



2021 ANNUAL REPORT

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Cover photo: Avianne from PelotonU advising Karen on enrollment options. Photo provided by PelotonU.

Opposite page photo: Dr. Mark Milliron, Dr. Richard Rhodes, Kristin Boyer, and Jenny Achilles at the 2018 Foundation Summit.

About the Foundation

Trellis Foundation is a grant-making public charitable organization focused on improving postsecondary attainment for low-income students and students of color in Texas. Our approach is highly collaborative and prioritizes catalytic investments, focused on changing or informing change to policy, practice and systems.

In 2017, Trellis Foundation was established by Trellis Company (formerly TG), a company with over 40 years of experience in supporting students and families in Texas who are pursuing their educational and career dreams. From 2006 to 2016, Trellis Company committed more than \$400 million to help nonprofit organizations and higher education institutions improve the rates of postsecondary completion. Our priorities are guided by the experience and expertise of Trellis Company's prior funding efforts, as well as its institutional knowledge gained from work in student debt and financial wellness.



Message from the Board Chair



Friends, Partners, Colleagues –

With my tenure as chair of the Trellis Foundation board of directors coming to a close in 2021, it has been good to reflect on the past four years of service. Since the foundation was established, we have awarded \$11.5 million to more than 50 distinct grant partners across the state of Texas. Additionally, the foundation's endowment has grown to \$257 million, which will provide future support for ideas, strategies, and resources aimed at improving and increasing the educational success of students.

I'm also tremendously proud that the Foundation developed a strategic plan – in the midst of a global pandemic – that champions equitable access and outcomes in postsecondary education as an essential component in manifesting the vibrant future that our students, communities, state, and nation are capable of creating.

None of the achievements of the past four years would have been possible without the input and guidance of the full Trellis Foundation Board. Alma Garcia; Josh Hunt; Mark Milliron, Ph.D.; Dora Ann Verde; Suzanne Walsh; and Welcome Wilson, Jr., have been the right voices at the right time for Trellis Foundation, and I'm grateful for all of the thoughtful discussion and insight they've generously provided as we set the direction of the Foundation.

As I return to regular board service as immediate past chair, I look forward to continuing the important work of the foundation and its capable team – now under the board leadership of Dr. Mark Milliron. The future looks bright for the Foundation, our partners, and the students and families of Texas. Onward!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard M. Rhodes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "M".

Richard Rhodes, Ph.D.

Trellis Foundation Board Chair 2017-2021
Chancellor, Austin Community College District

Message from the Executive Director



The ability to ask beautiful questions, often in very unbeautiful moments, is one of the great disciplines of a human life. And a beautiful question starts to shape your identity as much by asking it, as it does by having it answered. You just have to keep asking. And before you know it, you will find yourself actually shaping a different life, meeting different people, finding conversations that are leading you in those directions that you wouldn't even have seen before. – David Whyte, poet

In its best form, I believe that philanthropy can serve that purpose – asking beautiful questions and hoping that the emerging collaborations and dialogues lead to new insights and solutions.

In the midst of the storms (both literal and figurative) of 2021, we found hope in conversations with grantees and other stakeholders sharing the details of new partnerships being forged and common commitments building toward collective goals. For example:

- We began work with eight communities working to connect education and employment pathways for those who aspire to achieve credentials and experiences that will sustain their families.
- We collaborated to help design a network for programs that serve youth from 16-24 who are not meaningfully connected to education or workforce opportunities.
- We learned more about efforts to create Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Centers on college campuses, ultimately helping replicate this program in San Antonio.

I can't adequately express how grateful we are to each of you for the conversations we've begun or continued through this year. If we can keep asking beautiful questions of each other, I truly believe we can find our way to a more vibrant and inclusive future. In closing, I would lift up the words of bell hooks, another loss in 2021, but whose legacy and influence will continue to be a blessing to us all:

My hope emerges from those places of struggle where I witness individuals positively transforming their lives and the world around them. Educating is a vocation rooted in hopefulness. As teachers we believe that learning is possible, that nothing can keep an open mind from seeking after knowledge and finding a way to know. – bell hooks

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kristin J. Boyer'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'K' and 'B'.

