TEXAS STUDENT MEDIA APPLICATION FORM
MANAGING EDITOR OF THE DAILY TEXAN

select which terms of office
☐ June 1, 2019 - August 15, 2019
☐ August 16, 2019 - December 31, 2019

you are willing to serve:

This application and supporting materials must be submitted to the TSM Business Office (via hard copy to room HSM 3.200 or via PDF emailed to serpas@austin.utexas.edu) by Monday, April 29, 2019 at 12:00 p.m.

This position is due to be appointed at the TSM Board meeting scheduled for Friday, May 3, 2019 at 1:00 p.m.

Please plan to attend and discuss your application with the Operating Trustees.

Applicant Information

Catherine Martin
Name

cm53976
UT EID

catherine.martin@austin.utexas.edu
Email Address

Journalism + Public Relations
Major

Applicant Attestation / Authorization for Release of Information

1. I am currently enrolled as a UT-Austin student.

2. By the start of my term of office, I will (If an undergraduate) have completed 12 hours at UT-Austin with a GPA of at least 2.0 or (if a graduate student) have completed 9 hours at UT-Austin with a GPA of at least 3.0.

3. I agree to complete and pass a media law and libel test administered by the Editorial Adviser prior to taking position.

4. I have obtained and included signatures from at least five staff members of The Daily Texan supporting my application.

5. By the start of my term of office, I will have completed at least two semesters as a permanent-staff member of The Daily Texan in an area other than opinion.

6. By the start of my term of office, I will have served in a Daily Texan management position with supervisory and design responsibilities (as defined by the Daily Texan Handbook) for at least one semester.

Note: if no qualified applicant has filed by the deadline, the Board shall make an appointment using the Handbook qualifications, each of which shall be waivable by an affirmative vote of two-thirds majority of the voting members present.

I certify that to the best of my ability I have given true and accurate information concerning my scholastic and experience qualifications, and hereby grant permission for the Office of the Director, Texas Student Media, to verify said information. Further, I understand that this information will be provided to the TSM Board of Operating Trustees and will become part of the public record of TSM.

Catherine Martin
Signature of Applicant

4/26/19
Date
Supporting signatures from at least five staff members of The Daily Texan:

Lindsey Handler  
Copy Desk Chief

Claire E. Allsight  
News Editor

Samifpea  
Associate News Editor

Amorco D'nero  
Associate Managing Editor

Forrest Milburn  
Managing Editor

Ross Burkhardt  
Sports Editor

Lish M. Run  
Projects Reporter & Diversity Board Member

Allen Morgan  
Director of Digital Strategy

My experience at The Daily Texan consists of (list positions and dates):

General Reporter (Fall 2015)

News Desk Editor (Spring, Fall 2016)

Senior Reporter (Summer 2016, Spring 2017)

Associate News Editor (Summer, Fall 2017)

News Editor (Spring 2018)

Managing Editor (Summer 2018)

Associate Managing Editor (Fall 2018, Spring 2019)

It is recommended that you include supporting materials such as:

A résumé
A letter outlining your qualifications, goals, plans for the position
Letters of recommendation
Samples of published work (on 8 1/2" x 11" paper)
Catherine Marfin
5117 N Lamar Blvd Apt. 206, Austin, Texas 78751
210-667-0935 | catherinemarfin@utexas.edu | catherinemarfin.weebly.com

Education
The University of Texas at Austin
Bachelor of Journalism and Bachelor of Science in
Public Relations – December 2019
Certificate in Forensic Science, December 2019
Sociology Minor, December 2019

Experience
Burson Cohn & Wolfe, Austin
Public Relations Intern — Summer 2018
• Will be creating promotional and communications material for SONIC Drive In, BCW’s largest account

Texas Tribune
Reporting Fellow — Spring 2019
• Produced feature-length stories on top legislative topics during the 2019 Texas legislative session
• Pursued breaking-news and daily stories surrounding Texas politics
• Closely followed legislation as it moved through the legislative process in both the House and Senate

Houston Chronicle, Austin Bureau
Reporting Intern — Summer & Fall 2018
• Pitched and pursued stories around Texas politics leading up to the 2019 legislative session
• Assisted in coverage of the 2018 midterm elections
• Attended and live-tweeted committee hearings in the Texas Capitol while writing wrap-ups later

Austin-Bergstrom International Airport
PIO Intern — Spring & Summer 2018
• Assisted in promotional and marketing activities for the airport
• Drafted and proofed copy for promotional, marketing and media relations activities

The Austin American-Statesman
CodeNEXT Intern – Summer & Fall 2017
• Turned complex, technical issues surrounding zoning and land into easy-to-understand feature stories explaining the larger impacts of CodeNEXT on Austin residents
• Helped with the launch of CodeNEXTHub.org, a collaboration between the Statesman and leading Central Texas news outlets to provide a one-stop portal for CodeNEXT coverage

The Daily Texan
Associate Managing Editor, Fall 2018 – Spring 2019
Managing Editor, Summer 2018
• Oversaw the management of the newsroom and directed all non-opinion coverage, responsible for coordinating content, design and layout of a 12-16-page paper each week
News Editor, Spring 2018
Associate News Editor, Summer - Fall 2017
• Oversaw the news department of The Daily Texan. Edited stories, delegated story assignments and coordinated breaking news events with reporters and news desk editors.

