

THE PILLARS

WINTER 2023



ONE GOAL *Many Dreams*

THE JOURNEYS OF FIVE EXCEPTIONAL INDIVIDUALS

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PRESIDENT'S *message*

This issue of The Pillars features the stories of five students who share what receiving an HCU education has done for them. These are the kinds of testimonies that I have the privilege of hearing regularly — and the kinds that we often share with the Board of Trustees during our meetings. We want you to hear these stories as well.

Students like these truly inspire us, because they typically express their thanks to God for his provision, especially for the scholarship support that made a crucial difference in their lives, allowing them to benefit from a university experience like the one we offer.

Our world is deeply troubled, and one of the best ways to change it, as we try to do every day here at HCU, is to take a long view of our work. That is, we must continue to provide the ideas and life-changing experiences that form a Christian worldview and inspire values that produce honorable and moral citizens. Thus, we aim to instill ways of thinking and habits of living that not only facilitate career skills and competencies but also transform the very course of a person's life so he or she can grow to maturity, have a family, build a productive and meaningful career, and raise their children likewise to become hardworking Christian citizens who are faithful members of God's kingdom. This kind of change in a person's trajectory doesn't happen overnight, but it does happen. And we see it occur regularly on this campus.

We work hard to make an HCU education available to as many students as possible. Though we can't do all that is needed, we do a lot — and we want to do more. Our costs as a private institution are surprisingly low, but a college education is not free. These students depend on all of us to give.

Would you consider making a special gift for student scholarships as we embark on a new year? You could designate it for an endowed scholarship or for current funds. Either way, you will be part of changing lives, families, and ultimately — by God's grace — our communities and cities.

Wishing you the best in the new year. God has blessed us richly in Christ. Thank you for helping us do his work in the world.

God bless you and yours.



Dr. Robert B. Sloan

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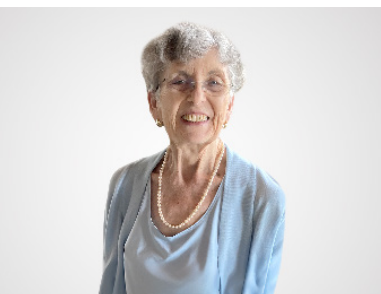
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ONE GOAL

Many Dreams

Many families can no longer afford to send their children to college.

One cause?

The rising cost of higher education.

However, thanks to the generosity of donors, Houston Christian University is able to offer a wide range of scholarships to deserving students in recognition of their academic excellence.

Follow the journeys of five exceptional individuals who — by God’s grace and the generosity of HCU’s scholarship and grant program — are receiving the benefit of higher education. These scholarships provide valuable opportunities and turn the dream of higher education into a reality.

The five featured HCU students (and so many more) are tackling their academic goals and achieving their dreams, all while receiving a world-class Christian education right here at Houston Christian University.

Each of their stories is a testament to their dedication, perseverance and unwavering pursuit of knowledge. Their narratives are not merely about overcoming financial hurdles; they are about embracing opportunities, excelling in their chosen fields and making a positive impact on the world.

Read on to discover their remarkable narratives. A big Husky “Thank you” to the generous donors who make these stories possible. ✝



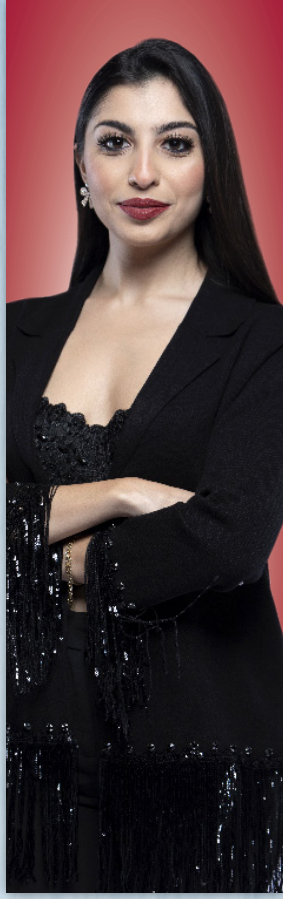
Eduardo



Brooklyn



Matthew



Sarah



Xavier

Securing *the* Future

SCHOLARSHIPS ENABLE HCU SENIOR TO PURSUE CAREER IN CYBERSECURITY

Houston Christian University (HCU) senior Eduardo Corazón envisioned a career as a neurosurgeon or neurologist, but his passion for electronics and programming led him into the world of cybersecurity.

Born to Nicaraguan parents of modest means, Corazón was raised in a Christian family with strong values and work ethics but with limited resources to fund his educational goals.

“I come from a poor socio-economic background, and whilst I firmly believe in a strong work ethic and dedication, there are certain factors that limit the execution of one’s goals,” said Corazón.

When beginning his college search, he evaluated his options at the University of Texas at Austin and Texas A&M but chose HCU for its affordability, proximity to home, faith-based education and small class sizes.

A graduate of Houston’s Carnegie Vanguard High School, Corazón was admitted to HCU and awarded The Hopper Fellows Award, named in honor of Rear Admiral Grace M. Hopper, PhD, a pioneer of computer science and military service. The scholarship is awarded to students pursuing degrees in high-demand, STEM-related degree programs who meet higher merit criteria and are willing to participate in leadership development and service activities for the College of Science and Engineering.

Corazón credits the generous donations of Holly Frost and his wife, Kathaleen Wall, through The Hopper Fellows Award for enabling him to pursue his educational goals.

“The impact this scholarship has had on my ability to pursue a higher education has been absolutely invaluable. Without the scholarship, I highly doubt I would be able to pursue my education at the same level or even at all given the economic burden that stems from college,” said Corazón.

He is also a recipient of the President’s Scholarship, a merit-based scholarship that provides \$88,000 to qualifying freshmen over eight undergraduate semesters.

A scholar in HCU’s Honors College, Corazón is also immensely grateful for the impact that his professors have had on his personal and professional development.

“Their profound wisdom, strength of character and guidance have been instrumental in my growth as an individual. I am truly fortunate to have had such dedicated individuals supporting me throughout my college experience,” said Corazón.

He commends the Honors College for developing a curriculum that has enabled him to learn more about Christ and philosophy, helped him solidify his religious beliefs after

experiencing a crisis in faith in high school and opened the door to a network of individuals who are helping each other grow in Christ.

“Whilst I was raised in a Christian family, I had almost lost my faith through high school as I embraced new ideologies and perspectives. Yet I found support and guidance in my mentors, professors and peers,” said Corazón.

“ Their profound wisdom, strength of character and guidance have been instrumental in my growth as an individual. I am truly fortunate to have had such dedicated individuals supporting me throughout my college experience. ”

– Eduardo Corazón

The transformative journey he has experienced at HCU reminds him of a favorite quote by Marcus Aurelius that he strives to live by that reads, “Think of yourself as dead. You have lived your life. Now, take what’s left and live it properly. What doesn’t transmit light creates its own darkness.”

For Corazón, the road ahead is full of light as he prepares to graduate at the end of the spring semester and begin working at Amazon Web Services (AWS). He interned as a Cloud Support Associate at AWS and was mentored by Amazon engineers with whom he worked on various high-impact cybersecurity assignments, including adding new open-source search features, addressing community issues, fixing bugs and testing.

“Cybersecurity is my passion, and the chance to apply what I learned at HCU in an industry with a far-reaching impact and an amazing culture has been truly fulfilling. I thoroughly enjoy learning, and my time at AWS and HCU provided the perfect environment to explore and develop my skill sets on both a personal and professional level,” said the HCU senior. 🏆



the *Blessing*

Brooklyn Lacy knew little about Houston Christian University (HCU) when she began deciding on a college. She credits her mother with encouraging her to consider the private, faith-based university during her college search.

Lacy admits that HCU became a surprise addition to her list after she began receiving emails from the University's undergraduate admissions office inviting her to attend a preview of the campus. Despite her reservations, she appeased her mother and decided to attend the event.

"First impressions are big for me, and since I came in with such low expectations, for those to be hit out the ballpark blindsided me," said Lacy.

Not one to believe in "love at first sight," the homeschooled student's outlook completely changed when she attended

“ I sat in my room for over half an hour on my floor crying and thanking God for the favor that he has placed on my life, time and time again. That moment sealed the deal. In my heart of hearts, I knew where my first steps as a college freshman would be taken. I wholeheartedly believe if it was not for that tremendous blessing, I would not be able to call myself a Husky. ”

- Brooklyn Lacy



Husky Preview, a one-day, comprehensive showcase of the HCU campus designed for prospective high school and transfer students.

“The faculty were incredibly kindhearted people and made the experience ten times better. Seriously, I had one of the best tour guides ever. Learning that a large percentage of the employees were alumni assured me that the school was a legit contender,” said Lacy, now in her sophomore year at HCU.

Seeing the beautiful campus, learning about the many undergraduate academic programs, the enriching student life environment and state-of-the-art fitness center added to HCU’s appeal for the Houston native.

“More importantly, its dedication to Christ in every aspect of college life was its most appealing attribute. They made faith the focal point of the college experience, and I could not have asked for more,” said Lacy.

Focused on enrolling in a university with a strong law program, she narrowed her search to several Texas schools, including Dallas Baptist University (DBU) and HCU because of their faith-based focus, when a letter arrived that would help her to solidify her direction.

“Right as I began leaning towards DBU and almost committing, God in his humor and favor had quite the surprise awaiting me in the mail. In mid-January, I received my welcome packet from Houston Christian University welcoming me into the Husky family. Opening to my official acceptance letter with a congratulatory message signed by the president himself, what the next page read was truly a blessing,” shared Lacy.

The letter indicated that in addition to Lacy’s acceptance to the university, she had been awarded the Founders Scholarship in the amount of \$96,000 which equated to \$24,000 per academic year.

She describes feeling chills go down her spine as she read the fine print and then feeling the need to pinch herself to make sure she wasn’t dreaming.

