The Political Context of UTSA's Founding

Shaping the Future

by
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UTSA'S Early History: When it was Just a Gleam

The first gleam of a university for San Antonio was in the eyes of José Antonio Navarro, who, while serving as Bexar County's Congressman in the Texas Republic, offered land so that it would be established in San Antonio. In contrast, and from another center of population, the first to perceive of a college in Austin was none other than Stephen F. Austin. It was 1833 when he fell in love with a beautiful tract of land on the banks of the Colorado River. He wrote to Samuel May Williams from Mexico that he would like to see "schools, academies, and colleges" there. Navarro was responding to his Spanish and Mexican constituency in San Antonio and Austin to his Anglo settlers. Austin's fantasy, however, became a reality less than 50 years later when the first students began attending the University of Texas at Austin in 1876. Navarro's dream would have to wait about 125 years to be realized.

The seed planted by Navarro during the Texas Republic finally began sprouting with the chartering of the Medical School in San Antonio in 1959. In fact, the Coordinating Board's recommended location of a commuter college+ San Antonio called for consideration to be given for maximum use of common basic resources between the Medical School and the UTSA. Charles LaMaistre, then Vice-Chancellor for Health Affairs for the UT System, recalled recently that what he and Regents Frank Erwin and John Peace had in mind for the new UTSA was,

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* This paper was originally presented at UTSA's Silver Anniversary Symposia on February 23, 1995.
+ Defined by the Board as "...an Institution of Higher Education catering to local students who may find part-time employment while continuing their education. This implies programs to prepare students for direct entry into occupations rather than for research-oriented professions."
indeed, a University of the first class, plus a law school. "They wanted a UT of Austin model for Hispanics in San Antonio" he said.

The recommended law school was never talked about publicly, probably because San Antonio already had a private law school and also because of opposition from among those who otherwise strongly supported establishing a four-year public university in San Antonio. When reminded that it was Southwest Texas State Teachers College and not UT Austin that had been-picked as the model for UTSA, La Maistre explained it was because of opposition from Coordinating Board members.4

The Pivotal Years, 1960-65

On the national setting, the 1960s had ushered in a new wave of optimism under President John F. Kennedy's New Frontiers program, followed by President Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society program, which included a landmark education bill, a major civil rights bill and a series of anti-poverty projects.5 Unavoidably, Texas would get caught up in the country's wave of optimism. This wave of optimism impacted Texas not only through Johnson, but also through newly elected governor, John Connally.

The findings of a Governor's Committee on state needs were reported and became embodied into the Higher Education Coordinating Act of 1965.6 Two major things the Act did was to (1) replace the existing Commission on Higher Education with a powerful Coordinating Board, the Texas College and University System, and (2) transfer authority over the Junior Colleges from the Texas Education Agency to the Coordinating Board. The power the Coordinating Board would be able to wield over a fledgling UTSA included some of the following (The numbers in parenthesis represent section of the existing Act.):

1. prescribe its role and scope (10);
2. a new school would be added only with its approval (10);
3. determine which Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) would perform research (10);
4. for a new IHE to be created, it would have to be submitted to the Board for study before submitting it to the governor and legislature, and then it would require a favorable vote of at least 2/3 of the members of the Board (13);

5. it would devise, establish, periodically review and opt to revise formulas for the use of the Governor and the Legislative Budget Board in making appropriations recommendations to the legislature (16), and;

6. it would allow for deviations from Board formulas by the governor, the Legislative Budget Board, the Board, or the governing board of any IHE, but with reasons and arguments in support of such deviations (16).

Even after his recommendations had been enacted into legislation, Governor Connally circumvented established procedure by announcing to the 59th Legislature in 1965, that he wanted "a new institution in San Antonio concentrating in technical and scientific education." State Senator Franklin Spears interpreted the recommendation as an "adjunct" to the Medical School, and not necessarily an IHE.

