

FROM THE HILL

Update from
President Denise Trauth
Texas State University-San Marcos
February 2008



President Denise Trauth

Dear Friends,

When I talk with many of you about happenings on campus, I often hear “I didn’t know that” or “that’s wonderful – tell me more.” In an effort to tell you – who are among our most important supporters – more about developments on campus, I am initiating a periodic update. Some of this you will have heard; some will be new to you. I hope this update will give you an insight into the view I have “from the Hill” of this marvelous place.

Generous gifts

As I mail this, we are preparing to announce a \$7 million gift from the PSH Foundation of Wimberley, founded by Ms. Patti S. Harrison. This is truly a transformational gift that will launch the construction of our Performing Arts Center. In gratitude, we will name the main theatre in that new facility the Patti Strickel Harrison Theatre.

We have also recently announced a second \$1 million gift from alumni Linda and Jerry Fields of Houston to the McCoy College of Business Administration. Their first such gift, \$1.1 million matched by the earlier McCoy gift, endowed a chair in ethics and corporate responsibility. The most recent gift, also matched by the McCoy gift, will endow a chair in urban and regional economics. Both chairs are named for the Mr. and Mrs. Fields.

Earlier this month we also announced a \$1.3 million-dollar gift from alumnus and San Antonio businessman Mr. Darren Casey. A portion, \$300,000, will go to the McCoy College to be matched by the McCoy gift for a named professorship. Athletics will receive the remainder, making it the largest gift that athletics has ever received.

McCarthy papers



Our biggest piece of recent news on the academic side was the acquisition of the papers of Cormac McCarthy by our Southwestern Writers Collection. Mr. McCarthy is often called the greatest living American author, having won the Pulitzer Prize for *The Road* and the National Book Award for *All the Pretty Horses*. The movie *No Country for Old Men*, based on his book by that title, is nominated for an Academy Award for Best Picture.

Also, in the Southwestern Writers Collection area in the Alkek Library, we have dedicated a room to memorabilia from *Lonesome Dove*. Because *Lonesome Dove* is the most popular portion of the Collection, we are delighted to have a permanent space for it so that visitors can see it anytime.

Student athletics fee

Our students overwhelmingly passed a referendum on increasing their athletics fee to support Bobcat athletics for a possible move to the Football Bowl Subdivision (formerly Division I-A) in four years. The vote was 4 to 1 in the largest voter turnout ever for a student election. The measure was subsequently approved by the Board of Regents. The approvals will allow the fee to increase by \$10 per semester credit hour in \$2 increments over five years. The fee will eventually double the fall 2008 fee of \$10 per semester credit hour, and by 2013 students will be providing more than \$10 million a year to support athletics.

This shows a tremendous excitement about the future of Bobcat athletics and provides an excellent example for us in raising funds from other sources. It is one of the first “benchmarks” that the Athletics Strategic Planning Committee recommended in its recent report.

Economic impact

We have recently released a new Economic Impact Study exploring the Texas State’s economic impact on Hays County, on our region and on the State of Texas. Based on data from the fiscal year ending on Aug. 31, 2006, that study concluded that Texas State has a \$545 million annual economic impact on Hays County, a three quarter of a billion dollar annual impact (\$749 million) on our region, and nearly a billion dollar annual impact (\$960 million) on the state of Texas. This translates into an employment impact of 9,314 jobs in Hays County, 11,530 jobs in our region and 13,847 jobs in Texas. You already know the impact we have on the lives and the futures of our students, but we are also proud of this additional kind of value that we provide.

Lots of students

Our record spring enrollment after the 12th class day is 26,501, an increase of 2.4 percent over last spring (fall was 28,121). Undergraduates increased 2.2 percent and graduates 7 percent. Diversity among the student population increased to 30.2 percent, compared to 28.3 percent last spring. Hispanic students now comprise 22.8 percent of the undergraduate enrollment, and African-American students 5.3 percent. We are making steady progress toward our goal of becoming a Hispanic Serving Institution (Twenty-five percent of undergraduates must be Hispanic for a university to be designated Hispanic Serving).



