



## Transfer Motivational Conference

June 5-7, 2025.

Jester West Dormitory

University of Texas at Austin

201 E 21<sup>st</sup>, Austin, Texas, 78705



The Catch the Next- ASCENDER Transfer Motivational Conference is designed to inspire students to embark on the transformative journey of transferring to a university for a bachelor's or advanced degree. We offer the opportunity to experience university life by staying in a college dormitory and enjoying the benefits of communal dining. Students will discover essential resources, including financial aid, housing options, and the transfer process. Our mission is to empower underserved, first-generation, low-income students, helping them overcome barriers, increase graduation rates, and complete a four-year or advanced degree.

### Agenda

**Coordinators: Daniel Garcia, Armando Sanchez, CTN**

#### Day 1: Thursday, June 5<sup>th</sup>

5:00 pm – 6:00 pm	Registration Swag Bag, Check-In, Key Retrieval, Dining Hall Card Retrieval Jester Hall dormitory reception area.
6:00 pm – 7:00 pm	Dinner at J2 Jester Hall Dining Room
7:00 to 9:00 pm	Free Time

#### Day 2: Friday, June 6

**UTC (University Teaching Center) 105 W 21<sup>st</sup> Street, Austin, Texas, 78712**

7 am – 8:45 am	Breakfast J2 Dining
8:45 – 8:55 am	Walk to the University Teaching Center (UTC).
8:55 – 9:00 am	Greetings, Maria Chavez, Daniel Garcia, and Armando Sanches. MC's
9:00- 9:30 am	<b>Welcome – Jeff Mayo, UT First Year Experience Director</b>
9:30 -9:45 am	Ice Breaker Bingo (hallway) Dr. Ana Alaniz, Armando Sanchez
9:45 am – 10:00 am	<b>Transfers: The door to a BS degree and ladder for economic mobility.</b> Dr. Maria Martha Chavez, CEO/President

10:00 - 10:10 am	BREAK
10:10 - 11:00 am	<b>Transfer 101: Admissions, financial aid, and housing with Q&amp;A</b> Jessica Wysinger, Sr. Program Coordinator – Transfer Admissions Michael K. Washington – Associate Director of Transfer Admissions Dr. Cierra Campbell-Bridges – Director of Transfer Admissions
11:00- 11:45 am	<b>Keynote: Becoming More Than You Thought You Could Be: My Story as a Transfer Student.</b> Dr. Yolanda Padilla, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs.
12:00 pm - 1:00 pm	<b>Lunch with the CTN Board</b>
1:00 pm -1:45 pm	<b>Finding your Why.</b> Dr. Ana Alaniz, South Texas College
1:45 – 2:00 pm	<b>Slam Poetry Prep,</b> CTN Board Member Mike Guinn
2:00 pm – 2:45 pm	<b>Scavenger hunt,</b> Analy Juan, Alumni, UT Austin Student, and Jeff Mayo
3:00 – 3:45 pm	<b>Career Workshop,</b> Audrey Hawkersmith, Career Coach, McCombs School of Business.
4:00 – 5:00 pm	<b>Slam Poetry Contest,</b> Mr. Mike Guinn, MSW.
5:00 pm- 6:00 pm	<b>Dinner</b>
6:00 pm - 7:00 pm	<b>Fun on your own</b>

**Day 3: Saturday, June 10<sup>th</sup>.**

8:00 am – 8:30 am	<b>Breakfast</b> TLC
8:30 am - 9:00 am	<b>Spirit Crushers,</b> Dr. Anna Alaniz, South Texas College
9:00 am – 9:30 am	<b>Alumni Panel:</b> Analy Juan, ACC; Juan Higa, PAC;
10:00 am – 11:00 am	<b>Financial Literacy,</b> Laura Flores, Dallas College
11:00 am– 11:30 am	<b>Student Panel:</b> The power of engagement/leadership. Diana Gorostieta, Facilitator Logan Martínez, Melanie Trujillo, PAC;
11:30 am- 11:45 am	<b>CTN Student Leadership Awards</b>
11:45-12:00 am	<b>Closing/</b> announcements, Charla’s, Empoderate Leadership Academy
Noon	<b>Lunch</b>
12:30– 1:00 pm	Departure from the University /City tours are optional. See attachment A.

