

UTA

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



Creative & Bright

*Alumnus Dalton Sessumes makes
a brilliant display of balancing
art and physics. PAGE 10*



NUTS!
One of UTA's many campus squirrels tucks into a peanut feast right before the Thanksgiving break.

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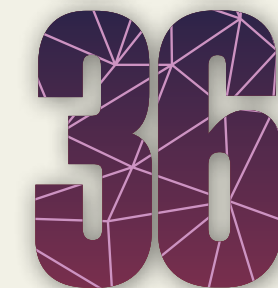
Maverick Moguls

The Maverick Entrepreneur Program and Award Fund prepares UTA students for business success.



A Semester of Firsts

In fall 2020, UTA's freshman students were history makers in more ways than one.



Take Me Out to the Egame

The University's newest varsity team regularly fights in epic battles, all in a virtual arena.



Accessing Success

UTA's pioneering commitment to a barrier-free campus continues to grow and evolve today.



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Advocates for Action

Maverick alumni, all with a passion to make a difference, are using what they learned as students to impact change, locally and globally.

ON THE COVER: Dalton spins a painting made of light through a high-density leviwand. PHOTOGRAPH BY DANNY GARCIA

From the President

Dr. Lim and a student "foot-five," a COVID-safe high-five alternative.



THIS PAST YEAR, The University of Texas at Arlington found itself, like many other higher education institutions, navigating a very challenging global pandemic. How would we ensure the health and safety of our students, faculty, and staff while keeping our students on track for success? We found the answer by staying true to our well-established strengths: ensuring access, achieving excellence, demonstrating adaptability and innovation, and standing together through it all.

That meant continuing to keep UTA a welcoming place for students from all demographics while maintaining our high academic standards and pursuing impactful, life-changing research and creative works. To that end, I am pleased to write that we welcomed our largest freshman class ever in University history. We also graduated a record number of students in 2019-20, making UTA one of the largest contributors to a high-quality workforce for all of Texas. Throughout, we've continued our robust research activity and maintained our progress toward Texas Tier One status.

We also made a commitment to strengthen existing and new partnerships within our community—and beyond. Through expanded and renewed external engagement, we are committed to building and maintaining vital relationships with industry, nonprofit organizations, Dallas-Fort Worth com-

MAVERICKS RISE TO THE CHALLENGE

munity leaders, elected officials, and our own UTA alumni. Each organization and individual serves a crucial part of the continued and future success of our wonderful institution. Moving forward, I look forward to meeting with many more of you, whether it be in person or virtually, to share the exciting things that happen daily at UTA.

In this issue of *UTA Magazine*, you'll read stories centered on themes of Maverick perseverance and Maverick excellence. We're celebrating the people—the dedicated faculty and staff, hard-working and inquisitive students, and committed and talented alumni—who make us strong, contribute to our impactful work, and enhance the school spirit that connects us all. I hope you enjoy reading each and every story, and that you feel, as I do, proud of all UTA has accomplished and excited for what is to come this year and beyond.

Go Mavs!

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



Interim President Lim is also a professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering.



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Excellence AT A GLANCE

UTA's Beta Gamma Sigma chapter, a business honor society, was designated with **highest honors status** for the 2019-20 academic year.



The Shorthorn swept **national awards** for college

journalism, winning in several categories at a national convention in late 2020.

Excelencia in Education named UTA's University Crossroads **one of five national finalists** in its community-based organization category for the 2020 Examples of Excelencia list.



UTA's Master of Science in Nursing Program is ranked **18th in the nation** by Learn.org.

UTA is **ranked no. 26** in the nation for social mobility by *U.S. News & World Report*.



UTA Athletics won the Sun Belt Conference's Student-Athlete Advisory Committee **Community Service Initiative Award** for 2019-20.

DOWN IN THE basement of the Science & Engineering Innovation & Research building, you can now find a colorful mural depicting large portraits of individuals wearing masks. Created by five student artists and two art professors, the mural captures this unusual moment in our shared history. "Art is still important in these strange times because it can bring a sense of unity," says Leonar Ali, a junior in fine arts with a concentration in painting. "I hope that months, even years, from now, people passing by will look at the mural, and it will remind them that although 2020 was filled with many uncertainties, we were still able to unite through art."



Mav Roundup

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

Faculty Focus

Mia Kirby, Assistant Professor in Practice, School of Social Work and the Center for African American Studies

MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS don't discriminate, but a person's background and identity can make access to treatment more difficult. Mia Kirby, assistant professor in practice, aims to change that. Her research explores the relationship between the "strong Black woman" archetype and the behaviors of Black women seeking mental health treatment. "I hope my research leads to greater opportunities to promote mental health treatment and wellness among people of color," she says.

What accomplishment are you most proud of?

My recent interview and feature with the *Today Show* website. I shared my research findings, which focused on the challenges that Black women face when receiving mental health treatment. As a researcher and a mental health advocate, I was very excited to help bring attention to this important issue and to promote changes in treatment approaches.

What are you excited about right now?

I have recently partnered with a nonprofit as a program facilitator to provide mental health education for young Black women. I am also an advocate with the National Alliance on

Mental Illness, North Texas, and have had some great opportunities to work with them during Minority Mental Health Awareness month. I look forward to future opportunities with them and other community-based organizations that support mental health.

What are you most looking forward to?

I am most looking forward to campus returning to normal so that I can connect more with students. Working in the Center for African American Studies, I will be leading some student engagement programs, so I look forward to meeting and connecting with students face to face within that framework.



PAYING IT FORWARD

Nursing student aims to heal patients' minds and bodies

Alyssa Tijerina, a nursing and psychology junior, always knew she would pursue a career in medicine. Having witnessed firsthand how family members fought different life-threatening illnesses, including cancer, she developed an aptitude for assessing the potential needs of patients.

"I knew from a young age that I wanted to be in the medical field and help people," she says. "I have such a strong passion for helping cancer patients and for mental health, and I hope to one day become a psychiatric nurse practitioner."

Tijerina's interest in both oncology and mental health led her to an internship—the first of its kind—with the Texas Center for Proton Therapy. The center treats cancer patients using an advanced, highly precise form of radiation that employs protons to destroy cancer cells while minimizing damage to surrounding tissue.

Through the internship, Tijerina assesses social and emotional interactions between the patients and staff for the duration of patient treatment.

"Having been in their shoes, I can definitely sympathize and empathize with our patients," she says. "In the future, I hope to counsel patients and their families through the uncharted territories involved with oncology diagnoses. It's a privilege and an honor to help those who need it."



SMART ENERGY MANAGEMENT

Balancing supply and demand in the electricity market

An emerging leader in alternative energy sources, Texas is moving toward a smart grid delivery system—and companies providing energy services are rushing to determine the best ways to balance supply and demand. Shouyi Wang, associate professor of industrial engineering, is developing ways to help them.

Using a three-year, \$466,068 grant from the National Science Foundation, Dr. Wang is researching how to meet the demands of an extremely dynamic and uncertain energy system. Electrical engineering Professor Wei-Jen Lee and industrial engineering Professors Victoria Chen and Jay Rosenberger are co-principal investigators on the project.

Wang and his team will develop machine-learning models that predict

real-time market prices and manage large-scale participation of residential demand-response programs. The goal is to create a dynamic decision analytics and optimization framework that enables a highly efficient, real-time energy management system for future smart energy markets.

"If we can determine how best to predict energy demand and react quickly to fluctuations in demand and market prices, then we can use that information to make a much more efficient smart energy supply system with reduced operational costs and increased system reliability," Wang says. "Greater efficiency on the part of the energy markets translates to greater savings on energy costs for everyone."



From the top: Shouyi Wang, Wei-Jen Lee, Victoria Chen, and Jay Rosenberger



ADVANCING EVOLUTION

Researcher examines the impact of nuclear testing on evolution

It sounds like the beginning of a horror movie: Researcher hatches preserved water flea eggs that he found preserved in lakes located in a fallout zone of nuclear testing conducted in the 1950s. In reality, this water flea resurrection represents an important scientific study that could shed light on the long-term evolutionary impacts of nuclear testing.

“We have no real experimental sense of this, only the common belief of nuclear-induced mutation,” says Matthew Walsh, biology associate professor and co-principal investigator on the project, which is funded by a \$200,000 grant from the National Science Foundation. “This allows us to look at nuclear genetic impacts across decades, study their effects in real time, and provide new insights into whether any nuclear-induced mutations degrade over time.”

Dr. Walsh collected the eggs from sediment cores found in a lake in Utah. After hatching the eggs, he will measure the viability and traits of the water fleas from before, during, and after the nuclear testing took place.

“In my doctoral studies, I became interested in the water flea as a vessel of investigation—they’re faster, smaller, and easier to work with in a lab, and the concept of resurrection is just remarkably cool,” he says. “It has been a longstanding goal of mine to leverage Daphnia in this way.”



HEALTH ON EVEN GROUND

UTA lab addresses maternal and child health equity

A research lab at UTA uses a combination of community-based participatory methods, secondary data analysis, and evaluation science to investigate social and health system factors that disproportionately impact the health and birth outcomes of Black women.

Led by Kyrach Brown, assistant professor of public health in the College of Nursing and Health Innovation, the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Equity Lab’s primary research focus is to investigate and ultimately help address the individual, community, and systemic factors that shape women’s health and birth outcomes.

“Persistent racial and social inequities in maternal and child health remain a significant public health issue,” Dr. Brown says. “Black women, in particular, tend to experience higher rates of preventable chronic health conditions, maternal health complications, and adverse birth outcomes compared to other racial groups.”

While addressing a complex societal challenge, the lab also provides a training ground for UTA students who will go on to impact patients in their careers.

“Being a part of the MCH Equity Lab helps me further understand health disparities and gain research experience that will benefit me both in the workforce and as I pursue a doctoral degree in social work,” says Tamaya Bailey, a graduate student in the School of Social Work.

History

HIST 3303 The History of Video Games

DON’T WALK INTO Professor Scott W. Palmer’s “History of Video Games” class expecting to learn more about the development of Nintendo or fun facts about popular game franchises. Instead, prepare for what Dr. Palmer calls an “edutainment adventure” that’s both serious and fun. (So much so that those

words are the official tagline for the course: “Serious. Fun.”) Students experience a complex exploration of the technological, cultural, and various other forces that have shaped—and been shaped by—electronic amusements, from the 1950s to the present day.

“We use a very popular thing—video games—to explore larger issues in the history of not just America, but global societies and cultures,” he says. “At the same time, we uncover the interaction between technological developments and the ways in which games are played, the content that goes into those games, and how you have a symbiotic relationship between technological

development in gaming and broader culture.”

Over the course of the semester, students explore a range of topics, including the origins and evolution of gaming technologies, the interaction of video games and popular culture, gaming aesthetics, the politics and economics of games and gaming, gamer culture, and much more.

“Studying the history of video games should be taken seriously because you touch on many facets of the liberal and fine arts—history, philosophy, political science, art and design, art history, architecture—it’s all part of it,” he says. “The class ultimately encourages students to think seriously about things they otherwise wouldn’t think about at all. But I believe if you’re going to take anything seriously, you should have fun while doing it.”

“Studying the history of video games should be taken seriously because you touch on so many facets of the liberal and fine arts.”

PHOTO BY WILKINSON/DAILY MIRROR/MIRRORPIX/GETTY IMAGES





Gallery

Dalton Sessumes Performance Artist

DALTON SESSUMES ('16 BS, '18 MS, Physics) walks between worlds, balancing a keen intellectual interest in the inner workings of things, from small machines to the vastness of the universe, with a kind of performance art that allows him to create stunning displays of light and movement for an audience.



Opposite: As part of his Visionary series, Sessumes shows art by Jake Amason and Stephen Kruse through his leviwand.

Top: A composite photo showing a leviwand fire trail mixed with a fire breath.

Middle: Sessumes demonstrates a smoke prop he invented while studying for his master's degree at UTA.

Bottom: Sessumes collaborated with Michelle Stawski (concept and design), Trent di Giulio (photography) and Anja Yamaji (body paint) to create aesthetic scenes to incorporate into music video clips and large-scale light projection visuals.

"In one way or another, I've been struggling with the balance between art and science my entire life," he says. "Ever since I was a kid, I've needed to find an equilibrium between them to be happy."

At UTA, Sessumes indulged his scientific side, gaining knowledge and experience that he considers to be foundational to his work as a performance artist.

"Through UTA, I was able to work at the Fermilab, where I was able to literally climb inside particle detectors and disassemble and reassemble them. Along with the software side, I was exposed to working on very technical things to produce something beautiful," he says. "And through my physics courses, I gained the ability to look at complex problems or complex creations and dissect them into individual mechanisms I knew I could grasp. Those skills were something I developed by banging my head against various quantum physics problems that were not easy in any sense—that mindset helped a lot."

As a performer, Sessumes has traveled the world with Cirque du Soleil. He's also made a name for himself as an innovator in the flow arts community, exploring the various implications of light as a medium, from LED props to holographic light projection. And in 2017, he founded a company, MindWorks, to provide performance entertainment, like circus or character work, for companies and events.

In the new normal shaped by COVID-19, Sessumes says he is both blessed and cursed by the constraints on his ability to perform for an audience. But thanks to his art, he is able to see this time as a good kind of challenge—the kind you can grow from.

"If it's too easy, you're going to get bored with it, and if it's too challenging, you're going to feel defeated—so there has to be a balance between them," he says. "It's a radical acceptance of what's happening in the here and now and moving through it."



TOP HONORS FOR NURSING

Nursing excellence recognized

For the third time, UTA's nursing program was named a 2020 Center of Excellence by the National League for Nursing (NLN), one of 17 nationwide to receive the honor this year. NLN is the premier organization for nurse faculty and leaders in nursing education.

The University was recognized in the category of "promote the pedagogical expertise of faculty"

"This honor reaffirms our standing as a leading center for nursing education and health care research," says Elizabeth Merwin, dean of the College of Nursing and Health Innovation. "We are extremely grateful for the recognition

of the passion, commitment, creativity, and hard work of our faculty and staff."

