



### **AC Takes Conservative Path to a Balanced Budget**

By Michele Fortunato Chair, AC Board of Regents

The Amarillo Globe-News (AGN) recently published a story about Senator Kel Seliger and Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick requesting public universities to provide detailed information about their tuition history. AGN Tuesday, March 9, "University tuition hikes worry state senators." The gist of the story is that the legislature increased higher education funding by approximately \$900 million in 2015, and the legislators are discouraged that the four-year universities are choosing to raise tuition, which makes higher education even less attainable for many Texas students.

Community colleges did not fare as well as the four-year universities in the last legislative session. After the smoke cleared from the 84th session, total community college appropriations were decreased \$24.2 million, while the total state budget increased by over \$7 billion. The funding cut is even more disappointing because community colleges in Texas enroll more than 70 percent of all college freshmen each fall. Yet the state continues to decrease community college funding with the state's total higher-education budget only allocating 12 percent to community colleges in Texas.

The article notes how the University of Texas System and the Texas A&M University System have decided to raise tuition at their member universities even after the legislature increased higher education funding in the last session.

When faced with a \$3.5 million decrease in state funding, AC solved the problem with a more difficult solution. Rather than raising tuition and property taxes this year to cover the shortfall, the college administration and Board of Regents cut expenses and reduced its budget by over \$3.5 million.

Amarillo College is and still remains the most affordable choice in our region for attaining higher education. One semester of tuition and fees for an AC student taking 12 credit hours averages \$1,000. This is a fraction of the cost associated with attending a public four-year university, where tuition and fee hikes are a regular occurrence especially after deregulation empowered the university governing boards to set tuition costs. Private colleges are even more out of reach for students and families who struggle financially.

No matter what the legislature decides about community college funding, Amarillo College maintains its focus on exemplary academic standards and ensuring student success. AC is dedicated to a "No Excuses 2020" plan to achieve a 70-percent completion rate. Our goal is that by the year 2020, 70 percent of AC students will finish a certificate program or earn the credits they desire to transfer to a four-year institution.

AC continues to play a crucial and diverse role in serving the Panhandle.

Sixty-one percent of the graduates of Amarillo ISD who choose to go to college attend Amarillo College. Nine out of every ten local emergency first-responders – paramedics, fire fighters and police officers – are trained at AC. Sixty-six percent of registered nurses in our area are AC graduates. Major industries such as Bell Helicopter and Pantex rely on AC graduates who possess workforce-readiness. Amarillo College leads the region for the educational institution which is creating the greatest economic impact on Amarillo to the tune of \$660 million per year.

A key factor to AC's impact on the economic health of our community is the opportunity it provides our citizens who otherwise might not pursue a higher education. Because of the affordability of AC, our constituents have more opportunities to achieve the American Dream, and skilled individuals may become higher wage-earners and productive taxpayers.

Taxpayers should be glad that our state leaders are questioning the inconsistency between increased funding and tuition hikes. Local constituents should be relieved that Amarillo College chose the fiscally conservative path to fix this problem without raising taxes or tuition. AC is committed to providing the best and most cost-effective higher education for student success and for the economic and cultural enrichment of every community of our region.



### Order in the Court

Larry Adams, professor of social sciences, took some students to a Naturalization Ceremony April 25 at the U.S. District Court in Amarillo. Mark White, AC's executive vice president and general counsel, addressed the group of 64 new citizens at the request of presiding Judge Mary Lou Robinson, who happens to have been AC's Distinguished Alumnae of 2004. AC students attending were Kendra Engstrom and Presidential Scholars Jenna Hooten, Jessica Suaste, Noah Truelock and Ashley Kirkwood (not pictured).





### On the Cover: This Chemical Spill was only a Drill

The Amarillo/Potter/Randall Office of Emergency
Management (OEM) conducted a full-scale hazmat exercise
May 3 on the West Campus, and some members of AC's
Emergency Management Team and Police Department played
an integral part in the drill.

The staged scenario involved a jackknifed tractor trailer resulting in a toxic chemical spill that "contaminated" not only the immediate area, but a few dozen "AC students," who were actually portrayed by about three dozen students recruited by the city from AACAL.

