

# UTA

**The University  
of Texas  
at Arlington**  
Magazine  
SUMMER 2021



## Giving Power

*Scholarships help  
talented Mavericks  
thrive. PAGE 48*



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**SUPERMOON**  
May's full moon  
shines high over  
the UTA campus.

## ON THE COVER

Four of the many Mavericks whose lives have been transformed through scholarships are featured on their own distinct covers. Clockwise, from top left: Akram Abbadi, Ken Fuentez, Dallas Johnson, and Lauren Sorto Ramos.

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SUMMER 2021  
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## FEATURES



### The Community Classroom

Service-learning opportunities at UTA allow students to make a difference as they hone their skills in the real world.



### With Great Care

UTA's gerontology program is a centerpiece of the University's ongoing efforts to reshape the future of health care research and training.



### Charting the Uncharted

As first-year teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic, these Mavericks are navigating new terrain in the education landscape.



### A Chance to Soar

Bright students deserve every chance to succeed. For many students, scholarships eliminate the main obstacle to achieving their dreams.



IT IS EVIDENT in this issue of *UTA Magazine* that there is a lot to celebrate at The University of Texas at Arlington. One article after another features Mavericks who are making the world a better place as our campus community continues doing what it does best—learning, educating, researching, creating and innovating. It is extraordinary to witness such heightened productivity, especially under the constraints of our times, and nothing gives me more optimism for the future than seeing our UTA community thrive despite all challenges.

Our most recent celebration of Maverick achievement took place at Globe Life Field in May, when nearly 7,000 graduates participated in our first in-person commencement ceremonies since December 2019. Graduates from 2020 whose ceremonies were canceled due to the pandemic and our newest spring 2021 graduates shared safe and memorable experiences as they celebrated with family and friends. It brought me great pleasure to see Mavericks together again to receive their degrees and to honor them for overcoming so many unique challenges while pursuing their education.

The pages of this magazine include more students, alumni, professors and programs at UTA that are worthy of celebration. Students are gaining an education of the mind as well as the heart in experiential and service-learning opportunities, advancing their academic



## CELEBRATING MAVERICKS

studies while also helping others. I believe this will instill the ethos of lifelong learning and service. Both students and faculty are bringing beauty, creativity and connection into the world through fine art, film and history. Generous and engaged alumni are creating endowments to fund the education, research and programs of deserving students and professors. Caring graduates are creating nonprofit organizations to assist the underserved, and UTA entrepreneurs are starting businesses that embrace diversity while providing internships and jobs.

It is truly inspiring to learn about the accomplishments centered on our University. Individually and collectively, our cherished students, alumni, faculty and staff are changing the world with an overcome-all-challenges spirit. Indeed, there is a lot to celebrate. I am so proud to be a member of the Maverick family, and I know you are, too.

Go Mavs!

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



Interim President Lim is also a professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering and a fellow of the National Academy of Inventors.

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# Excellence

## AT A GLANCE

UTA ranked **No. 1 in Texas** and among the top American colleges and universities in two international measures for sustainability. (2021 Times Higher Education Impact Rankings)

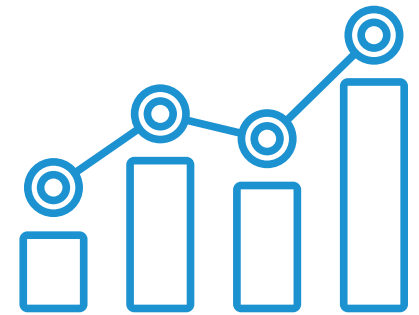
UTA's varsity esports team **won the College Esports Invitational.**



Nearly **300 UTA Mavericks** participated in The Big Event, the University's annual day of service.



UTA was **the only university in Dallas-Fort Worth** to be named to the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society's 2021 Transfer Honor Roll.



The University's part-time MBA program jumped **46 spots** to place **No. 66 in nationwide** rankings. (2022 *U.S. News & World Report* Best Graduate Schools)

UTA's annual day of giving, Mavs Day, raised **\$526,984** from **915 gifts** to support UTA students and programs.



**A**S THE WORLD inches closer to normal in the COVID-19 pandemic, UTA marked a major milestone: a return to in-person commencement, this year at Globe Life Field. The three-day celebration recognized 2020 and spring 2021 graduates and included a virtual ceremony for those who were unable or did not wish to attend the in-person festivities.







**Stories about  
the Mavericks  
who shape  
the UTA  
community  
near and far**

# **Mav Roundup**





## A LASTING LEGACY

New scholarship honors alumnus

In April, the Department of Communication began fundraising for a scholarship in honor of one of its outstanding alumni, Danny Woodward.

As a student, Woodward ('03 BA, '05 MA, Communication) worked on *The Shorthorn*, serving as the newspaper's youngest-ever editor-in-chief. *The Shorthorn* is where Woodward met his wife of 21 years, Monica.

For eight years, he worked as special assistant to former UTA President James Spaniolo. Most recently, he served as executive director of Executive Communications at Virginia Commonwealth University, winning numerous national speechwriting awards.

After the scholarship was announced, those who knew Woodward made generous contributions that fully endowed the Danny Woodward Scholarship in Communication Excellence. He learned of the achievement shortly before he passed away on May 18 after a battle with brain cancer. He was 43.

The Danny Woodward Scholarship honors Woodward's dedication to the study of communication and his commitment to UTA. It will provide financial support to undergraduate and graduate students in the Department of Communication who, like Woodward, demonstrate excellence.

Those interested in contributing to the scholarship can visit [give.uta.edu/Woodward-Scholarship](http://give.uta.edu/Woodward-Scholarship).

## WASTE NOT

Researcher turns food waste into fuel

Melanie Sattler is interested in your food—not so much what you eat, but what you throw away.

A professor of civil engineering, Dr. Sattler is leading the UTA portion of a North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) project funded through the Environmental Protection Agency that will determine how much more energy can be generated by diverting food waste from landfills to anaerobic food digesters. Anaerobic food digestion can convert food scraps into biogas to help with energy needs.

"Food waste breaks down in landfills and produces methane, which can be used for alternative energy," she says. "Often, though, the active part of the

landfill doesn't have a cover for two years. A lot of the gas escapes. The alternative to capture more of the gas from food waste is to use an anaerobic digester."

There are eight wastewater treatment plants with digesters around the region. Sattler says sending the food waste to these existing or new digesters would produce a better yield of biogas.

"Reducing food waste and maintaining adequate landfill capacity are goals for the growing region," says NCTCOG Executive Director Mike Eastland. "With this award, we can assess the amount of food waste that could be used to support development of future anaerobic digestion infrastructure and renewable energy projects in the region."



# 12

## **Xavien Johns, Junior, Business Marketing**

**First of all, congratulations on winning the city of Arlington's 2021 College Essay Contest for its Martin Luther King Jr. "Advancing the Dream" celebration.**

Thank you! The Office of Multicultural Affairs has been really big in my development here at UTA. One of the staff there encouraged me to enter, mentioning

some of the service projects I had already done and how I could talk about those.

Advancing the dream, to me, is about advancing the community.

You have

to take the steps to develop your own community and be accountable by working and putting in effort through activities like community service.

**Why is community service important to you?**

I didn't grow up with much. I went to homeless shelters for food, clothes, blankets, and things like that. One thing that really made me feel good was when someone cared enough to look out for us in any type of way. I wouldn't be at the place where I am if it weren't for the people who looked out for me.

**You chose to major in business marketing, which seems like a surprising route for someone so committed to service.**

**Why was that the right fit for you?**

I want to go into higher education and help guide leadership development for students, so I was looking for a major that would benefit me in higher education while exposing me to different opportunities for development.

Marketing is a good balance between learning how to reach out to people and how to market organizations, and I knew it would equip me with skills I could pull from going into grad school.

**You've also dedicated yourself to leadership and involvement as Mr. UTA and through membership in many different programs. What does leadership mean to you?**

For me, leadership revolves around service. The greatest leaders in the world were servants to the people. If you truly want to be a great leader, you're not in the front or the back, you're where you need to be. You should be leading for what your team needs.

**You're also a social justice peer educator. What has that experience been like for you?**

As a social justice peer educator, I go to classrooms and talk about things society normally doesn't openly talk about, like microaggressions, stereotypes, and biases. The conversations aren't always comfortable. It's definitely not a thing where everyone always agrees with what I have to say, but learning how to navigate those situations has been invaluable. I don't always love those conversations, but I always see the benefit of them—and programs like this make UTA a better place.





# Faculty Focus

Jonathan Asaadi, Assistant Professor of Physics

WHY DOES THE universe look the way it does? What are its building blocks, and how do they work? These are the questions that drive Jonathan Asaadi, assistant professor of physics. A high-energy physics experimentalist, Dr. Asaadi focuses on neutrino physics and detector research and development. In 2020, he received the Department of Energy's Early Career Research Award to work on a novel idea to make a sensor for neutrino physics experiments that is sensitive to signals from both light and charge.

**What is your proudest accomplishment?**

The professional accomplishment I am most proud of is being recognized by my peers and asked to serve as co-spokesperson of a small experiment collaboration (known as the LArIAT collaboration). Being given the opportunity to co-lead an experiment and help make programmatic choices that inform the science that will be done is an extremely satisfying recognition that your fellow scientists (older and younger) trust your judgment and ability. I am also very proud to have worked with a number of students and helped them achieve their PhDs based on the experimental work we did together and to have seen a number of publications come into existence.

compelling and challenging piece of R&D that is exactly what I want to be working on, 2) is the first time this award has been given to a university-based scientist to work on detector R&D and is an acknowledgment that UTA is doing some pioneering work in this field, and 3) allows me to collaborate with some of my favorite people both at UTA and in the broader high-energy physics community.

**What are you most looking forward to?**

Right now, the prospect that we may be approaching the end of a period where we had to keep distance from one another due to the pandemic. While I realize that we aren't out of the woods yet, the hope that we will be able to work, collaborate, and meet in person is really exciting to me. I'm the kind of person who loves getting together with people and have really missed that since the beginning of the pandemic.

**What are you excited about right now?**

I am really excited about the Department of Energy's Early Career Research Award because it 1) is a





## TRAVEL INNOVATORS

Students earn national recognition

Ten UTA students have been identified as some of the nation's brightest minds in transportation. As recipients of coveted Dwight David Eisenhower Transportation Fellowships, they will push for innovative change in areas such as highway construction, aviation, transportation policy, and more.

The recipients are Ana Maria Coca, Sachini Madanayake, Muhasina Dola, Nyoka Amy Florius, Kate Nguyen, Christian Libebele, and Taryn DiLorenzo, all engineering; Nicholas Allen, political science; and Vivian Fung and Marvelous Echeng from the College of Architecture, Planning, and Public Affairs.

"This is a very prestigious program, and our students' success in earning these fellowships speaks to the breadth of excellent research being done in this area at UTA," says Laureano Hoyos, professor of civil engineering.

The mission of the Eisenhower Transportation Fellowship Program is to advance transportation workforce development and retain top talent in the U.S. transportation industry. Fellowships are merit-based, and 150-200 are distributed nationwide each year.

"We are proud that this group has earned these prestigious fellowships," says Jim Grover, interim vice president for research. "It speaks volumes of the quality of our research enterprise and the value of UTA's contributions to education, research, and innovation."



## IMMIGRATION GUIDANCE

Alumnus' nonprofit aides undocumented immigrants

As a practitioner of immigration law, Douglas Interiano ('08 BA, Spanish) knows the complexities of the U.S. immigration system. But it is his firsthand experience as an undocumented immigrant that motivates him to help thousands of families each year.

"I know what it is like to be undocumented, to experience a lack of help while navigating a very difficult legal system," he says.

Interiano founded Proyecto Inmigrante ICS Inc., a nonprofit organization based in Dallas-Fort Worth that offers legal counseling, educational resources, and translation services to individuals and families seeking a home in the United States. In 2014, he partnered with his former Spanish

professor, Alicia Rita Rueda-Acedo, director of UTA's Spanish Translation and Interpreting program, to expand Proyecto Inmigrante's services.

From 2014 to 2020, students in Dr. Rueda-Acedo's Business and Legal Translation class donated more than 3,300 hours translating more than 3,000 documents for submission to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. In addition to the experience gained, many students have received internships with the organization, and a few have become full-time employees.

"I was able to get out of the shadows," Interiano says. "Now I am committed to serve, inform, and represent low-income families. My only purpose is to help them navigate this complex system."





## ENGINEER OF THE YEAR

Student earns national honor

Abel Misrak ('20 PhD, Mechanical Engineering) had more experience in the field of electronic and photonic packaging than most students when he graduated from UTA. As a graduate student under Dereje Agonafer, Presidential Distinguished Professor in the Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, he authored or co-authored more than 10 conference papers and three journal papers.

In 2020, Dr. Misrak was recognized for his accomplishments, being named Student Engineer of the Year by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers Electronic and Photonic Packaging Division. One student is selected each year for the award nationally.

"This award is an important recognition of the hard work I put in during my time at UTA," he says. "I'm grateful to Dr. Agonafer for his support, as well as the support of the people who submitted letters of recommendation on my behalf and who helped me along the way."

Agonafer is on a bit of a roll, too, with Misrak being the third of his doctoral students to win the honor.

Throughout his graduate career, Misrak served in leadership roles on multiple projects, including collaborations with Texas Instruments and a material characterization study sponsored by TDK InvenSense. He also completed several internships at Tesla, where he recently began his professional career as a senior mechanical design engineer.



## LEADING DIVERSITY

Myrtle Bell guides diversity initiatives in the College of Business

In many ways, Myrtle Bell's new position as associate dean for diversity, racial equity, and inclusion (DREI) in UTA's College of Business is a logical extension of her 30 years at the University. An alumna—she graduated in 1996 with a PhD in business management—and faculty member, Dr. Bell knows the Maverick community inside and out.

Her time as a faculty member began as soon as she graduated, and she's been teaching diversity courses for nearly as long. Though the national conversations around diversity have changed dramatically over the years, Bell says her approach to teaching it hasn't.

"You need to teach diversity with data," she says. "It's hard to argue when presented with the statistics of disparities in employment levels and wages by educational status as they relate to race, ethnicity, and sex. I've had many students over the years who just don't know the reality of things, and when they're presented with the data, their eyes are opened."

With Bell's appointment as associate dean for DREI, the College of Business

also launched its Diversity, Racial Equity, and Inclusion Group. The group assists the college's leadership in ensuring diversity, racial equity, and inclusiveness are well-represented in the college.

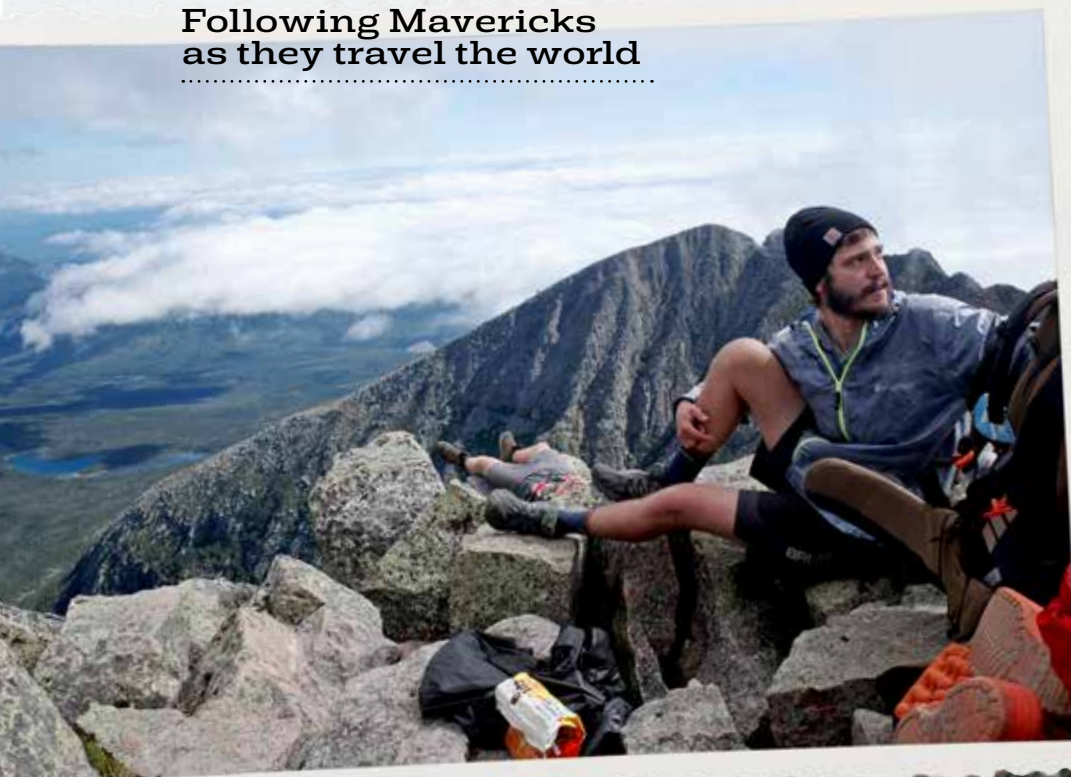
The group's early initiatives include the creation of Diversity Partners, a group of community and business leaders who provide the DREI Group with external perspectives regarding racial equity, diversity, and inclusion, along with providing mentorships, internships, and networking with students; the faculty and staff DREI Council, who work on curriculum changes, social media, and events; a student DREI Council to provide its input and engage in DREI activities; and DREI Scholars, a group of faculty and doctoral students who combine a wide range of expertise in diversity available for research, education, and training.

