

A&M SYSTEM *Quest*

For excellence in education, discovery and service

JUNE 2008

New System CEOs Help Usher in New Era

The wave of transformation that has been energizing The Texas A&M University System moved through the top tier of leadership in the first quarter of 2008, with the naming of six new CEOs and two others pending. Four of the nine member universities welcomed new presidents and two agencies acquired new directors.



Elsa Murano

“This is an exciting time for everyone in the A&M System,” said Bill Jones, chairman of the Board of Regents. “It is one of those watershed occasions when we can celebrate the extraordinary work of leaders who have carried us to impressive accomplishments while also looking forward with enthusiasm to fresh new ideas from a new generation of innovators.”

The changes began in January with the naming of **Dr. Elsa Murano** as president of **Texas A&M University** and **Gary Sera** as director of the **Texas Engineering Extension Service (TEEX)**. On April 23, the Board of Regents confirmed four additional transitions, appointing presidents for Tarleton State University, Texas A&M University-Texarkana, Texas A&M University-Commerce and a new director for the Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory.



Gary Sera

Searches continue for a new president of Texas A&M University-Kingsville and a director of the Texas Forest Service. James Hull, director of TFS, retired at the end of May. The Board of Regents appointed Dr. Robert Strawser interim president at Texas A&M-Kingsville and Tom Boggus interim director of TFS at its regular May meeting.

The four CEOs approved in April come from diverse backgrounds, but all bring a wealth of expertise and knowledge to their respective entities:



F. D. Dottavio

Dr. F. Dominic Dottavio, President, Tarleton

Dottavio will become the 15th president of Tarleton and most recently served as president of Heidelberg College, a 158-year-old private institution in northwest Ohio, since 2003. There he led successful campaigns for student recruitment and retention, fundraising and expansion of academic programs. Dottavio previously served as the chief executive officer of The Ohio State University at Marion, one of five campuses in the Ohio State University System. During his tenure, the Marion campus expanded to include a new site in an adjacent county and an enterprise center. A new library, technology center and child care laboratory were constructed and the campus received a \$10 million gift, one of the largest ever given to the Ohio State system.



Dan Jones

Dr. Dan R. Jones, President, A&M-Commerce

Jones is the 11th president of A&M-Commerce, and previously served as provost and vice president for academic affairs, chief student affairs officer and professor of English at Texas A&M International University. Prior to becoming provost at TAMIU, Jones served a variety of leadership roles at the University of Houston-Downtown from 1985-2003, including dean and interim dean of University College, associate dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and professor and assistant chair of the Department of English. He also was instructor and student publications adviser at Casper College in Casper, Wyo., from 1982-1985.

Dr. C. B. Rathburn III, President, A&M-Texarkana

Rathburn will serve as the third president of A&M-Texarkana, and was previously the president of Savannah Technical College in Savannah, Ga. During Rathburn's seven years as president, Savannah Technical College experienced the largest percentage growth in enrollment of any two-year college in Georgia and was the third fastest-growing two-year college in its size range in the nation in 2003. Rathburn also was responsible for the redevelopment of Savannah Technical College's main campus with the addition of three new facilities. He supervised the opening of three new campuses representing the acquisition of more than 100 acres of land and a total capital investment exceeding \$15 million.



C. B. Rathburn III



Tammy Beckham

Dr. Tammy Beckham, Director, TVMDL

As director of TVMDL, Beckham will lead one of 12 core member laboratories in the country that comprise the National Animal Health Laboratory Network, which provides surveillance and response to high-consequence animal diseases. For the past year, Beckham has been director of the Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory, a part of USDA's Plum Island Animal Disease Center in New York. Her responsibilities included managing the diagnosis of animal diseases, overseeing a nationwide animal health diagnostic system and coordinating efforts with the Department of Homeland Security, the National Animal Health Laboratory Network and other entities.

Working in various capacities at Plum Island over the last six years, Beckham specialized in developing ways using emerging technologies to more rapidly diagnose, and with greater accuracy, such potentially devastating diseases as foot and mouth, rinderpest and classical swine fever.

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Chancellor Challenges Diversity Council to Seek Major Changes for the Future of Texas

by Rod Davis
A&M System Communications

Major changes rather than incremental annual improvements are critically needed for Texas and its institutions of higher learning to extend full educational opportunities to students from all races, cultures and economic levels, Michael D. McKinney, M.D., chancellor of The Texas A&M University System, told representatives from the A&M System's member universities and agencies at the first meeting of the Chancellor's Council on Diversity in April.

Noting the ever-worsening dropout rates at Texas high schools and the profound numerical gaps on college-ready SAT scores (1100 or higher) among minority student populations, McKinney challenged the group, meeting in College Station, to provide him with as many ideas as possible. He said the goal is not only to increase minority enrollment in the A&M System but to vastly enlarge the potential pool of applicants. In the most recently measured year among Texas high school graduates, McKinney said, about 40,000 Anglo high school graduates scored at a college-ready level on the SAT, a number

that plummeted to 4,000 among Hispanic students and 1,200 for African-American students.

