



“I NEVER INTENDED
TO BECOME A
RUN-OF-THE-MILL
PERSON.”

-BARBARA JORDAN

TSU CLASS OF 1956



TO PUT IT SIMPLY, THE ALUMNI WE HONOR THIS EVENING ARE NOTHING SHORT OF EXTRAORDINARY. They are champions in the fields of business, politics, music, science and technology. From an emergency room physician who saves lives on a daily basis to an opera diva whose likeness was seen on a European postage stamp during the height of Jim Crow, their gifts are limitless. Tonight, we celebrate our eleven 85th Anniversary President’s Gala honorees. Legends in their own right, they tirelessly lead the way in their respective fields.

Felicia Conley

Ph.D. Environmental Toxicology, 2004

Graduate College

**Forensic Chemist, DEA South Central Laboratory,
United States Department of Justice**

Dr. Felicia Conley received a B.S. in Biology from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and a Ph.D. in Environmental Toxicology from Texas Southern University (TSU) in 2004. She currently works as a Forensic Chemist with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), South Central Lab where she is responsible for analyzing evidence and providing expert witness testimony in courts of law. She supports DEA Special Agents in their investigations and has assisted with the dismantling of several clandestine laboratories. She also provides training to Federal, State, and local law enforcement officials. Prior to working for the DEA, Dr. Conley developed a forensic science summer camp for high school students as a Research Assistant Professor at TSU, and received post-doctoral training at NASA JSC in Astrobiology. In 2007, Dr. Conley was named Chemist of the Year by the Gulf Coast Chapter of the National Organization for the Professional Advancement of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers (NOBCChE) and in 2008 was elected president of the Gulf Coast Chapter of NOBCChE. As a graduate student and as a professional, Dr. Conley's focus has always been on giving back, in the form of mentoring, training, and exposing youth to STEM fields.



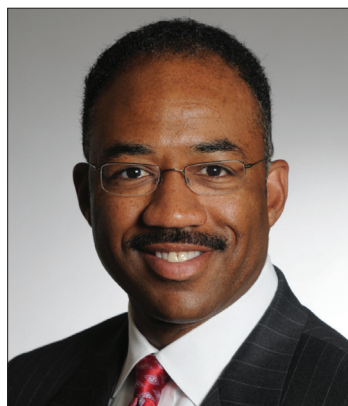
Kermit Crawford

B.S. Pharmacy, 1983

College of Pharmacy & Health Sciences

**President of Pharmacy, Health, Wellness Services &
Solutions, Walgreens Co.**

Mr. Crawford joined Walgreens as a pharmacy intern in 1983, before graduating from Texas Southern. He was a store manager and district manager for Walgreens in 1989 prior to being named Vice President of Store Operations in 2000. Today, Mr. Crawford is the President of Pharmacy, Health and Wellness at Walgreens Co., a position he has held since September 2010. He is on the board of the American Diabetes Association, Inc., the National Association of Chain Drug Stores and Northwestern Lake Forest Hospital, and is the director of all three. Mr. Crawford's community involvement includes the board of councilors of the University of Southern California School of Pharmacy and the Florida A&M University College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences Apothecary Board of Advisors. He is a member of the American Pharmaceutical Association and Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated.



Honorees



Dierdre Fontaine

**Masters in Business Administration
Jesse H. Jones School of Business
Director, Diversity and Inclusion, United Airlines**

Responsible for managing United Airlines' diversity strategy and initiatives, Ms. Fontaine is the recipient of several awards, including the Founders Award from The Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund, Legacy Hero Alumnae from Texas Southern University, and the IMPACT award from Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church. She also received a Woman of Distinction Award from the Houston Crohn's & Colitis Foundation, a 2008 Woman on the Move by Texas Executive Women Inc. and a 2009 Houston Women's Business Chamber of Commerce Hall of Fame Inductee. A proud native Houstonian, Ms. Fontaine is very active in the Houston community and serves on several boards including the Ensemble Theatre, Dress for Success Houston, the Holocaust Museum and Theatre Under The Stars. She is a graduate of Leadership Houston and an active member of Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church, The Links, Inc., Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and Jack & Jill of America.



