INSIDE

Waters Around University Receive Clean Bill of Health

University Receives New Lands from City

New Tool Measures Toxins in Marine Mud

IMPROVING HEALTH IN THE COASTAL BEND
Creating a scholarship endowment is one way to ensure your contribution will remain in perpetuity to support higher education and to help the University remain competitive in attracting the brightest students.

In recognition of donors making significant contributions to endowed scholarships, the University established the Endowed Scholarship Council. Donors with cumulative gifts to endowed scholarship funds of $50,000 or more are inducted into the Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Endowed Scholarship Council and recognized at the annual Endowed Scholarship Banquet.

For more information on ways you can support scholarships or establish an endowed scholarship fund, please contact the Office of Development at (361) 825-2420.
Our Focus on Health, Wellness

There’s a time-proven saying that “without your health, you have nothing.” That adage is as true for the Texas Coastal Bend as it is for the individual people who live and work in our community.

At Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, “health” is an all-encompassing concept which recognizes that the prosperity of the region is dependent on many factors, including the environment, a high quality of life, and the ability of students to receive a high-quality education.

Any programs designed to improve the overall health of a community must place a strong emphasis on education. That’s why, through research, volunteerism and partnerships with business, our faculty and students are making a discernable impact that will help assure that the future holds the same promise for all Coastal Bend residents as it does for the Island University.

The most high profile problem facing South Texas and the entire nation is the shortage of teaching faculty and facilities to turn out new healthcare workers. To help meet this crisis, the University’s College of Nursing and Health Sciences employs the latest educational tools, including Web-based courses and virtual learning laboratories. As a result, in four years, the nursing program has expanded from 400 students to more than 1,250 and is projected to enroll 1,400 nursing majors by 2010.

Our nursing students go into the community to stress preventative medicine, through free health fairs that focus on such areas as diabetes and high blood pressure by providing free glucose screenings and blood pressure checks. At the same time, they stress the importance of nutrition and exercise.

In the coastal sciences, Dr. Marion Nipper is developing a tool to measure the toxicity of chemical pollution and the status of the organisms inhabiting the sediment through a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) grant to insure the cleanliness and health of the United States’ coastlines. And the University’s Pollution Prevention Partnership is retrofitting more than 150 school buses with diesel oxidation catalysts and closed crankcase filtration systems that reduce emissions of air pollutants, allowing passengers to breathe cleaner air.

Our outreach in health education is broad, and we’ve touched the lives of thousands. It’s all part of giving back to the greater community, because we believe in maintaining a high quality of life. And we have the people who can help.

The Islander is produced in fall and spring by the Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Division of Institutional Advancement. Editorial and visual 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 suggestions 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: Dr. Bunny Forgione, associate professor, with students from the University’s College of Nursing and Health Sciences.
GREETINGS ALUMNI

At times we are called upon to give our best effort when it seems nobody is keeping score. This is what I am asking you to do as alumni. When you receive that invitation to participate in alumni events and causes, make the decision to get involved, no matter what. Can you believe there are more than 16,000 alumni in the local area? Let’s show our strength and numbers as we come out to Islander basketball games, shrimp boils and other events. Go to our alumni Web site at www.IslanderNetwork.com and let us know the types of events you are most interested in attending. Let us know if you are interested in starting a club made up of your colleagues in a field of study, fraternity, sorority, professional club or work group. This is your alumni association working for you.

Evon English
Director of Alumni Relations
6300 Ocean Dr, USC 101
Corpus Christi, TX 78412
361.825.5787 or toll free 1.877.482.6822
Evon.English@island.tamucc.edu

HAVE YOU HEARD

Lillie Hebert Hinojosa ’68 BS Elementary Education is currently living in Chula Vista, Calif., as a kindergarten teacher. She is just in love with our school and loves giving back to A&M-CC. Lillie also enjoys receiving mailings from us to stay updated.

Adolfo Gutierrez ’78 BBA Business Administration is owner of Adgtax Inc. in San Antonio. His hobbies include horseback riding, jogging, reading and working.

Diego Peris ’84 BBA Finance is an information technology and business consultant of Diego A Peris S in Caracas, Venezuela. His hobbies include bicycling, sailing, aerobics and soccer.

Rev. Mifflin Dove, Jr. ’89 BBA Accounting is Rector/Priest for the St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Katy.

Ramon Ramirez, Jr. ’91 BA Art is an art teacher and cartoonist for the Fine Arts Department of Smartly Cartoons in Edinburg. His hobbies include cartooning, traveling and photography.

Jeff Martin ’92 BS Mathematics is a development manager for Server Beach in San Antonio.

June Smith ’97 BA Art is a financial services representative for the New York Life Insurance Company in San Antonio. She is also president of the A&M- Corpus Christi Alumni San Antonio Club.

Rodney Buckwalter ’98 BA Communications is a manager with First Data Corporation in Corpus Christi.

Shawn Dupont ’98 BA History is owner of Dupont Cabinetry and Design in San Marcos.

Che Goff ’98 BBA Finance is assistant vice president of commercial lending for Frost National Bank in Corpus Christi.

Jennifer Smith ’98 BA English works at Laurelynn’s Jewelry Box in Houston.

Rosa Valdez ’98 BA Sociology is the marketing sales representative for TIBH Industries, employment initiatives for the disabled people, in Corpus Christi.

Richard Nava ’99 BS Kinesiology has been a teacher and coach for the past 13 years in the Houston metro area. Recently, he accepted a new position at El Campo High School as the adaptive behavior room teacher and the head coach for the varsity boys and girls swim teams. Richard has been married to wife, Kimberly, for 17 years and has two daughters, Blythe, 14, and Jill, 9.

Todd Tisch ’99 BS Geology is project manager for PSI, environmental and geotechnical consulting in Houston. Todd is now certified to perform property condition assessments and will be starting graduate school in spring 2008, getting an MS in environmental geology from the University of Houston-Clear Lake. Todd moved to Sitges, Spain, last year.

Gilda Ramirez ’02 Ed.D. Educational Leadership is director of student services and college finances for the College of Education at A&M-Corpus Christi. Her hobbies include dancing, swimming and gardening. She was selected as the 2008 Outstanding Alumni Award recipient for the Texas A&M-Corpus Christi Alumni Association.

Pictured are (from left) Rodney Buckwalter, Larry Olivarez Jr., former Nueces County Sheriff Larry Olivarez, Octavio B. Garcia, and Noel Vella.
The Island University Celebrates 60th Birthday at Homecoming 2008

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi celebrated The Island University’s 60th birthday during the 2008 Homecoming and Parents’ Week from Monday, Jan. 28, through Saturday, Feb. 2.

The “Celebrate 60” festivities were highlighted by a Homecoming Parade through downtown Corpus Christi Saturday afternoon that led to the American Bank Center where the Islander men’s basketball team defeated Southland Conference rival University of Texas-San Antonio.

Friday night, student performers competed for cash prizes at the ever-popular Islander Revue. Saturday, following the Islander’s basketball game, “After-Game Bashes” were held at two locations. The Scott Wiggins Band entertained fans at the Water Gardens a mix of Texas country and Southern rock and blues. At the Art Museum of South Texas, the party featured the sounds of the A&M-Corpus Christi Jazz ensemble.

An estimated 35,000 students have graduated from the University since the University of Corpus Christi opened its doors in 1947. All graduates and former students from the University of Corpus Christi, Texas A&M University at Corpus Christi, Corpus Christi State University and Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi are considered to be alumni.

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Thursday, April 24
Buc Days Wild Hog Cook-Off
American Bank Center

Saturday, May 3
Buccaneer Illuminated Night Parade
Miller Buccaneer Stadium

Saturday, May 17
Commencement Ceremony
American Bank Center

www.islandernetwork.com
ISLANDER TRACK STAR BECOMES UNIVERSITY’S FIRST NATIONAL CHAMPION

In high school, running was an outlet for Shadrack Songok. It was a chance to escape the dorm at Maji Mazuri High School in Kapsabet, Kenya. He never envisioned where it would lead him.

Now in his third year at A&M-Corpus Christi, Songok has become the most accomplished athlete since the athletic program was reinstated in 1997. Last spring, Songok won the school’s first national title winning the 10,000-meter run at the NCAA Championship.

The prior year he had finished fifth in the 5,000 to earn All-America honors for the first time. He has also won back-to-back Southland Conference and NCAA South Central Region titles in cross country and earned All-America honors in cross country the last two years.

