

**TJCSGA Region 2 - 2019**  
**Advisor of the Year: Richland College**  
**Kelly Sonnanstine**

**To Whom Deserves the Honor**



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## **To Whom Deserves the Honor**

Have you ever met someone who can plan a massive event in less than three days? Have you ever met someone with a wide range of creative skills including technology, construction, and crafting? Have you ever met someone with brilliant and outstanding event planning talents? I had not until I met my advisor, Kelly Sonnanstine because without her the Richland College Student Government Association (SGA) could not and would not function probably. Many times when people nominate someone for an award, it does not necessarily mean they deserve it, but this advisor truly does!

Miss Kelly shows passion and works diligently to make events happen for the students of Richland College. For instance, she helped to innovate and organize the Food Pantry on campus where students can come get food whenever they need it. This allows them to focus on their education rather than their stomach. Also, she was the primary planner in the Voter Rally and the Round Table Talk that took place on campus. Most of the staff members in the OSU were away when the call came in so she was basically on her own to put together this event. She did it in just two and ½ days without much help, now that is some amazing talent.

Some people are born with skills or some of them can develop over time she has a raw gift with creating flyers and videos. One can often find Miss Kelly in her office creating a flyer for an events without even being asked. She finds no qualms in spending hours on editing a video. In fact, she enjoys the challenge.

Besides all her talent and hard work if you need someone to talk to she will always be there for you to help guide you if you need anything at all. Students who are going through personal issues and in need of a friend; without hesitating, this advisor was there for them when they need someone. It is not easy to find someone who is willing to listen to you peel back layers of self-disclosure, but this advisor will.

### **Section 1: Advisor's role in their local SGA**

Miss Kelly has served as the primary advisor of the Student Government Association (SGA) at Richland College for 4 years. Her determination, character, and unconditional love for SGA and its members is one that has no bounds. She dedicates her time towards ensuring that all our projects are carried out efficiently. She expects nothing but the best from us as students and as an eBoard. She is not afraid to become the “mean mom” when someone gets out of line. We like to say that “she is the cool aunt until she isn’t.” Miss Kelly has rarely missed a single SGA meeting and even when she has a conflict she ensures that everything is well taken care of. She is more than just an advisor to the officers and members, she is a friend. Miss Kelly genuinely cares for each of us and often goes out of her way to get the best for us. Her intelligence and creativity have proven to be invaluable to us. Her guidance has changed us all.

Miss Kelly's creativity really sparkled this year as she helped us to organize our voter registration drive.

Because of her strategic outlook on things, we were able to expand our project into 5 separate buildings on campus which we kept staffed with volunteer deputy registrars from the Richland Votes Initiative. Miss Kelly kept the VDRs stocked with swag and candy while we were in class and then as we got out we went to those tables to help out as well. Over 8 school days, we were able to register 1143 new voters and about ½ of them happened on the first day alone.

Miss Kelly always keeps us in mind when opportunities arise on campus. Because of this, we were able to host the Richland Votes with America Rally but also had a private round table discussion with US Representative Colin Allred. She heard he was using the campus for a town hall meeting, so her immediate thought was how can the SGA be involved. She contacted his people and made arrangements for our round table discussion.

In her time as our primary SGA advisor, Miss Kelly has helped us to organize our Community College Day at the Capital twice. Although we were reluctant at first, Miss Kelly was able to help us see that making an impression is the first step in making a change and creating a New Kind of Texas. A number of staff members in the capital gave us compliments on our matching uniform and some even remembered Richland from 2 years ago as the “purple tie school.” Our trip to Austin was memorable and productive as we stayed busy the entire time. After all of our visits in the capital on the first day, we headed over to UT to meet with the SGA at the flagship school of the University of Texas system. It was fascinating to see so many people participating in their mock debates. They used Robert’s Rules like professionals. It was an amazing experience to meet them and understand how Student Government works at an University level. Miss Kelly guided Student Government Officers and Senators through the trip quite like a Mother Duck. All the members were always in line and on time thanks to Miss Kelly’s constant vigilance.

## **Section 2: Advisor’s role in community events not associated with SGA**

As the Coordinator of New Students Orientation at Richland College, Miss Kelly guides students through their first steps at Richland College. She assists around 3,000 students per year through New Student Orientation sessions. Since she started at Richland she has been the face of Orientation for almost 21,000 students. She also organizes ASK ME tables at the start of each semester to help those students who are still a bit lost. During the time she isn’t guiding new students through campus life, she also works as the advisor for the Student Ambassadors program. Her enthusiasm for this group of students has helped increase its membership population to around 35. Her presence at Richland College motivates the students to pick up the pace and strive to be leaders. For this goal, Miss Kelly developed the Student Leadership Institute which attracts students to this day. Miss Kelly doesn’t hesitate to help students and faculty members to reach their potential. She serves the Richland College Community as a DART/DCCCD liaison, a Certified Title IX investigator, the coordinator for the North Texas

Food Bank Mobile Food Pantry, and the coordinator for the RLC Food Pantry. She is not only an inspiration for the students but a consultant for the staff members as well. She has served as both the treasurer and the vice president for the Professional Support Staff Association. In these roles, Miss Kelly represents the staff members much like a leader of the Student Government Association represents the students. She has been nominated as the PSSA staff member of the year award for 3 years in a row. Perhaps this year, she will earn that coveted parking spot.

