



UT San Antonio™
The University of Texas at San Antonio



URBAN EDUCATION INSTITUTE

UEI News

2025-2026 Issue 4

Welcome back for another academic year!

As the 2025-2026 academic year unfolds, UEI remains committed to community-based work and to fostering partnerships with schools and non-profit agencies throughout Bexar County. As these partnerships deepen and opportunities arise, we will continue to be on the lookout for research opportunities we can share with members of the COEHD community. In the meantime, if you have an idea or project in mind, or just need help administering existing grants, please reach out to me directly. Now, perhaps more than ever, we must continue to 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 Project Updates

PROJECTS:

We are continuing our partnership with the City of San Antonio to evaluate its ambitious **Ready to Work** program. This program provides comprehensive job training, including case management and employer engagement, to help San Antonio citizens climb the economic ladder. We are continuing our partnership with **Celebrate Dyslexia** to investigate the educational and workforce outcomes of students with dyslexia, informing that early screening and appropriate intervention are critical to enhancing individual achievement, career success, and broader social benefits. Additionally, we have partnered with **UP Partnership** to enhance the quality and scope of counseling services for students in San Antonio, promoting foundational knowledge, ambition, and pathways to success in both secondary and postsecondary education.

UEI has collaborated with faculty and researchers from three institutions—the University of Texas at El Paso, Texas Tech University, and E3 Alliance—to study access, equity, and the impact of Texas's **dual credit** program. As a steering committee member of LonestaRP3 – a network of policymakers, researchers, and practitioners across the state – we have been collaborating closely with constituents across Texas to identify pressing educational policy issues and topics. Our recent Dual Credit project is the latest manifestation of that collaboration.

We are grateful for the generous funding from our supporters, including the City of San Antonio, Celebrate Dyslexia, UP Partnership, the University of Texas at Austin, and the Gates Foundation, which enables these research opportunities.

New Grant Award:

Congratulations to Research Fellow, Dr. Vanessa Sansone!

- **Subaward through Appalachian State University (\$175,935) “Rural Talent Development & Attraction Laboratory”**

Awardee: Vanessa Sansone, Educational Leadership & Policy Studies

SEED Grants:

Congratulations to Research Fellows, Dr. Thacker and Dr. Solis-Rodriguez!

- **T2 (\$25,000 AWARD) “Promoting Place-Based Climate Change Teaching Readiness for Educators in South Texas (PBC-CREST)”**

Awardee: Ian Thacker, Educational Psychology

- **INTRA (\$5,000 AWARD) “Using Social Network Analysis to Study How Collegial Interactions Can Shape Teacher Learning and Implementation of AI Technologies”**

Awardee: Janet Solis Rodriguez, Educational Leadership & Policy Studies

UEI Announcements

We're excited to introduce UEI's newest researcher, **Dr. Elisa Serrano**. Dr. Serrano is a postdoctoral research fellow at the Urban Education Institute. She earned her Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in Language, Culture, and Society from Pennsylvania State University. Her research and teaching focus on multilingual learners, educational equity, and identity in schooling. Elisa's work bridges research and policy to advocate for culturally and linguistically sustaining practices in education. She has contributed to national publications and collaborative research initiatives centered on equity in language instruction, and she brings experience as both a researcher and educator in K-12 and higher education contexts.



Dr. Jasmine Victor is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Urban Education Institute. Her research interests include policies and practices that influence the development and trajectory of Black women in higher education and student identity development. She also serves as a facilitator for the San Antonio Area Foundation's Confluence Fellowship Program, an eight-month transformational leadership experience for nonprofit leaders. She holds a Bachelor of Journalism from UT Austin, an M.A. in Public Relations from the University of Houston, and a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies with an emphasis in Higher Education from UTSA.



State, Local, and Other Research Opportunities

We continue to check these websites regularly 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.

UEI Team

Sharon L. Nichols, Director, UEI
Han Bum Lee, Associate Director, UEI
Jasmine Victor, Postdoctoral Research Fellow
Elisa Serrano, Postdoctoral Research Fellow
Rosa Arzola Hernandez, Fiscal Manager

Current UEI Research Fellows:

Dr. Sofia Bahena, ELPS
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