## BIOGRAPHIES, SPEAKERS



Armando Sanchez is a Catch the Next, Ascender Program Alum from Austin Community College (ACC). While a student at ACC, he began with an interest in Automotive Technology. A year later, he switched his interest in government after meeting an individual who opened his eyes to a different world. With the additional support from two professors who taught state and federal government. Armando then earned an opportunity to intern at the Texas House of Representatives, where he continued his interest in government by participating in the Diplomats as the Secretary of the club at ACC, discussing international issues. He started the program in 2017 and later graduated with his Associate of Arts in General Studies in December 2019.

In January 2020, he transferred to Texas State University at San Marcos, where he pursued a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Political Science, minoring in Communication Studies, and graduated in August 2021. During his journey as an undergrad, he developed skills that allowed him to adapt to different political settings, explain his concerns, and address current issues. The skills he developed throughout his time at Texas State have helped him advocate and research pertinent information. He has been able to draw upon these skills while being interviewed several times to discuss the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and other issues undocumented individuals face in Texas. Throughout these interviews, he was also allowed to present his concerns about the Supreme Court ruling on DACA, discuss the Texas House Bill 1486, and how it will impact undocumented students' eligibility for in-state tuition: Armando, a first-generation DACAmented student from Ixtapan de la Sal, Mexico.

Armando received a Master of Arts in Political Science at Texas State University, where he worked as a Graduate Assistant. Despite his rough childhood, Armando is proud of where he is and acknowledges the support he receives. He exists for what the future has in store for him, doing his best to change the world while making his parents proud of all the sacrifices they have made for him and giving him the world. Reminding him to keep his head up, no matter how cruel the world may be. Armando is the Operations Manager for Catch the Next, Inc.



**Daniel Garcia** has over eight years of experience in marketing, including two years as an account manager at one of Texas's most prestigious digital marketing firms. I specialize in Google Ads Management, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), Social Media Marketing (SMM), and Display Advertising. Daniel serves as CTN's Director of Marketing and Communications. And AI Integrations. Daniel leads CTN's [Project Evident](#) on AI Integration, funded by the [Austin Community Foundation](#).



**Dr. Jeffrey Mayo** is the Director of First-Year Experience at The University of Texas at Austin, where he leads initiatives to support the transition and academic success of first-year and transfer students. With over a decade of experience in higher education, Jeff is deeply committed to creating programs that foster a sense of belonging and empowerment among students. His work involves building comprehensive support systems and implementing strategies to enhance student engagement and retention. Jeff holds a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree in Higher Education/Higher Education Administration from The University of Texas at Austin, where he researched topics such as online education, college access, enrollment management, and higher education governance. His dedication to student development and success is evident in his leadership roles and contributions to higher education. Dr. Mayo is a member of the Catch the Next Board of Directors.



**Dr Yolanda. Padilla** is the Clara Pope Willoughby Centennial Professor and Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs at the University of Texas at Austin Steve Hicks School of Social Work. Dr. Padilla attended Texas Southmost College in Brownsville, her hometown. She transferred to UT, where she completed undergraduate and master's degrees in social work and psychology. Dr. Padilla completed a joint Ph.D. in sociology and social work at the University of Michigan and was appointed assistant professor at UT immediately following. Her areas of teaching at the graduate and undergraduate levels are social problems and social welfare policy analysis, social welfare programs, social work practice with communities and organizations, and introduction to social work practice. She developed two new courses incorporated into the school's curriculum, one providing specialized training in poverty policy analysis and another on policy and practice issues in social work with gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender populations.



**Jessika L. Wysinger, M.Ed** - Senior Program Coordinator of Transfer Admissions: Jessika Wysinger is the Senior Program Coordinator for Transfer Admissions at The University of Texas at Austin, where she plays a pivotal role in connecting prospective transfer students from various pipelines to the resources they need for a seamless transfer experience. Jessika is passionate about supporting Texas students as they seek admission to the flagship university, helping them navigate the admissions process and ensuring their success at UT Austin. Before her current role, Jessika worked in Freshman Admissions as an Admissions Counselor in Houston, where she focused on recruiting local students and guiding them through applying to UT Austin. A proud Texas Ex (a graduate of UT Austin, % 2019), Jessika holds a Master's in Enrollment Management and Policy from the University of Southern California. Originally from Jasper, Texas, Jessika credits her success to her roots in the tight-knit community and the lessons she learned from growing up there. She enjoys serving Texas by connecting students from all across the state to the opportunities that await them at the university. Outside of her professional life, Jessika has a deep love for live and recorded music, spending time with her family, outdoor activities (when it's not too hot!) with her pup Stella, and exploring new cities/countries like a local. A unique aspect of Jessika's name comes from its meaning: a combination of her parents' names -- so make sure to remember the K!



