

**TEXAS STUDENT MEDIA APPLICATION FORM**  
**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE DAILY TEXAN**  
Term of Office: June 1, 2020 - May 31, 2021

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](mailto:serpas@austin.utexas.edu)) by **Monday, February 3, 2020 at 12:00 p.m.**

Candidates are due to be certified at the TSM Board meeting scheduled for **Friday, February 7, 2020 at 1:00 p.m.**

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

**Applicant Information**

Abigail (Abby) Springs  
Name

ars5959  
UT EID

abbysprings00@gmail.com  
Email Address

Government + Political Communication  
Major

**Applicant Attestation / Authorization for Release of Information**  
(please circle yes or no for each)

- N 1. I am currently enrolled as a UT-Austin student.
- N 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.
- N 3. I agree to complete and pass a media law and libel test administered by the Editorial Adviser prior to taking position.
- N 4. By the start of my term of office, I will have completed at least one semester as a permanent staff member of The Daily Texan in opinion.
- N 5. By the start of my term of office, I will have completed at least one semester as a permanent or issue staff member of The Daily Texan outside opinion.
- N 6. I have obtained and included signatures from at least five current permanent staff members of The Daily Texan supporting my application.

*Note: The TSM Board may certify candidates by waiving one of requirements 4, 5, or 6 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. I understand that I am subject to the TSM Election Code, as detailed in Chapter 7 of the TSM Handbook, and to the Campus-Wide Election Code and the Election Timeline (available at <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/campuswideelections/>).

Abigail Springs  
Signature of Applicant

02/03/2020  
Date



**Signatures of at least 5 current permanent staff members of The Daily Texan:**

*Sneyzel*  
Sanika Nayak  
Associate Opinion Editor  
sn24646

*Hannah Lopez*  
Hannah Lopez  
Associate Opinion Editor  
hal697

*Brittany Miller*  
Brittany Miller  
Associate Managing Editor  
bkm945

*ADasgupta*  
Abhirupa Dasgupta  
Associate opinion editor  
ad44862

*Rebecca Martin*  
social media editor  
rm53669

*Jason Limwang*  
Jason Limwang  
Copy Desk Chief

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

Associate Editor (~~Spring~~<sup>Summer</sup> 2019 - present)

Newsletter Staffer (Spring 2020)

Opinion Columnist (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)

# ABBY SPRINGS

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214.519.3149 • abbysprings00@gmail.com

## EDUCATION

**The University of Texas at Austin**, Austin, TX

May 2022

*B.A., Government • Liberal Arts Honors*

GPA: 3.93

*B.S., Communication Studies • Political Communication*

## EXPERIENCE

**The Daily Texan**, Austin, TX

*Associate Editor*

June 2019 - Present

- Edit columns for publication in university newspaper with circulation of roughly 12,000
- Help determine editorial page position on important student and political issues as member of editorial board

*Newsletters Staffer*

January 2020 – Present

- Write and curate the weekly newsletter for the Daily Texan, The Daily Digest

*Columnist*

January 2019 – June 2019

- Write weekly opinion columns related to university, city, state, and national policy issues
- Conduct research, including interviews with students, faculty and university administrators to write effective arguments

**Liberal Arts Honors**, Austin, TX

August 2019 – December 2019

*Writing Fellow*

- Grade and edit weekly papers for freshmen in the Liberal Arts Honors program
- Serve as a mentor for writing advice, tutoring, and adjusting to college life

**City of Austin**, Austin, TX

May 2019 – August 2019

*Media Relations Intern*

- Created content for City of Austin Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram social media accounts
- Prepared public communications related to City Council and other meetings
- Fielded and responded to media inquiries, researched policy issues, and replied on behalf of the city

**Communication Career Services**, Austin, TX

May 2019 – August 2019

*Intern*

- Handled front desk duties; answered phones, scheduled appointments, welcomed and assisted guests

## COMMUNITY SERVICE

**Travis County Volunteer Deputy Registrar**, Austin, TX

September 2018 - Present

*Volunteer*

- Register students to vote through classroom presentations, voting registration drives, and on-campus tabling

