

2020 Presidential Leadership Executive Session

Speaker Bio

Session: Minority Serving Institutions – *Title IV* Compliance Overview



PRESENTER NAME: Cynthia Thornton

PRESENTER TITLE: Division Chief, Dallas School Participation Division

PRESENTER BUSINESS UNIT: School Eligibility and Oversight Service Group

PRESENTER BIO: Cynthia was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, and was a resident of Grambling, Louisiana, prior to moving to Arlington, Texas to work for the U.S. Department of Education (Department). Prior to joining the Department in 2007, she served as Director of Financial Aid for 11 years at Dillard University, New Orleans, Louisiana. She began her employment in financial aid working at Grambling State University (GSU) as an FWS data entry clerk, shortly after graduating from Northeast Louisiana University in Monroe, Louisiana. She was soon promoted as GSU's Director of Financial Aid, where she served for five years. Throughout her 21-year career in the private sector working in financial aid, she worked at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, both public and private, helping families find funds to pay for college.

She received her MBA from Grambling State University and a bachelor's degree in computer information systems from Northeast Louisiana University. While in Louisiana, she served on numerous committees for the Louisiana Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

(LASFAA), the Southwest Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (SWASFAA), and the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA), including serving as a NASFAA Standards of Excellence Peer Reviewer. She also served as the 2006-07 President of LASFAA, in the midst of Hurricane Katrina. One of Cynthia's proudest career moments is the work she performed at Dillard University maintaining and restoring its students' eligibility for the *Title IV* programs, staff continuity, and the safety of her family after one of the nation's most tragic disasters, Hurricane Katrina. She continued her work there for two years after the storm before making the decision to relocate to Texas.

Cynthia joined the Department in September of 2007, working in Federal Student Aid (FSA) with the Special Initiatives Services Unit (now Minority Serving and Under Resourced School Division) and was repositioned to serve as a Training Officer from December 2007 to November 2010. Since November 2010, Cynthia has served as the Division Chief for the Department's Dallas School Participation Division (Region VI).

Cynthia has been married to her husband, Tyrone, for 26 years and has two lovely daughters, Lauren, a 2019 Xavier University graduate currently attending Yale University, and Lisa, a second-year student attending the University of North Texas.