



# We're All In This Together

As another legislative session gets underway, Aggies and Longhorns rise above their rivalry to seek a brighter future for Texas.

By Elsa A. Murano  
President, Texas A&M University

**I** ALWAYS SMILE WHEN I PASS A HOME WHERE one of those half-maroon, half-orange flags is displayed. "A House Divided," the flag reads. I keep smiling as I consider that despite what goes on in living rooms across Texas each fall as the year's gridiron bragging rights are determined, our two universities are a "house divided" only on the playing field.





Aggies and Longhorns arrive at the Capitol for Orange & Maroon Legislative Day in February 2007.





## You Can Help

Texas A&M and UT will join forces on March 3 at the Capitol in Austin to plead the case with our state legislators for increased support of public higher education. For more information, go to [www.orange-maroon.org](http://www.orange-maroon.org).

At all other times—and especially when we go before the Texas Legislature every two years—Texas A&M and the University of Texas are a house united. After all, our universities were established for one reason: to improve the lives of people in Texas and beyond through teaching, research and service.

As the state's two flagship universities, Texas A&M and UT have much in common. UT President Bill Powers and I have met several times to discuss how we can leverage our shared purpose of educating the next generation of leaders and promoting economic growth in Texas. We and many others will meet at the Capitol on Orange-Maroon Legislative Day March 3 to help our state policymakers understand the importance of increasing funding for higher education.

There is no doubt that public higher education has a profound influence on our state. For our two universities alone, the state appropriates about \$700 million annually (\$372 million for UT and \$327 million for Texas A&M). And when

all Texas universities are taken into account, higher education generates more than \$25 billion in economic activity for the state each year.

This investment is impressive, and we have always been grateful for it. But now is the time to significantly increase it for the benefit of our citizens. Texas is at a crossroads, and our future as a leader in technology and as an economic engine will be determined in large part during the upcoming Legislative session.

Both Texas A&M and UT are poised to move to the next level of prestige and excellence at a time when our state's budget surplus makes this possible. At the same time, other

For Texas to remain economically prosperous, it must provide consistent funding so that its flagship universities remain leaders in science and engineering.

states such as Florida and California are cutting back their funding of higher education in response to the current economic downturn, making it easier for us to attract more of the country's best students and faculty to Texas.

If we ignore the profound opportunity that lies before us, then Texas will fall behind other states in terms of economic growth and quality of life. On the other hand, if we work with our policymakers to increase the resources available to help us fulfill our mission, then our state can make significant gains in these areas and lead the nation as one of the most prosperous states in the country.

Now is the time to capitalize on this opportunity. Now is the time for the State of Texas to make a bold statement regarding the importance of higher education.

Texas A&M and UT are prepared to lead this charge, and on Orange-Maroon



PHOTO BY ALLEN PEARSON

Legislative Day, we will ask the Legislature to enhance their investment in higher education through support of our two universities. As Texas A&M's part in this effort, we need to enhance our research capabilities in specific areas where our expertise can be matched with the needs of the nation, such as achieving energy independence and cancer prevention. To accomplish this, we will ask the Legislature to double the amount appropriated in the Competitive Knowledge Fund to \$190 million. The resulting addition of at least \$40 million in allocations to Texas A&M through this fund would enable us to recruit and hire established "superstar" researchers from all over the country in order to carry out the type of work that can improve the lives of virtually every Texan.

As the number of faculty and students at Texas A&M continues to set new records, we will need to focus on our physical infrastructure. To support this growth, we will request a Tuition Revenue Bond of \$95 million to begin a Facilities Renewal process, which is expected to span several Legislative Sessions. We will use this funding to begin the process of bringing our 500-plus structures up to the latest standards of safety and efficiency and to make them more conducive to learning and discovery.

We will also work with the Legislature to support new and innovative initiatives to retain top graduate students here in Texas and recruit additional undergraduate students from underrepresented groups.

Frankly, the great State of Texas simply cannot afford to fall further behind. For this reason, Texas A&M and UT are behind the effort to elevate one or more public universities in Texas to "tier one" status, as long as appropriations for our two existing flagship universities are expanded.

The future of Texas depends on higher education, and we all have a stake in it. If you are interested in helping us on Orange-Maroon Day, go to [www.orange-maroon.org](http://www.orange-maroon.org). In the meantime, Gig 'Em, Aggies! 🍁

# Our Common Purpose: To Be The Best

By William Powers, Jr.  
President, The University of Texas at Austin

Texans want to be the best at everything. And so it should come as no surprise to the Aggie and Longhorn alumni that their university presidents want Texas A&M and the University of Texas to be the two best public research universities in the nation. We owe it to our children and grandchildren to provide for them an affordable, accessible college education that is second to none. And we owe it to the people of Texas to educate the next generation of leaders who will be the thinkers, innovators, and visionaries of the 21st century.

President Murano and I have a common purpose. It is a purpose that all our alumni should share. We are working together to ensure that Texas policymakers understand the paramount importance of higher education to the future of our state. As engines for economic development, scientific discovery, technological advancement, social progress, and cultural enrichment, our universities have transformed Texas for well over a century, and we are a proven investment in uncertain times. To reinforce this message, we will gather our forces on March 3 for the Orange-Maroon Legislative Day at the State Capitol in Austin.

Higher education is a very competitive world. It is expensive. In order to succeed among the best, UT and Texas A&M must continue to attract exceptional faculty members, to provide an undergraduate experience that adapts to an increasingly complex world, to conduct major research that advances knowledge and improves our lives, and to serve the urgent needs of our fellow citizens. But we cannot accomplish these things without adequate state funding. And in state funding, Texas has fallen behind flagship universities in California, North Carolina, Minnesota and other states.

Like Texas A&M, UT will encourage the Legislature to appropriate more funding for the Competitive Knowledge Fund, which rewards successful research, and to help us renovate, expand, restore, and build facilities on our campus. We will also support retaining control of tuition in the hands of our Board of Regents, and we will support modification of the state's Top Ten Percent Law in order to give us more flexibility in admissions.

The major challenge for President Murano and me is to take our two great universities to the pinnacle of American public universities. We do this out of pride and a sense of duty to our fellow Texans. But we do it also because what starts on our campuses will change the future – through our teaching, our research, our public service, and our leadership. President Murano needs your support to make Texas A&M a world-class center of learning and discovery. And we at the University of Texas need your support because we are all in this together.

