

CADENZA

THE MAGAZINE OF THE REAUD HONORS COLLEGE AT LAMAR UNIVERSITY.
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Honors Cardinals



INSIDE THIS issue

- 3 **CAREER READY ON DAY ONE**
How HONORS ALUMNI AND FUTURE LEADERS SCHOLARS ARE TRANSFORMING CAREER READINESS THROUGH THE COLLEGE OF BUSINESS.
- 9 **KEEPING YOU GROUNDED**
AN ALUMNA FOCUS ON KRISTEEN REYNOLDS, AN ENTREPRENEUR WHO OFFERS SOLUTIONS TO PRESSING GLOBAL ISSUES.
- 11 **MATHEMATICAL MAGIC**
FACULTY PROFILE: DR. ROBERT VALLIN REVEALS HOW MATHEMATICS AND MAGIC COMBINE INTO THE PERFECT LESSON PLAN FOR HIS HONORS CLASSROOM.
- 13 **INAUGURAL CLASS OF REAUD FELLOWS**
INTRODUCING THE BRAND NEW REAUD LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE AND MINOR IN HONORS STUDIES.
- 17 **INNOVATION COLLABORATION**
INTRODUCING LOCAL YOUTH TO STEM THROUGH THE GOVERNOR'S SUMMER MERIT PROGRAM.
- 19 **THE HEALING POWER OF RESEARCH**
A CLOSE-KNIT HONORS RESEARCH TEAM FULFILLS ITS DREAM—EVEN AFTER GRADUATION FROM LU.
- 23 **A TALE OF UNDERDOGS**
WHAT COLLEGIATE LEADERSHIP LOOKS LIKE FOR HONORS FIRST-GENERATION LU AMBASSADORS.
- 27 **AMERICAN HISTORY IS FAIR GAME**
How DR. REBECCA BOONE CREATIVELY MOTIVATES STUDENTS TO CARE ABOUT HISTORY.
- 29 **THE SECRET TO FIXING THE WORLD**
DR. BETHANY AIENA SHARES HER TIP AT THE LATEST ALUMNI DINNER & CONVERSATION.
- 7 **SPOTLIGHT: TSUS HONORS LEADERS**
- 22 **HALLIBURTON ENGINEERING GLOBAL SCHOLAR**
- 31 **CHANGEMAKERS**
- 37 **ALUMNI NEWS**
- 39 **REAUD HONORS COLLEGE GRADUATES**
- 42 **HELLO FROM OUR DEAN**



COVER PHOTO:
Our inaugural Reaud Fellows from the Reaud Honors College's brand new Reaud Leadership Institute and Minor in Honors Studies.
COURTESY ALUMNI AFFAIRS

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By DANIELA CONTRERAS, REAUD HONORS COLLEGE STUDENT

Career Ready on Day One

How honors alumni and Future Leaders Scholars are transforming career readiness through the College of Business.



“Career ready on day one” is how Dr. Toni Mulvaney, professor of Business Law, describes the Future Leaders Scholars program.

Originating as a donation from College of Business alumnus Herman Wilson, this award provided free leadership training to scholars. It later became the Transformational Leaders Scholarship. Eventually, the training incorporated Franklin Covey’s leadership habits and career coaching.

Dr. Brad Mayer, professor of Management, and Dr. Mulvaney grew the program by teaching “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective College Students,” a rendition of Covey’s *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*.

By the 2023–2024 academic year, the program became the Future Leaders Scholars, made up of current College of Business student leaders who could teach lessons and offer advice to their peers. They served as mentors for LU’s Cardinal Communities, which helps first-year and transfer students adapt to college life.

One habit, Synergize, teaches a valuable interpersonal skill: “I value the strengths of other people and combine them with my own to solve problems.”

The College of Business has found a wonderful way to add Synergize to its program. Future Leaders Scholars are matched with mentors from the Young Professionals Board, a business organization of alumni who have graduated in the last 15 years. Through a series of monthly meetings, mentor

Honors Alum Give Back

Honors graduates are proud to contribute as College of Business community mentors. Those shown building camaraderie at an LU Green Squad recycling event include (opposite page, from left): Ryan Sherer (Class of 2018, fourth), Megan Huddleston (Class of 2016, seventh), and Kristeen Reynolds (Class of 2016, ninth).

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY COLLEGE OF BUSINESS



“We were thinking through topics like how to deal with conflict in the workplace...things that we want students to start thinking about at a young age....”

—Madison Marino (Class of 2019)

and mentee discuss topics tied to transitioning to the workforce.

“Their success validates what we’re learning at the university, and at the College of Business,” said Paul Howell, instructor of Management. “They’re coming back and saying, ‘Yes, this really works. These are real ideas and real tools that we can use in the business world and be successful at it.’”

A number of those members and mentors come from the common ground of the Honors Program and Reaud Honors College.

Ryan Sherer, associate attorney at Daws Law Firm, graduated with a Bachelor’s in Business Administration and Business Management in 2018.

He also earned a Doctor of Law, from Texas Tech University, in 2021. Sherer is proud of the board’s work in encouraging young professionals.

“We want people to look at Lamar and say, ‘Hey, this is someone who’s worth having; they came from Lamar,’ and I think that we’ve already got that,” Sherer said. “We really need to compound on that—get bigger, get better—and we’re doing a great job with it.”

During their inaugural year, Future Leaders Scholars participated in numerous community events, including helping local nonprofit Sleep in Heavenly Peace in April 2024. (From left)

Paul Howell, Future Leaders Scholar Daniela Contreras, Daniela’s mother, Toni Mulvaney, and Bryson Constance.





"I am discovering that there are so many tools. You can never finish learning, yet you can see yourself grow."

—Daniela Contreras



Accounting junior **Daniela Contreras** (far left) is among the honors undergraduates privileged to work closely with Dr. Toni Mulvaney (left) to develop the Future Leaders Scholars program.



Accounting senior **Amber Martinez** (back row, far left) served as a Peer Mentor in the Future Leaders Scholars program while she was working in Austin as an audit intern for RSM.

FUTURE LEADERS SCHOLARS PROGRAM LAUNCHED IN 2023-2024

My name is **Daniela Contreras**, and I am an accounting major in the College of Business. I was a first-year student when Dr. Toni Mulvaney and Dr. Brad Mayer implemented "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective College Students" as part of Cardinal Communities.

"Life skills are important," Dr. Mayer said. "I'm talking about interpersonal skills that employers find very helpful in succeeding."

After that Fall semester in 2022, I became a candidate for the Future Leaders Scholars program. I had to take a self-paced seminar on *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* in the Spring and pass the certification from Franklin Covey at the end of the semester. The certification program was paid for by the College of Business.

The online seminar included weekly or bi-weekly meetings with a staff mentor. "One of the habits of the main *7 Habits* is 'Put First Things First'—setting priorities. It really teaches having that mentor there to hold you accountable so that you have the right priorities," Dr. Mayer said. "The more scholars share the *7 Habits*, the more it'll build a culture in the College of Business of what it takes to live by the *7 Habits*."

Dr. Dale Fontenot became my staff mentor. I was surprised how much I could learn about myself professionally and personally while working with a mentor. This relationship gave me confidence and set me up to successfully become a leader at Lamar University.

I passed the certification that Spring and became part of the first group of Future Leaders Scholars, led by Dr. Ellen Zimmerman, Instructor of Human Resources. Scholars receive a \$10,000 scholarship each year, and

they all have a responsibility to give back to the school and community.

We met a couple times that Spring to brainstorm and outline the next steps as we built the program. It officially launched in the academic year of 2023-2024. Scholars served as peer mentors for Cardinal Communities at an introductory seminar in the Fall and an eight-week course of "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective College Students" in the Spring.

"It works much better when students have at least one semester under their belt," Dr. Mulvaney said.



Contact College of Business if you're interested in serving on the Young Professionals Board.

That Fall, Future Leaders Scholars either volunteered or worked with STAR Services and peer mentored Cardinal Communities. We had two mentors per section with a pro mentor per class. Volunteers were also encouraged to train with STAR Services. I felt empowered in the sense that I was trusted, and I believed in our network of students, peers, faculty, and staff.

In the Spring, we taught the *7 Habits* to our LU peers, with the aim of training our peers on soft skills and nurturing success. After passing the course and certification, those students were also invited to join as Future Leaders Scholars.

Since accounting internships are common in the Spring and Summer semesters, because

of business season and corporate tax extensions, the Future Leaders Scholars program added flexibility through virtual responsibilities for those student interns.

Amber Martinez (Class of 2023) is a Future Leaders Scholar pursuing her Master's in Accounting at Lamar University. She chose the internship route when she worked as an audit intern at RSM in Austin this past Spring. As a peer mentor, she had to make "sure the other scholars were not having any challenges with the classes, and that they were leading 'The 7 Habits of Highly Effective College Students,'" Martinez said. "Then also prepping for the Fall."

The scholarship also provides mentorship from the college's Young Professionals Board. "This semester we were able to support some of the students with career coaching," Dr. Zimmerman said. "Students were able to have very deep discussions about what to think about as they determine what job they want or even as they look for jobs or develop their resume."

My Young Professionals mentor Emily Carl is helping me market myself better. She nurtures trustworthiness by encouraging me to ask questions. I am discovering that there are so many tools. You can never finish learning, yet you can see yourself grow.

"We're still building the program so as the group progresses, we're establishing what you get in your second year, what you get in your third year, what you get when you're a senior," Dr. Mulvaney said. "Hopefully, the program has some transformational aspects to it so that this group of students becomes leaders by performing, by learning how to be a mentor, by getting a mentor, and by attending coaching sessions."



"I really value mentorship both professionally and personally.... I find myself learning every time I'm teaching someone else something."

—Kender Myers (Class of 2018)

Kristeen Reynolds is an entrepreneur and cofounder of DrinKicks, which creates sneakers manufactured from recycled materials. She graduated with a Bachelor's in Accounting in 2016 and Master's in Accounting in 2017.

When she counsels mentees on entering the workforce, she tells them, "It is the first time that doesn't have a time limit on it." Students no longer have a graduation date in mind; they now have the freedom to select careers based on personal choice and goals.

Kender (Myers) Prejean, a Senior Corporate Accountant at RNWBL, graduated with a Bachelor's in Accounting in 2018 and Master's in Accounting in 2020. She did not have a mentor as a resource during her college years at LU, which makes her passionate about mentorship today.

"I really value mentorship both professionally and personally. I think it's just really invaluable to teach someone something," Prejean said. "I find myself learning every time I'm teaching someone else something. I hope to improve my coaching skills, my mentorship skills, and just form connections that are going to hopefully last throughout my lifetime."

Madison (Marino) Doan is a Senior Research Associate in the Center for Education Policy at the Heritage Foundation in Washington, D.C. She graduated with a Bachelor's in Finance and Economics in 2019. She continued her studies at Pepperdine University School of Public Policy. (On a personal note, Madison is a newlywed who married

honors alumnus Edward Doan—Class of 2020—in January 2024.)

Madison began her mentorship journey after finding an informal mentor in her sorority sister through Alpha Delta Pi. Madison then helped the College of Business design its young professionals curriculum, serving on the Executive Committee of the board in the beginning stages.

"We really wanted to be as advantageous as possible. We were thinking through topics like how to deal with conflict in the workplace, or how to fix your resume, how to apply for jobs," Madison said. "All things that we want students to start thinking about at a young age, and for them to be good at when it comes time for them to go into their senior year, graduate, find a job, and find a career."



Ryan Sherer (Class of 2018, top left), associate attorney at Daws Law Firm, is proud of the board's work in encouraging young professionals. He enjoys helping Lamar University's College of Business graduating students find bigger and better opportunities in the workforce.

Megan Huddleston is Chief Financial Officer at G&G Enterprises. She graduated with a Bachelor's in Accounting in 2016 and an MBA in 2019. She found mentorship while working as a Student Assistant, including learning from Dr. Mulvaney.

"I was so positively impacted by the mentors who I had in college," Huddleston said. "I think that no matter how smart a student is or how competent they are, the reality is there's still things that you don't know, there's things that everybody doesn't know. And I think that learning experience is one of the most important things."

The Young Professionals Board aims to help students who are entering a new workforce expand their leadership skills. And while giving back to the university as mentors, board members also enhance their own leadership capabilities.

"There's a saying: what you teach, you become better at," Mr. Howell said. "And those who are receiving it, you're awaking them to their full potential to instead of 'maybe, I can,' to 'you know, I can do this.' That's the idea between a mentor and a mentee."



BY MEGHAN RAPP, *REAUD HONORS COLLEGE MARKETING COORDINATOR*

TSUS Honors Leaders:

The oldest honors program in the Texas State University System.

The Reaud Honors College holds the distinction of being the oldest Honors Program in the Texas State University System (TSUS). Twenty students registered for Fall 1963, the first-ever semester of the Honors Program. The honors community is proud to recognize our Reaud Honors students and alumni who contributed to TSUS as leaders and scholars.