In addition to the NLN designation, UTA students Nancy Parma and Jennifer Schoenfeld were named recipients of the NLN 2020 Scholarship, which supports diverse nurses committed to careers in academic nursing education.

"This bolsters UTA's standing as a nursing academic powerhouse for Texas and beyond while demonstrating the quality of our faculty, and our dedication, hard work, and commitment to academic excellence as we prepare the next generation of nurses," says Interim President Teik C. Lim.



DARK MATTER DECODER

Student earns prestigious appointment

A geography book, a gift he received from his father when he was young, sparked Hector Carranza's lifelong interest in physics. He got caught up in the illustrations in the chapter about the universe and its different components.

"I said to myself, 'How is there this much out there, and I can barely see any of it with my eye?'"

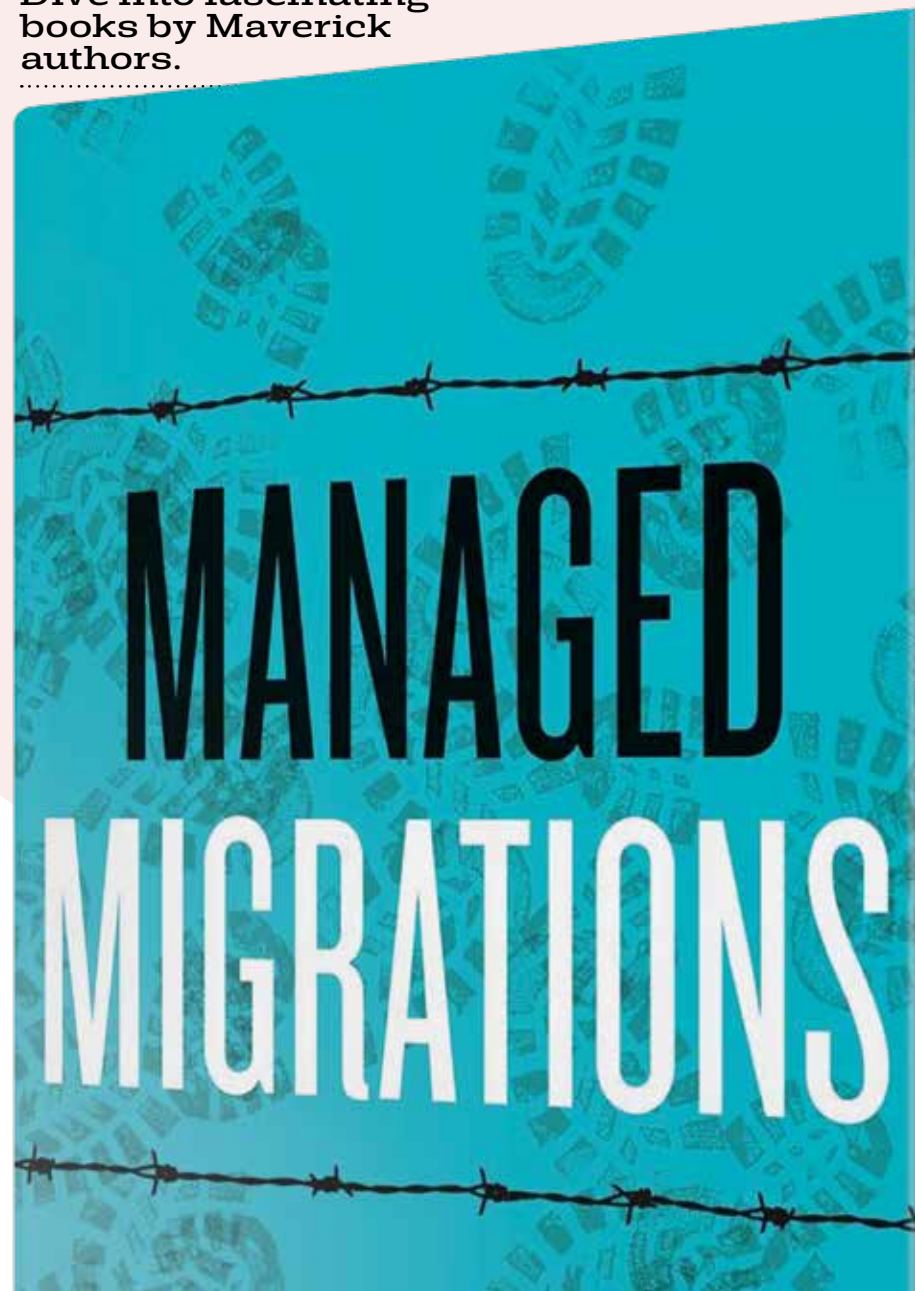
Now a doctoral student in physics at UTA, Carranza was one of only 62 students nationwide to be selected for the prestigious Department of Energy Office of Science Graduate Student Research (SCGSR) Program. Through it, he'll spend a year conducting research on light-mass dark matter searches at the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory, or Fermilab, in Batavia, Illinois.

Carranza began pursuing the SCGSR award while stationed at the CERN laboratory in Switzerland working on the Deep Underground Neutrino Experiment, a leading-edge international experiment for neutrino science and proton decay studies.

"The universe is beautiful, and it's equally beautiful how humans have been able to slowly unlock its secrets," he says. "As a long-standing mystery, dark matter holds the key to understanding even more. I want to pursue this mystery and hopefully, after a lot of hard work, understand what dark matter really is."

Read

Dive into fascinating books by Maverick authors.



Managed Migrations: Growers, Farmworkers, and Border Enforcement in the Twentieth Century

BY CRISTINA SALINAS, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF HISTORY

Winner of the 2020 National Association for Chicano and Chicano Studies Book Award, *Managed Migrations* examines the development of the agricultural industry on the border alongside the changing methods of border enforcement in the Rio Grande Valley during the past century. "It's a historical account of the relationship between workers and growers, industry, and labor on the border and the role of the Border Patrol in shaping those relations," Dr. Salinas says. "The law and the practices in the 20th century were fashioned by the realities of a growing industrial and agricultural sector along the border. Much of our current immigration law came out of what was going on in the 20th century."



Demystifying Hospice: Inside the Stories of Patients and Caregivers

BY KAREN J. CLAYTON ('86 MA, SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY)

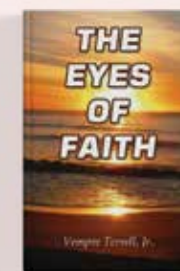
Demystifying Hospice is a collection of stories intended to help those in medicine, caregivers, and patients be more comfortable using hospice at the appropriate time.



Getting Signed: Record Contracts, Musicians, and Power in Society

BY DAVID ARDITI, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

Getting Signed provides an analysis of musicians' contract aspirations as a cultural phenomenon that reproduces modes of power and economic exploitation, unfolding how the ideology of getting signed created a mythos of guaranteed success, even in an era when power is being redefined by digital technologies.



The Eyes of Faith

BY VEMPERE TERRELL JR. ('16 MED, EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES)

Through personal anecdotes, Vempere Terrell Jr. shares how he began to live a more mindful, positive lifestyle. In doing so, *The Eyes of Faith* provides readers with a set of tools to overcome life's challenges.

Talk

Blaize LaFleur Junior, Political Science Student Body President

Black community at UTA. Moreover, I am extremely grateful to represent 40,000+ students during a time when we need leadership the most. Between living through mass protests, a global pandemic, and still going to college, students need someone who will advocate for them. I'm glad to be that person.

What do you hope to accomplish as president?

I want to make a positive impact on our campus and the Arlington community. There's a lot going on in the world right now, and students are having to do more than usual to accomplish the same things. If I can impact any students in a positive way, then I consider that a successful term.

Has COVID affected or changed your goals?

COVID hasn't changed the essence of my goals, but I definitely had to scale back some of the ideas I had. Now, I am more concerned with ensuring students still get to have the college experience they desire and the resources they need on campus, as well as providing support and advocacy throughout the pandemic.

What's next for you?

I'm set to graduate in May 2022, so I still have some time left before post-grad life. Attending a law school on the East Coast is a dream of mine. I'm not sure what kind of law I would like to practice yet, so I'm keeping my options open. I am very interested in government and politics, so one day I hope to serve my community through holding public office!

Why did you choose UTA?

I knew a few things that I wanted in a college: a large school, a big city in Texas, and most importantly, a population of students who looked like me. UTA checked all those boxes. Additionally, I received an academic scholarship. Once I got that email, my decision was made. I come from very humble beginnings, so my family didn't have anything to contribute to my education money-wise. That scholarship saved me from many loans and debt, and I am still grateful for it to this day.

What did it mean for you to be elected student body president?

Looking at the history of the presidency put things into perspective for me. There have been only five Black student body presidents in the history of Student Government at UTA, with Texas Senator Royce West ('74 BA, '79 MA Sociology) being the very first. On top of that, I am the first Black student body president at UTA in 34 years. Winning the election wasn't just a win for me, but the entire



SHORING UP SUPPLY CHAINS

Grant aids small businesses during the pandemic

UTA-based TMAC, the official representative of the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) for the state of Texas, recently received \$3.3 million in federal funding to help small- and medium-sized businesses respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The funding is part of a nationwide \$50 million pool of money authorized by the CARES Act for COVID-19-related projects to MEP centers in all 50 states and Puerto Rico.

TMAC delivers hands-on business management, technology, and operations solutions to a wide range of businesses, with eight offices across Texas, including at UT Arlington.

"Many products are produced by foreign supply chains located outside

the United States," says Mark Sessumes, TMAC state executive director. "When supply chains are disrupted, it creates havoc on producing and providing products to U.S. consumers. Health-related products not only impact American lives, but also our economy, livelihoods, safety, and national security."

The COVID funding allows TMAC to work with small- and medium-sized manufacturers to reshore supply chains and restore operations. It also funds TMAC to work with manufacturers who want to expand their capabilities and capacity to produce critical equipment and personal protective equipment to fill exponential demand now and in the future.

MAV ROUNDUP



LEADING OUTREACH

Student's service makes an impact

Sierra Lee ('20 BS, Microbiology) feels her life's purpose is to uplift others. So at UTA, she got involved, serving as volunteer coordinator for the Minority Association of Pre-Medical Students (MAPS) and the Medical Dental Preparatory Association (MDPA).

"I try to help others in direct ways and serve the most underserved communities," Lee says. "They are what drive me to do my part in bridging the gap of socioeconomic health disparities and continuing the fight for health equity."

With the MDPA, she organized donations to make 120 personal hygiene kits for people who are homeless in Fort Worth, along with subsequent efforts to serve warm meals. She also led a joint effort between MDPA and MAPS for the COVID-19 Homeless Relief Initiative, through which the groups raised money to buy, make, and distribute personal hygiene items, homemade hand sanitizer, and face masks. Lee also facilitated partnerships with nonprofit organizations such as Mission Arlington and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Tarrant County.

"At the essence of being a physician is serving others, so how can we advocate for the health and well-being of all but remain content knowing there are countless people barely getting by?" Lee asks. "My work is important because I might be the only one that day who has shown an interest in that person's well-being."



IN THE ZONE

CAPPA students design outdoor space for the Arlington community

The work of graduate architecture students in the College of Architecture, Planning, and Public Affairs (CAPPA) will live on long after they graduate in the new Innovation Zone, which opened recently at the city of Arlington’s East Library and Recreation Center.

The students designed canopies, pods, and other seating options for the outdoor zone at the new city facility as part of their class, led by Associate Professor Brad Bell and former engineering faculty member Michael Zaretsky. The city of Arlington partnered with CAPPA on the space.

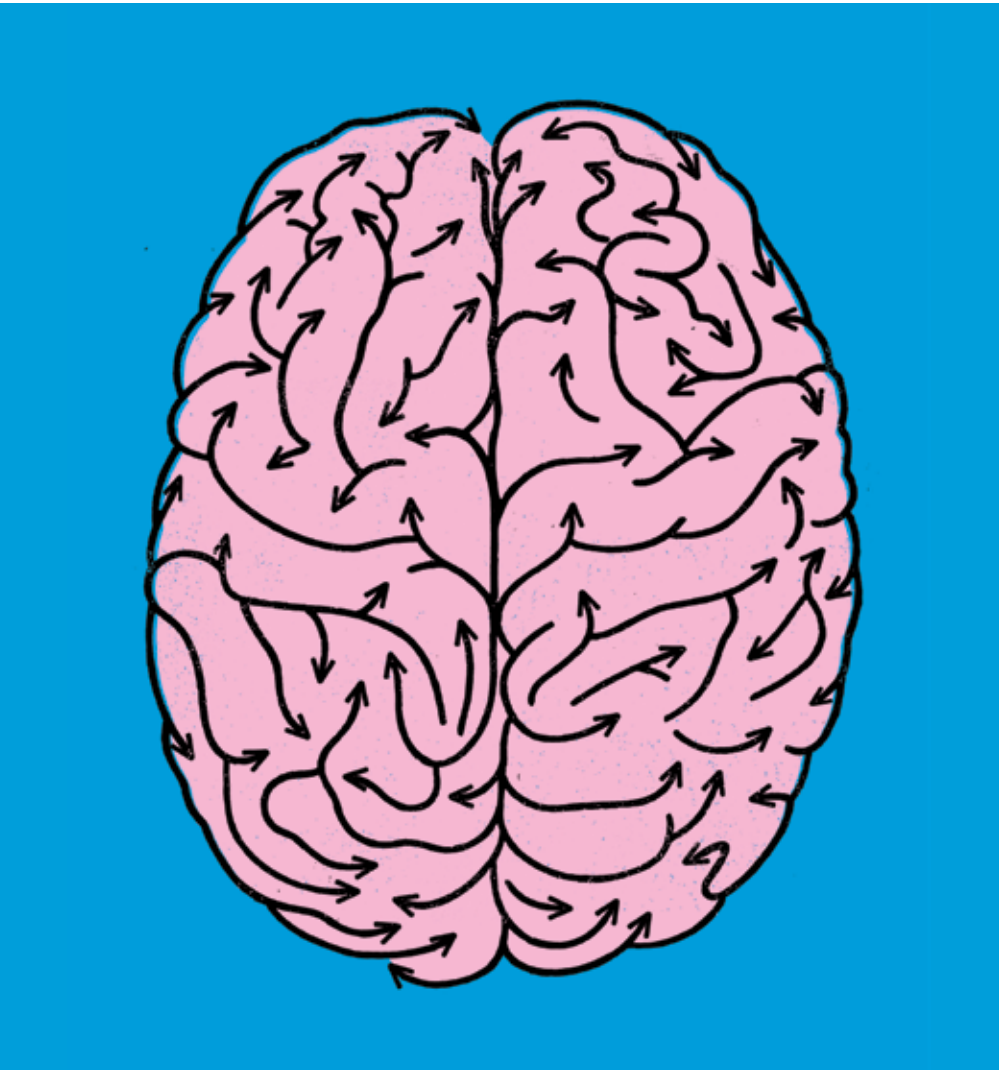
“The design studio class brought a new and creative energy to designing the Innovation Zone space,” says Jennifer Wichmann, Arlington assistant city manager. “It has been exciting to see them take the community’s input and use it to design a functional and tech-friendly space for all.”