"UTA is unique in the depth of our diversity, and that diversity is our strength," Bell says. "We need to use our diversity to make sure our students leave here equipped to change the world."

Myrtle Bell is associate dean for diversity, racial equity, and inclusion in the College of Business.

# Feature

Following Mavericks  
as they travel the world



## The Appalachian National Scenic Trail, crossing 14 states from Georgia to Maine

**WHO:** Graham Feil ('19 BS, Civil Engineering)

**HOW:** Five years of preparation and a three-hour plane ride.

**WHY:** "I always looked at this six-month hike as a period of change in my life and in myself, a time for self-re-

flection and independence, and an adventure before starting my career. I wanted to live an alternative lifestyle, build confidence in my abilities, and connect with other hikers."

### LESSONS HE TOOK

#### BACK HOME:

"In the face of adversity,

we can always choose how to react. Patience and mindfulness will lead to peace within yourself. Surrendering when we lose control gives us control. Living outside of your comfort zone will expand your comfort zone. Everything is in walking distance."





# STORY

## Academic Building for the School of Social Work and the Smart Hospital

**A** NEW HOME TO train the next generation of social workers and nurses is currently under construction at UTA. The University broke ground for the building on Feb. 9.

The development will provide more opportunities for transformative education and training of UTA students. It will also usher in critical advances in health care, bringing together the University's celebrated School of Social Work and the College of Nursing and Health Innovation's Smart Hospital.

"Collaborative work here will set the stage for the future of health care and social work, says Teik C. Lim, interim president.

The building will provide room for these programs to evolve to meet community needs, replacing outdated facilities that can no longer accommodate the University's growth. For more than 50 years, the School of Social Work has promoted excellence in research, teaching, and service to create educational opportunities for students and their communities. On the nursing side, UTA graduates the most nurses in Texas and has one of the largest nursing programs in the nation. The nursing program was named a 2020 Center of Excellence by the National League for Nursing.

"This space will support UTA's commitment to advancing knowledge, serving our students, and improving our communities, especially in health care," says Dr. Lim. "When we allow room for great minds to come together to innovate, all of society benefits."



### COMMUNITY-FOCUSED

"This opportunity will allow us to have more vibrant interactions with our students and will propel us forward in doing innovative social work for the community and continuing to be a top program in the nation." - Scott Ryan, School of Social Work Dean

### NEW DIGS

The 150,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility will serve nursing and social work students while fostering cross-disciplinary collaboration.







### ENHANCED TRAINING

"This building will greatly benefit our students by providing them access to greater clinical simulation experiences as a part of their education." – Elizabeth Merwin, College of Nursing and Health Innovation Dean

### CARE QUAD

The facility will create a new Health Sciences Quad adjacent to the Science & Engineering Innovation & Research building, the Life Science building, and Pickard Hall.

### NEXT-LEVEL LEARNING

The new building will be a mix of flexible technology-enriched learning spaces and labs, a simulation learning center, and faculty and staff offices.



# Crash Course

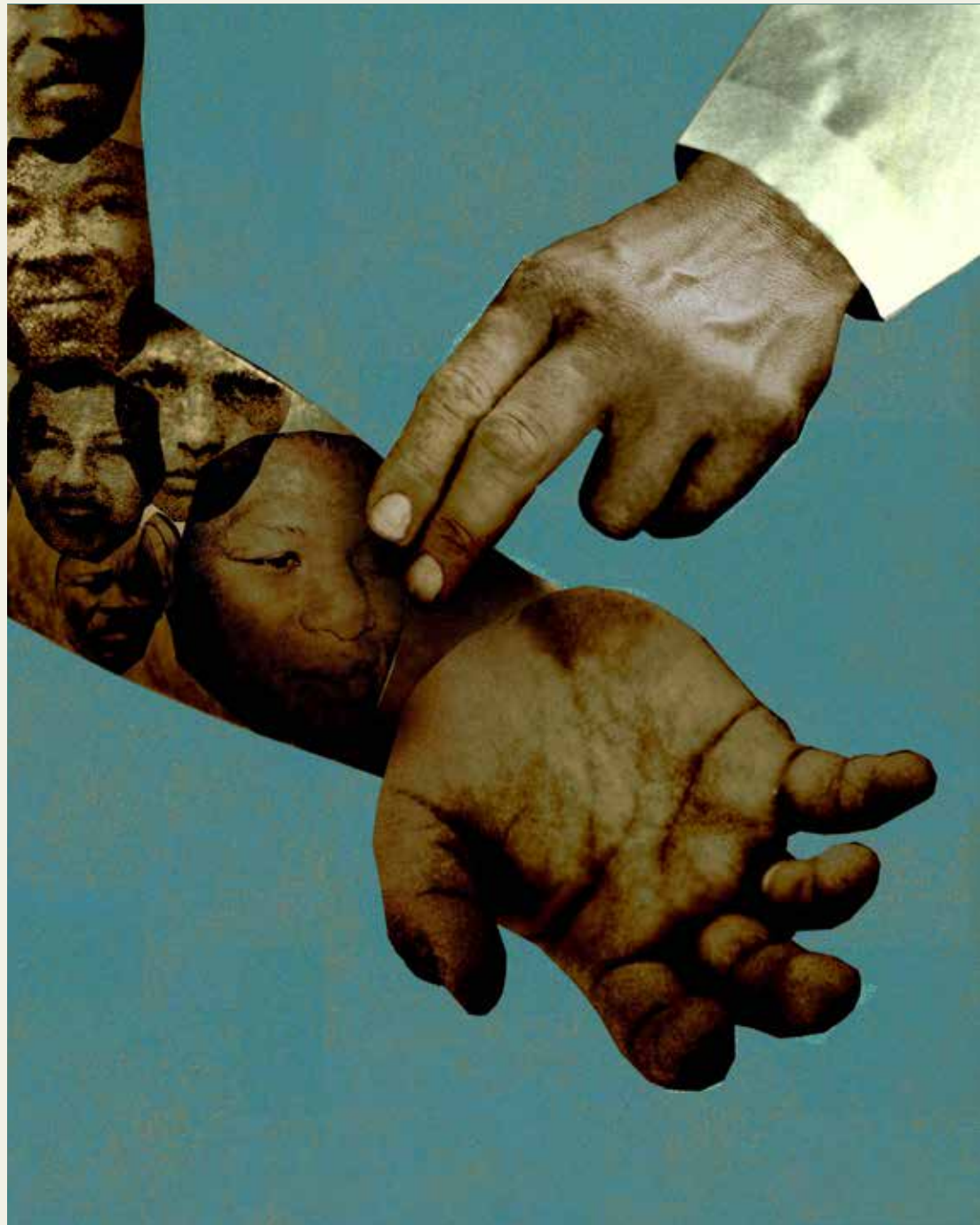
**ANTH 3369:**  
Medical  
Anthropology

**T**HE WAYS WE become sick seem fairly straightforward: a virus-laden cough, for example, or a spot of bacteria in your food. In general, treating illness seems similarly uncomplicated. But the systems in which we live can also play a major—and often unseen—role in the way we experience disease and other medical maladies. The complex interplay between societal factors and individual health is the crux of what students explore in Medical Anthropology.

“Our focus is the relationship between health and culture in various social contexts, with primary attention given to questions of power and inequality on the one hand, and culture and identity on the other,” says course instructor Amy Speier, associate professor of anthropology. “There are many different ways of understanding illness depending on the cultural context.”

Using case studies from all over the world, students examine beliefs, practices, and experiences related to health, illness, and healing. They also deconstruct the ways in which health and illness are socially and historically constructed and learn from a broad range of theoretical perspectives.

“There is power in biomedicine, in the physician, and in the processes of medicalization that occur,” says Dr. Speier. “We need to understand that the likelihood of becoming ill correlates directly with one’s socioeconomic status in life. Medical anthropology shows us how our illnesses, diseases, and health are all shaped by our cultural worlds.”





## MAKING THE GRADE

Education programs highly ranked

Each year, UT Arlington's College of Education graduates hundreds of future and current teachers, principals, and superintendents. As they work with students, parents, and community members around the country, they use the skills and knowledge they learned at a college growing in influence and reputation every year.

The latest example of this rise in prominence comes via *U.S. News & World Report*, which included the College of Education's master's programs on its list of the "Best Online Programs" for 2021. Overall, the master's programs were No. 52 in the U.S., with curriculum and instruction ranking No. 19. Additionally, the magazine named UTA's master's programs in education No. 16 for veterans.

A survey by the Texas Education Agency found 100% of UTA's College of Education graduates felt "well prepared" or "sufficiently prepared" by their teacher preparation program. Additionally, the college's overall graduate program has been recognized as top tier.

"It is exciting to see that programs in UTA's College of Education continue to be recognized for their excellence," says Teresa Taber Doughty, dean of the College of Education. "Our faculty members make our students their top priority. The result is an outstanding education and experience for every student."

*"I had made a commitment, and I felt it was important to remain true to my word, especially at a time our country really needed our assistance."*



## A VOCATION TO SERVE

Military veteran pursues social work degree, continues to serve community

Schuyler Hopkins signed up for the Air Force in the summer of 2001, but before she had to report for duty, the Sept. 11 attacks took place.

"People asked me if I still planned to join the military," says Hopkins, who graduated with her Bachelor of Social Work in 2021. "I had made a commitment, and I felt it was important to remain true to my word, especially at a time our country really needed our assistance."

Hopkins came to UTA after a 10-year career in the Air Force, where she was trained as a medic and served on bases in Texas, Mississippi, and Germany. After

leaving the military, she spent five years in the civilian workforce before becoming a Maverick.

About 3,000 service members and veterans are enrolled at UTA. *Military Times* ranks UT Arlington as the top university for veterans in the nation.

Ensuring veteran students and their families are cared for as individuals is an important part of UTA's mission, says James Kumm, executive director of veteran programs at UTA.

"We want our students to develop a sense of belonging and be proud to call themselves Mavericks."



## DRIVE-IN FILM FEST

UTA student films viewed, celebrated at socially distanced event

An in-person movie experience is hard to come by these days. Enter the Cinematic Arts' End of Semester Showcase at UTA—a drive-in movie night that featured short films produced by undergraduate and graduate students alike.

"Our students worked very hard in the middle of the pandemic to complete these extraordinary films," says art and art history Assistant Professor Daniel Garcia. "Being able to gather in a safe way to celebrate our students' work was an extraordinary way to finish the semester."

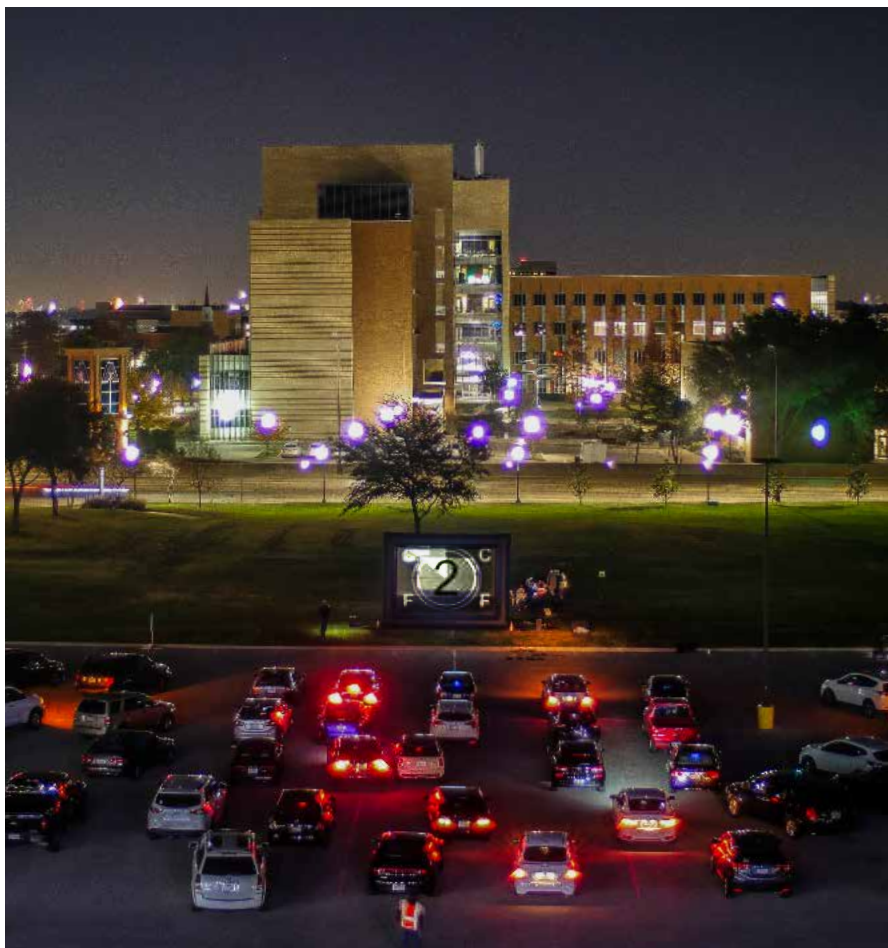
A large outdoor screen was set up in the parking lot between UTA Boulevard and West Nedderman Drive on campus, with audio available on FM radio. A diverse set of live-action, animated, and documentary films was featured, including a Victorian horror piece, a Western,

and a superhero origin story.

"Filmmakers have always found ways to solve problems," says Dr. Garcia. "Celebrating our work together in front of a large screen is a wonderful way to reaffirm the relentlessness and vocation of our students. Coming up with a safe option is just proof of the creativity and resilience of our UTA community."

Sierra Clark, a graduate student pursuing a master's degree in cinematic arts, says the pandemic didn't get in the way of her and her classmates' efforts to create enlightening and entertaining visual stories.

"Filmmaking is a collaborative medium that can take an insane number of hours to accomplish," she says, "so seeing your film or a film you helped create on the big screen is a rewarding experience."



## Hall of Honor, Department of Military Science

IT WAS MEANT to be a reconnoiter mission of a strongly defended enemy base at Wewak in New Guinea during World War II. Col. Neel Kearby led a flight of four fighters into the area, observed the enemy's installations and reinforcements at four airfields, and secured important tactical information. But the enemy spotted them on their return. Though the mission was complete, fuel was low, and the odds were against them, Kearby signaled to attack. In the end, he brought down six enemy aircraft and led his men safely to a friendly base.

Shortly thereafter, Kearby—an Arlington native and former student at UTA when it was called North Texas Agricultural College—received the Medal of Honor for his bravery, selflessness, and flying prowess. He died in action six months later, but his legacy lives on at UTA in the Department of Military



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and a Colonel  
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Science, and his bravery will be on full display at the National Medal of Honor Museum, scheduled to open in 2024 in Arlington.

Wanting to learn more about UTA's hometown hero, the National Medal of Honor Museum team visited the Department of Military Science to view its Medal of Honor on display.

Gently taking the medal off the wall, Robert Shenk, the National Medal of Honor Museum's chief museum content officer, said that the Medal of Honor was in great condition.

"Being greatly interested in Col. Kearby, we were all delighted by the opportunity to more closely look at UTA's Medal of Honor and talk more about ways for our two institutions to partner," Shenk says.

Kearby, a 1928 Arlington High School graduate, completed his collegiate studies at the University of Texas at Austin

before joining the Army Air Corps as a flying cadet.

"The sacrifice Kearby made was significant, and it's great to learn about his history," says Master Sgt. Jeremy Hubacek, UTA's senior military science instructor. "Plus, we got to take the medal down and see how it has aged over the years, looking at the material and the medal. It was a very emotional event, and I'm glad I was a part of it. It makes you feel good, and right now we need as much feel-good stuff as we can get."

The Department of Military Science has a Hall of Honor that pays tribute to alumni who were veterans or other people connected to UTA who have served.

"Once the museum is built, we're hoping to become more involved with the National Medal of Honor Museum as it opens up," Hubacek says. "With the museum coming to town, it could be a

great experience for our cadets to see why we in the Military Science Department do what we do and the ultimate sacrifices these men and women gave."

Shenk says Medals of Honor are great historic treasures.

