

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



Table of Contents

Message from the Board Chair -----	2
Message from the Executive Director -----	3
Strategic Plan -----	4
FY2020 Approved Grants -----	6
Grant Highlights -----	8
Genesys Works-Houston -----	8
College Forward -----	9
Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center - El Paso -----	10
Micro-grant Highlights -----	11
Texas Postsecondary Landscape 2020 -----	12
Looking Forward -----	14
Board Members -----	15
Staff -----	16

About the Foundation

Trellis Foundation is a grantmaking 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



Trellis Foundation began 2020 with the hope and optimism that often defines a new year. We looked forward to productive discussions among board, staff, and colleagues about the priorities and strategies that could help boost postsecondary attainment in our state – all contributing to the development of a formal strategic plan for the Foundation. And then we found ourselves, with the rest of the world, uncertain about what the future might look like, more acutely aware of the fragility of our health and our democracy, and of the inadequacy of our systems' ability to ensure equitable access and outcomes.

Ultimately, we found that the uncertainty of the current moment served as a catalyst for thoughtful conversations with colleagues about the opportunities ahead. It may be that our shared experiences in crisis sharpened our focus and let us be more honest about the inequities

and injustices we were witnessing together. We are incredibly grateful for the time that our friends and colleagues spent sharing the ideas and reflections that helped inform our strategy. In particular, the Board would like to acknowledge the contributions of Bryan Ashton, Tamara Atkinson, Christine Bailie, Sarah Belnick, Dr. Janet Cunningham, Jennifer Esterline, John Fitzpatrick, Jacob Fraire, Tina Gridiron, Leslie Gurrola, Sidney Hacker, Lisa Hall, Dr. James Hallmark, Dr. Tiffany Jones, Dr. Harrison Keller, Sue McMillin, Virginia Potter, Dr. Wynn Rosser, Dr. Victor Saenz, Faith Sandler, Deborah Santiago, Dr. William Serrata, Dr. Edward Smith, Dr. Rebecca Villarreal, and Josh Wyner to our strategic plan development.

In addition to an overview of the grant support awarded this year, this report includes a review of the strategic plan that Trellis Foundation released in September. It is a guide for our work, but by no means is it static. We would welcome thoughts and reflections from any collaborator in this work.

Throughout the course of the year, we were inspired by the determination of students, faculty, staff, and administrators; we were amazed by the instructional changes that happened more quickly than we could have imagined; and we were humbled by the agility and connections that the nonprofit community manifested to help students navigate uncharted waters. We know there have been setbacks and losses, and there is much to do; however, we have come to realize that just as hope and optimism can define a new year, these characteristics also define the Trellis Foundation.

With gratitude and appreciation for all who share this mission,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Richard Rhodes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning.

Dr. Richard Rhodes, Chair
Trellis Foundation

Message from the Executive Director



*"We cannot direct the wind,
but we can adjust the sails."*

– Bertha Calloway

[1998, A Shining Thread of Hope: The History of Black Women in America by Darlene Clark Hine and Kathleen Thompson, (Epigraph of Chapter 10: The Great Depression), Quote Page 240, Broadway Books, New York.]

This year, along with the commitments made through our regular process, and with the tremendous support of our Board of Directors, Trellis Foundation was able to accelerate support in direct response to needs elevated by COVID-19 and the movement for racial equity – needs that were exacerbated in 2020 and will continue to affect the students and families of our communities, state, and nation.

You will find the listing of grants, as well as a more detailed account of Trellis Foundation's support for specific initiatives reflecting the urgent needs in 2020. The first of these grants was related to emergency aid for postsecondary students, in partnership with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the Greater Texas Foundation (p. 10). Second, the Foundation awarded a grant for need-based aid for students in the accelerated BSN program at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center in El Paso (p. 10), which was matched by a JET Grant from the Texas Workforce Commission. Finally, the Foundation supported a microgrant program that recognized the diversity, equity and inclusion work that many nonprofits were undertaking to help ensure a more just and supportive society (p. 11).

