

A DEAN'S ROADMAP TO DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION: THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON LAW CENTER AS A TEMPLATE FOR SUCCESS

*Leonard M. Baynes**

INTRODUCTION

DIVERSITY is a bedrock principle, grounded in the equality provisions of the Fourteenth Amendment. Our justice system depends on people from all backgrounds to preserve democracy and further the rule of law. Absence of diverse representation calls into question the objectivity and credibility of legal decisions by courts, juries, prosecutors, and others. Moreover, studies show that more diverse and inclusive groups make better decisions.¹ Since the 1970s, many law schools have followed the Harvard University admissions plan and have considered diversity as one of many factors in their decisions to admit students.

Diversity is widely accepted. For instance, in the litigation leading up to the oral argument in the *Grutter* case, corporate executives and military officers submitted amicus briefs highlighting the importance of diversity to their professions.² The majority of the Supreme Court has also consistently noted the importance of diversity in education by pointing out that students from different backgrounds learn from each other in the classroom. Let us do a thought experiment. Imagine teaching a class on bilingual education where none of the students were bilingual speakers. How can the class have a full conversation about this topic without bilingual students describing their personal experiences? Without these students' participation, the classroom discussion would be purely an anodyne and academic exercise. Similarly, imagine a class devoted to policing practices in urban environments. Would a professor have a complete conversation about these practices without the participation of those who have experienced

* Dean and Professor of Law, the University of Houston Law Center, J.D.-M.B.A. Columbia University; B.S. New York University in Finance and Economics, recipient of New York State Bar Diversity Trailblazer Award in 2010; recognized as one of the 100 most influential lawyers of color in 2015. During my service as Dean, the University of Houston Law Center has been recognized nationwide three times for outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion by INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine. Many thanks to my research assistants for their tireless efforts, hard work, and production of earlier drafts of the University of Houston Law Center's diversity efforts: Anita Liu, Andrew T. Lindinger, and Rachael E. Stuhr. In addition, many thanks to Carrie A. Criado, John Kling, and Luana Gearing who copy edited earlier drafts of this manuscript.

1. Erik Larson, *New Research: Diversity + Inclusion = Better Decision Making at Work*, FORBES (Sept. 21, 2017, 2:18 PM), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/eriklarson/2017/09/21/new-research-diversity-inclusion-better-decision-making-at-work/#95431264cbfa>.

2. *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306, 330-31 (2003).

them? It is one thing to read about someone alleging that the police unfairly roughed him up. It is a whole other circumstance when a classmate recounts how it happened to him.

Since 1974, diversity has repeatedly been challenged at the Supreme Court. Despite these challenges, the Court has held public universities can use race as one of many factors in making admissions decisions under the strict scrutiny standard.³ Instead of overturning the use of race in admissions decisions, the Supreme Court has given guidance how constitutionally to structure these practices. In a recent Supreme Court decision, *Fisher v. University of Texas*, Justice Kennedy, writing for the majority, found the University of Texas's affirmative action policies to be constitutional, as the policies were narrowly tailored and satisfied a compelling governmental interest.⁴ Justice Kennedy deferred to the University of Texas's rationale to pursue student body diversity, but granted no judicial deference for the determination of whether the use of race in the admission process is narrowly tailored.

The majority upheld the measurability of the University's diversity-associated goals including "the destruction of stereotypes," "cross-racial understanding," preparing students for "an increasingly diverse workforce and society," and developing "leaders with legitimacy in the eyes of the citizenry."⁵ The Court also found that there was sufficient evidence to show that race-neutral policies and increased outreach efforts failed to achieve these goals. In conclusion, the majority mandated that the University of Texas continuously use available data "to assess whether changing demographics have undermined the need for a race-conscious policy; and to identify the effects, both positive and negative, of the affirmative-action measures it deems necessary."⁶

Justice Thomas dissented because he considered that any racial classification or grouping is demeaning toward those individuals and that doing so in any capacity, even for a presumed benefit, should not be allowed.⁷ Justice Alito also dissented because he thought that the University of Texas did not identify with enough specificity the "educational benefits of diversity."⁸

We are in the midst of another trend in challenging the constitutionality of affirmative action policies in higher education. The Department of Justice and the Department of Education sent an email to universities announcing that it was withdrawing the Obama Administration's Guidance on the voluntary use of race to achieve diversity in higher education.⁹ In addition, a group called Students for Fair Admissions brought suit against Harvard University arguing that it illegally

3. *Id.* at 323-25 (requiring classifications based on race or ethnic background be narrowly tailored to further compelling government interests). See also *DeFunis v. Odegaard*, 416 U.S. 312 (1974). But see *Regents of the Univ. of Cal. v. Bakke*, 438 U.S. 265 (1978); *Gratz v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 244 (2003).

4. *Fisher v. Univ. of Tex.*, 136 S. Ct. 2198, 2214 (2016).

5. *Id.* at 2211.

6. *Id.* at 2214-15.

7. *Id.* at 2215 (Thomas, J., dissenting).

8. *Id.* at 2220 (Alito, J., dissenting).

9. E-mail from U.S. Department of Education to University of Houston (July 3, 2018) (on file with author).

uses “racial balancing” in admitting students and as a result intentionally discriminates against Asian-American applicants.¹⁰ The suit also alleges that, “Harvard neither gave serious, good faith consideration to nor took advantage of workable race-neutral alternatives.”¹¹ The University maintains that its “admissions process reviews each applicant as a whole person, using race flexibly and as only one factor among many.”¹² Concomitant with this suit, the U.S. Justice Department has also opened a probe into the role of race in Harvard’s admissions policies to determine whether it was complying with the 1964 Civil Rights Act.¹³ Despite these most recent challenges, the Supreme Court consistently held that affirmative action programs in higher education are constitutional if they are narrowly tailored. Despite these challenges, it is important to note that many of the practices to increase diversity in law school admissions make smart business sense, as the percentage of college age students from diverse backgrounds constitutes an even more increasing majority of the population.

A dean should have a vision of his or her diversity objectives.¹⁴ To achieve this vision, it would be helpful if the dean acts as a “servant leader,” a style of leadership first identified by Robert K. Greenleaf in his 1970 essay *The Servant as Leader*.¹⁵ Greenleaf explained that the difference between the servant leader and other leaders is that the servant leader “make[s] sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served,” that those being led grow as persons, and that organizations and communities are subsequently improved.¹⁶ Through such leadership and inclusive vision, communities can be healed.

Adopting the servant style of leadership would help implement any plan to further diversity. First, to be a servant leader in this context, one must put oneself in the shoes of others. Being broadly inclusive beyond race and gender promotes empathy and common understanding in many aspects of humanity. Second, it is vital to recognize our implicit biases and work to overcome them. It is instrumental to recognize that these issues are not about you as dean, but about the overall good of the law school community and society.¹⁷

10. Bill Chappell, *Harvard Accused of ‘Racial Balancing’: Lawsuit Says Asian-Americans Treated Unfairly*, NPR (June 15, 2018, 2:44 PM), <https://www.npr.org/2018/06/15/620368377/harvard-accused-of-racial-balancing-lawsuit-says-asian-americans-treated-unfairly>.

11. *Id.*

12. *Id.*

13. *Id.*

14. E.g., *Read Law School Dean’s Letter on Diversity Initiatives*, CHI. MAROON (Feb. 12, 2018), <https://www.chicagomaroon.com/article/2018/2/13/read-law-school-dean-letter-diversity-initiatives/> (University of Chicago Dean Thomas Miles highlights six areas of diversity that he University of Chicago Law School will focus on. They include: “(1) faculty diversity; (2) admissions and student recruitment; (3) reassessing the Law School’s art work; (4) the appointment of a director for diversity and inclusion; (5) working to promote meaningful opportunities for students to engage in dialogues with one another across ideological and other boundaries; and (6) working to promote the values of civil discourse and the norms of professionalism as a central part of the student experience.”).

15. ROBERT K. GREENLEAF, *THE SERVANT AS LEADER* 1-2 (2d ed. 1991).

16. *Id.* at 7.

