



A World of Difference

2019 ANNUAL REPORT



- Two-story glass-enclosed Design Lab
- 21 educational labs and classrooms
- Three stories tall and almost 500 feet long.



TAMU's New Academic Innovation Center Offers Soaring Home for Teaching, Research

Even the blazing South Texas morning sun was warmed by the reception given TAMU's newest addition, the Academic Innovation Center (AIC), in dedication ceremonies held Aug. 26.

Representatives from The Texas A&M University System, including Chancellor John Sharp and Chairman Elaine Mendoza of the governing Board of Regents, joined State Senator Judith Zaffirini, local dignitaries and TAMU faculty, staff and students to herald the AIC's opening.

The AIC is a three-story stunner, its spaces bathed in shimmering natural light thanks to the abundant use of glass.

TAMU president Pablo Arenaz told visitors that the AIC is an inspiring space that provides an ideal environment for innovative teaching and research.

"It's a remarkable structure that truly advances how we define learning at TAMU. Technology is integrated throughout the entire building, while the classroom architecture itself is flexible to encourage open collaboration.

"A two-story glass-enclosed Design Lab enables project creation and completion in an open environment. With 21 educational and research labs and classrooms in addition to faculty and staff offices, the AIC houses a broad spectrum of programs, with special emphasis on engineering and the sciences," Dr. Arenaz said.

Arenaz noted the building's architecture celebrates the campus' past while embracing its future. It also pays homage to Laredo and the international border with a sweeping terrazzo floor that spans first and second floors, evoking the ebb and flow of the Rio Grande as it wends its way between Los Dos Laredos.

Construction began in 2016 and was funded by Tuition Revenue Bonds passed by the 84th Legislature. Architects were EYP Architecture & Engineering and O'Connell Robertson. Bartlett Cocke General Contractors oversaw the construction.

The final element of the building, a 130-foot tower, is nearing completion.

Enjoy an AIC video tour here: <https://50.tamui.edu/AIC>

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STAY CONNECTED



Message from the President/ DIFFERENCE

The Power of Transformation

On August 26, we officially kicked off our 50th Anniversary celebration with the ribbon-cutting for our newest building, the Academic Innovation Center (AIC). The AIC is a magnificent building that combines innovative teaching spaces with state of the art laboratories. We will have many more events throughout the next 12 months and I hope that you will join us.

The late American author and philosopher Vernon Howard encouraged transformation when he wrote “the great solution to all human problems is individual transformation.” Indeed, as agents of learning, Universities accelerate that change from one thing to another, and lead metamorphosis. Since the establishment of the Texas A&M University at Laredo Center in 1970, we have been transforming the lives of the people of this community and region. This rang especially true 25 years ago when Texas A&M International University (TAMIU) opened its doors as a four-year comprehensive University on a 300-acre campus.

We now have over 29,000 successful alumni scattered all over the world, over 8,400 students, and saw our largest graduating class this past year. We have increased the number of Laredoans who have a Bachelor's degree or higher by 58 % in the past 20 years – higher than any other south Texas community. More impressively, the number of graduates with jobs or attending graduate/professional school one year after graduating outpaces the Texas average by nearly 10 %, putting us in the top 25 %.

We continue to garner accolades for the quality of how we prepare graduates – a transformational experience. For the third year in a row, we were recognized as among the best western regional universities by *US News and World Report*, and ranked among the tops in Texas.

In four separate studies over the past three years, we have been ranked in the top 20 nationally in upward income mobility. Ten years after graduation, our graduates have moved their income level from the bottom 40% to the top 40%, many going from near-poverty to

middle class and higher. In a new study measuring return on investment (ROI) of a post-secondary degree published by Georgetown University, TAMIU was ranked 9th out of 84 four-year schools in Texas. The ROI, measured as net present value, showed that after 40 years the value of a TAMIU degree added over \$1,000,000 to an individual's earnings. These figures again demonstrate the transformational impact TAMIU has had on our graduates and community.

The most powerful transformational impact we have had has been in providing access to higher education to individuals and families these past 50 years. In 2000, over 75% of graduates identified themselves as the first in their family to graduate from college. This past year, that number has dropped to slightly over 50%. As a result, we are seeing more siblings as well as more second- and third-generation students graduating from TAMIU.

We invite you to come to campus, to see what exciting things we have going on, to reminisce about your own transformation... and to be part of our ongoing story.

- Dr. Pablo Arenaz

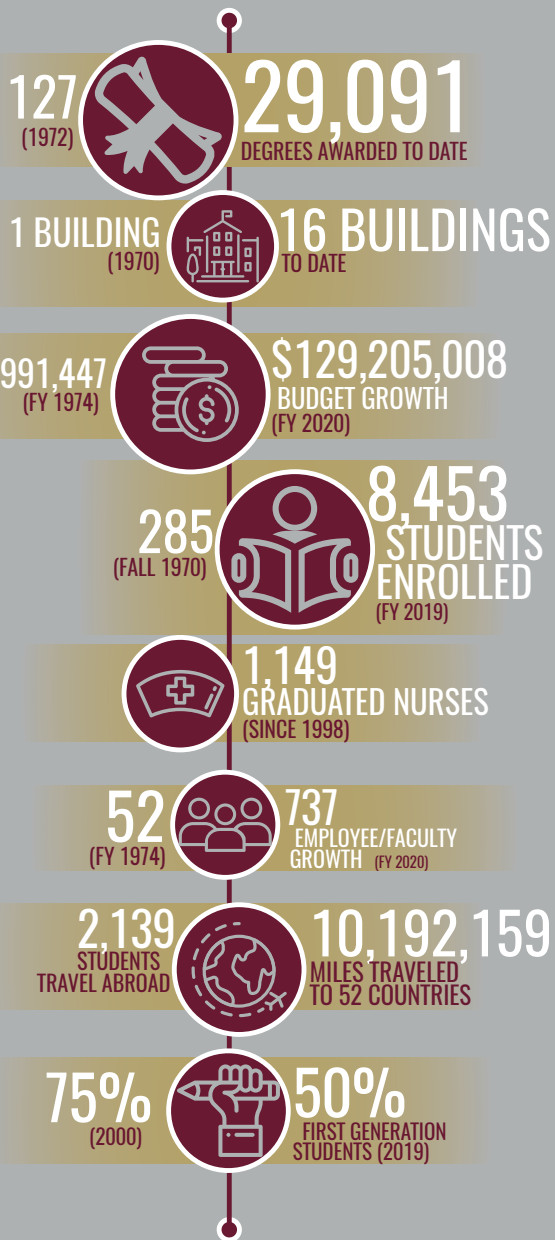
This transformation is exemplified by Olivia Corona who graduated in 2013. Both her mother, Minerva Corona ('77) and aunt, Oralia Jalomo ('82), graduated from TAMIU, setting expectations for future generations. Another prime example is the Buckley family. James Buckley ('02) was the 1,000 student to enroll in the Graduate School. His late mother, Esther Buckley ('75), a popular Laredo science teacher, was the University's 3,000 student, enrolling in 1998. Other family members have also graduated from TAMIU, including James's sisters Trina Bratton ('99), Rebecca Rodríguez ('04) and Jennifer Torres ('10)... and nephews Sean Bratton, Sam Bratton and Rene Peña. The legacy that they all have left will impact their families for generations to come.

This is the transformational impact that TAMIU has on this community and beyond: lives changed, opportunities realized and futures measurably brightened... metamorphosis at every level.

In these pages, we celebrate these milestones in our history. We recognize the "World of Difference" TAMIU has made in the lives of our alumni, our faculty, our staff and the communities we proudly serve.

We invite you to come to campus, to see what exciting things we have going on, to reminisce about your own transformation...and to be part of our ongoing story.

BY THE NUMBERS



TAMIU Presents First President's Dinner and Awards



David Killam, Antonio Sanchez, Jr., Joe Martin and Jim Pearl join President Arenaz.

