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**Chip Jenkins**  
*TBA Chairman*

## **DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION WITHIN OUR INDUSTRY**

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The Texas Bankers Association has been a longtime supporter of opportunities to attract and retain banking talent on behalf of our member banks, with a proactive stance towards diversity and inclusion initiatives. One way we accomplish this is through our direct support of Texas universities and their development of banking programs and curricula.

For this, we owe a debt of gratitude to the late Dr. Jim Bexley, whose vision led to the development of the Banking and Financial Institutions program at Sam Houston State University, which has become an outstanding pipeline of young talent for our industry.

Following the lead at Sam Houston, we have witnessed successful banking programs launched at Texas A&M University, Stephen F. Austin University, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, University of Houston and, most recently, The Excellence in Banking Program at Texas Tech University, led by former TBA Chairman Mike Mauldin.

When Chris Furlow took over as CEO of TBA in July 2018, he recognized a renaissance in commercial banking programs taking root in Texas, and he wanted to make sure TBA proactively supported these measures. Under Chris' guidance and the leadership of the TBA Board of Directors, additional funding was made available to support these

programs. Additionally, TBA hired a full-time employee, Brent Cox, to manage TBA's involvement with these universities.

Chris and Brent share the same vision and appreciation for the tremendous value these programs provide to our member banks and to the communities that reap the benefits of local decision making. Brent believes that healthy banks must be reflective of their local communities; this includes the makeup of their employees and the shared value systems of the communities they serve.

Shortly after Brent joined TBA, he called his longtime friend, George Martinez, CEO and chairman at Allegiance Bank, Houston, to discuss his role and opportunities to support diversity and inclusion in the banking industry. With Houston being the fourth largest city in the U.S. and the most racially diverse metropolitan area, it seemed that Texas Southern University, one of the nation's largest Historically Black Colleges, would be an ideal candidate to deliver on TBA's vision for diversity and inclusion.

George immediately bought into the idea and requested that Brent work with John Scroggins, senior vice president at Allegiance Bank, who is also a board member at the Jesse H. Jones School of Business at TSU.

George was keenly aware that John had always dreamed of creating a banking program at TSU and, with the assistance from TBA, this could now become a reality.

Over the next several months, John and Brent worked closely together to discuss what the program might look like and the many long-term benefits the banking program would generate. In December 2019, John and Brent made a presentation to the JHJ Advisory Board and a unanimous decision was made to grant approval to develop a Commercial Banking Program at Texas Southern University.

This new program is scheduled to launch in the fall semester of 2021. Not surprising, Allegiance Bank has stepped up to the plate as the initial key financial contributor and lead sponsor. TBA is extremely grateful to Allegiance Bank and its board of directors for supporting this important initiative.

On behalf of the TBA Board of Directors, I would like to thank the Advisory Board at TSU's JHJ School of Business for their support of their important endeavor. A special thank you goes out to Dr. David Yen, dean of the JHJ School of Business, and Muriel Funches, executive director of advancement. And to John Scroggins — thanks for working with TBA to make this dream a reality.

Lastly, George Martinez' legacy of giving back to his community makes him a shining star in our industry. The banking industry is truly fortunate to have had your leadership for the past 50 years.