Crime/Public Safety Senior Reporter – Summer 2016, Spring 2017
• Served as the primary reporter during the spring on-campus stabbing attack at UT-Austin

Additional Information
Memberships: Longhorn Marching Band (Fall 2015-present), Tau Beta Sigma (Spring 2016-present)
Skills: Excel, Google sheets, live tweeting, live blogging, Facebook Live, AP Style, Google sheets, R studio
To the Texas Student Media Board,

My name is Catherine Marfin and I am applying for the position of managing editor for the fall of 2019. I am excited for the opportunity to apply for managing editor and eager to continue making a positive impact on The Daily Texan this fall. With this letter, I will outline my qualifications and plans for the position.

I didn’t know what to expect when I stumbled into the news department of Texan during my first week of class. But after I completed my first news assignment, I knew the Texan was where I was meant to be. I hit the ground running when I started here, and I haven’t stopped since.

Since the fall of 2015, I have worked as a general reporter, news desk editor, senior reporter, associate news editor, news editor, summer managing editor, and associate managing editor. During this time, I have learned the ins and outs of the news department and management office, coordinated coverage of many high-profile events, assisted in solving newsroom challenges and helped create long-term strategies for news coverage and operations.

As news editor last spring, I was responsible for managing a news department that had completely changed in structure from previous semesters. That semester, I helped coordinate many high-profile events, including the Student Government elections, the controversy and campus backlash surrounding pharmacy professor Richard Morrisett, and the Texas primary elections in March. I also assisted in editing and developing long-form projects, including features from guest writers as part of the Texan’s partnerships with both the National Association of Black Journalists and the National Association of Hispanic Journalists. During both day-to-day content and special projects, I worked closely with management, copy editors, design and the art director to plan content, budget stories and lay out each paper.

These are experiences that have stayed with me during my time in the management office. As the Texan has pursued more ambitious coverage of campus, I have been an integral part in helping oversee regular coverage, breaking news events and long-form projects. As we have faced monumental news events in the last two semesters — from the Texas Cowboys suspension to the college admissions case and the investigation into UTILANP director Phil Nemi — my role in the management office has allowed me to sharpen my judgment and critical thinking skills in a newsroom setting. I’ve learned how to think critically about coverage, come up with solutions to newsroom challenges and ask tough questions about our content, abilities which make me more than capable of taking on the position of managing editor this fall.

The Texan has made immense strides in both news coverage and newsroom operations this semester under Forrest’s management. Many of these efforts have not been easy, and I’d like to continue to improve upon them as managing editor next semester.

The Diversity and Inclusion Board
The implementation of the Diversity and Inclusion Board was a historic event for our paper and has been hugely important in beginning to tackle the issue of newsroom diversity. Maria, Tiana, and Lisa have accomplished great things, and everyone on staff has learned a great deal from them about how to think critically about sources, coverage and newsroom culture this semester. The management staff, the Raising Voices Committee and the Diversity and Inclusion Board
have had ongoing discussions about how to further improve the structure and functions of the board. They have come up with many long-term goals that I’m hoping to assist in accomplishing if I were selected as managing editor.

Between collaborations, workshops and internal functions, the board has a tremendous amount of work on their plate. To more efficiently accomplish its long-term goals, each board member could focus on one set of tasks or overall function of the board. For example, individual positions on the board could include a collaborations editor, an external relations manager and a workshop coordinator. Additionally, members of the Raising Voices Committee could function as a “subcommittee” under each board member to assist in accomplishing each member’s tasks. Not only would this get the committee members more involved in the operations of the board, but it would help board members more efficiently tackle their respective goals.

These are ideas the board members have discussed this semester and which I would like to see to fruition if I were selected. Delegating the many tasks of the board in this way could allow each member to put more energy into one function, improving the board’s overall organization and output throughout the semester.

Projects
The projects team this semester has produced a variety of in-depth pieces which are important and meaningful to readers and have been essential in holding the University accountable. However, some of the long-form projects and series that we implemented in the last year have slowed through recent semesters.

If I were selected as managing editor, I would like to continue projects such as “The 5 Percent” and first-generation student series, which highlighted experiences of often underrepresented groups on campus, resonated with the student body and got a positive response among readers. Ideally, many of these stories would be continued through guest authors from partnerships with groups like the National Association of Black Journalists and the National Association of Hispanic Journalists. Having a dedicated position on the Diversity and Inclusion Board to coordinate and edit these stories would help in keeping these series going.

Workshops
The Diversity and Inclusion Board has coordinated and hosted different workshops for the Texan staff this semester. These workshops have been important in ensuring that all reporters understand the expectations of Texan content and how to go about writing and producing a story. If I were selected as managing editor, I hope to expand on the number and type of workshops that the Texan hosts throughout the semester.

The Texan could offer more workshops that help reporters understand how to better cover different groups on campus, for example, individuals with disabilities. While journalism students may receive some of this training in class or at outside internships, many staff members are not journalism majors, and if they are, they are often young and have not had such learning experiences. It’s important for as many Texan staffers as possible to be involved in these types of trainings because everyone on staff, from photographers to copy editors, is involved in the production of such articles in some way and thus should learn how to think critically about
content as well. Ideally, the Texan would utilize on-campus resources, such as student organizations and UT faculty experts who could function as guest speakers at these events, to put on such workshops. Having an external relations position on the Diversity and Inclusion Board would help in accomplishing these goals.

