

PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Texas Women in Higher Education Announces 2026 Grant Recipients

HOUSTON, Texas - Texas Women in Higher Education (TWHE) is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2026 Institutional Event and Leadership Development Grants. This year, seven exceptional women from institutions across Texas were selected for their commitment to advancing leadership, equity, and professional excellence in higher education.

Through this grant initiative, TWHE supports leaders as they engage in meaningful professional development and pursue projects that deepen their expertise and impact. Grant recipients will complete their individual projects over the coming months and will join colleagues from across the state at the TWHE Annual Conference, held virtually March 25 - 26, 2026.

Institutional Event Grant Recipients



Jennifer Cerda, Career and Transfer Coordinator at San Jacinto College–South Campus, is leading a new initiative designed to cultivate leadership among women across the college community. The LeadHERship Summit, scheduled for Spring 2026, will bring together students, staff, and faculty for a half-day event focused on leadership development, mentorship, and community building.

This initiative is part of a broader effort to advance the goals of Texas Women in Higher Education (TWHE) and the American Council on Education’s Moving the Needle Initiative, both of which advocate for gender equity and leadership advancement in higher education.

Held at the San Jacinto College Central Campus, the LeadHERship Summit will feature a keynote address from a prominent woman leader in higher education, two interactive leadership development workshops, and a panel discussion titled “Voices of Leadership.” The panel will highlight San Jacinto College women leaders as they share their career journeys, mentorship experiences, and insights on resilience and impact.



Angie Maxey, Assistant Dean of Students at the University of St. Thomas, is leading a new initiative focused on IMPACT: Initiative for Mentorship, Professional Advancement & Career Training (The Celt). The IMPACT initiative establishes a structured mentorship program designed to advance the professional and leadership development of women in higher education at the University of St. Thomas.

Through IMPACT, emerging women leaders are paired with experienced women mentors who provide guidance and support grounded in real-world experience and deep institutional knowledge.

The program offers intentional opportunities for mentorship conversations, professional development, and community engagement, all aimed at strengthening confidence, capability, and career readiness.

Through this initiative, the University of St. Thomas seeks to build a robust mentoring network that supports women's advancement in higher education, increase access to leadership preparation and career development resources, expand pathways for visibility, influence, and advancement for women on campus, and strengthen the leadership pipeline by preparing women to step confidently into future leadership roles.



Jana McCarthy, Student Affairs Lead Trainer at Austin Community College, is leading We Lead Together, a hybrid leadership symposium hosted by the Austin Community College Chapter of the American Association for Women in Community Colleges (ACC-AAWCC). The event will bring together higher education professionals from across Texas for a full day of workshops, dialogue, and celebration centered on leadership development, belonging, and collaboration.

The symposium will feature interactive sessions, a Founder's Appreciation Luncheon honoring Dr. Monique Reeves, and a "Leading a Chapter" panel discussion with current and former ACC-AAWCC presidents. Designed to cultivate meaningful connections and inspire participants to lead with purpose, the event will highlight shared experiences, lessons learned, and pathways to professional growth.

Through this initiative, organizers aim to strengthen leadership networks within Texas Women in Higher Education (TWHE) and AAWCC, while empowering participants to bring renewed energy, insight, and collaborative practices back to their home institutions.

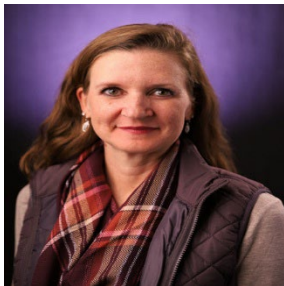


Patsy Robles-Goodwin, Professor of Education and Director of Dual Language/ESL at Texas Wesleyan University, will lead the hosting of “Empowering Women Leaders in Higher Education,” a special event supported by a Texas Women in Higher Education (TWHE) Institutional Event Grant.

The program is designed to inspire, empower, and celebrate women administrators and emerging leaders across higher education. The event will feature a distinguished keynote speaker who will share insights on leadership, resilience, and advancing excellence in academia. Participants will also engage in facilitated networking discussions focused on strategies for professional growth, collaboration, and leadership development. This initiative seeks to foster a culture of recognition and empowerment for women leaders by inspiring confidence, strengthening professional networks, and creating meaningful pathways for future women leaders in higher education. Aligning with TWHE’s mission to recognize and elevate women’s contributions to higher education, this inaugural program reflects Texas Wesleyan University’s commitment to leadership development and professional advancement.

Dr. Robles-Goodwin hopes the event will become an annual tradition, continuing to uplift, connect, and support women leaders and educators across campuses throughout Texas.

Leadership Development Grant Recipients



Bryn Brown, Associate Professor at Tarleton State University, will be participating in an upcoming EDUCAUSE professional development event. She will attend the EDUCAUSE New Managers Institute, an immersive virtual program requiring a total commitment of 20 hours and focused on building core leadership development competencies.

Through this institute, Brown aims to apply the knowledge and skills gained to her current and future leadership roles. She anticipates strengthening her communication and leadership abilities, as well as developing new skills in cost management, project leadership, and team management.



Stacy Evans, Director of the Center for Teaching Excellence, will enroll in the six-hour online course “AI for Teaching and Learning: Higher Education” offered by CareerCatalyst at Arizona State University. This professional development activity is strategically aligned with the institution’s readiness for the generative AI era and directly supports the ACE Moving the Needle Initiative and the TWHE vision by emphasizing the cultivation of ethical leadership in emerging technologies.

The primary objective of this engagement is to establish verifiable expertise in AI pedagogy and ethical integration frameworks. Outcomes are expected to include strengthened academic integrity policies, the development and facilitation of at least two new internal faculty support sessions within three months of course completion, and the ethical and effective leveraging of institutional investments in artificial intelligence.



Rachel Elms, Assistant Professor of Sport Management at Tarleton State University, will attend the Female Athlete Summit, hosted by the TRIA/HealthPartners Institute. The summit focuses on the unique needs, challenges, and opportunities facing female athletes, as well as the professionals who support them.

Through participation in the summit, Dr. Elms aims to expand her knowledge of current research and best practices related to female athlete health and performance, while engaging with cross-disciplinary sport professionals to examine the intersection of leadership, wellness, and athlete development. This experience will also strengthen her leadership capacity as a professor, mentor, and academic leader in sport management.

Attendance at the Female Athlete Summit will enhance Dr. Elms’s teaching and research in sport leadership, better equip her to mentor students, particularly women pursuing careers in athletics and sport administration, and further support the mission of advancing women into leadership roles in higher education.

The TWHE grants are overseen 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 for the Cullen College of Engineering at the University of Houston.

Texas Women in Higher Education (TWHE) is committed to fostering the professional growth and leadership of women working in higher education across Texas. Rather than focusing on a single functional area, TWHE supports women from all corners of the academy - public and private institutions, universities and community colleges - serving in a wide range of roles across their campuses.

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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