Texas Southern University Welcomes Yvette Barker, New Housing Director

Yvette Barker has been hired as the new Director of Housing at Texas Southern University. Barker, a student housing professional with more than 18 years of experience in general management, training, and strategic planning, comes from Prairie View A&M University where she served as General Manager for the American Campus Communities.

Barker will be charged with overseeing TSU’s # of housing complexes including the new freshman dorm slated to open later this year.

Barker earned her bachelor’s degree in Public Administration from Talladega College and her Masters of Education from Langston University. She will report directly to the Office of the President.

Former University employee indicted, charges include theft by public servant & misappropriation of fiduciary property

Investigation Uncovered “Dummy & Shell Companies” Used to Commit Fraud

A former Texas Southern University employee was indicted Thursday night by the Harris County District Attorney’s Office on two charges: theft by a public servant and misappropriation of fiduciary property.

Chandra Anderson, former administrative assistant at KTSU, was charged March 3, for defrauding the State of nearly $133,430. An internal investigation began when interim general manager of the campus radio station James Lancaster reported fraudulent business transactions, including suspicious invoices and what appeared to be bogus billing records. Anderson, who had worked at KTSU since 2001, and was terminated on August 10 2015.

Texas Southern University Police Department collaborated with the Harris County District Attorney’s office in an investigation that spanned 6-8 months. On last week the District Attorney’s office reported that Ms. Anderson confessed to the fraudulent activity.

“Fraudulent behavior is absolutely not tolerated and we will prosecute any and all employees who abuse their roles to steal from this university. We will exercise the full extent of the law to prosecute such criminal activity,” stated Eva Pickens, VP of University Advancement and University spokesperson.

Following the reported suspicion by Lancaster, the university began a review of invoices that normally had been reviewed by the accused, and recognized that unusual invoices were submitted for payment. University police and the internal auditor’s office were brought in to conduct further review. The audit revealed exceptions to standard protocols, and alleged acts of wrongdoing that included the awarding of contracts to shell or dummy corporations and billings for duplicate work.

As a result of the audit, the investigations and the findings, TSU officials have implemented several new measures and tightened controls regarding procurement procedures. Identified gaps have been closed and new safeguards have been implemented to assure that the university’s procurement and contracting processes are more secure and better protected from fraud.

TSU officials have taken the following actions in direct response to the loopholes that were identified in the university’s procurement procedures:

- Filed a claim with our crime insurance coverage insurer for reimbursement of our loss.
- Transferred KTSU to report to the Vice President for University Advancement, to whom the business operation team now reports;
- Hired a new full-time General Manager for KTSU;
- Initiation of an internal monitoring process of all contracts greater than $25,000 and the requirement of up to three levels of review/ signatures;
- Rigorous post award reviews of all contracts from the past two years that exceeded $100,000;
- Established a low threshold for repetitive contracts with single-signature authorization
- Increased scrutiny of vendors and a more rigorous vendor-approval process; and
- Utilization of fraud prevention software

TSU Vice President for Administration and Finance Edward Ness has implemented changes in the university’s procurement and contracting processes. For instance he has increased the number and level of review and verification for disbursements and provided additional training for business personnel.

Texas students receive EPA grants for sustainable projects

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) awarded a People, Prosperity and the Planet (P3) grant to TSU researcher Hyun-Min Hwang to develop new, sustainable products and strategies. His project titled Automated Hydroponic Green Roof with Rainwater Recycling Infrastructure for Residential and Commercial Buildings seeks to produce a prototype of a low-cost, automated, and sustainable green roof with rainwater recycling infrastructure and hydroponic system that can be easily installed for both commercial buildings and residential houses.

Funding for the P3 competition is divided into two phases. Teams are selected to receive grants of up to $15,000 to fund the development of their projects, then teams compete for awards of up to $75,000 to further develop their designs and potentially bring them to the marketplace.

EPA's P3 Program is a unique college competition for designing solutions for a sustainable future. P3 offers students quality hands-on experience that brings their classroom learning to life.

Cuba Gooding Jr., visits TSU

More photos on page 3
Awards show spotlights TSU talent

The People’s Family Workshop for the Arts will present the Mirror of Life Awards on Saturday, March 12, 2016 at the Deluxe Theater starting at 7:00 p.m. This unprecedented program, a pre-show event to the grand opening of the Deluxe Theater, is presented to show talent winners of the Arts Expo and Talent Competition of the Peoples’ Workshop that is held annually each summer. It will serve as a spotlight for talented Texas Southern University students as well as award special recognition to current TSU professor Dr. Dianne Jemison-Pollard and retired professor Benjamin J. Butler, in honor of their contribution to arts education.

Professor Howard C. Harris, Jr., A.Mus.D. is the founder of the People’s Family Workshop for the Arts, and Director/Founder Emeritus of the TSU Jazz program.

Tickets are $15 and $30 and will be available at the door. Tickets may be reserved for will-call on the day of the show by call or text to (281) 923-6057 or email info@pfwonline.org. The Deluxe Theater is located at 3303 Lyons Ave., in Houston’s historical Fifth Ward.