**Michael K. Washington** – Associate Director of Transfer Admissions: Mike Washington is an Associate Director within the Office of Admissions at the University of Texas at Austin. He oversees a broad range of responsibilities, primarily focusing on Transfer Decisions, Transfer Policies, the oversight of Transfer Partnerships, and the Articulation of transferable coursework. With nearly five decades of service at UT Austin, he began his career 1978 as an Admissions Counselor. In 1981, he accepted a position to oversee the Registration Supervision and Certification units within the Office of the Registrar. After serving in that capacity for eight years, he took on a new role as an Academic Advisor for Student Athletes in the Office of Intercollegiate Athletics. His final career move was back to the Office of Admissions in 1993. In his current role, Mike has helped establish numerous policies and procedures that have advanced UT Austin. He has become an advocate for higher education, serving on numerous committees, task forces, and boards (at UT, in Texas, and beyond). He serves as Chairman of the Board of Regents at his undergraduate alma mater (Texas Lutheran University). Mike was a first-generation college student (from Austin) who attended TLU on a football scholarship. He has promoted higher educational opportunities after completing a successful collegiate career (and a short stint in professional sports and high school teaching/coaching). Of which the last 30-plus years have been predominantly focused on advancing Transfer Students.





**Dr. Cierra Campbell-Bridges** – Director of Transfer Admissions: Dr. Cierra Campbell-Bridges is the Director of Transfer Admissions within the Office of Admissions at The University of Texas at Austin and has served this institution professionally for over a decade. Hailing from Richmond, Texas, Cierra is married to her UT sweetheart (Jay) and is the mother of two future Longhorn ladies (Cassidy & Caylee). She leads transfer recruitment and is instrumental in increasing the efficiency of the transfer admissions process. Cierra supports prospective students and their families in the transfer application process and university administrators on

and off campus with course transfer eligibility and admission requirements. Cierra leads the Centralized Internal Transfer team and works to ensure support is available to multiple stakeholders across the university and beyond. Cierra began her journey at The University of Texas at Austin as an undergraduate student, earning a bachelor's degree in Applied Learning & Development and a minor in Communication Studies. She then earned a master's in College and University Student Personnel Administration (CUSPA). She completed her doctorate in Higher Education Leadership & Policy in the College of Education at UT Austin. In the city of Austin, Cierra is a dedicated member of her faith community, Greater Mount Zion Church, and nationally a member of her sorority, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. Cierra lives by her faith, loves her family, lifts others, and leverages her power for the change she hopes to see in this world!



**Dr. Anna Bertha Alaniz** earned a doctorate from Texas A&M University Kingsville, a master's degree in Education with an emphasis in Reading from the University of Texas Pan-American (now the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley), and her bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with an emphasis on Bilingual/Bicultural Education from the University of Texas Pan-American (now the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley).

Dr. Alaniz serves as the ASCENDER Coordinator at South Texas College and Catch the Next Director of Professional Development. She also teaches all components of the ASCENDER program. She is a full-time developmental reading instructor and adjunct in the education and English departments. She is an adjunct in the Teacher Bilingual Program at Texas A&M University-Kingsville, where she teaches Foundation of Literacy and Assessment and Remediation in Reading. Dr. Alaniz taught public education at Roma ISD. She has 21 years of teaching experience, and her classroom practices have earned her the NISOD Excellence Award. Alaniz has taught adult literacy courses with Roma ISD. Dr. Alaniz's passion is helping underserved students persist and graduate from college. Her dissertation is titled, *Beating the Odds: Perceptions of Successful Former Developmental College Students.*



**Laura Flores** serves as Senior Manager for Academic Transfer Programs at Dallas College. In her role, Laura directly oversees the Ascender program for first-time-in-college students and is responsible for leading recruitment, student and faculty engagement, and retention and programming efforts. Over 10+ years, she has provided leadership in student engagement and leadership development, first-year support, first-generation success, peer mentorship, Dreamer student support, and more.

Her passion for working with college students can be attributed to her experience as a first-generation Latina student with a “non-linear” academic journey. She earned her bachelor's degree from Texas Woman's University and later pursued her master's degree in Higher Education Administration from Texas A&M University-Commerce. As a self-professed “foodie,” Laura enjoys exploring new places to grab a bite. When she's not on the search for the best street taco, she can be found spending quality time with her family and friends.