While House legislators did not act on the Governor's recommendation, Spears did. However, he was careful to follow the mandates of the new Coordinating Board Act. He introduced a resolution in 1965 calling for the Board to "study (the) feasibility of establishing an IHE in Bexar County." The resolution passed both the House and the Senate, and the Coordinating Board proceeded to study this matter. Doing the correct thing, however, did not help, for the feasibility study would show that San Antonio did not merit a four-year public university. Senator Spears decided to run for statewide office to challenge the findings of the report in the legislature.

Like other Texas metropolitan areas, Bexar County was under-represented in the legislature. Prior to the 1960s, most all senior colleges were situated in small towns, mostly because a rurally-controlled legislature had placed them there. IHEs were good business generators for small towns. But things were changing.

At this time, Texas was affected positively by the so-called reapportionment revolution of the 1960s, considered to be the most important event for American state government since the Civil War. The U.S. Supreme Court had held in *Reynolds v. Sims* that both houses of a State
Legislature had to be apportioned on the basis of population. And subsequently, in *Kilgarlin et al. v. Martin et al.* (1965) a federal court in Houston declared invalid the Texas Constitutional provisions declaring that no single county would be entitled to more than one Senator nor to more than seven Representatives.

After the special 1966 elections, resulting from the court cases, Bexar County would increase its House representation from seven to ten Representatives and its Senate membership would increase from one to two Senators. Big cities, like Dallas and Houston, would henceforth have more power in the legislature. Rurally-controlled legislatures would be things of the past. Significantly, big city representation would also include an increase in representation by African Americans and Mexican Americans.

**The Time Had Come, 1969**

Although the Coordinating Board had stuck to its mandate that no IHE would be allowed in 1967, this did not stop newly-elected State Representative Frank Lombardino, a former city policeman and businessman, from beating all members of the Bexar County delegation to the punch by introducing a bill for one in 1967. He signed up a majority of House members as co-sponsors!

In January of 1969, Lombardino had again signed up the majority of House members. On March 19, 1969 when the bill came up for consideration on the House floor, it took but five minutes as House members shouted their approval. The time seemed to have finally arrived for the illusory IHE to become a reality. As a State Senator at this time, I had already signed 19 of the 31 Senators to support the bill; nevertheless, a degree of uncertainty still prevailed.

The first clue that trouble loomed ahead was when Lt. Governor Ben Barnes announced that the Senate would not consider any new college bills until the general budget was adopted, adding that a Senate subcommittee was handling 22 new college projects! The second clue was the announcement that Senator Bill Moore had appointed himself Chairman of the sub-committee to "study" the new college bills, including HB 42.
Important behind the scenes lobbying efforts were key to successfully passing the bill to establish UTSA (HB 42). One of the most important and unlikely allies was Frank Erwin, then the UT Board or Regents Chairman. Ironically, because Erwin was seeking reappointment as Chair of the Board of Regents, he became a key player in the events that unfolded. I was keenly aware that Erwin was quite conservative, anti-liberal in Democratic Party matters, and that many, if not most, students at the University of Texas disliked him. I informed Erwin that if I voted for him I would be inviting the wrath of most of my friends. Erwin agreed that our politics were quite different, but in asking for my support, he said he was banking on us being honest with each other and on us keeping our word to one another, once a decision was made.

Despite the apparent risks involved, I saw the request as an opportunity to get needed conservatives' support for the UTSA bill. Who better that Erwin who was part of the most politically-dominant group in Texas, including President Johnson, Connally, Peace, and Barnes? As part of our understanding, I agreed to vote for Erwin's reappointment as Regent Chair. In turn, Erwin agreed to and followed through on my request that he not only testify for the UTSA bill, but also for the Dental and Nursing Schools bills, in person, and in both the House and Senate committees. Following our pact, I remember reluctantly going to inform each of my liberal Senate colleagues that I would be voting for Erwin. Although they did not like it because it would break the 11 votes needed to block Erwin's re-nomination, they each understood, and not a word was ever said about it again. When I recently asked Barnes if he had any knowledge of the deal, without hesitation, Barnes reminded me that I had asked him to speak with Erwin!

Another ray of hope was represented by the Coordinating Board which had done much better research by 1969.