“I sat in my room for over half an hour on my floor crying and thanking God for the favor that he has placed on my life, time

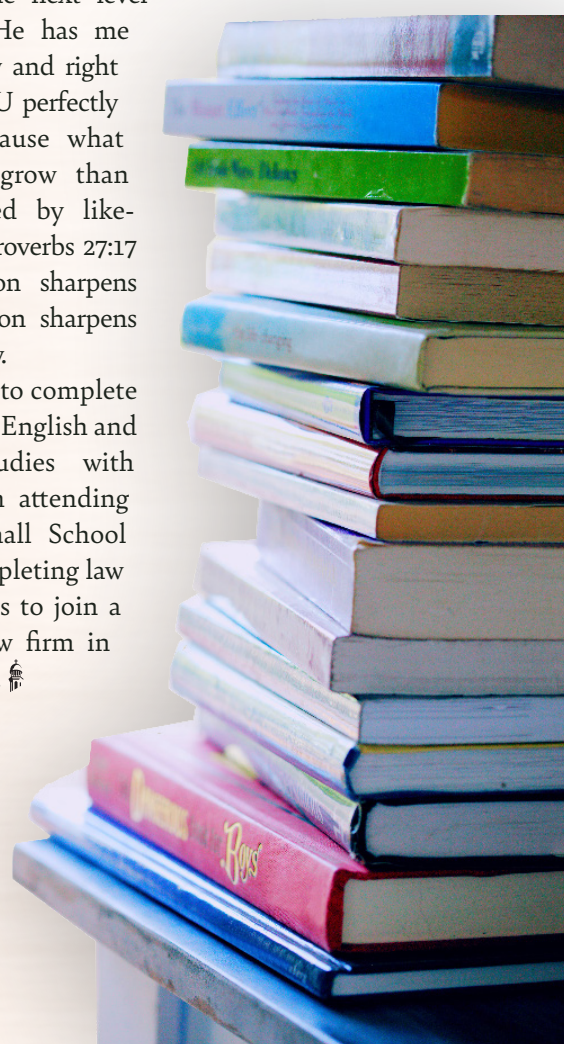
and time again. That moment sealed the deal. In my heart of hearts, I knew where my first steps as a college freshman would be taken. I wholeheartedly believe if it was not for that tremendous blessing, I would not be able to call myself a Husky,” said Lacy.

A scholar in the Honors College, Lacy has maintained the college’s rigorous academic requirements as well as the criteria for the scholarship that made her college education a possibility.

“Being here and listening to the voice of God will forever be one of the best decisions I could have made,” said the HCU sophomore.

As she begins the spring semester, she describes it as comforting to attend an academic institution that is committed to both academic excellence and spiritual growth.

“God has allowed me to be in a place where the next level of growth that He has me on requires a new and right environment. HCU perfectly fits the bill because what greater way to grow than to be surrounded by like-minded people. Proverbs 27:17 proclaims, ‘As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another,’” said Lacy.

She is studying to complete a double major in English and pre-law/legal studies with her hopes set on attending Thurgood Marshall School of Law. After completing law school, her goal is to join a well-respected law firm in the Houston area. 

A JOURNEY OF *Unprecedented* GRACE

Matthew Smith grew up in a turbulent home where alcoholism and violence prevailed. When his parents divorced, he found pleasure in riding horses in the summers, crayfishing, and playing rugby and cricket. In 2019, the course of his life changed when he gave his life to Christ after a friend witnessed to him.

“This was completely new for me, but learning about Jesus Christ and all that He has for me became my number one priority. It was an unexpected and drastic change for me, and everyone close to me,” said Smith.

A native of Aylesbury, England, Smith relocated to the U.S. to attend Notre Dame and pursue a bachelor’s degree

in history with a minor in political science. After graduating, he began working in the finance industry while completing his MBA and launching a Christian YouTube channel called “Unprecedented Grace” that, to date, has garnered 9.28K subscribers.

His desire to learn more about God’s Word to share his faith in Christ via his YouTube channel motivated him to make a major decision.

“With my work visa running out in a matter of months, I was faced with the choice of returning to England to study theology after eight years in the U.S. or enrolling in [a college] in America and returning to a student visa,” said Smith.

Uncertain how he would fund his education, he took a step of faith to apply to Houston Christian University’s Master of Divinity program and trusted God to provide the needed resources. On the recommendation of Richard Olds, Faculty-in-Residence professor in the School of Christian Thought, Smith would be offered a position in Residence Life that covered his living expenses.

“I came to Texas not knowing how God was going to pay for this at all. And I say ‘God’ very intentionally because there was no actual way that I could have paid for any of it myself,” admitted Smith. “I decided to come on the presumption that if God brought me here by covering my living expenses with the Residence Director position, he would similarly take care of my tuition, knowing I had arrived at the end of my own capabilities to pay for any of it whatsoever,” shared Smith.

His trust in God’s faithfulness was realized, and through a combination of scholarships, including the Hamill Presidential Scholarship, the Baptist General Convention of Texas Scholarship and the Jerry H. Stoller Scholarship, Smith was able to begin his academic career with no out-of-pocket costs.



“ I came to Texas not knowing how God was going to pay for this at all. And I say ‘God’ very intentionally because there was no actual way that I could have paid for any of it myself.”

- Matthew Smith

The UK-born international student describes the scholarships as “very specific, purposeful and needed blessings” and the divinity program as “the perfect incubation space” that has broadened his idea of who God is and enhanced his ability to mature and become wiser as he grows his “Unprecedented Grace” ministry platform.

“Jesus has truly revealed Himself as the finisher of my faith, and I am now more than happy to be a child in His presence. This is the result of being around more experienced Christians who invite God into the room as we all learn together,” said Smith.

As he continues his divinity studies, Smith is inspired by C.S. Lewis’ quote, “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.”

You can find “Unprecedented Grace” @MattsmifTV on YouTube. 📺

NEW SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS MINISTRY TRAINING

Houston Christian University’s School of Christian Thought is proud to offer, with the support of The Jerry H. Stoller Foundation, a new scholarship for students who are passionate about evangelism, academics, and ministry. The Jerry H. Stoller Foundation is a grantmaking foundation empowering Christ-centered organizations that have a vision for the Gospel to reach all nations. HCU students are welcome to apply who:

- Have sensed God’s calling on their life for ministry
- Have a desire to excel in theological education
- Are preparing for Christian ministry/ nonprofit work.
- Have a passion and practice for evangelism
- Are currently enrolled in a residential undergraduate or graduate program



On a Path to *Healing*

SCHOLARSHIPS HELP HCU STUDENT TO PURSUE CAREER IN MEDICINE

As far back as she can remember, Sarah Alameddine aspired to pursue a career in the medical field. Raised in a single-parent home, she credits her mother for fueling her desire to use medicine as a tool to impact the lives of others.

“My mother’s passion, dedication and resilience to help others no matter the circumstances not only ignites the flame of my desire to pursue a career in the health profession, but also allows me to establish long-term visions and goals,” said Alameddine.

“ I aspire to make a difference in my community and these scholarships are an influencing factor when it comes to affording the education I need in order to pursue my career. I believe that education is the primary factor that leads to success, and I try to connect my passion for education with my desire for helping others.”

– Sarah Alameddine

Her quest to fulfill her dream did not come without challenges. A month before the former Travis High student began her freshman semester at HCU, she received the devastating news that her mother and grandmother were diagnosed with breast cancer within two days of each other. Leaning on the resilience instilled in her by her mother, Alameddine forged ahead to begin pursuing her educational goals.

“Having two of the strongest women in my life going through something like that was definitely detrimental on my end. But I knew that I wanted to take that as a motivating factor to give back to my community and to really grow my passion for the medical field. I definitely took that route instead of going into the other little hole that it could have gone into,” she shared in an interview with KHOU “Great Day Houston” host, Deborah Duncan in a segment highlighting the 2023 Spirit of Excellence Gala.

With a strong resolve and the help of several University scholarships, including the President’s Scholarship, the Margaret S. Hudson Alumni Endowed Scholarship and the Grace Hopper Scholarship, Alameddine is pursuing a degree in biochemistry and molecular biology on her way to fulfilling her dream of a career in medicine.

“I aspire to make a difference in my community, and these scholarships are an influencing factor when it comes to affording the education I need in order to pursue my career. I believe that education is the primary factor that leads to success, and I try to connect my passion for education with my desire for helping others,” said Alameddine.



Her mother, Dr. Hala Alameddine, graduated from HCU in 2005 with a Master of Science in Healthcare Administration and works as Chief Operating Officer/Chief Clinical Officer at Kindred Hospital in Sugar Land.

“[My mother] continuously mentioned how the professors believed in her and how much they want their students to succeed and shine through their education. She also believed that [the] magic of education in a faith-based institution empowers students in making a difference in the community,” said the HCU junior.

Scheduled to graduate in 2024, she looks forward to continuing her mother’s legacy and fulfilling her childhood dream of working in the medical field.

“I admire medicine, not only [because of] its capabilities of healing the body, but through the concept of being able to help others,” said Alameddine.

During her “Great Day Houston” interview, she acknowledged that the financial constraints associated with going to college and paying tuition would have made it a challenge for her to also pay for medical school.

“But the beauty of the scholarships is that they have alleviated some of that tension and constraints that would have been added had I not [received] scholarships,” said the HCU junior.

As she focuses on completing her studies, she has set her aim on being accepted into a Texas-area medical school and specializing in the field of breast surgical oncology, a goal she knows is possible with the help of God and the generous scholarships that are enabling her to fulfill her dreams. 🙏

FULL RIDE TO

fulfill dreams



Xavier McIntyre was always the smallest player on the football field, but he never let his size keep him from playing the sport that he loved. A transfer student from The University of Texas at San Antonio, the former Elkins High School football player used that same drive and determination to earn a spot on the HCU Husky football team as a walk-on, helping the team secure its first winning season in the program's history with a 6-5 record.

"When I got here in 2021, I didn't have any expectations and came here as a walk-on on the football program. Now in 2023, having earned a full scholarship in football and becoming a team captain for the first winning season in history here at HCU, I can say that it was all worth it," said McIntyre.

He recalls his family's struggles including his mother working seven days a week on three jobs and the tragic death of his father last spring — only a few months before he was awarded an athletic scholarship from HCU — and credits the scholarship for making a life-changing difference in his college experience.

"The scholarship helped a lot because I used to get up at 4 a.m. to do Uber to make money for school. My mother's hard work and dedication is something I live by just watching her every day," said the HCU Husky football linebacker (No. 23).

In addition to receiving vital financial support from HCU, his professors, coaches and teammates helped him navigate the toughest experience of his life — the death of his father.

"The love that I got here at HCU from my teammates, from my coaches and professors and just everybody in between, helped me get through and become a stronger and better person. Now I know that just because you fall on tough times doesn't mean that you're alone — you always have people by your side who are willing to help you and boost you up when you're down," said the Houston native.



