LIGHTING THE WAY: ILUMINANDO EL CAMINO

THE INAUGURATION OF
DR. ROBERT H. VELA JR.

NOVEMBER 29, 2022
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-KINGSVILLE
Dr. Robert H. Vela Jr. began serving as the 22nd President of Texas A&M University-Kingsville in June 2022. For nearly 25 years, Dr. Vela has dedicated his career to promoting the transformational power of higher education across the state.

Dr. Vela previously served as President of San Antonio College, one of the largest community colleges in the nation, for eight years. Through collaboration and student-centered service, Dr. Vela led the college to earn the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, the nation’s premier recognition of achievement among America’s community colleges.

Dr. Vela launched his career in higher education at Texas A&M University-Kingsville in 1997, serving in various roles at the university, including as Upward Bound Program Coordinator and Director of the Teacher Development Center.

A nationally-recognized leader in higher education, Dr. Vela is a member of the Board of Directors of Excelencia in Education, an organization that accelerates Latino student success. He has also served as the President of the National Community College Hispanic Council and on the American Association of Community Colleges Board of Directors.

A first-generation college student from Alice, TX, Dr. Vela earned his bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees from Texas A&M-Kingsville.

In 2015, he received the Javelina Distinguished Alumni Award.

About the University

The roots of Javelina Nation began in 1917 when the Texas Legislature approved plans to locate a teachers college in Kingsville. The citizens of Kingsville lobbied hard for the college to be located within their community, and that strong spirit of cooperation between the town and the university still exists today.

With a focus on teaching and research programs, Texas A&M University-Kingsville boasts several renowned research centers that evolved from the natural environment of the region. The Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, The King Ranch Institute for Ranch Management, Citrus Center and National Natural Toxins Research Center are well-known throughout the world.

Since 1925, the university has been the leader in higher education in South Texas, providing students with opportunities to excel and pioneering research that impacts the region and beyond. With world-class faculty, academic programs developed to address growing economic needs and an enduring sense of community, Texas A&M University-Kingsville prepares graduates to be life-long learners, who help to shape the world around them.
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HONORARY DEGREES CONFERRED AT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-KINGSVILLE

Laurence A. McNeil .................................................. 1987
President George H.W. Bush .................................. 1990
U.S. Senator Patrick Moynihan ................................. 1998
Lucien Flournoy ...................................................... 2002
Stephen J. “Tio” Kleberg........................................... 2009
Dr. Laura F. Cavazo Jr. ............................................. 2015
David S. Delany ....................................................... 2021

The Texas A&M University System

Tim Leach ................................................................. Chair, Board of Regents
Bill Mahomes ......................................................... Vice Chair, Board of Regents
Robert L. Albritton ................................................ Member, Board of Regents
James R. “Randy” Brooks ........................................ Member, Board of Regents
Jay Graham .............................................................. Member, Board of Regents
Michael A. “Mike” Hernandez III .............................. Member, Board of Regents
Elaine Mendoza ....................................................... Member, Board of Regents
Michael J. Plank ...................................................... Member, Board of Regents
Cliff Thomas ............................................................ Member, Board of Regents
Demetrius L. Harrell Jr. ............................................ Student Regent, Board of Regents
John Sharp ............................................................... Chancellor
Billy Hamilton ......................................................... Deputy Chancellor and Chief Financial Officer
Dr. James Hallmark ................................................. Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Dr. Joe Elabd ............................................................ Vice Chancellor for Research
Phillip Ray ............................................................... Vice Chancellor for Business Affairs
Jenny Jones .............................................................. Vice Chancellor for Governmental Relations
Dr. M. Katherine Banks ........................................... Vice Chancellor for National Laboratories and National Security Strategic Initiatives
Laylan Copelin ......................................................... Vice Chancellor for Marketing and Communications
Dr. John E. Hurtado ................................................ Interim Vice Chancellor and Dean of Engineering
Dr. Jeffrey W. Savelli ................................................. Vice Chancellor and Dean of Agriculture and Life Sciences
Nim Kidd ................................................................. Vice Chancellor for Disaster and Emergency Services
Greg Hartman ........................................................ Vice Chancellor for Strategic Initiatives

