

# Challenge and Triumph:



By Dr. Jerry Thompson

The First 20  
Years of  
Laredo State  
University

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Reader,

You hold in your hands a very special mementoe of the collective toil of countless Laredoans. In your hands you have the history of an institution that has opened the doors to an enlightened citizenry for people from all over the world. You hold in your hands the first 20-year history of Laredo State University.

As the cover of this book attests, it has been a challenge. It has been a triumph. The idea for a University in Laredo was first germinated some 20 years ago. That seed was sown, nurtured and has grown to become a significant force in South Texas and world education. From a carrel in the Harold R. Yearly Library to a University that is proud part of The Texas A&M University System, LSU has become an institution we can all share pride in.

It gives me great pleasure to share the special history of Laredo State University. I think you will be, as I was, deeply moved with this story of sacrifice, commitment, challenge, triumph and unparalleled results.

I thank Dr. Jerry Thompson for his monumental accomplishment. We so often forget that all of our yesterdays, even those spent here in the South Texas sun, are part of a world history in which we all play leading roles.

And now I urge you to read on. Read of a past that has paved the way for the present and frames a very bright future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Leo Sayavedra", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Leo Sayavedra, Ph.D.



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Valuable newspaper clippings of the many events in the history of the University are at the Public Information Office: any history of Laredo State University would be incomplete without a thorough use of these records. Consequently, the various reporters who covered events in the University's history must be mentioned. These include Virginia Gonzales, Susan Adams, Marilyn Lamensdorf, Bill Bouldin, Jim Parish, Diana R. Fuentes, Sylvia Reyes, Roberto San Miguel, Odie Arambula, Amy Dawes, Kelly Lyne, Jim Lacey, Bob McVey, Andrea Wright, and Harry Taylor, all of The Laredo Morning Times. Also, Gary Rasp, Jim Warren, David Plesa, Mike Wallis, and especially Steve Levine, of the Times Austin bureau.

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Jerry Thompson  
Laredo State University  
August, 1990

**I**n the third week of August, 1969, a stranger arrived at Laredo Junior College on the grounds of old Fort McIntosh in far-west Laredo. This small, soft-spoken fellow had come to establish a branch of Texas A&I University. There was little doubt that he was a man on a mission. His name was Billy F. Cowart and for the next fifteen years he would play a significant role in Laredo education.

Born at San Benito in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, Cowart held degrees from Texas A&I, Stephen F. Austin, and the University of Texas at Austin where he had written a dissertation on the influences of the Mexican educator Jaime Torres Bodet. Specializing in the philosophy of education, Cowart had served as the director of student teaching on the Kingsville campus, and was later named as Director of the Upward Bound program for three years while he served as Associate Professor of Education. Having spent a large part of his life in South Texas, Cowart was more than familiar with the rough and tumble politics of the region.

One year earlier, in the hot summer of 1968, a 27-member delegation of Laredoans, headed by the physician brothers Leonides and Joaquin Cigarroa, had gone north to Austin to ask the Texas Coordinating Board for Higher Education to alter its master plan to add third and fourth year classes at Laredo Junior College. In the Coordinating Board's master plan for the 1970s, Laredo had been omitted on the grounds that it could not generate enough enrollment to justify the establishment of an institution of higher learning.



**Dr. Billy Cowart**

**B**ut Joaquin Cigarroa, the first Hispanic on the Coordinating Board, and older brother "Leo," a member of the joint board of Laredo Independent School District and Laredo Junior College, had other ideas. Both were influential in Laredo and South Texas politics, and were determined to see better educational facilities in the border city.

Emphasizing the traditional neglect of higher education in the region, as well as the discrimination against Hispanics that had plagued the state since 1836, the Laredoans, with over 8,000 signatures, made a second trip north a few weeks later to convince the Coordinating Board to amend its ten-year plan to approve the creation, not of a full-fledged university, but of an upper-level senior institution. Such a center, a branch of Texas A&I University, would enable many Laredo students who would otherwise be unable to attend a university--to obtain an education in Laredo. Within months, State Representative Honore Ligarde



of Laredo was able to push a bill through the House of Representatives creating the center. The provision was quickly approved by the Senate and signed by Governor Preston Smith.

Years later many Laredoans would remember Leo Cigarroa as the leading inspiration behind the creation of the upper-level school. For years Cigarroa had headed a citizens' committee which struggled to obtain higher education facilities in Laredo. J.C. Martin, Jr., Laredo mayor and member of the Texas A & I Board, recalled that Cigarroa worked "hard to find a way to get a full fledged university established here. Because of his optimism that some formula could be found that would win state approval, the rest of us in Laredo never lost enthusiasm despite countless setbacks."

From a small carrel in the Harold R. Yearly Library at Laredo Junior College, Cowart went to work in August, 1969. Classrooms and offices had to be leased from the junior college, equipment had to be purchased, operating procedures established, and most important of all, students had to be recruited and faculty hired. Assisted only by a work-study student, Mary Vela, Cowart set out to create the upper-level center. Faculty would remember him as an "extraordinary man," someone with an "unbelievable work ethic, who rarely, if

ever, took vacations or sick leave." There was little doubt that Cowart had a "desire to make a difference for the traditionally disadvantaged Hispanic student." Eventually moving into an office in Laird Hall next to a classroom used for English instruction by the junior college, Cowart continued to recruit faculty and see to countless details.

One of the first faculty hired by Cowart was F. Allan Briggs, an English professor from the University of South Florida in Tampa. Having taught at Sul Ross University at Alpine, Briggs was familiar with Texas higher education, and would become a faculty leader at this new South Texas institution. Years later, a colleague remembered Briggs as a man of "great wisdom" and someone with a "passion" for the teaching profession. Students would recall him as someone with a "great heart," an inspirational role model who left students with a passion for the teaching of English.

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*J.C. Martin Jr.*

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Drew C. Tinsley was at The University of Texas at Austin when contacted by Cowart. Reared in a small town in Arkansas, Tinsley was educated at the University of Arkansas at Monticello and at Auburn University, and she had taught at Kent State University before receiving her doctorate at The University of Texas. She had developed a teaching lab at Austin and was exactly what Cowart needed. Although she described herself as "a little old widow woman," Tinsley could be tough; Cowart would have her supervise student teachers.

**T**hrough Tinsley, Cowart also recruited another professor in education, Martha R. Thomas. Thomas would remember the faculty Cowart recruited that first year as individuals with a "missionary zeal." There were no school colors, no mascot, no emblem, no marching bands, and no big-time athletics. There was, however, an abundance of enthusiasm and that was what was needed for this fledgling educational institution on the Texas border.

Harold M. Kanter was another education recruit. The mild-mannered Kanter would be remembered as a "very competent, very bright, and hard worker who carried a big load." When he died of cancer in 1988, colleagues looked back on Kanter as "a real gentleman, someone you could easily learn to love." Kanter would become fascinated with the application of computers to educational measurement concepts while at the school, a subject on which he published a book in 1985. During his tenure, Kanter would edit two accreditation self-studies for the University. Two sons and a daughter, all prominent physicians, would testify to their father's passion for the world of learning.

Frank Dietz, Jr. came from the University of Arizona to teach Spanish. Although confined to a wheelchair, Dietz was "a man with a lot of fire," someone with a great deal of pride who did not ask or want sympathy, only academic performance. Cowart found James A. Bell at the University of Oklahoma. Jovial and care-free out of class, the red-faced and athletic Bell was a no-nonsense professor who had high academic expectations.

After being contacted at a history convention in Washington, D.C., Rex H. Ball left his wife behind to finish typing his dissertation in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and flew through a storm for an interview with Cowart. Within months, with the ink still wet on his Harvard diploma, the idealistic Ball arrived in Laredo to teach history.

Cowart found another young historian at a roominghouse in Mexico City. Stanley C. Green, a Ph.D. from Texas Christian University who had taught at Appalachian State University for a year and who was an authority on Mexican history, would be the second history professor at the center. Green, who hated eight a.m. classes, frequently

shocked conservative students by appearing for class in Bermuda shorts and shower sandals. In Laredo, Green would become fascinated with local history and he would later develop a graduate class on the subject. Green also worked on a manuscript chronicling the first decade of the Mexican Republic, a lengthy and scholarly study that would be published by the University of Pittsburgh in 1987.

**T**o teach business, Nestor Marquez-Diaz, a clever and cunning Puerto Rican attorney with a Ph.D. from the University of Madrid, was employed as a full professor.

Rafael A. Lecuona, a conservative Cuban-American from Florida State University, came to Laredo to teach political science. A world-class gymnast in the sidehorse, Lecuona had represented Cuba at the Pan American games in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1951, where he won a gold medal, and at the Mexico City games in 1955, where he was awarded the silver medal.

Lecuona had also represented Cuba at the 1948 Olympic games in London, England, the 1952, Helsinki, Finland, games, and had been to the Melbourne, Australia, Olympics in 1956.

As a result of his 1951 gold medal, he had been given an athletic scholarship to Florida State University and had gone on to receive his Ph.D. there. Alfredo Supervielle, another Cuban-American Ph.D. from Florida State, drove to Laredo through the late summer heat to teach Spanish. A small, quiet man with impeccable manners, Supervielle had escaped Castro's tyranny and had settled in the United States. He had taught temporarily in Indiana before coming to Laredo. Donald E. Critchlow, who was teaching reading at Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio, was lured to Laredo to teach education and start a reading program.

**O**ther members of the original faculty included Leon R. De King, a retiree from the Air Force and a Ph.D. from The University of Texas, who came south from Austin to be part of the education department. Joe Fisher Freeman, an older conservative economist who had been a banking advisor to several countries in the Far East, came to help teach business and finance. Clifford G. Dawdy, from Texas A&M and North

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**“Green, who hated eight a.m. classes, frequently shocked conservative students by appearing for class in Bermuda shorts and shower sandals.”**

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Texas State University, arrived to become librarian. Alfredo Garcia, a Cowart recruit from the Laredo Public schools, doubled as registrar and music instructor. Henry B. Darling, an M.B.A. from Harvard University, arrived at mid-semester to teach business. David E. VerMilyea, who had worked for Cowart in the Upward Bound Program in Kingsville, was hired as an Instructor in English and Director of Student Services. ■

## **THE COWART YEARS**

With students and faculty excited, Texas A&I University at Laredo opened its doors as the first upper-level institution in the state of Texas in September, 1970. Created primarily to serve regional needs, the school represented a new philosophy of higher education in Texas.

Degrees offered included the bachelor of science in secondary education, the bachelor of science in elementary education, and a bachelor of business administration. Registrar Fred Garcia would eventually register 286 students that semester. Over 90 percent of the students came from Laredo, many of whom, Cowart reported, did not have the financial resources to attend a senior college outside the area.

**B**y the following year, a program of studies for students interested in bilingual education had been added to the curriculum. The program was designed specifically for incoming juniors majoring in elementary education. Cowart also set out to gather support for amending the enabling act that had created the school to allow graduate classes in Laredo.

**B**y September, 1971, the number of students had increased to 459. In May, with graduation ceremonies in Kingsville, 25 students made the trek east to receive their diplomas. Nineteen would follow in August. With enrollment growing, Cowart increased the faculty from 19 to 23 in 1971. One year later, with several graduate classes offered for the first time, enrollment reached 637 and remained the same the following year.

