From the Director

During a year of uncertainty and social distancing, there is much for which I remain grateful. We have experienced opportunities to support each other in new ways and grow together. The RGK Center responded this year to serve our community and sector during the pandemic. Our students, alumni, faculty, and staff continue to inspire and serve through their passion and work.

The 2021 graduates of our Nonprofit Studies portfolio program delivered more than 2,200 volunteer hours to our community during their time at the university. Whether through a remote internship or field placement, supporting COVID-19 response and vaccination efforts, or mentoring youth and serving on nonprofit boards, I am grateful for our students’ commitment to service.

Our CONNECT program continues to expand its reach and impact, even while shifting to a virtual operation. Our team increased CONNECT fellowship funds, allowing us to issue $88,000 in student fellowships since last summer while delivering data and evaluation projects to 58 unique organizations. One CONNECT Fellow collaborated with Austin Young Chamber to interpret and share results of their survey, helping local businesses better understand employees’ needs and concerns at the beginning of the pandemic.

Our alumni have also shown incredible leadership, including developing support systems for older adults experiencing isolation and loneliness in the face of COVID-19.

I am grateful for the knowledge that our faculty contribute to the sector. Shifting to a virtual 20th anniversary celebration allowed our team to engage with alumni, nonprofit leaders, and other friends of the RGK Center across the country. This was a memorable series of events to showcase faculty research, acknowledge the support of advisory council members, and learn and reminisce together. We hope you had a chance to participate and celebrate the trailblazers who have been involved with the Center since its beginning, or that you are able to connect with us soon!

As we look to the future, I am hopeful for better things to come. Through times of hardship, our alumni, students, staff, and faculty continue to use their talents and passion to serve their communities and neighbors.

Serve on,

David Springer
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20 Years of Blazing New Trails

The RGK Center marked its 20th anniversary with a series of virtual events featuring RGK Center faculty, alumni, and advisory council members. We celebrated the trailblazing research of our faculty, our visionary founders, and all those who have joined us along the way. The celebration culminated with a Trailblazers Reunion in May to connect with all of our friends, old and new, and hear from the RGK Center’s founder Curtis W. Meadows, Jr. See below for brief event summaries and links to recaps and recordings.

Visit our anniversary homepage.

December 8, 2020
Power of Collaboration
Dr. David Springer and advisory member Mary Jalonick welcomed friends of the Center to a panel discussion examining how successful collaborations can help enact systemic change.

March, 30, 2021
"Data is Not a Magic Bullet, But..."
Dr. Francie Ostrower led a presentation and small group discussion about her recent research on audience building and retention within arts nonprofits.

April 7, 2021
Championing Volunteerism: The Invisible Arm of the Philanthropic Sector
Dr. Sarah Jane Rehnborg convened a panel of volunteer experts to share their "big ideas" in volunteerism.
Team Updates

The RGK Center welcomes Ethan Tenison as the Center's Project Manager for Data Initiatives. Ethan Tenison manages a portfolio of data initiatives, including the CONNECT Program’s technical and data science related projects. Before joining the team, Ethan completed his Masters of Global Policy Studies at the LBJ School with a portfolio in Applied Statistical Modeling. While completing his degree, he was a six-time CONNECT Fellow.

Through his CONNECT experiences, he worked on a diverse set of nonprofit projects ranging from data visualization and machine learning to survey administration and program evaluation. Prior to graduate school, Ethan was a bilingual Spanish elementary school teacher in Austin ISD and received his undergraduate degrees in Government and Spanish.

Jenica Jones joined our team as the RGK Center's new Administrative Manager. Jenica comes to us from UT's Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies, where she managed accounts, helped build international programming, and honed her management skills. She holds an MA in French linguistics from Indiana University and an MA in strategic negotiations from Université de Paris XI. Jenica is a native Austinite and loves running on Town Lake.
The Nonprofit Studies portfolio program is an opportunity to develop and advance skills in nonprofit management, philanthropy, data management and evaluation, cultural policy, social finance and marketing, and community collaboration. This spring and summer, 14 students graduated with the Nonprofit Studies certification.