But Songok never imagined he would have this type of success.

“In high school, I competed but it was more for fun,” says Songok. “I was at a boarding school and by competing we were able to get off of the campus and go other places. It wasn’t until after high school that I got serious about running.”

Songok decided to train at the Nandi Educational and Athletic Training Center directed by former Olympic gold medalist Peter Rono. The center matches Kenyan high school graduates with strong academic records and running potential with schools in the United States. The facility has helped more than 230 Kenyans earn scholarships across the United States since 1992.

“The club motivated me to run competitively and better myself,” says Songok. “The purpose is to train as an athlete to earn a scholarship. I had a friend from the same club already in the U.S. and he told me where to look and which schools to look at.”

One of those schools was A&M-Corpus Christi and when Songok first saw the campus he was awestruck.

“Miraculous,” says Songok, who, growing up in rural Kenya had never seen the ocean. “When I first saw that the school was on an island, I was like ‘wow! It was amazing’.”

Songok’s village in Kenya is in a high altitude region as opposed the near sea-level altitude of Corpus Christi. The differences in climate and geography required him to adapt.

“The change in altitude affects your training,” points out Songok. “It gets hot where I lived in Kenya but not as hot as here. It affected my training, but the hot, humid weather also helped me because I am used to the hotter temperatures when the championship is held.”

The climate is just one of many changes Songok has experienced in his new country. His biggest challenge was that he came to the U.S. from a completely different culture.

“Where I lived the tribal culture is still strong,” says the Islander. “The social life and family relationships are different. In Kenya, the kids have a lot of respect for their parents out of a fear for them. Here it seems to be more open – almost like a brother-sister relationship.”

Another difference that Songok had to grow accustomed to was dietary.

Shadrack Songok, who is in his third year at Texas A&M-Corpus Christi, grew up in a rural village in Kenya.
“When I first came here, I didn’t know what to order when we went to eat,” he recalls. “I went with the chicken because we eat a lot of that back home where we grow our own food.”

In his apartment, Songok fixes meals consisting of rice, chicken, or beef stew. But he has branched out some since he’s been here, introducing more American fare to his diet.

“I’ve tried things like pizza and Whataburger and I am sure when I go back to Kenya I will miss those things,” admits Songok. “I know in the big cities like Nairobi or Eldoret they have things like pizza, but not in the smaller villages.”

While the adjustments have been many, Songok has been helped by having a coach who understands the changes is going through both athletically and personally.

Songok, a senior history major, has had a lifelong interest in math and science.

“When you have a coach like Coach (Shawn) Flanagan who helps you believe in yourself it makes easier to adapt and grow,” says Songok. “When I got here I never dreamed I could be a 14-minute runner in the 10,000-meter run, but coach gave me the motivation to improve.”

Running isn’t the only area where Songok has found success. He has also fared in the classroom, earning Southland Conference Student-Athlete of the Year honors in track and cross country. He was also named to the United States Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Athletic Association Academic All-America team in both sports.

Songok, who is majoring in chemistry, is following a lifelong interest in the math and sciences. Last year, he gained on-hands experience with an internship at Flint Hills Resources.

“The internship was a great experience for me,” says Songok. “I was able to see what it would be like to work in those areas on a day-to-day basis, while gaining hands-on experience.”

After completing his bachelors, Songok wants to pursue his master’s degree while continuing to compete. While chemistry is his first love, Songok knows he may have a calling in other areas.

“Kenya needs educated people and I want to go back and get a job to help people in my country. I would love to go back and start a small organization that works with kids,” he says.

But first, Songok, who is in his final track season this spring and has one cross country season left, has a few goals he would like to reach athletically.

“When I came here I never would have thought that I could compete with some of the famous runners from Kenya,” he confides. “Now I know I can run with them without fear. I want to train for the Olympics and go to the trials in the longer distances. With all of the strong runners in Kenya, the trials would be like a mini-Olympics.”
Dr. Anantha S. Babbili Named Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Dr. Anantha S. Babbili joined Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi as provost and vice president for Academic Affairs in October 2007.

Prior to coming to the Island University, Babbili spent five years as dean of the College of Mass Communication at Middle Tennessee State University. He previously served 13 years as the chair of the Department of Journalism and head of International Communication at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas. From 2000 to 2001 he also held the Rogers Chair of Studies in Journalism and New Information Technologies at the University of Western Ontario, Canada.

Babbili came to the United States from India in 1971 with a bachelor's degree in journalism and biological sciences. He received his master's degree in journalism from the University of Oklahoma in 1976 and his doctorate in mass communication from the University of Iowa University in 1981.

Babbili is the former editor of Journalism & Communication Monographs and served on the editorial boards of the Journal of Mass Media Ethics and Journalism Studies. He has participating in and conducted many research and professional projects relating to diversity in the media and internationalizing media education. A former journalist in India, Babbili has written columns on international affairs, media ethics and foreign policy for major publications.

The duties of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs include coordinating A&M-Corpus Christi's instructional, research, and service programs; implementing policies and procedures that affect the Division of Academic Affairs; upholding academic and accreditation standards; and advising the President on academic matters. The deans of the University's five colleges also report directly to the provost.
Around Campus

FINANCE, ADMINISTRATION EXEC VP LOVITT RETIRES

Robert L. Lovitt, executive vice president for finance and administration, will retire from the University in April. A nationwide search is underway for his successor.

Lovitt, who joined the University in June 2005, was responsible for the financial affairs and administrative operations at the University. He was in charge of the comptroller and accounting functions, as well as human resources, the physical plant and the campus police department, among other areas.

Lovitt worked in university finance and administrative operations for 40 years, with more than 23 of these years at Texas institutions. Prior to joining A&M-Corpus Christi, he was the senior vice president for business affairs at the University of Texas at Dallas.

“Bob has achieved many great accomplishments at A&M-Corpus Christi,” University President Flavious Killebrew says. “He has helped us in our financial and operational goals, and his work is very visible throughout the campus.”

CASSIDY RECEIVES A.B. HERR AWARD

Dr. Jack Cassidy, associate dean and professor of curriculum and instruction, has been awarded the A.B. Herr Award by the College Reading Association (CRA). The award, which has been presented annually since 1972, recognizes a professional educator who has made outstanding contributions to the field of reading. Cassidy, a former CRA president, has been involved with more than 100 national publications and has also written, edited or consulted on more than a dozen series of texts and materials for children and youth. Cassidy served as the chief architect of the College of Education’s doctorate in curriculum and instruction with an emphasis in reading. That program, now in its fourth year, has more than 40 students.

JEFFRESS CHOSEN FOR NOAA REVIEW PANEL

Dr. Gary Jeffress, director of the Blucher Institute, has accepted an invitation to serve on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) Hydrographic Services Review Panel (HSRP). The panel advises the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, the administrator of NOAA, on matters related to the nation’s hydrographic services and navigation safety information needs. The HSRP helps ensure that NOAA’s navigation services programs continue to provide timely and accurate information needed to maintain a safe, viable and environmentally sound marine transportation system.

SCHENK APPOINTED ART MUSEUM DIRECTOR

Dr. Marsha Grace, a professor in the College of Education, has received the Literacy Award from the Texas State Reading Association (TSRA) for her outstanding contributions to the promotion of reading.

Grace, who works extensively with children in area school districts and the Boys and Girls Club of Corpus Christi, designed a tutoring program that encourages life-long learning and the love of reading, writing and books for children in first through sixth grades.

NIPPER NAMED TO FulBRIGHT SENIOR SPECIALISTS PROGRAM

Dr. Marion Nipper, a senior research scientist and specialist in marine ecotology at the Center for Coastal Studies, has been accepted as a member of the Fulbright Senior Specialists Program which provides short-term academic opportunities for U.S. faculty and professionals. Nipper spent three weeks in September 2007 at Estación de Ciencias Marítimas de Toralla (ECIMAT), University of Vigo, Spain, discussing their academic and research program, giving lectures and working with faculty and graduate students on a variety of issues of common interest.

CO-CHAIRS SELECTED FOR 2008 PRESIDENT’S COUNCIL

Dee and Ted Stephens, who have supported Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi since 1993 as President’s Council members, are the 2008 President’s Council co-chairmen. The goals for President’s Council in 2008 are to raise $135,000 and to increase membership by one-third from 96 to 128 members. The Stephens also established the Dee Stephens Endowed Scholarship for nursing students in 2005.

