INSIDE

Students Inspired by Presidential Inauguration

Returning Veterans Cope with Life After War

International Students Find Home at Island University

CREATING THE STUDENT COMMUNITY
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a robust history of the community’s engagement in our development and expansion. We see evidence of this generous commitment in our facilities, our programs, our faculty and our students. Building upon the well-being of the University opens additional opportunities for many individuals to step forward and provide private support which helps Texas A&M-Corpus Christi fund essential services that cannot be accommodated through state dollars and tuition revenues.

**MEMBER BENEFITS**

Membership in the President’s Council places you among individuals who continually focus their efforts on the vitality of Texas A&M-Corpus Christi. You are both an advisor and a friend to the University. Throughout the year we have many events and activities in which you have the opportunity to meet with fellow President’s Council members. We greatly appreciate the support of this devoted group and ensure ample recognition.

For more information about the President’s Council or other opportunities, please fill out the self-addressed, postage paid card attached in this magazine.

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi • 6300 Ocean Drive, Unit 5741 Corpus Christi, Texas 78412-5741 • (361) 825-2420

The President’s Council has grown to become our most prestigious private giving society. It is part of the annual giving program, and is rich in tradition. Members of the President’s Council support the Presidential Scholars program, the highest-level scholarship awarded to our best and brightest students. Funds also are used for numerous annual activities and programs implemented through the President’s Office which further build upon community engagement.

As a member of the President’s Council, you become our partner in progress, because your support helps guide us toward the many milestones we will reach.

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**Community Support**

**Faculty & Administration**

**ISLANDER ATHLETICS**

**Schedules & Tournaments**

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The quality of America’s universities is measured by many standards. But whether the focus is on business, science, education, health sciences, the liberal arts or other fields, the livelihood of any institution of higher learning is its students.

This is certainly true at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi where our enrollment is now more than 9,000 students. With the development of land donated by the City of Corpus Christi, our enrollment capacity now grows to 16,000 students. And, while the Coastal Bend will always be the bedrock of our student community, the increase in students from across Texas and other states and counties, brings diversity to our campus that enhances the learning experience in and out of the classroom.

Every semester, more students from the state’s major metropolitan areas discover the coastal beauty of the nation’s only university located on its own island. Our percentage of out-of-state and international students also continues to climb, broadening the campus culture and expanding the exchange of ideas and opinions in-and-out of the classrooms.

But it is the academic excellence of our faculty and programs that make the Island University a logical choice for high school graduates and graduate students looking to further their education and gain the skills necessary to succeed in an increasingly competitive world. Our students learn from faculty engaged in cutting-edge research, and with a student-to-teacher ratio of 19-to-1, they receive a personalized approach to teaching from highly accomplished faculty, 90 percent of whom hold the highest degree in their fields.

Among our latest academic accomplishments is the creation of an interdisciplinary program in marine biology at the master’s and doctoral level, the first of its kind in any state adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico. We also now offer a master’s program in Geospatial Surveying Engineering and a Master of Science in Kinesiology program. In fall 2009, the University will begin offering a Master of Arts in Communication. And perhaps most exciting, in January, the Texas A&M System Board of Regents approved the bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering. The decision for the program that could begin in fall 2009, now rests with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Texas A&M-Corpus Christi is also positioning itself for a role as a doctoral institution that is recognized as an academic leader in Texas.

But without highly-qualified and motivated students from diverse backgrounds, it would all be for naught. Today’s college students are the future of the nation and the world. They are also the future of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

The Islander is produced in fall and spring by the Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Office of Marketing & Communications, part of the Division of Institutional Advancement. Content in the magazine is designed to enlighten the University’s alumni and friends on A&M-Corpus Christi’s people, programs and activities. Comments and editorial ideas should be sent to: The Islander (c/o Office of Marketing & Communications Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi) 6300 Ocean Drive, Unit 5726 Corpus Christi, Texas 78412-5726

ON THE COVER

Today’s Islander is a mix of experiences, lifestyles and cultures supported by University life.

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COMMUNITY SUPPORT

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION GRANT PAVES THE WAY FOR STEM STUDENTS
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has received a $1.75 million two-year, Title V College Cost Reduction and Access Act grant from the Department of Education to increase the number of transfer and first-year college students, especially Hispanics, obtaining degrees in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). The grant runs through Sept. 30, 2010. In addition, the grant will expand the quality of classroom instruction through enrichment experiences. Funds will be used to create a STEM Center on campus to provide academic support services. The Title V/Title III Department comprises four distinct programs that offer intensive services to students resulting in academic success—the Title V Cooperative Grant, the Upward Bound program, the Student Support Services program and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board GO-Centers.

STORM SCHOLARSHIPS TO BE OFFERED AT TAMU-CORPUS CHRISTI
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has received a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant that will provide $5,000 scholarships for 12 incoming freshmen who are committed to a career in computer science or mathematics.

The "Attacking the Gathering Storm in Computer Sciences and Mathematics" (STORM) scholarships are part of the University's Scholarships in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (S-STEM) project. The scholarships could provide recipients with a total of $20,000 over four years.

The grant has several special features to help the STORM scholars succeed including faculty and peer mentoring, academic advising and assistance, career services and counseling, professional and development activities, and research internships. In addition to receiving free laptop computers, selected students also receive priority consideration for undergraduate research fellowships.

