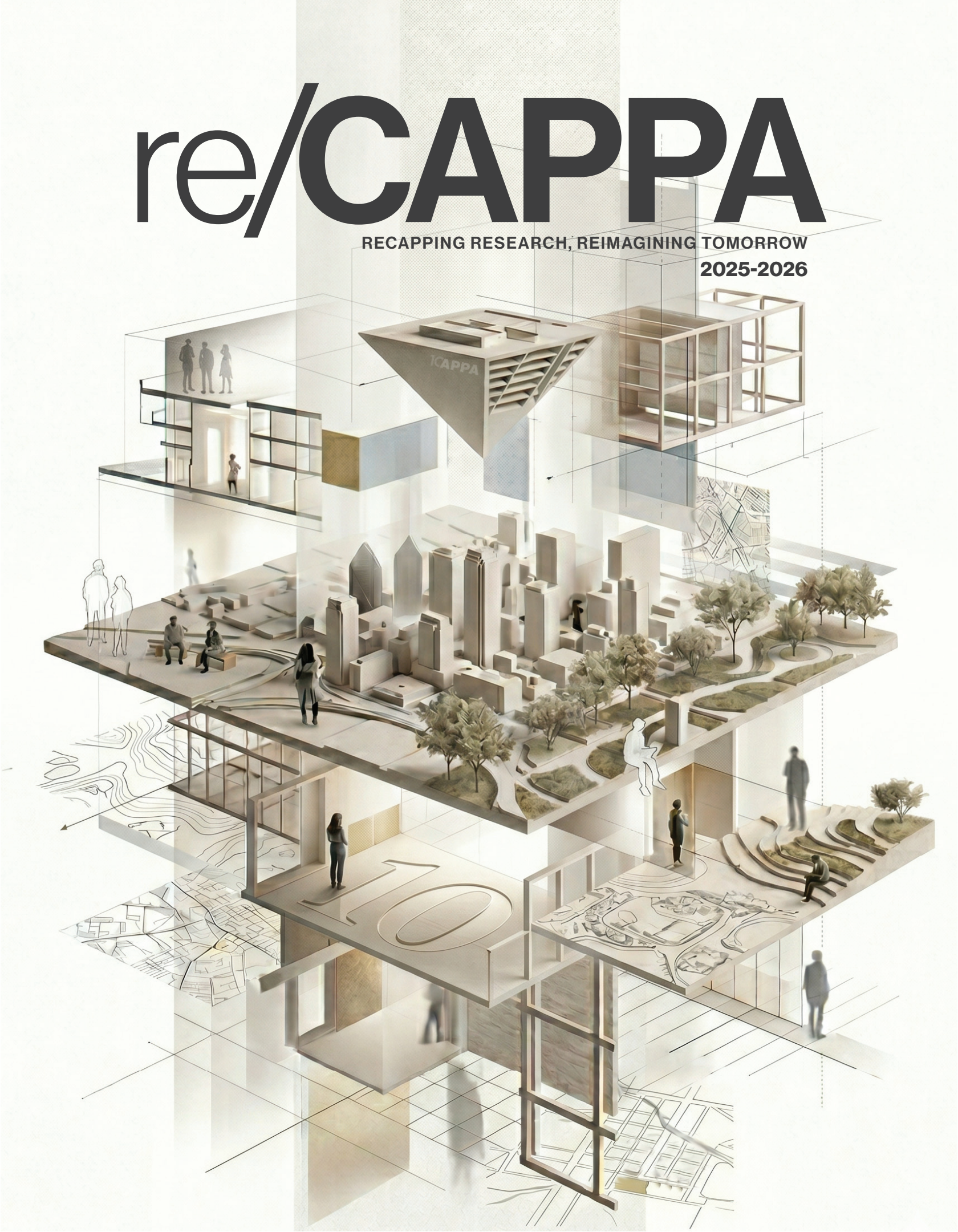
re/CAPPA

RECAPPING RESEARCH, REIMAGINING TOMORROW

2025-2026



re/CAPPA

RECAPPING RESEARCH, REIMAGINING TOMORROW

2025-2026

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UTA
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A Decade Together, A Future of Possibilities

As we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the College of Architecture, Planning and Public Affairs, I am filled with gratitude for all that we have accomplished together.

Over the past decade, CAPPA has grown into a college defined by innovation, creativity, and impact. During the 2025-26 academic year, our faculty advanced research in areas ranging from climate resilience and emerging technologies to sustainable infrastructure and community development. Our students tackled real-world challenges, explored new ideas across the globe, and demonstrated the talent and leadership that will shape the future of our professions.

The stories in this issue reflect the mission of CAPPA. They highlight groundbreaking research, transformative learning experiences, creative works, and partnerships that extend far beyond our campus. Together, they tell the story of a college that is not only responding to change, but helping lead it.

As proud as we are of the past ten years, we are even more excited about what lies ahead. We continue to invest in exceptional faculty, cutting-edge research, and innovative learning environments that prepare students to address society's most pressing challenges.

Our future depends on the strength of our community. Alumni, donors, friends, and partners have helped build the foundation of CAPPA's success, and your continued support will help us reach even greater heights.

Thank you for being part of our story. Together, we are creating a future of possibilities.

MING-HAN LI, PH.D., AICP, PE, PLA
DEAN



Investing in People, Creating Impact

At the heart of every achievement featured in this issue is a simple but powerful truth: great ideas begin with great people.

As Associate Dean for Faculty Success + Research, I have the privilege of witnessing the extraordinary work of our faculty each day. Their research, scholarship, creative practice, and mentorship are transforming communities, advancing knowledge, and preparing students to become the next generation of leaders.

This past year has been especially inspiring. CAPPA faculty won design competitions, secured competitive research funding, published influential work, expanded interdisciplinary collaborations, and engaged directly with communities to address complex challenges. Just as importantly, they continued to create meaningful opportunities for our students to learn, discover, and thrive.

As we celebrate ten years as a college, we also recognize that our success is built on a culture of curiosity, collaboration, and innovation. The accomplishments highlighted throughout these pages demonstrate what is possible when talented faculty are empowered to pursue bold ideas and meaningful work, a spirit reflected in this year's inaugural **CAPPA Forum: Research & Creative Works Symposium**.

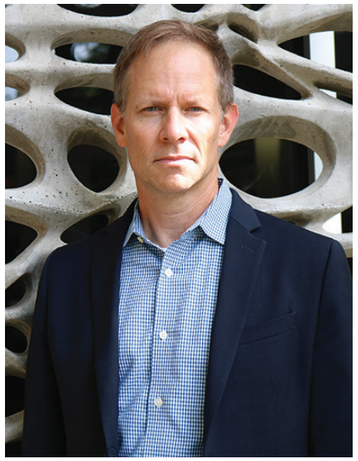
Looking ahead, our opportunities are limitless. By investing in faculty excellence, student success, and transformative research, we can continue expanding CAPPA's impact across Texas and beyond.

We are grateful for the alumni, partners, and supporters who share our vision. Your investment helps foster discovery, innovation, and opportunity for generations to come.

KARABI BEZBORUAH, PH.D.
ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR
FACULTY SUCCESS + RESEARCH

10 CAPPA 2015 2025

HONORS



ASSOC. PROFESSOR OF ARCHITECTURE INDUCTED INTO UTA'S ACADEMY OF DISTINGUISHED TEACHERS

In spring 2026, **Bradley Bell**, associate professor in CAPPA's School of Architecture, was inducted into UTA's **Academy of Distinguished Teachers**, one of the University's highest honors for teaching excellence. The distinction reflects decades of commitment to student success, mentorship, architectural education, and the development of future design leaders.

ASSOCIATE DEAN EARNS MENTORING EXCELLENCE AWARD

Dr. Karabi Bezboruah received UTA's **Excellence in Doctoral Student Mentoring Award**, recognizing her outstanding commitment to the academic, professional, and personal success of doctoral students. As CAPPA's Ph.D. program director, she has fostered a culture of support through mentorship, professional development, and student-centered leadership, helping shape the next generation of scholars and practitioners.





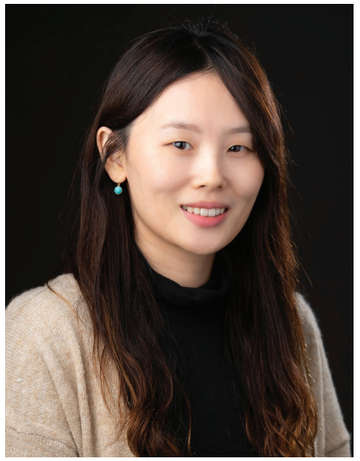
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS SELECTED FOR NASPAA COHORT

Dr. Jiwon Suh was selected for the **NASPAA NEXT 2025–2026 Cohort**, a prestigious leadership development program for emerging public service educators. The year-long initiative brings together faculty committed to advancing innovation, mentorship, and strategic leadership in public affairs education. Suh's selection recognizes her leadership in expanding accessible learning opportunities and her commitment to preparing the next generation of public service professionals.

ASST. PROFESSOR OF PLANNING SELECTED FOR NAS FRONTIERS SYMPOSIUM

Dr. Malini Roy was selected to participate in the **2026 U.S. and International Frontiers of Science Symposia**, an invitation-only program hosted by the National Academy of Sciences. The prestigious honor recognizes some of the nation's most promising early-career researchers. Roy's interdisciplinary work in hazard mitigation, disaster preparedness, and community resilience has earned national recognition for advancing strategies that help communities better prepare for and respond to complex risks.