He also was inspired by the words of encouragement his father shared with him two weeks before his sudden passing when he noticed that his son's school, sports and work commitments were taking a toll on him.

"He told me everything that you're working for is gonna pay off. You just have to continue to keep working and just know that everything's gonna be OK," shared McIntyre.

Leaning on his faith in God and the strong support system behind him, the HCU senior applied his father's advice in his role as starting linebacker helping carry the Husky football team to its milestone winning season. He also was diligent in his studies, earning a 3.75 GPA in his final semester and graduating with honors this past December with a Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology.

Not only did he excel academically and on the playing field, he also grew in his faith and attributes his growth and development to the spiritual foundation he received at HCU.

"One of my favorite scriptures is 'Faith without works is dead,'" said McIntyre. "Coming to HCU just shows how all my work continued to pay off in everything, especially in my faith."

The HCU alum now has his sights set on launching a brand of organic sports drinks, called OrganicX, that he is developing for athletes and fitness enthusiasts and plans to test through a network of gyms and athletic facilities.

Inspired by a quote by "Think and Grow Rich" author, Napoleon Hill, that reads, "Whatever the mind can conceive and believe, it can achieve," McIntyre is laser-focused on fulfilling his dreams. 🏈

"The love that I got here at HCU from my teammates, from my coaches and professors and just everybody in between, helped me get through and become a stronger and better person."

- Xavier McIntyre



Dallas Jenkins, creator, director and co-writer of the popular, faith-based television series, "The Chosen," delivers the keynote speech at the 2023 Spirit of Excellence Gala to share his journey and help raise scholarship funds for students.



2023 SPIRIT of *Excellence*

A NIGHT OF HONOR AND GIVING

The 2023 Spirit of Excellence Gala brought a sold-out crowd to the Houston Christian University (HCU) campus for an elegant evening of celebration and philanthropy as more than \$200K in scholarships was raised for HCU students.

Keynote speaker Dallas Jenkins, creator, director and co-writer of "The Chosen," shared the journey of faith that led to the creation of the widely popular, faith-based series and his aim to reach college students and others through the episodic series.

The highlight of the night was the presentation of the Spirit of Excellence Award, one of the University's highest awards, to three couples whose vision, dedication and leadership have been instrumental to the University's academic and spiritual strength. Recipients of the award included Nichole and Benny '86 Agosto, Alex and Randy '84 Sorrels and Cindy and Dan Wilford. Each couple has been steadfast supporters of HCU through the years.

The President's Award was presented posthumously in honor of Drs. Gloria and Wiley Biles for the couple's faithful support of the University and its mission.





NICHOLE AND BENNY '86 AGOSTO

2023 Spirit of Excellence honorees Nichole and Benny Agosto stand firm in the belief that when you give of yourself and your finances to benefit others for the glory of God, you are guaranteed positive results. The couple has continued to live out this belief and now have a scholarship in their names that blesses single mothers with scholarship funds. In 2022, the Agostos issued a matching gift challenge to invite alumni and University friends to join forces. The goal was to provide students with financial support to fund their aspirations of a quality, faith-based education that would pave the way to their future career goals. The couple has been steadfast in their support of HCU through the years, not only financially but through their service. Benny Agosto, an HCU alumnus and former Husky soccer player, has also been a dedicated supporter of HCU's soccer program.



ALEX AND RANDY '84 SORRELS

Alex and Randy Sorrels are dedicated supporters of HCU and have invested their time, talents and resources into causes close to their hearts at the University. A former President of the State Bar of Texas, Randy holds four board certifications. In 2022, he was named Texas Lawyer's Attorney of the Year and TEX-ABOTA Trial Lawyer of the Year. A stand-out in her own right, Alex Farias-Sorrels began her career as a Supreme Court of Texas briefing attorney. Following a stint at a major international law firm, she and Randy formed Sorrels Law. Alex also has served as a trustee of the Texas Bar Foundation – the largest charitably funded bar foundation in the nation – and on the Houston Young Lawyers Foundation. The couple holds the United States' record for the largest actual damages jury verdict ever awarded to an injured worker. HCU's soccer field was dedicated as Sorrels Field in 2007 in tribute to Randy's dedicated support of the program.



*First Lady Sue Sloan, Keynote Speaker Dallas Jenkins,
President Robert Sloan*



Sherry and Jim Smith



Lee Wong, Esther Wong, Dr. Robert Sloan

CINDY AND DAN WILFORD

Faith and family are very important to 2023 Spirit of Excellence honorees Cindy and Dan Wilford. During football season, they can be found in the stands cheering on the Huskies with their grandson. The couple are HCU Football Founders, contributors to the Husky Athletics Club and season ticket holders. A former college player, Dan went on to become an NFL referee.

As the former president and CEO of Memorial Hermann Healthcare System, Dan has utilized his relationships in the healthcare industry to bless HCU on numerous occasions. As a trustee of the University, Dan has served on several committees and is generous in sharing his extensive business knowledge with the University. Cindy and Dan are also members of HCU's Covenant Society, made up of partners whose generosity sustains a legacy of giving to enable the University to deliver future leaders of the world who will live as servants in the kingdom of God.



DRS. GLORIA AND WILEY BILES

The 2023 President's Award, presented posthumously in honor of Drs. Gloria and Wiley Biles, was received at the gala by Jo '77 & Charles '77 Canton, the niece and nephew of Drs. Biles.

Drs. Gloria and Wiley Biles invested in others throughout their lifetimes, together and individually — Gloria in education and Wiley in healthcare. The couple loved the Lord, their church and Houston Christian University. Now, their legacy is being realized from a generous estate planned gift that has become an Endowed Scholarship and will live on in perpetuity, impacting the lives of students forever.

Well-known for her lectures in history at the University over a 16-year period, Dr. Gloria Biles loved being in the classroom. After retiring, Gloria remained a faithful member of the HCU Retirees Association. Dr. Wiley Biles, a radiologist, practiced his specialty in the Army from 1947 to 1949 and then opened his own practice in Houston, which he ran for 39 years.



Dr. Archie Dunham, Gala Chairs Jess Rogers Dunham '00 MEd '02 and Cary Dunham '93



Jo '77 & Charles '77 MBA '80 Canton and Dr. Robert Sloan



Allene Lucas, Malcolm & Becky Morris, Maddox, Matt & Melissa Morris



Tana & Dale '83 Jefferson



Dallas Jenkins & Dr. Stewart Morris



Lisa '76 & Jerry Simon



Dr. Barbara Taylor-Cox '81, Colton & Tyler Cox, Donna '81 & Rick Havard



Clay MBA '96 & Kendall Trozzo



Mingo



HCU Pep Band



General Don Wagner



Stanley & Dr. Diane '93 Williams, Dena & Jay Williams



Chariman of the Board of Trustees, Garry Blackmon, Kintra Blackmon, Jewel Simpson



Hannah Mannion MBA '19, Aaron Diehl '06, Stephen Dinger '07, Danielle Dinger, Vanessa Cuellar '22



Jessica & JJ '06 Worthen + guests, Lisa Worthen, Regina Stanley, Lana & Justin Kates, Caley & Lance Scheild

Giving is truly a family affair for the Coggins and Copeland families. Each family was recognized as a “2023 Family of the Year” honoree by Houston Christian University (HCU) on Sept. 30 during the annual Family Weekend celebration. Families who receive this special recognition exemplify Christian family values and contribute their time, talent and resources in support of HCU’s mission.

HCU President Robert Sloan presented special plaques to each family during halftime of the Huskies football game against Lamar University. “We applaud this family for decades of sustained connection as involved students and now faithful alumni,” said Dr. Sloan of the Coggins family.

During the on-field presentation, Dr. Sloan described the Copeland family as “a family of deep commitment to their faith” that “truly exemplify the values of HCU.” He commended the family for giving of their time and talent to the University.

Each honoree has been faithful in their support of HCU’s mission of providing a learning experience that instills in students a passion for academic, spiritual and professional excellence as a result of the central confession, “Jesus Christ is Lord.”

2023 family of the year honorees

THE COPELAND AND
COGGINS FAMILIES
RECOGNIZED

Members of the Copeland and Coggins families join HCU President Robert Sloan on Husky field for special recognition as “2023 Family of the Year” honorees. Pictured, l-r, C. Monroe Copeland, Debbie Copeland, Jeff Copeland, Lucca Copeland and Lane Copeland, Dr. Robert Sloan, Mark Coggins, Steven Coggins, Donna Coggins, Irene Concepcion Coggins, John Coggins, Robert Coggins. | Photo courtesy of Michael A. Tims | University photographer



THE COGGINS FAMILY

Donna, a former nurse, and Dr. Steven Coggins, a physician, have been generous in their support of the University. They are parents to William '16 and John '20, both alumni of HCU and Mark '24 and Robert '27, who are current Huskies.

William graduated summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Science in Biology from HCU and is a resident doctor in the Department of Neurosurgery at the College of Medicine at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. His wife, Danielle '16, a fellow Husky and classmate, graduated magna cum laude with a Bachelor of Science in Biology.

Her father, Dan, has been a faithful contributor to HCU’s Huskies Give Big.


John graduated summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Science in Biology from HCU and is currently in medical school. He married fellow Husky, Irene Concepción '20, who graduated summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

The Husky tradition continues with Mark, a recipient of the Dr. James S. Taylor Alumni Scholarship and Robert, an incoming freshman who is the first recipient of the 1967-1970 Founding Classes of Houston Baptist College Alumni Endowed Scholarship.

THE COPELAND FAMILY

Monroe '71 Copeland and wife, Debbie '72, are Charter Club members and Husky Football Founders. They were each inducted into the Golden Circle, a special recognition for alumni who have reached their 50th graduation anniversary and have been faithful attendees at HCU’s annual Homecoming celebration.

Their son, Jeffrey '03 Copeland, was an endowed scholarship recipient and was a member of several student organizations. The Copelands have been generous donors to the University.

HCU “Family of the Year” honorees are recognized at various events, and a tile is placed in the University’s Walk of Honor to commemorate their faithful support of the University. 

HAMELIN STOOP: THE BATTLE OF PARTHOGEN

An Interview with Dr. Sloan

What are the central themes in “The Battle of Parthogen,” the fourth book in the Hamelin Stoop series?

The whole series has been about the struggle of good vs. evil and finding moral courage. This book also includes consequences and accountability. The importance of family memories plays a big role for more than one of the characters.

Share the synopsis of your latest book.