"They are some of the most important objects I think in American history because they relate to warriors who have gone, per the definition of the medal, above and beyond," Shenk says. "Kearby fits that definition. His gallantry as a combat fighter pilot is legendary. It's too bad Kearby didn't live to be able to tell his own story. That's part of the sacrifice associated with the Medal of Honor."

*"The sacrifice Kearby made was significant, and it's great to learn about his history."*



# Giving

## The Maverick community comes together to help students in need

**P**AM NICHOLSON ('07 MEd, Curriculum and Instruction) and Teresa Taber Doughty, dean of the College of Education, had an instant connection. Both longtime educators, they recognized kindred spirits in each other.

"I was immediately drawn to Dr. Doughty's enthusiasm and expertise," says Nicholson, who also received a teaching certificate in elementary education from UTA.

"Pam is an educator to her core," says Doughty.

When they met, Doughty had just begun plans to create a teaching lab in Trimble Hall. The idea resonated with Nicholson. In fact, the room, Trimble 111,

was one in which she had taken classes.

A few years prior, Nicholson and her husband, Brent ('84 BBA, Finance), had established the Brent and Pam Nicholson Endowed Scholarship for the College of Business. She was now looking for a way to support the program that had prepared her for her teaching career.

"My master's program enabled me to take the next step in my career when I became an instructional coach to first-year teachers, which was truly a dream job for me," Nicholson says.

Ongoing conversations resulted in her decision to fund the college's groundbreaking new space, the Pam Nicholson Innovative Teaching and Learning Classroom. The name embodies the aspirations for the space.

The room is now flexible for any teaching situation students and faculty may need to simulate. All furniture is modular and moveable. Added technologies include touchscreen computers, smartpens that can be used for working with children with learning disabilities, interactive robots that help teachers work on coding skills with children, and more. Most importantly, the room now facilitates collaboration and experimentation and encourages adaptability, skills integral to teaching.

"Pam wants to re-create the support-

ive education experience she had at UTA, while also allowing the college to grow and adjust with the times," Doughty says.

The Nicholsons also established the Pam and Brent Nicholson Endowed Graduate Fellowship to support education master's students.

"UTA helped me have the confidence to travel my career path in education," Nicholson says. "To have even a tiny part in what's ahead for the College of Education means a lot to me."





## E-LEARNING EXCELLENCE

Professor recognized for outstanding virtual teaching

Last year was one for the books in many ways. In the throes of a global pandemic, UTA students and professors had to take to the virtual space to gain what is usually imparted in traditional classrooms.

Karabi Bezboruah, associate professor in the College of Architecture, Planning, and Public Affairs, handled the challenge so well that she won the 2020 United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA) International Excellence in Teaching/Training Award. USDLA is the nation's leading distance learning organization.

"I try to humanize my online courses and be available for my students," she says. "Additionally, I use student feedback to improve every semester."

A public and nonprofit management specialist, Dr. Bezboruah also incorporates e-service learning projects into her online courses.

"Experiential projects help students acquire critical thinking skillsets that are so needed in today's workforce," she says. "It makes the online courses more context-based and practical for students, which adds value to the curriculum."

The prestigious USDLA International Awards are closely followed by the distance learning community.

"Each year we are impressed with the caliber of our winners," says Rhonday Blackburn, president of USDLA. "They stand as examples for the world to emulate."



## TRAINING ON WHEELS

Grant funds robots to help train nursing students

Thanks to a grant from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's Nursing Innovation Grant Program, UTA's Smart Hospital has tripled its fleet of telepresence robots and brought new training devices onboard to assist rural and remote nursing students.

Telepresence robots, which resemble computer tablets on wheels, enable two-way audio and video communication. With the robots, faculty members or students can move in clinical spaces and interact with patients and other caregivers.

"We're excited to have new robots coming to our college and put students in the driver's seat," says Jennifer Royce,

assistant dean for simulation and technology and project co-director.

UTA will also be able to obtain more task trainers, which are portable devices that allow nursing students to practice their skills remotely when social distancing precautions prevent them from attending a traditional skills lab.

The devices are estimated to help more than 200 students each semester.

"These robots are a helpful and creative solution to training students safely during the COVID-19 pandemic, one that will also help us increase educational access for our students in remote locations in the long term," says Royce.



## SOARING TO SUCCESS

Alumna, veteran achieves success and gives back

When Air Force veteran Tamiko W. Bailey ('01 BBA, Finance) started her business—Bailey's Premier Services, an aerospace and logistics company—eight years ago, she was up against some of the biggest names in aviation and defense. The aviation industry also doesn't employ many minorities or women. But her business has thrived, growing to more than 100 employees and multiple office locations.

"I did think about the fact that I'm a

woman and a minority doing aviation and defense," she says. "But I just try to do a great job and be myself. That has helped me more than watering down who I am."

Bailey was able to overcome early self-doubt, but the obstacles she faced are why she makes diversity a focus—not only for her business, but for students like her who just need opportunity. As such, she recently joined the College of Business' Diversity, Racial Equity, and Inclusion (DREI) Group. As a diversity partner, she mentors DREI students and even offers internships and jobs through her company.

"I think the power in my diversity is, for me, that I am always being myself," she says. "But overall, different input makes it better for everyone. The whole company wins."



## OPEN FOR OPPORTUNITY

UTA ranked among nation's best for Hispanic students

Aidaly Castillo ('20 BSN) has always had an interest in medicine and community outreach, especially to underrepresented communities. She says it started when she attended medical appointments with family members.

"I noticed the lack of diversity in medical settings, especially the lack of Spanish-speaking nurses and doctors. I think it is important to be a voice for the Hispanic community and raise awareness on health care issues."

She chose UTA because she was impressed by its degree programs, diversity, and commitment to serving students of all backgrounds.

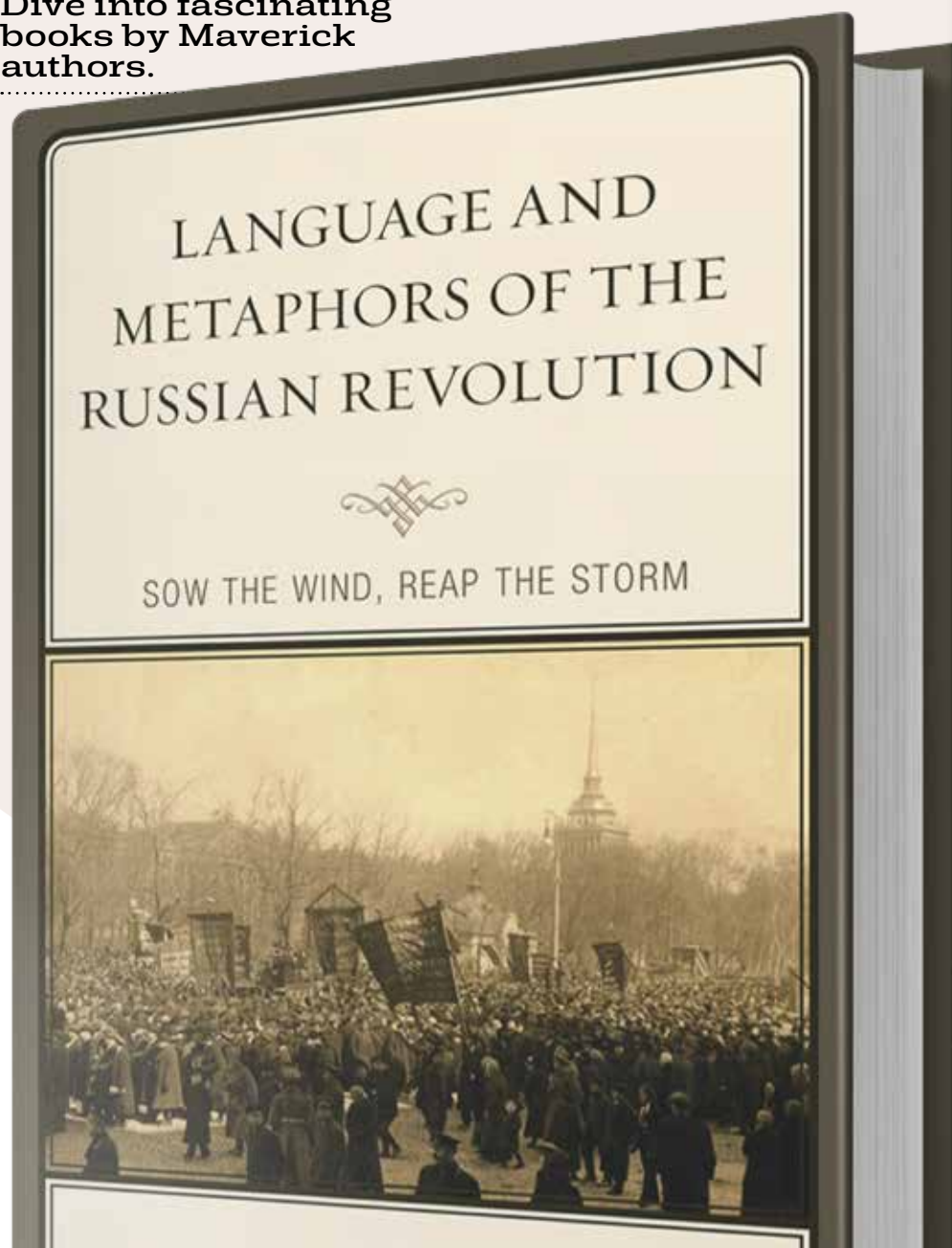
That excellence has only grown over the years, with UTA being ranked again in 2020 among the Top 100 colleges and universities for Hispanic students by *Hispanic Outlook on Education* magazine. The University ranked in four categories: No. 15 in bachelor's degrees; No. 9 in master's degrees, No. 24 in total enrollment, and No. 9 in architecture degrees.

At UTA, Castillo grew her skillset as president of the Hispanic Student Nursing Association. The organization builds partnerships to promote the successful development of Hispanic students as professional nurses.

"A degree from UTA, especially one from its College of Nursing and Health Innovation, will open many doors and give me unlimited opportunities to help communities in need," she says.

# Read

Dive into fascinating books by Maverick authors.



## *Language and Metaphors of the Russian Revolution: Sow the Wind, Reap the Storm*

BY LONNY HARRISON, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF RUSSIAN

Examining the evolution of storm, flood, and harvest metaphors in major works of Russian literature of the time, *Language and Metaphors of the Russian Revolution* offers an interpretive history of the Russian Revolution and the literary tradition that fostered it. Through a closer look at the language, symbols, stories, and imagery of revolution in the works of authors such as Maxim Gorky, Mikhail Bulgakov, and Boris Pasternak, Dr. Harrison focuses on the use of language as a weapon of class war and alternatively as a medium of resistance and dissent. "Sometimes a storm is just a storm," writes Harrison in the preface, "but more often than not, it is an ambient metaphor accentuating personal turns of fortune, unrestrained political forces, seismic ruptures, or the inexorable tide of change."



## *The Life I Didn't Expect: Facing Adversity and Winning*

BY RAY CERDA JR. ('87 BA, GENERAL STUDIES)

For high school football star Ray Cerda, the sky was the limit. But when a car accident left him with quadriplegia, his life changed forever. Cerda shares his story, a testament to the power of hope, determination, and perseverance.



## *Kicking and Screaming: A Memoir of Madness and Martial Arts*

BY MELANIE GIBSON ('12 MBA)

By all accounts, Melanie Gibson had a lot going for her. Behind the scenes, however, her life was falling apart. A childhood activity—taekwondo—took her from feeling troubled and lost to standing tall as a confident taekwondo black belt.



## *In the Mean Time: Temporal Colonization and the Mexican American Literary Tradition*

BY ERIN MURRAH-MANDRIL, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH

Taking a cue from Latino and borderlands spatial theories, Dr. Murrah-Mandril draws from literature, political documents, and more to examine the way U.S. colonization altered time in the borderlands.



# Gallery

**Michelle Gonzales,  
Painter and Mixed-  
Media Artist**

**"I** HAVE ALWAYS BEEN a collector of things," Michelle Gonzales says, recalling a childhood filled with art, music, and inspiration. "I would collect photographs, colored glass, and other trinkets I found on journeys taken around my home and neighborhood. Various forms of art were all around me, and I picked up on that."

That passion for creation blossomed at UTA. It took her two semesters to find her home in the Department of Art and Art History, but once she was there, she never looked back.

"After taking my first painting class, I was forever changed," she says. "Professor Marilyn Jolly helped me gain confidence in my process through questioning and critiquing, which allowed me to better assess my own work. It really transformed the way I engaged with my surrounding environment."

Gonzales continues to draw inspiration from her environment—and from her early days as a collector of things. Working across media, she combines painting, drawing, and collage with pro-

cesses such as sewing, embroidering, and the manipulation of found materials.

"I am interested in how memory is formed and preserved through time and space," she says. "Memory is not only personal, but it can also be inherited through behavior, imagery, and objects. The things we collect, stories we tell—or don't tell—impact our lives and can challenge our truths and our ideas of our pasts and selves."

Gonzales recently wrapped up a solo exhibition at the Umbrella Gallery in Dallas, and is currently working with the Amon Carter Museum as part of the Carter Community Artist program. Another solo exhibition will open in June at the Irving Arts Center.







**Clockwise, from top left:** *Diversion* (sewn fabric, resin, and oil)

*Comfort, Pain Diptych* (sewn fabric, embroidery thread, resin, acrylic, and oil)

*Heirless Bloom* (hand-embroidered sewn fabric, resin, and oil)

*Sappy Fools* (acrylic, oil, lace, confetti, canvas)



# Chat

## **Jim Greer ('84 BS, Electrical Engineering)** Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Oncor Electric Delivery

**A**LUMNUS JIM GREER admits he was surprised to find himself delivering the commencement address for UT Arlington's College of Engineering three years ago.

As a UTA student, his academic career didn't fit neatly into a four-year plan. But he kept grinding, working hard for every grade point and the opportunities a college degree would bring.

That persistence eventually paid off when Greer earned his bachelor's degree in electrical engineering in 1984. He is now executive vice president and chief operating officer for Oncor Electric Delivery, where he oversees all distribution and transmission planning, engineering, procurement, construction, maintenance, and operations, as well as performance management and continuous improvement activities.

"When I was a student, the last thing I thought I'd ever do was speak at a commencement ceremony," says

Greer, who was named a Distinguished Alumnus in 2014. "My

UTA experience prepared me very well for my career and shaped me into who I am today. I'm a proud Maverick in every sense of the word."

He demonstrates that pride through his service to the University as chair of the President's Advisory Board. In that capacity, he leads the board's efforts to increase philanthropic support and enhance UTA's profile and influence. He also chairs the College of Engineering Board of Advisors, and he and his wife, Stella, are supporters of that group's endowed professorship.

To inspire others, Jim and Stella made challenge gifts for MavsDay 2021, UTA's day of giving, supporting the College of Engineering Dean's Excellence Fund and the UTA Scholarship Fund.

Greer also gives back to the community through his roles as a board member for Downtown Dallas Inc., the Longhorn Council of the Boy Scouts of America, and the Dallas Metro YMCA. A registered professional engineer in Texas, he was appointed to the Texas Board of Professional Engineers by Gov. Rick Perry, is a member of the IEEE Power Engineering Society, and serves as an officer of the Texas Society of Professional Engineers.

He urges UTA alumni to strengthen their relationship with their alma mater and be visible and active advocates.

"Stay connected to the mother ship as you move through the various phases of your life," Greer says. "You know very well the advances UTA is making, the great progress happening here. Help tell that story."

# NINE-TIME CHAMPS

Movin' Mavs claim ninth wheelchair basketball title

The mood was joyous and celebratory as the Movin' Mavs traveled back home to Arlington from Tuscaloosa, Alabama, the site of the team's final victory of the season. They defeated Alabama 66-51, clinching their ninth National Wheelchair Basketball Association championship.

"Once the final buzzer hit zero in the national championship game, tears of joy and excitement came right after," says Alex "AJ" Hummer, a junior on the team. "We just all started hugging each other and yelling because we accomplished something greater than anything we could do by ourselves—because without one another, we would never be national champs."

The team finished with a record of 8-0 in a 2020-21 season cut short by both the COVID-19 pandemic and winter storms and power outages. In a typical season, the team would play between 25 and 30 games.

UTA lost four starters from last year's top-ranked squad and entered this season with an inexperienced starting

lineup that included three freshmen and a sophomore. The team also included players from Israel and Canada.

"It's been great seeing all of these differences come together in a team," says longtime coach Doug Garner. "We had age differences, philosophical differences, and cultural differences. We had to mold together all these parts in just a few tournaments. These players were willing to put in the work."

# SPORTING MAVS







## ATHLETICS GIVES BACK

Program recognized for  
community service

For the second consecutive year, UT Arlington Athletics won the Sun Belt Conference's Student-Athlete Advisory Committee Community Service Initiative Award. The University has now claimed either this or the Community Impact Award every year since 2015-16.

