

SUMMER 2022



the

Islander



**TAMU-CC
CELEBRATES
75 YEARS OF
STUDENT SUCCESS**

PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Dr. Kelly M. Miller, with attendees, at the 2022 President's Ball.

Dear Islanders,

April 1, 1947, marked the beginning of 75 years of higher education on Ward Island. Over the years, our name changed from the University of Corpus Christi (UCC) to Texas A&I at Corpus Christi to Corpus Christi State University and, finally, in 1994, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. That's a lot of names and that's a lot of change, but over the course of it all, our core mission has remained the same. Providing an unparalleled commitment to every student's success is, has been, and always will be the Island University's driving force.

At every turn, the support of our community and our legislators has been vital to our ability to carry out our mission. In fact, if it had not been for the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and later, leaders from the Coastal Bend that comprised the "4 UCC" group, we would likely not even exist. Thankfully, those leaders understood the value a university brings to a community.

The University of Corpus Christi laid a foundation for excellence. Each subsequent iteration built upon that foundation, allowing for the incredible successes that occur daily on our island. I hope that you join us in celebrating our 75th anniversary and all our accomplishments, as each and every one of you is a critical part of all that we do. Go Islanders!

Sincerely,

Kelly M. Miller, Ph.D.
President and CEO
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

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Meet seven alumni — one for each decade of our existence — that left a lasting legacy on the island.

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The Islander is published biannually by the Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Division of Marketing and Communications.

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LETTER FROM LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES

TO OUR ISLANDER COMMUNITY,

It is our greatest honor and privilege to represent Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. Over our combined years of service, we have been so proud to work together, advocating and championing the irreplaceable Islander Impact throughout the Coastal Bend and beyond. As we all celebrate the momentous milestone marking 75 years of higher education on Ward Island, we reflect on the many achievements we have worked with you to accomplish.

Highlights of these successes include:

CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION ASSISTANCE PROJECTS (PREVIOUSLY TUITION REVENUE BONDS)

- \$45 million for the Arts and Media Building (2021)
- \$60 million for the Life Sciences Research and Engineering Program (2015)
- \$45 million for College of Nursing and Health Sciences Building (2006)

ENGINEERING

- \$36 million (from 2009-2019) to establish programs in Mechanical, Electrical, and Civil, and Industrial Engineering, which included

- STEM pipeline initiatives
- \$4.2 million (2021) appropriated to further support engineering programs, including Mechanical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, and the STEM pipeline initiative
- \$2.185 million (2021) to support Civil and Industrial Engineering

LONE STAR UAS CENTER OF EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION

- Over \$23 million since 2015 to support one of seven FAA test sites in the U.S., the only one in Texas
- \$6.65 million (2021)

UNMANNED AIRCRAFT EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

- \$3 million (2021) in first-time funding to support statewide critical emergency response and disaster relief efforts

OYSTER AQUACULTURE

- Established the first-in-Texas oyster mariculture program to promote oyster ranches and small business opportunities (2019)

We are also proud of our work that extends beyond A&M-Corpus Christi and supports so many Islander students. This includes critical areas such as suicide awareness and prevention, Comprehensive Regional University funding, riptide education, and veteran support.

As we all commemorate this historic anniversary of the Island University, we are filled with hope and anticipation for all the triumphs yet to come. We remain committed to your mission to ensure every student's success, as we are proud to serve as champions of higher education.

Senator Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa began representing Texas Senate District 20 in 2003.

Representative Todd Hunter began representing Texas House District 32 in 1989.

Representative Abel Herrero began representing Texas House District 34 in 2004.

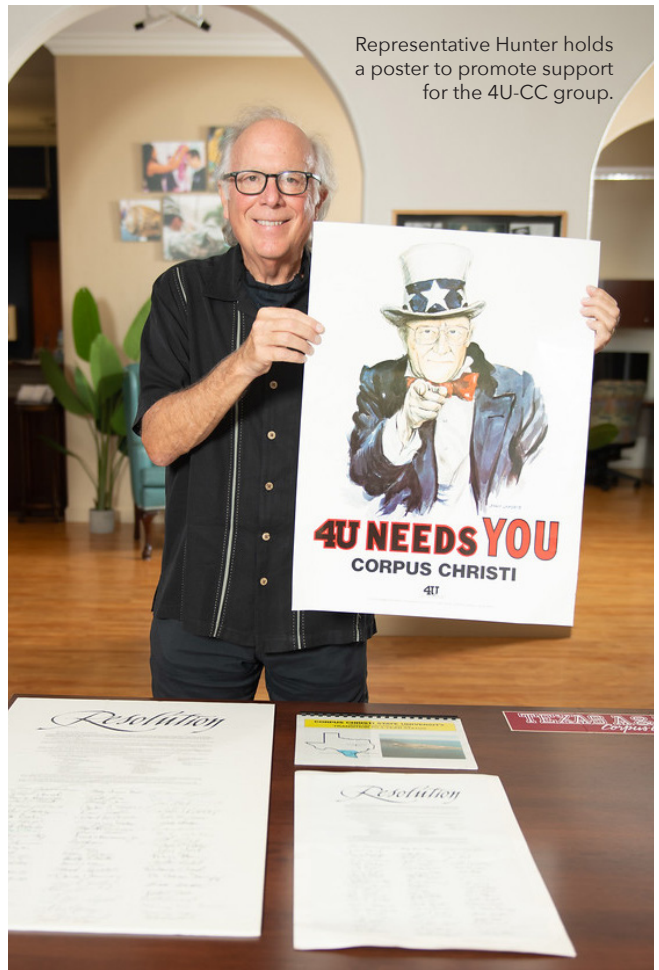
Representative Todd Hunter (left), Senator Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa, and Representative Abel Herrero at the 2017 Legislative Appreciation Reception.



Senator Hinojosa and Islander students at the Endowed Scholarship Banquet 2021.



Representative Hunter holds a poster to promote support for the 4U-CC group.



Andrea Gilson '16, '18 and Representative Herrero at the 2017 Legislative Appreciation Reception.



Islanders crowd the stage as
the Plain White T's headline the
75th Anniversary Concert and
Food Truck Festival.

TAMU-CC
CELEBRATES
75 YEARS
of Student Success



Stay up to date on anniversary events and initiatives at
tamucc.edu/75th-anniversary.



Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi traces its beginnings to April 1, 1947. In the following 75 years, through several name and affiliation changes, the institution continued to grow and is now a thriving comprehensive university with renowned academic and research programs that serve the needs of the region and nation.

In celebration of 75 years of student success, the Island University is hosting numerous events and exhibitions throughout 2022, which started with a countdown event on the eve of April 1.

Late into the night on March 31, hundreds of students gathered for a fun and festive event that culminated with a New Year's Eve-style countdown, complete with a DJ, glowsticks, and a sparkling cider toast.

"I've never seen a crowd this big at an event on campus this late at night," said Kenzie Long '22, a communication studies major. "It really makes me appreciate this school and I'm just happy to be here at TAMU-CC."

The following day, festivities resumed with a ceremonial cake-cutting event in the University Center. On hand were Mary and Jeff Bell Library faculty and staff, who gathered items for a time capsule. Some of the items included posters of university events, newspaper clippings, and a commemorative 75th

anniversary T-shirt.

William Whitworth '23, Student Government Association President and communication studies major, shared cake-cutting duties with Dr. Kelly M. Miller, TAMU-CC President and CEO.

"I can't help but think about all the faculty, staff, and leaders who have left their mark on the Island University and made it what it is today," Whitworth said. "I am so thankful to be an Islander."

A new campus tradition — a concert and food truck festival — was held on April 30 at Momentum Field. More than 2,000 Islanders enjoyed the free show, which featured the Plain White T's, an American rock band with two Grammy nominations and multiple platinum songs including its No. 1 hit, "Hey There Delilah."

"The concert was a great way to bring the Islander community together," said Jorge Daniel Suarez '25, a computer science major. "It gave students something to look forward to and it was an enjoyable way to relax and take our minds off the end of the semester and finals week."

Emily Salazar '23, a media arts major, said the show was her first concert experience.



Clockwise (L-R): Islanders enjoy the Plain White T's Concert and Food Truck Festival. Plain White T's members Tim Lopez (left) and Tom Higgenson perform. Islanders await the midnight countdown to the university's 75th anniversary. TAMU-CC President and CEO Dr. Kelly M. Miller cuts the ceremonial cake with Student Government Association President William Whitworth '23.

"I liked that this event was catered directly to Islander students. I felt like I was guaranteed a good spot in the crowd, and I felt safe knowing it was organized by the university," Salazar said. "I am already so proud to be an Islander, but this event made me feel like I was receiving a thank you gift from the school." ♦

Then & Now

Thanks to the support of our Islander community, both near and far, our university has experienced extraordinary growth over the last 75 years. With your help, we are poised to take our Islander Impact to the next level. Let us remind you how far we've come.

