



Hobby School of Public Affairs
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON



2025 IMPACT REPORT

**“TO HELP PEOPLE, GOVERNMENT
HAS TO WORK. MAKE THE SYSTEM
WORK.”**

- TEXAS LT. GOV. BILL HOBBY



MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

As the Hobby School of Public Affairs approaches its 10th anniversary, 2025 marked a period of expansion of its public service footprint. From record-breaking student engagement and transformative initiatives to applied research that connects to real-world challenges, the Hobby School is shaping insights on policy issues and training tomorrow's leaders in Texas and beyond.



The Hobby School celebrated a defining moment with the ceremonial groundbreaking of a new academic building. Designed to foster collaboration among students, faculty, policymakers and practitioners, the building will include dedicated research labs, modern classrooms and a memorial reading room honoring the legacy of Texas Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby. As construction starts, the state-of-the-art facility stands as both a symbol of the school's growth and a commitment to the next century of public service education at the University of Houston.

Students at the Hobby School demonstrate the power of learning through service. As the school looks ahead to celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Civic Houston Internship Program, it reflects on the program's enduring impact and its role in preparing generations of students for impactful careers grounded in community engagement. In 2025, more than 100 undergraduates contributed nearly 1,000 volunteer hours across Houston. A dozen undergraduates also served as Hobby Fellows during the 89th Texas Legislature, supporting state legislators at the State Capitol.

The Hobby School community advanced critical conversations on pressing policy issues, hosted lectures that challenged assumptions about technology, democracy and governance and empowered students through voter education initiatives and workshops. The launch of the SPACE City Panel, a longitudinal survey of area residents, signaled a major step forward in the school's data-driven approach to understanding the region.

Looking ahead, the Hobby School is deepening its commitment to engaging with the communities it serves. From building on long-standing programs to investing in new spaces and partnerships, the Hobby School is well-positioned for its next chapter.

Thank you for being part of this journey and for helping shape the future of public service.

Jim Granato, Ph.D.

Dean, Hobby School of Public Affairs

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Hobby School of Public Affairs
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

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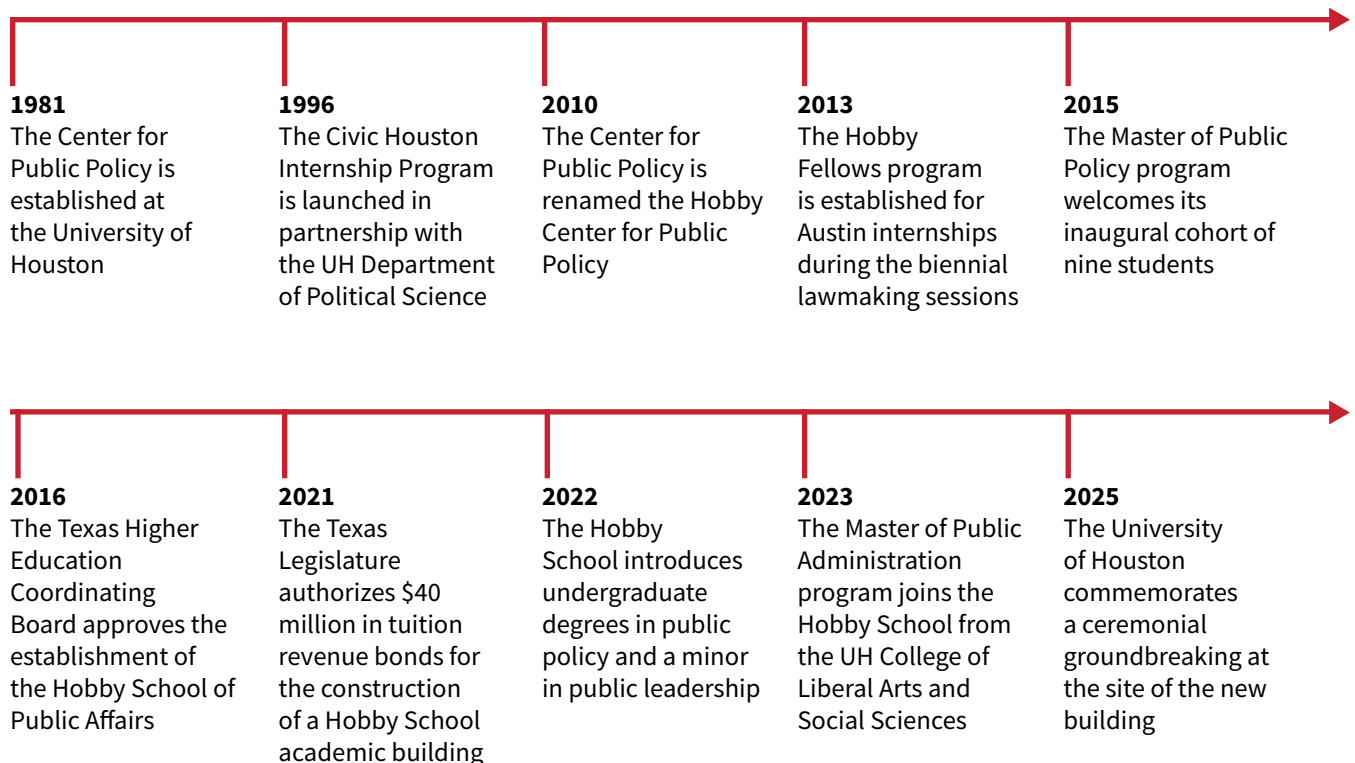
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BUILT ON A FOUNDATION