This time, the Board had taken private IHEs into consideration by voting on policy which called for a "climate of cooperation and planning" with them. Further, it showed that while private IHEs, throughout the state, were losing some percentage of enrollment, they were actually gaining in numbers. Such research neutralized the private IHE's which had earlier opposed the
Esquivel bill. Also, instead of disparaging San Antonio's low post-high school enrollment, it argued on behalf of a San Antonio IHE to meet educational needs. The updated research on Junior Colleges, revealed that they would lose some enrollment on an immediate basis but would recover it and continue on a higher level within a couple of years. It added that senior and graduate-professional sectors would be on an increase, and referred to such increases as "vital" because of the "serious deficiency" reflected in Texas IHEs.

At this time San Antonio had greater representation in both houses, thanks to redistricting.

Governor Preston Smith, while supporting a medical school for Texas Tech, in his hometown of Lubbock, had also supported Lombardino's efforts since 1967.

After approximately 40 hours of off and on filibustering on matters not directly related to college bills, Lt. Governor Barnes applied the gavel to silence last-minute filibusters at 3 A.M., May 27, 1969, thereby paving the way for a mid-morning vote. With one of the Senators still wanting to filibuster, Barnes recognized friendly Senators to move a very untraditional and seldom-used motion to cut off debate. The Senate complied, by barely passing it, 16 to 13. Once the bill was up for debate, it took only 15 minutes to get it approved. In the end the college bill's number one opponent, Bill Moore, had given up and was absent when the final vote was taken. The abrazos and celebration began!

As evidenced by newspaper accounts, San Antonians were jubilant over the passage of the UTSA bill as well as for the legislation which would bring a Dental and Nursing School to San Antonio.

John Peace stated there was no one with greater concern than him about making the UTSA "one of the greatest universities in the country."

Dr. Clyde Nail, vice-president of the Junior College system stated that it would have "little effect" on the two junior colleges.

Lombardino called it the "...the greatest thing that could ever happen to San Antonio."
Bernal said it was a windfall, adding that the Bexar delegation accomplished more in one session than any other legislative group in the history of Bexar County.

Erwin, referring to all three bills, promised to make the institutions the "...finest of their kind in the country."

Steen called it the "...greatest day in the history of this great city," and added that Smith and Barnes had done more for San Antonio in this session than that of "...all the rest of the governors and lieutenant governors in the history of the state of Texas."

Preston Smith called it a "...new golden era of higher education for South Texas."

**The Site Selection**

After the passage of the UTSA bill, the only thing left was to decide where to build the university. On the day after the bill passed out of the Senate, Regent Peace suggested that the next step was to review the sites and begin preliminary planning. But it seemed that various groups in San Antonio were counting on their site being the most ideal of the 10 sites offered. The final decision, however, would be in hands of the UT Regents, as stipulated by the legislation, and John Peace was already there, working.

Of the 10 sites offered to the Regents, a most interesting one, an offer by San Antonio College (SAC) was not included. The SAC site, an obvious winner of the best kept secret of 1969, was detailed in a 1979 *SA Magazine* article by Tom Walker. It showed how SAC professors had proposed to sell SAC to UTSA for $1.00! What gives the story a degree of legitimacy is that Senator Wayne Connally and SAC professor Golfrey Connally, both brothers of Governor Connally, were lead players in allegedly having arranged the deal. Nothing came of the project, but the thought that students could have walked into a ready-made UTSA, or that the administration could have spent its time readying its upper level courses beginning with the first year of operation, can sure arouse one's imagination!
"Finest in the Country": UTSA's Internal Strengths

So where is UTSA today, 25 years after its legislative birth?

Has the promise of a university of the first class been fulfilled? Is it living up to Governor Smith's expectations when he referred to the passage of the bill as a "... golden era of higher education for South Texas" or of John Peace's prognosis that it would be "one of the great universities in the country?" And what about Frank Erwin's prophecy that UTSA, along with the Dental and Nursing schools, would be the "finest of their kind in the country?"

Or does "greatness await UTSA," as suggested by Chancellor William H. Cunningham at UTSA's Silver Anniversary Convocation this past year (1994)?

