

# UTRGV BREAKS GROUND ON NEUROSCIENCE CENTER

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**Austin, TX – Senator Eddie Lucio** (D-Brownsville), participates in the groundbreaking ceremony for the UTRGV Institute for Neuroscience in Harlingen, Texas.

## **Medical first: Officials break ground on \$30 million neurosciences center\***

HARLINGEN — A new era of medical research and treatment opened for the Rio Grande Valley on Wednesday with the ground-breaking ceremony for the UTRGV Institute for Neuroscience.

The \$30 million facility at Haine Drive and North Whalen Road was decades in the making and will be under the umbrella of the UTRGV School of Medicine.

“I’m particularly proud of what’s going on here today,” said UTRGV President Guy Bailey. “This is how things are supposed to work. This is the model of how things work. This Institute for Neuroscience that we’re breaking ground for today is the result of a long partnership.”

Neuroscience is the field where psychology meets biology to further understanding of physical, psychological and neurological health conditions. The new institute will further enhance the City of Harlingen’s growing reputation as a regional center for medical care and treatment.

The facility’s 35-acre site, worth an estimated \$2.5 million, was owned by the city and transferred to the South Texas Medical Foundation in order to donate it to UTRGV. A \$15 million donation to the project also was made by the Valley Baptist Legacy Foundation.

“The budget is \$30 million for the construction of the new facility in Phase I of hopefully two or three phases,” said Marta Salinas-Hovar, UTRGV’s associate vice president for facilities planning and operations. “Phase I involves approximately 32,500 square feet of facility.”

Salinas-Hovar was unsure at this point the number of staff the facility would require once finished.

“This building, this construction, will begin over the next several months and we expect this building to be substantially completed by July 2021,” said John Krouse, dean of the UTRGV medical school. “And in that building which is over 30,000 square feet of space, will be not only research laboratories in neurosciences but also clinical facilities for psychiatry and neurology where we’ll be able to take care of patients who have these devastating diseases.

“We’ll also have our center on aging,” Krouse added. “We have a very large program, as you may know, in Alzheimer’s disease and again we want to expand that program to not only look at

diseases of aging but also helping aging, and how we can help individuals as they age have increased and improved quality of life for as long as they can.”

Harlingen Mayor Chris Boswell saluted the partnerships between UTRGV, the city, the Valley Baptist Legacy Foundation and the South Texas Medical Foundation for the perseverance shown in making the neuroscience center a reality.

“For any of you who know me and have seen me at these kinds of events, I usually start out, ‘It’s another great day today in the City of Harlingen,’” Boswell said. “But today I’m going to say it’s another astonishingly great day in Harlingen.”

The institute’s focus will be in three areas — education, programs in clinical excellence and personalized medicine and health and prevention programs.

For State Sen. Eddie Lucio Jr., the groundbreaking for the neuroscience institute was the result of more than 20 years of effort in attempting to secure university research facilities for the Valley.

“It’s incredible, I’m happy to see it,” he said.

Given the Valley’s extremely high rates of diabetes, obesity and some cancers, Lucio noted developing innovative treatment for these illnesses and others is one of the critical issues facing the region today.

“But we have a team that can address those issues down here now,” Lucio said. “I think not only the quality of life but life itself will be enhanced because of what’s happening here today.”

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\* Kelley, Rick. "Medical first: Officials break ground on \$30 million neurosciences center." *Valley Morning Star*, 6 November 2019, <https://www.valleymorningstar.com/2019/11/06/medical-first/>.