

## UTSA Today

The University of Texas at San Antonio

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Top photo (from left): J. Bruce Bugg Jr., Tobin Endowment trustee; Sandy Cornyn, wife of the senator; Sen. John Cornyn; Leroy G. Denman Jr., Tobin Endowment trustee; and UTSA President Ricardo Romo (Photo by Mark McClendon). Bottom photo (file photo):

Margaret Batts Tobin.

## Sen. John Cornyn opens UTSA \$10.6 million science lab

By [Kris Rodriguez](#)

Public Affairs Specialist

(Nov. 15, 2005)--U.S. Sen. **John Cornyn**, R-Texas, joined UTSA President **Ricardo Romo** and community members to celebrate the opening of the \$10.6 million Margaret Batts Tobin Laboratory Building on the UTSA 1604 Campus.

The new lab is named for the local businesswoman who in 1947 became the third woman to serve on the UT System Board of Regents.

"I am encouraged to see the outstanding research taking place at UTSA and in my hometown of San Antonio," said Cornyn. "The work that is being done here has benefits for the entire country, and UTSA has shown great vision and foresight in biotechnology."

"This facility is key to UTSA's movement to become the state's next premier research university," said Romo. "Faculty and students working in these labs are crucial to the university's mission to improving the lives of all our citizens -- today and in the future."

The 22,000 square-foot facility, designed by FKP Architects and built by Vaughn Construction, will accommodate UTSA faculty and graduate students researching emerging infectious diseases. The facility includes UTSA's second biosafety level three laboratory, which requires certification by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and government security clearances for researchers. Additionally, the facility houses six biology research laboratories, a multipurpose conference room and a computer media center.

The Tobin Endowment is providing \$1 million to fund the Margaret Batts Tobin Distinguished Chair in Biotechnology in support of research in the new facility. Among the Tobin Laboratory researchers is Professor **Garry Cole**, an internationally known microbiologist specializing in fungal diseases. Cole has authored more than 170 publications. He recently joined UTSA from the Medical College of Ohio and will focus on coccidioimycosis or desert valley fever, endemic to West Texas.

Accompanying Cole will be **Judy Teale**, professor of microbiology and immunology; **Jose Lopez-Ribot**, associate professor of microbiology; and **Floyd Wormley**, assistant professor of microbiology.

Teale is an immunologist investigating neurocystercercosis, a parasitic disease of the brain found in Latin America. Additionally, Teale will study the immune response to *Francisella tularensis*, the bacterium that causes tularemia. The organism is highly virulent when inhaled and is considered to be a potential bioterrorism weapon by the CDC because of the ease with which it is aerosolized.

Lopez-Ribot will focus on *Candida albicans*, the leading cause of fungal disease in the world, and Wormley is working to develop novel immune therapies and vaccines to treat or prevent invasive fungal infections.

All four researchers are part of the 15 faculty comprising UTSA's new South Texas Center for Emerging Infectious Diseases. The center's researchers are focusing on critical areas of human health including anthrax, tularemia, cholera, Lyme disease, desert valley fever and other parasitic and fungal diseases.

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