AC police (momentarily) evacuated A and C buildings, and other AC personnel became immersed in the proceedings just like they anticipate doing in a real emergency.

AC Police Chief Steve Chance said it was the first time the College and the OEM have collaborated on a disaster drill and that he was pleased by the opportunity to enhance AC's disaster preparedness through a life-like practicum. He said the drill went smoothly and was deemed a success by OEM.





# New VP for Business Steve Smith Settling into 'Dream Job'



Although he may occasionally pinch himself to prove it is not an illusion, Steve Smith is fast settling into his new reality as vice president of business affairs.

"It's a dream-come-true job," said Smith, himself an AC student in 1999. "It's truly exciting to be back at a place that's near and dear to my heart. I would not be where I am today without the start I got at AC."

Smith comes to his new post from Summit Truck Group, a vast multistate enterprise for which he most recently served as vice president for accounting.

As vice president here, he is charged with leading all business-related functions, developing new and alternate funding sources, administering the Employee Benefit Program, and serving as treasurer of the AC Foundation. He lists among AC's greatest resources its exceptional workforce, particularly those employed within the Business Office.

"We have very strong folks here," he said. "Top-notch associates and accountants who, like myself, are enthusiastic about impacting the lives of students in positive ways. We want to help solve problems and help both students and other departments meet their challenges."

Originally from Logan, N.M., Smith the student went from AC to West Texas A&M University, where he earned two degrees – a bachelor's in finance and a master's of business administration, the latter completed in 2006.

Before becoming immersed in the economics of largescale trucking, he was employed in the banking sector, locally as a senior branch manager for Herring Bank, and as a bankruptcy administrator for Amarillo National Bank. He also has experience as a strategic financial planner.

"I bring a financial-analysis mindset to the job, a business-minded perspective that I hope will be beneficial to the College," he said

Steve and Selena Smith have two sons – Jake, 21, and Jordan, 14 – and a daughter, Sienna, who is 7.

# **TLC for Thompson**

Delores Thompson has always preached to her students that tender loving care is a vital component of all nurse-patient interactions.

"I'm old school," she says. "I tell all my students that a little TLC will take you further than all the knowledge in the world. Sometimes it's the little things, like turning the pillow to the cool side."

Those who attended a reception for Thompson on April 27 at the CUB gave the longtime nurse educator a taste of her own medicine – a little TLC for the latest member of the AC Family to garner the prestigious distinction of Professor Emeritus.

And when she came forward, "honored and humbled," to acknowledge the recognition, the large assemblage indubitably got to see Thompson's cool side.





# College Establishes a New Division — the School of Creative Arts



## Risky Business



Victoria Taylor-Gore

Spring had appropriately sprung just hours ahead of AC's March 21st announcement about the establishment of a new division – the School of Creative Arts – from which much is expected to blossom.

The School is the brainchild of Dr. Deborah Vess, vice president of academic affairs. It contains the departments of visual arts, music, theater and mass media. It is overseen by Victoria Taylor-Gore (art), who was appointed dean, and Jill Gibson (mass media), who was named associate dean.

Vess says the intent of this reorganization is to place a renewed and distinguishing emphasis on the arts at AC, while nurturing interdisciplinary collaboration and curriculum redesign that students in pursuit of a proliferation of present-day, trans-disciplinary careers will find appealing.

"We intend to put more emphasis on the arts through creative leadership focused solely on the arts, on recruitment, and on creative curriculum design," Vess said. "This not only symbolizes our continued community-wide support of the arts, but also underscores our real commitment to building these programs within the College and encouraging their growth."

Many arts programs are candidates for overlap or interconnection, Taylor-Gore said, so this new structure opens up a plethora of avenues to explore.

"By establishing this School we are not only sending a message to our community that AC believes in the arts, is investing in the arts, but we're also making it easier for our faculty to work together across disciplines in a very positive atmosphere," she said. "It's a thrilling approach. I am humbled to be a part of it."

Texas Mutual Insurance Company awarded a \$100,000 grant to Amarillo College on March 24 for the establishment of a risk management program to provide workplace safety courses for local employers, workers and the general public.

