COLLEGE OF
HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL
SCIENCES NEWSLETTER

Special Edition
Grand Opening of the
College of Humanities and Social Sciences Building
A Dream Come True for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences

On behalf of the students, faculty, and staff of the college I express our heartfelt appreciation for making this day possible. This is a dream come true for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. I especially want to thank Chancellor Matthews and the Texas State University Board of Regent’s for their support. Without their leadership, their understanding of the needs of our students and their devotion to building a great university system, this celebration would not be happening.

Universities are truly wonderful places. They are the embodiment of all that is good in our world and all that we strive to be. Alfred North Whitehead once declared "The task of a university is the creation of the future." I cannot imagine a nobler goal for these borrowed atoms. This building will be judged by how well it functions to “create the future”. The architect, Helmut Jahn commented that “a building is hard to judge. It takes many years to find out whether it works. It's not as simple as asking the people in the office whether they like it.” So, in fairness it should take a while to know how well this building works. But, I can tell you unequivocally that we don’t just like it, we love it.

I have never liked the specialization of facilities that occurs at many universities, where research and scholarship is separated from teaching, where faculty offices and labs are isolated from students, and where administration is isolated from the faculty and students. This academic building is exactly the opposite. It contains in a single structure, classrooms, faculty offices, research labs, an advisement center, a center for the advancement of instruction, an open computer lab and administrative and business offices. This is as it should be with all aspects of the endeavor present in a single location.

In this building students not only receive classroom education, but are advised, interact with faculty, and are integrated into research and scholarly activities. Here faculty not only lecture, but advise, tutor and work with the students, engage in the creative enterprise in full view of the students, and continue to develop state of the art teaching skills. Here administrators are immersed in the entire enterprise and can better appreciate its energy and complexity.

This building is alive and vibrant. As I walk around inside the building during the day, I am surrounded by students, I encounter faculty, administrators, counselors, IT professionals, and the business people who keep this enterprise going. In this building we are all one, working together for the betterment of our students and our community. The positive energy level is amazing.

This building, so far has housed classes, labs, research and scholarship, advisement and mentoring, curriculum planning, faculty recruitment, scholarly presentations, student group meetings, functions from all over campus, and even an intercollegiate debate tournament, and this is only its first months of operation. It has already become so popular, that every room in the building is booked entirely all day, every day for the next two months.

John Kennedy once said “Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education. Our requirements for world leadership, our hopes for economic growth, and the demands of citizenship itself in an era such as this all require the maximum development of every young American's capacity. The human mind is our fundamental resource.”

In this building we will create the future by developing this fundamental resource.
What a wonderful and exciting day we experienced on March 20 with the dedication of the magnificent new building to house the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. The day began with an enthusiastic and fruitful CHSS Advisory Board meeting in Austin Hall, and we are already looking forward to the next meeting in the fall. The Advisory Board members, spouses, and special guests were also treated to a beautiful luncheon in Peabody Library, hosted by President and Mrs. Gaertner. Dean John DeCastro and his staff did an exceptional job planning and coordinating the program for the dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremony, which was most impressive in its mixture of students, faculty, staff and alumni. The quality of our SHSU students continues to make us proud. We are blessed with outstanding faculty members who teach and guide these young people through their college years, help them grow intellectually and personally, and prepare them for productive futures. So many good things are being done on this campus to accomplish exactly those goals, and that dedication to our students is what motivates all of us to do whatever we can to maintain our university’s legacy of striving to be the best it can possibly be.

It is my distinct privilege to serve as chairman of the first College of Humanities and Social Sciences Advisory Board. It is a responsibility that I take very seriously, and I encourage each of you to become involved with the university and help in any way that you can. Please feel free to contact me with any ideas you may have on how we can make a difference.
Sam Houston State University dignitaries broke ground on the $30 million College of Humanities and Social Sciences building more than a year and a half ago. Now, with help from faculty, students and guests, they honor its completion.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony for the largest academic building on campus was held Friday, March 20 at 1:30 p.m. The grand opening included speeches by College of Humanities and Social Sciences Dean John de Castro, President James F. Gaertner, Chancellor of the Texas State University System Dr. Charles Matthews, and Representative Kevin Brady.