## LEADERSHIP

**Liberal Arts Honors Student Council – UT Austin**

*Secretary*

August 2019 - Present

- Elected by my peers to serve as a member of the executive board, where I help plan and oversee the activities of the student council and liberal arts honors student body

*First Year Representative*

August 2018 – June 2019

- Planned monthly social events for Liberal Arts Honors students
- Promoted social events on social media
- Represented the liberal arts honors student body in events and presentations

## AWARDS

Liberal Arts Honors Writing Scholarship, National AP Scholar, National Honor Society, National English Honor Society

To the Texas Student Media Board,

My name is Abby Springs and I am writing to present my candidacy for Editor-in-Chief of the Daily Texan.

I would not be here without student journalism. Literally. My parents met in the office of their college newspaper, and they instilled in me a deep respect for the power of journalism and uncovering the truth. Coming to UT, I was at first wary of joining the Texan and following in my parents' footsteps. But after I found myself in the Texan basement, I just couldn't leave.

I love the opinion department. In our office, we do more than uncover the truth — we use our platform to advocate for our community and stand up for what we believe in. I have held two positions in the opinion department as a columnist for one semester and associate editor for nearly three. Now, I am running for Editor-in-Chief to make the Texan more accessible for low-income and underrepresented voices, to continue investigation and progressive advocacy, and to make the Texan basement a more enjoyable, inclusive and collaborative place to work. Outlined below are the initiatives that I hope to implement if I am elected Editor-in-Chief.

#### **Allow students to claim course or internship credit for Texan experience**

It's no secret that there's a barrier for entry for low-income students at the Texan. Our staffers put in hours and hours each week to make the paper come to life. For many, the Texan doesn't always feel like a student organization — it feels like a job. And for half of our talented staff, it's an unpaid one, a luxury that many low-income students cannot afford.

The reality of the TSM budget means that it's difficult to simply increase salaries or expand our paid staff. However, allowing students to gain course or internship credit for their work at the Texan will give staffers something of monetary value that will go toward their graduation.

According to the TSM 2019 Governing Documents, this has been a goal of past TSM leaders since at least 2011. However, there has been no recent push for implementing it. During the year of my tenure, I hope to work with the TSM board, the Moody College of Communication, and other University administrators to let staffers claim at least one hour of credit for their important work in informing the student body. I am willing to put in time and lead this initiative because this will give Texan staffers the equivalent of hundreds of dollars without taking a dime from the Daily Texan budget.

#### **Continue use of opinion page for student advocacy**

If I were to become Editor-in-Chief, my main role would be as the head of the opinion page and the Editorial Board. In this position, I hope to continue using our platform for investigation and student advocacy, as well as inviting a diverse array of underrepresented student voices to advocate for the issues that matter to them.

The opinion department differs from the rest of the Texan in one key way — while we all use our positions to investigate and uncover the truth, the opinion department uses those facts to interpret and advocate. I hope to use my position to continue our progressive advocacy, focused on university and local political matters like sexual misconduct or the Riverside vote from last year. To do so, I will personally sit down and communicate with student activists from different organizations to hear their perspectives and ensure we are advocating for the issues students care about. I will also pursue the investigation of different issues, such as UT divestment or hazing punishments, to heighten and support our editorials.

I would also like to foster collaboration between our forum team and the Texan's Diversity and Inclusion Board. Our weekly forum page is dedicated for members of the student body to submit op-eds on a select topic. As such, it is essential that we showcase a diversity of voices and backgrounds. However, we must also make sure to conduct outreach in a respectful way. By working with the Diversity and Inclusion Board, I hope to use the opinion section and the forum page to give a platform to marginalized and underrepresented voices on campus.

### **Columnist retention and morale**

As a columnist, the Texan was the only large student organization I was actively involved in. However, with everyone stressed about finishing their work and making deadlines, it didn't really feel like a student org. Last semester, we had almost half of our columnists quit and columnists regularly submitted their work past deadline. We need to make sure our staff actually commits to the Texan and enjoys their work. To accomplish this, I will encourage mentorship between the associate editors and the columnists, with regular lunches or coffee events with each pitch group. I will also host and plan more social events, as well as collaborate with our events team to create more inter-Texan social gatherings.

