music Education major at Lamar University with guitar as his primary instrument. He also plays cymbals for the marching band, performs in the Basketball Pep Band and plays for two worship teams at New Covenant and Lifepoint Church. He said he enjoys sharing the emotional connection of music with people. "It's important for people to understand art, to be able to communicate their emotions, express themselves through art," he said. "Music is the pathway that I've taken to be able to do that."

Psychology freshman Clara Schreck plays piccolo for the marching band and flute for the symphonic band, and she also performs with ONE Student Ministry and CSC Church Choir. Her musical experiences at LU have already earned her being named principal flute player in the symphonic band and a 2023 Orientation Leader. She also participated in the Texas Music

"Being in marching band means being a part of something bigger than myself. To me, it's a reflection of the human condition; individuals coming together to turn a concept into a movement. That's music."

Educators Association Convention. Band gave Schreck a constant as she transitioned to college life, saying, "It's you with everybody else, and you're contributing. And what you do, what you don't do matters."

Psychology sophomore Veronica M. Reyes plays cymbals for the marching band and is a worship leader for New Covenant Church where she has played keyboard for a decade. Connectivity is the quality in music that attracts her, saying, "Being in marching band means being a part of something bigger than myself. To me, it's a reflection of the human condition; individuals coming together to turn a concept into a movement. That's music."

Journalism sophomore Maddie Sims is also the Managing Editor at LU's *University Press*. Tuba was an unexpected instrument for her to play, given her short height of five feet, yet she shared her journey rising to that challenge in a *UP* news article, "Shortest Tuba Player Stands Tall." Her musical journey taught her that "Size doesn't matter, determination does." She said that band has brought her friendships and fun, and that she enjoys being part of a legacy of possibilities beyond expectations. "Being in band means that I'm tough," Sims said.

LU's Cardinalette who provides a dynamic visual flair as the feature twirler for the marching band is Exercise Science junior Kristin Hebert. She began twirling at the age of four, and she now coaches twirling at the same studio where she learned, Twirls and Swirls Twirling Studio. A Texas Academy

alumna, Presidential Scholar and S.U.R.F. Fellow, Hebert said twirling is a form of musical expression that requires an understanding of music to choreograph according to notes, tempos and volume. "It's a very unique way to express the music through that form of art," she said.

Human Resources junior Arielle Hickerson plays cymbals for the marching band and performs with the Chi Alpha honor society's worship team. She said she is excited about the Front Ensemble reintroducing her favorite instrument, the vibraphone, this fall. For her, music brings creativity to her career, fellowship, joy and, at the top of her list, worship. Performing at her best is important to her, she said, adding, "You never know what that show can do for someone else. Whether it'll be helpful; whether it'll be detrimental. Whether it'll be the last thing on earth or the most beautiful thing they've ever heard."

In academia, music and the arts can face questioning of their importance when education is viewed as a means for a job instead of its traditional school of roundedness across fields. "It is about developing a whole person and having a sense of how art interacts with life, how art informs us about the past, about the human condition, about the present," said Professor Bryan Proksch, who teaches "Music History I" as a Petition for Honors Credit.

A current trend stumping musical development is that people are no longer musical without professionalism, he said, sharing how factory bands used to play for the community and how



Psychology Pre-Occupational Therapy freshman Clara Schreck performed in San Antonio with her fellow flutists from Dr. Brielle Frost's Flute Studio at this spring's Texas Music Educators Association Convention.

music traditionally invited everyone to take part. Universities are a special place where music can still be a part of your growth. "To the person who wants to do music, I would say you should do music," Dr. Proksch said. "Everyone should do some kind of music because it's part of the human experience."

Lamar University marks its 100th year holding this traditional belief that everyone is musical. Our university bands are filled with students from all walks of life, pursuing different goals, while also displaying and expanding their musical talents. The doors to music remain open at Lamar University. We, the Centennial Generation of Southeast Texas, grasp music as enriching students' lives by fostering responsibility, school spirit and special memories.

By MEGHAN RAPP, REAUD HONORS COLLEGE COORDINATOR

Reaud Honors Reality Stars

Advocates of the honors college experience shine brightly on Amazon Prime.

This spring, host Alex Boylan announced to America, “Welcome to Lamar University. This is *The College Tour*.”

Watch parties across campus tuned in for the premiere of the Amazon Prime show, which featured Reaud Honors scholars-turned-reality stars (in order of appearance) Hannah Norwood, Toni Lopez Maldonado, Jacob Murphy, Stephanie Barron, and Zaid Mohammed. Other Honors Cardinals were also featured in some of the B-Roll. Representing the incredible opportunities available to students and embodying LU pride, all of our students were amazing advocates of the honors college experience.

Sharing LU’s commitment to the STEM learning environment, Norwood talked about the strong foundation for growth she experienced as a Biology Pre-Med student, which encouraged her to become a founding member of LU’s Women in STEM student organization.

“As a Presidential Scholar and member of the Reaud

Amazon Prime shared the remarkable stories told by Reaud Honors scholars-turned-reality stars Hannah Norwood,

Jacob Murphy, Zaid Mohammed, Toni Lopez Maldonado and Stephanie Barron (clockwise, from top left). Also shown are scenes from the episode featuring them with Lamar University and Reaud Honors College peers.

PHOTOS COURTESY THE COLLEGE TOUR



Honors College, I began my education with a built-in support system of peer and faculty members who encouraged interactions among individuals with diverse backgrounds,” she said. “I’ve combined my dedication to academic excellence, community involvement and organizational leadership to create a productive college experience.”

Lopez Maldonado credited LU’s status among the “Top 10 Most Affordable Colleges in Texas” for encouraging him to pursue higher education as a first-generation high school graduate who hailed from Guanajuato, Mexico. A Smith-Hutson Scholar, he received full tuition, room and board that covers his four years as an undergraduate.

“Before I even came to campus, Lamar University showed me its mission of serving and empowering minorities by giving me the opportunity to attend the Leadership Summit along with other Hispanic and Black students. The summit aimed to engage students on college and career readiness, identity and brotherhood,” he said.

Petting zoos, silent discos and first-year games are some of the events Murphy created as a Student Orientation Coordinator during “Week of Welcome” in fall and in spring. “Lamar is committed to student success,” he said. “Classes are extremely important, but a true college experience combines the classroom experience with the relationships built in on-campus involvement and the things we learn off-campus.”

Mohammed discussed LU’s undergraduate research and internship opportunities, including one inspired by an Honors Seminar course. “After taking the Stem Cell Seminar class, I became involved with the professor’s research lab, which focuses on cancer and stem cells. A current project we’re focusing on examines how microplastics affects wound healing,” Mohammed said.

His research journey has also included a summer in Dallas at the Thermal and Vascular Physiology Lab and, as a prestigious David J. Beck Fellow, a summer in Canada where he worked on a project involving autophagy receptors in cancer cells.

His story is a wonderful example of how students inspire each other at LU. “Student organizations, such as Lamar University Research Association, of which I am president, seeks to encourage students of different labs to interact, share what they’re working on and to gain insight from their peers,” he said.

Barron rhapsodized about the close-knit family atmosphere she has felt as an LU student. “Lamar

University’s honors college ensures that each one of us has a path to success,” she said, adding, “Through the college’s mentor program, which I help coordinate, I’ve had the opportunity to connect with multiple honors alumni who are more than committed to offer advice on personal and professional growth. By being a part of the honors college, I’ve been able to meet so many ambitious students who helped me push myself to become a better leader and person.”

Representing some of the best of Cardinal Nation, each of our Honors Cardinals provided a glimpse into the welcoming and accepting home provided at Lamar University.



BY SHELBY GRAHAM, REAUD HONORS COLLEGE STUDENT

Teamwork Makes the Dream Work

Model UN empowers honors students to rise to the challenge of solving global issues.



BACK ON THE WORLD STAGE: The Reaud Honors College's Model United Nations program earned recognition at the TexMUN Conference this spring! All of our delegates represented LU admirably: Daisy Calero Estrella, Estrella Balderas, Shelbie Williams, Stefany Rico (front row, from left); Kevwe Onakpoya, David Matherne, Patricia Castañon, Shelby Graham, Tomisin Egbewale and Dakota Emerson (back row, from left).

ALL PHOTOS BY MEGHAN RAPP

Delegates buzzed around the room like bees circling flowers as they attempted to negotiate a consensus over the human rights situation in Eastern Europe.

By the time Kevwe Onakpoya and I were finished, chatting from opposite corners of the room so as to confer with as many allies as possible, we, as the delegates for the Republic of Ireland, had found co-sponsors in Eritrea, Somalia, Yemen, United Kingdom and the United States of America, along with 12

signatories, on a resolution. We united to propose the creation of a human rights assessment team and an investigation into potential human trafficking along the refugee migrant trails, among other proposals. Onakpoya and I had walked into that room only a few hours before, unsure of what to expect, and already our confidence was growing. We *did* know how to successfully contribute to the debate as delegates. All that preparation in the months prior was bubbling to the surface.

That weekend of February 3-5, 2023, we were joined by eight of our Reaud Honors peers at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at University of Texas-Austin. Despite

all of us being first-time competitors at the TexMUN Conference, due to a hiatus brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, each team approached the challenge with confidence. Our Model United Nations teams consisted of four delegates for the Republic of Ireland, four delegates for Brazil and two delegates for Nicaragua.

We assembled a diverse group of honors delegates studying a variety of fields: engineering, computer science, biology pre-med and pre-dental, nursing, social work, political science and English. Only three among us had legal and debate experience. Despite different backgrounds, we all sought to gain experience in public speaking and to broaden our worldview.

"I really appreciate the fact that I've been able to make connections with other students who also like to challenge themselves and think critically about situations that come up," said Dakota Emerson, a Chemical Engineering senior who applied his background in debate competitions to his delegate role on the Security Council for Ireland.

His partner delegate Shelbie Williams agreed, saying, "Although we're not all political science majors like I am, we all are very interested in learning how to critically think and that is very important when you are competing in Model UN, and I find that one of the most important aspects in going into a competition."

A Political Science junior with a minor in Legal Studies, Williams was also enrolled in an International Law class that spring. She said she was excited to apply to that class what she learned about the UN and global politics at the conference, particularly in her role as head delegate for Ireland.

Stefany Rico, who graduated this May with her Bachelor of Social Work degree, advocated for Brazil in the General Assembly Third Committee. She went into this competition to learn more about the UN, saying she found it the "perfect opportunity to become more educated on global issues and initiatives."

Rico admired witnessing all the students working together to "find solutions," adding that is a great aspect of Model United Nations—it gives you the chance to grapple not with made-up scenarios, but with real world issues.