AC is one of six colleges statewide to receive such a grant.

The check was presented at the East Campus. Pictured, from right to left, are AC's trio of President Russell Lowery-Hart, Mark White, executive vice president and general counsel, and Megan Eikner, dean of career and technical education. Next in line is Texas Mutual President and CEO Rich Gergasko, and, finally, Woody Hill, Texas Mutual vice president of safety and information services.





## Lil' Badgers Makes Big Splash

Craig Clifton's schedule was interrupted throughout April as he was called upon repeatedly by local media to explain the intriguing ins and outs of Lil' Badgers.

Clifton is chair of the Sports & Exercise Sciences Department and captain of the Wow! Challenge team that conceived the learning environment for pre-school-age kids. Before the month was out, Clifton had granted interviews to all of the network affiliates in town.

Lil' Badgers was piloted this spring under the auspices of the Personal Enrichment Department, and the \$10,000 prize money Clifton's team earned by winning the Wow! Challenge has been placed into an account that will pay teachers and provide need-based scholarships once the program is fully operational next fall.







## Video Produced by School of Creative Arts Wows Turn Center

### Dean Envisions Future Service-Learning Opportunities for Students, Faculty alike

So-called opportunities for students to do a little résumé building through unpaid internships abound. However, those that pertain to service-learning are the ones Victoria Taylor-Gore truly *Values.* 

Take Bruce Moseley, no stranger to the AC *Family*, who requested the sort of *Innovation* he knew the College could generate. Taylor-Gore, dean of the newborn School of Creative Arts, not to mention a Culture-of-Caring proponent, naturally said *Yes.* 

The result was a *Fun* and heart-warming five-minute video meant to *Wow* those in attendance April 1 at Turn Center's annual Celebration of Hope fundraiser.

And wow them it did. Turn Center, a non-profit that provides physical, occupational, and speech therapy services to children across the Panhandle, enjoyed it's most lucrative gala ever.

"In the five years of this event, which is our biggest fundraiser of the year, this was easily our most successful," said Moseley, who last summer relinquished his role as coordinator of AC's Legal Studies Program to become executive director at Turn Center. "We had an incredible 40-percent increase in giving this year. That's huge," he said. "The video was a highly important piece of our fundraising effort, no doubt.

"I'm so thankful to Vicky for so graciously agreeing to spearhead this effort, and to Brent Cavanaugh and their enthusiastic intern, Marissa. It was a lot of work that clearly made a difference."

Cavanaugh, instructor of photography, and intern Marissa King of AACAL, served as videographers and interviewed the many Turn Center



Bookending the intro to their Turn Center video are, from left, Victoria Taylor-Gore, Marissa King and Brent Cavanaugh.

therapists featured in the short film. Taylor-Gore spent many hours editing the slick video.

Maybe it padded the résumé of only one AACAL student thus far (there was a need to expedite this initial project), but it appears to have opened the door to many – AC students and faculty, alike – who will be given the chance to participate in future publicity needs of Turn Center. The School of Creative Arts has decided to "adopt" the entity that "turns lives around, one success at a time."

"We were thrilled to do the video, but Bruce also asked us to consider projects related to graphic design, printed materials, posters, even a Christmas brochure," Taylor-Gore said. "These are opportunities that our students and faculty can take on as class projects or even on their own.

"While we don't promote making students a resource for free labor, this is different. It's a non-profit with a wonderful mission. It gives us a chance to promote AC's values and at the same time involve our students in service-learning activities that, yes, will look good on a résumé, but in more ways

than one."

Cavanaugh agrees. "Students can come away with good portfolio materials while having spent valuable time learning graphic-design techniques or how to operate video or photography equipment in a real-world situation and for an excellent cause," he said. "Turn Center will present opportunities and, if they fit in the curriculum, great."

AC was a Turn Center partner of sorts long before Moseley asked for help with publicity. The Occupational Therapy Assistant Program has for years sent students to the Center, where they've completed fieldwork requirements along the way to certification. Some Turn Center therapists got their start at AC.

