



# 2023

## ANNUAL REPORT



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## 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 as an independent organization by Trellis Company (formerly TG), a company with more than 40 years of experience in supporting students and families in Texas who are pursuing their educational and career dreams. 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.



# Letter from the Board Chair & Executive Director

This past year has made us appreciate the importance of community and belonging, not just for students, but also for our Foundation team and grantees.

In 2023, we celebrated a once-in-a-generation change for the state's 50 community college districts made possible by Texas House Bill 8. These institutions will now be funded dynamically, with student outcomes determining the level of state support they receive. The legislation also allocated unprecedented support for need-based aid for community college students. Trellis Foundation was proud to see this sector recognized and acknowledged for the important role these colleges play in the economic development and prosperity of the state.

Unfortunately, we were disheartened by the passage of legislation that removes state support for programs and initiatives designed for many underserved or marginalized populations in Texas public institutions. These new challenges have made it more important than ever to collaborate across sectors to make the promise of higher education a reality for all students and create a more just and inclusive educational system.

Trellis Foundation believes we can best serve our community by building connections and providing space to learn and grow together. In 2023, this meant increasing our giving and focusing on **supporting the capacity of community-based organizations** to advance college completion and **bringing grantees together in learning cohorts** to deepen relationships and work collectively to improve student success. We were especially proud of the collective work and learning of our grantees in reimagining more comprehensive mental health supports for striving students.

Reflecting on all that has happened in 2023, we are filled with gratitude for our grantees and awe of their continued resilience. Working with such incredible individuals and organizations has been an absolute privilege, and we look forward to what the future holds for our work together!



Mark D. Milliron, Ph.D.  
President, National University  
Chair, Trellis Foundation 2021-2023



Kristin J. Boyer  
Executive Director  
Trellis Foundation







We thank the diligent members of this innovative learning community:

**Alamo Colleges District**

**Amarillo College**

**Angelo State University**

**Austin Community College**

**Paul Quinn College**

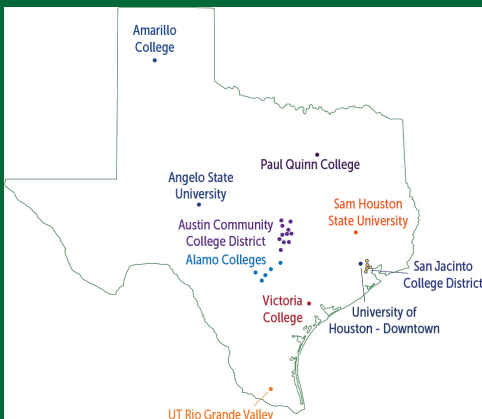
**Sam Houston State University**

**San Jacinto College District**

**Victoria College**

**University of Houston - Downtown**

**University of Texas at  
Rio Grande Valley**



## Programming Highlights

*As college students continue to report high levels of mental and emotional distress, Trellis Foundation has invested in deep work to support improvements to student mental health. We are grateful to an extended community of higher education institutions, nonprofits, and foundation partners for exploring with us the role that mental health plays in ensuring positive student outcomes. We are pleased to share some of the highlights and lessons from these efforts over the past year.*

In 2022, we announced the selection of 10 higher education institutions across Texas to join the Trellis Foundation Postsecondary Mental Health and Wellbeing Learning Community. In addition to grant funding to implement unique programs supporting student mental health, members of this learning community have participated in curated learning and worked together to solve problems. The Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute facilitated the learning community, and members are also supported by three national technical assistance providers (the JED Foundation, the Steve Fund, and Active Minds).

The first learning community convening in February 2023 surfaced key themes around resources, relationships, and the vulnerability required to persist through a sometimes ambiguous process on the way to achieving programmatic success. Throughout this project, Trellis Foundation and the Meadows Institute have tracked common obstacles and emerging solutions to share takeaways with the field.

The learning community celebrated their efforts at a spring 2024 convening focusing on the policy and practice recommendations developed through this work.

# Organization and Grant Breakdown

*In 2023, Trellis Foundation made commitments totaling \$7.45 million across our three focus areas, including:*



## HOLISTIC STUDENT SUPPORT - \$3,570,489\*

*American Association of Colleges & Universities* - \$25,000 to prepare educators at public higher education institutions in Texas to design, implement, and assess institutional programs that advance higher levels of student success by attending AAC&U's 2024 Diversity, Equity and Student Success conference.