The Hobby School took a momentous step into the future of public affairs education and the next generation of leaders at a groundbreaking ceremony at the site of the new state-of-the-art academic building. Dean Jim Granato welcomed University of Houston and community leaders, state lawmakers past and future, the grandchildren of Bill Hobby and others to celebrate the memorable event. As an embodiment of public service, the legendary former Texas lieutenant governor and his family's legacy will continue through this innovative building, effectively connecting study with practice for future generations.





“The Hobby School of Public Affairs not only educates future policy leaders, but it also empowers government, industry and everyday Houstonians with critical knowledge and guidance on key issues. This expansive new building will enable the Hobby School to increase its research and student body, enhancing its impact across Houston, Texas and the world.”

Renu Khator, Chancellor of the University of Houston System and President of the University of Houston

“The Hobby family has always exemplified a deep commitment to public service, and it’s been an honor to collaborate with them on this project. The Hobby School is leading the way in public policy education — not just in Texas, but nationally — and this new building will elevate its mission even further.”

The Honorable Garnet Coleman, Former Texas State Representative



“Public policy is made with real people coming together from different experiences with different issues, talking, thinking through things and coming up with real solutions. I look forward to seeing more of the fruits of this school because I know what’s being done here is going to make a difference not only in Houston but in Austin, the entire state and the entire world.”

The Honorable Dustin Burrows, Texas State Representative and 77th Speaker of the Texas House



“If my grandfather’s legacy is anything, it’s education. That’s where he chose to spend his time, that’s where he chose to spend his dollar, and that’s where he chose to focus much of his effort in public service. For him, supporting education at places like the University of Houston was key to unlocking Texas’ potential for generations. Zooming in, he has long held that Houston cannot be a great city unless the University of Houston is an excellent university. And thanks to the tireless efforts of so many people here, that dream has become a reality.”

Eric Pettus Hobby



ACTION INTO IMPACT

Civic Houston Internship Program students completed part-time internships in government offices, nonprofits and electoral campaigns during the spring and fall semesters. In addition to their internships, the **105 undergraduates** contributed **988 volunteer hours** on voter education initiatives and community issues in 2025.



Sophia Rodriguez (left) and Saron Regassa (right), 2025 CHIP interns

When **Sophia Rodriguez** walked into the orientation for her new internship, she didn't know the experience would redefine her sense of belonging. "The Civic Houston Internship program has been a welcoming and transformative experience," Sophia reflects. "The people I have met both at my assignment and through CHIP classes have given me a place to call home."

Sophia interned with the **Education Foundation of Harris County**, contributing to initiatives that support local schools and educators. Beyond their placements, these mission-oriented undergraduates connect with community issues and civic leaders throughout the semester, underscoring the program's commitment to civic responsibility. Jessica Ruland O'Connor, who directs the school's internship programs, also introduced the inaugural **Civic Engagement Ambassadors** program to amplify voter education programming and partnerships with student organizations. Their work is supported by a national grant from the **Students Learn Students Vote Coalition**, with the Hobby School selected as one of only four institutions in Texas to receive the award.

CHIP is just one opportunity in a dynamic portfolio designed to prepare students for leadership in government, policy and community organizations. Over the summer, six **Harris Fellows** immersed themselves in county government offices, tackling projects in constituent services, policy analysis and communications. **Saron Regassa**, who served with the office of Harris County Precinct 4, recalls, "My office was awarded a grant to give out 150 air conditioners throughout the precinct. It was amazing to connect people with resources and assist them throughout the entire process, especially since many get lost in the bureaucracy of the government. Providing a resource to people while maintaining accurate records and distributing items efficiently felt like what public service was supposed to look like."



Established in 2021, the Harris Fellows program places student leaders in county government offices over the summer.