In 1971, an ROTC program was launched as a part of the military science department of the Texas A&I. Within a year the Laredo unit had become one of only ten in the nation to become co-educational. With eight of 22 students female, the Laredo ROTC was singled out as having the highest percentage of female recruits in the nation. In 1973, Major Glen Mutter, who had started the program, was replaced by Major Jose Garcia, a native of San Antonio. With not enough recruits

and too few persons being commissioned, however, the program was closed in the summer of 1976.

Students at Laredo Junior College came to benefit in many ways from the presence of Texas A&I at Laredo. By 1972, the Harold R. Yearly Library, with the purchase of 16,000 books and 425 periodicals by the upper-level institution, added to the 45,000 volumes already in existence, was on its way to becoming one of the largest libraries in South Texas.

By 1972, a "second wave" of faculty had been recruited by Cowart. Manuel Pacheco, a Ph.D. from Ohio State University, arrived to teach Spanish and education. He would become Academic Dean. Lem Londos Railsback, a Ph.D. from The University of Texas at Austin who had once been a student of F. Allen Briggs at Sul Ross, came south to teach education. Leo Sayavedra, who was recommended to Cowart by Drew Tinsley, was lured away from United High School to help with student teachers. E. Elizabeth Pearce, an Ed.D. from the University of Houston, arrived to teach education. Raymond L. Smith, a lawyer and Ph.D. from the University of Oklahoma, taught business and marketing. Myron T. Swize, an Ed.D. from the University of Northern Colorado, came as Assistant Professor of Psychology. Phyllis B. Mercer, from East Texas State University, became assistant to Cowart and taught education. Eduardo M. Hinojosa was hired as an instructor in education.

A Peruvian-American, Lex S. Berrios, who was working in his doctorate at Columbia University, came to teach sociology. Edward N. Willman arrived as Instructor in Business Administration from North Texas State. Janet Fair, with an Ed.D. from the University of Houston, was Assistant Professor of Education. Laurence Fedigan, with graduate degrees from schools in England and France and a Ph.D. in education from The University of Texas at Austin, became an Assistant Professor of Education. With degrees from Texas A&I, Manuel Falcon taught art. Gary Hood, a Ph.D. from North Texas State, arrived to teach education and psychology. Randolph Hicks, fresh from California State University at Fresno, became Director of the new Law Enforcement Program. Ramon Alaniz, with degrees from Pan American and Texas A&I, became Director of the Teacher Corps. Julio Madrigal, who had studied at Texas A&I, arrived to assist Alaniz with the Teacher Corps. Lastly, the colorful and unpredictable Mary Milam arrived as Instructor in Sociology.

Students at the growing institution formed a student government separate from the junior college and even renovated an old Fort McIntosh building. Manuel "Chaca" Ramirez, a political activist, caused a stir in the community by putting a poster of "Che" Guevara in the small building. One student

organization, the Club Hispanoamericano, under the guidance of Spanish professor Alfredo F. Supervielle, spent several days in central Mexico as guests of the University of Guanajuato.

By 1974, the enrollment at the school had reached 758. One factor inhibiting even more growth was the limitation of the school to offer courses in education and business administration. With a large library, more faculty and students, however, change was inevitable. One example came with graduation, 1972. For the first time degrees would be conferred in Laredo rather than at A&I-Kingsville. To Richard Wagner's "*Grand March*," 75 graduates were ushered into Maravillo Physical Education Building promptly at eight p.m. on May 20 by faculty marshals Donald E. Critchlow and F. Allen Briggs. Chancellor James C. Jernigan drove over from Kingsville to assist Cowart in conferring the degrees. Among the proud graduates, who would be receiving bachelor's degrees in business administration, elementary education, and secondary education, were several individuals who would go on to become community leaders. One, Maria Teresa Vela, who had been a work-study student with Cowart, graduated with honors. She would become Director of Admissions and Advisement at the University.

But although enrollment continued to increase, serious problems loomed for Texas A&I at Laredo. Primarily because of a drop in Texas oil revenues, coupled with a traditional neglect of higher education in South Texas, the powerful Legislative Budget Board (comprised of Lieutenant Governor Bill Hobby, Speaker of the House Bill Clayton, four senators and four representatives), proposed to cut the school's budget from \$1,008,859 to \$828,624. Sounding the alarm, President Cowart predicted impending disaster for the struggling upper-level institution. If such cuts were sustained by the state legislature, massive reductions in professional and clerical staff and reduction of maintenance and operating cost would become mandatory. "Such cuts... would prohibit A&I at Laredo from operating in 1976 as it is currently set up," Cowart said. "We will not have the necessary funds to operate as an independent institution which we have been since 1972."

Specifically, Cowart projected a 54 percent decrease in existing professional personnel, a 58 percent cut in clerical help, and a 62 percent reduction in maintenance and operating costs. Summer school, a vital part of higher education in the community, especially for Laredo and regional school teachers, would have to be cut in half and some programs would be eliminated entirely.

Furthermore, plans to implement new programs lead-



ing to a bachelor's degree in accounting and master's degrees in counseling and guidance would have to be shelved. Cowart warned that only a united front by all South Texans interested in higher education could forestall such massive budget reductions.

J.C. Martin, Jr., Laredo mayor who had been on the board of A & I for 24 years and who was presently serving as chairman, also expressed alarm. "Here in South Texas the educational level is still below the national average as is the income level," Martin complained to The Laredo Morning Times.

Hoping to forestall a reduction of staff and service, community leaders pointed out that not a single medical, law, engineering, architectural, or other professional school was located south of San Antonio. Furthermore, universities in North and West Texas were spending about \$2,500 per student per year while

A&I at Laredo was spending \$1,500.

In an atmosphere of crisis, the Board of Directors for the three Texas A&I campuses convened for the first time at Laredo in February, 1975. At the



**Dr. Billy Cowart, J.C. Martin Jr., Dr. Rex Ball**

tense and somber meeting, the three presidents, Billy Cowart from Laredo, D. Whitney Holiday from Corpus Christi, and Gerald Robbins from Kingsville, as well as Chancellor James E. Jernigan, all warned of serious ramifications if the proposed cuts by the Legislative Budget Board became reality. Cowart bluntly told the Board of Directors that the proposed cuts had "created great concern" on the Laredo campus. With Chancellor Jernigan agreeing to head a delegation, plans were formulated to meet with the House and Senate Finance Committee in Austin as soon as possible.

During the first week of April, 1975, the House Committee on Higher Education, with Representative Billy Hall of Laredo as a member, recommended the restoration of any lost funds to the A&I budget. Unfortunately, however, it was decided that money would have to come from the budget of the A&I systems office. "I am pleased the committee recommended that we get the extra funds, but I wish they had gotten it somewhere else," Hall was quoted as saying. With Senator John Traeger supporting the A&I budget request, a

joint conference committee was able to find a compromise and a budget was finally agreed to for the fledgling Laredo school. Senator Traeger appeared especially interested in seeing that a new International Trade Institute, headed by Don Baerresen, be adequately funded. In prepared remarks, Traeger said the Institute was an "innovative" program that was badly needed on the border. The Institute, in the Senator's words, "emphasized diplomacy as well as trade with Mexico" and was a "real productive" project.

Shortly after Chancellor Jernigan announced his resignation in May, another serious setback affected the school. Governor Dolph Briscoe used his line item veto power to strike \$200,000 from the biennium budget of Texas A&I at Laredo that was intended for the International Trade Institute. Representative Hall called the governor's action "ill-advised, misinformed and totally insensitive...and a cheap shot from the hips." Hall went on to state that he was "personally appalled." The Laredo legislator was particularly upset since he had been assured repeatedly by Briscoe's office that the A&I at Laredo budget would not be touched. "The governor, more than anybody else, should be aware that international trade is what has kept us with our heads above water since the closing of [Laredo Air Force] Base," Hall said. Still, despite Hall's anger, the damage had been done. Higher education in South Texas had once again taken a back seat to what Hall called "real boondoggles."

Ironically, with the Mexican *peso* devaluation crisis in 1977, Governor Briscoe called on the Institute for International Trade to lend assistance in devising ways for dealing with the slumping border economy, expertise which would have been readily available had Briscoe not vetoed much of the Institute budget. In the years to come, Texas A&I at Laredo would continue to face an uphill battle in Austin to get its fair share of funding.

Another threat to the University came when Kenneth Ashworth, new Commissioner of Higher Education, recommended that A&I at Laredo not be allowed to retain the status of a university, but to revert back to an upper-level institution under direct management of A&I at Kingsville. For Board Chairman J.C. Martin, Jr., the recommendation was a fire bell

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in the night: "One of the main disadvantages of the change would be that A&I at Laredo, after having functioned three years as a University, would lose some of its autonomy," Martin said. "This would make it difficult to meet many of the special needs of the border area." As far as Martin was concerned, the status quo at the University needed to be maintained. Tony Bonilla, a vigorous champion of the South Texas University System and Corpus Christi political activist, and the only Mexican American on the 18-member Coordinating Board at the time, said that to force the University to revert to its previous status would only perpetuate the already existing unequal and inadequate higher education in South Texas. In the end, Ashworth's recommendations were overlooked. ■

## **LAREDO STATE UNIVERSITY**

Other changes were in store for the University on the banks of the Rio Grande. In June, 1976, shortly after D. Whitney Halladay was appointed acting chancellor for the A&I System, the Board of Directors undertook a study to consider changing the name of the school. Speaking for the board, J.C. Martin, Jr., liked the possibility. "Members of the board," he said, "naturally find much merit in the proposal that a name should be adopted which more clearly identifies the regional scope of the University." Martin asked that the chancellor obtain as much information as "possible from the faculties, students, and other interested people at...Laredo." Martin felt a name change would enable the school "to establish a separate character and identity while still having the protection of an overall system." Ralph Durden, board member from Corpus Christi, insisted, however, that component institutions in the System be restrained from adopting the same name as the one for the System.

**T**o study the possibility of a new name, Cowart appointed a committee consisting of Manuel T. Pacheco, Dean; Rafael Lecuona, Coordinator of Arts & Sciences; Rex Ball, Coordinator for Continuing Education; Harold M. Kanter, Coordinator for Education and Psychology; Don W. Baerresen, Coordinator for Business and Director of the Institute for International Trade; Aurora Guzman, secretary; Mike Herrera, President of the A&I at Laredo Alumni Association; and student representatives Rosa Flores, Felipe de la Pena, and Jose Manuel Martinez. "We are happy," Cowart said, "that the board wants us to have the opportunity to have our own name and identity."

The committee found that 69 percent of the University



students favored a new name that would "permit the development of a separate identity, character and reputation of the institution." After considering 107 names, the committee finally narrowed the choice to five. In the end it was Donald Baerresen who suggested the name of Laredo State University, which won out over the University of Laredo. In January, 1977, the A&I board voted to recommend to the legislature that the name of the school be changed to Laredo State University.

