Destination: Discovery
Student researchers at UTA help fuel our thriving research enterprise. PAGE 28
SUMMER 2020
VOL. X LV

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Student-Powered Discovery
Our students play a crucial role in the groundbreaking discoveries that drive UTA’s $117 million research enterprise.

A Degree That Makes a Difference
A liberal arts degree from UTA provides our alumni with an advantage in the workforce, leading them to rewarding and successful careers.

Care Through Crisis
Maverick students and alumni continue to play integral roles in providing care to their patients throughout the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Care and Creation
Alumna Holly D. Gray explores motherhood and caregiving through her art.

PAGE 22
From the President

Since we last published UTA Magazine, much has changed in the world. You’ve probably heard the words “unprecedented” and “uncertain” many times. But as I reflect on the last several months for UTA, I feel gratitude for the present and hope and optimism for the future. At every turn, I’ve seen spirit, determination, and achievement in our vast network of Mavericks—those students, faculty, staff, and alumni who work hard to keep our community resilient and strong.

Over the spring semester, I saw firsthand how quickly our faculty and staff adapted to the abrupt closure of our campus and the move to online learning and remote operations. I saw how our students responded to that change—with the fortitude that has come to define our student body. And I had the privilege to witness how our alumni came together to support our students in any way they could. As the saying goes, good times build trust, but bad times build character that lasts a lifetime.

While these times certainly are unprecedented, I can say with confidence that I have never been more certain about the strength of our Maverick community. Our spirit, our drive, and our commitment to transforming the lives of others have served us well, and they will take us to even greater heights in the future. I am honored to lead and serve the University during this unique time and am more than ever proud to be part of the Maverick family.

Go Mavs!

—Teik C. Lim, Ph.D.
President ad interim

Maverick Spirit:
United, Stronger than Ever

As of July 14, the FabLab has sewn 364 masks for the campus community and created 680 face shields for JPS Hospital and smaller clinics and agencies in Arlington and Fort Worth.

Over 6,000 students graduated in spring 2020, joining nearly 230,000 alumni across the globe.

365 prelicensure nurses graduated this spring ready to enter the workforce to combat COVID-19.

Through the CARES Act, UTA has provided 10,077 emergency grants—totaling $10.6 million—directly to students as of July 2.

Five engineering faculty members earned fellow status in professional organizations last spring.

More than 200 future Mavericks celebrated their decision to attend UTA in a unique, socially distanced drive-thru event on campus.
After spring break, at a time when UTA is usually bustling with activity, an eerie quiet took over campus. Because of COVID-19, the entire campus was shut down almost completely—but that doesn’t mean the University was any less busy. The majority of operations moved online, research thrived, and Maverick accomplishments continued apace.

Stories about the Mavericks who shape the UTA community near and far
BREAKING FREE OF ADDICTION

Nancy Ochoa used heroin for the first time when she was 15 years old. At 16, after the birth of her first child, her occasional drug use had turned into a “necessity.”

Ochoa, now in her mid-20s and a mother of two, is one of hundreds of patients in recovery after receiving help from social workers educated and trained at UTA.

The School of Social Work will be able to train more addiction recovery specialists under a new $1.3 million grant from the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration as part of its Opioid Workforce Expansion Program. UTA will award at least 81 advanced scholarships to intern with different health organizations and federally qualified health centers. The project is led by Dr. Woody, a lawyer who advocated for increased educational opportunities, particularly among low-income and marginalized students.

“Adelfa came from humble roots in South Texas and cared deeply about the lives of others, particularly those who were marginalized,” says Monica Lira Bravo, chair of the Callejo-Boitel Foundation Board. “One of her favorite quotes was, ‘Education is the great equalizer.’ It really speaks to her sense of personal purpose and her desire to help others succeed.”

Amber White, director of the Pre-Law Center, concurs. “Adelfa was a woman who refused to accept limitations. That’s what we want our students to embody.”

The courtroom allows students to simulate mock trials and moot court proceedings. White hopes to add even more advances to the space, bringing the program to the next level.

To break in the new courtroom, UTA hosted the American Mock Trial Association’s Regional Mock Trial Tournament for the first time. This year UTAs team improved their performance from the previous Regional Mock Tournament, which was held in Dallas.

ORDER IN THE COURT

Pre-law students now have their own courtroom.

UTAs Pre-Law Center opened the Adelfa B. Callejo-Courtroom on campus earlier this year thanks to generous funding from the Callejo-Boitel Foundation.

The courtroom honors the legacy of Adelfa Callejo, a lawyer who advocated for patients in recovery after receiving help from social workers educated and trained at UTA.

The School of Social Work and director of UTAs Center for Addiction and Recovery Studies (CARS).

“Through this grant we will train students to address and respond to the opioid epidemic through evidence-based practices,” Ochoa sought help after eight years of opioid use. “I didn’t want my baby and me to be another statistic,” she says, crediting her progress in part to everyone involved in her recovery at CARS.

Recovery will be a lifelong journey, but I’m hopeful,” she said. “My scars are a reminder of where I’ve been and where I don’t want to ever be again.”

Yan Xiao, Professor of Nursing, College of Nursing and Health Innovation

Yan Xiao, a professor and patient safety specialist in the College of Nursing and Health Innovation, is researching innovative interventions to reduce unsafe use of medications and provide patients and caregivers more efficient ways to manage and follow discharge instructions.

The consortium project started in 2019 with a four-year, $2.5 million grant aimed at improving medication safety. Xiao and his team will employ systems engineering methods and use interviews, focus groups, and design sessions at 12 clinics around the country. The team will add a simulated primary care clinic to UTAs Smart Hospital to prototype and test interventions.

What past accomplishments make you proudest?

Being able to build up an interdisciplinary team of collaborators from the different UTAs colleges and the R2s research began by Baylor Scott & White. The study focused on medication safety during transition of care. When patients are discharged from hospitals, they are at a higher risk of adverse drug events. UTA proved to be an excellent institution for working with clinical partners in reaching our patient recruitment targets and collecting clinical data.

What are you excited about right now? Innovation of processes and technology to enhance patient engagement in health care. We will study ways patients can be best supported in their decision making and in understanding educational materials. This will help providers to have meaningful ended interactions with their patients that will hopefully lead to better health outcomes.

What are you most looking forward to?

My interest is how on the understanding of the strengths and limitations of human performance. Our current way of designing the health care system does not take into account basic human factors. So, it is exciting that here at UTA we are advancing in that direction to see how we can support these interactions with human limitations in mind.
This fall, I will have the opportunity to live, learn, and intern in the nation’s capital as a Bill Archer Fellowship. This experience will provide me with invaluable insight on how to pursue my passion to help and support migrant workers seeking to become legal residents or citizens.

What are you passionate about law?

I realize from an early age my passion for human life and the rights we are granted upon being born. As I evolved in my knowledge of nations and the effects borders can have on our rights, I developed a deep desire to defend and protect the rights of individuals regardless of gender, race, or creed. I want citizens to know that knowledge of rights is the most powerful tool in today’s society. My career goal is not to make the most money or have the winningest case rate, but to touch a life.
LATE LAST YEAR, the School of Social Work expanded its global footprint with its first student/faculty study abroad course. A group of undergraduate and graduate students traveled to Belize with two social work faculty members—Associate Professor Eusebius Small and Assistant Professor in Practice Tracy Orwig—to better understand which people gain access to health care and how community residents are informed of their health options.