17. Donald G. Gifford, *Leadership in Legal Education Symposium: How Does the Dean Resemble the Islets of Langerhans?* 31 U. TOL. L. REV. 599, 600 (2000) (analogizing a law school

Diversity, especially when it comes to race, can be a sensitive and contested subject. However, just about every law school's website describes its commitment to diversity. Most, if not all, law schools admit diverse students or hire diverse faculty candidates who are well credentialed and at the top of their classes. The challenge, though, is many law schools chase after the same high-performing applicants and faculty candidates.¹⁸ When they invariably do not recruit them, the common refrain is "we just can't find them or if we do find them they go elsewhere." Instead of this way of thinking, it is more important to recognize that law schools have the power to change this dynamic. An inclusive environment where members of underrepresented groups want to go to law school and where faculty want to teach will increase a school's odds of attracting these diverse candidates. For many members of these underrepresented groups, they do not want to be in a law school where they are the only one or where they feel that they are excluded. They want to be in a place where they are accepted and they do not have to carry the responsibilities of their race, ethnicity, or gender. It has been well documented that women faculty and faculty members of color are asked to perform many tasks that are not asked of majority faculty. Those representing these groups are often asked to serve on certain law school committees so the committees are inclusive as well as appear more diverse. They are also asked by underrepresented student groups to provide advice and support for their organizations.¹⁹ The extra tasks that are not asked of majority and male faculty can lead to dissatisfaction and burn out the underrepresented faculty. The literature describes these additional tasks as "academic housekeeping."²⁰ It is important to keep this in mind when assigning these faculty members tasks and assignments. It also is important to remember more faculty diversity should balance the load for the existing diverse faculty. Also, keep in mind that every member of the faculty, staff, student body, and alumni network are part of the mosaic of your particular institution. Each member should be acknowledged and appreciated. In doing so, members of diverse communities will find your institution of greater interest.²¹

dean to the Islets of Langerhans in the human pancreas because the dean "[s]ustains the law school community by enabling the 'cells' ... [i.e., faculty, students, and programs] to use resources; [m]onitors the external environment and leads the law school in responding to changing conditions; and [p]reserves balance and harmony within the law school organism.").

18. Paul L. Caron & Rafael Gely, *What Law Schools Can Learn from Billy Beane and the Oakland Athletics*, 82 TEX. L. REV. 1483, 1495-96 (2004) (citing MICHAEL LEWIS, *MONEYBALL: THE ART OF WINNING AN UNFAIR GAME* 115 (2003)) ("Rather than recoil at the prospect of selecting players that other teams undervalued, [the general manager] leapt at the chance to outmaneuver his tradition-bound competitors ... '[because] when you rule out an entire class of people from doing a job simply by their appearance, you are less likely to find the best person for the job.'").

19. *See id.*

20. *See generally The Careers of Women Faculty Members Are Burdened by "Academic Housekeeping Chores"*, WIA REPORT (Oct. 5, 2017) <https://www.wiareport.com/2017/10/careers-women-faculty-members-burdened-academic-housekeeping-chores/>.

21. Kevin R. Johnson, *The Importance of Student and Faculty Diversity in Law Schools: One Dean's Perspective*, 96 IOWA L. REV. 1549, 1573 (2011) (noting that some "large donors ... express much interest in giving to a law school based on the relative access of the school in achieving a diverse student body and faculty.").

As dean, I am proud that INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine has recognized the University of Houston Law Center three years in a row for outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion.²² In 2017, the Law Center was one of only five law schools and one of only 85 recipients of the 2017 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (“HEED”) Award.²³ In 2018, the Law Center has the distinction of being the only law school recognized with the HEED Award.²⁴ The HEED Award is “the only national award honoring institutions for their efforts on behalf of diversity.”²⁵ This distinction signifies that outside validators recognize what the Law Center has accomplished.²⁶ This article shares with you some things that you as dean, as well as your law school, can do to reach your diversity and inclusion goals. Some things cost very little, like making sure that conferences, speakers, and events include people from diverse backgrounds. Others, like the Law Center’s Pre-Law Pipeline Program,²⁷ are quite costly, but have maximum impact.

To implement diversity at your law school, it is important to explore your school’s history.²⁸ Determine who the graduate or faculty member was to achieve the distinction of being the first of that milestone among the different racial, ethnic, and other groups. Recognize them. In doing so, the law school community will remember and honor its unique history. If these trailblazers are still alive, invite them back to tell their stories. Document their history on the web with videos or photos. These actions will send a signal to diverse communities that the law school appreciates their contributions and recognizes their accomplishments. It also allows the law school to remain in touch with its history of exclusion, learn how it overcame that history, and celebrate its success in doing so. It is also likely to demonstrate that although the world has changed dramatically in terms of representation of the underrepresented, the changes at each law school are fairly recent.

22. Greg Ortiz, UH Moment: *University of Houston Receives Top Honors for Diversity*, HOUS. PUB. MEDIA (Nov. 30, 2016, 6:30 AM), <https://www.houstonpublicmedia.org/articles/shows/uh-moment/2016/11/30/179085/uh-moment-university-of-houston-receives-top-honors-for-diversity/>.

23. *Diversity Magazine Recognizes UH Law Center for Second Year in a Row*, U. HOUS. L. CTR. (Sept. 12, 2017), <http://www.law.uh.edu/news/fall2017/0912Diversity.asp>. The Law Center shared this distinction with the University of Houston and the University of Houston College of Nursing. Ortiz, *supra* note 22. The University of Houston was the first university to receive three HEED Awards at the same time, and to receive the three awards at the same time for three years in a row. *Learn, Live, and Work*, INSIGHT INTO DIVERSITY, Nov. 2018, at 45, <http://www.insightintodiversity.com/wp-content/media/issues/november2018.pdf>. See also Email from Lenore Pearlstein, Publisher, INSIGHT into Diversity (Feb. 9, 2019) (on file with author).

24. *Recipients of the 2018 Insight into Diversity Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award*, INSIGHT INTO DIVERSITY, Nov. 2018, at 58, <http://www.insightintodiversity.com/wp-content/media/issues/november2018.pdf>.

25. *Diversity Magazine Recognizes UH Law Center for Second Year in a Row*, *supra* note 23.

26. It does not mean that we have gotten everything right or that we have not made mistakes.

27. *Diversity Magazine Recognizes UH Law Center for Second Year in a Row*, *supra* note 23.

28. David S. Walker, *Teaching and Learning Professionalism in the First Year with Some Thoughts of the Role of the Dean*, 40 U. TOL. L. REV. 421, 447 (2009) (“[A law school’s story] draws on the school’s history and its leading figures, past and present, to show a path over time by which obstacles were overcome and important goals accomplished, and it suggests how leaders of the community and its members can do so in the future.”).

Like many law schools, the University of Houston Law Center has an early history of excluding students based on race, along with other factors.²⁹ The Law Center transcended its early history and established a long legacy of educating students who have been pioneers in their communities. For instance, Justice Ruby Kless Sondock was the valedictorian of the 1962 graduating class, which included only a handful of women.³⁰ She went on to become the first woman to serve on the Supreme Court of Texas in its regular session.³¹ In 1970, James Lemond was the first African American to graduate from the Law Center,³² but only after the University of Houston became a part of the state of Texas's system of higher education in 1963, which required previously segregated schools to desegregate to receive state funding.³³ Mr. Lemond later became the first African American partner at the prominent Texas law firm; Winstead PC Raul Gonzalez was the child of migrant farm workers from Mexico and worked in the fields as a youth.³⁴ He graduated from the Law Center in 1966, and in 1984 became the first justice of Hispanic/Latinx descent to serve on the Supreme Court of Texas.³⁵ In the late 1970s, Phyllis Frye transitioned from male to female and was out while a student at the Law Center; she went on to become the first openly transgender judge in U.S. history.³⁶ Rehan Alimohammad, a partner at Wong Fleming, graduated from the Law Center in 2001. He served as the Chair of the Board for the State Bar of Texas from June 2017 to June 2018, the first Asian American and immigration attorney to serve in this capacity.³⁷

Maybe your law school's history of ending exclusion is more recent; maybe it had many pitfalls. Learning this history may help identify the obstacles to diversity at your law school. From there, keeping this history in mind will provide an informed, personalized perspective on forging the path forward and towards diversity and inclusion.

In the upcoming sections, you will see some of the programs that the University of Houston Law Center implemented and the thinking behind them. First presented are initiatives that aim to promote diversity and inclusion prior to law school. Such programs work to draw in nontraditional student populations and provide essential tools and inspiration for students as they set their sights on a legal

29. JOHN MIXON, *AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A LAW SCHOOL* 103, 193 (2012).

30. *The Year of Justice Ruby Kless Sondock '62*, U. HOUS. L. CTR. (2015), <http://www.law.uh.edu/Sondock/> (last visited Feb. 10, 2019).

31. *Id.*

32. *UHLIC's Black Law Students Association Honors Jim Lemond '70, the School's First African-American Graduate*, U. HOUS. L. CTR. (Oct. 26, 2016), <http://www.law.uh.edu/news/fall2016/1026BLSA.asp>.

33. MIXON, *supra* note 29, at 192-94.

34. *Justices of Texas 1836-1986: Raul A. Gonzalez, Jr. (b.1940)*, JAMAIL CTR. FOR LEGAL RES., TEX. LAW, <https://tarltonapps.law.utexas.edu/justices/profile/view/38> (last visited Feb. 10, 2019).

