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One Step Closer to Tier One

- innovative research
- academic excellence
- top-notch faculty  p. 14

CAMPUS EVOLUTION: TRANSFORMING THE CAMPUS LANDSCAPE  p. 4
As we near the end of the fall 2009 semester, the University of Houston campus — both literally and figuratively — is a changed place. The intangibles can't be seen or touched, but they are real nevertheless. Foremost, there is a campuswide feeling of celebration stemming from the twin legislative successes related to our drive to attain Tier-One status.

The tangible changes are seen all across campus. The East Parking Garage that popped up seemingly overnight during the summer opened for business in September. Work is well under way on phase one of the undergraduate residential housing on Wheeler, scheduled to open next summer. And Cemo Hall, the second building for the Bauer College of Business, soon will be finished.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony to symbolically open Calhoun Lofts, UH’s premier housing development for mostly graduate and professional students, was held in August. Several hundred students already are living there.

The complexity and speed of campus construction during the past few years, especially during the past few months, is nothing short of remarkable. Let me share some facts with you.

Prior to 2000, the total square footage of our buildings was under 6.1 million. Since that date, we have increased our usable space for classrooms, labs and study halls by almost 30 percent, making this decade the most significant in terms of construction in UH history — doubling any previous decade.

Since 2000, we also have renovated more than 919,000 square feet, or more than 15 percent of the entire campus, and we have more than 541,000 square feet of existing space scheduled to be renovated in the next two to three years. Including Calhoun Lofts, we now have housing for 5,208 students. By the time phase one of the undergraduate housing facility on Wheeler is completed, the total students in residential housing will climb to 6,294. Phase two, to be built adjacent to the phase one facility, will bring the grand total to 7,294.

Then, our goal of housing 25 percent of our students on campus and in affiliated housing — approximately 10,000 students — will be closer to reality, transforming the University of Houston into a new kind of urban residential campus commensurate with our soon-to-be Tier-One status.

As the campus changes all around us, and as we celebrate a spectacular 2009 in terms of enrollment, research grants and awards and fundraising, I can repeat with great conviction the new UH slogan launched on the first week of the fall semester — “You are the Pride!”

Renu Khator
Renu Khator
For the past several months, I have had the privilege of working with some of the most esteemed leaders in Texas, including former Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby, the Greater Houston Partnership and others, to help support the effort to increase the number of Tier One universities in our state, including the University of Houston.

The opportunity to establish the National Research University Fund — a constitutionally dedicated fund available to the state’s seven emerging research universities — is a rare chance to provide a pathway for steady funding that would help elevate UH. NRUF would provide funding similar to that which has raised Texas A&M University and The University of Texas at Austin to Tier One status. Creating more research powerhouses among our state’s universities would undoubtedly change the landscape of higher education in Texas forever.

The University of Houston already meets several criteria necessary to be ranked Tier One. Key among those is a university’s amount of research expenditures. While we are ahead of the pack in this category among the seven universities, we still need to double our research expenditures to about $150 million a year. The NRUF will help UH attain that goal in four to five years and qualify for the Tier One ranking.

At UH, research is the principal, but by no means the only beneficiary of this fund. Academic programs, student success and — in the long run — the value of a UH degree will be enhanced by the ripple effect that will flow from the Tier One designation. For the local and state economies, the benefits are more tangible. Economists estimate that every $10 million in research expenditures creates 334 new jobs, adds $8.6 million to the regional economy and generates $13.5 million in local sales.

I was privileged to travel to Austin many times during the last legislative session, along with Chairman Welcome W. Wilson, Sr. and Chancellor Renu Khator, to present our case for Tier One funding. I look forward to continuing to work with them and other state leaders as the university continues to advance toward its goal of becoming a nationally competitive Tier One university.

Nelda Blair (J.D. ’82)
Secretary
UH System Board of Regents
Inside

4 Building Boom Transforms UH Landscape
CAMPUS EVOLUTION — THE MAKINGS OF A TIER-ONE CAMPUS

8 Igniting Creativity and Innovation
UH ARTS PROGRAMS HAVE LOCAL, NATIONAL AND GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

14 No Matter How You Spell It, TRIP & NRUF Bring UH Closer to Tier One
HOUSTON’S UNIVERSITY IS READY FOR THE CHALLENGE

20 New Energy Research Park Energizes March to Tier One
LAND ACQUISITION OPENS DOORS TO NEW PARTNERSHIPS

IN EVERY ISSUE
1 Message from the President
2 Message from the Regents
13 Community Connections
17 Making an Impact
22 Faculty Honors
24 Play-by-Play
26 Giving Matters

www.uh.edu/magazine
Building Boom Transforms UH Landscape

FROM THE VERY BEGINNING, THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON HAS FOLLOWED TWO PRINCIPLES: MAXIMIZE EXISTING RESOURCES, WHILE STRIVING FOR INNOVATION.

by Michelle Hillen
Before the first brick was laid for the university’s first building, the 110 swampy acres donated for the permanent campus had to be drained and landscaped by 250 part-time national Youth Administration Workers. But once completed in 1939, the Roy Gustav Cullen Memorial Building was an Art Deco wonder, with 21 classrooms, library space, a large lecture hall and the first air-conditioning system on a college campus in the United States.

Those twin traditions of economy and innovation continue today as the university embarks on more than 2 million square feet of new construction — square footage amounting to more than 41 new Roy G. Cullen buildings — designed to take the university to the next level in stature, innovation and student success rates.

“Housing not only is associated with a lively campus life, but it also is associated with greater retention and higher graduation rates.”

In August alone, the UH System Board of Regents approved $240 million in construction projects to help create a Tier-One environment at UH. Those projects include many that will recruit top-notch students and attract top-tier faculty and staff.

MAKINGS OF A TIER-ONE CAMPUS

“It’s a very exciting time to be here,” says David Irvin, associate vice president for plant operations. “The amount of construction we have under design or under construction is unprecedented in terms of the life of this university.”

The projects, ranging from 34,000 square feet of classroom space to a new residence hall with more than 1,000 undergraduate beds, each will play an important role as the campus develops a more urban feel, reflective of the city of Houston and a Tier-One research institution.

“I think the buildings reflect the progress we are making toward the very ambitious goals that we have for the University of Houston and the people we serve,” says Elwyn Lee, vice president for student affairs.
Housing projects, including the new residence hall (Wheeler Housing East) — set to open in fall 2010 — and Calhoun Lofts, a luxury loft apartment complex designed with 984 beds for mostly graduate and professional students, will help achieve a goal of 25 percent of enrolled students living in on-campus housing by 2015. That is the level needed to be deemed a “residential campus,” Lee says.

“I think when we get to the 25-percent level, and we have a large percentage of freshmen living on campus, the image of UH as a commuter school will change,” he says.

In addition to contributing to a more urban environment, research shows that more on-campus student housing is directly correlated with student success, Lee says.

“They tend to be more involved in campus organizations, and, therefore, tend to be more attached.”

Eva Gao, who is working toward a joint M.B.A. and law degree, moved into the new Calhoun Lofts in August. “It’s very convenient for me,” Gao says. “And after seeing it, I really liked it. It is very modern ... and the price is definitely great.”

With a full array of services, ranging from cooking classes, movie nights and study rooms, Gao says there are probably more amenities than she actually needs. But it’s nice to have the option to use them.

FOSTERING A STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY

In addition to striving to meet the needs of on-campus students, the university also has tried to improve amenities for students who commute to campus.