APPROX. NUMBER OF STUDENTS

300 vs **11,000**
1947 vs 2022

NUMBER OF FACULTY

26 vs **574**
1947 vs 2021

APPROX. NUMBER OF STUDENT GROUPS

25 vs **150**
1948 vs 2022

GRADUATES

29 vs **2,156**
CLASS OF 1948 vs FY 2022

PROGRAMS/DEGREES ON CAMPUS

15 vs **86**
1947 vs 2022

CAMPUS LIBRARY



THE UNIVERSITY OF CORPUS CHRISTI
LIBRARY — OPENED IN 1963

24,000 SQ. FT

Included space for 80,000 holdings (books/volumes)

MARY AND JEFF BELL LIBRARY — OPENED
IN 1978

100,000 SQ. FT

Includes space for 1.4 million print and e-books,
databases and journals, and more!

Special thanks to Dr. Andrew Johnson for details included in his book, "The Island University: A History of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi."

To read more about the university's history, visit IslanderAlumni.org/store to purchase a copy of the book. Proceeds benefit university pride and traditions initiatives.



Milestones



1947

Ward Island becomes home to the University of Corpus Christi, an institution affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas. A total of 312 students are enrolled with 26 faculty.

Campus Landscape

While the landscape of the campus has changed significantly over the last seven decades, it has remained a home to students in its original location on Ward Island.





1951



1970



1973

1951

The University of Corpus Christi purchases Ward Island from the military with help from the City of Corpus Christi. Extensive renovations and removal of military structures begin.

1955

Construction of the first brick building, Warren Hall, begins. It houses up to 84 students and originally served female students only.

1963

Construction begins on a new library. The \$300,000 structure is designed to house up to 80,000 volumes. The building is known today as the Round Building.

1970

Hurricane Celia hits Corpus Christi on Aug. 3, 1970, and causes more than \$1 million in damage to campus.

1973

Texas A&I University at Corpus Christi opens its doors to 969 students as an upper-level institution offering courses at the junior, senior, and graduate levels.

1977

The Texas State Legislature changes the school's name to Corpus Christi State University.

1987

The Conrad Blucher Institute is dedicated and begins offering courses in surveying. It is established through a gift from the estate of Conrad and Zula Blucher and has since evolved from traditional surveying to geographic information systems.

1992

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board authorizes the university's first doctoral degree — a Doctorate in Educational Leadership.

1993

Four years after joining the Texas A&M University System, the A&M System Board of Regents renames the institution Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. A year later, it becomes a four-year comprehensive university and enrollment increases to 5,000 students.

1995

The groundbreaking ceremony for the Hector P. Garcia Plaza is held. The colorful plaza, located in the center of campus, includes a bronze statue of the Mexican American civil rights leader and physician, along with a fountain, stage, and covered seating.





1977



1993



1995



1997

The university celebrates its 50th anniversary with a ceremonial cake-cutting event.



2000



2006



2007

2003

The iconic Momentum sculpture is added at the main entrance to campus. The five spires represent educational elements including strength/courage, order, movement, accomplishment, and logic.





2000

Ground is broken on the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies at Texas A&M-Corpus Christi. The research center was founded by a \$46 million donation from Ed Harte, local newspaper publisher and noted conservationist.

2006

Islanders Athletics, now a NCAA Division I program, begins competing in the Southland Conference.

2007

The City of Corpus Christi donates 156 acres for the expansion of Texas A&M-Corpus Christi. The land is located off Ennis Joslin Road and Nile Drive and is the future home of campus housing, the Thomas J. Henry Tennis Center (2011), and the Dr. Jack A. Dugan Family Soccer and Track Stadium (2013).

2013

The Federal Aviation Administration names Texas A&M-Corpus Christi one of seven test sites for unmanned aircraft systems (UAS).

2017

A topping-out ceremony is held for the university's new life sciences building, Tidal Hall. The \$60 million development, which officially opened in summer 2019, supports some of the university's fastest-growing programs including environmental ecology, biomedical sciences/genetics, marine genomics, fisheries/mariculture, and marine microbiology.

2018

Texas A&M-Corpus Christi is classified as an "R2 Doctoral University — High Research Activity" campus by the Carnegie Commission of Higher Education.

2019

NASA teams up with the university's Lone Star UAS Center of Excellence and Innovation to test drone traffic management in downtown Corpus Christi, one of only two test sites nationwide.





2020



2021



2022



2019

The Island University establishes a presence in downtown Corpus Christi with the dedication of the Islanders Pavilion and Courts at Water's Edge Park.

2020

Texas A&M-Corpus Christi purchases a five-story building located on the corner of Chaparral and Lomax streets in downtown Corpus Christi. The 77,000-foot structure, built in 1947, will house UAS and emergency management initiatives, an art gallery, library archives, and more.

2021

The University's Lone Star UAS Center of Excellence and Innovation unveils a new netting structure — as big as a five-story warehouse — giving drone-operating experts a greater ability to test drones safely and quickly at the center's Flour Bluff headquarters.

2022

Texas A&M-Corpus Christi celebrates its 75th anniversary with a ceremonial cake-cutting event and time capsule collection. Other events are scheduled throughout the year.

2022

Islanders Men's Basketball plays Texas Southern University in the First Four round of the NCAA Division I March Madness Tournament.



An Athletic Legacy

Students have participated in sports on campus since the 1940s. Over the years, competition expanded, the program became more formalized, and Islanders Athletics reached the national spotlight.

In 2022, Islanders Athletics:

- has 16 NCAA Division I sports
- is a member of the Southland Conference
- had 53 conference championships and 24 NCAA Tournament appearances

Compared to 1999, when Islanders Athletics:

- had 13 sports
- competed as a Division I Independent
- had no conference championships (until 2003)



BETWEEN THE PALMS

An Interview with Past University Presidents

Throughout its 75-year history, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has been led by 11 presidents, each with different leadership styles and personal philosophies. However, one consistent theme among them is their passion and dedication to serving students and making TAMU-CC the premier institution of higher education in South Texas. We checked in with three former presidents — Drs. Alan B. Sugg (1977-1989), Robert Furgason (1990-2004), and Flavius Killebrew (2005-2016) — to ask them about their experiences on the Island.

Q:

DURING YOUR TIME AS UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT, WHAT WAS YOUR GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT?

Sugg: Clearly, the most important events during my tenure were the transformation of Corpus Christi State University into a four-year institution and joining the Texas A&M University System. Both moves enabled the university to significantly increase its enrollment and receive greater appropriations from the Texas Legislature. These accomplishments would not have happened without the tremendous support of the Corpus Christi legislative delegation and the Corpus Christi Chamber of Commerce.

Furgason: My initial reaction would be to point to the outstanding buildings that were built during my time here; however, what is most important is what you have going on inside these buildings. I think my greatest accomplishment was putting together a highly talented team who were attuned to our basic objectives. Several of those individuals went on to become university presidents themselves. We were very fortunate to attract that caliber of talent during those formative years.

Killebrew: We had a very new athletic program, and they needed space. So, we quickly realized that we needed to increase the footprint of TAMU-CC to accommodate athletics and keep academics on the island. The community came together and provided us with the land for that expansion, and funding was secured that allowed us to build Island Hall, the Dugan Wellness Center, the Michael and Karen O'Connor Building, and Bayside Parking Garage.

Q:

WHAT WAS ONE OF YOUR FAVORITE PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WHILE ON THE ISLAND?

Sugg: There are far too many to mention, but I would say working with such amazing people during my time was a wonderful experience. It was an honor to be surrounded by so many hardworking people, particularly assistant to the president Alicia Jasso, who remains a dear friend to this day.

Furgason: For me, walking down the spine of campus and seeing the wide array of students hustling to class or enjoying a break in one of our beautifully landscaped areas is probably one of the most enjoyable things I can think of. Seeing people doing things that are enriching their lives and knowing that we are a mechanism for them to do that is really the bottom line.

Killebrew: Certainly, the beautiful drive from my home to campus never got old, and there were so many great memories, but in my second year, Islanders Men's Basketball was invited to play Wisconsin in the first round of the NCAA tournament. We had them down 21 points at the half, and even though we didn't win, it was electrifying to be there cheering on our team.

Q:

WHAT DO YOU HOPE IS YOUR LEGACY?

Sugg: I hope I created an environment within the university where the administration, faculty, and staff understood that everything we did was to help the students be as successful as possible.

Furgason: A very simple, can-do attitude. It's easy to say 'I can't do this or that,' and that attitude can prevail in any organization at any time. What you have to do is flip that mindset and convince people that we can do it. We don't have to look like College Station or Austin to do it; let's program our own destiny here and get on with it.

Killebrew: When I came to the Island, the students didn't have many traditions in place. In working with some of our music faculty, we were able to resurrect our Alma Mater and breathe new life into our Pep Band. Secondly, I would hope that another legacy I leave is one of fiscal responsibility.

Q:

WHAT IS THE THING YOU MISS OR LOVED MOST ABOUT YOUR PRESIDENTIAL ROLE?

Sugg: I miss the honor of presenting the diplomas to the students at commencement ceremonies and congratulating them for their dedication and hard work. My wife, Jeannie and I treasure the memories we made during our time in Corpus Christi and raising our two daughters in such a special place. We are eternally appreciative to the wonderful citizens of Corpus Christi.