As part of the year-long celebration of its 50th Anniversary, Texas A&M International University hosted its President's Dinner and Awards in the Sue and Radcliffe Killam Library Great Room.

The event highlight was the presentation of the University's first TAMIU Tower Award Recipients: individuals or groups who have shared a towering role in shaping the University's destiny and mission.

The Inaugural Award Recipients were The Killam Family, The Lamar Bruni Vergara Trust and the A. R. Sanchez, Jr. Family.

The Killam Family name is synonymous with visionary initiatives that have fundamentally changed our nation, county and city. That vision forever empowered higher education in South Texas with the gift of 300 acres of former ranchland that would become home to Texas A&M International University. In doing so, Laredo's long-cherished dream of a University campus that would fuel futures was fulfilled. That monumental gift is part of a lasting legacy of innovative partnerships with the University that span academic, programmatic, research and scholarship support.

The A. R. Sanchez, Jr. Family, titans of innovative business development on multiple fronts, have ensured that their namesake School of Business fosters an expansive forum for the mind. Through programmatic, research and scholarship support, they have enabled the AACSB Accredited School of Business to excel, earning national ranking and recognition. Additionally, they have encouraged young scholars to explore their academic horizons here through a substantial endowment supporting the Sanchez School's ongoing development.

While Lamar Bruni Vergara never lived to see the lasting impact her enduring legacy made possible, her Trustees, Joe Martin and Jim Pearl, have ensured that her impact lives on. Whether it is a garden that offers reflective pause, a science laboratory filled with cutting-edge technology, a scholarship endowment that secures student degrees, a Planetarium that brings the stars a little closer, or a literacy program that nurtures young readers...the Lamar Bruni Vergara Trust's delivery of its namesake's caring legacy has been fundamentally impactful.

“TAMIU has been blessed by the generosity of so many in our community, but the combined legacy of these three Award recipients has fundamentally changed the destiny, secured the mission, and laid a foundation for future success for Texas A&M International University.”

- Dr. Pablo Arenaz

President Dr. Pablo Arenaz said the evening initiated a new tradition and recognized Tower recipients for their remarkable legacy here.

“TAMIU has been blessed by the generosity of so many in our community, but the combined legacy of these three Award recipients has fundamentally changed the destiny, secured the mission, and laid a foundation for future success for Texas A&M International University. As we observe our 50th Anniversary, it's fitting that we pause and reflect on the power and scope of the impact empowered by these families and foundations. We hope to move forward by pausing annually to share additional recognitions,” Dr. Arenaz said.

The evening's sponsors included: Visionary Sponsors--City of Laredo, Webb County, Texas Community Bank, Falcon Bank, IBC Bank and La Posada Hotel; Leader Sponsors--BBVA Compass, and Southern Distributing. The dinner was provided compliments of Aramark.

OUR VISIONARY SPONSORS





Students Generate \$35,000+ for Scholarships

A Texas A&M International University graduate can create a lasting impact for other students for years to come. Just ask the University's Student Philanthropy Council (SPC).

Through their efforts, the student-led organization helped generate \$14,964 in donations from 637 donors in 2018. During the past

three years, the campaign's donor total has steadily increased, climbing to 1,462 donors and \$35,662 in funds raised.

Initially kicked off in 2016 by TAMIU's SPC and the Office of Institutional Advancement, the Class Giving Campaign offers graduating students the opportunity to "pay it forward" by making a \$25 donation, often during the week leading up to the University's annual Commencement Exercises. To celebrate their commitment to the future of the University, students are awarded a philanthropy cord to wear at their Commencement.

SPC works to create and develop projects to help generate funds supporting fellow students and the University. Several events are organized throughout the year inviting all students to make a difference, including donating spare change during the annual Penny Wars Challenge, making an online gift during the #GivingTuesday campaign, and participating in Random Acts of Kindness Week.

Student philanthropy is not just about collecting donations, but contributing to building a strong commitment to helping others fulfill their potential, explained Jackelyne Briseño, TAMIU associate director of Alumni Relations.

"It's more than a campaign or a scholarship—it's a promise. It's a promise to the current TAMIU student starting a new semester, to the high school senior who is worried about funding his or her education, and to the individual who dreams about changing the world one day. When a student gives, they are demonstrating their commitment to their classmates and to the future of their Alma Mater," she observed.

TAMIU Employees get Highest SECC Group Contributor Award



L to R: Mary Treviño '72 and Dr. Marcela Uribe celebrate with President Arenaz.

Texas A&M International University employees have a reputation for knowing how to "Go Beyond" ... and they did just that by earning the State Employee Charitable Campaign's (SECC) Highest Employee Group Contributor Recognition Award for 2018, presented this September.

The campaign, "Together We Care," enables State employees to share their support for over 300 charities including 22 local and area charities and the United Way of Laredo.

TAMIU SECC Committee members Mary Treviño, director of Migrant Programs, and Dr. Marcela Uribe, learning resources coordinator, presented a plaque recognizing the distinction to TAMIU president Dr. Pablo Arenaz.

"I'm really proud of our employees and their commitment to the community we all love and want to elevate. What's especially significant is that TAMIU employees, through their shared generosity, provided \$50,238 to last year's campaign....the highest of any SECC group in Laredo...and they've already targeted providing an even greater gift this year. In this, the University's 50th Anniversary year, it's another way we can show how we impact our community," Dr. Arenaz said.

Treviño observed that over the years the University has consistently been a campaign Pacesetter, Top Five Contributor and routinely posts the greatest increase by dollar and percent.

"TAMIU employees have a big heart, and a bigger belief in our community. We appreciate their ongoing support and commitment to the campaign," she noted.

7 Faculty/DIFFERENCE

TAMIU Recognizes Outstanding Faculty with Awards

Texas A&M International University faculty were recognized at the Fall Freshmen Welcome and Fall Convocation for their teaching excellence, leadership, and scholarship.

At the Welcome, the Distinguished Teacher of the Year Award went to Dr. Puneet Gill, assistant professor of Curriculum and Instruction. Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award winner was received by Kimber J. Palmer, instructor in the A. R. Sanchez, Jr. School of Business' division of International Banking and Finance.

Gill has been a faculty member in the College of Education since September 2014. Her research primarily focuses on STEM, health education and science education, and has been published in multiple research journals, including *The Effective Schools Project and Information Technologies*.

Palmer has been a member of the TAMIU faculty since 2000. Her peer-reviewed publications include "The Federalization of the Oklahoma Law License" for the *Oklahoma Bar Journal*.

At the University's Fall Convocation, the Distinguished University Scholar of the Year Award went to Dr. John Dean, TAMIU associate professor of English. The Senator Judith Zaffirini Award for Scholarship and Leadership was awarded to Dr. John Kilburn, TAMIU associate vice president for Research and Sponsored Projects and sociology professor. Dr. Dean has been part of the University's faculty since 2009. Dr. Kilburn joined the University faculty 17 years ago.

Dr. Dean is the author of two books, and is currently working on his third. He is a scholar of the borderlands who navigates the disciplinary borders between literature and history to examine the borderlines of nations, ethnicities, and culture.

Dr. Kilburn has co-authored one book, 24 peer-reviewed articles, 19 book chapters, and numerous encyclopedia articles and book reviews. He has earned and managed grants for the University and helped others obtain research funding.



Dr. John Kilburn, Zaffirini Award for Scholarship and Leadership.



Dr. John Dean, Distinguished University Scholar of the Year.



Kimber J. Palmer, Outstanding Teacher of the Year.



Dr. Puneet Gill, Distinguished Teacher of the Year Award.

