



Hobby School of Public Affairs
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

2025 PUBLIC OFFICIALS OF THE YEAR AWARD LUNCHEON

Friday, March 21, 2025
UH Hilton
University of Houston



PROGRAM

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

James Davidson (M.P.A. '12)

INVOCATION

Leonard Chan (M.P.A. '09), President, Hobby School Alumni Association

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

James Davidson (M.P.A. '12)

WELCOME

Jim Granato, Dean, Hobby School of Public Affairs

RECOGNITION OF ELECTED OFFICIALS

Sara Donatto, Executive Director, Office of Government and Community Relations, UH System

KATHLEEN RUBINSTEIN BEST PAPER AWARDS

Kathleen P. Rubinstein (M.P.A. '96), MPA Adjunct Lecturer

PRESENTATION OF AWARDS

Peter M. Koelling, MPA Program Director

REMARKS FROM THE HONOREES

CLOSING

About the Master of Public Administration

A Master of Public Administration degree from the Hobby School of Public Affairs at the University of Houston provides a high level of training and education for aspiring public servants, public managers and nonprofit professionals to address complex societal challenges and lead organizations innovatively and ethically into the future.

2025 KATHLEEN P. RUBINSTEIN BEST PAPER AWARDS

Kathleen P. Rubinstein is a senior health care analyst at Norton Rose Fulbright and a long-term adjunct lecturer in the Master of Public Administration program. The MPA alumna teaches the application of policy analysis tools and approaches to contemporary healthcare problems. Through a scholarship award, Rubinstein recognizes two graduate students in the MPA program who write the best papers each year and demonstrate a strong understanding of their coursework's applicability to the real world.



TONYA LE, BEST SHORT PAPER AWARD

"Improving Performance Measures in Budgeting by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice"

Le analyzes the measurement performance used in the Texas legislative budget process to evaluate the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. Key metrics, including recidivism rates, inmate education participation and daily operational costs, help assess the agency's effectiveness and accountability. While these measures support data-driven decision-making, they have limitations, such as overlooking external factors that can influence reoffending. The paper also explores ways to refine these metrics to improve budget allocations, enhance rehabilitation programs and ensure efficient use of public resources.



FATIMAH EL-IBRAHIM, BEST LONG PAPER AWARD

"Evaluation Plan for Uplift Harris Basic Income Pilot Program"

El-Ibrahim developed an evaluation plan for the Uplift Harris County Guaranteed Income Pilot Program, a county-led initiative providing direct cash payments to low-income residents. The memo outlines a mixed-methods approach to assess the program's impact on financial stability, employment, education, health and social well-being. Through quantitative analysis and qualitative insights, the evaluation measures changes in participants' economic conditions and overall quality of life. The findings will help policymakers determine the program's effectiveness and inform future income security policies.



2025 PUBLIC OFFICIALS OF THE YEAR HONOREES

Since 2011, the Master of Public Administration program has honored local elected officials, public servants and practitioners who exemplify the highest standards in public service at an annual awards luncheon. The ceremony benefits the scholarship fund for Master of Public Administration candidates. These exceptional public service leaders improve their communities through dynamic problem-solving, collaboration and innovative and ethical leadership.

STATE REP. ANN JOHNSON

Texas House of Representatives



Texas state Rep. Ann Johnson represents House District 134, which includes Bellaire, Southside Place and West University. In the 89th Texas Legislature, Rep. Johnson is the vice chair of Judiciary & Civic Jurisprudence. She also serves on the Calendars and Public Health committees and the Permanent Standing Subcommittee on Disease Prevention and Women's and Children's Health.

She is a small business owner, attorney and adjunct professor at South Texas College of Law. Johnson has continued the work she did as the former Harris County Chief Human Trafficking Prosecutor, supporting victims of human trafficking and protecting vulnerable communities. During her first legislative session, she was honored with several Freshman of the Year awards and received praise from Texas Monthly for effectively working across the aisle.

