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## Texas Regional Collaboratives Conference Focuses on Leveraging Partnerships for Teacher Success

- August 25, 2011

**Transformational. Inspiring. Energizing. Amazing.  
Highly effective.**

Odds are, you'll hear at least one of these words or phrases during any conversation about the Texas Regional Collaboratives (TRC) for Excellence in Science and Mathematics Teaching – and they were used in abundance at this year's 17th annual TRC conference, which was held June 28-30 at the Renaissance Austin Hotel.

The theme of the 2011 conference was "Leveraging Partnerships to Maximize Teacher Quality," emphasizing a core feature that's made the Collaboratives a uniquely successful initiative for almost two decades – the strong and diverse network of over 60 P-16 partnerships around Texas.

The multi award-winning TRC offers sustained, high intensity professional development training to elementary and secondary science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) teachers in *every county* in Texas. This is made possible by the support of Texas Education Agency, corporate sponsors, Texas universities, regional education service centers, policy makers, government agencies, communities and school administrators.

"We are so fortunate and blessed to have the trust and support of our partners at the Texas Education Agency, Shell, El Paso Corporation, AT&T, and The Cynthia and George Mitchell Foundation," said Dr. Kamil A. Jbeily, founder and executive director of the TRC. "Their contribution to improving STEM education is commendable and greatly appreciated."



[VIEW SLIDESHOW of Conference Seminars](#)

"The TRC is an example of the purposeful synergy that results from people coming together, staying together and working together to empower our STEM teachers to invest in sustained and high intensity professional development to improve themselves and mentor others," said Jbeily.

As is tradition, the highlight of the three-day event was an evening showcase, reception and dinner at which notable speakers offered remarks and the 2011 Distinguished Service Award winner was announced.



Dr. Kamil A. Jbeily

This year's much-anticipated conference drew around 600 STEM education professionals and education supporters to Austin and offered them an opportunity to network; share successful and innovative lessons and teaching strategies; learn about the newest research related to teaching and the sciences; and honor examples of excellence in teaching, learning, and mentoring. The event also offered opportunities to recognize and showcase the generous, dedicated TRC partners for playing an active, ongoing role in improving STEM education for Texas students.

The TRC has been privileged to receive significant and continuing support from partners like the Texas Education Agency (TEA), AT&T Foundation, Shell, Toyota USA Foundation, El Paso Corporation, The Cynthia and George Mitchell Foundation, National Science Foundation and The University of Texas at Austin's College of Education.

"I am very proud of all the projects exhibited at the TRC showcase," said Dr. James P. Barufaldi, director of the Center for Science and Mathematics Education. "The excitement and creativity of teachers brought so much energy to the event! These projects exemplify contemporary STEM education that is built on hands-on, minds-on approaches to the teaching and learning of science and mathematics."

The TRC was honored to have UT System Chancellor Francisco G. Cigarroa deliver the keynote address, former teacher and current State Board of Education member Dr. Marsha L. Farney speak and to receive greetings from the College of Education delivered by Senior Associate Dean Dr. Marilyn Kameen. Dr. Marco A. Uribe was on hand to introduce Chancellor Cigarroa.

"Teaching and mentoring are the backbone of P-16 education," Chancellor Cigarroa stated to a standing room only crowd, "and we want to continue to recognize those teachers who are an inspiration and who are role models in their schools. I know it's not always easy for teachers - sometimes you need a partner, like the TRC, that you can lean on. I strongly believe that an investment in our teachers is a crucial investment in our future - the future of Texas, the nation and the world."

"We must work toward the day when *every* science and math teacher in Texas has all of the resources and training that they need to transform the lives of the students who are entrusted to them. On behalf of the UT System, I want to congratulate and thank all of you dedicated teachers, administrators, the TEA, your corporate sponsors and your many other partners. We will not succeed without you - all of you are the heroes of Texas and I cannot adequately express my respect, admiration and gratitude for all that you do."