In October 2008, the “commuter lounge” opened in the University Center, providing lounge space, study rooms, computers and televisions for commuting students. “We wanted to try to connect them with the university — give them a home away from home. They can’t go back to the residence halls. They have nowhere to lounge between classes,” says Chalen Rice, commuter service coordinator. “We just wanted to make efforts to create more spaces for them to be able to come and feel comfortable.”

In November 2008, students took the first step toward a $100 million upgrade of the University Center. In a campuswide vote, they approved a fee increase to pay for renovations. (The fee increase has been approved by the Texas Legislature and now must go before the UH System Board of Regents and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.) The upgrade, which would be performed in phases and completed by 2014, would include additional study and meeting spaces for student organizations, a centralized conference center, more retail and dining options, new outdoor lounging spaces, an outdoor amphitheater and a sleek new design.

ENHANCING THE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Other renovations and new construction on campus benefit all students and contribute to the university’s goal of reaching Tier One. For instance, a planned overhaul of Fleming Hall will include space for new chemistry and biology labs, Irvin says.

A Tier-One university requires top-notch faculty, and a top-notch faculty require top-notch research and academic facilities. New projects currently under construction, such as the $9 million Michael J. Cemo Hall project and the build-out of the Science and Engineering Research Center, will expand and enhance UH’s research space and classrooms that support new technologies.

Another project in the planning stage is the Health and Biomedical Sciences Center. Included in this facility is the Vision Institute at the UH College of Optometry, which will include 137,000 square feet of classroom, a surgical center and lab space, Irvin says. More than $5.5 million has been raised to date for the building.

The project’s lead donors are TSO (Network of Independent Optometrists), Essilor of America, Inc. and Vision Source. For more information on the Vision Institute: www.opt.uh.edu/vision-institute/
Equally exciting is the recently announced UH Energy Research Park, which will add about 600,000 square feet to the university on property located a half a mile east of the main campus. Much of that space will be used to develop an energy research center focusing on everything from alternative energy research, such as wind and solar, to traditional oil and gas recovery, as well as work force training and development (see page 20).

Expanded research facilities are key to the university’s quest toward Tier-One status. “It will definitely help us get to Tier One,” Irvin says. “It will provide the kinds of facilities we need to go after grants from the National Institutes of Health and some of the other major funding organizations.”

EASING CAMPUS PARKING

The most frequent issue raised by students is parking, so new parking garages are an important piece in the campus’s evolution. As existing lots are being removed to make way for new buildings, the university is moving forward with a series of planned garages to help meet the parking needs of students, faculty, staff and visitors.

The first of those garages — the East Parking Garage located near Calhoun Lofts — includes 1,500 spaces and opened in September. Another garage is planned on the west side of campus near Robertson Stadium for at least 2,000 cars, Irvin says.

The new parking, residential and classroom space will help to increase the density on campus, giving it a more urban feel, says Joseph Meppelink, adjunct assistant professor of architecture.

“I think between having a ring road that creates boundaries, structure parking and light rail that comes into the campus, it begins to feel like a traditional urban campus,” he says. “We already have great skyline views. UH has some very urban characteristics already.”

ENHANCING QUALITY AND PROVIDING ACCESS

As the university evolves, it will continue to strive for innovation — implementing changes that will provide students with more access to amenities and services and a better foundation for success.

“A lot of what we are doing is about enhancing quality,” Lee says, explaining that students will benefit from the addition of research, classroom and residential space, as well as the hiring of top-flight faculty.

And as state funding for new buildings grows tighter, the university also will continue its tradition of economy — making the most of existing funds and reaching out to find new funding sources, Irvin says.

“I think we are going forward with a very compelling story that says, ‘Here is where we are, and here is where we want to go, and here is why that is important,’” he says. “And if you help us go there, here is what it will mean for this city and this state.”

Private support is essential to the University of Houston’s success. Donors’ generous gifts play a major role in the evolution of the campus — allowing faculty, students, staff and visitors the opportunity to experience the best resources available for pursuing knowledge, preparing for real-world experiences and developing a sense of community. Here are a few of the major projects on campus that are transforming the campus landscape.

MICHAEL J. CEMO HALL: This C.T. Bauer College of Business $9 million project will construct a 34,000-square-foot building with a 400-seat lecture hall, three 80-seat classrooms and an academic center. The project’s lead donors are Michael J. Cemo, John Stumblerfield, Houston Endowment Inc., John and Darlene McNabb and John and Debbie Moore.

HILTON HOTEL: The $12.8 million renovation of the Conrad N. Hilton College of Hotel and Restaurant Management includes major upgrades of all teaching areas, cosmetic upgrades of public areas and hotel rooms, building infrastructure and structural upgrades. The college received a $6.5 million lead gift from the Conrad N. Hilton Fund — an affiliate of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.

SCIENCE BUILDING RENOVATIONS: The $23 million renovation of a portion of Science and Research Building 1 and all of Fleming Hall will reorganize and relocate labs — reconfiguring them for greater functionality — and renovate the entire building.

UNDERGRADUATE HOUSING: This $50 million project includes the construction of a 1,000 bed undergraduate residential facility adjacent to Moody Towers.

DINING RENOVATIONS: A $12 million renovation of the dining facility in Moody Towers Residence Halls will create an appealing dining experience for students, faculty and staff.

PARKING GARAGE: The $18 million 450,000-square-foot East Parking Garage will offer 1,500 spaces for Calhoun Lofts residents, students and visitors.

For more on construction projects: www.uh.edu/plantops/po_reports.html
Click on the FP&C Major Capital Projects Status link.
Igniting Creativity and Innovation

UH’s Arts Programs Develop Local, National, and Global Connections.

by Kelli Ferrell
For more than 100 children from Houston’s Fifth Ward this summer, the University of Houston provided an opportunity to engage their creativity in new ways. With the launch of the Deluxe Entertainment Camp for Kids, or D.E.C.K., third- through fifth-graders were introduced to acting, puppetry, storytelling and dance under the guidance of UH teaching artists, including some faculty and graduate students (see page 13).

“Our student camp instructors said the kids were so excited to be there,” says Brandy Robichau (’95), associate director for theatre and dance community relations. “One little girl asked if their recorders were made of gold. They treasured their instruments! And when one boy was asked about his favorite part of camp, he responded, ‘I didn’t know you could dance to poetry. It’s fun!’”

The new program is just one example of the vibrant arts programs at the University of Houston and its continued evolution into a force on campus and in the Houston community.

When UH President Renu Khator arrived in January 2008, she identified the arts as an area of excellence and one of the strategic initiatives for the attainment of top-tier status.

In 2003, the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts was founded, creating a formal collaborative alliance among schools of Art, Music, Theatre & Dance, the Creative Writing Program and Blaffer Gallery, the Arts Museum of the University of Houston.

“President Khator’s declaration of the arts as one of the university’s key strengths has inspired the arts units on campus and brought us closer together,” says Karen Farber, director of the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts, special assistant to the provost and community liaison for UH Arts.

The units that comprise UH Arts are a portal to the cultural and intellectual life of the campus community and the Greater Houston area, and their mission is to provide students and audiences with dynamic environments that illuminate the human condition and define contemporary culture.

Blaffer Gallery’s exhibitions and programs effectively serve as a gateway between the university community and the city of Houston while also engaging arts audiences globally.
UH Arts collaborates with organizations across Houston, making an imprint in the local community. “Each of our arts units has solid partnerships with organizations outside of the university. I would bet that nearly every arts organization in Houston has worked with the University of Houston in some way,” says Farber.