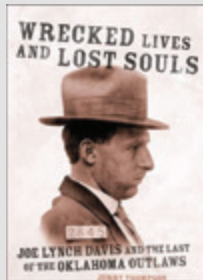


Dr. Thompson Gets Historical Award, Pens New Book on Grandfather

This past March, Texas A&M International University Regents Professor Dr. Jerry D. Thompson was named the recipient of the Texas State Historical Association's 2018 Kate Brooks Bates Award for Historical Research for his Pulitzer Prize-nominated publication, *Tejano Tiger: José de los*

Santos Benavides and the Texas-México Borderlands, 1823-1891.

The Award was presented in Corpus Christi during the Fellows Luncheon and Presentation of Awards. Thompson has been a TAMIU faculty member since 1987 and serves as one of the country's leading experts on the Civil War in the Southwest. He has taught for the past 50 years and is author or editor of 26 books on the US-México borderlands.



His latest book is *Wrecked Lives and Lost Souls: Joe Lynch Davis and the Last of the Oklahoma Outlaws* (The University of Oklahoma Press) and sees Dr. Thompson sleuthing into his own past to discover a man at the center of systematic cattle rustling, feuding, gun battles, a bloody range war, bank robberies, and train heists in early 1900s Indian Territory and Oklahoma...his own grandfather.

Dr. Momen Takes a Look at Political Satire

Political satire today often seems relegated to biting social and digital media posts. Texas A&M International University's Dr. Mehnazz Momen, associate professor of Public Administration, has expanded that fleeting view with a deep dive into political satire's rich history and evolution.

Dr. Momen is the author of *Political Satire, Postmodern Reality, and the Trump Presidency: Who Are we Laughing At?* (Lexington Books, 2019).

In the book, she explores why satire fails in the Trump era. She delves into the history of political satire through literature and cartoons and examines how and why it changed with the advent of television.

A Daisy for the Canseco School's Dr. González

Texas A&M International University clinical assistant professor of nursing Dr. Belva González was named the 2019 recipient of the Diseases Attacking the Immune System, or DAISY Faculty Award.

The Award recognized her commitment to the success of TAMIU students.

"The prestigious DAISY Faculty Award is given to a nursing faculty member who serves as both a role model and mentor within the nursing profession; to someone who has consistently demonstrated enthusiasm for teaching and learning; and [practices] nursing that inspires and motivates students," explained TAMIU Interim Dean Dr. Marivic Torregosa.

González has been a faculty member at the Dr. F. M. Canseco School of Nursing since 2002. She earned her Doctorate of Philosophy at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, as well as both Master's and Bachelor's degrees in Nursing at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

Established in 1999, the DAISY Faculty Award was created in memory of J. Patrick Barnes, who died from complications of an auto-immune disease. Inspired by the compassion and clinical skills of the nurses who cared for Barnes, his family decided to create the Award to recognize exceptional nurses.



A segment of the book also includes an analysis of the Trump campaign and its techniques as well as strategies that were borrowed from media and applied to politics.

"In my book, I argue that the media has encouraged the presentation of politics as entertainment and show with evidence how political coverage has changed in tone and substance," she said.

Momen, a TAMIU faculty member since 2002, is also the author of *The Paradox of Citizenship in American Politics: Ideals and Reality* (Springer, 2018).



9 Student/DIFFERENCE

Students, Faculty, Staff and Alumni Show How to 'Make A Difference'

Texas A&M International University students, staff, faculty and alumni truly lived up to "Make A Difference Day" this November by participating in three impactful community service experiences.

All told, volunteers generated 2,326 service hours with an equivalent monetary impact projected at over \$76,172.

Starting before sunrise at The Outlet Shoppes downtown, some 313 volunteers, a 136% increase over last year's TAMIU Make A Difference Day, participated. TAMIU undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, staff and alumni powered three different service activities: a mobile food-packing partnership with Feed My Starving Children,

Juan Ramírez Park beautification initiatives with Keep Laredo Beautiful and Jamboozie Festival site preparations with Laredo Main Street.

Volunteers showed how they always "Go Beyond" by setting a new TAMIU national record for meal packing and production of over 77,544 meals of the total 109,080 meals completed for the Feed My Starving Children effort. The group easily exceeded their goal of 100,000 meals packed.

The service hours generated are part of a student-led, year-long goal of 50,000 Service Hours to be delivered as part of a Service Challenge observing the University's 50th Anniversary.



Some 300+ volunteers at TAMIU's "Make a Difference Day" at The Outlet Shoppes celebrate another successful food pack, just one of three service opportunities generating 2,300+ service hours.



TAMIU Students Take Research Abroad for the First Time

Texas A&M International University's students are its biggest champions of the charge to "Go Beyond," but this summer, they REALLY took it to heart...and mind.

For the first time, students not only studied abroad, but also conducted research in their host country in the Research Abroad Program (RAP). The students: Cesar Ines Rodríguez, and Jenale Canales, both MA in Sociology students, and Maritza Moraida, a BS in Criminal Justice student, traveled with Dr. Marcus Ynalvez, TAMIU College of Arts and Sciences Associate Dean, to the University of the Philippines, Los Baños (UPLB).

The University Research Development Award-funded study investigated how professors' involvement in commercial science activities impact the ways they mentor and train graduate students. Students interviewed at various departments, colleges, and

institutes on the UPLB campus and conducted interviews at the International Rice Research Institute.

Ynalvez said the RAP experience shows that classroom training and actual front-line research activities are two different realities. He believes the combination of both makes for superior training.

"The best take home-piece is an international research experience packed with all its challenges, constraints, frustrations, and travails... which profoundly changes students, and which no research methods textbook nor manual could ever capture," Ynalvez observed.



Ashton Laurel

TAMIU's 'Closer Than Ever' Completes Degree Dreams

There was a time when Ashton Laurel didn't know if he would ever have an opportunity to complete his Texas A&M International University degree.

He had finished his junior year and decided it best to take a year off to raise funds to finance his final year. A scant 30 semester credit hours were all that kept him away from graduating with his Bachelor's degree in Business Administration...but finding the funds to cover his final semesters proved daunting.

Then, Laurel received a call from TAMIU's Office of the University Registrar and learned about the "Closer Than Ever" initiative. Launched in August 2018, it helps former students who have made substantial progress on their degree, but have delayed completion for various reasons.

Through scholarships and grants from donors including The D.&J. Alexander Foundation chaired by State Senator Judith Zaffirini, Laurel was able to complete his senior year without student loans, graduating this past Spring 2019.

Since its initial launch, the "Closer than Ever" initiative has helped 65 of the 134 students that have re-enrolled have received their degrees.

The University has awarded over \$850,000 in assistance to qualifying students.

"If you're in the same situation I was in, whether you're not sure whether to come back or how you're going to come back – talk to the people at TAMIU. They'll figure things out because the education that you get here is beyond priceless," said Laurel.

TAMIU Alum Marks a 'World of Difference' with Acceptance to Harvard Doctoral Program



Erick Vázquez Cano

Erick Vázquez Cano, '19 (B.S. Chemistry) weighed options carefully between attending a college in México or Texas A&M International University when applying as a high school graduate from Nuevo Laredo, México's Colegio Royal.

He said he chose TAMIU, partly due to its proximity to his parents' home in Nuevo Laredo, but also because he had planned to take his fundamental classes at the University and transfer to a university outside Laredo.

Four years later, he graduated from TAMIU with a Bachelor's degree in Chemistry, and is glad he never transferred to another university. Thanks to his dedication and impressive scientific research at TAMIU, he was one of only 20 students nationwide accepted to Harvard University's doctoral program in Chemical Biology.

He credits TAMIU's Dr. Ruby Ynalvez, associate professor of Biology and Dr. Alfred Addo-Mensah, associate professor of Chemistry, for helping him narrow his research focus, while encouraging him to present at conferences and to apply to Harvard.

"If I'm going to grad school in the first place, it's because of Dr. Ynalvez," he said, "She was the one who helped me consolidate my passion by helping me attend national conferences ever since my second year in college," Vázquez Cano said.