ASST. PROFESSOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECURES MULTIPLE RESEARCH GRANTS

Dr. Jiseul Kim earned multiple competitive grants supporting research and innovation in public affairs. She received the **2025 Gil Crain Memorial Research Grant** from the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) and a **UTA Teaching Innovation Research Grant** focused on public financial management education. Kim also serves as co-principal investigator on a **$334,108 Water Research Foundation grant** developing new frameworks to help water utilities improve long-term planning, operations, and resilience.

EPA GRANT ADVANCES CIRCULAR ECONOMY EDUCATION

A CAPPA team led by **Dr. Atefe Makhmalbaf**, with **Dr. Joowon Im** and **Brad McCorkle**, received a **$133,333 EPA Environmental Education Grant** to advance circular economy principles in building design and construction. The project will train high school teachers, engage students in hands-on sustainability projects, and expand environmental education opportunities in underserved communities across Texas.







EMERITUS ERA

DRS. MARIA MARTINEZ-COSIO AND ARDESHIR ANJOMANI NAMED EMERITUS PROFESSORS

Few honors carry greater significance in academia than emeritus status. This year, CAPPA celebrates two faculty members whose careers have helped shape the college, the university, and their professions.

Dr. Maria Martinez-Cosio and **Dr. Ardeshir Anjomani** have been named Professor Emeritus, recognizing decades of distinguished teaching, scholarship, service, and leadership.

For Martinez-Cosio, the recognition represents the culmination of a remarkable journey.

“It’s the perfect capstone to a journey that began as a first-generation college student,” she said. “It’s an honor that carries real weight because it’s earned, not given, and I’m truly humbled by this recognition.”

Throughout her career, Martinez-Cosio advanced research, teaching, and community engagement while mentoring generations of students and emerging scholars. She also provided leadership to the University, serving as CAPPA Interim Dean and Interim Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs during her tenure at UTA.

For Anjomani, the designation marks an important milestone following more than four decades of service to UTA.

“It is a profound honor that truly marks the culmination of my career,” he said. “While my formal duties may be winding down, my commitment to the university remains strong.”

As educators, researchers, and mentors, both faculty members have left an enduring imprint on CAPPA and the broader fields of planning and public affairs.

Dean **Ming-Han Li** praised the pair for their commitment to excellence and their impact on students, colleagues, and communities.

“Their legacy will continue to inspire scholars, students, and practitioners for years to come.”

While emeritus status recognizes a distinguished career, the influence of Anjomani and Martinez-Cosio extends far beyond a title. Their contributions live on through the students they mentored, the research they advanced, and the communities they helped shape.

BEST IN THE NATION

CAPPA’S STUDENT PLANNING ASSOCIATION EARNS THE PROFESSION’S HIGHEST STUDENT HONOR.

For students in CAPPA’s **Student Planning Association** (SPA), professional development extends far beyond the classroom. Through mentorship programs, networking opportunities, site visits, workshops, and community engagement initiatives, SPA has built a culture that prepares students to become the next generation of planning leaders.

That commitment earned national recognition in 2026 when the organization was named the **Outstanding Planning Student Organization** by the American Planning Association (APA). The award recognizes student organizations that demonstrate excellence in leadership, professional engagement, and contributions to the planning profession.

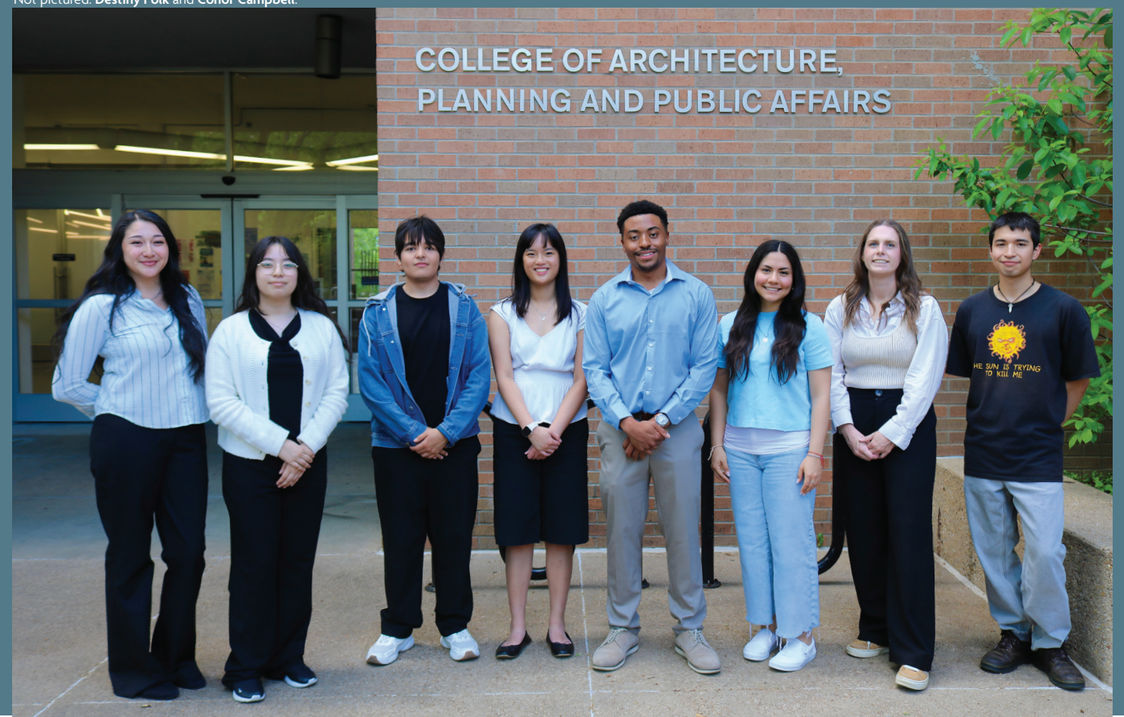
The honor reflects the dedication of SPA’s student leaders and members, as well as the guidance of **Dr. Deden Rukmana**, professor and director of CAPPA’s Master of City and Regional Planning program, who serves as the organization’s faculty advisor. Through partnerships with planning professionals, local APA chapters, municipalities, and community organizations, SPA has created meaningful opportunities for students to connect academic learning with real-world practice.

From mentorship programs and speaker series to conferences and community-based projects, the organization has become an important bridge between the classroom and the profession.

The award also highlights CAPPA’s commitment to experiential learning and leadership development. By creating opportunities for students to engage directly with the issues shaping communities today, SPA is helping prepare planning professionals ready to make an impact from day one.

As the organization continues to grow, the national recognition serves not only as a celebration of past achievements, but also as a reminder that the future of planning is already taking shape within CAPPA’s classrooms, studios, and student organizations.

Pictured L-R: SPA Student Leaders **Cierra Flores, Emily Marquez, Joseph Silva, Justine Nguyen, Jordon Drumgoole, Angela Uribe, Kena Nicol,** and **Eric Novelo**.
Not pictured: **Destiny Polk** and **Conor Campbell**.



MASTER OF CITY + REGIONAL PLANNING



Angela D. Brooks (APA President) and **Silvia Vargas** (AICP President Elect) field questions during expert panel



MCRP director, **Dr. Deden Rukmana**, welcomes students to the MCRP 50th anniversary celebration.



CAPPA students ask questions during the MCRP 50th anniversary celebration's panelist Q&A.

50 YEARS

1975

2025

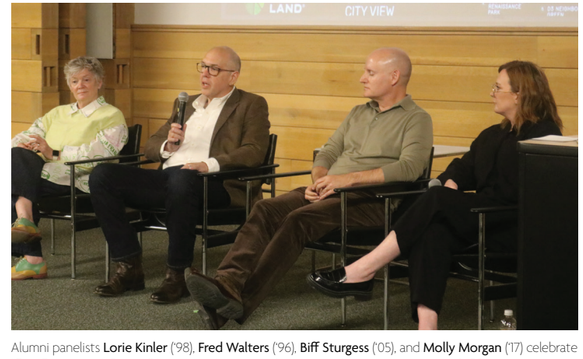
For 50 years, CAPPA's planning and landscape architecture programs have prepared professionals who shape the communities where people live, work, and connect. Graduates of the **Master of City and Regional Planning** and **Master of Landscape Architecture** programs have influenced cities, neighborhoods, parks, and public spaces throughout Texas and beyond.

Long before CAPPA was established in 2015, both programs had built distinguished legacies within the university and helped establish the interdisciplinary foundation that defines the college today.

To celebrate this milestone, alumni, faculty, students, and industry leaders returned to campus to reflect on the past and discuss the future of their professions. Through panel discussions and shared experiences, participants explored how planning and landscape architecture have evolved over five decades while considering the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Together, the celebrations honored the people, ideas, and impact that have defined these programs for half a century—and the next generation that will carry their legacy forward.

MASTER OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE



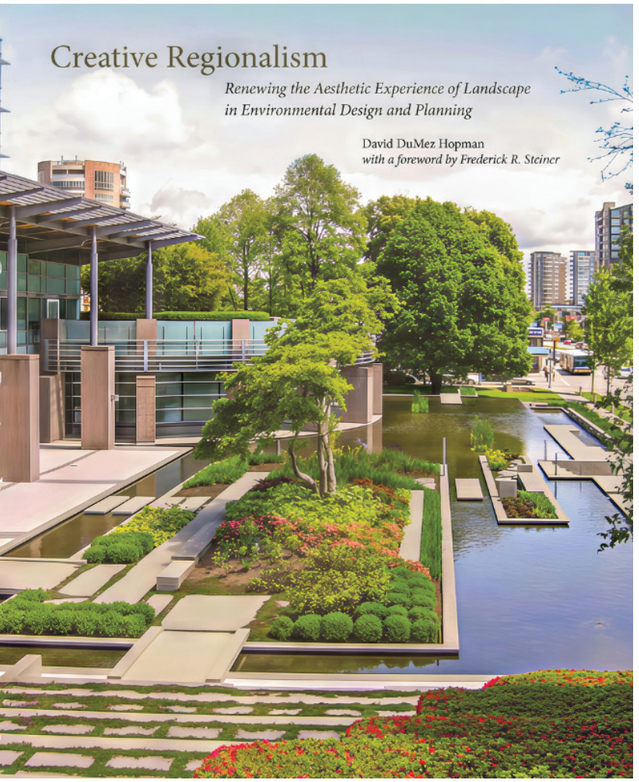
Alumni panelists **Lorie Kinler** ('98), **Fred Walters** ('96), **Biff Sturgess** ('05), and **Molly Morgan** ('17) celebrate "Five Decades of Stories" in celebration of the Landscape Architecture program's 50 years.