After a posting of the colors by the ROTC Color Guard, the SHSU Women’s Choir performed a patriotic medley. Students Jennifer Yepez and Laura Golden and English professor Melissa Morphew recited poetry, and Regents’ Professor Paul Ruffin read an essay, while students from the history, foreign languages and family and consumer sciences departments modeled costumes and outfits.

“Buildings, like people, rise from and later return to earth,” de Castro said. “It’s what happens in between that determines their worth.”

The new building, which is adjacent to the Smith-Hutson Business building, features 150,000 square feet of classroom space, faculty offices, administrative offices and student services areas. The classrooms and 24-hour computer lab also include state-of-the-art technology.

“The building really seems to be built for the students,” Amy Taber, a senior at SHSU, said. “There is a great computer lab on the main floor that has a lot of computers and several televisions. It’s a huge plus that it’s a 24-hour computer lab, too.”

The building was completed late last year for use by the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, which is ranked fifth nationally based on “faculty scholarly productivity” and doctoral programs by the Academic Analytics Company. The different departments will be featured during the ribbon-cutting throughout the building.

Students from Family & Consumer Sciences, Foreign Languages, and History departments model costumes and outfits.
President and Mrs. Jim Gaertner and U.S. Congressman Kevin Brady join in the celebration.

Dean John de Castro (above right) stands as the Sam Houston State University Women’s Choir sings and the ROTC Color Guard posts the colors (above left).
Convocation

It is agreed—the hardest part
is the prayer-like, insistent,
needful urge of beginning—
the bitter-green buds of the apple tree
pushing out into the gray-cold
mares-tail remnants of winter—
until a postulate of blue sky, a season
we call spring, that paperwhite moment when
anything is possible—
the buds of the tree
might burst open to reveal dogtooth violets,
tuberoses, or perhaps
blue-cheeked budgies warbling notes
wind-chime and silver
while the breeze
lifts their cobalt feathers, and we glimpse
the downy underside, a soft ripple,
watercolor-pale, tangerine.
But most times

the miracle of the ordinary is enough—
dandelion-shoots tufting the lawn
day after day after day, unhinging
their lint-whiskered seed upon the wind,
or pink-tinged blossoms with their promise
of pleasures to come—a day in late summer,
the breathless swelter of August heat,
when we reach up with a work-worn hand
toward some gold-coin-in-the-fountain shimmer
of sun, caught
in a canopy of dusty leaves, pluck
a russet-skinned Winesap from
it's fruit-burdened branch, taste
the bitter-sweet jouissance of completion,
a hardscrabble faith, to teach us
we must hold on
through days of drought,
through days of rain,
through days perfect
as honeybees and jonquils.

Melissa Morphew has won numerous awards for her poetry, including the Randall Jarrell International Poetry Prize and the W.B. Yeats Society Award for Poetry. She has published three collections of poetry, has a fourth collection appearing in 2010, and has published over 100 poems in nationally recognized journals.
Morphew... continued

First
The distance traveled between breath and kiss, so minutely profound, the Atlantic, the Aegean might slip inside such tectonic shimmer, balanced on the gnat-like wings of angels, the silver continent of a straight pin. This is the physics of terra incognita, without topography, landscape, no cartographer's shorthand, the laws of gravity do not apply—Newton's apple unfallen, smooth red skin intact, unbitten, and as yet not a blemish, not a fingerprint. We name this measure agony.
We name this measure desire.