Joseph B. Schenk has been named director of the Art Museum of South Texas, an affiliate of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

Schenk served as the director of the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, Okla., for four years where he developed a five-year plan that included extensive additions to exhibition and educational programs. From 1998 to 2004, he was director of the Mobile Museum of Art in Mobile, Ala., overseeing a $15.5 million expansion, building membership from 700 to more than 3,000 and adding thousands of works to the museum’s collection.
Oso Bay Gets **CLEAN**
Bill of Health from Marine Ecology

SHUTDOWN OF POWER PLANT MAY HAVE NEGATIVE IMPACT ON MARINE NURSERY

Analysis of water quality and marine animals collected from Oso Bay by Dr. David McKee’s Marine Ecology classes for the last 19 years continues to give one of the most unfamiliar bodies of water on the Texas Gulf Coast a clean bill of health.

This is good news for the Coastal Bend because Oso Bay is an important nursery area for many species of fish, crabs and shrimp. Without an abundance of essential habitat like sea grasses and good water quality, few of the larval marine organisms would survive and even fewer would reach maturity and spawn.

“The data we’ve collected shows Oso Bay to be a healthy and productive body of water,” says McKee. “The same kinds of organisms are represented each year in similar numbers indicating that few, if any, changes have occurred despite increasing development along the shorelines of this mostly urban bay.”

Annual monitoring of Oso Bay is necessary, says McKee, because several sewage plants discharge large volumes of treated water into Oso Bay and Oso Creek every day. Despite this, environmental quality remains high making the waters an excellent nursery for a variety of commercially and recreationally important marine species. Much of the credit, he points out, should go to the
treatment plants which effectively clean the effluent water while providing needed nutrients, current flow and circulation.

However, Oso Bay hasn’t always demonstrated such good health. Prior to the construction of the Barney Davis power plant in 1976 there was little water flow in the upper parts of the bay, salinity was lower and little sea grasses could be found. Since the power plant began operation, water has been pumped from the upper Laguna Madre to cool the electric generators before being discharged into Oso Bay. This input of water has increased current flow and circulation in the Oso, raised salinity levels and has led to an overall increase in productivity.

However, for the last several years the power plant has operated at a much reduced capacity and therefore water discharged into the Oso has been greatly decreased. Over time this could result in a decrease in productivity.

“As water discharge from the power plant decreases (or even ceases) it will become even more important to monitor the Oso Bay,” points out McKee. “The past 19 years of data we’ve collected will be irreplaceable for noting any changes.”

For a continual 24-hour period in January each year McKee’s Marine Ecology classes determine water quality and collect marine animals ranging in size from nearly microscopic to large predators like redfish and trout. Every four hours the students employ different biological collecting gears to determine the kinds of organisms present and the numbers in which they occur. Additionally, they analyze water samples by looking at such things as temperature, dissolved oxygen, salinity, pH and nutrients.

After the collections are tallied and the data analyzed, the students are required to write an extensive research paper to report their findings and to compare them to those observed over the past 19 years. Editors, many who are graduates of this class now employed as professional scientists, are utilized in this process to critique the students writing and provide guidance in reporting their results in a concise, technical format.

While the annual 24-hour study, called a “diurnal,” gives students valuable hands-on experience collecting and analyzing data as field biologists, McKee cautions that this is just a one-day glimpse into life in the Oso and one must concentrate on the trends seen in the data.

According to McKee, many factors can affect the findings. Salinity levels can be greatly elevated following a drought, and an extremely cold winter or low water levels can limit our collections in this very shallow and small body of water. A primary objective of the exercise is to allow students to pose questions and look for answers.

“Experience in technical writing is an essential skill needed by students preparing for careers in the sciences,” McKee says. “A number of our students will be hired as field biologists by state and federal agencies after graduation while others will enter graduate school and be required to conduct field research. Regardless of the path taken, data collection and analysis and technical writing are valuable tools for them to take forward during their developmental years as future scientists.”

For the past 19 years, Dr. David McKee’s Marine Ecology classes have analyzed water quality and marine animals in Oso Bay.
New tool helps measure impact of toxins on marine sediment

To learn the history of one of Texas’ coastal cities, a researcher would most likely go to the local library and look through the newspaper archives. But to discover the history of the waters on which those communities depend for economic security and recreational tourism, the answers are literally to be found in mud.

That’s where Dr. Marion Nipper comes in. In December 2007, the senior research scientist with the University’s Center for Coastal Studies received a $275,000 grant from the Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology (CICEET) to develop the Sediment Profile Imaging and Micro-sampling System, a tool to measure the health of sediments, including the toxicity of chemical pollution and the status of the community inhabiting the sediment.

The grant, awarded in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), is part of a national initiative to insure the cleanliness and health of the United States’ coastlines.

“The combined pressures of climatic change and human activity have made our coastal resources increasingly complex and difficult,” says CICEET co-director Richard Langan. “This project was selected for its potential to transform research into a practical, accessible tool that coastal water managers need to support their communities and protect the environment.”

The approximately 3-by-3-foot carousel, which was devised in partnership with Dr. Scott Carr from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), is
being built in California. It weighs approximately 400 pounds and contains a camera that, when submerged, sends real-time data back to scientists aboard ship. When completed, it will be employed to access the quality of marine sediment in four areas along the Texas coastline, Galveston, Lavaca, Corpus Christi and Aransas bays. This study will be done in partnership with Dr. Carr as well as Dr. Phil Gschwend from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Dr. Chris Reddy from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution.

“Gathering data on the health of marine sediments is extremely important because these deposits integrate the history of a body of water,” explains Nipper. “Any environmental changes, whether in chemical composition, temperature or salinity, affect animals and plants, and have a major impact on humans especially in areas with fisheries or recreational areas that depend on healthy water for their economy.”

Even changes that destroy organisms on the low end of the food web can be extremely dangerous, Nipper points out, because they set off a chain reaction. Without organisms for nourishment, fish, shrimp, lobster and other sea creatures harvested as food for humans would desert the waters. And, those that do remain, such as clams and scallops, absorb contaminants such as heavy metals and carcinogens, making them dangerous for human consumption.

However, Nipper, a native of Brazil who worked in New Zealand as an environmental scientist prior to coming to A&M-Corpus Christi 10 years ago, stresses that the situation is far from hopeless. The first step, she says, is to keep pollutants from industry, agriculture, storm water and sewage plants from entering the waters. The second is to clean the water, both through natural processes and dredging of polluted sediments.

The new submersible tool will also help cut the cost of cleaning up polluted coastal waters by helping to identify the boundaries of contaminated sites. According to Nipper, most communities faced with cleaning up contaminated sediment choose to remove the problem by dredging, which is expensive and disruptive to the environment. By using the tool to identify the boundaries of the contaminated area, the negative impacts of dredging can be reduced.

“While pollutants along the coastlines are a major concern, there is no point of no return,” she says. “If we stop dumping contaminants into our bays and remove what we can, given time, they will clean themselves up.”
Economic Reasoning Sheds Light on Health Care Related Issues

HEALTH ECONOMICS AND POLICY ONLINE GRADUATE COURSE SPARKS DISCUSSION

An elderly woman with heart disease and an otherwise healthy 30-something man are facing the same life-threatening medical condition. Although the initial reaction is to save both lives, are both lives really worth saving in terms of economic reasoning?

In a world where medical resources are scarce and more than 46 million Americans squeak by day-to-day with no health insurance, situations similar to this have sparked discussion in Dr. Adolfo Benavides’ Health Economics and Policy online graduate course.

“How ethical is it to make decisions based on dollars and cents? And who are we to quantify the value of a human life in terms of medical care? These are questions students will face in the real world,” says Benavides. “Eventually, most students come to the realization that although we are all created equal the value of human life in economic terms varies from individual to individual.”

Economics provides health care professionals with the tools to conduct microeconomic valuations of alternative forms of treatment for a given medical condition. Basically this entails the comparison of costs versus benefits and at some point the probability of recovery, the patients’ post-treatment quality of life and their ability to return to work to generate income, must be contemplated.

“This might sound harsh from a non-economic perspective,” Benavides says. “As part of this microeconomic valuation, we have to attempt to quantify the benefits and that’s where we have to put it in monetary terms and measure the productivity of these two individuals.”