CAPPA students attend Landscape Architecture's "Five Decades of Stories" celebration.



PICTURED L-R: Landscape Architecture faculty **Dr. Farshid Torabian, Dr. Joowon Im,** Assoc. Prof. **David Hopman, Dr. Diane Jones Allen,** Walters, Susan Gonzales, Kinler, Sturgess, **Hunter Lynch,** Morgan, **Dean Ming-Han Li,** and **Dr. Taner Özdil.**



DESIGNING FOR PLACE

DAVID HOPMAN'S *CREATIVE REGIONALISM* EXPLORES HOW DESIGN CAN STRENGTHEN THE CONNECTION BETWEEN PEOPLE, CULTURE, AND LANDSCAPE.

David Hopman, Associate Professor of Practice in CAPPA's Landscape Architecture program, has spent more than three decades exploring a question that sits at the heart of environmental design: What gives a place its identity?

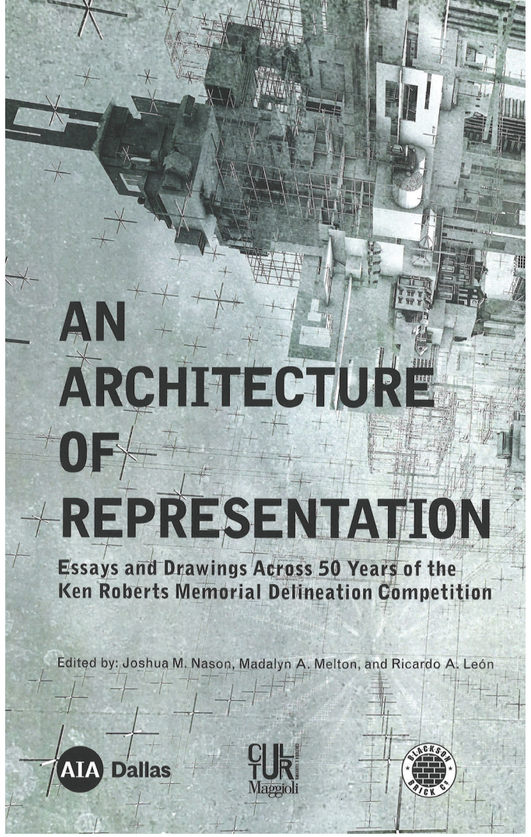
His new book, *Creative Regionalism: Renewing the Aesthetic Experience of Landscape in Environmental Design and Planning*, offers a compelling answer. Drawing on decades of professional practice, teaching, research, and travel, Hopman argues that the most successful places are those that reflect the unique cultural, ecological, and historical characteristics of their region while remaining responsive to contemporary needs and global influences.

Published by George Thompson Books and distributed by the University of Virginia Press, the book examines more than a century of regionalist thinking through historical analysis, philosophical inquiry, interviews, and case studies from around the world. The result is both a scholarly contribution and a practical guide for designers seeking to create places that are resilient, meaningful, and deeply connected to their surroundings.

The work has resonated with both academics and practitioners. In 2026, *Creative Regionalism* received a **Merit Award** from the Texas Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects, a notable honor for a single-author, peer-reviewed publication.

For Hopman, the recognition affirms one of the book's central ambitions: bridging the gap between professional practice and academic scholarship. His perspective has been shaped by years of studying and designing landscapes, as well as experiences in places such as Bilbao, Stockholm, and Vancouver—cities that have successfully balanced local identity with change.

As communities around the world confront environmental, cultural, and social transformation, *Creative Regionalism* offers a timely reminder that great design begins with understanding the character of place—and imagining how it can evolve for generations to come.

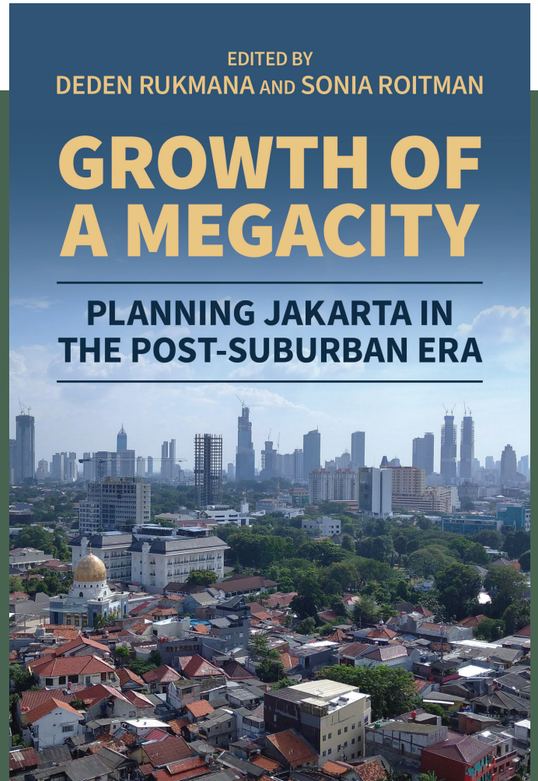


DRAWING A LEGACY

For 50 years, the **Ken Roberts Memorial Delineation Competition** (KRob) has celebrated the art and craft of architectural representation, showcasing how drawings shape the way architects communicate ideas and imagine the built environment. That legacy is honored in *An Architecture of Representation: Essays and Drawings Across 50 Years of the Ken Roberts Memorial Delineation Competition*, a publication featuring 42 original essays and a curated collection of award-winning works spanning five decades.

Edited by former CAPPA faculty member **Joshua M. Nason**, the volume highlights KRob's enduring influence on architectural education and practice. CAPPA's School of Architecture is prominently represented throughout the book, with contributions from faculty, students, alumni, and former instructors, including **Michael Malone, Brad McCorkle, John Maruszczak, Steve Quevedo, Madalyn Melton, Ricardo Leon, Don Gatzke, Kevin Sloan, Richard Ferrier, Kate Aoki, Bob Bullis, Timothy Ballard, Adam Fogel, Braison Boykin, Alejandro Borges,** and many others whose work has helped shape the competition's legacy.

Together, the essays and drawings serve as both a visual archive and a celebration of KRob's lasting impact on design culture, creative expression, and architectural discourse, while highlighting CAPPA's significant role in advancing the art of architectural representation over the past half century.



THE MEGACITY

As one of the world's fastest-growing urban regions, Jakarta offers important lessons for the future of cities. In *Growth of a Megacity: Planning Jakarta in the Post-Suburban Era*, **Dr. Deden Rukmana**, professor and director of CAPPA's Master of City and Regional Planning program, co-edits a comprehensive examination of how the Indonesian capital has evolved into a metropolitan region of more than 31 million people. Published by the University of Hawai'i Press, the book explores the challenges of rapid urbanization, including housing, infrastructure, environmental sustainability, and social equity. By examining Jakarta through the lens of post-suburban development, the volume offers valuable insights for planners, policymakers, and researchers working to shape more resilient and inclusive cities around the world.

RESEARCH MADE VISIBLE

EXPLORING SOUND, WATER, AND MOVEMENT THROUGH RESEARCH-DRIVEN DESIGN AND FABRICATION.

In architecture, research often begins with a question. In **Cord Read's** Digital Fabrication Design-Build Studio, students took that idea a step further, transforming research into full-scale installations that occupy space, engage the senses, and invite interaction. Students investigated the relationship between computation, material science, fabrication, and site to create architectural interventions throughout the CAPPA building.

Over nine weeks, student teams moved through an intensive process of experimentation, prototyping, digital modeling, and construction. The result was a series of installations demonstrating how architectural ideas can emerge from research while responding to environmental conditions, human behavior, and material performance.

One team explored architecture through sound. Their installation, **Blue Noise**, transformed the ambient noise of the CAPPA fountain into an immersive acoustic experience. Using computational design tools, students calibrated folded steel and polygal panels to collect and redirect sound waves, creating a space where visitors become surrounded by the sound of the fountain despite standing across the courtyard from its source. The project demonstrates how data and fabrication can shape both form and experience.

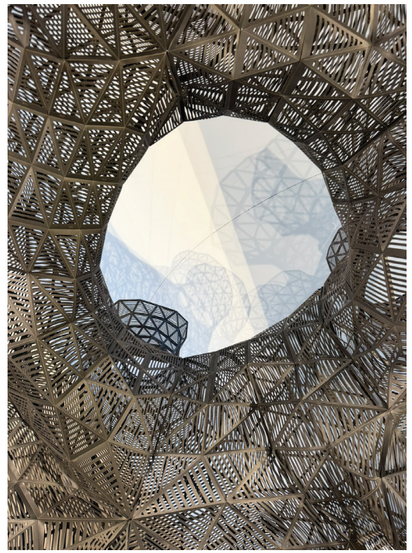
Another group turned its attention to ecology and water scarcity. Inspired by the biological systems of the Texas bluebonnet, **Water Without Rain** investigates how architecture can harvest moisture from the atmosphere rather than relying on rainfall. Mesh surfaces collect condensation, bamboo channels guide water across the site, and perforated bamboo elements distribute moisture back into the landscape. The installation offers a biomimetic approach to environmental stewardship while highlighting the potential of design to work with natural systems.

