



03.28.25

ROOM 109
BATES LAW BUILDING

CIVIC LEADERSHIP BOOT CAMP



Spring 2025 Civic Leadership Boot Camp Friday, March 28, 1-6 p.m. Bates Law Building | Room 109

The Hobby School is hosting a spring **Civic Leadership Boot Camp** at the University of Houston for the campus and surrounding community on Friday, March 28, from 1-6 p.m., in the Room 109 at Bates Law Building. The half-day workshop is designed to help strengthen individual civic leadership across roles and issues. Participants can engage in interactive workshops, breakout sessions and activities designed to elevate professionalism and build confidence and skills among engaged participants. The sessions focus on various aspects of civic leadership, including:

- Civic leadership in action
- Professional and civic communication strategies
- Networking and professional presence
- Ethical leadership and decision-making

What to Expect:

The boot camp features speakers and panelists with expertise and leadership experience across sectors. The group exercises will prompt thought-provoking discussions and challenge comfort zones to strengthen civic leadership and equip participants with new skills and additional tools and strategies.

Alexander Obregon, vice president of Comcast Texas, is the keynote speaker. Obregon has deep Hobby School ties. He started his public service journey as a Civic Houston Intern and now serves on the school's advisory board. The two-time UH Coog was the former Houston deputy city controller and now oversees Comcast's regional financial and business management functions. He will speak on leadership in action.

Arquilla Hargove, chief culture officer at Alchemy Consulting Group, a business consulting company, will lead the interactive workshops and breakout sessions. Hargove has more than 20 years of human resource and business consulting experience and co-directs the Certified Public Manager program hosted by the Hobby School.

The afternoon will close with a panel discussion on bridging leadership and professionalism, followed by a power-networking hour with refreshments. The Hobby School's Jessica Ruland O'Connor is the boot camp organizer. She directs the school's undergraduate internships in Houston, Austin and Washington, D.C., leads civic engagement projects and builds relationships with alumni and community partners.

Boot camp attendance is free, but registration is required, and spacing is limited. If you have any questions, contact Hobby School's Jessica Ruland O'Connor at jlruland@central.uh.edu.



- 1:00 - 1:05 P.M. **Welcome** Jessica Ruland O'Connor
Program Director
Lecturer, Public Policy
Hobby School of Public Affairs
- 1:05 - 1:30 P.M. **Keynote Address** Alexander Obregon
Regional Vice President &
Chief Financial Officer
Comcast - Texas
Civic Leadership in Action
- 1:30 - 2:00 P.M. **Workshop #1** Arquella Hargrove
Chief Culture Officer
Alchemy Consulting Group
**Mastering Professional and Civic
Communication**
*Topics: Business etiquette, writing professional emails, handling
difficult conversations, how to introduce yourself in different
environments, importance of first impressions and ongoing
credibility strategies for building meaningful and
lasting connections*
- 2:00 - 2:30 P.M. **Breakout Activity**
Practice Elevator Pitch and Professional Presence
*Topics: Students practice professional introductions
and discuss career goals while facilitators provide
live feedback on handshakes, body language,
conversational skills and more*
- 2:30 - 3:00 P.M. **Workshop #2** Arquella Hargrove
Ethical Leadership and Decision-Making
*Topics: Navigating conflicts of interest, decision-making
frameworks for ethical dilemmas in leadership,
self-awareness and empathy in leadership, managing
stress and conflict in high-stakes environments and more*

3:00 - 3:30 P.M.

Breakout Activity

Ethical Dilemma Challenge

Students will work in teams to analyze and respond to real-world ethical dilemmas in public service and business (handling conflict of interest, navigating an ethical gray area, etc.).

3:30 - 3:45 P.M.

Teams Reports

3:45 - 4:00 P.M.

Break

4:00 - 5:00 P.M.

Panel Discussion

Bridging Civic Leadership and Professionalism

Topics: How professionalism and etiquette impacts leadership in public service and civic and business settings. The role of ethical decision-making in public service and corporate environments. Tips for young professionals on networking, communication and influence.

**Traci Buttram
Matthew Conner
Santiago Franco**

5:00 - 6:00 P.M.

Networking

Light bites and drinks

MEET THE SPEAKERS



Jessica Ruland O'Connor is the director of internship programs at the Hobby School of Public Affairs. She oversees the school's undergraduate internships in Houston, Austin and Washington, D.C., leads civic engagement projects and builds relationships with alumni and community partners. Ruland O'Connor is a two-time University of Houston graduate with a Master of Public Policy degree and an undergraduate degree in political science. She started her public service journey as a Civic Houston Intern in the office of former Houston City Council Member Michael Kubosh and later as a Leland Fellow in the Washington office of former U.S. Rep. Gene Green. Previously, Ruland O'Connor worked in the public policy division at the Greater Houston Partnership.



Alexander Obregon is the regional vice president of finance & business operations at Comcast Texas. In his current role, Obregon serves as the chief financial officer responsible for Comcast Texas's financial planning and reporting, capital management, business assurance and the project management office. He also leads the business operations functions of the supply chain, fleet, real estate and facilities. Prior to his appointment, Obregon served as deputy city controller for the City of Houston and chief operating officer for the office of the Houston City Controller.



Arquella Hargrove is the chief culture officer at Alchemy Consulting Group (ACG). The business consulting agency partners with organizations to transform one culture, one business at a time. The team of collaborators has over 100 years of combined experience helping leaders and teams solve complex workplace issues, especially in today's intricate workplace culture. ACG finds itself in exciting places to be changemakers in the workforce, helping organizations provide positive, impactful change with intentionality.

PANELISTS



Traci Buttram is a dynamic public service professional with over a decade of experience in political and governmental affairs. The Houston native graduated with a University of Houston Bachelor of Political Science. Buttram has extensive local political campaign experience and worked at every level before becoming chief of staff for the City of Houston Mayor Pro Tem, and currently, manager of operations for the Harris County Office of County Administration. Buttram specializes in public policy, program building and process optimization.



Matthew Conner is the managing principal for Arete Public Affairs, where he specializes in public and government affairs and strategic business development. He has extensive experience in federal, state and local government and political campaigns. He previously served as the director of government relations for the Houston ISD, the largest school district in Texas. Before joining HISD, Matthew served as the district director for U.S. Rep. Michael McCaul and deputy regional director for Southeast Texas for U.S. Sen. John Cornyn. He has also worked as the Houston area field director for the Glenn Hegar Campaign for Texas Comptroller and as a field representative for the Greg Abbott Campaign for Texas Governor. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Political Science from the University of Houston.



Santiago Franco shares profound connections with the Hobby School, first as a Civic Houston Intern and later as a Hobby Fellow and Master of Public Policy alumnus. He holds an undergraduate degree in political science, also from the University of Houston. Franco began his professional career as a Texas Senate staff person, later moving to the state's General Land Office, where he applied his legislative knowledge to key flood mitigation. Currently, the two-time Coog specializes in collaborative policy priorities at the Harris County Intergovernmental and Global Affairs Department.
