

CADENZA

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Honors Cardinals



CADENZA



COVER PHOTO:
Alumnus Christopher Hagner gives us an inside look into Oklahoma City's first big pro sports win.
COURTESY CHRISTOPHER HAGNER

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A Good Place for All of Us

How Honors Cardinals create a powerful cycle of mentorship, action, and legacy

The spirit of volunteering through action reverberates throughout our Honors Cardinal community.

Some of us hit the ground running, during our undergraduate years, while others discover ways to contribute later in life, during post-graduate studies and careers.

Echoed across generations of Reaud Honors College service leaders, from alumni to current students, are stories of collaboration and collective aspiration. Ryan Servantes, a Reaud Fellow on a track and field scholarship, attributes these traits as success factors behind nonprofits that amplify the impact they make in their communities.

"I learned that running a nonprofit requires people working with one another toward one common vision," he said. "Despite differences in opinion on how to tackle specific issues, I saw how leaders were able to respect one another and work to achieve their shared goal."

Service leadership is integral to the Reaud Honors College's mission to empower students to align their passions with a purpose to imagine, innovate, impact, and inspire our LU community and beyond. From mentees to leaders, current students carry on the torch that alumni have passed down.

A sophomore studying Biology Pre-Vet Medicine, Servantes gained hands-on experience in his field while grooming horses and aiding auctions at fundraising events for Stable-Spirit, a nonprofit whose board he served through our college's Stepping Up initiative.

His experience serving the Southeast Texas community as a college student mirrors that of **Carlos Caballero (Class of 2018)** who applied



Where Are They Now?

(Clockwise from top) Danny Mortensen (Class of 2012) is a Senior Grants Manager at the Special Olympics; Alexis Sturrock (Class of 2021) is Director of Operations at CASA of Southeast Texas; and Arizbeth Lopez Garcia (Class of 2023) is attending medical school in Mexico City.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY ALUMNI CITED

his Mechanical Engineering studies to his work with Bridges of Hope. He transitioned from a Stepping Up student leader to a board member in 2019 and continued to help lead the job placement and educational support nonprofit that benefited at-risk women while he also worked as a Process Engineer in Improvement Projects at Optimus Steel. That is, until Bridges of Hope ceased operations in 2021.

"Something unexpected I learned was that when a program becomes unsustainable, you can choose to end it responsibly and still make significant contributions," he said. "When Bridges of Hope's long-term future was uncertain, the board took action to responsibly cease operations and flip the script by providing grants to other entities that could continue the organization's objectives. In the end, we had much to be thankful for and celebrate, and divesting our resources was the best way to pay it forward and continue the mission."

Today, Caballero works as a Commissioning Engineer for Amazon Web Services. "In my current company, I've found opportunities to volunteer with events like Destination Imagination, a nation-wide competition where students develop projects which help them learn valuable skills," he said, "and programs such as STEM Like ME, where I visited local schools to share my career journey with students."

Not all alumni were involved in service leadership as undergraduates. You might discover your passion for it while immersed in your careers, like **Joshua Davis (Class of 2011)** did. He combined his Criminal Justice degree with a Master of Public Health and now serves as Vice President of Development for the Eastern Region of Legacy Community Health. He gave back to his Honors Cardinals community by mentoring **Arizbeth**



"I've found opportunities to volunteer with events like Destination Imagination, a nation-wide competition where students develop projects which help them learn valuable skills..."

—Carlos Caballero (Class of 2018)

imagined how much we would learn and grow because of it. We went in hoping to make a difference in the lives of cancer patients. We not only achieved that, but also made a difference in each other's lives."

Cauthen now supports educational trainees on their career journeys as the Principal of Career Services at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. And she, along with Davis, continue to support and mentor honors students as Reaud Honors College Alumni Advisory Council members.

Outside of the Stepping Up initiative, Reaud Honors students make an impact on the Southeast Texas community in numerous ways.

One popular pathway is the Julie Rogers "Gift of Life" Program. Gift of Life is not just a volunteer organization—it is a living bridge between generations of Southeast Texas's most passionate advocates for cancer prevention.

Honors alum who have volunteered include **Brody McBee (Class of 2020)**, now an Associate Dentist at Redfield Smiles in South Dakota, and **Makenzie Sattler (Class of 2020)**, the HR Manager at G&G Enterprises Construction. Even an Honors Contract project contributed to helping spread awareness—**Byanca Cabrera (Class of 2024)** donated the brochure about cervical cancer she created in Ms. Kelli White's class to Gift of Life.

Current students in the Reaud Honors College continue to take up service leadership roles today with the nonprofit.

Reaud Fellow and Chemical Engineering junior Peyton Lee mentors

Joshua Davis (Class of 2011) frequently works with community partners in his role as Vice President of Development for the Eastern Region of Legacy Community Health. He stands here with one of them, Kayla White, the Director of the Southeast Texas Nonprofit Development Center. She is also our partner for our college's Stepping Up initiative!

high school students as a Gift of Life Youth Council Peer Advisor.

Last November, I, Saad Mohammed, and my fellow LU Ambassador peers Waverlee Cooper and Ashton Burch spoke at a Youth Council event to offer tips on how to navigate college, share best practices for balancing school and volunteering, and answer questions posed by youth council students.

The spirit of "mentorship through action" especially comes alive through fundraising programs led by students. Biology Pre-Med senior Campbell Fuller is a dedicated volunteer who has assisted in men's prostate cancer screenings and at fundraising events, such as Champagne & Ribs. Through Alpha Tau Omega, Fuller demonstrated creative philanthropy by using campus energy to raise funds for good causes. His 24-hour "Bike against Cholangiocarcinoma" was not just a fun event for campus pride and the students to enjoy a laugh. Rather, Fuller raised \$6,000 to assist research for this rare bile duct cancer.

"These events may look fun on the outside—and they are—but at their core, they're about people coming together to make a real difference," Fuller said.

Sometimes the opportunities students reach for on their own lead to leadership never imagined. **Alexis Sturrock (Class of 2021)** developed an immense passion for foster children after volunteering at an orphanage in Costa Rica in 2015, four years prior to entering Lamar University.

She turned to undergraduate research and, as a David J. Beck Fellow, mentored by Dr. Ginger Gummelt, Sturrock examined "The Evolution of Childhood Violence" while coordinating with members of the U.S. Congress,



White House staff, and the deans of HBCUs across the nation during her work as a marketing intern at the HBCU National Center in Washington, D.C.

"The David J. Beck Fellowship was a turning point in my journey. It gave me the confidence and resources to pursue leadership early in my career and helped build the foundation for my work today," she said. "Through my role as a director at CASA of Southeast Texas and as co-chair of the SETX Strong Families Coalition, I continue to live out the values I learned at Lamar. My goal is always to serve others in ways that prepare, empower, and equip them to make an impact in their own communities."

Sturrock's journey to her role today as Director of Operations at CASA of Southeast Texas included an undergraduate internship at Girls' Haven, where she assisted in treatment plans, intake assessments, and crisis interventions for at-risk youth with community partners that included CASA.

"Some of my favorite LU memories come from my time working as a Resident Assistant and interning at Girls' Haven," she said. "Those experiences taught me that leadership starts in the small, consistent acts of showing up, listening well, and putting others first. I carry those lessons with me every day."



"...true leadership comes from humility, compassion, and the courage to step into difficult spaces for the good of others."

—Alexis Sturrock (Class of 2021)

After graduating from Lamar University, she earned her Master of Social Work at the University of Houston and was hired as Executive Director at IEA, a nonprofit that supports educational programming and rehabilitative services for at-risk youth. Now that she is at CASA, Sturrock is living out her dream—helping secure safe and permanent homes for children.

"Service leadership is not just part of my work; it is the foundation of who I am as a professional and as a person," she said. "Lamar University, the Social Work program, and the Reaud Honors College shaped my values in ways that continue to guide me every day. They taught me that true leadership comes from humility, compassion, and the courage to step into difficult spaces for the good of others. I constantly ask myself, how can I better serve my clients, my peers, my coworkers, and ultimately, my community?

"I am incredibly grateful for the people and programs at Lamar who believed in me and helped shape the leader I am today. I hope my story can inspire other students to lead with purpose, integrity, and service at the center of all they do."

Another alumni who started flourishing as a servant leader at Lamar University is **Danny Mortensen (Class of 2012)**, who grew up in Colombia and finished high school in Panama. He was active in college ministry as an undergraduate. Today, he is a Senior Grants Manager at the global headquarters of Special Olympics in Washington, DC, where his team provides resources that promote quality healthcare for people with intellectual

disabilities. Thanks to Spanish fluency, he is able to steward quality relationships with colleagues in Latin America. Last year, he supported events in Chile, Paraguay, and Peru.

"My college ministry group taught me to prioritize people before career aspirations. My professors in the Department of Sociology taught me to think outside the box about the world, and they created friendly environments for students who didn't always fit societal norms. They may not know that they modeled that for me, but they did," he said. "I think that helped foster empathy and curiosity in me long-term. Those are crucial qualities in any professional environment. Washington, DC, has a pretty intense work culture, so I count myself lucky to have this background."

Service is not a solitary act; it is a cycle of mentorship, action, and legacy.



Biology Pre-Med senior Campbell Fuller volunteered at this year's Champagne & Ribs fundraiser to benefit Gift of Life's prostate cancer and men's health programs.

GIFT OF LIFE PHOTO COURTESY CAMPBELL FULLER; PORTRAIT BY IMELDA TRISTAN

Honors Cardinals who volunteer as undergraduates are not just completing tasks—they are honing skills that will ripple into future careers and communities.

Such experiential learning is the foundation of the Reaud Honors College. Honors students do not just take honors-level classes; they put what they learn into practice. They do so in the Stepping Up nonprofit boardrooms, where students learn the importance of advocacy. They do so with community partners, where laughter and service intersect. They do so through alumni mentorships that turn classroom knowledge into change.

As current students like Servantes, Lee, Fuller, and their peers continue their service leadership, they are not only honoring the alumni who paved the way for them, but also extending an invitation to the next generation of Honors Cardinals to join them.

To the alumni reading this: your stories and mentorship inspire this wave of students. To current students: your passion sustains this cycle. And to the community: The Reaud Honors College Cardinals are just getting started. 





NMUN—Yesterday and Today

A legacy of leadership at National Model United Nations

From Washington, DC, to New York City—the Reaud Honors College's Model United Nations teams have built strong peer relationships and developed effective diplomacy and negotiating skills while competing at National Model United Nations, the largest conference of its kind in the world.

We're sharing the highlights from this year's conference while also looking back at our 2019 and 2016 delegations to see where our alumni are today!

As a delegate myself with our 2025 El Salvador delegation, I enjoyed working with my teammates in the Honors Topics class this Spring to prepare to solve global issues through a

mock simulation of the United Nations. Our Model United Nations program was led by Dr. Maria Vallejo and assisted by Dean Tilisa Thibodeaux.

Once we arrived in New York City for the conference, we represented El Salvador in:

General Assembly 1 (*Bianka Paciorek* and me, *Michael Vu*); General Assembly 2 (*Toni Lopez Maldonado*); General Assembly 3 (*Tiolu Akinwunmi*); Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (*Jenny Tu* and *Faith Cheng*); and United Nations Environment Assembly (*Blake Pena*).

Lopez-Maldonado, assisted with research by classmate George Godsi,

was awarded "Outstanding Position Paper" for his research, analysis, and delivery on the issues "Promoting Sustainable Production and Consumption Patterns" and "Closing the Financing Gap to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals."

Although the conference was academic, the trip provided us a chance to interact with big city life, ranging from exploring the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Broadway to sightseeing at the Brooklyn Bridge.

Our time spent in New York City was truly inspiring. Going to the conference and connecting with students across the globe with



Who would visit New York City without grabbing a slice from Famous Joe's Pizza? Our pizza models are: Toni Lopez Maldonado and Jenny Tu from the 2025 delegation and (inset) Ayah Hamza from the 2016 delegation.

2025 PHOTO COURTESY TONI LOPEZ MALDONADO; ALL OTHER MUN PHOTOS COURTESY REAUD HONORS COLLEGE



Outstanding Position Paper winners at NMUN-NYC: Toni Lopez Maldonado from the 2025 delegation won while representing El Salvador's interests. Alexandria Toledo and Tara Hoch won as Botswana delegates in 2016.

2025 COURTESY TONI LOPEZ MALDONADO

ALEX & TARA
Alexandria Toledo is a *Registered Nurse* in Houston; Tara Hoch is a *Financial Banker* at PNC Investments in Beaumont.