Her partner delegate, Nursing junior Patricia Castañon, enjoyed meeting and interacting with like-minded people who appreciate international relations as much as her. "Never underestimate the quiet people" is a valuable lesson she says she learned during the debates.

Thinking on your feet was an important lesson learned by Tomisin Egbewale, a Computer Science sophomore who represented Brazil in the Security Council and also served as head delegate for Brazil. Much of the competition consisted of delegates preparing impromptu speeches along with "logically adjusting your positions to reach a consensus (which involves knowing when to be resolute), understanding and occasionally challenging the positions of others, and forming strategic alliances with certain member states, particularly on the Security Council," he said.

His partner delegate, Biology Pre-Med junior David Matherne, found the experience gave him a new perspective on politicians. "We should strive to

understand the intricacies of decision making and appreciate the challenges that politicians face on a daily basis," he said.

Daisy Calero Estrella, a Nursing sophomore, had a special connection to the country she represented in the General Assembly Third Committee. Nicaragua is her family's native country, which she considers the biggest part of her identity. "Although its government is not the best, I still love it. Do not judge people from a certain place just because of what you see in the media," she said.

Biochemistry Pre-Dental junior Estrella Balderas was excited about representing Nicaragua for another reason—before joining the Reaud Honors College, she made a promise to herself to take advantage of every opportunity placed before her. Her delegate experience revealed, "You don't have to be a Pre-Law or Political Science major, or even have debate experience to participate in Model United Nations," she said. "All you have to do is have a willingness to participate and represent your country proudly!"

One of the most valuable aspects of participating in Model United Nations is seeing firsthand how teamwork makes the dream work. That was especially true for Chemical Engineering sophomore

Award-winning delegates Shelbie Williams and Dakota Emerson (far right) enjoyed challenging other honors students while negotiating on behalf of the Republic of Ireland during Security Council sessions at TexMUN this spring.





Onakpoya and I, Shelby Graham, an English junior with a minor in Legal Studies. Negotiation was not easy, but by no means was it impossible once we capitalized on each of our strengths to work strategically, dividing and conquering the room. As the more confident and poised speaker, Onakpoya walked around the room to maintain open communication with multiple nations, while I maximized my research skills to work with allies in researching and writing draft resolutions that came from the conversations. We learned to hear and understand the priorities of other nations to reach a compromise on a resolution that made our country and our partner countries satisfied about what the proposal achieved for our member states.

Likewise, Emerson and Williams benefited from their different skill sets. “I have a moot court background, which is more of a legal background, and Dakota has a really strong debate background,” Williams said.

Balderas added, “Above all, MUN is about cooperation. While abiding by the international relationships and governmental policies of my nation, I believe both me and my partner-delegate Daisy learned a lot about what it means to compromise effectively to reach the goals of our nation.”

The Reaud Honors College prepares students to not only face challenges, but

also to welcome them. The boldness to walk into a room of competitors who had much more experience than our group is something Reaud Honors students have gained by participating in the countless opportunities the college provides us so we can grow confidence and develop leadership skills.

During the competition, Team Nicaragua delegates found themselves outnumbered, with hardly any allies. Yet “after taking part in challenging courses and being allowed various opportunities to step outside of our normal comfort levels, being a part of the Reaud Honors College prepared us tremendously to be a part of MUN,” Balderas said.

Rico and Estrella also felt the honors college had prepared them to find a way to deal with conflict and countries that didn’t agree with theirs on the issues. They had to think outside their own political opinions, capitalizing on the critical thinking techniques they learned in their honors classes.

Just as in the “real world” of global politics, tensions were sometimes high and negotiations were extremely challenging. It was entertaining to see dedicated students commit to the characters and personalities of their nations. Our Reaud Honors team also transformed ourselves to match our countries, utilizing the research into our countries we had conducted over the

Capitalizing on each of their strengths to work strategically, our MUN delegates divided and conquered the room: Patricia Castañon and Stefany Rico (standing, far left), Shelby Graham (standing, far right) and Kevwe Onakpoya (seated, far right).

past couple of months. This was a chance for us to diversify and be creative.

Throughout the competition, we pulled together and tackled the challenge with diligence. When awards were handed out that Sunday, we were pleasantly surprised to receive two honorable mentions: for Team Nicaragua, General Assembly Third Committee, and for Team Ireland, Security Council.

Speaking, persuading, teamwork, advocating and facing difficult challenges were all skills we improved upon during our experience at TexMUN. These skills are beneficial and applicable in any field one enters.

The Reaud Honors College is looking forward to building on the success of our students and continuing to help them expand their range of abilities. Next Fall, the college will compete at the Lone Star Model United Nations Conference.

“Although some opportunities like Model United Nations may be out of a student’s comfort zone, you’ll never know if you’ll enjoy it if you don’t try!” Balderas said. 📍



Daisy Calero Estrella and Estrella Balderas (from left) met at the honors summer book club (see opposite page) before partnering up to represent Nicaragua. They were happily surprised to earn delegate recognition at TexMUN.



Honors Summer Read |

Building Connections While Discussing Big Pharma

First-Year student and her mentor share their experiences in the Reaud Honors College’s summer book club.

As an aspiring nurse anesthetist, I have closely followed the conversation revolving around Big Pharma, its marketing tactics and its role in the opioid epidemic ravaging the United States. *Empire of Pain*, a research-based narrative written from the perspectives of members of a prominent family in the pharmaceutical industry, was my first exposure to the history behind this critical issue. Thanks to the Reaud Honors College’s summer book club, I was introduced to what would soon become my favorite book genre while learning the extent of how professionals’ failures to manage their ambitions can be detrimental to a nation.

Under the mentorship of Communication and Media professor Dr. Sheila Springer, my honors peers and I discussed the beginnings of medical marketing and deliberated on the factors that influenced Americans’ struggle against opioids. Although nobody in our book club lives like the Sackler family, the founders and owners of Purdue Pharma known for its

production of the controlled substance OxyContin, we made connections to the narrative based on what we see in our communities.

At that book club meeting held last fall, a few days before my first day of college, I met two individuals who would become crucial members of my support system over the next year. Because our discussion went beyond the narrative into also sharing our personal stories, we developed deep bonds of connection. And I found a supportive mentor in Dr. Springer, who I, as a nursing major, might never have met outside of the book club.

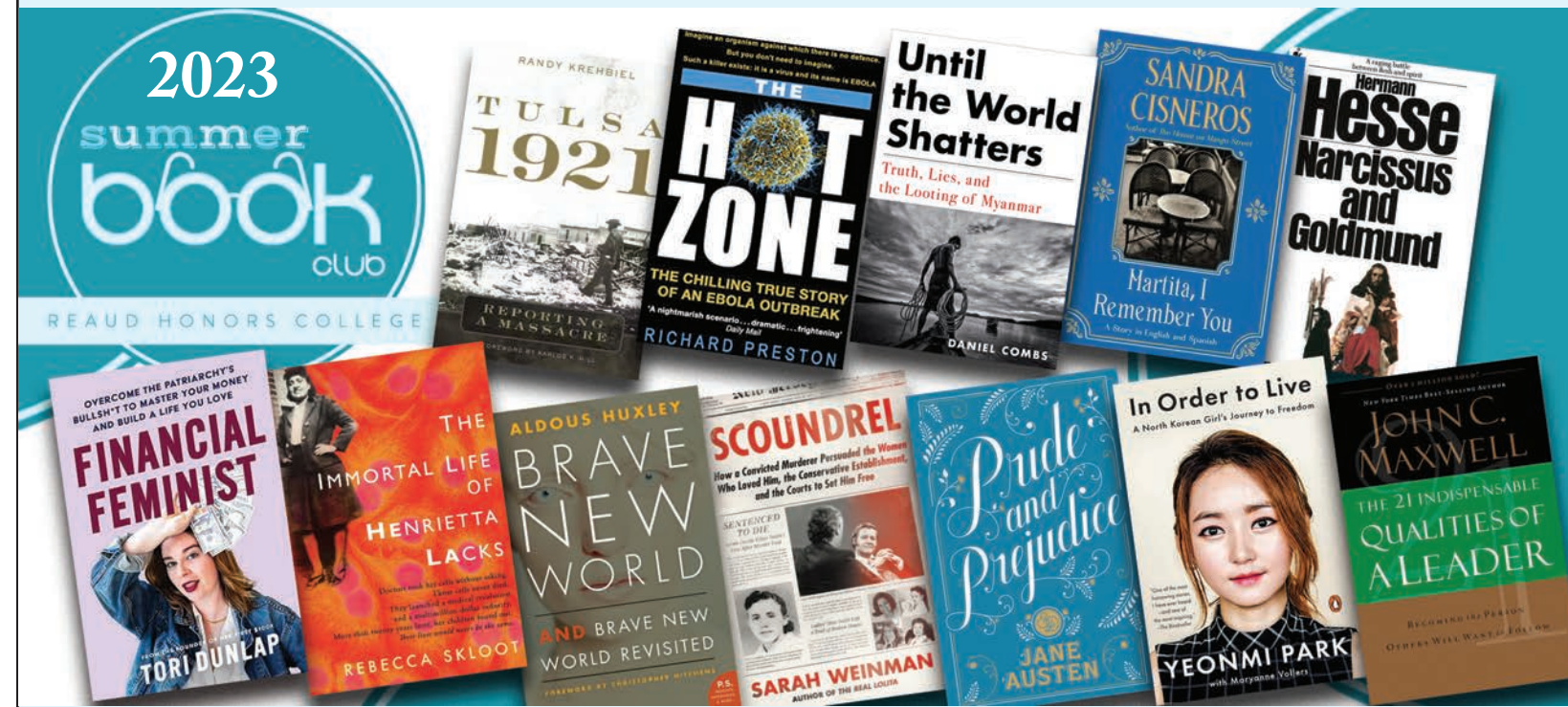
Dr. Springer finds the program benefits not only honors students, but also the professors leading the discussions. “The book club helps us have an understanding of what students know and how we can tie it into your own experiences,” she said.

The advantages of the program are threefold, she said: “You’re connecting with peers prior to the semester starting. You’re getting to know somebody. This

allows you a comfortable and safe space to start the conversation. Number two, you’re meeting a faculty person, so you get an idea of how faculty interacts with students. There’s a lot of differentials in between where my degree is and where you’re coming in. We want to limit that distance; we want you to know that we want to talk to you on your level. We want to hear about your experiences, and we want to include those in a way that is going to help you learn. The third thing that comes out of it is that it re-sparks a love for reading that maybe has been lost for a while.”