Kristin J. Boyer, Executive Director
Trellis Foundation

Focus on Workforce Connections

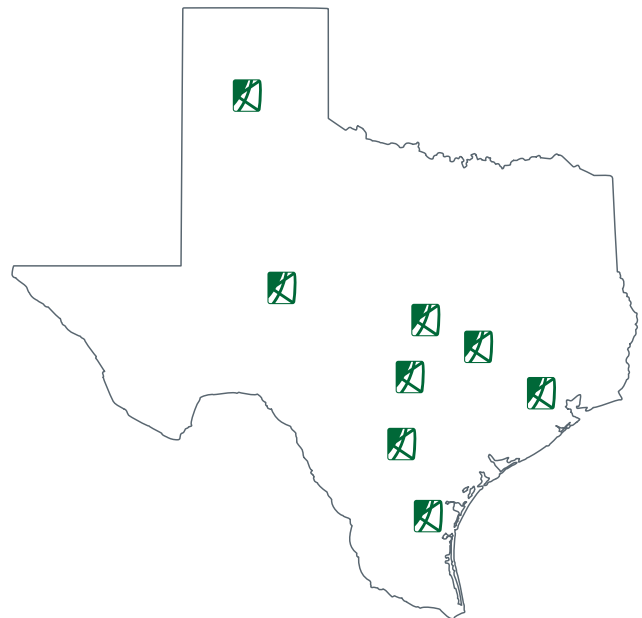


Students research options and navigate opportunities in the Coastal Bend region at the Coastal Compass Education & Career Resource Center in Corpus Christi. Photo provided by Education to Employment Partners.

As we collectively increase our understanding of the importance of lifelong learning and upskilling in career trajectories, the postsecondary sector is accelerating efforts to align regional efforts with workforce partners. Recognizing this, Trellis Foundation dedicated significant resources to enhancing our engagement in this work in 2021. Through grant funding, public conversations and professional affinity groups, we are learning alongside colleagues in order to support Texas students at all points of their educational and career journeys.

Grantmaking to support postsecondary/ workforce connections

- In 2021, we committed \$2 million to regional upskilling and reskilling efforts through a Request for Proposals. The eight selected communities spanned the state, including urban and rural regions (see graphic at right): Houston, Brazos Valley, San Antonio, Austin, West Central Texas, the Coastal Bend and Amarillo. Lead partners represented diverse sectors and included community colleges, workforce boards, P-16 councils, and community-based organizations.
- By providing general operating funds, we supported Project ARRIBA in El Paso as they provide postsecondary education and wrap-around services designed to help students earn the skills and credentials they need to succeed in the local labor market with a family-sustaining career path.



Participants complete the program with a degree or licensed certification and assistance both in securing a job and in navigating the initial year of employment. Partner institutions include EL Paso Community College, the University of Texas at El Paso, Texas Tech Health Sciences Center, and more.

- To further support upskilling for adult learners with some college credits but no degrees, we committed funds to Education to Employment Partners (E2E) in Corpus Christi and to Temple College.
 - E2E’s Recapture Your Dream program uses Navigators to work with students from multiple regional institutions— Del Mar College (DMC), Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (TAMUCC), Coastal Bend College (CBC), and University of the Incarnate Word-Corpus Christi (UIWCC) — to reconnect them to higher education as well as to other relevant partners, such as the Coastal Compass Education and Career Resource Center, Corpus Christi Housing Authority, Education Service Center Region II, Nueces County Community Action Agency, United Way of the Coastal Bend, Workforce Solutions of the Coastal Bend, and parent liaisons for local school districts.
 - Temple College’s “Next Step” reaches out to students who have stopped out of the program and connects them with robust support services—such as an orientation designed for the adult learner, lunch and learns, and faculty mentoring—all to help returning adults be successful.
- To advance collaboration and alignment at the regional and statewide levels, Foundation staff authored a landscape scan of upskilling and reskilling initiatives. Available on the Foundation’s website resource section, staff will continue to update the document as needed.