Furgason: The interaction with faculty, students, and staff; they are just a delightful and stimulating group to be associated with.

Killebrew: I really miss the day-to-day interactions with students and faculty; both are some of the brightest people you'll ever want to be around. Their energy was contagious and kept me going. Mostly, I miss being able to make a difference in the lives of the campus community.

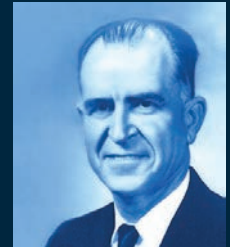
Continued on page 18.

THE ISLANDER HALL OF PRESIDENTS



1947-1948

E.S. HUTCHERSON



1948-1951

R. M. CAVNESS



1952-1965

W.A. MILLER



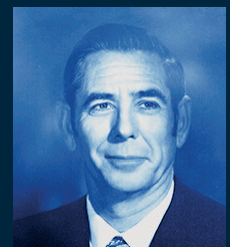
1966-1968

JOSEPH H. CLAPP



1968-1969

**LEONARD L.
HOLLOWAY**



1969-1973

**KENNETH A.
MARONEY**



1973-1977

D. WHITNEY HALLADAY



1977-1989

B. ALAN SUGG



1990-2004

ROBERT R. FURGASON



2005-2016

FLAVIUS C. KILLEBREW



2017-PRESENT

KELLY M. MILLER



Q:

WITH 75 YEARS OF HISTORY BEHIND US, WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR THE NEXT 75 YEARS?

Sugg: The university is located in an amazing city. It is a fantastic place for employees to raise a family and an attractive city for the students to live in while attending the university. I predict that Texas A&M-Corpus Christi will become one of the state's best universities.

Furgason: I see continued growth, particularly in stature, for the future of TAMU-CC. Programs like the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies and the Lone Star UAS Center of Excellence and Innovation are two examples of ways this institution is becoming a leader in the knowledge creation arena.

Killebrew: My hope is that the Board of Regents continues to attract good, strong leadership to the institution, and the university, in turn, attracts students from underserved populations. I think TAMU-CC is poised to take advantage of the opportunities available to provide the best educational experience possible and become the crown jewel of the Coastal Bend. ♦





LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

Reflections from the Current President

Dr. Kelly M. Miller: I joined Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi in 1994, as an assistant professor. I chose this university, a place that was thousands of miles away from home, because from the first moment I stepped on the island, it was electric. The energy was contagious. We had just joined the A&M System. It was the year we downwardly expanded, adding our first freshman class of 400 students. And there was a vision, a bold vision, that we were determined to achieve. We were on a mission to make closing the gap in educational attainment a reality; to ensure first-generation and at-risk students became successful professionals and leaders in Texas; to give the Coastal Bend an excellent four-year university with outstanding graduate and undergraduate programs that would support workforce needs, economic development, and keep our best and brightest in the Coastal Bend.

Serving this mission for 28 years and watching strides forward daily has been an incredible privilege — a privilege that affords me the ability to do the thing I love most: to congratulate and shake the hand of each student as they cross the stage at commencement. Seeing the look of accomplishment in their eyes and the smile that crosses their faces as they hear their friends and family cheer from the stands is a joyous experience like none other.

I am still early in my tenure as president, so discussing a legacy seems a bit premature. However, I can definitely say my presidency had been unprecedented. On the day I officially took office, I walked out of the Board of Regents meeting in College Station and shut campus down for Hurricane Harvey. Since then, we have experienced two hurricanes, a global pandemic, and an epic winter storm that resulted in the failure of the Texas power grid.

Ironically, during these difficult times, the thing I admire most about the university remained steadfast — and that is selfless collaboration to support student success. Administrators, faculty, staff, alumni, supporters, and the students themselves came together to make sure the university not only survived but thrived. In fact, we saw an 11.4% increase in graduation numbers during the pandemic. Additionally, in every one of these situations, we supported our community, serving as innovative problem solvers and demonstrating leadership throughout the Coastal Bend.

In addition to these successes, I am proud of the work that we have done in achieving R2 status, increasing the number of honors students and academic scholars, creating the VIP program with Del Mar College, further developing our work with unmanned aircraft systems, continuing to support sustainability and resiliency for the Gulf of Mexico, expanding into downtown Corpus Christi, enhancing a culture of excellence within Islanders Athletics, and providing an increased focus on student belonging and a vibrant campus culture.

But I am certain, with the support of our incredible Islander team, both on and off campus, the best is yet to come. ♦



ICONIC ISLANDERS

The 75-year history of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi is rich with stories of long-serving faculty and staff who dedicated their careers to student success.

While their journeys have been unique, the core mission of these Iconic Islanders is the same — to prepare graduates to be leaders in this community and beyond. These Iconic Islanders accomplished that mission by exhibiting dedication and commitment to their students, along with enthusiasm for passing on their knowledge to the next generation of scholars.

While it is impossible to feature all faculty and staff who have made the Island University their home, we honor their legacy by featuring three faculty members who have served the institution for a combined 98 years... and counting.



DR. WILLIAM “BILL” HUIE

Teaching students to be discerning and savvy consumers of media art through critical and analytical thinking has always been a goal of Dr. Bill Huie.

Huie, who started his illustrious career as a high school English teacher, first experimented with film to facilitate more robust discussion with his young students. His growing interest in the medium led him to teach communication and television/film classes at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

“As I was completing my doctoral dissertation at the University of Texas in 1974, I got word that a university in Corpus Christi needed a TV and film professor,” Huie said. “I applied and got the job, and the rest is history.”

During his 37-year tenure with A&M-Corpus Christi, Huie was known as a passionate and inspiring educator who had a significant impact on the lives of his students. Over the course of his teaching career, Huie regularly adjusted and expanded his instruction to incorporate the many changes that occurred within the television and film industries. He was a known jokester and would often have his students act out roles from comedic plays to help cement their film knowledge.

“I believe that education should have a fun side, and the classroom should provide a nurturing environment for students to voice their thoughts and opinions,” Huie said.

Huie dedicated himself to being a

positive force for change by serving on countless university committees. He published 10 academic articles during his tenure at the Island University and presented his research at the national level more than 30 times. He also hosted a weekly film series on campus called University Cinema, which was free and open to the public. He retired from teaching in 2011 and was later named Professor Emeritus by the Texas A&M Board of Regents.

Beyond the classroom, Huie was heavily involved in promoting film throughout the Coastal Bend. He co-hosted, produced, and secured funding for the television series, “The Territory.” The one-hour program, televised by KEDT-TV, brought independent media art to South Texas viewers for 21 years.

“I always had a goal of enriching local film culture,” Huie said. “I wanted to give my students and the community an opportunity to see works they probably would not have a chance to see otherwise.”

Even in retirement, Huie continues to share his knowledge of film with the Coastal Bend. Each spring, he headlines an event at the Alamo Drafthouse during TAMU-CC’s Communication and Media Week called Bill Huie’s Best Film.

“The idea was that I would pick a film that was nominated for an Oscar and should have won but didn’t. This year, the Academy surprised us and got it right, so we screened ‘CODA,’ even though it won Best Picture,” Huie said. “I love hosting these events, because the post-film audience participation always spawns great comments and discussions.”

Continued on page 22.

DR. MARY JANE HAMILTON

Renowned for her leadership in nursing education which spans a career of 27 years at the Island University, Dr. Mary Jane Hamilton is cemented in the university's storied history as founding dean of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences.

Hamilton, who came to the university in 1993 as a full professor after an outstanding academic career at Del Mar College, said her passion for service was instilled at a young age.

"I was speaking to my grandmother about my decision to become a nurse and she asked me with great seriousness, 'Can you hold an old woman's hand while she's dying?' She reminded me that being a nurse is more than physically taking care of people, it's being there for pivotal moments in their lives," Hamilton said.

As primary investigator on numerous grant proposals, Hamilton secured more than \$10 million from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), which supported substantial scholarships for military and underrepresented Islander nursing students.

"HRSA funding not only created educational opportunities that were non-existent before, but it also gave students hope," said Hamilton, who is a first-generation college graduate.

Hamilton also spearheaded the university's eLine Military Program, which offered academic credit for military medical education and experience. The fast-track program, which helped veterans earn a Bachelor of Science in Nursing, gained attention from the White House and was the model for additional programs throughout the country. As a member of the International Nursing Network for HIV/AIDS Research, Hamilton was also recognized nationally and internationally for scholarship in HIV/AIDS symptom management research.



During her time as an administrator at TAMU-CC, Hamilton never stopped teaching. Even after retiring as dean in summer 2018, Hamilton remained a faculty member until spring 2020.