Dr. Bettie Graham

**B.S. Biology
College of Science & Technology
Associate Director, Division of Extramural Research
Associate Director, Extramural Programs Branch
Program Director, Education and Community
Involvement Branch, National Institutes of Health**

Dr. Graham provides leadership for all of National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI) extramural training programs, especially for the NHGRI Minority Action Plan, which aims to increase substantially the number of individuals from underrepresented groups conducting genomic research. Dr. Graham manages the review of proposed minority action plans from NHGRI grantees, and devises new approaches regarding training of underrepresented groups. A program director since 1989, she oversees the NHGRI Training and Career Development Program, the Small Business Innovation Research Program/Small Business Technology Transfer Program, and the Loan Repayment Program. Dr. Graham is involved in the trans-NIH mouse initiative, as well as the scientific program management of grants related to mapping technology and the application of mass spectrometry to DNA and protein sequencing. A seven time recipient of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Director's Award, she received her Ph.D. in virology from Baylor College of Medicine.



Dr. Michael Steven Hunte

B.S. Biology magna cum laude, 2001

M.S. Biology, 2003

Thomas F. Freeman Honors College

**Doctor of Medicine from The University of Texas
Medical Branch at Galveston**

Michael S. Hunte, MD, specializes in Emergency Medicine at Methodist Charlton Medical Center in southwest Dallas. Dr. Hunte received his certification from the American Board of Emergency Medicine. He has received honors from UTMB Medical School as part of Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society and is the recipient of the Merck Manual Award. As a magna cum laude graduate of TSU, Dr. Hunte ranked 10th in his class. He is affiliated with Methodist Dallas Medical Center, Methodist Medical Center and Methodist Richardson Medical Center, Richardson, Texas. He resides in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area with his wife Richonda Hunte '03 and their three daughters, Aliyah (3 months), Samiyah (5) and Laila (7).



Bernadine Oliphint

B.A. Education

College of Liberal Arts & Behavioral Sciences

International Opera Star

Former Professor and Director of the TSU Opera Workshop

A native of Huntsville, Texas, Ms. Oliphint attended TSU with dreams of becoming a teacher. But the allure of performing on the big stage, along with a requirement for university teachers to have performance experience, pushed her to further her education in music. So she earned her master's degree in vocal performance from Indiana University and later returned to TSU to lead the Opera Workshop. As director, Ms. Oliphint taught students who later gained entrance to Yale University and Julliard. The operatic soprano worked all over the United States and Europe, including performances at the major opera houses of Germany, France, Switzerland and Italy. During the height of segregation in the United States, her likeness was featured on a postage stamp in Germany, where she studied and performed for nearly a decade. Ms. Oliphint is the recipient of numerous grants for study in Europe, including the Martha Baird Rockefeller Grant and the Fulbright Fellowship for study in Germany and the G. Verdi Plaque from the Verdi Foundation. She has represented the State of Indiana's opera houses and singers before the U.S. Senate Sub-committee hearings on the re-authorization of the Arts and Humanities Act. A former professor at Grambling, Fisk and Indiana Universities, she is now professor emerita of voice and opera at TSU. She shares her wealth of knowledge, 51 years of experience and wisdom through master classes in music.



Honorees

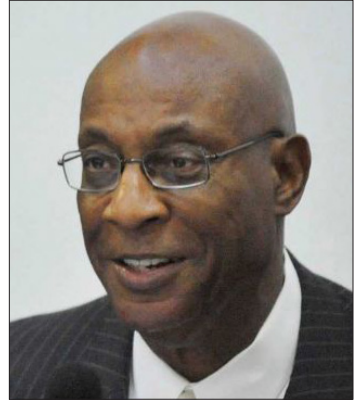


Dr. Carrol Thomas

Ph.D. Education, 1983

College of Education

Former Superintendent, Beaumont I.S.D.