MACKENZIE SAVAGE
UNM School of Medicine Student
mentoring future native medical students
@ Home tribe Cherokee Nation in Tahlequah, OK, with ANAMS chapter



RAEGAN MINALDI
One of 12 LSU law students inducted into Order of Barristers for advocacy
@ Gertz Kelley Law Firm as associate attorney in criminal defense



MAISSA SALIBI
Univ. of Alabama School of Law Student
tying studies to Lebanon homeland
@ Fall 2025: Human Rights Law study on mass tort litigation after 2020 Beirut port explosion



TIFFANY TRAN
ASDA Advocacy Chair and Student at UTHealth Houston School of Dentistry
@ TDA Legislative Day 2025



Spotted On Campus
BRA'AH HAMDAN (2019 DC Delegate)

LSS Analyst at Motiva

In Spring 2025, she gave back to her Management Info Systems community as the guest speaker for "Exploring MIS."

PHOTO COURTESY KAKOLI BANDYOPADHYAY

Learning about the journeys undertaken so far by our honors alumni delegates encourages current students today to reflect on our career aspirations and personal hobbies to see what we may also carry with us from our National Model United Nations adventure.

The greatest takeaways from the experience are to dream big, work hard, and live life to the fullest! ☀



Spotted On Campus
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PHOTO COURTESY KAKOLI BANDYOPADHYAY

For Honors Cardinals, National Model United Nations is not about winning awards or being the most recognized delegation. But rather the experience allows students to collaborate with peers from all over the globe and inspires us to think critically about our roles as society's future leaders.

Learning about the journeys undertaken so far by our honors alumni delegates encourages current students today to reflect on our career aspirations and personal hobbies to see what we may also carry with us from our National Model United Nations adventure.

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2019 DC Delegates



CADE PELLERIN
Mechanical Engineer at Hargrove Engineers & Constructors in Beaumont. Cade is shown with Madison Taylor (Class of 2023) at Tour du Mont Blanc this July 2025.



DAVID WILLIAMS
Technical Support Engineer at KSB by Standard Alloys in Port Arthur.

David is also a community theatre actor and pianist at Southeast Texas Stages.



TRAN NGUYEN
Pathology Resident at Duke University School of Medicine.



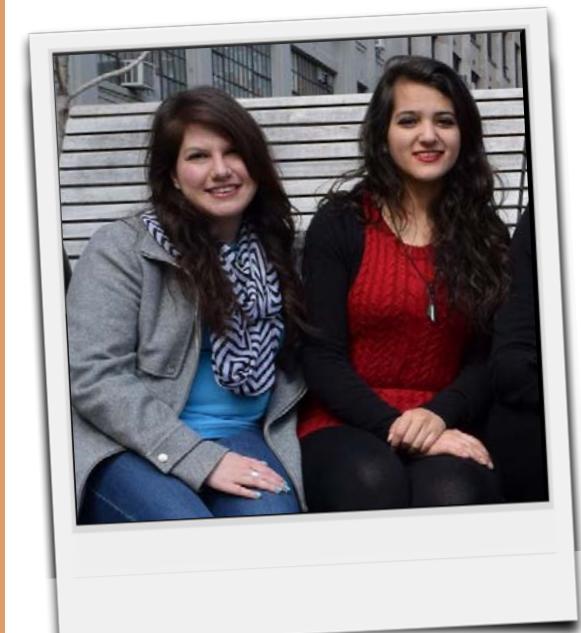
Award-winning MUN delegate partners both earned Juris Doctorates in May 2025!



BRENDON & ALI
Brendon Camp (left) earned his JD from Harvard Law School and Ali Hamza (right) earned his JD from UT-Austin School of Law.



At the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, our 2019 delegation: (front row) Mackenzie Savage, Maissa Salibi, Raegan Minaldi, Tran Nguyen; (back row) Tiffany Tran, David Williams, Himani Vithanage, Cade Pellerin, Ali Hamza, and Brendon Camp.



SHELBY MURPHY
Student Program Coordinator at UT-Austin



AMIRAH MOHAMMAD
Vice President, Corporate & Regulatory Counsel for U.S. Century Bank in Doral, Florida

As 2016 delegates in New York City, Shelby Murphy and Amirah Mohammad checked out the High Line, a park converted from an elevated railway.



Lessons Learned in China | Exploring Dry Needling

By: Exercise Science senior Jenny Tu

Sports medicine treatments around the world can vary based on cultural practices and available resources.

As a STEM senior whose passion piques more on the biomechanical side of science, I aspire to discover how different orthopedic treatments will affect a patient in the long term.

I traveled to China in Summer 2024 to learn from doctors at Liuzhou People's Hospital. For a month, I explored how Western medicine and traditional Chinese Medicine are brought together by dry needling.

I spent my first week observing orthopedic surgeries that included hip replacement, ORIF for humerus fracture, and leg amputation. The remainder of my time was spent observing rehab protocols in the outpatient clinic at the Physical Rehabilitation department.

Three days out of the week, I worked with Dr. Xing Le Qin (shown with me below), an experience that opened my mind and changed the way I was initially taught to examine an issue.

Dr. Qin taught me to not only examine the origin of pain, but also the body as a whole. To truly cure someone's pain, you must consider treating other parts, not only the part in pain. Locating the root of the problem is the most effective treatment plan.

Following this theory, most lower body pain is caused by the hip, while upper limb issues are usually caused by the shoulder or the shoulder blade.

Dr. Qin mainly uses dry needling, but he also incorporates Chinese acupuncture.

The American Physical Therapy Association defines dry needling as the use of "a thin filiform needle



Lessons Learned in China | Exploring Dry Needling

By: Exercise Science senior Jenny Tu



to penetrate the skin and stimulate underlying myofascial trigger points, muscular, and connective tissues for the management of neuromusculoskeletal pain and movement impairments."

This method has proven effective in treating issues with the muscular-skeletal system, but also internal issues, including insomnia, indigestion, tremors, and even bladder control.

I am grateful for my time at Liuzhou People's Hospital, which taught me a new way to consider how I will apply my studies as an Exercise Science student concentrating in Pre-Physical Therapy, with my goal of helping people through the field of Sports Medicine. This cultural experience was a great introduction to staying attuned to global knowledge!



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY JENNY TU

Alumnus Focus | CHRISTOPHER HAGNER

Analyzing a Championship

Christopher Hagner developed his math skills as a business analyst and helped an NBA team give Oklahoma City its first professional sports win

Statistics and math move across the screen as **Christopher Hagner (Class of 2016)** watches NBA professionals play.

How did he get there? After receiving a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics with a focus in Statistics, Hagner developed his reputation as an analyst at Colony Brands in Monroe, Wisconsin, before becoming a Business Intelligence Analyst for NBA's Minnesota Timberwolves and then taking a management position for NBA's Oklahoma City Thunder.

"I had to basically take all the math and critical thinking I developed at Lamar and use it to keep growing my skills. After a while, I found myself improving and now I'm doing what I love most," Hagner described his journey into the sports arena.

Hagner has a lifetime fascination with numbers. Among his most-loved classes at LU was Numerical Analysis. He toolled around with MATLAB, Robotics and Intelligent Control Systems (RICS), and Customer Relationship Management (CRM). He built his work ethic conducting alumni research and data analysis as an intern for the University Advancement Division.

Since he is an analyst for an NBA team today, most might assume

This summer, Christopher Hagner (Class of 2016) celebrated OKC Thunder's first NBA championship win—along with half a million thrilled fans!!! Yet Hagner is not only leading business intelligence for the NBA team—he is also teaching the next generation Sports Analytics as an adjunct professor at Oklahoma Christian University. He is proud to play a role in educating youth with leadership tools and real-world-based knowledge.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY CHRISTOPHER HAGNER



that Hagner was a student athlete; however, Hagner played sports casually. He spent much of his college career invested in organizations dedicated to leadership, collaboration, and, of course, math.

Hagner teamed up with friends to convince the Alpha Tau Omega organization to recognize the Lamar University fraternity as a chapter. He describes his experience as a founding father of the LU chapter as "starting your own small business right from the ground up. We had to plan all kinds of events, keep track of budgets, raise money for philanthropy, and everything else a fraternity does, but with minimal guidance on how to make everything happen."

Dead Poets Society and Math Club provided Hagner informal hangouts with a close-knit circle of friends. Groups of students met up once a week to discuss more intricate mathematics that required a deeper level of thinking.

The math clubs empowered Hagner to develop his critical thinking, while his Honors Logic class helped him understand how math contributes to the everyday life that we live. He discovered how his own mind processes thoughts by utilizing logic and philosophy, saying he developed a talent for "spotting logical inconsistencies and fallacies."

Seeing math in everyday life empowers him as the Business Intelligence & Analytics Manager for Oklahoma City Thunder. Hagner started as an analyst in March 2019, one year before the COVID-19 pandemic struck. He was forced outside of his comfort zone when everyone needed to start working remotely. Business Analytics has taught him how to work in a fast-paced environment, handle multiple



Honors Cardinal Memories! (From left) Christopher Hagner as a Class of 2016 graduate; showing his Cardinal pride at a football game; and sharing his Alpha Tau Omega leadership awards.

projects, and collaborate with various departments. He had successfully worked with different NBA teams, but working with an NBA team through a computer screen was hard. Yet COVID-19 gave Hagner one of his biggest career accomplishments.

"...I wouldn't be where I am today without what I learned in my undergrad."

During the global pandemic, Hagner and his team worked tirelessly to ensure that fans could watch games safely while adhering to NBA COVID policies. They created hundreds of pages of safety precautions, such as figuring out the math on the gradient of slopes to keep people six feet apart. Hagner is proud of his team's project, even though, ultimately, OKC Thunder prioritized health by playing without in-person fans during the 2021-22 season—the only NBA team to do so.

Where is Hagner now? He is still with OKC Thunder, working on lofty projects, such as winning another championship and building the OKC Arena scheduled to open by 2028.

But the biggest milestone to date came this summer, when OKC Thunder made history by winning its first NBA Championship.

"Winning the championship has been absolutely incredible," he said. "I feel the most joy in seeing the fans react to bringing the very first professional sports championship to OKC. This city and these fans have been through a lot, and it's incredible to see how, just over 30 years later, they can recover from the worst act of domestic terrorism in 1995 to getting an NBA franchise against all odds in 2008 to winning a championship in 2025. Seeing how much this meant to them really brought into perspective just how amazing sports can be and how it can make such a deep impact in so many lives."

"I'm grateful for all I get to do with the organization, and I'm very blessed to have learned so many relevant skills at Lamar. From creating statistical models in programs like R and Python, to learning all about amortization in my business minor, I wouldn't be where I am today without what I learned in my undergrad."



BY ASHTON RAINY, REAUD HONORS COLLEGE STUDENT

Faculty Profile | DR. SHANNON JORDAN

Stronger with Every Mile



BREAKING NEWS Track athletes Ryan Servantes, Riley Trent, and Ashton Rainey stand at far left with Dr. Shannon Jordan at "Wine and Weeds." Removing invasive weeds provided a real-world application of Dr. Jordan's Honors Seminar, "Environmental Physiology." Dr. Jordan teaches students the body's response to environmental conditions, such as why scuba divers get the bends, the difference between heat exhaustion and heat stroke, and if high altitudes have less oxygen. *BREAKING NEWS: Turn to p. 42 for an important Reaud Honors College staff update!!!*

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY DR. SHANNON JORDAN

As a distance runner, I've always been curious about how the body works under stress, what drives endurance, what aids recovery. I met Dr. Shannon Jordan the way many Lamar University students do, through a class. Ours was an online Honors Seminar, "Environmental Physiology," and despite the lack of in-person interaction, her presence

still came through: sharp, funny, and completely invested in her students. It wasn't until I worked alongside her in the garden, gloves on and tending to the weeds, that I began to truly appreciate what distinguishes her.

The event was the Mary Howell Garden Club's "Wine and Weeds," part social, part volunteer effort, part subtle

science lesson. We were picking invasive species at Beaumont Botanical Gardens. Aside from a brief conversation about cross country and small talk about the plants we were picking, I didn't know much about her. I knew she ran and worked in Exercise Science, but once I got to know Dr. Jordan, I truly began to understand who she is and how deeply

her career, research, and teaching are connected to the science of performance and the people behind it.

We talked about everything from training as a runner to the mindset needed to push through that last, brutal mile. "I ran a 5K with one contact lens," she told me with a grin. "Lost the lens mid-race. Finished one-eyed."

It was a small story, but it stuck with me. The determination and the grit.

Dr. Jordan's academic path started in a place far removed from tracks and trails. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Agronomy at Kansas State, with a focus on native range plants. But when a shift in her graduate program at Texas Tech introduced her to human physiology, she found a new path connecting her curiosity about plants to the people who consume them. Her research on green tea and its polyphenols served as a bridge between distinct scientific domains and

She teaches like a runner—intentional, adaptive, and always moving forward.

ultimately formed the foundation of her doctoral studies, in which she investigated the combined effects of exercise and green tea on glucose regulation in overweight, post-menopausal women. That may sound specific, but it's the kind of work that quietly pushes forward how we understand health and recovery.

