



JANUARY 2010 UPDATE

By virtue of its date alone, the year 2010 is a seminal year in the history of West Texas A&M University. One hundred years ago on February 17, 1910 (Founders Day) ground was broken for the construction of the first building on the campus of West Texas State Normal College and the cornerstone to that new building was laid on May 24, 1910. On September 20, 1910 West Texas State Normal College was opened for classes in the Randall County Court House. Yes! The same building on the square of downtown Canyon that is being renovated today! On that day, 152 students started classes and began the legacy of WT. Then, on October 11 of that same year, classes were moved to the newly constructed, yet unfinished, new main building.

Over the last one hundred years, much has changed. New Main is now Old Main. The original enrollment of 152 students has grown to 7,770 students and one degree option has turned into more than 106. However, while much has changed, some things have remained exactly the same. From the day classes began through today, WT's responsibility to provide student centered educational opportunities which lead to the economic, cultural and social development of the Texas Panhandle and the entire West Texas Region has not diminished, and the University's commitment to meeting this responsibility has not wavered. Throughout this calendar year, we will have many opportunities to celebrate this incredible University and the wonderful faculty, staff and students who have worked so hard to distinguish WT as an indispensable Panhandle Institution. The first of these special centennial events will be the Centennial Gala on February 13, 2010. This formal evening will set the stage for our Centennial Celebration allowing us to recognize and honor our campus and community leaders and celebrate the rich history of WT. Four days later on February 17, 2010, the 100 year anniversary of the campus groundbreaking, our Student Government Association will be hosting a campus-wide "Birthday Celebration"

complete with centennial specials on food and beverages, special entertainment, and a birthday cake like you have never seen. Throughout the year, there will be many centennial events and I encourage each of you to take advantage of these unique opportunities and reflect on the significant impact WT has made and will continue to make on both the people and the communities we serve.

While this year will be a celebration of our past and an opportunity for remembrance and reflection, it is also a time to look ahead. It is a time to renew our commitment to the provision of high quality education, research, and service. It is a time to build on WT's solid foundation to prepare for WT's second century as a premiere institution of higher education for the Panhandle Region and the State of Texas. To do this, we must be willing to take advantage of opportunities for improvement and expansion of our programs to better meet the needs of our students and community. We must be willing to take advantage of opportunities for growth in enrollment.

We must also continue to invest in the physical capital of our campus. During 2010, this investment in our physical campus is projected to approach \$71,200,000 and will impact facilities that enhance student life, residential living and several academic buildings on campus.

Student Life

With the approval by the Board of Regents during its January 2010 meeting, we will commence immediately with the construction of a new recreational/sports complex on the north side of campus. Our students will finally have the facilities they deserve for intramural sports, recreational sports, and practice space for the marching band. In addition, the project will include the premiere Division II intercollegiate complex for competition in baseball, softball, soccer, and track and field. This addition to campus will also provide much needed green space and a safe jogging/walking trail for personal exercise and relaxation. To complement the outside recreational area, construction will also begin for the further development of the Virgil Henson Activities Center. Phase IV improvements will include a new more efficient entrance, a game room, and, for the adventurous, a three story climbing wall that will help you determine just how BUFF (or how risk adverse) you really are. Earlier this academic year, students voted in favor of an increase in the Student Center Fee for the purpose of expanding the Jack B. Kelley Student Center. If the Texas A&M System Board of Regents approves the fee increase at its May 2010 meeting, then detailed planning for construction will begin later this year. Plans for the JBK expansion

include additional meeting rooms, a multi-purpose room, additional food service areas, study spaces, a catering kitchen and student lounge.

Residential Living

During the next couple of months, we will demolish Hudspeth Hall to make way for the construction of a new modern residence hall that will provide living space for up to 400 students. The new residence hall is slated to come online Fall 2011.

Academic Buildings

To enhance the quality of our science teaching labs, we will initiate renovation (Phase IV) of the ANS Building in May. To provide more space in support of externally funded research we have begun renovation (Phase I) of the old Palo Duro Hospital. Later this month, we will begin the much needed renovation (Phase I) of Mary Moody Northen Hall. In support of one of the fastest growing programs on campus, engineering, we are also in the process of bringing back to life the Old Ag/Nursing Building. Once renovated, it will serve as the home for our engineering programs. Lastly, during 2010, we will demolish the Old Fine Arts Building to make way for a much needed landscaped parking lot close to the core of the campus.

While there is much to celebrate during 2010, we must also plan for some serious challenges. All of us are very much aware that the current economic recession that has impacted many parts of the United States and is now starting to affect Texas, albeit on a much smaller scale. With the slowdown in economic activity, our state government could face a significant shortfall between projected revenues and the amount needed to maintain current state services, which includes higher education. As a consequence and in preparation for the worst, on Friday, January 15, 2010, Governor Perry, Lieutenant Governor Dewhurst, and Speaker of the House Straus jointly sent all state agencies a letter that stated in part,

Due to the uncertainty of the state's short-term economic future, as well as potentially substantial long-term costs associated with the passage of federal legislation currently being debated in Washington, D.C., we are asking each state agency to thoroughly review all planned expenditures for the remainder of the biennium. We respectfully request that each agency submit a plan to identify savings in priority increments totaling 5 percent of the general revenue and general revenue-dedicated appropriations for the 2010-11 biennium. Please submit these plans to the Legislative Budget Board and the Office of the Governor's Budget, Planning and Policy division, no later than February 15, 2010.

For WTAMU, this translates to a reduction of approximately \$3 million from the General Revenue funding for the biennium. Exacerbating the challenge is the fact that we have already completed nearly 25 percent of the biennium. Anticipating the Governor's letter, we began in December 2009 the initial process of planning for cuts and commencing this week we have begun to implement some of the measures that we prudently need to pursue to meet this request. Unfortunately, what we have implemented to date will fall significantly short of the budget reductions we need to identify. Over the next couple of weeks we will be meeting with all key stakeholder groups of the university to finalize our cost-cutting plans. As we finalize this process, we will keep everyone informed as to our plans.

Parenthetically, I am sure many of you are wondering why we don't just cut back on construction expenditures to come up with the \$3 million of saving required, and that is a fair question. The answer derives from the fact that funding for our planned construction and renovation projects come from sources of revenue that normally cannot be reallocated to cover general revenue expenditures. Therefore, even if each of the construction/renovation projects outlined above were canceled, we would still have to come up with \$3 million dollars worth of savings from our operating budgets.

In spite of the financial challenges confronting us, we must continue to pursue our dreams. We must commit ourselves to growth and to the pursuit of excellence in all that we do. As best we can, we are going to preserve the funding in support of our core mission: education. As best we can, we are going to preserve the funding in support of our primary stakeholder: students. In this process, I can assure you, we are going to preserve the characteristics, traditions and practices that have so distinguished WT during its first 100 years.

I look forward to working with each and every one of you in what is truly an important year in the life of WT.

GO BUFFS!