For example, Project Row Houses, a nonprofit arts organization and UH neighbor, has been enlisted in many arts-related projects with UH. It was established by African-American artists and community activists to create a positive presence in Houston’s Third Ward.

Similarly, the School of Theatre & Dance actively seeks opportunities for community engagement. Recently, the Shakespeare projects, directed by master’s students, went on the road to Discovery Green Park. The “Tales from the Bard” was so successful that the school has been asked to return annually. It is the same recognition of leadership that has led to other collaborations, such as working with local theater companies and choreographers annually on a student dance concert.

And this year, UH Arts went global as the Moores School of Music’s Concert Chorale made its debut at Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod in Wales, one of Europe’s oldest and most prestigious choral festivals. “Our very presence there demonstrated that we are a member of a very select club,” says Betsy Cook Weber (D.M.A. ’95), Moores Chorale director (see page 12).

Off campus, President Khator has fostered a strong relationship with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, actively participating in museum programs and serving on the leadership committee for the recent reinstallation of the Nidhika and Pershant Mehta Arts of India Gallery.

But the museum’s relationship with UH doesn’t end there. Houston Public Radio, KUHF 88.7 FM, has partnered with the museum for more than 12 years to create Artful Thursdays, a monthly series that looks at the museum’s collection and exhibitions through music, dance, literature and film to build sustainable, crossover audiences between the arts. The museum also has many other longtime partnerships with the university, including the College of Education, The Honors College and the Visual Studies Program.

MEASURES OF EXCELLENCE

UH students are members of a community of working professional artists in a major arts city. The School of Art is a collection of impressive resources, focused on creating and sustaining the environments necessary to support young artists. It maintains relationships with major museums, art centers and arts organizations, including the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; DiverseWorks; and the Lawndale Art Center, which was founded by UH.

“For the past three decades, UH School of Art students, alumni and faculty have provided Houston with a bedrock community of creative thinkers, makers and supporters,” says Rachel Hecker, associate director of the School of Art and associate professor of painting.

The school’s undergraduate students have been accepted into some of the most prestigious MFA programs, and the works of recent graduates have
been exhibited nationally and internationally in venues from the Whitney Museum of American Art to the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris.

“I think having very knowledgeable professors who are prominent in the art world and are willing to help is one of the primary resources here at the University of Houston. They really try to incorporate the Houston art community into the program. This access to the outside art world has helped all of our careers,” says Debra Barrera, graduate painting student.

Blaffer Gallery brings in nearly 15,000 visitors to campus each year. Its exhibitions are repeatedly featured in major national and international art magazines, such as Artforum, Art in America and Sculpture. Because of its various constituent audiences, Blaffer exhibitions and programs effectively serve as a gateway between the university community and the city while also engaging arts audiences globally through the circulation of exhibitions and distribution of the museum’s publications.

The School of Theatre & Dance is continually training people for the entertainment industry. Fourteen members of the MFA Acting Ensemble traveled to Memphis, Tenn., and Birmingham, Ala., to audition for theater companies from across the country. The group received 30 offers of employment, an average of two per actor. “Getting hired by these companies is a real-world recognition of the skills and discipline these students are gaining,” says Jack Young, head of graduate acting and directing.

As the University of Houston works toward achieving Tier-One status, some areas are at the top of their game. “The graduate Creative Writing Program is already a Tier-One program. The challenge is to maintain the quality of the program, and that means ensuring that we can compete for the best students in the country,” says director James Kastely. The program plays a central role in promoting the literary life in Houston, sponsoring readings and bringing talented writers to the city. It has been responsible in helping establish Houston as an international destination for major writers. Partnering with Inprint, a nonprofit literary arts organization, has made Houston’s rich literary culture the envy of many cities.

“Houston is a major arts city, and we continue to take advantage of that and contribute to it.”

Artforum, Art in America and Sculpture. UH Arts has come a long way. The future looks even brighter. “We know UH has top-level arts programs. Now we will join forces to communicate about our strengths and successes,” says Farber. “Houston is a major arts city, and we continue to take advantage of that and contribute to it.

“This will enable us to build a future that is aligned with the larger future of UH — benefiting all UH students, whether they are interested in viewing art or making it!”
If they had jet lag, it didn’t show. The members of the University of Houston Moores School of Music Concert Chorale had journeyed eight hours by plane and four hours by bus to participate in the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod in Wales. Travel fees were aided by donations from Continental Airlines and others.

When it came time to perform for an international audience, the chorale’s singers were not short on energy. Under the direction of Betsy Cook Weber (D.M.A. ’95), their voices rose to the occasion — dazzling audiences and impressing the event’s esteemed adjudicators. By the festival’s climax, the UH Moores Concert Chorale was among five top groups competing for the distinction of Choir of the World.

"It was exhilarating to be competing in that very select group," says Weber, undergraduate choral studies director. "Our singers were brilliant that night.”

The Moores Concert Chorale was the only choir at the festival to emerge as a finalist in all of its competitions, which deserves a standing ovation. The chorale took first place in the Chamber Choir Competition. As the top chamber choir, they qualified to compete for the Choir of the World. UH also earned second place in the Mixed Choir Competition and third place in both the Youth Choir and Folk Choir competitions.

The chorale also won over the people of Wales. Upon their arrival, the Cougar singers participated in a parade. As Texas’ sole choir, the UH chorale donned cowboy hats and Lone Star shirts. It was a winning combination that captured the hearts of the Welsh spectators, who exclaimed “Go Texas” or “Yeee-ha” as the chorale marched past them. Moreover, the chorale was the only U.S. choir to perform in the festival’s opening night Peace Concert.

Among a host of UH supporters were President Renu Khator and husband Suresh, UH industrial engineering professor; Moores School of Music director David Ashley White (’68, M.M. ’74), who composed one of the songs performed by the chorale, “I Saw Eternity;” and Texas Music Festival director Alan Austin (’91, M.M. ’93). And, UK-based UH alumnus James Murray (’72) proudly displayed his Cougar pride.

“I am so proud of all of you,” President Khator told the chorale at the festival’s conclusion. “You not only represented UH but also the U.S. This has been a great week, and I am so glad to have been here to witness this. GO COOGS!”
For 20 years, graduate architecture students have been spending their summers under the hot Houston sun — at construction sites, not at the beach. They’re part of the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture Graduate Design/Build Studio.

“Graduate Design/Build Studio measures the quality of students’ design thinking against the rigorous standard of built reality,” says Patrick Peters, GDBS associate professor and director for the last 16 years. “When students are here learning how to connect a column to a beam or develop a foundation, it’s with an exposure to the whole process.”

A green-building initiative, students begin researching and designing their projects in the spring and spend the summer building it. They see their design ideas evolve from a concept to reality. For many, this is their first foray into architecture, design or construction.

This year, students are working in support of Pat Neff Elementary School. UH students will design and build “The Solar Shade Tree,” a structure that will give children shaded access to an outdoor amphitheater. Students from the arts-focused program also will display their artwork in the outdoor area and use the space to perform plays. The project includes a standing-seam roof, trellis for additional shading, solar power from photovoltaic panels and basins for plants and rain collection. The structure also will have the capacity to “tweet” climate information on Twitter.

Community Connections

Design/Build Studio Turns 20
ARCHITECTURE PROGRAM HELPS TO BUILD IDEAS INTO REALITY.

A green-building initiative, the studio requires students to begin researching and designing their projects in the spring and to spend the summer building it.

Sparking Creativity in Young Audiences
UH TAKES THE ARTS TO AREA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS.