“Even if the A&M System got half of those, it wouldn't be a drop in the bucket toward an equitable level,” McKinney said. “We have got to find ways to radically increase those numbers where they start—in the schools and the social structure of the state.”

McKinney charged the diversity council to find innovative solutions and to be open to anything.

“I was in Houston and was telling someone we needed to bring in more minority students to the A&M System,” McKinney said, “and he asked me, ‘What do you want me to do, drive a bus through town and recruit?’ I told him, ‘If that's that it takes, I'll get you the bus.’”

The diversity council, chaired by Dr. Joni Baker, director of equal opportunity and diversity for the A&M System, consists of 24 volunteer members who serve for a two-year term. In creating the council, McKinney tasked it “to identify measures to improve our outreach to non-traditional communities. We must make sure the doors of higher education are open to bright young Texans of all walks of life.”

Welcome to
A&M SYSTEM
Quest

The picture to the right was taken during my recent participation in the Joint Civilian Orientation Conference (JCOC-75). We visited with the U.S. military of the Southern Command. This educational trip included stops at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, Brazil, Columbia, Honduras, Key West, Miami and the Pentagon. I also had the exciting opportunity to participate in a landing and launching from the deck of the *USS George Washington* in the Atlantic.



The young men and women of the armed services are very impressive and are committed to their country and their duty assignments. Just speaking with them and watching them do their work caused me to swell with pride for our country and our people. These soldiers, sailors, coastguardsmen, airmen and Marines are away from their homes every night to ensure that we wake up in freedom every morning. Thank you to those who serve and to all of those who have served.

By the way, the “do-rag” is from the Lancers, the Columbian Army Special Forces, and the snake was fresh from the jungle, not just a pet. I thought I could make a fashion statement by wearing a boa.

The Texas A&M University System has completed another academic semester and graduated more than 11,500 students in May. I commend these students for their perseverance and thank the parents and spouses for their support of our students.

Once again, I ask that you join me in thanking our outstanding faculty for the teaching and the examples they have given these graduates. Remember, as the graduates leave, a new group of freshmen and transfer students begin, but the faculty provide the stability for our education system.

As you can see from the pages of *Quest*, our universities continue to strive to keep education relevant, accessible and affordable.

Thank you for your continued support of the Chancellor’s Century Council. We now have more than 150 members, the highest number in the history of the organization, which enables the Chancellor’s Office to promote and assist the faculty and the students throughout our universities.

Michael D. McKinney, M.D.
Chancellor
The Texas A&M University System



Three universities in the A&M System offer extensive tuition assistance programs for students from families with lower incomes. The new plans at West Texas A&M and A&M-Corpus Christi will provide opportunities for full-time, four-year funding starting this fall, while a program at TAMIU will continue tuition aid that provided 244 students more than \$1.2 million in assistance last year.

Texas A&M System Expands Tuition Assistance for Students and Families

Following the directive of Chancellor Michael D. McKinney, M.D., to “make sure the doors of higher education are open to bright young Texans of all walks of life and from all financial backgrounds,” three universities in The Texas A&M University System are offering extensive tuition assistance programs for students from families with lower incomes. New plans at West Texas A&M University and Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi will provide opportunities for full-time, four-year funding starting this fall, while a program at Texas A&M International University will continue tuition aid that provided 244 students more than \$1.2 million in assistance last year.

At West Texas A&M, the ambitious new Buff Promise program covers in-state tuition and fees for undergraduate Texas residents who have an annual family income of \$40,000 or less.

“The Buff Promise is designed to reassure academically talented students from low- and middle-income families in Texas who may not feel that a university education is possible,” said Dan D. García, vice president for enrollment management. “We are doing what we can to make sure that students can afford to choose West Texas A&M.”

Tuition and fees will be covered by an innovative combination of federal, state and/or university grant sources and scholarships. In some limited instances, a need-based loan of up to \$2,000 per year is available. As long as the student continues to qualify, Buff Promise aid is guaranteed for up to eight fall and spring semesters, or the equivalent of four years of full-time course work. Based on expected 2008-09 tuition-and-fee rates for a 15-semester-credit-hour load, the Buff Promise will

provide about \$5,500 each year for a student.

“These full-time assistance plans are especially important due to the many obstacles to graduation that can affect part-time students,” said McKinney. “Taking only six credit hours a semester, for example, means that it would take about 10 years to graduate. For too many students, the goal slips out of reach. I tell students to borrow money and stay in school. But this kind of tuition assistance makes graduating and getting a solid stake in the future all the more doable. This is very important to Texas and Texans.”

A&M-Corpus Christi offers a similarly progressive plan with its Islander Guarantee!, which provides funding for full tuition and mandatory fees for undergraduate students from lower-income families. The university’s estimated cost for undergraduate students taking 15 credit hours in fall 2008 is \$2,618. Covering this amount will enable full-time status for many lower-income Texas residents who otherwise would be excluded by economic circumstances.