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY- KINGSVILLE

Dr. Robert H. Vela Jr. ............................................. President
Dr. Jaya Goswami ................................................. Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Jacob Flournoy ..................................................... Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer
Dr. Rito Silva ......................................................... Vice President for Enrollment Services and Student Affairs
Bradley A. Walker ................................................ Vice President of Institutional Advancement and External Relations and CEO of Texas A&M-Kingsville Foundation
Steve Roach .......................................................... Executive Director of Athletics
Henry Burgos ......................................................... Chief of People and Workplace Culture
Adriana Garza-Flores ............................................. Chief Marketing and Communications Officer
Dr. Kristina Ramirez Wilson .................................... Chief of Performance Excellence and Strategy
Joe Henderson ...................................................... Chief Ethics and Compliance Officer
Dr. Shannon Baker ................................................ Associate Vice President for Student Success
Dr. Maria Martinez ................................................ Associate Vice President for Student Access
Kirsten Company .................................................... Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students
Dr. Jose Espiritu ...................................................... Interim Associate Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies
John Dove ............................................................... Assistant Vice President for Information Technology Services
Dr. Shad D. Nelson ................................................ Dean, Dick and Mary Lewis Kleberg
Dr. Dolores Guerrero ............................................. College of Agriculture and Natural Resources
Dr. Natalya Delcoure ............................................. Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Dr. Nestor Sherman .............................................. Dean, College of Business Administration
Dr. Heidi Taboada ................................................... Acting Dean, College of Education and Human Performance
Dr. Tom Spencer ..................................................... Dean, Frank H. Dotterweich College of Engineering

Honorary Degrees Conferred at Texas A&M University-Kingsville

President George H.W. Bush 1990
U.S. Senator Patrick Moynihan 1998
Lucien Flournoy 2002
Stephen J. “Tio” Kleberg 2009
Dr. Laura F. Cavazo Jr. 2015
David S. Delany 2021
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Regents Professors

Dr. James R. Norwine - 1997 .................................................. Professor in the Department of Physics and Geosciences
Dr. Leslie G. Hunter - 1998 .................................................. Professor in the Department of History
Dr. John C. Perez - 1999 .................................................. Professor in the Department of Biological and Health Sciences
Dr. Timothy E. Fulbright - 2000 .................................................. Professor in the Department of Animal, Rangeland and Wildlife Sciences
Dr. Jacqueline Thomas - 2001 .................................................. Professor in the Department of Language and Literature
Dr. Jo Beran - 2002 .................................................. Professor in the Department of Chemistry
Dr. Steven D. Luker - 2004 .................................................. Professor in the Department of Animal, Rangeland and Wildlife Sciences
Dr. Paul M. Hageman - 2005 .................................................. Professor in the Department of Music
Dr. Micheal E. Teves - 2007 .................................................. Professor in the Department of Animal, Rangeland and Wildlife Sciences
Dr. Scott E. Henke - 2008 .................................................. Professor in the Department of Animal, Rangeland and Wildlife Sciences
Dr. David Sabrio - 2009 .................................................. Professor in the Department of Language and Literature
Dr. Mauro Castro - 2010 .................................................. Professor in the Department of Chemistry
Dr. Kathleen Rees - 2012 .................................................. Professor in the Department of Human Sciences
Dr. Nestor Sherman - 2013 .................................................. Professor in the Department of Health and Kinesiology
Dr. Karen Sue Bradley - 2014 .................................................. Professor in the Department Teacher and Bilingual Education
Dr. Kim David Jones - 2016 .................................................. Professor in the Department of Environmental Engineering
Dr. Gregory Sanders - 2017 .................................................. Professor in the Department of Music
Dr. Randall Williams - 2018 .................................................. Piper Professor in the Department of Agriculture, Agribusiness, and Environmental Sciences
Dr. Nirmal Goswami - 2019 .................................................. Professor in the Department History, Political Science, and Philosophy
Dr. Susan Roberson - 2020 .................................................. Professor in the Department Language and Literature
Dr. Fidel Hernandez - 2021 .................................................. Professor in the Department of Rangeland and Wildlife Sciences & Alfred Glassell Jr. Endowed Professor in Quail Research, Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute
Dr. Bart Ballard - 2022 .................................................. Professor in the Department of Rangeland and Wildlife Sciences & C. Borden and Rulanette Lawrence Endowed Chair in Waterfowl Research

