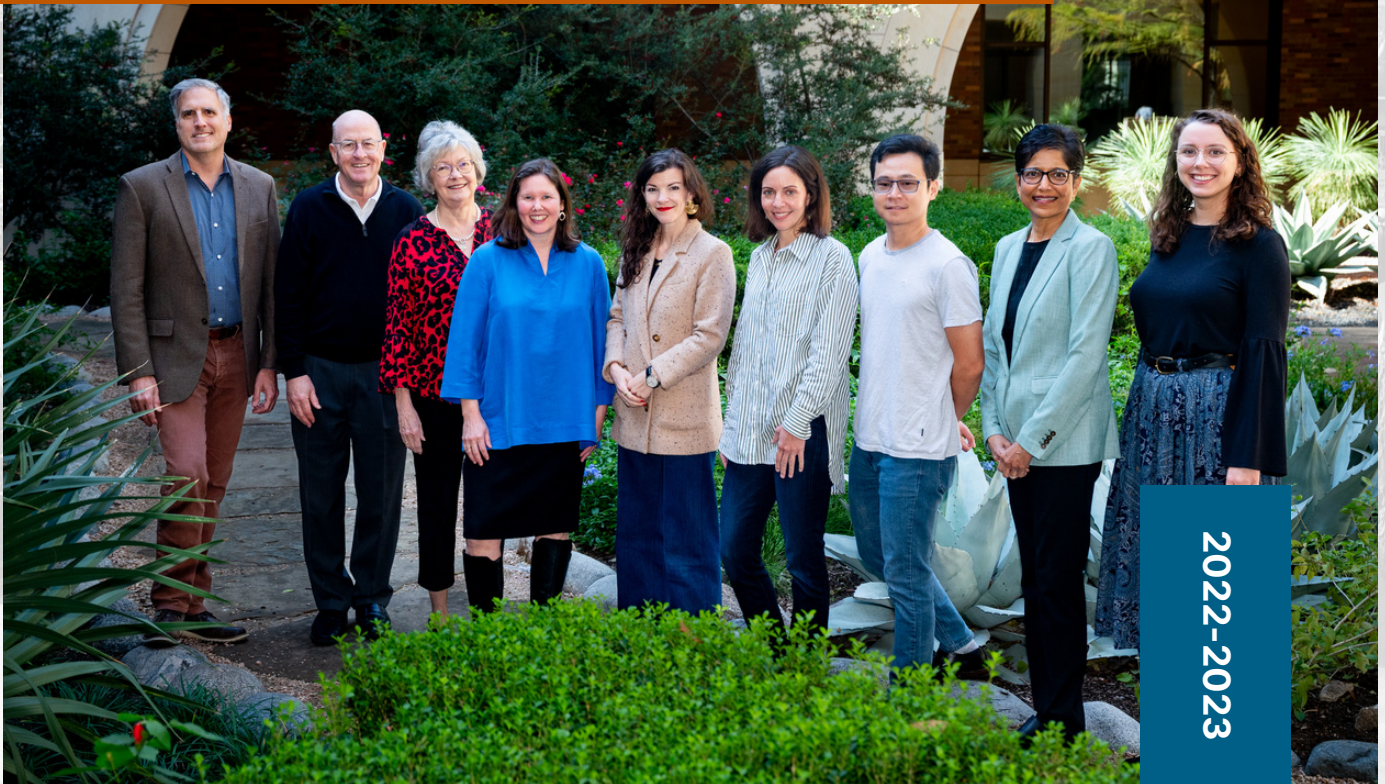




The University of Texas at Austin
RGK Center for Philanthropy
and Community Service
Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs

Annual Report

Deep in the Heart and Science
of Philanthropy



December 2023

rgk.lbj.utexas.edu



Dear Friends,

As 2024 begins, we are grateful for your support of the RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service. Having said farewell to longtime director Dr. David Springer, now Dean of the College of Social Work at Florida State University, we continue the work of welcoming students and community leaders to our campus, events, and programs so that we can share knowledge and achieve social impact together.

Alongside you, we feel the weight of current events and challenges facing the nonprofit and philanthropic sector here, and globally. We take comfort in the ability of individuals to take actions that manifest caring for each other and our communities.