With Representatives Billy Hall of Laredo, DeWitt Hale of Corpus Christi, and Irma Rangel of Kingsville in support, a bill changing the name of the school breezed through the House of Representatives by a vote of 139-0. With Senators John Traeger and Carlos Truan approving a compromise version, the bill also sailed through the Senate. At 2:45 p.m., May 27, 1977, Governor Dolph Briscoe signed the bill into law, and on September 1, 1977, Texas A&I University at Laredo officially became Laredo State University. Another part of the bill allowed for the possibility of Pan American University becoming part of the system, a concept that had originated in 1973 when a legislative effort to create a combined system blossomed and then wilted. Although the idea would be discussed on several occasions in the future, even in an informal gathering of the directors of the Pan American and South Texas System at Weslaco in January, 1977, the concept would never bear fruit. ■

## **THE INSTITUTE**

Despite inadequate funding, the Institute for International Trade, headed by Donald W. Baerresen, finally got off to a rocky start in the decade of the 1970s. Largely the brainchild of Cowart, the Institute came into existence as a result of talks between the president and the Laredo business community. One of Cowart's first moves was to lure Baerresen away from the American Graduate School of International Management in Arizona, where he had served as Academic Dean. Ironically Baerresen had been in Cowart's Laredo home in 1975 for an interview when news came that Governor Briscoe had vetoed an appropriation of \$200,000 for the Institute for 1976-1977. "Baerresen decided to come anyway, and the Institute was on its way," Cowart would later recall.

In November, 1975, the Institute was able to attract several hundred businessmen and scholars from throughout the United States to a two-day conference on newly implemented United States Customs regulations and procedures.

With 13 authorities from the U.S. Customs Service in attendance, the conference was designed to acquaint businessmen and women with information necessary for the success of any business involved with importing into the United States products assembled abroad and returned to the United States for additional processing. Other conferences followed that presented information and expertise on problem areas of international trade.

One of the largest conferences came in March, 1979, when over 400 persons from throughout the United States and Mexico attended an Institute-sponsored conference on the growing

Mexico-United States twin plant (or *Maquiladora*) manufacturing concept. An overview of border locations from



Sue, David and Radcliffe Killam

Brownsville, Texas, to

San Diego, California; legal and fiscal aspects; financing; plant operations and labor; industrial parks; foreign trade zones; as well as bonded facilities and custom clearance, were all discussed at the two-day conference. Seven months later, 300 businessmen, including executives from General Electric, Rockwell Industries, RCA Burroughs, Chrysler, Johnson and Johnson, Allen-Bradley, Motorola, Sylvania, Texas Instruments, and Braniff, all attended a conference designed to provide the latest information on new international trade rules and tariffs.

During the early years, the Institute for International Trade was fortunate to receive considerable financial support from Radcliffe Killam, Laredo oilman and philanthropist. Other Laredo individuals and businesses, including Laredo National Bank, International Bank of Commerce, Herring-Price Lumber Company, Corrigan Dispatch Company, Richter's, the Texas-Mexican Railway, Ward-Jackson, and private citizens such as Antonio Sanchez, Sr. and Matias de Llano, contributed to a working fund for the Institute. With such assistance, the Institute quickly became recognized as one of the nation's leading information exchanges in the field.

The Institute, logically located at the gateway to Mexico and in a city with the largest inland port in the coun-

try, was structured to complement the new Master of Business Administration degree in International Trade. The new degree, besides providing the traditional classroom instruction and library research, was designed to provide first-hand knowledge of many of the international operations in Laredo such as warehousing, transportation, freight forwarding and customs clearance. The pragmatic curriculum included special courses in customs brokerage, international distribution, foreign freight forwarding, and international trade simulations. Laredo, with a great variety of importers, exporters, freight forwarders, customs brokers, transportation firms, international banks, and other organizations concerned with international trade, became a living laboratory for students. With classes taught in both English and Spanish, the program was designed to be of special value to native South Texans. Furthermore, the prestige that came with the new M.B.A. in International Trade allowed the university to lure students from as far away as Malaysia, Taiwan, Ethiopia, Iran, Nigeria, Liberia, Canada, Ghana, Venezuela, Sierra Leone, and Mexico.

However, despite the growing reputation of the M.B.A. program in the international business community, the Institute for International Trade did not fare as well at the hands of Texas political leaders and remained little known among the general public outside of Laredo. A new economic ball game, however, was created with the continued devaluation of the



**Dr. Don Baerresen**

Mexican *peso*. With large numbers of shoppers in northern Mexico unable to buy goods in stores on the Texas side of the border, the flow of cash from across the international border suddenly dried up and the Institute suddenly developed greater importance. Within days of the initial devaluation, Baerresen, who had seen the crisis coming for some time, was receiving calls from the governor's office in

Austin requesting statistics on the impact of devaluation on the Texas border. Requests also came from various state agencies and private businesses for any data reflecting economic conditions on the border. Fortunately, the Institute had started collecting and publishing a weekly set of business indicators entitled "Mexico and Laredo's Retail Sales," which became the most accepted barometer of the impact of the *peso* devaluation on business on the Texas side of the border.

By 1979, with the new governor Bill Clements slashing millions from the state budget, the Institute for International Trade, nevertheless, received its requested funding of \$799,170 for each of the fiscal years 1980 and 1981. ■



## THE READING CLINIC

Another branch of the University which received considerable attention from a local, state, and national audience was the University's reading clinic headed by Don Critchlow. The clinic was a giant step forward in training students to diagnose and correct reading problems of area school children. With over 80 percent of the students in the clinic functionally bilingual in both Spanish and English, students could become professionally qualified for careers which required bilingual skills.

Critchlow had developed a reading clinic in San Antonio before coming to Laredo. He had also written the *Dos Amigos Verbal Language Scales*—an English-Spanish aptitude test, which was the first of its kind in the United States. Upset that most standardized tests did not take language barriers into consideration, the test was developed to see if children had knowledge of certain concepts, although perhaps not in English. Critchlow was also responsible for the establishment of the Paisano Council, a local chapter of the International Reading Association. Assisting Critchlow with the clinic was Eduardo Hinojosa, who would have a significant influence on the direction of the reading clinic and who would someday become the clinic's director.

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**“When Critchlow left the University in 1979 ... the mayor of Laredo, Aldo Tatangelo, proclaimed a special day in his honor.”**

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Juan Lira, then teaching at Nye Elementary School in Laredo, helped Critchlow with the Paisano Council. Lira helped bring teachers and administrators from the Laredo and United Independent School Districts to the clinic. He would go on to become head of the Division of Education and Psychology at the University. When Critchlow left the University in 1979 to study theology, the mayor of Laredo, Aldo Tatangelo, proclaimed a special day in his honor to “recognize the educator's contributions to the community and...his learning expertise in preparing local and area teachers to enter the teaching profession.”

By the mid-1970s, the University had become recog-

nized for pioneering new approaches to the teaching of bilingual education. Manuel Pacheco, who would become Dean at LSU, first came to Laredo as a program development specialist to develop a bilingual program through the Teacher Corps. Others, such as Lem Railsback, Ramon Alaniz, Quintin Vargas, and Candy Hein, were instrumental in the work of the Teacher Corps. Further, besides being pioneers in the field of bilingual education, several of the school's faculty also gained a reputation for their work in the analysis of teaching. Here Drew Tinsley emerged as one of the real trailblazers, and Tinsley's colleague Hal Kanter also became recognized for his work in the instruction of teachers working with the gifted and talented.

Despite inadequate funding, the University continued to grow. With students now able to obtain master's degrees in education, business administration, and international trade for the first time, the number of students at LSU reached 637 by September, 1972; 756 by September, 1974; and 852 by January, 1975.

One result of the addition of graduate degrees to the University was the continued expansion of the holdings of the Harold R. Yearly Library. By pooling library resources with Laredo Junior College, there was no duplication of book holdings as there would have been had each institution insisted on an independent facility. By 1978, the University had accumulated one million dollars' worth of books and periodicals.

Designated an official regional depository of materials by the United States Superintendent of Documents, the library also boasted 47,335 government documents. In the decade that followed the library would continue to expand, and by 1990, the Yearly Library had 164,664 books, 309,432 microforms, 5,477 audiovisuals, and was receiving 1,134 periodicals.

## UNIVERSITY HALL

At the February, 1976, meeting of the University System of South Texas Board at Kingsville, directors turned their attention to matters that would greatly influence the Laredo campus. The board approved a motion by Corpus Christi regent Ralph Durden to appropriate \$2,000 in undesignated funds for a building site feasibility study on the Laredo State University campus. The action was spurred by Cowart's announcement that the Laredo school had again reached a record enrollment and was quickly running out of space that

could be rented from the junior college. "We need at least an additional 18,000 square feet of classroom space right now, and we will need more as our growth continues," Cowart told the Board. Cowart suggested an appeal to the Legislature for a special appropriation for construction of a building on the Laredo campus. He was hoping to negotiate for a site on the 190-acre Laredo Junior College campus. Dr. Domingo Arechiga, President of Laredo Junior College, agreed to take Cowart's request before his board. In so doing, Arechiga described the cooperative relationship between the two schools as having worked very well and pledged his office to continuing such efforts. In a lengthy meeting that lasted past midnight on April 14, 1976, the junior college board unanimously agreed to give LSU several acres of land providing Cowart could get the two million dollars from the state for the construction of the proposed new building. Samuel A. Meyer, junior college board president, predicted any improvements to the campus which LSU would make would greatly benefit the junior college and enable LJC to attract more students.

**R**ealizing the difficulties in obtaining funding, Cowart was under no illusions about the ultimate success of such a project. Nevertheless, the president stressed the importance of making an energetic effort to get construction funds from the next Legislature, since it would take approximately three years from the time funding was approved to the time when the proposed 70,000 square-foot classroom and office complex would be ready for occupancy.

Fourteen years after the project was conceived, Cowart could still recall the difficulty in obtaining final approval. With members of the LSU and junior college boards, Cowart had traveled to Austin on several occasions over a three-year period to lobby for the funds. Senator Traeger and Representative Hall were strongly behind the project, but a major obstacle appeared in the form of the Commissioner of Higher Education, Kenneth Ashworth. After conducting a state-wide survey, Ashworth announced that he would not support any construction project at LSU. Ashworth even went as far as to recommend to the Legislature that no funds be provided for construction of any buildings at any upper-level institution anywhere. Ashworth was supported by Senator Oscar Mauzy of Dallas who introduced a bill in the Legislature that would cut off state money for new construction on campuses of upper-level college centers in the state. In response, Chancellor D. Whitney Halladay appeared before the Coordinating Board to emphasize the uniqueness of LSU, presenting a strong case that LSU should be excluded from the Mauzy Bill because it was not an upper-level "center" by the strictest legislative description.



In a stormy meeting at the commissioner's office in Austin, Ashworth told Cowart in no uncertain terms that he would vehemently oppose any appropriation of funds in the Legislature for such a project. In every hearing on the subject, the commissioner was there to oppose and Cowart was there to plead for funds. With both Traeger and Hall giving the matter a high priority, Cowart and LSU won the day in committee hearings in both the Senate and the House and eventually on the floor of both chambers. LSU would have its first building.

With Ricardo Gutierrez, chairman of the building committee of the USST, Senator Traeger of the 21st Senatorial District, Representative Hall of the 57th Legislative District, and President Billy Cowart wielding shovels, ground was broken for the first building at Laredo State University at 10 a.m.



**Billy Hall, John Traeger, Dr. Cowart, Ricardo Gutierrez**

Wednesday, May 20, 1976. Honored guests on the occasion included Samuel Meyer and Domingo Arechiga from Laredo Junior College.