AC is where Marissa King, the intern from ACCAL, plans to get her collegiate start next fall. Should she become immersed in yet another Turn Center project, it would surprise no one.

"It was so cool to see what those people do, how they help kids with Down syndrome and other disorders," she said. "It's really amazing. I had no idea. At first I was just tagging along to help out, but wow, it really opened my eyes."



### Seeing the LITE



Brenda Rossnagel gives an interview to the local NBC affiliate.

n enthusiastic and auction-savvy crowd showed up for the 14th annual LITE Luncheon on April 28th at the Amarillo Civic Center. This year's theme for the community-wide event to raise money for students with disabilities was "Making a Difference," and participants did just that; a preliminary tally from the auction, raffle, lunch and donations stands at close to \$27,000.

Jackie Kingston of KAMR-TV news served as mistress of ceremonies. She introduced the individuals who were chosen this year by disAbility Services as Students of the Month. They, in turn, shared uplifting stories about the services and assistance they've received at the College.

The ever-popular silent auction also captivated attendees, who continued to bid on the vast variety of items to the bitter end.

Give Brenda Rossnagel and her dedicated team in disAbility Services all the credit for yet another auspicious event.



Lisa Bentley, Kelly Prater and Joy Brenneman took a breather during the silent auction.



Jason Norman, April Sessler and Jo Beth Hill clearly enjoyed the festivities.



# Continuing Healthcare Education Reaccredited and Commended

Ontinuing education is vital for Texas nurses who are required to demonstrate their competency for re-licensure by completing as many as 20 contact hours of continuing nursing education (CNE) every two years.

Yet as the application process for accreditation has become exceedingly rigorous, the number of fully accredited CNE providers in Texas has dwindled.

Thankfully, that is not a problem for nurses throughout the Texas Panhandle who have come to rely on Amarillo College for quality CNE programs. AC's Center for Continuing Healthcare Education on March 23 was notified by the Texas Nurses Association that it has been granted reaccreditation as an Approved Provider Unit for Nursing Continuing Education, one of few remaining in the region.

AC's application not only earned approval for another three years, but it was designated for "Approval with Commendation" – a rare mark of distinction that usually only a handful of such programs in the state receive annually.

"I'm proud of our staff for their phenomenal display of teamwork,

and I am thrilled that Amarillo College is able to continue to provide continuing education opportunities that promote better healthcare outcomes throughout our service area," Kim Crowley, AC's associate dean of health sciences, said.

Crowley's team prepared and submitted a massive 260-page application in January. Its approval gives AC's Center for Continuing Healthcare Education the authority and latitude to formulate and present conferences and educational events for licensed nurses without seeking individual program approval from the Texas Nurses Association.



### Shawna Lopez Joins Pharmacy Task Force

Shawna Lopez, director of the Pharmacy Technology Program, has been nominated by the National Healthcareer Association (NHA) to become a member of its Practice Analysis Task Force. The NHA, which sponsors the Certified Pharmacy Technician credential (CPhT), is conducting a study to help ensure that future credentialing exams reflect the most current responsibilities and duties of the pharmacy technician profession. The task force on which Lopez will serve is intended to help shape future pharmacy technician training materials and initiatives.

"I am excited to be chosen," Lopez said.
"It will be a great learning opportunity and ensure I am preparing our students properly for boards."

Nancy Needham, who has taught infants at AC's Child Development Lab School since 1994, was singled out in April by the Panhandle Association for the Education of Young Children to receive a Lifetime Achievement Award. Needham, who plans to retire at the end of May, has had 86 infants – ages 3 months to 12 months – in her care at AC, and many more at the centers where she worked previously.

Kelly Murphy, veteran's coordinator in the Registrar's Office, is serving as first vice-president for the Texas Association of Collegiate Veteran Program Officials. She was elected to the post during TACVPO's annual business meeting in Lubbock. TACVPO was created over 40 years ago to help educate staff members at educational institutions across Texas who provide assistance to veterans and their family members that are using Veterans Benefits from the state of Texas or the Department of Veteran's Affairs.

President **Russell Lowery-Hart** has been invited to speak and so he will – to students of the Notre Dame Graduate School on May 25 at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Ind. His topic: Leadership and Service.

