

**Candidates for 2019-2020 At-Large Board Member
Texas Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators**



Cynthia Butler, Executive District Director, Dallas County Community College District

Statement of Candidacy

The purpose of TASFAA includes encouraging students to pursue higher education, promoting student financial aid programs throughout the state, facilitating communication, activities, services, and professional development among multiple communities involved in student financial aid administration in Texas, inspiring professional competencies, and motivating innovation and creativity throughout the financial aid industry.

I believe in this purpose and the importance of TASFAA to support statewide financial aid leadership and uphold continual professional development. If elected, I will use my experience to serve TASFAA and I will work towards promoting endeavors both in our campuses and in the community at large.

Association Activities

NASFAA (Member for 34 years):

Editorial Board of the Journal of Student Financial Aid - July 2015 – Current
Enhanced Loan Counseling Task Force Feedback Team – March 2019 – Current
Advocacy Network – April 2019 - Current
Policy Rapid Response Network Task Force – October 2017 – June 2018
Task Force on Management Benchmarking – October 2014 – February 2015
Conference Volunteer - 1987

SWASFAA (Member for 39 years):

SWASFAA Board – Texas Delegate – January 2017 – Current
Local Arrangements Committee – SWASFAA Conference 2017
Silent Auction – SWASFAA Conference 2017

TASFAA (member for 34 years):

Vice Chair – Texas Legislative Issues Committee – October 2017 – Current
Awareness Committee – 2002-2007
High School Partnership Committee – 2007
Lender Relations Committee – 2006

Regional Rallies – 2004-2005
Mentor Committee – 2000-2001
Proprietary Concerns Committee – 1990-1991
Membership Committee – 1990-1991
High School Counselor Workshop Presenter – 2006

ATLE (member for 11 years):

Early Awareness Committee – 2002-2005

Additional Activities:

TG Lender School Advisory Committee – 2009-2010

College Goal Sunday Steering Committee Task Force – 2005-2008

Biographical Statement

Cynthia Butler is the Executive District Director of Financial Aid at Dallas County Community College District, with responsibility for district-wide financial aid leadership. This includes oversight of approximately 56 million in federal and state financial aid and another 4 million of institutional financial assistance. Prior to joining Dallas County Community College District, she worked as an Executive Consultant of Higher Education, an Account Executive for former lenders of the Federal Family Education Loan Program, and is a veteran Director of Financial Aid.

She is a long time member of NASFAA, SWASFAA, and TASFAA with various committee and board participation, was a past member of ATLE, on the lender school advisory committee for the former TGSLC, and a past steering committee member with the College Goal Sunday Task Force.



Dede Gonzales, Associate Director, Texas State University

Statement of Candidacy

I have had the pleasure of serving TASFAA through committees since 2014 and am honored and excited to be nominated for a position as an At-Large Board Member. I believe that TASFAA serves an important function in advocating for financial aid in Texas, providing training opportunities for our TASFAA members, recognizing those deserving members within our profession and providing those networking opportunities to help financial aid administrators make those important connections with colleagues. As a Board member, I will do my best to help TASFAA continue this great work.

Biographical Statement

I am currently the Associate Director of Financial Aid and Scholarships at Texas State University. I have over 23 years' experience in financial aid administration. I have significant experience in the administration of federal, state and institutional financial aid programs as well as broad experience in student customer service, financial aid systems and regulatory compliance operations. I currently serve as a member of the THECB Financial Aid Advisory's Committee Data Collection Subcommittee and previously worked on the Emergency Aid Network. I have served as committee chair of the TASFAA Awards and Scholarships committee for the last four years. During my time with the committee, we have moved the scholarship application online and have implemented 2 new award categories for TASFAA members. I have also served on the TASFAA Constitutions and Bylaws committee. I would love to continue to serve TASFAA as a member of the Board.

Danchees (D) Ingram, Associate Director, University of Texas – Southwestern Medical Center



Statement of Candidacy

I wanted to participate in TASFAA from my first day on the job! Serving on the Training Committee since 2014 (now the Chair of that committee), TASFAA has provided me incredible opportunities to help create training curriculum, present on various subjects, and organize events and training opportunities. It has helped me enhance my management skills and to find a way to give back to an industry that has paved the way for my education and career. TASFAA is an endless source of networking – which is absolutely essential in our business. There is no college degree in financial aid - each other's expertise & experience are our education.

In my time as Financial Aid Specialist with Tarrant County College and liaison with The Higher Education Coordinating Board, I was able to understand how important it is to have representation of all sectors and students when policy changes and strategic planning are deliberated. In my experience, minority institutions and community college's voice are easily lost.

My primary goal as an at-large TASFAA Board member will be to ensure all voices are represented and taken into consideration when goals are set and decisions are debated. We must be intentional about diversity & inclusion – both across various institution types and underrepresented groups in our organization (gender, identity, culture, racial, ethnic, ability, and socioeconomic).

In addition, I want to work to ensure efficient and effective transfer of knowledge. As some of TASFAA's most influential and seasoned members prepare to enjoy their retirement, we need to focus on bringing in new faces- but we must make sure the wealth of knowledge is not lost nor their legacy forgotten. We should connect

established board members and leaders to eager, enthusiastic new leaders in our profession – but ensure in this migration that we work to retain what has made TASFAA strong. I look forward to continuing to serve TASFAA.