2021 Portfolio Graduate Highlight

Sissi O'Reilly, Ph.D.
Educational Leadership and Policy
College of Education

"The Graduate Portfolio Program in Nonprofit Studies provided an opportunity to coalesce my academic research in educational leadership with my interests in non-profit service and transformational change through engaging coursework, networking opportunities, and rigorous dialogue with scholars across other fields."

Sissi defended her dissertation, "Leadership in School Improvement Networks: Social Network Analysis of Principal Ego-Networks" before a committee that included RGK Center professor Dr. Patrick Bixler. The advisor for her dissertation was RGK Center faculty fellow Dr. Joshua Childs, a professor at the College of Education. Prior to earning her Ph.D. at UT Austin, Sissi worked for 15 years as a principal in Los Angeles Unified School District. Sissi currently serves on the board of Austin Opera. Read her full highlight here.
The **CONNECT program** seeks to build greater data, measurement and evaluation capacity within community organizations. The program is currently funded by the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, the Bill Wood Foundation, and St. David’s Foundation. In the 2020-2021 academic year and summer 2021, the CONNECT program matched a total of **58 projects** and distributed **$88,000 in program support** to students.

### Project Spotlight: Literacy Coalition of Central Texas

The Literacy Coalition of Central Texas has been involved in three different CONNECT cohorts since 2020. Previous CONNECT fellows developed a customized self-sufficiency matrix to assess program impact, conducted stakeholder interviews, and developed logic models to help LCCT track and measure program outcomes at an organizational level. This summer, a fellow is working with LCCT to better understand if and how their services are increasing clients' self-sufficiency and safety. The student is conducting an exploratory analysis and synthesizing recommendations in a final report. *Read more in our project library.*
Research and Publications

Patrick Bixler, Ph.D.
Dr. Bixler was named a faculty co-lead for a Planet Texas 2050 flagship project titled "Networks for Hazard Preparedness and Response". The project will explore the intersection of improved flood modeling, mapping, and prediction along with how governance networks use the information for decision making.

Ji Ma, Ph.D.
"Automatic Coding Using Machine Learning and Remapping the U.S. Nonprofit Sector: A Guide and Benchmark"

"Computational social science for nonprofit studies: Developing a toolbox and database for the field"

Francie Ostrower, Ph.D.
"Millenials are Not a Monolith: Experiences from One Group of Performing Arts Organizations' Audience-Building Efforts"

"Audience Building and Financial Health in the Nonprofit Performing Arts: Current Literature and Unanswered Questions (Executive Summary)"

2020 RGK-ARNOVA President's Award Recipients

The 2020 RGK-ARNOVA President's Award was presented to Dr. Marlene Walk (Indiana University), Dr. Kerry Kuenzi (University of Wisconsin), and Dr. Amanda J. Stewart (North Carolina State University). Their research, "COVID-19 as a nonprofit workplace crisis: Seeking insights from the nonprofit workers' perspective," was recently published in the Nonprofit Management and Leadership journal.
Community Impact

Portfolio Alum Leads Center's First High School Intern in New Course

Nonprofit Studies Portfolio alum Nick Lebo, a teacher and coach at Austin High School, recently taught AISD's first cohort of Practicum in Business Management. The course provides senior-level students the opportunity to develop practical skills through internships. This past year, Austin High School senior Harrison Shunk interned at the RGK Center supporting marketing and communications for the Center's programming.

Read the full story here.

Mapping the Texas Water Policy System

RGK Center faculty Dr. Patrick Bixler and Project Manager of Data Initiatives Ethan Tenison are collaborating with Texas Water Foundation to develop an interactive map of the Texas water systems landscape. The Texas Water Systems Map is the first comprehensive policy system map of the Texas water sector and will help equip decision-makers and stakeholders with the knowledge to better understand the complex water landscape at the state and local levels.