In Belize, the government runs hospitals and clinics and offers health services free or at low cost to citizens. Most hospitals in the generally poor country, however, are unable to perform surgeries, treat complex diagnoses, or offer treatments like dialysis due to shortages of equipment, among other issues.

“When I think about comparative health policy, it reminds me of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s words about health care,” Dr. Small says. “He said that of all the forms of inequity, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.”

Small notes the important role social workers play in health care crises.

“For developing countries with already fragile public health infrastructure, the situation is catastrophic. Many local organizations are overwhelmed with an overstretched resource capacity. Social workers can work directly with them to support readiness efforts to mitigate the devastating impact of the disease.”

WHO: Seventeen students and two UTA faculty members

HOW: As part of academic coursework in two social work classes, Comparative Health Policy and Community Health Promotion

WHY: To encourage students to consider equity in health care policy and whether everyone has a right to universal health care

LESSONS THEY TOOK HOME: “I realized that many aspects of my daily life, including health care, are luxuries. Firsthand exposure to cultural differences in access to care helped me to put aside personal bias and differentiate subjective truth from objective truth,” Guarnieri, student’s master’s student

“There is a wealth of wisdom in Belize,” says Amal Oruwg, student’s master’s student. “I have a greater understanding of how we can help each other heal. As a nurse at a North Texas hospital, I want to put hope into this world. I want to put hope into this world. I want to put hope into this world.”

Nursing has helped me become a better writer and an artist, and my poetry and my artistry have helped me become a better nurse,” she says. “It’s all connected.”

Small began college as a psychology major but decided to change course after visiting a friend in labor at a local hospital. She was struck by the expertise and teamwork demonstrated by the nurses who took care of her friend. They easily made her friend feel calm and at peace. Within a week, Shujaat had changed her major to nursing.

The pandemic has retaught what I learned,” she says. “Rural communities in Belize are cut off from many of the resources in Belize City. It’s crucial for communities to share information, ideas, and solutions for social issues so that these can be implemented by the community members themselves.”

Small notes the important role social workers play in health care crises.

“For developing countries with already fragile public health infrastructure, the situation is catastrophic. Many local organizations are overwhelmed with an overstretched resource capacity. Social workers can work directly with them to support readiness efforts to mitigate the devastating impact of the disease.”

Following Mavericks as they travel the world

THE ART OF CARING

Alumna blends her passions

As an artist and writer, Nehan Shujaat (’19 BSN) has long been interested in the human condition, exploring complex truths about her personal history, culture, family, and more through creative expression. Now, as a nurse at a North Texas hospital, she is exploring the human condition in a more immediate way. From arts to nursing may seem like a leap, but for Shujaat, it’s all inexorably tied together.

“Nursing has helped me become a better writer and an artist, and my artistry and my poetry have helped me become a better nurse,” she says. “It’s all connected.”

Shujaat began college as a psychology major but decided to change course after visiting a friend in labor at a local hospital. She was struck by the expertise and teamwork demonstrated by the nurses who took care of her friend. They easily made her friend feel calm and at peace. Within a week, Shujaat had changed her major to nursing.

While in nursing school, she didn’t lose sight of her drive to create, communicating her world through words and art. She channelled her experiences as a student nurse into her book of poetry, Here’s the Chair, published just last year.

“I’m responsible for what I put into the universe. I don’t want to be the type of person who doesn’t think about their actions,” she says. “I want to put hope into this world. I want to inspire people to see that we’re all powerful, and they can inspire the same in others. I think that’s how we can help each other heal.”
Brian Prejean (PhD, Kinesiology) came to UTA to learn the craft of human performance science. He didn’t expect the work would lead him to NASA.

At KBR Inc., an engineering company that provides contractual services to NASA, Dr. Prejean works with engineers to develop exercise equipment for long-duration space flights. His education prepared him for collaborating on a project for NASA’s Human Physiology Performance, Protection, and Operations Lab. He works to minimise mass and volume while developing exercise equipment that combines resistance and aerobic exercise capabilities in a weightless environment.

“I’m really excited to operate in a field like this, particularly at a time when we’re trying to do more with lunar and deep space exploration,” he says. His study of kinesiology and exercise performance, Protection, and volume while developing exercise equipment that combines resistance and aerobic exercise capabilities in a weightless environment.

Mike Ward understands why people might think violent video games can lead to acts of violence. But the science just doesn’t support it.

The economics professor just published a new study with data from more than 15,000 adolescents that shows no link, or perhaps a negative link, between violent video games and acts of violence. He says, “It is remarkable how consistent these findings are.”

Some policymakers and elected officials have decreed how playing these violent video games leads to acts of violence, especially following many of the multitude of mass shootings the United States has experienced. On the contrary, Ward says video game development is among the fastest-evolving forms of human expression.

It’s difficult to imagine the experiences that video games developed over just the next few decades will provide,” he says. “One consequence of a policy aimed at restricting content could be to stifle this explosion in creativity.”

MIKE WARD UNDERSTANDS WHY PEOPLE MIGHT THINK VIOLENT VIDEO GAMES CAN LEAD TO ACTS OF VIOLENCE. BUT THE SCIENCE JUST DOESN’T SUPPORT IT.
LIKE MILLIONS OF people across the country, students at UTA suddenly found themselves navigating an unfamiliar reality when COVID-19 began to spread throughout the U.S. in March 2020. That new existence meant adjusting to online learning, a change of environment as they sheltered in place, and, for others, needed help traveling home. Their stories are familiar: Decreases in income or complete job loss left several unable to pay bills; some were unable to afford access to internet and necessary technologies for remote learning; and others needed help traveling home. Fortunately, UTA students in need had a source of refuge. Since 2015, students with unexpected financial setbacks have sought relief by applying to UTA’s Emergency Assistance Fund. To qualify for aid, applicants must have a temporary financial hardship resulting from a sudden emergency that jeopardizes their capability to attend UTA. The program is made possible largely thanks to individual donor support. As of June 1, 514 donors had given more than $148,000 in direct response to the pandemic.

Some used their creative skills to garner support, such as Dan Cavanagh, professor and chair of the Department of Music, who hosted a live jazz concert from his living room in April. The hour-long event drew hundreds of viewers and raised more than $2,500 for UTA students. The impact of this collective community support will not soon be forgotten by students. In a thank you note to staff, Thao Ho, a junior finance and economics major and Goolsby Scholar, summed up the Maverick community’s reaction to the pandemic: “I felt compelled to do whatever I could to support my fellow Mavericks during these challenging times.”

One student’s financial setback was a short-term crisis caused by long-term health issues. Noelle Fields and Ling Xu, assistant professors in the School of Social Work, believe that social distancing requirements during the coronavirus pandemic place older adults at higher risks of physical and mental ailments.

The pair specializes in research and education related to older adults and their family caregivers. “While social distancing may impact all of us, the negative effect may be greater for older adults who are already at risk for social isolation,” Dr. Fields says. “Some in gerontology and other social science fields are calling for ‘physical distancing’ rather than ‘social distancing.’”

