

PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Texas Women in Higher Education Announces 2025 Grant Recipients

HOUSTON, Texas – Texas Women in Higher Education (TWHE) recently announced the recipients of the 2025 Institutional Event and Leadership Development Grants. This year's recipients include eight outstanding women across the state of Texas. TWHE's grants initiative is designed to support women in higher education state-wide as they pursue opportunities for both advancement and professional growth.

Recipients will pursue individual projects that support their professional goals, followed by attending the TWHE annual conference March 30, 2025 – April 1, 2025, in Houston, Texas. This year's grant recipients includes **Tonya P. Cooper**, Ed.D., Collin College; **Ashleigh Lewis**, Tyler Junior College; **Charlotte Rodgers**, Houston Christian University; **Shannon Hankhouse**, Ed.D., Tarleton State University; **Jihye Min**, Ph.D., University of North Texas; **Pamelyn Shefman**, Ph.D., University of Houston – Clear Lake; **Prairie Endres-Parnell**, Tarleton State University; and **Tia Caster**, Ed.D., Houston Christian University.

Institutional Event Grant Recipients



Tonya P. Cooper, Ed.D. is an Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Workforce at Collin College. Through her proposal she will host an institution level meet and greet with a women-led session, titled “Engaging and Connecting Women Administrators in Workforce Programs in Higher Education at the Community College Level.” The goal of implementing the initiative is to raise awareness of women leaders' disparities and highlight the critical importance of workforce programs in building a skilled workforce at the community college level. It can also potentially inspire more students to pursue these educational pathways, bridging leadership and workforce participation gaps.



Ashleigh Lewis holds a Professor of Education position with Tyler Junior College. Her project will focus on hosting a Faculty and Staff Trivia Night at TJC in March in honor of Women’s History Month. In addition to the opportunity for socialization and networking, the event’s trivia game will focus on a series of questions within various categories that align with women’s history. The top teams will receive prizes and bragging rights. Attendees will be asked to bring a donation for the local women’s shelter.



Charlotte Rodgers is the Director of Assessment and Academic Operations at Houston Christian University. Her project for the grant aims to elevate awareness of TWHE among HCU faculty and staff with an on-campus networking event. Attendees will hear from current TWHE members, and those individuals actively involved in TWHE conference initiatives. This will be a great way for individuals to support and mentor one another in the workplace, professionally, personally, and spiritually.

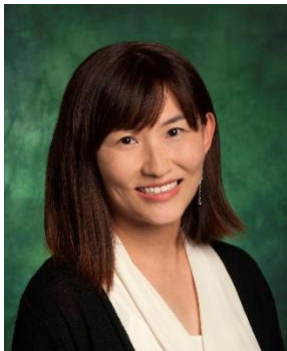


Pamelyn Shefman, Ph.D. (Executive Director of Planning and Assessment), **Esther Herrera, MBA** (Senior Manager of Training and Development), **Shreerexha Pillai, Ph.D.** (Associate Dean, College of Human Services and Humanities), and **Marci McMahan, Ph.D.** (Executive Director of Faculty Development) all hold positions at the University of Houston – Clear Lake. UHCL is creating a cross-campus collaboration to elevate faculty and staff leadership through a partnership between leaders in staff development, academic colleges, and the Center for Faculty Development. Through the grant, this group will launch an initiative in early spring 2025 with a kick-off event titled “The Next 50 – UHCL Panel on Creating Leaders for our Next 50 Years”. The event will include a panel of three to four UHCL-connected female leaders to share their leadership paths and stories of individual impact and resilience. It will include networking and a call to action to help solicit participant and facilitator interest for ‘Leaders in Flight,’ a cohort-based leadership workshop series. The leadership program is designed to build sustainable leadership paths for our campus’ next 50 years.

Leadership Development Grants



Shannon Hankhouse, Ed.D. is the Executive Director of External Operations Waco/Bryan and an Associate Professor of Criminal Justice at Tarleton State University. She will utilize grant funding to attend the 2025 Texas Council of Women School Executives (TCWSE) Annual Conference. Goals for attending the conference include enhancing her leadership skills, engaging with innovative practices in higher education, and networking with fellow educators and leaders. Shannon expects to create actionable strategies to implement on her campus, with increased visibility for their programs, and strengthened partnerships that will enhance their community impact.



Jihye Min, Ph.D. holds an Associate Professor position and is the Co-Director of the Consumer Insight Research Center (CCII) with the University of North Texas. Her proposal focuses on engaging in collaborative research with women scholars in hospitality and tourism. She plans to attend the leadership-driven RevMe Conference in Spain and visit the Rosen College of Hospitality Management to observe the operations of its research center. One of Min's primary goals is to deepen her research expertise in hospitality revenue management and data analytics through collaboration with accomplished women scholars in the field.



Prairie Endres-Parnell is a Senior Instructor at Tarleton State University. Through the grant she will attend the annual International Society of Educational Biography Conference in St. Louis and the annual National Communication Association Conference in New Orleans. During the ISEB Conference, Endres-Parnell will present on the impact of teaching intercultural communication. Her goal for the NCA conference activities includes engage with other scholars, enhance connections to others in her field, gather knowledge for advancement, and to serve the national and international bodies as best as she can.



Tia Caster, Ed.D. holds a position as Director for New Student Success and is an Assistant Professor of Education at Houston Christian University. She will attend the Asian Conference on Education (ACE) in Tokyo, Japan November 25-29, 2024. This event has averaged 3,500 participants each year since it first began in 2009 including representatives from 129 countries with almost 60% of participants being higher education faculty. This is an opportunity to not only present but also publish in the International Academic Forum (IAFOR) Conference Proceedings. This opportunity would allow her to engage in scholarly exchange in the context of global education.

The TWHE grants are administered by Del Watson, Ph.D, Director of Postdoctoral Affairs at The University of Texas at Austin, and Jamie M. Thomas, Ed.D., Executive Director of Student Affairs with the Cullen College of Engineering – Technology Division at the University of Houston. Texas Women in Higher Education (TWHE) is dedicated to developing, advancing, and supporting women employed at colleges and universities across the state of Texas. Unlike organizations focused on one area of responsibility, TWHE serves women in all sectors of higher education—public and private, university and community college—working in all areas of their institutions.

Texas Women in Higher Education follows the ACE Women’s Network guidance on diversity and inclusion: “The ACE Women’s Network holds inclusion and gender equity as core values to its work. Any individual who is committed to supporting and advancing women in higher education is welcome to participate in the ACE Women’s Network without regard to gender, gender identity, and gender expression.”

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For More Information:
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