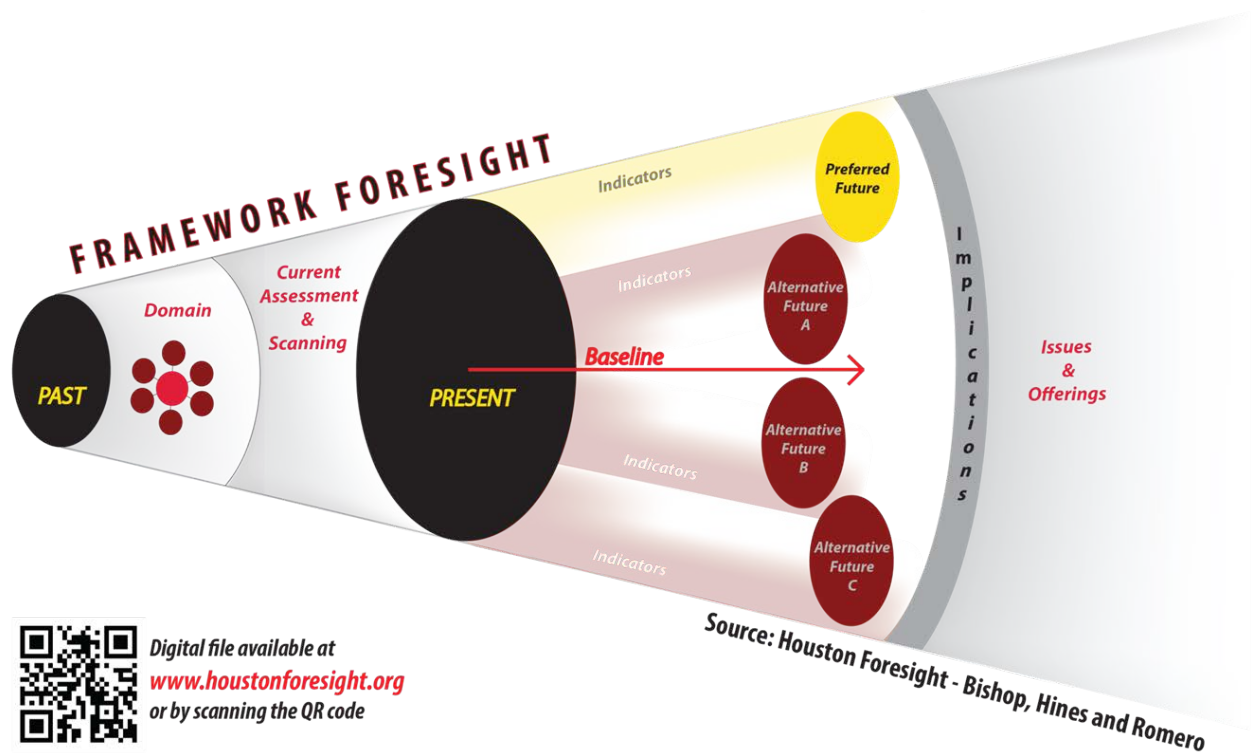


# UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

## COLLEGE of TECHNOLOGY Foresight



Digital file available at  
[www.houstonforesight.org](http://www.houstonforesight.org)  
or by scanning the QR code

2016

**Unofficial** Student Handbook

Updated 6/16/16

For those seeking to get in – **we know you'll make it!**

For those who just got in -- **welcome!**

For those about to start classes ....**don't panic!**

*Change the world*  
*It's not for everybody*  
*Exploring the future of anything and everything*  
*Surprise prevention experts*

**Mission of the Houston Foresight Program**

The *mission* of Houston Foresight program is to serve aspiring professional futurists and the world by providing high-quality foresight training to help individuals and organizations in business, government, education, and non-profits realize their preferred futures.

***You are special for embarking on this journey***

***Longest-running foresight program in known universe***

**A Vision for the Houston Foresight Program**

The work we are doing here is important. The world needs more foresight, and it's our job to help provide that. So, thank you, students (and alums), for joining us in this work!