The “Battle of Parthogen” picks up where book three, “The Ring of Truth,” left off with Hamelin returning to the children’s home in Texas while on the other side of the Atrium of the Worlds, Layla, Charissa, and Eraina desperately try to wake Princess Sophia from her coma. Hamelin must face the consequences of his rash actions even as Landon, one of Chimera’s evil sons, holds the city of Parthogen captive with his army and pack of vicious dogs. As Landon grows bolder in his attacks against King Carr’s encampment, it’s up to Hamelin and his friends to save not only Sophia but all of Parthogen before Landon’s reinforcements arrive and doom the Land of Gloaming forever.

What qualities do your main characters possess that you hope are an inspiration to your target audience?

As a 12-year-old, Hamelin is beginning to learn what it means to grow into a man. What does manhood entail? I also hope readers are encouraged to be reflective about life instead of rashly following the crowd.

Describe the writing process in your series.

I tend to start with a rough, broad outline. I like to think of the ending first, then the beginning, and then how the beginning and middle can best lead to the ending. After that, I like to dictate the first draft. Once I have that, I create a more specific outline that allows me to rearrange and reorder each scene as needed. Then, I will begin the editing and rewriting phase.

The books in the Hamelin Stoop series have been well received based on the awards and reviews. Describe the overall response to your series from young readers.

I originally wrote them for my grandchildren, who have all loved reading them. I’ve discovered lately that I also have readers that I didn’t expect. I’ve received positive letters and personal comments from older children and teenagers that really enjoy the series.

Are there any new challenges that Hamelin faces in the latest book?

At the end of the last book, Hamelin made some big mistakes that affected more than just himself. He now has to learn how to make it right. He has to make sure that his own individual quest doesn’t selfishly overshadow the needs of others or pull him off track from the larger story of the Ancient One’s plan.

How do you incorporate aspects of your personal and professional life into your books?

I sometimes incorporate what I’m studying biblically or theologically into the novel’s themes.

How long did it take to complete your latest book?

This book took about two and a half years to finish completely.

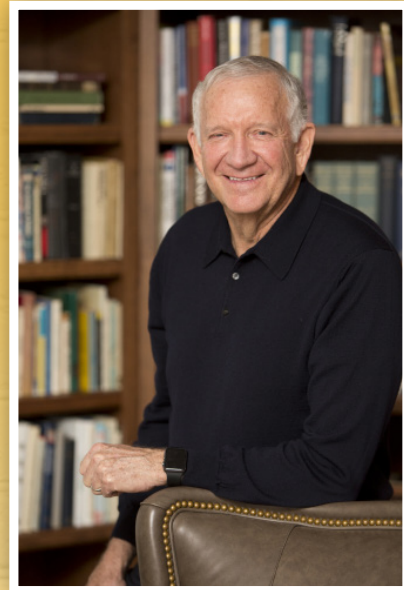
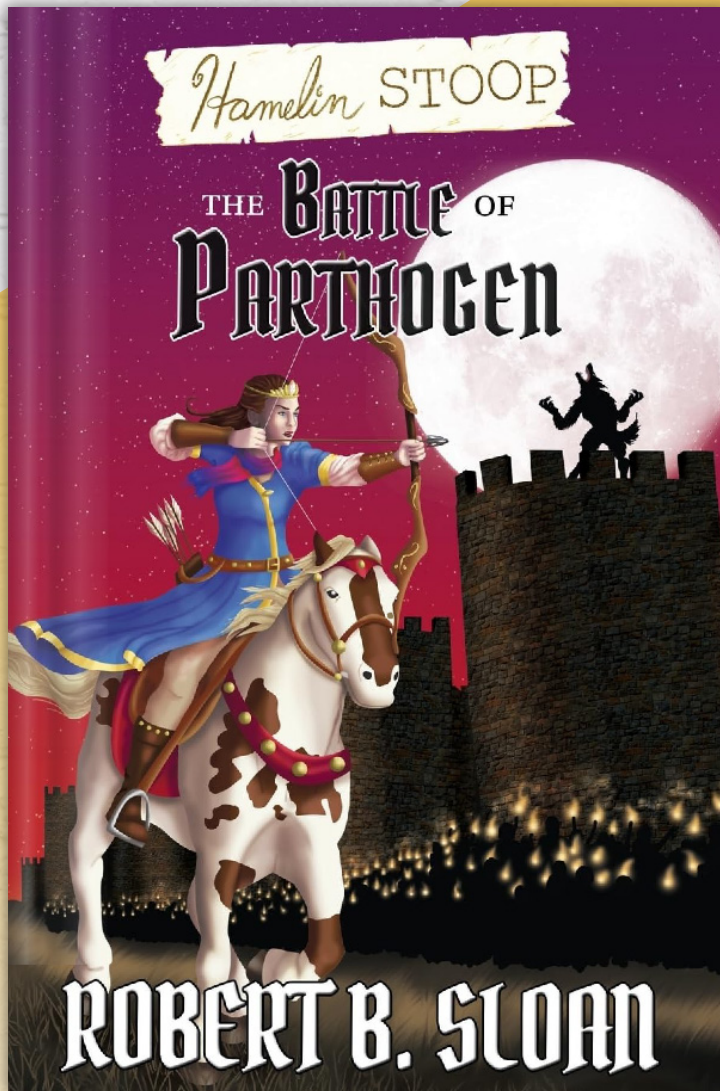
What is one of your favorite books by C.S. Lewis, who you have described as an inspiration for your own writing?

“The Chronicles of Narnia” series, “The Space Trilogy” and “The Great Divorce” are all fantasy books of Lewis’ that have influenced me.

Can readers look forward to future books in the series?

I plan for the global story to come to its conclusion in two more books. I have a good bit of a draft of book five done, and it is currently in the reworking and polishing stage.

BOOK SPOTLIGHT



Dr. Robert B. Sloan



TO FIND OUT MORE
about Dr. Sloan's book series, visit
robertbsloan.com/authors/book/

THE LINDA DUNHAM *School of Nursing* NAMED AT HCU



Houston Christian University (HCU) has announced the naming of the Linda Dunham School of Nursing.

This special recognition honors the life and legacy of Linda Dunham who passed away on April 21, 2023.

The nursing school, which awarded its first degrees in 1972, offers faith-centered curriculum to empower students to become compassionate leaders in diverse hospitals, healthcare settings and communities and provide care that transforms lives.

“It is a great honor for HCU to name our School of Nursing after Linda Dunham. Her faith, personality, character, and life of service illustrate all that we hope to achieve and bear witness to in teaching and training future nurses,” said HCU President Robert Sloan.

“Linda’s gracious character, her joy, her deep commitments to Christ and to her family exemplify a marvelous blend of the kind of integration of faith and nursing practice that we seek. We look forward to her continued influence on all those who come through the Linda Dunham School of Nursing.”



Linda Dunham was an active member of The Guild and was heralded by members as “a Martha and a Mary ... a woman of strong faith and a wonderful prayer warrior for many, as well as a doer. She worked tirelessly alongside her husband and her family to help others in need.” An Endowed Scholarship was established in Mrs. Dunham’s name by the Archie Dunham family.

In addition, a state-of-the-art nursing complex, slated for construction in The Sherry and Jim Smith Science, Engineering and Nursing Complex on the HCU campus, will be named the “Dunham Family Nursing Center” in the family’s honor.

“The family and I are grateful that the School of Nursing at Houston Christian University will honor Linda’s memory and that the new Dunham Family Nursing Center will be named after the Dunham family. My mother was a nurse in Oklahoma who worked well into her eighties. Our daughter, Laura Shook, was a nurse before entering full-time Christian ministry. Linda would say that nursing should also be a ministry because the very best nurses demonstrate patience, kindness, gentleness and love as they care for their patients. It will be our family’s prayer that all the nurses that graduate from the Linda Dunham School of Nursing demonstrate those attributes as they care for their patients,” said Dr. Archie Dunham.

Linda and her husband, Dr. Archie Dunham, have been steadfast supporters of the University through the years. The couple’s generosity and support have left an indelible mark on the landscape of HCU in significant ways, including the establishment of The Linda and Archie Dunham Theater, The Archie W. Dunham College of Business, The Dunham Bible Museum and Dunham Field.

The Dunhams were recognized in 2019 as HCU’s “Family of the Year” for their faith, integrity, generosity and service to God’s Kingdom. Their family includes Steve and Ronda Dunham, Laura and Mark Shook, and Cary ’93 and Jess Rogers Dunham ’00, MEd ’02, both alumni of HCU.

HCU receives \$2.5 million Gift to Establish Endowed Chair in Counseling

Houston Christian University (HCU) announced that The John M. O'Quinn Foundation has made a commitment of \$2.5 million to endow a Chair in counseling at the University. The John M. O'Quinn Foundation has made a commitment of \$2.5 million to endow a Chair in counseling at Houston Christian University (HCU). The announcement was celebrated with the dedication of a plaque in the Brown Administrative Building at a ceremony open to the HCU community followed by a luncheon hosted by HCU President, Dr. Robert B. Sloan and wife, Sue.

The gift, the largest from The Foundation to date “will allow many students to be well trained, positively impacting the lives of many in the community and across the globe,” read the plaque’s inscription.

“We believe that our counseling area is highly capable and truly prepared to tap into the deep roots of the broken and restless hearts all around us, and it’s The O’Quinn Foundation’s generous gift that is enabling us not only to speak to these needs individually but to provide opportunities for healing and restoration – the restoration of persons, families and ultimately culture,” said HCU President Robert Sloan.

A Texas trial lawyer and founding partner of The O’Quinn Law Firm, John M. O’Quinn dedicated his life to advocating for the needs of the underprivileged. He created The John M. O’Quinn Foundation in 1986 to fund charitable organizations with a focus on conservation, education, health, and programs benefiting underprivileged youth in Houston.

The John M. O’Quinn Foundation President Rob C. Wilson III described O’Quinn’s passion for supporting institutions that address the mental health needs of the community.



Pictured, l-r, Mr. Jeffrey Paine, John M. O'Quinn Foundation Trustee; Mr. Rob C. Wilson, III, President of John M. O'Quinn Foundation; Ms. Bess Wilson, (wife of Rob C. Wilson, III); Mrs. Sue Sloan; Dr. Robert B. Sloan, HCU President.

“Mr. O’Quinn was a big supporter and advocate for mental health care in Houston, as he was directly impacted by it during his lifetime. We honor his legacy with this endowed Chair, knowing it will be a valued resource for hope and healing for many in the community,” said Wilson.