Elementary school students in Houston’s Fifth Ward are discovering the power of the performing arts thanks to the creative minds at the UH School of Theatre & Dance. With the assistance of a two-year, $260,000 planning grant from Houston Endowment Inc., UH is working with the Houston Independent School District to introduce theater curriculum to students at elementary schools in Houston’s inner city.

“This grant is the largest that the School of Theatre & Dance has ever received,” says Steven Wallace, the school’s director. “It supports the university’s commitment to community partnerships and funds a pilot program that will be the seed for an ongoing arts education relationship between UH, HISD and the Fifth Ward.”

UH’s teaching artists will work to create performing arts and after school programs that spark creativity, while promoting personal and academic growth.

“Theater has a transformative power in an educational setting because it is a place where kids are allowed and encouraged to experiment, take risks and are safe to make mistakes and try again,” says Jackie deMontmollin, UH assistant director of theatre education. “That is how all of us learn best.”
Tier One at the University of Houston took one giant step forward this summer. After months of careful behind-the-scenes work, our Houston-area legislators collaborated with state leaders during the legislative session to put UH firmly on the track to achieving Tier-One status.

And, voters across the state took the next big step and approved a constitutional amendment to create the National Research University Fund (NRUF).

Proposition 4 (House Bill 51), as the amendment appeared on the Nov. 3 ballot, provides the funding that will turn the Texas Legislature’s vision of higher education excellence into a reality. Major newspapers across the state — including the Houston Chronicle, Dallas Morning News and Austin American-Statesman — enthusiastically endorsed it while political prognosticators confidently predicted passage of the enabling amendment.

This represents a real victory for UH and the other designated institutions that can compete for NRUF support.

There will now be legislation that spells out how this select group of seven Texas universities, including UH, can draw on substantial state funds to support world-class research and qualify for top-tier status. A base fund of $500 million in existing but dormant education money will be converted into a permanent account (NRUF) to support research expansion. (Earlier this year, the seven universities shared in a $50 million pool known as the Texas Research Investment Program (TRIP), the Texas Legislature made available independent of Proposition 4.)

For the record, the seven “emerging research” universities are UH, Texas Tech University, The University of Texas at Arlington, The University of Texas at Dallas, The University of Texas at San Antonio, The University of Texas at El Paso and the University of North Texas.

When an ebullient Gov. Rick Perry signed the Legislature’s NRUF proposal, he characterized the legislation as “a clear road map to help emerging research institutions reach the next level and as … a remarkable collaborative effort between a hard-working group of legislators and academic leaders from a number of
universities." For UH and its supporters, it has been not only a road map, but it also is a runway for a high-powered flight into fundraising and consciousness-raising.

"We competed vigorously for the matching funds, and our supporters stepped up with amazing and enlightened generosity," UH President Renu Khator says of the preliminary TRIP funding. "We will compete just as vigorously to achieve the standards needed to qualify for NRUF support."

Significantly, the creation of this new constitutional fund doesn’t require the collection of new revenue. It merely converts a currently dormant higher education fund of $500 million to this new, Tier-One-oriented objective. Since it’s likely that the designated universities will need several years to meet the eligibility benchmarks set by the Legislature and to be evaluated by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the fund amount is expected to grow appreciably. An optimistic goal is for NRUF to eventually approach the $2 billion mark, generating interest for the qualifying universities to draw on in their efforts to reach competitive Tier-One levels.

As the enabling legislation indicates, our state’s leaders have clearly demonstrated the considerable importance of developing additional Tier-One universities in Texas, where such institutions have been relatively scarce. Texas has only three such universities — state schools UT at Austin and Texas A&M plus Rice University, which is private — while comparable states, such as California and New York, have nine and seven, respectively.

That broad discrepancy is not just a matter of state pride. It’s a matter of economic survival and educational efficacy.

"In order for Texas to remain globally competitive, it needs more national research universities because they bring federal funding, incubate new ideas, prepare the work force of tomorrow and strengthen the economy in general," says Welcome W. Wilson Sr., UH System Board of Regents chairman. "I’m delighted that our legislators worked together so effectively to face this challenge." (Please see p. 16 for a list of those who advocated for HB51 and pushed the constitutional amendment forward.)

Economists estimate that every $10 million in annual research spending creates about 334 jobs, adding $8.6 million in wages to the regional economy. After drawing $500,000 in added state and tax revenue and generating $13.5 million in local sales, the total amount results in a 226-percent return on investment, according to a recent analysis. Another example: Alumni from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a Tier-One university by any measure, have founded more than 4,000 companies, which employ more than 1 million people and generate $232 billion in sales — an amount roughly equal to the total economic output of Houston.

Furthermore, the availability of more Tier-One universities in Texas will keep the state’s most academically talented students from leaving to attend out-of-state universities. Currently, Texas loses more than 10,000 high school graduates per year who attend doctorate-granting universities in other states, while attracting only about 4,000 students per year from other states. This brain drain — a net loss of nearly 6,000 highly qualified students per year — has increased more than 50 percent in the past six years. A Tier-One university provides greater opportunities for students to work with world-class faculty in nationally ranked programs and engage in cutting-edge research and learning. As a result, their degrees reflect a brand that is nationally recognized and globally respected.

"That is precisely what we are creating at UH," says Khator.

"I expect UH to be the next Tier-One university in Texas and to receive the national recognition within five to seven years."

With TRIP funds accounted for and NRUF funds looming on the horizon, what are the next steps toward Tier One for UH and how long will it take?

Keep in mind that, to gain recognition as a Tier-One institution, a university must be nationally competitive in the quality of its faculty, its academic programs and its student body. The university also must produce nationally competitive research and scholarship, which is measured by the amount of research grants and funding awarded to its researchers and the
impact its scholarship has in new discoveries. Finally, the university must prove it has the support base necessary to sustain this competitiveness, which is measured by alumni giving and the size of the endowment. Those are the objective measures national organizations generally use to gauge a university’s Tier-One standing. UH, by most accounts, has made great strides in all these areas and certainly none appears to be unreachable.

“I expect UH to be the next Tier-One university in Texas and to receive the national recognition within five to seven years,” Khator calculates. That prediction will strike many as bold — and perhaps strike a few as unrealistic.

“But we have made tremendous progress during the past year, and we are filled with pride at the achievements produced by the hard work and passion of so many,” Khator and Wilson observed in an opinion article they jointly penned for the Houston Chronicle.

“Why would we think this incredible progress will not continue? With the additional funding and support to make UH a Tier-One institution, we can lead the way to transforming the state’s economy, and of equal importance, the face of higher education in Texas today.”

Legislative Acknowledgment

It’s been said that success has many parents. That’s certainly true in the case of creating a pathway for the University of Houston’s Tier-One aspirations. These state legislators, along with Gov. Rick Perry, Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst and Speaker of the House Joe Straus, played significant roles in crafting, sustaining and ultimately passing the constitutional amendment and the enabling legislation. The University of Houston appreciates their persistent support over many years and salutes their dedication to improving higher education in the state of Texas.

