It was a gratifying day Friday when we could celebrate the coming of Texas A&M University to McAllen with our friends in the Rio Grande Valley.

Beginning in Fall 2017, Valley students can enroll in Texas A&M without leaving home, taking engineering, nursing and other selected programs. By Fall 2018, the $40 million multipurpose academic building will be completed and a new chapter in A&M's history begins.

My personal thanks to the Board of Regents, Valley elected officials and the Coordinating Board members who made this possible.

John Sharp

PRESS RELEASE: Texas A&M Earns Approval for Higher Education Center in McAllen

October 21, 2016

MCALLEN, Texas - Texas A&M University System Chancellor John Sharp announced Friday that the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has approved the establishment of a new higher education center in the Rio Grande Valley.

The announcement of the Texas A&M Higher Education Center - McAllen marks the latest step in fulfilling the Rio Grande Valley-focused vision of Chancellor Sharp and Texas A&M University President Michael K. Young. Top community and industry leaders from across the region joined university officials at the announcement at the McAllen Convention Center.

In September 2015, Texas A&M officials announced their intentions to enter into a unique collaboration with the City of McAllen and community partners to develop a new higher education center in the Rio Grande Valley, where students would be able to take courses and graduate with degrees from Texas A&M University.

The new center will offer coursework to complement the university's existing offerings in public health and nursing, but it also will have new programs.

"Today, we deliver on the pledge we made only 13 months ago to quickly advance the partnership opportunity with the City of McAllen and The Rio Grande Valley as we deliver a world renowned university here," Chancellor Sharp said. "We imagine the center being an exciting resource for future generations of students and leaders in the Rio Grande Valley."

Sen. Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa called the approval of the center "great news for the Rio Grande Valley."

"Texas A&M's desire to expand its presence in the Valley builds on our region's significant economic growth and development for the benefit of all," Sen. Hinojosa said. "As we continue to expand quality educational opportunities, our students benefit with more choices in different areas of study and professions from a top-tiered university."

Members of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board approved the plan Thursday at a meeting in Austin.

President Young thanked the Coordinating Board for its partnership and leadership.

"We appreciate the work of the Coordinating Board members and staff in evaluating this proposal in a timely manner," President Young said. "We fully recognize that this approval bears with it a commitment to increasing access to educational offerings and to graduating citizens of substance for the Valley, our state, nation and world."

Students at the new campus will have to meet the same admissions standards as enrollees at the main campus in College Station, and they will taught by Texas A&M University faculty. Upon graduation, they will earn Texas A&M University diplomas and Aggie rings.

Approval of the center from the Coordinating Board allows A&M to move forward with construction of the $40-million multipurpose academic building. The 60,000-square-foot facility - which will include classrooms, laboratories and offices - will be constructed on a 100-acre site in the Tres Lagos development on the north side of McAllen. The City of McAllen, in conjunction with Hidalgo County, is providing a lease for land and also financial support for various aspects of the project, including installation of utilities and other necessary infrastructure.

Classes are scheduled to begin in the fall of 2017 in temporary facilities, and the multipurpose academic building is expected to open in the fall of 2018. Accreditation approvals will need to occur as degree programs are finalized.

"When we first visited with Chancellor Sharp about the idea of bringing tier one educational opportunities to our region, we knew there would be tremendous obstacles." McAllen Mayor Jim Darling said. "I can't tell you how impressed we are with the work of the Texas A&M team to make this a reality in record time."

Community involvement, led by an advisory council, helped A&M officials develop a proposal to accomplish several goals, including: meeting the needs of industry in the region, sparking student interests and incorporating the strengths of the A&M flagship campus and The Texas A&M University System, Sharp said.

Sharp added that elected officials from the region - including state legislators, the U.S. congressional delegation, city leaders and policy-makers from Hidalgo, Cameron, Willacy and Starr counties - played vital roles throughout the process.

"Our region is among the fastest growing in the nation, with economic, cultural and community vitality that will demand education as a key to our success," Hidalgo County Judge Ramon Garcia said. "We are proud to be a partner in education with Texas A&M University for the future of our children."

Ground breaking for the initial building is set for December 15.

Additional information on the project can be found at http://valleyhec.tamu.edu.

About The Texas A&M University System
The Texas A&M University System is one of the largest systems of higher education in the nation, with a budget of $4.2 billion. Through a statewide network of 11 universities and seven state agencies, the Texas A&M System educates more than 140,000 students and makes more than 22 million additional educational contacts through service and outreach programs each year. System-wide, research and development expenditures exceeded $946 million in FY 2015 and helped drive the state's economy.

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