

TEXAS A&M INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY



TAMIU'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

**PART 12 OF 12:
PLANNING THE NEXT 50 YEARS**

TAMIU 50th Anniversary

TAMIU's 50th anniversary Planning the next 50 years

By Christian Alejandro Ocampo
Laredo Morning Times

For over half a century, Texas A&M International has molded members of the region and around the world into nurses, scientists, writers, artists and more.

In the year 2020, it is hard to imagine Laredo without its university, and the improvements it has brought to the community will not soon be forgotten. While this year has been a tough year for many amid the coronavirus pandemic, just like the university, they carry on.

For 50 years, the university has adapted to the ever-changing community and its needs. And for the next 50 years, it will continue to do the same as well.

According to president Dr. Pablo Arenaz, TAMIU is expected to grow from 10,000 to 12,000 students in the next five years who will all look forward to graduating from either undergraduate, graduate or doctoral programs. To do so, it is also planning to move into a doctoral/professional university, and Arenaz said it is on the way to being recognized as a destination university for several of its programs that will continue to expand to meet the standards of both the students and the industry.

"We have plans to expand our doctoral offerings to include degrees in criminal justice, border studies, education, eventually biol-



An inside view of the Sue and Radcliffe Killam Library.

Photo Courtesy of TAMIU

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Photo Courtesy of TAMIU

Pictured are plans for the city's upcoming tennis complex that will be housed on TAMIU's campus, enabling the school to expand its athletics programs over the coming years.

ogy, engineering and nursing," he said. "We have also recently added degrees in public health as well as petroleum and computer engineering. Also included in our plans is a Center for Entrepreneurship and an Incubator, a Center for Border Security and an Institute for Renewable and Non-Renewable Energy."

In 10 years, the first

phase of adding to the area includes a tennis complex which will start by moving the athletic facilities to the back 100 acres. The complex is a partnership between the university and the City of Laredo, and it will be funded by the city. This will allow TAMIU to add tennis, men's and woman's track & field and beach volleyball over the next 5-7 years while

keeping the academic focus for the existing campus.

According to Arenaz, students and staff can also expect significant growth in engineering, biology, psychology, the humanities, nursing, education and business programs and degrees. The proposed Center for Border Security and the International Institute for Renewable and Non-Re-

newable Energy are being designed to expand research capabilities that are critical to the region.

However, the university is not a one-person show.

Hundreds of dedicated staff and faculty members strive for improvement each year, and many have their own goals to complete. Whether it's athletics, humanities, science or any

field of study, the directors at TAMIU also have a 50-year plan that should delight students who will be veterans in their fields and others who may be going to their first day of school at elementary.

College of Arts and Sciences

Dr. Claudia San Miguel, the Dean of the TAMIU College of Arts and Sciences, said that the largest and most comprehensive academic unit is currently in development. When finished, it will create new academic opportunities and impactful research to benefit the people of the South Texas region and beyond.

This will include three new degrees that are meant to diversify and enhance career choices. Among them are a doctorate in criminal justice and a bachelor's in computer engineering and petroleum engineering. Both current and future students will have more choices, and over the years, more choices will continue to be added. In 2022, an master's in systems engineering is planned to start in the fall.

"The college is also an intellectual and research hub. We are proud of the numerous articles, books, creative works and performances produced by 100-plus faculty members," San Miguel said. "We are especially honored that the college earned a highly-competitive research

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grant of \$1.65 million from the U.S. National Science Foundation. This grant will generate new knowledge that advances learning strategies for undergraduate STEM education here and at other Hispanic-serving institutions.”

The A.R. Sanchez, Jr. School of Business

As Laredo is a border town and currently the strongest land port in the U.S., a heavy emphasis on business — both domestically and internationally — would be a boon for any student who sees themselves owning or managing a business.

The plans to grow the undergraduate and master’s program are

always a benefit for students in the area alongside the doctorate program. Additional concentrations, such as a doctorate, master’s and an undergraduate degree in international trade and entrepreneurship, are being developed.

“These new programs will further strengthen the Sanchez School’s portfolio and underscore its ongoing value to the communities and regions it so proudly serves,” Dean of the A.R. Sanchez, Jr. School of Business Dr. Steve Sears said.

To compliment these programs and opportunities, there are three research centers recognized for their contributions to the Laredo Community and Beyond, Sears said.

The Small Business Center has

been recognized with awards for innovative practices among its peers in meeting the needs of small businesses here.

The Texas Center for Border Economic and Enterprise Development provides valuable trade data for the border region.