*American Association of Colleges & Universities* - \$49,050 to develop a comprehensive strategy for institutional transformation that integrates AAC&U's programmatic areas of expertise to advance equity and innovation in teaching and learning to support higher levels of student success.

*Association of Community College Trustees* - \$499,939 in support of Kids On Campus to expand the number of Head Start programs on Texas community college campuses, providing affordable child care for student-parents and access to free/low-cost space near target families for Head Start programs.

*Catalyst Education* - \$50,000 to support the Higher Ed Equity Network's dialogue series for higher education institutional leaders aimed at collaboratively addressing the impact of a changing DEI landscape, fostering informed decision-making to counteract potential harm, and creating actionable and timely resources for the field.

*National College Attainment Network* - \$97,500 to ensure that a critical mass of Texas college access and success professionals can attend the 2023 NCAN Conference in Dallas, participate in professional development, and share their effective practices with colleagues from across the country.

*Texas Tech University* - \$200,000 to develop a pilot project that provides a clinical training grant as compensation for work to at-risk students at the Hunt School of Nursing, part of Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso, to reduce additional employment hours needed.

*University of Texas at Austin* - \$120,000 in support of the University of Texas at Austin College of Education to examine how state-level pressures and sociopolitical environments are shaping racial inclusion policy and practice on college campuses.

*University of Texas at El Paso* - \$50,000 for the Diana Natalicio Institute for Hispanic Student Success to organize a convening and site visits to other institutes to generate recommendations from national academic scholars that advance research, practice, and policy to raise Hispanic postsecondary attainment in Texas and the nation. These recommendations will inform a strategic vision and plan to leverage the institute's unique assets and opportunities that build capacity for Hispanic student success.

*\*\$2.5 million in general operating grants to 26 Texas community-based organizations providing direct impact services to support students in college completion.*

Trellis Foundation awarded \$1 million in total grants to four advocacy nonprofits to support the participation of Texas college students in policy fellowships programs.





## STREAMLINED PATHWAYS - \$1,744,211

*Charles A. Dana Center* - \$300,000 to improve student success rates in math by building capacity in postsecondary institutions to align corequisite implementation to evidence-based best practices.

*Education Equals Economics (E3) Alliance* - \$48,000 to prepare English Learners for success in advanced courses, including Advanced Placement, Dual Credit, and advanced math and Career & Technical Education courses.

*Education Strategy Group* - \$50,000 to design and facilitate a collaborative process for the core state-level partners in Texas to develop a jointly shared theory of change around college, career, and military readiness (CCMR) and pathways, in connection with HB 3 and HB 8.

*Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA)* - \$25,000 to support launching a training and leadership center to increase implementation of the expansive early college high school model that improves college access in the Rio Grande Valley.

*Texas Association of Community Colleges* - \$1,000,000 to continue to scale the dramatically successful set of core capacities outlined by the research-based essential Guided Pathways practices through Talent Strong Texas Pathways.

*Texas Association of Community Colleges* - \$20,000 to support implementation and scaling of 8-week courses in community colleges.

*University of Texas System* - \$201,211 to improve curricular pathways that help historically underrepresented students enter and complete quality degree programs at UT System institutions.

*Workforce Solutions Capital Area* - \$100,000 to identify gaps in community college and workforce board access to timely, individual-level employment and wage outcomes, identify a potential solution, and propose a plan for testing that solution in a Central Texas pilot.



## RECONNECTING LEARNERS - \$1,135,300

*Alliance for Higher Education in Prison* - \$110,000 to convene Texas program and policy professionals to share best practices in higher education in prison programming and access.

*Alliance for Higher Education in Prison* - \$25,000 to increase the representation of Texas higher education in prison (HEP) students and practitioners at the 13th National Conference on Higher Education for Prison (NCHEP) and expose the HEP field to the successes and challenges experienced by Texas HEP communities while creating new co-learning and collaboration opportunities for Texas HEP community members.

*Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries* - \$300,000 for the Greater Houston Opportunity Youth Collaborative to integrate and scale post-secondary educational attainment and employment pathways for Opportunity Youth to eliminate barriers to family-sustaining careers within regional in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

*Aspen Institute* - \$300,300 for the Texas Innovation Fund to foster partnerships and support community organizations, workforce training programs, schools, and postsecondary institutions to leverage state policy and funding to design, launch, and scale positive Opportunity Youth programming.