A third project, **Static Motion**, examined patterns of movement within CAPPA's fourth-floor study space. Using time-lapse data, students mapped circulation and occupation, translating those patterns into a suspended installation that visualizes how people move through and inhabit space. Constructed from laser-cut cardstock rings assembled into a branching structure, the installation captures the dynamic nature of human activity in a static architectural form.

Together, the installations demonstrate architecture's capacity to transform research into experience. Whether studying sound, water, or human movement, students used research as the foundation for design, turning abstract data and ideas into tangible forms that invite new ways of understanding the world around us.

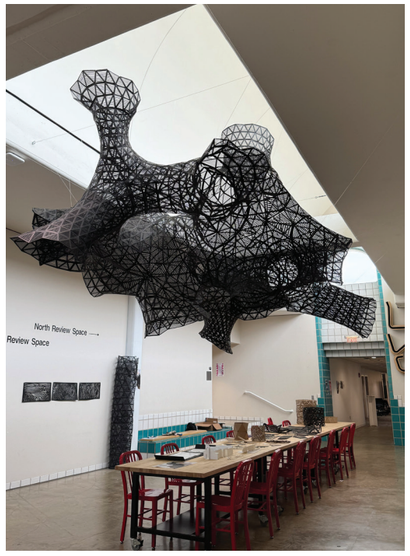






















PRINTING THE FUTURE

CAPPA'S ARC LAB IS TRANSFORMING ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION AND ADVANCING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CONSTRUCTION TECHNOLOGIES

BY
ERIC GARNER

In the Spring of 2026, the Architectural Robotic Construction Lab (ARC Lab) at UTA's College of Architecture, Planning and Public Affairs demonstrated its new large-scale 3D printing technology.

The event marked a major step in the college's continued leadership in innovation and applied research. Among those attending the demonstration were UTA President **Dr. Jennifer Cowley**, CAPPA Dean **Dr. Ming-Han Li** and alumnus **H. Ralph Hawkins**, whose support helped make the lab's pioneering work possible.

DEMONSTRATING THE FUTURE OF CONSTRUCTION

During the demonstration, attendees saw the lab's advanced 3D-printing capabilities, which translate digital designs into full-scale concrete structures. The live demonstration highlighted the potential of robotic construction to improve efficiency, sustainability, and design possibilities in the built environment.

"As we continue to invest in forward-thinking research and hands-on learning, ARC Lab exemplifies the kind of innovation that defines UTA's future," Dr. Cowley said. "Seeing this technology in action, and the collaboration behind it, reinforces CAPPA's commitment to preparing students to lead in rapidly evolving industries."

SHAPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF DESIGNERS

The ARC Lab has already become an integral part of UTA's architectural curriculum, embedding fabrication-aware design into both graduate and undergraduate studios. By enabling students to turn conceptual ideas into tangible 3D-printed structures, the lab bridges the gap between theory and practice, preparing students to lead in a rapidly transforming field. "The ARC Lab represents how philanthropy, faculty talent and institutional vision come together to accelerate discovery," Dr. Li said. "This lab positions CAPPA at the forefront of architectural research and advanced fabrication, while creating powerful, hands-on learning opportunities for our students and meaningful external partnerships."



“THE ARC LAB REPRESENTS HOW PHILANTHROPHY, FACULTY TALENT, AND INSTITIONAL VISION COME TOGETHER TO ACCELERATE DISCOVERY.”

—MING-HAN LI, DEAN





The demonstration not only celebrated a technological milestone but also highlighted the power of visionary philanthropy, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and academic leadership. With continued support and momentum, the ARC Lab is poised to shape the future of architectural research and unlock new possibilities in construction innovation.

A VISION REALIZED THROUGH PHILANTHROPY AND LEADERSHIP

The demonstration underscored the transformative impact of Hawkins’ longstanding commitment to architecture education and research. His philanthropy led to the establishment of the H. Ralph Hawkins, FAIA, Endowed Chair. In 2023, UTA recruited Professor **Dr. Shadi Nazarian** as its inaugural holder. A cross-disciplinary scholar, Dr. Nazarian specializes in the development and optimization of construction materials and technologies.

Building on that momentum, CAPPA launched the ARC Lab in 2024 to advance research, innovation, and the evolution of architectural practice.

Hawkins earned his undergraduate degree from UTA in 1973. A recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Award, he has played a key role in advancing the college’s vision for innovation through practice. He also serves on the CAPPA Dean’s Advisory Council.

ARC LAB: A HUB FOR INNOVATION AND COLLABORATION

Now fully operational, the ARC Lab is a state-of-the-art research facility within CAPPA. Designed as a collaborative, interdisciplinary environment, the lab brings together architecture, engineering, arts and sciences to advance cutting-edge research in large-scale additive manufacturing.

Its mission centers on shared access, experiential learning and industry engagement, equipping students with the technical and problem-solving skills needed in an evolving professional landscape. Its vision extends beyond campus, positioning the ARC Lab as a model for integrated design, applied research, and innovation in construction technologies.

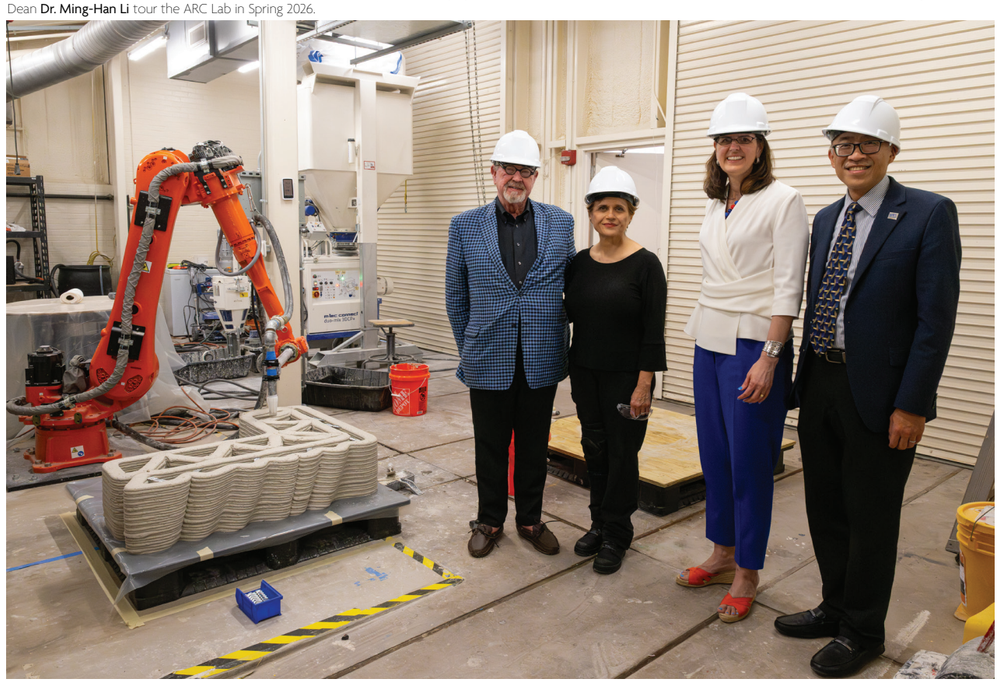
BUILDING A CULTURE OF RESEARCH AND IMPACT

For Nazarian, the ARC Lab represents more than a technological achievement; it is a platform for discovery and collaboration.

“As the inaugural Hawkins Chair, I had the goal of establishing the ARC Lab to cultivate a distinctive culture of research focused on materials innovation and emerging modes of additive construction,” she said. “Through interdisciplinary collaboration and hands-on exploration, the lab fosters breakthroughs that extend from campus to community to industry.”

The vision has been brought to life by a dedicated team that includes **Negar Ashrafi** (adjunct assistant professor of architecture), **Brad McCorkle** (adjunct assistant professor of architecture), and graduate research assistant **Shane Pellerin**.

PICTURED LEFT: ARC Lab graduate architecture students 3-D print a concrete scaled model for their project titled **BIVALVIA**, a bandshell project inspired by the shell where form, structure, and acoustics are inseperable. **BELOW**: Alumnus **H. Ralph Hawkins** (’73), Hawkins Endowed Chair **Dr. Shadi Nazarian**, UTA President **Dr. Jennifer Cowley**, and CAPPA Dean **Dr. Ming-Han Li** tour the ARC Lab in Spring 2026.



ALL FOR THE HALL

ARCHITECTURE STUDENTS REIMAGINE DOWNTOWN DALLAS WITHOUT ERASING ITS CIVIC HEART.

BY
BRIAN LOPEZ



The 15-minute city is an urban planning concept where everything you need is a short walk or bike ride away from home.

A group of architecture students at UTA believe downtown Dallas has the potential to be such a city—similar to walkable European cities like Paris or Barcelona. Dallas leaders are weighing a future downtown that includes a new arena for the Dallas Mavericks. And there remains considerable debate whether to include the iconic City Hall building in those plans or to raze it and redevelop that downtown site.

Building a new arena, along with the new Kay Bailey Hutchinson Convention Center expected to open in 2029, could serve to transform downtown Dallas, students said. They showcased their vision with an architectural model of a reimagined downtown built around connection, activity and people.