Dr. Michael Cook, Director of HCU’s Student Counseling Center, expressed his heartfelt appreciation to The Foundation for their gift, the faculty members and students it will enable the University to train, and the countless lives it will allow them to impact in the future.

The commemorative plaque, bearing O’Quinn’s image, hangs on a dedicated endowed chair donor wall in honor of The John M. O’Quinn Foundation’s generosity to the university. 🏛️



STATE-OF-THE-ART BIRTH SIMULATOR

Houston Christian University’s Linda Dunham School of Nursing students will now gain invaluable hands-on experience in the birthing process, thanks to a grant from The Cullen Trust for Health Care. The grant facilitated the acquisition of an innovative birth simulation system, allowing nursing students to engage in every aspect of childbirth. The state-of-the-art simulators offer a safe training environment with features like realistic sounds, palpable pulses and interactive technology. HCU faculty members expressed excitement about the opportunity for students to develop critical thinking and clinical judgment in a simulated setting, ultimately enhancing their readiness for real-world nursing careers. 🏛️

“CAPTURE THE FLAG” Cyber Competition

HCU Cyber Engineering Team Wins 1st Place



In November, conference attendees participated in a capture-the-flag event sponsored by Deloitte. | Photo courtesy of the Alamo Chapter of the AFCEA

A team of Houston Christian University (HCU) cyber engineering students won first place in the 2023 Capture the Flag (CTF) competition in the annual Alamo Chapter of the Armed Forces Communications & Electronics Association (AFCEA) event (Alamo ACE) held at the La Cantera Resort in San Antonio, Texas, Nov. 13-16. More than 4,000 attendees gathered at the national conference to gain insight into military and civilian information technology and cybersecurity topics. The 2023 CTF win marks the second time a team from HCU has won the top award at the annual conference.

HCU seniors Ethan Thomas, Ashley Huynh, Olachi Ajawara and Leonardo Yerena and juniors Krzysztof Turski and Alicia Martinez competed on the “CrackDaCode” team to take home the top award.

The CTF, sponsored by Deloitte, is a competitive event in which undergraduate and graduate college students compete to solve challenges in different areas of cybersecurity, including forensics, cryptography, reverse engineering, web and network attacks and more.

Dr. Katie Evans, Dean of HCU’s College of Science and Engineering, expressed pride in the students in this year’s competition.

“I am so proud of all of our students who competed and, especially, the team that earned first place. San Antonio is a hot spot of cybersecurity talent and infrastructure. It is a major recognition for our students, our engineering program and HCU to win the Capture the Flag competition at the Alamo AFCEA event,” said Evans.

Dr. Steven Lyford, Assistant Professor of Computer Science at HCU, echoed Evan’s sentiments and applauded the team for their achievement and the preparation that preceded their first-place win.

“We are very proud of our students’ accomplishments. We had the utmost confidence that they would do well, but they have exceeded our expectations. They have worked very hard and spent countless hours preparing and practicing for this event. To prepare for this event, students used skills and knowledge learned in class as well as outside studies and preparations. Some of that preparation included competing in other competitions like the National Cyber League (NCL) cyber competitions,” said Lyford.

In addition to garnering a first-place win, HCU also ranked no. 58 out of 100 colleges and universities across the nation in the Cyber Power Rankings. More than 20 HCU students participated in the annual NCL competition that draws more than 10,000 students from more than 500 colleges and universities and 100 high schools across the U.S. Two HCU teams finished in the top 10 percent of the nation with one team ranking in the top three percent.

As a part of the competitions, students are tasked with identifying hackers from forensic data, pen-testing and auditing vulnerable websites, recovering from ransomware attacks and more. Participating schools rank based on their top team performance, their top student’s individual performance and the aggregate individual performance of their students. 🏆

A Champion Among Us

HCU Alumnus Named
a “2023 Veteran Champion of the Year
in Higher Education” by G.I. Jobs Magazine

Houston Christian University (HCU) alumnus Cody Harrington '20, a U.S. Army combat veteran of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, was recently named a “2023 Veteran Champion of the Year in Higher Education” in the G.I. Jobs 2023-2024 Military Friendly® Schools fall issue.

Each year, the magazine recognizes 40 individuals who go above and beyond to help student veterans and their families succeed in education. Harrington was deeply honored to be among the individuals from across the nation to be recognized.

“This recognition serves as a reminder of the incredible privilege and responsibility that comes with advocating for the well-being of our veterans. I am committed to continuing my efforts to support and uplift those who have served our country. Together, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of our veterans,” said Harrington.

An Assistant Director of International and Veteran Student Services at HCU, Harrington is driven by a strong desire to meet the needs of veterans as they pursue their college degrees.

Before his official workday begins, he joins veteran trainers for early morning exercise as he oversees the Veteran Physical Training program to make sure workout plans meet the needs of student veterans.

After a busy morning of ensuring students are certified for G.I. Bill benefits and that courtesy calls are made to prospective students to provide instructions on using their benefits, Harrington shifts his focus to developing workshops and scheduling discipleship appointments to enrich the spiritual lives of the veterans he serves.

By the end of the day, he has attended various veteran organization support group meetings and offered guidance and a listening ear to student needs.

“I serve as an advocate and resource for veterans, ensuring they have access to the support they need for a successful academic year,” said Harrington.

HCU Director of International and Veteran Student Services Shannon Bedo believes Harrington is the ideal person to be named a “Veteran Champion of the Year” for his tireless efforts in serving the diverse needs of student veterans.

“He has built veteran services into a thriving community of Veteran students who use available resources to increase Veteran retention and a sense of community on campus. If he sees a challenge, he builds relationships and processes to exceed expectations,” said Bedo.

The HCU alum earned a degree in Biblical Studies in 2020 and works hard to ensure the student veterans in his care are equipped to achieve academic success and grow spiritually.

“Not only does Cody professionally build the Veteran Services Program, but he personally ministers to many of the Veterans by leading Bible studies, planning tailgates and other events ... even working out with students early in the morning. It’s obvious that God brought Cody to HCU as a ministry to this specific group of students, and we are so blessed to have him on campus,” said Bedo.

Harrington’s goal is for HCU’s Veteran Student Services Department to become a model for other departments across the country. 🇺🇸



Cody Harrington

*Assistant Director of
International and Veteran
Services at HCU*

Army, 2004-2012, Sergeant



A Wicked DISCOVERY

Tucked away in the Morris Cultural Arts Center on the campus of Houston Christian University sits the Dunham Bible Museum, a gem of an exhibit and home to one of this country's most extensive compilations of rare biblical artifacts.

"Our collection includes historic items such as a leaf from the original Gutenberg Bible, a 1536 Tyndale New Testament, a first edition (1611) King James Bible and even a Bible that went to the moon and back with Apollo XIV," notes Diana Severance, the museum's director.

Nestled within this vast display lies a peculiar relic — the infamous "Wicked Bible" — a testament to printing blunders so outrageous that they sparked centuries of debate.

In 1631, an English printer, Robert Barker (along with partner Martin Lucas), inadvertently omitted one little word from the seventh commandment, transforming "Thou shalt not commit adultery" into "Thou shalt commit adultery." Definitely not the message that Moses intended when he carried the stone tablets down from the mountain, this egregious error ignited a firestorm of speculation.

A second error was discovered in Deuteronomy where the text was meant to proclaim the "greatnesse" of God. Instead, the Wicked Bible replaces the word "greatnesse" with "great-arse" or "great-asse" — a word that would make most church-goers cringe.

Rumors swirled that the mistakes were not mere accidents but deliberate acts of sabotage orchestrated by a rival printer to discredit Barker and claim his lucrative printing license. Others attributed it to human error, the careless oversight of weary — and, perhaps tipsy — printers working long hours under demanding conditions.

Needless to say, the reigning monarch, King Charles I, was not amused. Barker and his associate were summoned to the Star Chamber, the highest court in England at the time. They were found guilty of negligence and fined £300, a significant sum in those days. The two

were also stripped of their printing licenses, effectively ending their careers.

An attempt was made to eradicate all existing copies of the Wicked Bible and almost all of the 1,000 editions were burned. However, it is believed that 11 copies somehow survived, including the one now on display at the Dunham Bible Museum. HCU obtained this rare printing in 2008 as part of a collection purchased from Dr. John Hellstern, a renowned collector of rare Bibles.

Visit the Dunham Bible Museum, located in the Morris Center for Arts and Culture on the HCU campus at 7502 Fondren Road. Admission is free and open to the public Monday through Saturday (excluding University holidays) from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

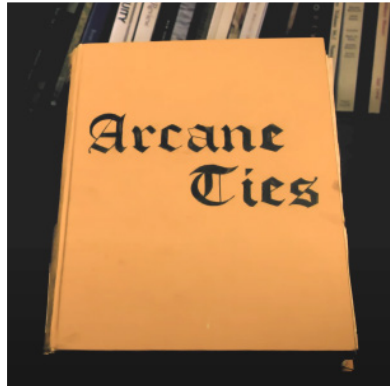
For more information, please call (281) 649-3287, enjoy a virtual preview tour (QR code) or visit hc.edu/museums/dunham-bible-museum.



No Tie Here

“ARCANE” WINS IT ALL

By Darian Cheatham



The film, “Arcane Ties,” was selected as the best short film at the Houston Christian University (HCU) 48-Hour Film Festival. The film is about two sisters who find a magical hourglass that will give only one of them immense power, enough to rule the land. Only one sister can control the power, and one sister will have to betray the other to gain the strength from the hourglass.

The Quack House, the production team behind the first-place film, included HCU students Caroline Roebuck, Gray Coleman, Gavin Quintanilla, Logan Williams, Ashley Riggins, Victoria Vasquez, Matt Bridges and Nekane Moyer. The team also won Best Costume, Best Hair/Makeup and tied with the El Jabz production team for Best Use of Prompt.

“It was crazy to see how much progress I made this year, from not placing at all to placing first with a project that I directed, a project that I was happy with. I wouldn’t have been able to do it without my incredible team, of course. They are all such amazing, talented people, and I’m lucky to work with them and call them my friends. I wouldn’t have wanted to compete with anyone else, and I’m glad they trusted me to lead our team,” said Caroline Roebuck.

Contestants were given 48 hours to make a short film in one of the following four genres: fantasy, mockumentary, samurai or monster movie. Students also were required to

respond to a prompt to include an hourglass, umbrella and Rubik’s Cube along with a specific line of dialogue in their short films.