### **Inter-Texan collaboration**

I would like also to focus on making opinion content more engaging and seen by more people. Opinion staffers can only make change on campus if people are actually reading our opinions. To help accomplish this, the opinion department should collaborate more with other Daily Texan departments to create more thoughtful, thorough, and entertaining opinion content.

Opinion content, especially our longform pieces, would be better served with a multimedia aspect that provides more depth to our stories. The opinion department is meant to uncover and highlight problems that directly affect UT students, so including a more personal, human element will help make our content more engaging and persuasive. The photo, video, and audio departments especially can help with this goal. For our less in-depth pieces, opinion illustrators could help provide infographics to bolster stories with a data element. Our financial aid editorial is one example of a piece that could have benefited from an infographic explaining the complicated process of PUF funding. Currently, most opinion pieces are simply 600 word stories. While they are interesting, this format can be difficult to get people to engage with. Adding a more exciting, multimedia aspect to opinion pieces can get our content seen and felt by more people who can make the change we are pushing for.

In conjunction, I would help expand the use of the opinion Twitter account to promote our stories and showcase multimedia elements. Our opinion twitter account does not currently do much other than post stories. I would like to collaborate with the Director of Online Strategy and the social media departments to find strategies to make our content seen by more people.

While I could write a novel about the passion I have for the Texan and opinion department, I think 1,000 words is a good place to stop. I believe that I will be a progressive, dedicated, and collaborative leader for the Texan, and I hope that the initiatives I have outlined show the vision I have for the paper and the people behind the pages.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Abby Springs

# UT needs to finally eliminate tuition for graduate students

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BY ABBY SPRINGS

“I have given up on UT.”

“I have lost my mental health trying to keep up with a ‘normal layperson’s life’ and a ‘successful student’s life.’”

“Your system is broken. I can’t have an unemotional conversation about this, nor can I begin to describe how (messed) up some departments are.”

“There were times when I rationed my food because I couldn’t afford food, rent and other school necessities.”

“Please, please, please, PLEASE fix this.”

Last year, the Graduate Student Labor Conditions Committee organized a survey to examine the financial climate of graduate students at UT. These were some of their responses.

UT’s graduate students are struggling. Hundreds of students in the survey expressed financial hardship — living paycheck to paycheck, skipping meals and making countless sacrifices just to survive.

On International Workers’ Day, UT graduate students gathered to protest unacceptably low wages and high fees for graduate workers. Chanting and waving signs, the large crowd delivered a petition signed by over 3,000 students, faculty and staff members.

The petition calls for immediate changes to graduate student payments and benefits, specifically regarding the Tuition Reduction Benefit. UT needs to adjust the Tuition Reduction Benefit to cover the full cost of tuition for Ph.D. students.

Instituted in 1997, the Tuition Reduction Benefit covers a portion of graduate student tuition. The benefit is \$3,784 for a 9 credit hour semester, while the average cost of graduate tuition is \$4,855, resulting in a \$1,071 bill per semester for every student. The benefit has not increased since 2011.

“Over the past couple of years, tuition has increased, and the tuition reduction benefit has not increased to match that,” said Kelly Houck, a graduate student in the Department of Middle Eastern Studies. “Ph.D. students end up paying a portion of their tuition, which shouldn’t happen at a major, elite institution. It’s embarrassing that that’s happening at UT.”

These students are the lifeblood of the University — they serve as teaching assistants and assistant instructors, educate and tutor undergraduates and provide acclaimed research as graduate research assistants. They deserve better.

Harvard, Duke, Brown and UCLA are among the top universities that cover full tuition for Ph.D. student workers. UT does not.

Not only does UT’s lack of funding harm graduate students, but it harms the University as well. One-third of students admitted to graduate school turn down UT for financial reasons, which affects UT’s ability to attract talent to its graduate programs and threatens UT’s status as a top university.



“I think a lot of people choose not to go back to school and pursue what they really want to do because (they’re) having to put (their) financial life on pause,” said Kristie Denlinger, a graduate student in the Department of Linguistics. “For my field, it takes half a decade to get the degree you want to get.”