There is strong evidence that for older adults, social isolation and loneliness negatively affect mortality and are associated with higher risks for a variety of physical and mental conditions such as high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, a weakened immune system, anxiety, depression, cognitive decline, and more. Dr. Xu recently received a grant from the National Institutes of Health to research ways of reducing the isolating stress experienced by families caring for loved ones with Alzheimer’s disease. “Social workers directly engage clients,” she says. “Our work is empathic in nature, so we know the perspective of our clients and can take the initiative and advocate for them. We do not propose new theoretical solutions, we propose action models like intervention or policy.”

While social isolation is easily recognized in older adults, it’s becoming more common across one’s lifespan, says Kathryn Daniel, associate professor and director of the Adult Gerontology Nurse Practitioner program. In addition, there are other marginalized groups at risk for detrimental isolation, including prisoners, immigrants, and other overlooked populations. Faculty members in UTA’s College of Nursing and Health Innovation expose students to other cultures and points of view to instill empathy and help them recognize the warning signs of social isolation.

“Put it simply, we are not meant to be isolated. Social networks are imperative in a healthy society.”
Although I grew up loving horror, I didn’t think of myself as a horror writer for a long time. It wasn’t until I decided to incorporate horror elements into my fiction that I wrote something interesting and unique.

Let’s start with the praise. How does it feel to have approval like that coming at you? The short answer is that it didn’t feel like a ton of accolades in the moment. A few weeks ago, however, one of my editors showed me some ad copy that cherry-picked all the best quotes from every professional review or write-up of your book “the most interesting and unique.” Now I love it, and I think you will, too.”

What was the process of writing that sentence for you? The opening sentence was definitely a “magic” moment. It came to me while I was daydreaming in my early 20s, and I spent so many years waiting for the rest of the story to follow. I wish I could craft a sentence that good on command. I’d never have trouble writing anything again.

Have you always wanted to be a writer? I always wanted to be a storyteller, but the ambition took a few different shapes over the years. What I eventually realized was that writing the stories was my favorite part of any creative endeavor, and after that, I focused on the craft of fiction. Although I grew up loving horror, I didn’t think of myself as a horror writer for a long time. It wasn’t until I decided to incorporate horror elements into my fiction that I wrote something interesting and unique. Now that I’m here, though, I’m happy to wear the label of horror writer.

How did UTA help shape your approach as a writer? UTA has a wonderful English Department and a terrific creative writing program. I got a solid grounding in the classics from my academic studies and learned a lot about the world of MFAs and modern literary fiction from my writing classes, especially my Advanced Fiction class with Laura Kopchick.

What’s coming up next for you? I’m working on a couple of novels and a TV pilot. Hopefully, I’ll be able to talk about at least one of those things in a more official capacity soon!

Fascinating books by Maverick authors to fill your library

Noah Turner and his family see monsters. While they deal with them in different ways, Noah is the only one who chooses to let them in. Written by alumnus and Arlington native Shaun Hamill (’08 BA, English), A Cosmology of Monsters is a sprawling family tale infused with a Lovecraftian horror that had reviewers raving when the novel was released last year. Among those reviewers was the master of horror himself, Stephen King. “If John Irving ever wrote a horror novel, it would be something like this,” he said. “I loved it, and I think you will, too.”

The opening sentence was definitely the “magic” moment. It came to me while I was daydreaming in my early 20s, and I spent so many years waiting for the rest of the story to follow. I wish I could craft a sentence that good on command. I’d never have trouble writing anything again.

Have you always wanted to be a writer? I always wanted to be a storyteller, but the ambition took a few different shapes over the years. What I eventually realized was that writing the stories was my favorite part of any creative endeavor, and after that, I focused on the craft of fiction. Although I grew up loving horror, I didn’t think of myself as a horror writer for a long time. It wasn’t until I decided to incorporate horror elements into my fiction that I wrote something interesting and unique. Now that I’m here, though, I’m happy to wear the label of horror writer.
Mahrouq and his family have been living the American dream for more than 25 years and are now providing pathways, "says Dan Cavanagh, chair of the Department of Music. "Having a degree in music industry studies is a career boost and more attractive than simply receiving a business degree and then working in the industry."

"The Music Department's Studio 301 is UTA's on-campus recording studio and features the latest recording tools and technology. Jones anticipates graduates will have the know-how to manage artists, run record labels, and produce albums—just as he has done for many famous performers, including Patti LaBelle, Jamie Foxx, and Jill Scott."

"Students should feel like being at UTA is just like walking into a studio in L.A. or New York or Nashville," says Jones. "I want to put UTA on the map as a place that educates and trains music industry professionals."
GRACIAS A DIOS. All I have to say is there were countless late nights, many tech weeks, a handful of opening nights, countless tears shed, a whole bunch of learning experiences and of course many new friends and a slew of memories made. Thank you Maverick Theatre company for making these years of my life one for the books.

@KARLALINNEA96

The University of Texas at Arlington
Magazine

Our online celebration of the Class of 2020

Congratulations, Class of 2020!

@RUCKEROY

Our #ForeverMaverick celebrates during a drive-by graduation party! Well done, Chris!

@BARBARAGRIFFITHMOFFETT

I have been blessed throughout my journey by friends and family, which has culminated in this: a master’s in education. Although these are unprecedented times, our resilience and ability to achieve and overcome is our legacy.

@ATAYLORK AMARA1

It’s commencement day! We should have all been walking the stage today, but at least we are alumni now!

@ERICA.J.LEWIS

Bachelor of Science in Biology with a Minor in Biochemistry. We’re halfway there, y’all, four more years to go! Progress to Doctor Status.

@DANIELLO3_34

PERFECT HARMONY

A cappella group honored

UTA’s A Cappella Choir—the University’s premier choral ensemble—was one of only 12 choirs across the country invited to perform at the National Collegiate Choral Organization’s 2019 national conference.

Karen Kenaston-French, director of choral activities and associate professor of music, conducted the performance. “I’m incredibly proud of our students,” she says. “They have a lot of pride in the choir and work extremely hard.”

The A Cappella Choir is made up mostly of undergraduate and graduate vocal music majors and was selected from a recorded audition submitted anonymously.

Dan Cavanagh, Department of Music chair, called the invitation to sing at the 8th biennial conference “a tremendous recognition of the work that Dr. Kenaston-French and our vocal colleagues are doing with our students.”

Previously, the 48-voice choir performed at the 2019 and 2014 Texas Music Educators Association convention, the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) national convention in 2015, and the 2016 ACDA Southwestern Division Conference. The choir performed with Mick Jagger and the rest of the Rolling Stones in Arlington in 2016. Other honors include appearances with the Manhattan Philharmonic Orchestra at Carnegie Hall, the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, and the Texas Ballet Theatre.

Campus Buzz

MAV ROUNDUP

Our online celebration of the Class of 2020

Congratulations, Class of 2020!

@RUCKEROY

I have been blessed throughout my journey by friends and family, which has culminated in this: a master’s in education. Although these are unprecedented times, our resilience and ability to achieve and overcome is our legacy.

@ATAYLORK AMARA1

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@DANIELLO3_34
For any artist, the act of creation is intensely personal—it's the process of making personal experiences and perspectives tangible. For Holly D. Gray (’06 BFA, Photography; ’19 MFA, Intermedia Studies), that act took on a new meaning when she became the mother of a medically fragile child.

“The repetitive acts of labor and fragile time spent as a female caregiver have become a large part of my thought process,” she says. “My role as a woman and the gendered assumptions that culminate with this identity are a constant influence on my artistic work.”

