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## Press Release

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### **South Texas College Seeking Partnership with Department of Homeland Security Agencies Ahead of Center Opening**

**MCALLEN, TEXAS (Nov. 21, 2017)** – Maintaining security on the border requires the highest level of advanced specialized training.

South Texas College has begun a series of law enforcement stakeholder meetings with Hidalgo and Starr County mayors, city managers, police chiefs, and Texas Department of Public Safety Commissioner Cynthia Leon as part of Phase II for its Regional Center for Public Safety Excellence (RCPSE). The latest phase includes the expansion and development of professional continuing education training for federal agencies within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

To accomplish this, STC in conjunction with the City of Pharr is pursuing a partnership with the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC), which is reviewing the College's master plan for the upcoming Regional Center Public for Safety Excellence in Pharr, slated to open June 2018.

Based in Glynco, GA, FLETC is the name of the interagency law enforcement training body for 91 federal law enforcement agencies. With an annual budget of \$272 million, it also provides tuition-free and low-cost training to state, local, campus and tribal law enforcement agencies through its Rural Policing Institute (RPI) and the Office of State and Local Training.

STC and the City of Pharr are now moving on to Phase II, which includes site visits with officials at the federal level who stand to benefit from the services of the RCPSE. Meetings are currently taking place with federal stakeholders, including FLETC, RGV Sector Border Patrol, Laredo Field Operations, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

STC President Dr. Shirley A. Reed is extending an invitation to leaders of the law enforcement community to become members of the President's Advisory Council for the RCPSE. The Council will regularly provide input and recommendations for professional continuing education and degree programs.

“Everybody agreed that this is absolutely needed, and it will be a benefit for all law enforcement officials, local, state and federal,” said Dr. Reed. “When we did the master plan, law enforcement professionals identified for us what their priorities were. We incorporated these priorities into the master plan, and when you’re developing a master plan you do some dreaming and some visioning but we are now in the reality phase.”

Meetings are currently being spearheaded by the offices of U.S. Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) and U.S. Congressman Henry Cuellar (TX-28).

Representatives from STC, along with Pharr mayor Dr. Ambrosio Hernandez, briefed officials at the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Laredo Field Office, a border agency within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, during a recent meeting in Laredo, who were then informed on the RCPSE masterplan. There are currently 1,000 agents based in the Rio Grande Valley needing Advanced Professional Skills training.

In attendance at the meeting in Laredo was David Higgerson, Director of the Office of Field Operations for CBP; Anna Garcia, Deputy Regional Director for U.S. Sen. John Cornyn; Francis Atwell, representative from the Office of Congressman Henry Cuellar; Wanda Garza, Executive Officer for External Affairs at South Texas College; Mario Reyna, Dean of Business, Technology and Public Safety at South Texas College; Eugene Crawford, Assistant Director (Mission Support), CBP; and Bradd Skinner, Assistant Director (Trade), CBP.

Representatives from STC will now travel to FLETC headquarters in Glynco, GA on Nov. 30.

Through a potential partnership, STC seeks to be the first community college FLETC provider along the Southern Border to offer Advanced Professional Continuing Education Training.

“I congratulate South Texas College for your commitment to bringing this high level of law enforcement training to South Texas,” said U.S. Congressman Henry Cuellar (TX-28), “By combining the expertise of our local, state and federal law enforcement, fire safety, and public safety officers, we will have a better trained police workforce.”

Located at 4300 S. Cage Blvd. in Pharr, the RCPSE will make STC the first border community college in the nation to establish integrative training for local, state and federal professionals in law enforcement, public safety, fire science and Homeland Security along the US/Mexico border.

The \$71 million master plan is slated to transform the RCPSE into a Public Safety, Law Enforcement, Fire Science and Homeland Security campus by 2030. The facility is located on a 64 acre site in Pharr with 180 additional acres available for future expansion. The master plan includes 534,385 square feet of buildings, structures and a driving track to be completed in three phases over the next decade.

“We need more advanced specialized training. At the end of the day, it’s about having access to that training for law enforcement officers as well as fire departments,” said Mario Reyna, Dean of Public Safety at STC. “They need continuous training, and that’s something that will only better

serve the residents in our communities across the Valley. Whether it's Rio Grande City, McAllen, Edinburg or Pharr; it's all about having highly skilled trained public safety officers.”

STC held its first business consortium meeting in August 2017 with city leaders, as well as with law enforcement professionals to discuss the proposed development of its \$4 million Emergency Vehicle Operations Course (EVOC) and \$3.2 million Covered Shooting Range as Phase II of the RCPSE gets underway.

Together with its partners, including Valley cities and law enforcement agencies, STC has developed a \$71.28 million long-range master plan for building its regional center in three phases.

Phase One includes a \$9.9 million investment. Set for completion in Fall 2018, it includes a training center, driving/skills pad, shooting simulation lab and a driving simulation lab.

Phase Two includes \$10.6 million investment for fire science and Homeland Security. It includes a multi-story fire training structure, two story residential training structure and a confined space/search and rescue training area. This phase also includes the EVOC, a cityscape with non-lethal training capacity, and a covered shooting range with firearm training classrooms.

Phase Three is a \$50.6 million investment in Integrative Homeland Security, which will add a physical plant and expansive growth with new education and student services buildings.

“Over the course of several meetings with our congressional leaders, federal agency heads, and regional partners, we have impressed upon our federal partners the significance of our regional efforts to enhance public safety and border security with our South Texas College campus in Pharr,” said Pharr Mayor Dr. Ambrosio Hernandez. “Thanks to our joint efforts between South Texas College, PSJA ISD and the City of Pharr, we are proud to have attracted the interest of CBP and other federal agencies to further augment the public safety education and training opportunities that will be available at the Regional Center for Public Safety Excellence.”

Key to that development is the EVOC that will enable sheriff's departments, police departments, fire departments, federal agencies and DPS to use the facility for a wide variety of vehicle training including driving skills practice and collision avoidance.

“We thank our regional and federal partners for their continued support,” said Mayor Hernandez. “We look forward to the enhanced security that will develop out of this collaborative partnership and benefit the safety of the entire region.”

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