



Scaling Apprenticeship

SA Lead Profile

The **SA Lead Profile** is an interview series with leaders of the Scaling Apprenticeship through Sector-Based Strategies (SA) grant. Each profile will provide you with an introduction to the SA Lead and help you get to know your peers. It also highlights the successes and challenges that the SA Lead has experienced while implementing the grant. Find out who is delivering the magic behind the scenes and their approach to specific aspects of the grant! This profile features **Dallas College** and **Patricia Corley**. She engages employers and promotes apprenticeship initiatives as the Relationship Management Project Leader for the **You're Hired!** grant. Using the SA grant funding, Dallas College developed the You're Hired! grant to serve businesses and apprentices in the healthcare industry.



Patricia Corley
Relationship Management Project Leader
Dallas College, **You're Hired!**

Profile Interview

■ Tell us briefly about your SA project.

The **You're Hired!** program provides flexible apprenticeship programs that meet healthcare sector and industry needs. Dallas College works closely with nine hospital and healthcare employers to understand their workforce challenges and develop innovative apprenticeship solutions that address employee retention and employment skills gaps in their regional workforce. As the Relationship Management Project Leader for employer engagement services, I recruit employers and support them throughout the apprenticeship process. I initially coordinated and revised the employers' apprenticeship goals and commitments once the grant started. I also developed strong relationships with each employer over time and now lead a team of four Relationship Management staff who split up the work that I started.

■ What skills and background do you bring to this grant?

I have been the Relationship Management Project Leader since the fall of 2019. My background prior to this role was in the retail management industry, where I managed and oversaw large stores with up to 300 people under me. In addition, I coordinated and provided training on marketing strategies to store managers across the region.

I really enjoy teaching others and want to finish my career in the education field. When I was younger, my uncle taught humanities classes in Mississippi at Alcorn State University, and I was inspired by this and wanted to teach at a college. My husband reminded me of this goal and lovingly pushed me toward reaching my dreams. I finished my master's degree in 2012 and my doctorate in educational leadership and management around 2017 while still working full-time. After this

One of the things that makes this program so successful is the support from Dallas College leadership. The Chancellor and Vice Chancellor set college-wide goals to advance apprenticeships regionally and nationally through the work at the college. Their goal is to serve 50,000 apprentices by 2030.

grant ends, I hope to teach soft skills and leadership courses at Dallas College.

This is my first position outside of the retail industry since I received my doctorate. I am thrilled to help others reach their career goals. Dallas College held its first apprenticeship cohort in December 2019. Soon after I first started, I participated in the planning efforts for this cohort and helped develop processes and procedures for the program. This increased my program knowledge and comfort level when talking with employers about the program and future cohorts.

When COVID-19 hit in March 2020, the Dallas College team quickly pivoted to virtual learning models for orientations, classrooms, and labs as well as electronic forms and documents for existing and new cohorts. The team cohesion became stronger, and their planning and communications within the **You're Hired!** team, interdepartmental teams, and apprenticeship stakeholders helped propel the team through these new virtual pandemic requirements.

"I am always excited to celebrate and recognize my team members and our stakeholders for their hard work during our quarterly meetings. The hard work has really paid off."

– Patricia Corley,
Relationship Management Project Leader

■ Please share one or two successful strategies or actions that exceeded your expectations. What made them successful?

1. Dallas College hosts quarterly virtual consortium calls with engaged and prospective employers. During one of the calls, the employers shared best practices that worked for their healthcare setting. The Medical City Dallas Hospital employees were in the first PCT cohort, and the hospital representative spoke about Dallas College's pivot to online learning during the pandemic to keep the program momentum for both employers and apprentices. This best practice meeting led to five other hospital systems joining an upcoming cohort. Allowing the employers to provide input and insight to other employers made this strategy so successful.

2. Dallas College added soft skills coursework into the curriculum. Career Connected Learning, previously known as WorkReady U, prepared professional development coursework for the program. Also, the National Healthcareer Association developed a soft skills curriculum specifically for healthcare professionals. The different curricula and approaches are helpful for employers to determine what works best for them, especially when the grant expires. Employers really appreciate the practice tests for the apprentices. They offer more than one, and this really makes a difference for the exam's "pass rate."

■ What hurdles have you overcome?

I had a huge learning curve when I started working for Dallas College. I knew very little about the healthcare industry and the different types of positions, let alone the different levels of training nurses can receive. Teamwork and follow-up on each step of the process were important skills for me to understand.

Recently, Dallas College went through a reorganization, where multiple colleges now fall under one umbrella. The transition had impacts on our partners, including employers participating in apprenticeship programs. For example, the college required new program documents and elements not previously collected; employers had to provide additional information and sign new agreements, as appropriate. My team had to strategically communicate the impacts of the reorganization to employer partners and other stakeholders.

■ How will your team sustain the program beyond the life of the grant?

Our leadership team has established lofty goals for the college. The Chancellor and Vice Chancellor set a goal of 50,000 apprentices by 2030. This has opened interdepartmental partnerships and alliances to reach the goal collectively and to find future funding to support and advance apprenticeships. Also, Dallas College is collaborating with the Texas Workforce Commission, state agencies, and other community stakeholders to align grants and funding to advance apprenticeships.

The **You're Hired!** team asks employers about their plans to sustain the program. They ask questions and

brainstorm strategies about streamlined programs, short-term training, and pre-apprenticeships. Employers asked for a train-the-trainer program to train apprentices internally after this grant ends. When employers piloted this approach, they used a different certifying body and reduced the number of practice tests; this resulted in lower exam pass rates for apprentices. They found that workers have higher pass rates and retention when the college is involved and prefer to have the college continue supporting the apprenticeship program. Dallas College continues to have discussions with them about sustainability planning and other funding opportunities.

■ What tips and strategies would you share with other SA grantees?

- Understand the dynamics of your internal team and build off their strengths. Engage and gain buy-in from your leadership and other departments. Without leadership buy-in and a team that is passionate about apprenticeship programs, your project will face more of an uphill battle to reach success.
- Assess and communicate risks and opportunities to plan for the unexpected. For example, plan for enough instructors to teach cohorts as the program grows.
- Survey and review the cohort and instructor evaluations to ensure that the vision aligns and that the instructors are the right fit for the audience. Develop a communication model to deliver and share feedback with stakeholders.
- Connect with organizations that already have a network of industry stakeholders, such as hospital associations.
- Most importantly, have fun. Metaphorically, when you bake a cake, put in all the required ingredients, and then add additional ingredients to see how people react. For the project, create your quarterly stakeholder meeting agenda and add “fun factor” agenda items to make the meeting interesting and maintain program momentum.

“If you build it, they will come”

**– A quote from the movie
Field of Dreams**