Notes for a Lecture to the Art Students: Another Way to Hear
1. Trust your eyes—
tree roots
might be a man's hands
knobby with age.
A toadstool
a woman's face
streaked with tears.
2. We know clouds have all sorts of guises, but the best of you will catch them in transformation—
a halibut changing to a hare,
a locomotive dissolving to mist on a lake.
3. Most people look like frogs or dogs or fishes.
4. Remember everything is simply a shape in relation to another shape with a distance between.
5. It's obvious God thought in circles and triangles and squares.
6. Touch the canvas; leave fingerprints.
7. It does not matter how many angels dance on the head of a pin but how many sleep beneath the curve of your eyelid.
8. One in ten million people taste in color.
9. There are black butterflies which weave the sky like ash from a volcano.
10. Clean your brushes with linseed oil and turpentine.
11. In a French museum behind a glass screen, a dried peach bears the label “Van Gogh’s Ear.”
Transformation
by Laura Golden

Feel the steel creep into your pores and layer over your skin.
Let your feelings dim and flesh grow cold.
Wish for the dark and quiet chaos.
Allow steel spikes to spring from your casing.
Gasp for unnecessary air as you feel the lacing of metal and muscle.
Accept this silver to fortify newly made wings.
In the fading light, freshly created claws move with a wild science.
Numbness fading away, trade the last of your worries for defiance.
Welcome a new beginning.

Buoyancy
by Jennifer Yepez

She carried me on her back through muddy unpaved streets, plastic bags over her shoes like makeshift wellies. She carried me on her back, me, an eight year-old almost already her size.
She struggled under my weight but kept her balance, stepping on half-floating stones racing the llovizna that threatened my school books and clothes. Racing time, racing the pesera to the corner, her arm outstretched calling the bus to a stop. She struggled under my weight.
I held onto her neck and floated, my worn pair of tennis shoes scrubbed clean, white, never touching the deep lodo.
At school the children played in the rain and stomped into puddles, imagining they swam on cement. I observed through the library window and thought of mothers on laundry days – of her laundry days.
I swam in the words she’d sent me for, learned and memorized them, carried them with me and recited them to her in the kitchen and she floated on the phrases as if English were a life vest pulling us to the surface for a breath. She floated, felt no weight, floated on the words I now knew how to say.
Several years ago I was selected by Mayor Bill Green to serve as tour guide for a production team doing a piece on Huntsville for the Discovery Channel. The point of the documentary was to demonstrate that Huntsville--viewed by many across the globe in a negative light because Death Row inmates are executed here--is just like any other little American town. I took them to the G&O Barber Shop, Walker County Hardware, Reliable Auto parts, and Huntsville Feeds, and we spent some time lying on my front lawn, where I explained to them—successfully, I think—that Huntsville is indeed just another American town: We didn’t vote to have the Death Chamber here.

In one scene, I’m standing in front of the feed store, which is located roughly halfway across the valley between the university and the Walls Unit. I point to the university on the hill with my left hand and to the prison on the other hill with my right.

“If we could get people admitted to that institution,” I say, nodding toward the university, “they would not end up as residents of that one.” I pointed to the prison. I might have added that if we had the funding to make it possible for more inmates to earn degrees while in prison, a very large majority of them would never be back behind bars again.

Of the colleges at SHSU, the one charged above all others with the responsibility of insuring that our students become broad-minded, tolerant, peaceful, law-abiding citizens is the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, now housed in this fine building.

This magnificent edifice--its masonry, glass, tiles, structural steel, and myriad other elements--those of you in this building today and those who will pass through it in the future all came from one source: the earth. But this building and the people who walk through its doors are made up of BORROWED atoms, transformed by whatever dynamics into shapes we recognize, and in time they will go back to the earth to be incorporated perhaps into other shapes, for this is the nature of things.

One February morning in 1982 I was walking down 20th Street toward the university, heading for my eight o’clock class. I noticed smoke in the hollow along Town Creek, and as I got closer to campus I could hear pumper trucks running and people yelling. A few minutes later I was standing on the quadrangle in front of the Thompson Building watching firefighters diligently trying to save Austin Hall. Where once the walls of Old Main would have blocked my view of University Avenue, only smoke obscured it.

Old Main, which had stood there for over ninety years, a landmark no one traveling through Huntsville could miss, had released most of its atoms back to the earth, some perhaps circumventing the globe, some settling across Huntsville and Walker County, some in time perhaps becoming part of me and many of you.