In Health Economics and Policy, students come to understand both the role of economic reasoning in the analysis of health care related issues through economic models, tools and concepts, and the system of health care delivery in the United States within broad social, political and economic contexts. Last fall, the class, which Benavides has taught since 2005 to master’s of nursing students, opened to graduate students from other disciplines.

“Early in the course, many non-nursing students are surprised, if not shocked, at the nature of the health care crisis in the United States,” Benavides says. “As wealthy as the country is, we still face the problem of scarcity of resources in many areas of the economy, including medical care. That’s a reality.”

Some of the health care related issues demanding urgent attention include the aging population, the increasing use of expensive medical technology, the large numbers of uninsured, medical costs that are rising faster than costs in most other sectors of the economy, and the shortages of nurses and other health care professionals. However, Benavides explains that all these factors can all be analyzed and understood from an economic perspective.

Of all the countries in the world, Benavides says the United States spends the most on health care, around 2 trillion dollars annually. And although most of Benavides’ students realize our country’s health care system has many shortcomings, they agree that transferring a health care system from another country to the United States won’t solve the problem.

“Rather than replacing our healthcare system with what has worked with other countries, we need to reform our existing system,” Benavides says. “We don’t need to overhaul it completely, but modify it and address some of the key issues within our social, economic, cultural and public policy context.”
GROWING TOGETHER

CITY’S LAND DONATION MAKES UNIVERSITY EXPANSION A REALITY

University President Flavius Killebrew and Corpus Christi Mayor Henry Garrett put their signatures to an agreement March 10 that formally transferred around 137 acres of city land near the intersection of Ennis Joslin Road and Nile Drive to Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi for future expansion.

The city’s gift includes around 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 non-academic purposes such as athletic facilities, student housing, a physical plant and remote parking, which will create space for expansion of academics at the University campus on Ward Island.

In 1972, the citizens of Corpus Christi 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 as a home for a new state-supported university. Discussions on acquiring land for expansion began in January 2006 after President Killebrew’s State of the University address. Throughout the next year, the city and University worked hand-in-hand to find the best possible location to meet the needs of the greater community.

“This is a historic time for both the city and for Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi,” says 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.”

The University has experienced phenomenal growth since opening its doors in 1947 as a small Baptist college. More than 25 years later, the University of Corpus Christi became an upper-level institution offering courses at the junior, senior and graduate levels with an initial enrollment of 969 students. Today, the University, which joined The Texas A&M University System in 1989, has approximately 8,600 students pursuing undergraduate and graduate degrees in five colleges.

Campus expansion studies have shown that the 240-acre Ward Island site can only accommodate the people, programs and services that support around 10,000 students. The recent level of campus growth indicates that this capacity will be reached within the next few years. In the last year, construction has begun on both a new $21 million wellness center for students and employees and a $45 million, 140,000-square-foot building that will provide classrooms and labs for nursing and health science students with space for kinesiology and wellness activities.

A&M-Corpus Christi officials stress that by concentrating academic activities on the island and shifting the land usage for other units to an additional site, the University has the opportunity to serve a market potential of 16,000 students.

The land donation will pay big dividends for Corpus Christi, too. A study conducted last year by University economists estimates that for every additional 1,000 students attending A&M-Corpus Christi, $21.3 million will be funneled each year into the Coastal Bend region and another 434 new jobs created. An additional enrollment of 6,000 students translates into $140 million and 2,880 jobs.

Around 137 acres of property off Ennis Joslin Road (highlighted in green) have been donated to the University by the City of Corpus Christi for future growth.
Education of new nurses critical in solving nation’s healthcare crisis

It’s a typical Saturday night at Christus Spohn Memorial Hospital near downtown Corpus Christi, Texas. The emergency room is crowded with people waiting patiently to see a doctor, most with ailments that while painful and worrisome, are not life-threatening.

A moment later, the place comes alive with frantic activity as an ambulance arrives with a stabbing victim in critical condition. A team of nurses springs into action; assessing his wounds and checking his vital signs, making sure they are stabilized before he’s wheeled off to surgery. Hours later, the victim, his condition still critical, is taken to the intensive care unit (ICU) where nurses like Scott Richardson, monitor his status throughout the night.

“Once the patient is in the ICU it is the nurse’s responsibility to keep him alive,” says Richardson, a recent graduate of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi’s College of Nursing and Health Sciences. “We monitor the patient’s condition constantly and assess the situation. Some, like the stabbing victim, have suffered significant trauma and others are acutely ill and on ventilators. The doctors leave instructions but sometimes you have to use your own judgment to keep things under control.”

Richardson, 25, thrives on emergency situations. A former med tech and a nationally certified paramedic, he has been interested in the healthcare field since his high school days in Houston. It was while Richardson was doing his clinicals for his paramedic license that he decided to become a nurse.

“A lot of my paramedic clinicals were at the hospital, and I saw all the different roles nurses take on,” he recalls. “I’ve always loved helping people and I enjoy the science behind nursing, so it seemed like a natural choice. It’s challenging but also very fulfilling.”

As the United States faces a looming nursing shortage that, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is expected to reach crisis proportions by 2010, dedicated professionals like Richardson are in high demand. However, while some of the shortage can be attributed to the aging baby-boomer generation, the national shortage of nurses is intricately linked to a lack of nursing faculty and training facilities at universities across the nation.

Dr. Mary Jane Hamilton, dean of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences, stresses that the well-documented nursing shortage makes construction of the new building for the University’s health care programs extremely urgent.
“The College of Nursing and Health Sciences building will allow for growth and development of new programs and expansion of existing nursing programs at a time when the demand for registered nurses is exceeding the existing supply,” says Hamilton. “With the new space, innovative and creative solutions will be put into place to alleviate the shortage.”

To get nursing graduates into the workforce more quickly, the College of Nursing and Health Sciences has also instituted the groundbreaking “Fast Track” program which allows students who have already earned a bachelor of science or bachelor of arts degree to graduate with a second bachelor’s degree in 18 months instead of two years. Under the program, students take an additional clinical course in the second and third semesters for a total of 18 semester hours. Courses and clinical hours for the accelerated program are identical to the standard program with the exception of the compressed format.

The “Fast Track” program was a big factor for Richardson, who had already earned his bachelor’s degree in biology from Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, when it came to selecting a nursing program.

“The other nursing programs I looked at required two years of basic courses followed by two years of nursing classes, so the possibility of graduating in just 18 months was too good to pass up,” he says. “But, beyond that, the professors are very knowledgeable and provided a lot of close instruction that will be valuable in my career.”

Like Richardson, senior nursing major Jessica Morris, 29, was already established in another profession when she decided to make nursing her life’s work. She was employed as a law firm in Tacoma, Wash., with the goal of attending law school when she decided it was time for a change of scenery and direction. Because she loves being near water, she looked at locations along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts before selecting Corpus Christi.

“When I got here I decided to go back to college and, because my personality lends itself to healthcare, I decided to get a nursing degree,” says Morris. “Nursing is a profession that you either love or hate and there’s no limit to the growth potential. You’re always learning something new; you never stagnate.”

When not in class, Morris works part-time at Driscoll Children’s Hospital as a floater, gaining experience in all critical areas and all floors of the hospital. After graduation, she plans to work at an area hospital while obtaining her master’s degree.

That’s an option more nursing professionals are pursuing, says Kathleen Rubano, chief nursing officer for Corpus Christi Medical Center. In that capacity, she oversees more than 450 nurses working at Doctors Regional, Bay Area, Northwest Regional and Heart hospitals.

“Many nurses at our hospitals work while continuing to attend classes for their post-graduate degrees,” says Rubano. “With the nursing shortage, it’s critically important that we help the best and the brightest to further their education. The College of Nursing and Health Sciences makes it possible for them to do so without leaving the area.”

While the nursing situation in Corpus Christi is still manageable, Rubano points out that the new facilities for the College and Nursing and Health Sciences are essential to the future of the area’s healthcare industry. However, the new facilities alone won’t solve the problem completely.
The college, she says, must attract new instructors to expand the number of classes to accommodate the student demand.

“Who are very excited about the new building and the growth of the program,” says Rubano. “We usually have about 30 openings at any given time and without the College of Nursing and Health Sciences, we would not be able to meet our needs. The graduates we get from A&M-Corpus Christi are some of our best nurses and strongest leaders.”

