

# *The Hog Call*



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OFFICE OF  
EMPLOYEE SERVICES

## *Meet Our Team!*



*Eric Nykanen -Manager, Employee Relations and Development*

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**How long have you been with Texas A&M University-Kingsville?**

I've been with Texas A&M University-Kingsville since October 2024. Even in a short time, it's been a rewarding experience. I've felt welcomed, supported, and proud to be part of a community that's truly committed to making a difference.

**Where did you graduate from?**

I earned my degree from the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities, where I studied at the Carlson School of Management. It was a great foundation that shaped much of my professional journey.

**What do you enjoy most about your role?**

I have the unique opportunity to make a real difference. Whether it's helping someone grow, giving them the tools they need to succeed, or supporting them when they need to reset and refocus. I get to have a direct impact on people's lives. That kind of purpose is what keeps me motivated every day.

**What is your fondest memory at TAMUK?**

One moment that stands out was the Service Award Ceremony. I was proud of how our entire team came together to make it a meaningful experience. Everyone contributed in a way that truly showcased our department's commitment and teamwork — it felt great to be part of something so intentional and positive.

**If you could switch roles with another employee for a day, which role would you choose and why?**

I'd love to be a field researcher studying endangered species, even if just for a day. There's something deeply intriguing about exploring and protecting rare wildlife, and the opportunity to witness something truly unique in nature would be unforgettable.



**EMPLOYEE RELATIONS**

## ***Investing in Our Future Leaders: The President's Leadership Academy***

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*At Texas A&M University–Kingsville, leadership is more than a title—it's a mindset and a commitment to growth. That's why the **President's Leadership Academy** was created: to invest in the professional and personal development of our outstanding staff and faculty and to foster the next generation of campus leaders.*

*The Academy is a year-long leadership development program designed to strengthen participants' knowledge of university operations, leadership principles, and strategic planning. Through monthly sessions led by campus leaders and guest speakers, participants gain insight into the inner workings of higher education and develop skills in communication, collaboration, and innovation.*

*Why do we have it? Because we believe our people are our greatest asset. The President's Leadership Academy is about recognizing and empowering those who show a passion for making a positive impact across campus. It's also about building community and creating a culture of support, excellence, and continuous learning.*

*This summer, we celebrated the graduation of our most recent cohort—an incredible group of professionals who demonstrated dedication, growth, and a true commitment to Javelina leadership. You can check out their photo and names featured below. Please join us in congratulating them on this important achievement!*

*We're now in the process of selecting candidates for the upcoming year, and the excitement is building. If you've applied or been nominated, stay tuned—we can't wait to welcome the next class of leaders who will continue to move TAMUK forward.*

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***President's Leadership Academy***

Top row - Left to right

Guadalupe Villarreal, Miao Zhuang, Jeff West, Jesus Reina, Austin McCoy, Hernan Hernandez

Bottom Row - Left to right

Crystal Garcia, Katelyn Garza, Priscilla Guerra, Maria Lopez, Ann Taylor, Dr. Venugopal Mendu

Graduates not pictured: Blanca Maldonado, Dr. Nuri Yilmazer, Javier Mendoza, Javier Trevino



***President's Aspiring Leadership Academy***

Top row - Left to right

Troy Sanchez, Ruben Hernandez, Alexis Cano, Rocio Polendo, Veronica Ortiz, Madison Lakers

Bottom row - Left to right

Dr. Hui Shen, Francis Regalado, Kristen Perez, Dr. Fulden Sara De Wissinger, Priscilla Binarao, Paige de Vaudrecourt, Samantha Gonzalez

Graduates not pictured: Christina Aranda, Melanie Duran, Sarai Guillen, Tamra Guillen, Kyle Millsap, Dr. Maria Donato-Molina



## ***Wellness & Refresh: Kona Ice***

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### ***Cool Down and Celebrate!***

Faculty and staff are invited to enjoy a refreshing Kona Ice on **Wednesday, August 6, 2025**, from **2:00 – 4:00 PM** behind **College Hall**. It's the perfect midweek pick-me-up and a great chance to mingle with colleagues.