In November 2023, Biology Pre-Med senior Zaid Mohammed was formally recognized as the recipient of the highly coveted TSUS Regents' Student Scholarship. He followed in the footsteps of Keeley Townley-Smith (Class of 2016), who was the first student in Lamar University's history to be named the Regents' Student Scholar, in 2015. Some other recent recipients include Accounting and Finance graduate Taliah Belcher (Class of

2022) and Biology Pre-Dental graduate Tiffany Tran (Class of 2022).

For the academic year of 2023-2024, Chemical Engineering senior Kelvin Elgar followed in the footsteps of Katey McCall (Class of 2021), as he voiced the LU student's perspective while serving his appointed role as student regent for the TSUS Board of Regents.

"What most surprised me was the depth of responsibility and the broad scope of issues," Elgar said. "While I anticipated being involved in university governance and decision-making, the sheer diversity of challenges, ranging from academic policies to budgetary considerations, was unexpected."

"It was a revelation to witness the interconnectedness of various elements within academia and the profound impact that decisions at the governance level could have on the student body

as a whole. This experience broadened my perspective and highlighted the significance of collaboration and proactive communication in addressing the multifaceted nature of higher education administration."

Always rigorous and challenging, the Honors College experience affords academically talented and highly motivated students the opportunity to develop their passion for academic excellence and exploration. We hope to see even more Honors Cardinals contributing as TSUS Regents' Student Scholars and Student Regents in the near future!



Juan Zabala, First Lady Stacy Taylor, Kaylee Goodspeed (Class of 2023), TSUS Student Regent Kelvin Elgar, and President Jaime Taylor with TSUS at the Spring 2024 Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo.

COURTESY JUAN ZABALA



Regent and Scholar

TSUS Student Regent



Governor Greg Abbott appointed Kelvin Elgar (above, first row, far right) the non-voting student regent for 2023-2024. The Texas State University System is governed by a nine-member Board of Regents appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate. Zaid Mohammed (below) earned the highly coveted TSUS Regents' Student Scholarship in November 2023.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY TSUS AND LAMAR UNIVERSITY

TSUS Regents' Student Scholar



ALUMNA: Katey McCall
(Class of 2021)

Governor Greg Abbott appointed McCall TSUS Student Regent for 2019-2020.



ALUMNA: Keeley Townley-Smith
(Class of 2016)

In 2015, Townley-Smith became the first LU student honored as TSUS Regents' Student Scholar.

By SIDNEY THOMAS, REAUD HONORS COLLEGE STUDENT

Alumna Focus | KRISTEEN REYNOLDS

Keeping You Grounded

Entrepreneur Kristeen Reynolds offers solutions to pressing global issues.

Kristeen Reynolds, a native of Port Arthur, Texas, demonstrated entrepreneurial awareness from a young age. By the age of seven, she was already pitching business ideas to her mother, Rebecca Jean. Playing the role of investor and mentor, her mother insisted on detailed business plans and a well-thought-out future before providing funding. This early experience laid a solid foundation for Reynolds' future ventures.

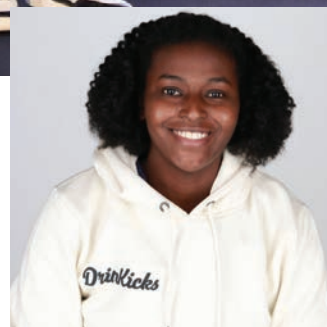
Reynolds' family history left a legacy of resilience and innovation that greatly influenced her. Her grandmother, Rosa Jean, was a trailblazer, becoming the first black social worker in Southeast Texas despite significant racial barriers. She later transitioned into real estate, helping her husband Sam become a successful realtor and developer.

Excelling academically, Reynolds graduated as valedictorian of Memorial High School in 2011. Following in her mother's footsteps, she pursued a career in accounting. She turned down a full ride to the University of Texas–Austin because she wanted to stay local to help her grandmother who had Alzheimer's. She planned on staying at Lamar University for only a year and then transferring, yet she found a great community at LU. As an LU Ambassador, she networked with politicians, donors,



Kristeen Reynolds (Class of 2016) is a CPA with entrepreneurial prowess. She and her company DrinKicks clinched the top spot at the 2024 Super Bowl as the NFL Players Association Pitch Bowl Winner. DrinKicks received \$25,000 in NFLPA marketing consultation, services, and NFL player activations.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY KRISTEEN REYNOLDS UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED; ABOVE PHOTO COURTESY NFL PLAYERS ASSOCIATION



and alumni. She also enjoyed volunteering as an honors student at nonprofits such as the SETX Food Bank across the street from campus. She graduated from LU with a Bachelor of Business Administration in 2016 and a Master of Science in Accounting in 2017, and she began her career as a CPA in the Houston area.

A couple years after graduation, Reynolds launched DrinKicks, a company focused on creating sneakers from recycled materials and food waste. DrinKicks' innovative approach uses materials such as rubber, bamboo, plastic, apples, and corn to produce eco-friendly sneakers.

Hurricane Harvey, the 2017 storm that ravaged her childhood home, helped push Reynolds to create DrinKicks. She wanted people to understand climate change was real, but also wanted to meet people where they were. Shoes are relatable—everyone wears and needs them. She said puns like “They keep you grounded” help her spread her message. DrinKicks' motto is “Mind, Body and Laces,” which stands for educating consumers about their consumption (mind), providing tips to create a healthy lifestyle (body), and tying the sustainability thread to our global economy (laces).

DrinKicks has garnered significant recognition, including being awarded the 2024 NFLPA Pitch Day winner at the Super Bowl in Las Vegas and earning a \$25,000 grant and a year lease from Greentown Labs, the largest climatetech accelerator in North America. The company's sneakers,



DrinKicks' commitment to sustainability is further highlighted by its educational initiatives, aiming to teach customers about recycling and reducing their carbon footprint.

soon to be available online and via an app, feature a chip that educates customers on the recycled materials used in their production.

For Reynolds, DrinKicks is not just a business; it's a platform to inspire her hometown community and beyond. Her passion has taken her all across the USA, from fellowships, most recently as a Halcyon Future Builder,

Puns like “They keep you grounded” help Reynolds spread her message.

to ringing the New York Stock Exchange bell as one of 40+ energy companies representing the Energy Workforce of the Future. This Fall, she'll represent USA as an Audi Environmental Foundation delegate at the 2024 One Young World Summit. She is the epitome of demonstrating that with determination and innovation, one can achieve significant goals.

Kristeen also has a sports-marketing business as well as a real-estate business that prints 3-D houses. Why 3-D houses? After



Reynolds also provides invaluable input as a member of the Reaud Honors College Alumni Advisory Council. She is shown here supporting Thanh and Tien Nguyen at LU's first-ever tech conference, in 2023, which the brothers organized.

By JACOB BREAU (CLASS OF 2023)

Hurricane Harvey destroyed her mother's home, she wanted to find a solution to flooding, Reynolds said. With 3-D homes, you would not have to rip out the walls or repair any serious damage; you would have a home to come back to. By the time she retires, Reynolds hopes she will have made an impact and difference in the world.

Reynolds exemplifies the spirit of modern entrepreneurship—blending innovation, sustainability, and education to create businesses that address pressing global issues. Her story is a powerful reminder of the importance of family legacy, education, and perseverance in achieving entrepreneurial success. Through DrinKicks, Reynolds is not only making her mark on the world, but also paving the way for future generations to follow in her sustainable footsteps.

BY AUSTIN KNOWLES, REAUD HONORS COLLEGE STUDENT

Faculty Profile | **DR. ROBERT VALLIN**

Mathematical Magic

Reaud Honors College students so enjoy Dr. Robert Vallin's math courses that one of his classes dressed up like Vallin to pay tribute to him on Halloween, while he dressed up as a Slytherin. His card trick mathemagician doppelgangers brought lots of joy to our campus!

PHOTO BY MEGHAN RAPP; ROBERT VALLIN HEADSHOT COURTESY ROBERT VALLIN



From an early age, Dr. Robert Vallin was proficient in math. However, he never fully understood what those with careers in math did. As a junior in college, he took his first “prove stuff” type of math course. Proofs changed him mentally, and he enjoyed the challenge posed from these types of questions. “I loved being good at something that everyone else is afraid of,” he said.

There was also, he admitted, a little ego involved in his newfound fondness of the subject. Vallin decided to pursue a teaching career due to the constant exposure to problems to which no one knows the solution.

After graduating from the University of Maryland, Vallin obtained his Master's and Doctoral degrees in Mathematics at North Carolina State University. He became a professor of mathematics at Slippery Rock University in Pennsylvania. At a conference in San Diego, he met his future wife, who lived in Texas. The two found positions at Lamar University, with 2024 marking Vallin's 10th year as Professor of Mathematics.

While here at Lamar, Dr. Vallin has accomplished great things academically. He has taught nearly every major math class, as well as the honors course “Mathematical Magic.” He has written nearly a paper per year while most math professors publish only around 10 papers in a lifetime. Vallin is also a published author. Moreover, he was awarded Honors Professor of the Year in 2020.

Vallin's book, *The Elements of Cantor Sets: With Applications*, spawned from a senior student's independent study. The Cantor set is created by taking the interval $[0,1]$, removing the middle third, removing the middle third of each of the two remaining pieces, and continuing this process infinitely. The fun with this topic comes with the fact that this set contains uncountably many points, though the set contains no

intervals of real numbers. This makes the set both “large” and “small,” providing a sense of contradiction. Vallin, along with the student, had discovered there was no single resource on Cantor sets. Following the study, Vallin had gathered enough information to write his book.

Another of Vallin's mathematical triumphs is his paper “On Preserving (R Euclidean) and Almost Periodic Functions.” The usual way to measure distance between points is on a number line and $|a-b|$, known as the Euclidean metric. Another way of measuring distance between points, the Trivial metric, is to say the distance between a point and itself is zero, while the distance between any distinct points is one. In the early days of studying these metrics, examples were created where large inputs

Fiddly little details in mathematical problems don't scare Vallin...nor his students.

did not mean large outputs. No matter how far you travel, you found y-values near zero. These examples involved trigonometric functions without the usual 2π period, thus they were deemed “almost periodic functions.” A question was posed: are all functions that preserve the Euclidean metric and get near zero all the time also almost periodic? Vallin's struggle came in finding a direction to go. He sometimes attempted to prove it true, while other times to show it false. In the end, Vallin found a counterexample.

Within the Reaud Honors College, Vallin always takes his courses to the next level by bringing in “real life” examples of problems. For instance, in his Calculus classes, he presented the link between math and SET, a game based on creating

“sets” from a pool of playing cards with differing shapes, numbers, shading, and color. The game helps students learn combinatorics (counting), linear algebra, and geometry.

Vallin's career may be teaching, yet he has a secondary pursuit: Magic! At a MathFest conference a decade ago, Vallin was given the choice between taking a mini course over ordinary differential equations or mathematical card magic. Vallin chose the latter.

This hobby soon turned into something much larger. Over the years, Vallin has taken on many leadership roles. He is on the board of directors for the Gathering 4 Gardner (G4G) Foundation, a nonprofit focused on stimulating curiosity and critical thinking in recreational math, magic, science, literature, and puzzles to preserve the legacy of polymath Martin Gardner. He is the co-director of the Mathematics of Various Entertaining Subjects (MOVES) Conference. He is also a member of a magic group “Cajun Conjurers” based in Lake Charles.

From my personal experience in taking Dr. Vallin's courses, his teaching is something special. He dives deeper into topics that some professors may avoid entirely. For his students in the Honors College, he has brought in outside papers to synopsise and explain, not just apply, algorithms. One of my favorite examples of his unique teaching style is his ability to break down proofs by avoiding all the word slop usually associated with them. He transforms the words into a picture that expands students' understanding of some of the toughest concepts in math.

Fiddly little details in mathematical problems don't scare Vallin...nor his students. His passion for making math fun has made the subject less challenging and more rewarding for many honors students at Lamar University. That truly is math magic!

BY ELIZABETH DIAZ ARREOLA, REAUD HONORS COLLEGE STUDENT

Inaugural Class of Reaud Fellows

Introducing the brand new Reaud Leadership Institute and Minor in Honors Studies.



Reaud Fellow Shares a Look at the First Year


Transitioning to college from high school is an extremely daunting task. Incoming freshmen are bombarded with different class dynamics, various student organizations, and an entirely new environment which they must navigate all on their own.

As both a Presidential Scholar and a Reaud Honors College student, I personally feel pressure to perform academically to the standards that have always been expected and to be as involved as possible.

Such expectations can be draining and exhausting, which was a great fear my colleagues and I felt when we signed up to become inaugural Reaud Fellows for the brand new Reaud Leadership Institute (RLI) that launched in Fall 2023 at the start of LU's Centennial. That summer of 2023, I was worried this commitment would stretch me thin and cause me great stress in my academics.