The College of Nursing and Health Sciences, which received full accreditation from the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education in spring 2006 for its graduate and undergraduate programs, is the university’s fastest growing college. In four years, it expanded from 400 students to more than 1,250 and is projected to enroll 1,400 nursing majors by 2010.

“It is important that students who are seeking to enroll in nursing programs look for national accreditation of the program, says Dean Hamilton. “Accreditation ensures that any coursework and degrees earned will be legitimately recognized by prospective healthcare employers, graduate schools, and nursing professional organizations. Accreditation also helps us to further improve the resources and curriculum of our programs to offer the best education possible for our students and professionals seeking to advance their careers and enhance their credentials.”

State, University Officials Break Ground

$45 MILLION BUILDING WILL HOUSE KINESIOLOGY, NURSING AND HEALTH SCIENCES PROGRAMS

Elected state officials and dignitaries from The Texas A&M University System joined Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi President Flavius Killebrew in breaking ground in November for the building that will house the University's nursing and health sciences programs.

Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst and State Sen. Juan “Chuy” Hinojosa were guest speakers at the groundbreaking ceremony for the $45 million, 140,000-square-foot building that will also include space for kinesiology and wellness activities. Ceremonial dignitaries included A&M System Chancellor Michael D. McKinney, A&M System Board of Regents Chairman Bill Jones, Regent John White and State Reps. Abel Herrero, Juan Garcia and Solomon Ortiz Jr.

The College of Nursing and Health Sciences is the University's fastest-growing college. Its graduate and undergraduate programs are currently located in several buildings on campus.

“Our nursing program is expanding rapidly, and this space will allow us to continue our tradition of providing an outstanding education for our nursing students,” says Killebrew. “Consolidating our program into one state-of-the-art building also better equips the University to help address the critical need for nurses throughout Texas and the country.”

The nursing facilities will consist of offices, various-sized classrooms, computer labs, a simulated hospital ward, patient simulator laboratories, and other specialized research spaces. Other health science-related programs to be housed in the building include kinesiology and athletic training. The kinesiology area will include classrooms, computer labs, gymnasium space, large meeting spaces, cardiovascular training space and specialized labs for exercise physiology, biomechanics, and motor evaluation and development.

“The kinesiology department plans to develop a research program that will include state of the art movement labs to assess athletic performance using various modes of testing, including high-speed video capture technology,” says Randy Bonnette, chair of the kinesiology department and associate professor in the College of Education. “Having graduate assistants and other students assisting this new line of research could lead to national recognition for Texas A&M-Corpus Christi because few programs in this field, if any, exist in the nation.”
First-Generation Scholar Wong Named Honors Student of the Year

RECOGNIZED FOR VOLUNTEERISM, ACADEMICS AND LEADERSHIP

In recognition of his volunteer work, academic achievement and leadership qualities, the Texas A&M Corpus Christi sociology major and first-generation student was recognized as Honors Student of the Year for 2007 by the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC). The NCHC promotes and advances honors and similar educational programs at more than 700 American colleges and universities. The Honors Student of the Year Award is presented to one student who has made an impact on his or her honors program, and who has participated in honors on a regional and/or national level.

“I would not be able to name a more serious and dedicated student,” says Dr. Janis Haswell, director of the University’s Honors Program who nominated Wong for the award. “He is personable, considerate, and respected; a real asset to the honors program and the University.”

As the student representative to the University’s Honors Council, Wong implemented a peer mentoring group to help freshmen better transition from high school to college. And to increase the number of Asian international students at the University, he started the South and East Asian Student Association.

“We help the students adjust to a new environment and promote cultural exchange among everyone on campus,” Wong says.

At the National Student Leadership Congress held in Washington, D.C., last June, he was a volunteer counselor who oversaw 13 first-generation, low-income high school students from across the country. He used his own experience to illustrate that higher education is available, if you want it bad enough.

“I wasn’t that much older than them, but they had to listen to me,” Wong says. “I told them college was possible because I’m a first-generation student and I’m not even from the United States.”

Wong, who maintains a 3.86 cumulative grade point average, has received many scholarships and honors including the Bronze Standard Hong Kong Award for Young People in 2002. He says the kindness of his host family, friends and professors, have helped him reach his goals.

“These experiences have made me a stronger and more understanding person,” says Wong, who will graduate Spring 2008. “I want to give back to my community because the people I have met have really helped me. It’s so incredible. If they didn’t help me, I wouldn’t be here at all.”
Ethics Bowl Team Sweeps Regionals, Advances to National Competition

Teams from Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi took first and second place in a field of 16 opponents from 11 Universities at the Texas Regional Ethics Bowl in November to advance to the national competition for the 11th straight year.

The first-place team won all its matches earning A&M-Corpus Christi a spot in the national competition in San Antonio the last week in February. Combined, the three Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi entries compiled a 7-1-1 record with the Islanders’ third team finishing in a tie for the fourth best record at 2-1.

Other schools competing in the regional competition included University of the Incarnate Word, Southern Methodist University, Texas State University, Texas Wesleyan University, Texas Lutheran University and Northwest Vista University, which placed third.

Ethics Bowl debates are similar to debates with teams of students giving presentations and responding to questions on ethical issues. A moderator poses scenarios to teams of three-to-five students and a panel of judges evaluates answers based on intelligibility, focus on ethically relevant considerations, avoidance of ethical irrelevance and deliberative thoughtfulness.

This year, the teams debated topics such as the roles of the Food and Drug Administration and pharmaceutical companies in the drug approval process, the policies and practices of payday loan companies, and the ethical justifiability of charging higher tuition rates for some majors than for others.

The three A&M-Corpus Christi teams consisted of students from the Honors program and from a number of other programs. Participants were: Michael Cogan, Miranda Debord, Amanda Dillon, Lauren Fleishman, Jack Ghably, Courtney Lee, Andy Machina, Sally Morehead, Dustin O’Neal, Rebecca Pizano, Ashley Smith, Jacob Spicer and Carolyn Voigt. The Ethics Bowl coaches are philosophy professors Andy Piker and Stefan Senczuk, who were assisted by professors Don Berkich and Glenn Tiller, also from the philosophy program.

Teams from Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi have participated in all 10 of the Texas Regional Ethics Bowls and have also participated in the National Ethics Bowl in each of the last 10 years.

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Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Alumni Association
New Dugan Wellness Center Underway, Supports Student Life Needs, Employees

$21 MILLION FACILITY OPENS IN NOVEMBER

The construction of the “Dr. Jack and Susie Dugan Wellness Center” is making the Island University more competitive with other Texas universities that are attracting prospective students by stressing on-campus services in addition to academic excellence.

Funding for the $21 million center was seeded by a $1 million gift from the Dugan family. The remaining construction costs are being financed by student fees. In addition, last year, students also approved a referendum that increases usage fees to finance the cost of facility operations.

“When prospective students are looking at A&M-Corpus Christi there’s an expectation that we will have this type of facility,” says Recreational Sports Director Jacqueline Hamilton. “We’re a little behind the curve in that other campuses already have beautiful recreational facilities. But the new wellness center will have a strong impact on recruiting and retention of students, faculty and staff.”

When completed, the 67,000-square foot complex will include two regulation NCAA basketball courts, weight and cardio areas, locker rooms, including two for those with special needs, and group exercise rooms. Other support areas include laundry facilities, offices for Athletics and Recreational Sports personnel and separate public restrooms near the entrance to the building.

“These types of facilities always generate a lot of excitement among students, faculty and staff,” says Robert Lovitt, executive vice president for Finance and Administration. “In addition to what this means to the campus community as a whole, our athletics programs will benefit from having additional practice space.”

Hamilton also points out that the increased programming and activity space at the new center will address the needs of students away from home for the first time. The high incidences of diabetes and obesity in South Texas, she said, are reflected in the student population.

“This is the time that our younger students are forming the eating and exercise habits that will affect the rest of their lives,” Hamilton says. “By encouraging them to establish and lead healthy lifestyles, we can also have a positive affect on the entire community.”

The University’s existing facilities at the Glasscock Fitness and Wellness Center were built in the 1960s for an enrollment of 800 students. With around 8,600 students, as well as faculty and staff on campus in 2008 the current facilities cannot meet the needs of all those desiring to use them.