We are forever grateful for the opportunities we have had to strengthen our connections with each other, with those who share our mission, and with those whose aspirations are not matched with the supports they deserve.

A stylized, handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'KJB'.

Kristin J. Boyer, Executive Director
Trellis Foundation

Strategic Plan



This year marked a major milestone for the Foundation, as our Board of Directors and staff completed our 2021-2025 Strategic Plan. As a result, we are excited to share an updated mission: 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.

Through thoughtful deliberations with our Board, we also committed to an explicit statement on racial equity:

At Trellis Foundation, we recognize the historic, pervasive, systemic effects of centuries of racial discrimination in this country. While our mission encompasses all students experiencing barriers to education and economic opportunity, we recognize the specific effects that racism continues to have on students of color.

Thus, we commit to the following principles in our grantmaking allocations and processes:

- Data disaggregation is key to identifying disparities and addressing the causes.
- While some programmatic solutions may be universally effective, the imperative to achieve equity of outcomes may require targeted and differentiated programming.
- Intersectionality of barriers means further targeting of supports may be needed for key populations, such as justice-impacted individuals and youth who are disconnected from education and the workforce.

- Communities of color should be represented on all levels of the work, including in leadership positions of community-based organizations, institutions of higher education, and foundations.
- Organizations led by professionals of color provide an important, unique perspective in this work and should be supported. If the organization is new or has fewer resources for capacity-building, funders may need to revise grant processes to allow for that capacity-building.
- System processes, including those in education and grantmaking, are based in cultural assumptions and structures. Widescale change requires an awareness of the existing cultural biases.
- As we examine our grantmaking processes and allocations in light of these principles, we will develop metrics to track our process performance and our grant portfolio composition.

This statement and revision of our mission reflect years of growth in our understanding that implementing these principles in our work is critical to achieving equitable attainment in our communities.

While the core of our giving remains the same, we are excited to focus on three specific content areas in support of our mission: Holistic Student Support, Streamlining Student Pathways, and Reconnection for Returning Learners.



Holistic Student Support

This focus area encompasses a range of supports, including:

- academic advising,
- career coaching,
- emergency support for basic student needs, and
- support for student mental health.

Work focused on raising awareness of racial justice needs and opportunities on campuses also contribute to addressing the needs of the whole student.



Streamlining Student Pathways

In this focus area, we center on easing those key transition points for students from K-12 to postsecondary, from postsecondary to career, and among various two-year and four-year campuses that students may attend. Much of this work is on the systems level—reducing credit loss, increasing transparency of career pathway options and requirements, and aligning data systems.



Reconnecting Learners

Finally, this focus area highlights our commitment to adult learners. Populations of particular focus in this category include Opportunity Youth (young people aged 16-24 who are not currently connected to education or the workforce), justice-impacted students, and worker learners.

In addition to defining our topics of focus, our staff and Board have also identified four key levers, or approaches, that we use in our work:

- **Supporting Localized, Direct Impact:** Support efforts that directly serve students and are tailored to local contexts, both through funding programs and building capacity, particularly for organizations with historic underinvestment.
- **Scaling Proven & Promising Practices:** Drive the expansion of programs and practices that have successfully narrowed educational disparities, so they can support students at a larger scale or in new geographies.
- **Driving Structural & Policy Change:** Inform and fund efforts that address systemic barriers to postsecondary success for student populations of focus to enable broader change across Texas, including policy change.
- **Convening & Catalyzing Collaboration:** Unify cross-sector actors toward shared goals and actions that are in line with the Foundation's priorities by leading, funding, or participating in relevant convenings and collaborative efforts. Catalyze shared learnings among key partners working on common or complementary strategies to improve supports for students and narrow postsecondary disparities.

We welcome you to visit our website for more details on our [strategies](#), [values](#), and statement on [racial equity](#).