The annual report offers an update on the people and programs that are achieving our mission: to prepare the next generation of nonprofit and philanthropic leaders through graduate education and research.

This moment of transition is an opportunity to be reflective, curious, and hopeful. I look forward to sharing more news with you soon!

Warm regards,

MOIRA PORTER

Interim Director, RGK Center



The University of Texas at Austin
**RGK Center for Philanthropy
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David Springer with students in his spring 2023 course. [Read more >](#)

Nonprofit Studies Portfolio

Students in the Nonprofit Studies portfolio program come from degree programs across campus, including: public affairs, social work, business, education, liberal arts, geography, and Latin American studies.

Our network of more than 550 alumni continue to be engaged with the Center through hosting student lunches, serving on speaker panels, and attending the Center's public-facing events.



graduate students earned the portfolio in Nonprofit Studies in 2022-2023

New Faculty Fellows

RGK faculty fellows teach courses across campus that integrate learning about nonprofits, social impact/entrepreneurship, civic engagement, leadership, philanthropy, and more.



Emily Bhandari



Ruben Cantu



Laura Rosen

Course Spotlight: Spring 2023

From Charity to Solidarity: Reimagining the Social Sector

In spring 2023, the RGK Center invited LBJ School alumni Becky Pastner and Madge Vasquez to co-teach a course for students in the Nonprofit Studies portfolio program, titled “From Charity to Solidarity: Reimagining the Social Sector.” Throughout the course, Pastner and Vasquez invited a series of local nonprofit leaders to share their experience and expertise with students, in addition to sharing their own expertise as leaders in the community.

Becky Pastner (MPAff class of '07) is a philanthropic and nonprofit advisor who brings 20+ years of diverse experience in programmatic, operational, and leadership roles across the social sector. She previously served as Vice President of Evaluation and Strategic Learning at St. David's Foundation.

Madge Vasquez (MPAff class of '01) has over 25+ years of private and public sector experience in nonprofit capacity building, community development, healthcare, philanthropy, business consulting and community engagement. She previously served as the CEO of Mission Capital.



CONNECT



Throughout the 2022-2023 semesters, CONNECT welcomed 30 new organization clients and completed a total of 59 projects. CONNECT fellows provided more than \$500K worth of deliverables to participating nonprofit organizations. The majority (42%) of organizations classified themselves as human service organizations, followed by health and public societal benefit organizations. Deliverables from four different projects were used to advocate for policy changes at local, state, and federal levels, including projects with RAISE Texas. [Read more in the CONNECT impact report >>](#)

Connecting Policy to Practice: Spotlight on RAISE Texas

[Read more >](#)

In spring 2023, RAISE Texas began working with CONNECT to examine the effect that medical debt has on Texans, especially those who are low-income and in communities of color. CONNECT fellow Ziyi Wang worked with RAISE Texas to further develop the data needed to propose model bills in the 2025 state legislative session addressing medical debt and healthcare barriers in the state.

“We’re building on the resources that UT Austin provides to the community, to community leaders, and to nonprofits. Access to resources and experts at UT Austin are extremely helpful to a small organization like ours.”

Elizabeth Colvin, Executive Director of RAISE Texas

After engaging in CONNECT...



of students reported their experience helped them obtain a job or internship



of students reported learning a new skill or software through their experience



of students reported their experience helped them expand their professional network



of orgs reported their experience helped them learn how to implement a measurement strategy for program evaluation



of orgs reported their project contributed to their ability to improve skills, knowledge, resources, and/or processes



of orgs reported their experience helped them learn how to use data for analysis, visualization and/or reporting

Student Spotlight: Chris Reyes

CONNECT fellow Christopher Reyes, a graduate student at UT School of Public Health, worked alongside a team at Ascension Seton to expand and improve their Food is the Best Medicine program. During the spring 2023 CONNECT cohort, Reyes and the Seton team successfully launched a community partnership with local food access organizations to improve access to healthy food for postpartum patients, providing participants with healthy prepared meals and produce for up to eight weeks postpartum.

[Read the full story >](#)



RGK Global Fellowships

In summer 2023, three students received an RGK Global Fellowship to support their internship working with an NGO outside of the U.S. [Read more >](#)



Sharon Munroe
(Quetzaltenango, Guatemala)



Gabriela LeBaron (Benin, Africa)



Katrina Liebch (Haifa, Israel)

"From morning to evening, I was in deep cultural immersion. You have to be here on the ground to see people and feel their energy. That's when the questions come up and you start to understand and learn."