**Michael Guinn** has successfully fused the art of spoken word with social awareness, making him one of the most sought-after motivational speakers, specializing in creating social awareness and empowering youth. He is also the founder of the PSI Certified Fort Worth National Poetry Slams and the Fort Worth Write National Youth Poetry Team. He is internationally renowned as one of the world's hardest-working performance poets, emcees, coordinators, poetry slam masters, and youth and adult Spoken Word events promoters. Guinn is also the co-founder of the NATIONAL POETRY AWARDS, the North Texas Spoken Word

Awards, and the Texas Spoken Word Awards, and has continued to host several ongoing weekly, monthly, and annual poetry open mics for the past 16 years. He has appeared, featured, judged, hosted, facilitated workshops, and helped organize events for the Austin International Poetry Festival, the Valley International Poetry Festival, the Arkansas Grand Slam, and the World Poetry Slam Championships. Guinn's list of stellar accomplishments includes Two National slam finals appearances, 5-time National Poetry Slam Semi-finalists, Toronto International Slam Co Champ, 5 Time Fort Worth Grand Slam Champ, 13-time NPS Slam Poet, 4-time Austin International Poetry Slam Champion, Great Plains Pile Up Slam Champ, Last Poet Standing Slam Champ and several literary awards including judge for the poetry category for the 2016 NAACP Image Awards. He has been involved in two movie productions and an online web series called Battle Lines. He holds a master's degree in social work.



**Dr. Maria Martha Chavez-Brummel**, the CEO of CTN, is a sociologist who researches, implements, and evaluates social policy. Dr. Chavez holds a bachelor's degree in journalism, psychology, and Spanish literature from Kansas State University and a master's degree in education focusing on curriculum and instruction. She also holds a Master of Philosophy and a Doctor of Philosophy degree from Yale University. At Kansas State, Dr. Chavez created the Minority Admissions Program. She has served as Assistant Dean at Yale College and as a faculty member at Yale. At Yale, Dr. Chavez established the Asian/Chicano- Native American Cultural Center, The Chicano Boricua Studies program (that has evolved into the American Studies, Race, Ethnicity and Migration major), the LULAC Head Start Program (a preschool initiative for

children up to 5 years old), and the building of The Latino Youth Center in the city of New Haven, Connecticut. Maria also worked at Save the Children Federation as Associate Vice President of U.S. Programs and Global Marketing Team and was the principal investigator for the state of the union report on America's Forgotten Children, looking at America's 101 poorest rural places. She established six community learning centers in the Central Valley of California as part of the America's Forgotten Children Campaign. Dr. Chavez also worked with Public Agenda, a research and engagement organization, as a national partner in the Achieving the Dream Initiative. She was a Research and Engagement coach and a Knowledge Development Working Group member.



**Diana Gorostieta Martinez**, member of the Catch the Next Board, is the Coordinator for the Ascender program under the Office of Student Affairs at Austin Community College (ACC). She promotes student engagement and retention by coordinating cultural and educational events, ensuring positive relationships between students and mentors. Diana, an alumna of the Ascender program, earned an Associate's Degree in Business Administration before transferring to Texas State University, where she obtained a Bachelor of Science in Marketing and, in the summer of 2023, completed her Master's Degree in Business Administration with a concentration in International Business. Additionally, Diana co-hosts the ACCTV show "Ready, Set, Ascender!"

This engaging program explores the richness of culture, education, and community within ACC and Central Texas, serving as a platform for celebrating student achievements and inspiring the community. As a proud first-generation Latina and dreamer, Diana is passionate about inspiring others, like herself, to pursue their educational aspirations.



Audrey Hawkersmith, Career Coach, McCombs School of Business.

#### ALUM PANEL



**Ana Juan** is a student at UT Austin. Attended Austin Community College for 2 years after graduating from high school in 2022 with honors. At ACC, I joined ASCENDER, CATCH The NEXT, Career Scholars program, AMIGOS, and traveled to Romania to study abroad in the summer of 2024. I'm a social work major at UT Austin and will graduate in May 2026 with my bachelor's degree. I have joined Texas Exes, the BEVO Buddy organization, and Mujeres in Medicine, and applied to become a SWEEP Mentor. Currently studying for the LSAT as I plan to apply and attend law school. As a first-generation Latina, I aspire to encourage other students to continue their education.



**Juan Higa**, Senior Advisor - Student Success, San Antonio College, and CTN Director of Finance and Personnel. Juan is a First-Generation professional with over 10 years of experience working with a diverse population of traditional and nontraditional students in the Higher Education Sector. Skilled in Student Counseling & Support, Interpersonal Communication, Educational Guidance, Case Loads, Nonprofit Organizations, Communication, & Event Management. He is an ASCENDER graduate from Palo Alto College, and while a student, he contributed to creating the Transfer Motivational Conference. He also created the ASCENDER club manual and the first internship program for CTN.



