Alumni Spotlight: Evelyn Miralles

University of Houston-Clear Lake alumna Evelyn Miralles is one of CNET en Español's 20 Most Influential Latinos in Technology for 2015, an annual list released in September.

Miralles, who earned a 1992 Bachelor of Arts in Computer Information Systems and a 2012 Master of Business Administration from UH-Clear Lake, called the recognition an "incredible honor."

The distinction nods to Miralles’ more than 20 years of experience developing cutting edge projects for NASA. Now, as a principal engineer and lead virtual reality innovator at NASA's Johnson Space Center, her desire is to inform others about NASA's accomplishments in virtual reality development. Read more...
Fall 2015 Commencement
Sat., December 19
George R. Brown
Convention Center
Noon
School of Education
School of Science and
Computer Engineering
5 p.m.
School of Business
School of Human Sciences
and Humanities

Alumni Happy Hour
Mark your calendars and plan to join us on Thursday, Dec. 10 for an alumni happy hour at Maggiano's Little Italy in the Galleria area from 5-7p.m! Network with fellow alumni and pick up some new UHCL swag!

Serge Timacheff Photography Exhibition
Serge Timacheff, '85 BS, fencing photographer, will have his photography on display at the UHCL Art Gallery January 22 through March 31. Read more about Timacheff and his photography online.

Update Your Information
Make a Gift
Become a Life Member

CLASS NOTES

Dr. Timothy B. Jones, '98
MS, published his second book, "Harnessing the Dynamics of Public Education: Preparing for a Return to Greatness" in October 2015.

Hilary Gramm, '11 MA, was recently voted by the Houston Business Journal

Make your 2015 gift before Dec. 31st!
As we inch closer to year-end, think about making a tax-deductible contribution to support a favorite program, initiative or area of greatest need at UHCL. A gift, regardless of amount, is appreciated. A gift of $1,000 will make you eligible to be recognized as a President's Cabinet member – an annual recognition level. If you or a spouse works for a matching gift company, don’t forget to submit your match form to double or triple your gift impact.

Make a gift online or mail your gift with a check payable to UHCL and send to: University of Houston-Clear Lake, Gift Processing, 2700 Bay Area Blvd, Houston TX 77058.

For questions, please contact Elbby Antony, Assistant Director of Development at (281) 283-2016 or antonye@uhcl.edu.

In order to receive calendar year 2015 tax deduction, gift must be received electronically by midnight, December 31st or mailed gift must have postal mark of 12/31/15 or earlier.

Alumni Coffee Tables
Mon., December 7, 2015
Tues., January 29, 2016
Mon., May 9, 2016
5:30-7 p.m.
Bayou Bldg., Atrium II

2015 YEAR END GIFT

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as The Best 40 under 40. She is Resource Development Director of Communities in Schools. Read more about Hilary on the UHCL Newsroom.

Leigh Ann Shelves, '09 MA, joined the Office of University Advancement at UHCL as an administrative assistant. She was previously employed in the School of Human Sciences & Humanities.

Jamie Smith, '02 BA, accepted the position as the Executive Coordinator for the Dean of the School of Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine earlier this year.

Elise Banks, '14 MS, Miss Texas International, was crowned Miss International 2015, August 1 at the Annual Miss International Pageant held in Jacksonville, Fla.

Pamela Walker-Williams, '10 MA, has been named E-Learning Development Manager, Employee Learning and Organizational Development for Houston Community College.


Barbara Ellis, '10 MA, currently works at UHCL as an Accessibility Specialist for the Office of Online Programs. Welcome back to UHCL!

Submit your class notes by sending an email to alumni@uhcl.edu or by completing this online submission form.

Alumni Celebration 2015
October 17, we honored several UHCL alumni and professors at the 2015 Alumni Celebration. Congratulations to all this year's award winners and thank you for your continued support, dedication and love for UHCL! View event photos on Facebook!