UT has been asked to raise the Tuition Reduction Benefit before — in December, the Graduate Student Labor Conditions Committee met with key members of University administration. The committee presented the results of its graduate student survey and requested the benefit be matched to increases in tuition.

The University then established a Graduate Education Task Force to address graduate labor concerns. The task force will provide recommendations by the end of next fall. In a statement, Mark Smith, dean of the Graduate School, emphasized the vitality of graduate students and the work the task force is doing.

However, the University doesn’t need to wait for this recommendation. The petition calls on the University Budget Council, led by President Gregory Fenves, to increase the Tuition Reduction Benefit.

The longer UT waits, the longer graduate students will struggle to survive.

The University has billions of dollars. To put the burden of tuition on its struggling graduate student population is disrespectful to the students and the accolades they bring to the University. UT needs to raise the Tuition Reduction Benefit to improve the working conditions of graduate student workers — for their sake and UT’s.

*Springs is a government freshman from Dallas.*

# Painter Hall memorializes wrong side of history

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BY ABBY SPRINGS

In 1946, Heman Sweatt applied for admission to the University of Texas School of Law. A hard-working, educated mail carrier in his 30s, he was like any other applicant in all respects but one — he was “duly qualified for admission into the Law School at the University of Texas, save and except for the fact that he is a Negro.”

Those were the words of Theophilus Painter, the president of the University at the time. Today, UT has a building on campus bearing his name — Painter Hall.

However, Painter was more than just a racist. He was on the losing side of a Supreme Court case, one that laid the groundwork to desegregate the entire U.S. public school system. Instead of honoring his stain on U.S. history, let's rename his building after one of UT's most significant students — Heman Sweatt.

“Heman Sweatt was a letter carrier. A mail person,” Edmund T. Gordon, vice provost for diversity said. “He wanted to study law... he was denied admission because he was black. They began running the case, with the help of the NAACP, up through the court system to the point where it reached the Supreme Court... with Thurgood Marshall arguing the case.”

The case, Sweatt v. Painter, was decided unanimously in Sweatt's favor and against the University. The University of Texas was forced to allow black students into its graduate schools. However, the undergraduate school remained segregated.

“That precedent, with a couple of others, became the basis for the Supreme Court decision in 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education*, which definitively knocked down *Plessy v. Ferguson*,” Gordon said.

Despite Sweatt’s immense contribution and sacrifice for civil rights, his name is not memorialized as a building on UT’s main campus. Instead, students of color study in a building named for the man who fought in the country’s highest court to keep them out.

“I feel like renaming the building is one way to make the black student body feel more included and respected in the University environment,” journalism sophomore Angelica Arinze said. “Sometimes I think there’s a difference between remembering history and growing from it.”

UT has renamed buildings named after racists before. Until 2010, Creekside Residence Hall was named after William Simkins, a former Klansman and law professor.

“I don’t see why they can’t do the same for Painter Hall,” Arinze said. “It makes me feel like UT doesn’t really care enough to make sure the black community at UT feels completely respected and included.”

Simkins and Painter would hate the campus of today — both explicitly told black students that they didn’t belong at UT. For students like Arinze, she said it’s hard not to feel like that when those are the names UT chooses to honor.

“UT’s inability and reluctance to make positive, inclusive change to their university’s structures stems from an inability to have a deep conversation about heavily racialized experiences students are having on this campus,” Arinze said.

Replacing Painter's name with Sweatt's would not be erasing history — it would serve as a reminder of the shame of our past as well as a celebration of the black students on our campus today. However, UT won't make changes without student pressure and efforts to make their voices heard.

“If students are really committed to something like that, I find it hard to believe that the University... would ignore them forever,” said Gordon. “But if they're not, then it's easier for the University to leave those things with the way they are.”

So, let's keep fighting for a university that reflects our student body. Instead of honoring a man who would have kept UT from progressing, let's memorialize one who paved the way for diversity across the country. Let's send a message that all students are welcome here.

*Springs is a government sophomore from Dallas.*