Having just completed my first year of college, I now feel prepared to participate in discussions in my classes and to engage in self-exploration. I am eternally grateful I signed up to participate in the honors summer book club, as I gained confidence in my ability to hold my own in a room full of scholars.

—Daisy Calero Estrella



By DAISY CALERO ESTRELLA, REAUD HONORS COLLEGE STUDENT

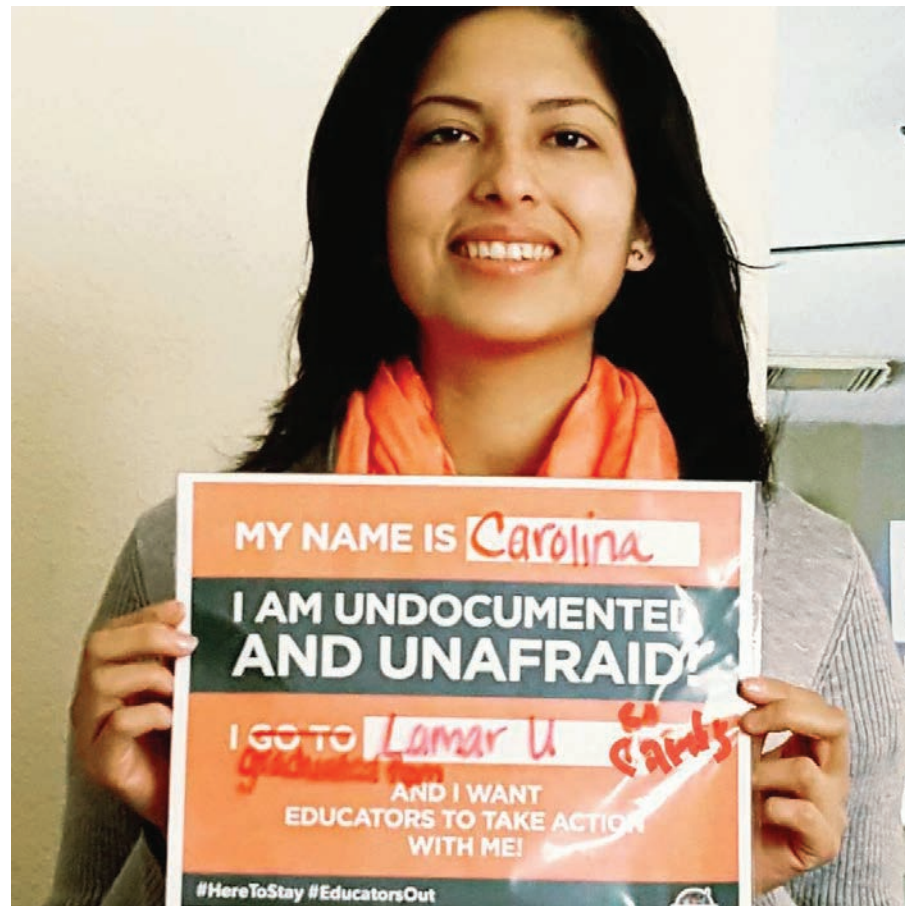
Changing the Young Latinos' Perspective on Possibility

Keeping more students on track is key to addressing Texas' workforce needs.

My Abuelito, the son of a schoolteacher in the city of Rivas, Nicaragua, taught me the importance of education and honoring my roots no matter where I am. I carry with me this sense of pride to be confident in my abilities as I push the limits on what I thought was possible while at Lamar University. The day President Jaime Taylor presented me with the Presidential Scholarship at my high school, Harmony Science Academy, I felt a quote ringing in my soul that echoes each day I navigate college life: "Si se puede. Yes, you can."

During my first year in the Reaud Honors College, I took advantage of opportunities to grow academically, personally and professionally. I served as an award-winning delegate in the college's Model United Nations program, and I worked with honors peers to form the SACNAS chapter at LU. My peers elected me Honors Student Association president for the upcoming year, and I plan to further develop my leadership skills next year by serving on a nonprofit board through the college's Stepping Up initiative.

Yet far too many of my high school peers have fallen victim to believing "College is a scam." They chose to go straight into the workforce—in the refineries, construction or at a local tienda—without pushing for a career beyond that of physical labor. As a Hispanic living in Port Arthur and attending school in Beaumont, I also witnessed the lack of striving for greater



Carolina Ramirez Cardenas (Class of 2010) cofounded United We Dream-Houston five years after she helped form the Students for the Dream Act organization on LU's campus. She went on to work in Washington, DC for United We Dream Network as a national coordinator before being promoted to National Education Equity Manager. She is now back in Houston as the Texas State Advisor for the Movement Voter Project.

COURTESY CAROLINA RAMIREZ CARDENAS

opportunities within my own family, having many cousins begin college, drop out and settle for jobs that do not fulfill them. Whenever their support systems failed to provide them with adequate resources during times of adversity, they developed a mindset that it is

okay to give up when things get hard. This perspective mentally handcuffs too many Latinos from reaching their full potential.

Considering Hispanics have become the majority demographic group in Texas, examining the young

The first Nancy Evans Memorial Scholar to graduate, Aurora Maldonado (Class of 2021) researched the award-winning "Perceived Barriers to Persistence in Higher Education" for Hispanic students as a McNair Scholar.

(Far right) Chemical Engineering senior Luis Arevalo cofounded LU Hispanic Society and has already earned two prestigious recognitions: Ann Shaw Leadership award and, this year, C. Robert Kemble Outstanding Senior Man.

MALDONADO PHOTO BY MEGHAN RAPP; AREVALO AND PRESIDENT JAIME TAYLOR PHOTO COURTESY LAMAR UNIVERSITY

Latinos' mindset on possibility is worth exploring. Keeping more students on track for higher education is key to addressing Texas' workforce needs.

"We must raise the bar to ensure all Texans can participate in, benefit from and contribute to the unique opportunities of our great state," reported the "Building a Talent Strong Texas" strategic plan released by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

As an Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution, Lamar University is well on its way to earning the critical HSI designation that would allow it to receive special grants and programs to support Hispanic students in innumerable ways. With our community supported by such resources, Latino youth will be more inclined to recognize that they are the generation of change; their unique cultural experiences can become a pathway for them to discover academic and professional expertise.

"Being an institution that looks like Texas is a worthwhile endeavor," said Dann Brown, associate provost for academic and faculty affairs.

The good news is that overall Latino enrollment in Texas colleges has climbed, from 633,660 in 2011 to 803,716 in 2019, according to the U.S. Department of Education. Yet despite Texas offering automatic admission to students who graduate in the top 10 percent of their high school classes, 16 percent of Hispanics who qualified skipped college entirely prior to the COVID-19 pandemic—in Texas and



anywhere else in the nation—compared to about 10 percent of white students who did not enroll, reported the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Even though the upward trend in young Texas Hispanics pursuing higher education is promising, too many lack knowledge in how to make their career dreams come true. "How do we center our needs and our possibilities as we're navigating barriers, but also how do we support one another? And how do we ask the broader community to support us as we navigate barriers?" asked Carolina Ramirez Cardenas (Class of 2010), the deputy director of State Partnerships at Movement Voter Project.

One of the barriers that impede success is immigration. As an immigrant from Coahuila, Mexico, Ramirez Cardenas shared how both the act of immigration and the policies regarding immigration affect Latino youth perspective on possibility.

"It depends on how we immigrate. My partner immigrated; it was pretty traumatic. He literally had to cross the river. My folks are right across the river, so it was a lot easier for us. There are other

folks whose families became citizens. A commonality that immigration gives me and many folks is this keen sense of urgency to do the best we can because we have family elsewhere in another part of the world who don't have the same opportunities that we have. That can also lead to us being hard on ourselves. Yet young Latinos, they change this country. We fought for 'Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals,' referring to the DACA movement she has been a leader in herself, which paved a pathway for her and millions of other young Latinos to apply for a work permit and provides temporary relief from deportation.

"DACA really changed my life. Because when I graduated from Lamar, I couldn't legally work," she says. "The movement was young people. They got on buses, and they talked to legislators. Church folks got together in their churches, and they sent mail and held meetings. Truly, the way that immigration has affected young Latinos' perspective on possibility is that young Latinos have actually affected immigration policies. When our lives are changed, we change our whole family."



FIRST GEN'S FIRST YEAR AT LU

"There is one phone call I will never forget," Antonio Lopez Maldonado, who goes by Toni, recalled in his award-winning First Gen Forward essay. "[My parents] picked up and quickly asked, 'Que te dijeron?' ('What did they tell you?'), and I replied, 'Si se pudo, si me la dieron' ('I did it, they gave it to me').... I remember how we all started crying on the phone, but more importantly, I remember everything that had led to that moment."

That moment was Toni learning he had been awarded the full-ride Smith-Hutson Scholarship at Lamar University. In his essay, Toni went on to share how he and his family came from El Acebuche pueblito in Guanajuato, Mexico. Neither parent attended college; his father did not even attend high school. Yet education for their children was at the forefront. "I had to ingrain a 'porque no?' ('why not?') attitude every time a door would close on me," Toni wrote.

Just a few of the many doors that have opened for Toni since he graduated from Red Oak High School in Red Oak, Texas, and stepped on the LU campus in Fall 2022: served as recruitment officer for LU Hispanic Society; named student representative for Smith-Hutson Leadership Council; first LU student (and the only one from Texas) to participate in the prestigious pre-law fellowship at Duke Law School; appeared in the 2023 Superbowl Commercial for LU and in Amazon Prime's *The College Tour*; elected vice president of SGA and vice-chair for TSUS Student Advisory Board; and traveled to New York City this summer to intern with ACLU's National Advocacy Institute.

Toni is working as a legal assistant at Packard LaPray law firm in Beaumont to help him grow in his desired field and prepare for law school.

PHOTOS COURTESY TONI LOPEZ MALDONADO

As the daughter of two Nicaraguan immigrants, I can attest to the far-reaching impact living in the United States has on

family that remains in the motherland. Apart from providing financial assistance to relatives living in their homeland, young Latinos living in the U.S. serve as role models to those who are not able to achieve as much due to their socioeconomic circumstances or an oppressive government. Yet how can the young Latino be empowered?

"The most direct way of empowering the young Latino is to make them aware of the opportunities available" and help them see "someone who looks like them who has already benefited from these opportunities," said Luis Arevalo, founder of Lamar University Hispanic Society and former Honors Student Association representative for the Student Government Association.

Every Winter Break, through the Reaud Honors College's "Home for the Holidays" program, honors students visit their former high schools to encourage students to consider college as an option. A major reason why the program has been successful is because youth encounter college students who look like them and face similar socioeconomic circumstances who are sharing their stories of how they got to where they are and where they hope to go because of their LU experience.