Biology student excels during NASA internship

In the summer of 2014, Dayana Abdullah – Smoot was one of NASA’s Minority University Research and Education Program students selected to work at the NASA Johnson Space Center. She was placed in the Education Department. At the end of the 10 weeks, Abdullah – Smoot had organized and executed a teacher’s workshop for 6th - 8th grade STEM disciplined educators. She was also selected to be the Sustainability Champion for her idea to create an Educator Guide for the NASA Johnson Space Center Sustainability Team.

In 2015, she was brought back to create the guide. The Educator Guide follows the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), which is the base curriculum for all Texas public schools. The guide will be used to promote Environmental Sustainability while informing the community of what NASA Johnson Space Center is doing to lower their Carbon Footprint. If given the opportunity, Abdullah – Smoot would like to use this guide as an outreach tool to share her story about the wonderful opportunities at TSU and NASA.

Abdullah – Smoot will graduate in August with her Bachelor’s degree in Biology.

TSU grad featured by Congressional Black Caucus

Mecole’ Hayes, a recent TSU graduate, was spotlighted by the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. Hayes received a Bachelor of Arts in Print Journalism with a minor in Speech Communications. Mecole’ served two terms as Editor-in-Chief of Texas Southern’s premiere student newspaper, The TSU Herald and served as the undergraduate Regional Journalist for the South West Region of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, of which she is also a proud member. She is a dedicated member of the NAACP and has volunteered with Goodwill Industries. Mecole’s work in journalism has been recognized by the National Association of Black Journalists, Who’s Who among Colleges and Universities, and the National Newspaper Publishers Association. This spring, Mecole will serve in the office of Congressman Marc Veasey.

TSU-AMA receives National Sales Network scholarship

The Jesse H. Jones School of Business American Marketing Association (AMA) chapter was recently awarded a $1,000 scholarship from the National Sales Network to help further their chapter initiatives for the semester. In addition, AMA faculty advisor Dr. Delonia O. Cooley was selected to host the 38th annual AMA International Collegiate Conference March 17-19, in New Orleans. TSU’s AMA is vying for the chance to become the first ever Small Chapter of the Year out of over 100 small chapters that have less than 25 members. Pictured from left, are TSU-AMA members LaCecia Jackson, Irene Coates, Alisha White, president, and Nhien Dinh, Historian.

TSU students get high marks, draw large crowd to Johnnie B. Goode stage play

Johnnie B. Goode, the stage play written by TSU’s Theatre Coordinator Thomas Meloncon, which paid tribute to the Blues, was a major hit February 26-27 in Sawyer Auditorium. Staged in 1950’s Port Arthur, TX., Johnnie B. Goode showcased TSU’s finest student thespians to packed audiences of students, faculty, staff, alumni and Blues lovers from Houston to Port Arthur for both performances.

Regina Hearne (Claudia) set the stage with her opening performance of the classic Blues hit Baby What You Want Me To Do. TSU alumnius and former professional football player Lloyd Mumphord’s (Blind Harmonica Joe) harmonica gave the play its authentic Blues flavor. Riveting performances by Renald Moore (Johnnie A. Goode), Sidney Odom (Johnnie B. Goode), Susan Loren (Elizabeth Goode), Anthony August (Sleepy Goode), Hindolo Bongay (Duce), Ian Thomas (Red Dog), Fairen Brock (Retha Goode) and Emmanuel Edwards (Understudy/Sleepy Goode) kept the audience engaged and entertained throughout.

According to Meloncon, Johnnie B. Goode attracted the largest audience in his tenure for a stage play. He adds, “This was a whirlwind experience for our students,” Meloncon said. “The exposure our students got from appearing live on FOX 26, KTSU 90.9, KCOH, and Social Media is immeasurable and valuable towards their future in acting.”

The staff in the Office and University Advancement on behalf of the Theater Department would like to thank everyone who purchased a ticket to support this endeavor to feature our students.
Thurgood Marshall School of Law student gets hands-on training in Texas government

Senator Rodney Ellis (D-Houston) introduced the 2016 class for the Texas Legislative Internship Program (TLIP), including Bailee Pender from the Thurgood Marshall School of Law. Ms. Pender is working at the Harris County Public Defender's Office.

"By participating in the TLIP program, I hope to appreciate the value of representing indigent defendants, as well as understanding the process of criminal defense work," said Ms. Pender. "This program is phenomenal because it gives students the opportunity to use what they have learned in law school in the workforce."

"I'm so proud of these students and their dedication to public service," said Senator Ellis. "Just as hundreds have before them, they are using this opportunity to gain valuable, firsthand knowledge into how government works and insight into the critical issues facing Texas."

Senator Ellis was inspired to create TLIP in 1990 because of his mentor, the late Congressman Mickey Leland, who stressed the importance of using one's individual success to provide opportunities for others. As his Chief of Staff, Ellis established an internship program in Congressman Leland's office and carried on that tradition when elected to public office.

What began as a small group of students 25 years ago has blossomed into one of the most successful legislative internship programs in the nation. TLIP has provided more 670 students valuable experiences in the Texas Legislature, the offices of the Texas Governor, Lieutenant Governor and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, city and county offices, and even Texas Monthly magazine. Past TLIPers have gone on to work in the White House, Congress, various state agencies, and the private sector, and three are current members of the Texas House of Representatives.

Bailee Pender graduated from Northland Christian High School. She attended the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor and graduated with a major in Communication and a Minor in English. She decided to go to Thurgood Marshall School of Law straight after college, where she graduated in May 2015 and became a licensed attorney in November 2015.