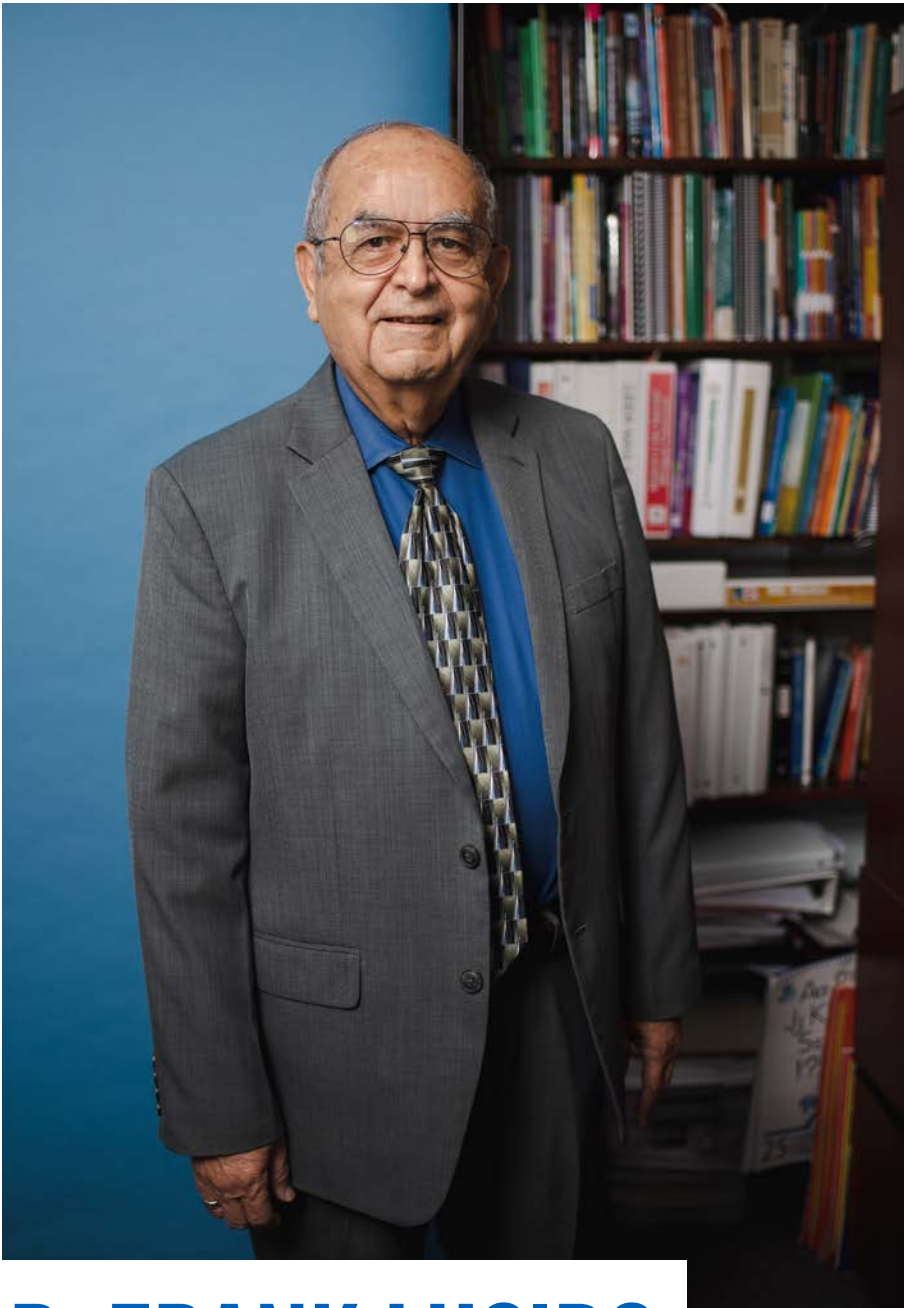
"It was important for me to be saturated in the profession and to experience what my faculty were experiencing so I wouldn't lose sight," she said.

Hamilton has been honored for her service, leadership, and scholarship through various awards with many of those achievements being formally recognized by the Texas House of Representatives during the 84th

Texas Legislature. She was also named Professor Emeritus by the Texas A&M Board of Regents.

In retirement, Hamilton remains committed to the Corpus Christi community through service on numerous boards and foundations.

"I hope others remember me as a strong, supportive, and encouraging mentor — someone who placed service to others above all else," Hamilton said. "I hope I am remembered as someone who embraced technology, encouraged increasing education, and was a strong advocate for nurses everywhere."



DR. FRANK LUCIDO

Dr. Frank Lucido '78 has held many titles in his 50-year career as an educator. From elementary school teacher to school superintendent, from university professor to associate dean, it's safe to say no one in the Coastal Bend knows the unique needs of bilingual educators and students in South Texas better than he.

Lucido is an expert in the education of English-language learners and is responsible for preparing future teachers in that field. Lucido has taught at

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi since 1985.

"When I first came to campus, it was just a few buildings, but thanks to university administrators and state legislators, we have grown to become a beautiful center for learning on the Gulf Coast," Lucido said. "I am so proud to work here."

Lucido's personal academic journey includes a bachelor's degree, three master's degrees, and a doctorate degree,

with one of his master's degrees coming from Corpus Christi State University. Lucido, who grew up in Corpus Christi, says his passion for education stems from his own years as a young student; while he flourished under inspiring teachers, he saw many of his friends drop out of high school due to injustices and inequalities in the education system.

"I wanted to make sure all students from all communities got an equal education opportunity," Lucido said.

In his 34 years and counting at the Island University, Lucido has published numerous journal articles and delivered more than 100 national, state, and regional presentations. He says that advances in technology have revolutionized his field.

"Technology — software and device innovation — gives us the opportunity to explore how the brain learns and increases hands-on learning, along with reading and language experiences that are creative and imaginative," Lucido said. "Students are now able to visit countries, historical sites, and museums all over the world through virtual reality. Science and reading learning resources are available online for all students to explore. Technology has ushered in a whole new opportunity to provide the students learning experiences that were not possible before."

Lucido says he dedicates his career to both the teachers in his classroom and the students in theirs.

"What I love most about teaching the next generation of teachers is that they have many opportunities to reach the minds and hearts of the students they will teach," Lucido said. "I hope my students remember me as a passionate professor who cared about them as a person and as a colleague in the field of education." ♦

NEWS BRIEFS

TOP TEN RANKING FOR GRAPHIC DESIGN PROGRAM



The graphic design program at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi is among the Top 10 best graphic design schools in Texas. The program ranked No. 7 on The Art Career Project's Best Schools list for 2022. The list recognizes excellence in academic rigor, student selectivity, graduation rate, early career success, alumni achievements, financial aid, faculty resources, and affordability/value.

The graphic design program also

kicked off two new collaborations this spring. Student interns created a line of merchandise and social media assets for the Texas State Aquarium's Wildlife Rescue Center. In addition, members of the Graphic Design Club partnered with the Corpus Christi Hooks baseball team to create a series of interactive augmented reality murals at the ballpark. Ninety students are majoring in graphic design this year.

ISLANDER GUARANTEE MAKES COLLEGE MORE AFFORDABLE



Beginning in fall 2022, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi will increase the income threshold for the Islander Guarantee program to \$125,000 — more than doubling the previous cap. Islander Guarantee, designed to serve Pell Grant-eligible students, is now at the highest level of all comparable award programs among Texas public universities.

Islander Guarantee is a financial resource for first-time college students. If the student meets additional criteria, the

program will cover the cost of tuition and mandatory fees. Eligible students will receive Islander Guarantee for up to eight semesters if they continue to meet eligibility requirements and funds remain available.

To learn more about Islander Guarantee, visit scholarships.tamucc.edu/guarantee.

\$250K GRANT PROVIDES FINANCIAL STABILITY FOR ISLANDER STUDENT INTERNS, BOOSTS LOCAL ECONOMY



A grant from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) is helping Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi reach its goal of building a best-in-class student internship program that will also strengthen the education-to-career pipeline and keep highly skilled workers employed in the greater Corpus Christi area for years to come.

The THECB Work-Based Learning Opportunity Grant – Internships, valued at nearly \$250,000, is supporting the Career and Professional Development Center (CPDC) this summer as it expands paid internship opportunities and converts unpaid internships to paid internships for dozens of Islander students. The THECB created this grant to help counteract the loss of opportunities caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

With support from the grant, TAMU-CC is:

- Converting 13 unpaid internships to paid work-based learning opportunities at Visit Corpus Christi and other local nonprofits;
- Increasing the number of students participating in paid work-based learning opportunities at small businesses in the Coastal Bend;
- Increasing wages for students in paid work-based learning opportunities at Visit Corpus Christi, Camp Aranzazu, the Port of Corpus Christi, and small businesses in the Coastal Bend.

Funding from the grant provides an increase in pay to \$20 per hour for the programs listed above.

PARTNERSHIP BY THE PINT

*Local Breweries Create University-Branded Beers,
Portion of Proceeds Benefit Islander Athletic Fund*

Islanders have a new way to show support for their alma mater thanks to a partnership between Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi and two local breweries, Lazy Beach Brewing and Lorelei Brewing Company. On National Beer Day, April 7, TAMU-CC announced the launch of two Island University-branded beers. Lazy Beach has added the Islander Wave to its menu while Lorelei now offers the Shaka Blonde. Both breweries, which are owned or managed by Islander alumni, are donating a portion of proceeds to the Islander Athletic Fund.