35. MIXON, *supra* note 29, at 462.

36. Deborah Sontag, *Once a Pariah: Now a Judge: The Early Transgender Journey of Phyllis Frye*, N.Y. TIMES (Aug. 29, 2015, 5:22 PM), www.nytimes.com/2015/08/30/us/transgender-judge-phyllis-fryes-early-transformative-journey.html.

37. *Sugar Land Attorney Elected State Bar of Texas Board Chair*, TEX. BAR BLOG (Apr. 21, 2017), <https://blog.texasbar.com/2017/04/articles/state-bar/sugar-land-attorney-elected-state-bar-of-texas-board-chair/>.

education. Next, programs that focus on students while they are in law school are described. These programs have proven essential to supporting and retaining diverse student populations once they reach the Law Center. LGBTQ-specific and religion-specific initiatives are also discussed. Later, this article discusses several programs that serve to connect law students and alumni to the Houston community and promote an understanding and appreciation for the diversity of the law school's dynamic surrounding community. Finally, the article closes with a discussion of initiatives that bolster strong, lasting relationships among Law Center alumni, prominent attorneys, and potential mentors after graduation.

I. PRIOR TO LAW SCHOOL

The legal profession has suffered an almost ten-year decline in admissions.³⁸ Moreover, the pool of applicants with the higher LSAT scores, during this period, has declined in both numerosity and percentage of total LSAT takers.³⁹ In the 2017-2018 admissions cycle, there was an increase in LSAT test takers and applicants.⁴⁰ Some commentators have called this increase the "Trump Bump," given the increased recognition of the need for lawyers and the importance of the rule of law.⁴¹ Although there has been a national increase in LSAT test takers and applicants, the increase has not been uniform across the U.S.⁴² In the South Central region where Houston is located, the applicant increase has been much more modest.⁴³ Moreover, given the downturn, we must always be cautious about expanding the size of our classes beyond the demand for lawyers in the job market. Given this past decline and the expected changing demographics of the applicant pool, it is important to consider ways to increase the number of highly qualified applicants. This can be done through outreach and pipeline programs.

The goal of some of the following programs that start before law school is to inspire students to go to law schools and increase their interest in the study of law. For other programs, the goal is also to give students the tangible skills to be more successful law school applicants. These programs can focus on elementary, junior high school, high school, and undergraduate students, although programs directed at college students have the immediate impact in terms of applications. The

38. Ethan Bronner, *Law Schools' Application Falls as Costs Rise and Jobs Are Cut*, N.Y. TIMES (Jan. 30, 2013), <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/31/education/law-schools-applications-fall-as-costs-rise-and-jobs-are-cut.html>.

39. Paul L. Caron & Kellye Y. Testy, *Caron & Testy: The Quantity and Quality of Law School Applicants*, TAXPROF BLOG (July 10, 2017), http://taxprof.typepad.com/taxprof_blog/2017/07/caron-testycorrected-data-the-quantity-and-quality-of-law-school-applicants.html.

40. Eric Ockert, *The Surge Continues: Surprising Trends for This Year's Law School Applicants*, LSAT & L. SCH. ADMISSIONS BLOG (Apr. 10, 2018), <https://blog.powerscore.com/lsat/the-surge-continues-surprising-trends-for-this-years-law-school-applicants>.

41. Stephanie F. Ward, *The 'Trump Bump' for Law School Applicants Is Real and Significant, Survey Says*, A.B.A. J. (Feb. 22, 2018, 6:00 AM), http://www.abajournal.com/news/article/the_trump_bump_for_law_school_applicants_is_real_and_significant_survey_say.

42. Ockert, *supra* note 40.

43. *Id.*

program can target at a small group of students within specific groups or they can cast a much wider net to attract as many students as possible.

Moreover, these programs are more effective than traditional admissions fairs in reaching potential law student applicants. With these fairs, the pool is very random and there are too many unknowns. Yes, it includes students who are interested in law school, but have they taken the LSAT? If so, is their score within your school's range of acceptance? Are the students seniors, juniors, sophomores, or freshmen? A more focused recruiting method through pipeline programs is more effective in forging a deeper bond with the students by helping them achieve their goals. These pipeline programs also allow us to get to know students well, which helps us make a more fully informed decision on whether to admit them. The following is a list and description of some of the Law Center's programs.

A. Diversity Matters Day (formerly Discover Law Day Programs)

For several years, the Law Center has held a Diversity Matters Day, which is financially supported by the Law School Admissions Council ("LSAC").⁴⁴ Diversity Matters Day provides a great deal of inspiration to students from racially and ethnically diverse high schools and colleges. While on campus, the students discover the benefits of a legal education. Through this event, these high school and undergraduate students are given tangible and critical information on the law school application process, what law school is like, and what they need to succeed in law school as well as the benefits of becoming a lawyer.⁴⁵ They are provided networking opportunities as well as a sense of community at an event with "like-minded peers from similar ethnic and cultural backgrounds."⁴⁶ Students also attend a mock law class and participate in a Q&A session with the dean.⁴⁷ Through Diversity Matters Day, the students learn about how a legal education can positively influence their lives, the lives of their families, and society overall. By planting these seeds while they are in high school or college, the students better appreciate what it takes to become a lawyer and are encouraged to continue to pursue academic excellence in order to achieve it.

B. Street Law

Street Law is a 40-year-old program that develops classroom and community programs that educate young people about law and government.⁴⁸ In 2016, the Center for Children, Law & Policy at the Law Center established the Street Law

44. *Law Schools: LSAC Diversity Matters Grants*, LSAC, <https://www.lsac.org/members.lsac-grant-programs/lvac-diversity-matters-grants> (last visited Feb. 10, 2019).

45. *Pre-Law Students Take Part in Discover Law Day 2016 at UHLC*, U. HOUS. L. CTR. (Feb. 10, 2019), www.law.uh.edu/news/spring2016/0210Discover.asp.

46. *Id.*

47. *Id.*

48. *History*, STREET LAW, INC., <https://www.streetlaw.org/who-we-are/history> (last visited Aug. 15, 2018).

Program.⁴⁹ Since its inception, Law Center students have taught over 550 local high school students; they have also developed lesson plans and administered tests for the program.⁵⁰ The law school student teachers also educate the high school students on the skills necessary to participate in a mock trial competition.⁵¹ In addition, Law Center professors lecture on legal matters in mock classes.

The Street Law Program provides the ethnically and racially diverse high school students with an opportunity to be exposed to legal education and to start thinking about law school very early in their educational career.⁵² The experience improves Law Center students' ability to convey legal concepts and strengthens their organizational and time management skills as well as cultural competency in interacting with diverse populations.

C. UHLC Pre-Law Pipeline Programs for Undergraduate Students

Through the initial, generous financial support of the Provost and now partially funded by LSAC, the Law Center established the award-winning⁵³ UHLC Pre-Law Pipeline Program for undergraduate students.⁵⁴ This program provides both inspiration and the skills necessary for the students to succeed. The Law Center's Pre-Law Pipeline Program furthers the Law Center's commitment to increase diversity of law graduates by providing law school preparatory resources in the form of "LSAT preparation, introductory law school classes, internships, and professional development sessions."⁵⁵ This program is available to undergraduate students who are "first-generation, low income, or members of groups underrepresented in the legal profession"⁵⁶ who have a minimum 3.0 cumulative undergraduate GPA, although the median undergraduate GPA of those participating is 3.6.⁵⁷ The students are racially and ethnically diverse. Approximately 49% of the participating students are African American, 34% Latinx/Hispanic, 10% white, and 6% Asian American.⁵⁸ They are geographically diverse. Although about 70% are Texas residents, the other 30% are students from across the U.S.⁵⁹

49. *High Schoolers Show Their Legal Skills at UH Law Center 'Street Law' Mock Trial Competition*, U. HOUS. L. CTR. (Mar. 26, 2018), <http://www.law.uh.edu/news/spring2018/0326StreetLaw.asp>.

50. *Id.*

51. *Id.*

52. *UHLC's Street Law Class Gives High School Students Chance to Showcase Trial Skills*, U. HOUS. L. CTR. (Apr. 21, 2016), <http://www.law.uh.edu/news/spring2016/0421Street.asp>.

53. *Regents Honor UHLC Pre-Law Pipeline Program with 'Excellence' Award*, U. HOUS. L. CTR. (Aug. 29, 2016), <http://www.law.uh.edu/news/fall2016/0829Pipeline.asp>.