"Dr. Addo-Mensah, three other students, and I went to Boston to present a research poster at the American Chemical Society Conference," Vázquez Cano said, "That's when he asked me, 'Where do you want to go to grad school?' I answered that I wanted to go to The University of Texas at Austin. He then asked me, 'Where do you really want to go?' So, I said if I possibly could go to Harvard, that would be nice. He told me to then apply, because I had nothing to lose," he continued.

He says he's proud to represent TAMIU at Harvard.

"Just the fact that I have a diploma from TAMIU... for Harvard to know that they have good people coming out of this University, might change the way they look at us or the way they perceive regional universities," he said.

Vázquez Cano said that he has not yet decided about his future career path.

"Once I complete my doctoral studies, I'm open to everything," he said, "With a Ph.D., you can become a professor, do industrial research or become a consultant to a lawmaker. You get to dream whatever you want to do. Before, I couldn't dream of working for the World Health Organization, but after Harvard, I'm sure the doors will be open for anything."



J. J. Gonzalez, '99... From First Freshman to Global IT Project Manager.

What University course would you take all over again today?*

"Professional Written Communication." I would be curious to see how the course has been updated to reflect current communication tools.

Who was your favorite professor and why?*

The late Dr. Stephen Lunce. His excitement about the future of IT was contagious. He convinced me that a CIS degree would not only help me find a job after graduation, but that it would provide the foundation for a successful career that would be ripe with opportunity. Recently, I had a professional decision to make and I remember thinking that he would be able to guide me to the right decision.

When did you know that your hard work had paid off and your degree had made a "World of Difference" for you?

Despite an intense travel schedule to Angola, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Nigeria, I successfully led and completed an Information Risk Management Project for Chevron.

What would your advice be to today's students as they make their way through their University experience?*

Internships, paid or unpaid, are a great way to make your resume stand out. More importantly, I would advise anyone entering the workforce to proactively manage their careers. Always be on the lookout for new opportunities, even within your current role.

What's your proudest accomplishment to date?*

I recently celebrated my 12th work anniversary at Chevron's Houston office.

Tell us what you're doing today career or life-wise and what you look forward to each day:

"I work for a great company and I'm fortunate to work with people who make my job fun. I do get homesick at times, but I try to visit Laredo at least every three months, and am amazed by how much it has changed and how far TAMIU has come from those early days."

González was part of TAMIU's Student Ambassadors. He has since served as a systems analyst with USAA in San Antonio, a job he landed right after graduation. While at USAA he earned his MBA at St. Mary's University.



James Buckley ('02) is Proudly Extending a TAMIU Family Legacy

Esther Buckley

Texas A&M international University alumnus and graduate English student James Buckley was a big part of TAMIU's 50th Anniversary year.

Buckley was the 1000th student to enroll in TAMIU's graduate programs and part of a record Spring enrollment of 7,436 students. That enrollment included a 25% increase in Graduate School enrollment.

Buckley, a secondary ELA teacher for the Laredo Independent School District at its Vidal M. Treviño Magnet School of Communication and Fine Arts, said his graduate degree pursuit is paying off...even before graduation.

"I already received what I wanted from pursuing a graduate degree at TAMIU. I have many fond memories, met many wonderful people, and stretched my brain by having high-level discussions on various literature offerings. Everyone should continue taking classes, just for the conversations about life that result from analyzing literature," he observed.

Buckley earned his undergraduate degree at TAMIU and comes from a long line of TAMIU alumni. His late mother, Esther Buckley, a popular Cigarroa High School Science teacher and Martin High School teacher at the Health Science Magnet, was the University's 3000th student to enroll in 1998 and was active in the Alumni Association. Other family members include his sisters, Trina Bratton and Rebecca Rodríguez, and his nephews Sean and Sam Bratton and Rene Peña.

Buckley's family legacy to TAMIU has clearly impacted him, and he proudly shares his family's love of learning.

"As an English teacher, I love literature. I wanted to enjoy the opportunity of having stimulating conversations about literature while learning more about what I teach. Also, you can't help but grow when you learn. I met many wonderful people in the program, and I am grateful for that too," he concluded.

\$2.3 Million Grant Awarded TAMIU's Online Family Nurse Practitioner Program



TAMIU's Online Family Nurse Practitioner Program was awarded a \$2,330,291 grant to help ensure more Hispanic students have the opportunity to become nurses and help address the nursing shortage in Texas.

Congressman Henry Cuellar ('82) shared news of the Award from the Department of Education's Title V, Part B, Promoting Post-baccalaureate Opportunities for Hispanic Americans Program.

"Our nurses are the front line of our health care system, but with the growing number of staffing shortages across the country, it is becoming difficult to meet the needs of our patients," said Congressman Cuellar, "This funding will help create more opportunities for Hispanic students to study medicine and increase the number of nurses in underserved populations in the region. I want to thank TAMIU President Dr. Pablo Arenaz, Interim Dean of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences Dr. Marivic Torregosa, and the rest of the University staff for their dedication to advancing the education experience of Hispanic and low-income students in the region."

Dr. Arenaz noted the funding builds on the University's established strengths.

"We are deeply appreciative of the leadership and partnership in delivering this grant provided by Congressman Cuellar. We're especially pleased that this grant recognizes and builds on the success of our FNP program. TAMIU FNP students have earned an enviable 100% pass rate on the national certification examination for the last four years...on their first attempt.

"Most importantly," Arenaz added, "students completing this program have the potential to impact over 600,000 patients every year. Throughout this, our 50th Anniversary year, we have been celebrating the transformative impact of this University. With the support that this grant provides, we ensure that our legacy of transformation continues forward."

Thanksgiving Memorable for 55 TAMIU Students, Recipients of D&J Alexander Foundation Scholarships

Fifty-five TAMIU students truly had something to be thankful for this past Thanksgiving: they were all named recipients of scholarships totaling \$125,000 from the D&J Alexander Foundation of Laredo.

President of the Alexander Foundation, State Senator Judith Zaffirini, presented the Awards in special ceremonies in the Academic Innovation Center. She said the Awards were a fitting way to honor her beloved Aunt, Mrs. Fred Alexander.

"This investment is a life-changer for these students and their families," Senator Zaffirini said, "Helping such an impressive group of seniors and freshmen complete and begin their education, respectively, is a wonderful way to honor the legacy of our beloved Tía Bebe."

She said that the scholarships empower impact, just as her Aunt impacted the Gateway City.



"Her impact on our City has been profound. After the opening of TAMIU, her ranch was subdivided. It is now the site not only of D&J Alexander Estates, but also of Alexander High School and a Fire Station. What better way to honor her than to invest in the future of students at our neighboring hometown University?," Senator Zaffirini noted.

TAMIU senior Nursing major Karina Gutiérrez offered a heartfelt perspective for both herself and fellow student recipients.

"I want to thank the Alexander Foundation and especially Senator Zaffirini for making this possible. So many of us work, take care of family and go to school to try and grow professionally. We could not do it without the generous support of people like Senator Zaffirini and the Board of the Alexander Foundation," Gutiérrez said.

TAMIU Students Top Award Winners at A&M System Student Research Symposium



Provost Mitchell congratulates Keaton Powers on his First Place Graduate Humanities Award at the Pathways Symposium.

TAMIU Student researchers have a winning way with research. They earned the highest number of awards at the competitive 16th Annual Pathways Student Research Symposium. Over 400 student and faculty representatives from throughout the sprawling Texas A&M University System gathered at TAMIU for the two-day competition in November.

TAMIU student researchers earned 18 of 61 Awards presented in ceremonies in the TAMIU Center for the Fine and Performing Arts Recital Hall. Others placing in the competition were Texas A&M University Commerce with 12 Awards, Tarleton State University with 11 and Texas A&M University with six Awards.