The Athletics program at UTA has consistently made community service a focal point. Its student-athletes completed more volunteer hours than any other Sun Belt school, helping with both local and far-reaching organizations. These efforts include working with the Navajo Reservation to do outreach and put on events, holding a canned food drive for Mission Arlington, raising money and donations for food banks to help with COVID-19 relief, serving food at the Ronald McDonald House, educating people in the community about alcohol awareness, volunteering with the Special Olympics, and participating in myriad local events for children.

This year, Maverick athletes also made a global impact with a donation of 253 pairs of shoes for the Soles4Souls drive, which provides footwear for those in need in Africa.

"We pride ourselves on community involvement, and we're honored to be recognized once again as a leading institution in the Sun Belt for our student-athletes' commitment to service," says Director of Athletics Jim Baker.

# UTA ATHLETICS FIGHTS CANCER

Women's basketball focuses on breast cancer research

One in eight women will develop invasive breast cancer over the course of her lifetime. For women's basketball coach Shereka Wright, it's a statistic that hits particularly close to home. Her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer several years ago, but thanks in part to an early diagnosis, she was able to beat it and has since been cancer free.

"In our community on the women's side, so many different players know someone who has been affected by breast cancer," she says.

So, when UTA Athletics launched UTA Beats Cancer, a focus on breast cancer awareness and research was the obvious

choice for women's basketball. In the 2020-21 season, five athletics programs are focused on fundraising for cancer research and survivorship programs. Their philanthropic efforts have also been boosted through a partnership with the Moncrief Cancer Institute. This year, UTA Beats Cancer aims to provide over 500 free mammograms through the Moncrief partnership.

"UTA Beats Cancer was created to make a positive impact on our local community," says Eric Trimbom, director of UTA Beats Cancer. "Our goal is to raise as many funds as possible and change as many lives as possible."

**Shereka  
Wright,  
women's  
basketball  
head coach**





## ALL-TIME SLUGGERS

Pence, Roberts recognized

Two former Maverick greats made the All-Time Sun Belt Conference baseball roster. Hunter Pence (outfield) and Ryan Roberts (third base) were among the star players nominated by member institutions and voted in by fans for the “fun little exercise” initiated by the Sun Belt Conference in April 2020 to pass the time during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Though UT Arlington was not a member of the Sun Belt Conference when Pence and Roberts played, all athletes from current conference teams were eligible for the roster. Pence was one of the top six in votes received.

Pence was the 2004 Southland Conference player and hitter of the year after leading the conference with a .395 batting average. In addition, he was the first UTA player to ever be named the Society for American Baseball Research Metroplex Collegiate Player of the Year. Following his junior campaign, Pence was drafted in the second round by the Houston Astros and made his major league debut in 2007. He is a four-time All-Star and a two-time World Series champion.

One of the top hitters in UTA history, Roberts became the second All-American in UTA history in 2003. He was the 2003 Southland hitter and player of the year and the 2002 newcomer of the year. Roberts was drafted by the Toronto Blue Jays in the 2003 draft and played in the big leagues for nine seasons.



## SERVING UP A CHAMPIONSHIP

Women's tennis tops the Sun Belt

UTA women's tennis charted a major milestone this year: For the first time since joining the Sun Belt Conference in 2014, the team claimed the regular Sun Belt Conference season championship.

The team was undefeated (8-0) in 2021 against Sun Belt competition, doubling its win totals of 4-0 in 2015 and 2016. They advanced to tournament play but lost in the semifinals.

The Mavericks went an impressive 35-7 in individual singles matches against Sun Belt competition, sweeping half of the matches they played. Up until the last match of the season, UTA had not allowed the opposing team more than

two points in a match, and that happened just once.

At the season's conclusion, Carla Pons was named Player to Watch for her breakout performance, which included a career-high 21 singles wins and a perfect 5-0 record in conference play, earning her a spot on the All-Sun Belt Singles Second Team. Momoka Horiguchi garnered an All-Sun Belt Singles First Team selection.

“It's a big accomplishment to go undefeated in the regular season,” says head coach Diego Benitez. “We're very proud of the way they handled those big conference matches, and we are excited to bring the trophy home to UTA.”

The Maverick women's tennis team made Sun Belt history this year.

SPORTING MAVS



# THE Community Classroom

*From Texas to Tanzania, UTA integrates community service into academic coursework, providing students with powerful learning experiences and opportunities to gain real-world skills.*

BY JEFF CARLTON





Angeles Margarida with her public art project, which was inspired by her service-learning experience in Tanzania.







# The most meaningful class Angeles Margarida attended at The University of Texas at Arlington was in Tanzanian pastureland.

As part of a summer studio course in the College of Architecture, Planning, and Public Affairs (CAPPA), Margarida traveled with UTA classmates and faculty to the Tanzanian village of Roche to design a community garden. Determined to better know the local residents and understand their experiences, she accompanied several women on a hike to collect water needed for drinking, cleaning, and cooking in their homes.

The women balanced 5-gallon jugs on their heads with one hand and hauled 3-gallon jugs in the other, each container filled with murky pond water from nearby farmland. Margarida, a former collegiate soccer player, says she struggled to lug a single 3-gallon jug and keep up with the women on their 30-minute walk back to the village.

"They're strong—those ladies can carry," says Margarida, who graduated in May 2021 with a master's in landscape architecture. "Listening to people who come from different backgrounds, life experiences, and cultures and providing a design that is tailored to them and will benefit their community? That felt like a very authentic experience to me."

That sense of service to a greater cause, in tandem with powerful educational experiences that help Maverick students on their paths to their degrees, forge the backbone of the Center for Service Learning (CSL), one of the key programs under UTA's Center for Research on Teaching and Learning Excellence.

Celebrating its 20th anniversary at UTA, the CSL works with faculty members to integrate community service into

academic coursework, a union that promotes both civic responsibility and the advancement of students' educational and career goals.

"Service learning allows students to experience the power of collaboration with community partners through their coursework," says Susan Dequeant, director of the CSL. "Students get real-world experiences and richer, better-rounded learning processes."

At UTA, service learning also fits into the Maverick Advantage program, which provides opportunities for UTA students to distinguish themselves through experiential learning opportunities both inside and outside the classroom. Service learning can take many forms at UT Arlington. Public health students have created campuswide anti-smoking events in partnership with Human Resources. Broadcast communications students develop promotional videos for area nonprofits. Landscape architecture students have worked with municipalities to protect coastal islands from floating garbage. Communication technology students build websites for fledgling community groups.

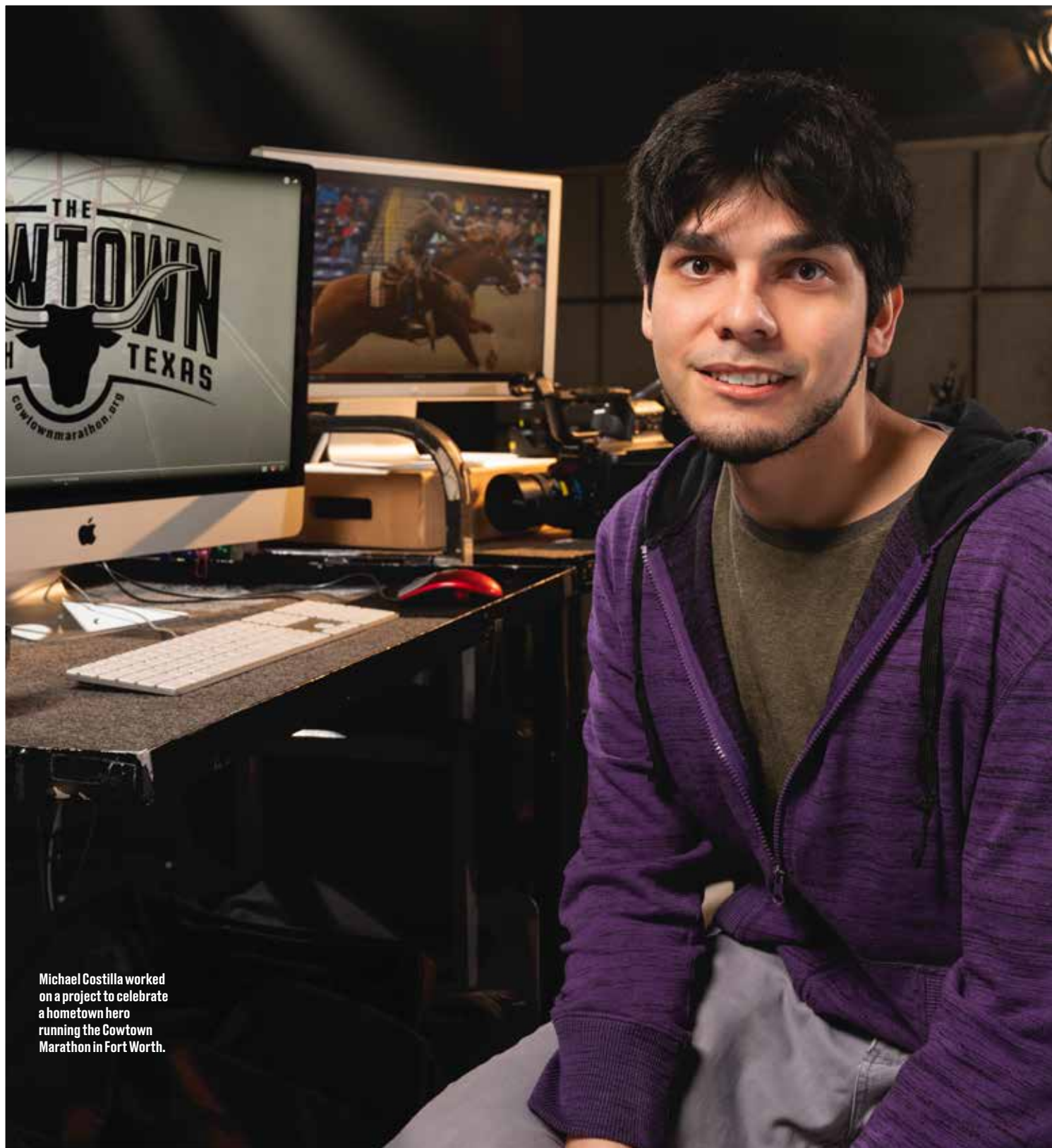
Regardless of the project, the community becomes an important part of the curriculum. Moreover, the lessons can be local or global.

"One of the great things about service learning is that it allows students to put their skills to the test," says Diane Jones Allen, CAPPA professor and director of UTA's Landscape Architecture program. "Students learn how to be creative for someone else, to really serve others."

That sense of service is an element that Rebecca Garner, clinical associate professor in the College of Nursing and Health Innovation (CONHI), tries to instill in her Introduction to Public Health course. She says her students need opportunities to apply their lessons in the real world.

"Public health is a person-centered field," says Dr. Garner, who is also director of CONHI's undergraduate public health program. "Students need to practice the skills they're learning in the classrooms."

Garner's students partnered with UTA Health Services and the Office of Human Resources on anti-smoking campaigns. They created one-hour seminars, interactive educational exhibits, and even a large-scale campus event called



Michael Costilla worked on a project to celebrate a hometown hero running the Cowtown Marathon in Fort Worth.





Jami Walton, now pursuing a master's in social work at UTA, says her service-learning course informed her current career path.





"Smoke This, Not That" that gave free Texas barbecue to Mavericks who viewed their smoking-cessation displays.

She says the key benefits to service learning are participation in community service, forcing students outside of their comfort zones, and providing students with opportunities to learn in different ways.

For students preparing to enter the workforce, a fourth benefit may be the most practical: a chance to gain professional experience and build one's resume or portfolio in the process.

That was certainly true for Michael Costilla, whose most meaningful UTA class may have been race day at The Cowtown Marathon in Fort Worth. As a student in a corporate video course taught by LaDonna Aiken, broadcast specialist in the Department of Communication, Costilla found himself working on a video project for the marathon with several classmates.

Their job was to film a "hometown heroes" promotional video featuring a well-known horse trainer. Their only problem: On race day, they didn't know what the horse trainer was wearing and how they would find her amid tens of thousands of other runners.

"We needed a Plan B," says Costilla, who graduated in 2020 with a degree in broadcast communications from the College of Liberal Arts.

The video team members fanned out across the course to ensure they wouldn't miss her, but they weren't certain they captured the needed footage. Only later when he was editing did Costilla realize he had the shots he needed. "The best feeling in the world," he says.

Aiken provides her corporate video students with similar opportunities through a variety of area nonprofits and government entities. Her students have made promotional videos for the Texas Girls' Choir, city of Arlington, city of Grand Prairie, Red Balloon Network, Mission Arlington, and more.

"Working with outside organizations nurtures that intrinsic motivation that students might not always have for regular class work," Aiken says. "It opens up possibilities of what they could do in the future with their work and gives them a sense of confidence to say, 'I can do this. I am making a difference.'"

Costilla, who got his start as the only member of his high school's audio-visual club, says he still lands jobs as a freelance videographer thanks to the portfolio he built through service-learning projects.

"You can learn all the theory you want, but the hands-on experience is incredibly valuable," he says. "If you are actually there, practicing what you have been learning, you are going to remember that. You will remember the struggles you faced. You will remember the fun that you had. It's all about the experience."

Starr Robinson, a communications technology senior, says one of her most valuable UTA classroom experiences has been building a website for a new organization that helps individuals who were wrongly convicted, like the organization's founder. She says the pressure of doing right by her client far exceeds the pressure of any other assignment.

"My jaw dropped when the founder told us her story," Robinson says. "I want to make sure this is pretty much perfect. We have to give it our all."

Jami Walton's experience with service learning was so valuable that it led directly to a job. In 2017, she was a student in an Introduction to Social Work course taught by Jim Langford, associate professor in practice in the School of Social Work. Dr. Langford's course required 20 hours of volunteering at the Salvation Army.

Walton draws a straight line from that class to her former job as program manager at the Salvation Army in Arlington.

"If it weren't for the service-learning experience, I wouldn't be where I am," Walton says. "Professor Langford sparked the light that set me on the path to where I am now."

The organization soon hired her as a shelter monitor, then later promoted her to case management specialist and then again to program manager, where she oversaw operations for the homeless shelter, the kitchen staff, the cold weather shelter, and the community food pantry.

Walton, who graduated with a Bachelor of Social Work in 2019, fulfilled her commitment while finding her calling.

"To the people who walked through the doors of our shelter, I know I will forever be a part of their success stories,"

says Walton, who is now working on her Master of Social Work at UTA. "I wanted to help them become something that they don't see in themselves. I wanted them to know the shelter wasn't their final destiny."

Margarida says her trip to Tanzania had a similar life-changing impact, even inspiring and informing her thesis project: "Empowering Artists Experiencing Homelessness Through Temporary Public Art in the City of Dallas." She is working with individuals who are experiencing homelessness to create a temporary art exhibit featuring murals that address their stories. The murals will be on display in Main Street Garden Park in downtown Dallas.

She says she also hopes to find work at a firm that engages closely with community members on its projects. She traces this desire back to a muddy pond, a group of powerful, intrepid women, and a rewarding project that helped improve the quality of life in a Tanzanian village.

"Without that trip, it might have been a different thesis," Margarida says. "I never had the experience before of engaging with a community like that. I never would have known how much I enjoyed this type of work." **UTA**

*"Service learning  
allows students  
to experience  
the power of  
collaboration  
with community  
partners through  
their coursework."*





## WEARING DOWN

*Aging systems break down over time. UTA researchers are tackling the problem holistically.*


The page features several decorative illustrations. In the top left, there is a sprig of three green leaves. To the right of the text 'WITH GREAT' is a large, detailed pink rose. Below the word 'Care' is a branch with several green, oval-shaped leaves. To the right of the main text, there are two small pink rose buds on a stem.

# WITH GREAT *Care*

As our nation's population grows older, UTA leads in its expertise in adult and elder care through strategic collaboration and thoughtful, caring action. From increasing the availability of trained professionals who care for older adults to advancing knowledge in meaningful ways, the University's impact reaches far and wide.

*By Sarah Bahari • Photo-illustrations by Gregory Reid*





America is aging—fast. In a decade, the number of people over age 65 will outnumber children under 18, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

By 2060, nearly one in four Americans will be 65 years and older, the number of people 85 and older will triple, and the country will have added a half-million centenarians. As this demographic grows, so will the demand for improved health care and expertise in elder care.

UTA is cultivating both, with an interdisciplinary focus growing in scope and reach, spanning the College of Nursing and Health Innovation (CONHI), School of Social Work, College of Engineering, and College of Science. Support for the work is substantial, with UTA receiving significant funding to accelerate both personnel and research in the gerontology field.

“Think of all of the medical breakthroughs of the past century, from antibiotics to hip replacements,” says Kathryn Daniel, associate dean for academic affairs in CONHI and a nursing and gerontology expert. “Those

breakthroughs mean that people are surviving and thriving well into older age. Health care has to keep up.”