Upon learning all this about Dr. Jordan, I talked with my teammate, Inca Padfield, who took Dr. Jordan's graduate course. Inca told me, "She's one of the few professors who actually listens when you speak. Like, she really hears you."

Hearing Inca's story didn't surprise me. I've seen it too, in casual conversations and class forums alike. Dr. Jordan doesn't just teach science; she models how to be present and how to lead with both knowledge and compassion. She also makes learning weirdly fun.

In one course, she ditched the textbook altogether and used journal articles instead. Students explored neuromuscular physiology through real-world studies and group debates. Another time, she led a project on the physics and physiology of race car driving.

Dr. Jordan said one of the most anticipated lessons each year is the department's annual VO₂ max test. This exercise allows graduate students to observe firsthand the physical and physiological demands placed on an individual pushing their body to its absolute limit. Inca also cited this as a favorite activity among the class.

Even Dr. Jordan's exam reviews incorporate creative elements, often featuring activities like crossword puzzles and group challenges. She designs these sessions to reinforce learning in a low-pressure environment, emphasizing engagement and understanding, rather than assessment, a distinctive aspect of Dr. Jordan's teaching approach. Learning with her never feels like box-checking; it feels like discovery.

What I admire most, though, is how she mentors. She always tells students, "You need to be the driver." She pushes them to pick research topics they care about, then trains them in every aspect: design, execution, presentation.

I remember her beaming as she talked about research mentee Kayla McKinley, who studied expired respiratory condensate in e-cigarette users and non-vapers. McKinley designed the study, ran the assays, presented the results, and nailed the Q&A.

As Department Chair of Health & Kinesiology, Dr. Jordan is setting new goals: growing faculty, improving advising, and transforming the lab with cutting-edge motion capture systems.

She's collaborating with the College of Engineering to elevate student research even more. There's this buzz during Cardinal View, Lamar's big recruitment event. Dr. Jordan loves it. She decorates her table, rallies student volunteers, that makes all the difference.



Dr. Shannon Jordan is energized by her own undergraduate research memories (top left) and marathon running (top right). In Spring, she traveled to Washington, DC, with Kayla McKinley (above) to meet with the U.S. Congress and advocate on behalf of undergraduate research.

and showcases the department like a proud coach showing off her team. "It's magical, but stressful," she said with a laugh. "Doesn't matter how tired I am, I'm awake for it."

When I asked her what advice she gives to women in the field, she didn't hesitate. "Confidence," she said. "You have to know you belong here."

As the first female exercise physiologist hired in her department, that advice isn't just theory, it's hard-won truth.

I have run plenty of races as a track athlete, but I think of teaching the way I think of distance running. It's about pacing, adjusting, knowing when to push and when to ease back. Dr. Jordan gets that. She teaches like a runner—intentional, adaptive, and always moving forward. For honors students like me, that makes all the difference.

First Texas Leadership Scholars

Honors Cardinals share their first year in the state-wide leadership program



Texas's high-achieving, community-oriented students at Lamar University can now take advantage of a state-funded, premier scholarship initiative!

During the 2024-2025 academic year, LU introduced its first cohort of Texas Leadership Scholars (TLS). The TLS program is a statewide initiative to foster leadership skills in students as they pursue higher education and was implemented in 2022 with 18

universities as members. This number now stands at 26 members. At LU, our inaugural cohort featured six Reaud Honors College students, plus three from College of Engineering, one from the College of Arts and Sciences, and one from School of Nursing.

Last September, these leadership scholars met each other for the first time in the Reaud Honors College Lounge, excited to learn what this program

Lamar University's first cohort of Texas Leadership Scholars: (first row, from left) Samantha Hatcher, Rachel Silva, Gabrielle Mayfield, Maddy Wernig, Rayna Christy, Shania Crawford, and Priya Rathore, with Dean Tilisa Thibodeaux. (Second row) Cayden Polozola, Kenneth Bibb, Carter Kuykendall, and Gerardo De La Torre.

ALL PHOTOS BY IMELDA TRISTAN UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

means for their future and about all of the benefits they can reap as dedicated participants. Dean Tilisa Thibodeaux and Ms. Imelda Tristan introduced themselves, setting the stage as advisers to guide the cohort throughout their leadership journey.

Within the group, the Honors Cardinals—Kenneth Bibb, Rayna Christy, Samantha Hatcher, Gabrielle Mayfield, Priya Rathore, and Maddy Wernig—were excited to work even more closely together.

"We'll all be Texas Leadership Scholars until we graduate, and for four years, we'll all be together," Samantha Hatcher said. "The community of it all is what I love about it."

This past year was filled with learning as the group got accustomed to the program, alongside sharing their own ideas of what the next year might bring. Scholars during this inaugural year were required to attend two check-in meetings and participate in extracurricular academic experiences each semester, as well as complete LU Lead and maintain a 2.5 GPA (honors students maintain a 3.5 GPA). Students who successfully meet these standards not only keep their scholarship, but also can continue to grow as leaders through their involvement in the program.

To ensure that students have equitable access to meet and surpass these requirements, students choose a mentor professor for their time at Lamar University. While all scholars are able to meet with Dean Thibodeaux and Ms. Tristan for any concerns, these mentor professors are chosen by the scholar from his or her department or area of study, allowing mentors to offer more major-based aid to benefit specific areas for improvement.

In addition to meeting these standards, two scholars went above and beyond in their involvement in the program. Wernig and Rathore represented the TLS program at this year's Honors Scholars Day.



Honors Inaugural Class of Texas Leadership Scholars

(From left, top row): Physics freshman Kenneth Bibb, Communication Journalism freshman Rayna Christy, and Theatre and Dance sophomore Samantha Hatcher. (Above): Nursing freshman Gabrielle Mayfield, Biology junior Priya Rathore, and Exercise Science freshman Maddy Wernig.

"It was really nice to be able to represent our cohort at Honors Scholars Day," Rathore said. "I was able to interact with so many people and explain what is so good about our program. It was a great way to showcase our current progress and future aspirations to people who were hearing about it for the first time."

While all six of us have the Honors Cardinal community in common, we enjoy collaborating with our leadership peers from other colleges. We all bring something different to the table when it comes to majors, backgrounds, and interests.

"I really enjoy the occasional collaboration with other TLS scholars," Rathore said. "Everyone in our cohort always has new, bright ideas that make me excited to learn more about them. I dare say that our TLS cohort is full of very interesting, colorful individuals who are worth befriending and getting to know more about."

The Honors Cardinals seated at the table are eager to bring a mirage of unique ideas to benefit our leadership community. At one of our first meetings, Mayfield sat to the right of Dean Thibodeaux. She is majoring in Health Sciences Pre-Nursing. Next

"TLS has shown me that leadership isn't just going up in front and telling people what to do. It's more collaborative.... You want to be a leader who serves the people, not a leader who wants people to serve you."



Texas Leadership Scholars presented leadership capstone presentations through LU Lead last Fall. (Clockwise from top left): Maddy Wernig; Kenneth Bibb; Gabrielle Mayfield; Samantha Hatcher; and Priya Rathore.

Wernig said she aims to "pursue leadership positions and mentorship opportunities."

By the end of her first year in the program, she was a student assistant in LU President Jaime Taylor's Office and was invited to be an LU Ambassador.

The diverse goals we all set for ourselves and share with our leadership peers encourage us to see into the minds of students outside of our circle of friends. Oftentimes, students might feel tied to their major and department when it comes to ideas; however, the Texas Leadership Scholars program provides students access to a wider variety of opinions and thoughts.

Yet my peers and I are not only contemplating ideas for our cohort. All

to her sat Hatcher, double majoring in English and Theatre. Following Hatcher was me, Christy, majoring in Communications Journalism, and Rathore, majoring in Biology Pre-Med. Bibb, double majoring in Mathematics and Physics, and Wernig, majoring in Exercise Science Pre-Occupational Therapy, rounded out our group.

Our insights and perspectives are heightened by the different goals we each have for our future.

For me personally, I set some leadership goals to help me achieve my dream of starting my own nonprofit. I'd like to gain experience working alongside nonprofit organizations and learn leadership skills from the board of these organizations.

In Spring 2025, I matched with the nonprofit United Way of Mid and South Jefferson County; I will provide a youth perspective to the board during the upcoming academic year. I also networked with journalism peers and was elected student body secretary for the statewide organization Texas Intercollegiate Press Association.

A recycling on campus pick-up walk was among the team building activities scholars participated in through LU Lead. (From left) Texas Leadership Scholars Rayna Christy and Samantha Hatcher join forces with Reaud Fellow Blaine Isom.

COURTESY NEW STUDENT AND LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS



of our meetings have had one recurring theme—planning the next year and coming years.

The help Cohort One can offer to future leadership scholars does not just begin at the start of the school year, when we will welcome the next group on campus. Hatcher hopes as the program evolves that incoming students will feel comfortable reaching out to older peers who can mentor them on how to make the most out of coming into college as a Texas Leadership Scholar.

"What's happening now is that people are a little bit shy and a little nervous to talk in the meetings. And I feel like if we just talked a lot more, it could be a little bit more enjoyable," Hatcher said. "Not that it's not enjoyable already, but just don't be scared of Cohort One essentially."

Mayfield echoed Hatcher's desire to be a strong peer mentor, adding even more advice for the incoming cohort.

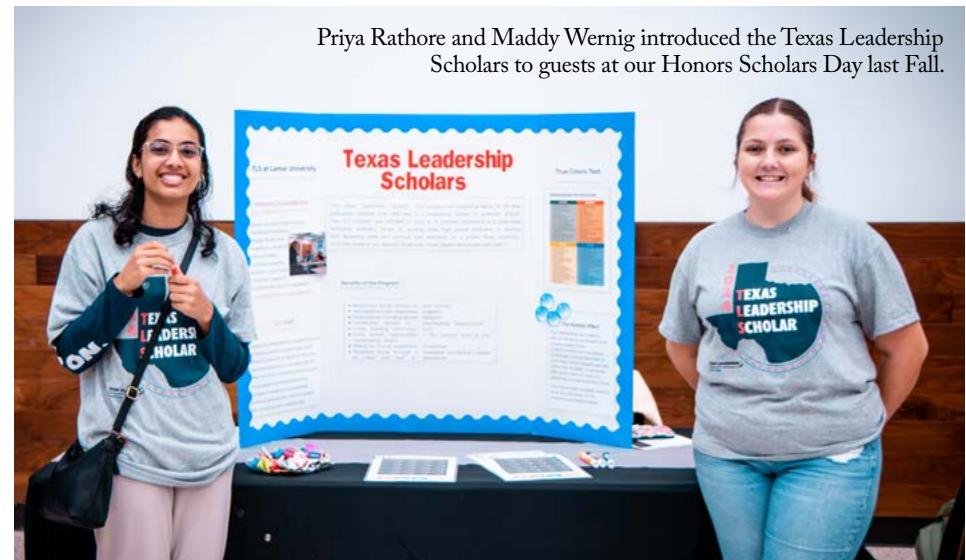
"Go to your Honors Conversations; they're really interesting," she said. "Really just try to meet the people in your cohort and make friends. It's a community that helps us succeed."

Not only does TLS aim to improve leadership skills, it also helps scholars develop a deeper understanding of the term leadership itself. For example, scholars were educated this year on the idea of servant leadership in comparison to the idea of power in leadership.

While our first cohort has met the requirements for this school year, we are nowhere near done growing as leaders. At our last check-in meeting of the year, a few ideas stood out to us that we look forward to carrying out.



Priya Rathore and Maddy Wernig introduced the Texas Leadership Scholars to guests at our Honors Scholars Day last Fall.



"I don't know what we're going to classify it as, but the mentor thing we are trying to implement, I'm really excited for that," Hatcher said. "I know they do it in a lot of sororities and fraternities, but I'm not in a sorority or fraternity. So this is like my version of that. I just hope that I get somebody who's interested in the advice I have to offer."

In addition to peer mentorship, our cohort also has ideas on how to increase engagement and expand knowledge of the program. Some ways we may do so include social events, volunteer events, and social media marketing. We want everyone to know how much this program helps our group of motivated individuals bond with each other while we grow as leaders.

"The best part of TLS was being able to have people to look to for support, at the very least socially or emotionally," Rathore said. "TLS helped me make more friends and get closer with Dr. Thibodeaux, Ms. Tristan, and my TLS mentor. I was also comforted knowing that I could always reach out to anyone in our program if I needed help."

