



RICE UNIVERSITY  
Center for Civic Leadership

# ANNUAL REPORT

# 20 24



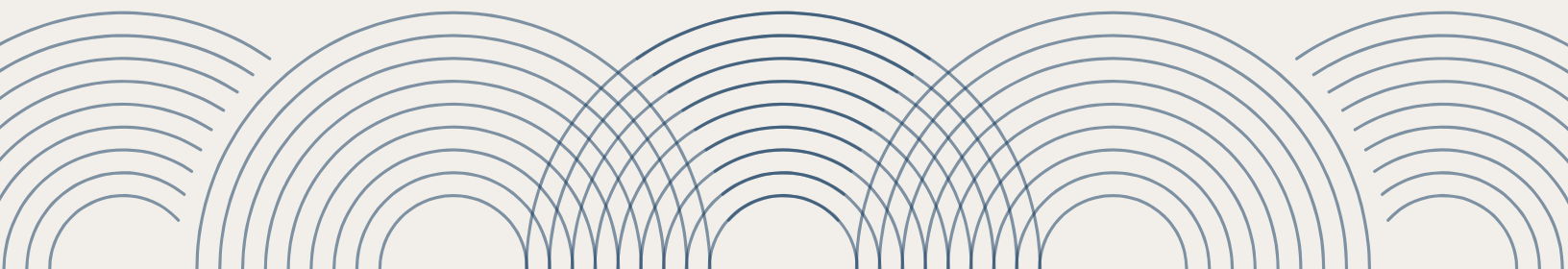


## **Welcome to the Center for Civic Leadership's 2024 Annual Report**

This past year has been remarkable for the Center for Civic Leadership (CCL), marked by transformative programs, impactful student experiences, and meaningful partnerships that strengthen our commitment to fostering leadership and civic engagement.

This annual report offers a glimpse into our accomplishments, highlights the work of our students and co-educators, and emphasizes our dedication to building equitable and inclusive communities.

Thank you for joining us in celebrating another year of changemaking and meaningful collaboration.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS



<b>MISSION   MEET OUR TEAM   IDENTITY</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2024 AT A GLANCE</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>CHANGEMAKERS THEMES</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>ACADEMIC INTEGRATION</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>COLLABORATION</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>COMMUNITY IMPACT</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>MOBILIZATION</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>REFLECTION</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>UNDERSTANDING</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>SENSE OF BELONGING &amp; PURPOSE</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>CCL COMMUNITY</b>	<b>14</b>

# OUR MISSION

The CCL convenes university and community stakeholders to take actions towards achieving an equitable, inclusive, and just society. We are committed to recognizing, responding to, and condemning all forms of discrimination and harassment whenever and wherever we see it by addressing systemic barriers of injustice, exclusion, and oppression. Through ethical community partnerships and critical pedagogies, we empower students and faculty to transform the structures that perpetuate oppression locally and globally.

## MEET OUR TEAM



**Rachel Bonini, PhD**  
Associate Director,  
Student Leader  
Development



**Danika Brown, PhD**  
Executive Director



**Melia Brown**  
Assistant Director,  
Student Leader  
Development



**Chris Burbridge**  
Assistant Director,  
Assessment



**Michi Heckler**  
Assistant Director  
International Programs  
& Initiatives



**Jessica Khalaf, PhD**  
Director of Operations  
& Partnerships



**Domenique Montgomery**  
Assistant Director,  
Houston Civic Projects



**Jorge Pineda**  
Assistant Director,  
Communications



**Veronica Reyna, PhD**  
Associate Director,  
Houston Civic Projects



**Kelsey Ullom**  
Associate Director,  
International Programs  
& Initiatives

## CHANGEMAKERS

At the heart of the CCL's mission is the belief that every student has the potential to take action on the change they want to see in the world. Our programs encourage students to connect with people in communities driving efforts toward systemic, sustainable change.

The CCL provides resources and support to develop students who are agents of positive, purposeful change in their communities.