#### ADVANCED HEALTH CARE

The health care needs of a 40-year-old differ vastly from the needs of an 80-year-old. Yet for too long, those differences have not been adequately reflected by the health care industry.

Dr. Daniel wants to change that. She has worked in elder health care for nearly 40 years, from geriatric primary care to long-term care and assisted living facilities. These days, her professional mission is to prepare the next generation of nurses for the same work.

By doing so, Daniel is positioning CONHI as a leader in adult gerontology nursing.

“Our older population deserves the most compassionate and knowledgeable health care possible,” Daniel says. “We are trying to fill that need by



## SOCIAL ISOLATION

*Social work research aims to ease the physical and emotional effects of loneliness.*







Kathryn Daniel and computer science and engineering Professor Manfred Huber in the control room of the Smart Care Apartment, a tech-enhanced living space designed to help older individuals remain healthy and independent

training UTA students to understand and address the specific health needs of older adults.”

Community and philanthropic organizations have long taken notice of UTA’s prominent role in gerontology. The Moritz family was one of the early investors in accelerating UTA’s work

ated graduate fellowships in the field, has helped fuel the University’s steady growth in elder care research over the past decade.

More recently, the Deerbrook Charitable Trust gave UTA a transformational \$4.7 million gift, recognizing the need for more skilled professionals to care for older adults.

In addition to significantly expanding opportunities for nursing professionals to work in elder care, the trust helped UTA launch a new graduate-level gerontology health care certificate program for health care professionals who work

with adults 65 and older.

The program is open to health care professionals who work in a variety of settings, from hospitals and home

health to skilled-nursing facilities and assisted-living centers. Students in the program study elder care in the U.S. and countries worldwide, heart failure and exercise rehabilitation, aging policy and social justice, and death and dying.

“We tackle weighty issues, such as end-of-life care, that are critical for health care professionals to understand,” Daniel says. “Death can be a difficult subject, but we have to address it so we can provide excellent, evidence-based care throughout all stages of life.”

The new certificate program is in addition to UTA’s Adult-Gerontology Nurse Practitioner program, which prepares advanced practice nurses to manage the complex health needs of older adults.

The University also recently broke ground on a \$76 million facility that will bring together CONHI’s Smart Hospital and the School of Social Work, enhancing opportunities for collaboration between the fields.

The Smart Hospital allows students to practice and perfect nursing and clinical skills while working with technologically advanced, simulated patients. Instruction provides the building blocks necessary to support older patients. Notable spaces include a home-health environment—a space that looks identical to a home, essential for a simulated learning environment for nurses and case workers who work with the elderly—and a dedicated virtual reality room where students can address a variety of simulation scenarios.

“This new building will greatly benefit our nursing students and other clinical students by providing them access to greater clinical simulation experiences as a part of their clinical education,” says Elizabeth Merwin, dean of CONHI. “Those students will become the health care workforce for the future, and they will graduate from UTA knowing they received the finest education to address patient needs.”

It’s all in service of the greater goal, which is to ensure that nurses have a robust skillset allowing them to provide superlative holistic care to our

*“Our older population  
deserves the most  
compassionate and  
knowledgeable health  
care possible.”*

in elder care when it established the Moritz Chair in Geriatrics. The family’s investment, combined with philanthropic support from donors who cre-



## WEAKER BONES

*Breaks caused by osteoporosis can be subtle. With earlier detection, UTA researchers hope to prevent more extreme damage later.*





aging population.

“Older adults have a lived experience that is so rich and varied. They have been part of history in ways that many of us can only imagine,” Daniel says. “They are complex and multifaceted. As health care professionals, we must embrace the complexity and richness of interpersonal relationships

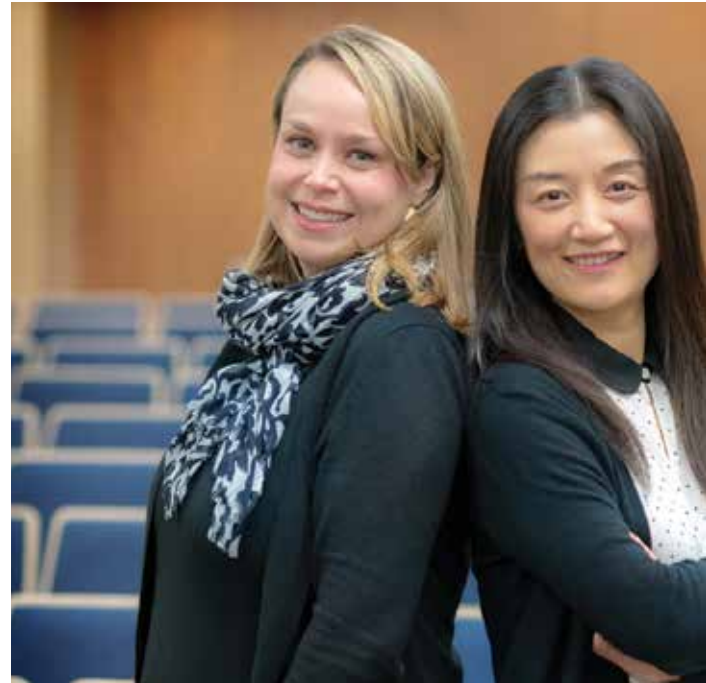
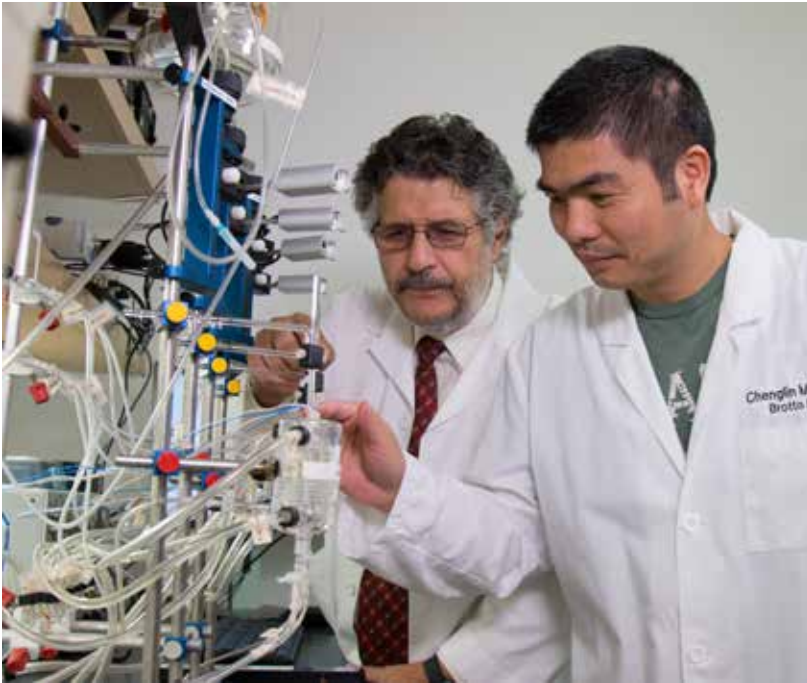
aging conditions,” says Marco Brotto, George W. and Hazel M. Jay Professor in CONHI and director of the Bone-Muscle Research Center. “Earlier diagnosis could be a game changer.”

With that in mind, Dr. Brotto and a team of researchers set out to study blood samples from 222 women, ages 20 to 80, including those who have os-

Research Center.

Now, the team is expanding its study to include more women, enabling researchers to evaluate body mass index, the effect of exercise versus a sedentary lifestyle, different countries of origins, and various races and ethnicities.

“We are still diagnosing osteoporosis with X-rays, a method we’ve been



Left: Marco Brotto and Chenglin Mo at work in the lab. Right: Noelle Fields and Ling Xu

because they will always be part of the care for older adults.”

## PRECISION MEDICINE AND OSTEOPOROSIS

Bones are living tissue, constantly broken down and replaced. But in osteoporosis, the creation of new bone does not keep up with the loss of old.

Some 200 million people suffer from osteoporosis, which most frequently results in fractures to the wrist, hip, and spine. Women are far more likely than men to develop the condition. Despite its ubiquity, osteoporosis is sometimes called a silent disease because people frequently do not know they have it until a bone fractures, seemingly without warning.

But what if there were a way to screen for the disease decades earlier?

“Osteoporosis is one of the most common and devastating chronic

teoporosis and others who do not and some with and without fractures.

Their landmark study, published in *Nature Communications Biology*, detailed a series of biomarkers in the blood that could be associated with osteoporosis and a quick, accurate, and sensitive screening method to quantify them, demonstrating the test’s clinical applications.

“We are quickly entering an era of precision medicine in which disease prevention and treatment will be highly personalized depending on a person’s genetics and other blood biomarkers,” Brotto says. “This is a prime example of precision medicine.”

The National Institutes of Health and the National Institute on Aging provided crucial support to the project, along with colleagues at Tulane University, Indiana University, and Creighton University’s Osteoporosis

using since 1963,” says Brotto. “But this is the 21st century, and it’s time we have 21st-century diagnostic tools. My goal is to develop an entirely new diagnostic kit for osteoporosis. This work could lead to improved interventions with nutrition, physical therapy, and new or repurposed drugs.”

## DIAGNOSING ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

In Alzheimer’s patients, the brain shrinks. As the disease progresses, a patient develops more severe memory loss and cognitive decline, eventually leaving them unable to complete everyday tasks.

Like osteoporosis, what if Alzheimer’s could be detected earlier, helping to tailor treatment to slow or prevent the disease from progressing?

Won Hwa Kim, an assistant professor of computer science, is exploring how

artificial intelligence (AI) could help identify variations in the brain to predict Alzheimer's in patients.

Dr. Kim hopes to develop a novel AI technique that uses algorithms that mimic the structure and function of networks in the brain, comparing people who have Alzheimer's to others who do not.

Previous studies have focused on identifying which brain regions are related to which functions. Kim's project will instead delve into the relationships between different brain regions, requiring sophisticated analysis methods for brain networks.

"Society is getting older as people live longer. But rather than to simply live longer, it is very important to improve the quality of life for elders and caregivers," Kim says. "We all will be old someday."

## COMBATING SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS

Loneliness and social isolation come with a heavy price. Social isolation is linked to increased risk of dementia, heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, a weakened immune system, and anxiety and depression.

That's troubling because one-fourth of adults 65 and older are considered socially isolated, according to the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine. And the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened loneliness and social isolation among all age groups, including seniors who are most at risk from getting sick from the virus.

Two social work professors, Ling Xu and Noelle Fields, are exploring how to use reminiscence therapy and digital storytelling to ease loneliness and social isolation.

"Humans are wired for social connection, and these social connections have a powerful influence on our overall health and well-being," Dr. Xu says. "Forming strong social networks can also help us as we grow older to stay healthy and happy."

The project will pair UTA students with older adults who have early-stage dementia, and the pairs will talk weekly about careers, families, and major life events. Students will create digital projects incorporating music and stories that document their partner's memories.

UTA is working with Meals on Wheels in Tarrant County to identify potential participants.

Such dialogues are traditionally conducted by social workers and health care professionals, but a shortage of trained professionals provided a unique opportunity for UTA students.

A control group in the project also will talk weekly, but without using reminiscence therapy or digital storytelling, to compare the outcomes.

RRF Foundation for Aging is providing funding for the two-year project, which will begin this year.

"Social distancing does not mean social isolation," Dr. Fields says, "It's more important than ever that we find meaningful ways to stay connected with others."

## HEALTHY, ACTIVE LIFESTYLES

It is difficult to overstate the importance of regular physical activity in older adults.

Exercise can delay, prevent, or help manage many common chronic conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease.

Yet 31 million adults aged 50 and older are inactive, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Why? And how do we change that?

Kate Hyun, an assistant professor of civil engineering, is leading a

cross-disciplinary research group to examine how technology can help people become more active, particularly those who have become sedentary during the pandemic.

The first part of the project will use methods of persuasion, like texts, emails, and automated voice messages, to increase physical activity.

During the second phase, participants will be given smartphone apps equipped with interactive modules developed by the team. The apps will use gaming, like Pokémon Go, and social media to set daily goals and interaction. For example, participants could be asked to walk one mile then take a photo of something in nature or join a Zumba class by Zoom.

"We want to first understand the barriers older adults face with exercise," Dr. Hyun says. "And then we want to learn what is most successful to help nudge them toward physical activity."

The W.W. Caruth Jr. Fund of Communities Foundation of Texas is supporting the work, which includes civil engineering, computer science, kinesiology, psychology, and social work.

Researchers are partnering with senior centers and churches in North Texas to identify participants. The project will focus on low-income areas,

*"Society is getting older as people live longer. But rather than to simply live longer, it is very important to improve the quality of life for elders and caregivers."*

where health disparities are the most prevalent.

"Adopting a healthy, active lifestyle has major benefits," Hyun says. "It's not simply about living longer. It's about living longer, healthier."

Through its far-reaching work in gerontology, UTA is helping older adults do just that. [uta.edu/mag](http://uta.edu/mag)







# CHARTING

# THE

# UNCHARTED

Recent UTA graduates are navigating a new world as first-year teachers during the pandemic.

But as Mavericks, they're rising to the challenge in their classrooms, online and in person.

BY DEVYNN CASE · ILLUSTRATIONS BY NIEN-KEN ALEC LU



**For all their careful and meticulous planning, any teacher will tell you that each day in the classroom is going to look different. Teachers must prepare for the unexpected, then roll with the changes when even contingency plans don't play out like they thought they would.**

During a pandemic in the teaching world, though, “different” is putting it mildly. But Mavericks—by definition, original, unconventional trendsetters—are uniquely positioned to succeed in classrooms that probably don’t look much like what they trained for. The spring 2020 graduates who earned their teaching certification through UTA’s College of Education stepped into their own classrooms across the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, rising to the challenge of being first-year teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“If you can handle this, you can handle anything,” says Holly Hungerford-Kresser, associate professor of literacy studies and English education. “The brilliant part of this trial by fire with pandemic schooling is that it’s hard to imagine anything being more difficult. Teachers, students, families, and districts have never been through anything like this before.”

### **THE NEW NORMAL**

On a typical day, Georgina Adame (’20 BA, English) wakes up at 4:45 a.m. to walk her dog before she gets ready to teach seventh grade at Ferris Junior High in Ferris, Texas, giving her plenty of time to get ready for a day in the classroom. But on the day of Adame’s interview for this article, the Ferris Independent School District was experiencing Wi-Fi outages at all schools. Without wifi, she says, everything used for the teaching process is affected.

The Ferris ISD teachers received this information at 6:30 a.m. School starts at 7:45 a.m.

“Crazy is the only word to describe it,” she says. “I never thought I’d have to constantly remind my class to charge their Chromebooks or that I’d have to encourage students to

buy a mouse for their laptop. We are preparing 21st-century learners for 21st-century careers.”

For new and veteran teachers alike, nothing is the same anymore. All are finding ways to adapt their teaching to face-to-face and virtual learning, usually for the same class period at the same time. Adame detailed subtle and vast differences she’s seen in the classroom that have affected her and her students.

“UTA did prepare me to teach, but there is no way they could have known this was going to happen,” she says. “Nothing compares to what I actually do on a daily basis. I never expected having to sanitize everything and distance my students’ desks. My kids don’t necessarily understand deeply why we still wear masks or why they can’t bring valentines to school to pass out.”

### **ABOVE AND BEYOND**

Teachers as professionals are often overlooked and underappreciated, while simultaneously being considered beloved by those personally impacted by great ones. It’s a vocation that requires its workers to go above and beyond the call of duty—and that aspect of teaching hasn’t changed, especially in times when social isolation and breaks from routine are creating mental and emotional strife for many.

Adame described a student she has worked with closely during her first year. The student’s anxiety was so severe that she would physically walk with him from his parents’ car in the mornings just to get him into the building for the day. He was often terrified to enter the school, standing with his head in his hands, crying and needing to be coaxed to leave the parking lot.

“Three weeks before the end of the first semester, he started walking into my classroom and sitting down on his own,” she says. “Now he comes to school early and is ready to go. He can leave my classroom now, walking out with friends, laughing their heads off. He doesn’t need me to walk him to other classes anymore. But that took about 12-13 weeks. Lots of teachers probably give that blanket statement, ‘I do it for the kids,’ but it’s because we really do, as teachers. We love our kids.”

As Dr. Hungerford-Kresser prepares new teachers, she keeps in mind how teaching in a pandemic is exceedingly different than the expectations some of these first-year teachers may have had.

“Teachers’ schedules, classrooms, and which students they are instructing can change daily,” she says. “They have to pivot with quarantines; they have to teach students simultaneously online and face-to-face. It is the ultimate test of teacher flexibility and compassion. Students, families, co-workers—everyone needs a lot of grace right now.”