"An individual or group being able to grow in their perception of 'what can be' and 'what is possible' can experience life-changing effects," said Aurora Maldonado, Social Work alumna (Class of 2021) who, as a McNair Scholar, researched the relationship between the perceptions of barriers to college, acculturation levels and the college self-

efficacy of Latinx/Hispanic students.

Describing the far-reaching impacts of Hispanic youth's perception of possibility, she said, "Family members and multiple generations of Latinx individuals are exposed to new perceptions of the inspiring drive, roles and potential innovations that such Latinx youth can bring to the larger society in a variety of disciplines, such as in STEM fields, in the creative arts, the humanities and in the media."

Arevalo also champions the community outreach events LU hosts every year. As an orientation leader, he has had the opportunity to speak to younger Latinos at Cardinal View and other events. Honors alumni also play an important role of being a mentor who can instill a possibility mindset in young Latinos. Ramirez Cardenas helped facilitate conversations with Latina honors students in 2019 and 2020, and she and other honors alumni continue to contribute to growing the college's mentorship program.

"The biggest change needed in the Latino's mindset for a real difference to occur is the way we see money," Arevalo said. "For many of us, most of our lives have been spent in a scarcity mindset, where we only ever have just enough and nothing more, nothing less. It is going to take a shift from the scarcity mindset too many of us still have to one of abundance."

Maldonado agreed, saying, "Latinx youth's perspective on possibility could be expanded and supported by noting how other Latinx youth are pursuing their goals even in the face of anticipated challenges." She emphasized the importance of youth having "intrinsic and external motivators in place, through socio-environmental support in educational settings and via mental health services to encourage the expanded view of what is possible."

Since young Latinos are often inseparable from their family, Ramirez Cardenas advocates reframing the question as, "How can the Latino be empowered as part of their community?" She said youth should ask themselves "what brings you truly alive, and what do you have to offer your people, your community? Seek out either your elders or your peers. They are great groups of folks that support you, and you can support them."

At the same time, a major socioeconomic barrier is that the Hispanic community may not have the knowledge necessary to support its youth. Both Ramirez Cardenas and Maldonado stressed how young Hispanics often do not know how to conduct college searches, decide on a career or even what kind of institution, a two year or four year, to attend. The FAFSA is another hurdle to overcome when breadwinners of the family do not speak English and are unable to accurately provide the information necessary to receive enough financial aid to make college feasible. Arevalo said he did not find out about the full-ride scholarship he eventually received to attend LU "until only a few months prior to the application closing."

Although going to college does not guarantee success in life, higher education often provides individuals with crucial knowledge not only in their discipline, but also about themselves. Young Latinos can already see models of

success they can build on by recognizing the skills people in our community acquire without having obtained a college degree.

"Yes, sometimes our moms or tias wouldn't push for higher education because they were unfamiliar with what it looks like to go to college, but I remember some of the things that they did excellently. Like, some folks were excellent at organizing big events. No college, they did it because they knew how to build relationships," Ramirez Cardenas said.

The solution for changing the Latino youth perspective may lie in honing those skills cultivated by their families, such as networking and entrepreneurship. "Folks open up businesses all the time without having a professional education in business, but rather a long history of experience working in mercados and pulperias," Ramirez Cardenas said. "We



I felt a quote ringing in my soul that echoes each day I navigate college life: "Si se puede. Yes, you can."

could work on seeing ambition and possibility for ourselves and also support the people who have gone through this journey of helping our community and removing barriers. Those barriers were pretty unnecessary and hard for many. Let's make the path easier for those who will walk this road after us."

A lack of motivation from family members, who may not push for pursuit of higher education because of its foreign nature and bureaucratic obstacles, is a major hindrance Arevalo

hears often discussed. "When speaking to those my age and especially those younger, it is immediate the influence that their older brothers, sisters, cousins and especially their parents have on their perspective on possibility," he said. "It all begins at home, and it is so important to be impeccable with one's words, as they are the foundation for the way we and those who look up to us see the world."

In her career as a licensed master social worker, Maldonado is encouraged by the evolving mindset she witnesses with Latinx youth today. "I have heard them say things like 'this is what I want to do' and 'this is how I'll do it.'" At the same time, she added, the thought process does still often turn to "them saying, 'I want to do this, but I won't be able to, so I'll just do this.'"

The strive to be great already exists within Texas' Hispanic youth. We can make that an achievable dream through higher education by improving support that allows them to discover where they should invest their talents, the extent of possibilities available to pursue and how they can achieve their goals.

I did not think I would be able to attend college after losing my Papi, but thankfully, with guidance and support from my Mami, I stayed on track academically. Now that I am here, I have made it my personal mission to discover what the community can do to encourage other youth. I believe communal support will empower young Latinos to become an unstoppable force driving for positive change not only locally in Southeast Texas, but also statewide, nationwide and internationally, with the purpose of transforming society for future generations to come.

"We must speak and walk with an air of prosperity about us," Arevalo said. "Only then will we realize for ourselves and help those around us recognize that the possibilities are truly infinite, and you can be anything you desire in this one life we are given."

BY HANNAH NORWOOD, REAUD HONORS COLLEGE STUDENT

A Beautiful Ride

Honors joins forces with the Reaud Foundation's Bicycles and Bibles giveaway.



A bicycle opens the door to a child's imagination. Climbing onto the seat and taking off with the wind blowing through your hair transports you into another world full of new adventures.

One of the greatest joys in childhood is the freedom that riding a bicycle presents. Mr. Wayne Reaud remembers that feeling well. Answering the Lord's call to ensure that underprivileged children get to share this fond experience, the Reaud Foundation created Bicycles and Bibles in hopes that Southeast Texas youth would feel pride in their new gift and love from their community.

As serving others remains a top mission in the Reaud Honors College, the Bicycles and Bibles giveaway provides an excellent opportunity

for the Reaud family and the Reaud Honors College to align passions for the betterment of the surrounding area.

"I volunteer to give back to my community that has already provided so much relief for my family and me. It's one of the best feelings to have, knowing you potentially have made a difference in a person's life by giving your time," said Sergio Mendez, Biology Pre-Med freshman.

Volunteers descend upon Ford Park Arena to fill bags with an inscribed Bible, clothes, jackets, shoes and toys for 1,000 children. The endeavor delivers the love of Christ to little hearts, reminding them that they are important and seen.

"My favorite part was doing the heavy lifting. It was a lot of elderly volunteers, so they were happy to

(Above, front row) Hannah Burns and Jacy Lognion help Reaud Foundation volunteers distribute food packages for holiday meals.

(Opposite Page, from left) Jule Nguyen, Adeline Tran and Kathy Nguyen take a smile break from distributing the large bags of toys and donations.

PHOTOS BY BRANDON GOUTHIER PHOTOGRAPHY


have some young people to help with breaking down boxes and lifting the large bags of toys and donations," said Melody Youwakim, Chemical Engineering junior.

When gifting day arrives, the children are all smiles as they receive their new bicycles and bags of goodies from eager volunteers.

The Bicycles and Bibles gathering embodies the true meaning of Christmas. Inspired by service, the



community event is a labor of love, ministering to precious souls and celebrating Southeast Texas. "I wanted to spend my time helping those in need during the holiday season," Exercise Science senior Kristen Crippen said. "I also enjoy the overwhelming sense of unity when a large group of volunteers come together to work toward a common goal for others and to have the chance to listen to their testimonies."

The blessing of giving proved infectious as participation in Bicycles and Bibles influenced Reaud Honors College students to begin volunteering annually at this exquisite occasion. At Bicycles and Bibles, scripture comes to life. 

The Reaud Foundation created Bicycles and Bibles in hopes that Southeast Texas youth would feel pride in their new gift and love from their community.

If any alumni are interested in volunteering with us next year, let us know!

Bicycles and Bibles Honors Volunteers



FRESHMEN: Hannah Burns (Nursing); Ashton DeRouen (General Business); Debani Herrarte (Computer Science); William Lang (Cybersecurity); Jakayla Malone (Exercise Science); Sergio Mendez (Biology Pre-Med); Ashton Moore (Chemical Engineering and Math); Victoria Morrison (Nursing); Grace Roy (Biology Pre-Med); Steven Sedtal (Cybersecurity); Tilly Worthy (Biology Pre-Optometry).

SOPHOMORES: Daisy Calero Estrella (Nursing); Megan Do (Chemistry Pre-Dental); Andrea Figueroa (Computer Game Development); Karen Figueroa (Communication Film Studies); Sage Grooms (Exercise Science); Kaitlyn King (Criminal Justice); Jacy Lognion (Speech and Hearing Sciences); Kathy Nguyen (Computer Science); Linh Nguyen (Nursing); Dylan Pardo (Biochemistry); Rima Shaaban (Chemistry Pre-Dental); Billy Tolar (Electrical Engineering); Jenna Vo (Nursing).

JUNIORS: Estrella Balderas (Biochemistry Pre-Dental); Kristin Hebert (Exercise Science); Juan Lerma Sarabia (Computer Science); Jule Nguyen (Nursing); Chloe Tew (Accounting); Adelin Tran (Chemistry); Melody Youwakim (Chemical Engineering).

SENIORS: Katherine Correa (Biology Pre-Optometry and Studio Art Drawing); Kristen Crippen (Exercise Science); Camille Fam (Biochemistry Pre-Med); Kaylee Goodspeed (Psychology graduate); Hannah Norwood (Biology Pre-Med graduate); Katie Page (Mechanical Engineering graduate).

BY JERI WOLFE, REAUD HONORS COLLEGE STUDENT

Spain and Beyond

Figuring out how to make my own opportunities led me to a semester abroad.

As a student from a low-income family, I have not been presented with many opportunities to travel. My father is disabled and raised my twin sister and I alone, so he was unable to physically work for better income. From him, I learned I needed to find a way to make my own opportunities. I applied for and received the McMaster Grant from the Reaud Honors College and the Gilman Scholarship to help finance my Spring semester studying at the University of Alicante in Spain.

At Lamar University, my English Language and Literature major courses mostly consist of literature analysis. At the University of Alicante, I studied the linguistic aspects of English, reading aloud in class the distinct vowel sounds of Middle English literature and exploring the structure of English words before the Great Vowel shift. I transcribed and dated English manuscripts, and developed an understanding of the craft of Medieval Literature. I befriended a diverse group of students from Alcoy, Alicante, London, Auckland and South Carolina to explore our shared love of the English language. I also took advantage of the university's free Spanish courses



Jeri Wolfe: Spring 2023, Alicante, Spain

and drastically improved my high school Spanish education by studying the language in Spain.