The Texan could also benefit from other types of workshops. For example, because the Texan prints daily, many reporters and editors are so focused on getting a story ready for the page that other details, like web headlines, do not get prioritized. As a large source of online traffic can come from Google and web searches, a uniform training or workshop in this area toward the beginning of the semester would be beneficial for everyone on staff. This is just one example of a staff-wide training that would allow for across-the-board improvements in the overall operations of the newsroom. Having a person on the Diversity and Inclusion Board dedicated to brainstorming and organizing workshops like these would help in these efforts.

These are just a few improvements that I’d like to see through if I were selected as managing editor for the fall semester. One thing I’ve learned in my last year in the management office is how important it is to encourage the Texan staff to try new things, experiment with content and express new ideas. It’s through this process that we’ve been able to produce innovative and engaging content in the last year, much of which has involved cross-department collaboration that previous semesters at the Texan lacked. There’s no shortage of good ideas among Texan staffers, and if I were selected as managing editor, I would participate in frequent individual meetings with department heads to discuss goals, ideas and improvements to their departments. Aside from improving our content, this would have the added bonus of fostering camaraderie among staff.

The basement has become my home over the last three years, and The Daily Texan has allowed me to grow and has afforded me opportunities that I am immensely grateful for. I would be honored to serve as the managing editor of such widely-respected and revered college newspaper, and I am eager to give back to a paper that has given me so much.

Sincerely,

Catherine Marfin
Associate Managing Editor, The Daily Texan
To the Texas Student Media Board of Directors,

I’ve stood before this board once before to outline my vision for what this paper could look like in the near future, and how I could help inch us closer to that ideal version of The Daily Texan. I felt excited for what was on the horizon, but I was afraid for what would lie ahead — and my potential to fail.

I’ve never known Catherine Marfin to be afraid of what lies ahead of her, even failure. I think I first learned that in spring 2017, when Harrison Brown was stabbed to death on campus in a day that will remain seared into many students’ memories forever. While many students went home or tried to stay away from the scene, Catherine — then our star breaking news/crime senior reporter — ran toward the scene. She made sure she had every detail of the event as it happened, so by the way we had a story out, students across campus and around its perimeter were looking to us for updates rather than to other local media — as they should.

The experience she learned that semester and her instincts helped her become a phenomenal reporter, challenging city planning jargon while covering CodeNEXT at the Austin American-Statesman in summer 2017, as well as shedding light on state inadequacies while covering the 86th Texas Legislature while interning at the Texas Tribune this semester. Catherine is one of the strongest reporters I know, and I probably look up to her way more than she realizes. She’s smart, fast, but empathetic and cares about her sources — everything a reporter should be.

That’s helped her grow into a fine editor, as well. She knows how to ask the right questions, often ones no one else in the room has even thought of, which has saved us from printing stories that shouldn’t see the light of day just yet too many times in the past year. As an associate managing editor for a full year and managing editor for one summer, Catherine checks off all the boxes for the experience you need to be managing editor. But managing editor isn’t just about checking boxes. It’s also about what impact you will have on The Daily Texan and its staff during your semester at the helm of the paper.

That’s where I know Catherine will not just succeed, but she’ll excel. Catherine is widely respected by everyone on staff, and every time she’s running the show during production night in the basement, departments are lively, joking, listening to music, while also getting their work done on schedule. Accomplishing that is a great feat, and few in management can say they’ve done the same.

During my semester as managing editor, I’ve learned that big ideas take big commitments. This means checking in with new department heads when it’s their first semester on staff; it means checking in to make sure things are running smoothly, particularly communication among departments; it means following through with promises, like holding workshops that offer reporters training opportunities when you say you will. We did a lot of that this semester, and I’m proud of what my management team — including Catherine — was able to accomplish. Now, I’m excited to hand the baton to Catherine, seeing all the fine-tuned adjustments she’ll make to departments and what initiatives she’ll launch during her time at the helm of The Daily Texan. I know she’ll be as committed and strong as ever, and I’ll be observing from afar, just as proud as ever.

That’s why I’m officially endorsing Catherine’s candidacy for fall 2019 managing editor. Please feel free to contact me at (214) 715-5935 or fmilburn@utexas.edu, in case you’d like to discuss her impeccable qualifications further. Believe me — I’d be happy to.

Best wishes,

Forrest Milburn
Managing editor, The Daily Texan, Spring 2019
As number of imprisoned Texas women grows, lawmakers hope to add "dignity" to their time behind bars

By Catherine Marfin

March 18, 2019

Evelyn Fulbright had a painful tumor on her uterus during the two years she spent in prison. It caused her to bleed during most of the month, so she’d often wear three pads at a time to keep herself clean. Usually, it wasn’t enough.

She said the pads in the prison were too thin, and the tampons had uncomfortable cardboard applicators. There were many times that she bled through her uniform, which is white in facilities operated by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

When that happened, she said she’d try and wash it out her own in the sink. She said she was told it was against the rules but that many women took the chance anyway.

“It was painful. I was bleeding all the time,” said Fulbright, who was sentenced to prison in 2006 when she was 41 years old. She said she had a severe cocaine addiction and was originally arrested for a drug offense in 2001.

Many women who have spent time in the state’s prisons have similar stories. In a survey of over 400 incarcerated women conducted by the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition last year, more than half said they didn’t have access to enough pads and tampons each month, and that the quality of products was poor.