Community Resources and Conversations

- The Center for Community College Student Engagement at UT-Austin hosted a webinar highlighting the findings from the Trellis Foundation-sponsored survey on work and learning among community college students. The webinar featured examples from a community college campus on how they have developed strategies to support working learners, leading to increased graduation

and employment outcomes. Findings from the report included:

- 29% of working students work more than 40 hours per week.
 - 85% of working students work one job.
 - 21% of full-time students who work, work more than 40 hours per week.
 - 19% of working students are working in a job related to their studies. This percent increased for older students.
 - Working affects about half of students’ ability to schedule classes; students facing those difficulties feel less engaged.
 - Over 80% of working students report their instructors do not know how many hours they work; over 80% also report no one helped them decide how many credits to take with their work hours.
- The Foundation joined the Workforce Matters Learning Lab “Amplifying the Voice and Power of Workers and Learners.” These conversations informed development of the Trellis Foundation upskilling RFP, particularly around encouraging inclusion of working learners as key stakeholders in the collaborations.



Two students prepare for a new career as a certified nurse aide at Temple College. Photo provided by Temple College.

2021 Summary of Grant Commitments

ORGANIZATION/PROJECT	AMOUNT	FOCUS AREA
Amarillo College <i>Project WIN: Workforce Innovation Network</i> To transform the Amarillo economy, and student learning, through a scaled work-based learning program that allows students to learn while they earn a paycheck in their field of study.	\$246,417	Reconnecting Learners
Aspen Institute <i>Co-Designing a Texas Opportunity Youth Network Strategy</i> To support the collaborative implementation of a state-wide strategy in Texas with the goal of dramatically increasing postsecondary and employment outcomes for Opportunity Youth, or young adults aged 16-24 who are not meaningfully connected to education or employment.	\$200,000	Reconnecting Learners
American Association of Colleges and Universities <i>AAC&U Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) Campus Centers (Texas)</i> To support the development of four Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) Campus Centers in the state of Texas to address systemic and structural racism on college campuses.	\$247,339	Holistic Support
College Possible <i>College Forward - College Possible Merger</i> To support the planning, implementation, and integration phases of a merger between College Forward and College Possible as a means to achieve geographic growth in Texas and support more students nationwide, while maintaining a focus on individual student outcomes.	\$100,000	Holistic Support
Education to Employment (E2E) Partners <i>UpSkill Coastal Bend Partnership: Upskilling & Reskilling Rural Residents</i> To align regional efforts and improve the region's economic vitality by focusing on the upskilling/reskilling of rural adults, especially those who are low-income and Hispanic.	\$250,000	Reconnecting Learners
Education to Employment (E2E) Partners <i>Recapture Your Dream: Re-engaging Adults with Some College and No Degree</i> To provide personalized, direct services to re-engage adults who were once enrolled in college credit courses but have since "stopped out."	\$300,000	Reconnecting Learners
Excelencia in Education <i>Telling the Story of UTEP and Dr. Diana Natalicio</i> To develop, publish, and disseminate a book that highlights the presidency and legacy of Dr. Diana Natalicio and her influence on the evolution of the University of Texas at El Paso from a small regional public institution into a local, regional, national, and international powerhouse of success.	\$21,765	Holistic Support
Foundation Communities <i>The Coalition for Advancing Reskilling Education and Employment Opportunities for Returning Learners</i> To create a network of postsecondary and employment support for individuals in Central Texas impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic by building out widescale infrastructure, such as a referral map and integrated marketing and data efforts.	\$250,000	Reconnecting Learners
Greater Houston Partnership Foundation <i>Houston Back on Track Job Recovery Initiative</i> To support an inclusive economic recovery by mobilizing partners in the Houston region to create an employer-driven effort to equitably and rapidly train, support and guide displaced workers into sustainable occupations.	\$250,000	Reconnecting Learners
Greater Waco Collective Impact Initiative <i>UpSkill Waco</i> To increase education-to-workforce system alignment and build McLennan County's capacity to provide equitable workforce training pathways in high-demand, high-paying occupations for underserved populations.	\$250,000	Reconnecting Learners