My semester schedule allowed me time to travel. I explored Spanish food and music during Alicante's week-long celebrations of Carnival and Semana Santa, the latter of which features citizens carrying a statue representation of Jesus through winding streets to commemorate his crucifixion. Of the multiple castles within the city walls, I walked the 19th-century Castell de

Sant Ferran on Tossal Hill and I hiked up Mount Benacantil to a breathtaking view of the city and the Mediterranean Sea to tour the 9th-century Santa Bárbara Castle built during Muslim control of the Iberian Peninsula.

Outside of Alicante, I took trips to the Netherlands. In Amsterdam, I traveled with my boyfriend to the Rijksmuseum to visit the Netherlands' oldest art history library, the Cuyper Library, and even witnessed a meeting with the President of France and the Dutch King! While strolling in Leiden, we read some of the 100 poems painted on buildings throughout the city. I also traveled to Lisbon in Portugal and became close friends with a nomadic student who showed me around the city center and the Lisbon Cathedral. She introduced me to the most delicious orange juice and helped me find the best spots to write and relax.

By taking a few courses abroad, I have developed a broader sense of perspective about my forthcoming English degree—all from a Spanish-speaking country!



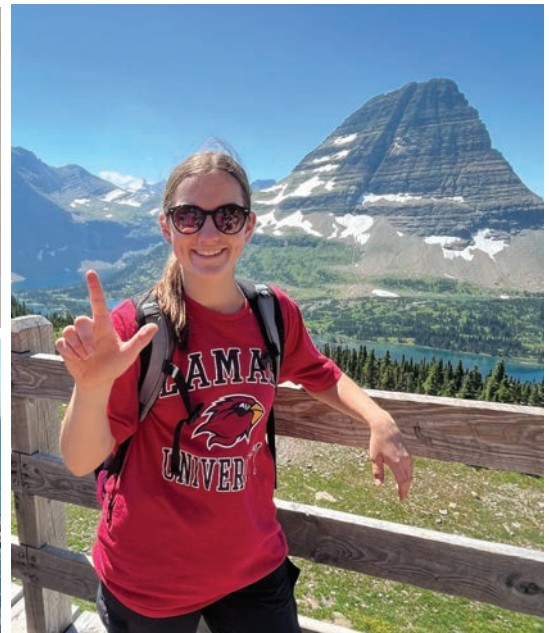
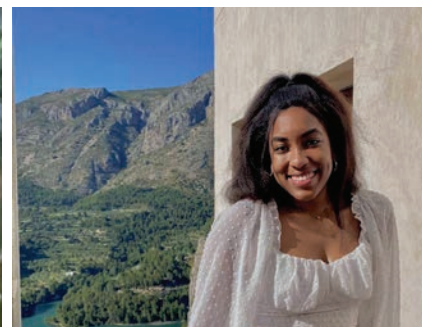
HONORS GLOBAL ENRICHMENT

(Opposite page, from left, top row): Madison Taylor, Lily Yoder, Kaylee Goodspeed and Annabelle Broussard hiked Oregon's Crater Lake National Park; Vishal Mundodi and Britney Brevell joined Dr. Matt Hoch's class to study Biology in Belize. (Second row): Jacob Murphy learned about Spanish architecture while also studying finance, management, marketing and tourism during

his winter tour of Alicante, Spain; Sheridan Kees explored Alaska's Sitka National Historical Park (joined by honors peer Jacob Murphy); Shelby Fryer co-authored an analysis of Alicante and Beaumont tourism after her summer trip to Alicante, Spain. (Third row): Displaying LU pride in Alicante, Spain; Gabriela Hernandez studied geriatric syndromes in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

(Bottom row): Chloe Smith and Amber Martinez studied business in Alicante, Spain; Taliah Belcher conducted undergraduate research in Sweden, Germany and Spain; Emily Alvarez explored her marketing major in Alicante, Spain; Britney Brevell toured the wonders of Montana's Glacier National Park.

PHOTOS COURTESY STUDENTS CITED IN PHOTO



Imagine. Innovate. Impact. Inspire.

CHANGEMAKERS

“I found mentoring teams to be an incredibly fulfilling and enriching experience. It was a joy getting to know each team personally, and my primary aim was to serve as their enthusiastic cheerleader.”

—Kristeen Reynolds

(Class of 2016) Cofounder of DrinKicks and LU Business Community Mentor



THANH NGUYEN, KRISTEEN REYNOLDS, TIEN NGUYEN
PHOTO BY JACOB BREAU (CLASS OF 2023)

Are you crypto-curious?

Crypto currency, blockchain and NFT—three buzz words that dominate the tech industry—were among the topics discussed in February at Lamar University’s first-ever tech conference, Block Party 2023: Decentralize the World.

Thanh Nguyen (Class of 2022), an engineer with Dow Chemical Company, said the idea for the tech conference came about after the student organization he founded with his brother and fellow Honors Cardinal **Tien** recognized a need to amplify the Southeast Texas region’s tech side. Their Blockchain Student Society earned the 2022 New Student Organization of the Year Award.

“We wanted to keep up the momentum of our student organization and we understand that Lamar University is one of the strongest engineering and business universities, but our technology side could use a bit of a boost,” said Tien, a Computer Science senior. “We wanted to bring technology down here to Southeast Texas, particularly to those who would normally have to travel to Houston or Dallas to gain insight on the industry.”

Industry leaders and their topics featured at the conference included: Mahesh Sashital, Lucrisma Cofounder/President, Blockchain101; William Fox, Data Gumbo Chief Product Officer, Web3forBusiness. Karen Scarbrough, Microsoft Senior Technical Program Manager, and Rebecca Hofmann, Blockchain for Energy President/CEO, also discussed the future possibilities of blockchain technology in a fireside chat. Guests included **Kristeen Reynolds** (Class of 2016), cofounder of DrinKicks.

Prior to the conference, the student entrepreneurs won First Place at LU’s Cardinal Ideas Pitch Competition. The Nguyen brothers, along with associate Cody Tran, wowed a panel of business and investment leaders with their idea for a startup company. Launched in April 2023, BSS Pro sets out to be the world’s first decentralized blockchain-powered online education platform with a mission of standardizing crypto/blockchain education.

BSS Pro



*Our Changemakers feature offers an assortment of Reaud Honors students to share an overview of how they imagine, innovate, impact and inspire our campus community each year. This is not a comprehensive list. Our students contribute in many meaningful ways, and our college is proud of each and every one of our Honors Cardinals.

SGA LEADERS

The Lamar student body elected the following Reaud Honors students to be their voice in Student Government Association in 2023-2024:

Toni Lopez Maldonado, Vice President;
Daisy Calero Estrella, Junior Class Senator;
Ashton Burch, Justice; **Rima Shaaban**, Justice; and **Shelby Graham**, Justice. Honors Student Association members elected **Megan Do** as Reaud Honors College Senator and **Kathy Nguyen** as HSA Representative.

LU AMBASSADORS

Reaud Honors students joining LU Ambassadors team in 2023-24: **Cristian Arevalo**, **Estrella Balderas**, **Sara Barboza**, **Ashton Burch**, **Kristin Hebert**, **Peyton McLaurin**, **Sergio Mendez**, **Kevwe Onakpoya**, **Drake Rothenberger**, **Clara Schreck**, **Rima Shaaban**, **Hannah Thrash**, **Dennis Tran** and **Mary Wernig**.



Leadership

Katherine Correa, **Biology Pre-Optometry & Studio Art Drawing Senior** • Digital media artwork “The Moon and Back” was on exhibit in Summer 2022 at the Miyazaki Prefectural Art Museum this July in Miyazaki City, Japan. She also explored 3-D replication to re-create Olympian Babe Zaharias medals and biologically-accurate character design for a vaccine comic.

Angelic Bautista, **Nursing Junior** • As the Sophomore Class SGA Senator, worked with Mr. Bryce Sinclair, director of Brooks-Shivers Dining Hall, to form a new student-centered Dining Hall Committee.

Grace Richard, **Exercise Science Junior** • As a midfielder/defender student-athlete, competed with LU Women’s Soccer Team to win the 2022 Southland Conference Championship last Fall.

Grafton Conger, **Mechanical Engineering Senior** • Served SETX community as Founder/President of Engineers Without Borders by assisting in the design and construction of a walkway for the Shorkey Center and determining repair options as a fixed equipment intern at ExxonMobil.

David Matherne, **Biology Pre-Med Junior** • Presented SURF research on Interplanetary Magnetic Clouds, which can trigger geomagnetic storms that are harmful for GPS satellites as well as for power grids on Earth, as part of the Texas Undergraduate Research Day at the Capitol in Austin.



2023-2024 HSA OFFICERS

Honors peers elected **Daisy Calero Estrella**, **Rima Shaaban** and **Estrella Balderas** to lead the Honors Student Association as President, Vice President, and Secretary/Treasurer; **Dylan Pardo** and **Luke Sodolak**, Intramural Sports; **Brenna Swanton** and **Stephanie Barron**, Peer Mentoring; and **Megan Do** and **Kathy Nguyen** to lead Student Government Association as RHC Senator and HSA Representative, respectively.



ALUMNA (CLASS OF 2002) & DIRECTOR OF ALUMNI AFFAIRS SHANNON (COPELAND) FIGUEROA WITH LU PRESIDENT JAIME TAYLOR

REAUD HONORS LU AMBASSADORS President’s Picnic, Spring 2023

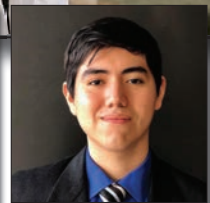
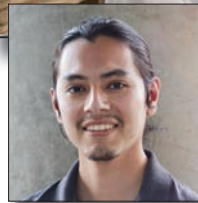
(Front Row) **Mary Wernig**, **Sergio Mendez**, **Rima Shaaban**, **Estrella Balderas**, **Tomisin Egbewale**, **Annabelle Broussard**, **Kaylee Goodspeed**, **Stephanie Barron**, **Kelvin Elgar**, **Isaac Moreno**, along with Texas Academy scholar **Alli Gross**.

(Second Row): **Clara Schreck**, **Sara Barboza**, **Julia Barrett**, **Ashton Burch**, **Sindi Castillo**, **Stefany Rico**, **Shelbie Williams**, **Madison Taylor**, **Britney Brevell**, **Waverlee Cooper**, **Hannah Thrash**.