Arabel Cutillar and Belén Vigil, two UTA students involved in the project, say that community members wanted a space that would work equally well for working and relaxing.

“This differs so much from previous studio classes in the sense that we are working with real clients and the community,” says Cutillar.

Bell says this kind of hands-on experience is invaluable for students to understand how public projects work.

“It really gave them a great idea of how the real world of architecture, clients, and the public work in real time.”



FEELINGS BEFORE FACTS

Business researchers study emergency decision-making

In the beginning stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, people flooded stores, stocking up on essentials in case of a prolonged societal shutdown—including toilet paper. Soon, the nation was experiencing a toilet paper shortage.

According to Traci Freling and Ritesh Saini, both associate professors of marketing, it’s a perfect example of what their research previously uncovered: People are more likely to base medical emergency decisions on anecdotal information instead of facts when they feel anxious and vulnerable. In the instance of the toilet paper shortage, worried consumers ignored calls for caution and made buying decisions based on subjective, anecdotal information.

“We found that people are more likely to consider personal anecdotes than fact-based information, especially when it deals with medical emergencies,” Dr. Freling says. “This is especially relevant in the current environment, where everyone is concerned about the coronavirus.”

Elten Briggs, chair of the Department of Marketing, says that Freling and Dr. Saini’s analysis could have implications on decision-making processes for business and industry.

“Their research provides guidance on how to craft more influential messaging during times like these, when anxiety is heightened for so many people,” Dr. Briggs says.



MAJOR OPTIONS

UTA unveils three new degree options

Meeting the needs of a dynamic student body and an evolving workforce, UTA recently announced the creation of undergraduate degree programs in philanthropy, business analytics, and data science.

The philanthropy degree program began last fall and is the first of its kind in Texas and second in the nation.

“Having a degree program preparing students for nonprofit jobs is an essential way UTA can help contribute to a vibrant nonprofit field that builds strong, healthy, sustainable communities,” says Colton Strawser, coordinator and lecturer for the program.

The new Bachelor of Science in Business Analytics program began in January.

“More and more businesses, especially larger firms, are seeing the benefits of data analytics and are recruiting college graduates with business analytics skills,” says Radha Mahapatra, chair of the Department of Information Systems and Operations Management.

In fall 2021, UTA will also begin offering its new degree in data science.

“We have designed an integrated degree plan that will educate students to use data science for solving problems in different areas of science,” says Morteza Khaledi, dean of the College of Science. “The goal is to prepare our students for challenges and careers in the 21st century.”

ARC-JET MILESTONE

Research team advances hypersonic research

A team from the Aerodynamic Research Center (ARC) at UTA has pioneered two cutting-edge measurement techniques in its state-of-the-art arc-jet plasma wind tunnel.

The research team accomplished two milestones: measuring the composition of atomic species and measuring flow velocity in the high enthalpy environment generated in the ARC’s arc-jet plasma wind tunnel. Enthalpy is a measure of the energy contained in the hypersonic flow.

“The arc-jet environment is an extremely challenging one for optical diagnostics,” says Luca Maddalena, professor of aerospace engineering and ARC director. “This development is spectacular in

overcoming those challenges and also in leading the way for others.”

UTA’s arc-heated, hypersonic wind tunnel—the only one of its kind in the nation at a university—came online in 2019. Through funding from the Office of Naval Research (ONR), research at the wind tunnel focuses on developing advanced laser-based measurements of plasma flow for the study of heat shields for hypersonic vehicles.

Eric Marineau, ONR manager for the project, said the team’s work crossed a major hurdle in the understanding of hypersonic aerothermodynamics.

“This is exciting news for the U.S. Navy and the entire hypersonic research world,” he says.

Luca Maddalena (front) with the Aerodynamic Research Center team.



Community

The Maverick community comes together to help students in need

THOSE CONNECTED with The University of Texas at Arlington likely have a glimmering glass pumpkin or a blown glass bowl on their shelves thanks to the Art and Art History Department’s popular art glass sale, which raises funds for its celebrated glass art program.

Jeff Schira noticed the pieces his wife Mary, associate professor in UTA’s Graduate Nursing Program, brought home each year from the sale. Jeff, an engineer-turned-lawyer, admired the glass art students’ technical skills and wanted to benefit the program in some way. In 2019, The Schira Family UTA Art & Art History Glass Program Endowment was established.

“It’s to support the program itself, to attract students who have promise in the glass arts, allow them to do their work, and allow the glass arts program to encourage them to do their work,” Mary says.

UTA’s glass program is among the nation’s most respected and boasts one

of the largest and most well-equipped studios in the country. With both bachelor’s and master’s tracks, the program has been a creative resource for students looking to explore this special art form. Support from donors like the Schiras makes it possible for more students to take advantage of this world-class program and pursue their creative ambitions.

“Their generosity is quite astounding and will have a lasting impact on the future development and progress of our program,” says Justin Ginsberg, glass program coordinator and assistant professor in the Department of Art and Art History. “Donors like the Schiras make it possible for students to have the most robust and

exceptional opportunity during their education at UTA and raises the bar within our program on an international scale.”

Thanks to the Schiras’ generosity, the program will also be able to cover the tuition costs for one graduate student during their three-year MFA program. Ginsberg says this will further bolster the already prominent program, allowing them to recruit some of the top candidates in the country.

“Art matters,” Mary says. “Our support is truly driven by Jeff’s appreciation and recognition that art is important. For individuals who have that leaning and want to do that kind of work, there needs to be support.”



SPACE EXPLORER

Doctoral student named Amelia Earhart Fellow

Katiyayni (Kati) Balachandran has always had her eyes on space.

Her dreams paid off when she became the seventh UTA student selected by the Zonta International Foundation as an Amelia Earhart Fellow.

Balachandran, a doctoral student, works with aerospace engineering Professor Kamesh Subbarao in the Aerospace Systems Laboratory. Her research focuses on developing techniques to model the shape and estimate the attitude of space objects using photometric light curves.

“Searching for the unknown and discovering new worlds is what makes space fascinating. As human interest grows, so will the number of objects out there,” Balachandran says. “Hence, identifying and tracking them is pivotal for future space exploration.”

The most recent honoree from UTA is Distinguished Alumna Wendy Okolo (’10 BS, ’15 PhD, Aerospace Engineering), an aerospace engineering researcher at NASA Ames Research Center.

“I’m proud to join an exceptional group of women who have previously received this prestigious award, many of whom worked in the Aerospace Systems Lab,” Balachandran says. “I’m appreciative of the support in this male-dominated industry. This fellowship allows me to focus on learning and sharing that knowledge with others passionate about the aerospace engineering field.”

SMOOTHER PATHWAYS

Scholarships help connect students with opportunity

UTA believes in the transformational power of higher education—and that every talented student should be able to pursue their academic dreams, no matter what. To that end, scholarships can make all the difference in a student’s ability to achieve in college, providing a major impact that lasts well after those students graduate.

Continuing its ongoing focus on student success and access to higher education, UTA recently announced a \$25 million investment in scholarships over the next five years, beginning with the fall 2021 term. The commitment will expressly help talented, high-achieving students achieve their academic goals, setting them up for long-term success.

“At this time of great economic, social, and health imperatives, it is important that we as a University step up and ensure high-achieving students receive the support they need to excel in their chosen fields as they earn their degrees with us,” says Interim President Teik C. Lim.

The financial commitment is aligned with UTA’s mission to provide academic excellence and access to highly qualified Texas students of all backgrounds.

Philanthropic and institutional funds will be used to support these future scholarship students. Please consider supporting talented students as they work to complete their degrees. You can make a gift to the UTA Scholarship Fund at giving.uta.edu/give.





TEACHING THEM WELL

Alumna goes above and beyond for students

When one of Cora Garner’s most conscientious students stopped turning in assignments this spring, just after the COVID-19 shutdown, it was alarming.

“It turned out that he was getting depressed because he wasn’t receiving that same personal attention he was used to getting in the school year,” says Garner (’18 BA, English), an English teacher at DeSoto Early College High School.

She says it was a valuable lesson for her because it was a reminder of how delicate—and crucial—the balance is between teaching content and building relationships, especially in a virtual environment.

Keeping students engaged and motivated is a challenge every teacher faces right now, but Garner is prepared. Known for doing what it takes to keep learning fun, she also writes her own lyrics to popular rap songs, teaches them to the class, and posts videos online. The response has been overwhelmingly positive.

Garner, a Teacher of the Year for the DeSoto Independent School District, is now working to earn her doctorate from UTA in educational leadership and policy studies.

“I want to empower and inspire students,” she says. “Students’ lives matter, and if I’m needed on the front lines, you’re going to see me there in my face shield and mask. Whatever it takes to help them succeed.”

MAV MEDIA PERSEVERES

Media students keep Mavericks connected

In the early days of the pandemic, dedicated students at UTA were going above and beyond to keep the Maverick community up-to-date and entertained through UTA Radio, UTA News en Español, and *The Shorthorn*.

“It is an honor to be a part of the newscast, but it’s also a great responsibility,” says Paulina Fonseca, a broadcasting major who produces, anchors, and reports for UTA News en Español.

Mavericks at student-run media outlets believe they have a mission to provide high-quality news reports, while training future professional journalists and broadcasters.

Brian Lopez (’20 BA, Journalism), editor-in-chief of *The Shorthorn* before he graduated, says he missed the camarade-

rie of the newsroom, but staying operational was never in question.

“It’s not the same editing online, he says. “But *The Shorthorn*’s goal has always been to keep our UTA and Arlington communities informed. During these times, that has become even more vital.”

Audrey Henvey, a UTA Radio reporter with a double major in French and journalism, says student media outlets can help UTA community members maintain ties during the pandemic.

“We’re in this impactful position to continue connecting our campus even though we can’t be physically at UTA,” she says. “Hearing student voices reminds listeners that they belong to a community and keeps them engaged through this hard time.”



Colligan

with **John Colligan** (’79 BS, Architecture; ’85 MARCH, Landscape Architecture)

WHEN WORD got out that Arlington’s Chester W. Ditto Golf Course would be redone, UTA alumnus John Colligan was determined to manage the project. He and his colleague, Trey Kemp (’05 MARCH, Landscape Architecture), were awarded the contract with the city of Arlington after interviewing for the job against five other design firms.

“I told Trey we were pulling out all the stops to get the job,” Colligan says. “I went to UTA, raised a family, own a home, and run a golf course design business in Arlington. No one could have more passion for this project than I do.”

Colligan has been a golf course architect for 35 years and has run his own firm, Colligan Golf Design, in Arlington for the past 23 years. Colligan Golf Design is highly regarded across the country for its renovation success. Locally, it has redone Dallas’ venerable Stevens Park Golf Course, Fort Worth’s Rockwood Park Golf Course, and River Crest Country Club. In addition, it restored Texas’ oldest public course, San Antonio’s Brackenridge Park Golf Course.

The course formerly known as Ditto Golf Course is now the Texas Rangers



Golf Club, which opened in 2019.

Colligan credits Kemp, who has been with him since 2007, for the new routing of the course and for providing a large portion of the plan and field work while Colligan worked to overcome the effects of chemo and radiation treatments after a battle with throat cancer.

The Texas Rangers Golf Club is already receiving acclaim as one of the nation’s best public golf facilities. *Golf Inc.* mag-

azine recognized the club as being the top public golf course renovation in the United States.

“While we are humbled by the recognition the course is receiving, we are more pleased with the response we are getting from the citizens of Arlington,” Colligan says. “And especially the fact that this has become the home course for The University of Texas at Arlington’s men’s and women’s golf teams.”

SHINE

E.H. Hereford University Center

THE UNIVERSITY CENTER at UTA has long served as a primary entry point to campus. Now, students, faculty, staff, alumni, and guests who visit the E.H. Hereford University Center (UC) will be greeted by a newly renovated entrance, unveiled in late 2020. In total, the entrance adds 4,000 gross-square-feet to the University Center.

Part of ongoing campus-edge improvement projects, the new plaza creates a welcoming front door to campus and will become a popular location for student events.

“The goal was to develop the north side of the UC in order to create a signature entrance to a building that suffered from a lack of identity,” says Troy Yoder, director of institutional construction. “Since most of our big events that we have on campus involve the Bluebonnet Ballroom, it really is a premier location. The entrance to the building now lives up to its function.”

GATHERING PLACE

The more open, airy entrance provides plenty of space and natural lighting to create an inviting area for student study sessions.



FRONT DOOR DETAILS

The transformation includes a two-story glass entrance, limestone materials, and terrazzo flooring that complements recent additions to the building.

BLAZING SPIRIT

For an interior wall, local artist Brad Oldham created a textured sculpture of Blaze meant to evoke the energy and excitement of school spirit on campus.



STUDENT HUB

As the heart of student activity at UTA, the UC is filled with students from morning to night. New tables and seating provide plenty of hang-out options.



COMING AND GOING

The new entrance also provides a greater ease of access, including a pedestrian walkway, a formal promenade, and a parking lot that extends to UTA Boulevard.