Yet upon attending our first Honors Development Seminar, where all nine of us in the inaugural class met each other for the first time, so much weight was taken off our shoulders. I felt so relieved.

As the year unfolded, Dean Dr. Tilisa Thibodeaux and Dr. Tony Kemerly created a seminar experience that challenged the mindset developed



Reaud Leadership Institute Launches

In Fall 2023, Reaud Fellows made history as the inaugural students in the Reaud Leadership Institute (RLI). Supporting the mission of RLI, the Minor in Honors Studies engages students in a unique multidisciplinary set of courses focused on developing their leadership and critical thinking skills.



Introducing RLI at Cardinal View (from left): Visiting Assistant Professor in Honors Dr. Maria Vallejo and Reaud Fellows Logan Morris, Elizabeth Diaz Arreola, Jenny Tu, with President Jaime Taylor.

BY IMELDA TRISTAN

by a high achieving student and the nuances of great leadership, all while broadening our horizons.

Leadership is an aspect that is difficult to cultivate and easy to go about incorrectly. Navigating the transition between being a leader in high school and becoming a leader in college is tricky due to the growth, change, and learning that need to happen as independent college students in charge of our time management and creating a solid foundation for our academic success.

Fortunately, our seminar curriculum taught us how to build on the competencies and traits that define a leader according to John Maxwell's The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader. The seminar provided all nine Reaud Fellows with the building blocks of great servant leadership. These tools promise to help us work toward a better tomorrow as leaders in our lives and at Lamar University.

The privilege of participating in this seminar impacted each fellow in a different manner, but every student walked away feeling as though they had gained skills, morals, and resources that they will be able to utilize for the rest of their lives.

Starting the year off as a Biology major, Jenny Tu discovered her passion for the scientific study of human movement through invigorating

seminar discussions about what truly motivates and drives us. "After a semester of discussion, I was able to realize that my passion piqued more in the Biomechanics side of science," said Tu, a junior who switched to studying Exercise Science Pre-Physical Therapy.

As Reaud Fellows, we all share a Minor in Honors Studies. Its cohort-based curriculum is built around the concept that people learn better when they study as part of a group. Building a community, however, can be challenging. Meeting new people can be an anxiety inducing experience. Since I knew that all nine of us would be high achievers, I was worried about characters clashing, opinions being too strong, and the stereotypical competitive no-nonsense air that can sometimes be associated with traditional honors students. Yet at that first meeting, everyone meshed well together and harmoniously interacted, even though we all came from different backgrounds, cultures, and experiences.

The bond we created continued after we completed our leadership seminar that Fall, with lifelong friendships and connections forming.

"I love the community I have found within the RLI group," said Alyvia Ott, an Interdisciplinary Studies freshman. "We have definitely bonded in excellence, leadership, and through the wonderful opportunities and

Inaugural Class of Reaud Fellows
(From left, first row): Electrical Engineering junior Bobby Barton; Exercise Science sophomore Elizabeth Diaz Arreola; Accounting and Finance sophomore Peyton Jones; (second row) Chemical Engineering sophomore Peyton Lee; Chemical Engineering sophomore Logan Morris; Accounting sophomore Soleil Tran; (third row) Biology Pre-Vet Medicine freshman Ryan Servantes; Interdisciplinary Studies freshman Alyvia Ott; and Exercise Science Pre-Physical Therapy junior Jenny Tu.

COURTESY ALUMNI AFFAIRS



In Spring 2024, Alyvia Ott and Logan Morris discussed their experiences as Reaud Fellows in the brand-new Reaud Leadership Institute during an episode of “On Campus” on 91.3 KVLU. Listen here:



“I love the community I have found within the RLI group. We have definitely bonded in excellence, leadership, and through the wonderful opportunities and experiences we’ve shared. I love that we encourage each other.”

experiences we’ve shared. I love that we encourage each other.”

Instead of competing, the RLI focuses on uplifting and supporting each other as we all embark on our separate journeys at Lamar University. Excellence is best achieved with a support system, which all Reaud Fellows provide for one another.

Beyond bonding on campus and at events centered around the Reaud Honors College, Reaud Fellows regularly hang out together outside of the classroom. Getting to know each other at a personal level has created strong connections and helped us become closer as a team.

Given the variety of majors and interests that exist within the RLI group, we also branched out on our own adventures. Chemical Engineering sophomore Peyton Lee, Accounting and Finance sophomore Peyton Jones, and Accounting sophomore Soleil Tran utilized the skills learned in their seminar to secure internship opportunities. Electrical Engineering junior Bobby Barton helped expand the Robotic Cardinals program on campus, creating opportunities for college and high school students to delve more

deeply into the world of robotics. Ryan Servantes, an athlete on LU’s Cross-Country team, managed to balance sports and his academic study as a Biology Pre-Vet Medicine freshman, while also seeking out experiential learning opportunities. In the upcoming academic year, he will serve as a civic leader on the board of Stable Spirit, as part of the Reaud Honors College’s Stepping Up initiative.

Dr. Thibodeaux took a chance when creating the Reaud Leadership Institute, painstakingly creating a curriculum that she felt would be enriching, developing a Minor in Honors Studies filled with classes meant to enlighten students, and coordinating workshops and events for the fellows to attend to enhance their professional development. This was no easy feat.

Reaud Fellows Jenny Tu and Elizabeth Diaz Arreola got to meet Beaumont Mayor Roy West at the City of Beaumont’s State of the City event in December 2023. Citizens gathered to hear from city leaders and stakeholders about Beaumont’s accomplishments this year as well as the city’s goals and priorities for 2024.

COURTESY JENNY TU

After a year of trial and error, new ideas and plans have emerged for the future of the Reaud Leadership Institute. The inaugural class’s feedback and opinions were welcomed and encouraged. All of us are dedicated to giving the next incoming class an experience that goes beyond and builds upon the current program. To add even more prestige and learning to the Institute, the upcoming



year will offer new events, an updated seminar, and a peer mentor system led by the current class.

“As new students join every year with mindsets just like ours, the RLI will continuously be molding new leaders,” said Logan Morris, Chemical Engineering sophomore. “I believe that Lamar University will be full of RLI students who will lead in various ways throughout Lamar, using the techniques that they learned through the Institute.”

The future of the Reaud Leadership Institute is bright, and the impact this program will have on Lamar University can already be felt on campus. At all events and trainings we participated in during our first year, professors, staff, and classmates alike have been interested in the RLI program and what it entails and are amazed by the impact that the Institute is having on our lives, college experiences, and hopeful future careers.

Having the privilege of participating in the Institute, which aims to mold us into the best possible leaders and versions of ourselves, has already impacted the way I carry myself, my approach to leadership, and the way I explore my college experience.

Without being a Reaud fellow, I do not believe I would be as prepared, involved, or enthusiastic about college and all that Lamar University has to offer. All of us Reaud Fellows cannot wait to instill the same values, ideals, and excitement in the incoming class and are looking forward to leaving an impact at this great university.



(Upper left) Reaud Fellows and HSA Executive Committee enjoyed lots of laughs during their team building activities. Another highlight of their leadership training was dancing the night away at the Etiquette Dinner hosted by Alumni Affairs. (Above, clockwise from top) Bobby Barton, Peyton Jones, Jenny Tu, Soleil Tran, Elizabeth Diaz Arreola, Alyvia Ott, Peyton Lee, and Logan Morris; Peyton Lee and Logan Morris; and Jenny Tu and Bobby Barton.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY ALUMNI AFFAIRS EXCEPT TEAM BUILDING BY IMELDA TRISTAN

BY MARY WERNIG, *REAUD HONORS COLLEGE STUDENT*

Innovation ColLABoration

Introducing local youth to STEM through the Governor's Summer Merit Program.

Reaud Honors College student leaders Hailey Barlow (far left), Dennis Tran (second), and Sergio Mendez (far right) had a grand time with their Texas Academy peer leaders encouraging kids to explore, build, play, and learn at the Governor's Summer Merit Program, which prepares 14-to-21 year olds for high-demand jobs.

PHOTO BY JOSH WILSON / COLLEGE OF BUSINESS



"You were really able to see the campers grow. A lot of them started off being really shy, but by the end of the week, they were collaborating and encouraging each other. It was really nice," said camp lead and Biology Pre-Med junior Sergio Mendez.

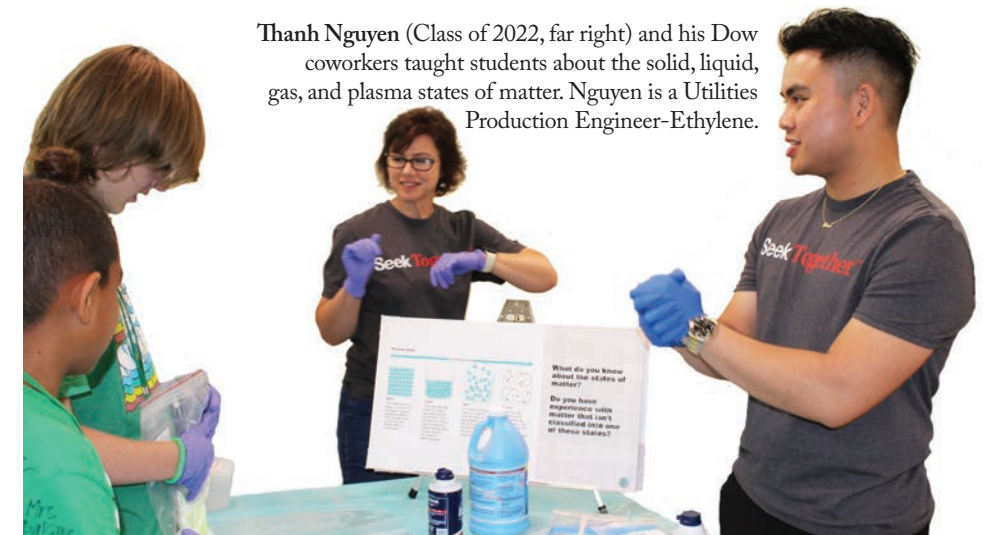
Starting in Summer 2023, the Reaud Honors College has been collaborating with the Texas Academy to administer the Governor's Summer Merit Program at Lamar University. Called Innovation ColLABoration, the program is a week-long STEM summer camp that introduces 14-to-21-year-old campers to a variety of industry clusters: advanced technologies and manufacturing, aerospace and defense, biotechnology and life sciences, information and computer technology, petroleum refining and chemical products, and energy. Student activities include Algorithmic Thinking with Legos, Mad Veterinarian Problems, and a Robotics Day.

Mendez particularly enjoyed watching campers develop as leaders and individuals. "The campers were super excited to participate, and you could see their teamwork and leadership potential," he said. "I wouldn't wear a banana suit for just anybody, but I did for them, because I knew they deserved it."

Not only did campers learn and grow at Innovation ColLABoration, but the camp leads did as well.

Chemical Engineering sophomore Dennis Tran shared how serving as a camp lead impacted his Reaud Honors journey: "Despite being a more reserved person, I became a better leader, team player, and Honors College student by adapting to Innovation ColLABoration's unexpected variables. I was able to grow exponentially out of my comfort zones, and it has transitioned directly to my involvement on campus this past semester. Aside from leadership growth, I was able to hone in on the characteristics of time commitment, communication skills, and networking while at camp."

Thanh Nguyen (Class of 2022, far right) and his Dow coworkers taught students about the solid, liquid, gas, and plasma states of matter. Nguyen is a Utilities Production Engineer-Ethylene.



Mendez enjoyed learning in a real-world environment. "Being involved in Reaud Honors College programs outside of the classroom is helpful because not only do you get the skills of being a leader, you also have the opportunity to collaborate with people from a variety of different backgrounds," he said. "Most of the time, being a leader means knowing how to communicate in teamwork settings, and you can't get that if you don't reach beyond the RHC classroom."

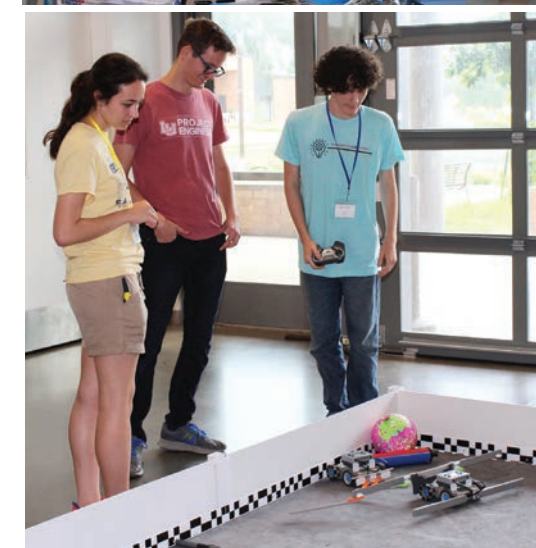
The mega-relay, a fan favorite, requires a culmination of all skills learned at Innovation ColLABoration over the week. Students must work with their teams to problem solve and compete against their fellow campers. Not only was this a fun experience for the aspiring STEM students, it was also a cutthroat competition among camp leads as they defended and encouraged their campers. Mendez bragged that his team, the Screaming Chickens, won the second week of camp, and he knows that his teams in the future will do the same.