Approximately $17.5 million will be used for construction of the wellness center. An additional $3.5 million in University funds will be used for construction of a partial third floor that will house a new emergency operations center.
Eyes on the Ball

STUDY SHOWS ENHANCED VISUAL SKILLS IMPROVE BASEBALL PLAYERS’ PERFORMANCE

A recent study conducted by a research team from the University’s Kinesiology Department demonstrated significant improvement in the hitting performance of Islander baseball players after enhancing their visual skills. The athletes trained their visual aptitudes with Vizual Edge, a commercial software program specifically designed to assess and train visual skills of athletes.

The research team is headed by Dr. Frank Spaniol and includes Drs. Bonnette, Melrose and Ocker, and graduate assistant Jeff Palueso. The purpose of this study, which was a follow-up investigation conducted by Spaniol and Bonnette with the Cincinnati Reds and Milwaukee Brewers, was to determine the validity of the Vizual Edge software in relation to improving hitting performance in baseball. Designed by Dr. Barry Seiler MD, an ophthalmologist from Chicago, Vizual Edge was created to improve visual skills. The critical question was, “would improving visual skills using Seiler’s software actually translate into improved performance?”

According to Seiler, “Visual skills can be evaluated and trained...........Elite high school, University, Olympic and professional athletes now incorporate visual performance into their training programs.” Dr. Spaniol, who played and coached Division I baseball, concurs and states, “It makes little sense to waste valuable training time working on something if it doesn’t translate into improved on-field performance.”

After the fall 2007 Islander baseball season, the research team tested the software’s viability. Utilizing a ‘pre-test, post-test’ design players were randomly selected for treatment and control groups. The treatment group trained their visual skills with Vizual Edge, while the control group did not have the benefit of using the software. Because the study was conducted in the off-season, players did not take part in any structured batting practice. At the onset of the study, subjects from both groups were tested for visual skills to determine eye alignment, eye flexibility, visual recognition, visual memory, and visual tracking. After achieving a baseline score, the treatment group received training on the software three times a week for five weeks.

A composite VEPT score was also calculated for each subject, which was used to establish personalized training protocols for the treatment group. Batting performance was determined by measuring the batted-ball velocity of pitches delivered at 76-to-80 mph by a pitching machine to assure consistency. Each subject received two rounds of six swings for a total of 12 attempts. Data analysis included a t-test to assess whether the two groups were statistically different from each other, by comparing post-test batted-ball velocity data. Results determined a significant difference between the batted-ball velocities of the treatment group as compared to the control group.

“We’ve known from previous survey studies that professional baseball players believe that training with Vizual Edge enhances their performance. The results of this study confirmed that college baseball players who trained with Vizual Edge outperformed those who did not,” points out Spaniol.
Cisneros, Galloway, Wildman

SPEAKER SERIES HIGHLIGHTS UNIVERSITY’S 60TH

MARC CISNEROS

Retired Lt. General Marc Cisneros, who played a highly-instrumental role in the capture of Panamanian dictator and drug lord Manuel Noriega, was the inaugural speaker in the University’s 60th Anniversary Speaker Series, kicking off a year of celebrating the history and future of the Island University, last September.

When the United States invaded Panama in December 1989, Noriega took refuge in the Holy See’s embassy which was immediately surrounded by U.S. troops. After being continually bombarded by hard rock music and “The Howard Stern Show” for several days, Noriega surrendered on Jan. 3, 1990. Cisneros, the highest-ranking Latino officer in the U.S. military, is widely-credited with persuading all nine of Noriega’s provincial commanders to surrender a collective 5,000 troops, averting what could have been a long and bloody battle.

Cisneros, a native of Brownsville, Texas, joined the army as a second lieutenant in 1961 and, at the time of his retirement, was commanding general at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio. During his military career, he received two Distinguished Service Medals and the Legion of Merit. In 1997, Hispanic Business magazine named him one of the “Top 100 Hispanics.”

GALLOWAY SALUTES MILITARY VETERANS

Joe Galloway, whose nearly 50 years as a journalist included on-the-scene coverage of wars in Vietnam, Kuwait and Iraq, spoke on “Honoring Our Troops” as the University observed “Veterans Day” in November.

Galloway was decorated with the Bronze Star Medal with V for courage under fire in recognition of his bravery in rescuing wounded soldiers during the first major battle between American forces and North Vietnamese Army regulars in the Ia Drang Valley in November 1965. His is the only medal of valor the U.S. Army awarded to a civilian during the Vietnam War. Galloway has been extolled as “the finest combat correspondent of our generation—a soldier’s reporter and a soldier’s friend,” by Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf.

In 1992, Galloway co-authored “We Were Soldiers Once… And Young,” with retired Lt. Gen. Harold G. Moore, which chronicles the battle between 450 American forces and more than 2,000 North Vietnamese Army regulars. “We Were Soldier Once… and Young” became a bestseller and in 2002 was made into the movie “We Were Soldiers” starring actor Mel Gibson.


JOE GALLOWAY

GALLOWAY SALUTES MILITARY VETERANS

In a lighter vein, Greeks Productions and the producer of the original 70s horror classic “The Texas Chain Saw Massacre” presented a special screening of their vintage horror flick “The Wild Man of the Navidad” in October followed by a reception and question and answer session.

Greeks Productions is Duane Graves and Justin Meeks, who wrote, directed, edited and co-produced the film. Both are 1999 Communications –TV/Film graduates from A&M-Corpus Christi and former students of Kim Henkel, the film’s co-producer who also wrote and produced the original “The Texas Chain Saw Massacre.”

An unsettling brew of dark comedy, suspense and terror, the 85-minute film tells the story of a mysterious, but violent creature that, for years, terrorizes residents of a small Texas town.

Graves directed the critically-acclaimed 2001 documentary “Up Syndrome,” an intimate portrait of his childhood friend who was born with Down syndrome. The film won several awards at festivals across the country including Slamdance and is currently distributed by Victory Multimedia.

Meeks worked with Graves on a trilogy of short horror films, which were co-produced by Henkel and were released internationally on DVD by Shock-O-Rama Cinema. Meeks also wrote, co-directed and starred in their second collaboration, “Rio Peligroso: A Day in the Life of a Legendary Coyote,” which has been picked up for a two-year distribution contract with View Askew Pictures.

Pictured at “The Wild Man of the Navidad” special screening in October are (from left) actor and musician Charlie Hurtin, filmmakers Justin Meeks and Duane Graves, co-producer Kim Henkel and Dr. Bill Huie, professor of communication and TV-film.

A special screening of the vintage horror flick “The Wild Man of the Navidad” was shown in October at the Performing Arts Center. The film was adapted from the real-life journals kept in the early 1970s by Texan Dale S. Rogers, which tell of a violent creature lurking in the woods near the small Texas town of Sublime.
World Affairs Council Speaker Warns of Global Health Problems

Diseases such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and the Avian Influenza (Bird Flu) seem a world away to people in the United States, but it is possible they could eventually invade this country, according to Nancy Carter-Foster, senior advisor for health affairs for the U.S. Department of State.

Carter-Foster, deputy assistant secretary for science and health, discussed global health problems during a February talk on “Global Health as it Relates to Foreign Policy” presented by the College of Nursing and Health Sciences in cooperation with the World Affairs Council of South Texas. The program was the first on-campus presentation by a speaker sponsored by the council since it became affiliated with the University in late 2007.

“There are too many people living in poverty who don’t have adequate health care,” she says. “Because of that, a person, who is ill, can get on a plane and bring a disease to the United States.”

The only way the United States can protect itself, she points out, is to work closely with other countries to investigate and help fight diseases.

“Ensuring global health means handling new threats including drug-resistant diseases and bioterrorism,” she says. “The microbial world is changing. Over the last 20 years, there have been 40 new diseases discovered… and there will be more.”

Kitchen Kaptains, Kids Cafe Help Avoid Lifetime of Diabetes, Obesity

A new program sponsored by the Food Bank of Corpus Christi is helping children who are at risk of diabetes learn how to avoid the life-threatening condition through age-appropriate instruction on healthy foods and exercise.

The “Kitchen Kaptains” program was made possible by $18,925 grant written by Dr. Charles Etheridge, associate professor of English, and former graduate student Anne Ries as part of an independent study. The program is being delivered through the Food Bank’s existing Kids Cafe sites.