In its second year, the festival drew hundreds of student submissions. HCU professors Bearden Coleman, Russell Hemati and Joshua Spires judged entries on artistic merit (creativity and entertainment value) and technical merit. Awards, trophies and prizes were presented to the winning teams.

“This year’s festival was amazing and would not have been possible without the incredible support of the cinema department here at HCU, Professor Sikora and all the students who participated this year. It is so wonderful and exciting to watch these films and see the amazing productions that people are able to create in 48 hours,” said Bryan Binder, one of the hosts of the festivals.

Second place was awarded to the Kens production team’s Samarai-themed film, “Toki,” and third place went to El Jabz for the team’s mockumentary, “It Takes A Village.”

Individual and team awards were given in numerous categories, including Best Acting (Eleesha Ebeling), Best Writing (Jacob St. John), Best Directing (Mickey Coleman), Best Editing (Jonah Pascual and Riley Wallace), Best Animation (Caroline Gillaspay, Liberty Dante, Eric Luckett) and Most Rewatchable (The Chosen Love Muffins). 🏆

A man in a dark blue suit, light blue shirt, and striped tie is sitting on a white bench. He is holding a brown football with white laces and the letters 'HCU' on it. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a blurred stadium with blue seating and a clear blue sky.

Building on a **WINNING** **FOUNDATION**


JASON BACHTEL NAMED HEAD COACH

All things considered, Wednesday, January 10 was a pretty good day to introduce a new head football coach.

And that's exactly what Houston Christian University did. It wasn't that long ago that HCU last named a head coach for its football program, but following the departure of Braxton Harris, the Huskies are looking to further build upon the foundation that was laid in Harris' single season with HCU.

And that's why, in front of local media, current HCU Husky football players and Jason Bachtel's family, the Huskies officially welcomed Bachtel to lead the program going forward.

"It didn't take us very long to figure out we had the right guy in the building," explained HCU Athletic Director Steve Moniaci at Bachtel's introductory press conference.



That “right guy” is certainly looking forward to building a strong future for the Huskies.

“I’m committed to the foundation that was laid. And now it’s time to build the walls. And the walls are going to be built on commitment and toughness. Those two things right there, guys, will start everything,” Bachtel stated.

Following his introductory press conference, Bachtel and his family took a stroll over to Husky Stadium. The clear blue skies and radiant sunshine provided a great opportunity to survey where Bachtel would be building the Huskies program and for HCU’s newest head coach to further explain his vision for the future of HCU football.

A huge part of his vision includes being more assertive on offense.

“We didn’t play quite the style of football that we would like,” Bachtel explained. “You’re going to see a little bit more explosive offense, a little more fast paced, a little more attack style with the fearless attitude.”

Of course, now that he’s guiding this program in its entirety, he has the chance to steer the Huskies in the way he wants them to go.

“That’s the exciting part of being in this seat, you can change a little bit of philosophy. Not that our philosophy was too far off, but there’s some nuances that you’ll see that it’s different in an attacking style,” Bachtel said.


It’s not uncommon for guys who spend their coaching career on the offensive side of the ball to hold that sort of mentality. And it could yield some really fun results for the Huskies. According to Bachtel, it’s not going to take drastic changes to get those sorts of results.

“My philosophy is they give you four downs for a reason. Let’s take them. You’re going to see us throw the ball out there a little bit deeper. You’re going to see us come after you a little bit more on third and fourth downs to get you off the field. Those are the things that you’re going to see [that are] different. They’re not going to be major differences,” Bachtel said.

For an offense that ranked second in the Southland Conference in points per game (with 26.1 points per game) this past season, being even more aggressive on that side of the ball is an exciting

possibility. For those keeping track at home, that’s a notable increase from 2022, when HCU was last in the conference in points per game at just 18 points per game.

With his new, offensive-oriented direction, Bachtel has also made it clear that he’s thrilled to be leading the Huskies moving forward.

“This is a dream come true. This is not a stepping stone. And I say those words knowing that [Steve Moniaci and Robert Sloan], after these past 13 months, will hold me to that. Our guys in the locker room hear those words and will hold me to them,” Bachtel declared. 

“ I’m committed to the foundation that was laid. And now it’s time to build the walls. And the walls are going to be built on commitment and toughness. Those two things right there, guys, will start everything.”

- Jason Bachtel

PLAY SMART *Save Lives*

**Cottrell Helps Launch
a New Cause in the Wake of
Darius Lee's Death**

The 2022 shooting death of HCU basketball player Darius Lee rocked the Huskies' men's basketball program, the HCU campus community and the lives of all those who knew him. While helping guide the members of his team through grieving the loss of their friend and teammate, and going through his own personal grieving process, Ron Cottrell (HCU James Sears Bryant Head Men's Basketball Coach) was contacted by a group of fellow coaches who wanted to help.

"Two months after Darius passed, I was contacted by a coaching buddy of mine who had this group of coaching friends who had been talking about 'What can we do?' It was born out of what happened to Darius," said Cottrell. "We started meeting via Zoom and talking about what we, as college coaches who deal with young men every day who have this going on around them in their communities, could do."


With Cottrell among those at the forefront of the effort, the group began the "Play Smart Save Lives" initiative which aims to educate coaches and student-athletes on the need for, and benefits of, safe gun storage. Additionally, the group is hosting webinars and working to develop nonpartisan programming that will help coaches speak to their teams about gun violence in general and specifically in the event of an incident that directly affects their team.

"We're not advocating taking people's guns, we're not trying to tell anyone what they should or shouldn't do with guns, but we are being realistic about the fact that people own guns and how we can all more safely co-exist with guns in our country."

On Monday, Nov. 27, when the HCU men's basketball team faced off against TCU in Fort Worth, Texas, both teams donned "Play Smart Save Lives" warm-up shirts during pre-game warm-ups and during the game on their benches, and a number of players wore special socks with the logo embroidered on them.

"Our game with TCU was the kickoff of the Play Smart games. Much like the Coaches vs. Cancer games, which have been going on for 20 years now, we are trying to get something similar going. This is our first effort into this and I was so fortunate and thankful that [TCU head basketball coach] Jamie Dixon wanted to be involved and wanted our game at their place to be involved. As important as it is for fans to come and see it, it's just as important as a chance for us, as coaches, to talk with our teams before the game about the cause and why we're doing this."

On Dec. 5, the National Association of Basketball Coaches sent messaging out to all members highlighting the group's work, educating coaches around the country on the group's mission and encouraging others to host Play Smart games of their own.

While "Play Smart Save Lives" is still early in its existence, more than 75 current and former collegiate coaches have already signed on as supporters of the cause. 





FROM START *to Finish*

Concepción Sets New Bar for HCU Women's Cross Country Runners



HCU junior Arlette Concepción had a banner season this past fall, securing multiple top-five finishes, an individual title and becoming the cross country program's first-ever United States Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association (USTFCCCA) female all-region honoree.

Concepción earned the all-region laurels thanks to a 21st-place finish out of more than 180 runners at the 2023 NCAA Division I South Central Regional Championships held in Fayetteville, Ark. on Nov. 10. The top 25 finishers at an NCAA regional meet are named all-region, and Concepción joins Matt Perri as the only other HCU runner to accomplish the feat. Perri's USFTCCCA all-region honor came in 2013 when he placed fifth at the regional.

Two weeks prior to the NCAA regional, Concepción posted the best-ever finish at a Southland Conference Championship (SLC) meet. The junior crossed the finish line on a soggy course just three seconds behind Lamar's Nia Clatworthy to place second out of more than 60 runners from conference institutions. Concepción's runner-up finish was the best by an HCU runner since Jessica Rabius finished fourth overall in 2021.

Concepción opened the 2023 season by finishing third overall and second among college runners at the 47th Annual Rice Invitational held on the Rice University campus. She then followed that up with the individual title at the UIW XC Invitational/Southland Preview a week later, winning the 6K race by more than 19 seconds on the very course where the conference championship race would be held in late October.

To put Concepción's performance and growth this season into perspective, prior to her 21st-place finish at regionals, she finished 74th as a sophomore and 86th as a freshman. Additionally, at her first two SLC Championship meets, she placed 22nd both times before improving to second place this year. 🏆



INDRA GUTIÉRREZ

named

HOUSTON BUSINESS JOURNAL

“40 Under 40” Honoree

HCU alumna Indra Gutiérrez is making great strides in the construction industry as president of Houston-based Gutier, a fully integrated construction services leader in design, procurement and construction. Her success, drive and ability to surmount the odds have landed her on the **Houston Business Journal (HBJ) “40 Under 40” list.**

Each year, a panel of HBJ judges reviews hundreds of nominations and applications for this highly competitive list, scoring individuals on leadership, a record of overcoming challenges and community involvement. Based on her personal and professional achievements, it is no surprise that Gutiérrez would receive this special honor.

An immigrant from Mexico and raised in a single-parent home, Gutiérrez developed the drive, discipline and motivation to overcome the odds to become president of her own construction company — in an industry where only 13 percent of U.S. construction companies are owned by females, according to Women in Construction statistics.

“I have struggled since an early age as I immigrated to the U.S. and was raised in poverty by a single mother. Everything I have achieved in life has been a result of my own drive, discipline and motivation. The struggles I’ve encountered throughout my life have prepared me to lead my construction company as I’m able to overcome challenges that most people cannot,” said Gutiérrez.

Being determined and self-driven have propelled her to achieve her goals, including becoming the first in her family to graduate from college and obtain multiple graduate degrees.

“It has been fulfilling as I have been able to set an example for the rest of my family members and for other young ladies who have a similar socioeconomic background as I. I believe that if you can see her, you can be her. You must be self-driven and set high goals and expectations for yourself and the life you want to live,” said the HCU International Business alumna.



Reflecting on her graduate studies in International Business at HCU, she describes her finance and accounting courses as “critical classes” that provided the skillsets for her current role. She also credits the spiritual foundation she received at HCU for solidifying her faith and affirming the importance of exhibiting morals and principles in business.

Winner of the 2014 Archie W. Dunham College of Business International Marketing competition, Gutiérrez also has been recognized as one of Poets and Quants Class of 2021 “Best and Brightest Executive MBAs” and was chosen from thousands of applicants across the U.S. to take part in McKinsey & Company’s Women in Operations leadership program.

Member of the Kendra Scott Women’s Entrepreneurial Leadership Institute and founder of Gutier Women’s Network, a company-based group created to support women in the male-dominated construction industry, Gutiérrez is motivated to empower and give back to others.