Dr. Carrol Thomas served as superintendent of schools for the Beaumont Independent School District from 1996-2012. Under his leadership, the district received two national Blue Ribbon Schools and a state and national demonstration school, and *Texas Monthly* magazine consistently rates several BISD schools among the best schools in Texas. Prior to coming to Beaumont I.S.D., he was responsible for improving the North Forest School District. Dr. Thomas is now credited with the transformation of Beaumont ISD; the district has evolved from one of the lowest performing districts in the state to one of the top school districts in Texas for improvement. As a result, Dr. Thomas was named Educator of the Month by Texas School Business and cited by the Texas Legislature for outstanding leadership as a superintendent. The National Association of Secondary School Principals has recognized him as one of the nation's top administrators, and the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Texas named him Exemplary Texas Superintendent. Dr. Thomas is president of the National Alliance of Black School Educators. He has also been an advisor for several education and government organizations, including President Obama's education transition team concerning the "No Child Left Behind" Act.

Hon. Senfronia Thompson

B.S. Biology

J.D., Thurgood Marshall School of Law

Texas State Representative



Rep. Senfronia Thompson was born in Booth, Texas and raised in Houston. Known as the Dean of women legislators, she has served longer in the Legislature than any other woman or African-American in Texas history. A Houston attorney, Rep. Thompson is currently serving her 20th term in the Texas House of Representatives. Representing Northeast Houston and Humble, she is the author of Texas' first-ever alimony law, the James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Act. She has also authored laws banning racial profiling, the state's current minimum wage law, laws creating drug courts, the Contraceptive Parity law, the Sexual Assault Program Fund, the Model School Records Flagging Act, and scores of other reforms benefiting women, children and the elderly. In 2001, Rep. Thompson was named by *Texas Monthly* as one of the "Top 10 Legislators" and one of six lawmakers "Who Rocked the Legislature" by the Associated Press. She has served on the advisory board of the United Negro College Fund and is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

Patrick Trahan

B.A., Telecommunications, 1991
School of Communication
Public & Government Affairs Manager,
Chalmette Refining, L.L.C.

Patrick Trahan is a 25-year veteran of media and public relations. In 1987, he joined the broadcasting team of KTRH-NewsRadio740 in Houston, where he spent ten years as a reporter and news editor, winning awards for education reporting and radio documentary. After six years as an assignments manager at KTRK-TV, the ABC affiliate in Houston, Trahan joined the administration of Houston Mayor Bill White. Mayor White called on Trahan to address local and national media as thousands of residents of southeastern Louisiana made their way to the Houston Astrodome for shelter following Hurricane Katrina. Trahan, also former member of the Houston Fire Department and the Houston Independent School District helped to marshal over 500 additional volunteers as people exited buses. He won the praise of emergency officials by working cooperatively with media and those forced to evacuate to provide information while respecting the dignity of those who were displaced. He is married to wife, Jacqueline, and has three sons, Jonah, Joel, and Job.



Rocky Williford

B.A. Political Science, 1994
Barbara Jordan-Mickey Leland School of Public Affairs
Founder, HipHopBlog.com
Co-founder & President, BodyBlocks Nutrition Systems

A former Manhattan investment banker, Rocky Williford is the founder of HipHopBlog.com, the micro-blogging network for hip-hop culture. He is the co-founder and president of the U.S.-based beverage maker BodyBlocks Nutrition Systems, Inc. and the official creator of The Hip-Hop Emblem, which is now on record with the United States Library of Congress. In addition to his entrepreneurial ventures, Williford is a social activist. He successfully launched a campaign lobbying the Houston Independent School District (HISD) for the use of metal detectors in its schools to combat violence. As a result, HISD approved a \$1.5 million security plan. In 2011, Mr. Williford was named one of the most influential people in hip-hop by The Hip Hop 100, an annual profile of the one hundred most influential people in hip-hop culture. He received a Louisiana Senate Commendation from the President of the Louisiana State Senate, was designated Honorary Lieutenant Governor of Louisiana, received a Proclamation from the Mayor of Atlanta, Georgia in 2003 and a Commendation from the Governor of the State of Georgia in 2003.