GARCIA ARTS & EDUCATION CENTER RECEIVES FAMILY SUPPORT GRANT
The Antonio E. Garcia Arts & Education Center has received a $178,000 grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to provide family support services to Coastal Bend families through the Life Enhancement & Academic Direction (LEAD) Program. LEAD is a three-pronged intervention program to combat the high rates of school dropout, alcohol and drug abuse, lack of parental involvement, and victimization of at-risk and/or adjudicated youth in the Corpus Christi area. The program focuses on family connectivity, healthy interactions and academic success. All components are completely staffed by College of Education graduate students.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

“Chair”-ish the Performing Arts Center
A new opportunity to show your support for the Performing Arts Center has been established. You now have the opportunity to dedicate a chair in this beautiful campus venue. For a donation of $250, a plaque (actual size 1.5” x 3”) honoring the individual or organization of your choice will be permanently affixed to the arm of each seat that you dedicate.*

The first plaque has been dedicated in memory of Irene Hajek by Terry and Andrea Hajek and Linda and Gordon Lindenthal. It is fitting that Gordon, the architect of the Performing Arts Center, donated funds for the initial dedication.

Please contact Dr. Lari Young, Director of the PAC, at lari.young@tamucc.edu or the Development Office at (361) 625-2430 to secure a chair at the Performing Arts Center to honor a friend or loved one.

*This is not the purchase of a seat option or license, and does not guarantee that particular seat will be available to you for any concert or event.

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ROTFUNDATION AWARDS
PIKER WITH WORLD PEACE FELLOWSHIP
The Rotary Foundation has awarded a 2009 World Peace Fellowship to Dr. Andy Piker as part of the Rotary Centers for International Studies program and conflict resolution training. As an associate professor in the College of Liberal Arts, he will attend the International Rotary Conference in Bangkok, Thailand, in summer 2009. The program was established by the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International in 2004, and focuses on conflict resolution training.

FERNANDEZ RECEIVES OUTSTANDING MAESTRO AWARD
Dr. John Fernandez, chair of the Department of Computing Sciences, was the 2008 recipient of the “Outstanding MAESTRO Award” presented by the Society of Mexican American Engineers and Scientists (MAES) for his contributions to the Hispanic community. The “Outstanding MAESTRO Award” recognizes individuals for their proactive and supporting efforts to increase the number of Latinx students completing high school and continuing on to college to pursue undergraduate and graduate degrees.

WAHL RECEIVES TSCA 2008 EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR AWARD
Dr. Shawn Wahl, associate professor in the Department of Communication and Theatre, was the recipient of the 2008 University Educator of the Year Award presented by the Texas Speech Communication Association (TSCA). The University Educator of the Year Award recognizes individuals for their excellence in teaching as evidenced by students and colleagues.

WOOSTER NAMED TEXAS A&M SYSTEM REGENTS PROFESSOR
History Professor Robert Wooster was named a 2008 Regents Professor by the Texas A&M System Board of Regents. Dr. Wooster, one of 12 professors within the system to receive the designation, was nominated by University President/CEO Flavius Killebrew. He received a $9,000 stipend, a commemorative medallion and a certificate in his honor.

KILLEBREWELECTED TO SERVE ON THREE BOARDS
University President/CEO Flavius Killebrew is serving a three-year term on the board of directors for the Washington, D.C.-based American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU). AASCU is the leadership association of 430 public colleges and universities. With more than 3 million students, these institutions fulfill the expectations of a public university by working for the public good through education, stewardship and engagement in their community and their state.

In September 2008, Dr. Killebrew was elected to a three-year term as chairman of the board of the Texas International Education Consortium (TIEC). Killebrew will preside over the annual TIEC meeting and the quarterly executive committee meeting.

Killebrew has also been appointed to the Governing Board of The Texas A&M University System Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (TAMUS LSAMP) program. The LSAMP program plays an important role in enhancing retention and degree completion for underrepresented minorities in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

LUNAHONORED AS 2008 TETA UNIVERSITY EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR
J. Don Luna, chair of the Department of Communication and Theatre, was honored as the 2008 University Educator of the Year by the Texas Educational Theatre Association (TETA). Luna, who is also a professor of communication and theatre, was recognized for his achievements and contributions to educational theatre. He has been a member of the Texas A&M-Corpus Christi faculty since fall 1994, and in his 25 years of stage experience, has directed and acted in scores of plays and has had starring roles in multiple film and television projects.

CHENAUX RECOGNIZED FOR SUPPORT OF SKILLSUSA
Dr. Elliot Chenaux, vice president for Student Affairs, was presented with a plaque and an official red jacket for his support of Texas SkillUSA during the District 12 Conference last October at the University. Texas SkillUSA is a non-profit youth organization that facilitates trade and industrial education and involves nearly 13,500 student and professional members participating in high school trade and industrial programs.

YOUNGAPPOINTED TO CITY’S ARTS AND CULTURAL COMMISSION
Dr. Lari Diane Young, director of the Performing Arts Center, was appointed by the Corpus Christi City Council in September 2008 to serve a three-year term as the education and youth representative on the city’s Arts and Cultural Commission. The commission promotes the development of the community’s visual and performing arts organizations and encourages the creative development of local artists.

HERNANDEZ NAMED DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
Dr. Arthur E. Hernandez became dean of the College of Education on March 1. As dean, he supervises academic, faculty and student affairs for the College of Education. He also oversees the Early Childhood Development Center, University Preparatory High School, Antonio E. Garcia Arts & Education Center, and the college’s bachelors, masters, and doctoral programs.

Before becoming one of the HRI’s endowed faculty, Yoskowitz worked as a professor of economics in the College of Business, where he continues to teach three courses per semester. As head of HRI’s Socio-Economics Department, he works to connect the ecosystem back to human well-being and studies the benefits that humans receive from nature.