"Believe me this is just the beginning," Chairman Gutierrez told the large gathering of Laredo State University students, faculty, and supporters. "This is a great day for Laredo. I feel intense pride in what is happening here today," Senator Traeger, the 15-year veteran legislator, added. Representative Hall noted: "This gathering... is proof that as Laredoans we dared to dream and to overcome great obstacles. We will continue to dream, to plan and to act to enable Laredo State University to offer greater opportunities to the youth of South Texas. Getting our first building and one that is designed to meet our special needs will mean the realization of one of our fondest dreams. Ownership of our own facilities should assure the permanency of Laredo State University." Cowart continued, "We are here to celebrate the

evolution of Laredo State University from a University Center, without degree-granting authority, to the status of a full state University." Cowart also described the support of Laredo Junior College as crucial in the success of Laredo State University.

The building, christened University Hall, would be completed in 14 months and ready for occupancy by fall 1979. Workman Construction Company, with a low bid of \$1,398,357, constructed the brick structure. With Alfonso Leyendecker and Guillermo Cavazos as architects, the new building was designed consistent with the regional architecture of the existing Laredo Junior College campus. The south side of the new facility was sheathed in a bronze solar glass which was protected from the sun by a two story arcade. Dramatic brick arches formed the backdrop for a lushly brick paved courtyard which featured oak studded brick planters, and redwood slat benches arranged in a series of seating clusters.

With enrollment continuing to grow at both the junior college and the University, the City of Laredo undertook to alleviate the congestion of traffic on

Victoria Street during the peak period from 7:30-8:15 a.m. In 1974 the city agreed to the construction of a three-lane overpass over the railroad tracks that would approach the campus on Washington Street. With two westbound lanes and one eastbound lane, the overpass was a major improvement in gaining access to the campus.

In the summer of 1977, Manuel T. Pacheco, who had served as Dean and Spanish professor since 1972, departed the University to become head of a multi-cultural graduate program at San Diego State University. Replacing Pacheco as academic dean was Leo Sayavedra, a native South Texan who had left United High School in Laredo to teach education at the University in 1972.

Not all was running smoothly for the new University, however. At the same time the University was struggling for

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**"This gathering... is proof that as Laredoans we dared to dream and to overcome great obstacles. We will continue to dream..."**

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*Billy Hall*

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its existence, considerable skirmishing broke out between South Texas senators and outgoing Governor Dolph Briscoe over the appointment of members to the USST Board. In the forefront of the sniping was Senator Carlos Truan of Corpus Christi. Although the USST was 51 percent Hispanic in student composition, and the Laredo campus was 83 percent Hispanic, only two of the nine board members were Hispanic. In 1977, Truan challenged one of Briscoe's appointments, Larry McNeil, on the Senate floor and had McNeil replaced with Rudy Garza. In 1978, with Briscoe's appointment of Mrs. Paul Hass of Corpus Christi and George Fred Rhodes of Port Lavaca, Truan called the appointments "a calculated snub of Mexican Americans." Truan had also invoked senatorial courtesy, a practice allowing any Senator to prevent Senate confirmation of anyone from his district, to block the nomination of Michael J. Mahaffey of Corpus Christi.

Another strong outcry came from LULAC State Director Ruben Bonilla, Jr., who objected to the appointment of Bill Baker, publisher of The Laredo Times. "Appointments should be made on the basis of merit and not on the basis of political loyalty," Bonilla said, "and obviously The Laredo Times was one of the first newspapers to endorse the governor." Two of Senator Traeger's recommendations, Norma Benavides and Mercurio Martinez, both of Laredo, had been overlooked by Briscoe. With Bill Clements, the first Republican governor since Reconstruction, ascending to the governor's mansion, one appointment was made that was critical to Laredo. Laredoans were pleased in October, 1979, when Clements appointed Sue S. Killam, wife of local oilman Radcliffe Killam. From the beginning, the Killams had been among the biggest supporters of the University.

Another problem surfaced, however, in early 1977, when the Coordinating Board again began discussions about revoking Texas A&I degree-granting privileges and returning the responsibility to the Kingsville campus. To impress upon the state legislature the importance of an upper-level institution in Laredo, a large delegation of Laredoans journeyed to the capitol city in January, 1979. Besides President Cowart, the delegation included Mayor Aldo Tatangelo, Webb County Judge Carlos Y. Benavides, Chamber of Commerce President Dennis Nixon, Greater Laredo Development Foundation Board Chairman Alan Jackson, President Domingo Arechiga of Laredo Junior College, Laredo Independent School District Superintendent Vidal Tevino, United School Superintendent Don Hughes, and Laredo Times publisher and member of the board of trustees, Bill Baker. ■



## A NEW DECADE

By 1980, ten years after opening its doors, thousands of students, especially from Laredo, had graduated from Laredo State University. With a strong program in education, an award-winning reading clinic, and an internationally-known M.B.A. program in International Trade, the University, despite numerous challenges, looked to a bright future. The school now offered bachelor's degrees in criminal justice, business administration, international trade, elementary and secondary education, and bilingual education. Master's degree programs included general business, international trade, and several fields of education.

With the coming of a new decade, a number of promotions and additions to the University staff were announced. Jose Garcia a retired Army major, was promoted to business manager in May 1980. Garcia, a recipient of the Combat Infantryman's Badge, Bronze Star, and the Army Meritorious Service Medal, had once headed the University's ROTC program, and then had returned to the University in 1979 to become supervisor of the Physical Plant. James W. Puig, who had been employed by the University for four years as Assistant Business Manager and Business Manager, was named Auditor and Funds Manager. Quintin Vargas, who had taught and held administrative positions at The University of Texas at Austin and the University of Michigan, and who had been Program Development Specialist for the Teacher Corps, was named as acting Coordinator of the Division of Education and Psychology.

The increasing maturity of the University also became evident with the appointment of Candy Hein as the new Public Information Officer. Hein had served as an administrative assistant at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston for four years, had been coordinator of women's housing at the University of Houston, and had taught in the Laredo public schools for four years.

By 1980, more and more faculty were contributing significantly to the development of the city and the region. History professor Rex Ball was elected Chairman of the Webb County Republican party. Another history professor, Stanley Green, was contemplating a race for Congress. Other faculty members were assuming leading roles in various civic groups and in organizations such as the Laredo Little Theatre. By 1979, Cowart had become President of the United Fund and had drafted Ball himself as fund campaign chairman. To-

gether, with hundreds of volunteers, more than \$203,000 was raised.

In 1980 Cowart was instrumental in starting the BorderFest celebration. The idea of starting a Fourth of July celebration in Laredo had first been discussed by Cowart and Dean Sayavedra as they returned from a meeting with the Coordinating Board. The celebration which would become an annual event, attracted tourism to the border by emphasizing the heritage of the area as reflected in traditional crafts, foods, dance, music and other cultural events. BorderFest would therefore become the official Independence Day Celebration in Laredo. It was perhaps appropriate therefore that President Billy Cowart be chosen as the "Man of the Year" by The Laredo Times in 1980. In the ten years that Cowart had been in Laredo, he had taken a temporary educational center and turned it into a respected University.

On the university's tenth anniversary in 1980, a distinguished member of the faculty was chosen as commencement speaker. F. Allen Briggs, Professor of English, was retiring after 40 years in the teaching profession. A Fulbright scholar, Briggs was praised by Cowart for his "high standards of academic excellence, innovative teaching styles, and his contributions to the development of this institution." Two years later, Briggs would die of an apparent heart attack in Belton, Texas. Sixty-six at the time of his death, he was Laredo State University's first and only professor emeritus. ■

## ON TO EXCELLENCE

Another sign that the University was coming of age was an ambitious fund-raising campaign. With \$400,000 as a goal, the campaign, labeled "On to Excellence," was headed by a four-member board of directors that included Regent Sue Killam, President Cowart, and civic leaders Norma Benavides and Oscar Carrillo. One objective of the campaign was to assist the school in faculty recruitment and retention. Cowart had complained that LSU was attracting only "one-fourth as many applicants for a position as a larger urban-centered University," a condition which he thought was due primarily to "geographic and intellectual isolation, less opportunities for consultant work, and lack of general cultural activities."

The campaign was designed to assist young faculty members in obtaining a Ph.D. degree, augment the Laredo State University library collection, assist in the expansion of the Institute for International Trade, offer fellowships and scholarships for students from lower and middle income

families, and expand the recruitment of students from outside Laredo. A major contributor was Etta Thaison Russell who donated a considerable sum in memory of her late husband, Ed S. Russell, who had organized the Union National Bank in 1928. Other donors included Radcliffe and Sue Killam, Ray Keck, Jr., and James Richter, Jr. By July 1981, friends of the University had given \$171,500. Two years later, the campaign had reached \$300,000.

A major award to the University came when the D.D. Hachar Charitable Trust Fund granted the reading clinic \$50,000. Shortly thereafter, Radcliffe and Sue Killam, two of the best friends of the University ever had, announced they were giving \$100,000 to the University for the construction of student

dormitories. For years the University had sought a permanent solution to the problem of housing for the many foreign students attracted to the International Trade program. The dormitories, although built on land owned by the junior college, were to be run by the University. Completed by the fall of 1985, the dormitory complex housed 120 students and eventually cost \$1,200,000.

As part of the "On to Excellence" campaign, a distinguished lecture series was inaugurated. The first dignitary invited to Laredo was former Prime Minister of Great Britain, Sir Harold Wilson. The Prime Minister was followed by Robert Kruger, one-time Ambassador-at-Large to Mexico. In November of 1982, the right-wing activist William Rusher arrived to deliver a lecture on "The Collapse of Liberalism."

Other financial help came when C.Y. Benavides, Sr. and his son C.Y. Benavides, Jr., established a scholarship fund at the University in honor of Anita G. Benavides, husband and mother of the donors.

Chancellor Whitney Halladay, who helped start the "On to Excellence" campaign, died suddenly in his sleep on July 11, 1980, while attending a family reunion. "Halladay stood by Laredo State University when the coordinating board challenged the organizational structure of the University," Cowart would later remember. Within days, Duane M. Leach,



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**"I have a very good feeling about being able to serve the people of Laredo and South Texas."**

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*Blas M. Martinez*

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President of Texas A&I, was selected as acting chancellor.

Other changes came with the election of a new governor, Mark White. In October, 1983, with the term of Bill Baker expiring, White appointed Laredoan Blas M. Martinez to the Board. With a degree from Texas A&I University and family roots dating back to the colonial era of South Texas, Martinez took a keen interest in LSU. "I look forward to working with the other members of the board and I have a very good feeling about being able to serve the people of Laredo and South Texas," Martinez told the local press. Chairman of the Laredo Planning and Zoning Commission, president of the Laredo Heart Association, and vice-president of the local Rotary Club, Martinez had also served as director of Laredo's Model Cities program from 1969 to 1974, and as director of its successor, the Community Development Agency, from 1975 to 1978. In the next six years Martinez would serve with distinction on the Board of Regents.

**D**espite an enrollment drop of 13 percent in the spring semester of 1980, which Dean Sayavedra attributed to the loss of the federally funded Title VII program in bilingual education, the University continued to grow. By the fall semester, 1981, the number of students had surpassed the previous record. Since 1970 the number of students and degrees offered had tripled. The school had awarded 2,225 diplomas, including 583 master's degrees.