The latest "official" plan of action for the university, the Agency's Strategic Plan for 1995-1999, which has the signatures of UTSA President, Samuel A. Kirkpatrick and UT Regents Chairman, Bernard A. Rapoport, outlines UTSA's strengths, as well as the problems associated with those strengths. The Plan also declares UTSA as a (1) comprehensive public metropolitan university and acknowledges that (2) it was created to be a university of the first class, offering bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees "...as are customarily offered at leading American universities."

And while much of what has thus far been covered by this paper has been a history of UTSA's early beginnings, such a history not only helps us understand where UTSA finds itself in 1995, but should help determine the direction it should follow for the next 25 years. As President Kirkpatrick has so appropriately forecasted, the next 25 years should hold great promise as UTSA and San Antonio work together.
### Table 1

**The University of Texas at San Antonio**  
**Program Development Proposal Profile**

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<td>Theater and Dance</td>
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<td>1995</td>
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**Student Enrollment**

UTSA's growth has truly been phenomenal. From a modest 671 students in 1973, attendance has soared to a high of 17,579 in 1994. Although more than half of the 35 IHEs in Texas suffered losses the previous year, UTSA maintained its ever increasing rate of enrollment.

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* Estimated date: dependent on demonstrated need, faculty base sufficient to deliver instruction and approval by the Texas Coordinating Board.

* While a Ph.D. Program in English is not included in Table I it is cited elsewhere in the Coordinating Board Memo, as well as in the Plan. Editor's note: As of Spring 1999, a proposal for a Ph.D. in English Language Literatures with an emphasis in Latina/o Literatures, is undergoing review by university committees and is expected to be submitted for system approval by Fall 1999.
moving up 2.0 % between 1992-1993 and up 2.82 % from 1993-1994. Overall, in the past 10 years, UTSA has increased its headcount by 35.6 percent.

And yet, there is more to come. In a recently released report by the Coordinating Board cited in the San Antonio Express, new projected enrollment figures show that by the year 2010, five South Texas border IHEs will account for 43% of the overall 200,000 gain of students enrolled in Texas higher education. And of those five South Texas border IHEs UTSA will lead the pack, moving from its present 17,579 to 25,368! Another astounding statistic shows that in terms of entering freshmen, there have been important gains. In 1993, 60% of Hispanic high school graduates entered college, up from 40% in 1989. The report also quotes David Gardner, Deputy Assistant Commissioner for the Coordinating Board, as saying that if the goal of bringing minority participation to parity is reached, the overall enrollment will jump from 200,000 to 400,000. Thus UTSA is well situated to meet the growing educational needs of its constituency.

The Library

Another important feature of a top-of-the-line university is that it have a library to match. The commitment by the administration is to have a state-of-the-art library to support student learning and to increase the research productivity of its faculty.

With so much high technology being developed in the field of communications and with researchers being able to access information through on-line internet sources with their computers won't there be a lesser need for having large volumes of books filling up a library?

"Not so," says Michael Kelly, head of UTSA's library, "it will have to be a combination of both. A high tech, digitized system will be excellent for research, but it won't be cheap, and it will not eliminate the need for books." As with overall funding, the speed by which a state-of-the-art library can become a reality, is also impacted negatively by the formula allocations used by the Coordinating Board.
External Forces, 1995

UTSA's Needs are Clearly Spelled Out

Other than the excellent internal analysis provided in the newsletter, Roadrunner UTSA, of January 12, 1991, concerning the funding woes faced by UTSA during this legislative session, consider another clear statement of the problem found in MALDEF's (Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund) class action lawsuit, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) et al vs Richards, et al (the Governor, Board, and others.) The suit addresses issues of funding inequity produced by admissions, recruitment, retention, scholarship, loan and graduate opportunities available at universities throughout Texas, as well as related but separate resource allocation policies of the Higher Education System.