Four No-Money Ways to Give Back to UHCL
By Berenice Rodríguez, M.Ed.
Career Counselor, UHCL Office Of Career Services

We at UHCL Career Services share our thanks with the many students, alumni, employers and staff on campus who make the work we do both enjoyable and productive. Our office aims to provide as many resources as possible to those seeking job search guidance, career planning and exploration, and you serve as a valuable resource. We are especially thankful for the alumni who return to UHCL in an effort to give back and share their knowledge, expertise and network with current students and alumni. These contributions vary in level of time and commitment needed but often require no financial contributions. If you are interested in giving back to UHCL, here are some ideas. Read more...

Chili Cook-Off: April 2, 2016
Save the date! The 27th annual UHCL Chili Cook-Off is Saturday, Apr. 2, 2016 from 12-4 p.m. Bring your family and friends for some great homemade chili, music and games!

We're on Instagram!
Follow @UHCLAlumniAssociation to stay connected to alumni, the campus and community. Tag #UHCLAlumni to share your pictures with us!
ALUMNA BRINGING OUTER SPACE DOWN TO EARTH, VIRTUALLY

By Kelsie Cleboski, Writer/Editor, Office Of University Communications

University of Houston-Clear Lake alumna Evelyn Miralles is one of CNET en Español's 20 Most Influential Latinos in Technology for 2015, an annual list released in September.

Miralles, who earned a 1992 Bachelor of Arts in Computer Information Systems and a 2012 Master of Business Administration from UH-Clear Lake, called the recognition an “incredible honor.”

The distinction nods to Miralles’ more than 20 years of experience developing cutting edge projects for NASA. Now, as a principal engineer and lead virtual reality innovator at NASA's Johnson Space Center, her desire is to inform others about NASA's accomplishments in virtual reality development.

Originally from Venezuela, Miralles planned to become an architect, and later, a web designer. She began by earning a Bachelor of Science in Computer Graphics from Lamar University prior to attending UH-Clear Lake. It was then that she discovered a passion for computer science as well. At the time, graphics and computer science were an unusual combination.

“I wanted to create, and I wanted to use my graphics background,” she said. Miralles expanded her studies in computer and information sciences at UH-Clear Lake and worked on projects directly related with NASA. When she applied for a full-time software engineer position with a NASA contractor in 1992, her unusual combination of degrees set her apart.

“They loved the combination of computer graphics and computer science,” she said.
That set of skills was put to the test as she helped develop technology for training astronauts, creating some of the world’s first forays into virtual reality.

“The team and I were a bunch of rookies at the time,” she recalled. “We were creating something that didn’t exist anywhere else.”

For NASA to have simulations for training, the graphics system, software, hardware, mathematical models and technical writing had to be developed to support the simulations. Miralles and the team worked closely with astronauts to ensure the accuracy and value of this new technology. The work was exciting. Intense. And mentally exhausting.

“The first year was completely overwhelming,” she said of the information overload and long hours at NASA. “I remember sleeping on my desk.”

And she wasn’t alone, noting the importance of her coworkers in their shared success.

“Teamwork. One of the most incredible things I’ve learned in my career is how important teamwork is,” she said. “We have been successful with so little resources. We were able to do so much as a team.”

Miralles and the virtual reality team have assisted with a number of high profile NASA projects, including early repairs to the Hubble Space Telescope in 1993 and the development of the International Space Station, launched in 1998.

“We were building something unknown before - an International Space Station. You can’t visualize and construct it any way but graphically at first,” she said.

The Virtual Reality Laboratory, which Miralles joined full-time in 2000, also supported space shuttle missions. In the space shuttle’s heyday at NASA, the lab assisted as many as four to seven missions per year. Today, the Virtual Reality Trainer helmet her team designed, tested and built is orbiting the world aboard the International Space Station, so astronauts can refresh their spacewalk skills before heading out of the aircraft’s airlock to work.

When NASA’s shuttle program ended in 2011, Miralles finally had the chance to take stock of all the VRLab’s accomplishments.

“That’s when the opportunity came to say, ‘We’ve done all this, and I could help people understand the scope of the accomplishment,’” she said.

Miralles said her UH-Clear Lake MBA has not only grown her managerial skills, it has also expanded her communication abilities within an engineering environment. She and the VR team are working to share their problem-solving techniques with other areas within NASA, and Miralles is also on a mission to communicate their achievement.

