

LAREDO MORNING TIMES

TAMIU'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY



PART 7 OF 12: FINE ARTS PROGRAMS

TAMIU 50th Anniversary

TAMIU's 50th anniversary Fine Arts programs

By Christian Alejandro Ocampo
Laredo Morning Times

"Art is just something we cannot help but do." Those are the words of Ellen Winner, a psychologist and Boston College professor to *The Harvard Gazette*.

Whether it is a visual art or a dance performance, TAMIU provides a consistent stream of fine arts to the Laredo community over the span of each year.

What are the fine arts?

What can a student, prospective

student or an art enthusiast find in their growing border town?

"We have an extremely supportive administration and structure within this creative environment which enables us to have multiple output opportunities," Dr. Colin Campbell, Associate Professor of Music and TAMIU organist said. "Not only for us as performing musicians and artists across the broadest spectrum, but also opportunities of working with the students."

According to Dr. James Moyer, TAMIU's Fine and Performing Arts Department Chair, there are four programs available.

Music and art are majors, while theater and dance are minors. Music has three separate degrees while art has two. This results in approxi-

mately 90-100 art majors in the school at a time, allowing professors to spend more time with individual students for more personal lectures and practices. It also allows the staff to alter the schedules and classes to the benefit of the students.

Another benefit is that the students have the fine arts building to themselves, Moyer said. Since the building of the AIC, the fine arts building has been left to the fine arts students.

"We are the last bastions on the campus that has our own place," Moyer said.

With the degree plans provided, more than 80% of music majors are in the music education program, which means that most students find work during school and after

graduation. The other art students with a BA have the opportunity to explore their options and jump into a field where they can use their creativity or go into graduate school and continue their education, Moyer said.

"We now have 15 (TAMIU alumni) teaching in the city," Moyer said. "We have a much bigger footprint than we had before."

These alumni teachers then inspire the next generation of artists, musicians, dancers and actors to continue their education and passion at TAMIU which then inspires the next, creating a cycle of creatives helping and inspiring creatives.

"We've got a very active and thriving community," Campbell said.



Spring Dance concert performers

TAMIU 50th Anniversary

Dance courses available for students include ballet, ballet folklorico, dance conditioning, flamenco, jazz and modern. Dance minors are also required to take courses such as dance history, improvisation, concert choreography and music for dancers. Multiple dance performances are available throughout the semester with all dance classes performing and filmed by Laredo Public Access television. The courses are led by professors Timothy Rubel and Jee Eun Ahn, and students practice and perform in two dance studios and a full-size performance theater.

According to Ahn, each of the dance courses produce their own dance piece every semester. One challenge of teaching students with their own dance background is teaching them the basic foundations of dancing for art. Despite this, students at TAMIU learn the basics of dance, maximizing their own ability and how to collaborate with others for a piece.

"We are focused on teaching correct techniques," Ahn said. "They study about the choreography and improvisation."

A major focus for Ahn and the TAMIU dance program is to teach dance as an art form and not for competition. This results in more interaction between performers on stage and the audience.

By using one's body, the students not only connect through the dance but show their own experience and beauty as a human being, he said.

"I want them to understand their body," Ahn said. "When I got here, they wanted me to teach them choreography. I want them to be able to learn dance in their body, I don't

want them to copy me. I want them to find their own original movement."

By guiding them, Ahn will teach the basics of dance through the different styles, but each student will use their own movement to change ballet. The basics are tools of dance, but the freedom learned in class will allow them to use those tools and expand on their dance, he added.

"I let them play a lot in class," Ahn said. "I change music a lot, so even if I give them the same phrase, they move differently."

Regardless if a student believes he or she is not a good dancer, Ahn knows they are great movers and are helped by their unique culture.

"We don't need to be the same; that's my main interest and goal as an educator," Ahn said.

Another goal is to have students perform outside of the university, Ahn said. They are slated to perform on April 17-18 at TAMIU for the public. They will also have a dance piece on-campus on April 8. She hopes that through each performance, the students will continue to dance in the community and that the community will open their minds to more modern dance pieces.

Additionally, the Amalia Hernandez tribute performance will be performed by the TAMIU Ballet Folklorico on March 26 in commemoration of Women's History Month.

Baile folklórico owes its inception to Amalia Hernandez, who started her dance company in the 1960s with a small group of dedicated dancers.

According to Dartmouth Ballet Folklorico, ballet folklorico is a collective term for traditional Latin American dances that emphasize lo-



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TAMIU 50th Anniversary



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cal folk culture with ballet characteristics — pointed toes, exaggerated movements, highly choreographed arrangements.

“We are not competing, we are just sharing dance as an art form,” Ahn said.

For music-lovers hoping to find great and new voice or instrumental talent, TAMIU has a variety of ensembles.