But folks, the same may be said of this building that may be said of Old Main. It doesn’t matter how wondrous a jewel it is or was on this hill. It does not matter how long the period of time between that assembling of atoms of Old Main and their release back to the earth, just as it does not matter how long this building will stand. As with the people who pass through them, buildings come from the earth, and they return to the earth. What matters is what happens between the coming and going.

Who knows how many students passing through this building will have their lives so shaped by those who teach and advise and mentor here that they will never become residents of that other institution on that other hill? Whatever powers there are out there that govern this vast universe, I appeal to You to bless this building and the lives of all who pass through it, and keep it free of rats.

Paul Ruffin, a Texas State University System Regents’ Professor and Distinguished Professor of English, has published over 24 books, over 800 poems, and numerous essays and reviews. He is the founding Director of The Texas Review Press and Editor-in-Chief of The Texas Review. He has been honored as one of the state’s top 10 poets by the Texas Commission on the Arts and is a candidate for Texas Poet Laureate.
Grand Opening Speeches and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

President Jim Gaertner (left) and Chancellor Charles Matthew speak.

U. S. Congressman Kevin Brady (left) presents a U.S. flag to SHSU and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences to celebrate the new building. Dean John de Castro (right) accepts the flag.

The College of Humanities and Social Sciences Building is officially open!
Celebrate with Music from the SHSU Women’s Choir

The Sam Houston State University Women’s Choir provides musical entertainment during the Grand Opening Ceremonies.

Building Facts: As SHSU moved into the 21st Century, it began a period of rapid growth. In response to this growth, Provost David Payne—along with the deans, faculty, and administrators—considered the possibility of modifying SHSU’s college structure. From this discussion emerged The College of Humanities & Social Sciences. President James Gaertner announced the formation of the college in March of 2004. In the fall of 2004, the college became a reality with Dr. Terry Thibodeaux serving as Interim Dean. Dr. John de Castro was named dean of the college in the summer of 2006. The college now consists of nine departments, Communications Studies, English, Foreign Language, Family & Consumer Sciences, History, Mass Communication, Political Science, Psychology & Philosophy, and Sociology.

After an assessment of academic space needs, planning for the present building began. Final construction approval was granted in May of 2007, and actual site work began on the 14th. What you see today is the result of this process.
College of Humanities and Social Sciences Building Celebrates with an Open House
The College of Humanities and Social Sciences Building is the Largest Academic Building on Campus

College of Humanities & Social Sciences Building:
At the ground breaking, Dean John de Castro quoted Winston Churchill: “We shape our buildings and then they shape us.” This beautiful building will shape the future of the College of Humanities & Social Sciences.
The newest college in the newest building
Largest academic building on campus
150,000 square feet of classroom space, faculty offices, student services area, and administrative offices
13 classrooms with seating for 1,434 students, plus additional seminar rooms
Classrooms equipped with state-of-the-art, high-definition projection systems, integrated with the university Blackboard software
10,000 square feet for our nationally award-winning Student Advising and Mentoring Center (SAM Center)
Home for the new Professional and Academic Center for Excellence (PACE), a center for assisting faculty, particularly new faculty, teaching assistants, administrators, and staff toward improvement in their assigned tasks
The HSS Building contains:
Department of Political Science
Department of Psychology & Philosophy
Department of Sociology
Office of the Dean
Accounts Payable
Business Office
Human Resources Office
Payroll
Purchasing
CHSS Classroom Technology
The CHSS classroom building is being equipped with state-of-the-art instructional technology in all of the classrooms with an eye toward enhancing the teaching experience for both the professor and the student.
A total of 16 classrooms will be outfitted with high definition projection systems and LCD displays, sound systems, video players and a networked computer that has a student response system.
The response system allows students to interact in real time by answering questions and surveys with the results being presented on the presentation computer.