After being away from formal education for over a decade, Gray found supportive faculty and a community of artists and creators that helped her kick-start a consistent artistic practice devoted to research and dedicated studio production. She had her first solo exhibition in 2018 and has been pleased with the direction and importance of her work since.

“I am very encouraged to inform and educate viewers on the objects, processes, and themes within my art practice,” Gray says. “I am proud of these interactions because they ultimately lead to important conversations about women’s issues, disabilities, health care access, and basic human rights.”
Movin’ Mavs’ seasons halted by COVID-19

When asked to pinpoint a personal team highlight in the 2019-20 Movin’ Mavs season, Antoine Gray doesn’t hesitate. “Any time one of our rookies got their first collegiate baskets,” he says. “We’d all go crazy on the bench.”

In an undefeated intercollegiate season like the one the Movin’ Mavs had this year, the players would have plenty of athletic highlights to choose from when asked. But rather than recall high-scoring games or personal moments of glory, again and again, the players choose highlights that exemplify the spirit of the close-knit team.

“It’s all about the way we clicked,” says Clarence McCarthy-Grogan. “We knew we had the right squad to be successful this season.”

The word “successful” almost doesn’t do the season justice. The team finished with an overall record of 22 wins and only one loss, going undefeated (14-0) in National Wheelchair Basketball Association (NWBA) Intercollegiate Division games. It was their first undefeated regular season in 15 years, and they were poised to compete for a title as they prepared for the championship tournament.

And then the COVID-19 pandemic took hold in the United States. Before the team had time to process what was happening, the NWBA canceled the tournament, and the Movin’ Mavs’ record season came to an abrupt halt.

“There was a feeling of loss instead of a celebration of success,” says Clarence McCarthy-Grogan.

Gray, who is working to finish his master’s degree in social work this summer, agrees.

“The whole world is dealing with the abrupt loss of a lot of things right now, so I know we aren’t in this alone,” Hunter says. “While this season didn’t finish as we had hoped, I still have a lot to be grateful for. We made a lifetime of memories.”

From his home back in Australia, McCarthy-Grogan is also finding his peace with the way the season ended.

“We can only focus on what we can control,” he says. “COVID-19 can’t touch our team readiness. We are focused on doing our best every game. We are focused on coming back much stronger next season.”

“I know we aren’t in this alone,” Hunter says.

“COVID-19 can’t touch our team readiness. We are focused on doing our best every game. We are focused on coming back much stronger next season.”
SIBLING DUO ON THE DIAMOND

Brother and sister athletes join the Maverick family

Growing up in Mansfield, Reagan and Trevor Hukill’s sibling bond strengthened as they became united in their efforts on the baseball diamond. Now that bond is even stronger since they joined the Maverick family.

“My biggest strength is pitching,” says Trevor, a left-handed pitcher who struck out 60 batters across 69 innings while grooming himself into the talent the Mavs’ coaching staff believed he could be. While he was plagued with injuries in his first season at UTA, Trevor expects to pick things back up in fall 2020.

“Trevor is a team guy who puts our baseball program first,” says Associate Head Coach Jon Wentz. “He cares and has worked to overcome a lot of adversity as a player in his short time here at UTA.”

Reagan also has a team-first mindset. In the 25 games the softball team managed to play this season, the freshman excelled with a .305 batting average and a 1.000 fielding percentage across 24 starts in the outfield.

“Reagan is a fantastic person to have in this program,” says head softball Coach Preejay Brun. “She’s a talented outfielder with a consistent swing. The one thing that stands out about her is her ability to make people smile. She just has the personality that makes you feel like everything is going to be OK.”

Luckily for the Hukill parents, if everything eventually goes back to normal after social distancing orders lift, they should have at least two more years of being able to cheer on their children.

“They chose to go to UTA because the programs are amazing,” says Melodie. “The coaches are amazing. They truly have found their home there.”

As a member of UTA’s men’s tennis team, junior marketing major Eduard Simo had seen his fair share of volunteer work while serving on the Student Athlete Advisory Committee at UTA. Since returning to his home country of Spain, however, he’s taken his community service up a notch.

“I tell everybody all the time that I feel like I’ve won the lottery because honestly, I did,” says their mother, Melodie Hukill.

“Trevor began working to overcome a lot of adversity as he became united in their efforts on the baseball diamond. Now that bond is even stronger since they joined the Maverick family.”

Head Coach Jon Wente. “He cares and has worked to overcome a lot of adversity as a player in his short time here at UTA.”

SERVING OTHERS

After recovering from COVID-19, tennis athlete serves up a notch.

As a member of UTA’s men’s tennis team, junior marketing major Eduard Simo had seen his fair share of volunteer work while serving on the Student Athlete Advisory Committee at UTA. Since returning to his home country of Spain, however, he’s taken his community service up a notch.

Upon returning home to Barcelona after COVID-19 closed the UTA campus, Simo first had to overcome coronavirus, which his family caught just days before his arrival.

He and his family quarantined themselves for 14 days. Once the period passed and his symptoms subsided, he was ready to make a difference.

Through Health Warriors, an initiative started by a close friend of his, Simo is helping to provide health care workers with support and encouragement through the donation of prepared meals.

As of early May, Health Warriors had donated 6,325 servings of food to 64 different organizations, including hospitals, prisons, and police and fire stations.

“It’s very gratifying for me because you go to these hospitals that are overloaded with so many people,” says Simo. “We go there and bring big boxes of food and they are just so happy. They all start clapping. Every single doctor comes out and says thank you. They’re doing like 12-hour turns, so it’s the least we could do for them.”

FIRST-EVER RECOGNITION

Women’s golfer earns Sun Belt honors

Kate Tran is the first player in the short history of the UT Arlington women’s golf program to be named Sun Belt Conference Golfer of the Week, league officials announced in March. The UTA women’s golf program played its inaugural season in 2017-18.

The award covers a period in which the Mavericks competed in one event, the Kiawah Island Classic in early March. Teeing it up against the largest field in collegiate golf, she tied for third place out of 264 competitors.

Entering the tournament, Tran had four under-par rounds in 84 career rounds, at the Kiawah event, she had three such rounds in three opportunities.

Tying for the tournament lead in par-5 scoring at -6 and tied for the 5th-best par-4 scoring average in the field at -4. The Arlington Martin High product was the lone player in the field to convert two eagles as she rolled in one of each of the first two rounds.

Tran added in UTA’s 891 total for the week as the Mavs finished in 11th place out of 53 teams. That $91 three-round total was the 2nd-best of the season and 2nd-lowest in program history, bested only by an 883 (+19) performance this past fall at Arkansas State’s Lady Red Wolves Classic.

Women’s golfer earns Sun Belt honors

Kate Tran is the first player in the short history of the UT Arlington women’s golf program to be named Sun Belt Conference Golfer of the Week, league officials announced in March. The UTA women’s golf program played its inaugural season in 2017-18.

The award covers a period in which the Mavericks competed in one event, the Kiawah Island Classic in early March. Teeing it up against the largest field in collegiate golf, she tied for third place out of 264 competitors.

Entering the tournament, Tran had four under-par rounds in 84 career rounds, at the Kiawah event, she had three such rounds in three opportunities.

Tying for the tournament lead in par-5 scoring at -6 and tied for the 5th-best par-4 scoring average in the field at -4. The Arlington Martin High product was the lone player in the field to convert two eagles as she rolled in one of each of the first two rounds.