As she continues to lead Gutier into the future, Gutiérrez places a premium on safety, quality, integrity and community, as well as providing job opportunities for women, minorities and others in the industry who are unafraid of challenges and have the motivation and entrepreneurial mindset to execute the work.

“We exist to build something that is greater than ourselves for future generations to come,” said Gutiérrez.

HBJ Class of 2023 “40 Under 40” honorees were recognized at a special gala and featured in a special edition of the Journal as a part of their selection. 🏆

DARBY ISEREAU

named

BAPTIST EDUCATORS
SERVING TEXANS

2023 B.E.S.T. Award recipient

Houston Christian University (HCU) alumna Darby Isereau has been named one of nine recipients of the 2023 B.E.S.T. (Baptist Educators Serving Texans) Award. The award celebrates Christian educators who are living out their faith daily among their students.

“This year, the Baptist General Convention of Texas joyfully celebrates Darby Isereau from Houston Christian University as the 2023 recipient of the B.E.S.T. Award,” said Cooperative Program Director Bruce McCoy. “Texas Baptists celebrate these graduates, who live out their Christian character daily in their classrooms and schools through the love and support they show to their students.”

The B.E.S.T. Awards are given annually to honor a teacher or administrator in Texas public schools who is a graduate of a Texas Baptist institution and a member of a Texas Baptist church. It is estimated that graduates from these universities represent six to eight percent of the more than 350,000 public school educators in Texas.

Isereau earned a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education with ESL certification from HCU’s College of Education and Behavioral Sciences (COEBS) in 2020. She began her teaching career at Cottonwood Elementary in the Cleveland Independent School District following graduation. In 2022, she was named “Campus Teacher of the Year” for her creative and innovative teaching methods.

The HCU alumna was presented with the B.E.S.T. Award at the 2023 Dr. Dawn K. Wilson Teaching, Learning, and




Research Symposium held recently in the Morris Cultural Arts Center. The symposium, a special celebration of teaching, learning and research, was developed by former HCU Professor Dr. Dawn Wilson, who impacted countless lives through her passion for education, heart for service and devotion to mentorship.

“I couldn’t be more honored to be the recipient of this award. I am so thankful for my COEBS professors and their support,” said Isereau.

Dr. Katie Alaniz, associate professor of education and director of the Center for Learning Innovations and Teaching Excellence (C-LITE), described Isereau as one of the most caring, dedicated and creative educators she has had the pleasure of teaching.

“She prayerfully and thoughtfully invests in the lives of her students, supporting their growth as scholars and encouraging them to reach their fullest potential within educational contexts and beyond,” said Dr. Alaniz.

Dr. Alaniz applauded Isereau for representing Houston Christian University and the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences with excellence and for seeking to provide meaningful and applicable classroom experiences that bring learning to life for her students. 

ALUM-A-GRAMS

1960s

Carol Ware '69 retired after 45 years at Second Baptist School in Houston.

1970s

Claudia (Stewart) Burns '71, MAP '05 is a Counselor for BetterHelp.

Art Daniel '73 is the President and COO for AR Daniel Construction Services, Inc.

Larry Meyers '75 is now retired from project managing.

Kathryn (Moore) Bassett '76 has retired from Southwest Airlines.

Richard Walters '77 is the Pastor at Oak Forest Baptist Church.

Robert Keptra '78 authored "Basic Sound Doctrine" a workbook for individual and group Bible study available on Amazon.

1980s

Richard Wilcox '82 is the Care and Community Pastor for Faith Bible Church.

Ralph Morgan '83 is the Pastor at Calvary Episcopal Church - Richmond.

Denise Juarez '85 is a Disaster Program Manager for American Red Cross.

Benny Agosto '86 was honored by The South Texas College of Law Houston Alumni Association during its Centennial Alumni Awards Luncheon with the Distinguished Alumni Award.

Louis G. Bruno, MBA '86 retired in 2020 after a 43 year career in sales management with Procter & Gamble, a journey that was accelerated by his education at HCU. He just

finished writing his second book, "The Love of San Demetrio," which is available at Seahillpress.com

Pedro Ruiz '86 is a Lawyer for Zende Del & Associates.

Stephen Vega '88 is a Police Telecommunicator III and Chaplin for the University of Houston System.

Ophelia Binkley-Webb '89, MLA '93 is an Instructor of Psychology at Wharton County Junior College and is also the Founder and President of Restoration Life Project (RLP), a non-profit working to combat human trafficking.

1990s

Cindi Renae (Smith) Green '90 is an English Instructor at Tarleton State University. She has also been a freelance writer since 2007 and has published over 40 books and hundreds of articles.

Cynthia McDowell '90 is an Executive Assistant to the CEO & Board Liaison at American Legislative Exchange Council. She is also a professional voice actor and cast in American Cornerstone Institute's "Star Spangled Adventures" third episode of the Boston Tea Party (voice of Priscilla) and an upcoming episode on Women's Right To Vote.

Carlos Munoz '90 is a Family Physician at OakBend Medical Group.

J Christy (Gessleman) Rasch '90 is a Missionary and Church Planter for Paragon Ministries International.

Dale Camperi '91 is the Owner of Camperi's Office Furniture.

Leslie Estes '91 is the Director of Faculty Support and Adjunct Professor at Dallas Baptist University.

Annie (Grissom) Drago '92 received the Founders Award from the Texas Educational Theatre Association, Inc.

Luisa Pizana-Hernandez '93 is an Elementary School Teacher at Crossbar Academy.

Nichole Pruitt '93 is a Program Coordinator at Bayou Bend.

Tom Kennedy '94 is the COO of Precise Standards & Solutions, Inc.

Ronald Richardson '94 is a Pharmacist at Covertus.

Dane Friend '95 received the HERO Jerry Noyce Executive Health Champion Award for his role as Chief Human Resources & Wellbeing Officer for Baylor College of Medicine.

David Haston '95 is a Controller for C. Pine Associated Inc.

Timothy Hall '96 is the Pastor at Butterfield Community Bible Church.

Jacqueline (Bourda) Smith '96 is the Sr. Human Resources Manager for Chevron.

Camille Ardoin '97 is the Digital Governance Release Manager for Abu Dhabi National Oil Company.

Becah (Lavender) Butler '97 is the Chief Program Officer for The Brookwood Community.

Kristen (Blakeman) Patterson '97 is an Occupational Therapist.

Cherlyn (Shelton) Walker '98 is a Psychotherapist II for Baylor Scott and White and started her doctoral dissertation this past Fall.

Shaundra Webb '98 recently completed her final defense for her dissertation to obtain her PhD in Management with a specialty in Organizational Strategy. She now holds six degrees including two from HCU. She is an Adjunct Professor at HCU in the MBA-HRM program.

Jeffery Cook '99 is a Substitute for Leander ISD and is semi-retired and enjoying life.

Stephen Farrell '99 is a Senior Project Controls Engineer for bp.

Tracy Gray '99 was appointed the Director of Strategy and Marketing for Intelligent Wellhead Systems.

2000s

Sandra (Wolfe) Bickerstaff '00 is a Registered Nurse at Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital.

Stacey (Hamm) Norris '00 was elected to Position 5 on the Magnolia ISD School Board.

Ross Shelton '00 is the Lead Pastor for First Baptist Church, Brenham.

Jon Lineberger '01 is the President of Texas for ACE Scholarships. ACE Scholarships advocates for school choice and fundraises for low-income families to send their student to the school of their choice.

Shobha Shukla '01 is the Chief Administrator for American International University West Africa.

Tameka (Anderson) Abernathy '02, MEd '07 is the Coordinator for After School Programs for Alief ISD.

Kimberly Penn '02 is the President of Webtropolis and Founder/CEO of Professor Drones.

Jo Ann Fey, MEd '03 was named the lone finalist for the superintendent position in Killeen ISD.

Cynthia (Spencer) Edwards '04 is an Evaluation Specialist for Houston ISD.

Stephen Hunt '04 is the Team Lead for Light Products Trading Americas at Neste.

Dan-Phi Nguyen '04 is an Attorney and Owner of The Law Office of Dan-Phi V Nguyen, PLLC.

Derrick Owens '07 is the Operations and Proposal Manager for Salesforce.

Ashley Nunes '08 is the Public Lands Policy Specialist on the Government Affairs team at the Center for Biological Diversity.

Maritza Price '08 is a Teacher for Fort Bend ISD.

Chinyere (Amaechi) Mbamalu '09 is a Senior Project Manager for the City of New York Department of Social Services.

Leah Randall '09 is the Head of Communication and External Affairs - Production and Operations at bp.

Justin Wilson '09 is a Teacher and Coach for Dickinson ISD.

2010s

Heidi (Dawson) Bargas '10 is a Teacher for Clear Creek ISD.

Gloria (Hill) Parker '10 is a Cardiac Telemetry Technician for Ben Taub Hospital.

Desmond Ikegwuonu '11 is an Associate Professor of Music for Cornerstone University.

Elizabeth (Tisdale) Sanchez '11 is the Manager of Grants Reporting, Assessment & Planning at Houston Community College.

Alina (La) Truong '11 owns Fish Bowl Poke & Pho in McKinney, TX and is in the process of opening another business in Frisco, TX.

Daniel Cadis '12 is now a Partner at Kirkland & Ellis.

Chloe McClain '12 is a Senior Registered Nurse at MD Anderson Cancer Center and recently won the Citation Award for Researching Nursing Practice in May 2023.

Erika (Silva) Vivas '12 is an Elementary School Librarian for Katy ISD.

Rachel Cano '13 graduated with her Doctor of Nursing Practice and is now a Nurse Practitioner at First Primary Care.

Ashley Milam '13 is a Registered Nurse.

Larry Freaney '14 is the Director of Education and Assessment at Rejoice Counseling Apostolate.

Elizabeth (Decker) Humphries '14 is a Choir Director for LCISD.

Nefi Lopez '14 launched his own personal injury law firm called Lopez Franco PLLC where he is the Managing Partner. At Lopez Franco PLLC, they represent people who have been hurt and help them get their lives back on track.

Sandra Solis '14 is a Financial Advisor for Ameriprise Financial.

Samantha Evans '15 is an Educational Diagnostician for Spring ISD.

Jonathan Fleming '15 is a Social Studies Teacher, Assistant Football Coach and Assistant Basketball Coach at Bastrop High School.

