



GREATER TEXAS FOUNDATION

**NEWS RELEASE**

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**GREATER TEXAS FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES  
FACULTY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM**

*Four Texas faculty to receive \$90,000 each for research to help Texas students complete a postsecondary credential*

BRYAN, TX – Greater Texas Foundation (GTF) today announced a financial commitment of \$360,000 over three years to support tenure-track faculty at Texas higher education institutions working in areas related to student postsecondary success. Following a competitive proposal process, the foundation selected four individuals to comprise the first cohort of the *GTF Faculty Fellowship Program (GTF Fellows)*. Each *GTF Fellow* will receive up to \$30,000 per year for a period of three years to support a proposed research agenda.

“Greater Texas Foundation’s mission is to support efforts to ensure all Texas students are prepared for, have access to, persist in, and complete a postsecondary education,” said Dr. Malon Southerland, GTF Board Chair. “GTF Fellows is a result of our board’s desire for the foundation to have a role in building research and teaching capacity for Texas faculty working in areas related to the foundation’s mission and strategy.”

“Only one in five Texas students completes a college credential within six years of graduating from high school,” said Dr. Wynn Rosser, GTF President and CEO. “With the addition of a new cohort each year, over time, GTF Fellows will create a broad and deep network of highly talented and committed Texas researchers working to understand barriers for students and identify research-based solutions to help more Texas students access and succeed at the postsecondary level.”

After being nominated through a by-invitation-only nomination process, the selected fellows were invited to participate in a competitive proposal process in which they were required to demonstrate significant potential in and commitment to a career in research and teaching at the postsecondary level. In addition, applicants were required to identify a mentor to assist them throughout the three-year fellowship. Each of the selected fellows’ home institutions committed to a partial match for the program.

Four individuals were selected for the first cohort of fellows: Dr. Lyle McKinney, Assistant Professor of Higher Education, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Houston (Mentor: Dr. Linda Serra Hagedorn, Professor and Associate Dean, College of Education, Iowa State University); Dr. Kalena Cortes, Assistant Professor, Bush School of Government and Public Service, Texas A&M University (Mentor: Dr. Lori Taylor, Associate Professor, Bush School, Texas A&M University); Dr. Edna Alfaro, Assistant Professor, Texas State University (Mentor: Dr. Stephanie Brickman, Professor of Anthropology & History, The University of Texas Pan-American); and Dr. Melissa Martinez, Assistant Professor in Education and Community Leadership, Texas State University (Mentor: Dr. Victor Saenz, Assistant Professor, Program in Higher Education Leadership, The University of Texas at Austin).



## GREATER TEXAS FOUNDATION

“As a second-year Latina junior faculty member in the Education and Community Leadership program at Texas State University - San Marcos, one of my areas of scholarship focuses on issues of equity and access for students of color along the P-16 pipeline, specifically college access and readiness issues for Latina/o students,” said Dr. Melissa Martinez. “My interest in this area is rooted in my concern for the education of our increasingly diverse student population in the state and across the nation. In particular, my experience as a former bilingual public school teacher and counselor in Texas enabled me to see firsthand how systemic inequities impact college opportunities for students of color and low-income students. Therefore, being a part of GTF’s first cohort of fellows provides a unique opportunity for me to expand my scholarship in this area, all the while being supported by an experienced and accomplished leader in the field, Dr. Victor Sáenz.”

“I am absolutely thrilled to have been chosen to participate in the GTF fellows program,” said Dr. Kalena Cortes. “Much of my research focuses on analyzing education policies, especially those designed to help disadvantaged students in both K-12 and postsecondary education. As part of my fellowship, I will analyze how specific institutional and legislative policies in Texas affect the opportunities for the State’s burgeoning minority population to pursue and complete a postsecondary education. The fellows program will not only give me the opportunity to focus on my research, but also to interact with scholars in the other fields.”

“My interest in student outcomes stems from personal observations I made while transitioning through high school and college,” said Dr. Edna Alfaro. “At the time, I was surrounded by family and friends making similar transitions; however, I noticed that there seemed to be almost as many paths through these transitions as there were people. These paths led to early, on-time, or delayed graduation or leaving school all together. These observations quickly turned to a genuine interest in gaining a better understanding for the factors that foster academic success. Having the opportunity to serve as a GTF Fellow will have a tremendous impact on my teaching and research activities. I hope to contribute to our understanding of Latina/o students’ academic success and retention by focusing on cultural, familial, and individual assets that enable students to overcome academic barriers. Partnering with GTF will provide me with the support needed to dedicate my time and energies to implement a research study that examines the importance of parents, culture, individuals, and universities in the transitions into and through college. Approaching my research with academic rigor will allow me to effectively serve my students while laying the groundwork for the future development of programs.”

“The open-access mission of the community college plays a vital role in providing a pathway to the middle class for students who have traditionally been underrepresented in American higher education,” said Dr. Lyle McKinney. “Strategies that help significantly increase completion rates at community colleges are desperately needed, particularly given the increased focus on performance-based funding. Access without success is a failure for the student and the college. I hope the findings from my GTF project will ‘move the needle’ forward in terms of identifying strategies that increase completion rates among community college students.”

“The GTF fellowship provides three things that are critical to the success of an assistant professor – time to conduct research, the opportunity to work closely with an expert mentor, and support to continue developing my skills as a teacher and scholar.”



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Through participation in annual *GTF Fellows* summits over the course of the fellowship, fellows will have access to professional development opportunities and guidance related to their intended career trajectory.

The selection process for the second cohort of fellows will begin fall 2013. For additional information about the *GTF Fellows* program and the first cohort of fellows, visit [www.greatertexasfoundation.org](http://www.greatertexasfoundation.org) and click on the “GTF Fellows” tab.

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### **Greater Texas Foundation**

Greater Texas Foundation is a statewide education grantmaker, based in Bryan, Texas. The foundation’s mission is to support efforts to ensure all Texas students are prepared for, have access to, persist in, and complete a postsecondary education. GTF puts particular focus on helping underserved and disadvantaged populations. GTF pursues its mission by forming partnerships, supporting research, sharing knowledge, and making grants. From 2001 through 2012, the foundation’s grantmaking totaled nearly \$40 million from more than 400 grants.