Biographical Statement

I never thought college was for me – in my family, you learn a skill and work. After high school, I went to Tarrant County College to get a bookkeeping certificate with the idea of doing just that. While there, a group of students (including me) lost our jobs. I was sure I would not qualify for financial aid, but I went to the office with a friend who was a little intimidated to go alone. Once there, the advisor we met dispelled the myths of financial aid and how I could get help also. She was so amazing and changed my life – when she mentioned work-study I wanted to work in the same office with her and help other students like me. In 2009, I started as a work-study in that very office.

Within four months, I was not only able to continue my studies but I also had a full-time financial aid job at TCC Northeast Campus. I managed the work-study program, and got to work directly with all kinds of special populations and nontraditional students. I loved that they could see someone who came from a similar place and looked like them as a knowledgeable and trustworthy resource.

While pursuing my certificate, an algebra teacher encouraged me to think about pursuing a career in accounting due to aptitude. I transferred into the Associate degree in Accounting Information Management program, joined the Accounting Society and volunteered with the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) organization. I received an invitation to join the Phi Theta Kappa International Honors Society and earned a transfer scholarship. I started and finished my Bachelor’s in Business Administration at the UT Arlington while working in the FA office at TCC.

The longer I worked in financial aid, the more I realized this career was such a good match for me. I have always liked helping people, and numbers come easy to me. While I was at TCC creating the FADS report and managing the Texas Grant and TEOG, volume increased 150%. I achieved 10 years of financial aid, and completed my MBA, in 2018.

Also in 2018, I took a job at UT Southwestern Medical Center as Associate Director. In my new role, I am able to participate in strategic planning and policy development. I enjoy being able to streamline processes, enhancing compliance and creating positive change on an institutional scale.

Jael Perez, Associate Director, University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley

Statement of Candidacy



Being a first-generation college student that would not be here without the assistance from many higher education administrators, I'm a passionate believer in college access, student success and on the crucial role that financial aid plays for students. I am thankful to work in a profession where I feel I can make a difference in families' lives every day. I love working with the wonderful financial aid colleagues at various institutions. I feel that due to the nature of working in the financial aid area, there is something that makes us all feel like an extended family. In financial aid, we always help each other through confusing and difficult regulations and share ideas without regard to competition among our institutions. Being part of the TASFAA Board of Directors for these past two years has been a wonderful learning experience not just about the great work that TASFAA is doing but also about the importance of volunteerism when it comes to administering a state association such as TASFAA. Thus, I am seeking to serve another term as a TASFAA Board of Director member and continue to work for and with the TASFAA membership.

Biographical Statement

Jael Perez received her Bachelor of Business Administration in International Business and Master of Business Administration from The University of Texas-Pan American. She joined the Financial Aid Office at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (previously University of Texas Pan American) in 2005 as Coordinator for the Work-Study Program. In 2009, she became an Assistant Director of Outreach and Customer Services and was then promoted to Associate Director in 2011. Jael has been involved in TASFAA from since 2013 to 2016 as part of the Fall Conference and the Scholarships and Awards committees. She has served as Vice Chair (2016-2017), Co-Chair (2017-2018) and Past Chair (2018-2019) of the Fall Conference Committee and as Board Member at Large (2017-2019).

TASFAA Conference Presentations:

Co-Presented Customer Service: Effective and Efficient (Frisco, Texas, 2016)

Leadership Strategies in the Financial Aid Profession (Frisco, Texas, 2016)

Other Local Involvement

In addition to my TASFAA involvement I'm involved in various regional collaborative committees in the Rio Grande Valley region such as:

RGV Focus-Culture of Attending College Committee- RGV regional collaborative effort that brings together leaders from higher education, high school education and community nonprofits to increase college going among South Texas High School seniors. www.rgvfocus.org

Deep South Texas Financial Literacy Alliance- RGV regional collaborative between institutions of higher education, Region One GEAR-UP, Financial Institutions, government agencies and other community based organizations to improve the Financial Literacy education in the area.

RGV LEAD and P-16 Council- RGV regional collaborative that links education from Pre-K to higher education, governmental agencies and businesses to prepare RGV youth for higher education and the workforce.
www.rgvlead.org



Christina Pikla, Director, Trinity University

Statement of Candidacy

I am honored to accept the nomination as a candidate for the TASFAA Board of Directors. If elected, I commit to serving the appointed term and representing the TASFAA membership as stipulated in the association's constitution and bylaws. I welcome the opportunity to serve on the TASFAA Board of Directors.

Biographical Statement

Christina joined Trinity University's Financial Aid Office in 2006 as a Financial Aid Counselor. She later served as the Assistant Director (2008), Associate Director (2013), and most recently, Director (2018). Prior to joining the staff, Christina was a student at Trinity, and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration and a minor in Spanish. In May 2018 she received a Masters of Education from the University of Texas San Antonio's Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program, concentrating in Higher Education Administration. Christina's involvement in TASFAA includes serving on the conference committee since 2016, including conference co-chair (2018), and she is currently completing a one year term on the TASFAA Board of Directors. She has participated in advocacy efforts as part of the NASFAA 2017 and 2018 Leadership Conference and Expo Capitol Hill visits. Christina is committed to the financial aid profession and to the students, families, and colleagues she serves.