Their master plan divides the area into three primary zones—an entertainment district anchored by the arena, a civic and cultural district, and surrounding residential areas—tied together by a pedestrian-focused "green loop" designed for walking and gathering.

"This whole design centers on this green loop idea where it's a public pedestrian walking zone that ties everything together," said **Michelle Estrada**, a fourth-year architecture student. "The biggest thing we wanted to keep in mind was creating a people-centered design."

The plan prioritizes activity in each zone, especially the civic and cultural district, where public plazas, cultural spaces and retail are designed to keep foot traffic active throughout the day, not just during major events.

Students said that without intentional planning, a new arena risks becoming another isolated development, as was the case with the American Airlines Center when it opened on the western edge of downtown in 2001.

"If we were just to stick an arena downtown, it would become underutilized during non-game days," said **Daniel Maldonado Orozco**, a senior in architecture and landscape architecture. "The space is going to end up being a dead zone."

Instead, their proposal blends residential, retail, entertainment and civic uses throughout the district to ensure it remains active day and night. The plan also responds to existing conditions in downtown Dallas, where large stretches of land remain underutilized and disconnected.





"With the new convention center being planned alone at the moment, there won't be much to do," Estrada said. "If someone were to come for a convention, they would have to get a cab or rideshare and go further into town."

To address that, students focused on creating a place people can stay, easily navigate and spend time, whether they live in the area or are visiting.

"We analyzed all the roads and how people are moving in and out of the actual city," said **Rhea Lanawan Tabora**, a fourth-year architecture student. "We did roads, land use, green spaces, urban gaps."
Through their research, students identified issues such as lack of sidewalks, limited tree canopy and infrastructure that prioritizes cars over pedestrians.

"There are issues that we often overlook, mainly because we're used to them," Tabora said. "Just because we're used to it, doesn't mean that it's OK."

For many students, the project was especially meaningful because it focused on a place they know well. "We haven't worked on a project of this scale," Tabora said. "And it's in our hometown."

They hope their work shows that transforming downtown Dallas doesn't require starting from scratch. "You don't need to have a clean slate to begin with," Tabora said. "We can work with what we have and what's coming."

"WE CAN FIT EVERYTHING DALLAS WANTS TO DO AND CREATE SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL AND VIBRANT WITHOUT DEMOLISHING CITY HALL." — CARLOS ALBA

That real-world challenge is exactly what the professors hoped the students would take on.

The UTA architecture studio is led by adjunct professors **Carlos Alba, Jason Wheeler** and **Eduardo Castañeda**. They have taught together at UTA for the past three years while working professionally across the architecture industry.

"We were thinking about what our next project was going to be," said Castañeda, an associate principal at Arcadis. "Since this was happening in our backyard, we had to jump on it."

The project began with the redevelopment of the Dallas convention center site, which will leave behind a large amount of open land. Alba, a senior designer at Perkins&Will, said the class started by asking how that land could better connect downtown.

"That is going to be all empty land," Alba said. "So we were asking ourselves, how can we plan it so it doesn't only integrate with downtown, but links to South Dallas and the Cedars?"

"We need to take a stab at this and show people why we don't need to start with a blank slate," Alba continued. "We can fit everything they want to do and create something beautiful and vibrant without demolishing City Hall."

For the professors, the assignment was about more than design; it was about teaching students how to think at the scale of a large city. That included introducing data-driven design methods, from analyzing weather and noise to studying transportation and infrastructure patterns.

"We analyzed all these different specific data points so we could data-prove within our design," said Wheeler, a design technologist at Gensler, an architecture firm.

Students also experienced the project beyond the classroom by visiting the area, touring City Hall and walking downtown streets to understand the challenges firsthand.

"They get real architects on a real architecture problem in something that's so close, right in their backyard," Wheeler said.
Castañeda said the experience helps students understand that architecture is ultimately about solving complex, real-world problems through collaboration.

"Dallas was built around the model of vehicular transport," Alba said. "We're trying to take a step back and find the balance; specifically, we're looking at that 15-minute city planning strategy."
For both students and professors, the vision is simple: a downtown that people don't just pass through, but one they choose to live in.

"It's about creating something that you fall in love with and want to be in," Alba said.

FAR LEFT: Exterior rendering of a reimaged Downtown Dallas.

LEFT CENTER: Detail image of the studio's form model indicating existing and proposed new construction for downtown Dallas, color-coded by building type.

BELOW: CAPPA students present their proposal for the redevelopment of downtown Dallas designed for a walkable, people-first downtown anchored by arena and convention center.





HOTTER CITIES, SMARTER SOLUTIONS

RISE 100 FACULTY MEMBER DR. WEI ZHAI IS USING DIGITAL TWINS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS TO HELP SAN ANTONIO ADAPT TO EXTREME HEAT.

BY
TRUNG (VICTOR) VU + BRIAN LOPEZ

Two years ago, The University of Texas at Arlington launched **RISE 100**—Recruiting Innovative Scholars for Excellence—a $60 million initiative to recruit 100 new tenure-track faculty, with the goal of elevating UTA's research profile and establishing leadership to pursue solutions to key academic and societal challenges.

Among the newest RISE 100 faculty is **Dr. Wei Zhai** in the College of Architecture, Planning and Public Affairs. Dr. Zhai was recently awarded a $700,000 grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) for a groundbreaking project addressing extreme heat in San Antonio's historic Westside. The initiative—*CIVIC-FA Track A: Co-Created Digital Twins for Heat-Resilient Home Rehab Co-Design*—blends advanced technology with grassroots collaboration to address one of the region's most pressing climate challenges.

The primary goal of the project is to enhance heat resilience for residents living in the Westside—an area marked by aging homes often poorly insulated and less energy-efficient—and in increasingly higher temperatures. During the sweltering Texas summers, these conditions pose serious risks to public health and quality of life.

Empowering Communities Through Technology

The project will pilot the creation of digital twins—3D digital replicas of 10 real homes—that integrate real-time temperature sensor data and simulate thermal behavior. By working directly with residents to co-create these models, the project empowers homeowners to visualize where heat accumulates in and around their homes and to explore practical, cost-effective retrofitting options before making any physical changes.

"Digital twins allow us to test 'what-if' scenarios, like adding insulation, planting trees or improving ventilation, and explore potential energy savings before making upgrades," Zhai said. "This approach helps residents make informed decisions about home rehab, prioritize limited resources and design effective, affordable strategies to keep their homes cooler."

LEFT: Conceptual illustration (AI-generated) depicting the potential applications of Dr. Wei Zhai's research.

Community-Driven Collaboration

Central to the project is the formation of the Cool Home Coalition, a broad partnership that includes residents, city departments, community organizations and researchers. This collaboration will coordinate efforts to streamline access to home improvement funding, share localized heat mitigation strategies and foster long-term community engagement.

Additionally, key collaborators include the Historic Westside Residents Association (HWRA) and the Esperanza Community Land Trust (ECLT), two organizations deeply tied to the neighborhood. HWRA will lead outreach, communication and recruitment efforts, ensuring that community voices remain front and center. At the same time, ECLT will manage the home retrofit process and contractor implementation, drawing on its extensive experience with housing rehabilitation.

"We chose HWRA and ECLT because of their long-standing trust and track record within the community," Zhai noted. "These organizations help us make sure the project is community-driven, culturally responsive, and grounded in the real needs of residents."

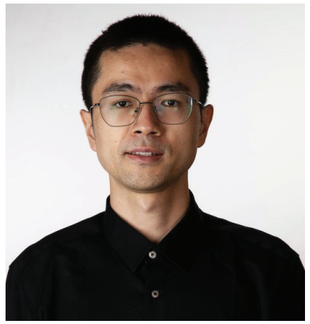
Beyond the initial pilot, the project aims to leave a lasting impact through the development of scalable resources: the Cool Home Platform and the Heat-Resilient Home Rehab Toolkit. These tools are designed for adaptation in other neighborhoods and cities, offering a blueprint for how communities across the country can respond to extreme heat through a mix of technology, community science and policy coordination.

"In the long term, we hope to reduce residents' exposure to extreme heat, lower energy costs and strengthen community capacity to address climate challenges," Zhai said. "We're also involving local youth in STEM programs to ensure the next generation of leaders is engaged in climate resilience."

Securing the NSF grant marks a significant milestone for Zhai and his team. It reflects growing recognition of the need to pair cutting-edge science with community-based initiatives.

"With this support, we can bring together residents, scientists and policymakers to co-create solutions that are both innovative and equitable," Zhai said. "The grant allows us to tackle extreme heat challenges head-on, ensuring that technological advances like digital twins directly benefit the communities."

As the pilot takes shape in San Antonio, Zhai is already exploring ways to scale the model to other cities facing similar climate pressures, including those in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.



RIGHT: RISE 100 faculty member **Dr. Wei Zhai** is advancing new approaches to climate resilience through research that integrates community engagement, technology, and housing rehabilitation.

BELOW: Dr. Zhai conducts field research in San Antonio's Historic Westside, where his NSF-funded project is helping residents identify practical solutions to reduce heat exposure and energy costs.



THE SMART COAST

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM OF UTA RESEARCHERS AND STUDENTS ARE HELPING TEXAS COASTAL COMMUNITIES PREPARE FOR AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Along the Texas coast, where small towns face rapid industrial growth and environmental pressures, communities are working to balance prosperity with preservation.

Researchers **Dr. Michelle Hummel**, associate professor of civil engineering, **Dr. Karabi Bezboruah**, professor of public affairs, and **Dr. Oswald Jenewein**, associate professor of architecture, are helping them do just that through UTA's Smart Coast Initiative. Together, they lead a multidisciplinary team focused on addressing challenges such as flooding, erosion, industrial expansion, and environmental quality.