2021 Summary of Grant Commitments

ORGANIZATION/PROJECT	AMOUNT	FOCUS AREA
<p>Lee College District <i>Lee College Huntsville Center Scholars: Supplemental Grant</i> To support a fourth cohort of Lee College Huntsville Center Scholars in preparing for gainful employment and personal success once released from prison.</p>	\$25,000	Holistic Support
<p>Project ARRIBA <i>General Operating Support for Project ARRIBA</i> To assist individuals from low-income households in gaining the education and job skills needed for high-demand occupations that pay a family-sustaining, living wage in El Paso.</p>	\$150,000	Holistic Support
<p>Project Unity <i>One For All Collaboration Project</i> To align regional workforce and educational systems to prioritize the pressing needs and career pathways for low-income adults and adults of color in light of COVID-19 and other inequitable conditions in the Brazos Valley region.</p>	\$244,113	Reconnecting Learners
<p>San Antonio Education Partnership <i>Upgrade: Reskilling and Upskilling the Workforce</i> To support the Upgrade program in creating opportunities and access to career pathways for COVID-impacted workers.</p>	\$250,000	Reconnecting Learners
<p>Temple College Foundation <i>Next Step</i> To support the college's work to recruit and expand supports for adults over 25 who have not completed college degrees, allowing them to return to college and to complete credentials that will better enable them to prosper.</p>	\$293,090	Reconnecting Learners
<p>Temple University <i>Evaluation of Amarillo College's Advocacy & Resource Center: Supplemental Grant</i> To support the evaluation of Amarillo College's Advocacy & Resource Center, which offers a social services case management program that includes access to emergency aid, public benefits programs, coaching, career guidance, counseling, and a food pantry and clothing closet.</p>	\$25,000	Holistic Support
<p>Texas Community College Education Initiative/TACC <i>Optimizing the Opportunity for Transformational Change at Texas Community Colleges</i> To support two project strands—one of which will focus on the implementation and scaling of 8-week courses in community colleges and the other of which will inform the deliberations of the Commission on Community College Finance on the unique and critical needs of Texas rural communities.</p>	\$298,000	Streamlined Pathways
<p>The University of Texas at Austin/Charles A. Dana Center <i>Texas Transfer Alliance: Supplemental Grant</i> To support the Texas Transfer Alliance project's efforts to move student transfer success metrics in a positive direction, especially for Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students and students from low-income communities.</p>	\$200,000	Streamlined Pathways
<p>The University of Texas at Dallas <i>Understanding how Texas Community College Campuses are Supporting Student Mental Well-being</i> To support academic research on how Texas community colleges are addressing their students' mental health needs as a means to identify recommendations for higher education stakeholders on how they can target resources to better support student mental well-being and academic success.</p>	\$149,276	Holistic Support
<p>West Central Texas Workforce Development Board Inc. <i>Big Country Career Coalition - Never2Late</i> To build a regional reskilling and upskilling model that centers on core competencies identified by industry leaders and offers equitable access, accelerates learning, and promotes entry into economically stable employment.</p>	\$250,000	Reconnecting Learners

Grant Highlights

While the past year has continued with unprecedented challenges for so many communities, organizations across the state worked to pivot, expand or adapt to meet these growing needs. This section highlights grants that closed during FY2021 (Oct. 1, 2020–Sept. 30, 2021) in each of the Foundation’s three focus areas. All three are examples of organizations with a clear understanding of the role of reflection and strategic organizational learning to ensure optimal support for students.

Reconnecting Learners: PelotonU



Trellis Foundation approved a general operating grant to PelotonU in March 2020, mere days before pandemic-related shut-downs began. The original goal of the work included a focus on expanding their model to other communities in Texas and nationally. They planned to provide consulting to other entities to develop similar models of in-person support for students—primarily adult learners—studying at competency-based online universities. When all studies shifted to fully virtual, PelotonU began to provide their coaching support fully online. Through the past two years, they learned from students that this approach better fit students’ lives and they began to expand support nationally. They no longer require in-person coaching of all students and are planning a concentrated expansion statewide to serve students who need more flexibility, support, or a college option closer to their home.

Co-founders Sarah Saxton-Frump and Hudson Baird shared these insights from the grant term:

1. *Relationships matter the most: Where we thought that in-person support was the key intervention in our model, we learned that the coaching relationship was the single greatest factor of student success. Students found virtual coaching equivalent to, and in many cases, preferable for integrating their school alongside their work and family responsibilities.*
2. Student motivations for going to college are complex, and should be more thoroughly researched on behalf of postsecondary institutions, especially hybrid colleges, who are lesser known and less considered by the students who could benefit the most from this new degree pathway.
3. A thriving, equitable staff culture cannot be person-dependent, or else it can fall apart after a significant leadership change. It is necessary to establish management norms, employee performance reflection, compensation policies, and approaches to promotions that will ensure equitable outcomes for staff in order to protect a thriving work culture.