(Back Row): **Dennis Tran**, **Cristian Arevalo**, **Kristin Hebert**, **Kevwe Onakpoya**, **Drake Rothenberger**, **Ryan Shugart**, **Jacob Murphy**, **Conner Montgomery**, **Kalan Bonnette**, **Peyton McLaurin**, **Zaid Mohammed**.

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CHANGEMAKERS



ALUMNI PRESENTERS: ALEXIS LOCKE & DAVID QUISPE (CLASS OF 2019) AND DANIEL QUISPE (CLASS OF 2021)

Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity

Reaud Honors students presented their findings at the following conferences during 2022-2023: *O.U.R. Texas STEM Conference 2022*: Landen Barrow, David Matherne, Zaid Mohammed, Tyler Stuck and Lily Yoder. *HASBSEB Conference 2022*: Emily Alvarez, Taliah Belcher, Sergio Mendez and Chloe Smith. *McNair Scholars Research Symposium 2022*: Taliah Belcher, Meikayla Mixon and Jennyfer Zarate. *O.U.R. Expo 2023*: Caitlyn Barlow, Halli Blank, Noah Bonnette, Jacob Breau, Sindi Castillo, Alaina Collins, Grafton Conger, Alexa Heng, Arizbeth Lopez Garcia, Amber Maredia, Aaron Martinez, Joshua Miguel Mallari, Katie Page, Casey Shontz, Catherine Twing, Nicholas Wade, Lexus Wilkerson, Shelby Williams and Lily Yoder.

Award-Winning Research



"Best SURF STEM Project," Texas STEM 2022, given to Psychology graduate **Lily Yoder** (left) for project: "The Effects of Positive Mood and Stereotype Threat on Memory Recall."

"First Place: Best Poster Presentation for Undergraduate Research," Texas STEM 2022, given to Biology Pre-Med junior **David Matherne** for project: "Interplanetary Magnetic Cloud of April 17, 1999."

"Best Talk at Undergraduate Level for non-OUR-Sponsored Research," Texas STEM 2022, given to Biology Pre-Med junior **Zaid Mohammed** for project: "Role of Autophagy Receptors in Cancer."

"Best Presidential Fellows Presentation," HASBSEB 2022, given to Finance and Accounting graduate **Taliah Belcher** for project: "Impact of Militarization on Growth of Countries."

"Best Presentation in Study Abroad Contest," HASBSEB 2022, given to Advertising Communications graduate **Emily Alvarez** for project: "Study Abroad at the University of Alicante, Spain."

"Dr. Mary Scheer Prize," from Center for History and Culture of Southeast Texas and the Upper Gulf Coast, HASBSEB 2022, given to Biology Pre-Med freshman **Sergio Mendez** for project: "The Inspiration to Fight Food Insecurity."

"First Place: Best O.U.R. Research Project in STEM," and "Second Place: Best O.U.R. Poster Presentation in STEM," EXPO 2023, given to Biology Pre-Med graduate **Amber Maredia** (right) for O.U.R. Grant research: "Effect of DMP Plasticizer on the Cell Migration of HaCaT and NIH-3T3 Cell Lines."



"First Place: Best STEM Presentation—In-progress and Advanced," EXPO 2023, given to Biology Pre-Med senior **Arizbeth Lopez Garcia** and graduate **Sindi Castillo**, for project: "Neuroprotective Effect of CBD on β -Amyloid Toxicity."

"Second Place: Best O.U.R. Presentation in STEM," EXPO 2023, given to Psychology graduate **Lily Yoder**, for project: "The Effects of Fatigue and Self-Esteem on Suggestibility."

"Third Place: Best HASBSEB Presentation—In-progress and Advanced," and "First Place: Lavender Award (Tie)," EXPO 2023, given to Computer Science freshman **Alexa Heng**, for project: "Understanding Victims of Sexual Assault: Deconstructing Emotional Manipulation Tactics Perpetrated Against Asian American Women."

"Third Place: Best STEM Presentation—In-progress and Advanced," EXPO 2023, given to Mechanical Engineering senior **Grafton Conger** and graduate **Katie Page**, for project: "Stirling Engine Kart Frame Analysis."

"First Place: Lavender Award (Tie)," from LGBTQ+ Initiatives Committee, EXPO 2023, given to Political Science junior **Halli Blank**, for project: "The Supreme Law of the Land Versus Public Opinion: A Scholarly Analysis of the Effects of Dobbs v. Jackson on the Future of Obergefell v. Hodges."

"With the support of Lamar University and Mr. Beck, I learned valuable skills and techniques such as CRISPR and SILAC."

—Zaid Mohammed, Beck Fellow



BECK FELLOW

Zaid Mohammed, Biology Pre-Med Junior

After taking the Reaud Honors College Stem Cell Research Seminar taught by Dr. Ian Lian, Zaid Mohammed began working in Dr. Lian's cell biology laboratory, which utilized stem cells in growing cancer culture.

As a David J. Beck Fellow, mentored by Dr. Lian, Mohammed researched renal clear cell carcinoma, a type of kidney cancer. He used a neural network, or AI, to test if the protein suggested by the AI is present in the patient sample. He also researched the protein APP and its relation to Alzheimer's disease. He used CRISPR to test the effects on the physiology of the cell every time we shift one base pair in the genome.

One highlight of his fellowship was learning the CRISPR protocol, as it is a very new technology awarded the Nobel Prize in 2020 and can be used for examining a variety of diseases.

Awards & Recognitions

PHI KAPPA PHI FELLOW

Amber Martinez, Accounting Senior:

Passionate about empowering others to become financially literate, Martinez received the fellowship from Phi Kappa Phi endowed by founding Reaud Honors College Dean Dr. Kevin Dodson. Her accounting journey includes: studying international business in Alicante, Spain, and researching, as a McNair Scholar, how rural residents of Spain perceive dimensions of sustainable tourism development.



OUTSTANDING SENIOR WOMAN

Chloe Smith, Speech and Hearing Sciences Graduate:

Smith represented her honors community and Lamar University in numerous leadership roles, including Peer Health Educator and President of the Student Advisory Council for the College of Fine Arts and Communication. In recognition of her exceptional undergraduate journey, Smith received the Bess Gentry Award for Outstanding Senior Woman, accompanied by \$1,000, from the Division of Student Engagement. Smith aspires to become a Speech-Language Pathologist.



OUTSTANDING SENIOR MAN

Luis Arevalo, Chemical Engineering Senior:

Arevalo represented his honors community and Lamar University in numerous leadership roles, including Founder/President of Lamar University Hispanic Society, SGA HSA Representative and LU Ambassador. In recognition of his exceptional undergraduate journey, Arevalo received the C. Robert Kemble Award for Outstanding Senior Man, accompanied by \$1,000, from the Division of Student Engagement.



ANN SHAW LEADERSHIP AWARD

Jacob Murphy, Management Graduate:

Earning a \$1,000 award for fostering a spirit of teamwork and excelling in leadership, Murphy served his Cardinal Community as Drum Major and Section Leader for Showcase of Southeast Texas, was named Outstanding Senior of 2023 by his marching band peers and served numerous student organization leadership roles, including President of Moot Court Association. Murphy aspires to become a lawyer in intellectual property law.



SENIORS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Reaud Honors students recognized as 2023 Seniors of Significance:

- Luis Arevalo, Britney Brevell, Sindi Castillo, Kaylee Goodspeed, Avery McLain, Jacob Murphy, Hannah Norwood, Christine Osborne, Chloe Smith, Madison Taylor, Jennifer Tsan, Shelby Williams and Lily Yoder.



Nation's Top 100 Speakers/
National Forensic Association

Matthew Sherwin,
Political Science sophomore;
Drake Rothenberger,
Accounting freshman



Spirit of Caring and Vision
of Excellence Award/
JoAnne Gay Dishman
School of Nursing
Madison Taylor,
Nursing senior

LOOKING AHEAD

Reaud Honors students conducting undergraduate research this summer who will present their findings in 2023-2024.

O.U.R. SURF FELLOWS: Kaitlyn Cherry, Kristin Hebert, Alexa Heng, Victoria Nguyen, Tyler Stuck and Madison Taylor. Fellows participate in 10 weeks of summer research and receive a \$2,000 stipend, \$1,000 in research support, and \$500 in travel support.

RONALD E. MCNAIR SCHOLARS: Katherine Correa, Amber Martinez, Ryan Shugart and Jennyfer Zarate. Scholars participate in six weeks of summer research and receive a stipend of up to \$2,800.

2023-24 LURA

Reaud Honors student leaders in O.U.R.'s Lamar University Undergraduate Research Assn.:

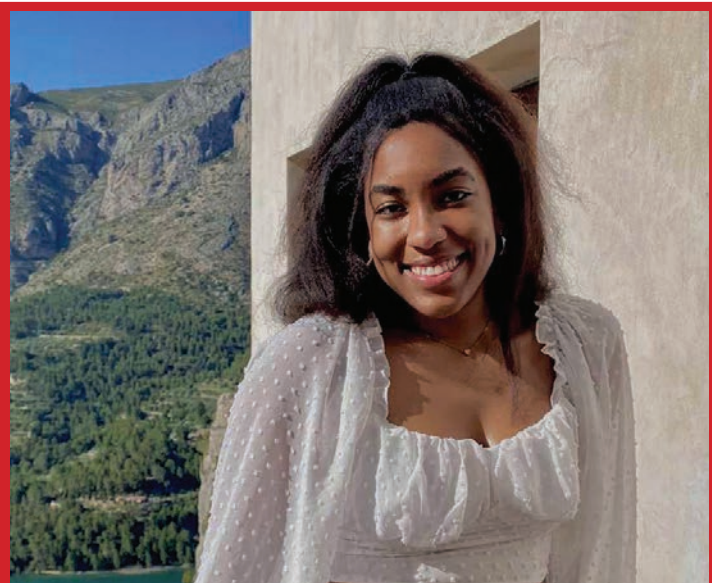
- Tyler Stuck, President
- Adeline Tran, Vice President
- Rima Shaaban, Treasurer
- Sergio Mendez, Secretary
- Jacob Thompson, Event Coordinator.



Pi Sigma Alpha National Political Science Honor Society Conference
Research: "The Abolishment of the Death Penalty in the International System"
Maissa Salibi (Class of 2022)

Research: "The Impact of Child Witnesses in Court: The Pros and Cons of Witnessing and Child Competency in Court"
Shelbie Williams, Political Science junior





Presidential Fellow

Taliah Belcher (Business Administration in Finance and Accounting Graduate) spent Summer 2022 studying abroad and conducting research around the globe—in Alicante, Spain, Bonn Germany, and Stockholm, Sweden.

