Alison Badgett  
**Executive Director**

Alison became executive director of Raise Your Hand Texas in May 2016 after serving as Director of Research and Strategic Development. In that role, Alison managed the organization’s research agenda to inform Raise Your Hand’s policy priorities and led development of the Raising Blended Learners demonstration initiative. Alison joined Raise Your Hand in 2014 through a fellowship with Education Pioneers, an organization that recruits and supports professionals in other sectors to assume education leadership positions outside of the classroom.

Prior to Raise Your Hand, Alison was the chief executive of several public policy organizations related to issues of housing and homelessness. Most recently, she was Executive Director of the New York State Association for Affordable Housing, a 375-member trade association engaged in advocacy on legislative and budgetary issues at the local, state and federal levels. Previously, she was Executive Director of the Homes for New Jersey campaign and the Mercer Alliance to End Homelessness, both diverse consortiums of civic and business leaders, which she led in the development and implementation of shared policy and programming agendas. Alison has also worked on child welfare issues, as the Director of Program Development and Advocacy for the Children's Home Society of New Jersey.

Alison has a bachelor’s degree from Princeton University in politics, a master’s degree from Columbia University Teachers College in philosophy and education, and is currently pursuing a doctorate in global education from the University of Southern California.

Ann Smisko  
**Deputy Director of Policy and Programs**

Ann Smisko joined the Raise Your Hand senior leadership team in 2016 as Deputy Director of Policy and Programs. Most recently, Ann served as Deputy Superintendent for the Dallas Independent School District, and before that she served as the district’s Chief of Academic Improvement and Accountability. Ann has served in multiple roles at the Texas Education Agency, including Associate Commissioner for School Improvement and Educator Initiatives, and she worked for the Austin Independent School District as Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction.

Ann was also Associate Vice Chancellor for Public Schools for the Texas A&M University System. She began her career as a teacher in the Boston Public Schools.

Ann has a Ph.D. in educational administration from UT-Austin, a master’s in education from Boston College, and a bachelor’s degree from Pennsylvania State University.
Petri Darby, APR  
Vice President of Marketing

A writer, brand marketing strategist, storyteller, and speaker, Petri joined Raise Your Hand Texas in 2013. His 20-year career includes spearheading marketing, communications, and digital strategy in the Make-A-Wish national office, running his own creative marketing shop, and other agency and corporate stints.

Petri leads a talented team of multimedia design, production, and marketing communications professionals who are all driven by a shared passion for changing lives and advancing public education through compelling storytelling.

Petri loves politics, independent movies, and used bookstores. His wife prefers reality TV and their two sons prefer Minecraft. Petri graduated from the University of Arizona, which he refers to as the “Harvard of the Southwest.” He has served as Haiku Laureate for TEDx The Woodlands, and, as far as he knows, he is the only two-time winner of the USA Today Online Haiku Contest.

David Anderson  
General Counsel and Policy Analyst

David joined Raise Your Hand Texas in October of 2014 after retiring from a 20-year post as General Counsel to the Texas Education Agency. He is recognized by the Texas Board of Legal Certification in Administrative Law and he is thrilled to have an email account that is not subject to the Public Information Act.

David trains for triathlons, practices Ashtanga yoga, and plays the Japanese game “Go.” He enjoys traveling with his wife Janee. They have two children.

Debra Salge  
Chief Administrative Officer

Debra has been with Raise Your Hand Texas since its inception in 2007. She helps direct organizational operations. She has a thorough understanding of the organization’s mission and vision, and shares the organizational belief that education is an investment, not a cost.

Debra brings to her role a wealth of administrative, financial, project management, and philanthropic experience, including 28 years serving as Executive Assistant to the Chairman and CEO at H-E-B.