As part of their leadership program, Texas Leadership Scholars joined honors peers at Honors Conversations led by faculty mentors throughout the year. This one led by Dr. Ashley Dockens (center) focused on building empathy in leaders.

BY ELIZABETH DIAZ ARREOLA, REAUD HONORS COLLEGE STUDENT

Bettering the Lives of Texans

A Texas Legislative Intern with healthcare goals shares life-changing experience



Politics and the political world have always felt out of my reach. As a first-generation Mexican-American Latina, I live a life inevitably shaped by the decisions of legislators and government agencies.

I first got involved in public policy during my sophomore year of high school. I worked with the city manager and library administrator in Dayton, Texas, to improve library resources that provide bilingual student activities, taking advantage of my skillset as a native Spanish speaker.

I gained a better understanding of how the decisions made by local, state, and federal officials trickled down to affect people like me. Yet my experience left some questions up in the air.

This Spring, during my junior year, I was in the first Reaud Honors cohort to participate in the Texas Legislative Internship Program (TLIP), supported by the Beaumont Foundation of America. I felt privileged to serve state government, discuss critical issues impacting our communities, and perform public service at the grassroots level.

Five Lamar University students lived in Austin to serve as Texas Legislative Interns in Spring 2025. (From left) Billy Rash, Elizabeth Diaz Arreola, Diana Resendez, Grace Mobley, and Steven Sedtal.

COURTESY TEXAS STATE LEGISLATURE; OTHER PHOTOS COURTESY ELIZABETH DIAZ ARREOLA



Through this experience, I became a better informed and well-rounded future healthcare provider and public servant.

Administered by the Mickey Leland Center on World Hunger and Peace at Texas Southern University, TLIP is an educational internship program sponsored by Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis.

Created in 1990, TLIP provides opportunities for Texas college students to intern at the Texas Legislature, in various state agencies, and in local government. This experience is a great way for students to initiate or focus a career in public service. Several TLIP participants now work in federal, state, or local government.

As an Exercise Science junior, I aspire to work as a Physician Assistant at a nonprofit or low-income clinic that specializes in pediatrics. In a world where marginalized communities need high quality care at increasing rates, the intersection of public policy and state government is crucial while making decisions that determine the approach and methodology healthcare providers can take.

I decided TLIP could teach me how I could: be a good advocate; identify the facts and data legislators need to understand the issues, particularly healthcare-related issues; and build relationships with constituents to help educate legislators about issues that affect the community.

Walking into the Texas State Capitol for the first time, for my TLIP Orientation, was nerve-wracking. Never had I been to Austin or the Capitol, much less interacted with representatives and senators. Orientation provided a crash course on the Texas Legislature and the extremely positive work environment and coworkers I had. Even the hardest of weeks were beautiful.

Over the course of the 89th Texas Legislative Session, this past January through June, I was privileged to serve as a

policy analyst intern for Honorable State Representative Josey Garcia, who represents House District 124 of Bexar County.

A product of the foster care system, Rep. Garcia served in the Air Force for 19 years, worked in healthcare, and was deeply involved in advocating for disadvantaged communities prior to being elected to serve in the House of Representatives. I got to work in the areas of veterans affairs, healthcare, affordable housing, juvenile justice, and child welfare—all areas important to me prior to my internship, so I was excited to dive into these realms.

I worked closely with the City of San Antonio, advocacy groups that included CASA and Texans Care for Children, and outspoken constituents on not only the 35 bills our office personally filed, but also thousands of other House and Senate bills. For my interactions with the public, I applied what I had learned last Fall, when I worked with board members serving CASA of Sabine Neches Region through the Reaud Honors College's Stepping Up program.

Every day, I joined my fellow interns in working on upward of 20 large and wide encompassing bills a day—which could be grueling. Yet working 90-plus hour seven-day work weeks felt worthwhile due to the passion I had for my work, the knowledge that I was actively involved in promoting policy to better the lives of Texans, and the extremely positive work environment and coworkers I had. Even the hardest of weeks were beautiful.

Through this experience, I became a better informed and well-rounded future healthcare provider and public servant. Everything I set out to learn at TLIP came to fruition.

For those interested in public service careers, participating in TLIP is a life-changing experience that brings connections, knowledge, and skills that will positively impact you for the rest of your professional career and life. I am deeply appreciative of my service as a TLIP intern for the 89th Legislature and will cherish this opportunity for the rest of my life. ☺





BY MARY WERNIG, REAUD HONORS COLLEGE STUDENT

Grit and Grades

The lifelong benefits of excelling as Honors student athletes

"It's hard to float the middle and feel like no one around you really gets it, but to that I say, 'How lucky are you to experience two incredible things at once? You GET to be a division one athlete, and you GET to be an RHC student."

Mackenzie Savage (Class of 2022) excellently articulates the special power Lamar University students must cultivate within themselves to successfully perform at the top level, as both an academic and an athlete.

Historically, stereotypes play a significant role in shaping the lives of students in K-12 and higher education. Students find themselves sorted into social groups based on their hobbies, interests, and on-campus involvement. But what about those students who don't fit perfectly into categories like "nerd" or "jock"? What about the students who fit into both?

Some Honors Cardinals find themselves in this exact situation, versatile enough to excel in both academics and athletics. They successfully

Reaud Honors Student Athletes (Top, from left) Track athletes Bianka Paciorek, Riley Trent, and Lauren Polk; Cheer Team with Kye Ana Washington in middle (wearing leg brace); golfer Rory Bennet; tennis athlete

Megan Do. (Middle) Dance Team Jacy Lognion (second) and Mollie McLeod (far right); Gold Medalist Ashton Rainey; golfer Montana Di Leo. (Bottom) Track athletes Ryan Servantes and Kenneth Bibb.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY LAMAR UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS; SPORTS COLLAGE DESIGNED BY MEGHAN RAPP

balance meticulous course loads, various social commitments, and long, grueling practices in the sweltering Southeast Texas heat.

How does simultaneous involvement as a high-achieving student and athlete impact their collegiate experiences?

Track and field athlete Ryan Servantes, a Biology Pre-Vet Medicine sophomore, feels that being a student athlete made the transition from high school to college much more seamless.

"The college experience can be very lonely at times, especially if life is just classwork. Being an athlete while having an honors course load allows for a community to be formed no matter where you are," Servantes said.

What extra steps do students take to master time management?

Jacy Lognion, a Speech and Hearing Sciences graduate on the Lamar University Dance Team, believes that setting a standard at the beginning of the semester and letting your professors know that you have obligations independent of academics allows them to work with you and help you to succeed in everything you choose to participate in here at Lamar.

"With good communication between your professors and coaches, everything is attainable," she said.

Track and field athlete Riley Trent, a Biology Pre-Med junior, said, "My advice to others is to surround yourself with like-minded people who will push you to be the best you can. These can be teammates, coaches, or professors who keep you focused on

your goals, encourage you to strive for more, and support you without adding unnecessary pressure."

Yet student athletes are not intrinsically motivated to balance their hectic schedules and athletic abilities.

"I feel like there's a common misconception about student athletes, with many people being under the impression that we must be super motivated to do the things we do," said Bianka Paciorek, Psychology Pre-Law sophomore and long-distance runner.

"While there's truth to the idea that being a student athlete is rewarding, the reality is that I'm not exactly motivated to wake up at 5 a.m. every day and push through an intense five-mile workout before heading straight to a full day of classes. The truth is, it's not motivation that gets me out of bed every morning—it's discipline."

Paciorek consistently reminds herself not to focus on how she feels in the moment. She stays committed to the bigger picture and the goals she set for herself, knowing it will all pay off in the end.

Being an honors student athlete not only impacts collegiate journeys, but also prepares students for life and careers post-graduation.

"Being involved in both academics and athletics has taught me how to manage time effectively, work under pressure, and stay committed to long-term goals. These skills translate directly into any career, helping me stay disciplined, adaptable, and resilient in challenging situations," said Ashton



During 2024-25, track star and Biochemistry Pre-Med junior Ashton Rainey won two first-place finishes in 3000m, at the Howie Ryan Invitational (9:48.09) and the SLC Indoor Championships (9:44.98), with the latter making her a Gold medalist. She also earned a silver medal in 10000m with the Southland Conference Outdoor Second Team. *BONUS: She authored our faculty profile on p. 13!*

Rainey, a Biochemistry Pre-Med junior and cross country and track athlete.

"Instead of being able to commit to just my athletics or my academics, I have had to distribute time for both. This pressure will soon be clouded with things like bills or a family. Juggling multiple important things now has helped to prepare me for that."

Psychology sophomore Kye Ana Washington began her first year on the Cheer Team last Fall and was recognized as "Cheerleader of the Game." She ended her first year a winner. The Cheer Team earned third place at the National Cheerleaders Association Competition in Daytona Beach, Florida.

She believes being a cheer athlete and an honors student will pay off dividends. "I have learned to push myself beyond my perceived limits, and that staying on top of things and having patience will help me with my future career in Psychology," she said.

Advice that she would offer fellow honors student athletes: "Don't give up and always ask for help! Some things just aren't meant to be done alone!"

Now a medical student at University of New Mexico School of Medicine,

Vice President; Reaud Honors College Senator and Senior Class Senator of Student Government Association; President and Vice President of Pre-Dental Society; and Tennis Representative for the Student Athletic Advisory Committee.

Lognion spent her junior year as Captain of the dance team. She also served her dance peers as Senior Social Chair. She further demonstrated her leadership skills at Lamar University as Vice President and Treasurer of Rotaract Club, and Treasurer of National Student Speech Hearing Language Association.

Servantes is involved in the Reaud Leadership Institute (RLI), a program that offers leadership development, global influence, and a variety of learning opportunities to a select group of honors students. As a Reaud Fellow in RLI, he developed his civic leadership skills by working with the board of Stable-Spirit, through the honors college's Stepping Up initiative.



Mackenzie Savage (Class of 2022) played softball on the 2020 Southland Conference All-Academic Second Team before her athletic career was shortened by the global pandemic.

Servantes shared how being a Reaud Fellow has changed his perspective on how to be a leader, both in the classroom and on his track and field team.

"A lot of the college experience can be very individual, but through the RLI, I have been able to look inward, identify areas of growth, and strive for something greater than myself. Whether I'm cheering on my teammates or helping a classmate, I have a deep purpose to lead in any way I can."

Jennifer Torry (Class of 2013) relies on her honors student athletic career to mentor students today as an educator and soccer coach in Toronto, Ontario.

"My experience as both a Mirabeau [now Presidential] Scholar and a Lamar Women's Soccer player

"I think there is still this idea that you will be recruited for your sport and then that becomes your whole identity—the 'University Athlete,'" Torry said.

Would these Reaud Honors College student athletes change anything about their journeys at Lamar University, if they had the chance to go back and do it all over again?

"I had a strong community through my soccer team and felt I had support there, which made me connect less with my RHC peers. However, in retrospect, I probably would have benefited more from connecting with peers in my field of study and honors courses," Torry said.

As an educator today, she can see how students may fixate on certain



WATCH: President Jaime Taylor chat about highlights from the 2024-25 academic year.

Best Athletic Program in Southland Conference

Lamar University has twice been awarded for having the best athletic success across all sports within the Southland Conference—for the first time ever, in 2024, and again, this year.

The college with the highest total of men's and women's all-sports points wins the Commissioner's Cup. LU has achieved this prestigious honor as one of 12 institutions in the Southland Conference.

While talking about Lamar University twice being recognized for having the best athletic program in the league, Lamar University President Jaime Taylor also highlighted how our coaches care about making sure student athletes are academically strong and are getting their degrees. That they're students first, then athletes.

"It's clear that our coaches care deeply about our student athletes, and they want to be successful in, you know, winning—right—but they also want them to be successful in life. They're invested in them as human beings as well," President Taylor said.

Southland Conference Commissioner Chris Grant praised Lamar University for elevating the standard across the league.

"You all are showing what alignment looks like, from student athletes to coaches to university leadership," Grant said. "That's how you build something sustainable. And Lamar has become a model for how to do that while lifting others around you."

After successfully defending the title, Vice President and Director of Athletics Jeff O'Malley proudly said, "This victory belongs to every member of the Lamar community. From coaches to support staff to student athletes—everyone played a role in reaching this goal."

"I think there is still this idea that you will be recruited for your sport and then that becomes your whole identity—the 'University Athlete.'"

—*Jennifer Torry (Class of 2013)*

is one I cherish and enjoy sharing with students. They are often amazed that I received a full-ride scholarship for academics and still competed on an NCAA team as a walk-on. I am not the typical example they see since, most of the time, university athletes are only lauded for their athletic achievements in the public spotlight. I enjoy opening their eyes to other avenues for achieving their goals."