### **PREPARED FOR ANYTHING**

In the Red Oak Independent School District, second grade teacher Olivia Hubbard (’20 BA, Education) is one of three brand new first-year teachers at her school, H.A. Wooden Elementary.

“It’s actually the best time to be a first-year teacher be-

cause now every teacher is back to square one,” Hubbard says. “While my graduation in May 2020 feels so long ago, I think about my UTA professors every day. My time at UT Arlington instilled in me an awesome skill set as a teacher. UTA is where I learned the strategies and techniques I’m implementing and using in my classroom daily.”

Teachers managed to advance the education field by a decade in only a few short weeks when the pandemic first shut down schools. While there is much to learn as the field of virtual learning progresses, Kathleen Tice, clinical assistant professor of literacy studies in UTA’s Department of Curriculum and Instruction, says graduates from UT Arlington have long benefited from online programming to prepare teachers, so teaching online was not entirely new for instructors.

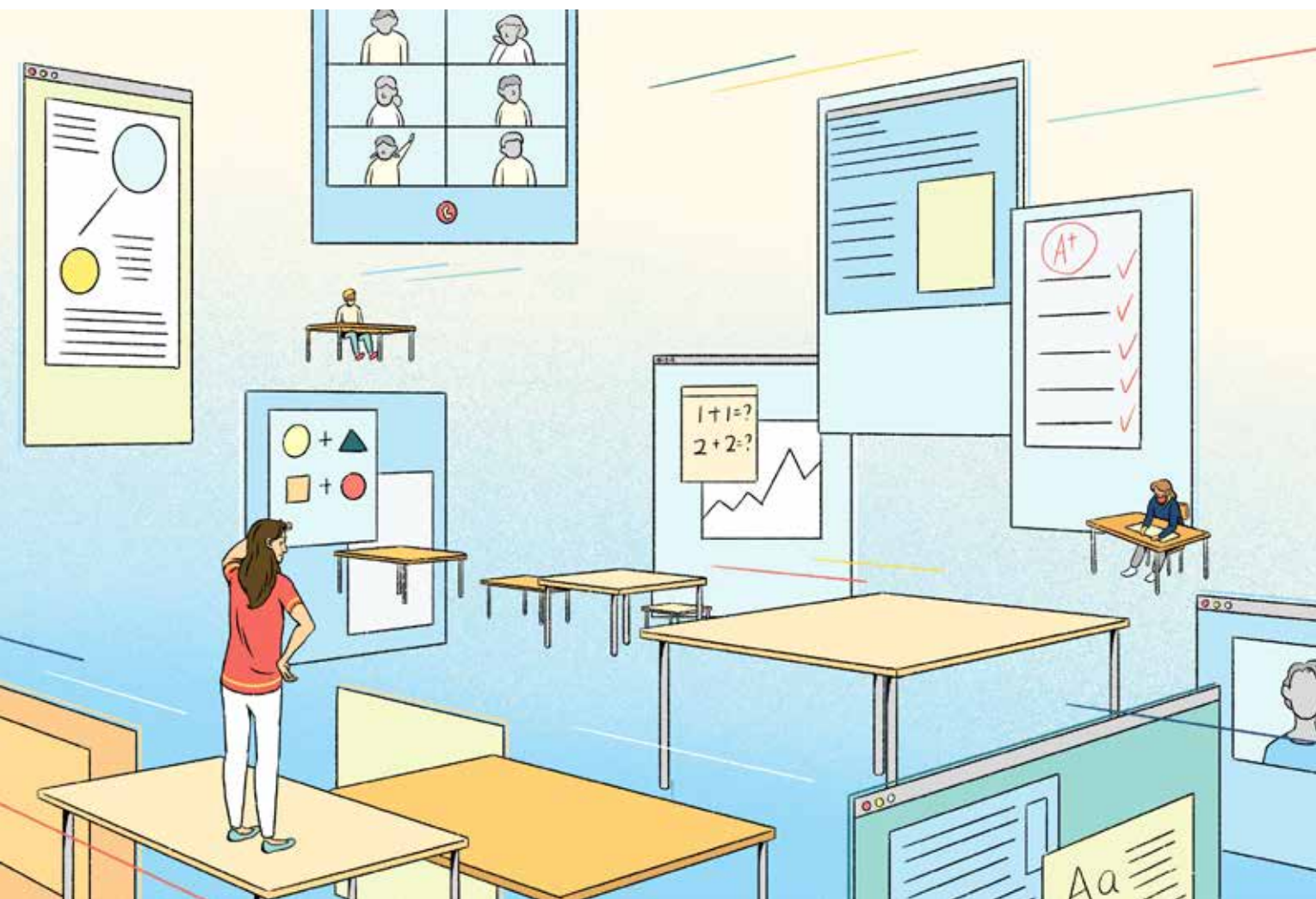
“I was determined to show the UTA graduates in the spring of 2020 that the pandemic would not prevent me from helping my students learn what they need to know to be effective teachers,” says Dr. Tice. “I demonstrated alternative ways to reach the same learning objectives through a virtual environment and showcased the importance of capitalizing on virtual resources. I knew many children would be counting on them once they left UTA.”

When not in a pandemic, UTA students attend field experiences face-to-face in classrooms with Texas Education Agency-certified teachers. Clinical teaching starts in the final semester of a student’s senior year at UTA and ends with graduation. Currently, if they are not face-to-face, as in the pandemic for some, they teach online in cooperation with their assigned certified teacher.

“As a student teacher, I learned a lot just seeing how other teachers in action set expectations for their students and implemented classroom management,” says Hubbard. “Now that I’m in my own classroom, I’ve also realized that teaching is a work of heart, which sounds cheesy. It’s true, however, because teaching has taken every ounce of who I am as a human being, and I freely give all of that to my kids.”

Joseph Hooks (’20 BS, Interdisciplinary Studies), who currently teaches fifth grade math and science at Mary Orr

**“If you can handle this, you can handle anything. The brilliant part of this trial by fire with pandemic schooling is that it’s hard to imagine anything being more difficult.”**





Intermediate in the Mansfield Independent School District, says the pandemic forced a quick turnaround for teachers to go from being in the physical classroom to being online.

"I had completed most of my field experience hours before spring break of 2020," says Hooks. "Those of us who needed it were given alternate assignments to finish up observation hours. I felt fortunate that throughout my time at UT Arlington, preparing to be in my own classroom was covered extensively. I don't feel like I missed anything due to any interruptions from COVID in my last semester."

Student teaching and clinical training are essential parts of a robust learning experience for those going into education. The field experiences greatly enhance the classroom lessons at UT Arlington of pedagogy and content knowledge.

"My expectations going into teaching were that it would be different every day and that teaching would be a job that I would enjoy," says Hooks. "I've experienced both so far during this pandemic."

## EXPECTATIONS VS. REALITY

UTA students began their spring 2020 semester anticipating a requirement of completing 14 to 16 weeks of clinical teach-

semester to make us soon-to-be graduates feel supported, prepared to graduate, and ready to go out into the world to teach," says Myka Miller ('20 BS, Interdisciplinary Studies), who is currently teaching seventh grade math at Shackelford Junior High in the Arlington Independent School District.

"My mom was a teacher, and I remember growing up playing classroom with my friends," she says. "Then in high school, when math was the bane of my existence, I had a great set of teachers who showed me how to love learning in a subject that I absolutely hated. That's when I knew I wanted to be a teacher."

At times, Miller admitted, she struggles with the emotional and mental toll teaching can take.

"I can still hear my professor's voice in my head, telling my class at UTA to crumple up a piece of paper. Saying that's how these students come to you, with problems, worries, fears, all crumpled up," Miller recalls. "As a teacher, you can only soften the edges, smooth out each paper as best you can, and not try to carry it all with you. Because you can't carry hundreds of pieces of crumpled-up papers and still take care of yourself. These kids are going through some heavy stuff, and the pandemic especially has brought out some horrible situations for them. All I can do is smooth out the hurt where I'm able to and do my best to help my kids feel supported."

As these first-year teachers and their students are still processing the pandemic, Melissa Hulings, UT

Arlington assistant professor of science education, stresses the importance of understanding the situations students face both inside and outside the classroom and how those situations impact their learning.

"These first-year teachers must develop a sense of community in their classrooms and navigate a teaching environment completely different than the one they themselves experienced," says Dr. Hulings. "It is essential for students to be engaged in encouraging and meaningful learning that meets their individual needs, whether that takes place virtually or in person."

Emily Rogers ('20 BA, English) teaches English and language arts for multiple grades at REALM Secondary School, a "school of choice" in the Burleson Independent School District. She finds it reassuring to know that she's not alone in adjusting to teaching in a pandemic.

"The fact that I am not the only one who is having to learn as they go is really comforting, but also very odd," she says. "I never imagined having to balance two sets of kids—in-person students and virtual students. Not being able to see my students' smiling faces or emotions in general is something I'm still getting used to."

Rogers also says she's learned to expect the unexpected when it comes to her students.

"We had a whole class at UTA dedicated to preparing us for what a typical classroom can look like, but the one thing our UTA professors always told us was to throw out any assump-

ing in local schools.

When the pandemic hit, the Texas Education Agency allowed students who had completed 10 weeks of clinical teaching to finish at that point. Students who began their clinical teaching at the beginning of the spring 2020 semester were able to stop at that time, having completed exactly 10 weeks. Others worked with their cooperating teachers and assisted in setting up online teaching to complete their required 10 weeks.

"My professors at UTA worked so hard that last spring



tions we may have when it came to our students,” she remembers. “My kids are all so unique, each one with their own personality and what they may be dealing with at home. All they want is to be understood.”

## CONTINUED SUPPORT AND MAVERICK PRIDE

At Corey Academy of Fine Arts and Dual Language in the Arlington ISD, fourth grade teacher Krystal Chavez ('20 BA, Education) says starting her teaching career during a global pandemic has been something she could have never envisioned.

“It has been far from a normal school year and basically the opposite of how I expected to begin my teaching career,” says Chavez. “I have truly learned so much and have grown as an educator. In the classroom we are teachers, counselors, and social and emotional support. It’s essential to provide our students with a safe and comfortable environment in our classrooms.”

No one could have known before March 2020 that UTA’s education graduates would begin their first year of teaching having to manage online and face-to-face learners concurrently. First-year and experienced teachers alike have found this to be challenging.

“Our most recent teacher education graduates have had to adjust very quickly to the new realities of a pandemic-era classroom,” says Teresa Taber Doughty, dean of the College of Education and professor of special education. “I am so amazed by our graduates who continue to impress me with their resilience, wit, wisdom, caring, and creative solutions to teaching during COVID-19.”

UTA’s Office of Alumni Relations and the College of Education have reached out to alumni throughout this difficult year in a commitment to keeping them connected to the vibrant Maverick community and to let them know we’re here for them. This includes gift packages with words of encouragement from past professors and materials they can hang in their classrooms, such as pennants or posters, and other items such as hand sanitizers, masks, and school supplies.

“UTA has continued to show support to me as an alumna,” says Chavez. “I have received their support through emails from my former professors and social media posts from the College of Education, as well as goodies in the mail just to brighten my day. Whatever the future may hold, I know I’ll continue to learn and grow as an educator in part because of UTArlington.”

UTA faculty interact frequently with graduates through Twitter and Facebook. This past year as in other years, former students text or send emails to their former professors, sharing teaching experiences or seeking advice.

“Fortunately, our Maverick graduates had the benefit of



Emily Rogers, left,  
and Noor Agha, right.

support from dedicated UTArlington faculty and working with incredible local teachers who modeled flexibility along with exceptional teaching practices,” says Dr. Doughty. “They all make me proud every day.”

Noor Agha ('20 BA, Education), teaching fourth grade at Jones Academy of Fine Arts and Dual Language in the Arlington ISD, hopes that things will return to “normal” soon and says she knows she can always reach out to UTA for any guidance or support she needs.

“They’re also navigating this strange world. We all have a lot on our plates,” says Agha. “Overall this has not been an easy year for anybody, but we teach because we love it. We all have a lot of goals and hopes as we continue to teach.”

While teachers hold on to the inspirations that led them to the field of education in the first place, Maverick pride is a bond that sustains them—from UTA faculty who work hard to serve their students to the graduates who leave the University to serve the next generations of scholars.

“I’m constantly promoting UTArlington to my kids,” says Agha. “I had such a good experience and learned a lot from my UTA professors, all who have so much knowledge to share. I always recommend my kids to go to UTA if they are thinking about going to college. I’m always telling them: You have to go to UTA and be a Maverick.” **UTA**

**“I had such a good experience and learned a lot from my UTA professors, all who have so much knowledge to share. I always recommend my kids to go to UTA if they are thinking about going to college.”**



# A CHANCE TO

# STAY



BY  
**JENNY  
GUMBERT  
AND  
MARK  
PERMENTER**

**F**or many academically talented students, only one barrier stands between them and their educational dreams: a lack of financial resources. Perhaps they're first-generation college-goers, parents working to support their families, or international scholars pursuing new opportunities. No matter their backgrounds, they have

one thing in common—they need that extra boost as they approach the finish line.

Donor-funded scholarships make the pathway to higher education possible and are often the difference between completing a college degree or dropping out of school entirely. For the following UTA students and graduates, the road to their success was paved by the generosity of the Maverick community.





# LAUREN SORTO RAMOS

**('20 BS, Biology)**

Julia and Dale Martin  
Pre-Dental Scholarship  
Recipient

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To Lauren Sorto Ramos ('20 BS, Biology), receiving a scholarship wasn't just about achieving her own dreams. If given the opportunity to pursue her goal of becoming a dentist, she knew she would translate her success into countless future impacts.

"The scholarship money provided won't end with me but will be multiplied and put back into the community when I'm a dentist and leader," she explains.

Thanks to the Julia and Dale Martin Pre-Dental Scholarship, Sorto—an ambitious, goal-oriented, first-generation college student—was able to afford to study biology at UTA and start her dentistry education. The scholarship was established by Dr. Dale ('78) and Julia Martin. Dale Martin is a pediatric dentist in Fort Worth and serves as the president and executive director of the UTA Alumni Association. He is a 2012 recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Service Award and continues to engage/volunteer with the College of Science, presenting to and mentoring students.

"The scholarship helped me get to where I am today by reminding me that people support me and my dreams," Sorto says. "I am truly inspired, and I will continue on to help younger students pursue higher education."

Sorto starts dental school this August and is already fulfilling her promise to give back to the community. She is currently volunteering at dental clinics in Dallas, and, once she graduates with her DDS, plans to continue to use her skills to benefit the community, especially those most in need of assistance.

"I hope to open up a clinic in south Dallas and also in my parents' home country of El Salvador," Sorto says. "I believe dental care is a human right and should be accessible."



***“The scholarship helped me get to where I am today by reminding me that people support me and my dreams.”***



## **FIZA SAEED**

### **Biomedical Engineering Junior**

**Dr. Shamim Sughra Malik Endowed  
Scholarship Recipient**

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Fiza Saeed had always known one thing: She was going to be a doctor. Growing up in Lahore, Pakistan, it was what she and her parents discussed and planned for years.

However, once Saeed took a look at the medical field in Pakistan, she realized how many hospitals lacked machinery and the resources to pursue new research.

“After seeing all this, it made me think that the main work is behind the scenes, researching about new things or designing new instruments that can help doctors,” she explains. “That’s how I came across biomedical engineering.”

UTA’s diversity and reputation as an outstanding engineering teaching institution put the University on her radar. Unfortunately, attending school in the U.S. is expensive for many international students and, as a first-generation college student, applying for aid was daunting for her and

her family.

Saeed was relieved when she found out that she could apply for assistance through UTA’s scholarship system and was awarded the Dr. Shamim Sughra Malik Endowed Scholarship.

The scholarship was established by UTA alumnus Asif Malik (’85 BS, ’91 MS, Computer Science and Engineering) in honor of his late mother Dr. Shamim Sughra Malik, who served in the Pakistani army as one of the few female doctors in the country at the time.

Following in the footsteps of Dr. Malik, Saeed is forging her path in the medical industry. She says all of this is possible because of her scholarship.

“It’s like a dream come true,” Saeed says. “My parents have never been prouder, seeing me as the person I am now because of UTA and this scholarship.”





## SHAHRZAD AMIRANI

**('89 BA,  
Chemistry; '93  
PhD, Business  
Administra-  
tion)**

Vice President,  
Head of New  
Products and  
Innovation, Ipsen  
Biopharma

The scholarship Shahrzad Amirani received as a UTA student became her lifeline to a college education. To inspire female students with similar needs, she established the Shahrzad Amirani Endowed Scholarship for undergraduates who demonstrate academic excellence and ambition and who receive all or part of their preparatory education in a country other than the United States. Dr. Amirani was named a Distinguished Alumna in 2019 and has served on the UTA President's Advisory Board since 2009.