*E2E Partners* - \$50,000 to provide personalized, direct services to re-engage adults who were once enrolled in college credit courses but have since “stopped out.”

*Lee College Foundation* - \$250,000 for Pathways from Prison to Postsecondary Education to create a continuum of education and reentry support services that begin in prison and continue in the community after release until students achieve a degree or professional certification.

*Lone Star Justice Alliance* - \$100,000 to support JustCareers, a collective impact, earn-and-learn workforce development model providing upskilling training and a livable wage for justice-involved emerging adults (17-24).



# Grantee Highlights

*Recent years have exposed entrenched barriers to degree completion and brought new challenges to students, their families and communities, and the institutions and organizations that serve them. This section highlights grants that closed during FY2023 (Oct. 1, 2022–Sept. 30, 2023) in each of the Foundation’s three focus areas. These grants each provide valuable lessons as post-pandemic challenges and opportunities continue to evolve.*



## HOLISTIC STUDENT SUPPORT: UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON EQUITY WALK

The pandemic laid bare the conditions that undermine college completion for historically marginalized groups. As a result, colleges and universities have taken a more holistic approach to student success. In 2020, Trellis Foundation joined four other foundation partners to help the University of Houston (UH) launch an initiative to dismantle the barriers impeding equitable outcomes in student success, including the challenges many students face to meet basic needs.

The Houston Guided Pathways to Success (Houston GPS) equity initiative — “Equity Walk: Building a Postsecondary Blueprint for Equity in the Texas Gulf Coast Region” – brought together 10 public postsecondary institutions in the Houston area: Alvin Community College, Galveston College, Houston Community College System, Lone Star College System, San Jacinto College District, Texas Southern University, University of Houston, University of Houston-Clear Lake, University of Houston-Downtown and University of Houston-Victoria.

In June 2022, as part of the initiative, UH hosted nearly 150 regional higher education professionals during its Equity Convening to focus on strategies and practices already being implemented to address equity at college and university campuses. The keynote speaker, Estela Bensimon, professor emeritus of higher education at the University of Southern California Rossier School of Education and co-founder of USC’s Center for Race and Ethnicity, encouraged all Houston GPS partner institutions to look beyond student success and address institutional excellence.

“When we talk about equity gaps, we’re usually talking about the students,” she said. “For you, I believe the next step is establishing a vision of equity that is intended to strengthen the institutional capacity of the 13 Houston GPS partners.” Bensimon expanded on that thought by explaining how equity initiatives are often separated from institutions’ core work and/or missions. She indicated that such initiatives should be brought from “the margins to the center” of colleges and universities.

Through this initiative, the participating colleges and universities strengthened relationships across the region, conducted assessments, provided training for institutional leadership and staff, and collectively advanced 22 equity projects in the Gulf Coast-Houston metro area.



STREAMLINED STUDENT PATHWAYS: TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

A postsecondary credential is still the best path to secure economic prosperity. In 2015, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board created a strategic plan aiming for 60% of Texans ages 25-34 to hold a quality certificate or degree by 2030. Five years ago, Trellis Foundation committed \$1 million to the Texas Success Center housed at the Texas Association of Community College as part of a larger initiative to implement Texas Pathways with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Greater Texas Foundation, TLL Temple Foundation, Teagle Foundation, and Jobs for the Future. Through this funding, the Texas Success Center was pivotal in launching a cohesive statewide reform strategy that pulled together disjointed and unconnected student success initiatives into a coordinated, comprehensive approach to advance whole-college institutional transformation.

Based on the guided pathways model co-designed by the American Association of Community Colleges and the Community College Research Center housed at Columbia University, Texas Pathways provides a framework to align systems and to re-design credential programs so that educational pathways are streamlined and efficient, dramatically enhancing the student experience. This strategy impacts more than 640,000 Texans served within our state’s 50 community colleges seeking socio-economic mobility through access to high-quality credentials and careers.

The Texas Success Center provides centralized and structured technical assistance to colleges focused on strategic action planning to support campus pathways teams while ensuring the diffusion of best practices and customized supports for practitioners through regular collaboration. Despite the disruption that colleges across the nation encountered due to the pandemic, from 2015 to 2021, Texas colleges made impressive strides in six early momentum metrics correlated with credential completion, transfer success, and future baccalaureate completion.