His research and policy work have centered on environmental, ecological and natural resource economics and microeconomic development and border economics. He has conducted extensive work in the area of water markets and allocation mechanisms. He is currently co-leading an effort to inventory and value ecosystem services in the Gulf of Mexico region as well as to develop a better understanding of the interaction of the Gulf of Mexico economies.

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Islanders to Host Conference Tennis, Baseball Tournaments

Corpus Christi will become “Title Town” this spring as the Islanders host the Southland Conference Championships in tennis and baseball. The top eight teams in both men’s and women’s tennis will head to the Coastal Bend for the tournaments April 24-26. Matches will be played at the HEB Tennis Center. The champion of both the men’s and women’s tournament automatically advance to NCAA Tournaments.

In baseball, the top eight teams from the Southland Conference will converge on the Coastal Bend in late May. The double-elimination tournament will be held at Whataburger Field May 20-23. The winner receives an automatic bid to the NCAA Regional Tournaments. For more information, contact the Intercollegiate Athletics Office at 361.825.2255 (BALL) or go to: www.goislanders.com

Intramural Sports Offer Fun, Flexibility and Fitness

Jay Garcia doesn’t let a full course load, a campus job and applying to graduate school stand in the way of staying in shape.

Since fall 2003, the senior marketing major has kept fit—with many different options—while making his studies top priority. He participates in a variety of campus intramural sports offered by the intramural sports office.

"I really look forward to the physical activity," says Garcia, who played varsity sports at South San Antonio High School. "Intramural sports are more carefree than official team sports, which can come down to hours of practice. With intramural sports, you choose when you want to play." Garcia has also made lasting friendships through intramural sports, which offer men’s and women’s co-ed teams.

"If you can’t make it to a game, you can have one of your friends substitute," Garcia explains. "The sport is more fun when you are playing against your friends."

Intramural Sports offers nearly 20 intramural sports this semester ranging from table tennis and Nintendo Wii to badminton and 5-on-5 basketball. Each semester, around 1,000 students participate in intramural sports. With the opening of the new Dugan Wellness Center, J.R. Heffernan, coordinator for Recreational Sports, expects the number of students in intramural sports to rise.

"Intramural sports gives students a chance to get away from the classroom for a little while," says Heffernan. "The games are competitive and not as routine as lifting weights or riding a stationary bike."

Often, students sign up because they want to interact with other students, Heffernan says. If a student signs up and isn’t already on a team, he or she will be placed on a team. Most sports require a four-week commitment with 12 games if they make it into the finals.

"Everyone’s out here to have a good time," Heffernan says. "We’re not here to win a World Series. We’re here to promote a healthy option and an opportunity for students to continue their competitive nature in sports.”

SLAM DUNK SUCCESS

The name is Bond, Horace Bond. The 6’8” Islander men’s basketball player from Gary, Ind., routinely draws the toughest defense assignments and is one of the top perimeter shooters in the Southland Conference. Bond, a sophomore majoring in management in sports management, wants to play pro basketball as his favorite NBA stars Kobe Bryant, LeBron James and Kevin Garnett and work in his area of study. Last season, Islander Athletics named Bond “Most Improved Player.” This season he scored all nine games during his travels with the Islanders, he visited Canada, Florida and South Padre Island for the first time and met many new faces. At the Islander University in fall 2007, Connolly played at the College of the Strickgson in California where he was named to the All-Golden Valley Conference, All-Non-Cal and All-American teams.

STRENGTH IN THE STRIDE

Women’s cross country athlete Anne Ronoh can definitely run the distance. The sophomore named Southland Conference “Newcomer of the Year” and Women’s Cross Country Athlete of the Week also is a strong uphill runner. The Kenyan native, who is coached by Sharon Flanagan, admits she is “friendly” and enthusiastic about competitions. She speaks three languages including Swahili. To keep fit, the junior avoids junk food and runs on the beach. Living in Kenya, Ronoh was accustomed to walking everywhere she needed to go before moving to Colorado at age 21. Ronoh’s mother, a retired registered nurse, has inspired her to pursue bachelor’s and master’s degrees in nursing. When Ronoh’s not at the track, she enjoys studying, reading novels and watching Steven Seagal action movies. In November, Ronoh became the first Islander women runner to compete at the NCAA Cross Country Championship.

DRIBBLE DRIVE AND DUNK!

Growing up with four older brothers, Islander basketball player Dezirée Green had no choice but to play sports, including basketball. The DeKalb, Ill. junior credits her sister, Shana, for her academic strength. The Houston Rockettes’ star shoots solid three-point baskets and is known for her defense and rebounding on the court. The Kenyan native, who plans to become a high school coach, has always been attracted to basketball game excitement. In high school, she was a four-time, all-district selection from Houston’s Westside High School and was selected honorable mention All-Texas and to the Greater Houston All-Scar game as a high school senior. As an university sophomore, Green starred in all 32 games and scored a career-high 23 points in the Conference Tournament in the second half to upset Texas State. She also was named to ESPN The Magazine Academic All-America District VI Second team.

COURT ACE CLAIMS CONFERENCE

Tennis success Lauren Monroy, who hails from Belgium, led the Islanders to an unbeaten Southland Conference during his first year at Texas A&M-Corpus Christi. The 6’4” sophomore and general business major was named the Southland Conference Freshman of the Year. Monroy also was runner-up for the Southland Conference MVP and was the No. 1 singles player for the Islanders beating Clemson in his first collegiate match. Before arriving at the Islanders, Monroy, who speaks four languages, practiced tennis in Chile, Austria and France. He’s known fond of the friendly Islander culture and the area’s pristine beaches and sunny weather.