Meanwhile, sixteen students joined the **Social Economy and Enterprise Academy**, partnering with nonprofits like BakerRipley and Evolve Houston to strengthen volunteer engagement and apply data-driven strategies to community challenges. "The program was an invaluable experience, allowing me

to apply research and statistical skills to real-world challenges,” says **Niamh Gerdes**, who worked with the American Red Cross to identify and implement a method to increase youth volunteer engagement across the Houston area.



MPA candidate Joseph Quarthey is a Fulbright Foreign Student Scholar participating in the Teaching Cities program.

Through the **Teaching Cities Program**, Master of Public Administration candidate **Joseph Quarthey** applied his expertise in disaster management to real-world challenges at the City of Deer Park. “It gave me valuable insight into how city regulations are applied to maintain safety, order and quality of life in the community,” said Quarthey.

Led by Instructional Associate Professor **Peter Koelling**, the program engages graduate candidates at the Hobby School in part-time assignments to observe the inner workings and challenges in municipal government. Koelling launched the program in 2024 to help those pursuing advanced

degrees develop practical skills and explore public service careers.

For those drawn to state-level policy and politics, the **Hobby Fellows** program placed a dozen undergraduates at the Texas Capitol during the 89th Legislature. Over 140 days, they supported lawmaking, staffed committees and built connections that will shape the remainder of their academic journeys and future careers. “The Hobby Fellows program gave me a unique, behind-the-scenes perspective on how lobbying truly functions,” shares **Benjamin Rizk**.



The Hobby School supports student leadership and civic engagement opportunities, such as the annual Texas Tribune Festival, a three-day gathering in Austin centered on politics and policy dialogue.

Fourteen students engaged in conversations at the **2025 Texas Tribune Festival** in Austin, exploring the future of the Lone Star State and critical policy issues. They were energized by new ideas and perspectives after connecting with peers and thought leaders.

From the Civic Houston Internship Program to Harris Fellows, Hobby Fellows and beyond, these programs share a common thread: they empower students to turn classroom learning into meaningful action.

CHIP students contribute 1,000 volunteer hours in the community	Harris Fellows celebrates 5 years	16 Social Economy and Enterprise Academy students address local nonprofit research and data projects	Next Generation Leadership Academy adds 10 future public service professionals
Civic Engagement Ambassadors program launches with national Students Learn, Students Vote grant	2,000 interns placed since 1996	105 Civic Houston Interns work part-time in government and professional offices	8 Teaching Cities Program participants gained firsthand exposure to multiple city services through department rotations, site visits and ride-along arrangements
		10 Hobby Fellows complete Austin internships during Texas’ 89th legislative session	

A portrait of Richard Murray, an older man with white hair, wearing a light-colored zip-up sweater. He is sitting in front of a large, modern building with a glass and steel structure. A red banner is overlaid on the bottom of the image.

RICHARD MURRAY: THE FUTURE OF TEXAS POLITICS

Richard Murray has been a cornerstone of Texas political analysis for decades. The professor emeritus in the University of Houston's Department of Political Science and senior research fellow at the Hobby School of Public Affairs has tracked the state's evolving political landscape with the same curiosity that first brought him to Houston in 1966.



“We live in very, very interesting times,” Murray said during a fall 2025 **Hobby Talks** podcast interview with Hobby School Dean **Jim Granato** at the Center for Student Media.

During the conversation, Murray discussed the implications of newly drawn congressional districts for the 2026 midterm elections, including potential shifts in the balance of power in Congress and broader party strategy. He also reflected on his career at the University of Houston and introduced “Letter from Texas,” a newsletter offering data analysis and commentary on the dominance of Republican politics in Texas.

Murray’s influence extends well beyond his research. Over the years, many of his students have gone on to successful careers in public service and elected office. At the **Hobby School’s Annual Luncheon** in February 2025 at the Wortham Center, Murray interviewed his former student, Houston Mayor **John Whitmire**, who reflected on his journey from University of Houston student and state lawmaker to Houston’s 63rd mayor.



Murray recalled an office-hours meeting with Whitmire in 1971.

“He stopped by not to say, ‘I want to go into politics,’ but to ask for an extension on a paper. I happened to have the new legislative maps lying out, and after we studied them, he pointed to his neighborhood and agreed that the new district in the state House of Representatives was a good fit for him.”

Whitmire served in the Texas House until 1983, when he was elected to the Texas Senate. He became Houston’s longest-serving state senator before being elected mayor in November 2023. Proceeds from the luncheon supported 2025 Hobby Fellows interning at the Texas Capitol during the 89th Texas Legislature.

Letter from Texas: A New Lens on the Lone Star State



In September 2025, Richard Murray launched “**Letter from Texas**,” a newsletter drawing on his decades of research and teaching to explain why Texas remains central to national politics. Each issue explores timely topics ranging from the implications of the president’s second-term agenda to Texans’ changing identity and economic growth across the Texas Triangle. Murray connects local trends to national consequences, examining questions such as, “Will Texas remain a Republican stronghold?” and “How will Latino voters influence future elections?” The newsletter has examined voting patterns in recent national elections, previewed the 2026 midterm elections and analyzed policies on tariffs and immigration. Murray informs and engages readers on the issues shaping Texas and the nation.