The breweries designed their beers to pair perfectly with a day at the beach, a backyard cookout, or a sporting event. Islander Wave is a kölsch-style beer with a light, fruity aroma and a pleasant hoppy bitterness. Shaka Blonde is a light, well-rounded, easy-drinking beer with hints of lime and sea salt, which gives it a perfect flavor profile for a hot Corpus Christi day.

Continued on page 26.





Shaka Blonde on tap at Lorelei Brewing Company.

Opposite page from top: Jon Palumbo, Director of Islanders Athletics, visits Lazy Beach Brewing. Co-owner of Lazy Beach brewery Cory Mathews '09 stirs the mash that will eventually become the Islander Wave brew. Trevor Belicek '15, General Manager of Lorelei Brewing Company, attends an exclusive tasting event that showcases their signature beer. A brewer examines the barley that is used to create the custom Islander-branded beer.

The idea of having an Islander-branded beer began as a passion project for Josiah Castro, Associate Athletic Director and Chief Revenue Officer for Islanders Athletics.

“I always thought that a university-branded beer was a creative way to connect with alumni, fans, and constituents of the university,” Castro said. “As it turns out, we were lucky enough to have two alumni-run breweries in Corpus Christi. The teams at Lorelei and Lazy Beach are excited to support their alma mater.”

"THIS COLLABORATION HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BRING FOCUS TO TAMU-CC AND ALL THE GREAT THINGS HAPPENING HERE, NOT ONLY LOCALLY BUT REGIONALLY. ULTIMATELY, ANY SUCCESS WILL HELP SUPPORT OUR ISLANDER STUDENT-ATHLETES AS THEY PURSUE THEIR EDUCATION."

Jon Palumbo
Director of Islanders Athletics

At the helm of Lazy Beach are Cory '09 and Jess Mathews '08, a husband-and-wife team. The couple, who met on campus, says that finding a way to give back to the Island University has been on their minds from the very beginning.

“Several years ago, we were able to serve our beer at TAMU-CC Homecoming. From that moment, we knew we wanted to partner more with the university,” Jess Mathews said. “As alumni and business owners, this city and the university are a part of who we are.”

Trevor Belicek '15, general manager of Lorelei, played baseball for the Islanders from 2012 to 2015 before playing minor league baseball for the Atlanta Braves organization. After hanging



up his cleats, Belicek found himself working for Lorelei and absorbing as much information about brewing science as possible.

“In the past, Lorelei had supported TAMU-CC through events like Islanders Athletics Casino Night, so when we discussed creating a university-branded beer, we said, ‘OK, let’s do this,’” Belicek said. “Now we have an opportunity to help with scholarships for future Islander athletes.”

The Shaka Blonde can features a “mer-dude,” a male mermaid that is designed in Belicek’s likeness, complete with an Islanders baseball jersey. The Islander Wave can was inspired by the Islander lifestyle and includes orchids, which represent the leis worn by Islander graduates at commencement.

“Long-term, we would love to see these beers for sale at local stores and restaurants, and down the road, possibly at the American Bank Center or Whataburger Field,” Jon Palumbo, Director of Islanders Athletics, said. “This collaboration has the potential to bring focus to TAMU-CC and all the great things happening here, not only locally but regionally. Ultimately, any success will help support our Islander student-athletes as they pursue their education.” ♦



De'Lazarus Keys '23 throws down a dunk as Isaac Mushila '23 looks on.



HISTORIC SEASONS

ISLANDERS BASKETBALL PROGRAMS COMPLETE HISTORIC 2021-22 SEASONS

It was a historic year for the Texas A&M-Corpus Christi men's and women's basketball programs. The men's team won the Southland Conference Championship (SLC) and advanced to the NCAA March Madness Tournament, while the women finished second in the league after an undefeated 14-0 home slate which saw head coach Royce Chadwick become the winningest coach in the conference's history.

"This was an incredibly exciting year for Islanders Basketball," said Jon Palumbo, Director of Islanders Athletics. "What our men's program was able to accomplish in Coach Lutz's first year

was tremendous. They came into the season focused and knowing they had a chance to do something special. The run they made to bring home a conference championship and put our university and community in the national spotlight made us all very proud. And our women's program took a big step forward under Coach Chadwick's leadership. An undefeated home season is a special accomplishment and a first for our program."

Under first-year head coach Steve Lutz, the men made their second-ever NCAA March Madness Tournament appearance after winning their third conference

championship, and first since 2006-07. The Islanders earned the automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament after winning three games in three days at the SLC Tournament in Katy.

The turnaround was one of the largest in the country after Lutz inherited a squad that finished 5-19 the previous year. This year, A&M-Corpus Christi more than quadrupled that win total, submitting a 23-12 season. It was the sixth 20-win season in program history, and first since 2016-17.

Continued on page 30.



Isaac Mushila '23 (center) and teammates raise the 2021-22 SLC Tournament Championship trophy.



**IN ONE YEAR,
A&M-CORPUS
CHRISTI
MORE THAN
QUADRUPLED
ITS PREVIOUS
WIN TOTAL**

(Top left): Terrion Murdix '23 drives through defenders.

(Right): Myles Smith '21, '22 hangs in the air on a field goal attempt.

(Bottom left): Head coach Steve Lutz boards the plane to Dayton, Ohio, for the NCAA Tournament.

(Bottom center): Islander student-athletes and staff gather on the court before the game at the NCAA Tournament.

Lutz went on to become a finalist for the Joe B. Hall National Coach of the Year award, presented annually to the top first-year coach in Division I college basketball.

“To be associated with these young men, it’s a dream come true,” Lutz said. “There’s nothing that I would change. They did anything and everything that was possibly imaginable. They rallied a city and university around them, and they won at a high level with a first-class manner.”

Isaac Mushila '23 and Trevian Tennyson '23 earned All-Conference recognition, and Terrion Murdix '23 was named the SLC Tournament MVP and to the SLC All-Defensive Team. The Islanders had 13 different student-athletes score in double-figures in a single game, which was tied for the most in the nation.

It all came after the Islanders were picked to finish sixth out of eight in the SLC Preseason Poll.

“Our success had nothing to do with me,” Lutz said. “Our success had to do with the 14 guys who sacrificed for one another, believed in one another, and put their individual goals aside for us to be able to achieve something that this

university hasn’t achieved since 2007. These guys are going to enjoy this the rest of their lives. They absolutely deserve it.”

Coach Chadwick, head coach for women’s basketball, became the winningest coach in SLC history with 211 career league wins. Chadwick also reached the 700-win total in his career earlier in the season and finished the year at 708.

“I love this city, the fans, and everything about our situation,” Chadwick said. “We have great administration and Corpus Christi is home.”

Makinna Serrata '21, the team’s leading scorer, was named the SLC Women’s Basketball Student-Athlete of the year.

“Coach Chadwick is the best coach I have ever played for,” Serrata said. “He has made me a better player and it’s an honor to play for him.”

A&M-Corpus Christi finished second place in the SLC regular season and earned a double-bye to the semifinals of the SLC Tournament. The Islanders beat SLC Tournament champion University of the Incarnate Word four times this year.

The Islanders posted their first undefeated home season in program history with a 14-0 mark, which topped their 13-1 record in 2019-20. A&M-Corpus Christi currently holds the sixth-longest active home winning streak in the nation and outscored the opposition 960-703 at home this year.

“I’m very happy for this team to be undefeated at home,” Chadwick said. “The student-athletes deserve all of the credit for this, and it’s quite an accolade to be able to do something for the first time in school history.”

In addition to Serrata earning Student-Athlete of the Year, A&M-Corpus Christi garnered a pair of All-Conference First-Team selections in Serrata and junior Alecia Westbrook ’23. Westbrook was also named the SLC Defensive Player of the Year and to the All-Defensive Team, along with sophomore Paige Allen ’24. It marked the first time in program history that the Islanders landed two student-athletes on the First-Team and two on the All-Defensive Team.

Westbrook became the second Defensive Player of the Year from A&M-Corpus Christi in the last three seasons.



Both Islanders men’s and women’s basketball have significantly raised expectations heading into next season. Both teams are expected to return all their All-Conference selections and a majority of their rosters as they head into the fall.

“We’re all looking forward to building on the success that our basketball programs accomplished this season,” Palumbo said. “With the coaches and student-athletes we have coming back for next season, and the new additions on the way in, I can’t wait for the 2022-23 Islanders basketball season.” ♦

(Left): Makinna Serrata ’21 celebrates after scoring.

(Right): Head coach Royce Chadwick signals a play to the team.

ISLAND OF CHAMPIONS

WOMEN'S CROSS COUNTRY

MEN'S TENNIS

BEACH VOLLEYBALL

ISLANDER ATHLETIC FUND

SOUTHLAND CONFERENCE

2021-22 CONFERENCE CHAMPIONS

MEN'S BASKETBALL

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Below: Izzy's new look is revealed at a pep rally.