SOPHOMORE HITTER DIGS TOP GRADES

Baseball is one of several intramural sports enjoyed by senior Jay Garcia and offered by Recreational Sports.
On the morning of January 21, 2009, more than a million people stood for hours in the bitter cold of Washington, D.C., to watch Barack Obama take the oath as the 46th president of the United States. Among the sea of spectators watching this historic event on the steps of the U.S. Capitol were five students from Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

The students, Gilbert Morales, Amanda Hill, Samantha Hernandez, Phillip Levasseur, and Oscar Salinas were selected to represent the University from dozens of hopefuls after submitting an essay to the Division of Student Affairs. At the time of the competition, it was not yet known who would be the next president. Each of the five brought home their own unique memories from the history-making inauguration.

Levasseur, a senior political science major, sees Obama’s election as a rejection of the media-fueled partisan politics which have burdened Americans for too long. Along with Salinas and Morales, he has formed the non-profit group “Act Now” to tutor high school students in math and encourage them to go on to college. They hope to have a pilot program established at one high school by next year that can be expanded to other area schools.

“It was an experience that has inspired him to challenge other Hispanics to become part of the political process. “I wanted to see the person who will have the world on his shoulders,” admits Levasseur, “and, when the candidate came to Corpus Christi in February 2008, was selected to introduce him at a rally in the jam-packed American Bank Center. He says Obama’s message of change struck a chord with the younger generation.”

“Every generation should be asked to give something of itself to our country. There’s a difference in the air and it’s one of hope.”

Samantha Hernandez, sophomore, political science major

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“Being in our nation’s capital for the inauguration was a moment that I will never forget. I now believe that it is possible for a Hispanic to be president.”

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For Salinas, a junior history major, his first trip to the nation’s capital was more than an opportunity to see the nation’s new commander-in-chief. “It was a real feeling, one of hope and possibility. It is a time to put aside our differences and help our fellow man. The experience has made me want to be more involved, both on campus and in the community.”

Morales, a senior history major, was already heavily involved in Obama’s presidential campaign when he wrote his essay. As a member of Nueces Students for Obama, he recruited volunteers to help with voter registration and, when the candidate came to Corpus Christi in February 2008, was selected to introduce him at a rally in the jam-packed American Bank Center. He says Obama’s message of change struck a chord with the younger generation.

“It’s about time somebody talked to us like adults,” he says. “Young people have been disenfranchised…now we know that we can do something to change the world. But we have to act together. In the last couple of years organizations on campus have begun working independently to better our community. Now, it’s time for us all to unite to build a bridge from the University to the community.”

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Samantha Hernandez, sophomore, political science major
They’re no longer in uniform but they are still fighting a war.

A few, like Keith Davis, a former Marine who was critically injured in Iraq, and Doug Gresenz, a 6’4” mountain of a Marine with tattoos decorat- ing his arms and forearms, stand out from the crowd. But most blend in with the thousands of other students who make their way across campus each day.

The camaraderie is superficial. Although they look like other students, many veterans feel like aliens. When you’ve seen your buddies die, when you’ve witnessed the devastating effects of armed conflict on innocent civilians, when you’ve lost a part of your body on a foreign battlefield, you never regain the innocence of youth.

Davis was following a lifelong dream when he joined the Marines after graduating from high school in Lumberton, Texas. He survived two tours in Iraq without a scratch, but during his third deployment his luck ran out.

On Aug. 3, 2005, Davis shot a machine gunner while on foot patrol in Ramadi. Moments later, rounds fired by an insurgent machine gunner ripped into his abdomen and shattered his left hip. Although he failed in and out of consciousness to tell his buddies in Iraq. Instead, he is pur- suing a degree in history with an eye on joining the Foreign Service after graduation. Despite his experience, he has come to love the Middle Eastern culture and hopes to return either as an employee of the State Department or the Defense Intelligence Agency. Now a decorated veteran with two Purple Hearts and two Navy/Marine Corps Achievement Medals with “V” for val- or, he is still making the transition from a military mindset to civilians.

“I’m only 25 but I feel really old when I’m in class with the other students,” admits Davis. “It’s not their fault. They just don’t have the same experiences and their opinions on so many things come from the media which has portrayed the war in such a negative light. But by talking with them, I’ve learned to be more tolerant of differing opinions and appreciate the freedom of expression and thought that we have in our country.”

Lance Cpl. Douglas Gresenz USMC once agreed. A machine gunner who saw combat on both mounted and foot patrols during the cam- paign to liberate the insurgent hotbed of Haditha, he now is following a life-long dream when he begins college at Corpus Christi.

Davis has been deeply touched by his ex- periences with Iraqi civilians, especially the children. A kinesiology major and history minor, he plans to teach and coach football at an disadvantaged Title I high school after returning to civilian life. For him, Texas A&M University- Corpus Christi is the ideal place to pursue that dream.

“I’ve never been the best student but I’m very motivated,” says Gresenz. “The classes here are focused and I can always go to my professors for some one-on-one in- struction whenever I need it. This uni- versity was the perfect choice for me.”

History professor Robert Wooster has taught many veterans throughout the years in- cluding several who have currently served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Their experiences, he points out, bring an added dimension to the classroom. “Military students are more serious than the typical student and they have the willingness and moti- vation to speak out when others may be intimidated,” Wooster says. “But, especially when it comes to the ones who’ve seen combat, it’s important to be sensitive to their needs and emotions.”

While working in the University’s Office of Veterans Affairs, Trevor Coaz, who spent a year patrolling the streets of Baghdad while in the Army, realized the need for a veteran’s support group. In fall 2008, he helped found the United Students Veterans Organization (USVO) to help former soldiers apply for their ben- efits and make the transition from military to civilian life.