INFORMING POLICY AND PRACTICE

Research at the Hobby School takes a rigorous, data-driven approach to understanding how people and communities navigate complex economic, environmental and social challenges. Through collaborative, interdisciplinary work, researchers translate real-time insights into evidence-based solutions that inform policy and strengthen resilience across Texas and beyond.

Tracking Resilience

In 2025, the Center for Public Policy launched the SPACE City Panel, a longitudinal survey that captures how area residents adapt to economic, environmental and social challenges. In partnership with the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, the panel reflects the voices of nine counties in the region through quarterly surveys on community engagement, sustainability and economic well-being. Early reports reveal rising concerns about inflation, debt and income volatility, strong support for practical climate solutions, and growing questions about AI's impact on jobs. With 1,500 panelists, this initiative delivers timely insights to inform policymakers, business leaders and civic organizations shaping the region's future.



Research Assistant Professor Maria Perez Argüelles is part of the Center for Public Policy team, where she supports the center's work through data analysis and research report writing for projects such as Texas Trends, SPACE City Panel, Texas Metropolitan Blueprint and other policy-focused initiatives. Her expertise in community resilience and energy, urban policy and spatial analysis contributes to advancing the research and impact of the Hobby School.



What's Trending?

The Hobby School of Public Affairs and the **Barbara Jordan-Mickey Leland School of Public Affairs** at Texas Southern University concluded the **Texas Trends survey series** in 2025, completing a five-year project that tracked the state's evolving population and public opinion. The report series honors three Texas leaders who dedicated their lives to public service: former Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby, former U.S. Rep. Barbara Jordan, and former U.S. Rep. Mickey Leland.

In 2025, the statewide surveys focused on upcoming elections, legislation, redistricting, immigration and energy. The final reports explored voter views on the 2026 primary elections, redistricting, immigration policy and household energy costs.

Metro State of Mind

The **Texas Metropolitan Blueprint** headlined a daylong symposium organized by The Texas Tribune. During a panel discussion, Hobby School researchers **Maria Perez Argüelles** and **Pablo Pinto** examined the challenges Texans face during severe weather events, including vulnerabilities in service delivery after disasters, and offered insights on potential paths forward.

The Texas Metropolitan Blueprint was developed as an actionable five-year plan to strengthen the long-term prosperity and competitiveness of the state's 26 metropolitan areas, which are home to 90 percent of Texas' population. The project is a collaboration among the **LBJ School of Public Affairs Urban Lab** at The University of Texas at Austin, the **George W. Bush Institute-SMU Economic Growth Initiative** and the Hobby School of Public Affairs. The effort draws on insights from more than 175 bipartisan leaders across the business, government and nonprofit sectors.

Released in conjunction with the 89th Texas Legislature, the policy recommendations address challenges associated with rapid population growth, including housing affordability, rising energy demand, workforce readiness and emerging technologies. The recommendations provide policymakers and civic leaders with a roadmap to ensure these regions continue to serve as engines of economic growth and opportunity.

Issues and Elections

Lone Star Leverage

Hobby School researchers **Renée Cross** and **Mark Jones** surveyed Texans on what they believed state lawmakers should prioritize in the 89th Texas Legislature. As educational savings accounts dominated the lawmaking session, the survey also examined other pressing issues, including immigration, gambling, marijuana, abortion, gun control and election reform. The findings were released in a six-part report series exploring where Texans find consensus and where divisions persist.



Distinguished Professor Pablo Pinto joined Houston Public Media's "Hello Houston" show to share insights from a report by the SPACE City Panel series, which examined household perceptions of the economy.

Think Local

Cross and Jones also examined hyperlocal policy issues through a series of surveys that captured the views of Harris County residents, Houstonians and voters in Texas' 18th Congressional District. These studies explored public opinion on government budget priorities, evaluations of elected officials, and quality-of-life issues affecting communities across the region.

Harris County

With a projected \$270 million budget deficit facing Harris County in fiscal year 2026, Cross and Jones surveyed voters to assess their top policy concerns, perceptions of quality of life, preferred strategies for addressing the budget gap and views of county leadership and emerging candidates.

City of Houston

As Houston confronted a significant budget shortfall, Cross and Jones conducted a comprehensive survey of registered voters to capture Houstonians' views on local policy issues, city services and elected officials, as well as the quality of life in their neighborhoods and across the city.



