
TAMUG irreplaceable

asset for Galveston, state

Since the Texas Legislature convened in January, Texas A&M University at Galveston and all higher education in Texas have worked hard to maintain current funding.

Our legislators, including representatives Mike Martin and Patricia Gray and Sen. Jerry Patterson, have been supportive and diligent in working to achieve this accomplishment. Very much in our favor, the staffs of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the Texas Legislative Budget Board have recommended that we should be funded at current levels until a full study is done to determine future needs.

But more importantly, the Legislature will have to approve these recommendations. This week, the funding bill has left the Texas Senate with a partial restoration of funding and representatives Martin and Gray will be working to restore the remainder of the funding in the House. Should that happen, the Senate and House versions will have to be reconciled in a conference committee.

While we are involved in this process, I thought this would be a good opportunity to make you aware of the importance of our special programs, both to Galveston and to the Texas economy. Let's look at some facts about what TAMUG contributes to the city of Galveston, the Gulf Coast, and the state of Texas.

We are unique in our role. Students come here from nearly 100 different counties in Texas to attend the only marine and maritime undergraduate institution on the Gulf of Mexico. We are the only pipeline for maritime professionals and the only oceanographic institute on the Gulf of Mexico. And the maritime industry is vital to Texas, accounting for 375,000 jobs or 5 percent of the total Texas employment and some \$10 billion (4 percent) of the total personal income in the state.

More than 75 percent of our students are



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enrolled in science or engineering majors compared to only 34 percent at the next closest institution. This figure opposes a national trend toward declining numbers of these students. About 60 percent of the courses taught here are science and engineering. We want our students to become the skilled workforce essential for a knowledge-based, service oriented economy.

Underscoring the commitment to excellence in education, the recently released U.S. News and World Report named TAMUG among the top five small arts and sciences schools west of the Mississippi River. The same report also listed the campus as the best buy of all of the regional campuses in the United States. TAMUG, Texas A&M University, and the University of Texas at Austin were the only Texas public colleges listed.

Enrollment has surged 132 percent in the past five years, with dramatic increases in the numbers of women (43 percent) and minority students (over 10 percent). The ripple effect of this growth is especially shown in the Galveston community. Over 50 percent of the 1,250-plus students are now overflowing into residential housing in Galveston and using services and business throughout the city. The presence of these students expands the tax base, which in turn, causes more investment in education and knowledge.

The campus provides direct employment for some 318 faculty and staff, educational opportunities for more than 1,275 students annually, and commands a total budget of \$17 million. About 36

percent of this budget is spent locally.

Based on a study conducted by the University of Houston at Clear Lake, we know that the total business volume generated from our existence surpasses \$26.5 million annually and supports a total employment base of an estimated 1,427 persons. In all, the economic impact of the campus exceeds \$40 million.

A new \$3.6 million physical education facility will be constructed at the Mitchell Campus in the near future. Each of these numbers will affect the Galveston economy exponentially.

The economy of Southeast Texas will benefit from the Chauvenet, a 393-foot Naval hydrographic ship which was identified this year to replace the aging Texas Clipper. The Chauvenet is in Port Arthur where some \$11 million in federal funds will be piped into the maritime industry during the refitting of the ship.

University research is one of the most powerful engines driving the economy of Texas. TAMUG research will pump approximately \$3.5 million into the Texas economy this year. Through the success of the Texas Institute of Oceanography, the only oceanographic research center on the Gulf, we have achieved an enviable record of receiving more than \$10 in federal or private funds for each \$1 of state funding used for matching.

To put this in the context of our budget, for every dollar of general revenue funds not appropriated for research, we lose \$10 in federal and private funding — to say nothing of the loss of new technologies and products.

Research is aimed at solving environmental and conservation marine problems that affect Galveston, and ultimately the entire state. Faculty are working to solve problems such as beach erosion, industrial pollution, and economic development. For example, projects are under way that will

develop a new breed of oyster that is expected to provide new stability for the ailing Texas industry. Another important project has established TAMUG as an important component of nationally funded research centers charged with adding solutions to problems caused by hazardous wastes.

The local impact of continuing education programs is \$2.3 million. We are teaching more than 15,000 classroom days to maritime professionals this year with a staff that grew from three to 17 in 1992. Our Center for Marine Training and Safety is teaching all training courses to more than 800 maritime professionals for the National Maritime Union.

Continuing education is also aimed at teaching the public about the ocean, its problems, and its wealth. Programs such as Sea Camp and Youth Opportunities Unlimited teach 600 youngsters each summer.

Economists point out that societies that have made major investments in education show the greatest long-term economic growth rate. Why? Because educated citizens are more productive. Their production spurs the development of new capital; capital creates jobs, thus expanding the tax base which causes more investment in education and knowledge.

The need for training and re-training of our citizens has never been greater. If we sacrifice this important link of our higher education system to meet short-term budgetary constraints, we are in fact sacrificing our futures.

The next few months will determine our success in re-establishing full funding. We look forward to this success and appreciate the support of our community and our legislative delegation.

Dr. David J. Schmidly is campus dean of Texas A&M University at Galveston.