MAVERICK STAMPEDE

Of course, the new entrance wouldn't be complete without statues of horses, a tribute to UTA's mascot. Horses also adorn either side of the front doors.





Maverick Moguls

From selling delicious baked goods to launching kids to STEM success, there is no shortage of good business ideas in the Maverick community. The Maverick Entrepreneur Program and Award Fund provides them a boost.

BY DANA JENNINGS
ILLUSTRATIONS BY JONATHAN CARLSON

A**FTER GROWING UP**
with business-owner
parents, Andrew “Frank”
Ridout says he has entrepreneurship in
his blood. While at UTA studying com-
puter science and engineering, he em-
barked on a journey to living a vegan
lifestyle. Plagued with a sweet tooth, he
came to find there was a lack of vegan
baked goods that hit the spot. So he
took on the task himself.

When Ridout started baking and handing out his vegan chocolate chip cookies, he was met with rave reviews. Thus, Frankly GOOD was born.

Even with a celebrated product and entrepreneur parents, Ridout found that launching a business was no easy task.

“I started out just selling at local farmers markets,” he says. “But as I began envisioning expansions, I discovered there was a lot of nitty gritty, behind-the-scenes stuff that I knew nothing about.”

Then one of Ridout’s professors put up a flyer for the Maverick Entrepreneur Program (MEP) and Award Fund. Now, what started as a college project and hobby is a bustling business with mighty aspirations perfectly within reach.

Investing in the Next Generation

As a marketplace for ideas, UTA provides fertile ground for the creative process that produces new technologies and business innovations.

Through the MEP, the University is strategically educat-

ing and mentoring Maverick students to become the next generation of entrepreneurs and innovators, using a mix of instruction and real-world experience.

The program was born from the vision of an anonymous alumnus who gave \$3 million to stir entrepreneurial spirit and creativity among UTA’s student body.

Since its inaugural semester in fall 2018, the MEP has welcomed more than 300 students from diverse academic disciplines and awarded more than \$825,000 to budding entrepreneurs.

Jeff McGee, associate professor of management and one of the program’s two Entrepreneurial Faculty Fellows, says the generous investment from the program’s benefactor places UTA’s entrepreneurial initiative in the upper echelon

of programs of its kind, with some of the most generous amounts of funding in the country.

Launching a Business from the Classroom

The MEP is rooted in and based on entrepreneurship courses in the College of Engineering and College of Business. These courses provide instruction and mentoring on business ideation, feasibility, and the pitch practice—all elements that make up Phase One of the MavPitch competition.

A signature component of the program, and what the engineering and business courses build to, the MavPitch competition is open to all UTA undergraduate and graduate students.

Robert Magnusson, professor of electrical engineering and Texas Instruments Distinguished University Chair in Nanoelectronics, helps with the MEP from the College of Engineering. He was recruited to UTA to introduce entrepreneurial “flavor” into courses in the engineering programs based on his own experience launching a business.

“My hope is that I can help students avoid mistakes I made,” Dr. Magnusson says. “If I had a class like this before beginning my business, I would’ve done better faster.”

For students not majoring in business or engineering, or students unable to enroll in one of the available courses, Dr. McGee says Phase One becomes a one-on-one education process.

UTA and MEP alumnae Ariel Bowman and LaTasha Taylor Starr, founders of ESTe²M Builders and participants in the program’s first year, say that the value of MEP is evident during this Phase One process.

“Jumping into business is intimidating for anyone, especially for non-business students like us,” Starr says. “We had the passion and vision to bring STEM learning to young people and underserved populations, but we didn’t have the business skills. Our time spent with Dr. McGee preparing for the MavPitch is where we put the puzzle together and made our business make sense in a way where we could be competitive while still being ourselves and true to our vision.”

Ridout says his Phase One experience was similar.

“These professors took so much time to help prepare me for the pitch competition,” he says. “I learned more about business and my own company in one week with them than I had in the entirety of Frankly GOOD’s existence up until that point.”

For students like Ridout, Starr, and Bowman, participating in the MEP and MavPitch meant the possibility of receiving invaluable funding for a business vision close to the heart.

Other students join the business or engineering courses with the hope of gaining new skills, though they’re not exactly ready to start a business, Magnusson says.

“For the students who don’t yet see themselves starting a business, we hope their time spent in the MEP can give them the perspective to evaluate the landscape of business once they take a job after graduation. If they know that starting a business is simpler than they think, they could identify spaces for improvement and launch a business that fills a hole once the time is right.”

Throwing Their Hat in the Ring

After finishing a semester of mentorship, developing their ideas, and forming a business plan, the students with dreams of launching a business distill their efforts into a three-minute video pitch for the online knockout round of MavPitch. From there, a panel of expert judges made up of faculty, alumni, and industry partners narrows the field of competitors.

McGee says the goal of this round is to identify teams or individuals with the most compelling venture pitches and ideas and that could compete most effectively if invited to the live round.



For Starr, making it through the video round was a moment of empowerment and assurance for the ESTe²M Builders concept.

“We were filled with fears of starting a business while in graduate school and competing with people developing world-class technology while we were trying to deliver an education-focused product,” Starr says. “For the judges to recognize our passion and the place education should have in entrepreneurship made us realize this was possible for us.”

The teams selected from the video round then move on to the Phase One live pitch competition, where they compete for up to \$15,000 in investment funds.

Though it’s a competition, Venkat Devarajan, professor of engineering and the MEP’s other Entrepreneurial Faculty

Associate Professor
Jeff McGee addresses
the audience before
the 2019 MavPitch
competition begins.





Winners of the 2019 MavPitch grand finale pose with competition judges.

Fellow, says the program strives to keep education at the heart of its live pitch competition.

“With our panel of judges, we try to simulate a venture capital situation. But in the real world, venture capitalists are not interested in improving your presentation or providing feedback on your business plan. You get a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’ without knowing how you’ve really done. In our program, you’re getting feedback every step of the way, even when it’s high stakes.”

The highest-rated winners from the Phase One live pitch competition are then invited to move on to Phase Two, where business planning ramps up as they make their way to compete for up to \$25,000.

Phase One is hosted in fall and spring of each year, while Phase Two takes place each summer.

Diving Deeper
Once invited into Phase Two, student teams are connected with external mentors

and begin honing their networking skills.

“Being able to meet other participants and to have the faculty mentors get me connected in the industry has proven to be one of the most valuable takeaways of my time competing in MavPitch,” says Ridout.

Bowman concurs.

“In this second round, we made contacts with business-

men and women throughout the Metroplex, and we were introduced to new grant and mentorship opportunities,” she says. “The support from our mentors was consistent as they pushed us to meet with alumni and UTA leadership to get feedback on areas for improvement.”

Phase Two participants are also required to participate in EpICMavs Deep Dive, UTA’s in-house, hands-on, seven-week mini accelerator offered in partnership with nonprofit startup incubator TechFW.

Hosted by the Office of Innovation & Commercialization, EpICMavs Deep Dive is free and open to the public, offering guidance on every step of bringing a startup idea to life.

“EpICMavs helped refine my ideas

and presentation skills,” Ridout says. “Being able to pitch my company and present to new audiences was new territory for me. I wanted to be able to do it well because I didn’t just have skin in the game, I had my whole body in the game because it’s my own business.”

Dr. Devarajan says students often come to the MEP lacking confidence, but he sees them mature right alongside their business ideas.

“That lack of confidence in the beginning often stems from their business ideas not yet being validated,” he says. “Throughout the various levels of the MavPitch competition, their ideas are validated. By the time they reach Deep Dive, they are much more confident and into the nature of business while they share with peers and mentors.”

The focus on being able to present is critical, as the judging rubrics between the Phase One and Phase Two finales have one key difference: the quality of the presentation.

Not a Big Finish, but a Launch Pad

At the end of their summer Deep Dive, the remaining teams return to the panel of judges for one last live pitch, where they’re each eligible to win up to \$25,000 in additional funds.

McGee says, ideally, students use this support to help capitalize their business.

For Starr and Bowman, the funds won from the MavPitch competition allowed them to produce their inaugural ESTE²M Builders at-home STEM project kits as they work to build competence, confidence, and creativity in STEM in children of all ages and learning abilities.

“We’re trying to redefine what STEM means for all communities,” Starr says. “We want to show children and their parents that STEM skills are not far-fetched and that STEM has many facets as we give them the opportunity to engage at any level.”

Now, Bowman says, she feels the sky is the limit for ESTE²M Builders, an optimism she and Starr have brought back to UTA to share as mentors in the MEP.

Ridout says he hopes to do the same someday. He used his funds from MavPitch to set up distributing for Frankly GOOD, but his vision is much bigger.

“I want to remove the stigma around vegan foods and make sure everyone knows vegan food can still be delicious,” he says. “Making money is nice, but the goal here is social impact, and that includes expanding Frankly GOOD to give people jobs—which is more important now than ever.”

Vision for the MEP

After two years with the program, Magnusson describes his time with the MEP and seeing the success of these young entrepreneurs as “energizing.”

McGee harkens back to the first semester of the program, when just 19 students participated, and remarks on the momentum gained in just a short time.

“Not only is the number of students participating increas-

ing, but the caliber of pitches and participants is rising,” he says. “We are reaping the benefits of building a structure into this program and creating opportunities for mentorship.”

Magnusson agrees, noting that fall 2020 is the best start they have ever had for the competition as they make an effort to foster more interdisciplinary collaboration.

The program’s reach will get a bigger boost through the newly established Center for Entrepreneurship and Economic Innovation, which will serve as a vehicle to promote the MEP within UTA and throughout the community and connect budding entrepreneurs with the North Texas business sector.

Despite the challenges that emerged in 2020, Devarajan remains optimistic, saying this is still a good time for students to be starting companies because of the versatility of the product market. Further, he maintains the MEP is a great pathway to that market.

“The biggest problem with starting a company is how exactly to start,” he says. “There are a number of pitfalls awaiting you, and they force you to fall behind—I learned that from my own experience. Figuring it out in this educational environment simplifies it and helps you avoid those pitfalls when you’re ready to launch.” **UTA**





a semester of firsts

**UTA's fall 2020
freshman class is a
historic one, both
in size and in the
unprecedented
experience of starting
college for the first
time during a pandemic.**

THIS PAST FALL, the strength of the Maverick spirit became even more evident. Our fall 2020 freshman class was the largest ever in University history, with 3,820 freshmen enrolling for the fall term, a 6.8% increase in first-time-in-college students. The freshman class also brought exceptional academic talent to the University, with an increase in the number of students from the top 10% of their high school class and a three-point jump in average SAT scores.

"We are making opportunities available, and the best and brightest students are using those opportunities," says Troy Johnson, vice president for enrollment management. "This freshman class represents a new standard for UTA, and the academic quality of the class is especially impressive."

Interim President Teik C. Lim says more freshmen students are attracted by the University's faculty excellence, expertise in e-learning, growing research enterprise, and commitment to expanding access to higher education.

"Despite the uncertainties of recent months, UTA continues to attract first-rate students from Texas and beyond who witness the research and academic excellence of our incredible students, faculty, and staff, and the invaluable commitment of our alumni and community partners," Dr. Lim says. "All of our work centers on our students, who are prepared to shape the world with their ideas, innovation, and spirit."

We talked to some of the students just starting college for the first time to get a look at who they are, how they're feeling, and why they're excited to join the Maverick family.

Gerald Slaughter

Major: Aerospace Engineering
Hometown: Waco, Texas

Why did you choose UTA? I've heard a lot of good things about it in the past few years. It has an amazing engineering program, and it's in the middle of the DFW area so nothing is too far.

What are you most excited about? I'm most excited about making new friends this year, and I would love to attend any event, honestly. I wasn't too big on school spirit in high school, but I think I want that to change in college.

So far, what have you enjoyed most about being a Maverick? Connecting with other Mavs. Even though people aren't out as much because of COVID, there are still plenty of opportunities to interact with others.

What has surprised you the most about your first year of college? Honestly, nothing has surprised me too much this semester, but hardly anything is surprising this far into 2020.

Gerald Slaughter stays focused during an afternoon study session.

Tony Pham

Major: Architecture / Hometown: Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Why did you choose UTA?

In all of North Texas, UT Arlington provides the only accredited program for architecture. I even asked a lot of industry professionals, and many of them recommended UTA to me.

What are you most excited about? Like most freshmen, I am excited about everything—classes,

events, and meeting new friends. I'll also be making friends who are similar to and different from me. In college, I get to be with friends and bond over things we like, something I wasn't able to do much in high school.

How does it feel to be part of a unique freshman class? Last time I called

my aunt in Vietnam, it was my high school graduation. She told me something that I still keep in mind today, that whatever I'm doing is unprecedented and unique, and that it's going to be something that I'll remember the most. On the brightest side, it's going to be something that I'm probably never going to forget.

Tony Pham, a student body senator, meets students during a virtual Greet Your Government event.



Amaris Werner with her mom, Robbie, and her dad, Adam, during the Move-In event last fall.

Amaris Werner

Major: Kinesiology
Hometown: Fort Worth, Texas

Why did you choose UTA?

I chose UTA so that I could have a fun college experience not too close and not too far from home. I was so excited to be in the center of the DFW Metroplex, and one of the biggest reasons I came to UTA was the level of diversity among staff and students.

What are you most excited about? Learning in a new environment and making new friends!

How does it feel to be part of a unique freshman class? To be honest, it was a rough transition from high school to college, es-

pecially with all the circumstances! However, dorm life is super fun, even though we might not be able to go out and partake in as many activities. UTA is doing a great job with enforcing all the policies and making sure everyone is having a good time.

So far, what have you enjoyed most about being a Maverick? I love being a Maverick because UTA provides resources, safety, and fun to all their students, although this year has been rocky. UTA is doing a great job of making the best of the situation!

Brianna Gomez

Major: Business Management
Hometown: El Paso, Texas

Why did you choose UTA?

I truly love UTA's welcoming atmosphere, the beautiful campus, and the amazing business program. When I toured other universities, none of them compared to UTA.

What are you most excited about? I'm most excited about being involved on campus, learning new things in my classes, and meeting new people (virtually and socially distanced, of course).

What has surprised you the most about your first year of college?