## LEADERSHIP FOR PUBLIC PURPOSE

*We don't just engage leaders, we support their development.*

We support and empower students, staff, faculty, and alumni to develop Leadership for Public Purpose through:

- Understanding values and positionality
- Developing skills to analyze social issues through an asset-based lens and build capacity of communities to address those needs
- Engaging with diverse stakeholders and exploring multiple perspectives when approaching social issue analysis and activities
- Developing critical reflection skills that allow them to be self-aware, values driven, and forward looking
- Listening to and valuing critical feedback

# 2024 AT A GLANCE

**769**  
STUDENTS  
SERVED

16% OF RICE  
POPULATION

**82** PELL  
STUDENTS  
25% OF  
CCL STUDENTS

**136** FGLI  
STUDENTS  
34.5% OF  
CCL STUDENTS

**11**  
COMMUNITY-ENGAGED  
PROGRAMS

**394**  
PROGRAM  
PARTICIPANTS

**325** STUDENTS ENGAGING  
COMMUNITIES VIA SERVICE,  
RESEARCH, CIVIC PROJECTS

**38** STUDENTS ENGAGING  
COMMUNITIES ABROAD

**22** STUDENTS ENGAGING  
COMMUNITIES VIA  
INTERNSHIPS

**9** CERTIFICATE STUDENTS

**21**  
FELLOWSHIPS  
ADMINISTERED

**640**  
ADVISING  
SESSIONS

**194**  
FELLOWSHIP  
APPLICATIONS

**83**  
FELLOWSHIP  
NOMINATIONS

**41**  
FELLOWSHIPS  
AWARDED

FY24  
STUDENT FUNDING

**410K** FELLOWSHIPS

**275K** ENDOWED/  
GIFT-FUNDED  
PROGRAMS

**ALL 7 SCHOOLS**

REPRESENTED IN BOTH  
STUDENT PARTICIPATION AND  
FACULTY ENGAGEMENT.



**\*SPRING - FALL 2024**

# CHANGEMAKERS THEMES

The following 6 themes capture the essence of our programs and initiatives, showcasing how we empower students to engage meaningfully, think critically, and create positive change as leaders for public purpose.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRATION

Students' academic experiences are informed by and can support community engagement. This environment fosters changemakers where multiple individuals and sources of knowledge can come together, create a space for peer support, and think critically on solutions to social issues.

## COLLABORATION

Students are empowered to view civic engagement as a mutually-beneficial process where students and co-educators build on everything they have done and learned together. Students become changemakers who seek to make systematic change as well as change day-by-day.

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

Students develop a skill set and mindset to amplify communities through an asset-based lens. Students are changemakers who are equipped to support and build out tangible resources for community organizations that make a positive impact while avoiding harm.

## MOBILIZATION

Students are empowered to work with peers and co-educators to understand community impact. As changemakers, students build communities on and off campus that are inspired to action and building awareness.

## REFLECTION

Students are prepared to affirm their civic identity while challenging harmful assumptions. Students are stronger changemakers because they are motivated to incorporate a variety of ideas and actions, developed locally and abroad, as they work together across different communities and peers.

## UNDERSTANDING

Students develop civic behaviors to decenter their perspectives to foster collective action and co-education that imagines something new. To make lasting and broad change, changemakers work with diverse groups and build coalitions with individuals who are likely to be different than them.

# ACADEMIC INTEGRATION

The CCL's academic **Certificate in Civic Leadership** includes a year-long **Capstone** course, which allows students to connect their degree courses and research with civic impact. Through mentorship and guidance, faculty advise students as they develop an ethically and community based project that builds capacity for their community partner.



Arinze Appio-Riley collaborated with Normal Anomaly on a project titled "LIBERTY: Lifting Identities, Building Empowerment, Resilience, Trust for Trans Youth" to create safe spaces for Black Trans youth in Houston. Arinze developed programming that connected youth to mentorship, health resources, and entrepreneurial opportunities at Normal Anomaly's new drop-in center. This capstone project not only addressed critical disparities in health, economic stability, and housing but also set a precedent for innovative, identity-affirming advocacy and empowerment for marginalized communities.

