

# TFA matters

SEPTEMBER 2021



**Texas Faculty Association:  
The challenges we share.**

## Meet your TFA State Board Members

Pat Heintzelman, President, 1st term (expires 2022), Lamar University

Cary Wintz, Vice President, 2nd term (expires 2022), Texas Southern University

Dr. Suzanne Jones, Secretary/Treasurer, Unexpired term (2022), Texas Woman's University

Rebekah Bell, Immediate Past-President (no term limit), El Paso Community College

Samir Iqbal, Member-At-Large, 1st consecutive term (expires 2024), UTRGV

Israel Aguilar, Member-At-Large, 1st consecutive term (expires 2024), UTRGV

Elizabeth Skerpan-Wheeler, Member-At-Large, 1st consecutive term (expires 2022), Texas State University

Daniel Adams, Member-At-Large, 1st consecutive term (expires 2022), Texas Southern University

Vanessa Camacho, Member-At-Large, 1st consecutive term (expires 2022), El Paso Community College

Rebecca Bell-Metereau, Member-At-Large, 1st consecutive term (expires 2024), Texas State University

Steve Wilson, Member-At-Large, 1st consecutive term (expires 2024), Texas State University

## Contact TFA

Call (409) 454-3701

Email [TFA.President@texasfacultyassociation.org](mailto:TFA.President@texasfacultyassociation.org)

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## President's Message: Victories and defeats

Having now completed my first year as TFA president, I celebrate some victories and rue some defeats. Many faculty members have asked for help. In tangible numbers, I have written 130-plus letters of support, issued half a dozen press releases, given seventeen interviews, and attended eighty-one meetings. These numbers only hint at the work to be done.

In January, the unthinkable happened. Dr. Matkin, president of Collin College, fired two of our members, in part, for establishing a TFA chapter on one of his campuses. Please read the many related articles we have attached to this newsletter. Through our affiliates, TFA has provided legal support to help these members weather the crises they have faced. Remember, what happens to one of us can happen to any of us.

I attended the National Education Association's annual Representative Assembly this summer. President and Dr. Biden both spoke as well as Stacy Abrams. We have support in the White House. Joe Biden is only the fourth US President to speak to our affiliate, NEA, the largest union in the country. I am compiling a list of contacts of other Higher Education Advocacy Groups across the country which are affiliated with NEA. In the past month, I met virtually with the leaders of sixty Higher Education Advocacy groups. Making these connections will make us stronger.

The Governor has brought the legislature back for a special session. We will keep you posted on the issues that affect Higher Education.

As we start the fall 2021 semester, most faculty have returned to face-to-face classes. The circumstances faculty teach in vary significantly from campus to campus. Some campuses have allowed little input from faculty. Working through your faculty senate is usually the best first step to address this concern.

Governor Abbott's executive order #38 resulted in public universities not being able to require faculty, staff, and students to be vaccinated. As the virus spreads rampantly in Texas, TFA issued a resolution, as did many other advocacy groups across our state, asking the governor to rescind his executive order and to allow universities and colleges to make their own decisions regarding masks and vaccinations. Then on August 25, 2021, only two days after the FDA issued its approval for the Pfizer vaccine, Abbott issued another executive order, #39, again resulting in colleges and universities not being able to mandate COVID-19 vaccinations, this time regardless of FDA approval. Consequently, many faculty members are going into battle without protection.

Just the day before the governor issued executive order #39, 15,516 new COVID cases were reported in Texas. TFA members report assorted responses on their campuses, ranging from universities offering non-academic incentives to promote masking and vaccinating, to faculty signing petitions for stronger university COVID-response measures, to faculty making simple pleas for compassion to administrators to strongly support masks and vaccinations. Please tell us how your administration is responding to your concerns. Stay safe and stay in touch.

In solidarity,

*Pat Heintzelman, Lamar University*



## Member Zoom Event Featuring Sara Nelson

Sara Nelson, International President of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, AFL-CIO, spoke to TFA members on August 7. Her inspiring conversation with attendees addressed organizing in a hostile environment, strategies to spread awareness

on specific issues, and how to keep pushing when circumstances seem impossible.

Sara emphasized how workplace concerns are the basis for solidarity whether those workplaces are classrooms, airplanes,

hospitals, or assembly lines. Described by *The New York Times* as “America’s Most Powerful Flight Attendant,” Sara attended a rally at Collin College to speak in support of the four professors who were wrongfully terminated.

### COLLIN COLLEGE UPDATE

Dr. Suzanne Jones continues to challenge her dismissal. For the most up-to-date information, including news coverage from national media, [follow this link](#).

### HIGHER ED LABOR SUMMIT

The Higher Ed Labor Summit was held on July 7 and 9 through Facebook. This summit was hosted by a new national committee representing all ranks of higher ed workers across the country and initiated by some members of Scholars for a New Deal. The summit developed a solidarity statement to unify and transform higher education and to discuss the [College for All](#) plan proposed by Senator Bernie Sanders and Representative Pramila Jayapal.

For more information about the summit, read this [Inside Higher Ed article](#). Review the [Vision Platform](#) that was developed and approved by the TFA board at their July 17th meeting. To keep current with this movement, join the [Higher Ed Labor United Facebook group](#).