Master of Public Policy Celebrates Ten Years in 2025

At the heart of the Hobby School mission are its students. Since the launch of the Master of Public Policy program, faculty and advisors have continuously refined the program, expanding applied learning, strengthening quantitative training and preparing graduates for the rapidly evolving challenges of public leadership.



2016
Master of Public Policy degree transitions from the UH College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences to the Hobby School of Public Affairs



2017
Hobby School of Public Affairs celebrates its first graduating class, awarding nine Master of Public Policy degrees and graduate certificates



2025
Twenty-one Master of Public Policy graduates make up the 57 graduates in the Class of 2025



Celebrating Achievement, Honoring Service

The Hobby School's ninth commencement on May 8, marked a defining moment as 57 graduates, the largest class in the school's history, walked the stage. The ceremony opened with Master of Public Administration graduate Leyla Taghiyeva's performance of the national anthem and featured Jeremias Iraheta, bound for Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, as the ceremonial banner bearer.

Former U.S. Congressman **Kevin Brady** addressed the new alumni, reflecting on lessons shaped by decades in government, urging graduates to pursue meaningful work grounded in service and community impact, values at the heart of the Hobby School mission.

Saron Regassa, the 2025 student speaker, called on her peers to advocate for the issues that matter and to approach public policy with humility, clarity and courage. **Danielle Guevara**, entering the MPA program and earning a Bachelor of Science in Public Policy, and **Lorenzo Salinas**, who completed dual graduate degrees in public policy and social work, received the Garnet Coleman Award for Student Excellence for their leadership and commitment to values-driven public service. From internships and research to civic engagement, their records were worthy of one of the highest distinctions among Hobby School graduates.

The 2025 graduating class joined a robust network of leaders who have mastered interdisciplinary coursework and ethics and leadership training since the school was founded in 2016.



Elevating Excellence

Alfredo Prieto Pe, a fall 2025 Master of Public Policy graduate, brought two decades of IT and consultancy experience and a strong interest in policy training to the program.

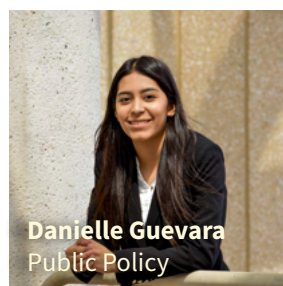
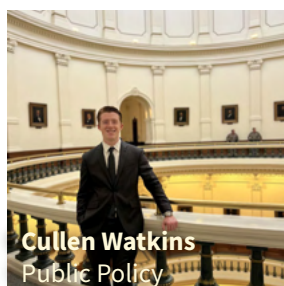
Through initiatives such as the **Teaching Cities program**, one of the Hobby School's approaches to implementing its agile learning model and preparing graduates for careers in public service, Alfredo and his peers expanded their municipal experience and practical understanding of city government operations. His academic excellence earned him an induction into **Pi Alpha Alpha**. He was among the 17 students recognized by Dean Jim Granato for leadership, scholarship and engagement. His fellow inductees included public policy undergraduates and Master of Public Administration and Master of Public Policy students who participated in experiential learning programs such as Harris Fellows, Hobby Fellows, Leland Fellows, the Civic Houston Internship and the Next Generation Leadership Academy, along with applied research initiatives supporting Houston-area nonprofits through the Social Economy and Enterprise Academy.



The Hobby School is dedicated to developing and supporting those who pursue public service and civic engagement. Its academic offerings, scholarships, Community and governmental partnerships, and special events create meaningful opportunities for leadership growth and recognition. Yet the most profound demonstrations of leadership emerge in the daily commitment to service and in the quiet resolve to lead by example.

Passion for Policy and Politics

Named for UH Professor Emeritus and Hobby School Senior Research Fellow, the Richard Murray Endowed Scholarship is awarded to students who are dedicated to making a tangible difference inside and outside the classroom.



Inspiring Others

Directed by the Hobby School, the Next Generation Leadership Academy is a partnership of the Volcker Alliance's nationwide Next Generation Service Corps. As a member of the academy, public policy major Colin Hull applied for the Paul A. Volcker Government Internship Award and was recognized for his public service pursuits and accomplishments.



Making Executive Decisions

Congratulations to Certified Public Manager Matt Daeumer who was selected to serve on the newly formed advisory board for the Texas Certified Public Manager Program. Daeumer who acquired the CPM in 2017, is assistant city manager of the City of La Porte.

"Public service is about making a meaningful difference in people's lives. I believe local government is the most accessible and impactful level of government. It is where service and community come together."
- Matt Daeumer

Leading the Why

The 2025 Hobby Leadership Award recipients Pamela Langford and Cassidy Lee were celebrated at the Hobby School Mixer on Nov. 10, where students and alumni connected with peers, staff, faculty and community partners. The award recognizes ethical and innovative leadership.