University Champion Sue Killam Passes Away

TAMIU President Dr. Pablo Arenaz offers his thoughts on the November passing of Sue Killam:

"We are deeply saddened by the passing of one of this University's most enduring friends and partners. Sue Spivey Killam was a true force for the betterment of higher education in South Texas. She championed this University singly and alongside her husband Radcliffe Killam and their family. As a member of the Board of Regents of the University System of South Texas, the governing body for the former Texas A&I University at Laredo and Laredo State University, she provided keen insight and cultural awareness that greatly influenced the University's initial years and subsequent growth. With Radcliffe, both built a truly astounding legacy now known as Texas A&M International University.

Prior to their visionary donation of the University's 300-acre campus...

land that she often recalled with a smile was among her favorite hunting locations...Radcliffe and Sue built a solid foundation for our University that spanned academic, program, research, and scholarship support. That generosity has continued ever since. Indeed much of the University's success can be measured through initiatives made possible by the Killam's boundless kindness. In 1998, the University bestowed its very first honorary doctorates, the highest honor provided by academia, upon Sue and Radcliffe. Radcliffe received the honorary Doctor of Humane Letters while Sue received an honorary Doctor of Arts.

This past October we presented the Killam Family with one of our first Tower Awards, which recognize those who have shared a towering role in shaping the University's destiny and mission. Despite her small stature, Sue Killam truly stands tall in our hearts and minds and we grieve her loss with her family and many friends."



TAMIU president Dr. Pablo Arenaz said TAMIU was honored to host Pathways participants, especially in TAMIU's 50th Anniversary year.

"The Pathways Symposium offers a System-wide forum to explore and share meaningful research and collaboration – something that anchors our mission and our 50th Anniversary Celebration," Dr. Arenaz noted.

Seven Agencies Join Partnership TAMIU: An Alliance For Good

Seven local agencies entered into powerful agreements aimed at furthering their missions by linking with TAMIU's Partnership TAMIU: An Alliance for Good.

With the Partnership, the organizations establish service opportunities that help them while enhancing TAMIU student learning and development.

Partnership agencies are Bethany House of Laredo, Children's Advocacy Center, Laredo Area Community Foundation, Laredo Crime

Stoppers, MileOne, Ruthe B. Cowl Rehabilitation Center and the United Way of Laredo.

Mayra Hernández, director, Office of Student Conduct and Community Engagement, said the agreements are mutually beneficial and make it possible for students to work with agencies and help direct positive social change.

"Partnership TAMIU: An Alliance for Good, was established in 2014, and is a signature partnership between the University and local agencies to collaborate in mutually beneficial activities in the interest of furthering the missions of both organizations – resulting in expanding and strengthening our commitment to community engagement through teaching, learning, research, and service," Hernández explained.

Since its launch, Partnership TAMIU has collaborated with 26 agencies in partnerships that span the spectrum of non-profit community service. Over 1800 TAMIU students have participated.

For the University's 50th Anniversary Year, TAMIU students have pledged to generate 50,000 hours of community service to Laredo in a 50th Anniversary Service Challenge. Partnership TAMIU initiatives figure into that Service Challenge.





Dustdevils Help Voz de Niños

Christmas came a little earlier than expected for a local group of children in need. Nearly 200 toys were collected as part of the 6th Annual Voz De Niños Christmas Toy Drive. Organized through the University's Dustdevil Athletics Department, over 40 children received several presents and gift cards. Students, staff, faculty, and alumni donated toys for both boys and girls ranging from two to 12 years of age. TAMIU Athletics also teamed up with Campus Dining Services to offer discounted items at dining locations on campus, with proceeds benefiting the Toy Drive. In January, Voz De Niños will attend a Men's basketball game and visit with student-athletes. Voz De Niños helps advocate for foster children living in Webb County through the training and support of CASA volunteers, or court-appointed special advocates. CASA volunteers assist in child welfare cases and advocate for their current and future needs.

Dustdevil Soccer Makes History



For the first time in program history, the TAMIU men's soccer team participated in the NCAA Division II Men's Soccer Championship in 2019. The Dustdevils earned an at-large bid as the ninth-seed and compiled a memorable 12-win season that was highlighted by a 1-0 victory over West Texas A&M University in the quarterfinals of the 2019 Lone Star Conference Championship that was hosted by TAMIU. A total of five Dustdevils earned 2019 All-Lone Star Conference laurels including first team honorees, freshman forward Nadav Datner and senior midfielder Ruben Nielsen.

Datner was named Lone Star Conference Freshman of the Year and Lone Star Conference Forward of the Year and Nielsen garnered Lone Star Conference All-Academic team honors and was selected to the 2019 Division II Conference Commissioners Association (D2CCA) All-South Central Region First-Team.



17 Looking Back/DIFFERENCE

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.

Let's review our "World of Difference."



1969

Dr. Billy F. Cowart begins a 15-year history of educational impact, establishing the University's branch campus from a study carrel in the Harold R. Yeary Library at then- Laredo Junior College.

Then Texas A&I University at Laredo opens its doors as the State's first upper-level institution.

1970



1975

Despite impressive enrollment growth, State budget cuts threaten to thwart the University's independence and plans to implement new programs. Community members rally to forestall the cuts and the reductions of staff and service.

Driven by enrollment growth, the Laredo Junior College Board of Trustees unanimously agrees to provide LSU with several acres of land to support the addition of an 18,000 square-foot classroom building, University Hall.

1976





University Hall welcomes students. Designed by Laredo-based architects Alfonso Leyendecker and Guillermo Cavazos, it features dramatic brick arches, a lushly paved courtyard and redwood benches.



After 15 years at the helm of the University, Dr. Billy F. Cowart announces his resignation. Enrollment at LSU reaches 1000 for the first time.

1977

The 65th Legislature approves HB 944 (Hale/Truan), changing the University's name to Laredo State University and establishing the University System of South Texas (USST). The University becomes Laredo State University effective September 1, 1977.



1979

1982

The Killam Family donates \$100,000 towards the construction of a 60-room shared dormitory on the LJC-LSU joint campus. Radcliffe Killam notes, "...the best way Laredoans can make friends throughout the world is to expand the scope of local colleges."



1984



Fulbright Fellow, nationally recognized scholar in the field of linguistics and authority on bilingual education, Dr. Manuel Pacheco, is inaugurated as the University's second president.

1985



1987

Senator Judith Zaffirini prioritizes a bill to remove threatening "Center" status. A busload of Laredoans travel to Austin in support of her SB 658. Eight days later, the bill passes. Representative Henry Cuellar takes up the House legislation signed by Governor Bill Clements in June.

Dr. Manuel Pacheco accepts the presidency of the University of Houston Downtown. Dr. Leo Sayavedra is named third President of Laredo State University.

1987



1989

The USST votes to dissolve, clearing the way for a merger with the Texas A&M University System.





Initial donation of 200 acres of land in northeast Laredo for a new campus from Radcliffe Killam. It grows to 300 acres.

1990



The University signs its first Freshman, Juan José González, a 17-year-old United High School graduate.

1995



Dr. J. Charles Jennett is named the fourth president of Texas A&M International University. Dr. Leo Sayavedra becomes the A&M System's Deputy Chancellor.

1996

Senate Bill 6, establishes a four-year University named Texas A&M International University, effective September 1, 1995.

1993





Groundbreaking for Phase III of the campus marks a \$49.5 million expansion including the Student Development Center, the Center for the Study of Western Hemispheric Trade and the Center for the Fine and Performing Arts.

1999



Dr. J. Charles Jennett packs up his trademark TAMIU cowboy boots and bids the University adieu. Dr. Ray Keck becomes TAMIU's fifth president Sept. 1, 2001 and serves as president through 2016.

2000



2000

The 30th Anniversary Celebration, "Dreams to Reality," is a year-long observation of milestones. It includes a Gala, a historical exhibit, the Dusty Fun Run, A. R. Sanchez, Sr. Distinguished Lecture Series and a closing barbeque.



2003

Groundbreaking for Phase IV is presided over by Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst. It includes a Science building highlighted by a glass pyramid housing a Planetarium.