Miss Kelly's influence reaches not just the current students at Richland College but those to come as well. She helped coordinate a College Knowledge Summit put on by the Student Leadership Institute. College Knowledge Summit invited students from local high schools to learn about the college lifestyle before they enrolled. Any questions, doubts, and misconceptions they had about the daunting college life were cleared up. Miss Kelly has guided students towards a better tomorrow and she has always pushed them to believe in themselves.

Miss Kelly represents Richland College and the DCCCD at many National Conferences. She has presented at the Annual FYE conference, the NODA annual conference, and the NODA Region 4 annual conference. Her vigil over the lives of the students and staff members remains steadfast. Her every effort is to better the lives of those around and insure that their future at Richland College is secure and enjoyable.

Until this year, the biggest event that Miss Kelly organized for the Richland College Community, was booking Freedom Rider Joan Trumpauer Mulholland as a guest speaker. Joan was a civil rights activist during the 60s and her picture has been featured in a number of textbooks. It is the picture of the students sitting at the lunch counter getting food dumped on their heads. That event filled our auditorium with about 350 people.

Miss Kelly outdid herself this year, as she worked with The Student Voter Initiative and Voto Latino to put together a youth voter rally featuring America Ferrera, Liza Koshy, and Alicia Keys. Not only did she put together this extraordinary event but she did it in 2.5 days. The estimated attendance for the voter rally was 3200 students. Her resolve to include students in all events was evident through the scheduling of 10 different student speakers that took part in the rally itself. And since those students, that normally would have had the "front row" were going to miss all the excitement, Miss Kelly made arrangements with the celebrity guests to have a student round table after the rally. Those 10 students plus some from student media all got to spend some time with our guests. Miss Kelly's belief that Richland College is a treasure trove of diverse mindsets and cultures, pushed her to maximize her efforts in creating an involved community. She understood that the Voter Rally was imperative to improve the atmosphere of Richland College in terms of voting and elections. Going into the future, she would continue her efforts to create an educated environment at Richland College.

Miss Kelly's generosity does not just apply to the Richland College Community, but she seems to leave

a legacy wherever she goes. While living in Florida, she volunteered with the American Cancer Society for 13 years and served on every committee possible including serving as the chairperson for the Relay For Life of Fort Myers Beach. That particular 24-hour event exceeded its goal of \$100,000 dollars raised in less than 6 hours. She even kept her promise with the rest of the teams and dyed her hair purple. In another example, Miss Kelly helped organized a church event called “Feeding the 5000” in Fort Myers, Florida where she was in charge of organizing the delivery of hot meals to needy families on Thanksgiving Day; as a result, she helped contribute to serving over 10,000 meals in that community. The impact that Kelly made put a smile on many faces and allowed them to not have to worry about going hungry on Thanksgiving Day. By the way, she still participates in this event on a long distance basis. These events show her dedication and mindset on making a difference not only in the community but in people’s lives and how down to earth she is in making those differences.

### **Section 3: Advisor’s role in TJCSGA region 2 activities**

TJCSGA Region 2 also benefits by working with Miss Kelly. She is currently serving as the co-advisor for the Awards committee where she works to make sure that everyone is on the same page. During her first year as our primary SGA advisor, 2016-2017, she served as the advisor to the Region 2 secretary. She served as the 2017-2018 Host School advisor for Region 2 and the 2017-2018 Co-Advisor for the Region 2 Executive Board. With her background in organizing large scale events, she was able to help Richland organize and execute both the Fall and Spring Conferences with a theme and flare that could rival any large scale event with a budget.

### **Section 4: Advisor’s role in TJCSGA State activities**

Although Miss Kelly’s full-time job duties as coordinator for NSO and our food pantry/truck keep her too busy to make a huge commitment to TJCSGA on a state level, she is still dedicated to the TJCSGA organization and is willing to do as much as she can to support the mission of TJCSGA. 2019 will be Miss Kelly’s 4th trip to the TJCSGA state conference. Each time we go, we have a new or partially new group of students so Miss Kelly starts the training over each time. Our chapter goes through multiple training sessions on everything was “What is business dress” to “Using table manners” before we attend. In 2017 Miss Kelly was the acting-advisor to our school’s campaign for state secretary. In 2018, Miss Kelly served as the co-advisor for the Legislative Committee. And this year, she served as the “fill in” advisor when the President school advisor had a mandatory engagement that could not be missed. Each year, her contributions grow as she continues to be more and more familiar with TJCSGA. I have even witnessed her speaking with and advising students from other schools during a crisis while their own advisor was unavailable. One of the greatest things about Miss Kelly is that she is not afraid to tell a student that she doesn’t know something. Her answer is never just “I don’t know.” It is always “I’m not sure, let’s go find out.”