Given the number of colleges committed to Pathways and the demonstrated growth in student success that colleges of all sizes and within all geographic contexts have achieved, the nature of this progress in students’ outcomes is impressive. Building on this strong foundation of work and the huge opportunity provided by Texas’ innovative new performance-based funding model for community colleges, the Foundation has pledged to support Talent Strong Texas Pathways – the next five-year phase of the Center’s work building student-ready institutions.

Early Momentum Metrics

Early Momentum Metric	2015%	2020%	2021%	Percentage Point Difference 2020–2021	Percentage Point Difference 2015–2021
Earned 6+ Credits in Term 1	58%	65%	62%	-3%	+4%
Completed Math in Year 1	29%	38%	35%	-3%	+6%
Completed Reading in Year 1	54%	58%	54%	-4%	0%
Completed Writing in Year 1	46%	53%	50%	-3%	+4%
Completed All Subjects in Year 1	20%	28%	25%	-3%	+5%
Persisted from Term 1 to 2	76%	72%	74%	+2%	-2%
Earned 15+ Credits in Year 1	44%	50%	47%	-3%	+3%
Earned 30+ Credits in Year 1	8%	11%	9%	-2%	+1%

Note: KPIs measure progress for first-time-in-college, degree-seeking students in the fall cohort of the indicated year. N= 50 community college districts

Celebration of Texas Pathways Strategy (presentation slides), Texas Association of Community Colleges, Nov. 2023.



### RECONNECTING LEARNERS: REGIONAL UPSKILLING & RESKILLING COHORT

Over the past few years, we’ve seen how quickly the job market can evolve. Expanding opportunities for Texans to update and build their skills is critical to filling labor market needs while offering good jobs that pay family-sustaining wages in a fast-changing economy.

To help strengthen intentional collaboration between higher education and workforce, Trellis Foundation announced \$2.2 million in grants in 2021 to nine grantees to participate in the [Regional Ecosystem Innovation for Reskilling and Upskilling Cohort](#).

Initially, the Foundation responded to an immediate reskilling need created by the COVID pandemic and the resulting rise in unemployment rates; however, we quickly saw the benefit of having healthy, multi-sector collaboration structures for adaptability to the constant changes in Texas’ evolving employment sector. With the help of our technical assistance partner, Jobs for the Future (JFF), the grant recipients participated in learning opportunities aimed at supporting their own upskilling and reskilling initiatives. JFF [also developed recommendations and resources](#) for the field, drawing on lessons from the grantees’ work.

### ALIGNING WORKFORCE AND EDUCATION INITIATIVES

#### Recommendations for Funders:

- Research existing initiatives to identify opportunities to integrate.
- Trust communities to define needs and approaches for integrating new pathway strategies.
- Invest in efforts aligned with quality pathway systems.
- Make multi-year investments.
- Provide flexible funding.
- Provide options and flexibility for setting and revising goals and budget.
- Be willing to sunset initiatives.

#### Recommendations for Practitioners:

- Align with regional priorities.
- Align with existing statewide priorities.
- Build strategies around common frameworks and definitions.
- Bring multiple voices together.
- Communicate existing efforts broadly.
- Commit to ongoing learning.

*Aligning Workforce and Education Initiatives: Lessons for Funders, Leaders, and Practitioners, Jobs For the Future (JFF), Sept. 2003.*



# Looking Forward

As we complete our busiest year to date, we are continually humbled by the trust and partnership of our grantees. For the upcoming year, we are particularly focused on the following objectives:

- Supporting implementation of groundbreaking community college finance legislation passed by the state legislature.
- Deepening the work in student mental wellbeing and convening policymakers and college and university leaders to discuss system-level solutions at our 2024 policy summit.
- Centering students in the development of and advocacy for equitable higher education policies.
- Nurturing relationships with new partners as we support local college completion work across the state.

We are so grateful to our grantee partners for their unwavering commitment and dedication to the work and mission we share. As we look forward to the year 2024, we are filled with excitement about the new possibilities it brings.