Debra received a bachelor’s degree in Social Work from Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio and an MBA from Texas A&M Corpus Christi. She is a graduate of Leadership Texas and is a former board member of Impact San Antonio, the World Affairs Council of San Antonio, and the Blue Star Art Complex. Debra is currently on the board of Teach For America/San Antonio and San Antonio Reads.
MJ Nicchio
Director for Government Relations

MJ manages the organization’s public policy and government affairs initiatives. He represents Raise Your Hand Texas at the Texas Capitol with state government officials, advocacy organizations, and other public policy stakeholders in an attempt to ensure support for the 5.3 million public school students in Texas. He is the liaison between all parties to provide impartial resources and research, and analysis of the potential impact of proposed legislation on public education in Texas.

MJ has worked in and around the State Capitol since 1989, and has built extensive contacts throughout state government. He began his career working as a researcher and member of the Capitol press corps. He has worked on dozens of campaigns for issues and candidates, and has represented several organizations as their governmental relations director at the Capitol.

Amanda Brownson
Director of Research and Policy

Amanda joined Raise Your Hand Texas in June of 2016. Prior to coming to the organization, she served as Director of State Funding for the Texas Education Agency, where she oversaw the distribution of roughly $20 billion in annual state aid payments under the Foundation School Program. She has also worked as a consultant for Moak, Casey & Associates and, prior to that, spent five years teaching elementary school in Texas and in California.

Amanda has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics, as well as a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Educational Policy and Planning from The University of Texas at Austin.

Jennifer Jendrzey
Associate Director of Research, Blended Learning

Jennifer Jendrzey joined the Raise Your Hand Texas team in 2015 and, among other efforts, immediately began assisting with the colossal coordination and launch of the organization’s new blended learning program. In her role, Jennifer’s research efforts focus on blended learning in alignment with her management of the Raising Blended Learners initiative.

Before joining Raise Your Hand, Jennifer worked at the Texas Education Agency supporting the Communities In Schools of Texas program. During her graduate studies, she was an Education Pioneers Fellow working in New Orleans as a human capital analyst. Jennifer has also worked for a college- and career-readiness nonprofit in San Antonio where she managed external affairs and in-school student programs.

Jennifer has a Bachelor of Arts degree in English, and a Bachelor of Journalism degree from The University of Texas at Austin, as well as a Master of Public Affairs degree from the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at The University of Texas at Austin.
Thea Ulrich-Lewis  
*Research Associate*

Thea Ulrich-Lewis, a member of the 2009 Teach for America Corps in the Rio Grande Valley, joined the Raise Your Hand Texas research team in April 2016. After three years of teaching 4th grade math and science, the Brooklyn native moved to Austin to complete a Master’s degree in public affairs at the University of Texas. She has worked at a variety of state agencies, most recently the Legislative Budget Board.

As a research associate for Raise Your Hand, Thea will be investigating a variety of topics related to the organization’s key issues, particularly teacher preparation programming. Thea’s interests run the gamut of physical activity, from the pleasant pastime of gardening in a central Austin community plot to high-powered play in the position of ‘prop’ for the Austin Valkyries Women’s Rugby team.

Cody Huie  
*Director of Leadership Development*

Cody joined Raise Your Hand Texas as Director of Leadership Development in August 2016. Before joining the team, Cody worked as Senior Coordinator at the Texas Center for District and School Support at Education Service Center Region 13. In his seven years at ESC 13, Cody developed training and resources for thousands of district and campus leaders around the state and managed the implementation of multiple statewide school improvement grants, including the Texas Title I Priority Schools Grant, and a grant focused on building capacity in rural schools. Cody has also worked as a district behavior specialist and a middle school special education reading teacher.

Cody has a Bachelor of Arts from The University of Texas at Austin and a Master of Public Affairs from the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs.

Marcela Andrés  
*Program Director*

Marcela joined the Raise Your Hand Texas team in July of 2016. As a child growing up in one of Austin’s most underserved communities, Marcela questioned inequality in education. Today she is dedicated to making a positive impact in underserved populations through her ability to forge strong relationships, and her commitment to ensuring every child in Texas has the opportunity to succeed.

