

Board of Directors – Candidate Statement

Candidate Name: Clarissa Tejeda

Organization: Texas A&M University-San Antonio



Why are you interested in serving on the SoACE Board of Directors?

I am eager to serve as Director of Access & Community Development because my professional journey has been defined by building inclusive communities and expanding access to career development resources. For nearly 12 years, I have supported and led employer relations and workforce development initiatives at Texas A&M University - San Antonio, a Hispanic-Serving Institution where more than 70% of students are first-generation. In this context, I have designed programs that not only connect students to meaningful opportunities but also address systemic barriers to access, such as food insecurity and limited professional networks. My involvement with SoACE since 2017 has reinforced my belief in the power of collaboration and shared best practices. Through roles on the DEI Taskforce, Conference Committee, and Employer Relations Knowledge Group, I have facilitated dialogue, coordinated programming, and advanced equity-focused initiatives. These experiences have prepared me to contribute at a strategic level, ensuring that SoACE members feel supported, connected, and empowered. This Board position represents an opportunity to extend my commitment to community-building beyond my institution. I am motivated to create platforms that amplify diverse voices, foster collaboration across member institutions, and strengthen the collective impact of SoACE. By leveraging my expertise in employer engagement, strategic partnerships, and inclusive programming, I aim to help SoACE continue to grow as a vibrant, accessible, and supportive professional community.

What qualifications or experiences make you a strong fit for this board position?

I bring a unique combination of professional expertise, association leadership, and community engagement that makes me a strong fit for the Director of Access & Community Development role. With over fourteen years of experience in higher education, I have consistently designed and implemented programs that expand access to career resources and empower student populations. At Texas A&M University - San Antonio, I fostered faculty relations to launch intentional first-year student programming that connects students to industry, developed initiatives tailored to first-generation students, and secured funding to address food insecurity through a \$22K corporate foundation grant. I also collaborated with cross-functional teams to co-author a talent connection grant, securing \$255K to create the

Texas Two-Step: Women in Technology program serving 100 community members, and co-authored a \$162K grant to support faculty in curriculum development for a Data Analytics Certificate. Beyond these initiatives, I have contributed to institutional priorities through campus leadership. I served on the SACSCOC accreditation review team, helping evaluate and strengthen compliance with accreditation standards, and I am currently serving on the steering committee for the Student Affairs divisional strategic planning, where I collaborate with colleagues to set long-term goals and align resources with student success outcomes. These experiences reflect my ability to advance organizational effectiveness and ensure alignment with broader institutional missions. Together, these qualifications position me to strengthen SoACE's community, create platforms for engagement, and ensure members have access to the tools and networks they need to succeed.

SoACE Membership & Leadership Involvement

Involvement and/or leadership roles (SoACE and/or similar organizations):

I have been an active member of the Southern Association of Colleges and Employers (SoACE) since 2017, consistently engaging in initiatives that strengthen the association's mission and community. In 2023, I was appointed to the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Taskforce, where I advised on equity-focused initiatives to ensure diverse perspectives were represented in programming. From 2022 to 2024, I served on the Conference Committee as External Engagement Assistant Chair then Chair, coordinating outreach and building connections that enhanced member participation. I also held a leadership role in the Employer Relations Knowledge Group from 2020 to 2022, serving as Assistant Program Coordinator for webinars that provided professional development and facilitated best practice sharing across the membership. Externally, I am Vice Chair for the City of San Antonio's Commission on Education, where I help advise city council in shaping strategies to improve educational access for San Antonio. I am currently serving on the steering committee for the San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce's Alexander Briseño Leadership Development Program, which is grounded in the ideology of servant leadership, and I also serve as a Board Member for Empower House. These community leadership roles highlight my ability to build partnerships, foster collaboration, and advocate for equitable access to resources. Together, these qualifications position me to strengthen SoACE's community, create inclusive platforms for engagement, and ensure members have access to the tools and networks they need to succeed.