Meanwhile in the Valley, an already successful tuition assistance plan from TAMIU moves into another year. The assistance package combines federal, state and institutional funds to meet tuition and fees for eight, 15-hour semesters. Eligible students must be full time and from households in which the combined income is less than \$30,000 annually.

“While others may be starting programs, we’re hoping to expand what’s basically ingrained in the culture of our service here,” said university president Dr. Ray Keck.



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Quest

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Volume 1: Issue 2

Texas Forest Service’s “Little Arson Annie” Sniffs out Arsonists

by Karen Heider
Texas Forest Service

She’s been on the job less than a year, but “Little Arson Annie” already has her nose to the grindstone – or, more accurately, on the trail of suspicious wildfires and the people who start them.

The AKC bloodhound, officially named Texas Forest Duchess Blaze, joined the Texas Forest Service ranks in September 2007 as its first-ever furry, four-legged arson investigator. Bloodhounds are the only breed of dog whose tracking ability is recognized by the courts.

Annie has her work cut out for her. Arson fires accounted for \$8 million in property losses during 2006, one of the worst wildfire seasons in Texas history. Her first assignment, in West Texas, was to assist a local law enforcement agency on a structure fire. With the guidance of handler Kevin Pierce, she quickly found a trail to a suspect’s residence.

“Annie is a quick study,” said Gary Bennett, chief law enforcement officer for TFS. “With the current fire danger situation, she is a welcome addition to our arson fighting team.”

Annie was donated to TFS and arrived in Lufkin barely six months old to begin working with Pierce. He got the idea of adding a bloodhound to the agency after assisting other state forest service investigators fighting a series of arson-caused wildfires in Georgia in the summer of 2007. With the help of canines, Georgia officials were able to make 10 to 12 arrests in just two weeks.

“With Annie, you are in deep trouble if you’re an arsonist in Texas,” said James Hull, TFS director and state forester. “She is already tracking and has started pursuing those who set fires in order to harm the public and their property.”



“Little Arson Annie” and her handler, Kevin Pierce, put in many hours training and honing her skills as an arson canine. Pierce and Annie also travel to Fort Bend County every two weeks to work with veteran bloodhound trainer and handler, Deputy Keith Pikett.

In addition to working arson cases and tracking suspects, Annie visits schools and attends functions to promote fire and arson prevention awareness. She also has been traveling to Fort Bend County every two weeks to work with Sheriff’s Deputy Keith Pikett, a 20-year veteran of bloodhound training and handling.

When she is not on the job, Annie goes home with

Pierce for evening training sessions. She’s become part of his family, and gets plenty of socialization from his three young children. It might turn into a long-term arrangement. Typically, a bloodhound works for seven years, and then retires. Pierce will have the option of buying Annie from the state agency at that time.

TEEX Provides Tuition-free Training for System Police Agencies



Nearly 40 A&M System university police officers have received tuition-free training from TEEX, resulting in a savings of more than \$7,000 for the police agencies.

by Jay Socol
Texas Engineering Extension Service

The Texas Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) has saved The Texas A&M University System police agencies more than \$7,000 by providing tuition-free, in-service training to campus law enforcement officers through the Law Enforcement Extension Program.

The TEEX savings initiative came in response to a challenge in April 2007 from Chancellor Michael D. McKinney, M.D. During a visit to the TEEX Public Safety & Security division at Texas A&M University’s Riverside Campus in Bryan, McKinney asked the Law Enforcement Extension Training program to

take a more active role in training system member police departments. Tom Shehan, director of TEEX’s Public Safety & Security division, quickly set out to devise a plan to offset the cost of in-service training for members of the A&M System.

“The tragic events occurring at colleges and universities across the country encouraged us to take another look at how we might better take care of our own through increased training,” said Shehan. “Bottom line, emergency response preparedness is a team effort. Being prepared systemwide through increased training efforts is a worthy cause.”

The program, created by TEEX, allows an A&M System police department to host training and invite other neighboring law enforcement agencies throughout the region to attend. Once a minimum class size is met, university police personnel are enrolled at no cost to the department.

“The program provides an opportunity to university departments, which may have previously depended on other local agencies to host training events, to now be seen as a community training resource themselves,” said Shehan.

System university police departments receive tuition-free training, while other local law enforcement agencies are relieved from paying excessive travel costs in order to receive professional training being conducted elsewhere within the state.

“This agreement is a win-win situation for us and the other local agencies,” said Shawn Burns, West Texas A&M University chief of police and chairman of the Council of Texas A&M University System Law Enforcement Administrators. “We have to train and keep our skills honed to protect our campuses. Before, we had to send individuals out to receive training. We won’t realize until the year is over what the full financial benefit will be.”

Since the inception of the program in September 2007, almost 40 university police officers have received tuition-free training. As the program expands to become a primary training resource for A&M System police departments, 186 officers currently employed by system universities could benefit from this new initiative.

Since 1940, TEEX has been one of the primary trainers for Texas officers and is recognized as the oldest statewide law enforcement extension training agency.

