

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Ginger Hall Carnes, Interim Director of Public Relations vcarnes@alamo.edu, 210.486.3884 (o); 573.3922 (cell)

NOTE: Since Liz is co-chairing the Graduation Committee, she will be at Freeman Coliseum all day on Thursday and will be available for interviews. To reach her before Thursday, you can call her office at 486-3711.

May 9, 2011

First student who enrolled to speak at Palo Alto College's Silver Anniversary Commencement

Palo Alto College's first student – who now is in charge of registering all students at the college – will be the commencement speaker to celebrate the College's 25th Anniversary. The ceremony is scheduled at 7 p.m. Thursday, May 12, at Freeman Coliseum.

Four hundred of the college's 700 graduates are expected to participate in the ceremony where they will receive Associate degrees and Certificates of Completion. In addition, students in the Gateway to College program who have completed their high school requirements will be recognized.

Palo Alto's first student, Elizabeth Aguilar-Villarreal, now oversees the Enrollment Management Department of the College. But she wasn't even contemplating college when she graduated from South San Antonio High School in 1985. Her mother encouraged her to attend mass on a Sunday that summer because Palo Alto President Terry Dicianna was recruiting there.

She was the first person who actually applied and registered for a course at the college's administrative offices in Billy Mitchell Village across from Kelly AFB. Liz has worked for the Alamo Colleges since starting as a work-study in the Admissions Office in 1985. She earned her associate degree from Palo Alto, a bachelor's degree from Our Lady of the Lake University, and her Master's in Counseling from Texas A&M University-Kingsville in 2004.

The first classes were held in high schools and military installations until the campus at I-410 and Hwy 16 opened in January 1987. The first semester's enrollment was 231.

The College, one of the Alamo Colleges, now serves more than 9,000 students. It was the first home for Texas A&M University-San Antonio as it started classes in 2000.

Palo Alto College is a fully accredited community college located on the Southside of San Antonio, and awards associate degrees, short-term certificates and offers non-credit continuing education classes. The campus is located at 1400 W. Villaret Blvd. at I-410 South and Texas Hwy. 16 or online at alamo.edu/pac.