Following Chancellor Cigarroa's address and culminating the gala event, Dr. Jbeily announced that this year's TRC Distinguished Service Award winner was middle school teacher Stef Paramoure. The Distinguished Service Award is the highest accolade that the TRC bestows and past honorees have included legislators, Texas Education Agency leaders and award-winning university faculty.



UT System Chancellor  
Francisco G. Cigarroa



TRC Distinguished Service Award Winner  
Stef Paramoure

"This year's honoree started out as a teacher, just like most of you, has served as a TRC mentor and through it all has been so dynamic and energetic, believing always that knowledge is power," said Dr. Jbeily. "She worked extremely hard with our corporate partners on developing podcasts and she's worked as a science specialist. After all of this, however, she informed me at the conference that she wants to return to teaching."

"She's outstanding in every way and so accomplished that last year she was invited to the White House to receive the national Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. If you go online, access the White House website and search for the Presidential Award for Excellence page and then 'Stef Paramoure,' you will see that, when Stef is asked what led to her success, she responds that she's totally indebted to the Texas Regional Collaboratives!"

In addition to a dinner, the evening also included a vast showcase of 47 interactive displays and STEM demonstrations that guests could visit before dining. TRC teachers, education service center staff and university faculty created the exhibits to demonstrate the hands-on, engaging, research-based pedagogical practices being used in science, math and technology classrooms around Texas.

"When I first went downstairs and saw the hall of displays, I was so excited. It was like being in Las Vegas!" said State Board of Education member Marsha Farney. "It's unbelievable, fantastic. I hope all of you take the incredible energy I saw in the display hall back to your classrooms. As teachers, we have the very best job in the world - we get to share knowledge that helps others become inquisitive, question and learn. No one else has this kind of power to transform lives!"

True to its purpose and core goal, the TRC offered high quality educational opportunities during the three days of the conference. TRC members were able to choose from 82 morning and afternoon breakout sessions presented by fellow teachers, TRC partner university faculty and regional service center staff.

In the workshops, attendees experienced teaching at its finest and most creative, with an emphasis on

the use of new technologies in the classroom; ways to make STEM education relevant by tying it to current news topics and issues; preparation of students for STEM competence upon entering college; and integration of the most current research-based instructional strategies. Those who attended sessions like “Pump It Up With Pi” and “Teach the TEKS with the New Mars Rover” have taken the fresh ideas, suggestions and techniques that they learned back to their own school districts and will be sharing them with colleagues, thereby spreading the professional development benefits of the TRC well beyond its formal membership.

In three general sessions, attendees heard from Dr. Janet Dubinsky, a University of Minnesota faculty member, who spoke about the relevance of neuroscience to education; Dr. Jim Knight, a research associate at the University of Kansas, who lined out suggestions for high-leverage activities that can have a major impact on teaching; and Dr. Everly Broadway and Dr. Kenn Heydrick from the TEA, who gave a post-legislative-session update on the state of Texas science and mathematics education.

To date, the Texas Regional Collaboratives have served over two million Texas students through improved instruction and performance of over 30,000 teachers of science and mathematics teachers, who are also sharing their gained knowledge and skills with other teachers at the district, regional, and state levels. The long-range goal of the Regional Collaboratives is to continuously (1) enhance the quality of science and mathematics teaching in Texas through Professional Development Academies and inter-regional collaboration; (2) increase the number of qualified science and mathematics educators by building the leadership capacity of teachers to mentor and serve a larger number of teachers; and (3) improve accountability of the system by evaluating the impact of the professional development on teachers’ knowledge and skills, their performance in the classroom, and on student achievement.

Headquartered at UT Austin's College of Education Center for Science and Mathematics Education, the Texas Regional Collaboratives for Excellence in Science and Mathematics Teaching program has received commendations from the U.S. Department of Education, policy makers, state legislators, and business partners. The Program was inducted into the Texas Science Hall of Fame on January 17, 2000, and was recognized by the Governor, the Senate, and House of Representatives on January 16, 2001 for distinguished achievements and contributions to supporting education reform.

To access more information about the TRC and view photos and video of this year’s conference, visit [www.thetrc.org](http://www.thetrc.org).

—Kay Randall, University Communications, 512-363-6520

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