It’s just one of many issues that make it difficult to be a woman in prison, and one of many that advocates and lawmakers are hoping to address this legislative session.

In the run-up to the session, the House Committee on Corrections was asked to study treatment options and conditions of the state’s incarcerated women. The committee’s report has led to a group of 13 bills aimed at helping women in the state’s criminal justice system, addressing issues including trauma history, feminine hygiene, vocational and educational programs, parents in the justice system and the treatment of pregnant women who are incarcerated.

Earlier this month, to coincide with International Women’s Day, a group of lawmakers and formerly incarcerated women marched from the Travis County Jail to the Capitol to share their
stories with lawmakers and discuss some of the proposed legislation. And last week, some of the bills began moving forward in the House.

The new scrutiny comes as the population of women in state prisons has risen at twice the rate of the male population over the last 40 years, according to TDCJ data. From 1980 to 2018, the number of incarcerated women increased 874 percent, while the number of incarcerated men increased 408 percent.

Last year, incarcerated women made up just over 8 percent of the roughly 145,000 offenders in TDCJ facilities, according to TDCJ data. And 64 percent of women in the state’s corrections system are there for nonviolent offenses, according to the House Committee on Corrections.

“There are expectations in free society of women. It’s important that TDCJ, in the rehabilitation and eventual reintegration, they focus on that and on promoting, facilitating the dignity of women and the health of women,” said Rep. James White, R-Hillster, who chairs the House Committee on Corrections.

White authored five bills this session that he said could help justice-involved women. One is House Bill 650, a comprehensive bill that he said is meant to provide “dignity and positive womanhood” to incarcerated women. The bill has bipartisan support from four co-authors.

Its proposals include adding a requirement that the department make certain feminine hygiene products available to inmates.

The department already provides 24 pads and six tampons to women each month, said Jeremy Desel, director of communications at TDCJ. He said there is no rule in TDCJ facilities that prohibits inmates from washing their own uniforms if they bleed through and that additional feminine hygiene products are available if women request them, or they can be purchased at the commissary.

He said a team of female leadership within the department recently reviewed the feminine hygiene products provided, and aside from adding panty liners to the list of items given out, the team determined the quality of the products was “satisfactory.”

White’s bill has since been updated to propose requiring the department to provide large-sized tampons with plastic applicators, regular or large pads with wings, and panty liners. The new version would also require the department to provide up to 10 additional products to women per day if they request them.

Lindsey Linder, a senior policy attorney with the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition, said those are the “absolute minimum acceptable standards” for women.

“If you only have access to a certain number of products, then you're waiting until you absolutely have to change them,” Linder said. “That's a medical issue. It can cause yeast infections, and if you're using tampons and you're waiting to take them out because you know you only have a
certain number, then you're looking at toxic shock syndrome risk. It’s just not a good health care policy.”

"It messes with you"

For the small portion of woman inmates who are pregnant, serving time in Texas can be especially difficult. From 2010 to 2016, about 200 women gave birth while incarcerated in TDCJ facilities each year, according to the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition.

Because of legislative changes made in 2009, TDCJ facilities are prohibited from shackling women during labor and while they are recovering from delivery. But they can still be shackled at any other time. White’s HB 650 would prevent shackling at any time during a woman’s pregnancy.

Angelica Zaragoza served two stints in prison between 2003 and 2016 for drug, theft and prostitution offenses. When she was sent to prison the first time in 2003, she was pregnant with her second child and gave birth while incarcerated. It was before the law had changed, so she said she was shackled by her ankle during labor.

But she said she was shackled other times, too, like when she went to doctor’s appointments or was transferred to the prison unit near a hospital in Galveston operated by the University of Texas Medical Branch, where many pregnant inmates give birth.

“How is a woman supposed to keep her balance and everything else? It's difficult. The [shackles] hurt, you’re swollen. It’s inhumane, really,” Zaragoza said.

Desel said in TDCJ facilities today, pregnant women would only be shackled during labor if they were determined to be a risk to themselves or their children. He said in the last five years, TDCJ has not used restraints during any deliveries but that some restraints are used when women are transferred between units.

“Leg restraints, restraint belts, and transport chains are not used on pregnant offenders due to the increased risk of a forward fall,” Desel said in an email. “As is standard security protocol for all transports, hand restraints are used and are placed in front of the body to ensure safety for the offender and the unborn child.”

But Linder said even hand restraints can be dangerous for women, especially toward the end of a pregnancy, when women are prone to losing their balance.

Zaragoza has four children and said her pregnancy in TDCJ was the worst. She said when she was bleeding in the days after she gave birth, the pads weren’t enough. There were a few times, she said, she resorted to buying T-shirts from the commissary and rolling them up in her underwear.

But she said her separation from her daughter was especially painful. After she gave birth, she said she only held daughter for 15 minutes before she was taken away.
"There was times after I had my baby that I swear I was going crazy. I would wake up at 2 o'clock in the morning just hearing a baby crying," Zaragoza said through tears. It was over 15 years ago, but she still gets emotional talking about it.

"It messes with you in so many ways," she said.

Desel said there is no set standard for how long a woman remains with her newborn after giving birth. He said each case is different, but a mother’s time in the hospital is usually limited to the medical discharge of her child.

White’s HB 650 proposes requiring women to remain with their infants for 72 hours after giving birth and prohibiting TDCJ from placing women in a unit by themselves after delivery. It would also require pregnant inmates to receive classes on parenting, prenatal care and hygiene, and the medical and mental health care of children.