FY2020 Approved Grants

ORGANIZATION/PROJECT	AMOUNT	FOCUS AREA
Project MALES/Texas Education Consortium for Male Students of Color <i>Texas Education Consortium for Male Students of Color: General Operating Support</i> To develop an actionable and transformative strategic plan for the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB).	\$150,000	Holistic Support
Texas Higher Education Foundation <i>Optimizing Strategy, Capacity, and Resources in Support of Texas' Higher Education Priorities</i> To develop an actionable and transformative strategic plan for the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB).	\$100,000	Reconnecting Learners
Texas Community College Education Initiative/Texas Association of Community Colleges <i>Success by the Numbers: Modernizing Data Access and Analytics for All Texas Community Colleges</i> To build a data infrastructure to connect statewide data resources, labor market data, and internal data to efficiently produce analyses and insights; bolster the in-house analytics capacity at all colleges, with a special focus on small and rural colleges; and drive policy development for student success.	\$200,000	Streamlined Pathways
University of Houston <i>Equity Walk: Building A Postsecondary Blueprint for Equity In The Texas Gulf Coast Region</i> A network of 10 Houston GPS partner colleges and universities will implement strategic equity assessments, training, and projects at-scale to address systemic equity issues and to close equity gaps in attainment within and across postsecondary institutions and communities in the Gulf Coast region.	\$200,000	Situational Priority
Intercultural Development Research Association <i>IDRA Education Policy Fellows of Color Program</i> To provide real-world training to advocates of color to influence higher education policy in Texas	\$100,000	Holistic Support
PSS-College Bound <i>Virtual Advising Monthly Newsletter</i> PSS-College Bound is helping students stay connected and emotionally healthy and advocate for themselves and their future.	\$2,000	Situational Priority
College Forward <i>Meditation and Mindfulness for Healing Racial Trauma</i> To support entire College Forward community by leveraging the expertise of two healing practitioners to foster BIPOC student mentorship and coping through racial trauma, as well as leading BIPOC staff through healing sessions.	\$3,500	Situational Priority
EMERGE Fellowship <i>EMERGE Fellowship DEI Evaluation and Initiatives</i> EMERGE Fellowship is committed to evaluating its policies, procedures, and programming and implementing the appropriate DEI initiatives to ensure racial equity.	\$3,500	Situational Priority
Communities Foundation of Texas <i>RGV FOCUS Supports Mental Health Resources across the Rio Grande Valley and beyond</i> RGV FOCUS seeks to provide access to mental health resources through the creation of English and Spanish videos created by UTRGV counseling staff.	\$3,500	Situational Priority
Breakthrough Central Texas <i>Building a Stronger Practice of Allyship and Anti-Racism at Breakthrough</i> To build community among postsecondary professionals working to meet college students' basic needs while they study—including food and housing solutions.	\$3,500	Situational Priority
Catch The Next <i>SteppingStones to Student Success</i> To provide resources to college students in order to address stumbling blocks during and after the pandemic.	\$4,000	Situational Priority
Texas Tribune <i>Public events and related coverage of postsecondary issues in Texas: 2020 supplemental awards</i> To achieve greater awareness of policy challenges and solutions for student success in Texas among The Texas Tribune's audience, which includes those who work in the public sector (e.g., policy makers, teachers, administrators) and those who are engaged stakeholders, such as parent groups.	\$130,000	Holistic Support
Project Arriba <i>Project ARRIBA</i> To assist economically disadvantaged individuals in gaining the education and job skills needed for demand occupations that pay a family-sustaining, living wage in El Paso. Project ARRIBA promotes a working partnership between community-based organizations, training institutions, and corporate partners.	\$100,000	Reconnecting Learners