The Lamar Bruni Vergara Planetarium opens its doors, bringing the heavens closer to TAMIU.

2005



The inaugural recital of the Sharkey Corrigan Pipe Organ is held with donor E. H. Corrigan present.

2006



2006

TAMIU shows a 4.23% increase in enrollment and a 7.77% increase in semester credit hours. Total combined undergraduate and graduate enrollment is 4,380.



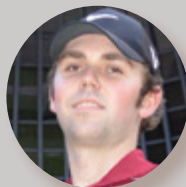
2009

TAMIU posts a Fall 2009 enrollment increase of 9.6% to 6,419 students and welcomes its largest freshman class ever: 723 students.



Members of the Dolly Richter Watson Foundation announce their gift of \$1 million to create the Helen Richter Watson Gallery celebrating the life and legacy of the famed Laredo-born ceramic artist in the Sue and Radcliffe Killam Library. The Gallery opens in 2011.

2010



A Referendum funding TAMIU Athletics passes 54% to 46% in an online student vote. The Referendum focuses on funding the University's Dustdevil Athletics program.

2014



2011

Jordan M. Gibson makes history at TAMIU. The junior marketing major and member of TAMIU's Men's Golf Team from Painted Butte, Alberta, Canada, is the 7,000th student of a record 7,039 students enrolled at TAMIU.



2015

The University receives a remarkable legacy gift of a Heritage Edition of The Saint John's Bible made possible by The Matias De Llano Charitable Trust.



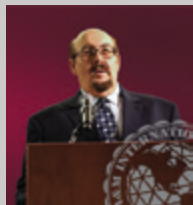
The Texas A&M University System Board of Regents appoints Dr. Pablo Arenaz as sixth president of Texas A&M International University. Dr. Ray Keck is affirmed as president of Texas A&M University-Commerce.

2016



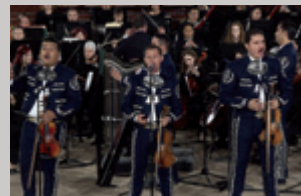
The Webb County Heritage Foundation awards the Regional Emmy Award-winning documentary video "Rhapsody on the Río," a collaboration by the City of Laredo, KLRN-TV, and TAMIU with its Luciano Guajardo Heritage Award.

2018



2016

Groundbreaking for TAMIU's largest classroom addition to date, the Academic Innovation Center, is held. A&M System Chancellor John Sharp and TAMIU president Dr. Pablo Arenaz herald construction on the 120,000 square-foot facility to house TAMIU's growing engineering and science programs.



2019

The stunning new Academic Innovation Center opens with Chancellor John Sharp, Board of Regents Chairman Elaine Mendoza and State Senator Judith Zaffirini sharing the ribbon-cutting.

President 's

Circle (\$25,000+)

Doctors Hospital of Laredo
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BBVA Compass Foundation
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 Laredo Morning Times
 Laredo Specialty Hospital
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 Wyatt Foundation

Chair 's

Circle - (\$5,000.00 +)

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 Marie and J. D. Wendeborn
 Isabel '00 and Jerry Woods
 Zoila '99 and Javier Zambrano

*Denotes Deceased



TAMIU Benefits from Johnson Charitable Trust

Texas A&M International University was one of five beneficiaries of a shared \$500,000 gift from the Samuel N. Johnson, Jr. 2013 Charitable Remainder Annuity Trust.

On behalf of the Trust, Trustee Jim Moore announced gifts to TAMIU's Theatre Department, the Laredo Little Theatre, Laredo Theatre Guild International, St. Edward's University, and the Webb County Heritage Foundation.

TAMIU president Dr. Pablo Arenaz welcomed guests to the Colonnade of the Sue and Radcliffe Killam Library, and reminded all of the extensive and lasting legacy the late Johnson and his sister Betsy Gill have had on TAMIU.

How Do We Give? We Give Big...The Big Event

This past March, Texas A&M International University celebrated the 10th Anniversary of its signature service event, The Big Event, at the Ruthe B. Cowl Rehabilitation Center. Over 300 TAMIU volunteers including students, staff, and alumni gathered to give back by painting, gardening, and organizing at the event facility.

Mayra Hernández, director of TAMIU's Office of Student Conduct and Community Engagement, said the service event generated an in-kind monetary impact of \$27,962. It gives students a chance to give back to a community most call home, she said.

"It's an exciting opportunity. TAMIU students want to 'pay it forward' -- to become effective leaders, responsible constituents and serve their community. They believe it is a shared obligation to give back to a community that has given them so much. And we all greatly admire the work of the Ruthe B. Cowl Center," she said.



Visit an online gallery at:

https://www.facebook.com/pg/txamiu.scce/photos/?tab=album&album_id=10156936683612295

See a video of our 2019 Big Event at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcE1738lph4&feature=emb_title

27 Faculty & Staff Annual Giving 2018-2019/DIFFERENCE

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Chair's Circle (\$5,000+) Rosanne Palacios

Scholar's Circle (\$1,000+)

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Athena M. Cortez '05
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Adrian Dominguez '03, '07

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Hilda P. Garcia
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60% of our Faculty & Staff—384 participants
\$56,987 Raised between Aug. 27 and Oct. 2
80 Departments of 81 participating - 99%
22 Departments at 100%
192 Donors are Alumni — 50% of the donors

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*Denotes Deceased

A Legacy of Your Own?

Interested in forging a legacy of your own at Texas A&M International University?

Call Rosanne Palacios at 956.326.2178, email rosanne.palacios@tamiiu.edu or mail donations to TAMIU Office of Institutional Advancement
 5201 University Boulevard,
 Laredo, TX 78041.

TAMIU '50 Hours for 50 Years' Fundraising Campaign 'Posts' Way to Record Success

By using an innovative social media campaign that mobilized online relations of its students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends of the University, TAMIU was able to 'post' its way with emails, shares, tweets and more to achieve a record fundraising goal.

"50 Hours for 50 Years," launched on Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 as part of the University's year-long 50th Anniversary observation. The goal was to have 500 donors participate and generate support for different areas on campus. That goal was exceeded, said TAMIU vice president for Institutional Advancement, Rosanne Palacios.

"We engaged 609 donors who have generated \$47,931 in gifts to the University. Of these new donors, 30% are students who made an average gift of \$6. Alumni made up 33% of our donors with an average gift of \$45," Palacios said.

Institutional Advancement partnered with the University's Office of Public Relations, Marketing and Information Services to deploy an online advocacy model that enabled students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends of the University to share a call for donations.

Those donations supported 84 different programs ranging from Leadership Programs to Dusty's Food Pantry and Colleges/Schools to scholarships. Participants could post encouraging messages, videos, photos or emails across various social media platforms to their respective networks. Their friends or followers could then participate in the Campaign and even share messages of support or challenge to their own networks.

Palacios said the University's use of social media enables it to directly reach University students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends.

"In the truest sense, we are reaching out to our University community and friends where they live: on digital platforms that they utilize and build community within. It's a great way to share our campaign, update people on the University's growth, our 50th Anniversary now underway, provide a chance to reconnect...or to connect for the first time," Palacios said.

"We're especially excited that so many students were part of this time-restricted campaign and have shown their support, alongside alumni, staff, faculty and other friends. It shows their commitment and passion for their University. People responded locally and globally, affirming the international nature of the University," she noted.

Palacios said the University looks forward to additional opportunities to engage with the University's growing community of partners.

"Throughout this 50th Anniversary year, we are celebrating the transformative impact this University has had. With the support provided by those who've responded to the '50 Hours for 50 Years,' campaign, we can ensure that our legacy of transformation continues forward," she said.



