

Greetings. I am Karen Herrera, the Director of Fine Arts for McAllen ISD. I hope you will take the time to read the following information regarding an exciting opportunity for arts students in the Rio Grande Valley which is coming up in September.

The Fine Arts Department at the University of Texas at Austin has taken note of the high quality arts education in our area and is actively seeking our students to enter its art's programs. Over the past year, I have been working closely with the Associate Dean of Fine Arts, Dr. Hunter March and the Dean of the Fine Arts Department, Dr. Douglas Dempster in an effort to bridge a collaborative and mutually beneficial relationship between students in our area and UT Austin.

As you are aware, the majority of our students do not pursue post secondary educational opportunities in music or other arts genres. This is due to any number of factors including lack of knowledge regarding job opportunities in the arts other than teaching and performance, misinformation about standards and procedures for admittance into arts programs at the university level and financial concerns among others.

In an effort to better inform students about opportunities available to them in the arts, to help prepare them for entrance into quality arts post secondary institutions and to increase student entrance into the University of Texas Austin Fine Arts Department, the University is sponsoring "Become a Longhorn" in McAllen on Monday, September 13 from 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. at McAllen High School. Interested students of the arts in grades 9-12, their parents, counselors, and teachers are invited to attend the evening.

The evening will include a reception hosted by the University from 5:30 to 6:30 with opportunities to visit with UT professors and students in the various arts genres, several of the Associate Deans and Dr. Dempster, the Dean of the Department. Dr. Dempster will speak briefly at the reception to welcome those in attendance.

From 6:30 to 7:45, break out sessions will be provided to address issues of admission and other questions from attendees. One session will be hosted specifically for parents to address questions about job opportunities in the arts and to help them understand the arts admissions process. We are also inviting counselors from the area to attend this session so they can better advise our students. Another session will be provided specifically for music students and teachers addressing issues regarding admission and the music audition process. A third session will be provided for visual arts students and teachers addressing admissions and the preparation of the portfolio. And finally, a fourth session will be provided for students and teachers addressing admissions and audition procedures for theater and dance.

As a finale to the event, UT Austin will host a Fine Arts Collage with performances of faculty and students in the McHi auditorium from 8:00 to 9:00 p.m. The Showcase will include performing faculty plus two student groups and a vocal soloist from the Butler School of Music, a student group from the School of Dance, and a student group from School of Theatre.

In total a group of approximately 25 students, faculty and staff will be traveling to McAllen to host this event which is being paid for entirely by UT. I have posters and invitation post cards for you to advertise the evening. Please call me if you would like some posters and invitation post cards for each of the arts areas at your campus (including visual and theater arts and dance instructors) mailed to your campus. I have also included scans of these items if you would like to print copies instead.

I'm sure you will agree this is an excellent opportunity for our high school arts students which will hopefully encourage more of them to further their talents and pursue careers in the arts. It would be really great if transportation of a group of students and teachers from your district could be arranged.

Please call me at (956) 618-6085 for more information or if I can be of further assistance to you and thank you for your support of arts education.

Sincerely,

Karen Herrera
Director of Fine Arts McAllen ISD and
Region XV Elementary Division Chair