Cassidy Lee ('22), MGPS Policy Analyst, Harris County Office of Justice Administration
2021 Civic Houston Intern, 2021 Harris Fellow

Pamela Langford, MBA, CPM Assistant City Manager of Operations and Director of Development Services, City of Port Arthur

Research, Analysis and Ethics

The 2025 Ethics Bowl team received scholarships from the Elizabeth D. Rockwell Center on Ethics and Leadership to strengthen their analytical skills through the application of ethical frameworks to complex social, political and public policy issues.

Led by Visiting Professor on Ethics and Leadership Nora Reikosky, the team earned a spot at the 2026 National Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl in St. Louis after placing among the top three teams at the regional competition in San Antonio, advancing the students to the national stage in its inaugural year.



The 2025 team members included Nzube Anwaegbu, Sophia Bebawi, Cory Bush, JanMarco Flores and Jacobe West.



Standout Student Attends Summer Institute

Sandra Teran was one of 76 students nationwide selected by **The Volcker Alliance** for the **Next Generation Service Corps Summer Policy Academy**. In June, she participated in professional development workshops, met with government leaders and visited key sites in Washington, D.C., before completing a two-week residential program at the University of Washington's Evans School of Public Policy and Governance. Emily Janowski leads the Next Generation Leadership Academy at the University of Houston.

Sandra returned to campus with renewed purpose: "It furthered my understanding of how to serve my community and how to lead with newfound knowledge and a sense of hope."



SHAPING PUBLIC DIALOGUE

The Hobby School creates spaces where policymakers, practitioners, students and partners engage directly with the issues shaping Houston, Texas and the nation. Its graduates and former interns serve at every level of government and across public service sectors, applying rigorous academic preparation and experiential learning to strengthen communities. This work is amplified through intentional outreach and storytelling guided by the enduring legacy of its founder and greatest champion, former Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby, whose commitment to public service and education is evident in every program, partnership and platform.

A Natural Path: Boots on the Ground Campaign



Emily Joslin was featured alongside Hobby School alumni **Cyrus Hosseini, Rohit Shajan** and **Bridget Wallenberger** in a statewide marketing campaign with the LBJ School of Public Affairs and the Bush School of Government and Public Service, celebrating alumni making a difference through public service.

Emily began her public service journey as a 2016 Civic Houston Intern and a 2017 Hobby Fellow in Austin, later earning her Master of Public Policy and Master of Social Work in 2020. Today, she serves as a government relations specialist for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, helping advance legislative priorities and support a biennial budget of more than \$1 billion focused on conserving Texas's natural and cultural resources. Her work impacts millions of Texans, including the 9 million annual visitors to state parks and the 2.7 million Texans who hunt or fish each year.

Emily's journey from student and fellow to trusted public servant illustrates how public service education cultivates leaders who not only understand policy but live its impact every day.

"I have always felt like I wanted my skills and knowledge to improve the lives of others, and that I needed to contribute to the greater good at work. Even if I only play a small part or make something slightly better, it's worth it. Public service offered me the opportunity to spend at least 2,080 working hours a year doing exactly that while also contributing to something I believe in and care about." — Emily Joslin, MPP/MSW '20



Community Connections

In 2025, the Hobby School's podcast series, **Hobby Talks**, amplified policy insight through conversations with leaders shaping local and national politics. Guests included a range of experts, from a county commissioner and state lawmakers to national voices on emerging issues, translating complex societal problems into accessible dialogue, expanding public understanding of governance, power and policy decisions that affect communities statewide.



Tech Talk

The Elizabeth D. Rockwell Center on Ethics and Leadership launched a lecture series exploring how digital tools shape human connection, challenge privacy and influence democracy. Featuring media scholars, authors and technology experts, the "Rebooting Our Relationship With Tech" series invited audiences to reflect on the ethical dimensions of rapid technological growth.



Art, Education and Policy

Conceptual artist **Nadya Tolokonnikova** sat down with Patricia Restrepo, curator at the Contemporary Art Museum Houston, for a wide-ranging discussion on art as a vehicle for disruption and generating change. The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts and the Elizabeth D. Rockwell Center on Ethics and Leadership co-hosted the artist talk. The Russian punk rock performer also reflected on her activism in her home country on Houston Public Media's "Houston Matters with Craig Cohen" show.

Education policy expert Robert Pondiscio with the American Enterprise Institute discussed the state of public education and the future of classrooms as the Texas Legislature was poised to pass an education savings account program and Houston ISD remained under state-appointed leadership.



Hobby School faculty and researchers shape public policy discussions and explore Texans' perspectives on critical issues. In fiscal year 2025, the school garnered **2,149 news citations**, including coverage of surveys such as Texas Legislative Issues, City of Houston, Texas Trends and the Congressional District 18 Special Election.