We encourage our honors alumni to join in the fun by participating as an industry partner. Please communicate your interest to Dean Tilisa Thibodeaux. Whether you contribute as current students or alumni, Tran recommends, "Go in with an open mind! There is a lesson to be learned at every single moment of camp, even if you don't realize it until two weeks later."



Chemical Engineering senior Colton Smith (above, far left) shared industry tips along with his fellow Valero Process Engineering interns.

Christine Osborne (Class of 2023, below, far left) and Electrical Engineering and Mechanical Engineering senior Ryan Shugart (bottom, center) led the popular Robotics Day!



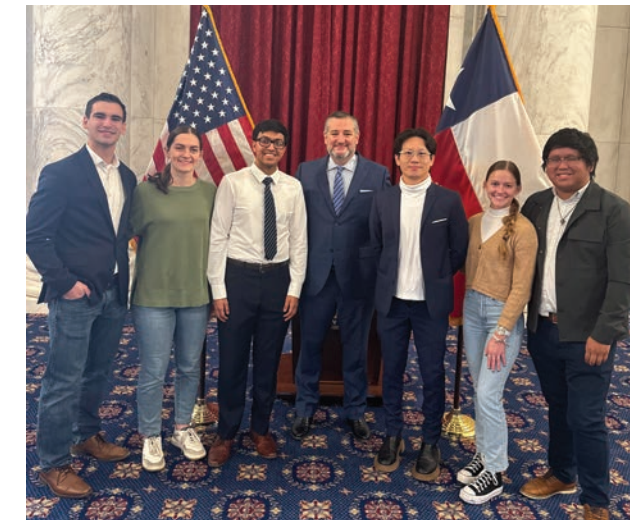
By SAAD MOHAMMED, *REAUD HONORS COLLEGE STUDENT*

The Healing Power of Research

A close-knit honors research team fulfills its dream—even after graduation from LU.

I'll meet you at the Capitol! Alumna Britney Brevell (Class of 2023) continued to present with her research team the next academic year, in Fall 2023. (From left) Dakota Emerson, Britney Brevell, graduate assistant Nathan Abalos, Morgan Luke, and Zaid Mohammed.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY MORGAN LUKE



The presence and proliferation of microplastics is a hot topic within the scientific community. These miniscule sized particles have been found in a range of places from food and water to even within the human body itself. Curious about the effects of microplastics, a group of honors students devised a research project: Amber Marelia, Britney Brevell, Morgan Luke, and Zaid Mohammed. Mentored by professor Dr. Ian Lian and graduate assistant Nathan Abalos, these students methodically uncovered results that opened doors to presentations at research conferences to being advocates on Capitol Hill.

This motley crew took shape via various opportunities offered by Lamar University and the Reaud Honors College. Marelia began assisting upperclassmen with their Office of Undergraduate Research (O.U.R.) grant project in 2019-2020. Brevell and Mohammed met Dr. Lian the following year, in Spring 2021, while taking his Honors Seminar on Stem Cell Biology. Luke joined the lab a year later.

"It was nice to learn how to use a microscope, work programs, and pipette in the lab," said Morgan Luke, a Biochemistry Pre-Med senior. "I definitely learned all about the bio side that I feel like I was lacking, but now I am able to take that information and bring it to medical school."

Fresh on the team's mind was the prevalence of microplastics. Brevell's

article about students conducting microplastics citizen science during a beach clean-up had graced the cover of the 2022 edition of *Cadenza* magazine. Luke and Abalos further enlivened the team with their shared interest in dermatology. The combination inspired the group's research question: How does microplastics exposure affect the rate of skin wound healing?

Once their research proposal earned a grant from O.U.R., the team figured out how to properly utilize each member's strengths while conducting the research. Dr. Lian was instrumental in not only training everyone on laboratory techniques, but also demonstrating that research can be fun and collaborative, Abalos said, adding, "We trusted each other."

The crew recruited honors peer, Dakota Emerson, a Chemical Engineering senior, to devise a more accurate way to split the cells. He immediately felt the tight knit and supportive community that defined the culture of the research group. "Even though I was a chemical engineering major and there was a lot I had to learn, everyone always made me feel included in the group," Emerson said.

To conduct their research, the team first split HaCaT keratinocyte and 3T3 fibroblast skin cells into two groups: those exposed to microplastics (dimethyl

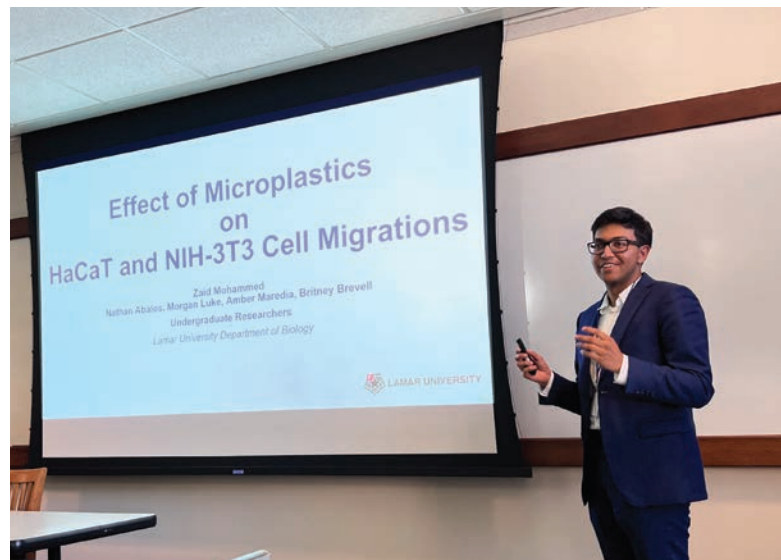
While at our nation's capital, Dr. Ian Lian and his honors student research team toured Capitol Hill and met U.S. Senator Ted Cruz (above left) and U.S. Representative Brian Babin (above right).

phthalate plasticizer) and those which were not. This way they could compare how the presence versus absence of microplastics could affect the outcome.

They then conducted a "scratch test" to mimic the effect of a wound. This laboratory technique split a plate of cells, leaving an empty space at the center. They took images of the cell plate every 24 hours to record how cells from the right and left side of the plate multiplied and eventually filled up the empty center space. The time taken to fill up the vacant area simulated how long it would take for a wound to heal.

Their findings supported that microplastics exposure decreased the rate of cell migration in HaCaT compared to control HaCaT cells. Conversely, however, they also found that microplastics exposure actually increased cell migration rates in 3T3 cells compared to control 3T3 cells.

They conducted a qPCR test to measure gene expression and found that microplastic treated HaCaT cells had down-regulated cell migration genes and exhibited no clear trends for inflammatory genes. Meanwhile



3T3 cells had up-regulation in both inflammatory and cell migration genes.

Their research demonstrated that microplastic exposure may slow down the initial response to wound healing in cells (slower rate of migration in epidermal layer located HaCaT cells), whilst potentially increasing scarring (increased rate of migration of 3T3 fibroblast cells, which produce collagen—a main component of scar tissue).

The excited team set about to share their findings with the broader community. Maredia presented at O.U.R.'s 2023 Research Expo at Lamar University. Mohammed presented later that year at the Gulf Coast Undergraduate Research Symposium at Rice University. Luke, Mohammed, and Abalos presented that Fall at the Reaud Honors College's Honors Scholars Day. Abalos presented at UTMB Galveston in January 2024 and earned the team first place for undergraduate research, winning \$200.

The highlight of these conferences for the students was the opportunity to network with peers and learn about the other projects being conducted. "It was a very constructive experience, and one that definitely will help me going forward," said Mohammed, a Biology Pre-Med senior.

In addition to scholarly pursuits, the group also sought to make an impact

as advocates. Encouraged by Dr. Lian to apply to the National Council on Undergraduate Research's Scholars Transforming Through Research (STR) Program, the team became one of 41 teams in the nation selected—and one of three from Texas.

After learning from the program's year-round training sessions on research and public health advocacy, the students were thrilled and grateful to travel to the nation's capital for the national conference.

In Washington, D.C, they met other research teams and brainstormed on approaches to advocacy from a policy perspective. They also explored the city and shared a memorable dinner with honors alumni Edward and Madison (Marino) Doan.

The couple shared valuable advice and their experiences in the workforce—Edward has been working as an engineer for various West Virginia firms, including Procter & Gamble and Stryker; and Madison is a senior research associate at the Heritage Foundation and a former legislative correspondent at the U.S. House of Representatives. This interaction is an example of the strong alumni network that the Honors College has built and one which will continue to strengthen.

On Capitol Hill, the research group met with U.S. Senator Ted Cruz and

Before they headed to the U.S. Capitol, the team presented their research at four other conferences, including at UTMB Galveston (above left) and at our Honors Scholars Day (above right).

U.S. Representative Brian Babin. "I think what was so awesome and so different about this conference is that you're presenting the idea of research to these representatives and to these senators to get them to support it," Brevell said.

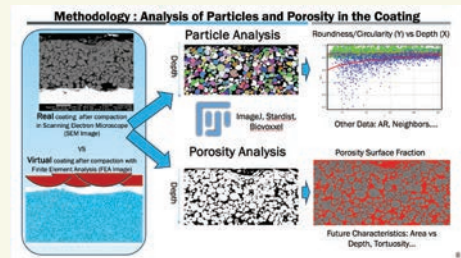
With quite a few team members graduating in May 2024—Mohammed, Luke, and Emerson—and some who graduated the previous May in 2023—Brevell and Maredia—the conference in Fall 2024 ended up being a wonderful culmination of years of hard work and camaraderie spent in the lab under mentor Dr. Lian.

Their tale highlights how undergraduate research can build friendships, develop critical thinking skills, and even encourage advocacy. Even more, the generous spirit that strengthens our honors community was in full force during this multi-year project, even after some students graduated from Lamar University and left campus to attend medical schools. Alumni and current students fulfilled their dream together and made the world a better and smarter place because of their outstanding research and advocacy.



Halliburton Engineering Global Scholar | Research at Arts et Métiers

By: Mechanical Engineering junior Luke Sodolak



Bonjour!

My time in France was an unforgettable one. Not only because I saw some of the most astonishing places on the planet, but also because I gained immense amounts of knowledge conducting research for Arts et Métiers while learning how to adapt to the life of the French.

As a Halliburton Engineering Global Scholar, I received a stipend to support my travel and living costs in France and was guided by Texas A&M faculty during my analysis of

an anti-corrosive coating consisting of aluminum particles.

Although sometimes my research was difficult or tedious, I was able to easily mitigate my stresses with weekend trips to the French Open in Paris, the beaches of the French Riviera, the luxurious streets of Monaco, or even just enjoying my incredible home city of Aix-en-Provence.

The notion that the "French are rude" was one I was able to quickly deny by encountering many people who were kind and willing to help me

navigate a difficult language barrier and cultural change. The life of the French people is an absolutely beautiful one, but experiencing the vast differences in their lifestyle made me realize how much I truly appreciated my Texan way of life back home.

Living in France for two months was something I never thought I would have the chance to do, but my sojourn has forever changed my life for the better. I cannot wait for my next visit, so that I can return with even more stories to tell. Until then, au revoir.



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY LUKE SODOLAK



BY KATHY NGUYEN, *REAUD HONORS COLLEGE STUDENT*

A Tale of Underdogs

What collegiate leadership looks like for Honors First-Generation LU Ambassadors.



Honors students are often among the leaders sharing their Cardinal spirit as LU Ambassadors—yet we take a look at how the leadership experience has lifted up our first-generation students. Some of our Honors First-Generation LU Ambassadors over the years include (clockwise, from top left): Estrella Balderas, Jasmine Banks (Class of 2011), Brittnee Rodriguez (Class of 2012), Sindi Castillo (Class of 2023), Dennis Tran, Beverly Pipkins (Class of 2011), Danielle Ellis (Class of 2015), and Viviana Denova (Class of 2022).

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY LU AMBASSADORS

First-Generation college students are like none other. Armed with a fierce determination to succeed, they carve their paths through hard work and carry a mission: to push past obstacles and, simply put, to win the game of life.

At Lamar University, more than half of students—53 percent—have parents who have not earned bachelor's degrees.

Some of these leaders of tomorrow desire an even bolder student experience. Along with the many firsts they encounter in college—taking a class, interacting with professors, managing their schedules—they make their presence known on campus through extracurricular involvement and by shining in the classroom. In turn, their peers and mentors encourage those with leadership goals to serve among the brightest of Lamar University's students as LU Ambassadors.

Ambassadors are the finest Cardinals who walk the campus. Sporting their red blazers of leadership, they seek to represent not only their interests, but also the university. Throughout their terms until graduation, they carry with them their interactions with community members and professionals. The program acts as the shoes that student leaders “break in” while walking a path beyond the average student's college journey. Each step represents another life skill and confidence builder gained.

