Frequently Asked Questions

What is the project?
In September 2015 Texas A&M University announced intentions to enter into a unique collaboration with the City of McAllen, Hidalgo County and local community partners to develop a new higher education center where students can take courses and graduate with degrees in select high-impact degree programs from Texas A&M University without leaving the Rio Grande Valley. The degree programs offered in McAllen will include programs in public health and nursing, which had been previously approved to offer in McAllen at an existing site, as well as additional proposed degree programs in engineering, agriculture and biomedical sciences at the new higher education center site.

Why is Texas A&M doing this?
Texas A&M is opening the Texas A&M University Higher Education Center at McAllen because the university is committed to supporting the educational needs of Texas with top-tier educational programs that will fulfill individual student career goals, enhance the continued economic development of the region and help provide the necessary skilled workforce. Texas A&M has identified engagement with growing population centers of Texas as imperative to its mission as the land-grant, tier-one public university for Texas. Its presence and impact on the people of the Lower Rio Grande Valley is historic dating over 100 years and is believed to be paramount to the future of Texas. Today, more than 1,700 students from Hidalgo, Cameron, Starr, and Willacy Counties are currently enrolled in Texas A&M University. In addition, there are more than 3,600 former students living in the four county lower Rio Grande Valley region.

What are the guiding principles of this effort?
The principles guiding this effort, and that will be at the forefront of all discussions for activities in the Valley are to:

- Support the mission and integrity of Texas A&M University;
- Maintain quality programs with the students’ best interests at heart;
- Provide quality programs that are of relevance to the needs of the region;
- Comply with all necessary and required approvals for offering programs at and opening off-campus teaching locations; and
- Be fiscally responsible and good caretakers of the university’s resources.

How is the project being funded?
Texas A&M University is utilizing multiple sources of funding to complete the initial building at cost of $40M and has prepared a multi-year start-up budget. Ultimately, student tuition and fees, state appropriations for enrolled weighted semester credit hours, special initiative funding, and targeted philanthropy will fulfill funding needs.
The Texas A&M University has entered into an agreement with the City of McAllen, which will support the university’s plans for the higher education site by the city issuing bonds to commit up to $10M towards construction, in addition to the current commitment of utilities and infrastructure connections at a 100-acre tract in the new Tres Lagos Development in north McAllen. A multi-year ground lease that will allow the City of McAllen and Texas A&M to partner on construction of the project.

At the Board of Regents meeting in February 2016, the Capital Plan was amended to allow Texas A&M University to initiate conceptual design of a 60,000 square foot multi-purpose academic building that will include classrooms, laboratories, and faculty and administrative support offices, as well as student services and gathering spaces, befitting the academic degree programs and courses to be delivered.

Who is leading the effort?
Our Provost Dr. Karan Watson and Dr. James Nelson, the University Project Coordinator, are leading a multi-college taskforce and an advisory committee of community and industry leaders to identify the programs that need to be offered through the Higher Education Center and that complement programs that are already available to students in the Rio Grande Valley. They also are leading the effort to establish the necessary infrastructure and student support services. The degree programs offered, once they are approved for offering, will be implemented by the faculty of the respective academic departments.

Where will the Higher Education Center be located?
The Higher Education Center will be located on a 100-acre site in the Tres Lagos development at 6200 Tres Lagos Boulevard. Immediately adjacent to the site is a 90-acre research and technology park that is proposed by the developer. When it comes to fruition, this technology park will provide significant opportunity for applied research collaboration between the university and regional industry, which will help support the economic development of the region.
What will the Center look like?
The Higher Education Center at McAllen will be in the Texas Tuscan style, which will complement the architectural style of the Tres Lagos development and represent Texas A&M University well. An artist’s rendering of the building is shown in the following figure.

What is the timeline?
Texas A&M University has proposed the HEC and associated degree offerings determined feasible in support of continued development of the Rio Grande Valley, and received approval of the Higher Education Center at McAllen from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). That approval was granted during the THECB meeting on October 20, 2016. The prospectus for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges was submitted in January 2017. Texas A&M anticipates offering some courses beginning in fall 2017, with full degree and student services complement at the opening of the building in Fall 2018.

