UH Community Connections

Outreach Efforts Are a Key Component to the Tier One Mission.

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Looking north from the UH Welcome Center, you can see the top of the Houston skyline. To the east, Maximus Coffee Group greets you, its fragrant coffee aroma wafting over the campus around mid-afternoon. And just a short drive down Interstate 45 south puts you at NASA’s doorstep. The University of Houston, nestled in its Third Ward neighborhood, is immersed in the city whose name it bears. But more than being a good resident of the community, UH aims to be connected to it.

Recently, UH was honored by the prestigious Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as one of the top community-engaged universities in the nation. UH was the only public metropolitan university in Texas given the distinction, which considers, among other things, a university’s service to the community and its students’ involvement in community issues.

“Our American Humanics students embody community responsibility and service,” said Lori Godwin (’03), interim program director of the David M. Underwood Chapter of American Humanics (AH). “Last year they gave more than 8,600 internship hours to Houston nonprofit organizations.”

American Humanics, a program of the Graduate College of Social Work, trains the next generation of nonprofit managers and leaders. UH’s chapter was rated first among AH chapters in the country in 2007 by the American Humanics Management Institute.

“Not only do our students learn about careers through these internships, they build their passion for working in the Houston community,” Godwin said, speaking of students like graduate Carlie Brown. “And the vast majority of our students stay in Houston after they graduate.”

Similarly, the Center for Mexican American Studies (CMAS) is immersed in Houston’s Latino community. Beginning with middle school students, officials with the CMAS Academic Achievers’ Program ( AAP) work to ensure students—first in their families to pursue higher education—stay in school, graduate from high school and enter college.

“We recognize the challenges first-generation students experience on the road to higher education,” said Rebecca Trevino, the program manager. “Together with our business partners who help us with scholarships, internships and mentors, AAP has helped many Houston students graduate and enter careers.”

“CMAS does so much for Houston and UH,” said AAP student Alicia Valdez. “It makes me want to do the same.”

Community connection is built into the fabric of the Civic Houston Internship Program (CHIP), part of the Hobby Center for Public Policy (HCPP), the program annually places nearly 100 undergraduates in Houston government and nonprofit offices.

“These interns are the next generation of civic leaders,” said Renee Cross (’97), associate director of the HCPP and director of CHIP. “We strive to encourage students’ interest and commitment to their community by preparing them through public service, as well as academic knowledge.” The HCPP also has developed civic volunteerism projects with students to educate and promote the 2010 U.S. Census throughout the Houston region, organized on-campus pet food drives to benefit Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston’s AmiMeals program and collaborated with county offices and nonpartisan organizations on voter registration and education projects.

Community involvement creates more than just connections for the University of Houston; it creates Cougar Pride.