### 2021 TFA HOUSE OF DELEGATES

President Pat Heintzelman opened the meeting at 10:04 a.m. CST on May 22, 2021. This is the second virtual House of Delegates since the COVID-19 pandemic discouraged travel. The main business of the meeting was considering eight proposed amendments to the bylaws. The most important amendment that was adopted replaced the House of Delegates with a Statewide Membership Meeting. This change will facilitate member participation and connectivity more widely than the current assembly of elected representatives. The first Statewide Membership Meeting is scheduled for Spring 2022.

An amendment that would have terminated mailed correspondence to members without a home email address on file failed. The amendment was proposed as a way to streamline communication with members and encourage more usage of TFA’s website. However, during the discussion, attendees emphasized the importance of reaching all members regardless of their communication preference.

In an effort to be green, TFA asks that members provide a home email address at our [website](#) or by emailing [TFA@tsta.org](mailto:TFA@tsta.org). Members can also review all of the 2021 proposed bylaws amendments there, under ABOUT TFA > STATEWIDE MEMBERSHP MEETING.

# Texas Legislature 2021

Lisa Dawn-Fisher acted as TFA's Legislative Consultant for the regular session. She shares her reflections on this session.

When the gavel fell at the end of the 2019 legislative session, policymakers were celebrating their monumental efforts to enact K-12 school finance reform and reduce local property taxes. They committed to upholding these efforts in the future, unlike their previous efforts at reform in 2006 that were undone during the Great Recession. Eying the success of the public education community in rallying support for funding reforms, the higher education community geared up to put higher education funding at the top of the next Legislature's agenda.

Yet, when the 87th Texas Legislature convened in January 2021, much had changed. The COVID pandemic was raging, and policymakers faced a potential \$4.6 billion budget shortfall. State agencies, including public colleges and universities, had been required to submit budget requests that reflected 5 percent cuts to their base bud-

gets. By the time budget hearings got underway, the revenue picture showed early signs of improvement and the budget shortfall fell to \$1 billion. Then, the state was hit with an historic winter storm that left millions of Texans in the cold and dark for a week or more.

Instead of focusing on higher education funding and policies, the Legislature was fully consumed with conversations about regulating utilities, voting, abortion, and free speech. Even as the budget picture improved and the budget shortfall disappeared, little was done to restore the cuts to the base budgets of public colleges and universities. At the same time, additional federal COVID relief funds were made available to states who committed to maintaining certain spending requirements. Because the state chose to maintain funding promised for K-12 funding and chose not to restore

the funding cuts to higher education, the state budget falls short of meeting the federal spending requirements for higher education by about \$1 billion, even as overall funding to higher education is increasing.

While it was a tough session on higher education, the Legislature authorized the Texas Commission on Community College Finance to study the funding formulas for Texas community colleges and make recommendations to the Legislature for their consideration when they next convene in January 2023. The 12-member Commission will be appointed by the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and the Speaker of the House. The Commission must begin their work by October 15, 2021, and their work must engage interested stakeholders. Their recommendations are due November 1, 2022.

## Fellowship and Local Chapter Recruitment Funds Awards

This past fiscal year, close to \$5,000 was awarded to TFA members for various projects.

Luz Murillo, Texas State University, used her fellowship to help fund a research trip to El Salvador: "Over the years I have published research related to Indigenous languages, literacy, and bi-/multilingual education in Guatemala and Colombia. For example, my research will appear as a chapter in the forthcoming book, *Vulnerabilities, Challenges and Risks in Applied Linguistics* (Routledge/British Association of Applied Linguistics). Based on my expertise in biliteracy and education in Indigenous communities in Latin America, I have been invited by colleagues at the Universidad Don Bosco in El Salvador to join a research team that will explore children's literacy development in two languages, Nauat Pibil and Spanish. The purpose of the project is to support and document the revitalization of Nauat Pibil, the sole remaining indigenous language spoken in El Salvador."

Luz Murillo with four teachers and speakers of Nahuat Pibil in Santa Catarina Mazahuat, Sonsonate, El Salvador.

The TFA board authorized another \$5,000 for the 2021-2022 year. These funds can be

used to cover expenses related to scholarly research, professional development, classroom development, or continuing education. Funds can also be used for membership recruitment. [Apply here.](#)





## MEET TFA'S INTERN

My name is Beyonce Allin Morales. I am 21 years old and am currently enrolled at Texas State University. I am pursuing a Bachelors in English and happen to be a first generation student. I originally went to The University of Texas at Arlington but decided I wanted a change of pace, so I transferred to Texas State. I was born and raised in Corsicana, Texas, and graduated from Corsicana High School in 2018. My first language was Spanish, but I quickly learned English when I started attending public school. I found my love for English during my junior year in high school in my rhetorical and writing class due to my teacher Mrs. Franks, who pushed not just me but everyone in her classroom.

My other passion aside from writing would be cheering. I have been cheering since the age of 5 and did all 4 years of cheer in school. It has played a big part in shaping who I am today. My biggest inspiration in life would be my mother who raised me on her own for most of my life. She is the reason I never gave up on myself and learned that life is what you make it. My main goal in life is to be heard. I want to be able to make a change in an individual's life, even if it is just one person. The ability to be heard is a privilege that I wish to have in my future years.

I hope I can be an example to my Mexican American community that we can do anything, regardless of where we came from. Oh, and Eat 'em up Cats!

# TFA T-Shirts Available for Sale

We have a limited number of T-shirts in various sizes for members to purchase. Cost is \$20. Please email [suzannejones.tx@gmail.com](mailto:suzannejones.tx@gmail.com) with your order and include your mailing address and method of payment (options are Venmo, PayPal, or check).

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