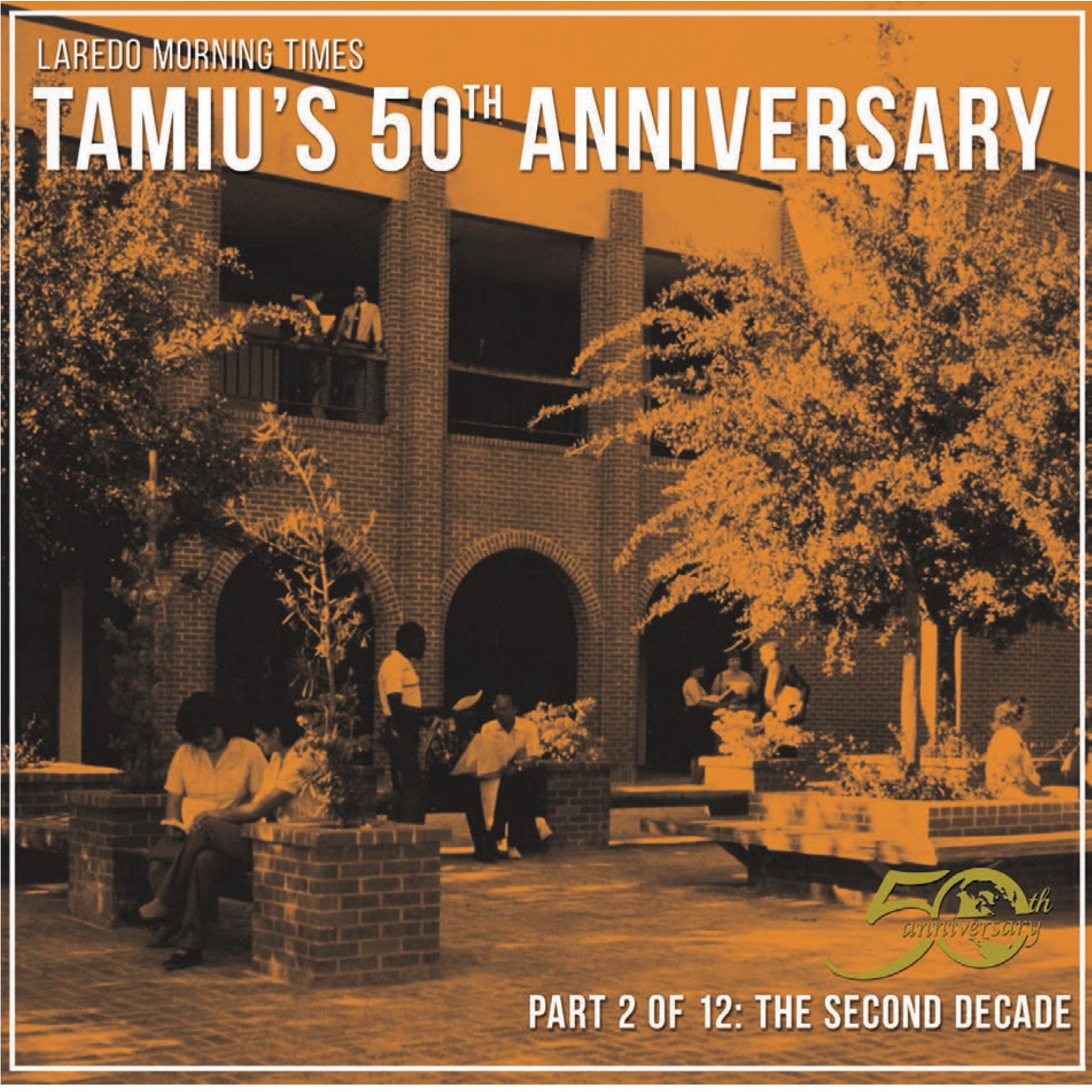


LAREDO MORNING TIMES

TAMIU'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY



PART 2 OF 12: THE SECOND DECADE

TAMIU 50th Anniversary

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The Second Decade

Editor's note: This is Part 2 of 12 in Laredo Morning Times' special look at Texas A&M International as it celebrates its upcoming 50th anniversary in 2020. LMT will be counting down to that momentous occasion with a monthly look at the university's past, present and future.