Students and staff from PelotonU. From left: Brianna, Sarah, Avianne, Erika and Karen. Photo provided by PelotonU.

Streamlining Student Pathways: Texas Higher Education Foundation (THEF)



Texas Higher Education FOUNDATION

The events of the past two years have raised the exigency of process refinement as a lever for effective change. During this time, our work with the Texas Higher Education Foundation underscored that importance, through the development of an actionable and transformative strategic plan for the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB).

Such a plan enables the agency to achieve greater efficacy through collaboration and partnership with its many partners to realize Texas' bold goal for 60 percent of Texans to hold postsecondary credentials by 2030. Through this grant, the THECB shared learnings related to the process of strategic planning, applicable to other organizations undertaking a similar scope of work.

Learnings included:

- Establish a structured process that prioritizes collaborative, high-quality planning
- Clarify internal organizational roles and responsibilities, including clear ownership of the strategic priority by the appropriate internal leader
- Assign ownership of the planning process and ongoing monitoring routines to a specific office or "delivery unit" of the organization, to maintain momentum and accountability

The strategic architecture the THECB crafted can have significant impact on the field in upcoming years, underscoring the importance of these process or capacity-building grants to support organizational change.

Holistic Student Needs: Amarillo College/Temple University



Amarillo College (AC) continues to excel through the passion of its leadership for addressing the needs of the whole student. The Foundation

provided complementary grants to the college and to The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice at Temple University to support a robust program evaluation of the effects of nudging on student use of AC's Advocacy and Resource Center (ARC).

Supporting capacity at Amarillo College for additional direct services during the evaluation provided an opportunity for further documentation and exploration of the effects of Amarillo College's programming, as well as immediate increased reach to their students.

They found:

- Nudging students prompted nearly twice as many to visit the ARC
- Targeted messaging mattered for population sub-groups
- The payoff was substantial: students nudged to use the ARC were 20% more likely to complete developmental education and move on to credit-bearing coursework

Amarillo College's Vice President of Strategic Initiatives, Cara Crowley, highlighted how the college has learned to tailor messaging, as a result of the evaluation:

The key is to create messaging that is simple, transparent, and allows the email reader to take an action step (e.g., click a button to see services available, etc.). The messaging needs to be crafted specifically for the cohort you are targeting. Generic emails to the masses do not work. Messaging needs to be diverse just like the cohorts of students you are seeking to target.



Amarillo College's Advocacy & Resource Center is located in the heart of its main campus and is open to all currently enrolled students. Photo provided by Amarillo College.

Looking Forward



More than 1,500 students, like Laura Geiger, visit Amarillo College food pantries each semester. Photo provided by Amarillo College.

As we enter a third year of coping with the effects of the pandemic, we are turning our focus to healing and rebuilding.

To that end, the Foundation will devote a significant portion of our FY2022 giving to a mental wellbeing cohort of grantees. We know that students and staff continue to process the events of the past two years. This moment offers a unique opportunity to develop holistic supports for students that incorporate this key need. The pandemic may have raised the exigency of this need, but it did not create it. Thus, we are excited that so many campuses and college retention professionals are beginning to include this work in their systems and structures. We look forward to learning alongside colleagues as we all build these important supports together.

Finally, we are optimistic about the opportunity to reimagine structures, processes, and ecosystems to better support students' goals. Conversations on postsecondary value, appropriate student loan debt levels, connections to career trajectories, etc., continue to challenge us as a community to reimagine what is needed and what is possible.

A few questions we are pondering as we head into the new year:

- Can academic class schedules, content, and processes more fully support equitable access and opportunity for students?
- What is the balance between economic development and individual knowledge expansion in the multi-faceted role of postsecondary education in society?
- How can we best implement and operationalize commitments to racial justice made over the past two years?