After the first few weeks of classes, I was surprised to see how fast-paced the classes are and how quickly the time is passing.

So far, what have you enjoyed most about being a Maverick? What I love most is having so many available opportunities, being able to show my school pride, and the sense of community.



Brianna Gomez takes notes during one of her in-person classes.



Jacob Mayfield stops by a booth at the University Center for information and free swag.

Jacob Mayfield

Major: Bioengineering
Hometown: Corinth, Texas

Why did you choose UTA?

I received a number of scholarships that only applied to colleges in-state, and of the in-state colleges, UTA was the best balance of affordability and quality engineering education.

How does it feel to be part of a unique freshman class?

I can't really measure this experience up to previous years given the bizarre situation we find ourselves in, but I can imagine it would be just as scary to venture out on my own any other year as it is

today. One of my favorite hobbies is performing magic, so the virus has really put a damper on that, but I hope that soon I can begin to go out and perform for my peers without fear!

So far, what have you enjoyed most about being a Maverick?

The community of friends that I have been able to build has been super helpful and enjoyable. I'm looking forward to spending the next couple of years getting to know this campus and the people on it.



Mira Darby gets into the rhythm of things at marching band practice with fellow Mavericks.

Mira Darby

Major: Music (Audio Production)
Hometown: Mansfield, Texas

Why did you choose UTA?

It's near where I live, offers a degree plan I want, and provides a generous amount of financial aid.

What are you most excited about? Marching band!! Being out on the field playing with a large (socially distanced) ensemble is refreshing after being alone for so long.

How does it feel to be part of a unique freshman class? This year is somewhat nerve-racking—having to figure out college on my own (being the first in my family to attend) in the middle of a crisis like this is a terrifying prospect. When everything down to grocery shopping needs a cost/benefit anal-

ysis, attending college becomes a monumental cliff to surmount. But here we are, gritting our teeth and facing it down anyway.

So far, what have you enjoyed most about being a Maverick? I've enjoyed the many services and utilities provided on the campus, as well as the hard-working and honest culture.

What has surprised you the most about your first year of college? It's surprising how well the campus functions despite the circumstances. I've observed many more people respecting protocols on campus than outside, and it makes me proud to be a part of this student body. [UTA](#)

TAKE ME OUT TO THE

GAME

*UTA's newest
varsity team
time travels,
plays soccer in
rocket-powered
cars, and battles
enemies for
supremacy. And
as some of the
top esports
players in the
nation, they tend
to dominate.*

BY ASHLEY FESTA



Even as some athletes around the country have to sit out their seasons, esports players at UTA are as competitive as ever—especially after being stuck at home during a summer of COVID-19. “It has been immensely easier to practice,” says Kyle Chandler, captain of the UTA Rocket League team.

“Play time has skyrocketed, so all skill levels are going to be way higher, even other schools’ teams. People are playing more than they’ve ever played.”

Indeed, the players who earn a spot on UTA’s esports team are ranked in the top 1% in the country for one of three games: *Rocket League*, a vehicular soccer game; *Overwatch*, a team-based, first-person shooter game; or *League of Legends*, a multiplayer online battle arena game. To even be considered for varsity team tryouts, players must have achieved a certain rank—Platinum for both *Overwatch* and *League of Legends* or Grand Champion for *Rocket League*.

“To get to that point, sometimes it’s like a full-time job,” says Drew Boehm, assistant director of esports at UTA. “They’re playing eight hours a day, hundreds of hours over a year. In a few years, they’ve played one game for thousands of hours, which adds up to make the best players in the game.”

In tryouts, players compete against each other for an exhausting amount of time. The team practices together about three times a week and regularly scrimmages against other universities. There’s a reason the best players keep logging all those hours: “The games are constantly changing,” Boehm says, “so if you aren’t constantly playing, your skill level will drop.”

But it can’t be play time all the time. Students must meet certain other requirements to remain on the es-

ports team. Like other sports, students must maintain a minimum GPA.

“We don’t want them to join the team and then let their grades suffer,” says Boehm, who added that players will be required to meet with professors, have mandatory study hall, or find other ways to bring their grades up if they begin to dip.

Players must also get physical exercise at least three times per week. Pumping iron at the gym isn’t necessary, but a healthy amount of movement is.

“Healthy body, healthy mind,” Boehm says. “If not for anything else, it’s for your brain, especially in esports where it’s such a mental game. We want players to stay well-rounded. Plus, we want to beat the stigma of just sitting in the basement playing video games all day.”

MAKING IT TO THE BIG LEAGUES

UTA hosted the inaugural Battle4Texas *Overwatch* tour-

“They’re playing eight hours a day, hundreds of hours over a year. In a few years, they’ve played one game for thousands of hours, which adds up to make the best players in the game.”

Drew Boehm, assistant director of esports (far right), with some of UTA’s *Rocket League* Team. From left: Cesar Rea, Camden Johnson, Jacob Cohn, and Kyle Chandler.



nament last year at Esports Stadium Arlington, the largest dedicated esports facility in North America, accommodating 2,500 spectators. While the team didn't win the event, they've ranked very well in many tournaments, including the Tespa *Overwatch* 2020 playoffs, the Collegiate *Rocket League* (CRL) playoffs in the fall 2019 and spring 2020 seasons, the *League of Legends* Conference 2020 playoffs, and the Electronic Gaming Federation *Rocket League* inaugural season Grand Championship in 2020, among others.

The *Rocket League* team recently qualified for the CRL 2020 fall season, the third semester in a row that they've qualified for the event.

In these tournaments, students play for cash and scholarships. Depending on the game and the tournament, prize pools can range anywhere from \$100 to \$100,000. UTA students have cashed in several times, once winning about \$2,000.

UTA also accommodates players who don't want to play competitively, hosting an esports club. While it's casual, the players are also successful. The team swept the 2017 Heroes of the Dorm National Championship. Through the competition, which was broadcast on ESPN, all five team members won free tuition for the rest of their college careers.

Similar to other sports, when students play in tournaments, professionals are watching—and recruiting. But unlike other sports, going from amateur to college player to pro isn't necessarily a linear progression. Students could go pro straight out of high school and then earn a scholarship and go back to college (and keep playing, of course). One UTA *Rocket League* player, Cesar Rea—whose player name is Adverse—received offers to play with multiple semi-pro teams, and he joined one of them outside his UTA playing time.

Even if students choose not to play esports professionally, they will still have developed talents that can easily transfer into other careers. Strong communica-

tion skills are necessary for esports players and for all facets of life.

"Players also must have really, really good hand-eye coordination," says Boehm, who added that surgeons who grew up playing video games are more capable at their jobs. It's true—a 2016 study published in *Archives of Surgery* linked video game experience with fewer mis-



takes and faster completion during laparoscopic and other types of surgery in which the surgeon must control medical instruments inside the body using a television screen.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Boehm has a vision for the future of esports at UTA, including renovating a dedicated space in the Maverick Activities Center. He hopes to get about 20 high-performance PCs for the space and plenty of room for all players, even if everyone is practicing at the same time. His wish list also includes a players' lounge separate from the gaming space.

"I'm excited about getting a place on campus to practice," says Andrew Cato, captain of the *Overwatch* team. "When we can practice in person, it'll be easier to get coordinated and improve when we're all together. And my computer specs aren't very good, so it would be nice to have a better setup to play on."

While those plans got postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic, Boehm also has other ideas he's currently working on, such as having their own livestream and inviting students who don't want to play esports to participate in other ways.

"Maybe they want to go into marketing or broadcast production," says Boehm, who wants renovations to in-

clude a space set aside as a broadcast studio with a green screen backdrop. "Even if they don't want to go into the esports industry, marketing students or an audiovisual class can get involved and get hands-on experience. It can be a great student-run educational opportunity, like an internship."

Boehm is eager to work with other departments to

all its games from their own homes rather than in person. While it's not ideal, Boehm is thankful it's possible the team can keep playing while staying safe. He also enjoys the camaraderie players can maintain through gaming.

"That's one of the best things about video games," he says. "Video games have been viewed as antisocial, but

Left: Members of the UTA's esports team compete in the 2017 Heroes of the Dorm National Championship. Right: Esports Stadium Arlington.



welcome students who are interested in social media management, photography, journalism, graphic design, community engagement, and more to see how those experiences can benefit them in their professional careers. For example, broadcast students who help shoutcast esports tournaments will have experience that can translate to sports commentary or anchoring a news program. (Shoutcasters deliver educating and entertaining narratives and commentary for virtual games as they're being played, similar to typical sports broadcasting.) And it will also bring more attention to the team around campus.

"It will be nice to have someone cast our games," Cato says. "If we can stream and someone is casting, it builds interest in the team. If someone wants to watch the game, it's more interesting when someone is commenting and explaining what's going on because *Overwatch* can be chaotic and hard to understand."

In addition, the Kinesiology Department has set up an official internship position. The intern will help keep esports players healthy, educating them about stretching, eye strain, and certain exercises as preventive measures.

BUILDING FRIENDSHIPS

Unfortunately, the pandemic has forced the team to play

playing is actually a social time. Students are still staying in touch with friends while also doing what they love to do."

"Our relationships go way further than just playing together," Chandler says. "One of the guys is my roommate now. You don't just meet teammates; you meet friends."

Cato agrees: "Just like any other sports team, you build up a trust and understanding of the other people on your team. That builds friendships pretty quickly."

Still, the players are looking forward to getting back to playing in person.

"When we're in person, it adds a new element and it's a lot easier to get excited," Cato says. "When it's online, you know there's someone behind the name on the screen, but it's not quite as personal, not quite as intense. Being in the same room with all your teammates and being able to see your opponents, you can hear their emotion and excitement. That's the most fun for me." **UTA**

SUPPORT THE TEAM

The UTA team would love your support—and you can do it from anywhere for free. Whether the team's performance is livestreamed at tournaments depends on how well they play in the earliest events, but eventually UTA will host its own livestream at [twitch.tv/utarlington](https://www.twitch.tv/utarlington). (Bookmark it now!) In the meantime, follow UTA esports' Twitter account at twitter.com/utaesports to find out where they're playing next and how you can join in the fun.

"Video games have been viewed as antisocial, but playing is actually social time. Students are still staying in touch with friends while also doing what they love to do."

ACCESSING SUCCESS

UTA's Student Access & Resource Center upholds a longstanding commitment to a barrier-free campus for all students. BY DEVYNN CASE

FAITH MAGNESS STARTED her academic career at The University of Texas at Arlington thinking what many might think when they hear the words “disability accommodation”—that it’s help for people with visibly noticeable conditions, like someone in a wheelchair. Then Magness by chance encountered the Student Access & Resource (SAR) Center.





Elvira Smith assists Faith Magness (seated).

While walking through the University Center, she saw a display that featured a mirror. The display informed those who peered into the mirror that there are all sorts of things, many unseen to the eye, that the SAR Center can help students with at UTA.

"I believed the stigma for a long time, that disabilities mean you have these obvious challenges," says Magness. "But that day I learned that there were resources on campus to help me with my ADHD, which I never knew was recognized as a disability."

Magness had developed strategies for her attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in high school that she soon discovered were no match for the stresses of life as a college student. Learning time management skills was something Magness said greatly contributed to her success at UTA.

"Learning to prioritize things, I would guess how long an assignment would take me to complete, and then I would double that," she says. "If I guessed that something would take me 30 minutes, then I would set aside an hour. Because in reality, I'm hoping it would take me 30 minutes, but if it becomes very challenging, then

allowing myself that extra time would help with my anxiety about the assignment."

Magness was grateful to learn about these resources that she did not even know existed for her on campus.

NEW NAME, BROADER REACH

This year, UT Arlington's Student Access & Resource Center changed its name from the Office for Students with Disabilities to better reflect its mission of service to all students with access needs that fall under the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act.

"Regardless of the name change, our role on campus is to ensure and provide accommodation and to support, as much as possible, equal access," says Cynthia Lowery, director of the SAR Center. "We want to provide opportunities for accessibility to all UTA students."

The Americans with Disabilities Act is a law, passed in 1990 and amended in 2008, that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in the public sphere. This includes schools, places of employment, public transportation, and anywhere else that is open to the public. The ADA is a comprehensive civil rights leg-

islation that prohibits discrimination and guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to participate in the mainstream of American life.

The SAR Center not only underwent a name change this year but has also grown in staff and technological capabilities. Within UTA's Division of Student Affairs, the SAR Center does far more than provide accommodations for students with physical disabilities—it also provides specialized fonts for dyslexia, extra time on tests and assignments, or allowing service and/or emotional support animals in campus housing.

INCLUSION, ACCEPTANCE, EMPOWERMENT

The majority of students who qualify for services on a college campus have unseen disabilities. This group is greatly underserved for various reasons, such as social and cultural stigmas about disability, but primarily because they often do not know or understand that they qualify for support under ADA law.

"Our goal is to grow the center and reach those students who qualify for resources under ADA law but have never come through our doors," says Lowery. "There should be nothing negative about disability. I want to get them through our doors so we can get started."

Lowery says that the SAR Center is striving to reach the national standard of service for a college or university campus, which on average is 19% of students. She is most passionate about using best practices for supporting students with disabilities; internal and campus programming that increases inclusion, student engagement, academic retention, and success; and collaboration with other departments on campus.

"Anything we can do that promotes inclusion, acceptance, empowerment, and destigmatizing for the personal and academic success of students with disabilities is the foundation for what we're trying to accomplish at the SAR Center," she says. "We want UTA students to complete their academic goals and become empowered in their own personal understanding that they can do anything they choose to do through patience and persistence."

The SAR Center office is stepping up outreach with information on who qualifies with the hope that this will begin to break down stigmatization barriers and, in general, broaden direct services for greater accessibility.

"A lot of people just don't know what we do," says Jonathan L. Johnson, who was named assistant vice president for health and wellness in 2019. "There are a

lot of students who we serve. It can be accommodations, academic counseling, alternative testing, or a range of assistive technology for students. The students' experience at UTA is very dynamic."

As the inaugural assistant vice president for health and wellness in the Division of Student Success, Dr. Johnson integrates health and wellness resources on campus. In addition to the SAR Center, he oversees Health Services, Campus Recreation, and Counseling and Psychological Services.