### **What brought you to UTA from Iran?**

After the revolution in Iran, our world as we knew it collapsed. The universities there closed for several years, so I decided to come to the U.S. In my family, education was the No. 1 priority. My mother, herself a college graduate, emphasized higher education. As for why I chose UTA, my uncle lived in the area and spoke very highly of the University.

### **How did the scholarship you received impact your education?**

When I think about my situation as a student, the numbers didn't add up. My scholarship equaled sur-

vival. If not for this support, I would have dropped out because I had no other means of paying for my education.

### **What motivated you to establish the Shahrzad Amirani Endowed Scholarship?**

For me, it was a moral responsibility. I'm somebody who survived and thrived because of a scholarship, so it was a no-brainer for me to help others. After all, education is the most effective way to help people succeed.

### **How did your UTA education prepare you for your career?**

The knowledge I gained in

chemistry, business, and applied statistics provided the perfect background for my career in the drug development industry. In addition to giving me a technical edge, UTA was very nurturing. The UTA village became my home and gave me the comfort, support, and confidence to succeed academically and professionally.

### **What message do you have for your fellow UTA alumni?**

We have a shared responsibility to develop and nurture the next generation of Mavericks. It should be part of our DNA. Every time you help educate somebody, that becomes your legacy.

## DALLAS JOHNSON

### **Communication Senior**

David E. Groner Endowed  
Scholarship Recipient

Uncertainties flooded Dallas Johnson's mind as he sat next to his mom at the UTA Communication Department scholarship event in 2018. Could he afford a four-year degree? Would community college be a more realistic option? Was graduate school just a pipe dream?

When the department chair called his name as a recipient of the David E. Groner Endowed Scholarship, his doubts faded.

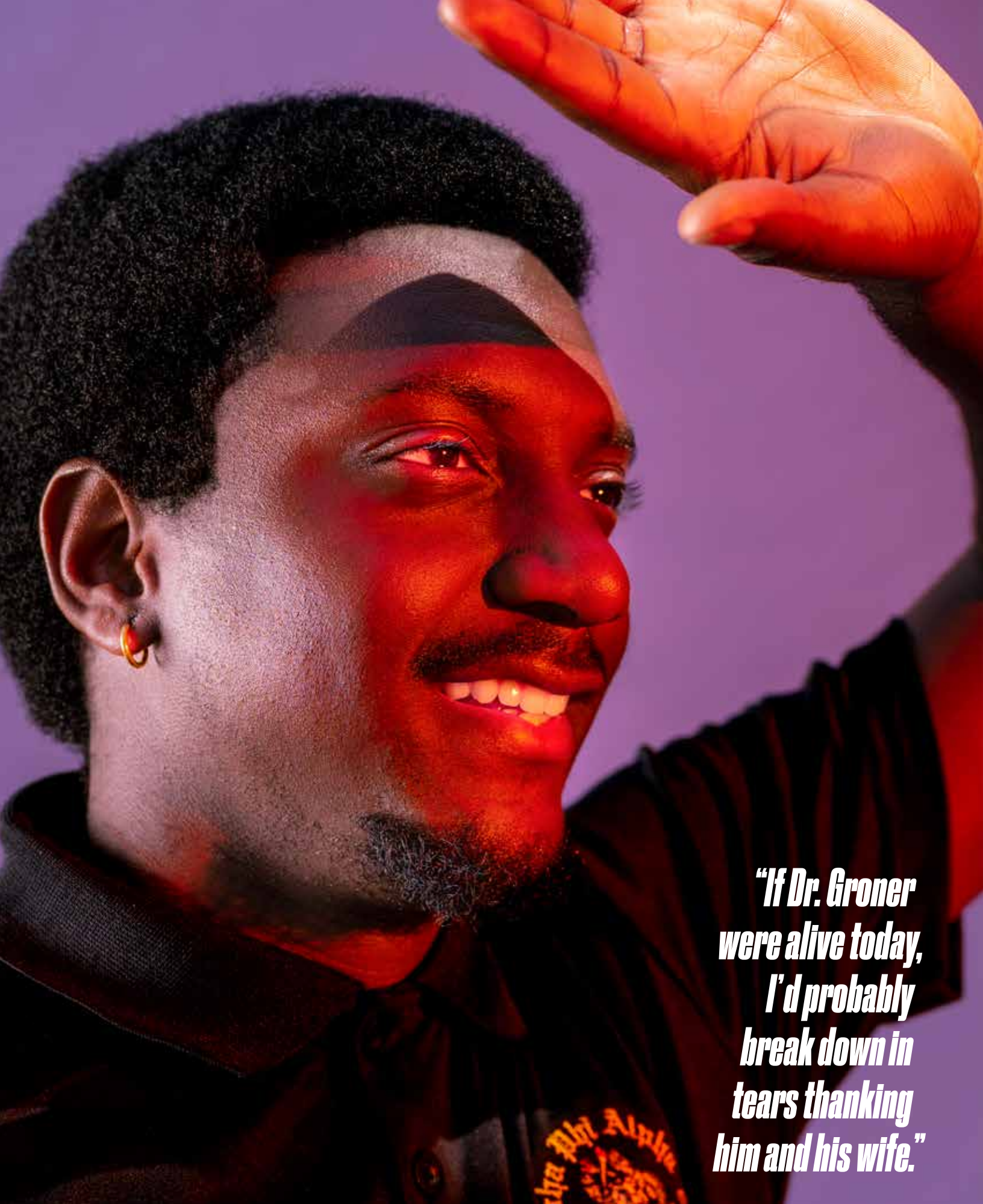
"I looked toward my mom, who had tears in her eyes. At that moment, I didn't fully understand how life-changing it would be, but my mother did," Johnson recalls. "This scholarship is one of the biggest blessings I've ever received. I don't believe I would've been able to attend UTA without it."

The scholarship was established through a planned gift from Mary Groner in memory of her husband, the late Dr. Groner, a longtime UTA communication professor. The scholarship supports motivated and talented students pursuing a degree in communication studies.

Not only did the award provide much-needed financial resources, it gave Johnson the confidence to succeed academically as a first-generation student. Thanks to his excellence in the classroom, he was selected for the prestigious McNair Scholars Program and the UT System's Summer Internship Program in Philanthropy.

He's on track to graduate in fall 2021 with plans to earn a PhD in communication studies, teach at a local university, and explore a career in philanthropy to raise funds and awareness for college students with similar backgrounds.

"If Dr. Groner were alive today, I'd probably break down in tears thanking him and his wife," Johnson says. "I would say thank you for giving me a chance to follow my dreams and ask him what I could do to better live up to his gift."



***"If Dr. Groner  
were alive today,  
I'd probably  
break down in  
tears thanking  
him and his wife."***



# KEN FUENTEZ

(’20 BSN)

Advancing Health Care in North Texas  
Endowed Scholarship Recipient

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Ken Fuentez’s (’20 BSN) initial plans for his career were interrupted by the unpredictability of life. Though he had planned to pursue a medical career and had earned a Bachelor of Science when he was younger, he was never able to continue on his desired career path.

Nearly two decades later, he decided to attend UTA’s College of Nursing and Health Innovation based on its reputation for excellence in nursing. And because of the University’s innovative and accessible approach to education, he would be able to attend while continuing to work to support his family.

Though his dream was now attainable, it wasn’t easy.

“I am the primary breadwinner in my household, so there was a constant worry that I would not be able to provide for my family,” he says. “I worked full time while going to school, but the times that I missed work had a significant impact on my paycheck.”

Thankfully, because of the generosity of a donor, Fuentez secured a scholarship that helped ease his financial stress.

In 2020, North Texas Specialty Physicians established the Advancing Health Care in North Texas Endowed Scholarship Fund at UTA. Its goal was

simple: Help students like Fuentez—highly motivated and academically talented—make a difference in nursing or exercise science. The group’s gift provided the support Fuentez needed to graduate with a bachelor’s in nursing in December 2020. He plans to eventually earn his master’s and doctoral degrees.

Now working at Texas Health Resources Harris Methodist in Fort Worth, he says he is incredibly grateful for the scholarship and hopes that his story will inspire others.

“It is possible to attain your dreams,” he says. “There are people who care about your future as much as you do.”





A portrait of Akram Abbadi, a young man with short dark hair and a light beard, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and blue tie. He is adjusting his tie with both hands. He is wearing a watch on his left wrist and a beaded bracelet on his right wrist. The background is a solid purple color.

# AKRAM ABBADI

**('21 BS, Economics)**

**Wayne Watts Scholarship for Aspiring Lawyers Recipient**

Akram Abbadi has dreamed of being a lawyer since he was 6 years old. But like many UTA students, he needed a financial lift to make his educational and career goals a reality.

That support came in the form of the Wayne Watts Scholarship for Aspiring Lawyers, which covered the majority of Abbadi's tuition and fees for his senior year.

"This scholarship lessened the financial burden for my family and me and allowed me to focus on my studies to improve my academic performance," says Abbadi, who served as UTA Student Congress chief justice for 2020-21. "It also helped strengthen my résumé and campus involvement so I

can be a more competitive candidate for admission into the law school of my choice."

The Watts Scholarship assists students who have demonstrated academic excellence as they near the end of their undergraduate careers and who plan to attend law school and become practicing attorneys. It was established with a generous gift from UTA Distinguished Alumnus Wayne Watts ('76), retired senior executive vice president and general counsel at AT&T.

In addition to receiving financial support, Abbadi has benefited from the UTA Pre-Law Center, which offers advising, mentorship programs with legal professionals, service-learning experiences, and moot court and mock trial competition training.

After graduating, he plans to use his UTA and law degrees to promote socioeconomic change and advocate for those in need.

"I'm deeply humbled and immensely grateful to Mr. Watts for all that he's done for me," Abbadi says. "This scholarship has brought me much closer to achieving my goals, and I only hope that one day I can do the same thing for someone else."

***"This scholarship has brought me much closer to achieving my goals, and I only hope that one day I can do the same thing for someone else."***



# Scholarships are life-changing

Help UTA expand its support of talented students



"Your generosity has inspired me to help others and give back to the community. I hope one day I will be able to help students achieve their goals just as you have helped me."

- Aidaly Castillo ('20 BSN),  
College of Nursing and Health Innovation Graduate

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS  ARLINGTON

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# CLASS OF 2021

*All the latest professional updates from our talented alumni all over the world.*

## 1981

### Rev. Leonard Hornsby

(BBA, Management) was appointed to fill the vacated District 5 seat on the Tarrant County College Board of Trustees. The district covers south Arlington and Mansfield. Hornsby has been the executive pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Mansfield, Texas, since 2007. He is a member of the board of directors for the Tarrant County Mental Health Association and a field consultant for the Office of African American Ministry, Baptist General Convention of Texas.

## 1983

### Wilma Davis

(BS, Mathematics) was honored with the Stephanie C. Hill Legacy Award from the Black Engineer of the Year Award (BEYA) STEM Conference 2021. Each year, the BEYA STEM Conference honors the work of engineers and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics professionals in their industries. Davis is a principal engineer at Bell Helicopter-Textron. She has more than 34 years of software development experience in the aerospace industry, including 19 years with Bell.

## FILL US IN

**You never call. You don't write. We miss you! Email us at [classnotes@uta.edu](mailto:classnotes@uta.edu) and let us know what is keeping you so busy.**

### James Hawthorne

(BA, Journalism; '10 MA, Criminology) was recognized with the Chief Don Stafford Law Enforcement Award at the 46th Annual Elite News Awards Night in Dallas. The award honors the first Black officer promoted to lieutenant in the Dallas Police Department. The Cedar Hill Independent School District police chief, Hawthorne retired as assistant chief after 28 years with the Arlington Police Department. He teaches a criminal research class at UTA and is a graduate of the FBI National Academy in Quantico, Virginia.

## 1989

### Ann Montgomery

(BA, Political Science) was elected as the Ellis County county attorney and district attorney. Her office is responsible for all criminal prosecutions in Ellis County as well as civil matters. She previously served as assistant county attorney for 17 years.



# CLASS NOTES

## 1991

### **Derrelynn Perryman**

(BSW, '92 MSW) was re-appointed by Gov. Greg Abbott to the Texas Board of Criminal Justice for terms set to expire on Feb. 1, 2027. She is a therapist and consultant in private practice and an adjunct instructor for UTA's School of Social Work. She retired from the Arlington Police Department after serving for 21 years as the victim services coordinator and as the victim advocate director for the Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney's Office. She is a certified peace officer instructor, training officers and first responders.

## 1992

### **Froswa' Booker-Drew**

(BA, History) was honored by the Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce as Volunteer of the Year. Dr. Booker-Drew has an extensive background in leadership, nonprofit management, partnership development, training, and education. She is the vice president for strategic partnerships at the State Fair of Texas.

## 1997

### **Brian Brumley**

(MSW) was reappointed by Gov. Greg Abbott to the Texas State Board of Social Worker Examiners for terms set to expire on Feb. 1, 2027. Brumley is a licensed master social

worker and a member of the National Association of Social Workers, Association of Social Boards, and Council on Social Work Education.

## 1998

### **Malik Aziz**

(BA, Criminology) is the new police chief at Prince George's County Police Department in Maryland, east of Washington, D.C. He previously served as deputy chief of the Dallas Police Department and on President Barack Obama's task force for 21st-century policing. He was with the Dallas Police Department for 29 years, starting as a patrol officer and overseeing various divisions, including patrol, communications, traffic, as well as crimes against persons, investi-

"Being a transfer and international student, I thought it would be a daunting transition, but it was far from it. Thank you, UTA, for cultivating my inner strengths and getting me out of my comfort zone."

— BABER HASAN  
KHAN ('00 BBA,  
FINANCE)

gations, and SWAT. He has been executive director of Police and Communities Together, national chair of the National Black Police Association, and chair of the Dallas Police Museum.

## 1999

### **Brandon Hayes**

(BBA, Finance), a specialist in state and local tax consulting, has joined JTaylor as a senior manager. He brings 20 years of proven experience assisting clients in a variety of industries, including oil and gas operations, power generation, manufacturing, health care, hospitality, retail, and grocery. He has helped recover millions of overpaid sales and use tax dollars in multiple states.

## 2001

### **Nikola Olić**

(BS, Computer Science Engineering) showed his photography exhibition "Structural Harmonies: Geometric Structures in Drawings, Prints and Photography" in May through July 2021 at The Museum of Geometric and MADI Art in Dallas.

### **Kenneth Sheets**

(BA, Political Science) was reappointed to the Texas Military Preparedness Commission by Gov. Greg Abbott. His term expires Feb. 1, 2027. The commission's goal is to preserve, protect, expand, and attract new military missions, assets, and installations.



## 1991

### **Brad Jones**

('91 MBA, Finance) was appointed interim president and CEO of Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) after the state's catastrophic energy failure in February. Previously, he was appointed

by the Public Utility Commission of Texas to assist ERCOT's newly appointed director of accountability. Retired in 2018 as CEO and president of the New York Independent System Operator, he previously served as COO of ERCOT, chairman of the Edison Electric Institute's Executive Advisory Committee, a board member of the Gulf Coast Power Association, and a vice president at TXU Energy.

## 2002

**Todd Schneider**  
(MBA, Finance) of Schneider Wealth Management in Southlake, Texas, has joined investment advisor company Golden State.

## 2003

**Rachel Ickert**  
(MS, Civil Engineering) was selected by the Texas Water Development Board to serve on a regional planning group that will work on a flood-control blueprint for the Trinity River basin, which stretches from North Texas to near the Gulf Coast. Due to be completed in January 2023, the project is part of the state's inaugural flood plan. Ickert is the Tarrant Regional Water District's water resource engineering director.

**Mark Melton**  
(BBA, Accounting; MS, Taxation), a tax attorney and partner at Holland & Knight LLP, began helping people facing eviction during the COVID-19 pandemic. He created Dallas Evictions 2020, gathered volunteer attorneys, built a website, and raised more than \$100,000, all of it spent on tenant-related costs. In the works is the Dallas Eviction Advocacy Center with 501(c)(3) non-profit status.

"I'm proud to have been a UTA undergraduate and graduate student. Top-notch innovative researchers here."

— MAJ ANGARANO  
(’87 BS, ’07 PHD, BIOLOGY)  
Professional Consulting  
Veterinarian, Hill’s Pet  
Nutrition



## 1994

**Raj Iyer**  
(’94 MS, ’97 PhD, Electrical Engineering) is the first civilian chief information officer of the United States Army. Dr. Iyer is responsible for the Army's IT portfolio, a global workforce of 15,000 IT professionals, and oversight of an \$18 billion annual budget.

**Rachel Proctor**  
(BS, Interdisciplinary Studies) won a special election to fill the vacated mayoral term in DeSoto, Texas. She served as mayor pro-tem 2013-19. She is CEO of Rachel L. Proctor International LLC, founder of the non-profit Leadership Inc., and owner of Neighborhood Christian Learning Center of Dallas, Texas.

