

Female trio will vie for top position at Laredo College

An intensive months-long national search for candidates to fill the Laredo College presidential role has produced a shortlist of three distinguished finalists.

At its March 22, 2022, special board meeting, the Board of Trustees met in executive session to discuss the status of the presidential search process. The Presidential Search Committee, comprised of 20 members that included Laredo College students, staff, administrators, trustees and community leaders, was in charge of identifying the top candidates after carefully reviewing their qualifications and conducting interviews.

Laredo College Board President Lupita Zepeda announced that the presidential finalists selected by the Laredo College Board of Trustees are Dr. Naydeen González-De Jesús, Dr. Pamela Monaco and Dr. Maria “Minita” Ramirez.

All three contenders have an extensive background in academia and senior-level administrative experience in higher education. Dr. González-De Jesús is the Executive Vice President for Student Success at Milwaukee Area Technical College in Milwaukee, Dr. Monaco serves as Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs at Wilbur Wright College in Chicago and Dr. Ramirez is the Vice President for Student Success at Texas A&M International University.

Although Dr. Marisela Rodriguez Tijerina has served as interim president since July 2021, this will be the first time in Laredo College’s 75-year history that a woman will be at the helm of the institution in a permanent position as the eighth college president.

“We would like to thank the entire college community for their continued interest and support in the process to identify our

next president,” Board President Zepeda said. “I would also like to take this opportunity to thank each member of the Presidential Search Committee for their exceptional work and effort.”

Public forums will take place the week of April 4. Each candidate will participate in a one-hour forum where they will be introduced and participate in a question-and-answer session. We invite and encourage the community to participate in these open forums, which will be made accessible to all faculty, administrators, staff, students and the general public.

Additional information about the presidential finalists and the upcoming open forums will be posted on the Laredo College Presidential Search website: www.laredo.edu/presidentialsearch.



LC’s environmental center reopens to the community

The Laredo College Lamar Bruni Vergara Environmental Science Center (LBVESC) officially reopened its doors to the public after a long hiatus. The center has been at the forefront of plant and wildlife conservation efforts in South Texas for more than 20 years.

Even though the center has reopened, remodeling and renovations to the entire facility are still on the horizon, including enclosure expansions and new animal additions. Other notable changes to operations include implementing select

weekend and holiday hours to offer another alternative for affordable, family-friendly entertainment in our community.

LBVESC Director Bianca Brewster, a passionate wildlife advocate who took the helm at the center in December, stressed the importance of animal education in our community. She stated that the staff has been anxiously waiting to reopen to the Laredo community and will work on expanding the center.



“I envision this place growing, being one of Laredo’s main attractions for locals and out-of-town visitors,” she said. “Although we are a small center in comparison to a zoo or other nature centers, we will be working to constantly provide different activities, exhibits and events for our community.”

The staff looks forward to hosting school tours, offering the center as a venue for small events, having Earth Day events and other fun activities. Visitors will meet and interact with various animals, including a fox, javelina, deer, alligators, snakes, turtles, tortoises, raccoons, squirrels, ducks, rabbits and more.

Additionally, the center is hosting “Wild Saturdays” to offer families and small groups an afternoon of weekend fun with lunch and animal feeding activities included.

Those interested in these events must make a reservation since space is limited.

Health and safety measures will be in place to safeguard all staff and visitors. Entrance will be limited to 15 people every half hour. Masks are required for indoor spaces and designated areas near animals. Also, there will be temperature check stations at the entrance and access to hand sanitizers throughout the facilities.

The community’s engagement and generosity have been at the heart of the center’s success. Those wishing to donate can either contact the center or visit www.laredo.edu/LBVESC to find the link to the center’s Amazon Wishlist.

The LBVESC is also a great place to volunteer and earn community service hours. Volunteers must be at least 16

years old. They will assist with different duties such as food preparation, maintenance and tours.

The center will be open Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Fridays from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. and Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Depending on availability and the community’s response, the center may consider modifying this schedule to better serve the community’s needs. Tickets are priced at \$4 for adults 18 and older, \$3 for children and senior citizens aged 65 and above. Admission is free for children ages 3 and younger.

For additional information about the center’s operations, volunteer opportunities, donations or questions, the public can call (956) 764-7501 or send an email to lbvesc@laredo.edu.