Tran added in UTA’s 891 total for the week as the Mavs finished in 11th place out of 53 teams. That $91 three-round total was the 2nd-best of the season and 2nd-lowest in program history, bested only by an 883 (+19) performance this past fall at Arkansas State’s Lady Red Wolves Classic.

SEASON INTERRUPTED

Maverick baseball cut short after best start in nearly 20 years

There was plenty of optimism heading into a new season of Maverick baseball, and the team certainly did not disappoint, posting a stellar start. But four weeks into play, the season was called thanks to COVID-19.

Though the season ended abruptly, it wasn’t without some memorable and even monumental moments. The Mavericks finished with a 12-4 record through 16 games—the team’s best start since 2003.

BY THE NUMBERS

The team ERA of 2.42 was among the best in the nation.

With 6.33 hits allowed per nine innings, the Mavericks led the Sun Belt and ranked 14th in the NCAA.

3 shutouts in 16 games played.

Wyatt Divis was one of the top relievers in the nation, with a 0.80 ERA in 16 innings pitched.

The team finished with the 20th hardest strength of schedule. The Mavericks played a ranked team on every Tuesday of the season (DBU—twice, TCU, Oklahoma).

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The $117 million research enterprise at UTA is filled with preeminent researchers solving some of the world’s most pressing problems. Students are playing an integral role in their discoveries, gaining experience that has impact far beyond the laboratory.

BY DANA JENNINGS
ILLUSTRATIONS BY NATHAN HACKETT
The research that impacts and transforms the world we live in takes years of diligent effort and teams of people contributing their time and expertise to keep the process moving toward answers to grand questions.

At UTA, faculty take and welcome with open arms undergraduate and graduate students into this process, allowing them to hone their research prowess in leading laboratories, gain invaluable experience, and play a vital role in the research mission of the University.

"Many students are intimidated by research, especially as undergraduates," says Marco Brotto, the George W. and Hazel M. Jay Endowed Professor in the College of Nursing and Health Innovation. "But if their eyes are opened to what is taking place around them, they might have an interest sparked. Then, once they get a taste of conducting research and making a discovery, they’re addicted."

Creating Lifelong Learners

Serving as living proof of Dr. Brotto’s philosophy for engaging students in research is Matthew Fiedler, a junior exercise science student and research assistant in Brotto’s laboratory.

Fiedler connected with the research community at UTA just four weeks into his freshman year and was hooked from the start, saying now that he’d love to spend the remainder of his working life doing research. His time in laboratories on the UTA campus set the stage for him to earn a position as a summer research course assistant at the prestigious Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL). Highly adept in imaging techniques, Fiedler will help professors in the classroom and with hands-on microscopy lessons. MBL attracts esteemed pre- and postdoctoral trainees, and Fiedler will be leading them as an undergraduate with two years left to complete his bachelor’s degree.

For Fiedler, his passion for research does look a bit like what we see in the movies.

"As I look through the microscope and find something, there are a few moments in which I’m the only one who knows what has been unlocked beneath that lens," he says. "It’s an incredible feeling."

Popular culture has often shown us that important, game-changing research centers on a pivotal “aha” moment, where a lone scientist hunched over a microscope in a laboratory looks up with excitement to share an incredible discovery. But the reality is most often quite different.
While the opportunity at MRL is an unparalleled one for Fiedler to hone his skills in teaching technical research concepts, Brotto looks forward to the intangibles Fiedler will bring back to Arlington.

“I hope Matthew spends this summer engaging in work that sparks a long-term academic career and starts his journey to becoming an independent investigator,” Brotto says. “Should he raise and harness a passion for something this summer, whether it’s a concept or technique, it will serve to advance our lab as a whole when he returns.”

Win-Win
Faculty are most often regarded as the experts, but what students bring to a lab environment can be just as impactful as decades of experience, says recent UTA alumna Arisa Towns.

Towns graduated in December 2019 with a Bacherelor of Science in Microbiology. She worked in the lab of Dr. Pellegrino, assistant professor of biology, in her senior year.

“Students play a bigger role in research than most people could ever fathom,” Towns says. “Many people are well acquainted with standard research papers, but they don’t realize that some of the research methods are often executed or even created by students.”

Towns believes research also contributes critical value to the academic mission of UTA.

“UTA prides itself on the research conducted on campus,” she says. “The findings of laboratories often make it into the classroom setting as an important means to providing students with a visual understanding of what their core curriculum is centered on.”

Brotto echoes this, saying the sharing of UTA research in a classroom setting can help make it seem less daunting and more tangible, potentially inspiring more students to get involved.

While students benefit from engaging in research, many faculty members note that they do as well in the pursuit of answers to grand research questions within their laboratory. Mark Pellegrino, assistant professor of biology, utilizes the individual interests of students.

“The students in my lab each have their own independent research project that supports an overall research question that my lab studies,” Dr. Pellegrino says. “Even though each student works independently on their own project, their findings often support one another to help solve a bigger question. My students provide important intellectual contributions to the project by critically appraising their data and interpreting the significance of their findings.”

Kytai Nguyen, professor of bioengineering, credits the students in her lab with much of its success.

“My students are the main power in my lab,” Dr. Nguyen says. “As a result of their hard work, our group has gained various research and education awards and published several peer-reviewed articles since I came to UDA in 2015.

“The students play an important role in our research mission,” she continues. “Their ideas and results from their own experiments lend tremendous value.”

Beyond the Lab
At the UTA Research Institute (UTARI)—the research and development unit of the University specializing in applying cutting-edge technologies to real-world engineering problems—student involvement is not any less vital.

UTARI brings on over 50 undergraduate and graduate students each semester, with many continuing from semester to semester and working with the same research teams.

“Our mission is to perform research and development that links discovery, development, and technology commercialization to technology-based economic development that benefits society,” says Eileen Clements, director of research at UTARI. “The students are involved in research that directly relates to this mission and play a role in executing grants and contracts with federal and state agencies and industry partners and in moving research and development through the pipeline.”

Dr. Clements says she sees many success stories, as a number of students who served as research assistants at UTARI have been hired as full-time employees after graduation, while many others credit their experience at UTARI with success in their job hunt.

“All of our research activities are addressing real-world problems, and in many cases are connected to business partners,” she says. “The students are often being asked to work on projects that have real deadlines, budgets, and deliverables attached to them. Having this kind of research assistant experience can really make the difference in getting the job.”

Pellegrino also emphasizes that experience in a laboratory as a student can make a world of difference in a student’s preparedness for life after graduation, whether that life involves research or not.

“If a student thinks they are interested in pursuing a career in research, then starting early during their undergraduate studies is a definite advantage,” Pellegrino says. “But laboratory experience also helps students learn critical organizational skills that can be applied to any career.”

Towns says her time in Dr. Ravenscraft’s lab provided her with more real-life experience than she could have ever imagined and credits the enthusiasm for research and mentorship of her faculty leader with her landing a job in a petroleum laboratory shortly after graduation.

“I will always be grateful for Dr. Ravenscraft and her patience with me as I learned the lab processes,” Towns says. “She took time to not only correct my mistakes, but also to help me understand the reasoning behind them. Her guidance helped me fully grasp research practices and helped me start my career. I felt confident going into interviews because I knew I was well-versed in relevant topics thanks to my amazing lab professor.”

Fiedler emphasizes the importance of students discussing their interests with their instructors. He credits getting connected with the network of faculty on campus early on in his studies with the success he is experiencing now.