These include:

- Symphonic Band
- Chamber Orchestra
- Mariachi Internacional
- Guitar Ensemble
- Percussion Ensemble
- Jazz Band

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Regardless of art choice, TAMIU provides students opportunities to gain experience through performances or exhibits. For theater and dance majors, the university has the Sam Johnson Experimental Theater and a 400-seat theater. An art gal-

lery is available for painters, photographers and any visual art artist to showcase their work. For musicians, an 800-seat recital hall is available for ensemble concerts.

Musical performances and concerts are spread throughout the year where community members can experience a change of pace from the usual sounds of the radio for an hour or two of classical music by guest performers or the TAMIU music groups.

According to Campbell, the mariachi is a strong tradition in the border regions, and TAMIU’s mariachi program is different from other music programs across the nation.

TAMIU previously announced its sixth-annual International Mariachi Festival on April 23-25.

According to the Smithsonian Folk Ways, Mariachi is a sound with rhythms rooted in colonial Mexico from 1519-1810. What we hear today emerged from ranches and small

towns in Mexico — more specifically in Jalisco, Michoacán, Nayarit, Colima and Aguascalientes.

The Smithsonian also states that the southwestern region of the nation is home to thousands of Mariachi musicians and where hundreds of schools have mariachi programs for their students. With practice, these programs perform in music halls, school festivals and competitions throughout the years.

According to TAMIU, the festival will feature the famed Mariachi Nuevo Tecalitlán and Mariachi Nuevo Tecalitlán Femenil, TAMIU Artists in Residence. It will include two-days of Nuevo Tecalitlán-led workshops for some 600-plus high school age mariachi musicians from across the state, and it culminates in a concert featuring the artists and students.

TAMIU offers a dedicated faculty and professional environment for students in order to provide the best education possible and to expand on a student’s skill in their instrument of choice.

This semester will be the first accreditation visit by the National Association of School of Music, which are the accrediting body for all college music programs.

Approximately 700 music programs in the country are members, which include the bigger A&M universities like West Texas State, Kingsville, Corpus and Commerce. Moyer said that being a younger school and receiving accreditation will be a challenge, but the process will be a learning experience and will result in improvements.

If the accreditation is successful, becoming a member will make the TAMIU music program stronger and more appealing to local and regional music teachers and students.

This will help with the recruitment process, which is essential in attracting students to the university. It will also put TAMIU on par with the major Texas universities being only 50 years old.

“For us, that’s the next step,” Moyer said.

According to TAMIU, some program highlights are:

- Music Scholarships available for music majors and minors
- 800 seat Recital Hall
- 450 seat Theatre
- An “All Steinway School” (piano majors)
- Complete collection of high-quality wind, percussion and string instruments for use
- Soundproof practice rooms
- 24-station iMac Computer lab
- Yamaha Clavinova 14-seat Piano Lab
- 69 rank Sharkey Corrigan Pipe organ built by the Kegg Organ Company

The Sharkey Corrigan Organ

According to the history of the recital hall, former president Dr. Ray Keck dreamed of outfitting the hall with a pipe organ. In 2006, his dream came true when the E.H. Corrigan Foundation gifted TAMIU with a Sharkey Corrigan Organ.

Guest performers are occasionally invited to perform. One such guest was David Briggs, a concert organist and composer, who said he had wanted to become an organist since he was 6 years old.

According to Briggs, he holds over 60 concerts a year in over several continents and teaches at Cambridge giving masterclasses in both the U.S. and Europe. He is also a com-

TAMIU 50th Anniversary

poser and has recorded 30 CDs with his own compositions and transcriptions.

For Briggs, he heard the calling from the organ as he was seemingly always around it. His grandfather, an engineer by profession, played it for an hour after work. Some of his first memories with an organ are of him sitting on his grandfather's lap as a child while he played the organ in Birmingham, England.

Prior to going to secondary school, he became a choir boy for his church where he would be able to listen to the organ even more. At school, his organ teacher helped Briggs practice after school until he left for Kings College Cambridge receiving one of the top organ scholarships in the world.

"In England, organists are obliged because when they work at cathedrals, you have to play new pieces of music every day, so you have to be very quick at sight reading," Briggs said.

According to Briggs, every instrument is a teacher to help a musician learn how to adapt, and through that adaptation, musicians reinvent themselves. This dynamic is what makes music fun in his opinion.

"There's a kind of symbiosis between you and the instrument," Briggs said. "Every organ is different, not only in the control mechanisms ... but also in the acoustic of the space, so you have to reinvent your game every time."

Just like a great orchestra that has its own personality, a musician that makes his own decisions and drives the vehicle (instrument) will show their own personality in their music, Briggs said.