54. *UHLC Pre-Law Pipeline Program*, U. HOUS. L. CTR., <http://www.law.uh.edu/pipeline/about.asp> (last visited Aug. 12, 2018).

55. *Id.*

56. *Id.*

57. Statistics on file with author.

58. *Id.*

59. *Id.*

In 2015, the Law Center and the University of Houston Honors College entered into a memorandum of understanding that created the 3+3 Program.⁶⁰ Through this program, outstanding high school students are admitted to the Honors College and obtain their undergraduate degree and law degree in six years instead of seven.⁶¹ Upon completion of the first year of law school, students earn a degree in Liberal Studies, with a minor in *Phronesis*,⁶² the study of law, ethics and politics, and a second minor of their choice from the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences.⁶³ After completing their first year in college, the 3+3 students also participate in the Pre-Law Pipeline Program, which provides them with the same resources as the other Pre-Law Pipeline students. The only difference in the programs is that the 3+3 students enroll in the pipeline program after completing their freshman year in college whereas the other pipeline program students enroll in the program after completing their sophomore year of college.

During the first summer participating in the program, the curriculum consists of a wide array of law school classes taught by UHLC faculty and internships at corporate law firms, government organizations, and public interest organizations located in the greater Houston area. For eight weeks during their second summer, the students prepare for the LSAT eight hours a day for five days a week. They also receive assistance in writing their personal statements and applying to law school.

The participating students have “experienced a 9-point average score increase and an 11-point median score increase after four diagnostic LSAT exams.”⁶⁴ Twenty-one percent of the pipeline students are enrolled or accepted into law school.⁶⁵ That totals about 20 students who might not have gone to law school without the Law Center’s help. There will be four graduates of the Pipeline Program enrolled at the Law Center for the 2018-2019 academic year, not including the three 3+3 Honors College students who were admitted in the fall 2018 entering class. Given that the program starts while the students are in their sophomore year (or freshman year in the case of the 3+3 students), more members of the cohort are expected to enroll in law school as time goes on.

While it is an aim that Pre-Law Pipeline students might enroll at the Law Center, that is not the primary purpose of the program. In fact, the majority of students who complete the program enroll at law schools other than the University of Houston.⁶⁶ The program seeks to diversify the legal field on a macro level and is succeeding on that front. Overall, the Pre-Law Pipeline Program seeks to

60. 3+3 Undergraduate/Law Dual Degree Program, U. HOUS., <http://uh.edu/honors/Programs-Minors/curricular-programs/3law-program/> (last visited Feb. 10, 2019).

61. *Id.*

62. *Phronesis*, U. HOUS., <http://uh.edu/honors/Programs-Minors/honors-minors/phronesis/> (last visited Dec. 31, 2018).

63. 3+3 Undergraduate/Law Dual Degree Program, *supra* note 60.

64. Regents Honor UHLC Pre-Law Pipeline Program with ‘Excellence’ Award, *supra* note 53.

65. Statistics on file with author.

66. Angela Morris, *Entering its Fourth Year, the Award-Winning University of Houston’s Pre-Law Center Is Just Getting Started*, TEX. LAW. (May 1, 2018, 6:00 AM), <https://www.law.com/texaslawyer/2018/05/01/entering-its-fourth-year-the-award-winning-university-of-houstons-pre-law-center-is-just-getting-started>.

“promote school-life balance, the importance of self-care ... exercising and mental health, along with the rigorous academic curriculum ... to shape them mentally, physically and emotionally to be prepared for law school.”⁶⁷ This program also fosters friendships and professional networks among the participating students.

The proof of its success lies in the increase in the number of law school students admitted to law schools who have been assisted by this effort and who are succeeding. Although we are encouraged that the LSAC funded pre-law undergraduate pipeline programs at eight other law schools,⁶⁸ there would be a much higher impact on diversity in the legal profession if more law schools were able to support these kinds of programs.

D. National Admissions Fairs

The University of Houston Law Center has hosted two national pre-law conferences “to provide African American and Hispanic/Latinx aspiring lawyers with information, resources, and contacts needed to succeed in law school.”⁶⁹ Opening up the Law Center to these kinds of conferences demonstrates a public commitment to diversity. Moreover, by hosting these conferences, those who attend are exposed to what our Law Center has to offer in the hopes that they may consider applying. There is also power in seeing those who are like you succeed, and hosting these conferences hopefully inspires belief in these students that it is possible to achieve their goals.

To the extent that the Law Center participates in admissions fairs (besides those focused on African Americans and Hispanics/Latinx), it also informs eligible students about the Pre-Law Pipeline Program. It is a great way to be able to offer more opportunities to students who actually attend these fairs, especially those who may not be ready to apply to law school.

E. Application Process

The Law Center also advises students that they can submit an optional Diversity and Inclusion Statement,⁷⁰ along with the traditional personal statement required for their application.⁷¹ The incorporation of the diversity and inclusion statement fosters an open, welcoming student environment signaling collaboration across different cultures and backgrounds. Research has shown that a “racially diverse law student body provides educational benefits for students, for their

67. Tiffany Pennamon, *An Advocate for Student Success Along the Law Pipeline*, DIVERSE EDUC. (Jan. 29, 2018), <http://diverseeducation.com/article/109117/>.

68. *Prelaw Undergraduate Scholars (PLUS) Programs*, LSAC, <https://www.lsac.org/discover-law/diversity-law-school/prelaw-undergraduate-scholars-plus-programs> (last updated Feb. 10, 2019). The list also includes the St. John’s School of Law Ronald H. Brown Prep Program of which this author was proudly the inaugural director for approximately ten years.

69. *UH Law Center to Host Black and Hispanic Pre-Law Conferences Nov. 13-14*, U. HOUS. L. CTR. (Nov. 6, 2015), <http://www.law.uh.edu/news/fall2015/1106pre-law.asp>.

70. *Application Instructions*, U. HOUS. L. CTR., <https://www.law.uh.edu/admissions/application-instructions.asp> (last visited Aug. 16, 2018).

71. *Id.*

institution, and for society, especially if there is significant interaction among students from diverse backgrounds.”⁷²

In making admissions decisions, the Law Center takes traditional metrics, such as LSAT scores and undergraduate GPAs, into account but also engages in a holistic analysis considering a variety of other factors.⁷³ Statistics demonstrate that these kinds of inclusive admissions processes have increased the percentage of Juris Doctorate diplomas awarded nationally to minorities from 8.6% to 25.5% from 1984 to 2013,⁷⁴ respectively. About 22 law schools are now accepting the GRE in its admissions decision of prospective students, in addition to the LSAT.⁷⁵ This should help increase applications from students who cannot afford to take both the LSAT and the GRE as well as to students who do not want to take multiple standardized tests to apply to graduate school or law school.⁷⁶

II. STUDENTS WHILE THEY ARE IN LAW SCHOOL

A. Diverse Faculty and Staff Support Diverse Students

The Pre-Law Program, Discover Law Day, and other programs and events are all designed to increase law school enrollment and applications. However, having a diverse faculty and staff is crucial in attracting and retaining diverse students. One study found that, “Due to stoppages in the educational pipeline, failure in recruiting and retention efforts, and hostile environments that lack meaningful pathways to promotion and tenure, African Americans are still underrepresented on the faculty and within the administration” of many institutions.⁷⁷

At other law schools, “the small number of Asians and the lack of an equal percentage of women in the faculty ranks are perhaps the most pronounced disparity” when compared to the student body.⁷⁸ Without critical mass, a law

72. Charles E. Daye, A. T. Panter, Walter R. Allen & Linda F. Wightman, *Does Race Matter in Educational Diversity? A Legal and Empirical Analysis*, 13 RUTGERS RACE & L. REV. 75, 76 (2012).

73. University of Houston Law Center—Law School Frequently Asked Questions, U. HOUS. L. CTR., <http://www.law.uh.edu/admissions/faq.asp> (last visited Aug. 16, 2018).

74. Alice Pettway, *Law Schools Innovate to Recruit and Retain Underrepresented Students*, INSIGHT TO DIVERSITY, (June 26, 2017), <http://www.insightintodiversity.com/law-schools-innovate-to-recruit-and-retain-underrepresented-students/>.

75. Paul Caron, *NYU Is 22nd Law School to Accept GRE for Admissions*, TAXPROF BLOG (July 21, 2018), http://taxprof.typepad.com/taxprof_blog/2018/07/nyu-is-22nd-law-school-to-accept-gre-for-admissions.html.

76. Kelley Taylor, *Law Schools Change or Waive LSAT Admission Requirement to Expand Access to the Profession*, INSIGHT INTO DIVERSITY (July 7, 2017), <http://www.insightintodiversity.com/law-schools-change-or-waive-lsat-admission-requirement-to-expand-access-to-the-profession>.