*Course s can be all online, f2f or blended*  
*Embrace uncertainty*  
***Professional preparation and applied emphasis***

This little handbook has each of you mind. It is designed to provide essentials on:

1. Getting in	2. Getting ready	3. Getting started
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admission Process &amp; Estimated Costs</li> <li>• What students say after taking our classes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choosing courses               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Degree plan,</li> <li>○ Electives</li> <li>○ Master’s option (internship, project, or thesis)</li> <li>○ Sequencing courses</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Where to live or where to stay if you visit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In class               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The “classes” part</li> <li>▪ The “online part” (Blackboard, Adobe Connect)</li> <li>▪ On reading to survive in graduate school</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Outside class               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Networking</li> <li>▪ Publishing</li> <li>▪ Events</li> <li>▪ Internships</li> <li>▪ What’s the point....again?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Some of our students enroll to become professional futurists, others seek to bring a futures perspective to their current careers (sometimes we call them “futurizers,” and others, well, just find it interesting. You will learn the concepts, methods, and skills to systematically explore the future however you choose to apply them. It may be helpful to think of three important things (UMI) you’ll learn:

- ***Understanding the future*** involves learning the key concepts of thinking about change and the future. (How does change happen?)
- ***Mapping the future*** involves anticipating significant changes and describing them in forecasts and scenarios. (What are the future possibilities?)
- ***Influencing the future*** involves visioning a preferred future, developing the plans to move in that direction, and execute the plan to make it happen. (What can we do about it?)

## GETTING IN

We are often asked what the typical background of a foresight student is. After 40+ years, our answer remains: “There isn’t one.” Andy likes to say “We’re just different!” He lists our common characteristics: big picture, open to new experiences, comfortable with ambiguity, an NTP on the Myers-Briggs, a systems thinker, sees options/alternatives, not too sure about anything, a global outlook, a long- time horizon, and optimistic with a sense of purpose.

### Admissions

**Required Items** (see website for full details)

- Apply online: <http://www.uh.edu/graduate-school/prospective-students/how-to-apply/fall-2015/>
- *Application Fee*: \$75 (\$150 for international students)
- *2 Official Transcripts* reflecting your Bachelor’s Degree sent directly from that institutions
- *2 Official Transcripts* of any coursework you have taken since degree
- *3 Letters of Recommendation* (or they can use multiple choice form)
- *Letter of Intent*: A 1-2 page essay describing your background, current employment and professional intentions.
- *Exam Scores* - Official exam scores from either the GRE, GMAT, or MAT.
- *Deadlines*  
Fall: July 1<sup>st</sup> (April 1<sup>st</sup> for international students)  
Spring: December 1st (October 1<sup>st</sup> for international students)

## Estimated costs

Tuition is based on residency (see <http://www.uh.edu/financial/undergraduate/tuition-fees/>). It is also more cost-effective to take more courses at a time, but of course, that is not always practical.

## What students say after taking our classes....

- *Helped me understand the importance of the future in the world we live in.*
- *More aware of the current trends and issues and more aware of the various scenarios possible and the steps one can.*
- *I now use everything I see/learn and think about how the future may be affected*
- *Made me think outside of the box a lot more.*
- *Instead of just assuming that things will progress in one direction, I think of the extremes.*
- *[I think of] where I might be in twenty years.*
- *Forecasting will be used and incorporated in our future jobs no matter what they are.*
- *Really exciting seeing how our present will have such radical influences on our future.*
- *[This class] probably had the biggest "takeaway" in my 46-year life*
- *Made me think of things in a new way.... Provided me a framework of how to develop ideas.*
- *Made me at least acknowledge the fact that maybe I should consider the long-term effects.*
- *Shakes you awake and makes you realize that some of the awful things about the planet and environment around you, might happen.*

## GETTING READY

### Choosing Classes

The 36-credit hours require 12 courses, which are organized in five levels. The course [syllabi](#) are online at [houstonfuture.org](http://houstonfuture.org).