"Developing a well-being and wellness curriculum with an institutional mission and strategic goals will help advocate for wellness on campus," he says. "Having a collective voice is important for people to recognize that we all have a part in engaging our community with regards to health and wellness."

A HISTORY OF SUPPORT

UTA offers a physically accessible campus and dedicated staff to assist and guide students of all abilities, as well as a long history of going beyond compliance before ADA was required in terms of inclusivity.

UTA installed its first curb ramps—or as *The Shorthorn*

"Our goal is to grow the center and reach those students who qualify for resources under ADA law but have never come through our doors."

Tiffani Riddick (left) stands with Elvira Smith outside of University Hall.



EQUAL ACCESS PIONEERS

After students pushed for a more accessible campus in the early 1960s, UTA became a model campus for Texas and the greater Southwest. Eventually, that push for access expanded to state and national disability rights advocacy, with the aim of making higher education accessible for everyone.



Clockwise, from top left: Part of making the UTA campus more accessible was tackling the problem of Cooper Street, which began with a protest for reducing the speed limit through campus.

Sam Provence (in wheelchair) was chairman of UTA's Handicapped Students Association

in the early 1970s. He helped launch a statewide campaign against physical barriers on college campuses.

The Movin' Mavs wheelchair basketball team celebrates its Final Four victory in 1994.

Photos from the University of Texas at Arlington Libraries

referred to them, mini-driveways—in 1970, the first permanent solution for those with mobility accommodation needs at UTA. Later, in 1974, then-UT Arlington President Wendell Nedderman participated in a daylong event that invited administrators to experience firsthand many of the problems students with disabilities faced attending UTA in the 1970s.

Regarding the experience, Dr. Nedderman said, “I gained a whole new perspective from the vantage point of a wheelchair.”

Another well-known figure who championed for accommodation at UTA was Jim Hayes. Hayes graduated from the University in 1974, where he was president of the Handicapped Students Association and the UTA student body. He also served as the coordinator of compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. In 1976, he helped found the Office for Students with Disabilities, eventually becoming its director, and helped create the Movin' Mavs, UTA's wheelchair basketball team, in 1989.

UTA's rich history of embracing innovation and creativity also includes adaptive sports scholarships along with programs like the Movin' Mavs and the Lady Movin' Mavs. More recently, the University created an interdisciplinary Minor in Disability Studies, led by Sarah Rose, associate professor of history.

A comprehensive timeline of the history of accessibility at UT Arlington and the Texas Disability History Collection can be explored thanks to online exhibits through the UTA Libraries. The Texas Disability History Collection shows how a diverse group of disability rights activists in the state—many of whom attended or have worked at UTA—played a pioneering role in the fight for equal access to education, work, and more.

GUIDING THE PROCESS

“UTA has a history of growing inclusion practices and programs for our students with disabilities,” says Doug Garner, head coach of the UT Arlington Movin' Mavs. “Accessibility is not only about the physical environment, but also about creating a culture of acceptance and awareness while providing services and programs that reach out to and include all students in our UTA community.”

Accessibility specialists at the SAR Center provide aid and guidance to students in personal, academic, and career matters. In addition to providing services to students, they also strive to be a resource to faculty and staff.

“We encourage students with disabilities to confidently grasp their full potential and not feel limited by their unique challenges,” says Lowery. “The SAR Center team is passionate about supporting and advocating for the academic success of the students we serve.”

Tiffani Riddick, another accessibility specialist at UTA who is focused on working with the deaf/hard of hearing population by communicating using American

Sign Language, thinks students from all backgrounds can be successful at a university.

“Seeing a student who may have been told they weren't college material in the past be successful and receive their degree is the best feeling,” she says. “I believe the SAR Center is important to help students be on an even playing field with their peers. Some may see accommodations as a leg up; in reality, it's a way of making the learning experience equitable for all students.”

Elvira Smith, associate director of the SAR Center, carries a large caseload of students with disabilities. She makes sure her students have every opportunity for success even after graduation, alerting them to the Job Accommodation Network in the event they may need workplace accommodations as well.

“I have been there for some students starting from when they were freshmen to completing their bachelor's, going on to complete their master's degree, and then becoming employed in their field of study,” she says. “Receiving communication, like a card or an email, from a student that says the support they received really made a difference is one of my favorite things.”

PROVEN RESULTS

Smith personally worked with Magness throughout her time at UTA while she finished her Bachelor of Social Work and her Master of Social Work. Magness would touch base with Smith at least once a semester to seek support, check in, and make sure she was staying on the right track, much like a student does with an academic advisor.

“It felt amazing to have someone in my corner, helping me advocate for myself if I needed, for example, extra time on a test,” says Magness. “That advocacy helped me feel safe and secure in learning how to become a successful adult at UT Arlington.”

Magness graduated with her master's degree in the summer of 2020 and is currently studying for the Licensed Master Social Worker exams. She's looking forward to being able to help people, providing the kind of assistance that she feels would have benefited her growing up. She hopes to one day open her own practice.

“I feel like I relate to the people in the field who social workers are trying to help,” says Magness. “Sometimes people are trying and trying, but they just need someone to throw them a rope. My experience at UT Arlington was empowering and helped me learn that I was capable all along. I want to help others in that way.” [UTA](#)

“Seeing a student who may have been told they weren't college material in the past be successful and receive their degree is the best feeling.”



Advocates for *Action*

As students, Mavericks experience everything they can—studying, participating in campus life, and engaging with their communities to effect change. As alumni, they turn that knowledge into transformative action, using the experience they gained as students to help the most vulnerable and underserved in our society.

BY JENNY GUMBERT • PORTRAITS BY ZERB MELLISH

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OR 125 YEARS, graduates of The University of Texas at Arlington have made significant and lasting impacts in North Texas and beyond. As students at UTA, they gained the skills needed to explore their chosen professional fields, while also learning what it means to be a part of a

Community that Cares. It's because of the University's dedication to fostering an environment where both education and empathy are valued that numerous UTA alumni have gone on to lead in the nonprofit sector, using their combined intellectual and emotional knowledge to give back to their communities.

The following nonprofit leaders are just a small sample of the UTA alumni who are dedicating their lives to advocating for and improving North Texas communities. Some of them are motivated by personal experiences with trauma or injustice, while others have developed a passion for a particular issue through experience in their fields, but together they are taking action to make their region—and the world—a better place.

Carol Klocek

('94 MS, SOCIAL WORK)

CEO of the Center for Transforming Lives

Carol Klocek has dedicated her entire career to helping women with children move out of poverty and into stability, self-sufficiency, and prosperity. Her deeply personal connection with these women's experiences drives her current work as CEO of the Center for Transforming Lives (CTL) in Fort Worth, Texas.

Growing up in a family of 10 in Arlington, Texas, she remembers the tension, anger, and fear that come with financial insecurity. She dreamed of a life where she would be self-sufficient and not have to rely on others.

"But my father told me I wasn't capable of achieving my dreams," Klocek says. "To go to college, I needed a scholarship, and he could not imagine that possibility. It's hard to dream big when you feel so small."

Klocek credits a neighbor with not letting her give up on her educational dreams.

"She saw the spark and desire that lived within in me to dream big and build a life filled with achievements," she says. Klocek went on to not only receive her bachelor's degree, but also two master's degrees, including a Master of Social Work from UTA.

As CEO of CTL, she leads the 113-year-old organization in its work providing dual-generational services and intervention programs that work alongside women and children on their paths from poverty to self-sustainability. Each year, CTL helps over 3,300 people in Tarrant County with comprehensive services, including traditional childcare and Early Head Start, family housing, and trauma intervention services for women and children experiencing homelessness.

Though she has been with CTL for over a decade, the impact of her work still brings her immense pride.

"I think what stands out most is the experience of hearing from successful women, 'If it weren't for CTL, I could not have done this,'" Klocek says. "That's what really fills my heart."



Michael Coleman II

(’14 BA, ADVERTISING)
CEO and Co-Founder of Crowned Scholars



Rickey Townsend

(’16 BS, INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES)
COO and Co-Founder of Crowned Scholars

While many college students were watching TV and zoning out, Michael Coleman II and Rickey Townsend were finding inspiration for their future non-profit organization, Crowned Scholars.

The duo met at UTA when Coleman was assigned as Townsend’s mentor, and they quickly developed a friendship. One night while watching an awards show celebrating Black women, they began talking about the absence of similar attention for Black men and how vital positive representation is to encouraging young boys to pursue their aspirations.

“We want to redefine for young Black boys what it means to be a Black man,” Townsend says.

In 2019, the North Texas natives launched Crowned Scholars with the goal of holistically developing middle-school-aged Black boys in Dallas, Texas.

“Most empowerment groups and organizations focus on high school or college students; however, students are becoming more and more impressionable at younger ages,” Coleman explains. “Crowned Scholars wants to step in to provide educational, personal, mental, and professional growth for the students we have the opportunity to impact.”

The curriculum for the program has two focuses: academics, with an emphasis on math, and healthy habits, a term that refers to important life skills.

As a math teacher at Dallas’ Benjamin Franklin Middle School, Townsend knows the importance of a strong early math education.

“Our goal is to provide confidence to boys in math and for them to be algebra-ready once they leave our program,” Townsend says.

Adds Coleman, “Our overall goal is to nurture the growth of these young men and make sure they know they are kings.”

An unexpected bonus of their work with Crowned Scholars has been the opportunity to recruit nearly a dozen UTA students and alumni to their team, providing opportunities to their fellow Mavericks while giving back to the school that brought them together.

Michael Coleman II, left, and Rickey Townsend



Madeline DuHaime McClure

(’97 MSW)
Founder and Former CEO of TexProtects

After nine years working on Wall Street, Madeline DuHaime McClure was ready for a change. Feeling unfulfilled, she decided to pursue a Master of Social Work first at New York University, then at UTA when her Texan husband moved them to Dallas. Now, with nearly 25 years of contributions and remarkable impact on the social work field, it’s clear she chose the right path.

McClure began her new career at Dallas Children’s Advocacy Center working with abused and neglected children. After several years, she noticed a need for reform and funding for Child Protective Services (CPS) in the region and the state. In 2004, she founded TexProtects to advocate for better policies, reforms, and increases in federal, state, and local funding with a focus on prevention, protection, and healing for Texas children.

“TexProtects was inspired by my professional experience healing abused and neglected children and working with CPS caseworkers,” says McClure, a UTA Distinguished Alumna. “I witnessed the inordinate demands put on them and their lack of support.”

Since its founding, TexProtects has assisted or led the passage of over 45 bills that have improved the CPS system and has secured over \$145 million for family-support home visiting programs, such as the Nurse-Family Partnership, that prevent child maltreatment and currently service over 21,000 families across Texas.

“It’s rewarding knowing that through our efforts, thousands of Texas children have been spared child maltreatment, thousands of parents have been empowered by the programs we brought to Texas, an untold number of foster children have been successfully transitioned to independence, and thousands of CPS caseworkers have received the training, support, and recognition to improve their ability to care for abused children,” McClure says.



Liz Rayburn
Curfman, LMSW

(’12 MSW)
*Senior Director of Program and
Community Engagement at Heart House*

Though Liz Rayburn Curfman has served communities around the world, her heart lies with the residents of the Vickery Meadow neighborhood in Dallas, Texas.

“Working in the Vickery Meadow neighborhood has been a highlight of my career,” she says.

Curfman’s first encounter with Vickery Meadow was as director of the Northwest Community Center (NCC). Through her work with NCC, she connected with the neighborhood’s refugee and immigrant residents. She now works as the senior director of program and community engagement of Heart House, an education nonprofit that serves the same population.

Vickery Meadow has a large number of refugee and immigrant families and individuals, a group she says often grapples with instability and trauma. Heart House is a program that helps students who come from those backgrounds with mental health support through art therapy sessions, STEM activities, project-based learning, mindfulness meditations, homework help, and social emotional learning (SEL).

Curfman believes that providing students a space where they can explore, meet others their own age, and interact with adult mentors is vital to their success. Their program takes support a step further by utilizing SEL and mental health strategies to assist students in developing as a whole person.

“As a Licensed Master Social Worker, I know how important mental health and social-emotional development is for stability on the path to success,” she explains. “I am so grateful for how UTA’s School of Social Work prepared me for a long career in nonprofit management and making change happen at the community and city levels.”



Brittany K. Barnett

(’05 BBA, ACCOUNTING;
’06 MS, ACCOUNTING)
*Founder of Girls Embracing Mothers; Co-
Founder of Buried Alive Project*

Brittany K. Barnett is reimagining what justice looks like. As an attorney and the founder of two nonprofits, she works tirelessly to transform America’s criminal justice system and bring hope to those who have been impacted by mass incarceration. It sounds like a lot to take on, but she’s just getting started.

As founder of Girls Embracing Mothers (GEM), Barnett works to empower girls with mothers in prison, breaking the cycle of incarceration and helping them lead successful lives with vision and purpose. GEM partners with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to take girls from the Dallas-Fort Worth area to visit their mothers in prison in Gatesville, Texas. Their curriculum includes art therapy and discussion of critical life issues.

“Mass incarceration devastates entire families and communities,” says Barnett, whose mother was incarcerated when she was younger. “I wanted to use my direct experience to empower women and girls impacted by maternal incarceration.”

Her other nonprofit, the Buried Alive Project, provides pro bono post-conviction legal representation to people serving life-without-parole sentences for drug offenses. The organization seeks to bring justice to those who they believe were unjustly sentenced to life in prison. Barnett co-founded Buried Alive with two of her clients, Sharanda Jones and Corey Jacobs, both previously sentenced to life without parole for first-time fed-



eral drug offenses and later granted clemency by President Barack Obama. “Life without parole screams that a person is beyond hope, beyond redemption,” she explains. “Buried Alive is the only organization singularly focused on serving the unique needs of this community. The work we do is literally life-saving.”