The Center for the Study of Western Hemispheric Trade, with the collaboration of the International Bank of Commerce, brings noted speakers to Laredo to speak on timely issues facing our border and beyond.

“With the generous gift by Mr. A.R. Sanchez, Jr. and the perseverance, dedication and vision of State Senator Dr. Judith Zaffirini to establish a doctoral program in her hometown university, the A.R. Sanchez,

Jr. School of Business has worked hard to build a reputation as a small but powerful business school,” Sears said. “It is known for its rigorous programs, quality faculty and high research standards, and it is one of the smallest accredited doctoral programs in the world.”

The College of Education

According to Dr. James O’Meara, the Dean of the College of Education, the goal of preparing 100% of educators in Laredo will continue. He adds that the college has enjoyed record undergraduate intakes, and their online graduate programs continue to grow and attract candidates from across Texas. These candidates



Photo Courtesy of TAMIU

Pictured are TAMIU leaders in 2020 including Athletic Director Griz Zimmermann, Vice President for Student Success Dr. Minita Ramirez, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Thomas Mitchell, President Dr. Pablo Arenaz, Vice President for Finance & Administration Juan J. Castillo Jr. and Vice President for Institutional Advancement Rosanne Palacios.

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Photo Courtesy of TAMIU

A TAMIU student looks through the viewfinder of a microscope.

are said to have a 100% pass rate in most certification areas, and graduate students have continued to be published in peer-reviewed publications.

As the pandemic-challenged educators across the globe, O'Meara said students will also obtain a Google Classroom and Remote Educator Certification to train them in teaching classes in both remote and on-campus settings. This training will not only serve as a reminder of the importance of education and their roles but will also prepare them for other situations in the future.

Through partnerships with the Fun Academy, Raising Texas Teachers and the A&M System's We Teach Texas initiatives, the goal will continue to be to produce day-one ready teachers that are certified and committed to making a difference in and beyond their classroom.

"Preparing teachers for the next 50 years requires us to go beyond the

successes of 2020," O'Meara said.

College of Nursing and Health Sciences, Dr. F. M. Canseco School of Nursing

As medical-oriented students continue to strive for their careers, the College of Nursing at TAMIU will continue to improve and adapt to the growing needs of the community.

A long-term plan will include a new master's degree program in nursing, public health, communication science disorders and kinesiology non-certification, Terregosa said. Over time, there will be curriculum changes to increase enrollment in kinesiology non-certification programs, as well as a track of pre-physical therapy for students who want to proceed in physical therapy after completing the non-certified degree.

There will also be an RN to MSN program that is being planned to help nurses with associate degrees transition to a master's degree in nursing. Torregosa said that a master's in public health will be offered in three years, and drafts for a master's degree in speech language pathology have been developed and are under internal review.

As the School of Nursing accepts students considered at-risk, under-represented and first-generation, Torregosa said that the program was ranked 11th in the state, outranking other schools such as the Texas Woman's University, University of Texas at Austin, University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, and the Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

"This report is a reflection of the rigor of our BSN program and the commitment of the nursing faculty for student success. Likewise, it also

reflects the hard work of our students," she said. "The college will continuously mold and hone our programs so that we are preparing graduates who are equipped with the knowledge and skills to problem-solve the healthcare challenges of today and tomorrow."

Graduate School

TAMIU has plans and improvements for alumni or current students planning to continue education after their undergraduate degrees. According to Dr. Jennifer Coronado, the Dean of the TAMIU Graduate School, plans to expand the degree and certificate offerings will continue through the years, starting with the launch of a master's in curriculum and instruction with a specialization in educational leadership and another specialization in special education.



Photo Courtesy of TAMIU

The TAMIU globe entrance marker off Bob Bullock Loop.

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Photo Courtesy of TAMIU

An overview of the TAMIU campus from the inside of the clocktower globe of Trailblazer Tower.

Additionally, a master's in information science and in the family nurse practitioner program will be available this fall. A doctate in criminal justice is being reviewed by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and if approved, students will be able to register starting in the fall of 2021.

To complement the College of Education's goal of providing remote-instruction training and certification, a master's in curriculum and instruction with a specialization in education technology will also be available for future teachers. The program will help them find better ways to master planning, delivery and assessments while also knowing how to deliver effective and engaging lessons in a virtual environment.

The TAMIU Advancing Research and Curriculum Initiative, a long-term project, is meant to expand the number of Hispanic and other underrepresented graduate and professional students that can be served by

expanding courses and institutional resources, Coronado said. She said the project will rigorously examine the metrics that lead to success for graduate students within a dominantly Hispanic population.

