FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
DATE: May 9, 2011  
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Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi to Hold Dedication Ceremony for Michael and Karen O’Connor Building  
New $25 million facility allows College of Business to consolidate at one location

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas – State and local dignitaries and the campus community will join with Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi officials to dedicate the new Michael and Karen O’Connor Building on Friday, May 13, at 2 p.m. The celebration is free and open to the public with a reception and tours of the $25 million facility.

The 75,000-square foot building that is the new home to the University’s College of Business was in part made possible by a $6 million gift to the University by the late Corpus Christi businessman Michael A. O’Connor and his wife, Karen. Currently, more than 1,400 undergraduate and around 250 graduate students are enrolled in the College of Business, pursuing bachelor and master’s degrees in business administration, accounting and marketing.

“The vision and passion of Michael O’Connor was instrumental in forging the partnership between the University and the Corpus Christi community that is so vital to the economic and cultural life of the Coastal Bend,” said Dr. Flavius Killebrew, president and CEO of Texas A&M-Corpus Christi. “Now, thanks to the generosity of the O’Connor family, our College of Business has a first-rate facility where students can experience innovative programs that prepare them for successful careers and faculty can conduct research that addresses the demands of our complicated and interwoven global economy.”

In addition to classrooms and faculty offices, the building contains a Center for Economic Research, an Executive Education Department, and two computer labs. The College also houses the international headquarters of the Society for Advancement of Management and student chapters of Delta Sigma Pi, Society for Advancement of Management, Executives Club, Student Economics Association, Student Finance Association, and Student Accounting Society.

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The building has three conference rooms that recognize local business leaders and University benefactors. Two are named for past recipients of the G. Russell Kirkland Distinguished Visitor in Business Administration Award, as was Michael O’Connor. John J. Buckley, a College of Business graduate and, until his death in 2008, head of the accounting firm Buckley & Associates received the award in 2007; and business executive and entrepreneur Melvyn N. Klein received the award in 2006. A third conference room is named in honor of Dr. Robert Furgason, former president of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

“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’Connor Building will allow us to better serve our students, provide executive development and assist our community businesses with their planning and management development needs.”

A 1958 graduate of St. Edward’s University in Austin, Texas, 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 compressor leasing company in the world and was listed on the New York Stock Exchange. He died in July 2003.

Karen O’Connor Urban is co-chair of the University’s $30 million challenge Momentum Campaign and vice president of the Texas A&M-Corpus Christi Foundation. She serves on the advisory board of American Bank and several not-for-profit organizations. 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.”

-A&M-Corpus Christi-