The University Classified Staff Council membership consists of: elected representatives from each operating unit; one member appointed by the president, one member appointed by the affirmative action officer and additional ex-officio members.

The UCSC 2015-2016 Officers are: Chair Denee Velazquez, Chair-elect JR Foster Bright, Secretary LaChandra Wilson, Treasurer Maria Barrientos and Parliamentarian Mario Sanchez.

Visit the UCSC website (uth.edu/ucsc) for more information.

UTHealth honors Dr. James H. “Red” Duke, Jr., M.D.

James H. “Red” Duke, Jr., M.D., renowned surgeon, medical educator and Texas icon, passed away Tuesday, Aug. 25, 2015, surrounded by family and friends. He was age 86.

Duke, the John B. Holmes Professor of Clinical Sciences at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth), was a dedicated physician known for his extraordinary patient care and efforts to train medical students and surgeons, and educate the public about health issues.

“Dr. Duke was a true pioneer – a talented and tireless surgeon, a dedicated and inspiring educator, and a friend and mentor to everyone he met. He never sought to be a leader, but became one naturally through his brilliance, compassion, patience and selflessness,” said Giuseppe N. Colasurdo, M.D., president of UTHealth. “He was a constant presence at our university and we will miss his guidance, his wit and, most importantly, his example. From all of us at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston – thank you Dr. Red Duke.”
This has been an exciting year for the University Classified Staff Council and have had the privilege of serving as the UCSC Chair. This year’s UCSC welcomed many new faces to the group, as well as returning members. This mix of new ideas along with experience has made for a successful year for the UCSC and all classified staff.

For the first time in the history of the UCSC, we have a member from one of our regional campuses. We hope for this type of membership to increase in the future, as our regional campuses are a vital part of UTHealth. Today’s technology, which allows a member to attend our meetings remotely, has been invaluable to expanding the UCSC membership.

We are looking forward to the 21st Annual Classified Staff Workshop that will be held July 15, 2016. This year’s theme is “Go Team” and we anticipate this event will go down in the books as one of the best UCSC workshops. The entire workshop concept has been revamped, thanks to the members of the UCSC Staff Recognition Committee and our partnership with Human Resources, Employee Assistance Program.

The Staff Development Committee is also to be applauded for the Brown Bags sessions. The committee has come up with fresh ideas and worked diligently to provide all staff with essential information. The ability to attend remotely has increased attendance. There have been two brown bags (Behaviors of Concern and Healthy Eating and Living Choices) with a collective attendance of 52. There are three future brown bags planned, another Healthy Eating and Living Choices, Compensation Model: How Did We Get There? and Volunteer Fair. Stay on the lookout for these and register to attend.

One of the most exciting things about this year is a monumental change in funding for the UCSC Educational Awards. I have worked closely with Eric Fernette to inform the University Leadership Council of the purpose and process of the UCSC Educational Awards Program. This program has been in place since 2004 and has awarded almost $60,000 to over 75 graduating high school seniors that are children of our classified staff. This has been accomplished solely by the fundraising efforts of each year’s committee. Part of my responsibility as the UCSC Chair is to attend the quarterly University Leadership Council meetings where I have the opportunity to inform UTHealth leadership of what the UCSC is doing and also bring any concerns of the classified staff to their attention. Mr. Fernette compiled the history and data of the Educational Awards and presented it at the December ULC meeting. To my surprise, Dr. Colasurdo announced that the President’s Office would be providing $25,000 for the UCSC Educational Awards Program, not only this year, but in years to come. This is huge for the Educational Awards Program. Of course, the committee will still work hard each year to raise funds to supplement this gift from the President’s Office, so please be sure to continue to support the UCSC Educational Awards.

I also want to recognize the efforts of the UCSC Communications Committee. Their work along with the help of the Office of Public Affairs has kept the UCSC in the forefront of the various forms of UTHealth communications.

Lastly, the UCSC Elections Committee has done an incredible job of keeping track of membership and will soon be accepting nominations for this year’s UCSC election. Please nominate yourself and/or your co-workers to be part of this exciting and integral committee. We are the voice of the classified staff and need representation from each operating unit to fulfill the mission of the UCSC.

I am looking forward to serving the last few months of this fiscal year and wish the University Classified Staff Council much success in the future.