Enrollment continued to increase despite new and more rigid academic requirements. Concerned about the English proficiency of its graduates, the faculty adopted new regulations in 1982 requiring that a student could not graduate until a test demonstrating the ability to meet national standards in the use of oral and written English had been passed.

**I**n January, 1984, University faculty and staff casually sauntered into the annual spring faculty and staff convocation to hear a surprising announcement. After 15 years at the helm of a struggling but growing University, Billy Cowart, the founding president and the only chief administrator the University had ever known, had decided to resign effective August 31. Cowart carefully read from a copy of a letter he had sent to Lawrence Pettit, the new chancellor of the USST. In specific, Cowart cited the "importance of infusion of new ideas, new perspectives into the institution, and, at the appropriate time, to allow for a timely and effective transition in leadership." That afternoon he told the press he had been thinking about resigning for over a year.

From Rio Grande City, Ricardo Gutierrez, President of the Board of Directors, expressed shock but praised Cowart's "unselfish devotion" to LSU. In Laredo, newly appointed

board member Blas Martinez hailed Cowart's accomplishments as something Laredo would long be proud of. With Cowart's departure, one era of the school's history was ending and another was beginning. ■

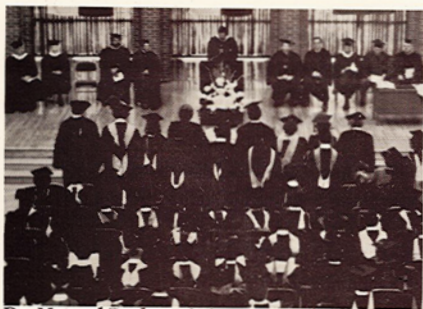
## **THE PACHECO YEARS**

Upon receiving Cowart's letter of resignation, Chancellor Pettit promised to search for the "most qualified man, or woman, to head the institution." By late February, a screening committee to select the new president had been named by President Gutierrez. Members included Regents Sue Killam and Blas Martinez, Dean Leo Sayavedra, faculty members Sandra Richard and Quintin Vargas, and Chancellor Pettit. Gutierrez announced that he would chair the committee and promised to "conduct an extensive and open search." "We will advertise nationally in the higher education media, and we will solicit nominations from organizations that represent women and minorities," Gutierrez said. "We want the best qualified president we can find."

When Cowart announced that he would be departing earlier than planned to assume the position of provost at Western Oregon State College at Monmouth, Pettit named Dean Sayavedra as the interim president until a new president could be selected.

From the time the search committee began its work, it was evident that one of the most experienced and best qualified candidates of the 60 who applied was Manuel Pacheco. In July, Manuel Trinidad Pacheco, born in Colorado but raised in a small village on the wind-swept plains of northeastern New Mexico, was announced as the second president of Laredo State University. A Fulbright Fellow with a doctorate in Foreign Language Education from Ohio State University, Pacheco had also attended the University de Montpellier in France and New Mexico Highlands University. Besides serving as Dean under Cowart from 1972 to 1977, Pacheco had taught at Middlebury College in Vermont, the University of Indiana, Elmira College in New York, Florida State University, the University of Colorado, Texas A&I, and New Mexico Western University. A nationally recognized scholar in the field of linguistics and an authority on bilingual education, Pacheco had also served as coordinator of the multicultural education department at San Diego State University. At the time Pacheco accepted the presidency, he was on a leave of absence as Associate Dean of the college of education at the University of Texas at El Paso while serving as an Education Policy Aide to the Governor of New Mexico, Tony Anaya.

As Cowart quietly slipped away to Western Oregon College, Pacheco was inaugurated as the second president of Laredo State University amid considerable pomp and pageantry on Saturday, April 27, 1985. A planning committee consisting of Sue Killam, Blas Martinez, Leo Sayavedra, Rex Ball, and Candy Hein invited representatives from throughout Texas and the nation to an elaborate ceremony in the Kazen College Center. Special guests included United State Ambassador to Mexico, John Gavin; Lieutenant Governor William P. Hobby, who would issue the official greeting from the State of Texas; Lawrence K. Pettit, Chancellor of the University System of South Texas; President Domingo Arechiga of Laredo Junior



**Dr. Manuel Pacheco is inaugurated**

College;  
President of  
the Laredo  
Chamber of  
Commerce  
David  
Leyendecker;  
Harold  
Kanter  
representing  
the faculty  
of the  
University;  
and Regent

Blas Martinez, who would act as master of ceremonies. State officials attending the ceremony included Senator Carlos F. Truan of Corpus Christi, Representatives William N. Hall of Laredo, Irma Rangel of Kingsville, and Hugo Berlanga of Corpus Christi. Lauro Cavazos, a native South Texan who was President of Texas Tech University, came south from Lubbock. (In 1989, Cavazos would become Secretary of Education in the George Bush Administration.) Other special guests included representatives from Incarnate Word College, East Texas State University, North Texas State University, New Mexico Highlands, Southwest Texas State University, Eastern New Mexico University, Texas Southern University, University of Texas-Permian Basin, Corpus Christi State University, Universidad Autonoma de Tamaulipas, and Pacheco's alma mater, Ohio State University.

In opening remarks before a large crowd, Lieutenant Governor Hobby called Pacheco "a man of vision." Hobby went on to say that under Pacheco's leadership "LSU can be, should be, and will be an intellectual magnet" for South Texas. In prepared remarks, Pacheco vowed to "work together with many constituencies to make [LSU] a regional center of excellence in higher education." To "strive to make LSU a resource



of increasing value and pride for everyone in Texas and Laredo," would be a major objective, the new president said. In his first postinaugural act, Pacheco conferred an honorary doctor of laws degree on Ambassador Gavin.

The school's first transition from one president to another was dramatic. During the 15 years that Cowart had served as president of the University, he had run what faculty would later call a "tight ship."

When Pacheco became president he set out to emphasize "openness, creativity, and especially decentralization." "I want to see decisions made from the bottom up rather than the top down," Pacheco told the Regents. Believing that "better decisions are made when more people are involved in the decision-making process," and with permission from the Coordinating Board, Pacheco set out to completely reorganize the University's administrative structure to allow for greater comment from the faculty.

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**"Sayavedra, Ball, and Garcia have served this institution well...and will be very instrumental in the future growth of the institution."**

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*Dr. Manuel Pacheco*

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Hoping to limit the number of individuals directly under him, Pacheco proposed that only the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Vice President for Administration and University Relations, and the Business Manager and Chief Fiscal Officer, report to the president. Under Cowart, eight administrators had answered to the president, while Pacheco's reorganization called for the Public Relations Office, Personnel, Financial Aid, and Recruiting Office to be under the Vice President for Administration and University Relations. The Business Office, Purchasing, Physical Plant, and Secretarial Services would be under the Business Manager and Chief Fiscal Officer. Admissions, Student Service, Language Proficiency Lab, and the faculty would be under the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Two years later the Financial Aid Office and the Personnel Office were placed under the Chief Fiscal Officer.

In June, 1985, Pacheco named Leo Sayavedra, who had served as Dean and interim-president, as Vice President for Academic Affairs. Rex Ball, former Administrative Assistant to the President, became Vice President for Administration. Joe Garcia was named as Chief Fiscal Officer. Showing his support for his closest aides, Pacheco told the local press,

"Sayavedra, Ball, and Garcia have served this institution well in a variety of positions and will be very instrumental in the future growth of the institution."

**P**acheco also reorganized the roles and functions of the division chairs to give them more responsibility and authority. Shortly thereafter, Pacheco named charter faculty member Stanley Green, Associate Professor of History and Juarez-Lincoln scholar, the Chairman of the Division of Arts and Sciences. Juan Lira, a Ph.D. from The University of Texas at Austin and a leading educational consultant, was appointed Chairman of the Division of Education and Psychology, while Rosa Maria Vida, Associate Professor with a Ph.D. from The University of Texas at Austin, was selected to be Director of Student Teaching. "These appointments will allow the University to continue with its commitment to provide balanced and aggressive leadership during a critical time," Pacheco emphasized.

Further democratization was reflected in the faculty's request in April of 1986 that a Faculty Senate be formed to replace the Faculty Assembly that had been headed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Faculty Senate, a concept with which the new president agreed, was designed to give the teaching staff a greater and more independent voice in school procedures and policies.

The Pacheco years also saw the reactivation of the Alumni Association. Although initially involved in promoting the school and in raising scholarship funds, the organization had become relatively inactive, but within a year the alumni had on its rolls more than 70 new members. The first president was Miguel "Mike" Herrera, III, who served from 1974 to 1986. He was followed by Enrique "Henry" Cuellar, Minnie Dora Bunn Haynes, and Christine "Tina" Trevino.

**S**peaking before several civic groups, Pacheco promised to lead "the institution to bigger and better things." This goal would include an expansion of programs at LSU to better serve the community. Realizing that institutions of higher learning in South Texas had been too often ignored by the state legislature, the new president pledged to seek additional funding, including federal grants, as well as funds from national and state philanthropic foundations. But despite his good intentions, many of Pacheco's hopes for outside funding would go unrealized. ■

## THE CRISIS YEARS

For the first time in its short history, enrollment at the University broke the 1,000 mark in the spring semester, 1985. Only weeks later, however, Pacheco found himself in a crisis. Governor Mark White, reacting to a rapidly slumping oil and gas industry, on which the bulk of the state's revenues were based, proposed cutting \$460 million in funding from state colleges and universities. The Legislative Budget Board recommended an even larger cut of \$560 million, or a reduction of 30 percent. The Budget Board's recommendations, if adopted, would reduce LSU's 1986 proposed budget from \$4,150,107 to \$2,551,689. To Pacheco there was little doubt that such cuts would lead to a drastic decline in the quality of higher education in Texas. "I find that cutting that much from higher education would have long-term consequences and would be irreparable," Pacheco told The Laredo Morning Times. "With the kind of budget cut recommendations being made, the new budget would not even support the current salaries of the current faculty and staff," the President went on to say. "We would have to reorganize and offer much reduced services and programs," he added. Such reductions would undoubtedly devastate academic programs and support services.

As he had done many times before, Representative Hall attempted to come to the defense of the University. "I am very concerned about our smaller colleges and universities," Hall said. "Now is not the time to cut our higher education funding particularly in the face of the devaluation. Before, in good times, a lot of kids could go off to college, but with many parents still feeling the effects of the devaluation, more and more kids are staying at Laredo Junior College and Laredo State University. We can't afford to cut programs now." Thinking that LSU might be next in line, Hall also became alarmed at rumors that the state was interested in closing Sul Ross University and the University of Texas-Permian Basin.

In a panic, President Pacheco hurried up Interstate 35 to Austin in early February, 1985 to defend the school's budget before the House Appropriations Committee. The besieged President eloquently presented the argument that such deep reductions "flew in the face of public policy." The majority of students attending LSU, Pacheco pointed out, were unable to transfer to other institutions of higher learning. Pacheco said that he had already cut \$92,000 from the present budget and had placed a moratorium on hiring. No new positions had been created, and replacements were only being made if the department cannot function otherwise, he said.