TDCJ operates some programs geared specifically toward pregnant women and giving women more time with their newborns. Best for Baby is a peer education program that teaches women child development and parenting skills, the Love Me Tender postpartum program allows women to visit and feed their newborns for two weeks after childbirth, and the Baby and Mother Bonding Initiative, which launched in 2010, allows women to live with their newborns in a residential facility for as long as a year after childbirth.

Desel said most pregnant inmates get to participate in one of these programs.

In Texas, more than 10,000 — or 81 percent — of incarcerated women are mothers, according to the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition.

Rep. Senfronia Thompson, D-Houston, filed HB 1389, which is co-authored by White. The bill would allow judges to sentence defendants who are primary caretakers to community supervision or deferred adjudication, a type of probation that allows a conviction to be dropped if an individual completes the program. Similarly, HB 1374, filed by Rep. Ana Hernandez, D-Houston, would offer a grant program for local departments that create pretrial diversion programs, which divert defendants from traditional criminal justice processing and provide rehabilitative treatment to offenders, specifically for defendants who are primary caretakers.

Support in the House

Advocates and lawmakers are hopeful of getting some of the legislation through the Legislature this session. Earlier this month, the House Committee on Corrections heard public testimony from advocates and formerly incarcerated women on a number of bills related to women in prison.

The legislation was well-received by the committee throughout the hearing. Lawmakers paid special attention to feminine hygiene products, the experiences of incarcerated women and the effects on their children. Of over a dozen people who testified, the majority were in favor of the bills.
Manny Rodriguez, deputy director at the TDCJ Community Justice Assistance Division, told lawmakers that local communities can already apply for TDCJ grants for pretrial programs tailored to any population. He said $6.3 million was allocated pretrial programs in 2017. Of 120 applicants, the department has granted funding to 29 programs.

But advocates testified that more could be done to encourage programming for parents in the justice system.

Michelle Ramirez works with Youth Rise Texas, an organization that works with youth whose parents have been incarcerated, detained or deported. She testified in support of the primary caretaker’s bill and said losing a parent to incarceration can have damaging mental health and behavioral impacts on children.

She said the effects of parental incarceration on children — changing schools, being put in the care of a new guardian, losing financial and emotional support, or being separated from their siblings — qualifies parental incarceration for what is known as an “adverse childhood experience,” a traumatic event that can have long-term effects on mental health and behavior.

“Losing a parent suddenly, for any reason, triggers a cycle of grief. It’s not solely a loss, but a traumatic experience that leaves long-term corrosive impacts,” Ramirez said. “Parental incarceration is not just a sentence for parents, but for their children as well.”

On Thursday, lawmakers on the House Committee on Corrections unanimously approved White’s comprehensive bill, SB 650, and Thompson’s HB 1389, which addresses community supervision for sole caretakers. Those bills will now head to the full House for approval. But they’ll also need to win the support of the Senate, where only one bill has been filed relating to the state’s incarcerated women.

Sen. Borris Miles, D-Houston, filed that legislation, Senate Bill 1846, last week. It’s less aggressive than other bills advocates have focused on and would prevent TDCJ from shackling pregnant women only after the first trimester and while the woman is recovering from delivery.

White said because of the testimony they heard prior to the 2019 session, the committee is serious about addressing the issues facing incarcerated women.

“When we see these trends, the House Corrections Committee, we’re noted for dealing with tough issues that have serious implications on the future. We’re going to address these tough issues,” White said.
Washington, D.C., on $7 a day: Unpaid internships abound in government, nonprofit work

By Catherine Marfin

Published December 14, 2018

Jovahana Avila headed to Washington, D.C. the summer after her sophomore year at St. Edward’s University in Austin for an internship with the Environmental Protection Agency. It was a huge opportunity for Avila, a political science major. But there was a catch — she was not going to be paid for her work.

Housing costs aside, she had $600 saved from leftover scholarship money and tips she made as barista, and she had to stretch it for three months. It was Washington on less than $7 a day.

She shared food with her roommates when she could. She walked 45 minutes to a cheaper grocery store. She sometimes walked 30 minutes to work in the heat to avoid the bus fare.

“I was starving almost every single day. I was living by stretching like one meal every day. It was very painful and very difficult,” said Avila, now a senior. “I was either like, ‘OK, today I’m going to have rice and the other day, I’m going to have beans,’ but I couldn’t have both.”

More Information: Should you be getting paid as an intern? Here’s the test

The seven-factor “primary beneficiary” test for interns determines whether they are entitled to the minimum wage under federal law:

1. Whether or not the employee and intern clearly understand that there is no expectation of compensation.

2. How similar training on the job is to training received in class.

3. How much the internship is tied to academics, such as through college credit.
4. How closely the internship aligns with a university's academic calendar.

5. Whether or not the internship period is limited to a timeframe that provides beneficial learning.

6. Whether the internship complements, instead of displaces, the work of other employees.

7. Whether the intern and employer understand the internship does not entitle the intern to a paid job.

The EPA was the third of Avila's nine college internships, six of which were unpaid.

Looser federal guidelines that rolled out in January are making it easier for employers to offer unpaid internships, a practice that is more common in nonprofit organizations and government agencies than in businesses, experts say. The new rules try to answer a question that seems to defy objective assessment: Is the intern getting more benefit, or is the business?