ORGANIZATION/PROJECT	AMOUNT	FOCUS AREA
Education Trust <i>Justice Impacted Students</i> To remove barriers to college access and affordability for justice-impacted students.	\$100,000	Reconnecting Learners
Texas A&M Foundation <i>Rural Student Success Initiative</i> To increase the number of students from rural Texas communities enrolling in and completing a postsecondary certificate or degree program.	\$100,000	Holistic Support
Education Equals Economics Alliance <i>E3 Alliance and Austin College Attainment Network (ACAN) Strategic Implementation & Scaling, and Regional Virtual Transition Mentoring Collaboration</i> To pilot a regional mentoring program and support the Austin College Access Network's implementation of its strategic plan.	\$150,000	Holistic Support
Genesys Works - Houston <i>Genesys Works Accelerator Pilot Project</i> To connect youth to pathways that lead to long-term economic success to create stronger communities and a more diverse workforce.	\$200,000	Holistic Support
Creative Kids <i>General Operating Support</i> To positively impact students and educators in the various communities that we serve by giving them opportunities for success in life by providing tech in education integrated through art.	\$50,000	Holistic Support
Texas Tech Foundation <i>Closing the Financial Gaps between the Dream and the First Nursing Job</i> To support nursing students with high unmet financial need in their second, third and fourth semesters of a four-semester program during academic year 2020-2021.	\$100,000	Situational Priority
Texas Higher Education Foundation <i>Texas Emergency Aid Grant Program</i> To support colleges and universities in either providing emergency financial aid to help students address basic needs created by unexpected college closures and other COVID-19 pandemic related disruptions—including housing, health care, technology needs, and childcare needs—or to support institutions in creating or improving the necessary infrastructure and capacity to optimize emergency aid funds.	\$200,000	Holistic Support
Texas 2036 <i>General Operating Support</i> To serve as an independent advocate for Texas's future, combining data analysis and long-term strategic planning with engaged influencers who will hold state policymakers accountable to the data and encourage policy decisions based on the long-term needs of Texas's communities.	\$50,000	Streamlined Pathways
PelotonU <i>General Operating Support</i> To provide working adults a pathway and support to graduate from college, through both direct services in Central Texas and through expansion of the model to other communities in Texas and nationally.	\$100,000	Holistic Support
Every Texan <i>Texas Equity Coalition and Fellowship Program</i> To decrease the equity gap in Texas higher education by strategically engaging equity-focused organizations in our statewide advocacy coalition while simultaneously developing and empowering Texas student policy voices through a three-year pilot student fellowship program.	\$500,000	Streamlined Pathways
Austin Community College District <i>For When it Rains</i> The Rainy Day Savings Program addresses student financial insecurity by helping students establish a savings account at a local financial institution and providing cash incentives as they set aside money for a financial emergency.	\$250,000	Holistic Support
Project GRAD Houston <i>Opportunity Youth Re-Engagement Collaboration</i> To identify, re-engage, and support the stop-out population across four local institutions: Lone Star College, Houston Community College, Lee College, and University of Houston, Downtown.	\$200,000	Reconnecting Learners

Grant Highlights



As the Foundation prepares to operate under a new strategic plan, we celebrate the work accomplished in our first three years of giving. This section highlights two grants that closed in FY2020 and proved particularly well-timed, given the effects of the global health crisis on students' financial needs, postsecondary attendance trends, and plans for employment.

GENESYS WORKS.

Genesys Works-Houston (GW) conducted an internal evaluation to better understand students who have stopped out of their programming over the years. Through surveys and focus groups, GW explored barriers that lead students to stop out and the activities that re-engage them.

They found that, to re-engage, their students would need:

- Help creating a plan that is aligned with their skills and interests, with options for certificates, credentials and two-year degrees in addition to four-year options (as well as confidence that all these options are valued by GW).
- More understanding of the college student experience, including time management, deciding between trade-offs (full-time/work), engaging with faculty, etc.

Given decreased enrollment trends resulting from the pandemic, these results can prove key for postsecondary support programs seeking to re-engage learners and further their economic opportunities (both through community-based organizations and at institutions of higher education).

