We Are One: Spotlight on College Advancement

From scholarships and grants to business partnerships and community relationships, College Advancement helps connect Lee College with the resources that support student success.

The team works closely with donors, grant funders, businesses, community organizations and the Lee College Foundation to create opportunities for students and advance the college's goals. The Foundation, which has been part of the Lee College community since 1968, plays an important role in this work through its support of scholarships and other college initiatives.

Behind the scenes, making an impact

College Advancement's work revolves around research, collaboration, and relationship-building. Roberto Regas identifies grant opportunities, works with campus leaders to align funding with college priorities, and helps ensure grant compliance. Lauren Heffernan builds relationships with businesses and community partners that can lead to funding, equipment, internships and other resources.

Kerri Hurlbut, Valeria Villalta and Norma Baltazar work with the Foundation Board, donors and students to administer scholarships and coordinate fundraising and stewardship events, including the annual gala and scholarship breakfast.

It's a team effort, and the results are making a difference. The department has already allocated more than $900,000 in scholarships for the 2026–2027 academic year and expects that amount to approach $1 million as additional funding becomes available.

The team also supports grant-funded initiatives across the College. Recent accomplishments include the renewal of two federal TRIO grants serving low-income and first-generation students, Houston Endowment grants supporting Teacher Pathways and HB 8 Transfer Pathways, and the College's first grant from the Elkins Foundation to help address students' basic needs.

Relationships that open doors

College Advancement is about more than fundraising and events. It is about turning community support into meaningful opportunities for our students.

Whether it's helping a scholarship recipient connect with a donor, securing resources to help a student meet a basic need or building a partnership that creates new career opportunities, the team works to turn community support into meaningful results.

For College Advancement, the most rewarding part is seeing those connections make a difference in students' lives.

"We are a small but mighty team that serves as a bridge between Lee College and the donors, funders, businesses, and community partners who believe in its students and programs," said Kerri Hurlbut, Director, Foundation Board Relations and Operations.

"We have a lot of heart for this work, and we take seriously our responsibility to honor the purpose behind every gift, grant, and partnership. The greatest reward is seeing that impact firsthand, whether it is a scholarship recipient meeting the donor who supported

them, a student receiving help with a basic need, or a new partnership opening doors for students.”

Meet the team!

- Roberto Regas, Director, Grants Management
- Kerri Hurlbut, Director, Foundation Board Relations and Operations
- Lauren Heffernan, Director, Development and Strategic Partnerships
- Valeria Villalta, Coordinator, Foundation Scholarships and Operations
- Norma Baltazar, Senior Administrative Specialist
- Leslie Gallagher, Chief of Staff; Vice President, Strategic Initiatives & External Affairs; Interim Executive Director, Lee College Foundation; and Chief Advancement Officer