## 2004

**Emil Moffatt**  
(BA, Broadcast Journalism) is *Morning Edition* host and reporter at WPLN-90.3 FM. Previously he was *All Things Considered* host for WKYU-97.5 FM in Bowling Green, Kentucky, and a reporter and news anchor at WBAP-1080 AM in Dallas. He also spent four seasons broadcasting minor league baseball in Fort Worth.

## 2005

Trey Kemp (MLA) is a new member of the American Society of Golf Course Architects. He is a golf course architect with Kimley-Horn and Associates in Fort Worth. He worked on the maintenance crew at Dallas National Golf Club while in graduate school. Kemp's golf course work portfolio spans locations throughout Texas. Previously, he worked at Colligan Golf Design in Arlington and Jacobson Golf Design in Libertyville, Illinois.

## 2006

**Chris Wilde**  
(MBA, Business) is the new CEO of Dunaway, a multidiscipline engineering firm. He has worked at the company as a civil engineer for 18 years. Dunaway has offices in Fort Worth, Austin, Midland, San Antonio, and Farmersville and plans to add Dallas and Houston this year.

## 2008

**John Bielamowicz**  
(BBA, Real Estate) was appointed chair of the Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists by Gov. Greg Abbott. He was first appointed to the board in 2016. Bielamowicz is president of Biel Partners Commercial Real Estate and co-founder of United States Mask. He is a member of the Real Estate Council and the North Texas Commercial Association of Realtors. In addition, he is a volunteer pilot for Angel Flight South Central.

## 2009

**Christine Chasse**  
(BSN, ’13 MSN) is in her third year of law school at Texas A&M University. Her article "Caps on Capsules: Prescription for Lower Drug Prices in the United States" was published in *Food and Drug Law Journal*. She is a legal nurse consultant with Lewis Brisbois Bisgaard &



# CLASS NOTES

Smith LLP in Dallas, and will take her bar exam in July.

## 2010

### Angel Torres

(BA, Political Science) has joined international law firm Weil, Gotshal, & Manges LLP as a Dallas-based associate in the firm's banking and finance practice. He was named to the inaugural 2021 edition of Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch in the Banking and Finance category.

## 2011

### Brittanie Boyd

(MBA) is the new senior vice president of marketing for the Philadelphia 76ers. In 2014, she joined Harris Blitzer Sports & Entertainment, the 76ers' parent company. Previously, she was co-chair of the company's Diversity and Inclusion Committee, and she currently sits on the Culture and Development Committee. She is a co-founder of Black Women in Sports and Entertainment.

### Maghan Gautney

(BS, Economics) was appointed to the governing board of the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired for a term set to expire on Jan. 31, 2027. She is a digital product manager at Capital One. Additionally, she is a member of the American Goat Society and the Nigerian Dairy Goat Association.

## 2012

### J.C. Derrick

(BA, Journalism) is the new publisher of *Mainstreet Daily News*, an online media outlet headquartered in Gainesville, Florida. Previously, he worked at the *Longview News-Journal*, then moved to Washington, D.C., where he rose from reporter to managing editor, then deputy chief content editor at World News Group, a national news media organization.

## 2013

### Brandy O'Quinn

(MS, Real Estate/Sustainability Studies) is assistant director at TechFW. She served as the public affairs senior manager for Blue Zones Project, a communitywide well-being initiative in Fort Worth, and was director of local business

development with the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce. Her consulting firm is Urban Strategies of Texas.

## 2015

### Jennifer McIntyre

(MEd, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies) will be principal of DeLeon Elementary in the Victoria, Texas, Independent School District beginning in fall 2021. She served DeLeon Elementary as assistant principal since 2019.

### Tonychris Nnaka

(BSN) began a new role as a policy adviser to city of Dallas Mayor Eric Johnson. Previously, he worked at Baylor University Medical Center and as associate manager of the tactical care unit dedicated to caring for COVID-19 patients.

### Kolby Walker

(BA, University Studies) earned his veterinary practice manager certification from the Veterinary Hospital Managers Association.

## 2020

### Cles Follett

(BS, Biology) has joined Quorum Architects as office administrator in Fort Worth.

### Alexa Washington

(BS, Public Health) earned the highly competitive Texas Health Resources Gunnin Fellowship. The fellowship provides financial assistance and a 400-hour internship with Texas Health Resources. She is pursuing her Master of Public Health at UTA.

"I recommend to anyone who's interested in completing a baccalaureate or master's degree: Go UTA!"

—ALICIA  
MCLEMORE-  
SMITH, ('13 BSN;  
'18 MSN, NURSING  
ADMINISTRATION)  
RN Care Manager, IEHP



## Hall of Honor

Earlier this year, six alumni were inducted into UTA's Military Science Hall of Honor for their outstanding achievements in

and out of the military. The 2021 inductees are Lt. Gen. Phil Ford ('65), Lt. Col. Jerry Attaway ('68), and Claudia and Larry Pink ('78). Since UTA was unable to host a ceremony last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 inductees Rob Roten ('65) and Col. Andrew Ward ('72) were also honored.



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# IN MEMORIAM



**Pat Brandenburg**  
(’49 AS, Business Administration) 91, April 10, Tucson, Arizona.

A tireless supporter of people and communities in need, she devoted

much of her life to her faith, social justice, and philanthropy. Her generous support has left a lasting legacy at UTA. In 2013, she established an endowment for the Center for Mexican American Studies (CMAS), which she continued to add to over the years. In 2020, she established an endowment for the Center for African American Studies (CAAS), bringing her cumulative giving to UTA to more than \$1 million. Her scholarships have helped dozens of students accomplish their educational goals and will continue to do so for generations to come.



**Paul E. Andrews Jr.**

78, Feb. 27, Fort Worth. A longtime friend of UTA, Andrews was founder and CEO of TTI Inc., a company that sells a wide

variety of electronics components. Over 50 years, he grew TTI into an international company with more than 7,000 employees. He took an active role in his community, and in 2007, he and his wife, Judy, established the Paul E. Andrews Jr. Foundation, which focuses on education and health care in Fort Worth. An avid car aficionado, he also donated funds to establish the Dr. Bob Woods Chair in Automotive Engineering for UTA’s Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, named to honor longtime professor and Formula SAE adviser Bob Woods.

## ALUMNI

### 1930s

**Ray Lusk Pollock**  
(’39 AS, Business) 100, Feb. 13, Spring, Texas.

### 1940s

**Shirley Mae Thompson Cain**  
(BA, English) 91, Jan. 9, Frisco, Texas.

**Dr. Billy D. Pierce**  
(’48) 90, March 20, West, Texas.

### 1950s

**Richard Dan Ankele**  
(’52 AA, Biology) 87, Jan. 15, Arlington.

**Dr. Richard Kent Cherry**  
(’53) 86, Dec. 31, 2020, Arlington.

**Janet Allen Cherry**  
(’54) 86, Jan. 15, Arlington.

**Sue-Beall Blanton Shaffer**  
(’57 AS, Education) 84, Dec. 28, 2020, Argyle, Texas.

### 1960s

**Elizabeth “Betty” Adair**  
(’63 BS, Education) 78, Nov. 12, 2020, Lacy Lakeview, Texas.

**Wade Lafayette Craddock, Jr.**  
(’63 BS, Physics) 80, Dec. 28, 2020, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

**John M. Loftis**  
(’63 BS, Mechanical Engineering) 81, Dec. 9, Beaufort, South Carolina.

**Jack W. Brannon**  
(’64 Industrial Engineering) 84, Jan. 24, Duncanville, Texas.

**Suellen Boyle Gratke**  
(’64 BA, Spanish; ’80 BS, Interior Design) 88, March 15, Arlington.

**Charles Thomas Reese**  
(’65 BA, Psychology) 77, Dec. 10, 2020, Raleigh, North Carolina.

**Edward “Ed” A. Camp**  
(’67 BS, Biology) 77, Jan. 1, Arlington.

**Claude R. Conwell**  
(’67 BS, Industrial Engineering) 77, Nov. 5, 2020, Azle, Texas.

**Donald Lee Day**  
(’67 BBA, Accounting) 76, Nov. 18, 2020, Fort Worth.

**Mary Turner Spencer Kobler**  
(’68 PhD, Comparative Literature) 80, Nov. 27, 2020, Denton, Texas.

**Clarence Donald Babers**  
(’69 BA, History) Nov. 2, 2020, Fort Worth.

**H. J. “Lindy” Linduff**  
(’69 MS, Mechanical Engineering) 87, Jan. 25, Hurst, Texas.

### 1970s

**Steven Markland Sykes**  
(’70 BBA, Accounting) 73, Jan. 5, Lake Highlands, Texas.

**Dennis Alan Cochran**  
(’71 BBA) 74, Jan. 4, Arlington.

**Helen Ruth Riley Eggleston Meacham**  
(’71 BS, ’75 MA, Biology) 88, Dec. 10, 2020, Arlington.

**Roy Neal Staton Sr.**  
(’71 MS, Mechanical Engineering) 83, Jan. 3, Arlington.

**Bill Fulgham**  
(’72 BBA) 72, Nov. 10, 2020, Midland, Texas.

**Bill Guerry**  
(’72 BBA) 75, Nov. 1, 2020, Arlington.

**Larry Wayne Sweeney**  
(’72 BBA, Accounting) 72, Feb. 20, Fort Worth.

**Jim Ashworth**  
(’73 BBA) 76, Dec. 1, 2020, Morrow, Ohio.

**Dick Colvin**  
(’73 BBA) 71, Nov. 20, 2020, Fort Worth.

**Ronald Ray Evarts**  
(’73 BS, Architecture) 75, Jan. 29, Fort Worth.

**Dennis Barnett Wadsworth**  
(’73 BS, Mechanical Engineering) 72, March 11, Wichita Falls, Texas.

**Michael Jay Buckley**

('75 MS, Civil Engineering) 70, Nov. 21, 2020, Granbury, Texas.

**Sue Simnacher Todd**

('75 BA, English) 77, Feb. 24, Dallas.

**Roy "Alvon" Key**

('76 BA, Foreign Language) 76, Nov. 9, 2020, Burleson, Texas.

**Janet Lee Parsons**

('76 BA, Theatre Arts) 67, March 6, Arlington.

**Michael Ray Sexton**

('76 BA, History and Mathematics) 69, Nov. 6, 2020, Fort Worth.

**Mary Nancy Champion**

('77 BA, History) 79, Feb. 15, Blanco, Texas.

**Jim Maddux**

('77 BBA, '89 MBA, Accounting) 81, Nov. 25, 2020, Weatherford, Texas.

**Ralph Mowry Seeley**

('77 BBA, Accounting) 74, Oct. 22, 2020, Azle, Texas.

**Phil Alford Houston**

('78 BS, Mechanical Engineering) 64, Feb. 15, Carrollton, Texas.

**Raymon Lynn McElhaney**

('78 BS, Psychology; '86, MA, Chemistry) 67, Nov. 15, 2020, Waco, Texas.

**Joseph Cleland Rentfrow**

('78 BBA, Marketing) 64, Dec. 15, 2020, Hurst, Texas.

**Phillip G. South**

('78 BS, Mathematics) 68, March 9, Fort Worth.

**1980s**

**Michael Ray "Mike" Davis**

('80 BFA, Theatre Arts) 69, Jan. 29, Denton, Texas.

**Diane Scott**

('80 MSW) 74, Nov. 2, 2020, Haleyville, Alabama.

**Cathy Acciarito Williams**

('81 BS, Architecture) 63, March 4, Grand Prairie, Texas.

**Sharon Ann Owsen**

('82 BBA, Accounting) 74, Dec. 17, 2020, Colleyville, Texas.

**Stephen Ray Payne**

('82 BS, Electrical Engineering) 65, Feb. 22, Bonham, Texas.

**Kristine Lyn Draper Winning**

('83 MSN) 68, Dec. 3, 2020, Lakeway, Texas.

**Frederick Hart Cleveland Sr.**

('85 PhD, Mathematics) 86, Nov. 14, 2020, Fort Worth.

**Rebecca Andrews Christopherson**

('86 MSW) Nov. 24, 2020, San Antonio, Texas.

**Chris Gomez Jr.** ('64 BA, '74 MA, Spanish) 82, March 7, Fort Worth. In 2006, Gomez was awarded the Inicia el Trayecto (Trailblazer Award) for being one of UTA's first graduates of Hispanic heritage.

**Norah Perez**

('86 BA, History) 84, March 10, Rainier, Washington.

**Kenneth "Kenny" Welch**

('88 BS, Psychology) Oct. 24, 2020, North Richland Hills, Texas.

**Ronald Little Vick**

('89 BBA, Management) 69, Jan. 18, Bedford, Texas.

**1990s**

**Michael Leo Barclay**

('91 BS, Mechanical Engineering) 69, Nov. 8, 2020, Fort Worth.

**Sharon Abbott Fewell**

('92 BSN) 78, Dec. 2020, Littleton, Colorado.

**Paul Erik Frederiksen**

('97 MCRP, MPA) 53, March 12, Keller, Texas.

**Mark Ashworth**

('99 BBA, Marketing) 44, Oct. 24, 2020, Las Vegas, Nevada.

**2010s**

**Matthew David Zahrndt**

('16 MEd, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies) 46, March 6, Waxahachie, Texas.

**Bria Scheerish McZeal**

('18 MSW) 26, Nov. 4, 2020, Port Arthur, Texas.

**Jennifer Michele Neidinger**

('18 MSN) 45, Feb. 9, Houston, Texas.

# FACULTY & STAFF

**Sue Stevens Durbec**

('80 BA, Political Science) 80, Nov. 24, 2020, Arlington.

**Kenneth Greene**

83, December 19, 2020, Arlington.

**Jerald W. Kunkel**

('79 BS, '94 MS, Civil Engineering) 74, March 11, Fort Worth.

**Fr. Bede "Karl" Lackner**

92, Nov. 10, 2020, Irving, Texas.

**Harold Edward Moore**

92, Nov. 4, 2020, Arlington.

**Mary Alice Dray Price**

100, Dec. 28, 2020, Arlington.

**William Charles Proctor**

88, Dec. 10, 2020, Bowie, Texas.





# The Explainer

## A Steeper Climb

Social Determinants, Past, Present, and Future, and African American Health in COVID-19.

**BY GENEVIEVE GRAAF,**  
Assistant  
Professor of  
Social Work

**U**NDER THE STRESS of the COVID-19 pandemic, existing structural inequalities in the United States have led to compounding adversities for African Americans. African Americans' COVID-19 vulnerability is rooted in disadvantaged social and economic positions, many originating in racism's historical and contemporary impacts.

Underlying disease rate disparities make African Americans more vulnerable to becoming sick from COVID-19 and suffering more serious illness and greater mortality. Increased risk is also related to African Americans' lower rates of health coverage, having decreased access to health care, and greater likelihood of living where there is less COVID testing. As such, African Americans have fewer opportunities for diagnosis and early treatment.

The COVID-19 recession also affects African Americans more negatively than whites. With smaller

personal and household wealth reserves to absorb the economic impacts of illness or job loss, more African Americans may slip into poverty and may remain there for a longer period of time. African Americans' occupations provide them with lower wages, slower wage growth, and limited job security when compared to whites. Historically, African Americans are more likely to experience unemployment and financial hardship during economic recessions and are slower to rebound than white households. Thus, recovery from the COVID-19 recession—in whatever form it might take—will likely see a slower economic response for African Americans due to their greater economic fragility. Further, the effects of disadvantaged and lost education for African American youth who are less likely to receive the learning supports they need to succeed during school closures may contribute to disparities in economic advancement and recovery in decades to come.

Both in this generation and the next, COVID-19 is likely to reinforce or increase African Americans' poverty—a strong predictor of poor health. In this manner, COVID-19 stimulates structural barriers underlying health disparities, triggering a feedback loop by which, even as African Americans' poverty causes poor health, African Americans' poor health will cause more African American poverty. As such, this pandemic presents public policy and investment choices that can reduce, reinforce, or even exacerbate disparities going forward.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



*Having spent years in community practice settings as a social worker, Dr. Graaf's research focuses on understanding and accounting for geographic variation and contextual influences in state and local policy and its impact on insurance and health care disparities based on income, race, and ethnicity. Graaf collaborated with her mentor, Lonnie Snowden at University of California's School of Public Health, to outline the risks COVID-19 poses to current and future African Americans' health disparities and highlight policy and practice interventions that may address existing vulnerabilities and prevent expansion of current health disparities.*



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# Look Back

**A tradition of service 1942**

Rosaline Ivey (right), associate professor of home economics for North Texas Agricultural College (NTAC), taught the freshman class that created this sewn service flag, complete with 1,056 stars for students from NTAC (now UTA) who served in the military. Harrison "Hoss" Dunsworth (left) was secretary of the NTAC Ex-Students Association.

*Hometown hero Neel Kearby claims a star on this flag; read more about him on page 16.*