**Primary Sponsors of Legislation**

**Rep. Dan Branch** — Chairman, Higher Education Committee

**Rep. Garnet Coleman** — Long-time UH and Tier-One Advocate; Chairman, County Affairs Committee

**Sen. Robert Duncan** — Conceived and passed constitutional amendment authorizing the NRUF; Chairman, State Affairs Committee

**Sen. Rodney Ellis** — Sponsored the first Tier-One legislation creating the Research Development Fund; Chairman, Government Organization Committee

*Sen. Judith Zaffirini* — Chairwoman, Senate Higher Education Committee; HB51 Sponsor

**Key Committee Activists and Leadership**

*Rep. Bill Callegari* (M.S. ’72) — Co-Author; Chairman, Greater Harris County Delegation

**Rep. Ellen Cohen** — Co-Author; Member, Higher Education Committee

**Rep. Craig Eiland** — Co-Author; Speaker Pro Tempore

**Rep. Rob Eissler** — Co-Author; Chairman, Public Education Committee

*Rep. Jessica Farrar* (’96) — Co-Author; Chairwoman, Mexican American Legislative Caucus

**Rep. Scott Hochberg** — Chairman, Appropriations Subcommittee on Education

**Rep. Geanie Morrison** — Long-time Supporter; Member, Appropriations Subcommittee on Education; Former Chairwoman, Higher Education Committee

**Sen. Dan Patrick** — Vice Chairman, Higher Education Committee

*Rep. Senfronia Thompson* (LL.M. ’96) — Co-Author; Chairwoman, Local and Consent Calendars Committee

*Sen. John Whitmire* — Dean, Texas Senate; Key Member, Appropriations Conference Committee; Chairman, Criminal Justice Committee

*Rep. John Zerwas* (’77) — Co-Author; Member, Appropriations Committee

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**Sen. Tommy Williams**

*Alumni of UH System Institutions*
Gov. Appoints Regents
UH SYSTEM WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS.

Gov. Rick Perry has appointed Nandita V. Berry (’91, J.D. ’95), Tilman J. Fertitta, Jarvis V. Hollingsworth (J.D. ’93) and Kristen Lindley to the UH System Board of Regents.

“With their diverse backgrounds, considerable talents and strong leadership abilities, I am confident that each of these appointees will make outstanding contributions to our board and to the University of Houston System,” says UH System Chancellor and UH President Renu Khator.

The appointments of Berry, Fertitta and Hollingsworth expire Aug. 31, 2015. They replace Calvin Stephens (’72), Dennis Golden (’76, O.D. ’77) and Lynden Rose (’83, J.D. ’89), whose board terms expired.

The 10-member Board of Regents is the governing body of the UH System, which includes UH, UH-Clear Lake, UH-Downtown and UH-Victoria as well as UH System at Sugar Land and UH System at Cinco Ranch multi-institutional teaching centers and KUHT television and KUHF radio stations.

Berry, of Houston, is senior counsel at Locke, Lord, Bissell and Liddell LLP. She received a bachelor’s degree from Mt. Carmel College in Bangalore, India, a bachelor’s degree from the University of Houston and a law degree from the UH Law Center.

Fertitta, of Houston, is chairman and CEO of Landry’s Restaurants Inc. He attended the University of Houston.

Hollingsworth, of Sugar Land, is a partner at Bracewell and Giuliani LLP. He received a bachelor’s degree from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, where he was co-captain of the Army football team, and his law degree from UH.

Earlier this year, Kristen Lindley was appointed as the student regent for a one-year term expiring May 31, 2010. Lindley graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor’s degree from UH-Victoria and has entered UHV’s M.B.A. program this fall. She is the first UHV student to be named to the board.
**Designer Lenses**

**PATIENTS IN STUDY GET CUSTOMIZED CONTACTS.**

While most patients with common vision problems find glasses or contact lenses fairly easily, others with certain eye diseases have limited options and may have to learn to live with poor vision.

Supported by a $1.25 million grant from the National Eye Institute, a College of Optometry team aims to give patients with “higher-order aberrations” the quality of life enjoyed by those with common vision problems such as nearsightedness, farsightedness and astigmatism.

“The lenses we make are made especially for you,” says Jason Marsack (Ph.D. ’07), research assistant professor of optometry. “It would not work for another individual with the same disease. It’s a custom fit, a designer lens.”

In patients with keratoconus, the cornea may thin and bulge forward, reducing its ability to focus light, Marsack says. In later stages of the disease, a corneal transplant may be the only chance for acceptable vision if the patient can’t tolerate wearing rigid contact lenses.

Patients overwhelmingly prefer soft lenses because they are more comfortable and can be worn longer. To create a custom soft lens, its surface must correct the eye’s optical errors and remain properly aligned during wear.

“Imagine a surface with bumps and hills on it. Instead of a clean focus, it’s a very blurry focus,” says Raymond Applegate, Irving M. Borish Chair in Optometry and professor. “The correcting bumps and hills of the contact lens have to register perfectly with the bumps and hills on the eye.”

Patients in the team’s study have had dramatic results. Ultimately, Applegate says, the team would like to see custom lenses become the standard of care.

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**Creation of the Ship Channel Security District**

**UH FORGES INTRICATE PARTNERSHIP.**

The development of the Houston Ship Channel Security District, a public-private partnership that will fund enhancements to technology, infrastructure and processes along the ship channel, was done in large part by Pat Bellamy (’76), chairman of the Houston Ship Channel Security Council and director of UH’s Southwest Public Safety Technology Center.

Bellamy insists that “UH enabled a can-do mindset and provided a neutral environment in which issues were discussed openly and resolved.”

SWTC, which is dedicated to research and education in the area of public safety technology and homeland security, entered into an agreement with the county and port authority to plan, develop, design, construct and implement security projects, says center executive director and engineering professor Steven Pei.

Local officials, including U.S. Rep. Gene Green (’71) and County Judge Ed Emmett, note the instrumental role UH played in creating a security apparatus that also will protect residents and workers, deter theft and mitigate man-made and natural disasters.

“In an area such as the security of the Port of Houston, there can be no weak link in the chain. Every facility must cooperate and contribute to harden the port from terrorists,” says U.S. Coast Guard Capt. Bill Diehl, adding that Bellamy married “the intellectual knowledge of the University of Houston with the industrial might of the facilities along the ship channel to make a security ring of steel.”

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**Pat Bellamy**
Every Move You Make
FREE iPHONE APP HELPS BURN CALORIES.

What can't the iPhone do? Thanks to a UH computer science professor, it can count the calories burned through the Walk n' Play download. Available from Apple’s App Store, users can have fun while burning calories. The game allows players to keep track of their physical activity through their iPhones.

“You attach the phone to your waistband or carry it in your pocket, and it records every motion — from walking to climbing stairs — and translates it into calories burned.”

Designed by a team of researchers led by Ioannis Pavlidis, Eckerd Pfeiffer Professor, the application’s co-developers include postdoctoral researcher Pradeep Buddharaju (M.S. ’05, Ph.D. ’07) and doctoral student Yuichi Fujiki.

“You attach the phone to your waistband or carry it in your pocket, and it records every motion — from walking to climbing stairs — and translates it into calories burned,” Pavlidis says. “The game tallies everything daily.”

A defining characteristic is the competition aspect. Users can employ the buddy system with a friend who also carries an iPhone or challenge themselves with a simulator programmed to follow an ideal routine for maintaining or losing weight through healthy activities.

While similar devices, like pedometers, are not new, this iPhone application is unique. Pedometers communicate measurements with steps. Calories, however, are metabolic units and the best measure of physical activity. But, people don’t sweat through everyday tasks anymore. Walk n’ Play allows the user to treat the world as a treadmill, giving a more accurate calorie count.

“Modern conveniences have changed our way of life,” says Pavlidis. “The basic idea behind the application we’ve developed is for people to get motivated and back to living more active lifestyles.”