Coming from South Africa, Campbell has introduced the cham-



A part of Jose Villalobos' exhibit, *J*** Fronterizo*

ber choir last semester to traditional African music because the choir has a large function in the African social structure.

"I introduced the students to this and also with the dance movements that would accompany each of the songs," Campbell said.

By introducing the diverse sounds of South Africa to a city with an over 95% Hispanic community, the music and dance performed at the university blends with African culture to create new art.

"Not just Africa, but rural Africa," Campbell said. "To see how the students enjoyed that, that was really amazing. We try to make all of those courses as interesting as possible so they can get a spread of the background of various instrumental music to enrich their total experience as students here in our department."

Campbell has not only influenced students with his culture, but also the culture of Laredo with his composition for the organ ma-

riachi and orchestra. The work was then performed and recorded for the Rhapsody on the Rio Grande documentary, which is the story of Laredo in approximately 15 minutes.

"I took the Rio Grande River as a metaphor for bringing people together because it was always around rivers that communities gathered," Campbell said. "Because water is the source of life."

The video is available to watch online at pbs.org/video/rhapsody-on-the-rio-grande-6lzuk/.

Through the 2017 collaboration with TAMIU, KLRN, San Antonio's PBS station and Laredo, Campbell was able to attend the Emmy Awards ceremony in 2018. He calls it one of his proudest moments in his career, and it was all thanks to TAMIU.

The impact of visual arts

Visual artists will be able to brandish their creativity through draw-

ing, painting, sculpting and computer design. Through the use of the dedicated visual art classrooms or the outdoors ceramic area, a student can draw, paint or sculpt to their heart's content.

For Jesse Shaw, professor of Printmaking and Art, there was always an interest for the arts.

Coming from a rural area in Kentucky, Shaw did know about the opportunities available for art students. While studying accounting, he took an art class to take the stress from micro and macroeconomics. Through the help of his professors, he saw the opportunities and has worked to educate his students about the options they have.

With his interest in comic books — more specifically graphic arts — and a commitment to print making, he pursued an MFA at Rhode Island School of Design. He then went to work at Durham Press, the publisher of limited-edition prints and multiples.

He now hopes to inspire and educate his students on the process of printmaking and its scene overall. According to Shaw, multiple conventions are hosted. T-shirts, music posters, miscellaneous posters and fine art publishing are all examples of what Shaw and his students do.

Shaw said that his students are going to participate in the "It Came from the Bayou! 2020." The Houston printmaking showcase will allow students to interact with experienced printmakers, demonstrate their talent, learn from experts and buy some prints.

"People collect prints the same way they collect comic books," Shaw said. "Texas has one of the largest poster events — as far as I know — in the world called Flatstock, and

TAMIU 50th Anniversary



The TAMIU Printmaking studio and the students and staff's materials

that's in our backyard. That's where international poster printers go and it's like their Comic-Con."

And while TAMIU currently has a well-equipped printmaking lab, Shaw said it was important to teach students how to create prints without the equipment.

After creating their prints, Shaw and his students traveled to Austin at the beginning of the semester to Print Austin, a printmaking show with over 100 booths, where the students were able to sell their own prints.

Shaw's goal is to go to these printmaking shows in the future and see his students there successfully selling prints.

They are working on some top-secret projects, but in previous semesters, Shaw and his students published work by esteemed artists like Carlos Hernandez, who has worked

with The Black Keys. However, these students are taught to work and produce work that fits the standards of the industry and artist.

Shaw is working on the process of publishing these works and having the students be able to keep a print and sell the stock left by the original artists. The proceeds of the sales then go back to the school, which will allow Shaw's classes to travel to more showcases.

"The artist gets prints they can sell, the students get a piece of work and the experience of working on a print and putting that on a resume," Shaw said. "We are in the process of getting that program off the ground."

Breaking down barriers with an art gallery

TAMIU works to host two art gal-

leries a year. Jose Villalobos' art exhibit "J*** Fronterizo" is an exhibit where he juxtaposes distress with a feeling of comfort deriving from patriarchal and religious social structures which marginalize gay identity.

He also said it explores and protests machismo and toxic masculinity within the norteno culture. Villalobo was raised in El Paso and Ciudad Jaurez, and he tackled those issues his entire childhood life as a closeted gay man.

The exhibit showcases sombreros, boots and other norteno culture items, and Villalobos said he uses these items because they are symbols of power. Items can be seen with homophobic language and articles of clothing embroidered with male-on-male sexual acts and phrases reinforcing Villalobos' message.

"Machismo is still a problem that exists," Villalobos said. "All in all, what I hope that they take from it is that the fact that we are made up of the same blood and bones as any other person."