Level 1. Overview*1. Introduction to Foresight* is a survey of the field--its, history, structure, theories, and methods.

#### Level 2. Theory

*2. Social Change* is a critical review of classical and contemporary theories of social change.

*3. Systems Thinking* reviews the classical cybernetic and the emerging complex adaptive approaches to see trends and events as products of underlying system structures.

#### Level 3. Methods

*4. Alternative Perspectives* brings together “different” perspectives, concepts, and methods for approaching the future.

*5. Futures Research* is an introduction to and practice in the tools and techniques used in forecasting alternative futures (scenarios)

*6. Advanced Strategies* is an introduction to and practice in the tools and techniques for organizing people and resources to create transformational change

*7. Statistics* is a review of the essential mathematical tools used by long-term forecasters and planners.

#### Level 4. Content

7. *World Futures* is an overview of the major trends and issues in the world today that are shaping the future of tomorrow.

8 -10. *Domain Electives*. You can take 3 foresight electives, 3 electives in a topic of interest, such as a technology, an industry or a social issue, maybe an independent study – whatever suits you.

#### Level 5. Capstone

11. *Proseminar in Foresight* is a final review of the foresight field, practice in some professional skills (such as writing, presentation, consulting and training), and planning for professional practice.

12. *Master's Option*. A thesis (an academic research product), a project (a client-oriented professional product), or internship (work with an experienced futurist).

### **Sequence**

To help plan your load, here is when courses are typically offered

	<b>Fall Semester</b>	<b>Spring Semester</b>
Mon	Intro	Intro Seminar
Tues	Alternative Perspectives	Strategies
Wed	Futures Research	Systems
Thu	Social Change	World Futures

### **Electives and Master's Option**

Each student takes nine hours (three courses) of electives (Note: Alt Perspectives is currently counted as an elective). We recommend that you pick a subject that you are interested in and take your electives in that subject. That subject is your domain and the courses are 'domain courses'

Your domain could be energy, politics, human resources – whatever your interest is and whatever kind of futurist you want to be. This summer we are offering “[Technology Acceleration](#)” taught by alum John Smart. You may take your domain in our Department (HDCS), in other departments at UH, in a university in your town or even on the Internet. The process for taking domain courses is:

1. Select the domain and confer with your faculty advisor (one of the foresight faculty).
2. Find suitable graduate courses at UH or other accredited universities. The best courses are often seminar or issues courses. Get verbal permission to take the course from your faculty advisor.
3. Submit a petition to the College to take the course: [petition form](#)
4. Take the course and earn at least a B for it to count.
5. If the course is outside UH, after you complete the course, have the university send your transcript to University of Houston, College of Technology, Attn: Graduate Advisor, 108 Technology 1 Building, Houston, TX 77204-4021

And it’s never too early to start thinking of your Master’s Option, though you may find it changing several times as you go through the courses. We suggest either a client project or an internship, and in some cases a thesis. We strongly advise that you have it planned by the time you finish the Seminar class.

## **Where to live and where to stay when you visit**

### **Living**

There are lots of options for living on campus. Many of our students find apartments in Mid-town or Montrose, which is close to downtown and to the university.



## Visiting

- Easiest place to stay is our very own [Hilton hotel](#) right on campus, managed and staffed by students of the hotel restaurant and management school. Rates around \$175 per night.
- We have used the Hotel Magnolia Downtown – we used to hold our week-long Certificate program there. It usually cheaper around \$150 per night, but it is not within walking distance of campus.  
<http://www.magnoliahotelhouston.com/houston.aspx>;
- Club Quarters in Houston, 720 Fannin Street Houston, 77002 United States of America, [http://www.clubquarters.com/loc\\_houston.php](http://www.clubquarters.com/loc_houston.php) has a similar rate and location.