Student News

EXPÉRIENCE … REAL-WORLD STYLE

Evan Leung, accounting junior, represented the C.T. Bauer College of Business at the PricewaterhouseCoopers Leadership Adventure, a two-day program where students learn how to put leadership into practice. He spent his summer in Chicago, honing his leadership skills along with 200 other student leaders from across the nation. The program seeks to complement what students learn in the classroom with real-world experience. Leung plans to put his leadership skills into practice with the Accounting Society and Delta Sigma Pi. His long-term goals include getting a master’s degree and a CPA.

TAKING IT TO THE HILL

Derek Goodwin’s research of Mary Talbert shed new light on Talbert’s role in building the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in Texas. The Honors history and political science major took his findings to Washington, D.C. His research poster abstract, “That Part of Hell Where We Should Work: Mary B. Talbert and the Texas NAACP,” was selected for “Posters on the Hill,” a Council of Undergraduate Research event showcasing students’ research to members of Congress and representatives of higher education funding agencies. Charles Orson Cook (M.S. ’72, Ph.D. ’80), faculty mentor and professor of history in The Honors College, directed Goodwin to an article on black history in Texas that mentioned Talbert.

SAY AMEN

Philip Sinitiere (Ph.D. ’09), recent history graduate, has co-authored “Holy Mavericks.” The book takes a look at five of the nation’s mega-evangelists, including Houston’s Joel Osteen and Bishop T.D. Jakes of Dallas.
Establishing the University of Houston’s new Energy Research Park on land near the Gulf Freeway that once housed Schlumberger’s global headquarters seems almost fated.

As a world-leading oil services company, Schlumberger recognizes that universities are a fundamental source of talent and ideas. It works with more than 45 universities worldwide.

While the site will forever be a landmark to the groundbreaking technologies developed by Schlumberger in petroleum-based energy discovery and processing, its new purpose represents the future and spearheads the university’s drive to becoming a Tier-One research university.

Built in 1953, the park is comprised of 74 acres with 15 buildings, plus 19 acres of developable land.

Purchase of the complex from Schlumberger “represents one of the most important physical expansions in the University of Houston’s history and is an integral part of our goal to become the world’s foremost energy university and a nationally competitive Tier-One research university,” says UH President Renu Khator.

THE VISION

The Energy Research Park includes UH academic and some energy-related research programs, UH administrative operations and third-party tenants with connections to the university. The vision for the complex is for a university-sponsored development that includes research, work force training and industrial partnerships — the three legs of the economic development triangle.

“The university is already seeking partners whose training programs will significantly enhance the region’s energy work force portfolio with the addition of world-class programs designed to train the next generation of workers in wind, solar and electric power generation, and industrial partners who will be working with our researchers to develop new manufacturing techniques,” says Carl Carlucci, UH vice president for administration and finance.

Eventually, he says, the university will try to establish an incubator to develop new energy-related businesses that will call Houston home.
Land Acquisition

Purchase of the complex from Schlumberger “represents one of the most important physical expansions in the University of Houston’s history and is an integral part of our goal to become the world’s foremost energy university and a nationally competitive Tier-One research university.”

“This is one of the most exciting announcements ever made at the University of Houston,” says Welcome W. Wilson Sr., UH System Board of Regents chairman. “The possibilities for this park are endless. It is my hope that we can move forward aggressively in recruiting the personnel needed to develop our growing portfolio of energy research projects that will be housed there.”

The renovated complex will be home to many of the UH energy research-related centers and institutes. Relocating there, for example, is the Smart Materials and Structures Laboratory, which has attracted research grants for topics such as sensor development, structural health monitoring and piezoceramic materials.

Many of the university’s “superstar” researchers, such as Paul Chu, the physics professor whose superconducting discoveries shook the tech world in the late ’80s, will populate the park. They will do the pioneering work that broadens the use of existing resources, discovers new energy sources to power lives, shapes business practices and public policy, and reduces the impact on the environment.

Here’s one example of how the Energy Research Park will enable UH to serve as a natural hub for innovation and bold approaches to address the world’s energy challenges.

An obstacle facing renewable power is getting clean energy to market, moving electricity from the windiest sites to the load centers. Without a solution to the grid problem, effective use of wind power is likely to remain a dream.

A proposed Energy Demonstration Project to be housed at the park will address the issue of transmission of wind power from a remote source, such as the enormous wind farms in West Texas, to urban centers. UH plans to install wind turbines at the complex and focus on research and development necessary to implement superconducting power lines in an effective manner to transmit wind power. The concept is of keen interest to the 5,000 Houston-based energy companies, as well as energy companies throughout the United States.

**EDUCATIONAL COMPONENT**

UH will integrate research and education to develop graduates who are adaptive and creative innovators in a global economy.

The park will serve as the new home for UH’s petroleum engineering program, combining leading-edge curriculum with opportunities to engage in mentored research. Initiatives will address some of the most critical needs of the energy industry from wind/solar power technicians to advanced programs related to the exploration and development of subsurface energy resources.

In an economy as challenging as a dry well, the UH Energy Research Park will create not only high-wage technical jobs, but additional jobs through site improvements and the renovation of its infrastructure.

With its unique focus on research, work force training and industrial partnerships, the UH Energy Research Park provides a wellspring of opportunity to advance UH’s mission to Tier One and helps the university lead the Houston energy industry to a better, brighter and greener future.
Faculty Kudos

**ANEE S BANDAY**, research assistant professor of pharmacological and pharmaceutical sciences, has received a three-year, $308,000 grant from the American Heart Association for his work in identifying the molecular mechanisms of AT1 receptor signal transduction during oxidative stress. Conditions associated with oxidative stress, such as hypertension and diabetes, exhibit increased AT1 receptor density, which could be a main contributor to high blood pressure.

**YI-CHAO CHEN**, professor of mechanical engineering, has been elected chairman of the Society for Natural Philosophy, an organization that seeks to unify mathematical and physical science research.

**MARGARET CHEUNG**, assistant professor of physics, has been awarded $219,000 from the National Science Foundation to study the behavior of protein folding and interactions in a cell. The knowledge obtained from the research will be used to discover physical principles of protein folding in vivo and predict new phenomena that can be seen only in the interior of a cell. An integrated multiscale modeling and simulation approach will be applied to enhance knowledge of complex protein dynamics in living systems.

**DIANA CHOW**, director of the Institute for Drug Education and Research and associate professor of pharmaceutics, has been invited to collaborate on a multi-institutional clinical trial for patients with traumatic, acute spinal cord injury. The collaboration includes eight institutions from the United States and Canada and is sponsored by the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation-North American Clinical Trials Network.

**CHE RYL CRA IG**, professor of curriculum and instruction, has been awarded an outstanding methodology Article Award by the American Educational Research Association for her article, “Why is Dissemination so Difficult? The Nature of Teacher Knowledge and the Spread of Curriculum Reform.”

**EKERE JAMES ESSIEN**, director of the Institute of Clinical Health and associate professor of clinical sciences and administration, has been appointed to the International Journal of Women’s Health editorial board.

**JEROME FREIBERG**, director of consistency management and cooperative discipline and John and Rebecca Moores Professor of Curriculum and Instruction, has been named an American Educational Research Association Fellow for his research accomplishments.

**JOHN HART**, history department chairman and John and Rebecca Moores Professor in History, has been awarded the Harvey Johnson Prize for the best book of 2008 for “The Silver of the Sierra Madre,” sponsored by the Southwestern Council of Latin American Studies of the Latin American Studies Association. The award was presented at the organization’s 2009 convention in the Dominican Republic.