Denise Maldonado developed a project with the Student Association's Labor Commission to build on her previous work and research around labor justice. Her project, "Rice Works Because We Do: Dimensions of Undergraduate Labor" delved into the critical need for undergraduate labor reform on campus. Denise further collaborated and served as an advisor to **Houston Action Research Team (HART)** students who were advocating for equitable employment practices prioritizing student workers' right and well-being.



In Spring 2024, the CCL brought together **Rice Faculty** members to celebrate Black History Month and highlight their efforts with students through the **Houston Action Research Team (HART)** program. The event was titled "Storytelling and the Resilience of Black Voices." The panel included faculty and staff who mentored student teams working with community organizations to empower Black communities in Houston through capacity-building research that utilized storytelling and oral histories.

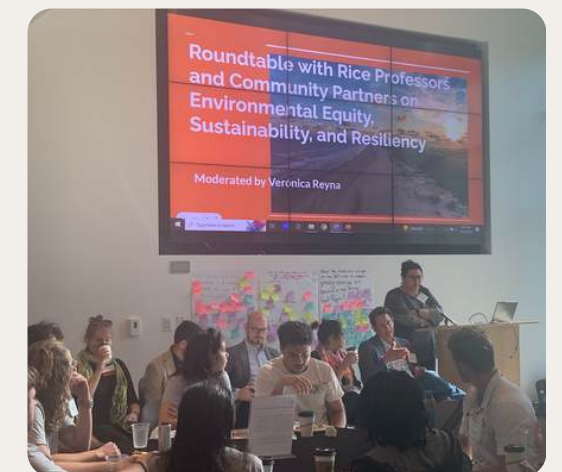


*(From left to right)  
Dr. Nicole Waligora-Davis (English),  
Dr. Portia Hopkins (Woodson Research Center/Fondren Library),  
Dr. Victoria Massie (Anthropology),  
and Dr. Amarilys Estrella (Anthropology).*

The CCL supported numerous faculty throughout fall 2024, including a special topics course with Professor Chad Shaw; community based learning in Professors Cassie Diep, Chase Lesane-Brown, and Carly Thomsen's courses; programmatic support with Professor Molly Morgan and Dr. Weston Twardowski; and initiative support in the Schools of Social Sciences, Political Science, and Humanities.

The **Gulf Scholar Program (GSP@Rice)** program, a partnership between the CCL and the School of Engineering, connects students with real-world challenges in climate justice and Gulf resiliency.

The 2024 cohort engaged in a peer-led curriculum on climate and environmental justice before conducting faculty-led, community-based research projects in the summer. Dr. Sylvia Dee led a team working with the Houston Climate Justice Museum to develop an exhibit utilizing climate model data to communicate messages around the climate crisis. The second team collaborated with Dr. Weston Twardowski and Commission Shift to develop a GIS-based web app that maps risks associated with carbon capture, use, and storage policies.



# COLLABORATION

**Alternative Spring Break (ASB)** Site Leaders and Participants engaged in a two-day disaster preparedness project with West Street Recovery where they set up, stock, and organize a hub house, i.e. a part of a home that is donated by residents in a neighborhood in order to use it for storing community emergency items needed in times of disaster. They supported the creation of the first hub-house in SouthEast Houston, which would have normally taken a month to complete.



As part of this process, ASB Participants recognized the value of and leveraged social infrastructure in helping to build resilience within the community.

Leveraging partnerships across CCL programs, **GSP@Rice** students contributed to the creation of the Climate Migration exhibit at the Houston Climate Justice Museum, which is a public art and public history project designed around the subject of climate change fueled migration that also blends climate science with art for environmental activism. As part of the project's development, Gulf Scholars spent time learning from West Street



Recovery and Connie's Hub House perspectives as grassroots organization, in relation to their founding, operations during and after Hurricane Harvey, and their approach to addressing urban flood challenges.