If the intern is the "prime beneficiary" of the arrangement, he or she does not need to be compensated under federal law.

But the loosened restrictions have not tamped down the simmering outrage that flares up periodically on social media over what some see as a form of economic hazing. Students from less affluent backgrounds may not be able to give away their time so easily, critics say.

Early this month, freshman Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez called it a "disgrace" that Senate and House staffers were working as bartenders and servers at a "dive spot" in Washington D.C. because they don't make a living wage working for the government. She pledged to pay her own staff members a minimum of $15 an hour.

During her work with the EPA, Avila told herself it was a necessary sacrifice to get to the next step.

"Every day I woke up with a fighting face to get through it and do my best," she said. "If you don't get that experience your degree is almost worthless, right?"

Post-recession spike
The backlash against unpaid internships gained momentum nationally amid a series of lawsuits filed by interns under the Fair Labor Standards Act. The court action led to a landmark federal appellate court decision in 2015 that set the “primary beneficiary” test that is now the backbone of the Department of Labor’s new, looser standard.

The factors in determining whether an internship should be paid include whether the intern’s work complements or replaces the work of other employees, whether the internship is tied to a university’s academic calendar and the extent the internship is tied to the student’s course work, such as through academic credit. If all seven factors exist, the intern is not considered an employee or entitled to the minimum wage.

There is no national survey of how many internships are paid or unpaid, but finance experts who track the matter say it ebbs and flows.

“During the recession we saw a big increase in unpaid internships because people were willing to do anything if they think it’ll lead to a job,” Coronado said. “But they become less common as the labor market has gotten stronger because if you want people, you’re going to actually need to pay them ... Part of it is just cyclical and it’s part of the business cycle.”

She said the fashion and media industries in New York, for example, now pay interns for positions that were unpaid during the recession.

But the government and nonprofit sectors are more likely to take advantage of young interns, said Guillermo Creamer, co-founder and chief of staff of the nonprofit Pay Our Interns.

A June 2017 report by Pay Our Interns found that only 8 percent of Republicans and 3.6 percent of Democrats in the U.S. House pay their interns. In the Senate, 51 percent of Republicans and Democrats offer paid internships.

In September, Congress passed a funding bill that set aside $14 million to pay congressional interns. If signed by President Donald Trump, the bill will give the Senate $5 million and the House $8.8 million to distribute to members’ offices.

In big cities like Washington, D.C., the average internship costs a student about $6,000, according to a Pay Our Interns report.

Unpaid internships are equally common at the Texas Capitol.
One factor is the relatively low budget for Texas lawmakers, which leaves less for the interns. House members get about $13,500 a month for all expenses, including salaries. Many students who accept legislative internships pursue scholarships to make up for their unpaid work. Some members of the Texas House and Texas Senate use campaign funds to pay interns.

**Ninth time’s a charm?**

For some students, the free internships don’t end with college.

Bria Graves is a journalism senior at the University of North Texas. She graduates this month, but she’s accepted an unpaid internship at the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History for the spring semester. It will be her fourth time working for free.

Graves said she was reluctant to take the internship, but she felt like she needed the experience.

“(Bigger internships) want you to have internship experience, but for a lot of students, it’s like I can’t even get the internship experience because the smaller ones, they don’t pay,” said Graves, who is African-American. “I mean if your family has money that’s cool, but a lot of times minority students, we don’t have that privilege to work for free.”

Avila has landed a paid internship for the spring with the Austin-based Center for Public Policy Priorities. She worked full-time for the center this summer, and because it was a paid position, she was able to cut back on other part-time jobs she needed to get through school.

“That was my first time really feeling myself in my best flow of energy and my least burnt out. It was such a good feeling to really feel 100 percent and give 110 percent at work,” Avila said. “I wasn’t able to do that before because I worked several jobs and because I wore several hats in order to put myself through these experiences.”

CEO Ann Beeson said the center prides itself on paying interns a fair wage, which includes paid sick leave and other benefits. She said the policy has helped the center attract a diverse workforce.

“If you have only unpaid internships, it’s difficult if not impossible for low-income people in the workplace, which disproportionately includes young people of color, to get a foot in the door for these important opportunities; for job training and growth and connections beyond the internship once they’re out in the work world,” Beeson said.
Santa Fe shooting prompts jump in number of Texas school marshals, who can carry guns on campus

By Catherine Marfin
August 10, 2018

AUSTIN — One week before hundreds of elementary students will flood the hallways for the first day of school, 20 Texas school employees ran screaming out of classrooms Friday as the sound of gunshots echoed through the hallways of the empty building.

They were practicing an active shooter drill as part of their school marshal training, an intensive six-day course that culminates in their certification to carry a firearm on school campuses. The Texas Commission on Law Enforcement is holding six courses this summer, which are partially funded by a $114,000 grant from the governor’s office.

Teachers and school administrators across Central Texas are getting ready for the start of another school year.

Since the mass shooting at Santa Fe High School in May, the number of school employees certified as school marshals in Texas has doubled from 33 in late June to 71, with the potential for 94 additional marshals by the time the summer courses end.

While some teachers and experts have questioned whether arming school staff is an effective way to stop a shooting on campus, top Texas officials called for more of them after a single gunman killed 10 people in Santa Fe.

Prospective school marshals undergo 80 hours of training during the course, which includes classroom lessons as well as simulations. During these drills, trainees use a Glock 17, a semiautomatic pistol that is modified to shoot rubber bullets.