We are grateful to our partners across the state for your collaboration in this reimagining, and we look forward to what 2022 can bring!

Staff

Kristin Boyer, Executive Director

Ms. Boyer leads Trellis Foundation's efforts to improve postsecondary outcomes for low- and moderate-income students and families. Prior to her appointment as executive director for the Trellis Foundation, Ms. Boyer directed the philanthropic program and activities for Trellis Company (formerly TG).

She currently serves as an Advisory Committee Member for the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, the Texas Student Success Council, steering committees for Pathways to Prosperity (Texas), and the Austin Opportunity Youth Collaborative under the Workforce Solutions of the Capital. She is also Chair of Philanthropy Advocates Leadership Committee.

Jenny Achilles, Sr. Director and Chief Program Officer

Ms. Achilles joined Trellis Foundation (then Trellis Company/TG) in 2013 with nearly a decade of higher education service in various capacities, including student affairs and study abroad advising.

Ms. Achilles serves on local and national committees, such as the Central Texas Education Funders Network steering committee and the Grantmakers for Education Learning, Evaluation and Data Impact Group. She previously served on the Membership Committee for the National Scholarship Providers Association from 2015-2017. She also leads the board of directors for a nonprofit dance and wellness studio in Austin.

Dianey Leal, Program Officer of Knowledge Sharing

Ms. Leal joined Trellis Foundation as the Program Officer of Knowledge Sharing in 2021. Prior to joining the Foundation, Ms. Leal participated in a number of research projects aimed at better understanding the structural inequities found in the educational pipelines of students. She worked as the managing editor for the *Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs* for two years, overseeing manuscript submissions and journal projects.

She is currently a doctoral candidate pursuing a dual major doctorate degree in the Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education and Chicano/Latino Studies programs at Michigan State University.

Megan Beadle, Grants Administrator

Ms. Beadle joined the Trellis Foundation in 2021 with nearly 15 years of experience in grantmaking and working with underserved populations in corporate and higher education settings.

Prior to joining Trellis, she led state-level charitable giving for the Walmart Foundation, assisting state and local nonprofits across the country. Additionally, Ms. Beadle worked on the Graduation and Grant Initiative at the University of Central Florida, assisting college seniors at risk of not finishing their degrees due to financial and situational hardships.



Left to right: Megan Beadle, Kristin Boyer, Jenny Achilles, and Dianey Leal.

Board Members



Richard Rhodes, PhD, Board Chair

Dr. Richard Rhodes serves as chancellor of the Austin Community College District, having served as its chief executive since in September 2011. In that time, Dr. Rhodes has worked to improve pathways into higher education, strengthen awareness of the community college mission, and give students the tools to accomplish their educational, professional, and personal goals.

He also serves on the boards of many national and local organizations including Trellis Company, chair of the American Association of Community Colleges, member of the League for Innovation, gubernatorial appointment to Texas Workforce Investment Council, and a member of the Association of Governing Boards – Presidents Council. Dr. Rhodes holds a bachelor's degree in business administration in accounting and a Master of Arts degree in educational management and development from New Mexico State University. He earned his doctorate through the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas at Austin where he received the Distinguished Graduate Award. Dr. Rhodes is also a Certified Public Accountant in Texas and New Mexico.



Mark Milliron, PhD, Board Vice Chair

Dr. Mark Milliron serves as Senior Vice President of Western Governors University (WGU) & Executive Dean of the Teachers College. WGU is a nonprofit university founded by 19 U.S. governors more than 25 years ago.

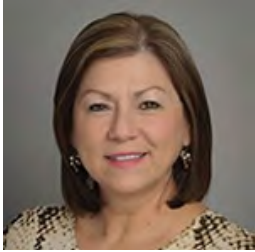
In previous roles, Dr. Milliron served as the co-founder and chief learning officer of Civitas Learning; deputy director for Postsecondary Improvement with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; founding chancellor of WGU Texas; endowed fellow and director of the National Institute of Staff and Organizational Development at The University of Texas at Austin; vice president for education and medical practice with SAS; and president and CEO of the League for Innovation in the Community College. He is a member of numerous boards and advisory groups. Dr. Milliron received his bachelor's and master's degrees in organizational communication from Arizona State University and his doctorate in education administration from The University of Texas at Austin.