The **Leadership Rice Mentorship Experience (LRME)** connects students to internships in a variety of different organizations that range from a diverse set of social issues. One LRME fellow, Nina Wallach, was a community engagement intern supporting Link Houston in planning the Connecting Communities Transit Workshop, in cooperation with AliefVotes.

Nina compiled a list of representatives from the Houston area and attended community meetings as well as meetings with nonprofits and advocacy groups. She spoke at both the Houston City Council and Metro Board meetings and led Art & Transit Workshops to promote community engagement. Additionally, Nina reached out to community organizations, government officials, METRO representatives, and religious groups to encourage their participation in a community discussion about public transportation in Alief, which she facilitated as part of a collaborative effort.



Sumin Yoon is a CCL alumnus who has participated in both **local and global opportunities**, culminating in a **Fulbright** this year.

*“During my Fulbright year, I will conduct medical anthropology research on the impact of repealing Indian Penal Code Section 377 on HIV/AIDS-related health in Hyderabad, India... I am excited to collaborate with Dr. Pushpesh Kumar from the University of Hyderabad and local HIV/AIDS organizations on this project. I also look forward to forming meaningful friendships within and outside my fieldwork.”*





# COMMUNITY IMPACT

In October 2024, the CCL organized and hosted the second annual Rich Family Endowment Launch Event. This event brought together students, faculty, staff, and community partners to engage with social issues, expand their networks, learn more about the **Rich Family Endowment (RFE)** program, and build community. Over 135 people registered for the event, with 126 represented in the RFE Lookbook - a curated resource showcasing participants and their interests, facilitating networking and community-building. The atmosphere was charged with inspiration and collaboration!



**WATCH OUR RFE LAUNCH EVENT RECAP**

Many students who apply and are selected for **fellowships** highlight their community-involved work as key to their development of leadership and motivation for public service. Students and alumni work with CCL staff to better understand their community-engaged learning or research and translate that into their applications, interviews, and fellowship experiences.

*“I want to develop and advocate for climate policy that preserves human health at the local, national and global levels. I will work with local communities to mitigate the very real human cost of climate change, campaign for social interventions and policy changes at the national level and build coalitions for the global stage. My mission is to bring to the world’s attention how human health and the health of the planet are inextricably connected.”*

**- Jae Kim, Rhodes Scholar 2025**

*“Protecting marginalized populations is the root of equitable policy...By continuing to diversify decision-making bodies and listening to marginalized people about their lived experience, we will be able to fight the onslaught of hate that is targeting the LGBTQ+ community...I look forward to learning from and collaborating with fellow scholars as I move forward with a career in public service”*

**- Lee Waldman, Truman Scholar 2024**

The CCL addressed **post-hurricane recovery** and climate resiliency through three distinct programs, empowering students to make a tangible impact. The **Ross Rankin Moody Civic Immersion** program partnered with the Houston Food Bank to distribute essential supplies to Houstonians following Hurricane Beryl. Through the **Alternative Spring Break (ASB)** program, students collaborated with West Street Recovery to establish and stock "hub houses" for disaster preparedness, significantly advancing community resilience efforts. One of the **Houston Action Research Team (HART)** explored disparities at the intersection of flooding and healthcare, proposing innovative solutions like resilience kits and improved emergency procedures. These efforts exemplify how the CCL empowers students to make a meaningful difference in the community.



# MOBILIZATION

**CCL Ambassadors** play an important role in building connections between the CCL and the diverse student body at Rice University. Their goal is to empower and mobilize students by connecting them with valuable resources and meaningful opportunities for civic leadership.

*“CCL Student Ambassadors serve as representatives for their peers, showcasing the profound impact the CCL can have on a student's journey at Rice. They demonstrate that there is no specific archetype for the type of person who participates in CCL programs, as they come from diverse backgrounds and experiences. They are able to mobilize their peers through their passion for social justice, their ongoing work in civic leadership, and a shared sense of community that inspires others to get involved.”*  
- Barakat Ibrahim, CCL Ambassador Coordinator



A priority of any **Rich Family Endowment (RFE)** project is for Rice students to mobilize others on and off campus. It provides an opportunity to build toward sustainability of the project and more awareness of the social issue.