"It’s intense, but it’s intended to be," said Kim Vickers, executive director of the law enforcement commission. "It’s one thing to say, ‘Give me a gun and I can use it if I have to.’ It’s a whole different matter to ask, ‘What is my natural human response, fly or fight?’ You’ll come closer to resolving that in your mind when you’re put in a position when you’re very keyed up, when you have to learn."
Employees who receive the training are selected by the districts where they work, but all public school employees, from administration to custodial staff, can sign up for the course after meeting eligibility requirements. School employees must have a handgun license, and pass a psychological evaluation before participating.

Texas schools don’t provide firearms to school marshals. When they return to their districts, school employees will be certified to carry their own handguns on campus. Teachers are required to store their firearm in a lock box while in the classroom, but they are free to carry their handgun on their person at any other time as long as it is concealed, said Michael Antu, deputy chief and director of enforcement and special services at the law enforcement commission.

“We’re showing them how to properly use it and how to safely use it when those situations arrive,” said Antu, who instructed this week’s course. “Some of the tougher decisions are when to shoot and not shoot. We train them that the firearm is only a tool for the school marshal, not the end all, be all.”

One of the prospective marshals, a 46-year-old educator from a district in Southeast Texas who chose to remain anonymous, said his district decided to participate in the training after considering various school safety options in the last year.

“The hardest part of this is having to process having something of such incredible consequence happen in an educational setting,” he said. “It’s sad that we’re having to have this conversation about the level of security in our schools, but we know from past events that it can occur…and we need to be prepared if it happens.”
CodeNext battles intensify where dense corridors meet neighborhoods

By Catherine Marfin

Tuesday, December 26, 2017

The monthslong negotiation process between the four households on Wild Street and an Austin developer began with two sketches.

In early September, the residents began huddling inside Allen Reichler’s home, suddenly responsible for hammering out terms for a nearly 100-unit apartment complex that could affect neighbors for blocks around. With North Lamar Boulevard practically in their backyard, these four families were quickly — but not unexpectedly — thrown into the lengthy and daunting task.

“We knew something was going to go up there,” Reichler said. “If you have that kind of property on the other side of your property line in the city of Austin, to think that nothing would go up there other than what is there today is foolish.”

Sure enough, a multifamily development real estate agent named J.R. Ellis approached the group of families, representing an Austin builder who hopes to build middle-income apartments behind their homes. They presented each family with two drawings, one that depicted what was allowed by code and one showing what the builder wanted to put there.

And because it was so close to the residential properties, current city policy meant the developer needed approval from at least three of the four affected landowners to depart from current zoning allowances.

“I said, ‘We really, quite honestly don’t care about you; we’re worried about us,’” Reichler said.
From adjustments to parking locations, resident rooftop access and water flow considerations, there was nothing that the four families asked of the developer that was not put in writing, Reichler said. While the city still has to approve the negotiations, three of the four families approved the variance request after almost four months of back-and-forth negotiations.

"They were pretty serious about not trying to muscle their way through this," Reichler said, "and we were very serious about trying to work with them."

While Reichler and most of his neighbors reached a relatively quick and amicable agreement in their case, this sort of tug-of-war between residents and developers can become extremely contentious, as was the case with Austin Oaks battle this year in Northwest Austin.

Yet, these transition areas — the places where more densely developed corridors and other zones bump up against traditional single-family neighborhoods — have come to symbolize one of the most fundamental and most heated debates over CodeNext, the city's ongoing overhaul of its land-use code.

While not formally defined in the CodeNext drafts, these spaces embody one of the rewrite's fundamental debates — how the city will balance demands for a more flexible code and streamlined approval process with the ability of residents to retain enough control over the shape and size of developments going up near their homes.

Proponents argue the final version of CodeNext should retain certain compatibility standards, but it also should provide for a more efficient and less costly approval process for more types of buildings. Critics worry the new regulations will give away the store, eliminating the ability of the city and residents to extract certain concessions from developers, as Reichler and his neighbors did.

The unpredictability issue

The issue covers a vast cross-section of the city, but it comes to a head along the corridors where the city hopes to promote denser residential and commercial development, such as Lamar Boulevard and Burnet Road.

The second draft of CodeNext includes a set of new requirements for these stretches, proposing a set of building types and density levels that would provide a smoother transition between the corridors and the residential neighborhoods that abut them.
"You wouldn't get a monolith building (near a residential unit), you'd have to stair-step it," said CodeNext project manager Jorge Rousselín. "The closer you are to the activity corridor, the taller you can build. The closer you are to the residential unit, the shorter it can be."

Under city code, a developer is only required to meet with a neighborhood association or land owner and engage in city processes when the developer wants to build something that varies from what current zoning allows, such as in Reichler's case.

These negotiations result in a conditional overlay, which creates a zoning district unique to a specific property.

It's these conditional overlays that add to the unpredictability of the current code, said Scott Turner, owner of Austin-based construction company Riverside Homes.

Anything allowed under a designated zoning category is up for negotiation between the two parties, from height, setback and compatibility requirements to less technical issues. Turner said this can make the process excessively arduous and complex.

"It's hard to predict going in what you can get out of it, and it's impractical for the city to rezone on a spot basis every time," Turner said. "It's extremely inefficient and just takes time ... so it's a disincentive (for developers) to go into in the first place."

