

HOUSTON CITY COUNCIL CHIEF OF STAFF REMAINS SAN JAC PROUD

By Neesha Hosein
SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

For Perdita “DiDi” Chavis, determination and perseverance are two key ingredients to success.

Chavis was on a pre-med pathway at Xavier University in New Orleans in the 1980s following high school graduation. After moving to Houston and working to support herself, she decided to return to college as a biology major.

She took classes at San Jacinto College off and on from 1993 to 2015, determined to earn a degree no matter how long it took. After taking art and Spanish courses to transfer to the University of Houston, Chavis learned she’d completed her Associate of Arts in general studies and graduated in fall 2015.

“This was such an exhilarating experience because, at the time, I had no idea how close I was to completion,” she said. “I would encourage anyone to never stop achieving your educational goals — no matter the obstacles, no matter the time, just finish! I cannot think of a better place to earn a degree than San Jac.”

Chavis’ fondest San Jac memory was receiving a scholarship from the biology department. She worked part time while taking classes, and the scholarship helped with books and tuition. Since then, she’s gone on to pursue more than one passion.

From career dreams to reality

Chavis graduated from the University of Houston-Victoria in 2019 with a Bachelor of Arts in English/concentration in creative writing.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Chavis started her job as chief of staff for the City of Houston Vice Mayor Pro Tem and District K Council Member Martha Castex-Tatum on May 11, 2020.

Meeting constituents’ needs and concerns is the most rewarding part of her job, which includes following and maintaining construction and improvement projects in the district, responding and addressing constituents’ concerns that have not been resolved by city services departments,

communicating new and updated city ordinances, and creating and implementing events and strategies that benefit the communities in the district.

“I chose to work for Houston City Council as chief of staff because I wanted to serve the public on a much grander scale than I did in public education administration,” Chavis said. “I love being there for constituents and helping.”

She said “it helps to have a wonderful and dynamic mentor and boss,” and she loves that every day brings new adventures and matters to address.

Life outside work

“I am proud to have shared the experience of carrying my daughter, Miracle, as one of several stories published in the book ‘Hope Beyond Fibroids,’” she said. “I have written poems and short stories, yet none are

published. I was invited by one of my creative writing professors, Diana Lopez, a published author, to present one of my short stories at the University of Houston-Victoria Undergraduate Interdisciplinary Conference in 2016, and I also helped to edit the UHV GROWL, their creative writing journal.”

Chavis enjoys sewing and has even made her own clothing. She makes customized gifts and crafts using her Cricut. She once sang in a local Houston band from 1997 to 2002 and has performed at weddings and other celebrations.

“I am proud to be an associate member of the Chief of Staff Association, an international organization of professional chiefs of staff,” Chavis said. “This organization allows me to connect, collaborate, and work with influential professionals across the globe!”



Photo courtesy of John Glaser

Why she is San Jac proud

Chavis believes her experience at San Jac contributed to her accomplishments by allowing her to attend an institution with other nontraditional and traditional students alike.

“The diversity of San Jac was refreshing and encouraging,” she said. “I like the programs San Jac offers individuals who want to gain knowledge and skills to be successful in their careers or explore a different career path, and they can do so affordably.”



Photo courtesy of Joe Gatson