77. Kamille Wolff, *From Pipeline to Pipe Dream: The HBCU Effect on Law School Deans of Color*, 14 J. GENDER RACE & JUST. 765, 768-69 (2011).

78. Chris Chambers Goodman & Sarah E. Redfield, *A Teacher Who Looks Like Me*, 27 J. C.R. & ECON. DEV. 105, 116 (2013).

school will have “lack of credibility” which will, “in turn, result in an inability to retain diverse teachers and faculty” continuing the cycle of exclusivity.⁷⁹

In terms of faculty, many of the trailblazers from underrepresented communities are currently on the Law Center faculty. Michael Olivas is the first tenured Hispanic/Latinx faculty member at the Law Center and holds the prestigious Bates Chair.⁸⁰ In 1996, Sandra Guerra Thompson became the first tenured female Hispanic/Latinx faculty member at the Law Center and “the first Latina tenured law professor in the State of Texas.”⁸¹ She holds the prestigious Blakely Chair. Elwin Lee, who now serves as the University of Houston’s Vice President of Community Relations, was the first tenured African American law professor at the Law Center and Meredith Duncan is the first tenured African American female law professor.⁸² Sapna Kumar became the first tenured Asian American woman law professor in 2014, Victor Flatt became the first openly LGBTQ tenured professor in 2002, and as of 2017, Assistant Professor Amanda Watson is the first female openly LGBTQ professor at the Law Center. I am proud to serve as the first African-American dean of the Law Center.

The Law Center has attempted to address the underrepresentation problem by hiring the most talented faculty from a wide variety of backgrounds. Roughly, 41% of the Law Center’s full-time tenured, tenure track, and promotion eligible non-tenure track faculty are women, and roughly, 16.9% of both full and non-full-time faculty are members of minority groups.⁸³ The more diverse the faculty is, the more likely that the institution will attract more diverse faculty and broader enrollment, better representation, livelier discourse, and more diverse programs. After all, “It is the business of a university to provide that atmosphere which is most conducive to speculation, experiment and creation.”⁸⁴

B. Programs to Support Current Students that Positively Affect Diversity

The Law Center also uses race- and gender-neutral initiatives, which are designed to help all students, but may have a diversity-enhancing effect. For example, we hold a reception for students in the top 30% of the class to celebrate their accomplishments after the first semester of their first year. Law school can be a very dispiriting experience for many students, especially after the first

79. *Id.* at 118.

80. *The University of Houston Law Center Faculty: Michael A. Olivas*, U. HOUS. L. CTR., <http://www.law.uh.edu/faculty/main.asp?PID=31> (last visited Jan. 1, 2019).

81. *The University of Houston Law Center Faculty: Sandra Guerra Thompson*, U. HOUS. L. CTR., <http://www.law.uh.edu/faculty/main.asp?PID=15> (last visited Jan. 1, 2019).

82. *Dr. Elwyn C. Lee*, U. HOUS., <http://www.uh.edu/about/leadership/senior-administration/elwyn-lee/> (last visited Feb. 10, 2019); *The University of Houston Law Center Faculty: Meredith J. Duncan*, U. HOUS. L. CTR., <http://www.law.uh.edu/faculty/main.asp?PID=13> (last visited Jan. 1, 2019).

83. These percentages are based on information from UHLC’s 2017 A.B.A. Standard 509 disclosures. See UNIV. OF HOUSTON, 2017 STANDARD 509 INFORMATION REPORT 1 (2017), <http://www.law.uh.edu/admissions/ABA/Std509InfoReport2017.pdf>

84. *Regents of the Univ. of Cal. v. Bakke*, 438 U.S. 265, 312 (1978) (citing *Sweezy v. New Hampshire*, 354 U.S. 234, 263 (1957) (Frankfurter, J., concurring)).

semester, when students get their grades. At many institutions including the Law Center, first-year courses are scored on a curve and follow a mandatory grade distribution. Students used to receiving all As may feel inadequate after the first semester when it is computationally impossible for all of them to receive As given the mandatory curve and grade distribution. Moreover, given the mandatory curve and grade distribution, students might find themselves in the top of the class without all As at some institutions. Many times after the first semester of their 1L year, students may not know how they are doing. For example, at the Law Center, if a student is in the top 30% of the class after the first year, he or she is eligible to write on to the *Houston Law Review*⁸⁵ as well as participate in the competition for the other law journals. This is important information for students to have, especially for students from underrepresented backgrounds.

Often no one congratulates the first year students on their performance, until the end of the first year, if at all. The top 30% reception came about in an effort to recognize these top students early in their academic careers. It was accompanied with the institution of a Dean's List designed to recognize top 30% performance after each semester at the Law Center. The Law Center has students of all backgrounds that are in the top 30% of the class. These students may be from racially and ethnically diverse or first-generation backgrounds; they may be LGBTQ students, they could be low-income students. Students from many of these backgrounds may not know how grading works or that by being in the top 30%, they are, in fact, at the top of the class. They need to be recognized and encouraged to continue to achieve even more success. At the event, the students are congratulated on their success but warned that they have only completed first semester and that 70% of the class is aiming to push them out of the top 30% by the end of the first academic year. The reception also allows the Law Center to identify the top performing students early in their career and mentor them while paying close attention to the special mentoring needs of those students from underrepresented backgrounds.

Similarly for students who might need more assistance in passing the bar exam on the first try, the Law Center established a class for students with certain law school GPAs as well as meeting other criteria. There is also a lottery for students not falling in this category to participate in the class. Statistical studies show students within a certain law school GPA range are likely to have more difficulty passing the bar exam on the first try.⁸⁶ The statistical study found the principal correlation with bar performance was law school grades, although many students at the Law Center with lower grades pass the bar exam on the first try.⁸⁷ This program is an in-class course for academic credit for students who fall into this category. It also includes workshops for students during the summer while they are taking a commercial bar exam course. I have guest lectured several classes

85. *The 2018 Write-On Competition Information*, HOUS. L. REV., <http://www.houstonlawreview.org/about/write-on-competition-2/> (last visited Aug. 16, 2018).

86. LINDA F. WIGHTMAN, LSAC NATIONAL LONGITUDINAL BAR PASSAGE STUDY 22-24 (1998), <https://lawschooltransparency.com/reform/projects/investigations/2015/documents/NLBPS.pdf>.

87. *Id.*; UNIV. OF HOUS. LAW CTR., OFFICIAL ABA DATA (2013), <https://www.law.uh.edu/admissions/ABALawSchoolDataforUniversityofHoustonLawCenter.htm>.

and workshops to teach the students the meaning of success and how to cope with bar exam stress. The students receive what I hope is an inspirational message that “they are all our students,” regardless of whether they are at the top, middle, or bottom of the class, and that we admitted them because we believe they will succeed. Like the top 30% reception and the Dean’s List, this class has no specific diversity component, but there are students from all backgrounds enrolled, and it has a valuable effect on the particular students from underrepresented backgrounds who may have no knowledge about how to study for, or succeed on, a bar exam.

III. RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

During the holiday seasons, the Dean’s Office is decorated with décor from different holidays around the world—ranging from Christmas, Hanukkah, Bodhi, Kwanzaa, Pancha Ganapati, and Yaldā. Incorporating these different cultures and faith traditions not only serves to highlight the Law Center’s appreciation for diversity, but also ensures that faculty, staff, and students feel welcome regardless of their religious or ethnic background. Furthermore, as a rule, we try not to organize or hold any major Law Center events on Judeo-Christian religious holidays. When there is a conflict, though, it is important to work toward providing accommodations for religious faith whenever possible. For example, when a Jewish Law Center student realized his graduation was taking place on a Saturday, the Jewish Shabbat, he initially chose not to attend the ceremony.⁸⁸ However, after discussion and further consideration, a solution was found.⁸⁹ The Law Center held a private ceremony just for him, his family, and friends; it was “complete with a processional, speeches, photos, and the traditional adorning of the Juris Doctor hood.”⁹⁰ By making graduation accommodations for this student, the Law Center was able to show that it respected and accepted other cultures and religions.

IV. LGBTQ DIVERSITY

As noted earlier, Phyllis Frye, the first transgender judge in the U.S., is an alumna of the Law Center.⁹¹ When Judge Frye applied to law school in 1978, wearing opposite-sex clothing was still a criminal offense in Houston.⁹² This ordinance and Judge Frye’s enrollment prompted faculty discussion about her application and admission to the Law Center.⁹³ The Law Center provided a couple of “lock for privacy” unisex bathrooms to accommodate Judge Frye, at a time

88. Faygie Levy Holt, *A Graduation Ceremony for One: Houston Law School’s Creative Shabbat Solution*, CHABAD NEWS (May 19, 2015, 11:50 AM), https://www.chabad.org/news/article_cdo/aid/2954549/jewish/A-Graduation-Ceremony-for-One-Houston-Law-Schools-Creative-Shabbat-Solution.htm.

