

# **Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi**

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## **Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Breaks Ground For Michael and Karen O'Connor Building**

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas – State and local dignitaries and student representatives joined with Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi officials today (Wednesday, June 24) to break ground for the new “Michael and Karen O'Connor Building” that will allow the consolidation of business faculty and classrooms at one location.

The \$25 million facility was in large part made possible by the application of more than \$6 million from a gift to the University by the late Corpus Christi businessman Michael A. O'Connor and his wife, Karen.

“Michael O'Connor was a consummate businessman whose vision and passion helped cement the partnership between the University and the Corpus Christi community that we enjoy today,” said Dr. Flavius Killebrew, president of Texas A&M-Corpus Christi. “Now, through the generosity of the O'Connor family, we are able to provide the College of Business with a first-rate facility that will serve as a focal point for innovative programs and research to address the needs of an increasingly complicated and interwoven global economy.”

After graduating from St. Edward's University in 1958, Michael O'Connor moved to Corpus Christi to work for Gardner-Denver, a company that manufactures pumps and compressors. Following a successful career during which he built and sold two companies, O'Connor retired in 1986 but six years later, at the request of entrepreneur Melvin Klein, he accepted the position of chairman of the board at Hanover Compressor Company. Under O'Connor's direction, the company became the largest

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compressor leasing company in the world and was listed on the New York Stock Exchange. He died in July 2003.

Today, Karen O'Connor Urban serves on the advisory board of American Bank, as well as a number of not-for-profit organizations. In addition to her work on behalf of Texas A&M-Corpus Christi, her extensive volunteer service has benefited many organizations including Christus Spohn Health System Foundation, the Art Museum of South Texas and Clowns Who Care.

"Mike's philosophy was that it's not so much the things we leave behind as the legacy we create that people will remember," said Urban. "We both knew when we made this gift that Texas A&M-Corpus Christi is the economic engine that will drive Corpus Christi's development. The University has already contributed much to the city's success and this new facility creates even greater opportunities for faculty to make a positive impact in developing and mentoring our business leaders of the future."

When completed in summer 2010, the 75,000-square foot facility will house a new Center for Economic Research with space for an Executive Education Department, faculty offices, classrooms and two computer labs. Pending approval of the Texas A&M System Board of Regents, the building's conference room will be named in honor of the late John Buckley, a College of Business graduate and, until his death in 2008, head of the accounting firm Buckley and Associates. Both Michael O'Connor (2001) and Buckley (2007) were awarded the G. Russell Kirkland Distinguished Award in Business Administration by the College of Business.

"This is a great occasion for the University and its stakeholders," said Dr. Moustafa Abdelsamad, dean of the College of Business. "The Michael and Karen O'Conner Building will allow us to better serve our students, provide executive development, and assist our community businesses with their planning and management development needs."

Currently, around 1,400 undergraduate and 200 graduate students are enrolled in the University's College of Business pursuing degrees in business administration,

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accounting and marketing. The AACSB-accredited College's formal administrative units include the Student Advisory Council, the Business Advisory Council, and the Center for Economic Education.

The College also houses the international headquarters of the Society for Advancement of Management, and sponsors student chapters of Delta Sigma Pi, Human Resources Management, Society for Advancement of Management, and the Student Accounting Society.

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