Jerry Terry, program coordinator for the Truck Driving Academy, through his involvement in Leadership Amarillo & Canyon, learned that the High Plains Food Bank had need of additional trucking to collect and deliver food. Terry, after consultation with AC's hierarchy, has reached an agreement with the Food Bank through which truck-driving students, who will be piling up Panhandle mileage anyway, soon will serve the Food Bank while practicing their craft. More light soon will be shed on this imminent community service.



AC and its meritorious Music Department received a Golden Nail Award on April 7 for steadfast support of community partners such as the Amarillo Symphony and Youth Symphony, and Amarillo Opera. Department Chair **Dr. Steve Weber,** center, and **Dr. Jim Rauscher,** professor of piano, right, display the award along with Corey Cowart, Amarillo Symphony executive director. The Golden Nail Awards annually honor local and area individuals, businesses and foundations who provide financial or in-kind support or volunteer in the fine arts.

### **Employment Milestones**

The following faculty and staff have qualified for length-ofservice pins since the Winter 2016 *Plugged In:* 

#### **CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEES**

#### MARCH

Michael Ward, 15 years Amy Guerrero, 10 Joni Stone, 10 Ellen Patterson, 5

#### APRIL

Nola Bartling, 10 years Shawn Reynolds, 5

#### MAY

Connie de Jesus, 15 years Nicole Patterson, 15 Chere Whitfield, 15 Chi Duong, 10

#### **ADMINISTRATORS**

#### MARCH

Kristin McDonald-Willey, 5 years

#### APRII

Jason Norman, 10 years

#### **FACULTY**

#### **APRIL**

Emily Gilbert, 5 years



### Study Abroad a Life-Changing Experience for AC Scholars

### "The longest journey is the journey inwards."

- Dag Hammarskjold

By Dr. Deborah Vess Vice President of Academic Affairs



any recent works have discussed the increasingly global nature of modern society. Amarillo itself is one of the most culturally diverse areas in the United States

and has become home to one of the largest refugee populations anywhere. We interact on a daily basis with citizens from many different cultures, use goods that come from all over the planet, and experience the daily ups and downs of a global economy. Modern life thrives on global connections, yet as Milton Bennett once said, intercultural sensitivity does not come naturally. We are not born with the natural ability to shift cultural frames of reference and to "understand the other." In a chaotic world that is so often filled with conflict and differences of perspective, one of the most important things a college education can provide is to develop intercultural competence.

The Presidential Scholars Honors
Program provides gifted students
from the Panhandle the opportunity
to enrich their knowledge of the world
through special honors seminars that
cultivate knowledge of current global
issues and develop the research
and communication skills necessary
to develop a deep sense of global
citizenship. Yet one cannot become
a global citizen without actually
experiencing the world, and the program
provides opportunities to study abroad
and to become acquainted with "the

other" through academic trips enriched with service projects.

I recently accompanied a group of thirteen Presidential Scholars on a journey to Poland and Lithuania, which focused on the impact of World War II on Eastern Europe. Lithuania was for centuries a crossroads and battleground of peoples, and in World War II, both the Soviets and Germans occupied it. The Soviets deported hundreds of thousands of Lithuanians to Siberia, where they worked as forced labor in extreme temperatures. The weather was subzero for the entire trip, which highlighted for us the suffering endured by these people. The students had read Between Shades of Gray, a novel about the Soviet deportations, and the author, Ruta Sepetys, had visited Amarillo College in the fall. On the coldest day of the trip the students met Irena, the eighty-yearold woman whose life struggles inspired the novel. While standing in a jurta like Irena had built in Siberia, students listened to her story, an experience that could never be captured in words. This small, elderly woman had survived more than most of us can imagine in a lifetime, yet joyfully shared her story so that future generations might never forget the tragedies of the War. Few know of the atrocities committed by the Soviets in Eastern Europe, but in that one afternoon, the students learned more than a book could ever relate; they learned about life and the resilience that makes living possible even in the midst of death.