By Lisa Dreher
Laredo Morning Times

Following a trying but successful first decade in its existence, Laredo State University saw a new wave of faculty and endeavors in the 1980s.

By 1980, LSU had graduated 1,897 students and offered various bachelor's and master's degrees.

Ushering in the new decade was the naming of LSU President Billy Cowart as the Laredo Times' "Man of the Year."

Cowart and LSU staff, community members and renowned city leaders helped build up the small center into a credible university.

On to Excellence

The Texas Legislature was meager on funding LSU, so the university took it upon itself to raise the money instead.

Whitney Halladay, the University System of South Texas Board Chancellor, helped launch the "On to Excellence" fundraising campaign with an ambitious \$400,000 goal. Cowart, LSU Regent Sue Killam, Norma Benavides and Oscar Carrillo oversaw the campaign which started in 1979.



THE SUE KILLAM PROFESSORSHIP IN THE FOUNDATIONS OF ECONOMICS WAS ESTABLISHED BY THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF SOUTH TEXAS IN 1980.

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The campaign would fund several projects, such as creating fellowships and scholarships for lower- and middle-income families. It would also expand the Institute for International Trade, assist young faculty members in obtaining doctorate degrees, bolster the LSU library collection and help recruit students outside Laredo to the area.

By July 1981, the university received \$171,500.

With so many students commuting to the university or coming from abroad, the Killam Family in 1982 donated \$100,000 for constructing the university's first dormitory on the Laredo Junior College-LSU campus.

Oilman and philanthropist Radcliffe Killam said the dorm would help Laredoans make friends from all over the world. The dorm's construction was completed in 1985 with 60 rooms that housed 120 students to the tune of \$1,200,000.

The Hachar Charitable Trust Fund also donated \$50,000 to the reading clinic.

Along with his son, C.Y. Benavides Sr. had established a general scholarship fund to help needy students to honor his mother, Anita G. Benavides. She was the descendant of the founder of Laredo, Don Tomas Sanchez. The Benavides family

donated more than \$50,000 and continues to give back today.

The campaign also started a distinguished lecture series, with notable speakers such as the former Prime Minister of Great Britain.

The Student Assistance Center opened in September 1981 to help students navigate the university's many resources. It now offers general information for departments and programs, information on special events on campus, a study room checkout, approvals for bulletin board flyers and a lost and found.

Change of Leadership

On July 11, 1980, Halladay died in his sleep while attending a family reunion. President of Texas A&I, Duane M. Leach, was selected as acting chancellor.

In January 1984, LSU President Billy Cowart shocked the university when he announced his resignation effective at the end of August. He told the press he had intended on resigning for over a year. He ended up resigning sooner than expected to become the provost at Western Oregon State College at Monmouth.

Dr. Leo Sayavedra, a Valley native and longtime educator, was to be the interim president. Sayavedra taught elementary science and

math, and he had consulted many school districts since 1972 on Mexican American history and culture.

In 1985, Dr. Manuel Trinidad Pacheco was inaugurated as the university's second president. Pacheco, who specialized in linguistics and bilingual education, served as Dean under Cowart at LSU from 1972 to 1977.

Pacheco was chosen out of 60 applicants. Born in Colorado but raised in a small village in northeastern New Mexico, he was a Fulbright Fellow – a recipient of a prestigious U.S. Cultural Exchange Program grant – with a doctorate in Foreign Language Education from The Ohio State University.

He also served as an Education Policy Aide to New Mexico Gov. Tony Anaya.

"I was very pleased because it's not very often that a person gets an opportunity to help really establish a new university," Pacheco said. "When I got there, it was far from being established, so being able to come in and establish both the business and functional parts of the institution as well as the academic programs was very exciting."

Under Pacheco, history professor Dr. Rex Ball became the vice president for administration. Ball was with



PRESIDENT DR.
MANUEL PACHECO



ACTING CHANCELLOR
DUANE M. LEACH

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the university since it was merely a center in 1970.

Joe García became the chief fiscal officer.

“It was empowering to see so many people dedicated to making sure the school succeeded,” Pacheco said. “The faculty went above and beyond normal expectations to make sure the school was successful.”

Among the most notable moments of Pacheco’s time was his protesting at the Texas Legislature to keep L S U

funded. This was in hopes to maintain its status as a university rather than just a center attached to LJC.