89. *Id.*

90. *Id.*

91. Sontag, *supra* note 36.

92. Brandon Wolf, *Celebrating the Victory over Houston’s Cross-Dressing Ordinance*, OUTSMART MAG. (Aug. 1, 2015), <http://www.outsmartmagazine.com/2015/08/celebrating-the-victory-over-houstons-cross-dressing-ordinance/>.

93. MIXON, *supra* note 29, at 343.

when accessibility to bathrooms for transgender people was not a mainstream political issue.⁹⁴ To combat the harassment that she faced, Judge Frye's classmates organized a new campus group, Friends of Gays and Lesbians.⁹⁵ Moreover, Judge Frye cites 12 faculty and staff members who provided her with emotional support during the time that she was a student at the Law Center.⁹⁶

Today, the Law Center policy protects all students from discrimination including LGBTQ students. In accordance with ABA guidelines, we provide that all employers (unless otherwise exempt by law) who use our placement services must comply with our nondiscrimination policy "assuring that it is an equal-opportunity employer, offering employment without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, veteran status, genetic information, or disability."⁹⁷ Our LGBTQ students have a student group called Outlaw, which provides dialogue and discussion important to their community.⁹⁸

The Law Center also has two openly LGBTQ faculty members as part of its tenured or tenure track faculty. Professor Victor Flatt is a tenured faculty member who holds the prestigious Dwight Olds Chair of Law and is the Faculty Director of the Environment, Energy and Natural Resources Center and has previously served as Associate Dean of the Law Center.⁹⁹ Professor Amanda Watson is a tenure track faculty member who also serves as the Director of the O'Quinn Library.¹⁰⁰

V. ENGAGEMENT WITH THE COMMUNITY

It is important for law schools to be engaged in the community. Faculty, staff, and students of diverse backgrounds expect and look for law schools with affiliations that reflect that commitment. The following are some of the programs the Law Center has that facilitate engagement with the larger Houston community.

A. Community Service Programs

In 2014, the Law Center implemented Community Service Day.¹⁰¹ Annually, the Service Day draws entering first-year Law Center students into various parts

94. *Id.* at 344.

95. *Id.*

96. *Id.* at n.277.

97. *Non-Discrimination Statement*, CAREER DEV. OFF., U. HOUS. L. CTR., <http://www.law.uh.edu/career/policies/anti-discrimination.asp> (last visited Feb. 7, 2019).

98. *Student Organizations*, U. HOUS. L. CTR., <http://www.law.uh.edu/organizations/> (last visited Feb. 10, 2019).

99. *The University of Houston Law Center Faculty: Victor B. Flatt*, U. HOUS. L. CTR. <http://www.law.uh.edu/faculty/main.asp?PID=5215> (last visited Sept. 20, 2018).

100. *The University of Houston Law Center Faculty: Amanda Watson*, U. HOUS. L. CTR. <http://www.law.uh.edu/faculty/main.asp?PID=5216> (last visited Sept. 10, 2018).

101. *UH Law Center Lends a Hand*, U. HOUS. L. CTR. (Aug. 18, 2014), <http://www.law.uh.edu/news/summer2014/0818CommunityServiceDay.asp>.

of the community during orientation by performing community service projects.¹⁰² The Community Service Day project gives students the opportunity to serve a number of organizations and individuals in the Houston area and “to connect with ... each other,” allowing “each student to see his or her classmates, not as competitors, but as humanitarians.”¹⁰³

Many of the service projects have provided students with the rare occasion to participate in public interest legal work that affects diverse communities, even before taking a single class. For example, in 2014, students had the opportunity to help attorneys and immigrants in the Houston area with applications for “special legal status under the Obama Administration’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.”¹⁰⁴ Thirty students aided immigrants with a total of sixty renewals and initial applications.¹⁰⁵ In 2017, students similarly worked “to assist citizens in need ... who cannot afford legal representation” alongside attorneys at the Houston Volunteer Lawyers Legal Clinic in the Third Ward, a mostly minority section of Houston.¹⁰⁶ Students also worked with NAACP attorneys to circulate a petition to property owners on Dowling Street in Houston requesting a name change for the street, which was named after a Confederate soldier.¹⁰⁷ Dowling Street led directly to Emancipation Park, which, at one time, was the only municipal park available to African Americans in Houston.¹⁰⁸ The students’ petition was essential in bringing the matter to the Houston City Council, which ultimately voted in favor of the petition.¹⁰⁹ Community service projects such as these give voice to those who may otherwise be voiceless and expose students to the impact of compassionate representation.

Other service projects have been more practically focused, highlighting the value of and need for service generally and strengthening the bonds between students, the Law Center, and the surrounding community. These projects focus on teaching the value of being a responsible participant in society, both on an institutional and an individual level. One such project brought students to Beauty’s Community Garden in 2017 and 2018, where they contributed to the construction of new beds and clearing of weeds in already-existing beds. Beauty’s Community Garden exists in Independence Heights, a Houston community that qualifies as a food desert because of its dearth of affordable fresh fruits and vegetables.¹¹⁰ Another such project, which is also a regular part of the Community Service Day program, involves packaging and sorting food at the Houston Food Bank.

102. *Id.*

103. *Id.*

104. *Id.*

105. *Id.*

106. *UHLC First-Year Students Introduced to Legal Community with Service Projects*, U. HOUS. L. CTR. (Sept. 14, 2017), <http://www.law.uh.edu/news/fall2017/0914service.asp>.

107. *Houston’s Dowling Street to Be Renamed Emancipation Avenue*, HOUS. PUB. MEDIA (Jan. 12, 2017, 8:46AM), <https://www.houstonpublicmedia.org/articles/news/local/2017/01/12/183416/houstons-dowling-street-to-be-renamed-emancipation-avenue/>.

108. *Id.*

109. *Id.*

110. *UHLC First-Year Students Introduced to Legal Community with Service Projects*, *supra* note 106.

Students' participation at the Food Bank regularly leads to the preparation of over 10,000 pounds of food for those who seek nutritional assistance.¹¹¹ Projects such as these emphasize the individual power of students and institutional power of the Law Center positively to influence the surrounding community.

B. Global and Public Interest Fellowships

The Global and Public Interest fellowships provide Law Center students with stipends of up to \$4,000 for the summer to complete fellowships across the globe.¹¹² These fellowships provide students with exposure to the public interest legal community, thereby instilling an excitement about and a commitment to public service in students and graduates. The students are responsible for obtaining these fellowships. Over the past few years, Law Center students have held the following fellowships:

- U.S. Attorney's Office in Idaho
- United Nations in New York City
- Environmental Protection Agency in New York City
- Equal Employment Opportunities Commission in Washington, D.C.
- PEMEX in Mexico City
- Public Utility Commission in Alberta, Canada
- Green Tribunal Court in New Delhi in India.

They also have served in many other government and public interest organizations throughout Texas and the nation.¹¹³

These Fellowships can propel students towards a career path they would not have otherwise considered. The Fellowships also enhance the opportunities for students from diverse lower socioeconomic backgrounds to partake in these public interest opportunities because they receive a stipend for their participation. Many of these students would not be able to participate but for financial backing from the Law Center. Moreover, given the nature and subject matter of the global and public interest placement, they provide the students with opportunities to learn about legal issues affecting diverse communities. Lastly, public interest work is particularly vital in lower socioeconomic areas where people may not have access to adequate legal representation. Initiatives such as the Global and Public Interest Fellowships allow students to increase legal access to those in need, and although not expressly designed to facilitate diversity, have a salutary benefit on these communities.¹¹⁴

111. *UH Law Center Lends a Hand*, *supra* note 101.

112. *Global Fellowship Program—FAQ*, U. HOUS. L. CTR., <https://www.law.uh.edu/pil/Global-Fellowship-Program.asp#> (last visited Feb. 10, 2019).

113. *Id.*

114. *Id.*

C. Mentorship Programs

The Law Center has an Upper Level Mentoring Program, which “pairs upper class students with attorneys to aid with the transition to practice.”¹¹⁵ Part-time students are connected directly with alumni of the Law Center’s part-time program who provide guidance and tools for part-time students.¹¹⁶ Mentors may work with up to three students and make a one-year commitment to their assigned protégés to offer assistance in professional development, including choosing a career path, networking, and job searching.¹¹⁷ To the extent possible, students and attorneys are paired based on student preferences regarding areas of practice and types of firms or organizations.¹¹⁸ This is another example of a neutral program that benefits diverse student populations, especially those from racial, ethnic, first-generation, and other underrepresented groups. It also keeps alumni connected to the Law Center while providing students with helpful tools to succeed.