**ARTURO HERNANDEZ**, director of the Development Cognitive Neuroscience Initiative and associate professor of psychology, has received a two-year, $375,000 National Institutes of Health exploratory grant to examine how basic activity changes in children who are learning a second language.

**LAMAR PRITCHARD** has been named dean of the College of Pharmacy. Before joining UH, he was dean of the College of Health Sciences and of the College of Pharmacy at the University of Louisiana at Monroe. ULM’s College of Pharmacy’s giving increased six-fold under his leadership. Pritchard also has served as medical science manager at Bristol-Myers Squibb and has provided medical science research support and has targeted research initiatives for major medical academic/research centers. His initial UH priorities include increasing funding, building a state-of-the-art facility, recruiting additional top-notch faculty and developing the University of Houston Center for Drug Discovery.

**DANA ROOKS**, Elizabeth D. Rockwell Endowed Dean’s Chair in the University of Houston Libraries and the dean of libraries, has received the Texas Library Association’s Distinguished Service Award for 30 years of outstanding leadership and service to Texas libraries. Rooks has mentored young librarians and has served as co-principal investigator for Texshare, a statewide resource-sharing project. She also has served as TLA president and a board member of the Association of Research Libraries, the Greater Western Library Alliance, the Online Computer Library Center Research Libraries Advisory Council and the Amigos Board of Trustees.
NICOLÁS KANELLOS, The Brown Foundation, Inc. Chair in Spanish, has been named a member of Real Academia Hispanoamericana, also known as the Spanish American Royal Academy for Literature, Arts and Science.

JOE KOTARBA, sociology department chairman and professor, has received the George Herbert Mead Award for Lifetime Achievement from the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction, an international professional organization of scholars interested in the study of social issues with an emphasis on identity, everyday practice and language.

MARTIN MELOSI, director of the Center for Public History and Distinguished University Professor of History, received the 2009 Distinguished Service Award from the American Society for Environmental History for his outstanding contributions to the organization and community. Melosi served as president of ASEH (1993–95) and funded the E.V. and Nancy Melosi Travel Grant as well as helped organize two conferences in Houston, the only city to host the event twice.

HALUK OGMEN, director of the Center for Neuro-Engineering and Cognitive Science and electrical and computer engineering department chairman and professor, and BRUNO BREITMEYER, professor of psychology, have co-authored Experimental Phenomena of Consciousness: A Brief Dictionary. The book received an American Library Association Choice Outstanding Academic Title Award.

NORMA OLVERA (M.S. ’88, Ph.D. ’92), director of the Behavior Opportunities Uniting Nutrition Counseling and Exercise Program and associate professor of health and human performance, and REBECCA LEE, founding director of UH’s Texas Obesity Research Center and principal investigator of the Health Is Power Project, have received the National Cancer Research Awareness Award presented by The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center’s Center for Research on Minority Health.

RAÚL RAMOS, associate professor of history, has received the T.R. Fehrenbach Book Award for “Beyond the Alamo: Forging the Mexican Identity in San Antonio, 1821–61.” The award honors original research and publication of material that preserves, records and recounts Texas prehistory and history.

PRADEEP SHARMA, Bill D. Cook Faculty Scholar and associate professor of mechanical engineering, has received the 2009 Thomas J.R. Hughes Young Investigator Award from the American Society of Mechanical Engineers.

CLAREMARIE VERHEYEN, associate professor of makeup and costume history, has received the U.S. Institute for Theatre Technology-Southwest Regional Section Forrest A. Newlin Founders Award in recognition of outstanding lifetime service.

CAMERON WHITE, professor of education, has received a Fiscal Year 2009 Fulbright-Hays Seminar Abroad Grant.

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UH FACULTY: YOU ARE THE PRIDE

BOOKSHELF

DAVID R. DOW, Distinguished University Professor of Law, has authored “America’s Prophets: How Judicial Activism Makes America Great.”

GARY DWORKIN, professor of sociology, has co-edited “International Handbook of Research on Teachers and Teaching.”

MIKE EMERY, adjunct lecturer of communication and media relations writer, has authored a chapter, “Rock Brands,” in “Business of Entertainment: Popular Music.”

HELEN HATTAB, assistant professor of philosophy, has authored “Descartes on Forms and Mechanisms.”

PETER HOFFMAN, director of the Blakely Advocacy Institute and Newell H. Blakely Chair in Evidence in the UH Law Center, has edited the “2008–2009 Texas Rules of Evidence Handbook.”

W. LAWRENCE HOGUE, John and Rebecca Moores Professor, has authored “Postmodern American Literature and Its Other.”

LARRY KELLEY, professor of advertising, has co-authored “Cases in Advertising Management.”

JOE KOTARBA, department of sociology chairman and professor, has co-authored “Understanding Society through Popular Music.”

JOSEPH A. PRATT, interim dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences and NEH Cullen Chair of Business and History, and MARTIN MELOSI, director of the Center for Public History and Distinguished University Professor of History, have co-authored “Energy Metropolis: An Environmental History of Houston and the Gulf Coast.”

BRANDON ROTTINGHAUS, assistant professor of political science, has co-edited “International Perspective on Criminal Disenfranchisement Law.”
‘Rhoades’ to Glory
NEW AD OFFERS HOPE TO COUGAR FAITHFUL.

by Richard Bonnin
Mack Rhoades has all the attributes of a leader — a drive for perfection and an expectation of excellence that quickly put his name on the map nationally in athletics circles.

The University of Houston’s hiring of Rhoades as its new director of athletics, succeeding the retired Dave Maggard, offers the Cougar faithful hope for an eventual return to the glory days of Cotton Bowls and Final Fours. Coinciding with Rhoades’ arrival, the young, but talented, Cougar football team achieved immediate success, rising as high as 12th in the nation after a signature early-season win over Big 12 foe Texas Tech.

Rhoades, 43, who spent the past three and a half years as AD of The University of Akron, brings an impressive track record to UH. The numbers speak for themselves: 765 total Dean’s List honors, 213 all-conference honors, 83 student-athletes named Academic All-Mid-American Conference, 20 team conference championships, 14 MAC Players of the Year, 12 All-Americans and 11 team runner-up finishes on the conference level.

The on-field success has been matched off the field as well. Akron’s student-athlete federal graduation rate stood at 68 percent through 2008, and the overall student-athlete GPA went from 2.789 to 2.964.

The success of the athletics program under Rhoades’ leadership was accomplished under a balanced budget each of the past three years. On the national front, he served as a member of the NCAA Division I Championships/ Sports Management Cabinet — also serving on the Administrative Committee of that cabinet as well as chairing the MAC’s External Relations Committee.

UH President Renu Khator says hiring Rhoades is an important element in advancing the university’s goals.

“We all believe the University of Houston is going to be a Tier-One university,” Khator says. “We are grateful to the Legislature and the community for helping move us toward that goal, but a Tier-One university is not going to be built without a Tier-One athletics program. His passion and vision to build athletics here into a Tier-One program is something that impressed me.

Rhoades, who arrived in Houston with his wife, Amy, and daughters Nicolette, Natalie and Noelle, calls UH “a special place.”

“It’s special because of its tradition, the teams and the national championships,” Rhoades says. “But, what makes it more special is the people. That’s how you win. That’s how you move forward. You do that with quality people."