Denée Velazquez
UCSC Chair 2015-2016
Employees honored for longevity, service at STAR Awards

More than 600 members of the UTHealth community were invited to the annual STAR Awards, which honors individuals celebrating five, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35 and 40 years of service to the university. This year’s theme harkened back to the Golden Age Hollywood with a red carpet entrance, paparazzi and UTHealth backdrop to shine a bright light on the talent, dedication and achievement of these employees.

Employees celebrating five, 10- and 15-year milestones gathered for a reception on Tuesday, March 29 at the Denton A. Cooley, MD and Ralph C. Cooley, DDS University Life Center for a reception. STAR recipients were personally greeted by members of university leadership and volunteers from Human Resources, who presented them with their service awards. Upon entering, the guests were treated to a string quartet, enjoyed a variety of small bites, popcorn bar, berry infused “mocktails,” a flipbook memento and personal caricatures. Attendees posed together for commemorative photographs in front of an official UTHealth backdrop.

During the program Eric Fernette, vice president and chief human resources officer, and Giuseppe N. Colasurdo, M.D., president of UTHealth, Kevin Dillon, M.B.A., C.P.A., senior executive vice president, chief operating and financial officer, and Michael R. Blackburn, Ph.D., executive vice president and chief academic officer of UTHealth, co-dean of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, professor and vice chairman of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at the McGovern Medical School, applauded the talent, quality and value of the people at UTHealth, speaking to the crowd to offer their congratulations and deepest thanks to recipients for their contributions and commitment to UTHealth. Throughout the event, Fernette, Colasurdo, Dillon and Blackburn mingled with guests and thanked the honorees for their years of service.

The celebration of legacy and red carpet theme continued with a special “Tiffany touch” two days later on Thursday, March 31, as more than 160 employees with 20, 25, 30, 35 and 40 years of service were invited to the Denton A. Cooley, MD and Ralph C. Cooley, DDS University Life Center for a luncheon. This year, 12 employees were honored for 35 years of service, two who recently retired, and five employees were honored for 40 years of service.

At the luncheon, the 10th Annual President’s Award for Leadership recipients were announced, featuring four honorees for the first time: Jonathan Green, manager of Technical Services at UTHealth School of Dentistry; Bassel Choucair, executive director of Information Technology at McGovern Medical School; Alisa Sanders, R.N., I.B.C.L.C., clinic director, The Lactation Foundation, senior lactation consultant at McGovern Medical School; Susan Tortolero Emery, Ph.D., senior associate dean for Academic and Research Affairs, Allan King Professor in Public Health at UTHealth School of Public Health.

STAR Awards are hosted annually by the Office of the President, Office of Human Resources and produced by the Office of Development and Public Affairs. Critical to the success of the event were the volunteers who greeted STAR awardees and presented each with their gift.

More photos from the STAR Awards events can be viewed at UTHealth’s Flickr page: www.flickr.com/photos/uthealth
UCSC welcomes member from UTHealth School of Public Brownville Regional Campus

Christina Villarreal is a senior administrative manager, The UTHealth School of Public Health-Brownsville Regional Campus. In 2015, she became a first UCSC member from outside The University of Texas Health Science at Houston. Villarreal share’s her story about why she wanted to serve on the council.

“My first day on the job was back in October 2003 as a lay health outreach worker working on a Multi-Drug Resistance Tuberculosis across the Mexican American Border grant funded by NIH. By July 2007, I was appointed as Administrative Manager for the campus. I have been in this role since then.

“As manager, I am tasked with every detail of the regional campus. Brownsville is the only UTHealth owned facility of all the regional campuses. I have daily encounters with all sorts of issues from beehives in the trees to submitting million-dollar grant applications. My primary function is to make sure that the campus runs smoothly.

“I oversee all pre-award activities and manage all post award activities from hiring new staff to approving every purchase on the campus. While keeping up with the everyday activities of the campus is overwhelming, knowing that the community I come from is benefitting from the work of the researchers makes it all worthwhile.

“In the recent two years, our campus has doubled in staff and I felt that we were losing touch with activities in Houston so I felt it was necessary to try to keep the connection strong with the staff in Houston. I have worked with several departments in Houston, and having a way to make it all come together through the council was a great opportunity.