Torry began her mentorship journey while still an undergrad, volunteering as a youth soccer coach for the GulfCoast Soccer Club, leading practices for soccer players aged 4-14. Today, she helps students consider first what their goals are, and then the steps to take in pursuit of those goals. Her students often struggle with expressions of identity and self.

The Reaud Honors College is proud of our student athletes and alumni who are achieving great things—both inside the classroom/workplace and on the field.



BY DANIELA CONTRERAS, REAUD HONORS COLLEGE STUDENT

South Korea through Mexican-American Lens

Carrying our heritage, everywhere we went, during our Study Abroad adventure



Twin sisters Karen and Andrea Figueroa loved exploring central Seoul with Daniela Contreras (center) while studying abroad in South Korea. The trio stand at the summit of Namsan, beneath the N Seoul Tower, the second-highest point in the capital city.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY DANIELA CONTRERAS AND TONI LOPEZ MALDONADO

In Summer 2024, four students in the Reaud Honors College, myself included, found ourselves in South Korea. We shared not only the destination, but also our Mexican roots.

With the McMaster Honors Grant, Andrea Figueroa, Karen Figueroa, and I took part in Dr. Christina Gregory's faculty-led trip to Seoul. Toni Lopez Maldonado took two immersive courses at Chungnam National University—one of the 10 Flagship Korean National Universities—in Daejeon, as a Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholar.

I am Daniela Contreras, an Accounting senior with a Writing minor and a member of the LU Hispanic Society and Beta Alpha Psi. I serve the College of Business as a Future Leader Scholar and my campus community as Historian for the Hispanic Women's Association and as an undergraduate researcher.

When I was eight, I was introduced to a new way of life when I moved from Michoacan, Mexico, to the United States. Landing in Seoul, South Korea, I felt ready to immerse again into the new, but also to meet a familiar face. I reunited with a Lamar University exchange student and, above all, my friend, Becky.

Toni emigrated at nine years old from Guanajuato, Mexico, and is a first-generation Political Science junior with a minor in Legal Studies. He has served our campus community as Student Body Vice President and is currently the President of LU Hispanic Society. He is an award-winning Model UN delegate (see p. 8) and studied as a pre-law fellow at Duke Law School and Stanford Law School. In the Fall prior to traveling to South Korea, he met Young-Ho Jung, consul general of the Republic of Korea in Houston, while he was at Kfest as an academic scholar.

In South Korea, Toni studied the Korean language and comparative



Daniela Contreras twirls around in her hanbok, the Korean national dress, at Gyeongbokgung Palace. Established in 1395, it is the first and largest of the royal palaces built during the Joseon Dynasty. Contemporary South Koreans wear hanboks for weddings, festivals, celebrations, and ceremonies.

politics with people all over the world. "We shared a common interest over global events like the Olympics," he said. "So even though I was halfway across the world, I was still able to make meaningful connections with people, despite the language barrier and the cultural barrier. It reminded me that we're not all so different."

"Being back in a similar situation, going to a new country, and remembering that feeling of feeling like a complete stranger, not just to what you saw around you, but just it was a new entire world," he said of arriving in South Korea. "Going through that really gave me greater appreciation of my upbringing."

Although born in the United States, Andrea Figueroa and her twin sister Karen grew close to their Mexican roots from Michoacan.

"Our first language was Spanish. When we got into school, we basically had to learn English on our own," Andrea said.

Being exposed to a third culture was easier than Andrea expected, she said. A first-generation Computer Science junior working on a Game Development certification, Andrea is a member of Crochet Club, Society of Hispanic and Professional Engineers, and the K-Pop Club, where she takes Korean classes.

Karen is also in K-Pop Club. A first-generation Communications senior with an emphasis in Film, she makes short movies as a member of Red Beak Productions and is also an award-winning undergraduate researcher.

"For me I've always enjoyed learning about new cultures and learning languages," Karen said, "because I think that's just so fun."

In several of her films, most recently "Loteria" and "Lunar New Year," Karen incorporates cultural concepts. "I'm also doing my research, making sure I'm culturally expressing it in the best way possible. Learning about the culture



from the source of origin helps with that," she said.

For me, the trip reinforced how Hispanics carry our heritage everywhere we go—whether we're sharing meals or listening to a concert. We are a joyous and community-based culture. When immersed in the warmth of Korean culture, the four of us discovered it to be more similar to our culture than we imagined.

"Though you do have all of the honorifics and all of the rules in their culture to be polite," Andrea said. "It's customary to greet others by, instead of saying, 'good morning' or 'good afternoon,' you usually greet them saying, 'have you eaten yet today?' as a way of showing care for the other person."

Karen said Korean food "felt like homemade meals." She compared it to being in Mexican restaurants back home: "If you go in a Mexican restaurant, you could see them making

the food, and once it's served, you could tell it's homemade food."

"I could connect some Korean dishes back to our own Mexican dishes," Andrea said.

One food highlight for both Karen and Andrea came after walking on a hot summer day. They stopped for a lunch of spicy cold noodles.

"At least, from what I've seen, I don't think America has anything close to those cold noodles," Karen said. "It's served in a bowl with ice cubes in it. Walking around in summer's heat, that was such a nice meal to have."

My best-loved meal came from the Kimchi Museum in Seoul, where we learned to make radish kimchi and also tried different types of kimchi. Kimchi, traditionally made with spicy fermented cabbage, is a staple Korean side dish I have incorporated in my life back home. The Kimchi Jeon—a savory pancake made with sliced kimchi—is my favorite thing to make.

Karen said her favorite part of the trip was listening to a busker at the

While Toni Lopez Maldonado studied at Chungnam National University in Daejeon, his course in Korean Society inspired his analysis of South Korean and United States politics. He was ready to learn! In the Fall prior to his summer adventure, he had also earned an academic scholarship from the Korean American Society of Houston for his essay exploring the Korean Wave's impact on Korea's society and economy.

South Korean cuisine was also a major highlight for Toni. "Some really cool things that I got to do over there is go to really great restaurants; eat a lot of good food. The 24-hour study cafes are very popular over there, so that was something new for me that I used a lot, especially when studying," he said.

"The reason why people know Daejeon is because it has one of the best bakeries in Korea," he said, adding that Sungsimdang Bakery has the "best and softest bread I had ever tried."

In Mexico, feeding someone, or asking someone to eat, is a way to show care for each other. Korean etiquette expresses that sentiment by serving food to another. We started doing that at every meal while there, adding a silent way to express our appreciation.

Andrea best described a resonating feeling all of us found in South Korea through our Mexican-American lens: "it was a home away from home."

"For sure a difference from here and Korea is here people are more talkative, but the Koreans more show it through action," Karen said.

In a loud way, Hispanic culture expresses a lot through music, which was very easily channeled in the Korean experience.

To me, Korea is very musical, aside from the quiet aspects of the culture. At night, you can find performers, from professionals to children, in spots along Myeongdong to Hongdae. My favorite was a little girl singing in a Moana costume surrounded by a very supportive crowd, including me.

Karen said her favorite part of the trip was listening to a busker at the



Favorite foods in South Korea: Kimchi from kimchi-making class with Study Abroad group (Daniela); spicy cold noodles (Figueroa twins); bread from Sungsimdang Bakery (Toni).

corner of Myeongdong street. "That's what sticks out to me the most because I love music. Seeing it in its rawest form, just listening to him, it was a good time," she said.

"When he started singing that one song by Ed Sheeran, I was crying," Andrea added. "I was sitting on the steps munching on my little corndog, or whatever I was eating, and I was crying."

A major highlight for Andrea was the night we spent in our hotel room opening K-Pop albums as we packed on the last day. It was a moment where we got to channel our excitement about our adventure through that musical connection we share.

"A really fun event that I got to go to was called Water Bomb," Toni said. "It's a music festival mixed with a water park."

too. Lee Young Ji is one of them. She was my favorite artist who I saw."

Even our surroundings felt like home. Korean structures are guided through nature with traditional roofs mimicking mountains. Traditional Mexican structures are adobe, which is manually mixed mounds of mud, water, and hay. Both share a cohesiveness between people and earth, but also between people and people.

At the peak of my trip, I reconnected with Becky who I never expected to see again. Those ties never broke and remain strong. I will always remember what she said to me before parting: "I don't believe this is the last time we will see each other."

"In Korean culture there are feelings and emotions that don't have an English translation, and one of them is called

"Jeong means an unconditional love that Korean people have as society with each other. That's a similarity that I saw with Mexican culture...."

"They divide the attendees into two groups: the yellow team, the purple team. Everyone has water guns, and they have water fights. Then the [musical] artists go—and there's an interruption—'water bomb is on!' The artists have a big water gun and spray the crowd. It's crazy. It was really fun.

"I got to see some of my favorite artists that I had listened to back in the US who were performing at the festival

Honors Adventures Abroad and at National Parks



Nataly Magana in Dubrovnik, Croatia



Mckenzie McDonald (center) in Belize



Liam Gore, Peyton Jones, and Alyvia Ott at Mammoth Cave National Park in Kentucky

Revitalization for a Student Org

Reaud Fellow helps healthcare club regain strength with the support of friends

Inactive after former leaders had graduated, Lamar University's Pre-Physical and Occupational Therapy Club (POTC) was in danger of going by the wayside.

Imbued with the leadership development she began the previous year as an inaugural Reaud Fellow, Exercise Science senior Jenny Tu took charge in Fall 2024 to kickstart POTC. She joined forces with two Reaud Honors College students, Elizabeth Diaz Arreola (also a Reaud Fellow) and me, Kayla McKinley, as well as Exercise Science peer Michelle Lane.

Supported by the Department of Health and Kinesiology, POTC aims to empower Pre-Physical Therapy and Pre-Occupational Therapy students with the tools they need to succeed and create a community of students who can work together to help educate and serve the general public. Recognizing the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration, the student organization also welcomes students interested in similar medical professions, such as chiropractic care, cardiac rehabilitation, athletic training, and physiotherapy.

For instance, Diaz Arreola is concentrating in Pre-Physician Assistant, yet her similar interest in rehabilitation encouraged her to help friends get POTC back up and running. She served as the club's Treasurer during the Fall before she headed to Austin in Spring to intern with the Texas Legislature (see p. 19).

My favorite part of POTC, which I serve as Vice President, is the people who make up the club. Jenny, Elizabeth, and I met through the Reaud Honors



Scaring up some fun! Volunteer Alyvia Ott, Treasurer Elizabeth Diaz Arreola, and President Jenny Tu hand out treats to kiddos at Spindletop Boomtown Museum's Spookfest.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY JENNY TU UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

College, but POTC has opened the doors for us to connect with Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy students outside of honors and even outside of Health and Kinesiology. Thanks to our club members, I have discovered that volunteering doesn't have to feel like work. POTC is a fun way to serve! We laugh and joke around while collecting donated food, but we also know that food will feed families. That balance keeps us coming back.

Starting off strong in Fall 2024, POTC led a food drive to benefit the Southeast Texas Food Bank, showcased the benefits of our club at Honors

Scholars Day, distributed sweets at Spindletop Boomtown Museum's Spookfest, and provided helpful tips at the health fair at Gift of Life's Monster Dash. The club's community education efforts continued the following Spring, while volunteering for LU's Big Event and at the Alzheimer's and Dementia Student Summit. We also engaged with local kids through interactive activities at College of Engineering's Discover Engineering event.

As President of POTC, Tu has transformed the club into a powerhouse for health advocacy and hands-on service. From crafting pamphlets for the Gift of



Life to volunteering at Boys' Haven, the members of POTC work to ensure that they have a real-world impact outside of their general healthcare studies.

"It's about taking what we learn in anatomy labs and making it accessible," Tu says. "When we teach kids at Boys' Haven about healthy habits, we're practicing the patient education skills we'll use in our future careers."

Tu has also increased the club's community reach by creating an Instagram account and a brand-new logo for POTC. Her favorite leadership experience, though, has been helping support LU peers academically. She and other members have been working on their graduate and professional school applications since Spring; she is applying for the PTCAS this July.

"POTC has allowed me to have the platform and credibility to share my experience applying for professional

"When we teach kids at Boys' Haven about healthy habits, we're practicing the patient education skills we'll use in our future careers."

At Discover Engineering, Jenny Tu (above left, center) demonstrated bioelectrical impedance analysis, sending a low-voltage current from one hand to the other, which estimates percent body fat.

Kayla McKinley (above right) engaged kids with other interactive activities that included the vertical jump test and grip strength test.

BY KRISTEN BAKER (CLASS OF 2024)

me a community to belong to, which I think is something every college student is looking for! I was able to meet some new people along with the opportunity to get some extra volunteer hours for the honors college."