D. Connecting Students of Color with Lawyers of Color

The Law Center encourages the empowerment of traditionally underrepresented student populations and the creation of professionally meaningful relationships between such student populations and practicing attorneys. For example, the Hispanic Law Student Association (“HLSA”) has an annual Wine and Cheese networking event and reception, which is hosted and supported by Porter Hedges, LLP.¹¹⁹ The HLSA at the Law Center partners with the HLSAs operating at the two other Houston-based law schools: Thurgood Marshall School of Law and South Texas College of Law.¹²⁰ Notable alumni from each of Houston’s three law schools attend the annual event. Students have the chance to network with notable Hispanic attorneys, such as the President of the Mexican American Bar Association, and judges, including Texas Supreme Court justices.

The Law Center’s Black Law Students Association (“BLSA”) also holds an annual scholarship reception that recognizes members’ accomplishments for the preceding year, awards scholarships to exceptional members, and provides significant networking and empowerment opportunities for students and alumni.¹²¹ The Law Center professors, professional staff, and BLSA alumni are among the attendees.¹²² BLSA’s annual reception empowers BLSA members to continue

115. *Upper Level Mentoring Program and Part-Time Partners Program*, U. HOUS. L. CTR., <http://www.law.uh.edu/mentor/> (last visited Feb. 10, 2019).

116. *Id.*

117. *Id.*

118. *Id.*

119. *HLSA Wine & Cheese Networking Event, 10/28/2015*, HISP. BAR ASS’N OF HOUS. (Sept. 15, 2015), <https://hisbahouston.com/hlsa-wine-cheese-networking-event-10282015/>.

120. *Id.*

121. *UHLC’s Black Law Students Association Honors Jim Lemond ’70, the School’s First African-American Graduate*, U. HOUS. L. CTR. (Oct. 26, 2016), <http://www.law.uh.edu/news/fall2016/1026BLSA.asp>.

122. *Id.*

pursuing excellence in legal education through scholarships and creates opportunities to network with outstanding African American legal professionals.

The Law Center's support of, and participation in, events such as BLSA's annual reception and HLSA's Wine and Cheese event advance diversity and inclusion within the Law Center by fostering connection among students, alumni, and prominent legal professionals.

E. Diversity of Speakers and Events

Representation and inclusion are necessarily implicated in decisions regarding speaking roles at law school events. These seemingly small decisions make a difference in promoting diversity and inclusion. Without representative speakers and events, a law school might inadvertently send negative signals to the underrepresented communities:

- (1) that there are no, or very few, individuals of such communities in the legal field, and as such, the legal profession will not be an understanding or supportive place for such individuals; and
- (2) that although there may be individuals from those groups practicing law, no such individuals are qualified to fill those prominent roles.

F. Convocation Speakers

Law school graduations are a great way to highlight talented lawyers of diverse backgrounds as well as successful alumni. During the past four years, all the Law Center's convocation speakers have been women, three of whom are women of color. Although I had diversity and inclusion in mind when initially choosing graduation speakers, it was never my intent to choose only women; instead, it just happened based on the speakers' availabilities and my contacts.

These speakers have included:

- Justice Eva Martinez Guzman of the Texas Supreme Court (2015)¹²³
- Paulette Brown, the then-President of the American Bar Association and a partner at Locke Lord LLP (2016)
- Meredith Attwell Baker, '94, Chief Executive Officer of the Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association ("CTIA") and former commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission (2017)
- Star Jones, '86, the President of the Professional Diversity Network and former prosecutor and media host (2018).

Both Ms. Baker and Ms. Jones are Law Center alumnae. All of the speakers' messages were inclusive, inspirational, and served as a road map for graduating students' future success. No one has blinked an eye that all the convocation speakers have been women and were predominantly of color; it is because all are unquestionably qualified and professionally successful.

123. UH University Information Technology, *UH Law Center 2015 Convocation*, YouTube (May 16, 2015), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UUUJvboDXFA>.

Justice Guzman is the first Latina elected to statewide office in Texas.¹²⁴ She was a first-generation college student.¹²⁵ She very well may be the Law Center's first female convocation speaker of Latinx origin. At the convocation, she repeated her initial greeting in both English and Spanish, thereby validating bilingual speakers and individuals of Latinx descent.¹²⁶ During her presentation, she reflected on her personal and professional journey from her childhood in the East End of Houston, where she noticed a lack of access to courts or lawyers for members of the Latin-American community and for those of lower socioeconomic status.¹²⁷

In 2016, American Bar Association President and Locke Lord, LLP partner, Paulette Brown, addressed the Law Center's Spring Convocation attendees, emphasizing action by newly empowered graduates in a time of political upheaval and challenges to diversity.¹²⁸ Ms. Brown is also a first-generation college graduate and the first woman of color to serve as President of the American Bar Association.¹²⁹ She noted, as a child, she attended segregated schools.¹³⁰ Ms. Brown encouraged graduates to "help open opportunities and possibilities for women, people of color, and other ethnicities, and those with disabilities, with different sexual orientations, and ... for those who lack financial resources."¹³¹

In 2017, Meredith Attwell Baker served as the convocation speaker.¹³² She advised students to keep an open mind in terms of careers, and her career highlights that lawyers could do anything in their careers.¹³³ She specifically stated:

Our profession is designed to be adversarial, but that does not make us adversaries. If you raise your voice, act out in frustration or anger, you aren't helping your cause and are only impacting your blood pressure. Plus, it rarely, if ever, works. You should always strive to see the other side. Make each other human and find compromise.¹³⁴

In 2018, Star Jones encouraged the graduates to be leaders and warriors for justice.¹³⁵ She discussed how she decided to become a lawyer and how much the law degree contributed to her overall success in every aspect of her career.¹³⁶ These

124. *About, JUST. EVA GUZMAN*, <https://www.evaguzman.com/about/> (last visited Feb. 10, 2019).

125. UH University Information Technology, *supra* note 123.

126. *Id.*

127. *Id.*

128. UH University Information Technology, *Law Center—Spring 2016 Convocation*, YOUTUBE (May 14, 2016), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1zYzclZJQQ>.

129. *Id.*

130. *Id.*

131. *Id.*

132. *Baker '94 Encourages Class of '17 to Embrace Unlimited Opportunities of a Legal Career*, U. HOUS. L. CTR. (May 18, 2017), <https://www.law.uh.edu/news/spring2017/0518graduation.asp>.

133. *Id.*

134. *Id.*

135. UH University Information Technology, *University of Houston Law Center*, YOUTUBE (May 11, 2018), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pSPp_a0d8e8.

136. *Id.*

speakers' stories of resilience serve to break down unfounded perceptions about the relationship of individuals of background and ethnicity with the law.

G. Named Speaker Series

The Law Center has a jurist-in-residence program named after alumna Justice Ruby Kless Sondock,¹³⁷ a Law Center alumna whom as outlined above was the first woman to serve on the Texas Supreme Court in its regular session.

The program serves to connect Law Center students with the judiciary¹³⁸ to improve and enhance connections among the bench, bar, and academia.¹³⁹ The program has also attracted a diverse group of jurists such as Judges Gray H. Miller and George C. Hanks, Jr., who both serve on the federal court of the Southern District of Texas.¹⁴⁰ Each described the nontraditional paths they took to law school, and how their legal education worked to "change[] their lives and the trajectory of their careers."¹⁴¹ We were honored to host a number of other diverse and accomplished jurists throughout the course of the program, including:

- Judge Adalberto Jordán (Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals)
- Judge Gregg Costa (Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals)
- Associate Justice Sonia Sotomayor (U.S. Supreme Court)
- Judge Eleanor Ross (Northern District of Georgia)
- Judge Jenny Rivera (New York State Court of Appeals)
- Chief Judge Roger L. Gregory Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals)
- Justice Jeffrey V. Brown (Texas Supreme Court)
- Chief Judge Lee H. Rosenthal (Southern District of Texas)
- Chief Judge Robert A. Katzmann (Second Circuit Court of Appeals).¹⁴²

In honoring Justice Sondock's trailblazing career and in inviting jurists who came from similarly nontraditional backgrounds for legal professionals, the Law Center affirms nontraditional points of entry into the legal field, legal education, and the judiciary.

H. Black History Month

Starting in 2016, the Dean's Speaker series included a Black History Month event for the first time. It included a screening of "Andrew Young's Making of

137. Justice Sondock was also named a Texas Legal Legend by the Litigation Committee of the State Bar of Texas. The Law Center hosted an induction ceremony in 2015. See *State Bar of Texas Honors Justice Ruby Kless Sondock '62 as a Texas Legal Legend*, U. HOUS. L. CTR. (Nov. 23, 2015), <http://www.law.uh.edu/news/fall2015/1123Sondock.asp>.