Tiffany (Spencer) Robinson '15 was promoted from Assistant Principal of Accountability to building Principal in Alief ISD.

Kenia Covey '16 is a Senior Associate for Mercer.

Shalondra Frazier-Deckard '16 is an ASVAB Test Administrator for the US Department of Defense.

Charles Jager '16 is a Property Manager for Foley Hills Apartments.

Tiffany (Scott) Becton '17 is a Benefits Analyst for Infogain.

Jeremy Camp '17 recently got married and began coaching football at Timberwood Middle School in Humble ISD.

Sandra Elledge '17 is a House Supervisor for Legent.

Marcy Higginbotham '17 is a Teacher for Pasadena ISD.

Austin Holley '17 is a Payroll Analyst at Waste Connections.

Leah Smith '17 is a Registered Nurse for HCA Health.

Tabitha (Wingo) Adkins '18 is a Registered Nurse III for Houston Methodist Hospital.

Joshua Arrizola '18 is Hospitality Manager at Topgolf.

Evelyn Brass '19 is an Information and Referral Specialist for United Way of Greater Houston.

Lora Doremus '19 is a Visiting Lecturer in Spiritual Formation here at HCU.

Chace Freel '19 is a Teacher for CFISD.

Charlotte (Hodges) Gonzalez '19 is a Registered Nurse.

Jeremy Higdon '19 is a Chiropractic Intern/Chiro Assistant at Prince Health and Wellness. He graduated from Palmer College with a Doctorate in Chiropractic Medicine.

Rebecca (Birkenmeier) Luchowa '19 moved to London after graduating to get her Masters in Medieval Studies from King's College London. She lived in London for three years, got married, and is now back in the U.S.

Chris Nation '19 is the High School Pastor for Westside Church.

Kevin Pannackal '19 is a Resident Artist at the Opéra National de Paris.

2020s

Richard Eng '20 is the Lead Pastor at Bethel Evangelical Free Church.

Lauren (Camacho) Fazal Din '20 is a Recruiter for Memorial Hermann.

Katherine Quinonez '20 is a RN Mother/Baby Nurse for Memorial Hermann Health System.

Ashtyn Richey '20 is a Teacher and Coach at Lovejoy High School.

Michael Basquez '21 is a Student Success Advisor at The College of Health Professions.

ALUM-A-GRAMS

Howard Bundage '21 is a Realtor/Property Manager for At Home Properties.

Christina Columbus '21 is an Administrative Specialist III at KBR.

Sarah Cruz '21 is a Broker Assistant for CRC Insurance.

Oscar Guajardo '21, MS '22 is a Tax Auditor for the State of California.

Colleen Hale '21 is the Baptist Student Ministry Coordinator for the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Evelyn Kamau '21 is a Staff Nurse at Houston Methodist.

Shaterrica (Sledge) Alvarado '22 is a Counselor at Community Medical Service.

Nicholas Belbas '22 is a Cybersecurity Analyst for Chevron.

Catalina Elwonger '22 is a Research Technician for Baylor College of Medicine.

Marlon Henderson '22 is the Senior Pastor at First Pilgrim Calvary Missionary Baptist Church.

Arnie Palyola '22 is the Property Manager for Nevada City Inn.

Caitlin Runyan '22 is a Toddler Teacher for The Learning Experience - Cypress.

Ginia (DeArmon) Warren '22 is the HR Director for Indus Communities.

Stacie Arguello '23 is the Accounts Payable Coordinator for River Pointe Church.

Charles Collins '23 is an Art Director and Coach at Western Academy.

Gulnaz Dhanani '23 is a Teacher for Houston ISD.

E. T. George '23 is the Lead Editor for Subsea Solutions.

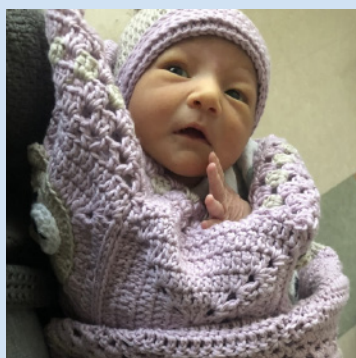
Heather Jacobs MBA '23 is a Project Procurement Specialist for CPChem with Strategic Contract Resources.

Andy Merida '23 is a Student Account Specialist here at HCU!

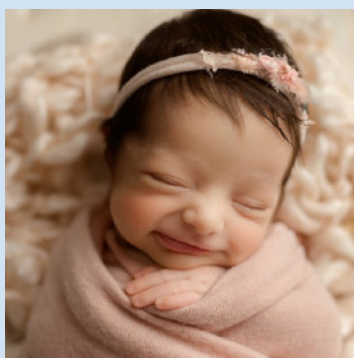
Daylon Piper '23 is a Pastoral Assistant at University Park Baptist Church.

Taylor (Bryant) Renken '23 is a Teacher for Founders Classical Academy.

HUSKY PUPS



Tayyaba Q Ali, MAP '99 welcomed her beautiful baby girl, **Jasmine Anisa Ali**, on January 12, 2023.



Destiny (Bellamy) Rasheed '15 and her husband, **Mo, Remi Rasheed**, welcomed their first baby, into this world on May 4, 2023.



Kaya (Gaston) '17 and Tyler '15 Jones welcomed their second child, **Josephine "Josie" Jones** on July 27, 2023.

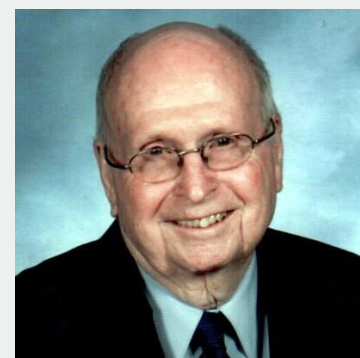


Jessica (Lagner) '15 and Ethan Lee welcomed daughter, **Magnolia Lee** on Jan. 10, 2024.

IN MEMORIAM



Dr. John Arthur Lutjemeier, Sr. former Professor of Education, passed away on July 25, 2022.



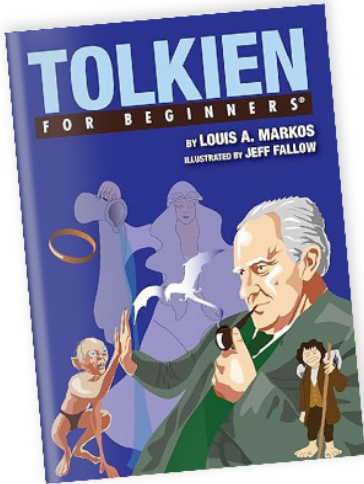
Dr. Jerry Gaultney, former Professor and Dean of the College of Science and Mathematics, passed away on October 6, 2023.

Esther Robertson Snoddy, Former member of The Guild and Director of the Museum of Southern History at HCU, passed away on September 7, 2023.

Nona Ruth Mosely, friend of the University and wife of former Trustee, Tom Mosley, passed away on December 12, 2023.

Timothy Bruce Dyeson '88, alumnus and former gymnast, died on December 5, 2023.

Andreana "Andie" Paulding Patsch, former student and member of the inaugural softball team, died on December 17, 2023.



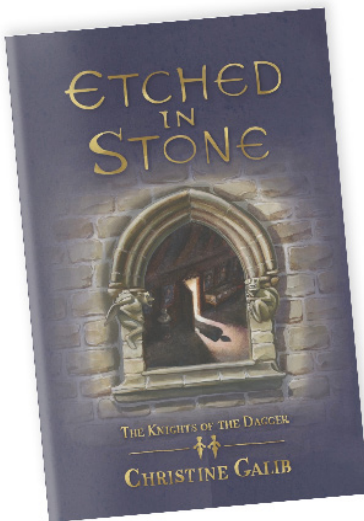
Tolkien For Beginners

DR. LOUIS MARKOS

Dr. Louis Markos, HCU Professor of English, introduces readers to the multilayered depth and breadth of J.R.R. Tolkien's tales of Middle-earth, what critics, following Tolkien's lead, refer to collectively as his legendarium, in his book, "Tolkien For Beginners."

To do justice to the full dimensions of that legendarium, author Louis Markos speaks in two voices: that of the storyteller who loves the stories he tells and that of the critic who seeks to identify and explicate key themes from those stories. In his telling and analysis, he treats the legendarium both as a collection of secondary-world myths with their own integrity and as a reflection of Tolkien's Catholic worldview.

Available on Amazon



Etched in Stone (The Knights of the Dagger)

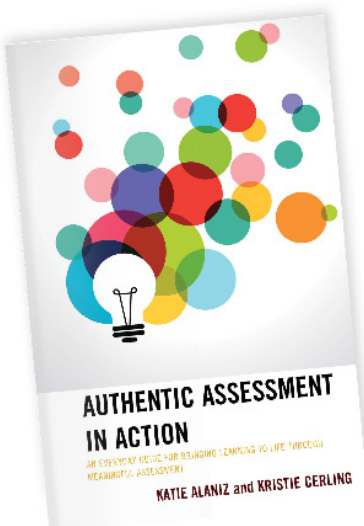
DR. CHRISTINE GALIB

Dr. Christine Galib, Adjunct Professor of Entrepreneurship at HCU introduces readers to a young woman on a quest to follow in her grandmother's footsteps and the mystery and intrigue that ensues in her book "Etched in Stone (The Knights of the Dagger).

A dead professor. A gold pendant. A mysterious poem. As Carly Stuart starts college, the search for a murderer-and the Holy Grail itself-is on.

But with a dead professor, and criminals anticipating her next moves, will Carly and her partners have the courage to see their Grail quest through quest through?

Available on Amazon



Authentic Assessment in Action: An Everyday Guide for Bringing Learning to Life through Meaningful Assessment

DR. KATIE ALANIZ & DR. KRISTIE CERLING

HCU Associate Professor of Education Dr. Katie Alaniz and Professor of Education Dr. Kristie Cerling have co-authored a new book titled "Authentic Assessment in Action: An Everyday Guide for Bringing Learning to Life through Meaningful Assessment." The book is designed to empower educators to provide highly impactful, consistently engaging and unquestionably applicable learning opportunities for students.

In an age in which far too few students understand how to effectively apply digital literacy or safety as they explore and generate content, today's educators hold the potential for far-reaching impact. Educators must learn to harness the enthusiasm students have for content creation (and particularly digital content creation) into everyday assessment opportunities. In doing so, they position themselves to enhance student engagement, motivation, and achievement in academic contexts.

Available on Amazon



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