Primary Pulse Check



Hobby School researchers **Renée Cross** and **Mark P. Jones** are regular guests on Houston Public Media's flagship program, "Houston Matters with Craig Cohen," where they discuss current policy and political issues and break down findings from Hobby School research and polling.



Their work is frequently cited in major media outlets, including The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Hill, CNN, CBS News, NBC News, The Texas Tribune, The Dallas Morning News, the Houston Chronicle, the Austin American-Statesman, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, the San Antonio Express-News, KTRK and KHOU. This coverage underscores the Hobby School's role as a trusted source of analysis on Texas governance and public policy.

Public Sector Principles

Dean **Jim Granato** and Associate Dean for Graduate Studies **Sunny Wong** co-authored an **opinion editorial** for the **Houston Business Journal** on the effectiveness of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). The editorial explained that despite obstacles embedded in our democratic processes, DOGE's impact could differ from previous presidential administration efforts to overhaul the government bureaucracy and streamline federal spending due to the communications landscape.



Director of the Center for Public Policy **Pablo Pinto** engaged with multiple media outlets to share his expertise on regional policy issues. He appeared on **Houston Public Media's "Hello Houston"** show to help audiences understand the basics of surveying ahead of elections and to highlight the CPP's research focus areas and the value of polling for policymakers and the communities they serve. Pinto also discussed inflation pressures affecting Houston-area households in the **Houston Chronicle**, drawing on findings from the Houston Metro Community Survey, and spoke with **Radio Bilingüe** about the political and demographic implications of Texas' congressional redistricting.



Associate Professor **Chris Bronk** was featured across media outlets for his expertise in cybersecurity and emerging technologies. He analyzed national security risks tied to federal data consolidation in a

Baker Institute for Public Policy issue brief and provided commentary to Australian media on outdated meteorological technology. Bronk advised **KHOU 11** viewers on navigating online threats involving cryptocurrency scams and TikTok policy developments and joined **Houston Public Media's "Hello Houston"** to explain the ripple effects of a major Amazon Web Services outage.



An article he authored examining how rapid advances in digital technology are reshaping global politics was published in **Communications of the ACM**, considered a leading publication covering discoveries, innovations and research in computing technology. In an opinion piece for the *Houston Chronicle*, Bronk warned that inconsistent U.S. policy on advanced AI chips threatens America's leadership in global technology.



Researcher Assistant Professors **Maria Perez Argüelles** and **Agustín Vallejo** provided bilingual insights to Spanish-language media outlets, including



Telemundo and **Univision**, on the SPACE City Panel reports covering climate policy, food insecurity and workforce trends.



In an op-ed for **The 74**, Assistant Professor **Blake Heller** and co-author Kirsten Slungaard Mumma of Teachers College examined the measurable benefits of adult education programs and their broad impact, calling for continued federal funding.



Professor **Mirya Holman** appeared on **NPR's All Things Considered** to discuss perceptions of women in positions of power and why women in political leadership are more often referred to by their first names than their male counterparts.



In an opinion piece for the *Houston Chronicle*, Professor of Practice **Chase Untermeyer** reflected on the quiet influence and legacy of Dick Cheney. Untermeyer served as director of presidential personnel for George H.W. Bush from 1988 to 1991.



Professor of Practice **James Thurmond** appeared on **ABC 13** to explain how Houston's special districts influence local infrastructure and community development.



With leadership and experience from a broad range of public and private expertise, the Hobby School Advisory Board serves as strong ambassadors of the school's mission in the community.



The Hobby School Advisory Board welcomed two new members, **Matthew Conner** and **Hani Jneid, MD**, in 2025. A University of Houston alumnus, Conner holds a bachelor's degree in political science and served as a 2013 Hobby Fellow-Austin and as a 2012 Civic Houston Intern. Most recently, he was a panelist at the 2025 Civic Leadership Boot Camp. Conner is the managing principal at Arete Public Affairs, a consulting firm specializing in government relations.

Jneid is a physician, educator and researcher whose career has been devoted to advancing heart health and building institutions of excellence in Texas and beyond. He serves as professor and chair of the Department of Cardiovascular Medicine at the University of Texas Medical Branch, director of the Sealy Heart Institute and vice president for cardiovascular operations.



Former Hobby School interns Matthew Conner of Arete Public Affairs, Traci Buttram of Harris County Office of Administration and Santiago Franco of Harris County Intergovernmental and Global Affairs provided an insider's perspective on government relations and public service at the 2025 Civic Leadership Boot Camp.

ADVISORY BOARD

2025 Members

Ashley Smith, Chair

Alice Aanstoos, Chair Emerita

Senator Don Adams

Ramona Adams

Matthew Conner

John Cryer III

Charles Foster

Jason Fuller

Bill Hobby

Curtis Huff

Powell Hutton

Hani Jneid, M.D.