“We have to remember that other students haven’t been where we’ve been, or done what we’ve done,” says Coaz. “So many things that concern them aren’t relative to us. Because of our experiences, we appreciate what other people take for granted.”

The USVO is much more than a mutual support group. With a membership of 35 and growing, it plans to work with local VFW and American Legion posts on community service projects. Members also plan to make periodic trips to Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio to visit other veterans undergoing treat- ment for trauma and rehabilitation.

“Sometimes soldiers who are hospitalized far from home just need someone to talk to, someone who understands what they’ve been through,” says Coaz. “It’s the same here on cam- pus. It’s our job not to forget what our young veterans have been through because, unfortunately, a lot of people will.”

Young Veterans Adjust to University Environment, Civilian Life

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University Meets the Needs of Veterans Seeking Educational Benefits

With the new GI Bill taking effect in August 2009, universities across the country are preparing for a wave of returning war veterans eager to take advantage of the educational benefits they earned while serving their country.

According to the Department of Defense, the number of veterans enrolled in colleges and universities will increase by about 25 percent in fall 2009 alone. At Texas A&M University- Corpus Christi, it’s esti- mated that 100 veterans will be added to the ranks of the more than 400 students, includ- ing active-duty military or their depend- ents, already receiving benefits on campus.

In addition to assisting returning military members with applying for educational benefits granted by the Post 9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Act of 2008, the Veterans Affairs Office at Texas A&M Corpus Christi is committed to recruiting, retaining and supporting both active-duty and former service members to increase diversity among the student body, faculty and staff.

The University is also adapting a Military Student Bill of Rights and participating in the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges, a consortium of colleges and universities dedicated to helping service members and their families get college degrees. Through this program, military students can take courses in their off-duty hours at no additional cost.

For more information about the Post 9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Act of 2008 and assistance with applying for benefits, call Veterans Affairs Director Lynn Perry, at 361.825.2231, or go to http://emst.tamucc.edu/vets/.

Watch the Veterans Day Ceremony at thailand.tamucc.edu/veterans/
Small Business Internships Helping Students Land the Right Job

After interviewing for several jobs following his junior year, computer science major Taylor Hucker realized that without an internship, his chances of landing the right job after graduation were slight.

“Having an ‘internship’ on your resume is important to opening doors,” says Hucker, who graduates in May. “Last year, I didn’t have an internship. Every major company that looked at my resume told me I had to find an internship before I graduate.”

To remedy that shortcoming, Hucker took advantage of the City of Corpus Christi’s Small Business Internship Program. Through matching funds, student gets paid double minimum wage or $13.10 per hour to assist in small business growth-related activities, according to Jim Needham, dean of Community Outreach. Needham says the City’s goal for the program is to create a new full-time jobs.

In August 2008, Hucker landed a position with the Ensemble Group, a local Web site design and application developer. The program is one of many internships offered through the University’s Career Services office.

“This has been a great experience,” says Hucker. “I believe it will help me find a job once I graduate.”

The same internship has advanced senior Cory Mathews’s skills from simple Web site updating to being placed on a team focusing on larger, more complex applications.

“Most companies require one to two years experience and I’ll be fortunate to have that before I graduate,” says Mathews, who also graduates in May. “This has given me real world experience.”

Grace Martin, owner of Ensemble Group, says her part-time interns have been a tremendous help to her five-employee business which caters to clients outside the city and state.

The Small Business Internships Program has also provided seniors Matt Mendez and Tanya Lopez with an exciting hands-on learning experience working for the Corpus Christ IceRays hockey team.

“Myryam Ramirez, director of Game Operations, relies on the interns to help her execute every game element, assist with corporate sponsorships and make game nights run smoothly.

“The staff here is very helpful and willing to teach us everything they know about game operations and their business in general,” says Lopez, who is studying media communications with a minor in business and has taken advantage of several internships on and off campus.

“The more people you know, the more opportunities you find,” says Mendez. “This is a good environment for me. I don’t want to be some individual than right in our own backyard. This is a great way for students to earn money, get credit and work in a positive environment.”

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“The staff here is very helpful and willing to teach us everything they know about game operations and their business in general,” says Lopez, who is studying media communications with a minor in business and has taken advantage of several internships on and off campus. “It’s the best of both worlds for me – sports and media communications.”

Mendez, a marketing major and psychology minor, enjoys the connections and friendships he has made.

“The more people you know, the more opportunities you find,” says Mendez. “This is a good environment for me. I don’t want to be somewhere I’m not happy.”

IceRays General Manager Pat Dunn notes that the program’s quality of interns has been exceptional and urges more students to seek internships with the IceRays.

“We are a nationally-known operation and there are jobs fairs offered through the league where people from all over the country apply for jobs with the IceRays,” Dunn says. “What better way for us to find talented individuals than right in our own backyard. This is a great way for students to earn money, get credit and work in a positive environment.”
With more than two dozen clubs and organiza-
tions from which to choose, students have many
opportunities to immerse themselves in campus
life. Whether their passion is politics or the liberal
arts, there are groups on campus that bring
individuals together for fellowship, educa-
tion and community service.
Increasing student awareness of the chal-
lenge facing the nation has lead to a resur-
gence of on-campus activism. Many students
contributed their time to both political parties
in the 2008 presidential campaign and, in
the local arena. The University’s Honors Students
Association and Student Environmental Ac-
tion League combined with community groups
to stage an environmental forum at which they
questioned Corpus Christi mayor and city
council candidates on local quality of life issues.
In addition, speakers of local, state and national
importance frequent lecture on campus and in
the classroom.
The Islander Cultural Alliance is the face of
the diverse student population that promotes the
unity and inclusion of all groups through mutual
respect and interaction. In addition to promoting
events such as the annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
Day Parade; Women’s History Month; Character,
History Month; Hispanic Heritage Month and
other recognized observances, the organization
champions the cause of culture and diversity,
affirming the rights of all races, gay, lesbian and
transgender students.
The Campus Activities Board sponsors events
every month of the year and Greek organiza-
tions are active in the community, especially with
projects to clean up area beaches and neighbor-
hoods. Each year, the “Islander Revue” music
and dance extravaganza, in which student or-
ganizations compete for cash prizes, is one of the
most popular events on campus.
Andrelyn Williams, a junior biomedical sci-
cence major from the Houston suburb of Katy,
takes a holistic approach to dealing with stress
and anxiety.
“About two years ago,” she says, “I was driv-
ing home from work and the tension and stress
was just so overwhelming.”
Williams, who is also a member of the tennis
team, consulted with the Counseling Center and
began to implement relaxation techniques that
she found to work.
“I have learned to take more time for myself,”
she says. “I recognize that my stress levels are not
in my control, but I can control my reactions and
manipulate my environment.”