Note: Student workers are welcome to join but will need to purchase their own snow cones.



## **August TIAA Webinars: Learn, Plan & Thrive**

Get your financial future in shape this summer with TIAA's free live webinars — designed to help you take control of your retirement and long-term wellness. Whether you're actively planning or just getting started, these sessions are practical, easy to follow, and open to all employees.

## **Upcoming Webinars in August**

### **Your Guide to Living Well in Retirement**

**Date:** August 14 at 11 a.m. (CT)

Discover strategies to help you not only retire, but thrive in retirement.

### **Live Long and Prosper: Your Guide to Understanding Longevity**

**Date:** August 28 at 2 p.m. (CT)

Learn how longevity impacts your finances, health, and personal planning — and how to prepare wisely for the years ahead.

**Register now** at: [tiaa.org/webinarschedule](https://tiaa.org/webinarschedule)

These webinars are free and open to all employees. Just choose the sessions that interest you and sign up — it's that easy.

### **Prefer to learn on your own time?**

Explore TIAA's *Essentials with TIAA* YouTube series for quick, jargon-free videos on topics like budgeting, saving, investing, and retirement basics. Most videos are under five minutes and packed with helpful tips.

Watch here: [Essentials Playlist](#)

## ***Benefits Corner: Supporting You This August***

Take a moment for yourself this month—your well-being matters.

**Upcoming Webinar:** Men's Mental Wellness

**Date:** August 20, 2025

**Location:** Virtual via Zoom

**Register here:** [Men's Mental Health Webinar](#)

This session is open to all faculty and staff. Join us for an important conversation on men's mental health and practical tools for managing stress and supporting one another.

## ***August Wellness Webinars from BCBSTX***

This month, take a moment for yourself. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas (BCBSTX) is offering a series of free, live wellness webinars available to all health plan members. Whether you're a parent, a professional, or someone working on personal growth, there's something here for you.

### **Upcoming Webinars:**

#### **Setting Boundaries for Well-Being: The Art of Assertiveness**

**Thursday, August 7 | 10–10:30 AM CST**

Learn how to speak up with confidence and set healthy boundaries without the guilt.

#### **Raising Future-Ready Kids 1: Resilience & Grit**

**Wednesday, August 13 | 11–11:30 AM CST**

Discover strategies to help your kids develop the resilience and grit needed to thrive in today's world.

#### **Time Management: Capturing Our Time Thieves**

**Friday, August 15 | 12–12:30 PM CST**

Identify common time-wasters and learn practical tools to help you stay on track and accomplish your goals.

#### **Raising Future-Ready Kids 2: Anxiety and Depression**

**Wednesday, August 20 | 11–11:30 AM CST**

Recognize the signs of anxiety and depression in children and explore Cognitive Behavioral Therapy strategies that can help.

#### **Raising Future-Ready Kids 3: Empowering Parents in a Social Media World**

**Wednesday, August 27 | 11–11:30 AM CST**

Gain research-backed tips to help your kids build a healthy relationship with technology and social media.

To register, visit: [Register Here!](#) and use the access code **BETTERME**.

Take advantage of these opportunities to boost your emotional well-being. These sessions are available at no cost to all BCBSTX health plan members.



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### ***Step Challenge Success: A Javelina Win!***

We're excited to share the results of our inaugural 2025 WebMD Invitational Challenge, a systemwide event hosted by The Texas A&M University System. This friendly competition brought together teams from across the state in a celebration of wellness, teamwork, and movement.

#### **Here's how we did:**

- 140 teams participated across the system
- 565 individuals joined the challenge
- Our very own Royal Hogs finished in an impressive third place!

Special congratulations to **Mildred Slaughter**, who claimed second place overall as an individual with an incredible **1,412,687 steps!**

Thanks to all who stepped up and represented Javelina Nation with such enthusiasm and energy.