For first-generation college students, the Ambassador experience offers a turbocharged boost of guidance. They often act even more determined to interact with the people they meet as Ambassadors since, unlike many of their peers, they do not have the resources and guidance from family college graduates to help them along their academic journey.

Yet family can be supportive in the way that means the most—



Lifelong Friendships!

Honors First-Generation LU Ambassador **Sakurah Fisher** traveled with **Thanh Tsan** to visit **Madison Marino** (all from Class of 2019) in Washington, D.C., when Marino was a legislative intern at the U.S. House of Representatives in 2019. All three honors students served as LU Ambassadors as undergraduates. Today, Marino works as a Senior Research Associate at the Heritage Foundation in Washington, D.C.; Tsan is a Senior Maintenance Engineer at Dow in Freeport, Texas; and Fisher works as the Youth and Families Development Promoter at the Peace Corps in Ecuador.

through steadfast love. In her first-place-winning essay, shared at LU's inaugural First Gen Luncheon, Kaylee Goodspeed (Class of 2023) revealed how family nurtured her when she realized healthcare was not her calling:

“I felt lost and discouraged, and I considered giving up on my pursuit of higher education. I was able to overcome those feelings, however, with the support of my family. My mother and grandmother raised me on the principle that knowledge could get you anywhere, no matter how meager your beginnings. Neither of these women who reared me had the opportunity to attend college because they lacked the

funding, and they were single mothers. Even so, they stood by my side and gave me the strength to keep pushing forward.”

Goodspeed combined her fascination with the natural sciences and research to pursue psychology at the end of her sophomore year, stating, “I have enjoyed every minute since then.”

At the same time, Goodspeed admitted, “My journey in college has been far from straight and narrow.”

One of the greatest challenges faced by many college students, yet particularly first-generation students, is Imposter Syndrome. Students might



Class of 2023 Law Underdogs: **Jacob Murphy** stands between his first-generation LU Ambassador friends **Shelbie Williams** (at left) and **Kaylee Goodspeed** (at right). All three are pursuing their JDs, with Murphy at UT-Austin, Williams at Texas Tech, and Goodspeed at University of Houston.

question themselves and contemplate whether they deserve to be among the other bright and talented students.

Goodspeed counted herself among the self-doubters, yet said the LU Ambassadors program provided an outlet to challenge that notion. The year-round leadership events where Ambassadors interact with community members and professionals force the student leaders to be more welcoming of change and improvement and to level up their social skills. Each gathering serves as the boost of confidence they need to engage in conversation or improve their mindset.

“You’re interacting with very powerful people,” Goodspeed said. Yet after her first semester as an LU Ambassador, which helped her push past her limits and fight to be a finer student every day, Goodspeed declared victory over her Imposter Syndrome: “I overcame it.”

Now a JD candidate at the University of Houston, Goodspeed says she continues that mindset she learned as an Ambassador to “Put your best face forward.”

When life meets higher education and its plethora of choices, however, a leadership mindset is often nowhere in sight. At the beginning, college felt like a rollercoaster for Chemical Engineering sophomore Dennis Tran, especially, he said, with “so many unknown variables coming at you at one time.”

Startled by the eye-opening surprise of how many aspects of college life students should consider before stepping foot on campus, he said he was almost overwhelmed by it all. “The hidden struggles of mapping out a day-to-day or familiarizing yourself with new systems are experiences that most first-generation students face,” he said.

Yet LU Ambassadors offer a spirit of mentorship like none other. Some have

walked similar career paths. Even those who have other professional interests shared helpful advice. Tran’s Reaud Honors College friends, particularly Kelvin Elgar, Zaid Mohammed, and Isaac Ramirez (formerly Moreno), were so open to guiding him as a freshman to be a leader on campus and also to prepare him for professional endeavors. Eventually, they also pushed him to apply to the Ambassadors program.

As an LU Ambassador today, Tran said the program “represents Lamar University at the highest level.” He added how he particularly enjoys being part of a network of like-minded people who inspire him as role models.

Even as foreign as navigating college felt for him, Tran said the Ambassadors program is doing a stupendous job of “closing the distance of the unknown” and going beyond in its mission of preparing the leaders of tomorrow.

What motivates these future leaders? If they are first-generation students, oftentimes they are the



Still a leader in her community—**Jasmine Banks** (Class of 2011) presented Criminal Law 101 to the Aspiring Young Lawyers Camp in the Dallas-Fort Worth Area in Summer 2024. Banks is an assistant criminal district attorney in Tarrant County.

embodiment of upward social mobility for their family.

Pre-Dental Biochemistry senior Estrella Balderas said her pride in representing her parents and her family inspires her as she weaves her path to success and a better life. To get to college was difficult enough—it was “hard getting to know everything—how to apply to college and doing the financial aid,” she said.

As an LU Ambassador, Balderas pounces at the opportunity to hear alumni stories and dive deeper into how they were able to succeed. Every

The Ambassadors program is doing a stupendous job of “closing the distance of the unknown” and going beyond in its mission of preparing the leaders of tomorrow.

gathering and workshop molds Ambassadors’ thoughts and actions into what success looks like, she said. When she met the CEO of BP America, she thought to herself, “I’m going to be like that one day.”

As a future dentist, Balderas said she aspires to “make changes in the dental field, especially in terms of cost.”

The Ambassadors program, she added, has greatly influenced the development of her dream, particularly in demonstrating how communication is your biggest asset. “I am able to advocate for the things that really matter,” she said, “and to use my voice to do that.”

With each step forward, LU Ambassadors are continually pushed ahead by their support systems at Lamar University. The momentum gets stronger with every interaction.

Facing the unknown is a unique challenge navigated by first-generation students. “Beginning university with no defined goals was terrifying. There

were not any professionals in my family who could offer advice about specific career paths, so I had to explore many possibilities on my own,” Goodspeed shared in her essay.

Yet challenges can become opportunities for growth. First-Generation students mold their mindset on education slightly differently than the average person. They are putting a lot on the line to invest in a future they have envisioned for themselves. At Lamar University, the Ambassadors program has become a guiding light for crushing the world

and all the barriers that stand between them and their dreams.

As they gather their strength and wit to beat all odds against them, alumni and current first-generation Ambassadors are pioneering a future where they triumph and overcome adversity. They have the leadership skills to refine their confidence wherever their journey takes them.

Leadership stories will continue to unfold among first-generation students on LU’s campus, bolstered by community partnerships between the LU Ambassadors program, Reaud Honors College, faculty mentors, alumni, community members, and countless coaches in every department and college on campus. Tune in as we watch and champion the future engineers, dentists, lawyers, doctors, and so many more as they achieve their dreams.

After all, who doesn’t love a good underdog story?



First-Gen Research Success

Honors First-Generation LU Ambassadors represent an elite group—of the approximately 130 honors graduates who served as LU Ambassadors through 2023, only 10 were first-generation students.

Interestingly, all 10 share undergraduate research in common. **Sindi Castillo** and **Kaylee Goodspeed** (Class of 2023) were part of the Reaud Honors College’s Cancer Research ELP team led by **Lindsey Cauthen** (Class of 2007) during the Covid-19 Pandemic. **Goodspeed** and **Shelbie Williams** (Class of 2023) presented research in Political Science. **Sakurah Fisher** (Class of 2019) conducted research as a prestigious David J. Beck Fellow.

Most of them were drawn toward undergraduate research as McNair Scholars: **Janice Simmons** (Class of 2007), **Jasmine Banks** (Class of 2011), **Beverly Pipkins** (Class of 2011), **Brittnee Rodriguez** (Class of 2012), **Danielle Ellis** (Class of 2015), **Fisher**, and **Viviana Denova** (Class of 2022).

Today, these alum work in careers across the spectrum, ranging from assistant district attorney at Tarrant County (**Banks**) to Youth and Families Development Promoter at the Peace Corps in Ecuador (**Fisher**).

Another alum, **Goodspeed**, is pursuing her dream to work in environmental law. As an undergraduate, she shared her first-generation journey in an award-winning essay, in which she concluded:

“Being a first-generation student comes with special hurdles, but my time here has shown me that I am entirely capable of my goals, and much more. It is clear to me now that my status as a first-generation student was never a burden; rather, it allowed me to explore several pathways freely and share a unique perspective with my peers. I am grateful that I was able to experience undergraduate study through a lens of unbridled curiosity, and I am certain that my experiences will carry me on to professional success.”

We hope future honors first-generation research students will follow in their footsteps and serve as LU Ambassadors.

BY KAYLA MCKINLEY, *REAUD HONORS COLLEGE STUDENT*

American History is Fair Game

How Dr. Rebecca Boone creatively motivates students to care about history.



To bring the American Revolution era to life, students in Dr. Rebecca Boone's "Honors U.S. History to 1877" class play a game. Each one is assigned a character to role play based on that person's background and the historical context.

Besides opening students' eyes to the difficulty of revolting against Great Britain and forming a new country, this game also challenges students to develop independent learning styles and to face obstacles such as public speaking.

Business freshman Lisbeth Rojas shared her journey as she delivered speeches to the class during the game: "When I would walk up there to do the speeches, I would get really shy. That's actually changing. I'm not scared to do it anymore."

Yet just because the students were playing a "game" did not make the experience silly and fun and light for all.

"The game was super stressful at times and not my favorite," Civil Engineering freshman Erica Callahan said. "But it did what it was supposed to do. I learned so much from that game."

Callahan was on the historical losing team—Loyalists. "It taught me to argue a different side of things and how to approach arguments that are typically less favored. It forced my whole team to think outside the box," she said. "The public speaking portion also helped me out a whole lot. I wasn't afraid to get involved because, at the end of the day, I was playing a character. It has for sure had a lasting impact, especially with how I go about presenting in other classes!"

Honors students discuss Frederick Douglass's autobiography by the duck pond: "I like to take my classes outside to discuss important works of literature. The Ancient Greeks believed that the best thinking was done surrounded by nature," said Dr. Rebecca Boone, Chair of History and Chair of University Studies at Lamar University.

PHOTO BY IMELDA TRISTAN

She said her character "wanted to help his neighbors, which I can respect. He wasn't all pro-loyal to a mother country; he just wanted to make sure he could feed his family. He was a fun one to play because I didn't have to be super aggressive in my approach. I felt like arguing the monetary argument was probably what stopped me from getting mobbed."

Students wrote essays to prepare for their debates during the game, which

Callahan says helped her figure out her character's role in supporting the British. "The arguing with other players helped me a lot too," Callahan said. "I knew by debating, we had a chance to delay voting. So I made myself be out there as much as possible. Overall, I gained so much valuable skills from that game—still didn't like [playing] it," she said, with a laugh.

Rojas said she also felt the game was "very intense between the different teams," adding, "I thought we were going to lose because we were doing a really, really, really bad game. We could not convince anybody to do anything."

Rojas was impressed by her peers, saying Reaud Fellow and Accounting sophomore Soleil Tran "was good at debating everything" and Texas Academy junior Madison McGuire excelled as Maj. Gen. Alexander McDougall. "They made the perfect team."

"Having to do a speech in front of them and having to cooperate with everyone, especially when Soleil and Madison were screaming at you, and I was like: 'I don't know what to say.' But I would have to scream something back because, if not, I would go down and people were not gonna vote for me," Rojas said.

Rojas admitted she was shocked when her Loyalist team won the game: "What came down to it was that the Patriots convinced us to vote to free slaves."

The pages of history books will teach you that strategy hurt the Patriots—the British policy of offering freedom to slaves led many of the enslaved away from the Patriots to fight for the British.

The game was a treat for the Fall 2023 class for another reason—they were the first honors students to play it! "I was really excited that we were the first, and how [Dr. Boone] would laugh at us and everything when we were playing the game. She was enjoying it as much as we were," Rojas said.

"She definitely inspired me because she loves history so much, and watching her passion for history made me love it

too. That's also what sets her apart as a professor, is that you can tell she really enjoys what she does," Psychology sophomore Cooper Wilcox said.

Wilcox admitted learning from Dr. Boone helped them grow: "This was the first class that I really talked out loud—like I was excited to ask questions and to talk. It was nice."

The classroom experience Dr. Boone cultivated also paved the way for students to make friends. "While taking the class, I made connections with others who I might have never talked to without that. I had people to study with and write with afterwards, which is super cool!" Callahan said.

"...watching her passion for history made me love it too."

Discussing Frederick Douglass's autobiography in the great outdoors, instead of their everyday classroom, was also popular with the class. One autumn day, they walked together across campus and sat in the grass by the duck pond outside the John Gray Center.

"The Fredrick Douglass Book—that book was so cool," Biology Pre-Med freshman George Godsi said. "Learning about how a poor slave can become a very knowledgeable person and can impact a society and say: 'This is not the truth. I am as human as y'all, and I have a right to learn, study, and become a good person in community.' That was so cool."