Attending meetings from a regional campus has been a challenge. I have been able to attend one onsite UCSC council meeting and the rest have been through Meet@UTHealth. On occasion, I have been cut off due to network failures. (It seems Wednesday is a day where the system is heavily used for classes and causes internet loss.) Despite these interruptions, I am able to somehow keep abreast of what happened at the meeting by the other members letting me know and the detailed minutes released afterwards. I hope to continue with this endeavor as time permits and have a more active role from afar!”
UTHealth Medical School renamed McGovern Medical School

UTHealth Public Affairs

In November 2015, The John P. McGovern Foundation has made a transformational $75 million gift to bolster medical training, provide full scholarships and support scientific discovery and innovation at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth) and its medical school.

UTHealth Medical School will be renamed the John P. and Kathrine G. McGovern Medical School in honor of the largest gift in the university’s history.

“Today we honor the tremendous legacy of Dr. John P. McGovern and his wife Kathrine, and we celebrate how this transformational gift will impact each and every one of you for years to come. The McGovern name is synonymous with service, knowledge and compassion – values that are embedded in the very foundation of our university,” UTHealth President Giuseppe N. Colasurdo, M.D., told a crowd of students, faculty, staff and guests during a gathering in Webber Plaza on November 23.

The late John P. McGovern, M.D., was a pediatrician, allergist, immunologist and educator who helped shape the Texas Medical Center (TMC) in its formative years. Almost 55 years after establishing his foundation, now led by his wife Kathrine McGovern, Dr. McGovern’s vision continues to transform the TMC through numerous gifts supporting the art and science of medicine.

The largest gift in the foundation’s history will, in part, be used to provide a series of scholarships to be awarded annually. The medical school’s first full scholarships will recognize McGovern Scholars’ superior scholastic achievements, high standards of personal conduct, and empathy and compassion for patients and their families. These scholarships will offset students’ burden of debt and will also allow UTHealth to attract qualified students who would not be able to attend medical school without financial support.

In addition to scholarships, the gift will enhance programs at UTHealth’s McGovern Center for Humanities and Ethics, which was established in 2004 by another generous donation from the McGovern Foundation. McGovern embraced the philosophy of Sir William Osler, M.D., whose approach included patient-centered, compassionate care and appreciation of medical history and the humanities. McGovern co-founded the American Osler Society in 1969. With its focus on ethics and humanities, the McGovern Center’s mission is to address the dehumanizing forces in health care today. The center serves all six of the university’s schools.

During his career in medicine, McGovern held 17 professorships, received 29 honorary doctorates, authored 252 professional publications including 26 books – all while serving as president or chief elected officer of 15 professional societies of medicine. He died in 2007, leaving a legacy that his wife carries on today through her work heading the John P. McGovern Foundation.

“One of my patients recently told the medical school’s graduating class of 2015, ‘The biggest gift you can give your patients is yourself and your time,’” Colasurdo said. “Each student at McGovern Medical School will learn these values, ensuring that, every four years, more than 1,000 alumni will enter the health care workforce practicing the Oslerian values that formed the heart of Dr. McGovern’s philosophy.”
UCSC members participated in UT House Medics

Each year, the UT House Medics’ team of volunteers descends on homes in need of renovation. This year, several UCSC members joined to lend a hand. Since its inception in 1991, UT House Medics has renovated over 75 homes. Its goal is to help elderly Houstonians with home renovations including scraping and painting exteriors, landscaping, replacing windows and doors, building wheelchair ramps, and etc.

This group partners with Houston's largest community outreach organization, Rebuilding Together - Houston, which works to preserve affordable homeownership and revitalize neighborhoods.

“When you meet a homeowner, your heart fills up. They know their home may be run down and in need of repair, but it’s their home and they don't want to leave,” said UCSC member Dennie Clemmons in her Rebuilding Together - Houston testimonial. “It means everything to them. There IS no place like home. If they could be like Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz and click their heels, they would. But, I guess that's why we’re here.”
To raise additional funds to support the UCSC Education Awards, the council sold carnations in time for Administrative Professional Day (April 27). Each order included two flowers, one included at no additional charge, as a surprise! Here are some photos of lucky recipients.

Reminder to UCSC Representatives: Please send all publications and correspondence to the Communications Committee prior to publishing, mailing or emailing.