Beth Madison

Kathryn McNiel

Catherine Clark Mosbacher

Matthew Moseley

Tyler Nelson

Mark Nitcholas

Alex Obregon

Beth Robertson

Francisco Sanchez, Jr.

Katherine Summerlin

Freddy Warner

FACULTY AND STAFF SPOTLIGHTS



Chris Bronk, associate professor at the Hobby School, has been appointed to the University of Houston's newly formed Faculty Council by President

Renu Khator. He joins colleagues across campus in supporting faculty affairs, curriculum development and research and scholarship initiatives.



Brandon Williams joined the Hobby School as an instructional assistant professor and the new director of the Elizabeth D. Rockwell Center on

Ethics and Leadership.



Nora Reikosky, visiting professor on ethics and leadership, guided the University of Houston's first intercollegiate ethics bowl team to

qualify for the 2026 Association for Practical and Professional Ethics Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl National Competition, coaching students to discuss complex social, political and ethical dilemmas and build their capacity to evaluate and discuss them.

Faculty

Jim Granato, Ph.D.
Dean and Professor

John Antel, Ph.D.
Professor

Sam Arenberg, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor

Yuki Atsusaka, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor

Chris Bronk, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

Gail Buttorff, Ph.D.
Research Associate Professor and Associate Director,
Center for Public Policy

Daniel Engster, Ph.D.
Professor and Associate Director, Elizabeth D. Rockwell
Center on Ethics and Leadership

Valentine Gilbert, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor

Jessica Gottlieb, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

Katelyn Heath, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor

Blake Heller, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor

Mirya Holman, Ph.D.
Professor

Peter M. Koelling, J.D., Ph.D.
Instructional Associate Professor and Director of
Graduate Initiatives

Maria Perez Argüelles, Ph.D.
Research Assistant Professor

Pablo Pinto, Ph.D.
Distinguished Professor and Director, Center for Public
Policy

Agustín Vallejo, Ph.D.
Research Assistant Professor

Brandon Williams, Ph.D.
Instructional Assistant Professor and Director, Elizabeth
D. Rockwell Center on Ethics and Leadership

Alan Witt, Ph.D.
Professor and Associate Dean for Undergraduate
Studies

Sunny Wong, Ph.D.
Professor and Associate Dean for Graduate Studies

Toshiyuki Yuasa, Ph.D.
Instructional Associate Professor

Joint Faculty

Don Foss, Ph.D.
Professor, College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences

Norman Johnson, Ph.D.
Professor, C.T. Bauer College of Business

Boris Shor, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, College of Liberal Arts and Social
Sciences

Senior Research Fellows

Mark P. Jones, Ph.D.

Richard Murray, Ph.D.

Professors of Practice

The Honorable Garnet Coleman

James Thurmond, Ph.D.

The Honorable Chase Untermeyer

FACULTY AND STAFF SPOTLIGHTS



Peter Koelling was inducted as a 2025 Fellow of the American Bar Foundation, a global honorary society of attorneys, judges, law faculty and

legal scholars whose public and private careers have demonstrated outstanding dedication to the highest principles of the legal profession.



Victoria Cordova joined Leadership Houston Class XLIV, a prestigious regional program building leaders through civic engagement and

connecting changemakers to the city's economy, politics, history and industries.



Magdalena Padilla is the new program director of academic affairs, overseeing student recruitment,

advising and promotion of the graduate and undergraduate programs. She began her UH journey in 2012 with the then-Hobby Center for Public Policy.

Staff

Diana Benitez, C.P.M.
Program Director, Graphic and Web Design

April Blount, M.B.A.
Director, College Business Operations

Falon Boehm
Multimedia Specialist, Communications and Marketing

Victoria Cordova, M.A.
Executive Director, Communications

Renée Cross, M.L.A.
Senior Executive Director and Researcher

Emily Cruz
Program Manager, Centers and Business Operations

Emily Janowski, M.B.A., C.P.M.
Program Director, Next Generation Leadership Academy and Certified Public Manager Program

Kailey Moore
Program Manager, Student Services

Jessica Ruland O'Connor, M.P.P.
Program Director, Internship Programs and Lecturer

Magdalena Padilla, M.P.A.
Program Director, Academic Affairs

Dumonique Rayson, M.A.
Department Business Administrator

Elizabeth Salinas
Executive Administrative Assistant, Dean's Office

Savannah Sipole, Ph.D.
Research Associate, Center for Public Policy

Cherish Wallace
Department Business Administrator

Isaiah Warner, M.A.
Manager, Information Services

Celeste Zamora, C.P.M.
Communications Manager





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