Opposite (L-R): The Islanders Cheer and Dance team poses for a photo with Izzy. Izzy takes the stage as the crowd cheers. Stickers, T-shirts, and other assorted items showcase Izzy's new look.



INTRODUCING IZZY THE ISLANDER

SAME NAME, SAME ISLANDER SPIRIT, NEW LOOK!

This spring, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi unveiled an updated version of its mascot, Izzy. The debut was held at a May 4 pep rally prior to the South Texas Showdown, the annual baseball rivalry game against University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley.

The updated Izzy is a blue character with waves of green and blue hair. The mascot wears board shorts and sunglasses, showcasing a coastal lifestyle, but can easily change into a sports jersey or even a suit to match the event Izzy attends. Additionally, Izzy will carry a surfboard. There are currently three surfboard designs, created by Islander alumni Monica Marie Garcia '11, '14, Sandra Gonzalez '11, and Malachy McKinney '09. Each board incorporates images suggested through a survey sent to the entire Islander community. Images reflect campus history and traditions along with South Texas culture.

A task force worked to develop Izzy's new look after the university received a letter from the Office of Hawaiian Affairs noting the previous mascot's tiki mask and tribal tattoo hold sacred meaning to Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders.

Jon Palumbo, Director of Islanders Athletics, said the task force's work centered around addressing the concerns raised in the letter while creating a mascot that stayed true to the Islanders brand. The result, he said, is a mascot with a fun loving, friendly personality designed for all Islanders.

"Historically, some of our biggest fans used to paint themselves blue to show school spirit," Palumbo said. "They created a fan group called the Blue Crew to show school spirit and cheer for our teams, and we thought it would be a good idea to pay homage to that spirit with Izzy."

After the pep rally, Izzy led the crowd to the Islanders Baseball game, where the mascot threw out the first pitch. Later the same night, Izzy attended Late Night Breakfast, a campus tradition that offers students a hearty meal to kick off finals week.

"I thank the task force for their work," said Dr. Kelly M. Miller, President and CEO of Texas A&M-Corpus Christi. "With such a wide variety of views on what the mascot should be and how it should look, we knew we would not be able to incorporate every idea. This diverse task force came up with a great concept that incorporates our history and simultaneously embraces our Islander spirit."

Rickabaugh Graphics, a company that specializes in creating and/or updating university mascots, assisted with the project.

Merchandise featuring Izzy can be purchased online or at the Campus Store in the University Center. ♦





7 IN 7

SEVEN INFLUENTIAL ISLANDERS ACROSS SEVEN DECADES

Numbers tell a story, and our numbers show that our Islander family is steadily growing. Over the past 75 years, we have welcomed nearly 55,000 graduates into the Islander alumni family. They came to the Island University from different places with their own dreams. After commencement, each left campus with new ideas and experiences that contributed to their futures. As we look back on these alumni, we find stories of adversity overcome and dreams realized. We invite you to read about seven alumni — one for each full decade of our existence — who left their mark on our institution and who show us the meaning of Islander Impact.



1950s DR. NOLAN ESTES '50

Dr. Nolan Estes shined bright as a two-sport Tarpon, while working toward a degree in education. The UCC football and basketball star was on full scholarship; he played tight end on the football team and center on the basketball team, the latter of which went 25-1 his senior year, racking up big wins over powerhouses like Oklahoma City

University and Southwest Texas State University.

In addition to his athletic accomplishments, Estes served as sports editor of the Tarpon student newspaper. He was also vice president of the Baptist Student Union. During his first year on campus, Estes met the love of his life, Mildred Johnson, a cheerleader and music major from Houston. In 1949, Johnson was named “most beautiful” in *The Silver King*, the UCC Yearbook. The couple married in 1951 and celebrated 70 years of love in 2021.

Estes was drafted by the Army and served from 1951-1953, earning the Bronze Star for service in the Korean War. He earned a master’s degree from the University of Texas in 1954; six years later, he earned a doctorate from Harvard University’s Graduate School of Education.

“When I was selected for the program at Harvard, they only took 20 people from

around the country. About half of them were from other Ivy League schools, and I had a good foundation, maybe even better, than most of them,” said Estes, who grew up near the Texas-Mexico border in the small towns of Rio Hondo and Lozano.

Following various K-12 leadership positions around the country and a two-year stint in Washington, D.C. where he served as the Associate U.S. Commissioner for Education, Estes became the general superintendent for Dallas Independent School District, where between 1968-1978, he oversaw the integration of Dallas schools. After an additional 24 years in leadership positions at UT, Estes retired in 2002.

“The skills and knowledge I gained at UCC provided a sound foundation for the rest of my university studies and professional pursuits,” Estes said. “It’s that experience that helped me enjoy a successful career.”



1960s

JAGDEV "JAG" SINGH CHEEMA '67

The road to the Island University is different for everyone, but in the case of Jagdev Singh Cheema, it began in India. Cheema's first stop in the U.S. was in California, but his sense of adventure and love for western movies soon found him bound for Texas. The University of Corpus Christi was not only the place Cheema would earn a business degree from in 1967; but also the place he found the love of his life, Linda, a fellow UCC student.

Jag Cheema had a long and illustrious career in sales and financial advising, which took him and his family to New Mexico for many years. He retired in 2020 as Senior Vice President of Wells Fargo, and he and Linda now split time between New Mexico and a recently purchased Corpus Christi home.

"We have a history here, a connection, and Linda has always had a soft spot in her heart for Corpus Christi," Jag Cheema said.

As a former UCC tennis player, Jag Cheema formed a special bond with staff and students in Islanders Athletics, and in 2011, the Cheemas created an endowed scholarship for Islander student-athletes. In 2016, the couple established a second endowed scholarship for first-generation Islander business students. Cheema said he inherited a spirit of giving from his father, and together with his wife, the couple feels called to give back to the

university that gave them so much.

"My father told me to judge your success not by how much money you have, but by how happy you are. If you're not happy, you're not successful," Jag Cheema said.

Beyond their philanthropic donations, the Cheemas say meeting the students impacted by their generosity is a highlight for them.

"We tell the students, 'you owe us nothing,' but if they want to do one little thing, we would like them to help someone else when they are in the position to do so," Jag Cheema said.

In fall 2021, the couple donated funds to purchase new equipment for the recently renovated Islanders Athletics Field House weight room. The complex, renamed the Jag and Linda Cheema Sports Performance Facility, serves as the weight training home for all 16 Islanders Athletics programs.



1970s

TERRY BURROWES '70

A Tarpon from the Class of 1970, Terry Burrowes, a native of New York, majored in speech so he could pursue a career in the performing arts.

"It was through the university that I got the opportunity to be on stage and audition for a play at the Little Theatre — now called the Harbor Playhouse," Burrowes said.

As a member of the UCC Choir, Burrowes sang under the baton of Dr. Melton James. Burrowes was also captain of the cheerleading squad, where he fondly remembers cheering for the basketball team, which included the legendary Roy Ford, '71. Additionally, Burrowes was a DJ on KUCC, where soul music and rock were his favorites to play.

"My on-air name was Terry B," he recalled. "The station was only heard on campus, but it was special to us."

Burrowes and his graduating class were unable to walk the stage for graduation, as Hurricane Celia ravaged the Coastal Bend on Aug. 3, 1970, destroying much of Ward Island in its wake. Fifty years later, in 2020, Burrowes made the journey from his New Jersey home to TAMU-CC for Homecoming Week.

"The campus was beautiful," he said. "To see the current dorms and remember what it was like living in Miller Hall... to see the round library, where the 1970 hurricane had caused such devastation. I helped clean up the debris, along with others."

Burrowes had a successful career as a theatre company owner, international educator, educational administrator, and volunteer EMT, and is now enjoying retirement. He says the formative experiences he had at UCC helped shape his professional career in the decades that followed.

"I had the opportunity to do things at UCC that no one said could not be done," he said. "There were no nay sayers."

Continued on page 36.





1980s

THERESA BARRERA-SHAW '89

Theresa Barrera-Shaw is breaking the glass ceiling for the next generation of female entrepreneurs.

“When I was a little girl, all I wanted to do was carry a briefcase,” Barrera-Shaw said. “I knew even then that my dream was to be a businesswoman.”

Barrera-Shaw grew up in Kansas but attended Corpus Christi State University after her parents moved to Texas to be closer to family.

While studying finance at CCSU, Barrera-Shaw worked diligently to support herself. She took a job at Sam’s Club, which at the time was new to the area. Little did she know that her entry-level job as a part-time cashier would lead to a 27-yearlong career with Walmart. In 2001, Barrera-Shaw made her mark as the second Hispanic vice president in the company’s U.S. business, securing the title of vice president over seasonal merchandise.

“I never imagined that I’d be vice president of a Fortune 100 company,” Barrera-Shaw said. “But it’s so important to have that vision, to set the trail for others, and get in there and prove yourself.”

In 2004, Barrera-Shaw was invited to return to campus to give the keynote address at commencement.

“Now there’s so much spirit and pride

throughout the campus,” she said. “It’s truly blossomed into something special.”

In 2013, Barrera-Shaw left Walmart to start a company with her husband, the Barrera Shaw Group, a professional retail management consulting firm.