Genesys Works-Houston executive director **Katherine Taylor** explained the important timing of this work:

"The results of the pandemic have reinforced the perspective we gleaned from focus groups: that high school graduates need support and opportunities to successfully enter the workforce, in addition to support to successfully navigate postsecondary education. These insights will inform our programmatic strategies going forward."



college forward

College Forward (CoFo) had planned to spend 2020 developing additional infrastructure for virtual student advising to expand the scope of students they could serve. The initial groundwork they laid proved crucial to their rapid response to the universal changes imposed by the pandemic.

These measures included:

- Switch to full-time staff (rather than shorter-term AmeriCorps staff) for virtual advising, allowing a 400-1 student/advisor ratio. CoFo maintains a robust AmeriCorps staff for other aspects of their coaching and student supports.
- Updated technology and messaging suited to a virtual environment.

Scott Del Rossi, Managing Director, Programs and Student Services, at CoFo shares his thoughts on the past year:

"From lessons learned during this quick transition period, College Forward continues to navigate critical dilemmas, such as continued student engagement without the benefit of in-person events.

Our Program teams have already successfully transitioned traditionally in-person meet-ups—such as campus road trips and after-school hangouts—into engaging and interactive video conferences and check-ins.

We anticipate prolonged campus closures, along with a new normal for on-campus life. Through whatever comes next, our fleet of coaches, Program and Curricula experts, and dedicated leadership will continue guiding our students with the most engaging virtual services possible."



Students take a study break at the Austin Community College Highland Campus, one of College Forward's higher education partners

Grant Highlights



Trellis Foundation funds were matched through a JET Grant from Workforce Solutions Borderplex to support the 2020 cohort of students in the accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program at TTUHSC-El Paso.

Trellis Foundation targeted some of the available 2020 funding to some of our new award funds to respond directly to the financial distress students faced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.



• Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board/Foundation

- \$200,000 for Emergency Aid for students in response to COVID-19
- Emphasis on capacity-building for higher education institutions
- Facilitated robust connection to technical assistance; institutions indicated this was key for the rapid build-up of programs



• Texas Tech University Health Science Center El Paso

- Provided needed matching funds to leverage Texas Workforce Commission opportunity that arose as a response to COVID-19
- Supported nursing students in El Paso during the health crisis
- Included a partnership with Project ARRIBA, another current grantee, to provide wrap-around supports for students



Students also faced significant mental distress as a result of both the COVID-19 pandemic and increased attention on racial injustice in the country. While the dialogue centering on the pervasiveness of racial inequities is essential to begin systemic change, the constant visibility can increase the burden faced by students of color.

To respond to this mental strain, we released our first-ever request for proposals for small grant dollars for specific deliverables to support students and professionals of color.

The micro-grant design included these components:

- Rapid RFPs in four focus areas: Coping/trauma; Race and Equity; Access to supports during COVID-19 (economic, mental health, etc.); DEI Taskforce initiatives
- Awards ranged from \$2,000-\$4,000
- Priority for deliverables that could be shared with the field
- Priority for budgets that allocate any stipends to professionals of color

We selected six awardees for these micro-grants:

- Breakthrough Central Texas, "Building a Stronger Practice of Allyship and Anti-Racism"
Deliverable: Internal structures & Reflection piece (e.g., a blog)
- Catch the Next (5 regions in Texas), "SteppingStones to Student Success"
Deliverable: Toolkit for each region, in English and Spanish
- College Forward, "Meditation and Mindfulness for Healing Racial Trauma"
Deliverable: Written guide for facilitators (and 4-session series for their staff)
- RGV Focus, "Mental Health Resources across the Rio Grande Valley"
Deliverable: Webinars in English and Spanish
- EMERGE Fellowship (Harris County), "DEI Evaluation and Initiatives"
Deliverable: Internal structures & Reflection piece (e.g., a blog)
- PSS College Bound (RGV), "Virtual Advising monthly newsletter"
Deliverable: Newsletter

Texas Postsecondary Landscape 2020

The following details paint a statistical portrait of the current higher education landscape in Texas. Many of the challenges to postsecondary attainment that existed prior to the pandemic are likely to grow – even as the state begins the recovery process. Trellis Foundation will continue to track and support efforts to achieve equitable opportunities and outcomes for Texans, and we remain committed to this mission.