After the club's first full year back on campus, POTC is proud to play an integral role in empowering LU's rehabilitative healthcare students to serve and lead together. Merging service with friendship heals all of us! ☺



POTC had a busy day educating LU and SETX communities about the student organization. They chatted with guests at our Honors Scholars Day (left) and then headed to Spookfest that evening (opposite page).

Another big Fall event for POTC was the health fair (far left) in downtown Beaumont at Gift of Life's Monster Dash 5K.

HONORS SCHOLARS DAY
PHOTO BY IMELDA TRISTAN

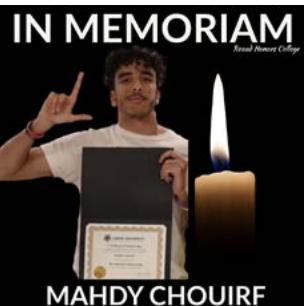
Imagine. Innovate. Impact. Inspire.

CHANGEMAKERS



A proud moment for West Brook High School—when Mahdy Chouirf was named Presidential Scholar, earning him a full-ride scholarship, prior to entering Lamar University in Fall 2024.

COURTESY LAMAR UNIVERSITY



With a heavy heart, the Reaud Honors College regrets to share the sad news of the sudden passing of 19-year-old **Mahdy Chouirf** on Sunday, June 8.

A Chemical Engineering sophomore about to enter his junior year, Mahdy earned the prestigious LU Presidential Scholarship after graduating from West Brook High School in Beaumont in 2024. Upon receiving this full-ride scholarship, he thanked his parents, originally from Marrakech, Morocco, in Northern Africa, for his work and study habits and

shared how he hoped to apply the education he learned as a Chemical Engineering student to help conserve and protect the environment.

Mahdy was a member of the Honors Student Association, SASE, and AIChE. During his first year in the Reaud Honors College, he shared how he wanted to work as a chemical engineer to solve global challenges in energy resource fields. He hoped to develop technologies or processes that would solve critical issues in energy, healthcare, and the environment and aspired to work for an energy company.

Our Honors community is forever blessed by the time Mahdy graced our lives. Our deepest condolences to his family and loved ones. Mahdy, yours is a light that shone too briefly.



During his first year at Lamar University, Mahdy Chouirf took both Calculus I and Calculus II. He enjoyed studying under Dr. Robert Vallin so much, he asked for a selfie, or as he called it, an ussie, after the last class day in May 2025.

BY ROBERT VALLIN

*Changemakers offers an assortment of Reaud Honors students as 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.

Leadership

Daisy Calero Estrella, Nursing Senior
As a Diversity in Health Care Scholar, she participated in HACU's *¡Adelante!* Leadership Institute in Aurora, Colorado.

Ashton Moore, Chemical Engineering Junior
Reese Rodgers, Chemical Engineering Sophomore
Won Student Recognition awards, for second year and first year respectively, at AIChE Student Conference in San Diego; the duo also gave a presentation on "High School Chem-E-Car Intro."

Victoria Nguyen, Industrial Engineering Senior
While spending her Spring semester as a manufacturing engineering intern at Keurig Dr Pepper, Nguyen was the lead spokesperson for the beverage company's celebration of National Beverage Day.



Daniela Contreras, Accounting Senior
A Future Leaders Scholar at the College of Business, Contreras is shown at Fall 2024 Cardinal View with **Jeri Wolfe (Class of 2023)**, Library Specialist at LU's Mary and John Gray Library.



Read Daniela's article on p. 25

Drake Rothenberger, Environmental Science Junior
Spent this Spring Break building a home in Tahlequah, the capital of Cherokee Nation. A service leader both on campus and off, Rothenberger has dedicated his Spring Break twice to help LU peers build homes for Habitat for Humanity.



LU AMBASSADORS

Reaud Honors students joining LU Ambassadors team in 2025-26: Brianna Brottem, Taylor Bui, Faith Cheng, Elizabeth Diaz Arreola, Jasmine Guillory, Mohamed Irhabi, Madison McGuire, Alyvia Ott and Maddy Wernig.



SGA LEADERS

The Lamar student body elected the following Reaud Honors students to be their voice in Student Government Association in 2025-2026:

Campbell Fuller, Vice President; Kathy Nguyen, Secretary-Treasurer; Ashton Burch, Chief Justice; Bianka Paciorek, Justice; Lauren Rosetta, Justice.

Honors Student Association elected: Jenny Tu, Reaud Honors College Senator; Brianna Brottem, HSA Representative.



2025-2026 HSA OFFICERS

Honors peers elected **Michael Vu, Bilal Alani, and Saad Mohammed** to lead the Honors Student Association as President, Vice President, and Secretary/Treasurer; **Carsen Barrett and Blaine Isom**, Intramural Sports; **Alyvia Ott and Kinsey Tran**, Peer Mentoring; and **Jenny Tu** and **Brianna Brottem** to lead Student Government Association as RHC Senator and HSA Representative, respectively.

REAUD HONORS LU AMBASSADORS

President's Picnic, Spring 2025

Front row: Estrella Balderas, Alyvia Ott, Peyton Jones, Clara Schreck, Sergio Mendez, Lizzie Drago, and Taylor Bui.

Middle row: Kevwe Onakpoya, Faith Cheng, Daisy Calero Estrella, Ashton Burch, Grace Roy, Alyson Vu, Rima Shaaban, Waverlee Cooper, Maddy Wernig, and Jordan Nelson.

Back row: Madison McGuire, Peyton McLaurin, Ryan Shugart, Logan Morris, Carsen Barrett, Mohamed Irhabi, Kathy Nguyen, Saad Mohammed, Brianna Brottem, Bilal Alani, Alyssa Harper, Jasmine Guillory, Ashton Rainey, Riley Trent, Kadence Garlington, Ryan Servantes, Blake Wilson, Drake Rothenberger, Dennis Tran, and Mary Wernig.

Imagine. Innovate. Impact. Inspire.

CHANGEMAKERS



AWARD-WINNING SHORT FILM FILMMAKER

Red Beak Productions President **Adam Baeza** (above, at right) won "First Place" and "Audience Award" at Boomtown Film and Music Festival's 48-Hour Film Race in February 2025. The Mechanical Engineering junior's award-winning film, "Reaper," featured two survivors, left behind by a civilization-destroying plague, who are hunting for food without realizing they are now prey.

LOOKING AHEAD

Reaud Honors students conducting undergraduate research who will present their findings in 2025-2026.

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

O.U.R. URG AWARDEES: **Natalie Bean**, **Alexa Heng**, and **Jenny Tu**. Up to \$2,000 for a spring research project.

O.U.R. SURF FELLOWS: **Mackenzie Howell**, **Nirbhik Neupane**, **Priya Rathore**, and **Ryan Servantes**. Fellows participate in 10 weeks of summer research and receive up to \$6,000 for project.

2025-26 LURA

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

Kayla McKinley, President
Mohamed Irhabi, Vice President
Priya Rathore, Secretary
Campbell Fuller, Treasurer
Saad Mohammed, Recruiting Director
Jenny Tu, SGA Representative



Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity

Reaud Honors students presented their findings at these conferences during 2024-25: Int'l Symposium of Molecular Spectroscopy 2024: **Megan Do**. SURF Symposium 2024: **George Godsi** and SURF Fellow **Kayla McKinley**. O.U.R. Conference 2024: **Adam Baeza**, **Karen Figueroa**, **Alexa Heng**, **Kayla McKinley**, and **Sergio Mendez**. McNair Scholars Research Symposium 2024: **Estrella Balderas** and **Drake Rothenberger**. Biology Research Poster Session 2024: **Estrella Balderas**, **Helena Bautista-Mathias**, **Sergio Mendez**, and **Jordan Nelson**. Chemistry and Biochemistry Poster Competition 2024: **Tiolu Akinwunmi**, **Estrella Balderas**, **Brandon Billot**, **Elizabeth Diaz Arreola**, **Sergio Mendez**, **Blake Pena**, and **Adeline Tran**. O.U.R. Expo 2025: **Natalie Bean**, **Alexa Heng**, **Mohamed Irhabi**, **Kayla McKinley**, **Nirbhik Neupane**, **Riley Trent**, and **Jenny Tu**. American College of Sports Medicine Conference 2025: **Kayla McKinley**. COE's Senior Design Symposium 2025: **Tiolu Akinwunmi**, **Caleb Gruber**, **Brennan Roy**, **Ryan Shugart**, and **Luke Sodolak**.



Award-Winning Research

"Best Reaud Honors College Research," O.U.R. Conference 2024, given to Communication Film Studies senior **Karen Figueroa** (left) for project: *"Letter to Myself."*



"Best Sexual and Gender Equality (SAGE) Research," O.U.R. Conference 2024, given to Sociology graduate **Alexa Heng** (right) for project: *"Navigating Sexual and Emotional Communication in Generation Z University Relationships."*



"Best STEM Oral Presentation," O.U.R. Expo 2025, given to Biology Pre-Med sophomore **Mohamed Irhabi** (left) for a preview of his David J. Beck Fellow research project that will contribute to the search for non-invasive diagnostic tools for neurovascular disease.

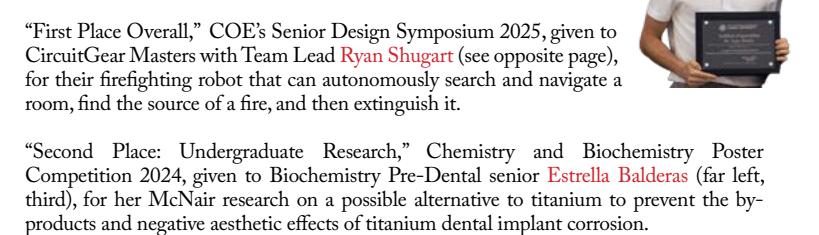


"Leadership Appreciation," O.U.R. Expo 2025, given to Biology Pre-Med junior **Sergio Mendez** (right) for his leadership as President of the student org Lamar Undergraduate Research Association (LURA).



"First Place Overall," COE's Senior Design Symposium 2025, given to CircuitGear Masters with Team Lead **Ryan Shugart** (see opposite page), for their firefighting robot that can autonomously search and navigate a room, find the source of a fire, and then extinguish it.

"Second Place: Undergraduate Research," Chemistry and Biochemistry Poster Competition 2024, given to Biochemistry Pre-Dental senior **Estrella Balderas** (far left, third), for her McNair research on a possible alternative to titanium to prevent the by-products and negative aesthetic effects of titanium dental implant corrosion.



"PROBLEM SOLVING in Engineering is not just about memorizing information, but taking a problem, breaking it down to its FUNDAMENTALS, and building from a strong foundation of understanding."

—**Ryan Shugart**



AWARD-WINNING RESEARCH SCHOLAR

Mechanical Engineering and Electrical Engineering graduate **Ryan Shugart** is known for his innovative ideas for solving complex engineering problems.

Through Robotic Cardinals, he and cofounder **Christine Osborne** (Class of 2023) created robust educational programs in robotics for Southeast Texas youth.

During his academic career, Shugart has discovered gathering data through research and collaboration is just as vital as the technical skills he uses to solve problems.

As a McNair Scholar, he explored how to optimize the energy efficiency of a standard household refrigerator through waste heat recovery with a thermoelectric generator.

As a David J. Beck Fellow, he learned Field Programmable Gate Arrays embedded systems from scratch as an FPGA engineer with Emerson Automation Solutions.

Two weeks before graduation, Shugart and his senior design team won First Place Overall for their firefighting robot. The problems keep coming...and he keeps solving them!

Awards & Recognitions



OUTSTANDING SENIOR MAN

Ryan Shugart, Mechanical Eng. and Electrical Eng. Graduate:

Shugart represented his honors community and Lamar University in numerous leadership roles, including Cofounder and President of Robotic Cardinals; President of Student Engineering Council; Lead for RHC/TA's Innovation CollABoration as part of the Governor's Summer Merit Program; Director for COE's Project Engineer; Mentor for Cardinal SOAR, particularly for the 5th grade robotics team at Regina Howell Elementary competing at LEGO Mindstorms; COE Ambassador; and LU Ambassador.

In recognition of his exceptional undergraduate journey, Shugart received the C. Robert Kemble Award for Outstanding Senior Man, accompanied by \$1,000, from the Division of Student Engagement. Shugart has accepted a position as an Embedded Systems Engineer with Emerson Automation Solutions near Austin.

SENIORS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Reaud Honors students recognized as 2025 Seniors of Significance: **Estrella Balderas**, **Ashton Burch**, **Daisy Calero Estrella**, **Waverlee Cooper**, **Jacy Lognion**, **Peyton McLaurin**, **Lauren Rosetta**, **Grace Roy**, **Rima Shaaban**, **Ryan Shugart**, **Luke Sodolak**, and **Gavin Treuter**.