Barnett also advances criminal

justice reform as the founder of XVI Capital Partners and Milena Reign, social enterprises devoted to showing the world-changing impact that formerly incarcerated people can have when they have access to resources that allow them to thrive. She also published her first memoir, *A Knock at Midnight: A Story of Hope, Justice, and Freedom*, in September 2020. [UTA](#)

Scholarships offer life-changing support, empowering students to create their own futures. By making a gift to the UTA Scholarship Fund, you will help UTA expand its support of talented students like Aurora as they fulfill their educational dreams.



“Receiving a scholarship was a great honor. It motivates me to keep going and inspires me to work harder because there is always someone out there who notices and values our hard work.”

- Aurora Torres,
College of Liberal Arts Student

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS  ARLINGTON

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

CLASS OF 1979

1979

Alfred Vidaurri Jr.
(BS, '82 MArch, Architecture) was elected first vice president/president-elect of the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards, which facilitates licensure and credentialing of architects. He is vice president and principal at Freese and Nichols Inc. in Fort Worth.

1981

Roger A. Krone
(MS, Aerospace Engineering) was named to the board of directors for Lear Corp. He is CEO of Leidos, a Fortune 500 information technology, engineering, and science solutions and services leader. In 2017, he was named a UTA Distinguished Alumnus.

1983

David Johnson
(BA, '01 MA, History) serves as chief assessment officer at the Federation of State Medical Boards.

1986

Shameem “Rumi” Hasán
(MS, Industrial Engineering) earned a PhD in technology management from the Business School at École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne in Lausanne, Switzerland. He is a tech-

nology manager at Bank of America's e-commerce division.

1990

John J. Crocitti
(BA, History) is the Academic Senate president-elect at San Diego Mesa College in California. He is a professor of history and chair of the Social Sciences Department.

Jesus Alfredo “Fred” Ortiz

(BS, Architecture) designed Globe Life Field, the new home of the Texas Rangers. He is a principal and director of sports at HKS Inc.

1992

David Stevens
(PhD, Mathematical Sciences) is the associate dean for academic and faculty affairs in the Moody College of Business at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. He is also the Dr. Bernard J. Bienvenu/Dr. Rexford Hauser/BORSF Endowed Professor in Management and the Edward G. Schlieder Educational Foundation/BORSF Professor in Money and Banking.

1993

Corey Doyle
(BBA, '98 MBA, Finance) has been promoted to director of commercial real estate for Affiliated Bank in Arlington, Texas. He is

active in many civic and nonprofit organizations, including The Parenting Center, Arlington Chamber of Commerce, Kenya Kids Can, and Habitat for Humanity.

Melanie Self Kroeker
(BBA, Management) has been named director of human resources for Fort Worth Housing Solutions. Previously, she served as Trinity Metro's vice president of human resources and Equal Employment Opportunity officer.

1994
Joli Livaudais
(BA, '98 MA, Psychology) exhibited "All That I Love" at *Paper Routes—Women to Watch* on Oct. 8 at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C.



Livaudais is a Little Rock-based artist and an assistant professor of photography at University of Arkansas–Little Rock.

1995
Alan Phillip Clark
(MArch, Architecture) is a licensed architect in Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina. His firm, Alan Clark Architects LLC, focuses on high-end residential renovations, new houses, and historic preservation projects.

1997
Chris Berzon
(BBA, Marketing) is a first vice president, financial advisor with Morgan Stanley in Fort Worth. Previously he was with Wells Fargo.

Terry Morawski
(BA, Communication) was named superintendent of the Fort Smith Independent School District (FSISD) in Arkansas. He joined FSISD as chief operations officer in 2017 and became deputy superintendent in 2018. Previously, he held leadership positions in Texas at Mansfield, Comal, and San Antonio school districts.

2002
Nafees Alam
(BBA, Management) was named to *Fort Worth Inc.* magazine's 2020 Entrepreneur of Excellence list. He started DRG Concepts, a restaurant startup and management company.

Kelly Heatly
(MS, Marketing Research) is a consumer insights

1984
The late Kalpana Chawla
(‘84 MS, Aerospace Engineering) was honored when Northrop Grumman named a space station resupply ship after her. Chawla made history at NASA as the first female astronaut of Indian descent, but died tragically with six crewmates in 2003, when Space Shuttle *Columbia* was re-entering Earth's atmosphere.

“UTA has a lot to celebrate! Great faculty, staff, students, and alums! Looking forward to many more years of excellence.”

—GLORIA BENDER
(’82 BS, ’88 MS INDUSTRIAL ENGINEERING)
Owner, TransSolutions LLC

consultant and principal of Heatly Custom Research LLC, based in Dallas. In September, she completed her term as president of the Qualitative Research Consultants Association (QRCA), the largest global association of qualitative researchers. A member since 2006, she also served on QRCA's board of directors as president, vice president, and treasurer.

Michael E. Ludwig
(BSN; '07 MS, Health Care Administration) was named vice president of patient care services and chief nursing officer for Texas Health Harris Methodist Hospital Southlake.

O. Gustavo Plascencia
(BFA, Photography) is dean of visual arts at the New World School of the Arts College in Miami. Previously, he was assistant chair and graduate coordinator in the Department of Studio Arts at the University of North Texas and director of MFA programs at the Memphis College of Art.

2003
Ryan Getty
(BA, '05 MA, Criminal Justice and Criminology) received tenure and was promoted to associate professor at California State University, Sacramento. He is also a retired police officer of more than 30 years, 20 of which were served in Texas. His daughter,

Marissa Getty, is a biology major at UTA.

Keeton Moore
(BBA, Finance; '06 MBA, Finance and Real Estate) has been promoted to president of PlainsCapital Bank's downtown Fort Worth branch.

2004
Clifton Beck
(MPA) is the new director of human resources for the city of Lubbock. He previously served in the same position for the cities of Amarillo and Odessa.

Rashad Jackson
(BS, Architecture; '08 MS, City and Regional Planning) is the planning and development director for the city of Grand Prairie.

2005
Jason Hurst
(MS, Engineering Management) is vice president of innovation at Bell Flight. He will oversee the Nexus aircraft, an air taxi, and the Autonomous Pod Transport. He has worked at Bell Flight for 19 years.

2006
Meredith Austin
(BA, History) has been named the 2020 Advocate for the Gifted by the Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented. The

gifted and talented coordinator for the Humble Independent School District also serves on the Texas Education Agency Commissioner's Advisory Council on Gifted and Talented Students.

Gloria Loera
(MSN) was appointed to the board of directors of YWCA El Paso Del Norte Region. A nurse practitioner, she is an assistant professor at the Hunt School of Nursing at Gardner-Webb University in El Paso, Texas.

Todd Mayo
(BA, Sociology) is a mortgage lending officer at Premier Bank Texas' Grapevine Mortgage Center.

2007
Jonathan Cranz
(BS, Management Information Systems) was named to the 2020 *Fort Worth Business Press* 40 Under 40 list. He is a public finance attorney and partner with Kelly Hart & Hallman LLP in Fort Worth.

Amanda Potaszni
(BA, World Languages) earned a PhD in Urban Education and Policy Studies at the University of Massachusetts-Boston, where she teaches in the Department of Computer Science in the College of Science and Mathematics. She was named to Delta Zeta's 35 under 35.

“It was an amazing experience 10 years ago, and UTA keeps getting better!”

—ALLIE RODGERS
(’09 BBA, ’11 MS, HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT)
Human Resources Specialist, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

Paul Dawkins
(’09 PhD, Mathematics Education) received the Annie and John Selden Prize for Research in Undergraduate Mathematics Education from the Mathematical Association of America. He is also co-principal investigator on a National Science Foundation grant to adapt research-based K-12 practices for orchestrating discussion to the context of an undergraduate proof-based mathematics course.



Veronica Schnitzius
(MBA) is president of Dallas-based American Leather, which boasts a 20% market share of luxury leather furniture sales in the U.S.

John Shaver
(BS, Mechanical Engineering) was named a 2020 Rising Star by *Civil and Structural Engineer Magazine*. The publication said Shaver's rise is due to "his ability to lead other engineers and quickly adapt to the changing needs of clients." Shaver is a project manager in the LJA Engineering Energy sector.

2012
Tiesa Leggett
(MA, Interdisciplinary Studies) is vice president of advocacy for the North

Texas Commission, a public-private partnership that drives large, impactful projects and advocates for regional issues. She will help lead the legislative initiatives.

Solomon Onita Jr.
(BFA, Film) premiered his semiautobiographical film *Tazmanian Devil* in August at the American Black Film Festival. Filmed in North Texas, the coming-of-age drama tells a culture-clash story of a Nigerian teenager from a strict church-going family who moves to Texas and pledges a fraternity as a way to make friends.

Billy Quarles
(PhD, Physics and Applied Physics) is a research scientist at the Center for Relativistic Astrophysics at the Georgia Institute of Technology.

CLASS NOTES

Mashooq Salehin
(PhD, Social Work) was named associate professor of social work and sociology at North Carolina Technical and Agricultural State University in East Greensboro, North Carolina. He previously taught at Radford University in Radford, Virginia.

Leigh Caudle Whitaker
(BA, Political Science) was selected by Super Lawyers as a Rising Stars Honoree for 2021. She earned a law degree at South Texas College of Law and is with Wilson Legal Group PC in Dallas, Texas.

2014

Brandon Waller
(BS, Environmental Science), founder and head chef of Bam's Vegan, is expanding his popular plant-based catering and pop-up business to a brick-and-mortar restaurant. Bam's Vegan Smoothie and Wraps is set to have its grand opening in January 2021 in Irving, Texas.

2015

Amy L. Yoon
(MBA, Accounting) is vice president of finance at Calloway's Nursery Inc. She formerly served as Calloway's controller.

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You never call. You don't write. We miss you! Email us at classnotes@uta.edu and let us know what is keeping you so busy.

"Proud to be a Maverick. Thanks for creating such an amazing environment for international students such as myself to learn and grow."

—TONY NGUYEN,
'15 PHD, COMPUTER SCIENCE)
Software Engineer,
Google

2017

Linh Dao
(MFA, Visual Communication Design) is assistant professor of graphic and interaction design at California Polytechnic University-San Luis Obispo. Previously, she was a specialist professor at Monmouth University in New Jersey. She has exhibited her work at universities in Texas, Iowa, New York, and the Institute for Art and Innovation in Berlin, Germany.

Pamela Reese-Taylor
(BSN) was selected as one of seven health professionals to serve on Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins's School Public Health and Education Committee. The committee was created to address the COVID-19 pandemic. Reese-Taylor is the only K-12 school health professional on the committee. She is the lead nurse for the Cedar Hill Independent School District.

2020



Abel Misrak
(’20 PhD, Mechanical Engineering) received the 2020 American Society of Mechanical Engineers Electronic and Photonic Packaging Division Student Engineer of the Year Award.

Only one student is selected each year for the award nationally. He is a senior mechanical design engineer with Tesla in Palo Alto, California.

2018

Jenelle Dugan
(MSN, Family Nurse Practitioner) is a family nurse practitioner with North Texas Area Community Health Center's Northside Center in Fort Worth, Texas.

2020

Mya Lewis
(BFA, Art History) has been working as a curatorial intern with the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. She published an article, "American Craft Forum: Threads of Change," in the Aug. 6 issue of *Smithsonian Folklife* magazine. Lewis played a key role in organizing the Makers Summit event for the African American Craft Initiative at the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage.

David Rettig
(EMBA) was named to the 2020 *Fort Worth Business Press*' 40 under 40 list. He is the mayor of Northlake, Texas, and a director at Fidelity Investments.

Ashley Tetteh
(MSW) was selected as one of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*'s Hometown Heroes for her commitment to continuing Girls Inc. of Tarrant County's service to and programs for girls from low-income households after the pandemic brought in-person programs to a halt. She is a case manager for Catholic Charities in Fort Worth, Texas.

Stacy Williams
(MBA, Finance) was promoted to director of residential finance at Affiliated Bank in Arlington, Texas. He serves as chairman of the board of the Arlington-Mansfield Area YMCA.

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IN MEMORIAM



Hugh Parmer

(’86 MA, Political Science) 80, May 27, Fort Worth, Texas.

Parmer became the youngest legislator in the Texas House of

Representatives (1964-65) at age 23. He served as Fort Worth mayor (1977-79) and in the Texas Senate (1983-91). In 1988, at age 49, Parmer took and passed the State Bar Exam without attending law school under an old state law permitting the substitution of years of legislative service for law school hours. He served as director of the Humanitarian Response Bureau of the Agency for International Development during the Clinton administration and president of the nonprofit American Refugee Committee.

ALUMNI

1940s

Frances Faye Wadley Bondurant

(’44) 95, Oct. 28, Arlington, Texas.

Ernest Schattel

(’47) 97, Aug. 22, Roscoe, Texas.

Jake Cook

(’48) 90, Sept. 23, Fort Worth, Texas.

1950s

Rosalie Risinger Beeman

(’57 AS, Education) 83, Oct. 2, Fort Worth, Texas.

1960s

James “Jim” Paul Brooks

(’61 BBA) 87, Sept. 22, Houston, Texas.

Grover Livingston

(’61 BS, Mathematics) 85, April 18, Dallas, Texas.

Jesse “Jess” Aaron Holloway

(’63 BBA) 79, Sept. 12, Cuernavaca, Mexico.

Charlie Dan Dickerson III

(’64 BA, Business) 79, May 9, Anson, Texas.

Weldon Ray Bryant

(’65 BS, Biology) 76, Sept. 9, Fort Worth, Texas.

Gary Wayne McVean

(’65 BA, Psychology) 78, June 27, Durango, Colorado.

Aubrey Clay Houston

(’66 BS, Electrical Engineering) 92, May 6, Lakeland, Florida.

Ronald Eugene “Ron” Bolton

(’67 BA, Psychology) 75, June 23, Goddard, Kansas.

Clarence Frank Cope

(’67 BS, Geology) 80, June 18, Dallas, Texas.

Billie Sue Shelton Fields

(’67 BA, English) 75, May 1, North Richland Hills, Texas.

Michael Don Gaston

(’67 BBA, Economics) 76, June 15, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Jack Kilpatric

(’67, BS, Chemistry/ Biology) 80, July 31, Lampasas, Texas.