Texas A&M Researcher Advances Study of Infectious Diseases

by Kathleen Phillips
Texas A&M AgriLife News and Media Relations

If you knew what possessed the young Jim Sacchettini to become a biochemist, you might look upon the “bar scene” more approvingly. But that story’s for later.

For now, ponder Sacchettini’s interest in what he calls “the diseases of the poor,” infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and malaria, which not long ago were considered wiped from the face of the earth.

Sacchettini came to Texas A&M University in 1996 and now is professor of biochemistry and biophysics, and Wolfe-Welch Chair in Science director. But it was in the Bronx, where he went in 1990 after earning his doctorate at Washington University in St. Louis, Mo., that the young researcher saw these maladies firsthand.

“It was like being in a developing country,” said Sacchettini, then working at the Albert Einstein School of Medicine. “And we were awakened to the fact that infectious diseases like tuberculosis really had never left.”

Einstein is near Rikers Island, a New York City jail that houses some 17,000 inmates at a time. In the late 1980s, a drug-resistant form of TB developed among inmates who unwittingly spread it throughout the city as they were released, Sacchettini said.

Although he had already started working on TB, little research was in progress for infectious diseases. But the Rikers episode and others prompted urgent concerns that focused on the



Dr. James Sacchettini

need worldwide for better treatment options.

Sacchettini and his colleague, Dr. Thomas Ioerger of the university’s computer science department, subsequently developed a method that became the basis for all his drug discovery research. In essence, they make the protein that is principle to the disease, crystallize it and depict it in 3-D form on a computer, then after seeing the protein’s vulnerable spot, make inhibitors to block its function.

“It’s virtual drug screening,” Sacchettini said. “At the protein’s active site, the computer tries to fit drug-like molecules into it to block it.” With some 2 million molecules to screen, that process might

have taken 40 years to complete by old methods (processed through one computer). But Sacchettini and colleagues thought of a way to use all of the university’s computers to screen molecules during off hours. Now the process can be completed in just two weeks.

When a blocker is found, the lab buys or makes the compound and creates another 3-D image “with the inhibitor bound to it and try to improve on it,” Sacchettini said. “No matter the disease, the process is always the same.”

The job may be repetitious but Sacchettini never finds it boring, and his enthusiasm extends to a 50-person team. On a recent visit to his lab, technicians and students bustled about like floor traders in a bull market. “What’s challenging or unusual, that’s what keeps my job exciting,” Sacchettini said. “Something that strikes you where you think you can make a difference.”

In addition to TB and malaria, his team is studying drug design for Alzheimer’s, Type 2 diabetes and cancer. “The challenge comes from the differences among proteins,” he said. “If I think someone has never tried something, that’s the drive for me to get into it. Sometimes we try an idea and it doesn’t work, but being an academic means we have the freedom to try new ideas and approaches to solve a long-standing problem.”

As for his career choice in college, Sacchettini first worked as a bartender. “I could mix drinks without measuring,” he recalled. “Turns out that was perfect training for biochemistry.”

A Closer Look at Contracts and Grants

The following contracts and grants were funded by external sources during fiscal year 2008 for projects at the Texas Transportation Institute and Texas A&M University–Kingsville. These are just a few highlights of the many research projects taking place across The Texas A&M University System. The projects are listed by name of principal investigator, department, project name, funding source (if external), amount and duration.

Focus: Texas A&M University-Kingsville

Paula Maywald, Tim Fulbright and Forrest Smith
Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, Animal and Wildlife Sciences
Native Plant Germplasms for Wildlife Habitat Restoration
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
\$81,220 over three years

Randall DeYoung
Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute
Population Structure, Dispersal and Effective Size of Texas Lesser Prairie-Chickens
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
\$182,205 over three years

Mary L. Gonzalez
Special Programs
Upward Bound
U.S. Department of Education
\$250,000 over four years

Venkatesh Uddameri
Department of Environmental Engineering
Modeling Studies to Evaluate Recharge in the Mission River Watershed and Estimate Groundwater Availability in Refugio Groundwater Conservation District
Refugio Groundwater Conservation District
\$38,584

Kuruvilla John and Yifang Zhu
Department of Environmental Engineering
Rider 8: Corpus Christi Ozone Near Non-Attainment Area Air Quality Research Activities
City of Corpus Christi
\$450,000

Leonard Brennan
Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute
Quail Research Support
Lawrence Family Foundation
\$31,900 for the first year of research

David W. Pledger
Department of Biological and Health Sciences
The Threat of Rift Valley Fever in North America: Approaching Assessment from the Insect Vector Perspective
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
\$41,302

Jose Ortega-Santos, William P. Kuvlesky Jr. and Leonard A. Brennan
Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute
Development of an Appraisal Guide for Wild Turkey Habitat
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
\$133,628

Focus: Texas Transportation Institute

Jeff Arndt
System Planning, Policy & Environment Division
Work Zone Focused Technical Assistance Workshops
Battelle Memorial Institute
\$190,000 over two years