Back in Laredo, in a somber and sullen meeting with his staff, Pacheco warned that there was also a movement in the House of Representatives to eliminate the Institute for International Trade. State Representative Tom Uher of Bay City, Chairman of the Education Subcommittee, had stated publicly that he opposed funding the Institute. Uher could not understand the value of the research conducted by the Institute. "It just can't be justified, there are more important things to spend our money now," Usher said. In defense of the Institute was Irma Rangel from Kingsville. At Hall's urging,

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**"Some success, some failures, and a great deal of work."**

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*Dr. Manuel Pacheco*

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Rangel, a member of the Subcommittee to the House Appropriations Committee, was able to get the funds reinstated for the Institute.

Another assault came from State Comptroller Bob Bullock, who alleged that 48 Texas colleges and

universities, including LSU, were hoarding "billions in local banks," while Austin budget writers strained to make ends meet. James W. Puig, Auditor and Funds Manager at LSU, pointed out that of the \$800,000 LSU received from federal grants and agencies all had restrictions attached. "The University is not free to spend these [funds] in any way that they want," Business Manager Jose Garcia also pointed out.

In March, 1985, Pacheco was back in Austin to testify again before the House Appropriations Committee. Pleading for full funding, Pacheco pointed out that South Texas had traditionally not been included in funding for higher education. "Any decrease would be a step backwards. We need more programs, not fewer," he continued.

In the end, the LSU budget for 1986-1987 was cut but not to the extent Pacheco had originally feared. Although the Legislative Budget Board recommended a reduction of some 26 percent, the final budget reflected only a 5.7 percent reduction or \$189,000 less than the 1985 budget.

In his first year as President of LSU, Pacheco would have, in his words, "some success, some failures, and a great deal of work." And there was little doubt in Pacheco's mind that 1987 would be even more trying than 1986.

One consequence of a reduction in the budget was an inevitable increase in tuition. As early as January, 1985, Pacheco warned that tuition in Texas (the lowest in the nation, paying for only two percent of the cost of instruction) had not been raised since 1957 and would have to be significantly

increased. Some state officials were even recommending that tuition be doubled or tripled. With a majority of LSU's undergraduates receiving financial aid, officials hoped that any tuition increase would be accompanied by added appropriations for financial assistance.

The higher tuition that Pacheco predicted became reality the following year, and particularly detrimental to the Institute for International Trade was the tripling of tuition for non-resident students. Students who were paying \$480 for 12 credit hours suddenly found themselves paying \$1440 for the same course load. By January, 1986, enrollment had plunged 30 percent. The number of Mexican students, many of whom were from Monterrey and Nuevo Laredo and who were taking advanced classes in managerial and marketing theory, dropped by 50 percent.

Immersed in budgetary problems, Pacheco faced one crisis after another. At a February, 1986, meeting of the Directors, it was announced that Governor Mark White, by executive order due to a continued drop in oil revenues, was asking all state universities to use "their expertise, their imagination and their intelligence" to further cut their budgets by 13 percent beginning March 1. Specifically, the governor wanted an immediate hiring freeze, no promotions or merit pay increases, no new outside contracts, no purchases of non-essential supplies, and a deferring of all construction and renovation projects.

Pacheco dejectedly returned to Laredo to spend the next few days mulling over the budget for areas to make additional cuts. Reducing the budget by \$650,000, after having already gone through two budget cuts in the last 18 months amounting to 20 percent, was difficult. Vice President for Academic Affairs Sayavedra predicted that a reduction of such magnitude would be devastating since the school was already losing \$190,000 in revenues from foreign student tuition and \$213,000 from in-state tuition. In a somber meeting with faculty and staff, Pacheco promised to do his best not to cut personnel or eliminate essential services. He was finally able to announce that he had been able to cut the budget by three percent. Furthermore, no employees had been dismissed. Although a number of the state's major universities had announced a shutdown of summer sessions, classes, although reduced in number, would continue at LSU.

To better manage the growing economic crisis on the border, Governor White appointed a 23 member Task Force on Border Economic Development headed by Laredo businessman and industrialist Ruben Garcia. At one of the first hearings in Laredo the task force received an earful of com-

plaints of inadequate and underfinanced education. Donald Baerresen, business professor at LSU; Roger Worsley, President of Laredo Junior College; Rex Ball, LSU administrator and history professor; Sandra Richards, LSU business professor; and Leo Sayavedra, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, at LSU all came forth to testify. In particular, Sayavedra's testimony sent shock waves all the way to Austin. According to the Vice President, the per capita higher education appropriation for Texas was \$155.95. For South Texas, the rate was only \$69.58. By comparison, Central Texas, one of the wealthiest regions in the state, received \$290.52 per capita. Of Hispanics over the age of 25, only seven percent possessed a four-year degree, less than one-half that of the general population.

By the summer of 1986 another crisis, hotter than the South Texas summers, swept south from Austin. News leaked out of the Governor's Select Committee on Higher Education, chaired by Austin attorney Larry Temple, that the committee was once again considering closing several universities including Sul Ross, the University of Texas-Permian Basin, East Texas State University, and Texas A&M University at Galveston. Furthermore, the committee was considering merging several schools. More striking for Laredo, however, was the serious discussion of reducing Laredo State University to a branch studies center, the way the school had been in the beginning, consequently offering fewer courses and programs of study.

Within days Laredoans had risen up in righteous indignation to the news from Austin. "The message must go out to the Select Committee that Laredo won't roll over and play dead," Blas Martinez told the local press. Martinez went as far as to warn that the University might be closed altogether. "Laredo today cannot meet its educational needs, and without LSU, the problem will be compounded," Vice President Sayavedra was heard to say. "We have the lowest per capita income and the highest rate of unemployment. Downgrading LSU will drag us down and relegate South Texans to second class citizens." Sayavedra was also concerned that Laredo's ability to lure industry to the border, with LSU subjugated to second class status, would be greatly diminished. Laredo Independent School District Superintendent Vidal Trevino was particularly incensed. "Downgrading LSU would impact LISD, UISD as well as area schools," Trevino said. "It would seriously hamper future economic growth and development." The Superintendent warned an angry meeting of 200 public officials, educators, business leaders, and interested citizens, that "a crime is about to be perpetrated on this community."

In late June, several hundred citizens met to marshal forces to challenge the Select Committee. When Judith



Zaffirini, candidate for State Senator, suggested that a "select committee" be formed to defend LSU, former United States Congressman Abraham "Chick" Kazen stepped forward to volunteer. Saying he would "come out of retirement" for the cause, Kazen declared: "We've sweated blood over education in South Texas and we don't want to see anything taken away." Joaquin Cigarroa called for an intense campaign to alert state decision-makers to the local importance of LSU. "If there was ever a time for the community to come together it is now," Cigarroa said. Mayor Aldo Tantangelo called the situation the city's "greatest crisis ever." At the conclusion of the meeting, Superintendent Trevino urged everyone present to do everything possible to save the University.

Within 24 hours petitions were already being distributed throughout Laredo to save LSU. Kazen urged all local businesses and organizations to obtain as many signatures as possible. Within three days petitions were at most shopping centers, banks, churches, and temples. LSU graduates, undergraduates, and even high school students, were out walking the city's many neighborhoods to obtain signatures.

Scenting the political winds in Laredo, Governor Mark White, in a hotly contested race against Bill Clements for reelection, pledged his support for LSU. In a keynote address before the Association of South Texas County Judges and Commissioners at Laredo, White said he was "not going to turn back now on the quality of education. We'll fight to keep LSU here," he said.

Five days after White's encouraging remarks, Kazen's "Select Committee" met at the University to lay plans to testify before Temple's Select Committee. Kazen announced that the number of signatures had reached 11,000. "People have been tremendous," Kazen told the packed crowd, "never in all my life, I've never seen a project that merited such support."

Fighting the hardest to save LSU was President Pacheco. In a hand-delivered six-page letter to Temple's Committee, Pacheco outlined a number of reasons why LSU should continue its present status. The President pointed out that LSU was more than 90 percent Hispanic, and that many of the students were first-generation immigrants. The prospect of

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**"Downgrading LSU will drag us down and relegate South Texans to second class citizens."**

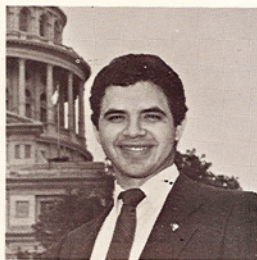
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*Dr. Leo Sayavedra*

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these students attending higher education facilities outside Laredo was far less than for children born to wealthier and better educated families. In fact, the entire area of South Texas had been neglected for 150 years, he said. The region was one of chronic unemployment, extreme poverty, and low educational achievement, and could hardly be expected to overcome its problems if the state insisted on working counter to that end. Just as Sayavedra had earlier noted, downgrading or closing the University would hurt community effort to attract industry to the border. Furthermore, when Texas developed its desegregation plan, "it committed \$60 million to Black institutions of higher learning. To the Mexican-Americans, it committed nothing," Pacheco said.

State Representative-elect Henry Cuellar also stepped forward to defend the University. Cuellar, himself an LSU MBA graduate, vowed to fight for LSU, had said during his campaign that "economic development needs the assistance of a good strong program of higher education."



Henry Cuellar

On a hot July morning, Chairman Kazen and members of his committee flew to Austin in four airplanes provided by local banks to meet with Temple's Select Committee. With a huge bundle of papers containing more than 20,000 signatures, Kazen told Temple that in all of his years in public life, he had never seen an issue that had so unified the people of South Texas. When Temple replied that his committee had not made any firm decisions and were only gathering facts, Joaquin Cigarroa cautioned that "sometimes statistics may reinforce negatives in an area with an enormous need."

Other individuals from outside Laredo also came to the defense of the University. One was House Speaker Pro Tempore Hugo Berlanga. "It makes no sense that at a time when we're trying to improve public education, that we scale down higher education," Berlanga told a group of Laredoans. In lambasting Temple's Select Committee, Berlanga suggested increasing the sales tax, slashing tax loopholes and exemptions, and even creating a state lottery and legalizing pari-mutuel betting, if necessary, to increase revenue for higher education.

Local and national LULAC leaders also became active in their support of LSU. In a three-day national convention in Las Vegas, Nevada, several LULAC heads sent letters and telegrams to make their opposition to downgrading or closing

the University known to Governor Mark White.

Political activist Ruben Bonilla, head of the Mexican-American Democrats, told the Select Committee that they should not be discussing downgrading Laredo State University, but should instead be considering making the school a first rate institution. "South Texas can no longer tolerate being the stepchild of the state policy makers," he said. Support for the school also came from State Senator Carl Parker, chairman of the Senate Education Committee.

At the opening of the local Democratic Party Headquarters in September, Governor White told a veritable "Who's Who" of local and area Democratic officials and office seekers that he would "make certain that Laredo State University stays here and it's going to be improved."

As Temple's Select Committee continued to meet through the crisis summer of 1986, LSU's future looked bleak. University officials became particularly alarmed when the Select Committee voted to recommend keeping open Texas A&M at Galveston, the University of Texas-Permian Basin, East Texas State University, and Sul Ross State but voted unanimously to postpone any decision on LSU.