Most recently, Marcela served as the Founding Operations Manager supporting the opening of four charter schools under the KIPP National network in Austin. In that role, she exercised her passion for building a family’s capacity to be strong partners in navigating their child’s educational journey. Marcela also taught 3rd and 4th grade at Colegio Ingles, a school in Torreón, Coahuila, Mexico, that offers a bilingual program for students learning English.

Marcela has a Bachelor of Business Administration in Finance from Saint Edward’s University and a Master of Education from Harvard Graduate School of Education.
Charlotte Moore  
*Writer/Producer*

Charlotte, an award-winning writer and journalist from Austin, Texas, joined the Raise Your Hand Texas marketing team in June of 2014. Her 17-year journalism career includes reporting for the Austin American-Statesman, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, and various lifestyle magazines, and producing for the CBS television news affiliate in Austin.

As writer and producer for Raise Your Hand Texas, Charlotte helps craft and deliver the multimedia stories that give human voice to our policy and advocacy work. Charlotte is also editor-in-chief of The Raise Review, our organization’s public education-focused magazine.

Charlotte is an unapologetic chocoholic who enjoys laughing, watching movies, creating art, and spending quality time with her daughter, Hayley, a junior at Texas State University in San Marcos.

Jenny Magic  
*Communication Strategist*

Jenny, who joined the Raise Your Hand Texas team in 2015, is best known as a top-rated speaker at national marketing and technology conferences. Her background as owner of a content strategy agency and co-owner of a web design firm complements the expanding online marketing goals of the organization.

As communications strategist for Raise Your Hand Texas, Jenny helps architect the content strategy and implement it across digital platforms.

Jenny is an award-winning mentor who also organizes the 1,100 member #AustinContent Meetup. An avid reader, fierce game night competitor, and former “top man” of the family waterski pyramids, Jenny geeks out over Wired magazine and loves using her two young sons as an excuse to do fun kid stuff.

Joel Goudeau  
*Visual Design Strategist*

Joel, who joined the Raise Your Hand Texas marketing team in 2014, has literally left his mark across Texas with his flair for graphic design. The Abilene Christian University graduate has worked closely with state agencies and education nonprofits to develop prominent marketing projects.

At Raise Your Hand Texas, through his talent for illustration, multimedia design, photography, and videography, Joel helps lead the organization’s visual branding and “look and feel” across print and digital platforms.

The Brazilian-born husband and father of two little girls enjoys tall, refreshing glasses of caldo de cana (sugarcane juice), world travel, backyard soccer games, and he boasts having read all five of the epic “Game of Thrones” volumes.
Anne Bannister  
*Digital Producer*

Anne, a filmmaker, photographer, and narrative storyteller joined the Raise Your Hand Texas marketing team in June of 2014. She recently graduated from Southwestern University, where she made her mark creating video productions for the Admissions Office. In 2012, she spent a life-changing six months in rural Thailand as an intern for a nonprofit that nurtures children from isolated mountain villages and broken families.

As a Digital Producer for Raise Your Hand Texas, Anne uses her talents to craft, shoot, and edit the stories that give voice to educators, and bridge the gap between the Capitol and campus communities.

Born to a family chock-full of educators, Anne knew by age six she was destined to have an education-related career. By nature Anne is an artist and an adventurer. She loves to sing, paint, throw pottery, cook, daydream, and travel. Anne is passionate for the outdoors; she has found all of the best hiking spots in and around Austin (and the best food trucks to eat at afterward, too!)

Briana Mascitelli  
*Operations Manager*

In June of 2014, Briana packed up her Kia Soul and made the 1,700-mile trek from the small town of Hopatcong, New Jersey to Austin, Texas in hopes of starting a new career. The Susquehanna University graduate majored in Communications, and most previously worked as a counselor for a nonprofit agency in New Jersey.

As operations manager for Raise Your Hand Texas, Briana uses her “Jill of all trades” flair to facilitate day-to-day activities — from managing financial reports and human resources to assisting with projects in the marketing and program departments.

Briana is a pop culture aficionado and expert roadtripper. She is just 10 states shy from joining the “All Fifty Club”.