-- Gabriela LeBaron

Kozmetsky Fellows

The RGK Center welcomed two new Kozmetsky fellows in 2022-2023. The fellowship is named for Mrs. Ronya and Dr. George Kozmetsky, founders of the RGK Foundation and namesakes of the RGK Center. Kozmetsky Fellowships are competitive full-tuition scholarships awarded to students interested in careers in the nonprofit and philanthropic sector.



Allison Hooks, MPAff/MBA

Libby Morris, MPAff



Student Spotlight: Joyce Ovalle

Kozmetsky Fellow, PhD Candidate at the LBJ School of Public Affairs

In fall 2023, Joyce defended her dissertation proposal and advanced to her PhD candidacy. Her dissertation title is “Network Effects, Organizational Attributes, and Dependency Dynamics: A Three-Paper Study on Funding Asymmetries Among U.S. Environmental Nonprofits.”

Joyce was selected for the 2023 ARNOVA Doctoral Fellows Program. She attended the annual conference in Orlando, FL, where she collaborated with and received feedback from a small group of peers and experts in the field of nonprofit and philanthropic research.

Joyce also co-authored an [article with Dr. Ji Ma](#) that was published in PLOS One. In the article, they examine why some universities produce more practice-oriented peer-reviewed journal articles than others, using nonprofit studies as an example.



Alum Spotlight: Blanca Garcia, MSSW

*Director of Mental Health Services,
Grant Halliburton Foundation*

Nonprofit Studies portfolio alum Blanca Garcia developed the Here for Texas Mental Health Navigation Line soon after joining the Grant Halliburton Foundation team. In 2022, she received a \$300,000 grant to support the Foundation’s Hispanic outreach initiatives and programs she has developed. [Read more >](#)



Faculty Research & Updates

Patrick Bixler received the President's Award for Global Learning for his undergraduate program in Kenya. The program will tackle the global challenge of water security by harnessing solar power to desalinate water in rural and peri-urban communities in Kenya. In March 2023, Bixler published new research exploring the factors that influence citizens' confidence in public and nonprofit sectors in the context of natural hazards. He was also named as a key researcher on a new climate research project collaboration with UT Austin and City of Austin.

David Eaton brought a group of students to Israel in January 2023 as part of his course, "Creating Shared Civil Society Activities in Israel and Palestine," in collaboration with Hebrew University.

Ji Ma was selected to participate as a mentee in the Provost's new Mentored Faculty Scholars Program. He presented at conferences for both ARNOVA and APAMM in fall 2023. He also published new research in *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* that describes the topics shared between English and Chinese scholarship on nonprofits and philanthropy and explores why English scholarship is cited in Chinese journal articles.

Francie Ostrower published research funded by the Wallace Foundation titled "Why is it Important That We Continue? Some Nonprofit Arts Organizations Rethink Their Value in Challenging Times." She presented this research at the Association of Arts Education Administrators (AAAE) annual conference in June 2023. Ostrower also had a chapter featured in "Giving In Time: Temporal Considerations in Philanthropy," titled "Rethinking the Significance of Foundation Lifespan."



RGK faculty, staff, students, panelists and guest speakers at the Tech & Society Symposium, hosted at the LBJ School.

Tech & Society Symposium

In October 2023, the RGK Center hosted the Tech & Society Symposium, an initiative led by faculty associate Becky Lentz. The goal of the Symposium was to convene members from multiple sectors (academia, public, private, and nonprofit) around the theme of “researching the role funders play in advancing digital/data rights, justice, equity, and inclusion in the U.S. and beyond.” Panelists included leaders in the data/digital rights, justice, equity, and inclusion space both locally and across the country. Attendees gathered in-person at the LBJ School and asynchronously through a new Slack workspace.

Index of Volunteer Engagement

Sarah Jane Rehnborg and Noel Landuyt presented preliminary data from their Index of Volunteer Engagement (IVE) at the OneStar Nonprofit Summit in February 2023. Attendees at the Summit consisted of local nonprofit/philanthropic leaders and students.