Yet two years after his appointment, Pacheco announced he accepted a position as president of the University of Houston Downtown in 1988.

After much deliberation, the University System of South Texas Chancellor announced Sayavedra as LSU’s third President. Sayavedra did not

attend school until he was 12, and he attended a segregated elementary school.

Sayavedra hopped from place to place where he was forced along with African American students to stay away from the white students. He sought quality higher education. He hitchhiked to San Antonio College where he found a job at a gas station working 10-hour shifts on top of a full stack of courses.

Sayavedra later earned a scholarship to Trinity University where he got his bachelor’s in mathematics and a minor in chemistry. He then earned a master’s in education and mathematics from North Texas State University, and later a doctorate in curriculum and instruction from UT Austin.

Sayavedra would go on to drastically transform and embolden the university, including overseeing the merge with the Texas A&M System and expanding various degrees and

programs.

“We had to expand the academic programs,” Sayavedra said. “We became one of the institutions that would offer a degree in international business. Things developed, one thing to another.”

Funding Highs and Lows

Once again, the university experienced funding uncertainty as the Texas Legislature and the oil economy were unpredictable and sometimes unforgiving.

It was a good year in 1983 for the university. Enrollment had tripled since 1973, and the Texas House approved a \$75 million constitutional fund for 17 smaller university and state colleges – including LSU – that were not part of larger systems such as UT and A&M.

Yet in 1985, the peso’s value was dropping as oil prices were slumping. During this chaotic time, Texas Gov. Mark White recommended a \$460 million cut in funding for universities and state colleges.

The Texas Legislature Budget Board recommended slashing \$560 million, which would reduce the university’s 1986 proposed budget from \$4,150,107 nearly in half to \$2,551,689. LSU also placed a moratorium on hiring and cut

\$92,000 from its budget.

The Texas House also proposed eliminating the Institute for International Trade, which had drawn in many international students and plenty of attention to LSU.

Yet Irma Rangel, a Kingsville native and member of the Subcommittee to the House Appropriations Committee, secured funding for the Institute.

In February, Pacheco went to Austin to prevent budget cuts before the House Appropriations Committee. He said many students could not transfer to other higher education institutions.

The next month, he returned to Austin, and after much testifying, LSU’s budget was cut by only 5.7% rather than 26%. This resulted in \$189,000 less than the previous budget for the 1986-87 school year.

Yet tuition increased due to the budget cut. Specifically, non-resident students’ tuition tripled as enrollment plunged. The total of Mexican students attending the university dropped in half.

The following year, Texas Gov. Mark White asked universities by executive order in February 1988 to chop down their budgets due to slumping oil prices. His magic number was a 13% decrease by March.

With much negotiating



**PRESIDENT DR.
LEO SAYAVEDRA**

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GOV. MARK WHITE, ANDRES RAMOS AND BLAS MARTINEZ

and deliberating, Pacheco announced the budget would only be cut by 3% after the past year full of detrimental slashes.

After an avoided blow, White appointed 23 people to a Border Economic Development task force which held hearings in Laredo.

One of their hearings including members from LSU and the community, including Sayavedra, business professor Donald Barresen and history professor Rex Ball. Sayavedra spoke on appropriations for higher education being severely underfunded and neglected in South Texas compared to Central Texas.

“There was a number

of people from Laredo, and they helped us a whole lot,” Sayavedra said. “Some were not very happy about what we were doing, but afterwards everybody realized that we were trying to do the right thing, and as a consequence, we changed higher education in South Texas a great deal. We started in Laredo, and we sent more and more kids an opportunity to go there.”

Although they dodged a funding crisis, LSU faced threats of closure altogether. Word spread that the Governor’s Select Committee on Higher Education considered closing several universities. The committee, chaired by Larry Temple,

discussed reverting LSU back into a branch studies center.

In response, Dr. Joaquin Cigarroa and community leaders created a petition that year to defend the university from closing. It gathered 11,000 signatures, including those from banks, churches, shopping centers and other local businesses.

The petition also included State Representative-elect Henry Cuellar’s signature. Cuellar earned his MBA from LSU and is now the U.S Representative for Texas’s 28th congressional district, which includes Laredo.