“Research not only provides you with great experience that will benefit you in your quest for jobs after graduation, but it also provides you with the opportunity to be a part of the best feature of UTA,” she says. “My involvement in research at UTA has provided me with even more gratitude for my alma mater.”
A DEGREE THAT
Makes a Difference

A liberal arts degree provides the foundation for successful careers in health care, journalism, entertainment, and more.

BY DEVYNN CASE
In today’s increasingly global world, employers are beginning to place more value on a liberal arts education, which provides graduates with a dynamic, far-reaching knowledge base.

A recent report on employment, skills, and workforce strategy from the World Economic Forum found that 80% of employers agreed that all students need a strong foundation in both liberal arts and sciences. And a report by the Association of American Colleges and Universities noted that employers felt that candidates with broad learning were most prepared for long-term career success.

Elisabeth Cawthon, dean of UTA’s College of Liberal Arts (COLA), says that COLA students start with classroom experiences that allow them to engage in critical, interdisciplinary thinking. They also learn effective communication, benefit from internships, and find support from involved, connected faculty—all excellent workforce preparation.

“A degree in the liberal arts can educate future leaders and expansive thinkers who are comfortable in many fields,” says Dr. Cawthon. “It prepares students for creative, worthwhile, and beneficial careers.”

UT Arlington’s HMI program is one of the best in the country, producing broadcast journalism professionals in all areas of the field. The program has a 100% graduation and job placement rate, highlighting the demand from industry for UTA-trained graduates.

HMI has produced a broad network of alumni working in some of the largest markets in the United States and internationally. Proyecto U, established in 2014, is one of the few programs in the country that gives students real-time, experiential learning opportunities in broadcast journalism.

Juana Palmieri became interested in a news career in her early twenties and immediately decided to attend UT Arlington. She credits her time at UTA with teaching her the value of hard work.

“UT Arlington was a great experience,” she says. “I was able to experience different forms of journalism, such as The Shorthorn and UTA News en Español. I also interned with Proyecto U.”

Palmieri was part of the Hispanic Media Initiative (HMI), a program in UTA’s Department of Communication that focuses on the advancement of Hispanic media education, journalism, and research, addresses urgent needs found in the media industry, and secures the continued development of a world-class education at UTA.

“UT Arlington was a great experience. I was able to experience different forms of journalism, such as The Shorthorn and UTA News en Español. I also interned with Proyecto U.”
KEVIN BACH
‘17 BFA, Theatre Performance
Actor

“My degree has given me a leg up on my competition. Getting to hear insights from UTA faculty members and their experiences about being in L.A. and New York really prepared me for a career once I graduated.”

Bach says attending UT Arlington gave him a strong foundation in his craft. “My degree has given me a leg up on my competition,” he says. “Getting to hear insights from UTA faculty members and their experiences about being in L.A. and New York really prepared me for a career once I graduated.”

JACQUELINE DELGADO-MARTINEZ
(‘19 BA Political Science, BA Spanish for Translation and Interpreting)
Medical Interpreter

Jacqueline Delgado-Martínez always knew she wanted to give back to her community, so she began her collegiate career at a community college with the intention of becoming a nurse. But now, as a medical interpreter at a public health hospital in North Texas, she is there for the community in a way she never imagined.

“My degree has given me a leg up on my competition,” he says. “Getting to hear insights from UTA faculty members and their experiences about being in L.A. and New York really prepared me for a career once I graduated. They had so much knowledge to share with me. I couldn’t help but to be a sponge and absorb as much as I could.”

“Something that we, as medical interpreters, speak in the first person, as if we were the patients,” Delgado-Martínez says. “That can be very affecting at times, but I still love my job. I love being there for patients and their families.”

She recalls the passion that her UT Arlington professors showed, inspiring her to work hard to finish her degree—teachers like Alina Ria Rueda-Acedo, associate professor of Spanish and director of the Spanish Translation and Interpreting Program. “I teach translation and interpreting in three areas, including health care,” says Dr. Rueda-Acedo. “It’s vital to provide students with assignments that replicate the types of activities they would encounter working as translators and interpreters in the real world.”

In support of OLLI’s mission to vitalize student learning not only with research and creativity, but also with professional experiences, Rueda-Acedo has established several collaborative partnerships with local nonprofit and for-profit organizations that provide services to the underprivileged Hispanic community.

“I am grateful for the education decisions that brought me here.”
UTA is a Community That Cares—and that remains especially true for our students and alumni who bring their skills, compassion, and hard work out into the world. Across Texas and beyond, thousands of Mavericks have stepped up during the COVID-19 response to show how we improve communities, especially in times of great need. Here are just a few of their stories.

ELISABETH BERGLUND
NURSE
After her capstone work in the College of Nursing and Health Innovation in April, Elisabeth Berglund ('20 BSN) saw a post on social media from a group called the Special Operations Medic Coalition. They were looking for medical personnel to staff a converted indoor football facility in New York City known as The Bubble, a site that can treat up to 280 COVID-19 patients with staffing by military and civilian health care personnel.

“It was a call to action,” Berglund says. “My dad encouraged me. “This country needs help, and this is what you’re trained for,” he told me. I prayed about it and decided to apply.”

After her arrival, Berglund and other volunteers received personal protective gear, a rigorous orientation, and their new assignments of caring for patients cleared from more critical floors in a nearby hospital.

“It’s truly a team effort, and it is very rewarding to see our patients get better and go home to their loved ones,” says Berglund, who served as a paramedic. “I feel UTA prepared
As a nurse practitioner at Texas Pulmonary and Critical Care Consultants, Amy Bird ('09 BSN, ’09 MSN) is used to treating patients with severe breathing difficulties. But COVID-19 has added a new wrinkle to her daily life.

“Were the gatekeepers of COVID testing—we identify who gets tested and who doesn’t,” she says. “Because of that, the hospital staff nurses and respiratory therapists are relying on us to keep them safe by identifying COVID-positive patients quickly. It’s a lot of pressure.”

On the home front, the longtime nurse’s husband and children moved out during the beginning of the COVID-19 response to mitigate the risks of her job. They kept in touch with calls and video chats before they developed a plan to bring the family back together.

“When you have a patient who has beaten the odds and they’re definitely on their way home, that makes everything worth it,” she says. “Ones life is worth everything.”

“Dr. Philpott is a first-year emergency medicine resident. He says encouragement from the community is bringing her the most joy right now.

“Sarah Van Leuven, a master’s student in the online family nurse practitioner program, has had a tough year part about working as a nurse right now is seeing her coronavirus-positive patients so sick and alone. “Van Leuven enrolled in UTA’s online master’s program in 2019, attracted by its flexibility, high-quality reputation, and affordable tuition. Becoming a nurse practitioner, she says, will give her the opportunity to earn more money and enjoy a more routine work schedule. The online classes — along with regular study sessions via video conference with one of her classmates—have helped Van Leuven maintain a sense of normalcy during the pandemic.

“I’d never had this feeling of being part of something that is bigger than myself,” she says. “I really feel like I’m making an impact when I go to work.”
When we needed it most, the Maverick community was here for us. Thank you so much for your support.

To those who have supported UTA students through gifts to the Emergency Assistance Fund and other efforts: Thank You. We are forever grateful for your assistance.