The human spirit and determination that never dies was an inspiring theme in the class's discussion of Douglass's autobiography. His personal experiences with slavery—which included physical and psychological abuse as well as the inability to freely achieve an education—inspired him to fight for his rights. His is the kind of passion for learning that Dr. Boone seeks to inspire in her students.

Another way Dr. Boone helped students step into her characters' worlds and see history more fully through

their eyes was by analyzing Abraham Lincoln's speeches and letters. History is messy because people are messy. Lincoln is remembered as helping end slavery in America. Yet analyzing a letter he wrote taught the class that yes, he disagreed with slavery, but his real objective as President was to maintain unity even if doing so would mean a different path for the future of the enslaved.

Dr. Boone's assignments often made students feel like detectives. One asked them to review pictures and documents from Paul Revere's time. "The goal was for us to analyze and come to conclusions based on the evidence we had been given, collect 'clues' to how life was different in his day," Godsi said.

Such assignments empowered the students when it came time to play the American Revolution game. John Locke's writings were brought up over and over again. Both sides—Patriots and Loyalists, as well as Moderates and crowd members—used Locke's writings to try to prove their points. This may seem contradictory, but it happens even today, especially in politics and media. Proving a point using the same source and then deciphering which ones were factual or skewed was great practice for students. Virtually everyone will have to use reasoning and analytical thinking in this way at some point in their lives.

Even when Dr. Boone lectured, a more traditional manner of teaching, she grabbed her honors students' attention. "Dr. Boone's lectures were probably my favorite part of the class," Callahan said. "She has this way of making her lectures way more entertaining than any of my other classes thus far. Her ability to have fun facts about anything and everything is truly amazing. She is not afraid to talk about the less glamourless parts of history and that is something I really appreciate. I felt like it made a great difference in the entire learning experience."

Dr. Boone's engaging teaching style taught her honors students that history is not a straight line—it's a bunch of scribbles that lead to actions that impact us today.

By MOHAMED IRHABI, *REAUD HONORS COLLEGE STUDENT*

The Secret to Fixing the World

Dr. Bethany Aiena shares her tip at the latest Alumni Dinner & Conversation.

Do you struggle with managing your desire to “fix the world?” Do you need help setting realistic expectations and focusing efforts where they can be most effective?

Bethany Aiena (Class of 2011) asked these questions to her dinner mates one balmy Spring evening in 2024. She was hosting at Lamar University’s “Alumni Dinner & Conversation,” an event that bridges the gap between current students and their successful predecessors with the hopes of igniting aspirations and connections.

Aiena leaned in, smiled at the students, and shared her secret: A good mentor can point the path toward successfully maintaining professional boundaries by providing guidance on how to balance personal involvement with professional responsibilities.

One of those students, Stephanie Barron, a Psychology Pre-Physician Assistant senior and LU Ambassador, later said that Dr. Aiena’s advice resonated deeply with her. “Dr. Aiena stressed the importance of networking and finding a mentor,” Barron said, and “how crucial Dr. Shelton’s mentorship was in guiding her career path, helping her realize her potential and ambition to pursue a PhD.”

When Aiena was an undergraduate student, Dr. Jeremy Shelton, associate professor of Psychology and department chair, advised her on how to keep a

professional distance while still providing compassionate care during her internship at a healthcare facility.

The lesson profoundly influenced her educational and professional trajectory, Aiena told her dinner mates. Today, she continues to practice balancing emotional labor with self-care in her career as Associate Director for the Behavioral Health Program at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center in Houston. Her daily work life is managing administrative and clinical aspects of behavioral health services delivered at community-based outpatient clinics.

Do you struggle with managing your desire to “fix the world?”

This conversation about navigating careers in healthcare psychology was made possible thanks to another honors college alumna, Shannon (Copeland) Figueroa (Class of 2002), director of Alumni Affairs. “The goal of the ‘Dinner & Conversation’ is to give students an opportunity to learn more about and hear a firsthand account of the day-to-day realities of a career in their discipline,” she said.

One student at the table, Mary Wernig, was initially skeptical about the relevance of the event to her major in Speech and Hearing Sciences. She found herself pleasantly surprised by

how the interdisciplinary discussions broadened her perspective on patient care.

“Dr. Aiena advised keeping career options open and not dismissing potential job offers or experiences prematurely, which made me think about the wide range of possibilities in my future career,” Wernig said. “It amuses me how many types of care—including therapeutic, mental, and physical—are all involved in treating just one patient!”

Such magic is craftily orchestrated by Figueroa thanks to her perspective of being on both sides, a student and an alumna. Her experience helps her select alumni who exhibit leadership qualities that will impress even the most active LU Ambassadors, Reaud Fellows, and student guests seated at their dinner tables.

Stories shared. Connections made. Another successful and enriching alumni conversation concludes, as students depart feeling a deeper appreciation for their chosen fields.

Would you like to share your story and connect with some of LU’s brightest students? Please email your fellow honors alumna, Shannon Figueroa: alumni@lamar.edu. You, our alumni, are the heart of this robust program!

(Opposite page) Dr. Bethany Aiena with her dinner guests, who included her mentor, Dr. Jeremy Shelton (see the pair in the center inset).

PHOTOS COURTESY ALUMNI AFFAIRS



Imagine. Innovate. Impact. Inspire.

CHANGEMAKERS

“My main goal was to create a supportive space for the students to ask questions and learn about the competition.... My mentorship focused on preparing them to debate, public speak, and engage with other students in this simulation of the United Nations.”

—*Dr. Maria Vallejo*
Visiting Assistant Professor in Honors



Dr. Maria Vallejo with the 2023-2024 MUN team (above) and with some of our brand new Reaud Fellows and President Taylor (right) at our Cardinal View booth introducing the Reaud Leadership Institute.

PHOTOS BY MEGHAN RAPP (ABOVE) AND IMELDA TRISTAN (RIGHT)

In Fall 2023, Visiting Assistant Professor in Honors **Dr. Maria Vallejo** served as a first-time faculty advisor to our Model United Nations team.

“My main goal was to create a supportive space for the students to ask questions and learn about the competition,” Dr. Vallejo said. “We met weekly to learn research techniques, go over the rules, and review drafts of their work. My mentorship focused on preparing them to debate, public speak, and engage with other students in this simulation of the United Nations.”

The preparation process involved in-depth research on the selected countries and the two assigned topics for each committee. For the WHA, topics included the responsible use of antibiotics and improving patient care, while the Security Council focused on the situation in Sudan and promoting cybersecurity and its impact on peace and security.

The well-prepared team masterfully put their research into action and demonstrated exceptional performance at the Lone Star Conference on November 4-5 in Richardson.

Drake Rothenberger and **Dakota Emerson** earned “Outstanding Delegation” as the Russian delegates for the Security Council. **Kevwe Onakpoya** earned “Distinguished Delegation” as the USA delegate for the Security Council. **Dylan Pardo** and **Grace Roy** earned “Delegate Choice” (voted by fellow students) and “Honorable Mention” (best delegates by the judges) as the Brazil delegates for the World Health Assembly. **Michael Vu** earned “Outstanding Position Paper” and “Distinguished Delegation” as the Brazil delegate for UNESCO.

As they celebrated their accomplishments, the students created their own award to give to Dr. Vallejo, “Outstanding Queen Award,” in recognition of her excellent guidance throughout the Fall semester that instilled global leadership skills and public speaking confidence in each of the student delegates.



SGA LEADERS

The Lamar student body elected the following Reaud Honors students to be their voice in Student Government Association in 2024-2025:

Megan Do, Senior Class Senator;
Campbell Fuller, Junior Class Senator;
Ashton Burch, Chief Justice;
Rima Shaaban, Justice;
Angelie Bautista, Justice;
Lauren Rosetta, Justice.

Honors Student Association elected:

Michael Vu, Reaud Honors College Senator;
George Godsi, HSA Representative.

Leadership

Mallory Martin, Nursing Junior

Co-Captain of LU's Cheer Team, Martin performed at the Homecoming centennial celebration.

Elizabeth Drago, Criminal Justice Freshman

Drake Rothenberger, Environmental Science Sophomore

The leaders behind this year's Big Event, the biggest student-run, one-day service project in the nation: Drago, as Recruitment Coordinator, and Rothenberger, as Programming Coordinator.

Tomisin Egbewale, Computer Science Senior

After spending the summer interning at Northwestern Mutual's Information Risk and Cybersecurity Department in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Egbewale earned his “Ethical Hacking” certification.

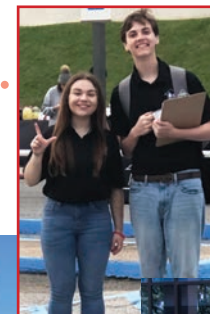


Michael Vu, Management Sophomore

As Assistant Director, Vu helped bring the murder mystery drama “Dangerous Corner” to life.

Helping Families During Spring Break

Four Reaud Honors Civic Leaders spent their Spring Break volunteering with Habitat for Humanity to help families in need in Starkville, Mississippi: Elizabeth Diaz Arreola, Drake Rothenberger, Michael Stewart, and Jenny Tu.



2024-2025 HSA OFFICERS

Honors peers elected Rima Shaaban, Megan Do, and Grace Roy to lead the Honors Student Association as President, Vice President, and Secretary/Treasurer; Dylan Pardo and Bilal Alani, Intramural Sports; Alyson Vu and Saad Mohammed, Peer Mentoring; and Michael Vu and George Godsi to lead Student Government Association as RHC Senator and HSA Representative, respectively.

SARA BARBOZA
CHATS WITH
FIRST LADY STACY
TAYLOR FOR
KVLU EPISODE
OF “ON CAMPUS”



LU AMBASSADORS

Reaud Honors students joining LU Ambassadors team in 2024-25:
Bilal Alani, Carsen Barrett, Daisy Calero Estrella, Lizzie Drago, Kadence Garlington, Alyssa Harper, Peyton Jones, Saad Mohammed, Logan Morris, Jordan Nelson, Kathy Nguyen, Ashton Rainey, Grace Roy, Ryan Servantes, Jada Thrash, Riley Trent, Alyson Vu, and Blaine Wilson.



REAUD HONORS LU AMBASSADORS

President's Picnic, Spring 2024

Front row: Isaac Ramirez, Julia Barrett, Jada Thrash, Lizzie Drago, Waverlee Cooper, Rima Shaaban, Texas Academy's Alli Gross, Kathy Nguyen, Estrella Balderas, Daisy Calero Estrella, Stephanie Barron, Clara Schreck, and Grace Roy.

Middle row: Kelvin Elgar, Luis Arevalo, Hannah Thrash, Alyssa Harper, Ashton Rainey, Peyton Jones, Jordan Nelson, Dennis Tran, Logan Morris, Kadence Garlington, Alyson Vu, Kristin Hebert, Sergio Mendez, Peyton McLaurin, and Mary Wernig.

Back row (behind Rainey): Riley Trent, Tomisin Egbewale, Zaid Mohammed, Ryan Servantes, Bilal Alani, Saad Mohammed, Carsen Barrett, Ryan Shugart, and Drake Rothenberger.

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

Imagine. Innovate. Impact. Inspire.

CHANGEMAKERS



ROBOTIC CARDINALS REUNITE AT MCNAIR SCHOLARS RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

McNAIR SCHOLAR RYAN SHUGART AND CHRISTINE OSBORNE (CLASS OF 2023) CREATED LU'S FIRST-EVER ROBOTICS CLUB. FIRST-YEAR HONORS CARDINALS BOBBY BARTON AND REESE RODGERS JOINED THE CREW LAST SUMMER, HELPING TEACH ROBOTICS, BEFORE BEGINNING THEIR FIRST SEMESTER AT LU. (FROM LEFT: RODGERS, OSBORNE, SHUGART, AND BARTON.)

LOOKING AHEAD

Reaud Honors students conducting undergraduate research this summer who will present their findings in 2024-2025.

DAVID J. BECK FELLOW: Ryan Shugart. Fellows receive up to \$10,000 in funding for a summer project.

O.U.R. SURF FELLOW: Kayla McKinley. 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: Estrella Balderas and Drake Rothenberger. Scholars participate in six weeks of summer research and receive a stipend of up to \$2,800.

