

Sara Landreneau Kleinpeter
Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS)
ACCT Regional Awards 2021
Professional Board Staff Member Award

1. In what ways has this staff member demonstrated a service leadership role toward the members of the board of trustees, administrators, faculty, students and community?

For more than eight years, Sara Landreneau Kleinpeter has served as the Coordinator of Board Services for the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS). With this title, she lobbies her time between three separate boards and a total of 25 unique board members on any given day. Her background in education and public service bodes well for her role at LCTCS. She is an empathetic servant leader who has a knack for handling high stress situations with calm and grace. Her work ethic is unsurpassed and she's a constant support to all in the office, regardless of the department seeking assistance. Sara is eager to volunteer her assistance with projects and events when they arise. She always offers a refreshing point of view. Her critical thinking is helpful in many situations. She is skilled in organizing projects, meetings or gatherings of all sizes and uses her creativity to make each event memorable and unique. Additionally, Ms. Kleinpeter makes it a point to have a vested interest in the members of the Board. She often calls to visit with each of them and get updates on their non-LCTCS lives.

The LCTCS Conference, much like the ACCT Congress, is held annually and Sara serves as the conference volunteer coordinator. She recruits and trains more than 100 volunteers to aid in conference registration, conference session moderators, and general capacities. For the Annual Conference in 2015, Ms. Kleinpeter additionally served as the contact for a special luncheon honoring former Governor Murphy "Mike" J. Foster, who founded the Community and Technical College System in Louisiana. This luncheon brought together three former Louisiana Governors, the sitting Louisiana Lt. Governor, and a host of industry leaders and legislators. Each of the VIP guests were treated with red carpet like amenities hosted by Ms. Kleinpeter.

Ms. Kleinpeter can always be counted on to welcome any guests at any time and does it with a joyful spirit that well represents the LCTCS. Once, she even jumped to assist an international leader whose jacket button had come loose. She quickly grabbed her sewing kit and reattached the button to his jacket before his next meeting, which included a national audience and media. There is no task too small or too big for Ms. Kleinpeter. She also helped to plan and execute two annual fundraising kickball tournaments to benefit the Capitol Area United Way.

As a part of the LCTCS Development team, Ms. Kleinpeter helped to organize the 2015 LCTCS Taste of Louisiana, an event that showcased the culinary programs throughout the state system to legislators. And each year, she plays a part in planning the Louisiana Workforce Experience, an annual legislative event hosted by the LCTCS Foundation that highlights the LCTCS Colleges and their workforce programs. In 2021, Ms. Kleinpeter chaired the team in the planning and execution of a combined Workforce Experience and Taste of Louisiana that was held outdoors and drew a crowd of more than 150 legislators, lobbyists, and industry leaders. She also assisted the development team with securing invitation information and coordinating invitations to the M. J. Foster Promise Program appreciation event to honor legislation of the same name.

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2. How does this staff member demonstrate performance in support of the Board/CEO team?

Ms. Kleinpeter assists the System President as needed and provides support to Katie Waldrop, Executive Assistant to the President, often. Both work in tandem to meet the needs of the system office. Sara plays a vital role in assisting the Board, President, and Executive Staff when the system is participating in an ACCT led search for new college leaders. She excels at onboarding new Board members through an orientation that can only be described as the “speed-dating” introduction to LCTCS – a day packed with the departmental leaders that introduce new members to the facets of the LCTCS, its twelve member colleges, and how the system operates. Following this orientation, Sara takes the time to orient new members and aid them in understanding the system. She is a constant person of contact that can connect Board members to the leaders within the system or on the college campuses.

Twice a year, Ms. Kleinpeter works with college Chancellors and/or Registrars to collect the varied information relative to commencement activities and ceremonies for each college. She provides the Board with a detailed list of commencements throughout the state which allows members to prepare for and attend when available. Occasionally, she assists members in preparing remarks for commencement ceremonies. For colleges close to her physical office, Sara attends commencements and assists members with proper regalia. On one occasion, she gowned up as part of the college platform party when a board member was unexpectedly unable to attend. This was welcomed by the college and a prime example of how she goes the extra mile when needed to support the Board.

More recently, Ms. Kleinpeter demonstrated great patience in leadership when transitioning the Board to a virtual meeting platform, in which many were not familiar with the technology needed. The pandemic allowed professional growth for Sara, who did not shy from learning new meeting methods that enabled the Boards to meet while also ensuring they did not break Louisiana public meeting laws. Her calm approach to teaching members how to use the new technology was welcomed and demonstrated her ability to communicate across varied generations.

3. How has this staff member assisted the Board/CEO team in developing or initiating innovative or special projects for your institution?