These data are compiled as part of the annual publication of the State of Student Aid in Texas, produced by our research colleagues at Trellis Company. The full report is available at <https://www.trelliscompany.org/state-of-student-aid-2021/>. We appreciate having the access and ability to use this information to inform the Foundation's work and would encourage others who share our mission to explore this valuable resource as well.



Texas Education Pipeline

About **1/2** of Texas high school graduates **enrolled in college immediately after high school in 2019.**



Texas College Student Profile

80% OF ALL FRESHMEN attending Texas public higher education institutions in fall 2018 were enrolled at **community colleges.**



Costs & Paying for College in Texas

Unmet need for **low-income Texas students** is about **\$10,000** at public universities per school year.

It takes **68** hours per week at **minimum wage to pay for 2 semesters at a** Texas university; **54** at community colleges.



Debt

Student loan debt is the **3rd largest** type of consumer debt in Texas, behind mortgage and auto debt.

LESS THAN 1/3 of direct student aid to Texas community college students was in the form of loans, compared to **nearly half for Texas public university students.**



Student Financial Wellness

Almost **1/4** of students surveyed in fall 2019 reported they did not know how they **would pay for college the next semester.**

More than **1/2** of students in a 2019 survey reported that they would **have trouble getting \$500 dollars** to meet an unexpected need.



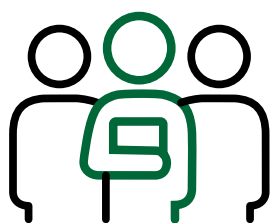
College (Still) Pays Off

Over a lifetime, earnings by bachelor degree recipients exceeds high school graduate earnings by **\$1M**

Unemployment rates **DECREASE** as educational attainment rises.

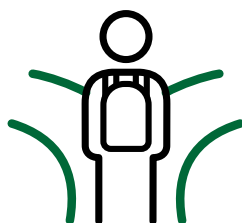
Looking Forward

As we turn our gaze toward the horizon once again, the following thoughts and questions frame the work ahead, aligned with our new strategic plan:



Holistic Student Supports

- Needs related to food, housing, and mental health will increase due to the financial instability and continued rise in higher education costs. What are the policy implications for postsecondary affordability and access that help ensure student success?
- Greater numbers of colleges have now administered emergency aid because of the funds received through the CARES Act. How will this change their processes, policies, and practices?



Streamlined Student Pathways

- Community college student enrollment declined by nearly 9% in 2020, and many high school student direct-to-college enrollments did not materialize. How do we ensure that we are reaching the high school graduates from 2020 and 2021 with the messages and opportunities that resonate most?
- Many students need or want to earn while they learn and may be reluctant to give up a job or reduce hours with the higher unemployment levels currently. How do we help higher education institutions explore or pilot work-based learning opportunities that can lead to on- and off-ramps through education and employment over a lifetime?



Reconnections for Returning Learners

- Employers are redefining job requirements and expectations in terms of skills and competencies that candidates will bring with them. How will this focus shape the curricular pathways and transcribing for students going forward?
- Short-term credentials are a key strategy in reigniting the economy after the pandemic. How can institutions accurately build non-credit-bearing credentials into a viable, longer-term career trajectory for working learners?

Trellis Foundation continues to be in awe of the students we meet who dream, plan, persist, and persevere – in spite of having to navigate systems that were not designed for them or for today's workplace needs. We take our inspiration from them and will work diligently to promote the changes in systems, policies, and practices that lead students to success.