Read the full story here.
Course Lists

Fall 2020

Affordable Housing Planning
Dynamics of Organizations and Communities
Government and Not-for-Profit Accounting
Finance for Social Innovation
Financial Management of Human Services
Gender, Health, and Society
Grantwriting and Resource Development
Historical Museums: Context and Practice
How Organizations Institutionalize Inequity and What We Can Do About It
Law: Entrepreneurship and Community Development
Leadership as a Catalyst for Community Change
Leadership in Human Service Systems
Management of Preservation Programs
Nonprofit Management of Human Services
Program Evaluation for Nonprofit, Public, and Social Impact Initiatives
Reentry: Criminal Justice

Spring 2021

Advocacy
Austin Arts/Economic Development Policy
Building an Intergenerational Metropolis
City Consulting: Engaging Austin to Understand Homelessness
Civic Entrepreneurship for America's Children
Collaborative Governance
Data Management and Research Lifecycle
Policy Implementation Seminar
Leadership in Human Service Systems
Marca, Brazil -- Cite Entrepreneurship
Meadows Fellows -- NGO Consulting
Mobilizing the Community and Engaging Volunteers
Nonprofit Law
Social Entrepreneurship
Social Justice Philanthropy
Storytelling for Policy Wonks

Summer 2021

Dynamics of Organizations and Communities
Financial Management in Human Services
Fundraising for Public/Nonprofit Organizations
Perspectives on Philanthropy
Program Evaluation
In her *Philanthropy and Social Change* course series, RGK Center fellow and associate adjunct faculty member Dr. Becky Lentz explores with her students the question: “How has philanthropy been used to address root causes rather than just the symptoms of systemic and structural inequality?”

The series, which she piloted at the LBJ School through the RGK Center while on sabbatical from McGill University in Canada in 2016-2017, brings attention to the role philanthropic actors play in society. Read the full highlight on our website here.

“The course further affirmed my passion for community organizing and gave me language with which to communicate the importance of organizing to people in other fields...[It] drove home for me the importance of breaking down silos among fields in social justice work, and that is a commitment I carried with me in my next position.”

Juan Carlos Cardoza-Oquendo, MPAff ’18

Dr. Lentz uses "The Oppression Tree: Facilitation Tool" from the Centre for Community Organizations in Quebec, Canada for in-class activities related to this topic.
20th Anniversary Acknowledgements

Below is a list of individuals named by founding director Curtis Meadows, Jr. and other Center faculty and staff to have been influential to the creation and growth of the RGK Center. We are grateful for their leadership and expertise in areas of philanthropy, volunteerism, nonprofit management, and international civil society, in addition to their generous donations of time, talent, and treasure throughout the years.

Anne Hodges Morgan **
Admiral Bobby R. Inman **
Curtis W. Meadows, Jr.
David Eaton
Dennis Cavner **
Domingo Barrios **
Doug Dempster
Ed Dorn
Fred Smith **
Greg Baldwin **
Greg Kozmetsky **
Ken Gladish **
Lady Bird Johnson
Larry Temple
Linda Perryman Evans **
Lindsey Harbison **
Maggie McCarthy **
Margaret Randow
Mary Jalonick **
Maureen Hackett **
Max Sherman
Michael Granoff
Michael Meadows
Mike King **
Moira Porter
Pat Porter
Paul W. Harris **
Peter Frumkin
Peter Moore **
Randa Safady **
Rick Cherwitz
Robert Meslen
Ronya and George Kozmetsky
Sarah Jane Rehnborg
Sharon Martin
Shirley Bird Perry
Terrell Blodgett
Tom Johnson
Valleeu Wilkie Jr. **
William Glade

** indicates current or former RGK Center advisory council member

"The vision I had for [the RGK Center] was something that would eventually affect all students at The University of Texas. They would be asked to ponder the questions 'Why should we care about others? What do we owe back to the state of Texas for the education we've been given? How could I give to improve the lives of others?'"

Curtis W. Meadows, Jr.
Founding director of the RGK Center
Former Director of the Meadows Foundation