Turner, who founded Riverside Homes in 2001 and worked as a real estate agent for four years prior, regularly works with neighborhood residents during his home construction projects and said he often runs into the "conditional overlay problem."

Even when city code does not require him to, Turner said he has made a habit of meeting with residents early and often to explain the intentions of his project and answer questions about current zoning.

More developers are engaging in conversations with neighborhood residents now than before, he said, noting that completing a project on good terms with neighbors helps draws in more business for the developer later.

Still, many developers don't engage with neighbors if those conversations are voluntary, even though the city currently tries to encourage them. In that sense, Turner said, CodeNext takes positive steps toward creating a better platform for developments that won't require neighborhood approvals.
CodeNext would not change the requirement for negotiations in the case of developments that vary from code. However, in its current form, it would increase the number of "by-right" building types allowed in many areas of the city, allowing for more flexibility in what property owners could build without going through individual zoning cases.

And with more by-right development opportunities, developers might not have to request zoning changes nearly as often — something that proponents say will decrease building costs, encourage the addition of more housing in the city and ultimately help ease Austin’s soaring costs.

"One of the obstacles of (the current code) is that it's too onerous to go from two units to three or four units," Turner said, "so you don’t see many being built, if any, unless the zoning is already there."

'Strategic negotiation'

However, such an expansion of by-right development possibilities could decrease the chances that a developer would engage in any sort of conversation with nearby residents or neighborhood associations. And while it would substantially improve the predictability of the process, it would give residents less input into the proposals that arise around their neighborhoods.

In fact, said District 7 City Council Member Leslie Pool, the expected reduction in variance requests under CodeNext would leave residents and neighborhood associations with few options to mediate conflict or request concessions from developers.

"Why would I (as the city), give away a freebie for nothing?" Pool said. "Why would I give away an entitlement in advance when I can hold that and get more reduced apartment prices, or contributions for a park, or maybe a playground, or anything? We’re increasing the ability for different uses without using that as an opportunity for strategic negotiation."

Within Pool’s district, members of the Crestview Neighborhood Association have become some of the most vocal CodeNext critics. For the average resident, the idea of a decrease in these dialogues and a loss of control can be a major concern.

When negotiations between Crestview landowners and developers are on a small scale, like compatibility issues or the removal of trees, the neighborhood association doesn’t typically stand in the way, said Mike Lavigne, president of the association.
It becomes more heavily involved when commercial developments are planned — a major source of anxiety under this second draft of CodeNext, which expands the types of commercial use in some areas available to developers.

"If you change the rules to allow (more) entitlements, there's even less action between the builder and the neighborhood," said Lavigne, who also serves on the board of Community Not Commodity, which opposes the current CodeNext draft. "There's no reason they would ever come to the neighborhood, because there's no reason for them to ask for anything anymore."
Victim and suspect in on-campus stabbing identified

May 1, 2017
By Catherine Marfin

School officials from the North Texas town Graham confirmed the death of UT student Harrison Brown in the on-campus stabbing in a Facebook post Monday evening.

The UT Police Department held a press conference Monday afternoon confirming the suspect in the on-campus stabbing as biology junior Kendrex J. White.

UTPD received reports of an individual assaulting others with a large, Bowie-style hunting knife on the 200 block of East 21st Street, across the street from Speedway and San Jacinto, at 1:49 p.m. Monday afternoon. UTPD had officers on scene within two minutes, UTPD Chief David Carter said. Between the time UTPD received the call and the time officers arrived on scene, White had assaulted three other students.

White was taken into custody almost immediately, Carter said. The stabbing victims were three white males and one Asian male, all students in their early 20’s. One victim was pronounced dead at the scene. The victims have not been identified and those injured are receiving treatment at Brackenridge Hospital.

The University official safety alert was not sent to students until 30 minutes after the incident occurred.
Carter said the Austin Police Department and the Texas Department of Public Safety will be assisting with the investigation and sending their officers to help patrol campus and areas west of campus.

“This is something that rattles any community, especially a college campus,” Carter said. “We are fortunate in that the University of Texas has a great partnership with the Austin Police Department and the Department of Public Safety, who will be assisting us in this investigation.”

Carter said the department is working on interviewing upward of 25 witnesses, most of whom are students.

UT President Gregory Fenves released a University-wide statement after the incident.

“There are no words to describe my sense of loss,” Fenves said. “Campus safety is our highest priority and we will investigate this tragic incident to the greatest extent possible. Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims and their families, the witnesses to the crime, and every member of Longhorn nation. We all mourn today.”

UTPD said the social media rumors that circulated after the incident, many of which claimed the West Campus area, specifically Greek fraternities, were additionally being targeted, were not credible. Carter said UTPD cannot confirm if any of the victims were fraternity members, or if the incident is related to the West Campus vandalisms that occurred on several fraternity houses last week.

An APD Public Information Officer confirmed that rumors of other incidents near 24th and 26th Streets in West Campus were not credible.

Additionally, a sign that read “Tuition Pays for Bombs” was seen hanging from the Moody Sky Bridge, between the Belo Center for New Media and the Jones Communication Center, roughly an hour after the on-campus stabbing, but was quickly taken down. UTPD said they do not believe the two incidents are connected.
There are no additional or ongoing threats to the campus areas, according to UTPD.

Shortly after the incident, Provost Maurie McInnis announced in an email that all classes and events were cancelled for the day.