Inaugural Committee

Chair .................................................. Adriana Garza-Florès
Chair Ex-Officio .................................................. Randy Hughes
Facilities/Grounds .................................................. Chris Vera, Andy Gonzalez
Culinary Selections & Preparations .................................................. Jackie Flores, Craig Pretero
Invitations & Commemorative Items .................................................. Raquel Garcia
Music .................................................. Dr. Scott Anthony Jones
Processional & Recessional .................................................. Kirsten Company, Erin McClure, Dr. Jarett Lujan
Ceremony .................................................. Martin Brittain, Norma Flores, Melissa Guajardo
Publicity & Printing .................................................. Jesse Garza Carreón, Krystal Emery, Sophia Yzaguirre
Security & Safety .................................................. Chief Julian Cavazos
Staging & Decorations .................................................. Gloria Buff, Crispin Treviño
Transportation .................................................. Steve Roach
Ushers & Greeters .................................................. Kirsten Company, Raquel Garcia
Community Liaison .................................................. Manny Salazar
Student Liaison .................................................. Tyler Larraga
Alumni Liaison .................................................. Gloria Buff
Faculty Liaison .................................................. Dr. Tanner Machado
Staff Liaison .................................................. Susan Smith
Delegate Liaison .................................................. Bradley A. Walker, Abby De La Mora
Post Inauguration Concert .................................................. Joanne Castro, Erin McClure
Sound .................................................. Mark Cortez, Vincente Barrera
Livestream & Production .................................................. Christopher Ambriz, James Pollock, Trenton Payne, Mario Hernandez, Kevin Jimenez, Gabriel Cavaoaos, Ryan Burgos, Mario Martinez, Brittney Dudley
Photography & Media .................................................. Monica Alfaro, Jenilee Rollefstad, Sarah Tuley, Julie Navejar

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DR. ROBERT H. VELA JR.
The Presidential Medallion is being presented to Dr. Robert H. Vela Jr. by Chancellor John Sharp on behalf of The Texas A&M University System. It bears the university seal on its face. The back is engraved as follows:

Presented to Robert H. Vela Jr.
Upon his installation as President
Texas A&M University-Kingsville
November 29, 2022

With wishes for great success
Chancellor John Sharp

The University Ring

In early 1998, a committee of students, alumni, faculty and staff began discussing the idea of an official ring for graduates of Texas A&M University-Kingsville. After determining that there was interest in the idea, the committee heard proposals from several companies that specialize in class rings and selected one to design and manufacture the ring. Working with a professional designer, the committee members wanted the ring to reflect symbols that represent the university’s history and traditions.

The symbols they chose include the school’s mascot, the Javelina, because of its tenacity; mesquite and cactus because they personify our students’ ability to survive and prosper; palm trees because they are found all over the campus; the Lone Star because it symbolizes the State of Texas; and the beautiful tower from College Hall because it is a recognized landmark on the Texas A&M-Kingsville campus.

The ring design was unveiled February 16, 1999. The first eligible students ordered rings and received them prior to commencement in May 1999. The first 150 rings were numbered and registered.

At the inauguration of the university’s 15th president, Lt. General Marc Cisneros, USA, Ret., received the first official university ring. Dr. Vela received his University Ring in Fall 2003. A special ring commemorating his presidency is being crafted.