**Sandra Fernandez** graduated from UT Austin with a bachelor's degree in social work. She works with the Housing Authority of the City of Austin as a Family Self-Sufficiency Coach. She is also a clinical GIFT present for Hospice Austin and has her own business.

#### Student Panel



**Melanie Trujillo**, from Palo Alto College, is the Secretary of the CTN Club. She is also President of the APAC Beauty Society and Treasurer of Club Earth. She is a Senator of the Student Government Association, a Member of LeadHers, a Member of Somas MAS, and a Member of PAC Student Media.



Logan Martinez  
Student Trustee

**Logan Martínez** is studying Political Science at PAC and has a 4.0 GPA. He plans to transfer to Texas A&M University-San Antonio for a bachelor's degree. His future educational goals include obtaining a juris doctorate in constitutional or international law from St. Mary's University. He has served in several leadership roles at Palo Alto College, as Student Body President, President of Catch the Next-PAC chapter, PAC Presidential Ambassador, Vice President for PACMen, and Phi Theta Kappa. He is a work-study in PAC's student life department and has just completed his term as Student Trustee for the Alamo Colleges District Board of Trustees. Before enrolling in the Alamo Colleges, Martinez was a field organizer for the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations. He has since worked on multiple political campaigns for city council and legislative candidates. When not involved in school-related activities, Martinez enjoys spending time with friends and family, including his two nieces, studying philosophy, history, and geopolitics.

### **A Grateful Tribute to Transfer Motivational Conference Sponsors**

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our esteemed sponsors for their generous support of the ASCENDER Program's Transfer Motivational Conference. Their unwavering commitment to fostering educational advancement has made this event possible.



The University of Texas at Austin  
Undergraduate College

The Office of Community Engagement at the University of Texas at Austin's College of Undergraduate Admissions. Whose dedication to empowerment serves as a beacon of inspiration for all.



The Transfer Office, for their tireless efforts in facilitating seamless transitions for students pursuing higher education.



Austin Community  
FOUNDATION

The Austin Community Foundation, Hispanic Impact Fund, and Austin Community Foundation. Your unwavering support propels the Ascender Program forward and

empowers countless students to reach new heights of success.

The LEAD program for their invaluable contributions in nurturing leadership skills and fostering personal growth among transfer students.

### **SPECIAL THANKS TO THE MOTIVATIONAL CONFERENCE PLANNING TEAM:**

Ms. Analy Juan, CTN alum

Mr. Jeff Mayo, CTN board and Transfer Office

Mr. Armando Sanchez, CTN alum and Staff

Daniel Garcia, CTN staff

Juan Higa, CTN alum and Staff

Dr. Anna Alaniz, CTN staff

Dr. Maria Chavez, CTN CEO



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### PARKING:

Brazos Garage BRG 210

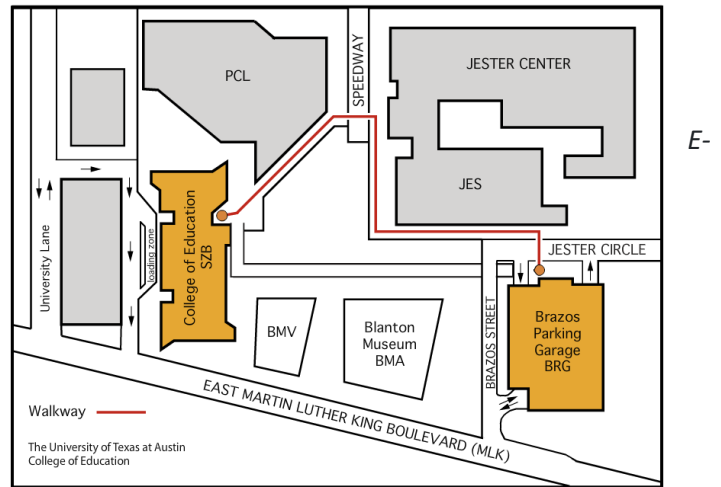
201 E 21st St, Austin, TX 78705

Phone: (512) 471-6126

mail: [garages@utexas.edu](mailto:garages@utexas.edu)

### WHAT TO BRING TO UT

Toiletries: soap, shampoo, towels. Blankets.



### THINGS TO DO IN AUSTIN, TEXAS

See Attachment A.