Twenty (20) legislators from every major population area in the border combined efforts with expert planners, representatives of universities, Chambers of Commerce, labor unions, etc. to aide in the development of a border university plan to respond to the needs of IHEs in the Border Region. The ten-year plan to (a) increase undergraduate, masters, doctoral, and professional programs, (b) to enhance libraries, laboratories, and physical plants, and (c) to increase scholarships, student services and research opportunities, would be presented to the legislature for action. At the end of the 10-year period, that border area would have graduate and professional programs roughly comparable to those in the rest of the state. While the 10-year plan did not materialize, it did spur action by the state to provide what became the South Texas/Border Initiative. It became a two-year program which still has a distance to go for parity to become a reality.

The case went to trial in September, 1991. By January, 1992 the court had accepted 78 uncontroverted or admitted fact findings (See Table 2 for a partial listing) agreed to by both the plaintiffs and defendants. Eventually, the State Supreme Court ruled against the plaintiffs. In explaining the reversal, Al Kaufman, lead attorney for the plaintiffs, stated that while "...the facts
presented remained uncontroverted, the Court ruled that the facts did not provide evidence showing a violation of the law."

The court case benefitted IHEs such as UTSA in that it defined the deficiency of allocations made to IHEs in the Border Region, a 41-county area extending from Corpus Christi to San Antonio to El Paso and toward the international border with Mexico. (See Maps 1 and 2) Further, it shows the Border Region with a population of 3.4 million people and with five of the ten most populated SMSA's (Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas) areas in the state. The 41 counties are also seen as a Mexican American region by state policy makers; this region has environmental and disease problems known only in third world countries.

Further clarity of the deficiencies was provided in testimony given by Richard Jones, UTSA professor, concerning the following 5-tier classification of universities in Texas (the first 3 tiers were referred to as "comprehensive research universities" during the trial):

**Tier 1**
The flagship institutions: Texas A & M University at College Station and the University of Texas at Austin

**Tier 2**
The multi-doctorate universities with professional schools: Texas Tech University in Lubbock and the University of Houston

**Tier 3**
Multi-doctorate institutions: University of North Texas in Denton, Texas Women's University in Denton, University of Texas at Arlington, University of Texas at Dallas, and East Texas State University in Commerce

**Tier 4**
The four-year universities with some graduate courses

**Tier 5**
The upper level institutions: institutions teaching only junior and senior courses and offering a limited range of masters programs

The 5-tier classification shows clearly that none of the Border Region IHEs are found in Tier 1, 2, or 3. A fact that is not so obvious by this classification chart is that only one of the

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* San Antonio, El Paso, Corpus Christi area, Hidalgo County and Cameron County.
state’s eight medical schools is found in the Border Region and that is the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio.

**Conclusions**

UTSA cannot go at it alone. When attempts are made to see UTSA’s problems from the perspective of one IHE, the problems of salaries, operating budgets, funding formulas, program development, degrees development, insufficient space per student, high classroom utilization, insufficient scholarship funding, underfunded library, etc., are so overwhelming, that to consider their resolve seems a near impossibility. Likewise, for each of the Border Region IHEs, if each decides to go its own way.

The future of Texas lies in the fastest growing area of the state - the Border Region. Like UTSA, each of the five Border Region IHEs is fast growing. According to the Legislative Budget Board Fiscal Size Up, from 1984 to 1993, UTSA increased its enrollment by 35.6 %, UT Pan American by 53.7 %, UT Brownsville by 60.1 %, A & M Corpus Christi by 27.4 %, and A & M Laredo by 84.5 %. And as was recently forecasted by the Coordinating Board, close to half of the 200,000 students enrolling in IHEs will be from the Border Region. With less dependence on oil and gas today, Texas needs to find its future within its human resources. An untrained and under-educated work force will be the demise of Texas and surely keep it from competing in the global marketplace. Texas leaders will not allow this to happen!

The community is ready to support UTSA. A good example of how a community can address a problem is currently being exemplified by the City and Chamber of Commerce putting together a group of leaders to help keep Kelly open. Leaders from the military, the Chamber, other businesses, education, labor, civil rights groups, political groups, government workers working with elected officials have come together to analyze the problem and to counter the closing, which seemed highly likely a few months ago. UTSA is a model university which can

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*Editor’s note: Kelly Air Force Base will be permanently closed in 2002.*
be highly supported but needs a hard sell before the legislature. UTSA’s future, like that of all other Border IHEs, is based on meeting the needs of our growing Hispanic population.