2024-25 LURA

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

Sergio Mendez, President
Adeline Tran, Vice President
Liam Gore, Treasurer
Kayla McKinley, Event Coordinator

Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity

Reaud Honors students presented their findings at the following conferences during 2023-2024: *American Society for Microbiology National Conference 2023:* Stephanie Barron. *McNair Scholars Research Symposium 2023:* Ryan Shugart. *O.U.R. Expo 2024:* Helena Bautista-Mathias, Kaitlyn Cherry, Daniela Contreras, Deidre Dages, Karen Figueroa, George Godsi, Laci Graham, Kristin Hebert, Alexa Heng, Mohamed Irhabi, Sergio Mendez, Jordan Nelson, Victoria Nguyen, Rima Shaaban, Tyler Stuck, and Adeline Tran. *International Day of Women in Science 2024:* Estrella Balderas, Kaitlyn Cherry, Megan Do, Victoria Nguyen, Rima Shaaban, Adeline Tran, and Jennyfer Zarate. *National American Chemical Society Mtg. 2024:* Adeline Tran. *ASM Texas Branch Spring Mtg. 2024:* Estrella Balderas, Helena Bautista-Mathias, Sergio Mendez, Jordan Nelson, and Rima Shaaban. *COE's Senior Design Symposium 2024:* Luis Arevalo, Annabelle Broussard, Kelvin Elgar, Dakota Emerson, Jacob Lindh, Isaac Ramirez, Colton Smith, and Melody Youwakim.



Award-Winning Research

"First Place: STEM Research," International Day of Women in Science, given to Nursing graduate **Kaitlyn Cherry** (above, far left) for project: "Exploring Causes, Manifestations, and Interventions of Autism Spectrum Disorder Among Nursing Students."



"Outstanding Student Poster Award," National American Chemical Society Mtg. 2024, given to Chemistry senior **Adeline Tran** (left) for project: "Conformational Studies of Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA) in the Presence of its Helicity."

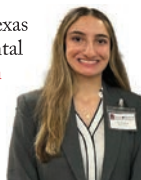
"Best of Chemical Engineering: Senior Design Project," COE Senior Design Symposium 2024, given to Chemical Engineering seniors **Colton Smith** and **Dakota Emerson** (right) for project: "Foreseen Ethylene: An Ethane Cracker Design."



"Lavender Academic Excellence Award," from LGBTQ+ Initiatives Committee, given to Sociology junior **Alexa Heng** (left), for her award-winning research on understanding victims of sexual assault.



"Second Place: Antimicrobial Microbiology," ASM Texas Branch Spring Mtg. 2024, given to Chemistry Pre-Dental junior **Rima Shaaban** (right), for project: "Evaluation of essential oils for the anti-protozoal activity against Trichomonad pathogens." Her research partners included alum **Vishal Mundodi** (Class of 2023).



"This award...reinforced my belief that I belong in the COURTROOMS, board meetings, and even the SENATE floors I envision myself in."

—Toni Lopez Maldonado, awarded "Rising Star-Youth" by Hispanic Proactive Coalition



RISING STAR

Toni Lopez Maldonado, Political Science Junior

Political Science junior **Toni Lopez Maldonado** has inspired his peers with his perseverance in pursuing growth opportunities to help him fulfill his dream of being a lawyer.

He talked about initially struggling to find a sense of belonging as an immigrant, first-generation student, while being honored by the Hispanic Proactive Coalition as a young person making an impact in the Hispanic community of Southeast Texas. Today, he is a recognized campus leader at LU. This past academic year, he served as SGA Vice President, Smith-Hutson Scholarship Student Representative, and LU Hispanic Society Community Outreach Officer.

His accomplishments include being the first LU student selected as a Duke Law Fellow and a Korean American Society of Houston Scholar. This summer, he will study comparative politics in South Korea. He will then head to the Stanford Law Scholars Institute to learn from legal experts.

Awards & Recognitions

OUTSTANDING SENIOR WOMAN

Morgan Luke, Biochemistry Pre-Med Graduate:

Luke represented her honors community and Lamar University in numerous leadership roles, including President of AMSA, President of Helping Hands, SGA Junior Class Senator, and Service Chair of HSA. In recognition of her exceptional undergraduate journey, Luke received the Bess Gentry Award for Outstanding Senior Woman, accompanied by \$1,000, from the Division of Student Engagement. Luke aspires to be either a dermatologist or ENT specialist.



ANN SHAW LEADERSHIP AWARD

Sergio Mendez, Biology Pre-Med Junior:

Earning a \$1,000 award for fostering a spirit of teamwork and excelling in leadership, Mendez served his Cardinal Community as LU Ambassador, undergraduate researcher and LURA officer, Treasurer of SACNAS, Peer Mentor of HSA, and camp lead for Governor's Summer Merit Program. He is also involved with AMSA and LU Hispanic Society.



See Mendez on p. 17

SENIORS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Reaud Honors students recognized as 2024 Seniors of Significance:

Julia Barrett, Stephanie Barron, Angelie Bautista, Annabelle Broussard, Tomisin Egbewale, Kelvin Elgar, Dakota Emerson, David Haley, Kristin Hebert, Morgan Luke, Zaid Mohammed, and Lexus Wilkerson.



Florence Nightingale Leadership Award/

JoAnne Gay Dishman School of Nursing
Angelie Bautista, Nursing senior

Inaugural "Compy" Award/
LU Writing Center/ "From Saris to Soul Food: A Rhetorical Comparative Essay"

Mohamed Irhabi, Biology Pre-Med sophomore

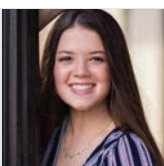
Helen and Larry Rose Dance Award/
LU Dance Team

Mollie McLeod, General Business senior



Pi Sigma Alpha National Political Science Honor Society

Honorable Mention: "Analyzing the Practical Implications of Consumer Data Privacy Policies: Exploring Data Brokerage and Surveillance Practices"
Halli Blank (Class of 2023)



Runner-Up: "State Court Innovation: The Court Backlog Reduction Simulator"
Peyton McLaurin, Political Science junior





AT OUR SPRING BANQUET: DEAN TILISA THIBODEAUX (ABOVE LEFT) AND ADVISOR AND SUCCESS COACH IMELDA TRISTAN (RIGHT).

BANQUET PHOTOS BY BRANDON GOUTHIER

Honors Awards

The Reaud Honors College is proud to announce our inaugural awards recognizing Honors Students of the Year and Honors Faculty of Distinction, launched in our 60th anniversary year and during Lamar University's centennial celebration. Our Honors student body continued our rich tradition of recognizing the Honors Professor of the Year. Congratulations to our prestigious recipients!

Honors Faculty of Distinction: Dr. Bianca Easterly (Associate Professor of Political Science), shown below with Dean Thibodeaux

Honors Professor of the Year: Dr. Ashwini Kucknoor (Associate Professor of Biology), shown below with incoming HSA President Rima Shaaban, who presented the award on behalf of HSA

Honors Student of the Year - Community: Annabelle Broussard (Chemical Engineering graduating senior), shown below, at left

Honors Student of the Year - Leadership: Kelvin Elgar (Chemical Engineering graduating senior), shown below, center

Honors Student of the Year - Research and Scholarship: Jennyfer Zarate (Biology Pre-Med graduating senior), shown below, at right

STEPPING UP CIVIC LEADERS

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

United Board of Missions:
Estrella Balderas (Biochemistry Pre-Dental senior)

Garth House:
Daisy Calero Estrella (Nursing junior)

Samaritan Counseling Center of Southeast Texas:
Jule Nguyen (Nursing senior)

Beaumont Main Street:
Kathy Nguyen (Computer Science and Electrical Engineering junior)

B.O.O.T.S. - Bringing Out Our Troop Sisters:
Grace Roy (Biology Pre-Med junior)

Watson Rare Native Plant Preserve:
Alyson Vu (Biochemistry Pre-Med junior)



Hear from our
Stepping Up
civic leaders!



Heading to Nike

"What does someone even do at Nike?" Chemical Engineering senior **Isaac Ramirez** can tell you! As a Product Creation Engineer intern at Nike, he had the unique opportunity to help create cutting-edge athletic gear! He said the experience taught him how "something that goes on your foot can turn into a matrix of considerations that takes many engineers to solve!"

Ramirez also gained valuable hands-on experience as an intern with Corteva Agriscience in Midland, Michigan, and Freeport, Texas. But Nike won his heart. He has accepted a position as Product Creation Engineer at Nike World Headquarters in Beaverton, Oregon.

Read Mary's
article on p. 17
.....

HONORS FACULTY OF DISTINCTION

HONORS PROFESSOR OF THE YEAR

HONORS STUDENTS OF THE YEAR



Imagine. Innovate. Impact. Inspire.

CHANGEMAKERS

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

(From top) Accounting graduates **Amber Martinez** and **Lexus Wilkerson** got a jump-start on their post-college careers at Walmart's Accounting Finance Development Program in Arkansas. They are shown with LU alum Lance Taylor, a corporate finance analyst at Walmart.

Home for the Holidays Ambassadors at Port Neches-Groves High School: **Camila Ortiz** (Accounting and Finance sophomore), **Alyvia Ott** (Interdisciplinary Studies freshman), **Raegan Nunley** (Mathematics sophomore), and **Peyton Jones** (Accounting and Finance sophomore).

HSA volunteers at the Charity Clay Shoot benefiting Hope Women's Resource Clinic: **Sergio Mendez** (Biology Pre-Med junior), **Dylan Pardo** (Biochemistry Pre-Med junior), **Grace Roy** (Biology Pre-Med junior), **Brenna Swanton** (Nursing senior), **Alyssa Harper** (Mechanical Engineering sophomore), **Natalie Dickens** (Biology freshman), and **Sanaa Rougeau** (Accounting sophomore). Back row: **Luke Sodolak** (Mechanical Engineering junior) and **Abraham Asabi** (Chemical Engineering senior).

Honors Seminar: Environmental Physiology students get in the weeds: **Ryan Servantes** (Biology Pre-Vet Med freshman), **Riley Trent** (Biology Pre-Med sophomore), **Ashton Rainey** (Biochemistry Pre-Med sophomore), and **Dr. Shannon Jordan**.

2024 STUDENT ORG OF THE YEAR

**NATIONAL STUDENT
SPEECH LANGUAGE
HEARING ASSN.**

*Advocated for issues relevant
to the field of speech-language
pathology and audiology within
the university community
and beyond. President Mary
Wernig (shown).*



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**.

Josh Daspit, 2004: Co-Created Family Business Research Productivity Ranking at Texas State University; participated in the Global Family Business Think Tank.

Steven Trahan, 2005: Hired as Senior Software Development Engineer at Amazon Web Services in Austin.

Stephanie Kelsey, 2006: Promoted to Ambulatory Clinical Director for Value-Based Payment Programs at University of Texas Medical Branch.

Oscar Villanueva, 2007: Promoted to Senior Bible Instructor at Second Baptist School in Houston.

Amanda Pooler, 2009: Hired as certified ESL teacher at Silsbee Elementary School.

Raul Ponce, 2010: Hired as Director of Product Management at Spiral based in New York City.

Laura Whitmire, 2010: Promoted to Director of Enrollment Management at Notre Dame High School in St. Louis.

Cameron Campbell, 2011: Hired as Site Reliability Engineer at Honeywell in Bryan.

Kaitlynn Pate, 2011: Promoted to Laboratory Department Head at ExxonMobil

Kayleigh Romero, 2013: Graduated with EdD in Instructional Systems Design and Technology at Sam Houston State University.

Christine Zabala, 2013: Hired as Visiting Assistant Professor of Higher Education and Student Affairs at University of Iowa.

Brandon Laird, 2014: Hired as Band Director at Texas A&M University.

Paul Rizk, 2014: Hired as Orthopedic Oncologist at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

Lauren Schuldt, 2015: Promoted to Development Coordinator for Annual Giving at Lamar University.

Yanni Thomas, 2015: Hired as Senior CME Coordinator at Houston Methodist.

Bernard Yett, 2015: Graduated with PhD in Electrical Engineering from Vanderbilt University; hired as Assistant Professor at Stevens Institute of Technology.

Tyler Doiron, 2016: Hired as Algorithm Engineer at Magna International in Detroit.

Jason Hatton, 2016: Promoted to Senior Data Engineer at Simplifi based in Fort Worth.

Kristeen Reynolds, 2016: Won NFL Players Association Pitch Competition of 2024 as founder of DrinKicks. See alumna profile for more updates!

Julia Carter, 2017: Promoted to Tier 2 Customer Support/HMIS Specialist at Bonterra software development.

Macy Morehead, 2017: Graduated with MS in Nursing from UT-Arlington; board certified as a Neonatal Nurse Practitioner.

Bailey Brevell, 2018: Graduated with DO from Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine; selected for pediatric residency at Baylor College of Medicine.

Progga Chirontoni, 2018: Awarded Pathfinder Award for Excellence for Community Service and for Collaboration, from HDR; awarded “Most Interesting Trash” and “Trashiest Section” at Annual Texas Water Conference.

Katherine Deaton, 2018: Promoted to Senior Engineer at Samsung Semiconductor in Austin.

John Ellis, 2018: Promoted to Program Management Senior at Lockheed Martin in Fort Worth.

Linda Pham, 2018: Awarded Steinhagen Fellowship from Lamar University.

Joshua Davis, 2011: Named Young Professional of 2023 by the Greater Beaumont Chamber of Commerce; contributed to honors community in an NSSLHA Alum Chat about the importance of nonprofits in healthcare. Today, Joshua is Vice President of Development-East Region at Legacy Community Health.



