



URBAN EDUCATION INSTITUTE

The University of Texas at San Antonio

UEI Research News

2024-2025 Issue 2

Welcome to the UEI Research Newsletter, Issue 2! In this issue, we share a little bit more about who we are and the kind of work we do. We want to encourage any researcher whose work fits within our mission and scope to consider working with us! One way to engage with us is to become a UEI Affiliated Research Fellow. As a new program, we're slowly building a community of scholars who are working to understand the educational landscape of Texas. This is purposely broad to invite a cross section of researchers whose interests converge on the goal of using research, data, and theory to understand and improve educational processes and outcomes. Current Fellows come from departments across COEHD including BBL, ELPS, and EDP. Please reach out to me directly with questions. Now more than ever we must leverage science for the betterment of educational policies and practices!

Sharon L. Nichols, UEI Director

UEI Mission

The Urban Education Institute provides equity-focused and impactful research, evaluation, and training in collaboration with community-based research-practice-policy partnerships on issues that inform and influence educational and workforce-related policies, experiences, and outcomes.

Key Research Areas:

- Texas educational accountability
- Education-to-workforce pipeline
- Student development, motivation, and learning
- Teacher effectiveness and retention

Things We Do:

- Provide mixed-methods expertise to empower evidence-based decision-making for San Antonio, the region, community partners, and researchers.
- Provide training opportunities to students, fostering the development of quantitative and qualitative methodological skills through applied research experiences.
- Provide administrative support to help researchers develop and implement sponsored project proposals.

Why Engage With Us?

- To learn about the state-wide educational dataset available for researchers to study key research questions related to Pre-K-to-workforce pathways.
- To brainstorm ideas, co-design research/projects, and leverage UEI's expertise to enhance your research projects.
- To seek support for grant submissions and administration.

Don't Know Where to Start? Just Ask! Sharon.nichols@utsa.edu

UEI Announcements

On January 16, 2025, Dr. Nichols met with the UEI Research Fellows and spoke on the benefits of being affiliated with a research institute and how this can be beneficial for PI and co-PIs. Being associated with a research institute provides access to a wide range of resources, including funding opportunities and administrative support, which can significantly enhance the research process. Additionally, research institutes often facilitate interdisciplinary collaborations, allowing researchers to engage with experts across various fields, thereby strengthening the scope and impact of their work.

So, reach out to the UEI Director, Dr. Nichols, to discuss your interest in becoming a UEI Research Fellow!



UEI Research Fellows gathered to discuss the state of UEI and how to strategically shape its future.

On 11/16/24, UEI convened the first meeting of the COEHD “Quant Group.” Spearheaded by Dr. Kevin Hirschi from the BBL department (and co-chaired by Dr. Sofia Bahena from ELPs), this new group brings together researchers who utilize, teach, or have interest in the application of quantitative methods in research. If you’re interested in joining this group or just curious about what the group is about, please reach out to Dr. Kevin Hirschi (Kevin.Hirschi@utsa.edu) or Dr. Sofia Bahena (Sofia.Bahena@utsa.edu) for more information.

State, Local, and Other Research Opportunities

We check these websites daily for new research opportunities:

State:

- [Office of the Governor](#)
- [Texas.gov eGrants](#)
- [Texas Education Agency](#)
- [Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board](#)

City:

- [City of San Antonio](#)

Non-profit Foundations and Organizations:

- [Greater Texas Foundation](#)

- [San Antonio Area Foundation](#)
- [Charles Butt Foundation](#)
- [H.E. Butt Foundation](#)
- [The Meadows Foundation](#)
- [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#)
- [Russell Sage Foundation](#)
- [Texas 2036](#)
- [UP Partnership](#)
- [Communities in Schools](#)
- [The Center for Young Minds](#)

There are presently no new announcements. We will keep you informed.

In this Issue: Focus on Greater Texas Foundation



GREATER TEXAS FOUNDATION

The Greater Texas Foundation ensures all Texas students are prepared for, have access to, persist, and complete postsecondary education.

Long-term Goals:

- Help more high school and college learners complete a postsecondary credential.
- Reengage disconnected learners to pursue a postsecondary credential.

A year ago (January 2024), the Greater Texas Foundation launched a strategic planning process. Their research and interviews during this planning process surfaced several headwinds and tailwinds within the broader economic, postsecondary, and policy landscapes that likely have future implications for the foundation's work.

Beneficial Trends	Concerning Trends
Sizable economic growth fueling demand for a more specialized workforce	Decline in learner preparedness for postsecondary education
Robust population growth and demographic change	Increasing disconnection of learners from school and work
Exploration of different routes to a credential, degree, or position	Inequitable access to education and stagnant completion rates
Technological innovations (e.g., Generative AI)	Institutional barriers (e.g., policies, practices) to learner success
Increased focus of policymakers and funders on postsecondary enabling conditions	Politicization of education issues

Take a moment to explore GTF's recent grant announcements. Does one align with your areas of interest? You may be inspired to submit a project concept. <https://greatertexasfoundation.org/announcement/>

Past Partnership

The Greater Texas Foundation funded the Urban Education Institute's three-year (2020-2023) evaluation of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's Virtual Advising Project (ADVi). ADVi is an AI chatbot that communicates through text messages to provide information, suggest actionable steps, and answer college admission-related inquiries. Our research highlights the growing use of ADVi among racially and ethnically underrepresented students, students from low-income families, and students who received special education in high school. This suggests a potential demand for AI tools to assist in the educational transitions of these students.

How to approach the Greater Texas Foundation for grant funding

Do you have a project concept?

Proposals are evaluated for how they fit with GTF's grantmaking areas and where there is the greatest potential for collaboration and mission alignment.

- Does this proposal drive systemic change?
- Does it build knowledge across the field?
- Does it spur innovation to solve persistent challenges?
- Does it meet a direct need?

Concept Stage

Step One: Submit an Initial Inquiry Form <https://greatertexasfoundation.org/grants/grant-application-review/>

- You will need organizational information, primary contact information, and a 300-word description of your proposed project.
- If you qualify based on the screening questions, a program staff member will reply to your Initial Inquiry within six weeks.

Step Two: Submit a Concept Paper

- If your project is a potential fit, you will be invited to submit a brief concept paper through their online application system.
- Your concept paper will be reviewed by the foundation staff, who will determine whether a proposal may be invited based on the outcome of this stage.

Do you have additional questions? Take a look at their FAQs. <https://greatertexasfoundation.org/grants/faqs/>

Information obtained from <https://greatertexasfoundation.org/>

UEI Team

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Jasmine Victor, Postdoctoral Research Fellow
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Current UEI Research Fellows:

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Dr. John Davis, EDP
Dr. Alonzo Flowers III, ELPS
Dr. Kevin Hirschi, BBL
Dr. Hyejeong Lee, ILT
Dr. Vanessa Sansone, ELPS
Dr. Janet Solis Rodriguez, ELPS
Dr. Ian Thacker, EDP
Dr. Victor Villarreal, EDP