When a Select Committee staff report appeared in mid-July, which President Pacheco called "detrimental to LSU's interest," the president cancelled a long-awaited vacation and once again took his defense of the University to civic groups and anyone who would listen. Pacheco pointed out that LSU was presently training 43 percent of the teachers presently employed by the Laredo Independent School District and 48 percent of the teachers at United Independent School District. Furthermore, any downgrading of LSU would present serious problems in hiring faculty since a "center" as opposed to a University, was radically different. Vice President Sayavedra said attempts by the Select Committee to downgrade LSU would take the school "many steps backwards--all the way back to 1969." The proposed change, he said, would "stifle any kind of growth...and thwart the University's ability to maintain a quality faculty." In a talk before the Kiwanis Club, Joe Garcia, the University's business manager, echoed Sayavedra's comments. "The change from the current status of Laredo State University to a branch study center would be a step backward of 15 years for college educational facilities in Laredo and South Texas," Garcia said. "Rather than omitting or dropping programs, we need to be expanding our programs."

Clearly impressed at the anger and concern of many Laredoans who actively lobbied independently and collectively to keep LSU alive and in its present status, the Select Commit-



tee eventually suggested that LSU remain intact and the Legislature should do everything possible to help the University add courses and degree programs.

With one crisis over Pacheco sought to achieve one of his major objectives. For years the school had wanted language in the enabling legislation for the University that allowed the school to be closed at the discretion of the Coordinating Board. Pacheco saw no danger in LSU being closed since it was "no longer experimental," but the reference to the school as a "center" was no longer appropriate, he felt. To the president the language in the enabling legislation hung over

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**"This is an issue in which there are no party lines, no social lines...We have all united to work for the common good of our community."**

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*State Sen. Judith Zaffirini*

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"the head of the University like the sword of Damocles." Pacheco also complained that the language placed the faculty at a disadvantage and was a detriment to the well-being of the school. As early as May, 1985, Senator Traeger and Representative Hall had sponsored legislation eliminating the offensive language but the Coordinating Board, feeling that the legislation was a step by LSU toward expansion, opposed the legislation. Although the measure was sent to the floor of the House of Representatives, it was voted down.

Although she agreed that it was unlikely the Coordinating Board would attempt to close LSU, newly-elected Senator Judith Zaffirini set as one of her priorities a bill that would remove the threatening provision and secure the school's future. Zaffirini first won the support of Kenneth Ashworth, Commissioner of Higher Education who had previously opposed altering the legislation. She next won over Larry Temple, Chairman of the Coordinating Board.

When the Senate Education Committee held hearings on Zaffirini's SB 658 in April, 1987, some 50 Laredoans, including alumni, county, city and University officials, as well as a host of interested citizens, chartered a bus to Austin. Many, including Pacheco, Dianne Freeman (Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce) and Zaffirini herself, testified before Senator Carl Parker's Education Committee.

Pacheco told the committee that the original legislation contained language detrimental to the interests of higher education in the area and to the purposes for which the legislature had established the school. "Moreover," Pacheco

said, "it threatens the existence of Laredo State University and has a negative impact on students, faculty, administration, recruitment, and hinders long-range planning efforts." Zaffirini presented the committee with numerous letters in support for the bill from local officials and business leaders. She also gave Parker a letter from Temple, stating that the Coordinating Board would not oppose the bill. In response Parker agreed, saying that he would support any legislation that would help "the educationally underserved area of South Texas." Eight days later Zaffirini's bill breezed through the Education Committee by a vote of ten to zero. "This is an issue in which there are no party lines, no social lines, the Senator said. "We have all united to work for the common good of our community. There is no limit to what we [can] accomplish when we work together."

With Representative Henry Cuellar sponsoring a similar legislation in the House, Laredoans were back in Austin for hearings before the House Higher Education Committee. With no opposition from the Coordinating Board, the bill, with minor changes, sped through the House in mid-May as an "inconsequential amendment." A month later, Governor Bill Clements signed the legislation, assuring the independence of LSU. "Laredo State University is important to Laredo economically," Clements said on the occasion. "The University also fills an important higher education need in Laredo and surrounding communities that will be important in turning that economy around in the years and decades to come." With younger and more determined minds at work in Austin for the University, another milestone had been reached in the short history of the school. ■

## **A POSSIBLE MERGER**

Ever since Laredo State University opened its doors in 1970, considerable discussion had developed exploring the possibility of a merger with Laredo Junior College. By the 1980's, both Illinois and Florida, which had experimented with the "two-plus-two" system had determined that such a system did not always satisfy the needs or work to the best interests of the area served by the institutions.

Although the original concept of the two-plus-two system at LSU and LJC was well designed and well intentioned, it too faced a rocky and uncertain future. Hoping to increase the effectiveness of the school and assure financial savings, the merging of the two institutions into a single four-year University was seriously considered in 1985 when the

junior college initiated talks. Consequently Dean Sayavedra and his counterpart at Laredo Junior College, Jose Roberto Juarez, inspected Lamar University at Orange. Favorably impressed, Presidents Arechiga and Pacheco, along with Deans Sayavedra and Juarez, journeyed north to present the idea of the merger to Ken Ashworth, Commissioner of Higher Education. Although Ashworth was not impressed, the local business leaders and the Laredo media, particularly The Laredo News, continued to promote the idea of a merger. Citing financial savings, through the establishment of a single president, registrar, and administrative officers, the group noted that a reduction in staff of up to 50 percent could be realized. Furthermore, a four-year institution would allow for curricular expansion to offer a host of new degrees in such areas as nursing, fine arts, home economics, languages such as German and French, and sciences such as biology, chemistry, and physics.

A prime architect behind the merger was Lieutenant Governor Bill Hobby. In a meeting with local educators at the annual Washington Birthday Celebration, Hobby unveiled a draft of proposed legislation designed to create what he called a "hybrid" four-year university in Laredo. "What I'm after," Hobby said, "is a merger, in theory and practice, of the management and operation of institutions of higher education which currently are only separate in governance." Hobby promised that the junior college could retain its locally-elected board and continue as a taxing entity. "After five years," Hobby said, we would hope the school could run under only one administrative body."

Although the idea of a merger had been discussed on the administrative level for some time, the Laredo Junior College Board of Trustees complained that the merger bill had been dropped on them like a "bombshell," and because they had not had time to discuss the idea, the Laredo Junior College Board of Trustees refused to take action on the proposal. Adamantly opposed to any merger was the president of the junior college board, Gustavo L. Acevedo, as well as board members J.C. "Pepe" Trevino and Ezequiel D. Salinas, Jr. Another board member, Mario Gonzales, however, asked the board to listen to "the facts" before deciding to fight the proposal. The board unanimously passed a motion stating it would not consider a merger stemming from Hobby's legislation, if the board was not allowed to study and comment on the bill before it was introduced.

In response, Hobby called several Laredoans, including representatives from both LSU and the junior college, to Austin to clear up any "misunderstanding." Largely due to aggressive opposition to any merger by members of the junior college board, faculty, and staff, Hobby's final bill did not



mention the word "merger" but referred only to a "partnership" between the two institutions. Specifically, the bill would encourage "partnerships" between public community colleges and upper-level universities which share common campuses.

If both desired, the two institutions could "enter into a partnership agreement designed to coordinate the management and operations of the institutions." The proposed legislation also allowed the two schools to appoint "an advisory committee composed of three members from each board to study "curriculum offerings and...the joint use of faculty and staff, facilities, and library resources."

The bill would further allow the two institutions to make joint appointments of administration, faculty and staff. Hobby bluntly told the Austin meeting that if the "Laredo community was not behind the plan there would be no sense in wasting time on it." Although strongly opposed to the original proposal, the junior college board found the watered-down version acceptable. Board stalwarts Ruben M. Garcia and Mario Gonzales voiced approval. With identical bills introduced in the Senate and House, the measure passed both bodies by a voice vote and was signed into law by Governor White.

By the early 1980's, the M.B.A. program in international trade continued to attract students to Laredo from Africa, the Far East, and Southeast Asia. Some of the most active students at the University were from Malaysia, who formed a Malaysian Student Association and helped to set up several exhibits to educate the Laredo community about their country. Besides a colorful display in the Yeary Library, the students distributed travel brochures to visitors and students at the University.

In May, 1985, Enti Liu, director general of the Coordination Council for North American Affairs for Taiwan, visited the University for a close look at the Institute. In response, Ping-tung Chang, a professor of mathematics at the University, arranged a visit by University and city officials to Taiwan to celebrate the 74th anniversary of that country. The delegation included President Pacheco, Candy Hein (Director of Public Information at the University), and Mayor Aldo Tatangelo. Dubbed the "Laredo Goodwill Delegation," Pacheco and Hein used the opportunity to promote Laredo State University and the International Trade Program.

**I**n a whirlwind 10 day visit, the delegation visited a number of oil-refineries, shipping companies, high-tech industries, farming operatives, and several universities, including Taiwan Normal University. While on the island, the Laredo delegation also participated in the signing of a proclamation making Taiwan a "sister city" of Laredo. From Taiwan, the delegation flew on to Hong Kong, where further visitations and contacts were made. The trip, paid for by the Taiwanese

government, was proclaimed a huge success by Pacheco and Tatangelo, but ultimately had little long-range impact on the University.

In March of 1986, Pacheco was back in the Far East on a visit to Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Malaysia. In Malaysia,



**International Trade students share culture**

the Ministry of Education that would allow Malaysian students to enroll at LSU to pursue a Master of Business Administration in International Trade. In Taiwan, Pacheco

visited with government officials, renewed contacts made during the previous visit, and talked with prospective students. From Taiwan, he went on to Hong Kong, then to Guangzhou on mainland China. In China, Pacheco met with 15 students who were interested in coming to Laredo but did not have the financial resources to do so.

Promoting the International Trade Program, the only one of its kind in the United States, was called clear thinking by the Laredo press. President Pacheco deserved congratulations for "his spirit, energy, planning and resourcefulness." Many of Pacheco's hopes for attracting large numbers of students to the University from the Far East, however, would remain unrealized. Nevertheless, students such as Osei K. Bonsu, a graduate in international trade from Ghana was convinced that LSU was "bridging the entire world with the United States." Bonsu, who had travelled halfway around the world to gain his master's degree in international trade, pointed out that 80 percent of the students in the international trade program were from outside the country.

Assistance in attracting students from Mexico came in 1987 when the legislature passed a bill allowing Mexican students to pay in-state tuition at universities on the Texas-Mexico border such as LSU. Designed to improve relations between Texas and Mexico, the legislation was praised by Pacheco as helping to alleviate the loss of Mexican students as a result of the 1985 tuition hike.

One example of the growing prestige of the Institute for International Trade, now directed by Phillip Lane, was the establishment of a quarterly journal at the University in 1986. Billed as the first of its kind in the United States, the journal was edited by Professor Khosrow Fatemi, who was also responsible for seeing that the journal was established at LSU. The International Trade Journal was designed to "publish significant conceptual or theoretical contributions to the field of international trade." Included in its scope were not only international trade theory but international trade organizations and agreements, international trade relations, commercial policy, national studies, regional studies, and trade and development. In September, 1986, President Pacheco proudly presented Mayor Tatangelo with the first copy of the journal. With an editorial advisory board composed of 23 distinguished and well-known scholars and practitioners of international trade from around the world, the journal gave the University continued exposure and prestige.

By 1990, with distribution to all regions of the United States and over 20 foreign countries, the journal, with five to seven articles and book reviews in each issue, had indeed, as Fatemi had hoped, achieved its goal of excellence. In addition to this new journal of international trade, the Institute continued to publish the International Trade Letter, Laredo Economic Index, and the Border Business Indicators.