Madison “Matty” William Reed Jr.

(’67 MS, Mechanical Engineering) 84, June 7, Granbury, Texas.

Mark Lamkin

(’68 BA, History) 77, Sept. 12, Southlake, Texas.

Jerry Lee Haley

(’69 BS, Chemistry) 78, May 24, Lubbock, Texas.

1970s

Ed Fuller

(’71 BS, Architecture) 76, May 3, Las Vegas, Nevada.

Jack Gordon Parkhurst

(’71 BFA, Art) 80, July 24, Mansfield, Texas.

Deborah Lynn Crayton Watterson

(’71 BA, French) 71, July 4, Arlington, Texas.

David Merle Bailey

(’72 MS, Biology/ Chemistry) 72, May 10, Pantego, Texas.

Beverly Brand Blumenthal

(’72 MSW) 88, Aug. 29, Dallas, Texas.

William Lee “Bill” Guerry

(’72 BBA) 75, Nov. 1, Arlington, Texas.

Charles Fred Doughty

(’73 BS, Mechanical Engineering) 76, Aug. 12, Springtown, Texas.

Roy Richard Merrill

(’73 BBA, Business Administration) 73, April 11, Reston, Virginia.

Loyd “Cotton” Culwell

(’75 BS, Engineering) 82, Sept. 25, Fort Worth, Texas.

Emily Perrin Rider

(’75 BSN) 66, July 29, Lubbock, Texas.

Earl Preston “Buddy” Spiegel Jr.

(’75 MA, History) 72, May 30, Arlington, Texas.

Olive Ann “Bansy” Tuttle Johnson

(’76 BM) 91, April 6, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Doak Meador

(’76 BBA, Accounting) 70, June 3, North Richland Hills, Texas.

Scott Edward Willingham

(’76 BBA) 66, Aug. 13, Fort Worth, Texas.

Danny Schwartz

(’77 BA, Sociology) 70, Sept. 4, Pantego, Texas.

Ralph Mowry Seeley

(’77 BS, Accounting) 74, Oct. 22, Coppell, Texas.

Larry D. Barton

(’78 BS, Criminal Justice) 73, May 3, Wichita Falls, Texas.

Helen Boyer

(’78 BSN) 87, May 12, Fort Worth, Texas.

Dequita Jan Brent

(’79 BS, Criminal Justice) 63, May 11, Katy, Texas.

1980s

E. Robert Hrncir

(’80 BS, Mechanical Engineering) 63, Sept. 21, Dallas, Texas.

Joan Buck Neves

(’80 MA, Accounting) 69, Aug. 3, Daytona Beach, Florida.

Hellen Marie Day Smith

(’80 BSW) 85, Sept. 30, Whitney, Texas.

Mary Alice Arrington Camp

(’81 BA, Communication) 73, July 31, Arlington, Texas.

Darrel Rogers Cox

(’81 BS, Economics) 68, Aug. 3, Ridgway, Colorado.

Gloria L. Hazel

(’83 BFA, Art) 95, July 24, San Antonio, Texas.

Jeffry Albert Petruy

(’83 BBA, Finance) 59, Sept. 8, Pasadena, Maryland.

Carolyn Jeanne Barnes

(’87 BA, Speech) 71, May 22, Arlington, Texas.

Kenneth Welch

(’88 BS, Psychology) 62, Oct. 24, North Richland Hills, Texas.

1990s

Karen Diane Kidd

(’92 BS, Electrical Engineering) 66, May 3, Hurst, Texas.

Dorothy Jean Riddell Martin

(’92 MA, Linguistics) 91, June 25, Dallas, Texas.

Echo Ellen Wagner Penland-Jackson

(’92 MSW) 72, June 15, Sherman, Texas.

Tsae-Feng Kevin Yu

(’92 MS, Computer Science Engineering) 55, May 26, Nashua, New Hampshire.

Patricia Joan Klimchock

(’93 BA, English) 77, June 7, Arlington, Texas.

Kathryn “Katie” Springs Krehmeier

(’94 MS, Human Resource Management) 50, July 25, Houston, Texas.

Roger Fravel Ray

(’94 BS, Mathematics) 72, June 24, Arlington, Texas.

Edward Daniel Huerta

(’95 BA, Classical Studies) 51, Aug. 11, Concepcion, Texas.

Brian Scott Polley

(’95 BSW) 49, Oct. 3, Fort Worth, Texas.

George Kevin Agee

(’99 BS, Information Systems) 59, May 15, The Woodlands, Texas.

Revis Maxwell Dickerson Jr.

(’99 BS, Interdisciplinary Studies) 68, July 19, Arlington, Texas.

William Ryan Gaylor

(’99 BA, Journalism) 46, Sept. 16, Norman, Oklahoma.

2000s

Melissa Anne Ohlweiler Halter

(’00 BFA, Art) 46, May 27, Lewisville, Texas.

Ricardo Ortiz

(’02 BA, Spanish) 52, June 28, El Paso, Texas.

Joanne Walker

(’03 PhD, Transatlantic History) 48, Aug. 1, Shreveport, Louisiana.

Lorelei Peralta Mauldin

(’06 BSN) 61, Aug. 14, Bedford, Texas.

Elizabeth Dilliplane

(’07 EMBA) 63, June 22, San Antonio, Texas.

2010s

William Raymond “Bill” Kenney

(’12 MS, Mathematics) 33, Sept. 1, Houston, Texas.

Lauren Leigh Spurrier

(’15 BA, History) 36, July 9, Fort Worth, Texas.

FACULTY & STAFF

Elaine Doris Bahn

94, Oct. 2, Arlington, Texas. She was an administrative assistant from 1972-89.

William Clyde “Bill” Bibb

86, July 9, Macon, Georgia. He was UTA’s director of athletics from 1989-91.

Eunice F. Bonar

95, April 20, Cortez, Colorado. She taught chemistry from 1965-86.

Ruth M. Boyd

94, May 31, Arlington, Texas. She worked in the Military Science Department as an administrative assistant for UTA 1978-79, then as an Army

employee in the same position until 1992.

Abe Alfred Bush Jr.

78, Aug. 3, Granbury, Texas. He was a former assistant director of admissions from 1969-76.

Euda E. “Pete” Dean

85, Aug. 4, St. Louis, Missouri. He taught mathematics for 27 years, from 1961-88.

Melissa Brown Gibbons

69, June 14, Joshua, Texas. She was an adjunct faculty member in the College of Education from 2001-11.

Kenneth R. Kenamer

80, May 8, Nacogdoches, Texas. He was an adjunct faculty member in the Journalism Department from 1975-82.

James Stuart Kersey

91, July 8, North Richland Hills, Texas. He helped create the Graduate School of Social Work in the 1960s. He was a School of Social Work faculty member from 1972-88 and served as assistant dean for eight years.

William “Bill” Ross Meacham

97, Sept. 22, Fort Worth, Texas. He taught in the Biology Department from 1950-88 and served as chair.

Billi Marie Rogers

(’62 BA, English) 90, Sept. 7, Bedford, Texas. She taught English from 1950-80.



The Explainer

Mexico, as well as to the U.S., where they appeared until recently on the magazine racks of Mexican supermarkets and bakeries in North Texas. In the 1960s, Italian and other European film production companies partnered to finance wildly successful “Eurowesterns” or “Spaghetti Westerns” that breathed a gritty and strange vitality into the genre. Westerns even made a mark in Africa: *Life Magazine* in 1963 reported on the Federal United Texas Cowboy Club, which staged pageant-like fast-draw competitions and shootouts on the streets of Lagos, Nigeria.

I wrote my last book, *Heroes of the Borderlands: The Western in Mexican Film, Comics, and Music*, because I discovered a large repertoire of Western-themed Mexican films and comics that historians of culture had largely ignored. As I delved deeper into the subject, I realized that Mexican filmmakers and comic book publishers were using the Western to tell Mexican stories about Mexican historical problems and topics, such as immigration to the United States, political violence in rural Mexico, and folk religious practices. The blending of U.S. storytelling devices with Mexican ones not only produces provocative stories about the Mexican condition, but also speaks to bigger questions: How do stories and myths change when they cross national and linguistics borders? How do stories from outside of the United States rewrite or challenge American ideas?

I don’t study Westerns for the sake of Westerns. I study them because popular culture reflects the global history of taste and fashion, prejudice and stereotypes, and competing ideas about identity. The stories we consume, like the stories we tell, help us to find meaning and community. I study Westerns to critically reconstruct and contextualize that worldview and sense of belonging, and to explore how cultural differences and historical context affect their meaning. [UTA](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Christopher Conway is a recipient of the UT System Regents Outstanding Teaching Award. In addition to *Heroes of the Borderlands*, he wrote *Nineteenth-Century Spanish America: A Cultural History*. His collection of vintage Mexican comics and film ephemera has been exhibited at UTA and at the Artes de la Rosa Cultural Center for the Arts.

ILLUSTRATION BY PETE RYAN

Westerns Around the World

The Enduring Appeal of an American Myth

BY
**CHRISTOPHER
CONWAY**
Professor
of Modern
Languages

TO EXPLAIN WHY I study Westerns I need to explain why Westerns matter. The most obvious reason is their popularity. Americans who grew up in the 1950s and the 1960s experienced television Westerns on a first-run basis on radio, television, and in movie theaters. They read comic book Westerns and played with branded toys like the legendary Daisy Red Ryder BB gun. As Avi Santos has written, over 10 million people a week listened to the *Lone Ranger* radio show, while nearly 100 million readers a week devoured the *Lone Ranger* newspaper comic strip. Cowboy fan clubs, like the Roy Rogers Riders Club, had millions of children on their rolls and used folksy codes of conduct to promote citizenship and religion.

Westerns also went global. American companies syndicated Western television programs throughout Europe, Latin America, and Asia. The Spanish novelist Marcial Lafuente Estefanía (1903–1984) wrote over 2,000 Western novels that circulated throughout the Spanish-speaking world, from Spain to Venezuela to



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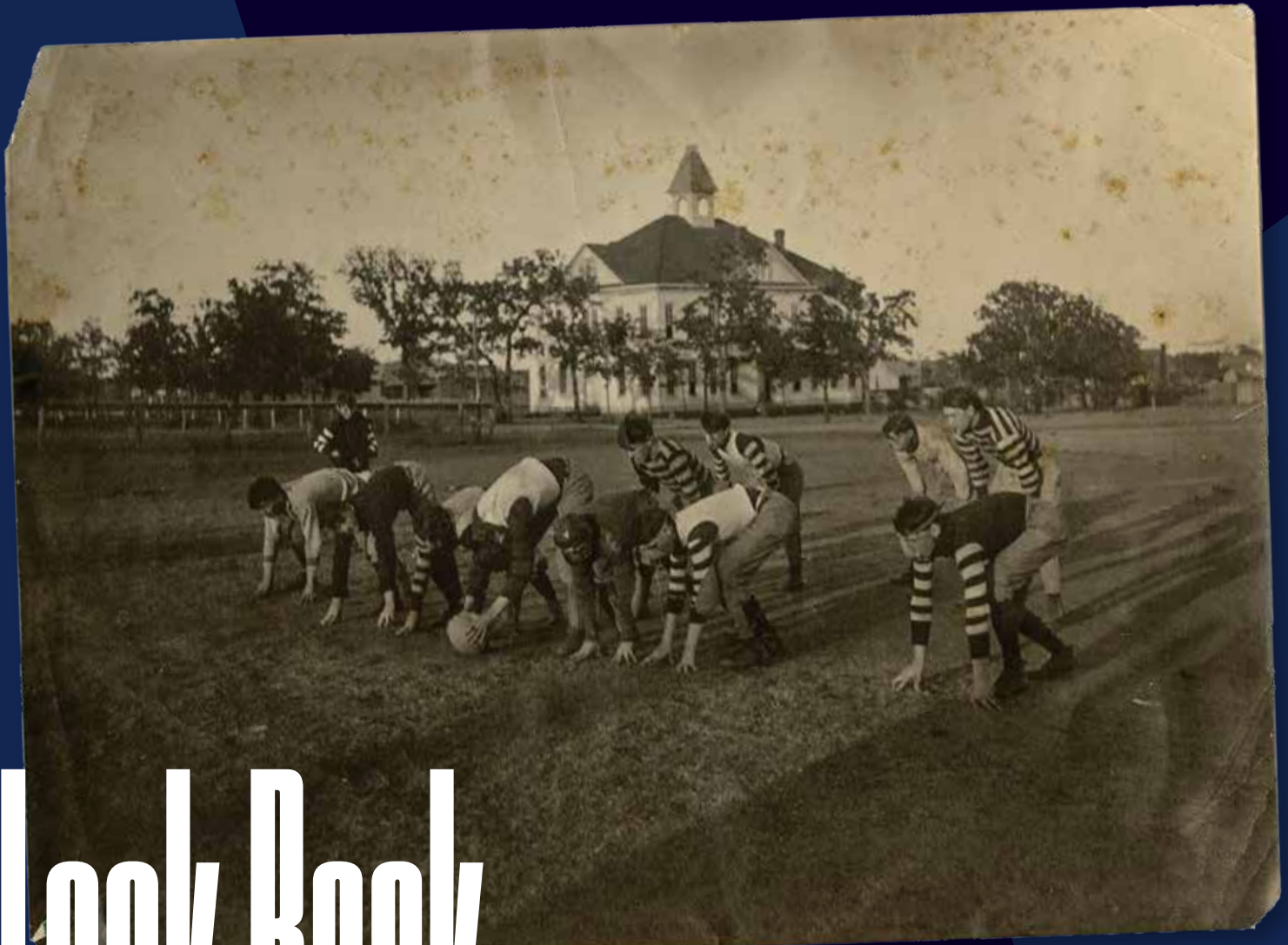


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Look Back

Training mind and body

At the Carlisle Military Academy—one of the earliest iterations of UT Arlington—sports education was an integral part of the educational experience. The school's founder, Col. James M. Carlisle, believed that in addition to the regulations of military life, regular physical activity would help instill discipline in his cadets. Here, Academy students play football on campus in the early 1900s.