Brian Bochner
System Planning, Policy & Environment Division
Guidance on Mitigating the Impacts of Large Distribution Centers on Texas Highways
Texas Department of Transportation
\$223,000 over two years

Joe Bracci
Constructed Facilities Division
Structural Assessment of “D” Region Affected by Premature Concrete Deterioration
Texas Department of Transportation
\$850,000 over four years

Dock Burke
Southwest Region University Transportation Center
University Transportation Centers Program: Grant Solicitation for Regional Centers for FY 08
USDOT-Research and Innovative Technology Administration
\$1.7 million over one year

Paul Carlson
Operations and Design Division
Increased Understanding of Driver Visibility Requirements
Science Applications International Corp.
\$386,000 over two years

Bill Eisele
System Planning, Policy & Environment Division
Safety and Economic Impacts of Converting Two-way Frontage Roads to One-way
Texas Department of Transportation
\$325,000 over two years

Charles Glover
Materials Division
Evaluation of Binder Aging and Its Influence in Aging of Hot Mix Asphalt Concrete
Texas Department of Transportation
\$1.3 million over five years

Eyad Masad
Materials Division
Modeling of Hot Mix Asphalt (HMA) Compaction
Federal Highway Administration
\$484,000 over two years

Chris Poe
Research and Implementation Division
Vehicle Infrastructure Integration (VII) Data Use Analysis and Processing
Mixon/Hill, Inc.
\$647,000 over two years

Melissa Tooley
Transportation Center for Mobility
University Transportation Center for Mobility FY 08
USDOT-Research and Innovative Technology Administration
\$1.5 million over one year

David Trejo
Constructed Facilities Division
Development of a Precast Bridge Deck Overhang System
\$275,000 over one year

Juan Villa
System Planning, Policy & Environment Division
Measuring Border Delay and Crossing Times at the U.S./Mexico Border
Battelle Memorial Institute
\$160,000 over two years

Melissa Walden
Center for Transportation Safety, Planning & Evaluation
Impaired Driving Enforcement Curriculum Update
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
\$125,000 over two years

Joe Zietsman
System Planning, Policy & Environment Division
Characterization of In-Use Emissions from Non-Road Equipment in the TxDOT Fleet
Texas Department of Transportation
\$286,000 over two years

Endowments

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi



Corpus Christi Attorney Kenneth Botary and American Bank President Al Jones present a giant check for \$5,053,339.33 to A&M-Corpus Christi President Flavius Killebrew.

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has received more than \$5 million from the estate of local businessman Lawrence Atkins, the largest single private gift given toward scholarships in the history of the university. Over the next four years, the contribution will provide almost 100 additional scholarships for A&M-Corpus Christi students.

“Mr. Atkins had expressed a strong desire to support students at A&M-Corpus Christi and put such provisions in his will,” said university president Flavius Killebrew. “His incredibly generous legacy will assure that many deserving students will have an opportunity to earn their college degrees.”

Atkins’ gift creates a new level in the university’s prestigious Presidential Scholarship program that supports the best and brightest students. Each of the four years, 15 new students will be added, receiving \$3,000 a year.

In addition, funds from the Atkins’ gift will create the Islander Scholars program, supporting eight new students a year (32 total) who each will get \$2,500 a year for four years.

Texas A&M University-Commerce

John and Nelba Armstrong have given Texas A&M University-Commerce a \$100,000 endowment gift to fund scholarships for junior and senior level undergraduate students in the College of Business & Technology.

“Our experiences of going to college while raising a family and holding down jobs has made us appreciate the needs of hard-working students,” the Armstrongs said. “We were the kind of students we hope this endowment will help. We’ve been down this road and we know how hard it is.”

“We’ve seen the quality of students A&M-Commerce produces,” Nelba Armstrong said. “And many of them have gone on to great things. Like us, they struggled as they worked hard for their degrees. This endowment is our way of sharing and giving something back.”

Donations from the Armstrongs and others have helped the university’s endowments grow from \$8 million to \$18 million in just a few years.



Nelba and John Armstrong (center, right) present A&M-Commerce president Keith McFarland with a check for their endowment, which will fund scholarships for junior and senior level undergraduate students in the College of Business & Technology.

Texas A&M University at Galveston

A \$1 million endowment from Texas A&M University alumnus Thomas W. Powell has established the Thomas W. Powell ‘62 Chair in Engineering and Technology at Texas A&M University at Galveston. The gift will fund teaching, research, service and professional development activities in marine engineering technology at the university.

“I have always enjoyed the sea. As a youngster we spent a lot of time catching sand crabs and looking for seashells in the surf. Today I love living on Tiki island and spending my free time fishing. I truly believe this campus is the window to the sea for College Station,” said Powell.

“When I was on the Board of Visitors, I met really talented students who were exploring their options for working offshore,” said Powell, a long-time friend of the university who served on the TAMUG Board of Visitors from 1991-2001, including time as the chairman.