TRIBUTES 2018-2019

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Arturo N. Benavides, Sr. Randy Blair	Rosario Garcia Adela Guerra
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Michelle Guerra '11 Generoso Gutierrez '99	The Team: Cathy, Yeli and Jacky Paola Tovar '20
Paul Hickey Nicholas Hudson, PhD	Cesar Villarreal '19 Raul Zapata '19
Vanessa Ibarra	



The Mark of Presidents

As part of the University's 50th Anniversary Celebration, a Special Commemorative Presidential Plaque was installed at the Sue and Radcliffe Killam Library Green Fountain area, known as the Walk of Fame. The Presidential Plaque memorializes the six presidents who have served the University in its 50-year existence: Dr. Billy F. Cowart (1970-1984); Dr. Manuel T. Pacheco (1983-1988); Dr. Leo Sayavedra (1988-1996); Dr. J. Charles Jennett (1996-2001); Dr. Ray Keck (2001-2016) and Dr. Pablo Arenaz. Joining President Arenaz (right) at the historic event were former Presidents, left, Dr. J. Charles Jennett and middle, Dr. Leo Sayavedra.

WALK OF FAME

TAMIU's Walk of Fame is located on the south end of the native stone water fountain that graces the plaza in the center of campus. Purchase of the inscribed bricks is great way for students, organizations, parents, alumni, and community supporters to be part of a permanent tribute that supports TAMIU.

Mirelda Canales '16, '18	Queabet Perez '18
Michael T. Chandarlis '98	Sergio A. Perez '14
Vanessa Colegio '18	Ana L. Quesada '91
Alberto De Llano '87	Daniela Ramos '18
Kiara Elliott '16	Nicole M. Romanos '14, '18
Linda M. Gonzalez	Alexia Serna '19
Candy Hein	Nelly P. Toledo will graduate in Dec 2019
Edmundo Patoni	Paola V. Tovar '20
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Elvialicia Perez '18	

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(\$10,000,000 +)

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Platinum Society

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Gold Society

(\$500,000.00 +)

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 Frances* and Blackstone Dilworth, Jr.
 Doctors Hospital of Laredo
 H-E-B
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 Sisters of Mercy and Mercy Health Center
 TAMIU Alumni Association
 TAMIU Faculty & Staff

Silver Society (\$250,000 +)

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 Port Laredo
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 Women's City Club
 Audrey and Carlos M. Zaffirini, Jr.

Pewter Society

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*Denotes Deceased

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TAMU students are part of the University's philanthropic tradition and each class contributes to the Dustdevil P.R.I.D.E. scholarship.

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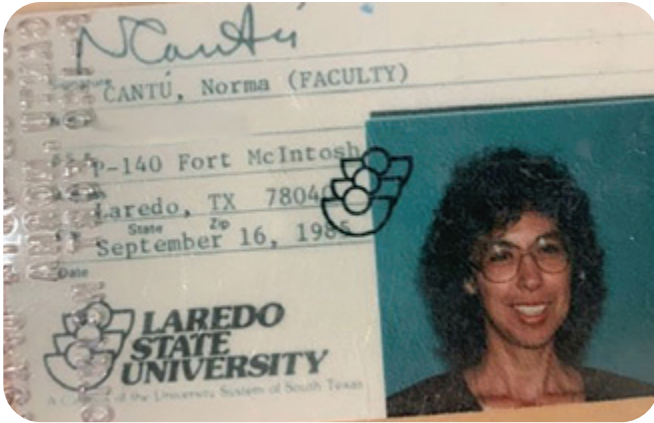
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 Alexander Yanez
 Reyna E. Yanez
 Casey Y. Zamarripa
 Tomasa Zapata
 Danny Zaragoza
 Alyssa J. Zepeda

Dr. Norma E. Cantú, '73...

Leader, Researcher, Teacher and Writer.



What University course would you take all over again today?
I loved my Shakespeare courses at what was then-Texas A&I at Laredo... also Children's Literature.

Who was your favorite professor and why?
Dr. Allen Briggs because he was a mentor unlike any other who saw potential in me and made me feel smart. But there were others who also inspired me like Dr. Hal Kanter.

When did you know that your hard work had paid off and your degree had made a "World of Difference" for you?
As soon as I graduated I knew my hard work and sacrifice—I worked full time except for the last semester—had paid off. It made a world of difference as without it I couldn't have gone on to get my MA and eventually my PhD.

What would your advice be to today's students as they make their way through their University experience?
Stay focused on your dream and don't give up! Work hard—read widely and travel.

What's your proudest accomplishment to date?
Perhaps I am most proud of my students who have gone on and achieved great things. As a writer, my books make me proud, but they are secondary to the "work" of teaching.

Tell us what you're doing today career or life-wise and what you look forward to each day:

I am a writer and an endowed professor at Trinity University where I teach Chicana and Latinx Studies. I travel all over the world giving talks and reading from my work. What I look forward to each day is meeting my students and engaging with the world, making a difference. I work hard, but because I love it I don't consider it work; it's life. And it's a wonderful life full of surprises and rewards from an email from a former student to a poem that appears almost by magic on the pages of my daily journal.

*A former LSU and TAMU faculty member, Dr. Cantú's latest novel is *Cabañuelas* (University of New Mexico Press). Her previous novel was *Canícula: Snapshots of a Girlhood en la Frontera*, first published by the University of New Mexico Press in 1995 and updated in 2015. She has earned the *Américo Paredes Prize* from the American Folklore Society, the *National Association of Chicana and Chicano Studies Scholar Award* and induction into the *Texas Institute of Letters*.*



Henry Cuellar, '82...

From Classroom to Courtroom
to Congress.



What University course would you take all over again today?

I would take all the courses in the MBA program dealing with international trade and logistics over again to refresh myself as I work to educate my colleagues at the US Capitol about the importance of passing the trade agreement between the US, Mexico and Canada.

Who was your favorite professor and why?

Laredo State University had so many excellent professors, but I enjoyed taking classes taught by Dr. Khosrow Fatemi and Dr. Rafael Lecuona because of their expertise and their life experiences that brought a different dimension to teaching.

When did you know that your hard work had paid off and your degree had made a “World of Difference” for you?

As a practicing attorney in Laredo representing many clients in the international trade field and knowing how their businesses operated in real life, I knew my hard work getting my MBA had paid off and my degree had made a “World of Difference” to me. My MBA made me a much better attorney.

What would your advice be to today's students as they make their way through their University experience?

Once you have decided what degree you want to obtain from TAMIU, focus and work hard to achieve your goal. There will be challenges, but you can overcome them all if you work hard and believe in yourself. Ask for help from the University, they are there to guide you to find your path to success.

What's your proudest accomplishment to date?

I have brought many improvements to Laredo, but I am very proud of passing legislation and obtaining all the necessary funding to establish TAMIU as we have it here today. I said many years ago that the establishment of TAMIU was a once in a generation accomplishment that would forever transform Laredo, the region, and the State.

Tell us what you're doing today career or life-wise and what you look forward to each day:

I'm a U. S. Congressman proudly serving my constituents.



Lola O. Norris, Ph.D., '99

A Lifetime of Loving Language.



What University course would you take all over again today?

All of them! But one in particular: Poetry of the Spanish Golden Age, a course I took with Dr. Ray Keck. One of the poems we studied was Góngora's "La fábula de Polifemo y Galatea," a very long Baroque poem. It was without a doubt the most difficult poem I have ever read. Analyzing stanza by stanza and uncovering its sophisticated metaphors, complex syntax, elaborate vocabulary, and intricate beauty was one of my most rewarding literary experiences. I still remember how challenging it was, and how much I loved it.

Who was your favorite professor and why?

Dr. Ray Keck and Dr. Alfredo Supervielle were my favorite professors. Everything I know about Spanish Peninsular and Latin American literatures I learned from them. I was at awe at the depth and breadth of their knowledge, their eloquence, the ease with which they explained the most difficult concepts, made connections, and brought literature to life. They were both very passionate and enthusiastic professors who really challenged us to look beyond the obvious, to find the deeper meaning. They inspired me every day, and they are the reason why I am a University professor today.