Neither UTSA’s administration, nor the UT System can go at it alone. With community leadership behind it, standing forthrightly behind the Bexar County delegation, the right things can happen. The key to it all, as it was in 1969, is to have the Governor begin verbalizing support for UTSA and Border Region IHEs. Just as important are the Lt. Governor and the Speaker of the House. They were supportive in 1993, they would surely be supportive in 1995. There is unanimity among the legislators that it is San Antonio and the Border area that needs the attention of the state in matters of higher education. However, it is the disinterested but very interested leadership from San Antonio which has to endorse UTSA’s needs. Joe Krier, Chamber of Commerce president and member of the Coordinating Board is ready to serve. The elected officials from Bexar County are well-informed, but they need to be there when community leaders are talking to the Governor, Lt. Governor, and Speaker of the House.
Map 2*
Average Distance to Closest Comprehensive Public University in Texas

1. East Texas State University
2. Texas Women University
3. University of North Texas State
4. University of Texas-Dallas
5. University of Texas-Arlington
6. Texas A&M University
7. University of Texas-Austin
8. University of Houston-University Park
9. Texas Tech University

A. El Paso
B. San Antonio
C. Corpus Christi
D. Brownsville
E. McAllen
F. Laredo
Acknowledgments

While its been a personal pleasure for me to re-visit with old friends while writing about the history of UTSA, I also find it necessary to acknowledge them for helping with their lucid recollections -- people like Glenn Kothmann, Johnny Alaniz, Franklin Spears, Ben Barnes, Charles LaMaistre, Peter Flawn, and many others. They helped lighten the task of writing the paper.

At home I had my very faithful supporter, my wife Mary Esther, who not only encouraged me, but helped specifically with the editing of the final draft.

At the UTSA Bicultural-Bilingual Studies Division, ever allegiant and thorough Roberto Milk, has always been ready to advise and assist. And then there's Maria. Without Maria Espericueta, and her patience, a copy of this essay would never have been received by so many others.

At UTSA, Norma Guerra, Terry Leal, and Dwight Henderson have helped much. At the UT systems level Armando Diaz provided key information.

At MALDEF, Al Kaufman came across like a champ. There were many times I felt I had reached his exasperation level. But alas, he would smile and give me more information.

And last but not least, my friend of many years, Senator Gregory Luna, has been a good listener, and has helped me keep abreast of what is going on with the Legislature. And without Delia Acosta, the Senator's able Assistant, the task would never have been completed for she was able to connect me with all the appropriate offices.

Other members of the Legislature I need to thank for their advice and contributions are Senators Frank Madla, President Pro-Tem Gonzalo Barrientos, Senate Dean Carlos Truan, Judith Zafarrini, and Eddie Lucio. House members, especially those from Bexar County were all ready to help -- Leo Alvarado, Christine Hernandez, John Longoria, Robert Puente, Ciro Rodriguez, Sylvia Romo, and Leticia Van de Putte. As a member of the Legislative Budget Board, Christine Hernandez was especially helpful.
Endnotes

2 Bill and Isabella Cunningham, Greetings from the University of Texas System, Dec., 1994, Austin, Texas.
4 Personal conversation with Charles A. LeMaistre, President, University of Texas, M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, Houston, Texas. 24 Jan. 1995, Austin, Texas.
9 S.C.R. 95, by Spears, 6 May 1965.
10 Tom Walker, "Why Did They Put It Where They Did." As part of article, "The Rise and Fall of the University of Texas Near San Antonio," SA Magazine, November, 1979, p. 32.
12 "The Oar", Office of Admissions and Registrar, UTSA, Fall, 1994, No. 9.
13 Texas Legislature, Fiscal Size Up, 1994-95 Biennium, Texas State Services, Legislative Budget Board (Austin, Texas) 1994-95 Biennium, pp. 4-33, 4-34.