Construction

We currently have \$288 million in active projects in the programming, design or construction phase. Cranes and construction fences are common on campus. We are building a major addition to the Student Recreation Center and a parking garage on the west part of campus, along with sidewalks paralleling Sessom Drive.

We are also removing Concho Street between Falls-Sterry and Butler-Lantana halls and replacing it with green space. This is the first “gray-to-green” project in our Campus Master Plan’s goal of replacing asphalt with grass and sidewalks. Our campus is much too pretty to hide under asphalt!

A major facility in the design stage is the Undergraduate Academic Center, which will sit across the street from the Episcopal Church and Jones Cafeteria. Funding for this building (\$45 million) and the nursing building in Round Rock (\$36 million) was made possible by legislative action in the last session. We expect to break ground on both of those facilities next fall.

Engineering

We have received approval for our electrical engineering program from the Coordinating Board. We have finished out the fifth floor of the Roy F. and Joann Cole Mitte Complex to house the program, and we have hired a director for it – Dr. Harold Stern from the University of Alabama. We are recruiting faculty now and will begin classes in the fall. This means that the Ingram School of Engineering is off to a good start.

LBJ Centennial

We are working collaboratively with the LBJ Library and Museum, the LBJ School of Public Affairs, the LBJ Foundation, the Lady Bird Wildflower Center, and the LBJ state and national parks to host events for the LBJ Centennial in 2008-09. Our celebration will be planned under the umbrella of our Common Experience, a theme chosen by the university every year to focus debate, speakers, exhibits, and fine arts performances for that year. The theme for 2008-09 will be “Civic Responsibility and the Legacy of LBJ.”

We will launch the Centennial celebration with three events in August 2008 – the LBJ Picnic that welcomes all faculty and staff to the new academic year, the New Student Convocation that welcomes new freshmen and transfer students, and the LBJ Student Picnic for all students.

You will hear more about this celebration as planning progresses.

Forensic research facility

Freeman Ranch will be the location of our new Forensic Research Facility, a five-acre open-air lab where forensic anthropologists will study decomposing bodies. The acreage will be surrounded by high-security fencing and located at least one mile from all properties bordering the ranch. Within it, human bodies that have been donated to the facility will be allowed to decompose in a natural environment.



The facility, an integral part of a graduate program in forensic anthropology, will train scientists and assist law enforcement officials in establishing the time and nature of death when bodies are found. It will also provide training in the identification of skeletal and dental remains. During the first several years of operation, there will be no more than five or six bodies at the facility at any one time. Netting and fencing will keep intruders out of the facility, including scavengers and predators such as vultures and coyotes.

The facility at the ranch is the only one like it in the South or West and only the third in the country. Others are located in Tennessee and North Carolina.

Recent grants

Grant activity has mushroomed at the university in recent years. Our faculty is engaging in a wide range of research. Some examples of recent large grants are:

- Mr. Andrew Sansom and Mr. Eric Mendelman, both of the River Systems Institute, received another year of funding of \$699,996 from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality for the project Texas Watch, a network of trained volunteers and supportive partners working to gather information about the natural resources of Texas and to ensure the information is available to all Texans. Established in 1991, Texas Watch is administered through a cooperative partnership among Texas State University, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
- Mr. Frank Contreras and the Center of Migrant Education received \$597,370 from the U.S. Department of Education for projects designed to help ensure that migrant children have the opportunity to meet the same challenging content and achievement standards that all children are expected to meet and graduate from high school prepared to successfully transition to postsecondary education or employment.
- Mr. Larry Lucero, Texas State Small Business Development Center (SBDC), received \$463,724 from the Small Business Development Center at the University of Texas at San Antonio to support the SBDC for another year in its efforts to counsel and train small business owners and managers in dealing with financial, marketing, production, organizational, engineering, technical, and other problems. Clients are also assisted in developing feasibility studies, business plans, cash flows, and financial statements through one-on-one counseling.
- Mr. Dave Williams, Center for Safe Communities and Schools, received another year of funding of \$450,000 from the Office of the Governor to support the Center for Safe Communities and Schools, which promotes help and healing for crime victims, provides safe places and positive role models for young Texans, enforces laws that protect citizens, and expands training opportunities for Texas criminal justice professionals.
- Dr. Michelle Toews, Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, and Dr. Karen Brown, Center for Children and Families, received a second year of funding of \$361,065 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for their project to assist adolescent parents in