While exploring the impact of militarization on the financial and economic growth of highly militarized countries, she tested multiple hypotheses by obtaining data from the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, and the United Nations.

Building on her research as a Presidential Fellow, Belcher deepened her analysis of highly militarized countries by focusing on developing countries—as an O.U.R. Grantee—and developed countries—as a McNair Scholar.

She presented her incredible research journey at the inaugural Honors Scholars Day last fall.

Belcher is pursuing an MBA in Business Studies at the University of North Texas.

STEPPING UP CIVIC LEADERS

Reaud Honors students who served as ex-officio members on the boards of local nonprofits through our service leadership initiative:

Beaumont Children's Museum:

Ella Oyakawa (American Sign Language senior)

Some Other Place:

Megan Tan (Nursing junior)

Shorkey Center:

Christine Osborne (Marketing & English graduate)

Beaumont Farmers Market:

Lexus Wilkerson (Accounting junior)

Stable Spirit:

Kelvin Elgar (Chemical Engineering senior, shown below)



Research in Puerto Rico

As a McNair Scholar, **Jennyfer Zarate** (Biology Pre-Med junior) researched gut microbiota and Hashimoto's Thyroiditis, an autoimmune condition that attacks the thyroid gland, through a systemic review and meta-analysis, under mentor **Dr. Ashwini Kucknoor**.

Zarate presented her research at our college's inaugural Honors Scholars Day before traveling to San Juan, Puerto Rico, to present it at the SACNAS National Diversity in STEM Conference. She also founded the LU chapter of SACNAS-Society for the Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science. At Honors Scholars Day in Fall 2023, she and other Reaud Honors officers plan to share how SACNAS promotes diversity in STEM fields.

HONORS PROFESSOR OF THE YEAR



Dr. Bogdana Bahrim earned special student recognition as Honors Professor of the Year by Reaud Honors College students.

Dr. Bahrim received her Ph.D. in Physics in 1996 from the University of Paris XI in Orsay, France, followed by postdoctoral research at Kansas State University. She joined Lamar University in 2001 and has been teaching the Honors Calculus-based Physics I since 2003.

Physics is one of the oldest academic disciplines, and the most fundamental. In Dr. Bahrim's class, students not only learn Physics, but also how to succeed in Physics. In a setting where the student-teacher interaction is very close and questions are welcomed at any time, students develop a passion for research and discovery. In Spring 2023, Dr. Bahrim taught an Honors Seminar about the beauty of Surface Science.

Dr. Bahrim's research focuses on Atomic and Surface Science.

She is published in prestigious international journals, such as *Physical Review* and *Surface Science*, and mentors both undergraduate and graduate students. Her research has been successfully funded by various sources, including the National Science Foundation, the O.U.R. Program and the Dean of College of Arts and Sciences at Lamar University.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

All year long, our Reaud Honors students shared their experiences with community members in a variety of ways: with honors students from all over the nation at the National Collegiate Honors Council Conference in Dallas; as alum visiting their former high schools; and as advocacy leaders at the TexMUN Conference in Austin and at LU's first Advocacy Banquet.

(From top) **Sheridan Kees** (Accounting graduate) with some of her Partners in the Parks in Alaska crew at NCHC; Stepping Up Civic Leaders at NCHC: **Lexus Wilkerson** (Accounting junior), **Tomisin Egbewale** (Computer Science sophomore), **Emily Alvarez** (Advertising Communications graduate); Home for the Holidays Ambassadors **Alexa Heng** (Computer Science freshman), **Drake Rothenberger** (Accounting freshman), **Sergio Mendez** (Biology Pre-Med freshman) with Ms. Diane Johnson at Nederland High School; and TexMUN team at LU's first Advocacy Banquet: **Shelbie Williams** (Political Science junior), **Tomisin Egbewale** (Computer Science sophomore), **Patricia Castañon** (Nursing junior), **Estrella Balderas** (Biochemistry Pre-Dental junior), **Daisy Calero Estrella** (Nursing sophomore), **Shelby Graham** (English junior), **Kevwe Onakpoya** (Chemical Engineering sophomore).

Turn to article
on p. 19

2023 STUDENT ORG OF THE YEAR

HELPING HANDS

Contributed to several SETX community projects, including *Sleep in Heavenly Peace* and *Fall Into Action*. Reaud Honors student officers: Secretary **Morgan Luke** (shown) and SGA Representative **Aleena Huda**.



Imagine. Innovate. Impact. Inspire.

CHANGEMAKERS

Alumni News

Reaud Honors College Alumni Advisory Council

Chair: Alisa Hicklin-Fryar 2002; Jenny Achilles 2003; Bethany Aiena 2011; Lindsey Cauthen 2007; Danny Chand 2002; Stephanie Cryer 2005; Josh Daspit 2004; Joshua Davis 2011; Christine Felix 2011; Daniel Grooms 2002; Valerie Juarez 2011; Carolina Ramirez Cardenas 2010; Kristeen Reynolds 2016; Kayleigh Romero 2013; Brittany Ross 2011; Wesley Smith 2011; and Brandan Still 2006.

Jenny Achilles, 2003: Graduated from Leadership Austin Essential Class 43.

Eric Beier, 2004: Promoted to Integration Manager of Air Force Research Laboratory at Fort Sam Houston.

Elizabeth Holmes, 2004: Hired as Legislative Consultant at Texas Association of Counties.

Beth Yelverton, 2004: Promoted to Director of Honors Student Success and Partnerships, Honors Programs, at Texas Woman's University.

Jennifer Albrecht, 2006: Shared mentorship at ExxonMobil, where she works as a chemical engineer, in *Cardinal Cadence* (Summer 2023).

Aaron Bonvillion, 2009: Hired as real estate agent for the Loken Group-Keller Williams Platinum in Houston.

Josmery Ramirez, 2009: Starred in the film *The First Step* by Studio 220 Films.

Rajiv Jaini, 2010: Promoted to Data & Analytics Strategy Leader at USAA in Houston.

Bethany Aiena, 2011: Promoted to Associate Director of the Behavioral Health Program/CBOC PCMH Psychotherapy Supervisor at the Michael E. DeBakey Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Houston.

Carly Broussard, 2011: Hired as Director of Kids Ministry at Commonground Church in Bridge City.

Cameron Campbell, 2011: Hired as Mechanical Engineer at Garver based in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Joshua Davis, 2011: Promoted to Vice President of Development-East Region at Legacy Community Health.

Maricela Guerrero, 2011: Hired as Project Manager at Natgasoline.

Rebekah Maxwell, 2011: Named Rotary Club of Beaumont President for 2023-2024; named officer of the Board of Directors for the Greater Beaumont Chamber of Commerce.

Brittnee Barnes, 2012: Awarded State Farm's Chairman's Circle Agency.

Madison Morrison, 2012: Hired as Staff Attorney at Court of Appeals for the First District of Texas.

Rachel Binagia, 2013: Hired as Senior Designer at Happy Cabbage Analytics in Denver, Colorado.

Elisabeth Maxwell, 2013: Hired as Dive Officer at Moody Gardens in Galveston.

Candice Montgomery, 2013: Promoted to Senior Manager-Commercial at Freeport LNG in Houston.

Vivian Caloobanan, 2015: Hired as Academic Advisor at Lamar University.

Jacqueline Benavides, 2016: Hired as Pipeline Distribution Coordinator at Targa Resources in Houston.

Jason Hatton, 2016: Promoted to Product Manager at Simpli.Fi in Fort Worth.

Tory Hoecker, 2016: Inducted into Lamar University's Circle of Omicron Delta Kappa National Leadership Honor Society.

Dalton Holly, 2016: Promoted to Business Manager at Melissa ISD.

Megan Huddleston, 2016: Hired as Chief Financial Officer at G&G Enterprises.

Kristeen Reynolds, 2016: Awarded "Heavy Hitter" award for 2022 from the Young Emerging Leaders of Port Arthur; recognized among "40 Under 40" by Southeast Texas Young Professionals Organization.

Caitlin Talbert, 2016: Hired as Marketing Associate at Driven based in Carrboro, North Carolina.

Kara Timberlake, 2016: Hired as Marketing Writer at Rice University.

Will Pickard, 2014: Contributed to honors community in an Alum Chat at a meeting for American Medical Student Association (AMSA); also hosted Pre-Med Table at Dinner & Conversation alumni event; currently a family medicine physician with Christus Trinity Clinic. He and wife **Erin Binagia (2010)** reside in Port Arthur.



DID YOU KNOW?

Alisa Hicklin-Fryar, 2002: Served as Lamar University's official mascot Big Red, from 1998-2002!

BIG RED PHOTO COURTESY LAMAR UNIVERSITY; ALL ALUMNI PHOTOS COURTESY THOSE FEATURED

Kennedy Mitchell, 2017: Promoted to Licensed Professional Counselor Associate at Spindletop Center.

Macy Morehead, 2017: Graduated with M.S. in Nursing from the University of Texas-Arlington.

Thomas Plew, 2017: Promoted to Police Corporal at University of Houston-Clear Lake.

Dani Sanders, 2017: Contributed to honors community in a Pre-Law Alum Chat about corporate law and mental health; currently a corporate associate attorney at Wilson Elser in Houston.

Progga Chirontoni, 2018: Hired as Engineer at Carollo Engineers in Austin; coauthored "The Last Drop" article, a young professionals' take on the future of water, in *American Water Works Association Journal*.

Trent McGee, 2018: Hired as Percussion Director at Greenville ISD.

Ryan Sherer, 2018: Named a First Term Director for the Jefferson County Young Lawyers Association.

Madison Demel, 2019: Promoted to Education Director at Mathnasium in Apex, North Carolina.

Sakurah Fisher, 2019: Hired as Youth and Families Development Promoter for the Peace Corps in Ecuador.

Victoria LaFleur, 2019: Hired as Corporate Counsel at Group 1001 in Prosper.

Alexus Locke, 2019: Contributed to honors community in an O.U.R. Alum Chat at the 2022 Texas STEM Conference and presented research, "Unraveling the Role of Tumor Extracellular Vesicles in Angiogenesis to Inform the Design of Biomimetic Electronic Devices;" currently a Clinical Research Coordinator for Pediatric Emergency Medicine at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta.

Madison Marino, 2019: Hired as Research Associate and Project Coordinator at the Heritage Foundation in Washington, DC.

David Quispe, 2019: Contributed to honors community in an O.U.R. Alum Chat at the 2022 Texas STEM Conference and presented research, "Solar Cells Efficiency with Perovskite Materials;" pursuing Ph.D. in Materials Science and Engineering at Arizona State University.