Dora Ann Verde, Board Secretary

Ms. Dora Ann Verde is a Certified Public Accountant with a private practice in San Antonio primarily serving nonprofit organizations, prior to which she served as chief of internal audit for the San Antonio Water System and partner in a public accounting firm. Her community involvement currently includes board services for several nonprofit organizations including ACE Academy in Northeast Independent School District, National Association of Corporate Directors, WINGS (Women Involved in Nurturing, Giving, Sharing), San Antonio 100 and Trellis Company. She also serves as a corporate board member and chair of the audit committee for a privately-held corporation.

Ms. Verde also served as board chair for Trellis Company, Texas Public Radio and SAY Si. She currently serves as secretary of the ACE Academy Board and treasurer for WINGS. She is also chair of audit committee for the San Antonio Women's Hall of Fame nonprofit organization. Ms. Verde holds a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in accounting from the University of Texas at San Antonio. Her professional organizations include membership in the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, Texas Society of CPAs, San Antonio Chapter of CPAs, and Institute of Internal Auditors.



Alma Garcia

Ms. Alma Garcia started her career as a bilingual education teacher in the Brownsville Independent School District, where she went on to serve as an elementary and secondary school principal. She later joined the University of Texas at Brownsville, where, as an adjunct professor, she designed instructional methods courses for graduate and undergraduate students in secondary education programs, and later served as director of GEAR UP, a college awareness, readiness, enrollment and outreach program. She joined Educate Texas in 2004 and is among the foremost experts on dual enrollment, dual credit and early college high schools (ECHS) in the state. In 2015, she founded a consulting practice serving school districts, administrators, and nonprofits across the state. Ms. Garcia holds a bachelor's degree in education from UT-Pan American and a master's degree in educational administration from Stephen F. Austin State University.



Josh Hunt

Mr. Josh Hunt is executive vice president and member of the board of directors for Hunt Companies, Inc., headquartered in El Paso, Texas. Mr. Hunt is also president of the Hunt Family Foundation and serves on several other Hunt governance boards and committees. In addition to his duties at Hunt Companies, Mr. Hunt serves on the Board of Directors for WestStar Bank, a \$2.5 billion regional bank, the board of directors (past chair) of The Hospitals of Providence (Memorial and Sierra), the board of directors (former chair) of the Medical Center of the Americas Foundation Board and founding chair of the El Paso Children's Museum and Science Center. Mr. Hunt is a member of the Executive Committee of the Borderplex Alliance, and a member of the Young Presidents Organization (YPO) El Paso/Juarez Chapter. He is also chair of MountainStar Sports Group (MSSG), which owns several professional sports teams. Mr. Hunt graduated from The Cox School of Business at Southern Methodist University with a bachelor's degree in real estate/finance. He also earned an MS degree with honors in Real Estate and Construction Management from the Daniels School of Business at the University of Denver.



Suzanne Walsh, JD

Ms. Suzanne Walsh is the current president of Bennett College in Greensboro, North Carolina. She was most recently deputy director of postsecondary success for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, leading and developing a team and a portfolio of over \$70 million in postsecondary investments in institutional transformation in the United States. She previously served in leadership roles with the Lumina Foundation for Education and The Heinz Endowments. Suzanne has her juris doctorate and master's in social work from Case Western Reserve University, a bachelor's degree from Cornell University, and an associate degree in applied science from Hudson Valley Community College.



Welcome Wilson, Jr.

Mr. Welcome Wilson Jr. is president and chief executive officer of Welcome Group, a real estate development firm specializing in single-tenant office buildings and industrial buildings including lab, warehouse, and manufacturing facilities. He currently serves on the Board of Trellis Company, as well as with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the Texas Higher Education Foundation, the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission, the Texas Business Hall of Fame, and the Greater Houston Partnership. In addition, he is also chair of the Board of the Alamo Trust, chair of the Board of Remember The Alamo Foundation, chair of the Board of the Southwest Houston Redevelopment Authority, and chair of Houston's Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone #20.



Mission Statement

Trellis Foundation advances equitable educational opportunities in Texas by supporting postsecondary programs, practices and systems that reduce disparities and lead to success for low-income students and students of color.

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