When did you know that your hard work had paid off and your degree had made a "World of Difference" for you?

I lost my husband during my first semester in graduate school. When I wanted to drop out of the Master's program to get a full-time job and raise my six small children, my professors persuaded me to stay and to continue with my studies. It was very hard to work, go to school, and raise a large family as a widow. It took longer than normal to graduate, but with my professors' encouragement and support I attained my goal. I was the first student to graduate with an MA in Spanish at TAMIU (and with a 4.0) and that made me incredibly proud.

What would your advice be to today's students as they make their way through their University experience?

Going to University is not easy. It is not supposed to be. But don't ever give up. This is a time to learn, to be challenged, to travel, to expand your horizon beyond what you ever thought possible. But you have to read, read, and read some more.

What's your proudest accomplishment to date?

Thanks to my TAMIU professors' motivation and mentoring, I continued my education and got a PhD in Hispanic Studies. In my doctoral program, I met other amazing professors who continued to nurture me and help me grow. Getting a PhD and publishing my first book were my proudest accomplishments.

Tell us what you're doing today career or life-wise and what you look forward to each day:

I am an associate professor of Spanish and translation at TAMIU. I get to instill in students the same love for Spanish language, literature, and culture my professors instilled in me. I love my job and every day I look forward to being in the classroom and teaching. I hope I inspire my students as much as my professors inspired me.

Dr. Lola Norris is TAMIU's first graduate to earn the collaborative Ph.D. in Hispanic Studies at Texas A&M University. She is the author of "General Alonzo de León's Expeditions into Texas, 1686-1690" (Texas A&M University Press). Multilingual, she and husband Dr. James A. Norris, associate professor of political science, frequently lead TAMIU study-travel programs.



Tano Tijerina, '02...

From the Playing Field to County Leadership.



What University course would you take all over again today?
History, now that I am older and have more experience I appreciate the significance of history and leaving a positive legacy for future generations to look back on. Especially local history, learning about local pioneers and settlers in Webb County and surrounding areas.

Who was your favorite professor and why?

Dr. Carlos Eliseo Cuellar. He was a practical teacher who genuinely loved teaching. There's a common saying that says, "love what you do and you will never work a day in your life" – he personified that.

When did you know that your hard work had paid off and your degree had made a "World of Difference" for you?

Up until my senior year in college, I was working towards obtaining a degree for my family. My wife would constantly endorse the importance of an education, and encourage me to seek a higher level of education for my children. They were my driving force until my senior year — at that moment it dawned on me that I was doing this for ME. That no matter what happened in life, no one was going to strip me from that piece of paper that I worked hard for.

What would your advice be to today's students as they make their way through their University experience?

Experience life outside the classroom, through internships, volunteering and extracurricular activities. Those experiences will really help guide you in the direction you need to go for your career.

What's your proudest accomplishment to date?

As a human being my proudest accomplishment would have to be my two biological children and my two adopted children. Because they remind me every day of God's love.

Tell us what you're doing today career or life-wise and what you look forward to each day:

Today I am your proud 23rd Webb County Judge. Every day I look forward to making a difference in our community and making Webb County the best County it can be.



Tijerina also played baseball professionally.

Robert P. Hernández, '05...

Marketing Guru and
Champion of Culture.



What University course would you take all over again today?

MKT 4310 International Marketing:

“Comparative analysis of cultural, legal, political, economic, and technological environments as they affect marketing strategy in the international marketplace. Special emphasis on problems of the multinational corporation and its role in the current world economy.”

In this ever-changing world, my love for marketing, cultures, and global business is what excites me to continue to learn about all the international marketplaces through culture, politics, economics, and current tech environments.

Who was your favorite professor and why?

Dr. Jyotsna Mukherji. Simply said, any class with Dr. Mukherji

felt like you were acknowledged and critiqued by one of the best in the industry. Having any positive feedback from her meant that you had the skills and talent to succeed in marketing.

I recall having a big presentation as our final exam which counted for a large percentage of our grade. Her reaction to this day made me know that I was on the right path and was destined for a great career. Further-

more, her door was always open for career advice.



When did you know that your hard work had paid off and your degree had made a “World of Difference” for you?

I knew I had made a difference when I was sought out by universities and colleagues in my field of work to give speeches on my career path, and experiences in design, branding, advertising, trademarks, and promotions.

What would your advice be to today's students as they make their way through their University experience?

Through various speeches that were given at high schools in Texas and Alabama, I simply stated this: get involved with as many extracurricular activities during your high school years. This way you are able to identify what your fortes are and what you're most passionate about.

What's your proudest accomplishment to date?

My learning experiences at TAMIU helped guide me to become the Creative Director for BBVA and start my own 501c3 non-profit, Alabama Multicultural Organization.

At BBVA, I am able to work with over 35 countries and manage over six employees that produce marketing material throughout the USA. With Alabama Multicultural, I've been able to impact thousands of students and my community in Alabama through arts, music, dance, film, theatre, food, and sports.

Furthermore, I was also one of the first in my school district to be awarded the first-ever Distinguished Alumni Award.

Tell us what you're doing today career or life-wise and what you look forward to each day:

Currently, I am the Creative Director for BBVA USA.

Daily, as a hobby, I manage my non-profit, Alabama Multicultural Organization after-hours to help promote inclusion and diversity through culture in Alabama. We host various events throughout Alabama such as the Alabama Coffee Fest, Street Fair, Night Out, Cinema, Dia de los Muertos, Pride Fest, and other events that help celebrate our cultures through arts, music, dance, film, theatre, food, and sports.

Julio Obscura, '14...

From Reading the Globe to telling Global Stories.



What University course would you take all over again today?

Anthropology 101 because Dr. Jaclyn Jeffery encouraged us to engage in class, question ideas and rethink concepts. She was also an incredible human.

Who was your favorite professor and why?

Dr. Conchita Hickey and John Hickey. Their love for education and the arts is contagious. I had the opportunity to travel twice with them as a Reading the Globe Ambassador and mentor to the countries of Ghana and Turkey. It was thanks to them that I've come this far.

When did you know that your hard work had paid off and your degree had made a "World of Difference" for you?

I've had a few, but more recently I got to spend two days with iconic portrait photographer Annie Leibovitz and she expressed

how much she loved my photography work and also complimented my skills and talent. For those not involved in the photography world, there is no higher compliment than hers. And it all got started my freshman year at TAMU's photo lab during Photo 101.

I wouldn't say the degree made a difference. I think it was the experiences and opportunities that TAMU gave me that allowed me to explore various courses and travel/study around world that gave me the tools and confidence to tackle any obstacle that came my way.

What would your advice be to today's students as they make their way through their University experience?

Everything you do matters. Every second spent learning anything should be embraced... especially if it interests you. Your hobby can become your life's work.

What's your proudest accomplishment to date?

I had a full circle moment: My freshman year (2009) I had the opportunity to be a TAMU Reading the Globe Ambassador in the country of Ghana. During our time in Ghana we passed by Jubilee (the presidential palace) where I was told I couldn't take photos. Ten years later, I traveled back to Ghana -- this time as an official photographer to Speaker Nancy Pelosi -- to document the historic trip during the year of return. During this visit we were welcomed to Jubilee and I was the only photographer allowed to take photos at the building where I was once told I couldn't take photos. This has been one of my most meaningful accomplishments.

Tell us what you're doing today career or life-wise and what you look forward to each day:

I'm the Creative Director and the Official Photographer for the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi. I create, design, and direct visual content for the Speaker's social media accounts and also content distributed to all House Democratic Members of Congress to maintain unified messaging. Everyday I look forward to learning something new. I get a thrill to beat reporters to publish the first and best photo of my boss, and to find better ways to combine technology and storytelling to create awareness on issues that affect us all.



Obscura visits Istanbul, Turkey in 2013.



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A World of Difference