“Whether they were studying how to build a better bulkhead, transportation, oil exploration or food processing, they were engrossed in learning. I got know a group of students who built a submarine for a competition, and I came to be passionate about Texas A&M University at Galveston,” he said.

“The generosity of individuals like Mr. Powell makes it possible for us to attract and retain the very best faculty members who conduct research critical to our region and provide education important to our students and community,” said Dr. R. Bowen Loftin, vice president and chief executive officer of TAMUG.



Thomas W. Powell

Recent Appointments



Pierce Cantrell was named vice chancellor for information technology on Jan. 1. Cantrell serves in a dual capacity as the A&M System’s chief information officer and vice president and associate provost for information technology at Texas A&M University, a role in which he will continue to serve at the university. From 1998-2006, Cantrell served as associate provost for information technology at Texas A&M, and since then, as vice president and associate provost. From 1992-98, he was assistant department head for electrical and computer engineering. Cantrell is an associate professor of electrical and computer engineering, having joined the faculty of Texas A&M in 1982 as an assistant professor.



Maria Hernandez Ferrier was named executive director at Texas A&M University-Kingsville System Center-San Antonio on March 11. Ferrier previously served as executive director for external funding (grants) for the Southwest Independent School District and executive director of the Southwest ISD Education Foundation in San Antonio. In 2002, she was appointed by President George W. Bush to direct the Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students in the United States Department of Education. As executive director of the San Antonio center, Ferrier will be responsible for on-site coordination of academic programs, financial administration, student services and institutional advancement activities.



Brett P. Giroir, M.D., was named vice chancellor for research for the A&M System on April 23. Giroir, a physician-scientist trained at Harvard University and UT-Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, and most recently director of the Defense Sciences Office of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) in Arlington, Va., will provide leadership for strategic development and research efforts throughout the A&M System. As a director at DARPA, Giroir led a \$450 million annual research effort that ranged from fundamental physics to human biology, and achieved such breakthroughs as neural-controlled prosthetics and technologies to improve natural immunity to infectious diseases.



Frank Griffis was named director of communications for the A&M System on March 3. He most recently served as director of marketing and marketing services for LeTourneau University in Longview, Texas. From 1990- 2000, Griffis held a variety of positions at Norwich University in Northfield, Vt., the nation’s only private military college. He also operated his own public relations/marketing firm, Frank Griffis & Associates, Inc. of Austin, and was managing partner of Grassroots Texas, Inc., a public affairs firm, from 1982-1990.



Elsa A. Murano was named the 23rd president of Texas A&M on Jan. 3 by the Board of Regents. Murano is both the first Hispanic-American and first woman to be named president of Texas A&M as she was when she was previously named the vice

chancellor of agriculture for the A&M System and dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Texas A&M in 2005. As a microbiologist, she has served as a member of the Texas A&M faculty since 1995, while leaving the College Station campus from 2001-04 to serve as undersecretary of food safety for the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C.



Garry Ross was named executive director at the Tarleton University System Center-Central Texas on Jan. 21. Ross will provide vision, primary leadership and on-site coordination of academic programs, financial administration, student services and institutional advancement activities to the Tarleton-Central Texas campus. Ross previously served as deputy vice provost at the University of North Texas in Dallas. He also has served as the executive director and dean of academic and student affairs for the A&M System Center in San Antonio and dean of the University College at Texas A&M University-Kingsville.



Gary F. Sera was named director of the Texas Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) on Jan. 3. Sera had served as interim director of TEEX since March 30, 2007. Sera will continue to work to advance the agency’s mission to develop a skilled and trained workforce that enhances public safety, security and economic growth of the state and the nation through training, technical assistance and emergency response. In fiscal year 2007, TEEX served more than 200,000 people from all 50 states and 53 countries through training and technical assistance. The agency has seven divisions and an annual budget of \$79.3 million.

Texas A&M President Steals the Show on Public Television

by Rod Davis
A&M System Communications

Dr. Elsa Murano’s star turn on “Texas Monthly Talks,” the weekly public television interview program hosted by editor Evan Smith on Austin’s KLRU-TV, provides an opportunity for members of The Texas A&M University System to see the president of Texas A&M University at her best. In a conversation that ranged from diversity on the Texas A&M campus to the university’s ambitious Vision 2020 plan to a pretty decent joke at the expense of rival University of Texas, the new Aggie president quickly found a groove that kept the audience engaged and entertained. Although the *Texas Monthly* editor often can grill his guests with aggressive questions, on this occasion he seemed almost smitten with Murano’s charm, wit and breadth of knowledge.

That didn’t mean that the interview, which aired in April, wasn’t tough-minded.

“You embody change,” Smith told Murano, after having introduced her as a “first” in the land of the 12th Man – first president who is female and first who is Hispanic. But he also noted that Texas A&M, “fairly or not, has been criticized for lagging in diversity.”

“Somewhat fairly, certainly,” said Murano, who came to the university in 1995 as an associate professor in the Department of Animal Science and associate director of the Center for Food Safety. “A



Dr. Elsa Murano

few years ago Texas A&M increased the numbers of underrepresented students fairly significantly...but we’re not where we want to be yet. ... Texas A&M has been moving forward for quite awhile and we’re just now seeing the evidence of that more obviously.”