Caitlyn Barlow, 2023:
Process Engineer at Smurfit Westrock, Barlow helped inspire grade school kids at COE's Discover Engineering extravaganza!

COURTESY COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING;
UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, ALL ALUMNI
PHOTOS COURTESY THOSE FEATURED

Hannah Carlson, 2019: Hired as Children's Book Story Team Lead at Brave Books.

Johnny Frazier, 2019: Promoted to Crude Coordinator at ExxonMobil.

Cade Johnson, 2019: Graduated with MD from UT Health Houston; selected for medical residency in Emergency Medicine at UT Health Houston.

Victoria LaFleur, 2019: Hired as Junior Corporate Counsel at Dickey's Barbecue Restaurants in Dallas.

Alexus Locke, 2019: Hired as Clinical Research Team Lead at Emory University School of Medicine.

Madison Marino, 2019: Promoted to Senior Research Associate at Heritage Foundation in Washington, DC.

Natalie Sfeir, 2019: Awarded ASHA's Distinguished Early Career Professional Award; hired as Speech Language Pathologist at Tufts Medical Center.

Riley Almufti, 2020: Graduated with MS in Psychology-Industrial & Organizational from Lamar University.

Patricia Correa, 2020: Hired as UI Designer at Marriott International.

Jordan Curl, 2020: Selected for medical residency in Family Medicine at Lonestar Family Health.

Areli Garcia, 2020: Hired as Marketing Coordinator for MJH Life Sciences in Rockland, Maryland.

Omar Hamza, 2020: Selected for medical residency in Psychiatry at Harvard University.

Govin Kaggal, 2020: Hired as Associate at Latham & Watkins in Houston.

Raegan Minaldi, 2020: Hired as Criminal Defense Associate Attorney at Gertz Kelley Law Firm; contributed to honors community in a Pre-Law Society Alum Chat.

Rebekah Newell, 2020: Named 2023 Coach of the Year for Girls' Tennis by Southeast Texas Coaches Association.

Bonnie Ruten, 2020: Promoted to Senior Mission Integration Engineer in Space Flight Operations at Axiom Space in Houston.

Makenzie Sattler, 2020: Graduated with MBA in Business Administration from Lamar University.

Casey Smith, 2020: Hired as Human Resources Specialist at US Environmental Protection Agency in Denver.

Melissa Torres, 2020: Hired as Community Health Worker at Loyola Medicine.

Abbey Brown, 2021: Graduated with MS in Speech-Language Pathology from Lamar University.

Katelyn Maxwell, 2021: Promoted to Orbital Debris Project Engineer at Aerodyne Industries in Houston.

Katey McCall, 2021: Graduated with JD from Texas Tech School of Law.

Erin Sims, 2021: Hired as Academic Advisor at Lamar University.

Alexis Sturrock, 2021: Recognized among “40 Under 40” by Southeast Texas Young Professionals Organization.

Erin Taylor, 2021: Hired as Registered Nurse at Texas Children's Hospital.

Emily Alvarez, 2022: Graduated with MBA in Business Administration from Lamar University; hired as Recruitment and Marketing Manager for Gadolin Research and is on-air host for Telemundo Beaumont-Port Arthur/Lake Charles station.

Taliah Belcher, 2022: Hired as Pathways Intern at NASA.



Nicole Lavergne, 2021:
Jumping for joy over earning a Certificate of Clinical Competency and the research publication of “In the Driver's Seat: Narrative-Based Counseling in Aphasia” in the June 2024 issue of *Perspectives of the ASHA Special Interest Groups*.
By JACOB BREAUX (CLASS OF 2023)

Jesse Carter, 2022: Graduated with MS in Professional Accounting from Lamar University.

César Delgado, 2022: Hired as 4th Grade Writing Teacher at Port Arthur ISD.

Morgan Dollar, 2022: Hired as 6th Grade ELA and History Teacher at Little Cypress Junior High School.

Wesley Lewis, 2022: Promoted to Process Engineer at Arkema.

Andrew Zinck, 2022: Hired as Financial Analyst at Freudenberg Flow Technologies in Houston.

Jacob Breaux, 2023: Hired as Video/Photography Coordinator at Lamar University.

Arturo Gonzalez, 2023: Hired as Technology Specialist at BASF.

Kaylee Goodspeed, 2023: Awarded National Scholarship from Omicron Delta Kappa for 2023-2024.

Grace Harmond, 2023: Hired as Quality Control Gas Chromatography Chemist at Altivia Specialty Chemicals in La Porte.

Sheridan Kees, 2023: Graduated with MS in Professional Accounting from Lamar University.

Jacob Murphy, 2023: Elected Student Bar Association President at University of Texas School of Law.

Hannah Norwood, 2023: Contributed to honors community in an AMSA and Pre-Physician Assistant panel.

Katie Page, 2023: Hired as Equipment Engineer at Samsung Semiconductor in Austin.

Stefany Rico, 2023: Graduated with Master of Social Work from University of Houston.

Darya Romashets, 2023: Graduated with MBA in Healthcare Administration from Lamar University.

Jennifer Tsan, 2023: Promoted to LEAD Engineering Program Member at Wabtec Corporation.

Catherine Twing, 2023: Contributed to honors community in an AMSA and Pre-Physician Assistant panel.

Nicholas Wade, 2023: Hired as Junior Software Developer at Richard engineering, procurement, and construction firm.

Jeri Wolfe, 2023: Hired as Research, Engagement, and Learning Library Specialist at Mary and John Gray Library at Lamar University; board member of Augusta's Angels, nonprofit she served as a student.

Lily Yoder, 2023: Contributed to honors community in an O.U.R. Undergraduate Research Alum Chat.



Nasim Abdelwahab, 2019:
Inspiring the next generation of aerospace engineers with a campus visit! Today, Nasim is a mechanical engineer at Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin. Enjoyed catching up with our former HSA President.

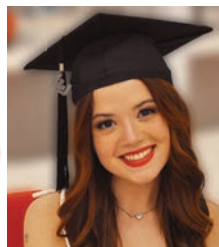




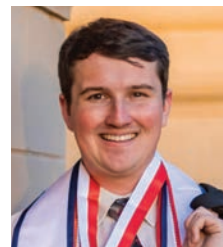
2023 – FALL GRADUATES



Join our RHC Alumni Group on LinkedIn!



Halli Blank



Grafton Conger



Katherine Correa



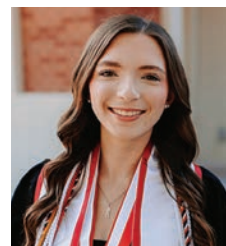
Camille Fam



Shelby Fryer



Shelby Graham



Shelby Guest



Arielle Hickerson



Arizbeth Lopez Garcia



Amber Martinez



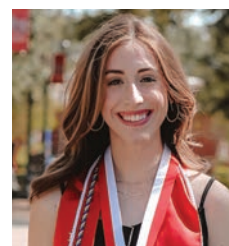
Avery McLain



Nicholas Northrup



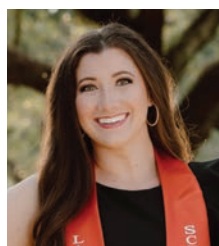
Grace Richard



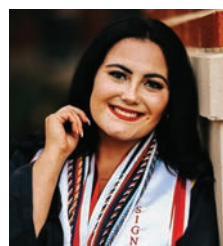
Melanie Sharpton



Megan Tan



Madison Taylor



Shelbie Williams



Jeri Wolfe



Teri Wolfe



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 2023** and **Spring 2024** Reaud Honors College Graduates albums.



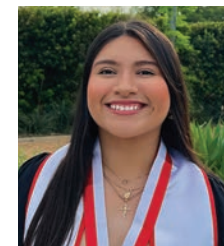
2024 – SPRING/SUMMER GRADUATES



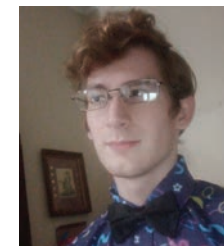
Luis Arevalo



Kristin Baker



Stephanie Barron



Reese Bonin



Annabelle Broussard



Byanca Cabrera



Kaitlyn Cherry



Kristen Crippen



Deidre Dages



Camren Dionne



Tomisin Egbewale



Kelvin Elgar



Dakota Emerson



Kristin Hebert



Abby Hoffpaur



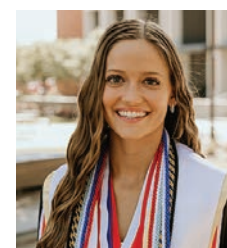
Katherine Holly



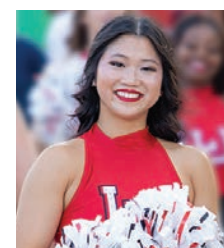
Gabrielle Holston



Jacob Lindh



Morgan Luke



Mollie McLeod



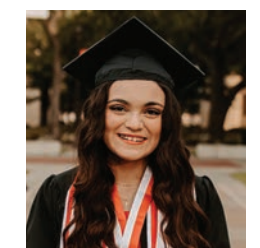
Zaid Mohammed



Jule Nguyen



Ella Oyakawa



Jaqueline Portillo



Isaac Ramirez



Colton Smith



Tyler Stuck



Lexus Wilkerson



Melody Youwakim



Jennyfer Zarate



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.



Reaud Foundation's *Bicycles and Bibles*: Winter Break Honors Experience

During Winter Break, Honors Student Association members helped spread holiday cheer to local families in need at the Reaud Foundation's "Bicycles and Bibles" event. (Front row) Sergio Mendez, Michael Vu, Daisy Calero Estrella, Adeline Tran, Elizabeth Drago, Annalise Briggs, and Kindall Saunier. (Back row) Megan Do, Montana Di Leo, Peyton Jones, Alyvia Ott, Alyssa Harper, and Bobby Barton.

By IMELDA TRISTAN

Imagine • Innovate • Impact • Inspire

HELLO

from our Dean



Greetings Honors College Cardinals and Alumni,

It has been a very exciting year in the Reaud Honors College!

The Reaud Honors College has completed its inaugural year of the Reaud Leadership Institute where nine outstanding scholars declared a minor in Honors Studies and committed to leading while they serve the Lamar community and beyond. The Reaud Leadership Institute is comprised of Southeast Texas Legends Scholars and Presidential Scholars, all of whom were awarded a full-ride scholarship to Lamar University, making up the top 4% of the honors student body. This past year, Reaud Leadership Institute students joined LU Ambassadors for Social Etiquette training and networking, participated in a Scholars Development Seminar as a cohort, attended our Top Scholars Banquet in their honor, volunteered at Honors Scholars Day, and participated in a Study Away experience with the Partners in the Park Program to Mammoth Cave, Kentucky, with members of the National Collegiate Honors Council. We are looking forward to an outstanding new crop of Reaud Leadership Institute students this upcoming year.

The Honors College has positioned itself to be the epicenter of innovation and collaboration through our various programs that serve as the connective thread between academic colleges across campus and in the community. One such contribution was our grant work with the Texas Workforce Commission Governor's Summer Merit Program, which involved Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas; Center for Midstream Management and Science; Center for Advances in Port Management; Spindletop Museum; Texas Academy; College of Engineering; and the College of Arts & Sciences. Together, we co-hosted Innovation Collaboration STEM camp for youth to expose students to post-secondary educational opportunities and engage them in learning experiences that allowed students to explore a STEM pathway as a future major or career option. In total, we hosted 134 campers over three weeks, and it was a tremendous success thanks to our outstanding Honors College staff, Lamar University staff, and community partners!

Highlights of our Honors College this past year included our very own Honors scholar selected as the Texas State University System Regents Scholar, Zaid Mohammed, who represented Lamar University as one of 90,000 students in the TSUS system! Twelve students were selected as outstanding Seniors of Significance by the Office of Student Engagement, eight won undergraduate research awards, four earned prestigious summer research fellowships, six students won multiple awards at Model United Nations, and six served on nonprofit boards, such as United Board of Missions and Garth House, through our Stepping Up Civic Leadership Program. Lastly, 10 honors scholars traveled this summer as part of Study Abroad and Partners in the Parks. We appreciate your support for our ongoing McMaster fund that offers these opportunities to our students!

Moving forward, we are looking forward to an exciting year ahead! We will be hosting innovative opportunities for our students, ranging from scholarships to new student leadership programs! As always, you are important to us, and we look forward to hearing from you. Please contact me if you wish to be invited to our alumni advisory council or wish to become involved with us. It would be our pleasure to connect with you!

-Dr. Tilisa Thibodeaux, Ed.D.

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



Hello from the Thibodeaux family to our honors alumni family! (From left) Ben, Sadie, Micah, and Tilisa.

COURTESY TILISA THIBODEAUX



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Honors Summer Read



BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH BOOKS

Alumni, read what we're reading! This past summer, faculty mentors invited current and incoming Reaud Honors College students to join their honors book clubs; the clubs will discuss the above books this Fall. Some of our honors students meet their closest friends in these clubs!