"Our goal is to understand how industrial growth and climate change are affecting people's daily lives and to co-create solutions that help the region remain resilient for the next 50 to 100 years," Hummel said.

What began as a small collaboration between two early-career faculty members has grown into a major research initiative supported by more than $2.5 million in federal and state funding. Over the past six years, the program has brought more than 150 UTA students to the Texas Coastal Bend, centered around Corpus Christi, for hands-on research and community engagement projects.

Working alongside local leaders, environmental organizations, and residents, students help collect data, evaluate infrastructure needs, and develop design and policy solutions aimed at strengthening coastal resilience.

"We believe in engaged classrooms and experiential learning," Jenewein said. "When students work directly with residents and decision-makers, they see the real impact of what we teach and study."

A key component of the initiative is a low-cost network of air and water quality sensors hosted by local residents throughout the Coastal Bend. The data feeds into a web-based platform that provides near-real-time environmental information, helping researchers, residents, and policymakers better understand how climate and industry affect their communities.

Beyond data collection, the initiative is building long-term partnerships and scalable tools that can be adapted by other coastal regions facing similar challenges.

In September 2025, the team hosted the inaugural Smart Coast Summit in Corpus Christi, bringing together community leaders, policymakers, and researchers to begin developing a shared Coastal Bend Vision 2050, a roadmap for healthier, more resilient, and sustainable coastal communities.

BELOW: Through the Smart Coast Initiative, faculty and students work alongside local leaders and residents to develop data-driven solutions that strengthen resilience across the Texas Coastal Bend. (Pictured: **Dr. Michelle Hummel**, second from left; **Dr. Karabi Bezboruah**, third from left; and **Dr. Oswald Jenewein**, second from right.)









DESIGNING THE FUTURE METROPOLIS

THE INAUGURAL *CAPPA FORUM* BROUGHT TOGETHER RESEARCHERS, DESIGNERS, AND STUDENTS TO EXPLORE THE FUTURE OF CITIES

BY
ERIC GARNER

The most important conversations about the future of cities rarely happen in a single classroom or discipline. They emerge when designers, planners, researchers, and students come together to share ideas, challenge assumptions, and explore new possibilities.

That spirit was on full display March 3, 2026 at the inaugural **CAPPA Forum: Research & Creative Works Symposium**, where faculty and students showcased scholarship, design investigations, and creative work centered on the theme "Designing the Future Metropolis." The event highlighted the breadth of inquiry taking place across CAPPA and the role interdisciplinary collaboration plays in addressing complex challenges facing communities today.

Throughout the day, participants presented work exploring issues ranging from housing, transportation, and environmental justice to emerging technologies, resilience, and the future of urban development. While the topics varied, they shared a common goal: using research and design to better understand and improve the places where people live, work, and thrive.

The forum also reinforced one of CAPPA's defining strengths: the ability to bridge disciplines. Conversations brought together perspectives from architecture, planning, interior design, landscape architecture, public policy, and industry, demonstrating how collaborative thinking can generate more effective and innovative solutions. An expert panel featuring leaders from academia, practice, and regional development further explored the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in shaping the next generation of metropolitan regions.

For students, the symposium offered something equally valuable: the opportunity to participate in a community of scholars, creators, and practitioners. Presenting research and creative work alongside faculty and peers fostered dialogue, built confidence, and highlighted the important role students play in advancing knowledge and innovation within the college.

As CAPPA celebrates its first decade as a college, the forum represents more than a single event. It reflects a growing culture of inquiry, creativity, and impact—one that encourages bold ideas, supports interdisciplinary exploration, and advances solutions for the cities and communities of tomorrow.







LEFT PAGE: CAPPA Students present their projects at the 2026 CAPPA Forum

TOP: UTA Provost **Dr. Tamara Brown** delivers welcome remarks at the 2026 CAPPA Forum

MIDDLE: CAPPA Faculty **Dr. Farshid Torabian, Dr. Jiseul Kim,** and **Dr. Nubras Samayeen** review CAPPA Forum projects.

BOTTOM: Expert Panelists answer audience questions at the 2026 CAPPA Forum. (Pictured L-R: CAPPA Dean **Dr. Ming-Han Li, Elaine Kearney** (TBG Partners), **Blaine Brownell** (UNC Charlotte), and **Dr. Wayne Atchley** (UTA).)

CAPPA FORUM WINNERS

BEST PAPER

AYUSHI MAVUDURU
Bus Transit-Oriented Design for a More Equitable Trinity Metro System in Fort Worth, Texas

BEST POSTER

AISHA OWUSU
Community-Led Environmental Justice and Reparative Planning in Sandbranch, Texas

BEST STUDIO PROJECT

HORTENCE KEITA
Island Park: A Resilient Community Concept

FORUM STATS

12 *Studio Projects*

15 *Posters*

23 *Research Papers*

26 *Faculty Presenters*

56 *Student Presenters*

406 *Student Attendees*





"AI IS NOT REPLACING DESIGN THINKING. IT'S EXPANDING IT."

-DR. SHERMEEN YOUSIF



BEYOND THE PROMPT

DR. SHERMEEN YOUSIF IS HELPING ARCHITECTS MOVE BEYOND AI-GENERATED IMAGES TO A FUTURE WHERE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE CAN EVALUATE, OPTIMIZE, AND SHAPE THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT.

Artificial intelligence is rapidly changing the way architects work. What began as a tool for generating images has evolved into something far more powerful: a way to analyze performance, simulate outcomes, and explore design possibilities at a scale previously unimaginable.

At CAPPA, Associate Professor **Dr. Shermeen Yousif**, a RISE 100 hire, is helping lead that transformation.

An internationally recognized researcher in artificial intelligence and design, Yousif is establishing the **Performative AI Lab**, a new research environment where immersive visualization, robotics, computer vision, and AI-driven design converge. The lab represents a significant investment in the future of architectural education, providing students and researchers with access to emerging technologies that are already reshaping professional practice.

Yet the lab's purpose extends beyond technology itself.

For Yousif, the most important question is not how architects use artificial intelligence, but how artificial intelligence can help architects make better decisions.

"AI is not replacing design thinking," she explains. "It's expanding our ability to test ideas, evaluate performance, and understand the consequences of design choices."

At the center of the lab will be an immersive visualization environment anchored by a curved LED display wall capable of presenting AI-generated design ecosystems, complex data sets, and spatial simulations at full scale. Combined with a programmable robotic arm, the space creates opportunities for students and researchers to move seamlessly between digital experimentation and physical fabrication.

The result is a new kind of design studio, one where architecture can be experienced, analyzed, and refined in real time.

The work also reflects a broader shift occurring throughout the profession. Increasingly, architects are being asked to address issues that extend beyond aesthetics, including environmental performance, resilience, resource consumption, and social impact. AI offers new tools to support those efforts, helping designers evaluate countless variables and identify solutions that might otherwise remain hidden.

Yousif's research explores how artificial intelligence can contribute to high-performing environments while remaining rooted in human creativity. Rather than simply generating forms, AI systems can help designers compare options, optimize performance, and create workflows that are both innovative and measurable.

For students, that distinction is critical.

As AI becomes increasingly integrated into professional practice, future architects will need more than the ability to operate new software. They will need to understand how intelligent systems function, how they are trained, and how they can be applied responsibly.

The Performative AI Lab was created with that future in mind.

By bringing together immersive technologies, robotics, and advanced computational design, the lab positions CAPPA at the forefront of one of the most significant transformations currently taking place in architecture. More importantly, it prepares students not just to adapt to that future, but to help shape it.

LEFT PAGE: Renderings of CAPPA's new Performative AI Lab.
ABOVE: Image of Dr. Shermeen Yousif

THE WELLS NEXT DOOR





CAPPA RESEARCHERS EXPLORE HOW FRACKING RISKS INTERSECT WITH TEXAS SCHOOLS



CAPPA researchers examine the proximity of fracking wells to public schools across Texas to better understand patterns of environmental exposure and potential impacts on students.

Every day, millions of Texas students head to school expecting a safe place to learn. Yet for many, active oil and gas operations are located just down the road.

A recent study by CAPPA researchers **Drs. Julene Paul** and **Evan Mistur** (pictured above) examined the proximity of active fracking wells to public schools across Texas, shedding new light on the intersection of environmental justice, public policy, and children's health.

The findings were striking. Researchers found that nearly one-third of Texas public schools are located within 10 kilometers of an active fracking site, affecting more than 1.5 million students statewide. More than 250 schools are located within just one kilometer of active wells.

While the study documented widespread exposure across Texas, it also revealed troubling disparities. Schools serving larger percentages of Black and Hispanic students were more likely to be located near active fracking operations, even after accounting for factors such as population density, school size, and grade level.

Fracking, or hydraulic fracturing, has played a major role in expanding Texas' energy industry. At the same time, researchers and public health experts have raised concerns about potential impacts associated with air pollution, noise, traffic, and other environmental stressors. Children are considered particularly vulnerable because of their developing respiratory and immune systems.

For the research team, the study highlights the importance of considering how land-use decisions affect vulnerable populations and whether environmental risks are distributed equitably across communities.

More broadly, the findings underscore the role planning and public policy play in shaping everyday experiences. As Texas continues to grow, the research raises an important question: how can communities balance economic development while ensuring that all students have access to healthy learning environments?

By bringing environmental justice, geography, and public policy together, the study contributes to a growing conversation about who bears the costs of development and how communities can create healthier futures for the next generation.



NATURE AS INFRASTRUCTURE

HOW GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE CAN HELP COMMUNITIES PREPARE FOR A CHANGING CLIMATE



The Colorado River winds through downtown Austin, one of the fastest-growing metropolitan regions in the nation. As development continues, researchers are exploring how green infrastructure can help cities better manage flooding, extreme heat, and other climate-related challenges.