While noting the many strong traditions at Texas A&M, Murano further supported a forward-looking posture while discussing Vision 2020, a roadmap to recognition as a consensus “top 10” public university by the year 2020. “I want us to be among the top 10 if not the top three public institutions of

higher education in the country,” she said. “We’re always striving for excellence.”

The cordial tone of the interview reached its full payoff when the microbiologist-turned-president found a way to leave ‘em laughing. Smith asked if she had a favorite Aggie joke. Murano said she had a favorite, but it was about Longhorns:

“There’s a Longhorn and a Red Raider and an Aggie walking down the beach one day and they find this lamp. And they rub it and a genie comes out. And the genie says, ‘I can grant each one of you a wish.’

“And the Red Raider says, ‘My father’s a farmer and I’d like to be a farmer and I would love to have the land up in Lubbock to be fertile for all time.’ And the genie goes like that [snap] and grants his wish.

“And the genie turns to the Longhorn and he says, ‘I love our campus and so I’d like to protect it as best as we can and I’d like to have a big, thick wall, 50 feet high, so that nothing can ever happen to our beautiful campus.’

“So he goes like that [snap], and sure enough. “So the genie goes to the Aggie and the Aggie says, ‘Now tell me something, how tall are those walls?’

“The genie says, ‘Oh, 50 feet tall and 3 feet wide and they’re completely impervious to anything. Now what would you like as your wish?’

“And the Aggie says, ‘Fill it up with water.’”

See the interview on the web at:
www.texasmonthly.com/texasmonthlytalks

City of Corpus Christi Donates Land to Help University Expand Its Campus



A&M Corpus-Christi president Flavius Killebrew (front, left) and Corpus Christi mayor Henry Garrett shake hands after signing documents transferring approximately 137 acres of land from the city to the university. Looking on are (L-R) Kathy Killebrew, Windsor Elementary student Marisa Chamberlain, Student Government Association president Seamus Nelson and Pharaoh Valley Neighborhood Association president James Murray.

After more than a year of laying the groundwork for Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi’s future expansion, President Flavius Killebrew and Corpus Christi mayor Henry Garrett signed an agreement formally transferring approximately 137 acres of city land to the university on March 10.

The city’s gift includes approximately 96 acres surrounding the water treatment plant west of Nile Drive and 41 acres of South Guth Park on Ennis Joslin Road. The land will be used for nonacademic facilities such as athletics, housing, a physical plant and parking, which will create space for expansion of academics at the university campus on Ward Island. The Austin firm of Broadus & Associates prepared a master plan and held two public forums with homeowners from adjacent neighborhoods before the donation was formalized.

“This is a historic day for Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi,” said Killebrew. “Through its generous donation, the Corpus Christi community has once again assured the university’s continued growth. Now, as the campus expands, the university will be able to preserve its unique setting while providing current faculty with support and capital resources for the expansion of existing programs. At the same time, we’ll be able to attract more outstanding scholars to teach and conduct research for undergraduate and graduate programs.”

Campus expansion studies show that the 240-acre Ward Island presently can only accommodate around 10,000 students, a capacity that will be reached within the next few years. A&M-Corpus Christi officials said that by concentrating academic activities on the island and shifting the land usage for other units to an additional site, the university would have the opportunity to serve a market potential of 16,000 students.

In the last year alone, construction has begun on both a new \$21 million wellness center for students and employees and a 140,000-square-foot, \$45 million building that will provide classrooms and labs for nursing and health science students with space for kinesiology and wellness activities.

The ceremony marked the second time that the city of Corpus Christi has come to the assistance of the university when expansion became necessary. In 1972, voters approved a \$1.5 million bond issue (the equivalent of \$8.2 million in today’s dollars) to purchase Ward Island and donated the site to the state as a home for a new state-supported university.

News Briefs

Members of **The Texas A&M University System** based in Brazos County accounted for a record economic impact on the local area of almost \$3 billion during 2007, according to an in-house study. The direct economic impact on the local area by the institutions was a record \$1.16 billion, an increase of almost \$98 million over the 2006 level. When applying a conservative 2.5 economic multiplier—reflecting the number of times dollars are spent in the community—the direct economic impact figure for Texas A&M University and other A&M System members based locally translates into an overall economic impact on the area of approximately \$2.915 billion for 2007 — up more than \$244 million from last year.

The Texas Engineering Extension Service’s Brayton Fire Training Field and Emergency Operations Training Center both recently have received major upgrades. The new \$10.3 million wastewater treatment plant at Brayton officially started operation on Feb. 6 and has increased capacity by 60 percent. The new plant reduces Brayton’s groundwater consumption by 35 percent and recycles more than 1.3 million gallons of water each day.

The Science and Technology Building, the first for **Texas A&M University-Texarkana’s** five-phase multiplex campus, is expected to be completed in June. Construction is scheduled to begin in September on the next building, a 175,000-square-foot, four-story, multipurpose library.