## **Section 5: Home Life/Education**

Miss Kelly graduated from Newberry College, in Newberry, South Carolina with a Bachelor of Arts in Communication. In addition, she has a double Master's Degree in Public Administration (Magna Cum Laude) and Professional Leadership Studies (Cum Laude) from Hodges University in Fort Myers, Florida. Furthermore, Miss Kelly has used her degrees to change lives at many different levels, from 1993 to the present day. Miss Kelly's considerable effort and creativity played an integral role in earning her awards. As an Area Promotions Manager, she won the Cobb Theatres/Buena Vista Promotional Contest for Disney's The Lion King. By collaborating with public influencers such as radio shows and utilizing advertisements, Miss Kelly promoted the film successfully and won the national award. This laid the groundwork for what she masterfully does today – organize events and inspire students.

Miss Kelly is the primary breadwinner for her family. Her mother and older brother both live with her in Rowlett, Texas. She is also the proud dog mom to Daisy Mae Belle, a 12-year-old Toy Fox Terrier and the unofficial mascot of our SGA. Daisy Mae attends any weekend work sessions that she can and she is always dressed in her finest attire.

### **Conclusion**

Miss Kelly has changed the lives of those around for the better. As an advisor, she has gone above and beyond to build a better for the Richland's community and it's students. As far as a human being, she has touched each and every person she has met. Every second of Miss Kelly's life has been dedicated to making someone's life better in some shape or form. The list of achievements and messages that Miss Kelly has ingrained into our community goes on and on, and so does our appreciation for her efforts. In fact, she has become an inseparable part of what TJCSGA represents and how our local SGA impacts the students of Richland College. Her efforts have changed the environment the students of Richland College experience. They are more involved in their community and more interested in changing themselves and the various communities that they are a part of. Her work as Coordinator of New Student Orientation in the Office of Student Life allows her to engage with students, staff and faculty. This gives her the opportunity to act as the bridge between students and the administration, thus ensuring a healthy line of communication. Miss Kelly has shown diligence, vigor, and creativity in her work and she has acted as a friend, an advisor, and a mentor to countless people. Every single one of these people can vouch that Richland College and its community has transformed into a bright place, full of people who are full of hope and are always looking to the future with Kelly Sonnanstine as their beacon.





**Richland College**

DALLAS COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

February 27, 2019

To whom it may concern:

I would like to nominate Kelly Sonnanstine for OAdvisor of the Year with Region II of the Texas Junior College Student Government Association for her excellent work helping students learn about civics, civic participation and what it means to be a U.S. citizen. She and SGA do this through informative student activities, exciting campus events and community collaborations.

With a campus of 20,000 full-time students who hail from 130 different countries and speak 79 different languages, civics has been in the forefront of many students' minds during the 2018-2019 school years. In response to changes in immigration policy, SGA has coordinated panel discussions to address student concerns, help them understand the changes in law and for those who need, to meet with immigration attorneys to file paperwork. With the Texas Legislature in session, she took SGA leaders to Austin to meet with their representatives and discuss issues of importance to students.

The SGA put on a fantastic campus event to raise the awareness of the 2018 election and the importance of voting. Students were given the opportunity to register to vote, meet with representatives of different political organizations and attend a get-out-the-vote campus rally, led by celebrities Alicia Keys, America Ferrera and Liza Koshy. That event drew close to 3,200 students, many of whom cast their ballots at the campus polling place the same day. SGA and Student Media leaders met with the campus guests in a live interview in the Richland Chronicle TV studio.

SGA has collaborated with Richland Student Media on several occasions allowing students in both organizations to learn about the importance of journalism to democracy. SGA representatives visit the newsroom regularly to offer story ideas and participate in interviews. Kelly and her students host a weekly radio show in which they discuss student and community issues. And, in an exciting turn of events, SGA and Student Media leadership participated in a town hall meeting with newly-elected U.S. Representative Colin Allred during which they were able to discuss the government shutdown, national and international issues and have some fun by asking who he (a former NFL football player) thought would win the Super Bowl.

Kelly Sonnanstine has provided excellent leadership to SGA as an organization and inspired her students to raise their expectations of themselves and the world around them. She has done this in a fun and accessible way and shown her students that they too can make a difference in the world around them.

Kelly Sonnanstine is highly deserving of this award.

Sincerely,

*Meg Fullwood*

Margaret Fullwood  
Learning Laboratory Specialist  
Journalism/Student Media  
Richland College

# Miss Kelly @ Richland