In South Texas, diabetes is a major health problem which can be attributed to many factors including ethnicity and economics. Roughly one in two Hispanics will develop type 2 diabetes unless they take preventative measures, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

And one in three Texas children born since 2000 is predicted to develop diabetes. According to the American Diabetes Association, better nutrition is the key to helping people avoid obesity and diabetes, which can also lead to many other serious health problems.

“We’re concentrating on teaching children how to eat well and avoid a lifetime of obesity, diabetes and other weight related problems,” says Donna Linnane, the Food Bank’s nutrition education coordinator. “Through Kitchen Kaptains, kids learn to limit portions and make wiser food choices.”

The program also provides children with backpacks filled with nutritious snacks to take home for the weekend for the 39 weekends of the school year.

“Lots of these kids on weekends will be lucky to get a full meal,” explains Food Bank Executive Director Bea Hanson. “We’ll send them home with fruit cups, tuna fish, crackers and peanut butter and jelly.”

Since 2005, Etheridge and his students have written successful grant applications totaling more than $270,000 on behalf of the Food Bank which include $47,000 from Kraft Foods to build a room-sized refrigerator, $5,000 from the Ed Rachal Foundation to purchase fitness equipment for the Kids Cafe, and $160,000 from the Meadows Foundation that paid off the new Food Bank Building.

“Our students always see the important role the Food Bank plays,” Etheridge says. “There’s a lot of hunger and poverty in the Coastal Bend. Feeding people is such a basic need. I can’t imagine a better partnership for teaching grant-writing.”

Children from the five Kids Cafe sites prepare a fruit dish at the Food Bank of Corpus Christi to kick off the Kitchen Kaptains Program, a comprehensive diabetes initiative targeting children ages 5 through 15 at risk for obesity and diabetes.
School Bus Project Aids Kids’ Health, Improves Environmental Air Quality

**CHILDREN WHO RIDE BUSES EXPOSED TO SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER LEVELS OF POLLUTANTS**

The Pollution Prevention Partnership at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi will retrofit more than 150 school buses with equipment to reduce harmful emissions through a Clean School Bus Project funded by a local refinery.

Valero Refining – Texas, L.P. will provide $500,000 for the project which is part of a consent decree approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The project will benefit the areas near the Valero Bill Greehey Refineries in Corpus Christi, and the Valero Three Rivers Refinery. Work is scheduled to begin in late spring and should be completed prior to the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year.

The Clean School Bus project is designed to reduce children’s exposure to diesel exhaust from school buses by retrofitting the buses with diesel oxidation catalysts and closed crankcase filtration systems that reduce emissions of air pollutants from exhaust pipes and crankcase breather tubes. By reducing ambient air pollution, passengers will have cleaner air to breathe.

“Children are especially sensitive to air pollution because their respiratory systems are still developing,” says Gretchen Arnold, director of the Pollution Prevention Partnership. “Recent studies suggest that children while traveling on school buses are potentially exposed to significantly higher concentrations of pollutants than what is measured in a community’s outdoor air.”

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the 24 million children who ride on school buses nationwide each day are more susceptible to air pollution from diesel vehicles because they breathe 50 percent more air per pound of body weight than adults. While school buses are idling, exhaust accumulates in and around them exposing the students to respiratory problems, lung damage and increased risk of lung cancer.

“Although new school buses are required to meet cleaner emissions standards, a significant percentage of school bus fleets are older model buses equipped with diesel engines manufactured between the years of 1990 and 1999,” points out Arnold. “Budget constraints prohibit school districts from purchasing new buses or retrofitting their existing older fleets in order to reduce the diesel emissions.”

The grant money will allow the school buses to be fitted with diesel oxidation catalysts which reduce harmful pollutants by absorbing then into a honeycomb canister that converts the pollutants into water, cutting hydrocarbons and carbon dioxide by 60 to 90 percent. New closed crankcase ventilation systems designed to return blowback gases to the engine intake for subsequent combustion will also help reduce hydrocarbon and carbon dioxide emissions.

The Pollution Prevention Partnership will coordinate with school districts and procure equipment and installation services to retrofit older buses. Emissions of particulate matter, hydrocarbons, and carbon monoxide will be measured before and after the project. Expected reductions in exhaust emissions are 20 percent for particulate matter, 40 percent for hydrocarbons, and 30 percent for carbon monoxide.

The diesel emissions sensing equipment obtained by this project will expand the capabilities of the Pollution Prevention Partnership’s AutoCheck program that measures and reduces exhaust emissions from gasoline-powered vehicles. Acquisition of diesel exhaust measurement equipment will expand AutoCheck’s services to include vehicle fleets powered by diesel engines.

“This program has been instrumental in maintaining air quality in the region that meets national ambient air quality standards,” says Arnold. “Expanding the program’s capability to diesel fleets will be important to keeping the air clean in the future.”
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has received a grant totaling more than $1 million from the U.S. Department of Education's Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program to fund research internships for students from under-represented populations.

Ronald McNair and six other NASA astronauts died on Jan. 28, 1986, when the Space Shuttle Challenger exploded after launch from the Kennedy Space Center. A native of Lake City, S.C., McNair graduated from North Carolina A&T State College with a degree in Physics in 1971. He later received his Ph.D. in physics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and joined NASA in January 1978.

Each year, the Department of Education reviews hundreds of applications for the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program, a national program that provides first-generation, low-income, minority college students with paid internships and mentoring to prepare for enrollment in graduate programs. The prestigious program provides college juniors and seniors with opportunities to conduct research and publish or present their findings and offers assistance in applying to graduate school.

“As a Hispanic Serving Institution, our University mission focuses on recruiting, supporting and training a diverse, highly-qualified student body, faculty and staff,” said Dr. Harvey Knell, dean of Graduate Education and associate vice president for Research and Scholarly Activity. “This award will give approximately 20-to-25 junior and senior students from the under-represented populations in our University the opportunity to work in research labs and go on to doctoral programs.”

Although the award is usually for four years, the University will receive a five-year $1,097,575 grant because its application ranked in the top 10 percent of the 318 applicants, of which 181 received funding. Dr. Susan Garza, associate professor of English, was principal investigator and Dr. Luke Moissina, assistant professor of psychology, was the co-principal investigator for the award request.

“This is a huge blessing that the University received this award,” says Garza. “I am most excited for the students who will benefit from this program. As a first-generation, low-income student who went on to complete a Ph.D. program, I know how important it is to have people in your life who encourage you to do things you might never have thought were possible.”

Dr. Susan Garza (left), associate professor of English, and Priscilla Herrera, McNair Scholars Program coordinator, provide scholarship information to students.

“The crew of the space shuttle Challenger honored us by the manner in which they lived their lives. We will never forget them, nor the last time we saw them, this morning, as they prepared for the journey and waved goodbye and slipped the surly bonds of earth to touch the face of God.”

Plight of illegal immigrants inspires ‘El Esfuerzo Humano’ exhibition

Master of Fine Arts graduate Leonel Monsivais needed to look no further than his own family to find inspiration for his exhibition “El Esfuerzo Humano (The Human Endeavor),” which was showcased last fall at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi’s Islander Art Gallery.

In 1953, when Monsivais’s father was just 13, he and a friend entered the country illegally and spent two weeks making the 140-mile trek from the border to San Antonio. Unfortunately, when they arrived, family members took them back to Mexico.

“My father and his friend survived on cantaloupe and watermelon from the fields they were crossing and drank water from hoof prints after the rain,” says Monsivais, who became a legal resident at age 8 and moved with his family from Piedras Negras, Coahuila, to Eagle Pass, Texas.

In “El Esfuerzo Humano” Monsivais employs sculptures, various media and a narrative of his father’s journey to express the hardships faced by illegal immigrants as they cross “la frontera” or border region of the United States. His works put a human face on the estimated 850,000 immigrants who enter the United States illegally each year, many in search of a better life.

Of his youth in Mexico, Monsivais, 42, remembers clean, empty milk jugs that were sold in small grocery stores as canteens for immigrants. His piece Yoga II, Spanish for “water jug,” is a glorified version of that memory, created from a polished cast bronze jug weighing 62 pounds.

“This one has a shiny gold finish like a precious jewel and it sits on a burgundy velvet base, the way a precious jewel is displayed,” explains Monsivais, who is also a University art adjunct professor. “It’s a symbol of how precious water becomes when you are trying to survive.”