What the Soviets did not do to Lithuanians, the Nazis finished. On the outskirts of Vilnius, in the beautiful, snow-covered Panerai Forest the Nazis massacred thousands of Lithuanian Jews. The monuments to the dead rise gracefully, crying out to the heavens. Today only one synagogue remains in Vilnius, once one of the greatest intellectual centers of the European Jewish community. Another haunting reminder of the inhuman acts committed in World War II was Auschwitz-Birkenau,

a vast site outside of Krakow, Poland. We walked from the train station to the crematoria, conscious of all the Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, and others who once walked that road toward what would be their final destination. Our group was silent through this experience, numbed by the realization of the magnitude of the horrors here, but aware that we must share this experience so that it will not ever be repeated.

Having learned about the suffering of Poles and Lithuanians during the Holocaust we wanted to explore contemporary issues as well. In Vilnius we visited a soup kitchen and made a Texas chili lunch for the clients using the mushrooms that grow so plentifully in the Panerai Forest. We learned about homelessness and poverty in one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Irena was deported and had lost her home, yet we met many younger Lithuanians who, because of life's twists and turns, had also lost their homes and who were forced to live in the cold. We made a hot lunch for the clients there. While we were there for just two mornings, we came to see this as a place that we can call "home." We shared a meal with new people whose life stories we know and will carry with us forever. Study abroad is important because it allows one to be at home in a variety of environments. Milton Bennett defines intercultural competence as the ability to move along the intercultural continuum and adapt to new frames of cultural reference. "Home" becomes where you are culturally at any moment, and study abroad does not take you away from home so much as it takes you home. It simply redefines what home is.

As Dag Hammarskjold once wrote, "the longest journey is the journey inwards." Forced to confront the best and the worst of human nature on this trip, we returned forever changed by the experience. On that bitterly cold day in the jurta, Irena had remarked that, "If you have shelter, warmth, and food, you live in paradise." That day, in that numbing cold, or in that soup kitchen in Vilnius, we believed that, and we won't ever forget it.



### Respiratory Care Spring Seminar

Respiratory Care brought in some authoritative speakers, including Rep. Walter "Four" Price, to heighten the first-ever AC Respiratory Care Spring Seminar. The two-day event was conducted April 14-15 and drew about 60 attendees each day, about a third of whom were first- and second-year AC respiratory care students. The seminar was deemed a complete success, and Respiratory Care now plans to undertake the event annually.



Cyndi McColl, AC adjunct, presents a session on "Improved Care for Adult Cystic Fibrosis Patients."



Enthusiastic patrons made good use of the Lecture Hall.



# Collin Witherspoon Moving to IR

Collin Witherspoon, interim department chair for math, sciences and engineering, is headed for a new post at AC: Executive Director of Decision Analytics and Institutional Research – effective June 1.

In this new role, Witherspoon will be instrumental in assisting AC achieve 70-percent student completion by 2020. He is charged with developing predictive modeling; providing analytic support and recommendations to leadership, faculty, and staff; and ensuring accurate reporting for AC.



### Healthcare Showcase Draws High-Schoolers to West Campus

C, with its Health Sciences and Nursing Divisions leading the way, launched an ambitious community-partnership initiative on April 4, linking about 150 Palo Duro High School students with the people and programs housed on the West Campus – not just for a day, but for a future.

The AC Outreach Program for Palo Duro High School commenced with a daylong showcase of programs for students in grades 9-12 who have expressed interest in pursuing health sciences and nursing careers after high school.

Those students, along with several Palo Duro administrators and counselors, toured the West Campus for starters, but his initiative was designed to swiftly proceed from show-and-tell to long-term mentorships.

Each student who attended ultimately will be assigned to a mentor whose area of expertise coincides with the area of interest expressed by each student. The mentors might be AC faculty or students, or even members of the professional healthcare community, and it is the aspiration of program organizers that the ensuing relationships last at least until the students finish high school.

Phyllis Pastwa, an instructor in the Associate Degree Nursing Program, is the chief architect of the outreach program. "By bringing these students to our campus, sharing our compassion and our enthusiasm in their ability to succeed, I believe we can make a difference," she said. "We want to get them excited about the possibilities, to instill in them enough confidence to pursue degrees."