Left to right

Mildred Slaughter, Amanda Perez-Rodriguez, Nahun Jimenez, Theresa Perez, Dr. Mariya Pachman



EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

# ***Hiring Corner: Stay Ready, Stay Compliant***

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## **Upcoming New Hire Orientation Dates**

Mark your calendars—staff orientation sessions for new employees are scheduled on the following Mondays:

**September 8, 2025**

**September 22, 2025**

**October 6, 2025**

**October 20, 2025**

**November 3, 2025**

**November 17, 2025**

**December 1, 2025**

**December 15, 2025**

If you serve on a search committee, are a hiring manager, or participate in the recruitment process, you are required to complete the **Recruiting and Hiring Best Practices Training** on an annual basis.

### **Training Details - Staff Hiring:**

**When:** Every Wednesday at 10:00 AM

**Where:** Microsoft Teams

**Register:** [Click here to register!](#)

## ***Hiring Packet Checklist (Staff Positions)***

**Before submitting hiring packets to HR, please include the following documents:**

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- **Justification Memo** – Outlines the selection rationale and salary
- **Hiring Matrix** – Includes all applicants, scoring, and action codes
- **Interview Questions and Notes** – From each search committee member
- **Reference Checks** – Documented feedback for the final candidate
- **Degree Verification Form** – For confirming education requirements
- **Credential Evaluation** – Required for all teaching faculty roles

If you have any questions or need help with hiring procedures, please reach out to HR—we're here to support you every step of the way.

### ***Hiring Student Employees? Don't Skip the Training!***

If you're hiring student workers, make sure you're up to speed on the student employment process. This training covers required documentation, timelines, and best practices for supervising student employees.

#### ***Student Employment Hiring Manager Training Details:***

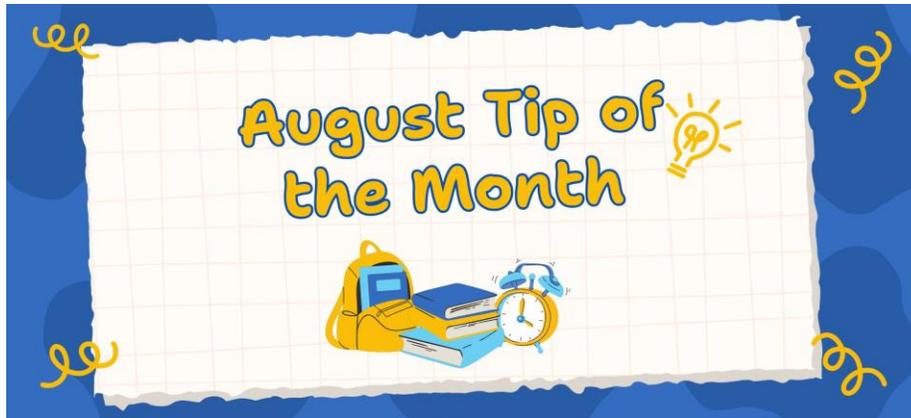
##### **Dates Offered:**

- August 5, 2025
- August 12, 2025
- September 2, 2025
- September 9, 2025
- October 7, 2025
- October 14, 2025

**Location:** Javelina Dining Hall

**Register Here:** [Hiring Manager Training](#)

This session is **strongly encouraged** for all supervisors hiring student employees to ensure a smooth and compliant onboarding process.



### ***Javelina Insider: Tip of the Month***

***Welcome to the busy season!***

As the campus comes back to life and the emails start rolling in, don't forget—you set the tone. Take a little time this month to ease back in: tidy up your space, refresh your calendar, and set one or two goals that actually excite you.

Instead of jumping into everything at once, pace yourself. Start with what's most important, and don't forget to carve out time for breaks—whether it's a quick walk, a snack, or a moment to catch your breath. A clear mind makes everything run smoother.

You've got this, Javelinas!