The Rice Black Men's Association (RBMA) RFE project, in partnership with M.E.N. Inc., aims to create a safe space for young Black men both on and off campus to engage in conversation around the Black male identity, navigating life on a college campus, and more. Additionally, the project looks to cultivate mentorship between Black male students on campus and young men attending local high schools. The hope is that by developing these relationships, students will be better equipped to lead others and foster a greater sense of community.



**Rice Votes** is a group of students, staff, faculty, and community partners providing voter registration and voter education opportunities for Rice University. Dr. Veronica Reyna, Associate Director of the CCL, coordinates and convenes Rice Votes.

From July 2024 to the registration deadline in October, Rice Votes successfully registered over 600 individuals. When combined with registration numbers from the Kelley Center for Government Information, the total number of people registered this fall rose to 881.

The overarching strategy for Rice Votes was based upon these four pillars:

- Voter education
- Turnout support
- Institutionalization of voter registration and education support
- Communication consistency

We encourage everyone to read the Rice News Article about [Rice being recognized as a 2024 ALL IN Most Engaged Campus for College Student Voting](#).



# REFLECTION

The **America Reads** Program Coordinators organized several events to provide student mentors with insights from experts on education equity and tools to support students in Houston.

One notable event was a panel titled “How Schools Can Foster Education Equity in Texas.” This discussion featured faculty and staff representatives from HISD, EMERGE, PAIR, ReVision, and the Kinder Institute’s Houston Education Research Consortium. The panel created an opportunity for education leaders to share their expertise on promoting education equity and developing strategies to support students in Houston. This event introduced student mentors to new ideas and resources, while also encouraging them to reflect on new perspectives that contribute to their personal and academic growth.



Students in the **Houston Policy Experience (HPE)** program had the opportunity to shadow local community partners, learn the fundamentals of policy influence, observe essential civic professional skills, and gain insights into how policies impact social issues and inequities. Throughout the program, they were encouraged to engage in continuous reflection on their experiences, which helped them recognize their personal growth.

*“The Houston Policy Experience helped me understand what it will actually take for me to try and make positive change. More than just ideas, I’m going to need to learn how to effectively lead, communicate my ideas, and connect with other like-minded people.”*

**387**  
STUDENTS  
ADVISED

**12%**  
STUDENTS  
ADVISED ARE  
FIRST-GEN

With the reflective practice of personal statements, fellowship students are supported in the process through holistic advising, centering the student’s experiences and their synthesis of their work. As critical reflection is at the core of the advising and writing process, Rice students are prepared to discuss their leadership, community involvement, and academic pursuits.

The CCL is responsible for advising all undergraduate students interested in pursuing a **fellowship** or scholarship, along with administering the submission and convening the **presidentially appointed faculty committee**.

*“Without exception, students who make use of CCL advising have an exponentially better chance at winning some of the most prestigious awards this university offers. Their essays are better written, their research agendas are more cogent, and they have a better sense of how to communicate the impact that this opportunity might have on their life.”*

**- Margarita M. Castromán Soto, Assistant Professor of English,  
Fellowships Committee Member**

First-Gen, Limited Income (FGLI) students were given the opportunity to develop a global perspective through exploratory travel and experiential learning in Costa Rica, guided by their passions and interests via the **Moody Global Fellows (MGF)** program. Students met with faculty and local residents to discuss important issues in San Jose and compare experiences in Costa Rica and Houston. Each evening, they reflected on the day’s activities, leading to a stronger sense of belonging to a global Rice community, a better understanding of ethical tourism, and essential skills for future international travel.