In the 88th Texas Legislature, Rep. Johnson's focus on public safety resulted in the passing of historic legislation creating six new Harris County criminal courts to address the judicial backlog and free specialty courts for human trafficking and drug prevention and veterans assistance programs that help reduce recidivism.

MAYOR DAN DAVIS

City of Manvel



Dan Davis was elected mayor of Manvel City in 2023. He previously served on the Manvel City Council from 2019 to 2022, where he was the youngest councilmember. His leadership is rooted in a forward-thinking and collaborative approach and the values of innovation and transparency.

Drawing from his missionary experience in Japan, Mayor Davis emphasizes understanding diverse perspectives and fostering effective local governance. As Manvel City Mayor, Davis has guided significant economic growth by renegotiating development agreements, securing the city's first grocery store and increasing the city's fund balance by over \$4 million. His people-centered leadership is reflected in job growth numbers, new local business openings, and investments in infrastructure improvements by working with local and state agencies and partners. Known as a leader and a neighbor, Mayor Davis understands the importance of building a responsive government. Beyond his role as mayor, Davis runs an engagement and delivery team for a software company. He also volunteers with local organizations, trains for marathons and enjoys time with his family.





DAVID LANGENBERG

City of Humble

David Langenberg is the fire chief for the City of Humble, bringing 27 years of experience in fire and EMS services to the role. Since 2018, he has led Humble Fire Rescue with a solutions-oriented approach, guiding the department through complex emergencies, including the COVID-19 pandemic and regional disaster relief efforts. Chief Langenberg holds multiple undergraduate degrees, a Master of Public Administration from Sam Houston State University and the Executive Fire Officer designation from the National Fire Academy.

Beyond his leadership as fire chief, he served for over a decade on Texas Task Force 1, a federal and state search-and-rescue team, deploying to natural and man-made disasters. He also served eight years as a publicly elected commissioner for Harris County Emergency Services District #9. Committed to mentorship and professional development, he is writing a book to guide aspiring first responders. Chief Langenberg is also a proud father of two sons, Colin, a high school senior, and Corbin, a BSN student at Prairie View A&M and Texas Army National Guard member.



DIANA RAMIREZ

Harris County

Diana Ramirez is the Harris County Administrator, overseeing day-to-day county operations of departments that report to the Harris County Commissioners Court. She is the first woman and Latina to hold the job. Ramirez grew up in Laredo, Texas, and earned a BA from the University of Texas and an MPA from Princeton University.

Ramirez has a long history of public service, including serving as the executive director of the Harris County Department of Economic Equity and Opportunity. She joined Harris County in 2021 following 30 years of public service in various capacities with Travis County, the Texas General Land Office and Texas Health and Human Services. Ramirez is the chair of the Government Finance Officers Association's Committee on Economic Development and Capital Planning and a member of the Urban Land Institute (ULI). She is also a ULI's Public Private Partnership Gold National Product Council member. Ramirez resides with her husband, and on any given game day, you might find her cheering on her beloved Houston Astros.

2025 PIONEER AWARD HONOREE

The Pioneer Award recognizes a public official with a long record and consistent demonstration of working for the public good.



CAROL LEWIS

Texas Southern University

Carol Lewis is a professor in transportation studies and director emeritus of the Center for Transportation Training and Research at Texas Southern University (TSU), where she teaches the next generation of public service professionals the fundamentals of transportation and urban transportation issues. Before joining TSU in 1992, she spent 15 years as the manager and director of planning at the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO). Lewis chaired the Gulf Coast Rail District, which promotes multimodal mobility and safety at rail crossings, and was a member of the Houston Galveston Area Council's Transportation Policy Council and METRO Board of Directors. She previously served as a transportation advisor to former Houston Mayor Bill White and as chair of the City's Planning Commission. Her research for the U.S. Department of Transportation, Texas Department of Transportation and other public entities focuses on public transit for vulnerable communities, smart growth and strategic planning. Lewis holds a doctorate in political science from the University of Houston and master's and bachelor's degrees from the University of Iowa.

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