THANK YOU

To make a gift to the Emergency Assistance Fund, visit giving.uta.edu/give.
Mike Rhyner

(’81 BA, Radio/Television/Film) retired in 2019. He co-founded The Ticket, North Texas’ first all-sports radio station, in 1994 and was a mainstay on its popular program The Hardline for 26 years. He was named to ESPN’s list of Sports Radio Personalities of the Year in 1997, 1998, and 2003 and was inducted into the Texas Radio Hall of Fame in 2014 and the Dallas Press Club Legends in 2016. Rhyner was named a Distinguished Alumnus of UTA in 2017.

Mike Rhyner

1983
Paul M. Sawyer
(ES, Geology) retired from teaching after a varied career that took him around the world. He has worked with oil field equipment and as an assistant arborist, a property tax consultant, and an environmental and property inspector. He was also chair of the STEM programs at Harmony Science Academy and a science teacher at Sunset High School, both in Dallas.

1985
Kathryn Collins
(ES, Industrial Engineering) is senior vice president and chief human resources officer for Entergy Corporation. She began her career as an industrial engineer with Texas instruments before moving to human resources. She also worked at JCPenny, RealPage, Trinity Industries, and Arcosa.

1988
Lee Mulcahy
(BA, French; ’89 PhD, Humanities) exhibited paintings at Redstone, Colorado’s 24th annual community show and Art Basel Miami. His gallery and studio are in Aspen, Colorado.

1989
Clifford Welch
(MArch, Architecture and Environmental Design) has earned Fellow of the American Institute of Architects status. He is a principal at Welch Latorre Architects and has been a past president of the Dallas Architectural Foundation. He has taught graduate-level design at UTA.

1990
Rodney Anderson
(BBA, Real Estate) served three terms in the Texas Legislature and is now the Dallas County Republican Party chairman. He is executive vice president and national agency manager of Alliant National Title Insurance Company.

1991
Jo Trizila
(PhD, Theatre Performance) was reappointed as city of Dallas cultural affairs commissioner for District 6. She is the founder and chief executive officer of Dallas-based TrizCom Public Relations and Pitch PR. She also serves on the board of directors for Heroes for Children and the advisory board of Taylor’s Gift, both nonprofit organizations.

1993
Colleen Norton
(BMM, Music) retired in May 2019 after 26 years of teaching elementary music. She taught at Arlington, Grand Prairie, Mansfield, and Crowley school districts. She volunteers with Code Blue and Citizens on Patrol for the Fort Worth Police Department and Code Rangers for Fort Worth’s Code Compliance Office. She participated in the Fort Worth Citizens Fore Academy and the Tarrant County Citizens Prosecutors Academy. Norton also has a jewelry business.

1994
Katrina McGhee
(BMM, Marketing) joined the American Heart Association’s nationwide leadership team as executive vice president of marketing and communications. She will operate from the association’s national center in Dallas, Texas.

2000
Dora Zapata
(IBBA, International Business) vice president of corporate philanthropy and community relations at Wells Fargo, received the Community Advocate Award at the 13th annual Minority Business Leaders Awards presented by the Dallas Business Journal. She is a member of UTA’s President’s Hispanic Advisory Council.

2001
Nikola Olfi
(BB, Computer Science Engineering), a software designer, showcased his photography at After Image Gallery in Dallas’ Uptown neighborhood.

2006
Carolyn Ansley
(MEd, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies) was named principal of the Dallas Ninth Grade Campus in Aledo, Texas.

2007
Bradley Ford
(MCRP) was named city manager for the city of Waco.

2010
Emily Williams
(MLA) was named chair of the city of Dallas Landmarks Commission.

2011
Rebecca Vice
(MPA) is assistant city manager for the city of Allen. Vice joined the city manager’s office in 2013 and later served as organizational development and employee engagement administrator.

2014
Elizabeth Bailey
(RSN) is a clinical supervisor for the observation/COVID-19 unit at Anne Arundel Medical Center in Annapolis, Maryland. A Naval Academy graduate, she is a former Navy helicopter pilot.

2015
Javina Fraga
(BA, Broadcasting), a producer for KXTX Television, was part of the team that won a Lone Star Emmy in the Morning/Daytime Newscast category.
Zoranna Jones (PhD, Public and Urban Administration) has been appointed as assistant dean for TCU’s School of Interdisciplinary Studies.

Ana Larranaga (BS, Architecture) displayed works at Enclaves, a reception hosted by the AIA Dallas Latinos in Architecture.

Maria Contreras (M Arch) displayed works at Enclaves, a reception hosted by the AIA Dallas Latinos in Architecture.

Myriam Igoufe (PhD, Urban Planning and Public Policy) is the Dallas Housing Authority vice president of policy development and research. She led the UTA-generated North Texas Regional Housing Assessment analysis, which included 21 cities and housing authorities across the area.

Ángel Martínez (’83 BA, Physical Education) was inducted into the Texas Tennis Coaches Hall of Fame. Hired in 2014, he re-established the men’s and women’s tennis programs at Texas Wesleyan University, where he serves as head coach. Martínez has 31 years of coaching experience at the high school level, including 15 years at Grapevine High School and Cedar Hill High School. His high school coaching record of 638–105 includes one state, 19 district, and two area championships.

Jehova Azucena (BA, Broadcasting) and Nathalie Palacios (BA, Broadcasting) received National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences Lone Star Chapter Awards for work they did while students in UTAs Hispanic Media Initiative.

Faith Geiger (BSW) was profiled in a March 2020 Fort Worth Magazine story highlighting women in leadership positions in Fort Worth. Geiger, founder of Collective Growth, is pursuing master’s degrees in social work and business administration.

Mark Harcrow (BS, Criminology and Criminal Justice) was named police chief for the Palestine, Texas, Police Department.

2020

David Retting (EMBA, International Business) was named to Fort Worth Business Press’ annual “Forty Under Forty” list. He is mayor of Northlake, Texas, and director of accounting services at Fidelity Investments.

If you have any questions about philanthropic planning topics, please contact Kurt Bartley, CAP®, senior director for gift & estate planning at UTA, at kurt.bartley@uta.edu or 817-272-9387.

Congress recently passed the CARES Act to encourage giving and reduce your tax liability. If you are thinking about making a gift in 2020, you could benefit from the following tax provisions:

1. Take a special tax deduction for gifts up to $300 (Non-Itemizers)
2. Deduct 100% of your annual income (Itemizers)
Serena Simmons Connelly (’95 MSSW), 50, April 22, Dallas. A dear friend and supporter of UTA, Serena Simmons Connelly was known for her compassion and determination to help those in need. She dedicated her life to uplifting the most vulnerable in our communities, including HIV/AIDS patients, refugees, and torture survivors in Dallas. Connelly also established the Human Rights Initiative of North Texas, the Harold Simmons Foundation, she shaped much of its outreach over the years. Connelly was also a lifelong supporter of UTA. In the early 2000s, the Harold Simmons Council and was a member of the President’s Advisory Board.

Robert “Bob” Boykin
(’88 BS, Mathematics) ’75, Jan. 23, Arlington, Texas. He was the voice of Big Tex, the 55-foot-tall cowboy at the State Fair of Texas, from 2013 to 2019. Boykin worked at Lockheed Martin for 40 years designing military aircraft like the Stealth bomber and the F-16.

Robert “Bob” Cooglan
(’82 BA, Geophysical) ’62, Dec. 28, Mesquite, Texas.