## Supporting Communities: General Operating Support for College Completion Nonprofits 2023 Request for Proposals (RFP) Awards



# Foundation Staff



## **Kristin J. Boyer, Executive Director**

Kristin Boyer leads Trellis Foundation's efforts to advance equitable postsecondary outcomes for students across Texas. Her recent professional service includes several terms as an Advisory Committee member for the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, chairing the Latino Student Success Funders Group, and serving as leadership committee chair of Philanthropy Advocates, a funders' organization that informs policy and legislation in Texas. Prior to joining the Trellis Foundation at its inception in 2017, Kristin served as the director of the public benefit grant program for TG (now Trellis Company). In addition, she has held positions in higher education development, communications, admissions, and financial aid, and she served as a public school teacher in rural Kansas. Kristin holds a Master of Arts degree in communications, and bachelor's degrees in English and Spanish, with a secondary education endorsement.

## **Erica Villarreal Ekwurzel, Chief of Staff**

Erica Villarreal Ekwurzel joined Trellis Foundation in 2023 with more than two decades in the nonprofit and philanthropic sector, most recently as founder and principal of CivicAIM. This philanthropic advisory firm strengthened foundation governance, grantmaking, and social impact in Texas and beyond. She also served as a frontline fundraiser and a foundation program officer at an education-focused Central Texas family foundation. Erica has professional designations of Chartered Advisor in Philanthropy (CAP®) from The American College of Financial Services; 21/64 Certified Philanthropy Trainer & Facilitator; and Certified Fund Raising Executive. She also serves as the Secretary to Trellis Foundation board of directors and on the nonprofit boards of Austin Together, Austin Ed Fund, and The New Philanthropist's Legacy Leadership Circle. Erica is a graduate of Austin College and the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at The University of Texas at Austin, where she completed her master's degree in public affairs with a concentration in nonprofit management and philanthropic studies.



## **Jenny Achilles, Senior Program Officer**

Jenny 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. She serves on local and national committees, such as the Funders Collaborative for Higher Education in Prison & Reentry Support, Central Texas Education Funders Network steering committee, the Texas Rural Funders Membership & Dues Task Force, and the Grantmakers for Education Learning, Evaluation & Data (LEAD) Impact Group and Postsecondary Access & Attainment 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. Jenny earned a Bachelor of Science in communication from Lamar University and master's degrees from the University of Texas at Austin in journalism and public policy, with a focus on nonprofit studies.

## **Jesus Perales, Program Officer**

Jesus Perales joined Trellis Foundation in 2024 with more than ten years of experience in policy and advocacy. Prior to his arrival at the Foundation, he served as the Immigration Policy and Programs Coordinator at the Texas AFL-CIO, the state federation of labor unions. Jesus' previous experience in higher education includes research, advocacy, and policy work at United We Dream and Young Invincibles and as a legislative staff member at the Texas Senate. Jesus earned a Bachelor of Arts in political science from Lamar University and a master's degree in government and public service from the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University, focusing on state and local government.







### **Sara Reeves, Grants & Operations Manager**

Sara Reeves joined the Trellis Foundation in 2023 after managing United Way for Greater Austin's grantmaking processes through a period of unprecedented growth during the COVID crisis. Before joining the United Way Team, she was a program manager in higher education, focusing on leadership development, international business, and entrepreneurship. Sara serves as chair of the PEAK Grantmaking Southwest Chapter and chair of Central Texas Education Funders. Sara spent time in Western Samoa with the Peace Corps, where she served as a secondary school computer instructor. Before joining the Peace Corps, she worked as a journalist at newspapers in Indiana and Florida. Sara holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Missouri with a minor in Women's Studies and a master's degree in public affairs from Indiana University with a concentration in nonprofit management.

### **Mia Ibarra, Program Associate of Learning & Communication**

Mia Ibarra joined the Trellis Foundation in 2023 with more than 14 years of experience in nonprofit, government, and philanthropic service. Before Trellis, she was an advocate and campaign manager at Every Texan (formerly the Center for Public Policy Priorities), a statewide public policy nonprofit. Her previous higher education background includes the Udall Foundation, where she managed the competitive undergraduate Udall Scholarship program.



### **Shamecca Perkins, Graduate Fellow**

Shamecca Perkins is a first-generation college graduate and a fifth-year doctoral student in Educational Psychology at The University of Texas at Austin. She is a Graduate Fellow at the Trellis Foundation and a Graduate Research Assistant at the Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk. Before moving to Texas, she served as a college adviser in rural Virginia with the Virginia College Advising Corps.

### **Alexa Garza, Graduate Fellow**

Alexa Garza was a 2023 Graduate Fellow with Trellis Foundation. She is a student at Texas Woman's University, pursuing a master's degree in business with an emphasis on Women in Leadership. Her passion for advocacy is rooted in her personal experience of incarceration and the stigma she faced in her community upon release. She obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration from Tarleton State University and completed certification through the Library of Congress as a braille transcriber.