State Sen. Judith Zafirini said she always wanted a university in Laredo, especially since she had an

exhausting schedule commuting back and forth from Laredo to Austin. She and Cuellar advocated rigorously for the university at the Texas Capitol.

“I left (Laredo) every Sunday after lunch,” Zafirini said. “I would leave my sister’s home and drive to Austin. I would drive by myself until 10 p.m., get up on Tuesday and teach at Laredo Junior College, and take all day until like 9:30 at night.”

Then on Wednesday, she slept and would return on Thursday. And then she would do it all again Sunday.

“It was such a sacrifice that I did not want Laredoans to sacrifice to get a degree,” she said. “And there

were so many Laredoans who did not even think about getting a degree. People didn’t know about university, most striving to get a high school diploma – and at the time it was mostly for men, not women.”

Pacheco emphasized the fact the border region severely lacked educational opportunities and any sort of upward mobility.

“There was clearly a need to provide opportunity to young people to get an education,” Pacheco said. “The ability of students to travel to other places to go to college – it wasn’t affordable, so it was very difficult for them to have to go to other places. The Lieutenant Governor was one of the big proponents of providing



Upcoming Schedule

TAMIU President’s Dinner	Oct. 17
TAMIU Alumni Artist Lecture and Panel	Oct. 24
Make a Difference Day	Nov. 2
Presidential Lecture Series presents Anya Kamenetz	Nov. 6
A&M System Pathway’s Conference	Nov. 7-8
TAMIU Giving Day: 50 for 50	Nov. 19
Holiday Tree Lighting Celebration	Dec. 2
Ring Ceremony	Dec. 4
Pre-Commencement Ceremonies	Dec. 11
Commencement	Dec. 12
TAMIU Grand Tower Ribbon Cutting	January (TBD)
TAMIU 2020/Vision of our Past	Jan. 30

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LSU PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH DR. F. ALLEN BRIGGS AS COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER IN 1980.

more institutions and availability in South Texas.”

Pacheco said he did not believe the Legislature was specifically targeting LSU but had financial concerns to deal with.

“I think some people believed that there was a bias,” Pacheco said. “I thought they ... thought it was appropriate for the existing institution to meet those needs.”

Political and community leaders pulled out all the stops.

U.S. Rep. Abraham “Chick” Kazen responded to Zaffirini’s call for a select committee to testify before Temple in Austin. Kazen and his

members took four airplanes provided by local banks to the bustling capital.

LULAC leaders and activists testified before the committee, all reiterating the fact Laredo was segregated through poverty and politics.

Gov. White, seeking reelection against Bill Clements, rallied behind the cause.

“(We will) make certain that Laredo State University stays here, and it’s going to be improved,” said White at the time.

A Step Toward Independence

Political fervor swirled in Laredo and carried over to the Capitol as busloads of advocates defended their beloved university before oil bigwigs and ingrained, old money Texas politicians.

In the university’s legislation allowing it to exist, there was language which referred to it as a “center” which politicians could use to justify reverting it back to.

The freshman State Sen. Zaffirini, inaugurated in 1987, created Senate Bill 658 to remove this provision.

“Being designated as a center meant LSU could be closed by a majority vote of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board with no legislative action,” Zaffirini said. “Re-designating it as an upper-level educational institution placed it under the authority of the Texas Legislature. That meant its closure would require a bill to be passed and signed by the governor.”

About 50 Laredoans and others passionate about LSU went to Austin, including Pacheco, to testify before State Sen. Carl Parker’s Education Committee.

“It threatens the existence of Laredo State University and has a negative impact on students, faculty, administration (and) recruitment, and (it) hinders long-range planning efforts,” said Pacheco at the time.

Zaffirini even had the backing of the Higher Education Coordinating Board, chaired by Larry Temple. He had initially considered reverting LSU back to its old ways, but Temple later penned a letter to Parker stating his board would not oppose her bill.

The bill passed the Senate Education Committee 10-0.

Cuellar sponsored similar legislation in the House, and advocates returned this time to testify before the House’s Higher Education Committee. His sponsored bill was nearly untouched except for a few small changes, and it sailed through the House in May.

The next month, Texas Gov. Bill Clements signed the bill.

“I vividly remember the legislative effort, supported by strong local support,” Zaffirini said. “It was a unifying effort.”