*“Rice really values unconventional wisdom, and I got the chance to hear perspectives from individuals who live outside the US, to experience a different culture and to learn a lot about myself as well. It got me to learn about the kind of areas that I’m interested in and how traveling can fulfill that niche. Going abroad expanded my mind.”*

**- Michael Tsao**

# UNDERSTANDING

Participants in the **Moody Civic Immersion** program engaged with community leaders and organizations that offered a wide range of perspectives and values. They explored various topics, including environmental justice, refugee justice, community engagement, healthcare, transportation equity, and LGBTQ+/Mental Health advocacy.

Throughout the program, participants had daily opportunities to reflect on their interactions and discussions. This reflective process helped them develop a deeper sense of empathy and social awareness while laying the foundation for their own personal civic journeys, grounded in understanding and community building.

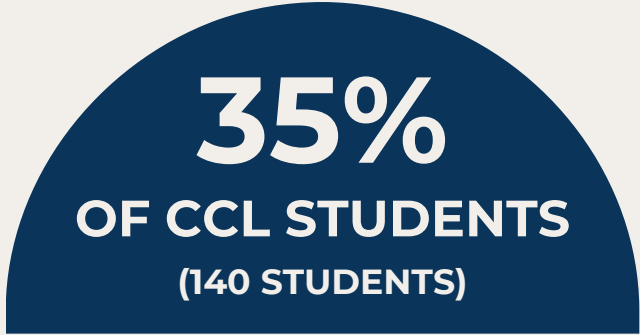
*“Hearing [the community partner] mention the ways to talk about mental illness without inducing shame helped me to recognize that this is something I can take part in with the people in my own life”*



WATCH RICE'S RECAP OF MOODY CIVIC IMMERSION

The **Loewenstern Fellowship** provides students with funding, preparation, mentorship, and support to conduct critical service and civic research outside of the United States. Loewenstern students in Uganda leveraged the opportunity to gain a new, de-colonial perspective on public health while working closely under the mentorship of community public health experts at the Kiyita Family Alliance for Development (KIFAD).

*“One of the key aspects of KIFAD’s dedicated mentorship has been understanding the importance of addressing stigma in TB and HIV/AIDS patients. This knowledge is crucial for conducting interviews that gather valuable information while ensuring patients feel comfortable and respected...moreover, KIFAD has provided me with invaluable insights into understanding the deep-rooted social issues within the community that often go unnoticed by the public. This holistic approach to my development has significantly enhanced my ability to contribute to the community and has enriched my overall experience as a Loewenstern fellow.”*



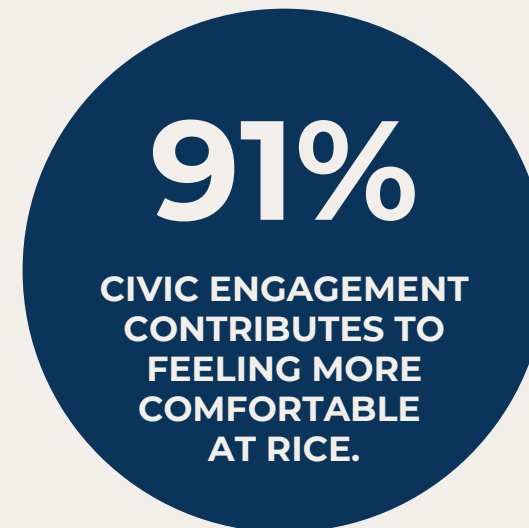
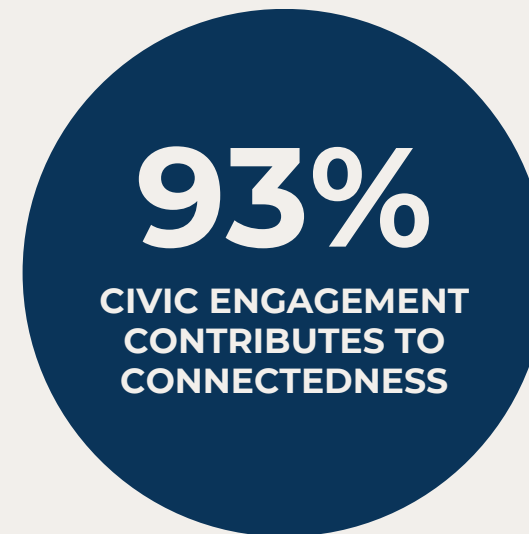
Apply the knowledge they have gained as learners to lead CCL programs and support their peers in their civic leadership development.