LU's First Gen Students of the Month

Alex Tran, Electrical Eng. sophomore
Blake Wilson, Management Information Systems junior

Sergio Mendez, Biology Pre-Med Junior

Pulse Magazine's Best Scholarly Essay
"The Harlot Wears Scarlet: Symbolism in Chaucer's 'The Canterbury Tale.'" **Savanna Peveto-Kreatschman**, English junior

TSUS Edmund P. Kuempel Scholar
Kayla McKinley, Exercise Science sophomore

Irving O Dawson Award
Best Undergraduate Political Science Student
Peyton McLaurin, Political Science graduate

NMUN Outstanding Position Paper
Toni Lopez Maldonado, Political Science senior

SEMESTER EXCHANGE IN FRANCE & SPAIN

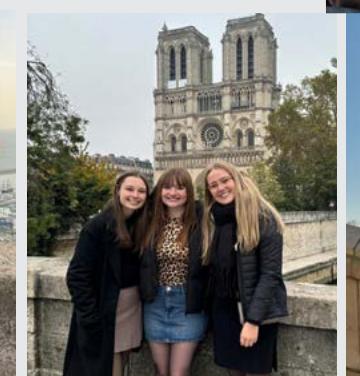
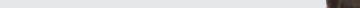
Three McMaster Study Abroad Scholars expanded their academic horizons during semester-long sojourns: **Mary Wernig** at Universidad de Alicante in Spain (Fall 2024) and **Brynn Trove** (Fall 2024) and **Nataly Magana** (Spring 2025) at the Rennes School of Business in France.

Read Mary's article on p. 21

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From left)

Mary Wernig holds Spain flag at Castell de Santa Barbara; Brynn Trove and Mary Wernig at Notre Dame (far left and far right, respectively), and Nataly Magana by Eiffel Tower and with camera.





AT OUR SPRING BANQUET: PRESIDENT JAIME TAYLOR (FAR LEFT) AND DEAN TILISA THIBODEAUX (FAR RIGHT) CELEBRATED OUR SPRING 2025 REAUD HONORS COLLEGE GRADUATES.

BANQUET PHOTOS BY BRANDON GOUTHIER

Honors Awards

Reaud Honors College Dean Tilisa Thibodeaux is proud to recognize our Honors Students of the Year and Honors Faculty of Distinction. These distinguished awards were launched in the academic year 2023-2024, during our college's 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. Sanaz Alasti (Professor of Criminal Justice) shown below with Dean Thibodeaux

Honors Professor of the Year: Dr. Zhiho Guo (Assistant Professor of Organic Chemistry), shown below with research mentee Sergio Mendez, who presented the award on behalf of HSA

Honors Students of the Year - Community: Brenna Swanton (Nursing) and Gladys Oliva Guillen (Nursing), below, far left

Honors Student of the Year - Research and Scholarship: Ryan Shugart (Mechanical Engineering/Electrical Engineering), center

Honors Student of the Year - Leadership: Rima Shaaban (Chemistry Pre-Dental), far 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:

CASA of Sabine Neches Region:
Elizabeth Diaz Arreola (Exercise Science junior)

Mental Health America of Southeast Texas:
George Godsi (Biology Pre-Med sophomore)

HOW Center:
Rehan Hamdan (Biochemistry Pre-Dental junior)

United Board of Missions:
Alyssa Harper (Mechanical Engineering junior, below)



Southeast Texas Food Bank:
Kayla McKinley (Exercise Science sophomore)

Nutrition & Services for Seniors:
Saad Mohammed (Biology Pre-Med senior)

Samaritan Counseling Center of Southeast Texas:
Gladys Oliva Guillen (Nursing senior)

Southeast Texas Family Resource Center:
Ashton Rainey (Biochemistry Pre-Med junior)

Stable-Spirit:
Ryan Servantes (Biology Pre-Vet Medicine sophomore)

Golden Triangle RSVP:
Jenny Tu (Exercise Science senior)



Young Farmers Scholar Helps Hometown Rodeo

Mechanical Engineering sophomore and Young Farmers Scholar **Trey Ames** built a custom fire pit over Winter Break for his local chapter of Young Farmers to be raffled at his hometown rodeo in Dayton this May.

Trey has also shown great leadership this year as a College of Engineering Ambassador. Some of his recent accomplishments include: leading a volunteer clean up at the Humane Society of SETX in February as Engineers Without Borders President (see inset); going "Home for the Holidays" during Winter Break to inspire future engineers at Dayton High School; and helping at various COE events throughout the year, most recently, COE's Spring 2025 Career Fair.

FRESHMAN ENTREPRENEUR

SOPHISTICATED VISIONARIES
PRESIDENT
LEA WALKER

Business freshman who won "Program of the Year" during LU's Toast of Leadership for her student business and entrepreneur event.



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

(From top) Recycling rock stars! LU President Jaime Taylor joins our honors eco-warriors from Green Squad: Green Squad President and HSA SGA Rep **George Godsi** (next to President Taylor) with Volunteer Coordinator **Kayla McKinley** and Social Media Coordinator **Erica Callahan** (bottom row).

LU's Society of Asian Scientists and Engineers networked in Boston where the student org received the SASE Inspire award for "Most Improved Chapter." Standing by Baymax is Webmaster **Kathy Nguyen** (far left) with **Victoria Nguyen**, **Dennis Tran**, and President **Alex Tran** (far right). In the Spring, LU recognized SASE as the "Outstanding Student Organization" of 2025!

Honors Student Association hit the pickleball courts in Fall to welcome HSA members back to campus.

Reaud Fellow and Studio Art Painting freshman **Gabrielle Sensat** (kneeling in front) shared the benefits of being a Reaud Honors College student as a Home for the Holidays Ambassador at Bridge City High School during Winter Break.

More than 50 Honors Cardinals engaged with alumni at Dinner & Conversation. Among them were Pre-Dental juniors **Helena Bautista-Mathias** (right, at bottom) and **Rehan Hamdan** (right, at top left).



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CHANGEMAKERS

Alumni News

Reaud Honors College Alumni Advisory Council

Chair: Alisa Hicklin-Fryar **2002**; Jenny Achilles **2003**; Bethany Aiena **2011**; Lindsey Caithen **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**.

Christy Blanchard, 2002: Hired as Chemistry Teacher at Hardin-Jefferson High School.

Mason Tschappat, 2005: Hired as VP of Engineering and Installation at Safe Foods Chemical Innovations headquartered in North Little Rock, AR.

Jennifer Gonzales, 2006: Awarded 2025 Reaud Excellence in Education Award from the Beaumont Foundation of America.

Courtney King, 2009: Hired as Creative Services Manager at CSI DMC; Launched Workflow Consultant at ATE Consulting by Courtney King.

Brian Gustin, 2010: Hired as Automation Engineer at Covestro in Baytown.

Leah Moss, 2010: Graduated with DBA in Marketing from Baker College; Hired as Adjunct Professor at Cornerstone University in Grand Rapids, MI.

Jackie Seaman, 2010: Hired as Support Engineer at Permasense.

Sophie Wilmore, 2010: Promoted to Assistant Vice President, Asset Quality Analyst II at Broadway Bank in San Antonio.

Joshua Davis, 2011: Recognized by American Cancer Society for top tier fundraising at 2024 Real Men Wear Pink Event.

Maricela Guerrero, 2011: Freelancing as Notary Public in Lumberton.

Amanda Lilley, 2011: Awarded Garfield County Bar Association Outstanding Young Lawyer for 2024.

Chelsea Barnard, 2012: Started business, Oldspeak Bar, in Garden City, ID.

Elisabeth Maxwell, 2013: Hired as Research Assistant for Darling Marine Center at University of Maine.



Jennifer Torry, 2013: Hired as English Subject Team Leader & Teacher at Greenwood College School in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Queamani Brown, 2014: Hired as Regional Assessment Specialist at Action Behavior Centers-ABA Therapy for Autism in Beaumont.

William Pickard, 2014: Featured in a CHRISTUS Southeast Texas Health System employee spotlight for Men's Health Month.

Sarah Sauceda, 2014: Promoted to Senior Corporate Counsel at AMD in Austin.

Danielle Ellis, 2015: Completed residency at the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine in Anesthesia.

Chase Engman, 2015: Hired as Assistant City Attorney for City of Beaumont.

Aimee Lieby, 2015: Promoted to Chemist at ExxonMobil in Beaumont.

Lauren Schultdt, 2015: Hired as Family Support Specialist at Texas Family Care Network in Nederland.

Christopher Hagner, 2016: Promoted to Business Intelligence & Analytics Manager at Oklahoma City Thunder NBA Team.

Tory Hoecker, 2016: Hired as Clinical Staff Pharmacist at Prescription Mart Pharmacy in Beaumont.

Amirah Mohammad, 2016: Appointed as Chair for South Florida Women In-House Counsel Group's Professional and Career Development Committee.

Levi Morris, 2016: Recognized as Nederland Chamber of Commerce and Tourist Bureau March 2025 Teacher of the Month.

Leela Dimperio, 2017: Launched B3 Interpreting Services in Beaumont.

Danelle Sanders, 2017: Hired as Associate Attorney at McDowell Hetherington in Houston.

Mahjabeen Javed, 2018: Graduated with PhD in Biomedical Engineering from Texas A&M University-College Station; Hired as Senior Engineer for NPD Procurement at Smith+Nephew in Fort Worth.

Jordan Curl, 2020: Graduated with MD from Texas Tech University-Health Sciences Center; Hired as Resident Doctor at Lone Star Family Health Center in Conroe.

Dakota Emerson, 2024: Hired as Process Engineer at Indorama Ventures, Emerson gave back to his LU community with his alum coworkers at the Fall College of Engineering Career Fair.



Cade Johnson, 2019: Training with Life Flight, as well as Fire EMS Rescue, as part of his Emergency Medicine residency at UT-Health Houston.

Linda Pham, 2018: Graduated with MS in Professional Accounting from Lamar University.

Nasim Abedelwahab, 2019: Promoted to Mechanical Engineer III at Blue Origin in Seattle.

Johnny Frazier, 2019: Promoted to Mechanical Integrity Second Line Supervisor at ExxonMobil in Beaumont.

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

Madison Marino, 2019: Promoted to Policy Analyst at Heritage Foundation based in Washington, DC.

Emily McCall, 2019: Graduated with MD from Texas Tech University-Health Sciences Center-El Paso.

David Quispe, 2019: Graduated with PhD in Materials Science & Engineering from Arizona State University.

Haya Alani, 2020: Graduated with Doctorate of Dental Surgery from University of Texas School of Dentistry-Houston.

Edward Doan, 2020: Hired as MBA Associate at Anacapa Partners based in San Mateo, CA.

Jackson Dolce, 2020: Graduated with Doctor of Optometry and Master of Science in Physiological Optics and Vision Science from University of Houston.

Areli Garcia, 2020: Promoted to Marketing Specialist at Association of Cancer Care Centers in Rockville, MD.

Madison Hamby, 2020: Graduated with MA in Behavior Analysis from University of Houston-Clear Lake; Hired as Wellness Program Director at Samaritan Counseling Center of Southeast Texas.

Bra'ah Hamdan, 2020: Hired as Lean Six Sigma Analyst at Motiva Enterprises in Port Arthur; Gave back to LU community as guest speaker for "Exploring MIS."

Omar Hamza, 2020: Graduated with MD from Texas A&M University-Health Science Center; Selected for Psychiatry residency at Harvard.

Fizzah Khan, 2020: Graduated with Doctor of Occupational Therapy from Baylor University.

Brody McBee, 2020: Graduated with Doctorate of Dental Surgery from University of Texas School of Dentistry-Houston; Hired as Associate Dentist at Redfield Smiles in Redfield, SD.

Katey McCall, 2020: Graduated with Juris Doctorate from Texas Tech University School of Law; Hired as Assistant District Attorney for Orange County.

Kayla Painter, 2020: Hired as American Sign Language Interpreter at Forsyth County Schools in Cumming, GA.

Makenzie Sattler, 2020: Awarded 2024 Southeast Texas Young Professionals Organization 40 Under 40.

Kennedy Smith, 2020: Hired as Communications Advisor for TC Energy in Houston.

Hannah Abdullah, 2021: Graduated with Doctorate of Dental Surgery from University of Texas School of Dentistry-Houston.