“To be an entrepreneur, you have to have courage,” Barrera-Shaw said. “You have to learn to follow your gut. You’re the CEO of you — invest in yourself.”

Reflecting on her time as a student, Barrera-Shaw credits her mother — who passed away during her first semester at CCSU — for persuading her to attend the university.

“I wanted so badly to move back to Kansas, but she told me to stay,” Barrera-Shaw said. “She knew all along that CCSU was where I was meant to be. Listening to her and pursuing my degree opened so many doors for me. I know she would be proud.”



1990s

DR. PATRICK AYARZAGOITIA '92, '11

Two-time Islander alumnus Dr. Patrick Ayarzagotia encourages first-generation students like himself to never stop searching for their true selves.

“In my life, I faced many disadvantages; however, I believe that there is a certain skill one develops to turn potential problems into assets,” Ayarzagotia, a native of Robstown, said. “I was driven to do what it takes because of those who

came before me. The sacrifices of my parents and their parents before them are who inspired me to learn, grow, and ultimately succeed as a student.”

Ayarzagotia earned a communication degree from CCSU in 1992. After a decade working in the TV news business, Ayarzagotia, who was inspired by his registered nurse wife, made a dramatic career shift into the field of health care.

He earned an associate degree in nursing in 2004, followed by a Master of Science in Nursing-Family Nurse Practitioner from Texas A&M-Corpus Christi in 2011, and a Doctor of Nursing Practice in 2013.

Both inspired and humbled by the life-changing work of his new profession, Ayarzagotia says he felt called to teach future nurses. He did that by serving as TAMU-CC nursing faculty from 2012-2017.

“Being a nurse has opened up a world which I am privileged to be part of,” Ayarzagotia said. “It has given me purpose in life and has blessed me with the opportunity to share my knowledge and skills with others.”

In addition, in 2013, Ayarzagotia and his wife founded Education for Advanced Practice, which provides continuing education and training for nurse practitioner students and advanced practice nurse practitioners.

In support of his alma mater, Ayarzagotia helped establish graduate nursing scholarships and donates to other scholarships. He currently serves as an Islander Alumni Association board member.

“I’d like to leave a legacy which embodies the true spirit of the Island University,” he said. “A legacy that encourages students to explore their passions, think beyond the classroom, and become leaders in their chosen field.”



2000s DR. WHITNEY KILGORE '01, '05

In her student teaching semester at the Island University, Dr. Whitney Kilgore says she was one of many single mothers working to complete a teaching degree. Inspired by the ever-supportive but demanding teaching style of her mentor, Dr. JoAnn Canales, now TAMU-CC Dean Emerita, Kilgore overcame the challenges of her rigorous course load, student teaching, and the personal demands of raising a child.

Twenty years after she earned her bachelor's degree, Kilgore launched the Dr. JoAnn Canales Endowed Scholarship in Education for single mothers in their student teaching semester.

"I can't say this enough — the faculty at TAMU-CC truly care about each and every student," Kilgore said. "The support and caring that I received during my most difficult semester changed my life, my daughter's life, and laid a path to our future for which I will forever be grateful."

Kilgore would go on to earn a master's degree from TAMU-CC in 2005, a post-graduate certificate in Educational Technology Leadership from George Washington University in 2011, and a doctorate in Learning Technologies from the University of North Texas in 2016.

Today, Kilgore is co-founder of iDesign, a Dallas-based company that partners with more than 100 universities and

colleges in the creation of their online and hybrid programs.

While at TAMU-CC, Kilgore was a member of the international honor society Phi Theta Kappa and president of both the Professional Association of Corpus Christi Educators and the TAMU-CC chapter of the Association of Texas Professional Educators.

Kilgore has visited campus numerous times since her days as a student.

"I continue to be impressed with the expansion of the university, the recognition that it has received, and the grants awarded for research," Kilgore said. "But it's the people and the culture of community at TAMU-CC that I'm impressed with most."



2010s VALERIE FERDIN '13, '15

Valerie Ferdin certainly made the most of her time on the Island. Along with earning two degrees and securing a job in the lucrative field of engineering, she also currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Islander Alumni Association and recently created an endowed scholarship to help first-generation mechanical engineering students reach their education goals.

Ferdin, a Corpus Christi native, said her time on the Island is more than just a fond memory. She says it's an integral part of who she is.

During her time as an Islander, Ferdin carried the same passion she had for

her coursework into various research assistantships, academic clubs, and extracurricular activities.

"My involvement on campus provided me with some of my best memories," Ferdin said. "From traveling to Hawaii to help build the A&M-Corpus Christi Marine Technology Society, to presenting research in California and Washington, these experiences have had a great impact on my life."

Upon earning her bachelor's degree, Ferdin found immediate employment with Baker Hughes as a field engineer based out of Houston. She then advanced her education by earning an MBA from TAMU-CC's AACSB accredited online program. She is now a lead mechanical engineer with Baker Hughes.

"My MBA gave me the much-needed insight of the connection between engineering and business," Ferdin said. "The experience and knowledge I gained while at TAMU-CC helped me develop into a well-rounded professional." ♦



HOMECOMING TRADITIONS

Light a Fire in the Hearts of Attendees

“Islander Forever, From Sunrise to Sunset,” was the theme for Homecoming Week 2022. The Islander Alumni Association hosted numerous events — including campus tours, a reunion lunch, a tailgate party, and a banquet to honor key alumni — all with the goal of helping alumni celebrate Islander pride, relive fond memories, and rekindle old friendships.



Islanders set “The Big I” ablaze, a favorite Homecoming tradition.

Jeff Dupont '97, '00 returned to the Island University to celebrate his 25-year class reunion with his longtime friends. Dupont, now Dean of Students at Fort Lewis College, earned a bachelor's degree in kinesiology and math, along with a master's degree in higher education administration. He also worked on campus from 1997-2001 as the assistant director of Campus Recreation, now known as Recreational Sports.

"When I came to school here, there were about 4,000 students. It is incredible how much the campus life has changed," Dupont said. "Seeing current students crowded around for Lighting of the I, you could feel their energy, and it was electrifying."

Mark '00 and Tina '98 De Ases not only earned their degrees on campus but also found love. The couple, who traveled from Houston, said it was their first time to attend Homecoming since their graduation. Like Dupont, Mark and Tina were part of a group of close friends and colleagues who worked in the TAMU-CC Recreational Sports department at the same time.

"We always tell people to get involved with student activities because you meet so many different people," Tina De Ases said. "When you get involved in different clubs, recreational sports, and student activities, you have the opportunity to build lifelong friendships."

Mark Scott '91, President of San Jacinto Title Services, said the Homecoming

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Adrian Rodriguez, Vice President of Student Engagement and Success, and daughter Ayden show Islander spirit at the Homecoming game.



Meagan Pendleton '22 is crowned the 2022 Homecoming Islander.



Islanders Cheer and Dance participates in numerous events during Homecoming Week.



Ross Williams '23, Islanders Men's Basketball, blocks a shot.



Makinna Serrata '21, Islanders Women's Basketball, lines up to take a shot.

festivities gave him time to reflect on the growth of the university and the success of each new class of Islander graduates. Scott, who was honored by the Islander Alumni Association as the 2022 Outstanding Alumnus, was a leader in helping to pass legislation to downwardly expand TAMU-CC into a four-year institution.

“My relationship with this university is unique, and for so much of it, I often just felt fortunate enough to be in the right place at the right time,” Scott said. “As I watched my son and his friend enjoy the Homecoming basketball game, I’m proud knowing I had a hand in making that happen.”

Beverly Brooks ’13 attended Homecoming alongside her teenage daughter. Brooks, who earned a degree in special education, is now a middle school teacher for the Corpus Christi Independent School District and says while Homecoming gave her the chance to reminisce, it also reminded her of the future she built through achieving her college education.

“I remember waking up one Friday morning and, on a whim, deciding to come check things out on campus,” Brooks said. “When I visited the university, right away, I had this feeling that compelled me to take the next step. I didn’t know then that it would turn into my future, an experience now I can share with my daughter as she looks to take those same steps.” ♦



University representatives are invited to Corpus Christi City Hall for a Homecoming proclamation.

HOMECOMING HONORS BANQUET

The Islander Alumni Association held its Homecoming Honors Banquet during Homecoming Week 2022. Honorees (pictured below) included:

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS:

- Distinguished Alumnus - **Garrett Frazier '04**
- Outstanding Alumnus - **Mark Scott '91**
- Young Alumnus Award - **Dr. Don Trahan, Jr. '08, '10**

ATHLETIC HALL OF HONOR INDUCTEES:

- Islanders Men’s Basketball - **John Jordan '15**
- 2009 Islanders Men’s Tennis Team - **Jan Cingel '08, '09; Jaume Farras '09; James Langford '11; Andrew Maingot '13; Laurent Montois '12; Dmitry Novikov '11; David Pace; Alex Pavlov '12; Mike Pavlov '09; and Jose Zunino '09, '12**
Coached by head coach Steve Moore and assistant coaches **Jason Holland '03** and **Goncalo Figueiredo '06, '12.**



Ed Cantu '81 (left) joins Homecoming Honors Banquet awardees.