“I needed to finish that MBA to have the big picture,” she said. “I need a more complex agenda. I can’t just sit at my console. There is a hunger for VR development in the business world and the desire for understanding the technology and the many possibilities for its application.”

To communicate about the lab’s work, Miralles has visited conferences, universities and research facilities nationwide. While her work in virtual reality has focused on space exploration, there’s plenty of development in other venues to be done. Virtual reality applications are already in the works for ocean and planet exploration, medicine and psychology, in addition to entertainment and social media, and Miralles sees a bright future for the technology.
Miralles is also passionate about inspiring students, especially middle school girls. She says that’s an important age for fostering interest in math and science and, having been the only female member of the Virtual Reality Lab for the majority of her career, she makes it a priority to encourage young women. Her greatest joy is when she expands students’ ideas about what is viable.

“You want to light them up so they can go out and think of the possibilities,” she said. “Finding that passion is key to a successful career,” she said, and that’s what she tells her two daughters and students of all ages.

“You’ve got to be curious. You’ve got to find the things that you like to do and the things that you’re good at,” she said. “At the end of the day, you need to enjoy your job. There’s nothing more gratifying than graduating with the tools to be successful at what you’re passionate about.”

Miralles said her education at UH-Clear Lake, both as an undergraduate and a graduate student, has supported her career. She cites excellent professors, in-depth discussions and unique opportunities as some of the best aspects of obtaining her degrees.

As the world catches up to NASA’s work in virtual reality, Miralles is watching. Looking back, she sees all the innovation and work of her team. Looking forward, she’s excited to see both where the technology is headed and who is going to take it further, beyond Earth orbit.

**FOUR NO-MONEY WAYS TO GIVE BACK TO UHCL**

By Berenice Rodríguez, M.Ed.

*Career Counselor, UHCL Office of Career Services*

We at UHCL Career Services share our thanks with the many students, alumni, employers and staff on campus who make the work we do both enjoyable and productive. Our office aims to provide as many resources as possible to those seeking job search guidance, career planning and exploration, and you serve as a valuable resource. We are especially thankful for the alumni who return to UHCL in an effort to give back and share their knowledge, expertise and network with current students and alumni. These contributions vary in level of time and commitment needed but often require no financial contributions. If you are interested in giving back to UHCL, here are some ideas.
1. **Informational Interviewing** - This forum is used to assist students who are thinking about different career options or for alumni who are thinking about a career switch. The process offers a wealth of information to job candidates and provides an opportunity to learn important networking skills more than any online search can provide. Perhaps you have been contacted by a current student or alumni via email or LinkedIn to ask about your current position and company? Although that is a viable start, sometimes those conversations can be more easily held over the phone or in person. If you have the time, a connection offline can have a great influence on someone who needs guidance in their career path. Don’t be afraid to set a time limit, and there’s no need to have an open position at your company. Informational interviewing is all about you and your chosen career path and sharing that information with someone else.

2. **Campus Events** - Networking nights occur every semester on campus with a focus on different majors. In the past year, our office has hosted networking nights for marketing, management, finance, accounting and information technology. Each of these events comes together because of the time volunteered by alumni and their respective companies. Our office facilitates a panel-style discussion where you have time allotted to address questions from students. These events provide the opportunity for job seekers to speak directly with industry professionals and representatives while creating new networking contacts.

3. **Career Week** - If you would like to provide more one-on-one assistance, Career Week at the start of every semester is a time to apply your expert eye to reviewing resumes. You may have looked at many resumes for your colleagues or you are employed to hire new talent. During our Resume Rally, alumni and employers volunteer two hours, reviewing resumes in 15-minute increments. We consistently get great feedback from students, sharing how helpful it was to see someone in their industry give them professional advice.

4. **Job Openings** - Lastly, providing information on job leads is an easy way to give back to your fellow UHCL colleagues. If you come across positions within your company or similar companies where you feel a UHCL student or alumni may fit the experience needed, give our office a call. We can place the lead in our Jobs4Hawks online job database. No need for follow up; we just need many eyes and ears to share the various opportunities that the Houston area has available.

Thanks again to all the individuals who have already assisted our office throughout the past year. We hope you can assist the UHCL community in 2015. If you would like to participate in any of the above activities, please contact our office at 281-283-2590.

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