To achieve UH’s vision of excellence, Rhoades must overcome numerous challenges, including mobilizing the university’s fan base. The last time the football team averaged 32,000 in home attendance — the capacity at Robertson Stadium — was in 1981 (when home games were played in the Astrodome). Since the Cougars’ last Final Four appearance in 1984, they have topped 6,000 in average men’s home basketball attendance once.

“I never would have pursued this position if I didn’t honestly believe we could recapture the greatness of the past,” Rhoades says. “There’s no reason why we can’t build a football program here that is able to get into the top 25 and remain there. And in terms of basketball, again there’s great opportunity.”

Winning creates excitement, as evidenced by the on-campus record crowd of 32,114 for the Texas Tech game, but Rhoades recognizes that he must address other obstacles if UH is to elevate all 16 of its intercollegiate sports programs.

“We’ll have to work hard with all of the various student groups on campus to convince them that this is the place to be for athletics events,” he says. “That doesn’t happen overnight.”

Rhoades’ successes in fundraising and improving facilities were key factors in his hiring.

“I really believe in grassroots marketing,” Rhoades says. “You can have billboards and signage, but we need to go beyond that and get on the phones, develop fan clubs and talk and meet with people in person and ask them to attend our games.”

As he develops a strategic plan for the athletics program, Rhoades says he has three objectives: building a tradition of winning championships with strong fan support, providing the student-athletes an experience that molds them into “champions for life,” and complying with the NCAA rules.

“We’re going to do it the right way,” he says.

More ONLINE | www.uh.edu/magazine/09f/features/rhoades
Financial support of $1.5 million to the University of Houston Jack J. Valenti School of Communication from alumnus Lance Funston has triggered an outpouring of support from Texas and beyond.

To spark community participation, Funston ('67), chairman and CEO of TelAmerica Inc. in Philadelphia, offered his financial support via a two-to-one match, to add a media communications center to the existing facility. To date, more than $3 million has been raised to support the Jack J. Valenti School of Communication capital project and student scholarships, though some matching funds are still available through Funston’s challenge.

The addition to the existing facility will include a state-of-the-art student television production studio, audio and video editing suites, a technology classroom, and a grand entrance to the school. Construction will begin in 2010.

“Financial support from alumni, such as this from Mr. Funston, are essential as the university moves forward in its quest to be the state’s next top-tier research university,” says UH President Renu Khator. “This helps achieve our goals for the Valenti School and inspires other alumni to invest in their alma mater and in the success of our creative and hardworking students.”

The school’s planned expansion is designed to help better accommodate its growing enrollment. As of 2009, the Valenti School has more than 1,500 communication majors each year, making it one of UH’s largest academic units.

“Students choose the Valenti School over other programs for our competitive, well-rounded curriculum and for the opportunities in Houston’s thriving communications workforce,” says Beth Olson, the school’s director.

The university renamed the school in honor of UH alumnus Jack J. Valenti ('46, Honorary '02), who died in 2007. “I am honored to be a partner with the University of Houston in a way that improves the teaching and learning environments for the students, while at the same time honoring the remarkable legacy of my good friend Jack Valenti,” Funston says.
ExxonMobil Gift Makes it Possible to Triple the Impact

Thanks to ExxonMobil’s employee gift-matching program, 2008 was a good year for the University of Houston, which received $385,891 from the corporation’s charitable arm.

Gerald McElvy (’75), Exxon Mobil Foundation’s president, says this year’s gift reflects an increase of about $75,000 over a year ago.

“The continuing financial support from the people of ExxonMobil is made even more significant thanks to the company’s policy of tripling those already generous gifts,” says UH President Renu Khator.

ExxonMobil and its employees, retirees, surviving spouses and directors donated more than $36 million to 900 U.S. colleges and universities through the foundation’s 2008 Educational Matching Gift Program. Seventy-three Texas institutions received a total of $8.33 million.

“These donations are a remarkable testament to the value ExxonMobil employees and retirees place on higher education,” says McElvy. “We’re investing in the future, campus by campus, by providing these much-needed dollars for colleges and universities to increase their level of excellence.”

Through the matching program, donors may pledge up to $7,500 per year to colleges or universities with which they are affiliated. Donations are matched on a 3-to-1 basis.

“The ExxonMobil program is the premier corporate matching-gift program in the country for the benefit of higher education,” says Michael Rierson, UH vice president for university advancement. “The University of Houston is grateful for the continued investment in the future of our students, faculty and programs by ExxonMobil employees and retirees.”

To date, ExxonMobil’s various contributions to the University of Houston System, including matching gifts, total about $14.8 million.

“Exxon Mobil Foundation funds math and science programs to respond to the nation’s growing need to produce more engineers and scientists and to develop more highly qualified math and science teachers. We support programs that encourage women and minorities to become scientists and engineers,” McElvy says.
Opening Doors for Future Cougars

WHEN UH OFFERED ARTHUR MEEKS ('91) THE OPPORTUNITY TO ADVANCE HIS CAREER THROUGH EDUCATION, IT CHANGED THE COURSE OF HIS LIFE.

Today, Arthur and his wife, Stephanie, are grateful for UH’s help and are determined to provide similar opportunities for others.

In the early 1970s, Arthur was a draftsman at Houston Engineers. To advance in his career, he decided to take courses at the College of Technology, where he earned his degree in manufacturing systems-engineering technology — all while working full time. Throughout the years, he has held several managerial positions and currently is the senior engineering supervisor at Weatherford International.

While Arthur attended classes, Stephanie often walked the UH campus with their three young boys and spent hours in the stacks of the M.D. Anderson Library.

She has worked as a development officer for several nonprofits, including UH (1996–2004). She now is the director of donor relations at KSBJ radio station.

The Meeks family has established a legacy of opportunity for generations to come. Arthur has helped secure funds for the university as a board member of the Technology Alumni Association. He also gives unrestricted gifts each year. Stephanie remains an active library donor. Both have designated a percentage of their estate to UH in their wills: Arthur to the College of Technology and Stephanie to the UH Libraries.

“I want others to have the opportunity to hold down a job and take courses to benefit them in that job,” says Arthur; and Stephanie hopes to “leave a little bit of a legacy to help the library function in the future.”

Plan a gift that will CHANGE LIVES, beginning with yours.

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- Scholarships
- College/Department Faculty
- M.D. Anderson Libraries and Archives
- Athletics Programs
- Research

Contact the Office of Planned Giving to learn how you can shape the university’s future through a gift in your will and become a member of The 1927 Society.

Office of Planned Giving
www.uh.edu/plannedgiving
713-743-8880
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This information is not intended as legal advice. Please consult your CPA or attorney.
Your UH Connection ... YOU MAKE THE DIFFERENCE.

Your UH connection affects real people: on the phone, in the classroom and in the field. When a UH student calls, please take action! Answer the call and make your 2009–10 gift. And perhaps you can make a student’s UH experience a little richer with some friendly advice.

www.uh.edu/giving

This is Chalice Hornsby. She’s one of the newest callers on our Student Telefund team. She will be calling soon to talk with you about the value of University of Houston alumni support and to ask you to join the thousands of alumni who are committed to assist UH in reaching its Tier-One goals. She also wants to learn about your UH experience.

CHALICE HORNSBY
COLLEGE: CLASS, Sophomore
MAJOR: Political Science
MINOR: Business
HOMETOWN: Houston

“This job allows me to have a conversation with those who have accomplished what I strive for every day — a college degree. I like to discuss what people are doing with the degrees that they received from the University of Houston. It’s interesting. And I love getting advice. It encourages me to keep going for my goal.”

“I am counting on your passion, your commitment and your action.”

Renu Khator
Renu Khator
UH President