Villalobos said the exhibit was a personal decision to talk about very

intimate and personal issues. This could have been seen through his performance, which addressed how machistas view men with rough hands as "real men."

In his performance, he stitches red letters that spell out a homophobic curse word onto a piece of leather. After each letter, he recites a phrase and then hits his back with the leather.

"I feel that sometimes people don't understand the power of art until they specifically see something that puts them in a place that they can relate to them or understand it," Villalobos said.

Villalobos received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Texas at San Antonio. He was awarded the Artist Lab Fellowship Grant that same year for his work "De La Misma Piel" at the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center. In 2018, he was one of 25 artists from across the country to earn a \$25,000 Painters and Sculptors grant from the prestigious Joan Mitchell Foundation.

Villalobos has exhibited and performed at Albright College, the Mexic-Arte Museum, the El Paso Museum of Art, El Museo de Arte



The TAMIU Printmaking studio includes prints made by TAMIU students from renowned artists

TAMIU 50th Anniversary

de Ciudad Juárez, the Strut Gallery of San Francisco and the Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts in New Castle, Maine.

Most recently, his work was featured in the nationally recognized exhibition "Trans America/n: Gender, Identity, Appearance Today" at San Antonio's McNay Art Museum, and it was included in 11 other group exhibitions as well as four solo exhibitions across the country

in 2019.

The gallery is free of charge and will be open to the public through April 2.

Current students may also take part in a gallery with the TAMIU Artists Guild organization, which sets up the Art Attack exhibit at the Student Center. There students can present their art on a moveable wall for all to see. The art ranges from drawings to photography and is an example of what is

taught at the university and the students' own talent.

Improvements still sought for growing programs

According to Moyer, there are many necessary changes the university will need to make in order to craft the best art education in the area. From adding new programs and degree plans to new campus additions, the school may be a long way from finishing its plans, but the students will always be its No. 1 focus.

Examples of campus additions would be a new section for additional kilns for ceramic classes, Moyer said. Extra classrooms for lectures are important as well as providing dance studios.

One addition already added was a revamped lighting system for the recital hall. This was because the hall is used for a lot of major events for school and external collaborations such as dance recitals. The sound system for the room will also be revamped this Spring.

As the fine arts building is still nameless, Moyer said that he hopes someone soon will generously donate money to the arts and have their name placed and immortalized on the building.

Currently, Moyer is waiting to hear from H-E-B after applying for a \$200,000 grant which would add nine music practice modules to one of the dance studios.

A short-term goal for both Ahn and Campbell was to raise awareness for the

school's student performances. Since the students work very hard on their performances and the recital room fits 800, they would like to invite the community to pass by and see the ever-growing art scene of Laredo.

Campbell also said that he would look at a collaborative program between Music and Dance in the upcoming year. This would allow students to perform the dance pieces to the music of other students.

Regardless, TAMIU is the place to be for the creative mind, body and soul.

"Don't ask, 'What is art?'; rather, ask, 'When is art?'" Winner said. "Anything can be treated as art or not. And when we treat something as art, we tend to it in a special way"

50
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A World of Difference



SHARE YOUR STORY!

Your story is our story – and now it's time to share that story! We're inviting individuals who have been impacted by the University to share a memory or moment that's forever changed their lives.



VISIT us at <http://50.tamiau.edu/yourstory>.



UPLOAD your story, photos, and videos.



SUBMIT your story.



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50
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Upcoming Schedule

Presidential Lecture Series	March 25
The Big Event	March 28
TAMIU athletics BBQ Party & Car Show	March 28
TAMIU Alumni Golden Celebration	March 28
Celebration of Life	April 7
TAMIU Planetarium 15th anniversary	April 2020
25th annual University Life Awards	April 23
Ring Ceremony	April 29
2045 Dinner	May 2020*
Pre-Commencement Ceremonies	May 6
Commencement	May 7
TAMIU Enrichment Day	May 21

THIS EVENT HAS BEEN POSTPONED



TAMIU.EDU/50

From a study carrel on a shared campus to three name changes and an inspiring home on 300-acres in northeast Laredo, TAMIU has quite a story.

And with over 29,000+ alumni worldwide, we're really living up to our 50th Anniversary theme, "A World of Difference."

Our Alumni Golden Celebration, Saturday, March 28 from 7 – 11 p.m., is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reconnect with the University that has made that difference possible. It's a time to come home.

We hope you'll come home, join our Celebration and share in our story.

*It's a story 50 years in the making.
It's the story of a lifetime.*

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 28 – Alumni Golden Celebration. Ticket Info at 956.326.2176 or go.tamiau.edu/golden

We Thank Our 50th Anniversary Visionary Event Sponsors: Falcon Bank, The City of Laredo, Texas Community Bank, IBC Bank, Webb County, and La Posada Hotel.

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