

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Announces New Leadership Team

Jan. 23, 2020, Austin, Texas – Today, Commissioner of Higher Education Harrison Keller announced the appointment of a new senior leadership team designed to advance the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board’s ambitious goals for postsecondary education. “Achieving a bold vision for Texas higher education requires the agency to work in close partnership with colleges and universities, employers, the legislature, and Governor Abbott to accelerate the pace of innovation and to make pathways to high-value credentials and good jobs clearer and more accessible for Texas students,” said Commissioner Keller. “I’m proud to announce that these outstanding individuals will be joining our new leadership team. Each of them has a strong proven track record of professional accomplishment and collaboration and is deeply committed to building new partnerships, strengthening our higher education institutions, and expanding opportunities for our students, our communities, and our state.”

Senior leaders announced today include three new deputy commissioners:

- Rey Rodriguez as Deputy Commissioner and Chief of Staff;
- Lori Fey as Deputy Commissioner for Data Analytics and Innovation; and
- Ray Martinez as Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Workforce Education.

Additional new appointments include:

- Melissa Henderson as Associate Commissioner for Development;
- Elizabeth Bolin as Deputy Chief of Staff;
- Leslie Hall as Senior Director, Project Management Office; and
- Amy Peterson as Senior Director, Strategic Finance Policy.

Commissioner Keller also announced that Dr. Stacey Silverman has been permanently appointed to serve as Assistant Commissioner for Academic Quality and Workforce, after successfully serving in an interim capacity since October. Dr. David Gardner will transition to a new role as Deputy Commissioner for Special Projects.

Short narrative bios are provided below.

Rey Rodriguez has over twenty years of experience in government relations, public policy, planning and program development in local, regional, state, and federal government. In his previous role as Associate Vice Chancellor for Government Relations and Chief Policy Operations Officer for the University of North Texas System, he was instrumental in developing strategic approaches to system priorities and engaging diverse stakeholders – including students, faculty, administration, elected officials, and community leaders – in order to achieve collaborative, defined outcomes. Prior to joining the UNT System, Rey served as an advisor to the Commissioner of Social Security, and in various roles within the United States Congress and Texas House of Representatives.

Lori Fey has worked in Texas public education and philanthropy since 2003 as a senior leader with the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation. Among other initiatives, Lori was instrumental in the development of the Texas Student Data System for K-12 education. She also founded and led the Ed-Fi Alliance, an education data standards and advocacy organization aimed at streamlining school districts' abilities to equip educators with improved decision-making data. Most recently, she served as director of the Rebuild Texas Fund, a \$100 million private philanthropic fund aimed at spurring rebuilding efforts in the 41 Texas counties hardest hit by Hurricane Harvey.

Ray Martinez has served since 2014 as President and Chief Executive Officer of the Independent Colleges and Universities of Texas (ICUT), a membership association located in Austin that represents a diverse mix of 42 private, nonprofit, regionally or nationally accredited institutions of higher education. Prior to joining ICUT, Ray served as chancellor of Western Governors University Texas, in senior government relations positions with Rice University and Texas A&M International University and as the director of the Committee on Higher Education in the Texas Senate. Ray has served as a member of the Board of Trustees for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and as an adjunct professor of public policy at The University of Texas School of Law and the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs.

Melissa Henderson brings more than fifteen years of Texas education policy experience. Most recently, Melissa served as director of policy for Educate Texas, leading the organization's postsecondary policy work and overseeing the work of the Texas Student Success Council, a statewide policy and advocacy group focused on smoothing student pathways into, through, and beyond higher education into the Texas workforce. Prior to joining Educate Texas, Melissa was a legislative director in the Texas House of Representatives, advising on both public education and higher education issues.

Liz Bolin has been with the University of North Texas System since 2005, where she served as Director of Policy and Planning. In this role, Liz has been responsible for advancing higher education policy analysis, engagement and leadership, and representing system and campus interests with the federal government, Texas Legislature, and state agencies.

Leslie Hall has worked at the intersection of education practice, policy, and administration for over fifteen years. At the University of Texas at Austin since 2013, Leslie led change initiatives and established new offices and practices to support innovation, improve educational quality, and transform service to students. Prior to her time at UT Austin, she managed projects for federal, state, and local education agencies across the country to increase students' readiness and success in postsecondary education.

Amy Peterson served on the staff of the Texas House Committee on Appropriations during the 78th and 79th legislative sessions, first as Assistant Clerk and later as an Analyst for both the General Government and Education Subcommittees. She was promoted to Director in 2007 and served in that capacity for the 80th, 81st and 82nd sessions. For the 83rd session, Amy joined the Comptroller's staff as a Legislative Liaison. Amy returned to the Capitol in 2017 as Director for the House Committee on Public Education, where she played a key role in reforming the state public school finance and accountability systems. She is a member of the State Bar of Texas.

Dr. Stacey Silverman has served since October as Interim Assistant Commissioner in the Division of Academic Quality and Workforce at the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Stacey provides leadership on statewide initiatives related to undergraduate and graduate education with a focus on achieving state goals for higher education. She currently oversees more than \$100 million in state-funded grant programs. Prior to joining the staff of the Coordinating Board, Stacey was Director of Legislative Affairs for the Texas Academy of Family Physicians.

Dr. David Gardner has a distinguished career at the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, including most recently serving as Deputy Commissioner for Academic Planning and Policy and Chief Academic Officer. His primary responsibilities have included coordination of the agency's efforts to achieve state higher education goals in Closing the Gaps and 60X30TX, by promoting academic excellence and research at Texas institutions of higher education. Prior to joining the Coordinating Board, David was a faculty member at Hofstra University. He has also been a visiting professor at Texas A&M University and an Adjunct Professor of Higher Education Administration at The University of Texas at Austin.