When will the Higher Education Center open?
Groundbreaking for the Higher Education Center was held December 15, 2016. The building is expected to be substantially completed by Summer 2018 and will be turned over to the university at that time. Courses at the site are scheduled to begin fall 2018.

How are the degree programs being determined?
Texas A&M has evaluated and continues to evaluate regional economic and workforce data, as well as student interest, and is engaged in discussions with civic and business leaders to determine potential academic program needs. The university has participated in and/or hosted forums and town hall discussions to learn from regional leaders of employment trends, skillset needs and student interest.
Additionally, Texas A&M is working across disciplines to identify unique opportunities for existing programs to be extended to the Higher Education Center at McAllen. To help us in this effort, an External Advisory Council composed of regional business, educational, and civic leaders was formed and continues to meet. From this council, the university learns about anticipated future regional workforce needs and deficiencies in current higher education opportunities, and with whom the university can build advocacy for our intended academic offerings.

**How will Texas A&M University attract potential students?**

Texas A&M has a rich history of students from the Rio Grande Valley applying to, attending, and graduating from degree programs in College Station, Texas, and the health related degrees from its Health Science Center sites across Texas. It opened the Prospective Student Center in the Valley in 2010. Texas A&M anticipates a great deal of interest from qualified students across the Rio Grande Valley as well as Texas for the select degree programs to be offered. Further, the university will engage in an active marketing program so that students and their families in the Rio Grande Valley are aware of the degree program the university will offer in the Valley.

**Will students be considered Texas A&M University Students?**

Students who study at the Higher Education Center and earn a degree from Texas A&M University are expected to satisfy the same admission requirements as all students admitted to Texas A&M University, and to achieve the same graduation requirements. The only difference is that the students will be studying in McAllen rather than College Station, although opportunities for change of major or campus transfer will be available. Students who graduate with coursework offered through the Center will be graduates of Texas A&M University and will be eligible to receive the Aggie Ring, diploma and transcripts from Texas A&M University.

The first student to be admitted to the newly approved Higher Education Center, studying Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Engineering was announced on March 15, 2017. Marco Piña of Donna, Texas accepted the offer of admission. Additional students are reviewing offers now and a briefing event for students is being planned for late March. Texas A&M is hoping to recruit between 25-100 students in this initial year of Higher Education Center.

**How do students apply for study at the Center?**

Students who want to study at the Higher Education Center at McAllen will apply to Texas A&M through ApplyTexas just like all other students seeking admission to Texas A&M. On their applications, they will note their preferred degree program, if that program is available in McAllen, they will be prompted to notify if are interested in studying at the Higher Education Center in McAllen.
Will the cost to study in the Valley be different?
No, the cost to attend class and study at the Higher Education Center will be the same as studying in College Station. The cost of housing and meals may be less, though, because students might be able to live at home, and because apartment rent, travel and other costs of living are somewhat less than in College Station.

Who will administer the Higher Education Center?
The Higher Education Center will be administered by campus leadership in College Station. However, there will be local leadership in McAllen to support student needs and to provide necessary student services, such as academic advising, financial aid, and enrollment. Texas A&M will do everything possible to ensure that the quality of the educational programs and the support provided to the students in McAllen is the same as that provided to students in College Station.

Where can I find the latest information?
You can obtain the latest information by going to the Higher Education Center website at valleyhec.tamu.edu.

Texas A&M University, the flagship campus of The Texas A&M University System, is one of the largest and most diversified institutions of higher learning in the nation. With a record enrollment of more than 60,000 students, Texas A&M remains committed to the values of its land-grant heritage, ensuring accessible education for the people of Texas and the world. With externally funded expenditures exceeding $854 million, Texas A&M’s faculty-led research is changing lives globally while stimulating economic growth in Texas. Always leading by example, Texas A&M produces leaders of character dedicated to serving the greater good.