## GETTING STARTED

### In class

Our approach to learning emphasizes practical applications. We give very few tests, but prefer projects that are like real professional work. In some cases there is even a real client you ‘work for’; and, in most others we ask you to produce work with a potential client in mind. Along with readings, we typically have “activities” in order to practice working with either the reading or lecture material as well as assignments that are typically project-related. Our goal is to create a portfolio of work products that you would be proud to show a prospective employer or client.

For each course you take, estimate that you will need to invest about 10 hours per week (including class time). So, three classes is thirty hours = full time! If you take a full-time load, it strongly suggested you either don’t work or work just part-time. If you take a part-time load of one or two classes, you can usually handle full-time work. A full-time course load and a full-time job is not recommended (don’t be mean to yourself!)

## The “classes” part

- Classes are held Monday through Thursday 5:30-8:30 pm in the Cameron Building, Room 229. Remote students can dial in via the Internet to participate in the classes using Adobe Connect software. Classes are also recorded so that those who cannot make it to class can still listen in.
- We strongly encourage classroom interaction, including remote students. Students who attend class get learn more and get consistently better grades than students who do not. The online learning platforms we use are Canvas and Blackboard, which provide a forum for online discussions between classes.
- We also use games for learning, whether a MOOG, the IFF World Game, the Social Change Game, Indicator Bingo, Know Your Brain Game, Fishbanks, or Foresight Jeopardy
- We occasionally have outside guest speakers that address a class. We advertise that to all students in case they would like to sit in.

## The “online part” (Canvas & Blackboard)

- The written component of class is hosted on the Canvas and/or Blackboard platforms, the home for all correspondence. Most courses combine a discussion of readings, lecture, online forum discussions, short “activities” or exercises to apply what was learned, and lengthier assignments.

## Outside class

### Networking

We strongly encourage students to begin their professional networking right from the beginning. Many students join the Association of Professional Futurists (<http://profuturists.org/>) Each year we enter some of our best student work into the APF Student Recognition program, and we

usually have at least one winner (No pressure ☺). Many students also typically attend the World Future Society meeting each summer. Our program has an annual session there each year that features our best student work (something else to shoot for).

## **Publishing**

We encourage students to produce work that is capable of being published, and many have been successful--sometimes on their own, and other times with a faculty member. Sometimes students are invited to present their work at conferences. A recent grad, Heather Schlegel, received a contract to produce her own futures video – [Fly Me to the Moon](#). You can see some excellent student work samples on our [Student Work](#) page.

We also have a very popular blog, [Houston Foresight](#) that will keep you up-to-date on program news. We are always seeking more contributions – it’s a great way to get your name “out there.”

## On reading to survive in graduate school

Former Foresight faculty Wendy Schultz provides this excellent advice:

*“As a grad student, I took a World History grad seminar over in the History Department to get a grounding in the Big Historical Picture. Prof. Bentley’s concept of required reading went something like this: for week one, read H.G. Wells’ History of the World. For week two, read all of Oswald Spengler. For week three, read all of Toynbee. For week four, read Sorokin. For week five, read MacNeill AND Theda Skocpol !!?? As it happened, my spouse, a history grad student, was also in the course. I asked him why his head hadn’t exploded yet. He gave me the survival secret: structured scanning of the material to get the main ideas, concepts, arguments, and evidence.*

*It goes something like this: Ration what you can do to the time available. As a foundation, always read the first and last chapter of the book, because a good writer will cover the main concepts, arguments, and overview the evidence at the beginning and the end. If you have more time, read the first and last paragraph(s) (or section) of each chapter. This will give you more detail. If you’ve still got time. Choose whether you want to focus on the background literature, the concept definitions and theory, the argument, or the evidence: the author has probably provided at least one chapter on each of those; read it in its entirety. If you have still more time, move on to your next area of interest – if you read the theory chapter, for example, you might go on to read the evidence / case study chapter(s). And of course, with sufficient time you could read the entire book.”*

## Events

The university occasionally brings in big-name speakers, Daniel Yergin and Ray Kurzweil to name a few. Our program also puts on events now and then. We organized a Climate Change teach-in a few years ago. And each Spring we typically have a weekend “re-union” where we invite current