As communities across Texas, including the rapidly growing Austin region, face increasingly severe floods, droughts, and extreme heat, researchers are rethinking how cities interact with the natural environment. For **Dr. Taner Özdil**, associate professor of landscape architecture and associate director for research at CAPPA's Center for Metropolitan Density, the answer begins with a simple idea: work with nature rather than against it.

In a recent article published by the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), Özdil explores how green infrastructure uses natural systems to manage stormwater, reduce flooding, improve water quality, and create healthier urban environments. Rather than relying solely on concrete channels and underground pipes, green infrastructure incorporates solutions such as rain gardens, bioswales, urban forests, permeable pavements, and restored wetlands to absorb and slow runoff while providing environmental and community benefits.

The need for these strategies continues to grow. As development replaces natural landscapes with roads, parking lots, and buildings, communities become more vulnerable to flooding and heat. At the same time, climate change is increasing the intensity of storms and placing additional pressure on aging infrastructure.

For Özdil, landscape architecture plays a critical role in addressing these challenges because it combines science, planning, and design to create solutions that are both functional and people-focused.

His work emphasizes that green infrastructure is more than an environmental amenity. It is an essential investment in resilience, helping communities adapt to change while improving quality of life. Nature-based solutions can reduce flood risks, cool urban neighborhoods, support biodiversity, and create public spaces that strengthen connections between people and place.

Research conducted at UTA has explored how these approaches can be integrated into cities and neighborhoods across Texas. By analyzing environmental conditions, land-use patterns, and community needs, researchers are identifying strategies that help communities become safer and more sustainable over the long term.

Ultimately, Özdil believes the future of urban design depends on recognizing that natural systems are not obstacles to development but valuable assets. As cities continue to grow and weather becomes more unpredictable, green infrastructure offers a pathway toward communities that are not only more resilient, but also healthier, more livable, and better prepared for the challenges ahead.

PLANNING BEYOND THE CITY

HOW CAPPA'S INSTITUTE OF URBAN STUDIES RESEARCHERS ARE HELPING RURAL TEXAS COMMUNITIES BUILD STRONGER FUTURES





Hillsboro, Texas serves as an example of the small communities that benefit from the Institute of Urban Studies' mission to bring planning expertise, research, and community engagement beyond major metropolitan areas.

When most people think about planning, they picture fast-growing cities, major transportation systems, and dense urban development. Yet some of the most important planning challenges exist far beyond city skylines, in the rural communities and small institutions that serve as the backbone of Texas.

Through the Institute of Urban Studies (IUS), CAPPA researchers are helping ensure those communities have access to the same high-quality planning expertise often reserved for larger cities. By combining data-driven analysis, community engagement, and applied research, IUS works with local partners to develop practical strategies for growth, infrastructure, and long-term sustainability.

One example is the institute's ongoing partnership with Hill College. What began as a planning initiative focused on the college's Hillsboro campus evolved into a broader effort encompassing additional campuses and communities across the region. Supported by CAPPA researchers and graduate students, the project demonstrates how university-based research can provide actionable solutions for institutions navigating growth and change.

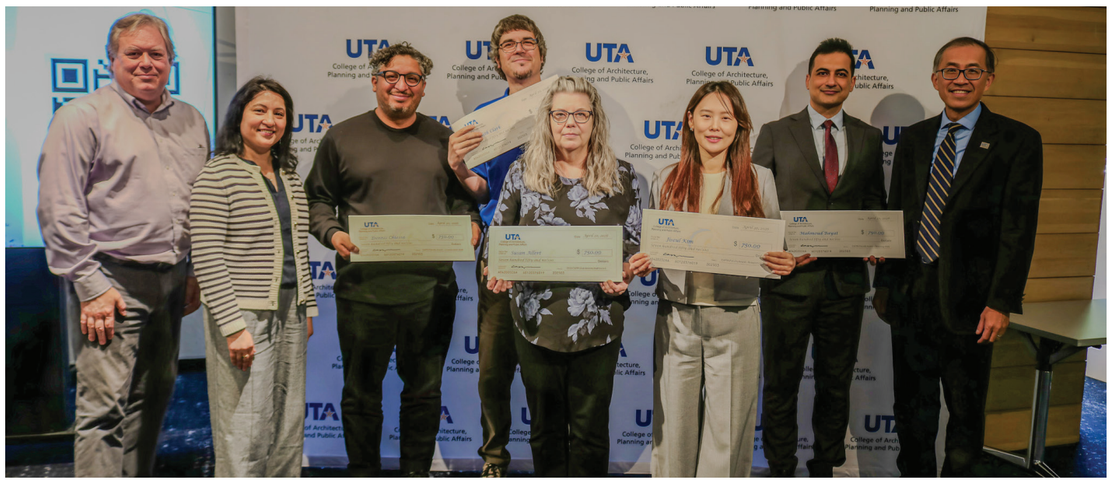
The partnership also highlights the role students play in applied research. Working alongside faculty, graduate researchers gain firsthand experience addressing real-world planning challenges while helping communities develop strategies grounded in local needs and priorities.

The future of the Institute of Urban Studies is now being guided by **Jenifer Reiner** (pictured above), who was appointed interim director in 2026. Under her leadership, the institute will continue its longstanding mission of connecting research, public service, and community engagement while expanding opportunities to support local governments, educational institutions, and communities throughout Texas.

As Texas continues to grow, the future of the state will depend not only on its metropolitan centers but also on the strength of its smaller communities. Through initiatives led by the Institute of Urban Studies, CAPPA is demonstrating how research and public service can work hand in hand to support thoughtful growth, informed decision-making, and community resilience across the region.

RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE

CAPPA'S SECOND ANNUAL FACULTY & STAFF AWARDS CELEBRATE THE PEOPLE ADVANCING TEACHING, RESEARCH, CREATIVITY, AND SERVICE ACROSS THE COLLEGE



PICTURED L-R: Asst. Dean for Student Success & Operations **Charles MacBride,** Assoc. Dean for Faculty Success & Research **Dr. Karabi Bezboruah**, Assoc. Professor of Architecture **Dennis Chiessa,** Academic Advisor **Sebastien Sol,** Special Events Coordinator **Susan Allert,** Asst. Professor of Public Affairs **Dr. Jiseul Kim,** Asst. Professor of Architecture **Dr. Mahmoud Bayat,** and CAPPA Dean **Dr. Ming-Han Li** at the **2nd Annual CAPPA Faculty & Staff Awards.**

As another successful academic year came to a close, CAPPA faculty and staff gathered to reflect on the accomplishments, partnerships, and innovations that continue to strengthen the college. A highlight of the annual Spring Faculty and Staff Meeting was the presentation of the CAPPA Faculty & Staff Awards, now in their second year. The awards program was established to recognize the individuals whose dedication and achievements help define the college's culture of excellence.

Led by Associate Dean for Faculty Success and Research **Dr. Karabi Bezboruah**, the awards celebrate outstanding contributions across teaching, research, creative activity, and service. The program reflects CAPPA's commitment to recognizing the work that drives student success, advances scholarship, and strengthens the college community.

This year's honorees reflected the breadth of talent across the college. **Dr. Mahmoud Bayat** received the **CAPPA Teaching Excellence Award for Tenure-Track Faculty**, recognizing his commitment to student learning and academic excellence. **Dr. Jiseul Kim** earned the **CAPPA Excellence in Research Award for Tenure-Track Faculty** for her scholarly contributions and growing research impact. **Associate Professor Dennis Chiessa** was recognized with the **CAPPA Excellence in Creative Activity Award for Tenured Faculty**, celebrating his accomplishments in creative scholarship and practice.

The college also honored outstanding staff members whose dedication helps create an exceptional experience for students, faculty, and visitors. **Judith Clark**, Administrative Assistant II, **Sebastian Sol**, Academic Advisor II, and **Susan Allert**, Assistant to the Associate and Assistant Dean and Special Events Coordinator, were each recognized with **Outstanding Staff Awards** for their commitment to service and support of the college's mission.

More than an awards ceremony, the annual meeting serves as a reminder that CAPPA's success is built on the talents, creativity, and commitment of its people. As the college continues to expand its influence in research, design, planning, and public affairs, the Faculty & Staff Awards stand as a celebration of the individuals whose work helps shape the future of the college and the communities it serves.

CAPPA TURNS 10

A MILESTONE YEAR SPARKS NEW CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF NORTH TEXAS.







On October 10, 2025, CAPPA celebrated its first decade as a college. But rather than focusing solely on its accomplishments, the college used the occasion to launch a conversation about the future.

That conversation began with the **CAPPA 10 Kickoff Summit**, a gathering of civic leaders, industry experts, researchers, alumni, students, and community partners united by a shared question: How can North Texas continue to grow while remaining sustainable, prosperous, and resilient?

The event marked more than the start of a year-long anniversary celebration. It also signaled the return of **Vision North Texas**, the award-winning regional collaboration focused on growth, mobility, sustainability, and quality of life throughout the region.

CAPPA Dean **Ming-Han Li** and UTA President **Jennifer Cowley** opened the summit with remarks that reflected on the college's first decade while looking ahead to the challenges and opportunities shaping the next. For both leaders, the anniversary provided an opportunity not only to celebrate CAPPA's impact, but also to reaffirm its role as a convener of ideas and partnerships.

Over the past decade, CAPPA has established itself as a place where architecture, planning, public affairs, and research come together to address real-world challenges. The kickoff summit demonstrated how that interdisciplinary approach can help shape conversations far beyond campus.

