



February 2014

As we head into the second month of the new year, we continue to make extraordinary progress on the establishment of The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. But before I update you on where we are now, I would like to pay brief tribute to UT System Chancellor Francisco G. Cigarroa, M.D., who announced on Monday that he will be stepping down to return to medicine full time.

It is with highest regard and admiration that I congratulate Dr. Cigarroa on his new opportunity to become head of pediatric transplant surgery at UT Health Science Center at San Antonio.

And on behalf of thousands of individuals in the Rio Grande Valley and beyond, I would like to express my profound gratitude for his legacy of a new University of Texas institution and medical school in South Texas.

While the Board of Regents conduct a search for a new, permanent chancellor, Chancellor Cigarroa has agreed to stay on, and he has expressed his intention to serve the UT System Board of Regents as a special advisor on the continued development and implementation of UTRGV and its new medical school. He has reassured everybody that the planning for a different and unique university will continue as blueprinted and in accordance with the Guiding Principles.

I invite you to read more about the Chancellor's announcement today by [clicking on this link](#) and to read on about the exciting progress we've made in South Texas.

Academic Program Working Groups

All Academic Program Working Groups have turned in their preliminary reports, and we have had preliminary presentations by groups at both campuses. It is clear the groups have been diligently working, and, from the presentations, we can tell there will be some creative proposals for consideration by the new university. Many groups have dreamed "big" and that's exciting for UTRGV, the new university for the 21st century.

Final reports are due February 14.

What's Next?

Review and analysis of the working groups' proposals will take place next. Campus leadership from UT Brownsville and UT Pan American, along with others from UT System offices will soon begin reviewing the recommendations made by the working groups and organizing them for eventual presentation at an April symposium.

The proposals will also be submitted to external reviewers or consultants for evaluation and measurement against emerging and innovative trends in higher education and the Project South Texas Guiding Principles.

Consolidation of Degree Programs

Now that the "big-thinking" of the working groups is close to completion, the process of consolidating the existing degrees from both campuses begins. With the assistance of UT System Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Kevin Lemoine and UT System Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Linda Johnsrud, lead administrators from both campuses are planning how degree programs common to both campuses will be consolidated into new UTRGV degree programs. For example, if both campuses have a degree program in business management, administrators and faculty from that discipline will come together to design and propose the new business management degree program for UTRGV.

The UT system intends to submit the programs "en masse" to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, which greatly streamlines the process for submitting degree programs for approval. The different disciplinary groups will work on degree consolidation over the next several months with a goal of having the majority of programs for the UTRGV program inventory ready for the UT System Board of Regents to approve in May 2014 and the Texas Coordinating Board doing the same in July 2014. Those programs that require further discussion or full proposals because they are new programs can be approved later. (The next Board of Regents meeting after May is August with the Coordinating Board meeting in October.)

April Symposium

The first phase of planning for the new UTRGV culminates with a symposium on April 24 at a location in the Valley, yet to be determined. This will be a major event where the recommendations of working groups, external consultants and others will be presented to UT System leaders. We are hopeful that the founding president of UTRGV and the founding dean of the UTRGV medical school will participate. The April Symposium will present the first glimpse of The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley.

Ask a Question or Offer a Suggestion

Remember that you can learn more about UTRGV by submitting an anonymous question to the [Ask a Question section](#) of the Project South Texas website. Every effort will be made to post a response within 24 hours. In addition to posting a question about the transition and planning process, read other questions that have been submitted, as well as the answers that are available at this time.

To expand and broaden participation, we are also asking anybody who wishes to offer a “new idea” for the new university to post it in the [Ask a Question section](#) for now. Soon we will have a suggestion box on the website.

Respectfully submitted,

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