## **Fun in Houston**

Houston is the nation's fourth largest city, known as the energy capital of the world, home to 19 Fortune 500 companies, and the world's largest medical center. It's fun place to live with all the "big city" amenities, such as Houston Ballet, Houston Grand Opera, or Houston Symphony or large Museum District, 160 golf courses, NASA, Houston Zoo, or hiking at the Armand Bayou Nature Center. For sports fans, The Houston Astros and the Houston Rockets both play right downtown and the Texans are close to Medical Center. An unbelievable array of food, especially good barbeque (We are big fans of Goode Barbeque) and Tex-Mex. Lots of coffee shops. There is also a lively nightlife scene, from jazz to blues to rock and everything in between, and sometimes beyond.

students, prospective students, Certificate participants, alums, and other friends for socializing (e.g. pool party) and some serious futures discussion. Topics have included "After Capitalism," "City-Making," and "Student Needs 2025+."

## **Internships**

Many students do an internship to meet their Master's Option requirement. Sometimes an internship opportunity emerges, and some will take one wherever they are in their degree program. We strongly encourage real work experience. Who knows, maybe you'll end up at Disney, like former intern and now staff futurist Emily Empel!

## What's the point again?

So why do this? Let's review our mission and vision.

**A Vision for the Houston Foresight Program**

***What it's all about...***

The work we are doing here is important. The world needs more foresight, and it's our job to help provide that. We need more trained professionals to help us spread foresight, helping clients solve problems and work toward their preferred futures.  
So, thank you, students (and alums), for joining us!

***The big vision***

Foresight is a disseminated practice in widespread use.

***The program vision***

To be widely recognized as the premier training ground for professional futurists and for those seeking to futurize their lives and their organizations

And how do we get there? Here is an outline of the learning outcomes:

<b>Generic Skills</b> ...of a graduate student	<b>Foresight Skills</b> ...of a professional futurist	<b>Knowledge</b> Facts about various topics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Researching               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finding</li> <li>Reading, understanding, citing</li> <li>Analyzing</li> <li>Synthesizing</li> <li>Interpreting</li> </ul> </li> <li>Thinking               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Critical thinking</li> <li>Systems thinking</li> <li>Creative thinking</li> </ul> </li> <li>Decision-making               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Values clarification</li> <li>Decision analysis</li> </ul> </li> <li>Communicating               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presenting</li> <li>Speaking</li> <li>Writing</li> <li>Interviewing</li> <li>Social media presence</li> <li>Visualizing</li> </ul> </li> <li>Calculating</li> <li>Facilitating               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group process</li> <li>Teamwork</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Framing               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder analysis</li> <li>Domain mapping</li> </ul> </li> <li>Scanning               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current assessment</li> <li>Finding, collecting, analyzing signals of change</li> </ul> </li> <li>Forecasting               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing baseline &amp; alternatives</li> <li>Systems models</li> </ul> </li> <li>Planning               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying implications &amp; issues</li> <li>Developing strategies &amp; plans</li> </ul> </li> <li>Visioning               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Crafting a vision</li> </ul> </li> <li>Acting               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change management</li> <li>Institutionalizing</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Foresight field               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Origin, history</li> <li>Knowledge base—theory, methods</li> <li>Stakeholders (individuals, organizations, projects)</li> <li>Trends, issues, new directions</li> </ul> </li> <li>Emerging global context and futures</li> <li>Domain specialty</li> </ul>

You can do it.....we can help!!!

## Contacts

So here's who you'll want to talk to –

### **Program Coordinator for curriculum and careers**

Andy Hines, Assistant Professor  
ahines@uh.edu  
832-367-5575

### **Advisors for University rules and regs**

Edrel Stoneham, Academic Advisor  
[ezstoneh@Central.UH.EDU](mailto:ezstoneh@Central.UH.EDU)

### **Grad Assistant for what it's really like!**

TBD