

# *ΦBK KEY NOTES*

## *The PBKAAGA Newsletter*

*December 11, 2020*



**Key Notes**, the Phi Beta Kappa Alumni Association of Greater Austin newsletter highlights Association news, recent and upcoming events, and developments in the Association's continued evolution. Additional details about the organization can be found on the Association website: <http://pbkaaga.wildapricot.org/>

***Our mission:***

*Recognizing excellence in the liberal arts and sciences through college scholarships and teacher excellence awards, as well as fostering fellowship and lifelong learning among PBKAAGA members*

**A Letter from the PPKAAGA President**

Warmest Holiday Greetings to all!

The calendar has turned to December, and we are plummeting to the end of this most auspicious year of 2020. Our continued well wishes for all our membership for health, and safety, and strength during the months ahead.

We have learned a lot during this year, figured out solutions to challenging problems, pivoted to new plans when needed, and brought innovation into the mainstream. All these efforts have kept our organization viable and growing.

We have an incredibly talented and generous membership that funded two Teacher Excellence Awards. We held Zoom board meetings, and the Scholarship Committee joined a Zoom Breakthrough Central Texas presentation of the PBKAAGA 2020 Scholarship winners. We held a Zoom Trivia night and established our national presence in Key Connections. And then, we launched our first ever General Membership Zoom meeting with great success and wonderful speakers to present the Teaching Excellence Awards. Finally, we executed our first ever online Fundraising Campaign, [no Zoom here!] and were able to garner donations that will make another Breakthrough Central Texas High School Scholarship possible for 2021. It was the year of the pandemic, shutdowns, and lock downs, but we managed to stay connected and be successful.

I end my tenure as President, grateful to all those who served with me, and who offered advice, guidance, and immeasurable help through these twenty-four months. It has been my privilege to serve this organization.

My very best to all,

Connie



**#GIVINGTUESDAY**

***Giving Tuesday was a great success!!***

Thanks to everyone who donated to our scholarship fund on Giving Tuesday, December 1. Your support makes it possible for us not only to fund as many scholarships in 2021 as we did in 2020, but we can offer one more!

The students really appreciate it!

**2020 Teaching Excellence Award Winners Announced**

At the November 8, 2020 Fall General Meeting, PBKAAGA was pleased to honor not just one, but two, excellent teachers, Rebecca Cohen from Pflugerville High School and Jessica Davis from Bowie High School in Austin.

After opening remarks from President Connie Hicks, our keynote was a presentation from Dr. Art Markman and Dr. Bob Duke, also known as Two Guys on Your Head, hosted by Rebecca McInroy. Their discussion of teaching and learning was inspiring to teachers and to lifelong learners alike. We really appreciate that they were able to meet with us.

Members of the Teaching Excellence Award Committee described the process of choosing award winners, and they provided some background on Ms. Cohen and Ms. Davis. Each of the teachers then spoke about their goals as teachers. Supporting statements were provided in person by Ameka Hunt, Principal of Pflugerville High School, and in writing by Carla De La Rosa, Assistant Principal of Bowie High School.

Congratulations to both of our winners!

## PBKAAGA 2020 Teaching Excellence Award Recipients



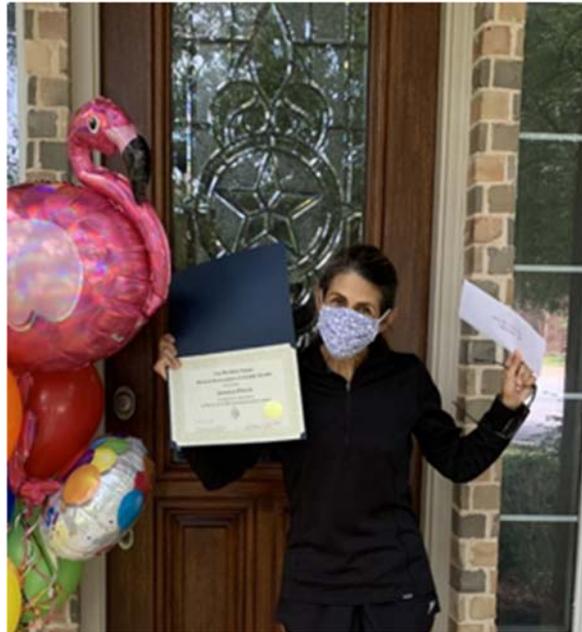
**Rebecca Cohen**

Pflugerville High School

Pflugerville Independent School District

Rebecca Cohen teaches English I and pre-AP English I for freshmen and AP English III for juniors at Pflugerville High School in the Pflugerville Independent School District. In her application, Rebecca writes that she believes students learn best when given autonomy in their education. She aspires to make all of her units purposeful, geared towards real-world application, and full of student choice. She is a strong believer in celebrating student success. Rebecca states she works hard to build relationships with students and that her "secret weapon" in forming these relationships comes through one-on-one writing conferences where her students learn she is not only invested in their education but also in them as human beings. Ameka Hunt, Principal at Pflugerville High School, says Rebecca is an innovative teacher who creatively incorporates student interest into her lessons in an effort to build excitement and passion for learning. Assistant Principal, Marisa Ramos, writes that anytime she observed Rebecca teaching, she found herself wanting to stay longer. She says Rebecca encourages you to tap deep within and find your passion for learning.

Rebecca is a campus and district leader. She is a new teacher mentor, AVID site team member and sponsor of the Pflugerville High School tutoring center. She also serves as the Professional Learning Community leader at Pflugerville High School and is often asked to serve on curriculum writing committees at the district level. Her principal says Rebecca is the ideal colleague, mentor, and friend to her peers. In 2018, she was named Pflugerville High School Teacher of the Year.



**Jessica Davis**

James Bowie High School  
Austin Independent School District

Jessica Davis teaches pre-AP Biology, AP Biology, AP Environmental Science, and Anatomy and Physiology at James Bowie High School in the Austin Independent School District. In her lessons, Jessica employs a constructivist theory approach using argument-driven inquiry, learning through case-studies, and the use of brain-targeted teaching strategies. She places a strong focus on building classroom community, collaborative projects, student voice, and problem solving. In her application for this award, Jessica writes, “the primary principle that defines me as a teacher is the belief that every student has the ability to engage in complex science, especially when they feel emotionally uplifted and respected as a person.” Erin Kowalik, Bowie High School Science Department Chair, echoes this, writing that regardless of their skill set when they enter, Jessica’s students bloom in the collaborative atmosphere of her classroom, finding joy in learning and building relationships.

It was clear from her application that Jessica stays current in her research of pedagogy and best practices, always striving to be the best she can in every endeavor. Her department chair writes that in addition to her quick wit and sense of humor, Jessica is a generous and collaborative colleague who serves as a mentor to new teachers and a team leader on campus. Carla de la Rosa, Assistant Principal at Bowie, states that Jessica is a campus leader and respected educator with strong ethics, values, and leadership skills who shows sensitivity to others and fosters collegiality. In 2019, she was named Bowie High School Teacher of the Year.

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**Upcoming Events**

**Sunday, May 2, 2021, 3-5 p.m. – Spring General Meeting** and scholarship award presentations. Join us at the Neill Cochran House

Museum at 2310 San Gabriel St, Austin, TX 78705. For those unable to be there in person, we plan to also be on Zoom.

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### **Stay in Touch**

Want to stay connected with Phi Beta Kappa news and updates in the Austin Area? Visit our web site, <https://pbkaaga.wildapricot.org/> and like and follow our Facebook page, Phi Beta Kappa Alumni Association of Greater Austin, or search **@PBKAAGA** and follow us on Instagram.

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