A centerpiece of the event was a panel discussion featuring leaders from the organizations guiding Vision North Texas 2.0: **Todd Little**, executive director of the **North Central Texas Council of Governments** (NCTCOG); **Tamela Thornton**, executive director of **Urban Land Institute Dallas-Fort Worth** (ULI DFW); and **Chris Wallace**, president and CEO of the **North Texas Commission** (NTC). Joined by President Cowley and moderated by CAPPA faculty member **Dr. Taner Özdil**, the panel explored topics ranging from population growth and economic development to transportation, sustainability, infrastructure, and regional collaboration.

The discussion did not stop with the panelists. Audience members were invited to ask questions and share perspectives, creating a dynamic exchange between community leaders, practitioners, students, and researchers about the future of one of America's fastest-growing metropolitan regions.

The summit also served as the launch point for a new series of Vision North Texas 2.0 workshops designed to continue those conversations in greater depth. In March 2026, CAPPA and its partners convened the first workshop, focused on one of North Texas' most pressing challenges: water.

The decision to begin with water was intentional. As North Texas continues to experience unprecedented growth, regional leaders recognize that long-term prosperity depends on securing sustainable and resilient water resources. With

FAR LEFT: CAPPA 10 Kickoff Summit presenters Dr. Taner Özdil, TJ Gilmore, Chris Wallace, Tamela Thornton, Todd Little. UTA President Dr. Jennifer Cowley, and CAPPA Dean Dr. Ming-Han Li

ABOVE: UTA President Dr. Jennifer Cowley joins expert panel at CAPPA 10 Kickoff Summit.

LEFT: CAPPA Students attend the CAPPA 10 Kickoff Summit panel discussion.

the region's population projected to exceed 12 million residents by 2050, questions surrounding supply, infrastructure, conservation, and drought preparedness are becoming increasingly urgent.

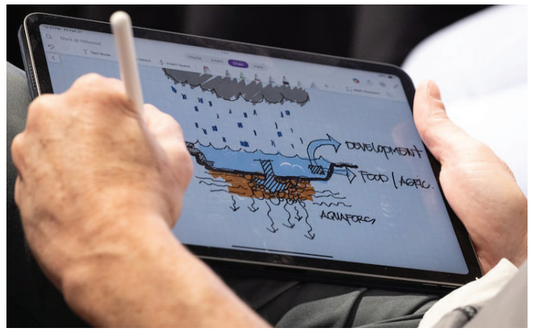
Hosted at UTA, the workshop brought together representatives from water utilities, municipalities, planning agencies, consulting firms, nonprofit organizations, and academic institutions. Rather than relying on traditional presentations alone, participants engaged in collaborative discussions designed to identify emerging challenges, share best practices, and explore opportunities for regional cooperation.

Conversations focused on a wide range of issues, including aging infrastructure, water reuse, conservation strategies, floodwater capture, green infrastructure, and the need for stronger communication among communities and utility providers. Participants also discussed how policy, technology, and public education can work together to address future water demands.

For Dean Ming-Han Li, the workshop reflected the broader purpose of Vision North Texas 2.0. "Our region is growing at a pace few parts of the country can match," Li told participants. "That growth comes with extraordinary opportunities and responsibilities."

The workshop demonstrated the collaborative model at the heart of the initiative. Government leaders, private-sector professionals, researchers, and community stakeholders worked side by side to examine challenges that no single organization can solve alone.

More importantly, the event established a framework for future conversations. Organizers envision the workshop series as an ongoing forum that will address a range of regional issues, including transportation, economic development, workforce readiness, resilience, sustainability, and quality of life. The goal is not simply to produce a report, but to create a living process that helps guide decision-making across North Texas for decades to come.





ABOVE: Hillwood Community's Director of Planning and Innovations, **Mark Meyer**, sketches on his tablet as he leads the **Vision North Texas 2.0 Water Workshop**.

BELOW: NCTCOG staff take notes at the **Vision North Texas 2.0 Water Workshop** in March 2026.

A SPACE TO INSPIRE

ALUMNI PHILANTHROPY CREATES A NEW HUB FOR CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION, AND ARCHITECTURAL EXPLORATION.

Great architecture begins with a place to imagine, experiment, and create. Thanks to a generous gift from alumnus **Dallas St. Clair** ('06 BS Architecture), CAPPA students now have a new environment designed to do exactly that. The newly dedicated Dallas St. Clair Studio provides graduate architecture students with a collaborative workspace where ideas can develop from concept to construction.

The 2,733-square-foot studio accommodates 70 students and features dedicated workstations, advanced digital tools, 3D printers, and a plotter to support a wide range of explorations, from affordable housing and sustainable design to emerging construction methods. Open around the clock, the space encourages experimentation, teamwork, and hands-on learning.

St. Clair's gift also establishes a visiting professor position, bringing accomplished practitioners to campus to share professional insight and enrich the student experience. For St. Clair, the investment reflects a desire to give future generations of architects the same opportunities that helped shape his own career.

More than a studio, the space represents CAPPA's commitment to fostering innovation and preparing students to lead the future of the profession. Dedicated during the launch of the college's 10th anniversary celebration, the Dallas St. Clair Studio stands as a lasting example of how alumni support can transform education and inspire the next generation of designers.





TOP RIGHT: Dean **Ming-Han Li** presents **Dallas St. Clair** with 3-D Printed plaque commemorating the opening of the Dallas St. Clair Studio.

RIGHT: Students working in the newly renovated Dallas St. Clair Studio

BELOW: Student organization leaders join **Dallas St. Clair** for the ceremonial ribbon cutting. (Pictured L-R: **Kayli Nauls, Violet Hernandez, St. Clair, Vi Hoang, Elisa Ng, Shane Pellerin**, and **Max Dunne**)



STUDY ABROAD, STUDY AWAY 2025

From the smart cities of **South Korea** to the sustainable communities of **Taiwan** and the architectural treasures of **Italy**, CAPPA students spent Summer 2025 experiencing the built environment firsthand. Faculty-led programs immersed students in topics ranging from digital government, public transportation, and climate resilience to architectural history and urban design. Whether collaborating on planning concepts in Jeju, exploring sustainable living practices in Taiwan, or studying the iconic streets and landmarks of Rome, Florence, Verona, and Venice, students gained a deeper understanding of how culture, design, and planning shape communities around the world—returning home with new perspectives, skills, and inspiration for their future careers.















ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

HKS ARCHITECTS CHAIRMAN EMERITUS H. RALPH HAWKINS ('73)

AIAS PRESIDENT ELISA NG ('26)

Leadership is shaped by those who build, those who mentor, and those who invest in the future. In this edition of the Alumni Spotlight, **Elisa Ng**, president of UTA's American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS), sits down with **H. Ralph Hawkins**—Chairman Emeritus of HKS Architects, member of the Dean's Advisory Council, and one of the college's most dedicated supporters—to discuss leadership, legacy, and the importance of investing in future generations.

EN: As a student entering the profession during a time of rapid technological change, what advice would you give to emerging professionals and young architects on staying adaptable while remaining true to their design values?

RH: One of the greatest skills students can develop is a strong problem-solving methodology. Technology will continue to change, but problem solving will always be one of an architect's most valuable tools.

EN: As a student preparing to enter the profession, what's one mindset or habit you believe makes the biggest difference in building a meaningful and lasting career in architecture?

RH: Realize that architecture is a team sport. You'll work with architects, engineers, interior designers, landscape architects, and many others. Those collaborations provide tremendous opportunities to learn and grow.

EN: Based on your experience throughout your career, how do you think the role of architects is evolving today, especially in addressing challenges that matter beyond design, such as community impact and sustainability?

RH: The role of architects continues to grow more complex. Beyond design, architects must address community needs, sustainability, and evolving regulations. Efforts such as the 2030 Challenge have demonstrated how the profession can make a significant impact by reducing energy consumption and advancing more responsible building practices.

EN: Many students are passionate about design but have limited exposure to the business side of architecture. What skills or experiences would you encourage them to develop now if they hope to become future leaders of firms and practices?

RH: Understanding basic business principles is essential. Learn how budgets, schedules, and project management work. Those skills allow architects to contribute beyond design and become leaders within their organizations.

EN: Looking back at your career, was there a defining moment or project that fundamentally changed how you think about architecture and its impact on people?

RH: Much of my career focused on healthcare design. A defining moment came when a hospital administrator called to tell me their first baby had been born. It reminded me that architecture supports life's most meaningful moments—from celebration to loss—and can have a profound impact on people.

EN: What inspires your continued commitment to CAPPA, and why do you believe investing in our students and programs is so important right now?

RH: My inspiration comes from the education I received and the faculty who made it possible. Staying connected to the college and helping it grow has always been deeply rewarding.



ABOVE: AIAS UTA Chapter President **Elisa Ng** ('26) and alumnus **H. Ralph Hawkins** ('73) at Hawkins's Dallas home.

PROFESSIONAL PARTNER PROGRAM

Launched in 2026, the CAPPA Professional Partner Program connects students, faculty, and industry leaders through mentorship, recruitment, professional engagement, and experiential learning. Partner organizations help strengthen student success while supporting the research, creative work, and innovation that define CAPPA.

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GIVE BACK. BUILD FORWARD.

Your journey at CAPPA and UTA helped shape who you are today—now it's your chance to shape the future. By giving back, you empower the next generation of architects, landscape architects, interior designers, planners, and public leaders to dream bigger, design smarter, and lead boldly.

Whether it's a one-time gift or ongoing support, your contribution fuels scholarships, innovative research, and transformative experiences that keep CAPPA at the forefront of excellence.

Let's build a legacy ***together***.