One use of this technology is to give professors a tool for determining how well students are absorbing the material and where additional explanation may be necessary.
The rooms will also contain SMART Classroom technology which allows all electronic presentations to be saved to a file that is then uploaded to Blackboard, the classroom management system.
Student can then review the presented PowerPoint presentations or notes as part of their studies.
HSS will also be equipped with two high definition video conferencing rooms. One will be on the first level in the executive conference room and the other will be a classroom on the first floor. With 120 seats this will be SHSU’s largest videoconferencing venue opening up opportunities for guest speakers to be brought in via video conference as well as academic classes.
The executive conference room will support videoconferencing as well as seminar classes and faculty training. Using state-of-the-art electronic displays, high definition video cameras and video conferencing, this facility will be equipped for communication and recording of meetings, classes and training. This room is also ready to serve as the University’s Command Center when the emergency management plan has been activated.
Finally, HSS will have, as part of the PACE Center, high-end video production capabilities giving faculty a place to produce content to enhance their classroom effectiveness. This package also includes the ability to send broadcast video feeds to commercial media outlets.
The return on these investments will be multifaceted. We envision this project directly serving three main purposes: 1) providing a context for faculty/student exposure to and discussion of instructional technologies; 2) developing and demonstrating the power of technology to transform education; and 3) providing a powerful tool for recruiting and retaining quality students.
HSS will be equipped with Gigabit Ethernet to the desktop. Once installed, it will be saturated with wireless connectivity within the building.

SpawGlass Construction Corp. and WHR Architects, Inc.—guides in the construction of this $30 million building
Final Note of Special Recognition...

Sam Houston State University Debate Team Completes Successful Season

Congratulations to the new SHSU Debate Team (see attached picture) and their coach Adam Key. The team completed an amazingly successful season their first year back in competition. They competed in 10 International Public Debate Association tournaments and won 3 tournaments, amassing 70 individual and team trophies. The team ended the season with a fourth place in the nation finish. SHSU individual debaters Clayton Goss and Adesuwa Omoruyi ended the season ranked nationally fifth and eighth respectively.
Sam Houston State University’s
College of Humanities and Social Sciences Advisory Board

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CHSS Vision Statement

To become a “Tier I Balanced” college -- nationally recognized for excellence in both instruction and research/scholarship -- in which:
1. all students receive excellent instruction from tenure-track faculty,
2. undergraduate and graduate students are actively involved in research activities,
3. graduates are well regarded by employers and graduate and professional schools,
4. faculty well rounded who take equal in instructional, scholarly/research, and service activities,
5. instruction and research/scholarship are equally valued and rewarded,
6. the scholarship of teaching and innovation in instruction are promoted and rewarded,
7. the quality of the research, scholarship, and creative activity of the faculty are well regarded internationally,
8. seeking extramural funding for research/scholarship is promoted and rewarded,
9. outstanding scholarship is valued regardless of the attraction of extramural funding,
10. extramural funding for research is used to support students and engage them in the production of knowledge and understanding,
11. an active cross-disciplinary intellectual environment is present that promotes creative interactions of faculty and students,
12. students and faculty are actively engaged in the community,
13. service to the college and the profession are encouraged, valued, and rewarded.

“A teaching institution disseminates knowledge; a research institution discovers knowledge -- a balanced institution does both.”

CHSS Mission Statement

The College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) provides an essential component to a liberal arts education: understanding human beings in their diversity as expressed in their literatures, histories, ideas, values, oral and written expressions, and behavior. By promoting analytic, interpretive, interpersonal, and communication skills, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences facilitates personal growth, competent professionalism, and responsible citizenship.

Giving to the College of Humanities & Social Sciences

The faculty and students of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences are highly appreciative of the generosity of our alumni and friends. These important gifts are used to develop and maintain high quality educational opportunities for our students. They are essential to developing interactions between students and faculty and for attracting top students and faculty to Sam. If you would like to contribute to the college, please either contribute directly by sending a check made out to the Friends of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences or by designating all or a portion of your contribution to SHSU to the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. You may also designate your gift to go to a specific department or program in the college. Simply make out your check to the Friends of (name) Department. The college faculty and students will be most grateful.

Office Staff

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Associate Dean: Dr. Kandi Tayebi
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