Joyce Eileen Daugherty
(’89 MA, History) ’60, March 24, Grand Prairie, Texas.

Charles Milton Headley
(’78 MA, Sociology) ’64, Feb. 21, Wylie, Texas.

Janet Lili Caero
(’79 MS, Psychology) ’82, Jan. 26, Fort Worth, Texas.

Arden “Buddy” Fritz
(’73 BA, Economics) ’60, Jan. 29, St. Paul, Minnesota.

Zoe Hill
(’88 BA, Accounting) ’87, Feb. 23, Weatherford, Texas.

Carol Ann Hester Jr.
(’74 MA, History) ’70, April 15, Arlington, Texas.

James “Jim” Fox
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Don Hager
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1970s
Kathleen Meyer Kidd
(’70 BA, Psychology) ’71, Jan. 3, Oaklawn, Virginia.

William Edward “Eddie” Cameron
(’72 BBA) ’71, Jan. 27, Arlington, Texas.

John Donald Drawnecke
(’72 BBA, Accounting) ’90, Feb. 17, Bonham, Texas.

Herbert Allan Ruiz
(’72 BBA, Accounting) ’84, March 12, Dallas, Texas.

Earl Albert Galliant
(’74 MBA) ’79, April 19, Cal- leysville, Texas.

Marjorie Maring Mitchell
(’74 BA, Sociology) ’86, Nov. 12, Arlington, Texas.

Donald Eugene Wasterheide
(’74 MBA) ’83, Dec. 8, Fort Worth, Texas.

Yvette Therese Victoria Agnew
(’79 BA, 1st MA, Foreign Languages) ’81, Jan. 22, Fort Worth, Texas.

Robert “Bob” Boykin
(’88 BS, Mathematics) ’75, Jan. 23, Arlington, Texas. He was the voice of Big Tex, the 55-foot-tall cowboy at the State Fair of Texas, from 2013 to 2019. Boykin worked at Lockheed Martin for 40 years designing military aircraft like the Stealth bomber and the F-16.

1980s
Ernest “Ernie” Ruf
(’80 BS, Mechanical Engineering) ’63, Dec. 11, Humble, Texas.

Joyce Eileen Daugherty Cooglan
(’82 BA, Geophysical) ’62, Dec. 28, Mesquite, Texas.

Charles Milton Headley
(’78 MA, History) ’60, March 24, Grand Prairie, Texas.

Sean Brian Headley
(’99 BA, Marketing) ’44, Nov. 5, Arlington, Texas.

2000s
Whitney Kongevic
(’70 BA, Speech) ’47, April 28, Easley, Texas.

Brandon David Menzow
(’04 March) ’40, Oct. 28, Guapinol, Texas.

2010s
Wendy Michelle Underwood-Kaspadov
(’11 BS) ’43, Oct. 22, Lewisville, Texas.

Amy Marie Duncan
(’82 BA, Public Relations) ’32, Jan. 2, Hurst, Texas.

Mary Godfrey Scott
(’04 BSN) ’70, March 17, Denton, Texas.

Joseph “Joe Pat” Bohanon
(’96 BS, 97 MS, Social Work) ’65, Feb. 18, Oklahoma. The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma tribe member formed UTA’s Native American Student Association in 1994. He taught at a number of colleges, including Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma, where he was chair of American Indian Studies. Bohanon was also president of Pawnee Nation College.

John Abruzzo
(’13 BSN) ’61, April 2, Seaford, New York. He worked as a nurse at Huntington Hospital on Long Island, one of the largest hospital networks in New York. He died from COVID-19 early in the pandemic.
The word “robot” was originally conceived for the play R.U.R., Rossum’s Universal Robots (1920) by Czech playwright Karel Čapek. In that play, perhaps a foreshadowing of our uneasy relationship with technology, robots overthrow their human overlords. Hollywood has continued the tradition of framing human-robot relationships as fraught. However, the front-line approach to human-robot collaboration in 2020 is a far different story from the version presented by Hollywood. At UTA, social robots are used for social good. Through purposeful and rigorous research from diverse disciplines such as liberal arts, theater arts, social work, engineering, nursing, and psychology, among many others, robots are programmed with theatrical authenticity to help address significant human problems.

Applying theater methodologies to artificial intelligence and social robotics creates trust and a potentially strong emotional interaction for the human. This is accomplished using theater techniques that humanize the design, behavior, and relational connection of the robot. Social awareness and empathetic response in robotics platforms are key. Theater performance is built on engagement, empathy, emotion, embodiment, and communication through a human-human model. I translate the human-human model to a human-robot model, creating a uniquely authentic experience of emotion.

The social robots of the Emotional Robotics Living Lab at UTA are programmed to perform for their audience much the same way a human actor rehearses and performs in a play. It is my expertise to create the human-robot framework as truthfully and honestly as its traditional theater model. Performance methodology, sensory data work, live field study, and relational narratives are examined to create a unique experience of emotion.

Current research work includes developing an enhanced Shakespeare-acting robot, examining prospective memory and exercise goals in older adults, providing resilience through original narratives for young adults and their caretakers, and tackling social isolation and loneliness in humans. All the research is interdisciplinary and seeks to solve problems that one perspective alone does not provide.

As we work through the complexities of COVID-19, it is clear that social robots may be able to connect arts and humanities-driven content to humans at a time when human contact is not possible—and in doing so, help reduce the stress of social isolation.

**All the World’s a Stage**

Social robots ease human isolation

**BY JULIENNE GREER**

Assistant Professor in the Department of Theatre Arts

The word “robot” was originally conceived for the play *R.U.R.* by Czech playwright Karel Čapek. In that play, perhaps a foreshadowing of our uneasy relationship with technology, robots overthrow their human overlords. Hollywood has continued the tradition of framing human-robot relationships as fraught.

However, the front-line approach to human-robot collaboration in 2020 is a far different story from the version presented by Hollywood. At UTA, social robots are used for social good. Through purposeful and rigorous research from diverse disciplines such as liberal arts, theater arts, social work, engineering, nursing, and psychology, among many others, robots are programmed with theatrical authenticity to help address significant human problems.

Applying theater methodologies to artificial intelligence and social robotics creates trust and a potentially strong emotional interaction for the human. This is accomplished using theater techniques that humanize the design, behavior, and relational connection of the robot. Social awareness and empathetic response in robotics platforms are key. Theater performance is built on engagement, empathy, emotion, embodiment, and communication through a human-human model. I translate the human-human model to a human-robot model, creating a uniquely authentic experience of emotion.

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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Julienne A. Greer is an interdisciplinary scholar and artist working at the emerging intersection of theatre and social robotics. As director of the Emotional Robotics Living Lab at UTA, her primary focus is human-robot interaction in order to “humanize” social robots to the nuances and subtleties of human behavior and performance for use in interdisciplinary research. She is a passionate advocate for undergraduate and graduate research for a future that may not have even been conceived of yet, but will most certainly impact our lives and how technology and the arts collaborate.
Look Back

Four-Year Fervor

A decade of campaigning for two-year Arlington State College (ASC) to become a four-year institution ended in 1959 when Texas Gov. Price Daniel signed legislation making it official. When news reached campus, spontaneous celebration broke out. ASC cheerleaders Charla Blount (left) and Jerry Carter (right), along with Ken Priksyl, were among the revelers.

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