"We also continue to build on a legacy of faculty and student research collaboration that is uncommon for a university of our size and youth. Student researchers from TAMIU earned the highest number of awards at the competitive 16th Annual Pathways Student Research Symposium that TAMIU hosted last fall," Coronado said. "Over 400 student and faculty representatives from throughout the Texas A&M University System gathered at TAMIU for the two-day competition. TAMIU student researchers earned 18 of the 61 awards presented."

University College

With the mission of the University College to empower students

to become competent, resilient and self-determined, TAMIU Dean of the University College Dr. Barbara Hong said the college is undergoing major restructuring.

An improved Advising & Mentoring Center is being developed with all the college's academic success coaches. This is to provide students more consistent and coherent advisement on their majors without interruptions from freshmen enrollment until graduation, Hong said.

The improved AMC, University Learning Center and the reading and writing center will have extended hours, weekends and virtual meetings to meet the students' needs now and for the next 50 years.

"We aim to enhance the skills of every student through personal empowerment paths that foster a learning community, critical thinking and global citizenship," Hong said. "Students will be equipped with a growth mindset, a meaningful purpose and a sense of belonging as they navigate

through their education at TAMIU."

The First-Year Seminar will also be restructured to help teach students to cultivate their sense of self-awareness, self-empowerment, self-advocacy and self-regulation. Hong said those skills are essential and are reinforced by a student's growth, purpose and sense of belonging (GPS). Additionally, the freshman Signature Course will also help expose students to international, interdisciplinary and intellectual problem-based/inquiry learning.

According to Hong, the course is meant to improve students' critical thinking, communication and teamwork skills by tackling real-world problems in their communities and using their sense of self to help others during their academic journey.

"We seek to prepare every student who enters TAMIU with a mindset that they are here to grow intellectually, socially, emotionally and professionally," Hong said.

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Alumni and students

With another 50 years on the horizon, TAMIU staff and leaders cannot change the university by themselves. The goal of improving the community can only start and end with everyone in the community giving input and coming together to advance the university. As Arenaz regularly meets with student government to cooperate in the planning, he said that their input was added to the Academic Innovation Center.

With that in mind, students, staff

and alumni have also stated what they believe the university can add and where it can improve. The additions may take months of planning or years of implementing, but the university has the next 50 years to improve and become a university worthy of a major 100-year anniversary.

Rebekah Maria Rodriguez said she hopes to see an expansion of student services such as health services and student counseling, as those services helped her throughout most of her college years. She believes they

are important services, but due to the limited number of counselors and a growing population of students, an expansion would benefit the students in a greater capacity.

Mindy Lee would like to see the communication coursework be added into the core curriculum as opposed to having just English coursework.

“It is so important for students to learn basic communication skills and strate-



Photo Courtesy of TAMIU

A TAMIU graduation ceremony held at the TAMIU Kinesiology and Convocation Building.

gies,” Lee said. “Many students are completing their degrees without learning skills vital to being a competent communicator.”

Ryan Duncan-Ayala said he would like to see a larger focus in the arts and hopes to see an improvement and expansion on the current theater program. On the flip side, Miguel Inclan hopes to see more undergraduate and graduate programs involving local government like city planning, sustainability and water/environmental policy, homeland security and emergency management, and more.

As an example of life’s unpredictability, the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 changed the way the people of Laredo will remember the year. Despite the uncertainty and fear, people

persevere for the hopes of a better future. Fifty years ago, TAMIU students and staff could probably not imagine what the university would be like today. As a cornerstone of the Laredo community, it has evolved from a simple university to a beacon of a grander future for students of all generations.

With the support of an experienced staff, cooperation between them and their students and with strong leadership, TAMIU is striving to continue molding incoming students into nurses, doctors, teachers, scientists, artists, dancers, musicians, engineers and so much more.

In 50 years, who knows what the university will evolve into, but it is already working on it.


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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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.

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FALL SEMESTER BEGINS
TOMORROW!
MONDAY, AUG. 24, 2020

Today, many parents and their college-bound students are delaying or reconsidering their options. As the pandemic has reminded us, home is where the heart is.

- If you're considering deferring your **DREAM EDUCATION**...don't.
- If you're worried about **TRANSFERABILITY** of core courses...don't be.
- If you think degrees can be both **AFFORDABLE AND EXCEPTIONAL**...we agree.
- If you'd rather **BE HOME HERE** than online elsewhere...we get you.

You see, at TAMIU we believe that home is where the smart is.

We've got 85+ degree programs, a gifted and global faculty and a 50-year legacy of innovation, leadership and service to over 30,000 graduates worldwide.

Find out if TAMIU is where the smart is for you this Fall.

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