Clockwise from left: Andrelyn Williams, a junior biomedical science major from Katy, Texas, completes an assignment. Marshall Burns, a psychology major from Seguin, Texas, walks to class. Students participate in Culture Fest events held Nov. 15 at the University Center.
International Student
Sets a Shining Academic Example
Togrul Quliyev overcomes challenges to become a campus leader

International student Togrul Quliyev has always believed in himself. And since arriving at the Island University in fall 2005, he credits constant optimism and self-motivation for his many accomplishments.

In less than four years, Quliyev, a junior majoring in finance from the nation of Azerbaijan in southeastern Europe, has become a shining example of academic excellence.

“The president of the Student Finance Association holds a 3.9 grade point average, serves as business senator of the Student Government Association and is in the University’s Honors Program. In the community, Quliyev works as a financial advisor assistant.”

“One of my biggest challenges was starting a new life away from friends and family,” explains Quliyev, who is on track to graduate in May 2010. “And I wasn’t fluent in English, so I had some difficulty in communicating with others.”

Quliyev has also adjusted to living in a society with more liberal views; whereas in Azerbaijan, he was accustomed to more conservative values. Because people in his native country dress and act more formally, he had to get used to the informal atmosphere of the United States.

When Quliyev researched universities away from home, he was immediately drawn to the idea of studying at the nation’s only university located on an island. “Being by the sea is very relaxing to me,” he says. “Even if you only have a short break between classes, you have time to enjoy the surroundings.”

“Building a global presence on campus is the focus of the University’s new Office of International Education (OIE). The OIE helps international students adjust to the unfamiliar culture while ensuring they succeed in the classroom. The OIE also oversees the Study Abroad Program, which arranges exchange programs with other universities for students and faculty who desire to study in other countries.

Bringing a global presence to university life supports student understanding of how connected we are throughout the world,” says University President and CEO Flavio Killebrew. “Our domestic students benefit greatly when exposed to diverse cultures and these experiences support the internationalization of the campus. In turn, we provide students with opportunities to enhance their education through the exploration of other countries and cultures.”

The OIE provides students with guidance and assistance with various campus offices and service providers and also engages students in campus life through international events and social activities.

Killebrew said that the creation of the OIE comes as a time when international student attendance at Texas A&M-Corpus Christi has skyrocketed. Today, more than 500 of the 9,000 students at the University are from other countries, whereas just five years ago there were only around 30 international students enrolled.

The OIE also serves the more than 180 students in the English as a Second Language International Program, a privately-owned and operated program on campus that provides intensive English training to prepare students for entrance to the University.

The OIE is located in the University Center and currently serves students representing 42 countries. The office, part of Academic Affairs, also promotes international diversity throughout the campus.

“Many of the faculty and students at the University is on the rise every semester,” says Dr. Robert Nelson, associate vice president for Academic Affairs. “Increasing an Office of International Education is crucial to the University, where these students will receive the support and opportunities they need to successfully assimilate into their new environment.”
New Campus Organization Promotes Environmental Awareness

The Islander Student Environmental Action League (SEAL) is generating public awareness in an effort to create an eco-minded student community.

The Islander SEALs formed last summer to promote environmental awareness within the University and the Coastal Bend through civic engagements. SEAL President Barbara Tharas says maintaining biodiversity to support the survival of diverse species of plants and animals is a major priority.

“Public awareness is the most important step in changing the lifestyle and culture of the student body to be more environmentally sustainable,” says Tharas, a sophomore. Last fall, the Islander SEALs had a hand in several plants-friendly projects. In September, they teamed up with the City of Corpus Christi’s Storm Water Department to place environmental warning covers on around 200 campus storm drains. The plastic disks read “Storm Water—Keep It Clean. No Dumping—Drains to Bay.” The group also launched a corralized Ward Island Clean-Up where, on a Saturday, two volunteers pick up trash along the University’s bike trail.

“Because I enjoy the outdoors, I’ve developed a compassion for protecting animals, marine life and their natural habitats,” says Tharas, an Aranmula Place native. In its formative stages, the Islander SEALs met with Life coach Flischbach, director of the Physical Plant, to discuss ways the group could assist the department.

“The concern of students have worked with our staff in different areas of campus to implement additional student recycling initiatives with guidance from the Environmental Advisory Council,” Flischbach says. Together, the Islander SEALs and the Physical Plant have added extra recycling bins for paper, aluminum cans and plastic bottles around campus. Students have also collected and transported recyclable items to drop off locations on campus.

The Islander SEALs enthusiasm and concern for the environment led Mikell Smith, a research technician in the Harre Research Institute, to join the group.