Other powerful images include a tall, twisted barbed wire and cement fence “El Lotro Lado” and “Lety’s Abarrote (Lety’s Grocery),” a platform piece with milk jugs cast in bronze hanging from a hook.

Before he died in 2006, Monsivais’ father reminded his son to focus his art on the “struggle of the human spirit to progress,” rather than on politics. In creating his works, Monsivais remains true to his father’s request.

“My perspective on illegal immigration is not one of protest, but one of existence,” Monsivais says. “Immigrants from Mexico exist as human beings and crossing into the United States is a catalyst for progress, which is a testament to the American dream.”

Monsivais believes that if the conflict between people on both sides of the border was removed, the unity between them would be easily seen as would be the collective consciousness that is second nature to them.

“This is evident in the region’s history, food, language and art,” he says. “The cultures from both countries in this particular area are intermingled and intertwined.”

It was largely due to his father’s influence that Monsivais chose to study art. His father, who taught him carpentry, also enjoyed painting portraits and landscapes to give as gifts.

“Every time he needed an extra hand, he could count on me,” Monsivais says. “I learned how to stucco and work with cement and paint, some of the skills I use to create art. I’m like a clone of my father. He has been the inspiration for what I am doing.”
Community Support

COASTAL BEND COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANTS AWARDED
Total of $29,050 grants are as follows:

College of Education
Dr. Marsha Grace, professor of curriculum and instruction, was awarded $5,000 for the Boys and Girls Club Books and Supplies Program.

College of Education and Antonio E. Garcia Arts & Education Center
Dr. Robert Garcia, director of the Antonio E. Garcia Arts & Education Center, and Misty Kesterson, adjunct faculty, were awarded $5,000 for the FunFitness: Health and Fitness Improvement Project.

College of Liberal Arts
Dr. Charles Etheridge, assistant professor of English, was awarded $1,650 for the Young Author's Camp Scholarships.

College of Liberal Arts and Performing Arts Center
Dr. Lari Young, director of the Performing Arts Center, was awarded $1,400 for the “60 Tickets to Celebrate 60 Years” Furgason Bravo Series Tickets Program.

College of Science and Technology and Harte Research Institute
Dr. Wes Tunnel Jr., associate director of the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies (HRI) and director of the Center for Coastal Studies, was awarded $5,500 for the Moody High School Innovation Academy Internship.

College of Science and Technology and Center for Coastal Studies
Jay Tarkington, Aquatic Education Program director in the Center for Coastal Studies, was awarded $5,500 for the Coastal Bend Eco-History Awareness Program.

Intercollegiate Athletics
Catrina Cooper, assistant athletic director, marketing/external relations and senior woman administrator, was awarded $5,000 for the Summer Basketball Camp for At-Risk Youth.

EXXONMOBIL PRESENTS UNIVERSITY GRANT FUNDS
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has received a $3,800 grant from Exxon Mobil Corporation to fund departmental grants for Management Information Systems and Computer Science.

ALUMNUS DONATES PROPERTY FOR FUTURE WELCOME CENTER
Long-time benefactor and alumnus, Woo Sung Lee, has donated more than a quarter acre of property on South Alameda Street in Corpus Christi to Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi for the new alumni and welcome center to house the University’s alumni relations operation and some development functions. The center will be named after Lee, a 1959 graduate of the University of Corpus Christi.

TWO RECEIVE GOOD FATHERS SCHOLARSHIPS
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi students Arturo Sucedo and Armando Martinez are the first recipients of The Jeremy Trejo Good Fathers Foundation Scholarships. The Foundation, which offers a $1,000 scholarship each semester to eligible fathers, was established by Trejo’s in-laws, John and Diane Torrey to teach young men the values, qualities and responsibilities to be passed along from father to son.

TWO GRANTS FUND NEW EXPERIMENTAL GARDEN
The Educational Center for Math and Science Experimental Garden near the entrance of the Early Childhood Development Center (ECDC) was funded by a $20,000 grant from the Earl C. Sams Foundation and a $10,000 grant from the Behmann Brothers Foundation to provide an outdoor classroom that employs a hands-on, minds-on learning approach to encourage students to continue their personal experimentation through future careers in mathematics and science.

COLLEGE OF NURSING AND HEALTH SCIENCES ENDOWMENT
Betty Swane and T.D. Higginbotham have established a $25,000 endowed scholarship for students in the College of Nursing and Health Sciences.

Corpus Christi’s Regional Transportation Authority unveiled the “60th Anniversary Bus” in late January as part of their partnership with the University’s 60th Year Celebration.
Campus Health Fair Screenings Focus on Diabetes Prevention

Students and University employees were offered free health screenings during the fall semester at the “Know Your Numbers Health Fair” sponsored by the College of Nursing and Health Sciences and the Department of Kinesiology.

As part of the University’s campaign to stress diabetes prevention through proactive healthcare, participants were tested for glucose levels, body mass index (BMI) and blood pressure. According to the American Diabetes Association, one out of three children born since 2000 in the Corpus Christi area will develop diabetes.

“The Corpus Christi area faces a diabetes epidemic that has tremendous costs to our community both in human and business terms,” says Dr. Mary Jane Hamilton, dean of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences. “Because of this, a huge segment of future employees could be unable to fully and healthfully enter the workforce, placing the Corpus Christi area at a competitive disadvantage to other communities competing for jobs and investment.”

‘Paint the Island Pink’ Supports Early Breast Cancer Detection

The Women’s Center for Education and Service held its fourth annual “Paint the Island Pink” expo in October as part of the University’s Breast Cancer Awareness Month observance. The event provided stressed the importance of regular self-examinations for early detection of breast cancer.

“The reason we do this year after year is because the disease is now showing up in younger women; whereas, before it was women over the age of 50 who were most at risk,” says Rhonda Williamson, director of the Women’s Center for Education and Service.

The event, which was free and open to the public, included a panel of breast cancer survivors who discussed their experiences, as well as doctors who answered questions. Speakers included breast cancer survivors Cindy LeBus and Margot B. Cummings; Dr. Gerard J. Voorhees, radiation oncologist with the Corpus Christi Cancer Center; and Dr. Burk Strong, radiologist for Radiology Associates, LLP. Local cancer organizations showcased treatment, care, and support options available for patients in the Coastal Bend.

WORLD AIDS DAY CREATES HIV AWARENESS

A record number of students on campus made a responsible decision by choosing to get tested for HIV during the University’s World AIDS Day observance Wednesday, Nov. 28.

The 65 students, which included many couples, waited 20 minutes for results through free OraQuick swab testing, according to Dr. Theresa Sharpe, assistant director of the University’s Counseling Center.

“It eliminates some of the stigma about getting tested and presents it as something healthy, positive and proactive in terms of knowing your status,” Sharpe says. “We’re getting the message across that AIDS doesn’t discriminate. Anyone who is sexually active is at risk.”

According to the most recent annual report released by the Texas Department of State Health Services, 604 people in the 12-county Coastal Bend region are living with HIV/AIDS including 64 new cases reported in 2006.

A memorial service was also held to remember those who have lost their lives to AIDS. And, students, staff and faculty were encouraged to wear a red ribbon, the international symbol of AIDS awareness.
A paver in the Walk of Recognition is the perfect way to commemorate your time spent at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. Purchasing a paver is a great gift idea, and the money raised provides scholarships for University students.

For information about Student Foundation activities or Walk of Recognition bricks, please call Office of Development at (361) 825-2420 or email student.foundation@tamucc.edu

WALK OF RECOGNITION

Please fill in the blocks EXACTLY as you would like to see on your paver. Leave a space before and after “&”. Each space counts as a character. Omit punctuation marks. Orders received together will be laid together; brick location will be determined by architectural design. A&M-Corpus Christi Student Foundation reserves the right for copy approval or refusal. For questions about your copy call (361)825-2420 or email student.foundation@tamucc.edu.

Special guidelines: If line and space permit, bricks may include: (a) “In Memory of” or “In Honor of”; (b) class year; or (c) group, club, military, honors, social club or Greek affiliation.

$100
4 x 8 Brick
Two lines of 12 characters per line

$250
8 x 8 Brick
Top two lines have 12 characters per line; center will contain one official seal and may have up to three letters as character abbreviations on either side of seal; Bottom line contains degree and class year.

Please mail this form to:
Student Foundation
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
6300 Ocean Drive, Unit 5746
Corpus Christi, Texas 78412-5746
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