

TEXAS JUDICIAL COMMISSION ON MENTAL HEALTH LEADERS SHARE DEEP TIES TO TEXAS LAW

This spring, the University of Texas School of Law will welcome back one of its most distinguished alumni to deliver the commencement address—Texas Supreme Court Justice Jane Bland. Justice Bland, a Co-Chair of the Texas Judicial Commission on Mental Health (JCMH), is a proud double Longhorn who earned both her undergraduate business degree and law degree at UT. As she celebrates her 35th law school anniversary, her return marks a full-circle moment.

“The law school taught me the problem solving and critical thinking skills I use to resolve cases,” Hon. Bland said. “More than that, I made lifelong friendships I treasure to this day.”

Justice Bland’s upcoming speech marks more than a personal milestone—it also shines a light on the strong connection between the University of Texas School of Law and the leadership of the JCMH. In fact, four members of the Commission’s Executive Committee are graduates of Texas Law, a testament to the school’s far-reaching influence on Texas’s judicial landscape.

JCMH Executive Director Kristi Taylor, also a double Longhorn, celebrated her 30th law school anniversary this April. Her memories at Texas Law include an impactful experience through the Guanajuato Exchange Program—a cultural and academic initiative between UT and the Escuela de Derecho at the University of Guanajuato. Each spring break, approximately 30 UT students travel to the historic city of Guanajuato, Mexico to attend legal seminars, participate in an official ceremony at the city government offices, and tour the state’s supreme court.

“Texas Law opened doors for me to pursue my passion for policy and systems reform, leading to a fulfilling career—and the best friends,” Taylor said.

Also bringing Longhorn pride to the Commission is JCMH Co-Chair and Court of Criminal Appeals Judge Jesse McClure III. Judge McClure saw both personal and professional success as a Texas Law student; he met his wife while they were in the same law school section. But there is one memorable accomplishment that he was never quite able to achieve.

“I’m still in pain from our law school intramural soccer team’s failure to win the campus championship,” Hon. McClure said. “We made the finals in my first year and lost in overtime, and we lost in the semifinals my third year.”

The fourth Longhorn on the JCMH Executive Committee is Justice Rebeca Huddle, who serves as Deputy Liaison to the Supreme Court of Texas. Like her colleagues, Justice Huddle represents the continued impact of a Texas Law education on Texas’s courts and mental health policy work.

Together, these four Texas Law alumni bring decades of experience, insight, and collaboration to the Texas Judicial Commission on Mental Health, shaping policy and driving reforms that serve some of the state’s most vulnerable populations. Their stories reflect a deep commitment not only to the law but to the school that helped launch their careers—and continues to inspire new generations of lawyers.