LSU had gained its independence as a stand-alone university, yet talk of merging with LJC was on the horizon.

Merger Talks

At the tail end of the decade, momentous changes shook up the university on how it would operate and be supported. Higher education and community officials floated the idea of LSU merging with Laredo Junior College.

In 1985, that idea became a true possibility when Laredo Junior College Dean Jose Roberto Juarez started talking with Sayavedra, who was Dean at the time. They both considered using Lamar University at Orange – now Lamar State College–Orange – as an example of financial savings from mergers, yet the Texas Legislature would not budge.

Creating a four-year university would result in reducing nearly half the staff, yet they argued it would expand more degrees in fields such as fine arts, languages, biology and

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nursing.

Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby even drafted proposed legislation where both institutions would answer to only one administrative body.

The LJC Board of Trustees said the bill caught them off-guard and gave them little notice of discussion, so they did not take any action on it. Hobby brought everyone together to convince them otherwise, yet LJC opposed the idea and it never came to fruition.

In 1988, Texas A&M University System and the University System of South Texas conducted a study which found Texas A&I University, Corpus Christi State University and LSU would all benefit by merging with the A&M System. The study stated there were several advantages to the change, such as joint research and more access to administrative support services.

There was even consideration to join the UT System at that time.

“We had a presentation from A&M because they were thinking about us, and ultimately we felt that A&M was going to be better for us in Laredo, because the University of Texas System wanted to control the entire border from Brownsville to El Paso,” Sayavedra said.

“We were concerned about that because we wanted to control the international trade between Mexico and the U.S.”

The University System of

South Texas Board of Directors just needed the green light to dissolve, granted by President Blas Martinez. The A&M Board voted for it, and the Texas Legislature approved LSU to become part of the A&M System in 1989.

Sayavedra talked to the Texas A&M System Board and said they needed land and money to build everything.

“This is when I talked to Mr. Killam and Mrs. Killam, and I told them what I was trying to do. But

ultimately, I finally showed him what I was hoping to do, so they agreed, and we got the land. After that, we got the money to start building Phase 1,” Sayavedra said.

In 1990, Radcliffe Killam donated 200 acres of land to the university for its own campus where it sits today, in a lush green landscape with frolicking deer.

“It took a while, but they got it done,” Sayavedra said.



SUE, RADCLIFFE AND DAVID KILLAM (SEATED) PICTURED WITH LJC PRESIDENT DOMINGO ARECHIGA AND LSU PRESIDENT BILLY COWART AFTER A \$100,000 DONATION IN 1982.

For more information on TAMIU's 50th anniversary, follow TXAMIU on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn and Spotify, use the hashtag #TAMIU50 and visit the school's website at 50.tamiau.edu.

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TEXAS A&M INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
A World of Difference



**SHARE
YOUR
STORY!**

Your story is our story – and now it's time to share that story! We're inviting individuals who have been impacted by the University to share a memory or moment that's forever changed their lives.

 **VISIT** us at <http://50.tamiau.edu/yourstory>.

 **UPLOAD** your story, photos, and videos.

 **SUBMIT** your story.

 **FOLLOW TXAMIU** on our official social media channels.



From a study carrel on a shared campus to three name changes and an inspiring home on 300-acres in northeast Laredo, TAMIU has quite a story.

And with over 23,000+ graduates worldwide, odds are you or a member of your family have shared in our story. Our 50th Anniversary theme, “A World of Difference,” affirms how we’ve impacted our community, region, and world... and will do so for generations to come.

Join our Celebration and share in our story.

*It's a story 50 years in the making.
It's the story of a lifetime.*



TAMIU.EDU/50

UPCOMING EVENTS

Oct. 17 • President’s Dinner & Awards.

Tickets: \$150. Call 956.326.2176

Online purchase at: <http://50.tamiu.edu/sponsorships>

Oct. 24 • ‘Going Beyond’ Alumni Panel and Artist Talk

Center for the Fine and Performing Arts, room 108 | 3:30 - 5 p.m.

For more information, call 956.326.2591

Oct. 24 • Book-Signing with Artist Mary Quiros

Center for the Fine and Performing Arts Lobby | 5:30 p.m.

For more information, call 956.326.4483

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