The Institute continued to sponsor prestigious international symposiums. Along with the University of Tamaulipas, the Institute sponsored a conference on the entry of Mexico into the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in August, 1986, that attracted economists from as far away as Geneva, Switzerland. More of the world's leading economists gathered in Laredo in June, 1987, for a three-day conference on "North American Economics in the 1990's." The conference was jointly sponsored by the North American Economics and Finance Association, the National Center for Export-Import Studies at Georgetown University, and several other international trade and economic groups.

By the decade of the 1980's, students who had once studied at LSU had returned as faculty. One example was Norma Cantu. The oldest of 11 children, Cantu worked her way through college in Laredo before going on to the University of Nebraska where she received a Ph.D. A Fulbright scholar and a F. Allen Briggs protege, Cantu became Assistant Professor of English, and in 1989, Chair of the Division of Arts and Sciences. ■



## THE SAYAVEDRA YEARS

In November, 1987, Rex Ball, Vice President for Administration and University Relations, announced that he would be leaving the University to assume the position of Vice President for Development at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois. Highly involved in community affairs, Ball, had been with the University since 1970. He had taught United States Social, Intellectual, and Colonial history, had served as President of the Kiwanis Club, Campaign Chairman of the United Fund, and Chairman of the Webb County Republican Party.

Earlier, Manuel Pacheco, the University's second president, had also announced that he would be leaving the University to assume the Presidency of the University of Houston-Downtown. Within weeks, Alan Sugg, system chancellor, announced the appointment of Leo Sayavedra as the new President of the University. Sugg had decided not to seek a nationwide search for Pacheco's replacement in consideration of Sayavedra's 11 years of experience with LSU.

**A** native of the lower valley, Sayavedra had roots that stretched deep into the arid soil of South Texas. From the time he could walk, Sayavedra had picked cotton to help support his family and had not attended school until he was 12. Finally attending a segregated elementary school in Sharyland, he graduated from high school in Benavides, Texas, only six years later. Able to use a segregated swimming pool in Mission only on certain days, usually just before it was cleaned, Sayavedra had experienced the bitter reality of South Texas racism. Denied service and thrown out of a barber shop in Alice, he had viewed movies from the balcony of segregated theatres in Sinton and Navasota with Blacks. Sayavedra had also seen his share of "No Mexicans or Dogs" signs throughout the Lone Star State. As a young man, most summers had been spent camping out in hovels and tents along the migratory farm route winding north from the Rio Grande.

With only a burning desire to attend college, Sayavedra arrived at Texas A&I University at Kingsville to find that financial aid was unavailable. One administrator sarcastically suggested that his only hope for an education would be to set up a stand in the student union building where shoes could be shined for ten cents.

With his clothes in a small trunk, Sayavedra hitchhiked to San Antonio to enroll at San Antonio College. After paying his tuition, and renting a small room for a week, he had only four-dollars left. When the four dollars dwindled to fifty cents, he began walking the streets in search of employment. Able

to find work at a gas station at 50 dollars a week, the aspiring student worked the one p.m. to eleven p.m. shift while taking a full-load of courses at the college. Awarded a scholarship to Trinity University, Sayavedra went on to graduate with a BA in mathematics and a minor in chemistry. He later earned an M.Ed. in education and mathematics from North Texas State University, and a Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction from the University of Texas at Austin.

Sayavedra coached football and taught math and science at San Diego High School, moved on to Hebbbronville High School, and then on to United High School in 1970. Cowart had found Sayavedra attending summer school at the University of Wyoming and persuaded him to come to LSU. After serving as assistant professor of education from 1972 to 1977, Sayavedra became Dean and then Vice President for Academic Affairs.



**Dr. Leo Sayavedra**

With a keen insight into the educational needs of South Texas, and the knowledge needed to survive in the tough and ever-changing Texas educational environment, a new era in the history of Laredo State University began with Sayavedra presidency. In a time of transition, Sayavedra had inherited a much brighter future than Pacheco had in 1984. With the crisis years of 1984-1986 largely behind the University, this new period allowed for idealism and optimism.

Sayavedra well understood the opportunities available. One of his first objectives was to expand course offerings at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. Then he set out to expand the international trade program into the Graduate School of Business and International trade. He also worked to convince the Coordinating Board to allow LSU to expand its role and scope by granting degrees in nursing, transportation, management, finance, tourism, marketing, economics, science and math, and hotel-motel management, as well as a master's degrees in such areas as psychology, political science, Spanish, History, English, sociology, accounting, computer science, and law enforcement administration. "Our students need the tools so they can compete," Sayavedra said. "The future of this city and its quality of life depend on what happens to Laredo State University." With assistance from Senator Zaffirini, Representative Cuellar, and Blas Martinez, a special appropriation to

develop many of the new programs was received from the Legislature.

Sayavedra also reorganized the administrative structure of the University by placing the Public Information Office, the Director of Development and Planning and the International Trade Institute

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**“Our students need the tools so they can compete...The future of this city and its quality of life depend on what happens to Laredo State University.”**

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*Dr. Leo Sayavedra*

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directly under the president. The Vice President for Academic Affairs and a new officer, the Vice President for Business and Support Service, would also answer to the president.

In addition to expanded course degree availability and an improved administrative structure, Sayavedra also announced that he was upgrading the university's student-support services, including counseling, job-placement, academic advisement, and financial aid opportunities.

Other plans included improving the university's relations with Laredo Junior College and expanding the International Trade Program into a fully-funded Graduate School of International Trade. On a much larger scale, Sayavedra felt that the city and University, strategically located on the United States-Mexico border, was in a position to host a North-South Center linking North, Central and South America in a way the East-West Center had been established at the University of Hawaii.

Sayavedra's first year saw a flurry of other activities relating to the future of the school. Realizing that Texas was growing more conscious of its expanding Hispanic population as well as of historical neglect of higher education in South Texas, Sayavedra, in cooperation with Senator Zaffirini, was also outlining long-range plans that included expanding the University from a two-year to a four-year institution. There was also talk of the University becoming part of either the University of Texas or the Texas A&M System.

When he became president, Sayavedra named Quintin Vargas III, Associate Professor of Education and Director of University Planning, as the new President for Academic Affairs. "He brings with him a thorough and clear understanding of the academic needs of the university," Sayavedra said of Vargas. "He is young and dynamic and we are confident he



will provide the leadership that will assist the University in achieving its next level of development." A native Laredoan, Vargas had a B.A. degree in psychology and philosophy, and a M.A. in philosophy, both from the University of Texas at Austin. His Ph.D. in higher education administration was from the University of Michigan. Everyone agreed that the ten years Vargas had spent at Laredo State University had been impressive.

Soon after Sayavedra became president, a 14 member Legislative Joint Committee on Higher Education in South Texas, co-chaired by Senator Carlos Truan and Representative Eddie Cavazos, held hearings throughout South Texas. Senator Zaffirini, a member of the committee, promised to "examine and assess all possibilities for improving higher education in South Texas." South Texans "deserve and demand better than the status quo," the Senator told the local press. "For too long South Texas has been getting crumbs while other areas of the state get cake," she added. Representative Henry Cuellar also complained that South Texans were not receiving their fair share of higher education funding.

When the Joint Committee came to Laredo, Blas Martinez was another who complained that South Texas was not receiving adequate funding. As a result, Senator Zaffirini asked President Roger Worsley and Sayavedra to complete separate feasibility studies outlining the advantages and disadvantages of all available options, including the merging of LSU and the junior college or just expanding LSU's program base.

But perhaps the most exciting news to come out of Laredo in 1988 was the initiation of talks with the Texas A&M System that would possibly lead to a merger of the University System of South Texas with the A&M System. Although the University of Texas appeared interested in the Institute for International Trade and the school's location on the border, it was A&M that showed the most interest. This situation became especially apparent when the University of Texas moved to merge with Pan American University, rather than LSU.

In November, 1988, a lengthy feasibility study by both A&M and the University System of South Texas was released that showed that Texas A&I, Corpus Christi State University and Laredo State University had much more to gain than to lose by merging with the larger A&M System. In particular, the study cited an improvement in support for academic strengthening of the USST institutions, more opportunity for research collaboration, contract and grant applications, between both faculties, greater access to administrative support services, more balanced geographic and demographic opportunities for the A&M System, and an overall strengthening of higher education in South Texas.

After more than 60 meetings over a period of 18 months, the USST Board of Directors, headed by newly-elected President Blas Martinez, the sole Laredo member of the board voted to dissolve the system and clear the way for a merger. Within two weeks the A&M Board, too, had voted unanimously for a merger. "This is a very bright day for us," Martinez was heard to say. Sayavedra himself was quite confident the decision would "change the course of education significantly." In a legislative session that Senator Carlos Truan, co-chairman of the Joint Legislative Committee on Higher Education in South Texas, called "historic," the Texas Legislature gave its blessing to the merger of the two systems.

As the University entered the 1990s, LSU continued to be a leader in creating special programs to meet community needs. These included the TexPrep Pre-freshman Engineering Program, an eight-week summer engineering program for minority high-ability science and math middle and high school students. The "Little Steps, Big Steps Program" allowed faculty to work closely with students to curb illiteracy among South Laredo children and their parents. The popular Summer Children's Workshop introduced elementary age students to the college campus through four weeks of various activities that included mathematics, science, drama, sports, and art. Newcomers were encouraged to enroll in the Acculturation Project, in which they are introduced to the bicultural-bilingualism of the border. The Image Motivates Adolescent Growth & Excellence (IMAGE) Project encouraged LSU faculty, staff, and students to "adopt" high-risk elementary students by providing support and guidance.

As the second decade of the University came to a close, discussion continued as to a possible merger with the junior college. Touting the Lamar University System which included four-year baccalaureate degrees, technical-vocational two-year degrees, as well as developmental courses, a 21-

member committee of Laredo educators and financial leaders, chaired by local businessman Manuel Bravo, overwhelmingly recommended a merger. Arguing that a merger would eliminate the junior college property tax and better serve a growing *maquiladora* industry, Blas Martinez also endorsed the merger. With President Roger Worsley of the junior college

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**"Within two weeks the A&M Board, too, had voted unanimously for a merger."**

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in opposition, a majority of the junior college faculty and staff persuaded the junior college board not to endorse the proposal. Any possibility of a merger slipped away when the junior college board appointed a committee headed by Gladys Keene that examined and eventually opposed the "Lamar Model."

With an optimistic Sayavedra at the helm, Laredo State University entered the decade of the 1990s with a sense of security that had been absent during the struggling years of the 1970s and the tough budgetary battles of the 1980s. With a growing student body, an expanded degree inventory, a new role and scope, and a larger and more diversified faculty, the University, now part of The Texas A&M System, and located in one of the fastest growing cities in Texas, had clearly outgrown its meager facilities.

**W**ith Radcliffe Killam donating 200 acres of land, plans were underway in Laredo and College Station for the construction of a new campus northeast of Laredo. As the school prepared to enter its third decade, the possibility of expanding to four-year status also assumed a real possibility. Laredo State University appeared destined to enter the new millennium with more students, new facilities, and a renewed mandate to serve the needs of the region and the state. ■



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