CLASS NOTES

1970s

Dinah Bowman '71 exhibited a 50-year retrospective of Gyotaku (Japanese nature printing) called “Impressions of Nature” at Coastal Bend Community College. Her Gyotaku was also featured on “Texas Country Reporter” and in Texas Monthly. Texas Shores, a Sea Grant publication, is profiling Dinah’s scientific illustration work.

Lonny Wilder '71 recently retired following a 30-year career training first responders. He continues to serve the law enforcement community as an advisory board member for Guardian Alliance Technologies. Lonny previously worked as a journalist for KIII-TV in Corpus Christi and WFAA-TV in Dallas.

Bill Spencer '75 is moving back to Corpus Christi to live on North Padre Island after 47 years in the oil and gas business.

1980s

Sharon Scerrato '83 is happily retired at the Jersey Shore.

1990s

Ray Ramos '94 advanced to program specialist IV with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission-Residential Licensing Program.

Sylvia Leal '98 has a set of twins who are in the top 50 of their high school sophomore class. Additionally, her daughter advanced to the state competition for UIL violin solo and ensemble. She is very proud of her children’s work ethic.

Gloria Garcia '99, '03 received her Doctorate of Education in Higher Education Administration from Texas Tech University.

2000s

Kristi Briggs '00 is an education technology specialist in Canaseraga, New York. She is a VEX Robotics coach to a high school team; this year, she also started a middle school robotics team and two elementary robotics teams. She also took her all-girl team to the VEX World Robotics Championship in Dallas in May 2022.

David Cottle '03, '06, '09, recently completed his Doctor of Nursing Practice at the University of Texas-Austin. He serves as a nurse anesthetist and clinical adjunct faculty for the U.S. Army Graduate Program in Anesthesia Nursing at Fort Hood.

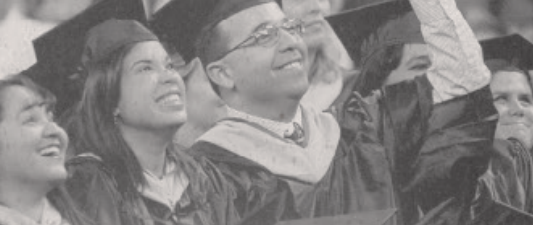
Trina Yarborough '03 is proud to announce that her oldest daughter has followed her footsteps by earning a Bachelor of Business Administration. Her middle daughter graduated from the University of Texas in San Antonio in 2020 with an electrical engineering degree.

Stephanie Gutierrez '04 is celebrating 15 years with the Bexar County Juvenile Probation Department as a senior probation officer. This is her 17th year serving her community as a juvenile probation officer, having previously served in San Patricio County for two years.



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Crystal Mendez '04 is a proud first-generation university alumna. Her son graduated from college in May 2022.

Cassandra Self '05 recently became a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives, the nation's leading professional society for health care leaders. She currently works at Texas Health Resources as a program director of clinical supply services.

Gregg Birdy '07 is proud to announce that his son graduated Cum Laude in May 2022 from Johnson High School in San Antonio.

Nikki Cortinas '07 is nearing the completion of her MBA from Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

Jennifer Niemeier '07 and family have moved back to North Carolina, where Jennifer is teaching physical education and is an assistant softball coach at Wake Forest High School.

Monique Wellesley '08, and her husband Loyd, own a thriving pet sitting business called Good Life Pet Sitting in San Antonio. In addition, Monique is a successful real estate agent for JBG Goodwin, REALTORS and enjoys helping others make their dreams come true.

Dustin Carter '09, '16 recently published his second novel, "Guadalupe: A Human Trafficking Story." The novel is available on Amazon and all proceeds from sales in January 2022 were donated to Veterans for Child Rescue to raise awareness for human trafficking prevention.

Raquel Gonzalez '09 was honored by having two daughters graduate from Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi — one in fall 2021, another in spring 2022. It's a household full of Islander pride!

Jacquelyn Reuther '09 now works as a genomic scientist in the oncology division for the genetic testing company Invitae.

Dr. Nicholas Huffeldt '08 started as a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Research Fellow at Lund University, Sweden, in January 2022, and will continue working on global change biology and Arctic animals.

2010s

Dominic Burch '11 is celebrating 13 years of employment at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

Chantel Eubanks '12 has been named marketing manager for the Orlando Fringe in Orlando, Florida.

Dr. Katheryn Paynter '13, '21 graduated with her Doctorate in Educational Leadership and was promoted to assistant director of the University Center at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

Joshua Perez '13 bought a brand-new house in Brownsville.

Vanessa Armentrout '14 accepted an offer as a biological scientist with the Bonneville Power Administration in Portland, Oregon.

Brittany Figueroa '14 accepted a new job as a recruiting coordinator for Express Employment Professionals in Waco.

Amy Montez Frye '14 was chosen as the public address announcer for the Corpus Christi Hooks AA Affiliate for the Houston Astros.

Aaron Arroyo '15 and Sterling (Burton) Arroyo '15 gave birth to their son, Mateo Howard Arroyo, on Sept. 29, 2021. He arrived 10 weeks early at just 3 pounds and is now healthy and happy.

Jamie Fink '16 accepted a position with Boise State University as a communications specialist for the College of Engineering.

Frances Quintana '16 has been promoted to senior operations analyst for Charter Spectrum Sales Call Center in El Paso.

Erica Wakefield '16, '17 was awarded Richard King High School's Teacher of the Year for the 2021-2022 school year.

Julie Fomenko '17 has been named associate professor and executive director of simulation and experiential learning at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, Fran and Earl Ziegler College of Nursing.

Nia Lane '17 recently started qualifying exams for her Ph.D. in Nursing with University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio. She married the love of her dreams in June 2022.

Lauren Trevino '17 successfully passed the first step of the United States Medical Licensing Exam and is moving to Danbury, Connecticut, where she will complete her medical school clinical clerkship.

Priscilla Cantu '18, '20 accepted a job at H-E-B in San Antonio as an associate financial analyst.

Stephanie Decker '18 is now the director of quality management for Post Acute Rehabilitation Hospital of Corpus Christi.



Joyce Paez '18 recently graduated from Louisiana State University with a master's degree in Educational Technology Leadership. She accepted a position with the San Antonio Independent School District.

Kelsie Starry '18 accepted a new position as an administrative assistant and lab technician at Superior Weighting Products in Corpus Christi.

Alyssa Uresti '18 received the Chi Sigma Iota honors award in the Professional Counseling graduate program at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

Dulce Garcia '19 was promoted to wellness coordinator at Friends for Life Animal Shelter in Houston. She takes care of the veterinary and medical needs of the shelter's animals. She's also currently enrolled in an online veterinary assistant program to further her skills and education.

Jasmin Lira '19 started a new position as a research assistant at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio.

Isabel Zapata '19 recently wrapped up her second year of teaching kindergarten in San Antonio.

2020s

Megan Greige '20 recently started graduate school at The Ohio State University, in the School of Environment and Natural Resources.

Corine Kuhlman '20 is a telemetry nurse in San Antonio. She loves being a nurse and caring for her patients and hopes to continue her education at the Island University in the future.

LeeEllen Crider '21 was recently accepted into Grand Canyon University for a master's degree in Geriatric Psychology.

Jackson Gray '21 was hired as a veteran affairs specialist in the Office of Military and Veterans Services at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

Dakota H. Little '21 has been named customer care coordinator for Elkay Manufacturing Co. in Downers Grove, Illinois.

Brittany Maxey '21 was accepted into Carnegie Mellon University's Literary and Cultural Studies master's program in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She will begin her studies in fall 2022.

Avery Rodriguez '21 and Nicholas Rabideau '21 met at the Island University and are now engaged.

Divya Aryal '22 was recently hired at Dell Children's Hospital as an operating room nurse.



President's Circle is a special opportunity for community members to get involved with their Island University and support the vision of our faculty, staff, and President and CEO, Dr. Kelly M. Miller. Thanks to member support last year, President's Circle was able to designate \$100,000 in funds for direct student support. Our members continue to be integral champions for our students and community.

MEMBER BENEFITS

Members of President's Circle receive an insider's look into the university with exclusive in-person event programming and correspondence from President Miller to keep you updated on the current happenings on campus. We hope you will join us in our commitment to student success and make your Islander Impact!

presidentscircle.tamucc.edu

MEMBER LEVELS: *Bronze Circle: \$1,000 | Silver Circle: \$2,500 | Gold Circle: \$5,000*



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Establishing an endowed scholarship is a meaningful and permanent way to help Islander students pursue their educational goals. The commitment of your gift ensures that future generations have access to a world-class education.

The Island University established the Endowed Scholarship Council in recognition of donors making significant gifts to endowed scholarships and hosts an annual Endowed Scholarship Banquet offering endowed scholarship recipients the opportunity to meet with their generous benefactors.

For more information about our Endowed Scholarship Council or creating an endowed scholarship, please call 361.825.2639.