Natalie Sfeir, 2019: Named as member of Methodist Healthcare System's Healthcare Equity Index Committee.

Thanh Tsan, 2019: Hired as Senior Maintenance Engineer at Dow; switched to the chemicals industry after three years as a mechanical engineer with Valero.

Emmalee Calvert, 2020: Hired as Clinical Dietitian at St. Luke's Health System in Twin Falls, Idaho.

Edward Doan, 2020: Hired as Project Engineer at Stryker in Leesburg, Virginia.

Jack Dolce, 2020: Presented myopia treatment research examining how multifocal contact lenses affect visual performance; studying optometry at University of Houston.

Govin Kaggal, 2020: Graduated with J.D. from the University of Alabama.

Nguyen Nguyen, 2020: Hired as Graduate Teaching Assistant in Mechanical Engineering department at Texas A&M.

Kayla Painter, 2020: Graduated with Master's in Christian Ministry from Deaf Theological Center in Nashville.

Raegan Minaldi, 2020: Contributed to honors community in a Pre-Law Alum Chat; graduated with J.D. from Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center.



Daniel Grooms · 1st
Technology Leader at Celanese

Congratulations, Arturo! Best wishes in your career! Feel free to connect in the future if you'd like to have a conversation about career development. For now, enjoy your achievement!

HONORS CARDINALS HELPING HONORS

Daniel Grooms, 2002 (above): Served as a mentor to Reaud Honors Chemical Engineering Graduate **Arturo Gonzalez, 2023** (right), through our college's AMP-Alumni Mentor Program.

Interested in mentoring an honors student? Scan the QR code to connect with us!



Marcus Rodgers, 2020: Shared journey to NASA as a mentee of LU alumnus C.L. Ross in *Cardinal Cadence* (Summer 2023).

Makenzie Sattler, 2020: Awarded 2022 Southeast Texas Cattle Baron's Ball Shining Star Award.

Melissa Torres, 2020: Hired as Newborn Hearing Screening Technician at Pediatrix Medical Group in Chicago.

Tyler Martin, 2021: Hired as Process Engineering Technician at Universal Matter in Houston.

Daniel Quispe, 2021: Contributed to honors community in an O.U.R. Alum Chat at the 2022 Texas STEM Conference and presented research, "Magnetic Smart Materials" and presented poster, "A Concept for Deployable Normal Incidence UV Mirror Based on Shape Memory Alloy Sheet;" currently a Ph.D. candidate at Northwestern University.

Cody Sasser, 2021: Hired as Process Engineer at Motiva.

Alexis Sturrock, 2021: Hired as Executive Director of Inspire, Encourage, Achieve (IEA); graduated with Master of Social Work from University of Houston.

Liseth Aguilar, 2022: Hired as Turnaround Engineer at TotalEnergies.

César Delgado, 2022: Hired as CBT Proctor at Industrial Safety Training Council.

Victoria Freeze, 2022: Hired as Substitute Deaf Education Teacher at Goose Creek ISD.

Wesley Lewis, 2022: Hired as Plant Process Engineer at Arkema in West Chester, Pennsylvania.

Nicholas Mugleston, 2022: Hired as Android Developer at Cognizant in Plano.

Luke Nguyen, 2022: Hired as Polyethylene Process Engineer at INEOS in LaPorte.

Thanh Nguyen, 2022: Promoted to Utilities Production Engineer (Ethylene) at Dow.

Ayo Oni, 2022: Hired as iPhone Hardware Engineering Project Manager at Apple in Cupertino, California.

Cade Pellerin, 2022: Hired as Mechanical Engineer I at Hargrove Engineers & Constructors.

Tiffany Tran, 2022: Awarded \$25,000 as inaugural Chick-fil-A Community Scholar; also awarded \$5,000 as Omicron Delta Kappa Scholar; currently a dental student at UT Health School of Dentistry in Houston.

David Williams, 2022: Awarded \$5,000 as Omicron Delta Kappa Scholar.

Andrew Zinck, 2022: Graduated with MBA from Lamar University.



MEET OUR NEWEST ALUMNI

Scan QR Code. Click on "Photos" (mobile) or "Photos" and "Albums" (desktop). To read the biographies sharing our graduates' journeys, select **Fall 2022** and **Spring 2023** Reaud Honors College Graduates albums.



2022 – FALL GRADUATES



Emily Alvarez



Taliah Belcher



Jesse Carter



Morgan Dollar



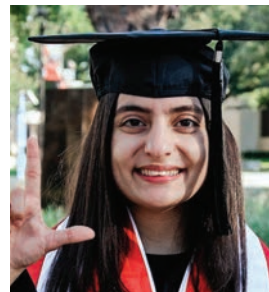
Julianne Haidusek



Elijah Humphrey



Meikayla Mixon



Maissa Salibi



Kadie Sloane



Carly Theriot

2023 – SPRING GRADUATES



Caitlyn Barlow



Jacob Breaux



Britney Brevell



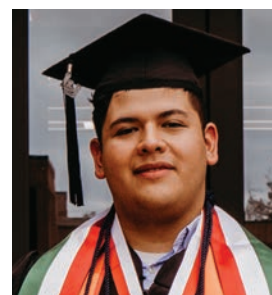
Sindi Castillo



Alaina Collins



Adrien Connor



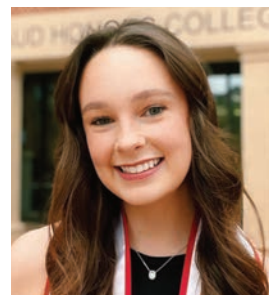
Arturo Gonzalez



Kaylee Goodspeed



Grace Harmond



Sheridan Kees



Amber Maredia



Morgan Martin



Joshua Miguel Mallari



Vishal Mundodi



Jacob Murphy



Hannah Norwood



Christine Osborne



Katie Page



Line Ydi Recinos



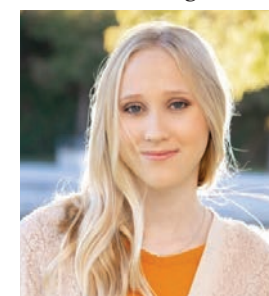
Jasmin Reyes



Stefany Rico



Darya Romashets



Chloe Smith



Jennifer Tsan



Catherine Twing



Nicholas Wade



Lily Yoder

Join our RHC Alumni Group on LinkedIn!





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.



Transformational Gift: Groundbreaking of the Reaud Honors College and Administration Building

Looking back to 2014, when Lamar University broke ground on the three-story administration building that houses the Reaud Honors College: (from left) President Emeritus James Simmons, TSUS Regent David Montagne, Jon Huntsman Sr., Wayne Reaud, Jon Reaud and President Emeritus Ken Evans. The transformational gift by Wayne Reaud (Class of 1971) and Jon Huntsman Sr. allowed the university to upgrade its honors program into an honors college.

COURTESY LAMAR UNIVERSITY

HELLO *from our Deans*



Reflecting back on the 2022-2023 year, the Reaud Honors College has taken a giant step forward in the direction of new and innovative academic programs, research, scholarship and community involvement at Lamar University.

We were proud to highlight our honors students' achievements at our inaugural Honors Scholars Day last fall. In addition to their works in student organizations and with on-campus partners, their achievements also included contributions to our honors programs: Partners in the Parks, Stepping Up Civic Leadership, Alumni Mentor Program ELP and Model United Nations.

Also, in partnership with the Texas Workforce Commission, Texas Academy, College of Engineering, and several other departments and industry partners, we held the Texas Governor's School: Innovation ColLABoration STEM summer camp for high school students across Southeast Texas. This fulfilled the grant's purpose of attracting highly qualified outstanding students to honors and LU.

In the past year, 160 honors students were actively engaged in honors programming! Further, the Honors Student Association is one of our most active and dynamic groups hosting recruitment events and bolstering community partnerships through their service.

Lastly, our team is growing. This summer, we hired an Associate Dean, Dr. Tony Kemerly, honors professor, Dr. Maria Vallejo, and Advisor and Success Coach Imelda Tristan. Everyone on our team is looking forward to benefiting from their many years of experience coordinating programs and developing curricular initiatives that enhance the student experience.

-Dr. Tilisa Thibodeaux, Ed.D.

Dean, Reaud Honors College & Texas Academy
Associate Professor, Department of Educational Leadership,
College of Education & Human Development

I am honored and humbled to have been selected as the Associate Dean of the Reaud Honors College. The Reaud Honors College has a tradition of excellence, and I hope to take my previous experience and build on that solid foundation.

I have come to Lamar University from High Point University, a private, liberal arts institution in High Point, North Carolina. I started there in 2001 and accumulated nearly 20 years of honors experience through a variety of means, from the creation of honors contracts for courses in the major, to the development of courses in the Aesthetics and Inquiry, Scholars Seminar and Life in the Liberal Arts sections of the honors general education core.

I greatly enjoy honors education because of my eclectic educational background: my bachelor's degree is in health promotion from McNeese State University; my master's degree is in sports performance from Louisiana Tech University; my Ph.D. is from the University of Mississippi in biomechanics with a second area in Health Behavior Change. Finally, I received another master's degree in communication studies focusing on semiotics and cultural studies from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. My education has led me to teach a wide variety of courses, from "Culture of Obesity" to "Who Am I? Locating the Self in the Whedonverse" to "Death: Looking Beyond the Veil." My research interests include the lived experience of bodies, and I have published work analyzing the treatment of bodies in popular culture from a variety of texts, including the television shows *Supernatural*, *Angel* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, the films *Cabin in the Woods* and *The Hunger Games*, and books by Stephen King.

I am excited to be a part of the Lamar University family. Please do send any ideas you may have—about things you wish we were doing or how we can make the Reaud Honors College the best in the nation.

-Dr. Tony Kemerly, Ph.D.

Associate Dean, Reaud Honors College





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LAMAR UNIVERSITY

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Honors Charter Class of 1963



In Fall 1963, twenty students became the first Honors Program scholars at Lamar State College of Technology, the precursor to Lamar University.

(First row, from left) Michael Brannan, Linda Cansler, Sharon Cobb, Betty Coerver, Thomas DeMary and Charles Young. *(Second row)* Ronald Gibbs and Jenelle Cross. *(Third row)* Mark Mehringer, Don Popken, Kathleen Johnson, Janyth Stewart, Caroline Goodrich and Dale Priest. *(Not shown)* Henry Barclay, Valentine Goodrich, Bill Kaminer, Walter Magee Jr., Sharon Newton and Janell Price.

We welcome our alumni to please join us, in Fall 2023, to commemorate the Reaud Honors College's 60th Anniversary and LU's Centennial.