# SENSE OF BELONGING & PURPOSE

For the CCL, we recognize that to be an ethical and empowered changemaker - it is important for our students to have a strong sense of belonging with their communities and a strong sense of purpose around the positive change they seek to make in their communities.

We understand sense of belonging to be based on how connected the student feels with their peers at Rice, how valued they feel while enrolled at Rice, and how comfortable they feel to be themselves while at Rice; additionally, we tie a sense of purpose to a student's ability to connect and identify future goals they have for themselves to the community and civic engagement experiences they have done.

Specifically, our assessment highlights that because of the different community experiences students have engaged in as highlighted throughout this annual report, the CCL is directly contributing to student's sense of belonging and sense of purpose - therefore fostering a mobilized and connected set of changemakers who will be impacting their communities.



**OF THE 171 CCL STUDENTS WHO COMPLETED THE 2023 SURVEY OF ALL STUDENTS.**

# CCL COMMUNITY

Our Changemaker community is comprised of our co-educators. Be they our Advisory Board, faculty partners, alumni, campus partners, or community partners, the CCL is committed to building a community together that helps everyone involved learn, grow, and expand our impact.

## CCL ADVISORY BOARD

Our advisory board includes Rice Faculty, Alumni, and Community Partners who help advance the vision of the CCL to make Rice University a leader in civic engagement and education by employing ethical frameworks in pursuit of social change. Below are our current and inaugural board members.



**Oni Blair**  
ACLU of Texas



**Jenifer Bratter**  
Sociology



**Reilly Brooks '18**  
Schoolyard Ventures



**Placido Gomez '13**  
Houston ISD Trustee



**Anjeanette Gunter '04**  
Rebuilding Houston Together



**Akilah Mance '05**  
Houston Forensic Science Center



**Mallesh Pai\***  
Economics



**Constance Porter**  
Business



**Caroline Quenemoen**  
Associate Provost



**Jeff Reichman\***  
January Advisors



**Douglas Schuler\***  
Business



**Arlei Silva**  
Computer Science



**Scott Solomon**  
BioSciences



**Norma Torres Mendoza '13\***  
EY-Parthenon



**Nicole Waligora-Davis**  
English

\*Board Membership Ended 2023

# JOIN THE COMMUNITY

## STUDENTS

Students are encouraged to learn more about and engage with the CCL through various ways.

- Join an [advising hour](#)
- Fill out the [CCL Interest Form](#)
- Meet with a [CCL Student Ambassador](#)

## FACULTY

The CCL has a robust set of resources to support faculty including:

- Funding for community-based learning
- Engaged pedagogy consultation
- Connection to diverse community organizations
- Curricular resources for working with community partners for research and learning
- Connections to student ambassadors (graduate and undergraduate)

Learn more through our [CCL Support for Civic and Community Engaged Learning and Research](#).

## ALUMNI

Alumni engagement is integral in developing the next generation of Changemakers at Rice. Alumni can stay engaged with the CCL through programmatic opportunities, mentorship, and events. To stay connected, we encourage any Rice alumni focused on social impact to fill out our [24-25 alumni engagement survey](#).

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Community partners are our main co-educators for high impact, experiential learning for our students. Through a mutually beneficial and reciprocal approach, the CCL develops and collaborates with community organizations locally, nationally, and globally to amplify the work of the organization and provide students with community based learning and/or research. To partner with the CCL and learn more about upcoming opportunities, please consider filling out our [24-25 call for participation](#).

CENTER FOR CIVIC LEADERSHIP  
*Changemakers*

