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# JESSICA SHEPARD WATTS, PhD

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Passionate, creative, and strategic advancement professional with 20 years of experience in fundraising, relationship building, volunteer management, strategic planning, and leadership in educational and non-profit environments. Proven track record of successfully managing teams, building corporate and foundation partnerships, and fostering collaboration to accelerate growth and achieve institutional priorities.

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## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

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**Louisiana State University – Shreveport**, Shreveport, Louisiana Feb 2025– present

*Adjunct Instructor*

- Teach variety of courses including Resource Development and Grant Writing through the Institute for Nonprofit Administration and Research
- Redesigned two courses including Grant Writing and Capital Campaigns

**The Dallas Foundation**, Dallas, Texas

*Chief Partnerships Officer*

May 2024– present

- Lead the Philanthropic Partnerships team of seven, securing new funds and stewarding current donors
- Serve on Senior Management Team, involved in strategic unit planning, budgeting, and decisions
- Direct external outreach with current and prospective donor partners, advisors, stakeholders
- Cultivate a thriving and opportunity-rich community in greater Dallas.

**The University of Texas at Dallas**, Richardson, Texas

May 2024– present

*Lecturer*

- Teach a Resource Development Course to graduate and undergraduate students

**Axxess**, Dallas, Texas

*Vice President of External Affairs*

Nov 2021 – May 2024

- Lead External Affairs in Dallas and supported offices around the world
- Managed Corporate Social Responsibility
- Reported to the Chief of Staff and supported the CEO in business affairs

**University of North Texas**, Denton, Texas

*Executive Director of Corporate & Foundation Relations*

July 2018 – Nov 2021

- Lead the central corporate and foundation (C&F) relations team, manage a team of five
- Serve on Advancement Executive Team, involved in strategic unit planning, budgeting, and decisions
- Work with UNT System Chancellor, President, Provost, Cabinet, and Deans on a weekly basis
- Team and I directly cultivate and secure \$6M+ in annual support, Total of \$8M raised from C&F
- Gift Highlights/New Relationships: cultivated largest corporate gift in history - \$1M to name research lab (1/20), \$1.2M first gift from national foundation (12/19)
- Team submitted 144 proposals in FY20, increase from 120 proposals in FY19
- Additional Roles: NACRO Board of Directors, ARNOVA Pracademic Committee

**The University of Texas at Dallas**, Richardson, Texas

January 2012 – July 2018

*Senior Director of Corporate Relations* (Promoted in January 2016)

*Director of Corporate Relations*

- Led the central corporate relations team, managed a team of two
- Regularly engaged President, Provost, Cabinet, Deans, Department Chairs with donors
- Cultivated and closed a \$1m naming opportunity in Davidson - Gundy Alumni Center
- Built four top partnerships from \$0 giving, to sustained engagement and \$80k-\$200k+ annually
- Managed the largest and most comprehensive corporate partnership of the university, averaging \$2m+ in annual research funding and \$50k - \$7M in philanthropic support

- Built a marketing presence, created/managed Corporate Relations website, newsletter, social media
- Launched Corporate Open House featuring engagement opportunities research, recruiting talent
- Manage Corporate Alumni Receptions at companies and corporate events on campus

**United Way of Metropolitan Dallas, Dallas, Texas**

June 2006 - January 2012

**Director of Women of Tocqueville, Major Gifts** (Promoted in July 2011)

- Managed Women of Tocqueville (WOT), an affinity group of over 170 female executives and community philanthropists giving over \$10,000 annually
- Recruited 30 new WOT in 5 months: most new members recruited in a single year in the group’s five-year history
- Recruited new donors by managing a prospect list and cultivating their gifts through one on one meetings
- Managed 20 WOT committee members and executed volunteer, networking and advocacy events

**Development Officer** (Promoted in August 2008)

- Using Consultative Selling, foster relationships to further development and fundraising productivity
- Develop great relationships with key volunteers, donors and specialized committees
- Managed WLC Committee, executed events, created new committee structure, goals and follow up plan

**Other roles at United Way: Assistant Director of Development** (January 2007 - July 2008), **Campaign Associate** (June 2006 - December 2006). Portfolio of 100+ fundraising campaigns raising over \$2.7M, delivered 140 presentations, Led Campaign Associate Program (23 campaign employees)

**Office of U.S. Representative Lloyd Doggett, Washington, D.C.**

January - May 2006

**Congressional Health Fellow**

- Updated constituent database and helped draft constituent relations
- Reported on congressional briefings, researched health policies and submitted findings to the Congressman

## EDUCATION

**The University of Texas at Dallas**

2019

*Ph.D. in Public Affairs, 4.0 GPA*

Dissertation: *Navigating the Partner Landscape – Understanding the Impact of External Resources and Partners on Universities in the Modern Economy*, ARNOVA Research Presentations (2016-2020)

**The University of Texas at Dallas**

2010

*Master’s Degree in Public Affairs*

**The University of Texas-Arlington**

2006

*Bachelor of Arts in Political Science*

Summa Cum Laude, NCAA Division I Women’s Tennis Team, Dean’s List, Scholar Athlete

## ACHIEVEMENTS/CIVIC INVOLVEMENT

- 21/64 Certification, 21/64 2025
- Dallas Business Journal 40 Under 40 2024
- Leadership Dallas 2024
- Emerging Leaders in Philanthropy Program, Communities Foundation of Texas 2020-21
- Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA) 2016 - present  
Presented four research papers: *Determinants of Industry Engagement and Satisfaction at Higher Education Institutions* (2020), *Revenue Diversification at Public Higher Education Institutions* (2018), *Alumni Giving through a Student Phonathon Program* (2016) and *The Dallas Entrepreneur Center: An Impact Analysis on a New Model of Entrepreneurial Support Organization* (2016)
- NACRO Executive Committee: Vice President, President, Past President of the Board 2016 - 2019
- Other/Past Affiliations: Regularly Speak on Fundraising at Conferences (NACRO, CASE), Richardson Chamber of Commerce Women in Leadership Committee, Richardson Adult Literacy Center Board, Leadership Richardson Class XXVIII, Archer Fellowship Alumni Board, Competitively selected for a UT System public policy fellowship, Bill Archer Fellowship, in Washington, DC