“Jumped right on board,” says Smith. “It’s a great opportunity to create a green campus initiative to which student involvement is vital.”

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS SPRING 2009

April 3 – Aug. 16, 2009
Grand Canyon: From Dream to Icon
The Art Museum of South Texas
1921 N. Shoreline Blvd.
The Grand Canyon: From Dream to Icon will explore the historic and artistic imagery of the famous landmark. The exhibition will feature paintings, photographs, drawings and prints by famous artists. Tours are given at the grand opening of the Dr. Jack and Susie Dungan Wellness Center on January 24.

April 30 – May 29, 2009
Connie Arismendi: Remedios Well
Gallery for the Arts, Texas A&M–Corpus Christi

Corpus Christi native Connie Arismendi explores ancient healing traditions through contemporary eyes in her latest exhibit titled “M'erech.” The artist is known for her installations involving the Hispanic culture. Information: 361.825.3289 or 361.825.5752.

June 5 – 27, 2009
Visual Dialogues
Islander Art Gallery, 4224 Weber Road in the Harre Center

Showcasing artwork by Texas A&M–University-Corpus Christi faculty and selected art students, “Visual Dialogues” serves as a tool to communicate and teach students about the array of creative processes and techniques used by University of Texas-A&M faculty and students. Information: 361.825.2389 or 361.825.5752.

Dr. Jack Dungan and University President Favisus Killibrew were joined by University faculty and elected officials, and members of the Dungan family at the ribbon cutting for the new $21 million Dr. Jack and Susie Dungan Wellness Center.

The Islander women’s basketball team capped off a day of celebration by defeating UT-San Antonio in the Dungan Wellness Center court in the first game played on Ward Island since the athletic program was revived in 1997.
Brandy West has photographed families, migrant farm workers and others in need at the La Puente homeless shelter in Alamosa, Colo.

“She brings warmth to the organization,” Powers says. “She does whatever needs to be done, especially in a diverse non-profit such as ours.”

Some new college graduates want to make money; some want to make a name for themselves, and some like Brandy West want to make a difference.

Not long after earning a bachelor’s degree in communications from Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi in December 2007, the San Antonio native joined AmeriCorps, a volunteer program created in 1993 for national and community service. While working as the work group coordinator for La Puente, a shelter for the homeless and impoverished in the San Luis Valley of Southern Colorado, she has put the photographic skills she learned as a student to good use.

With her camera, West has captured hundreds of images of migrant farm workers hard at work in the fields, volunteers preparing meals at the food bank, smiling children in the community garden participating in educational activities and hopeful families trying to rebuild their lives.

“I learned to focus on social issues where I could become part of the solution,” West says. “I want people to see the kind of work we do and eliminate the stereotypes people have of the homeless.”

West’s photos have caught the attention of many including Kate Powers, volunteer coordinator for La Puente who says that the images reflect the photographer’s kindness and upbeat personality.

“Brandy’s photos are amazing,” Powers says. “She definitely has an eye for photography and I know her talent will take her many places. She’s the happiest when she’s using her camera.”

And, Powers stresses, West has an outstanding work ethic which is especially important to an organization that relies on volunteers.

“BRANDY WEST

In addition to being the primary photographer for La Puente’s quarterly newsletter and photo journals, West organizes week-long volunteer trips to La Puente for universities, churches and other groups. She has also contributed her culinary skills, helping to make dinner for more than 200 people who attended the shelter’s annual Thanksgiving dinner.

West, who receives a modest stipend for working with La Puente, lives in a home with six other volunteers. After fulfilling her commitment with La Puente, West will receive the AmeriCorps Education Award, which will pay off her past and future school loans.

“Don’t mind living on less so that others can succeed,” she says. “I could be having a bad day, but knowing that there are people out there willing to donate their time and money to help humankind is reassuring.”

ALUMNA WORKS TO ELIMINATE STEREOTYPES OF THE HOMELESS

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In the global war on terrorism, there are few weapons more potent than the sharing of information. Whether it is gathered by domestic or international agencies, reliable intelligence is the key to preventing future terrorist attacks and bringing those responsible for past atrocities to jus-
H ave You Heard

Rosemary Hendricks Lawson ’62 BS Education, 12 MS Education teaches fourth grade in the Refugio, Texas, ISD. She has been teaching for 29 years and recently obtained her Online Master’s Specialization from Sam Houston State University. She is married with two children.

Lone PCCSF ’11 BS Psychology and Counseling is enjoying her fellowship from the Corpus Christi ISD after teaching for 3 years. She does volunteer work at Christus Spohn Hospital Shoreline.

Kimberly Brandl ’89 MS Curriculum and Instruction kindergarten teacher in Flour Bluff, TX, ISD Central School. Kimber has been teaching for 23 years and was named District Teacher of the Year in 2007. She has been married for 21 years to husband, Rick, and they have three sons, Jacob, 19, Jake, 16, and Jael, 15.

Josephine Garcia Martinez ’95 BS Occupational Training and Development, 1964 BBA General Business, 1965 MS Occupational Training and Development is an adjunct computer instructor for Del Mar College. She is working on doctoral studies in institutional and roleology strategies, and teaches effectiveness in working with female adult students.

Brenda Hudson ’96 BS Counseling and Guidance completed several years as a volunteer for Advocacy, Inc., where she served on the Policing and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Health Advisory Council. Brenda remains active in this community as an advocate for people with disabilities.

Bette (Davis) Williams (right) pictured with her husband, Knox, and two of their basset hounds. The Austin chapter, which also carried its largest scholarship after her.

