

News Release

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Legislation for a new UT university in South Texas filed today

AUSTIN – Members of the Rio Grande Valley Legislative Delegation held a joint news conference at the Texas Capitol today announcing the filing of companion bills in the Texas Senate and Texas House of Representatives to create a new university in South Texas within The University of Texas System.

The legislation would establish a university in South Texas that includes academic campuses in Cameron and Hidalgo counties and an academic center in Starr County. The new university would also include a school of medicine and the bill stipulates that the medical and research programs of the medical school be conducted across the South Texas region.

The bills were filed less than a week after Governor Rick Perry in his State of the State address called for the Texas Legislature to pass a bill giving South Texas access to Permanent University Funds.

“The UT System Board of Regents believes strongly in this mission,” Regents Chairman Gene Powell said. “We believe the students of South Texas deserve access to a first-class education and that this new, PUF-eligible university will have a magnificent impact on the educational and economic opportunities in the region.”

The UT System Board of Regents in December unanimously approved an initiative to authorize [Chancellor Francisco G. Cigarroa](#) to work with the Legislature to establish a new, PUF-eligible university that includes the University of Texas at Brownsville, the University of Texas-Pan American and the future South Texas School of Medicine. The result would be a single institution that spans the entire Rio Grande Valley, with a presence in each of the major metropolitan areas of Brownsville, Edinburg, Harlingen and McAllen. The board also approved the allocation of \$100 million over the next decade to accelerate the pace of transitioning the Regional Academic Health Center in Harlingen to a school of medicine.

“We are very appreciative to our members of the Legislature for supporting this vision,” Cigarroa said. “This is a monumental step in implementing a transformational plan in South Texas that will forever change the educational, economic and medical landscape in this critically important region of our state and nation.”

UT Brownsville President Juliet Garcia and UT Pan American President Robert Nelsen wholeheartedly support the creation of a new university and applauded lawmakers for moving forward.

“In the Rio Grande Valley, mothers often tell their daughters and sons that education is the one thing that can never be taken from them. By uniting behind the Chancellor’s and the Board of Regents’ vision of establishing a new university with a school of medicine in the Valley, our legislative delegation is making it possible for more and more daughters and sons to achieve their dream of walking across the stage and receiving a diploma,” Nelsen said. “Today is a day that will be remembered forever in South Texas.”

Garcia thanked the Rio Grande Valley legislative delegation for working tirelessly on the issue.

“Your unwavering commitment has given life to an idea that will propel forward the dreams and aspirations of thousands,” she said. “And it will long be remembered as the preeminent catalyst that forever unleashed the potential of the human capital in the Rio Grande Valley.”

About The University of Texas System

Educating students, providing care for patients, conducting groundbreaking research and serving the needs of Texans and the nation for more than 130 years, The University of Texas System is one of the largest public university systems in the United States, with nine academic universities, six health institutions and a fall 2012 enrollment of roughly 216,000. The UT System confers more than one-third of the state’s undergraduate degrees and educates nearly three-fourths of the state’s health care professionals annually. The UT System has an annual operating budget of \$13.9 billion (FY 2013) including \$3.1 billion in sponsored programs funded by federal, state, local and private sources. With more than 87,000 employees, the UT System is one of the largest employers in the state.