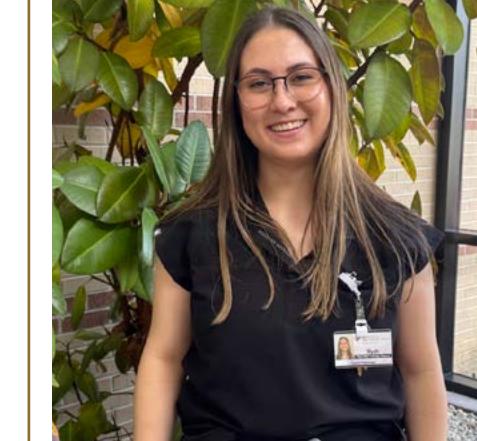
Abbey Brown, 2021: Graduated with an MS in Speech-Language Pathology from Lamar University; Hired as Speech-Language Pathologist at Dayton ISD.

Chase Gordon, 2021: Graduated with Doctorate of Dental Surgery from University of Texas School of Dentistry-Houston.

Grace Granger, 2021: Hired as Math Teacher and Dual Credit Instructor at the Woodlands High School.

Nathan House, 2021: Recognized as Indovinya's first Seeq Super User, setting a new standard in role as Process Engineer at Indorama Ventures in Port Neches.

Tyler Martin, 2021: Hired as Test Engineer at Lockheed Martin in Dallas-Fort Worth.



Nyah Sciarrilla, 2022: After graduating with an MS in Speech-Language Pathology from Lamar University, Sciarrilla was hired as a Speech-Language Pathologist at CHRISTUS Southeast Texas Health System and featured in a CHRISTUS employee spotlight for National Aphasia Month.

Kyra Rost, 2021: Graduated with MA in Sociology from Ohio State University.

Cody Sasser, 2021: Graduated with MBA from Lamar University.

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

Alexis Sturrock, 2021: Hired as Director of Operations at Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Southeast Texas.

David Yeakey, 2021: Hired as Engineer at INEOS in La Porte.

Taliah Belcher, 2022: Graduated with MBA from University of North Texas; Hired as Budget Analyst at NASA in Houston.

Brendon Camp, 2022: Graduated with Juris Doctorate from Harvard University.

Bethany Edwards, 2022: Hired as Registered Nurse at St. Luke's Medical Center in Houston; Awarded the "Good Samaritan Excellence in Nursing" Bronze Medal from CHI St. Luke's Health.

Ali Hamza, 2022: Graduated with Juris Doctorate from University of Texas-Austin; Published in Texas Law Review: "A Closer Look at Participation Agreements: Criticisms and Jurisdiction."

Krystal Le, 2022: Graduated with MS in Professional Accounting from Lamar University.

Line Ydi Recinos, 2023: Graduated with MBA from Lamar University.

Luis Arevalo, 2024: Hired as Process Engineer for Chevron Phillips Chemical Company in Port Arthur.

Kristen Baker, 2024: Hired as Coordinator of Marketing and Communications for College of Engineering at Lamar University.

Annabelle Broussard, 2024: Hired as Operations Engineer at INEOS in La Porte.

Kristen Crippen, 2024: Hired as Dance Instructor at June Badon Elite School of Dance and Acrobatics in Port Neches.

Tomisin Egbeawale, 2024: Hired as Security IAM Engineer at Northwestern Mutual in Milwaukee, WI.

Kelvin Elgar, 2024: Hired as Process Engineer at Chevron in Salt Lake City, UT.

Kristin Hebert, 2024: Hired as Stewardship Coordinator at Lamar University's Division of University Advancement.

Gabrielle Holston, 2024: Hired as Teacher at Little Cypress-Mauriceville CISD.

Isaac Jimenez-Ramirez, 2024: Hired as Functional Engineer at Nike headquartered in Beaverton, OR.

Mollie McLeod, 2024: Graduated with MBA from Lamar University; Hired as Instructor & Apprentice at Bonnie Cokinos School of Dance in Beaumont.

Jaqueine Portillo, 2024: Hired as Chartswap Representative at Resource Corporation of America in Houston.

Colton Smith, 2024: Hired as Associate Process Engineer at Valero Port Arthur Refinery.

Melody Youwakim, 2024: Hired as Process Engineer at Motiva Enterprises in Port Arthur.

Hannah Norwood, 2023: Showing off her Cardinal pride on "Alumni Shirt Day" as a medical student at Arkansas College of Osteopathic Medicine.



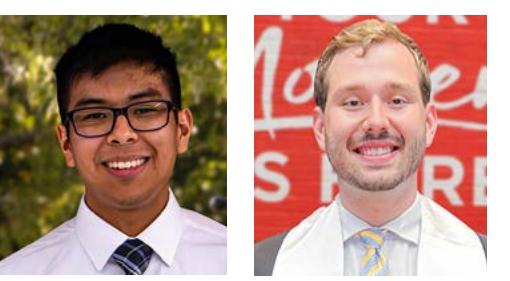
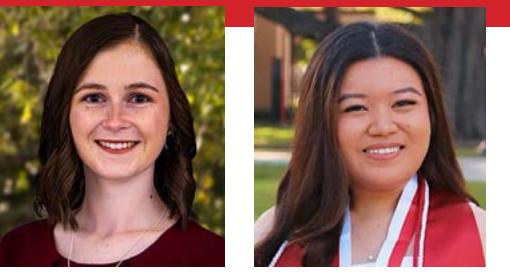


GRADUATES

2024 – FALL



Join our RHC
Alumni Group
on LinkedIn!

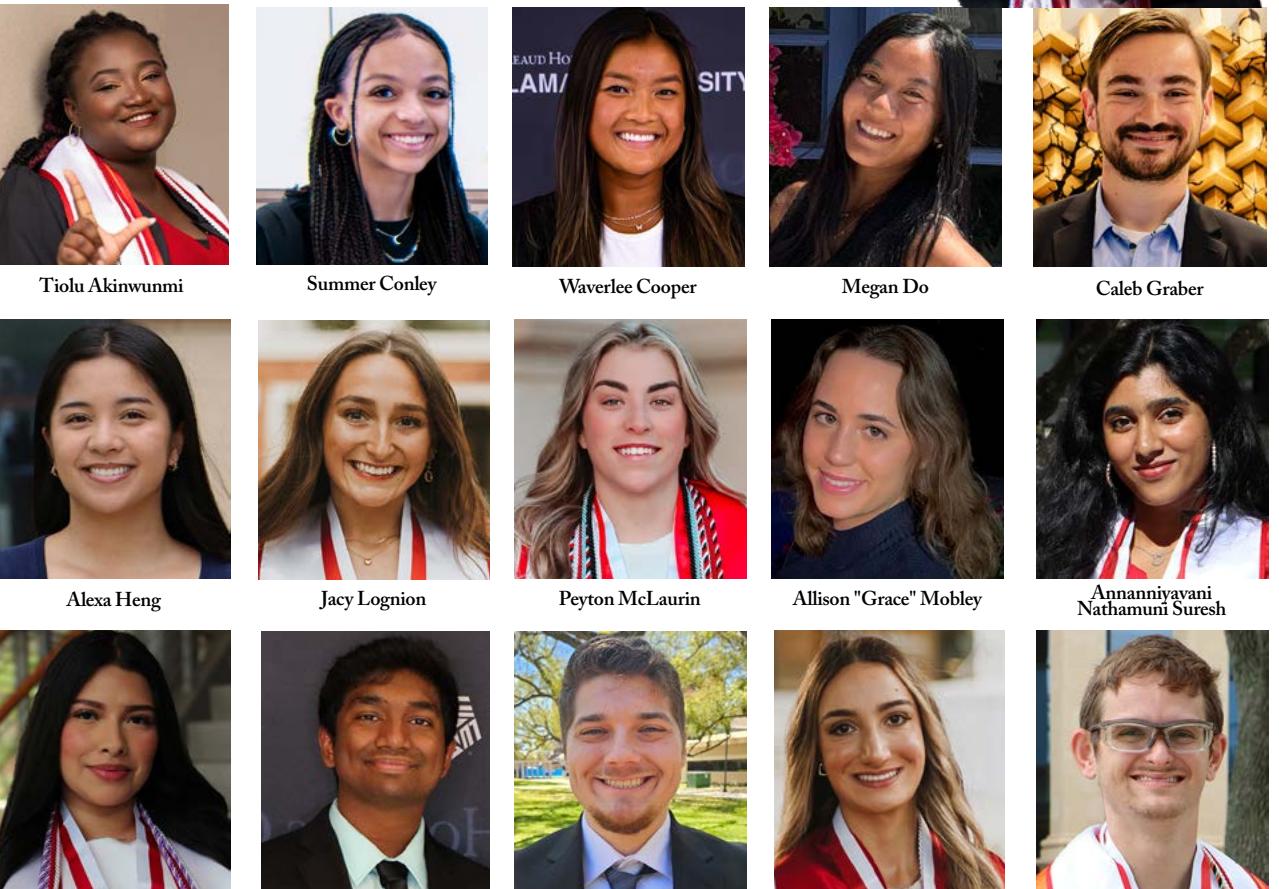


MEET OUR NEWEST ALUMNI

Scan QR Code. Click on "Photos" (mobile) or "Photos" and "Albums" (desktop). To read the biographies sharing our graduates' journeys, select Fall 2024 and Spring 2025 Reaud Honors College Graduates albums.



2025 – SPRING



2025 – SUMMER



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 Leadership Institute Doubles in Second Year!

During the 2024-25 academic year, the Reaud Leadership Institute (RLI) doubled in size—nine more students joined the inaugural class to bring us a total of 18 Reaud Fellows! Launched in Fall 2023, this highly selective program offers leadership development, global influence, and experiential learning opportunities to help students grow into catalysts for change. Shown here are most of our newest Reaud Fellows at the alumni dinner and conversation.

COURTESY ALUMNI AFFAIRS

Imagine • Innovate • Impact • Inspire

HELLO *from our Dean*

Greetings Honors College Cardinals and Alumni,

This year has been a momentous one, filled with tremendous growth and opportunity. Lamar University has recognized Reaud Honors College students as top academic performers! Our students rank in the top 2.4% of undergraduates.

We are also proud to see our Reaud Leadership Institute growing. As we enter into our third year, this prestigious group includes 30 students selected by invite only. Reaud Fellows attend Lamar University as Presidential or Southeast Texas Legends Scholars and seek leadership opportunities, use innovation and novel ideas as a catalyst for change, and are influencers on campus. Institute students participated in the Texas Legislative Internship Program (TLIP), Stepping Up Civic Leadership, LU Ambassadors, Model United Nations, and a variety of other honors college hosted programs.

In collaboration with the Beaumont Foundation of America, Reaud Honors College students participated in TLIP, during which they spent a semester in Austin. Three honors scholars served with representatives from various political parties in the Capitol. As interns, they worked directly with representatives and the chief of staff, scheduled political meetings, and served as an integral part of the legislative planning and decision process during the 89th legislative session. They also networked at socials in the Capitol and learned about the process for peaceful protests in the state of Texas. What an incredible opportunity for our honors college!

One of our major highlights of the year was participating in National Model United Nations (NMUN) in New York City. Seven student delegates, led by Dr. Maria Vallejo and me, represented the country of El Salvador. Our students competed against 3,000 delegates across the world, where 60% of delegates belonged to international student groups. All members of the National Model United Nations team succeeded—and one also won Outstanding Position Paper. This was a remarkable success for our NMUN team!!!

Highlights of our honors college this past year include 12 honors students selected as Seniors of Significance, including one named Outstanding Senior Man, by the Division of Student Affairs, six won undergraduate research awards, six became Texas Leadership Scholars through a state-wide program hosted out of the Higher Education Coordinating Board, eight earned prestigious summer undergraduate research fellowships, and 10 served on nonprofit boards, such as Southeast Texas Food Bank and Stable-Spirit, through our Stepping Up Civic Leadership program. Lastly, 10 honors scholars traveled this past year and this summer as part of Study Abroad or Partners in the Parks. We appreciate alumni support and donations for our ongoing McMaster fund that allows us to bring these opportunities to our students!

We have a very exciting year ahead of us! We will introduce our Associate Dean, Shannon Jordan, Ph.D. who has taught nearly 20 years in higher education and comes to us from the College of Education and Human Development at Lamar University. We are thrilled to have her expertise and outstanding leadership on our team. Moving forward, we will continue many of our student-centered programs and start a few more, so watch for updates on our socials for ways you can get involved. Contact us at honors@lamar.edu if you wish to be invited to our alumni advisory council or want to stop in for a visit. 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



I had a great time chatting about Learner's Mindset with our students during one of our Honors Conversations this year!

BY IMELDA TRISTAN



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Reaud Leadership Institute Doubles in Second Year!



During the 2024-25 academic year, the Reaud Leadership Institute doubled in size! Launched in Fall 2023, this highly selective program offers leadership development, global influence, and experiential learning opportunities to help students grow into catalysts for change. Shown here are our inaugural leaders who served as great peer mentors for our incoming cohort.