In June 2005, Williams, a TSCPA director and current president of the West Austin Rotary Club, was the first woman in 50 years to receive the TSCPA “Mentorious Service to Public Accounting Profession” award. She is honored to receive this award, and has served in many positions in estate planning and it’s a better way for a fulfilling career as one ages.

“I love the field of estate planning. “Some of the most challenging and rewarding cases have been with clients who are about to turn 80 or 90, and we’re all growing older together. I love helping people and am able to do so through my work,” Williams says.

In 1965, Williams and Knox began showing and breeding basset hounds, including Bunch, who holds the title of top-producing sire. Although Bunch died in 1999, he has produced 74 champions and counting. Bunch Jr., an American Kennel Club champion, was also shown two years ago at Westminster Kennel Club.

Williams is a member of several national basset hound clubs and is treasurer of the Austin Kennel Club.

As a result of dog breeding, I have made friends in Australia, Switzerland, Thailand, Brazil, andMexico and love traveling all around the country,” she says.

Williams received her bachelor’s degree in home economics at the University of Texas in 1960 and then entered in breed shows in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi. Williams is a member of several second-generation clubs.

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Williams is a member of several second-generation clubs.
She and her husband celebrated their 50th anniversary in Feb. 17, and they have a 3-year-old son.

Tamara Alston ’86 BS Nursing received a master’s degree in instructional technology from Texas A&M University-Kingsville and recently submitted her application for the online doctoral degree in the Educational Leadership program.

Channel Coast ’96 Education interdisciplinary teacher in the Early Head Start Program in Houston, Texas, area. She will receive her ma- 

ters’ degree in early childhood education in May. She has a 2-year-old son.

Alagaili Hutchins ’96 BBA Accounting is an accountant for a family-owned Michaels landscaping company and was featured in the 2008 Ban-

ner Homes and Gardens magazine.

John Purcell ’79 BBA Education interdisciplinary-

ly lives in Houston, Texas, with his wife, Connie. He is a third-grade teacher for the Fort Bend IBD and is working on his second year in administra-

tional administration from Lamar University.

Cayson Moore ’17 BBA Education Interdiscipli-

arily is employed at Synergy Learning Center. She married James Williams in May 2007 and they have a 2-year-old daughter.

Jessica Garza ’03 BA Psychology was in Orange County, Calif., Probation Department in 2007 after serving

as a parole officer for 15 years. He retired from the Orange County, Calif., Police Department.

Cecilia Gamez ’08 BBA Criminal Justice is in

the Social Security Administration in Washington, D.C.

Dwain Valadez ’83 BSA Secondary education interdisciplinary is a teacher for Del Mar College. She per-

formed in her senior year at Corpus Christi High School.

Joshua Machicek ’06 BS Biology is a contingency planning analyst with Tesoro in La Porte, Texas. He lives in Norfolk, Virginia, with his wife, Christine, and their two children.

Jennifer Tajchman ’08 BA Psychology works as a family-based safety specialist for the Department of Family and Protective Services in Corpus Christi.

Young alumni enjoy eating shrimp at the Alumni Shrimp Boil held during Homecoming 2000 before the Islander Shrimp bowl.

Stacy Brown ’94 BA English is a self-employed

English teacher. She teaches in the College of Fine Arts at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

Cecilia Gamez ’08 BBA Criminal Justice is in

the Social Security Administration in Washington, D.C.

Jennifer Tajchman ’08 BA Psychology works as a family-based safety specialist for the Department of Family and Protective Services in Corpus Christi.

Many recent grads turned out for the food and fun at the Alumni Shrimp Boil held during Homecoming 2000 before the Islander Shrimp bowl.

ERIN PATTON ’15 CRIMINAL JUSTICE is the offi-

cially acting in the Corpus Christi, Texas, Police Department.

Sara Geissler ’06 BSIS Interdisciplinary Study is an account manager with Warner Chilcott Drug Company in Waco, Texas.

Valerie Kline ’06 BA History is working on her master’s degree in environmental studies in Sitka, Alaska, and is expected to complete by spring 2010.

Alex Sadowski ’16 BA Political Science and Communication is a graduate assistant in the Center for Civic Engagement at the University of Illinois at Springfield. He received a B.A. in Communication from the University of Scranton and is working on his Master’s in Political Science.

Many recent grads turned out for the food and fun at the Alumni Shrimp Boil held during Homecoming 2000 before the Islander Shrimp bowl.

Laurie Ciminelli ’06 BSN Nursing is a board (

her husband welcomed their first child, a girl, in December 2007 and are expecting a second child in October.

Juliette Chaun-Nance ’12 BA Music is the di- 

rector of bands and music programs at the School of Excellence in San Antonio, Texas. She gave birth to her first child, a boy, in March 2009.

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Many recent grads turned out for the food and fun at the Alumni Shrimp Boil held during Homecoming 2000 before the Islander Shrimp bowl.
Stephanie Rose Salinas ’06 BS Biology received her master’s degree in counseling from Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi in December 2008 and is pursuing her healthcare administration certification from the College of Nursing and Health Sciences. She is getting married in April.

Sai Ajay K. Garimella ’07 MS Computer Science is a programmer/business systems analyst at KPMG in New Jersey.

Ali McKenzie ’07 BS Geographic Information Science is working on a master’s degree in geospatial surveying science at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. She also works at the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies Coastal and Marine Geospatial Lab.

Jennifer Shroyer ’07 BS Biology teaches at Holmes High School in San Antonio, Texas. Jennifer was awarded the First Year Educator of the Year Award and has been nominated for the HEB Excellence in Education award.

Derrick Chait ’08 BS Computer Science works in the Information Technology Department at ExxonMobil in Houston, Texas, as a server operations specialist in the Baytown Refinery and Chemical Plant.

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