# Board Members



## **Mark Milliron, Ph.D., Board Chair**

Dr. Mark Milliron serves as President and CEO of National University (NU), one of the largest private, nonprofit universities in the United States. NU is designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) and has a 50-year history of innovating around the needs of military, working, and nontraditional students. Prior to his presidency at NU, Mark served as Senior Vice President of Western Governors University (WGU) & Executive Dean of the Teachers College. Previous roles have included serving 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. Mark helps catalyze positive change in education through his service on the boards and advisory councils of leading-edge education organizations, including Bennett College, the Global Online Academy,

Civitas Learning, the Mastery Transcript Consortium, and ISKME/Open Education Resource Commons. He also holds an appointment as a Professor of Practice in the College of Education at The University of Texas at Austin. Mark 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, CPA, Board Vice Chair**

Dora Ann Verde is a Certified Public Accountant with a private practice in San Antonio that exclusively serves nonprofit organizations. Previously, she served as chief of internal audit for the San Antonio Water System and was a partner in a public accounting firm. Her community involvement includes board service for many nonprofit organizations, including ACE Academy in the Northeast Independent School District, National Association of Corporate Directors, SOLI Chamber Ensemble, and Trellis Company. She serves as a corporate board member and chair of the audit committee for a privately held corporation. She is also a member of Impact San Antonio, a women's giving group, and two women's networking groups, SA100 and Oakes Club. Dora holds a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in accounting from the University of Texas at San Antonio and an Associate in Arts degree from San Antonio College. 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**

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 innovative school models like Early College High Schools (ECHS) and Pathways in Early College High Schools (P-TECH). In 2015, she established a consulting practice dedicated to supporting school districts, administrators, and nonprofits statewide with leadership and instructional guidance. Alma 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**

Josh Hunt is executive vice president and member of the board of directors for Hunt Companies, Inc., headquartered in El Paso, Texas. Josh 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, Josh serves on numerous civic, non-profit, and professional boards and committees, including the Board of Directors for the Texas State History Museum Foundation; WestStar Bank; the Medical Center of the Americas Foundation (former Chair); the Paso Del Norte Foundation; and La Nube – El Paso Children's Museum and Science Center (founding Chair). Josh 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.

### **Richard Rhodes, Ph.D.**

Dr. Richard Rhodes is the president of Texas A&M University-Central Texas. He previously served as chancellor of the Austin Community College District, having served as its chief executive since September 2011. In that time, Richard 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, a member of the League for Innovation, a gubernatorial appointment to the Texas Workforce Investment Council, and a member of the Association of Governing Boards – Presidents Council. Richard 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. Richard is also a Certified Public Accountant in Texas and New Mexico.



### **Suzanne Walsh, J.D.**

Suzanne Walsh is the 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 more than \$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 been a frequent speaker and workshop leader at conferences such as the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities, the American Association of Colleges and Universities, and the Global Learning Council, of which she is an active member. She has published and edited several books and journal articles on the topic of educational transformation and is the recipient of numerous awards, honors, and fellowships. 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. She is a member of the Ohio Bar.

### **Welcome Wilson, Jr.**

Welcome Wilson, Jr. is president and CEO of Welcome Group, LLC, a real estate development firm specializing in single-tenant office buildings and industrial buildings including lab, warehouse, and manufacturing facilities in Texas. He is also a joint venture partner in Kingham · Dalton · Wilson Ltd., a design/build construction affiliate of Welcome Group, and is a director of River Oaks Financial Group, Inc. Welcome currently serves as chairman of the Alamo Trust and serves on the board of directors of the Remember the Alamo Foundation in San Antonio. He was appointed by Texas Governor Greg Abbott to serve on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in Austin. He also serves on the board of directors of the Texas Higher Education Foundation, Greater Houston Partnership, the Trellis Company, the Trellis Foundation, the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission, and the Texas Business Hall of Fame. In addition, he is chairman of the board of the Southwest Houston Redevelopment Authority and, by appointment of the Mayor of Houston is chairman of Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone #20 (TIRZ # 20). Welcome is a former gubernatorial appointee and former vice chairman of the University of Houston System Board of Regents.





### **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.

### **Contact**

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