Board of Directors

Richard Rhodes, PhD, Board Chair

Dr. Rhodes serves as the Chancellor of Austin Community College, where he has worked since September 2011 to improve pathways into higher education and give students the tools to accomplish their goals. He also serves on the boards of many national and local organizations including Trellis Company, the Carnegie Foundation, the Educational Testing Service National Community College Advisory Council, and as a member of the STEM Higher Education Council.

Mark Milliron, PhD, Vice Chair

Dr. Mark Milliron is Senior Vice President & Executive Dean at the Teachers College for Western Governors University (WGU), a nonprofit university founded by 19 U.S. governors more than 20 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.

Dora Ann Verde, Board Secretary

Ms. Verde is a Certified Public Accountant with a private practice in San Antonio serving a variety of nonprofit clients, 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 many nonprofit organizations including ACE Academy in Northeast Independent School District, National Association of Corporate Directors, WINGS, 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 Texas Public Radio and SAY Si and treasurer for ACCIÓN Texas, and the San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

Alma Garcia

Ms. 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. Hunt is Executive Vice President and Member of the Board of Directors for Hunt Companies, Inc. He 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 is a board member of the Borderplex Alliance, member of the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) President's Athletic Advisory Council, chairman of The Hospitals of Providence Governing Board, a founding board member and current chairman of the new El Paso Children's Museum, chairman of the Medical Center of the Americas Foundation Board, and a member of the Texas Tech Foundation Board. Mr. Hunt is a member of the Young Presidents Organization (YPO) El Paso/Juarez and Aspen Chapters, Urban Land Institute, and International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC).

Suzanne Walsh, JD

Ms. 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. Wilson 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 Friends of the Texas Historical Commission, the Texas Business Hall of Fame, and the Greater Houston Partnership. In addition, he is also Chairman of the Board of the Alamo Trust, Chairman of the Board of Remember The Alamo Foundation, Chairman of the Board of the Southwest Houston Redevelopment Authority, and Chairman of Houston's Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone #20.

Staff



Kristin Boyer,
Executive Director

Kristin Boyer leads Trellis Foundation's efforts to advance equitable postsecondary outcomes for low-income students and students of color across Texas. Prior to her appointment as executive director for the Trellis Foundation,

she directed the philanthropic program and activities for Trellis Company. She currently serves as an Advisory Committee member for the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, as a co-chair for the Latino Student Success Funders Group, and as a steering committee member for the Austin Opportunity Youth Collaborative.



Lakya Lewis,
**Grants Administrator &
Operations Assistant**

Ms. Lewis joined Trellis Foundation in 2019, following her passion to advocate and serve at-risk populations through education. She began her career as a Youth Specialist for the Department of Family and

Protective Services. In 2014, Ms. Lewis made the transition to the nonprofit sector. Her work focused on education retention and recovery for current and former foster youth. Ms. Lewis serves as a committee member for the Texas Youth Permanency Research Council and continues to advocate for at-risk populations through volunteer work.



Jenny Achilles,
**Director of Partnerships
& Programs**

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 the Central Texas Education Funders Network steering committee and as co-chair for 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.



Ashlee B. Daniels,
Graduate Fellow

Ms. Daniels is a doctoral student at Prairie View A&M University studying to receive her degree in Educational Leadership. Her research focuses on how to best accommodate Black women in higher education through the lens of Edenism, a

theoretical framework that she created as a solution for best critical thinking teaching practices and strategies for children of color. Her work is guided by Edenism to provide mentorship and support for Black female students matriculating through college and to prepare them for successful career positions. Ashlee's research interests include the effects of diversity on college campuses, Black female leadership, the curricular implementation for students of color, and the articulation and manifestation of critical thinking skills by students of color at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) and HBCUs.





About Trellis Foundation

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

info@trellisfoundation.org

(877) 255-6656

(512) 219-4784

Twitter: @trellisfdn

P.O. Box 5393

Round Rock, Texas 78683-5393