Prairie View A&M University has been named one of the top 15 producers of African-American baccalaureate degrees in the nation, according to *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* magazine. Released annually, the Top 100 listing provides a tool to measure those universities that have conferred the largest number of degrees to minority students and ethnic breakdowns in various academic disciplines, and the year’s list covers the 2005-06 academic year.

The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education magazine ranked **Texas A&M** 13th in awarding doctoral degrees to Hispanic students. Last year, Texas A&M was included in the “2007 Publisher’s Pick List” of institutions where Hispanic students have thrived. The university also was listed as one of the top 100 universities in the nation for graduating Hispanics.

Retired *Texas Clipper* Starts New Life as Artificial Reef



Texas A&M University at Galveston’s USTS Texas Clipper made its final voyage into the Gulf of Mexico on Nov. 16, 2007. The World War II ship, which served for decades as a training vessel for TAMUG, was towed from the Port of Brownsville and sunk in open waters off the Texas coast, where it will serve as an artificial reef. The 473-foot, 7,000-ton ship took about two hours to sink.

Texas A&M’s New TIPS Facility Launches Ambitious Plans for Research, Education and Cures for Diseases from Cancer to AIDS

Calling it “a milestone in the future of the investment in Texas,” Gov. Rick Perry and other officials broke ground on the \$47.8 million Texas A&M Institute for Preclinical Studies (TIPS) facility March 28 on the Texas A&M University campus. Located near the College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences and the headquarters for the Texas A&M Health Science Center, the facility will focus on research and education and will feature an array of multi-disciplinary programs that will play key roles in training veterinarians, physicians, scientists, engineers and technicians in a variety of medical and research-based initiatives.

“The knowledge and technology that is produced here will change our state and nation,” Perry said. “This will make Texas even more competitive in the global marketplace. This facility is an example of our intent to always look forward in deciding what is best for Texas. It shows that Texas means business when it comes to biotechnology.”

Texas A&M president Dr. Elsa Murano compared

the new facility to the school’s historic mission of service. “Texas A&M will be in a position to compete for major funding from the federal government and corporations, funding that we were not in a position to pursue before now,” she said. “Through these collaborations, Texas A&M will help bolster our state’s high-tech sector. Through this facility, we can work to find cures for diseases such as cancer, Alzheimer’s, heart disease and even AIDS.”

The TIPS facility will encompass about 104,000 square feet and is expected to be completed by June 2009. Dr. Theresa Fossum, professor of veterinary medicine, will serve as TIPS director.

“Our goal with this facility is not only to discover knowledge, but to apply it,” Board of Regents chairman Bill Jones said. “This shows that we are making our mark in the field of biomedical research and science and that we want the business side to be commercialized here. This is all about what research can do for you and me and the people of Texas.”



Gov. Rick Perry and Dr. Theresa Fossum, director of the new TIPS facility, display their Aggie spirit as well as an architectural drawing of the new facility, which is planned to open in June 2009.

Fashion Disaster



When a London-based men’s fashion magazine asked to use the Texas Engineering Extension Service’s Disaster City training facility as a backdrop for its spring shoot, it seemed like great opportunity. It’s not every day an international magazine wants to photograph models in \$3,000 suits climbing over simulated train wrecks and charred debris fields in Central Texas.

“Our goal is to explore non-traditional opportunities without compromising the credibility of the agency,” said Jay Socol, director of communications for TEEX. “Striking the right balance will mean great things for us.”

The *Esquire* shoot struck the balance between the absurd and the divine. The end result was 12 pages of gorgeous shots, including a nice blurb about TEEX and Disaster City.

“The great thing about the *Esquire* opportunity is that it came about as a result of the photographer having been at Disaster City about a year earlier on a previous shoot,” said Socol. “He knew he wanted to come back to shoot a scenario featuring a James Bond-like character. The photographer convinced *Esquire* of just how great Disaster City is, and the rest is history.

“We try to give every media representative a great experience because there’s always a chance they’ll want to come back,” said Socol.

The Chancellor's Century Council

Since its founding in 1987, the Chancellor's Century Council (CCC) has provided The Texas A&M University System with leadership and funding so extensive that it has transformed both the vision and the capabilities of the chancellor's office in guiding the A&M System. With more than 150 members today, the CCC actively helps Chancellor Michael D. McKinney, M.D., with a number of immediate and long-range missions including legislative assistance, promotion of the system on state and national levels, expansion of goodwill for the A&M System and support in raising discretionary funds for A&M System programs.

CCC members come from all walks of life in the A&M System family, with many from the top tiers of the business, financial, legal, educational and civic communities. Joining the CCC reflects not only an interest in the A&M System, but also in its future as an incubator of the very best Texas can offer.



Linemen train at the nationally acclaimed Texas Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) facility in College Station

If the **Chancellor's Century Council** sounds right for you, consider joining our dynamic ranks now.

For membership information,
contact Niky Jackson at **979-458-6000**
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