building and maintaining healthy relationships by helping them develop their personal and relationship skills. This project will train interns from a variety of disciplines at Texas State and implement the modified program with low-income, predominantly Hispanic adolescent parents.

Faculty & Students

- Dr. Donald Olson, Department of Physics, was named the university's first recipient of the Joann Cole Mitte Faculty Grant for Excellence in the fall. The competitive \$25,000 award, funded by the Roy F. and Joann Cole Mitte Foundation, will support a future research project. Dr. Olson and his research team have made international news several times in recent years by applying their unique brand of "forensic astronomy" to various historical questions and events. Previous reports have included the accurate prediction of the appearance of elusive moonbows in Yosemite National Park; the linking of Edvard Munch's iconic painting "The Scream" with the cataclysmic eruption of Krakatoa in 1883; the identification of the star seen in Act 1 of Shakespeare's "Hamlet" as Tycho Brahe's supernova of 1572; the calculation of a new date for the legendary Battle of Marathon in 490 B.C. and the ensuing run across Greece that inspired the long-distance race that bears its name today; the location of the exact time and place Ansel Adams took the photograph "Autumn Moon, The High Sierra from Glacier Point" and the unearthing of a long-lost Adams photograph in the process; and shedding light on the circumstances surrounding several paintings by the Dutch master Vincent van Gogh.
- Dr. Jian Shen, Department of Mathematics, was named a Kavli Frontiers Fellow by the National Academy of Science and invited to participate in the Kavli Frontiers of Science Symposium in the fall, the academy's premiere activity to train young scientists to be future leaders in the field. He was one of only two Texans invited.
- *Final Conversations: Helping the Living and the Dying Talk to Each Other* by Dr. Maureen Keeley, Department of Communication Studies, has been named Book of the Year 2007 in the consumer health category by the *American Journal of Nursing*.
- Dr. Wayne Sorensen, School of Health Administration, has been named recipient of one of two American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE) 2008 Gold Medal Awards, the highest award given by the ACHE.
- Student-athlete Mr. Nick Clark was named one of 15 National Scholar Athletes and a finalist for the Draddy Award by the National Football Foundation, the so-called Academic Heisman. This honor included a \$15,000 scholarship. Clark was also named to the 2007 CoSIDA/ESPN The Magazine Academic All-America Football Second Team, one of only four players from Texas to earn Academic All-America honors in the University Division, which includes players from all FCS and FBS subdivision teams. Clark, who earned his baccalaureate degree in mathematics last May and is currently pursuing a master's degree in physics, was voted the Southland Conference Student-Athlete of the Year in football.



- The six-year graduation rate for Texas State student-athletes is better than any other NCAA Division I public university in Texas.
- In November, our Mariachi Nueva Generacion placed first at the annual Mariachi Vargas Extravaganza in San Antonio. This is the second consecutive year that we have won this competition. This competition is well known for setting the standard for mariachi ensembles nationally.

Texas State is truly the rising STAR of Texas. We are moving ahead boldly and confidently to meet the requirements of a burgeoning state economy, population and industries and to provide our nation with tomorrow's skilled professionals. We are grateful that you share our common vision. I will keep you regularly informed of our progress.