138. Leonard M. Baynes, *The Ruby Kless Sondock Jurist-in-Residence Lectureship*, 54 HOUS. L. REV. 1263, 1263-70 (2017) (discussing the impetus of the Ruby Kless Sondock Jurist-in-Residence Program).

139. *Id.* at 1265.

140. *Id.* at 1266.

141. *Id.* at 1266-69.

142. *Past Jurists-in-Residence*, U. HOUS. L. CTR., <http://law.uh.edu/jurist/past.asp> (last visited Feb. 10, 2019).

Modern Atlanta.”¹⁴³ The documentary shared the hardships and inhumane suffering experienced by African Americans throughout segregated Atlanta.¹⁴⁴ Professor Andrea Young, the daughter of former Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young, led the discussion after the viewing of the documentary. Through Mayor Andrew Young’s “public-purpose capitalism” strategy, Atlanta created more job opportunities and joint business ventures for “full participation of minority and women-owned businesses.”¹⁴⁵ By turning the City’s focus onto the future, Mayor Young built bridges between African Americans and whites.¹⁴⁶ “Atlanta shares with Houston a legacy of leaders who chose prosperity over prejudice in responding to segregation,” Professor Young said.¹⁴⁷ The screening of the movie commemorated the rocky road to a diverse society, as well as the road that still lies ahead.

In 2017, Professor Paul Butler of Georgetown Law and the author of “Let’s Get Free: A Hip-Hop Theory of Justice,” was the Black History speaker.¹⁴⁸ Professor Butler’s talk centered on hip-hop and its relationship with criminal justice, particularly as they pertain to the expression of changing sentiments regarding incarceration and criminal conviction. Professor Butler played samples from several hip-hop artists, such as 2Pac, Beyoncé, and Kendrick Lamar to illustrate this relationship. He then discussed the way in which the music reflects the impact of the over-incarceration of African-American men on the messages expressed in Hip Hop music, as well as how hip-hop can act as an agent of change through its ubiquitous presence in American society. Professor Butler’s talk emphasized the value that is derived from incorporating diverse expressions and perspectives into the legal reform analysis.

In 2018, St. John’s Law Professor Cheryl Wade discussed Black Migration,¹⁴⁹ the Search for Work, and the Impact of Corporate Governance. Professor Wade stated that black migration “was central to the existential evolution of black people ... when more than 6 million African-Americans migrated from southern states to northern states.”¹⁵⁰ She attributed the Great Migration’s beginning “to northern industrialists who recruited African-American southerners to relocate and work factory jobs.”¹⁵¹ The Great Migration is known for contributing to the creation of an African-American middle class; however, Professor Wade emphasized that African-American workers who were drawn to the North faced pervasive employment discrimination.¹⁵² Further, they confronted

143. *UH Law Center to Screen “Andrew Young’s Making of Modern Atlanta” Documentary*, U. HOUS. L. CTR. (Jan. 14, 2016), <http://www.law.uh.edu/news/spring2016/0114ModernAtlanta.asp>.

144. *Id.*

145. *Id.*

146. *Id.*

147. *Id.*

148. *Georgetown Professor Analyzes Intersection of Criminal Justice, Hip-Hop Culture at UHLC Lecture*, U. HOUS. L. CTR. (Feb. 28, 2017), <http://www.law.uh.edu/news/spring2017/0228Butler.asp>.

149. *St. John’s Law Professor Wade Analyzes Failures, Triumphs of Great Migration at UHLC Lecture*, U. HOUS. L. CTR. (Mar. 7, 2018), <http://www.law.uh.edu/news/spring2018/0307Wade.asp>.

150. *Id.*

151. *Id.*

152. *Id.*

the harsh realities that their expectations about the North were often erroneous. Overall, Professor Wade asserted the Great Migration is illustrative of the power of corporate governance and the importance of looking beyond hiring and creating a culture that promotes retention and attraction of diverse candidates.¹⁵³

I. Continuing Legal Education

The Law Center provides free continuing legal education (“CLE”) programs to alumni. In addition to the traditional topics on the latest legal updates in different areas of the law, some of the CLEs are designed to address socially significant legal issues. They have included Race and the Law: Hate Crimes, Confederate Symbols, and Healing the Racial Divide; The Effects of Immigration on America’s Local Communities; and Fostering Equality: Examining the Legal Issues Facing the LGBTQ Community.¹⁵⁴ Through these socially significant CLEs, the Law Center provides a sense of inclusion to the community and affirms a commitment to diversity and inclusion. For many of these socially relevant CLEs, there have been over one hundred lawyers in the audience, demonstrating a need to discuss these challenging issues. Law schools can create the space for these discussions.

VI. BUILDING A LONG-LASTING NETWORK OF DIVERSE ALUMNI

The Law Center Alumni Association encourages diversity. Under then-President Richard Whiteley, the Association established a Diversity and Inclusion Committee. The co-chairs were Victor Wright and Fermeen Faisal, who have organized events that are open to all but with a particular focus on underrepresented groups. For instance, they held a breakfast on how to become a general counsel with an all-women panel. They also held a breakfast meeting with Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner and have co-hosted the Dean’s Black History Month speakers.

The Alumni Association is currently headed by Cynthia Mabry, who is the youngest and second woman president in the Association’s history. The President-elect is Victor Wright, who will be the first African-American president of the Alumni Association. It is important that the alumni board be reflective of the demographics of the alumni. To further this end, the Law Center has also invited a diverse and select group of student leaders to the reception before the alumni board meetings. This facilitates conversations and interest in the students to join the alumni association when they graduate. The Alumni Magazine is another way

153. *Id.*

154. *Race and the Law - Hate Crimes, Confederate Symbols, and Healing the Racial Divide*, U. HOUS. L. CTR., <http://www.law.uh.edu/cle/2015Sept18/homepage.asp> (last visited Feb. 10, 2019); *The Effects of Immigration on America’s Local Communities*, U. HOUS. L. CTR., <http://law.uh.edu/cle/2017Oct20/> (last visited Feb. 10, 2019); *Fostering Equality: Examining the Legal Issues Facing the LGBTQ Community*, U. HOUS. L. CTR., <https://www.law.uh.edu/cle/2015Oct16/homepage.asp> (last visited Feb. 10, 2019). The “Fostering Equality” CLE focused on the right of same-sex couples to marry and included notable speakers (then) Mayor Annise Parker and Judge Phyllis Frye.

to highlight the institution's diverse graduates.¹⁵⁵ Allowing current and future students to see alumni of varying backgrounds can foster mentorship. Networking events with HLSA and BLSA, as well as holding these events at venues that resonate in minority communities are very powerful messages sent to alumni who are interested in diversity and inclusion. A few years ago, when the Law Center held an alumni and friends event at New York City's historic Apollo Theater, an invitation was sent nationwide to reach our alumni. Many alumni personally responded, expressing disappointment in not being able to attend. One alumna was going to be in Argentina on business and was trying to figure out a way to get to New York City for the event. These events resonate in particular communities and send a very strong, yet subtle, message that each of these groups are vital to the community and that the law school celebrates each community's unique history.

CONCLUSION

As dean, I am very proud of the University of Houston Law Center's legacy and commitment to this "brilliant diversity."¹⁵⁶ I do my best to honor this legacy and to ensure that our different communities feel included and remain stitched together.¹⁵⁷ In this very global world and increasingly diverse nation, it is not only important that our students are well-trained lawyers, but also that they are culturally competent in working with, reporting to, collaborating with, and arguing before individuals from different backgrounds.¹⁵⁸ The Law Center provides an educational laboratory for all our communities to come together, to learn from each other, and most importantly, to celebrate one another.¹⁵⁹ I hope that this compilation of different types of programs and the motivations behind them will inspire you to do similar things at your law school.

155. See *Six Alumni Reach Great Heights*, 34 U. HOUS. L. CTR. BRIEFCASE 1 (2016), <https://studylib.net/doc/10841188/briefcase-legal-powerhouse-six-alumni-reach-great-heights>.

156. *Bush's 1,000 Points of Light*, HISTORY, <https://www.history.com/speeches/bushs-1000-points-of-light> (last visited Feb. 10, 2019). ("We are a nation of communities ... a brilliant diversity spread like stars, like a thousand points of light in a broad and peaceful sky.")

157. Leonard M. Baynes, *Dean's Note on Diversity*, U. HOUS. L. CTR. (July 31, 2018), <http://www.law.uh.edu/news/dean/2018-07-31.asp>.

158. *Id.*

159. *Id.*