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International Flags

The 36 flags in the processional represent the countries of origin of the international students attending Texas A&M University-Kingsville. These nations are Bangladesh, Belgium, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, China, Columbia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Germany, Ghana, India, Italy, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Mexico, Nepal, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Taiwan, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States, Venezuela, and Vietnam.

Academic Regalia

The origin of academic gowns, caps and hoods is a matter of speculation. Unheated buildings may have necessitated the gowns. The remaining regalia might reflect the influence of the clergy during medieval times. The hoods, for example, might have served as head coverings before skull caps were adopted. In any case, when American schools decided to adopt academic dress, they agreed, through a series of meetings and conferences, on some standard designs and colors. The gown design becomes more intricate with advanced degrees. Velvet trim, for instance, is reserved for doctors’ gowns. The hoods, too, become longer as one proceeds from the bachelor’s to the master’s to the doctor’s degree. The cap is plain for both bachelor’s and master’s. Velvet is reserved for the doctorate. The tassel on the cap may be black or the color appropriate for the major field of study. A doctor’s tassel, however, may be made of gold thread.

The color of the facing of the hood denotes the type of degree, and doctors’ gowns may also be trimmed in the same color. Examples are as follows: Arts and Letters - white, Commerce and Accounting - drab, Economics - copper, Library Science - lemon, Music - pink, Education - light blue, Pharmacy - olive, Fine Arts and Architecture - brown, Humanities - dark crimson, Law - purple, Engineering - orange, Philosophy - dark blue, Physical Education - sage green, Science - golden yellow. The color of the lining of the hood denotes the university or college granting the degree. Texas A&M University-Kingsville’s colors are blue and gold. Students wearing the blue and green or gold honor cords are members of national honor societies. The honors presented during this ceremony are calculated on the student’s cumulative grade point average for the semester prior. Official honors designation, which includes the calculation of the current semester’s grades, will be indicated on the final transcript and diploma.
The University Mace

A symbol of authority, the mace is traced to an ancient weapon of war. William the Conqueror is seen flourishing a wooden mace in the eleventh-century Bayeux Tapestry. The military use of the object gradually gave way to its ceremonial function, and maces became jewel-encrusted symbols of high office. The Texas A&M University-Kingsville mace was crafted March 1999 in the Department of Industrial Technology to reflect many of the unique characteristics that have made the university a leader in South Texas. The black walnut that comprises the main body symbolizes the history and traditions that have been established by the university. The top is crowned with the university seal engraved in gold.

The Tower Chimes

Striking on the hour and every quarter hour, the “Westminster” chimes of the College Hall tower were played for the first time in March 1999 for the inauguration of President Marc Cisneros. The chimes celebrate Javelina pride throughout the day, ringing out “Hail AMK” and “Jalisco”.

Past Presidents

- James R. Hallmark
  Interim 2022
- Mark A. Hussey
  2019 - 2021
- Steven H. Tallant
  2008 - 2018
- Robert Strawser
  Interim 2008
- Rumaldo Z. Juarez
  2003 - 2008
- Kay Clayton
  Interim 2001 - 2002
- Lt. General
  Marc Cisneros, USA, Ret.
  1998 - 2001
- Manuel Ibáñez
  1989 - 1998
- Steven Altman
  1985 - 1989
- Eliseo Torres
  Acting 1985
- Billy J. Franklin
  1981 - 1984
- Richard C. Meyer
  Acting 1980 - 81' & 89'
- Duane M. Leach
  1977 - 1980
- Gerald B. Robins
  1973 - 1977
- James C. Jernigan
  1962 - 1973
- Ernest H. Poteet
  1948 - 1962
- Robert Barrow Cousins
  1924 - 1932
- Edward Wynn Seale
  1932 - 1934
- James Otis Loftin
  1934 - 1941
- John L. Nierman
  1941 - 1942
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  1942 - 1948
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