Sara is an integral part of the LCTCS by being a constant communicator with the three boards she serves. Board members remain informed about not only meetings, but also all activities occurring across the state. Ms. Kleinpeter ensures that all members complete annual ethics and harassment training, along with the reporting required by the Louisiana Board of Ethics. She efficiently prepares annual reports to the Louisiana Secretary of State and the Governor’s Office of Boards and Commissions.

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Each year, Ms. Kleinpeter helps to facilitate the annual planning meetings of the Board. During this meeting, the Board, in conjunction with the System President, sets the goals and strategic initiatives for the future.

It has become evident over the years that Sara has great skills in assisting in special projects. She is eager to take on any challenge presented – big or small – and uses her vast community resources to develop a plan and executes same. From simple things, such as providing coordinated themed shirts to engaging team building activities to building morale boosters or more complex tasks of researching freshman legislator’s backgrounds to figuring out logistics of multiple, simultaneous member needs, she completes special projects or requests with a productive plan and a joyful attitude that is contagious.

Sara is well versed with the ACCT Board, having supported the campaigns for two LCTCS Board members. Former member Woody Oge had an unsuccessful, yet well executed, campaign for the ACCT Board. The following year, after learning much about the process, she developed and produced a successful campaign to elect me to the ACCT Board, not only once but twice. Ms. Kleinpeter utilized her background in effective communication and the art of negotiation to aid her in the support she provides all members.

4. What professional development activities at the national and/or state level has this staff member pursued?

Ms. Kleinpeter is eager to participate in professional development activities. She is an active participant in the ACCT Professional Board Services Network (PBSN). She was elected in 2016, 2017, and 2018, as the Southern Regional Member-at-Large for PBSN and served on the PBSN Executive Committee for the 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 terms.

She is the proud graduate of the following state or local programs:

The 2018 Class of the Baton Rouge Area Chamber Leadership Baton Rouge Program.

The 2019 Class of the Council for a Better Louisiana Leadership Program. The 2021 Cohort of the New Schools of Baton Rouge CHANGEMAKERS Program.

Participant in Dialogue on Race Louisiana 2020.

Participant in the LCTCS/The Sloan Group DEI Program in 2021.

Completion of a private Memoir Writing Course in 2021.

Often, her colleagues ask why she’s doing so many activities. She always responds that she never passes up an opportunity for growth. Sara reads as often as she can about leadership and communicating across generational differences and varied work styles. She excels at making meaningful connections with others and those connections often lead to unique opportunities for professional growth.

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5. What other continuing educational activity has this staff member pursued?

Sara seeks out opportunities to learn and grow as a professional in higher education and in her personal life at every turn. She consistently participates in professional development or invites contacts from prior development opportunities to engage in activities at LCTCS. She engages in online discussions regarding books related to Roberts Rules of Order and keeps up to date on varied online board meeting platforms. She uses online resources to increase her knowledge of how to use computer programs and creative design tools.

In her personal life, Ms. Kleinpeter co-chaired her church's annual Auction for three years, resulting in increasing profits each year. She attends fundraising and event planning continuing education classes to increase her knowledge on best practices for planning events and raising funds – which can be applied directly to her role as it relates to the LCTCS Foundation.

Ms. Kleinpeter is an applicant to the Louisiana State University Graduate School to pursue a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Agricultural & Extension Education, with the anticipated start date of August 2021. Pursuing this degree is a bold example of her desire for continuing educational activities.

6. What recognition has this staff member received for his/her leadership or involvement in the college or community?

Ms. Kleinpeter is often complimented by individual Board members and her peers. They are quick to recognize her vast knowledge of her role, and the operations and activities across the state system, as well as staying abreast of legislative activities. She is always willing to assist anyone who needs help, works to solve any problems when asked, and always remains a phone call or text away for any situation.

7. What outstanding characteristics motivated you to nominate this staff member?

In addition to working full time and excelling in her role as Coordinator of Board Services, Ms. Kleinpeter is a model citizen and is actively engaged in community programs. She's involved as a volunteer at her church and her son's school, with the Anna's Grace Foundation, the Sigma Chapter of Delta Zeta Sorority, the YMCA, and a variety of other organizations. Sara is part of the Bella Bowman Foundation Princess and Notable Figure Cast and can be found dressed as Mary Poppins for youth patients at Our Lady of the Lake Children's Hospital. A self-described volunteer addict, Sara is often seen representing LCTCS around the greater Baton Rouge area and throughout the state. Ms. Kleinpeter is an advocate for community and technical colleges and is passionate about making sure students of all ages have access to quality education.

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I am excited and honored to nominate Sara Landreneau Kleinpeter for the Professional Board Staff Member Award because of her unwavering passion, effective reasoning, critical thinking, creativity, and undying commitment to the Board, students and community of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System. She is proficient and professional with which all she does and maintains a wonder spirit while doing it all.