

THE PATRIOTS' CASA

An Academic Home for the Brave

TEXAS A&M
UNIVERSITY
SAN ANTONIO
Military Embracing™





FOREWORD

*Dr. Richard A. Box, Chairman Emeritus,
Texas A&M University System
U.S. Army Veteran*



Back in 2012, when I chaired the Board of Regents for The Texas A&M University System, I was honored to have a part in approving and breaking ground on this newest jewel in the Texas A&M University System's crown – the Patriots' Casa. I can't think of a more appropriate place than Texas A&M University-San Antonio to build a facility that will embrace and transform the lives of our military community members who seek to complete their education. San Antonio, Texas is one of the most patriotic cities – if not the most patriotic city – in our nation, military embracing to the core, and one of the largest military hubs in the United States. Patriotism has also been a great part of the warp and fabric of the Texas A&M System. In fact, Texas A&M University at College Station produced more officers and people for the war in the greatest generation, World War II, than the service academies did. When you combine the deep military heritage of the Texas A&M University System and the fierce patriotism of San Antonio, it's hard to imagine the Patriots' Casa residing anywhere else.

President Ferrier and her faculty and staff, in pioneering the Casa, have truly embodied the spirit of our country's great patriots. These facilities and programs, and the caring and support that exists within these beautiful stucco walls, serve as an important model for our country's academic community to replicate. I look forward to seeing the Patriots' Casa, and the staff and faculty of Texas A&M University-San Antonio, serve the military community for generations to come.

A close-up photograph of a white, five-pointed star embroidered on a dark blue fabric. The star is the central focus, with its points extending towards the corners of the frame. The fabric has a visible woven texture. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the threads.

PATRIOT

*One who loves his or her country and supports its authority and interests.
A military service member or veteran and his or her spouse,
children, parents, and friends.*

CASA

*Home. Hearth. A place for family.
A place to grow.*

PATRIOTS' CASA MISSION

Provide academic, life, and career skills support for student veterans, military personnel and their military families enrolled at our University.

The Casa's dual purpose is to help ensure our students in the military community and their families achieve their academic objectives and are equipped for post-graduation success.



PATRIOTS' CASA
COMMEMORATIVE COIN

In the fall of 2011, a group of employees at Texas A&M University-San Antonio took pen to paper to sketch out a plan. Their goal was to fulfill critical elements of the University's mission – prepare and empower – for active duty, reserve, and veteran military students and their families. This group comprised more than 10 percent of the student body, easily twice that of a typical university.

Preparing and empowering military students can involve a lot more than what civilian students require. It means guiding their transition from military service to academic life. Transition from a forward-operating base in a war-torn country to stateside, in many cases. Sometimes, it means transition from being severely wounded to undergoing deep rehabilitation, physically and mentally, all while trying to figure out what's next.

President Maria Hernandez Ferrier knew that it was the University's duty to embrace and serve this group as they have served our country. She had already built a team of liaisons whose charge and passion was to reach out to the military student community and shepherd them through the higher education process, mindful of how difficult their transition may be.

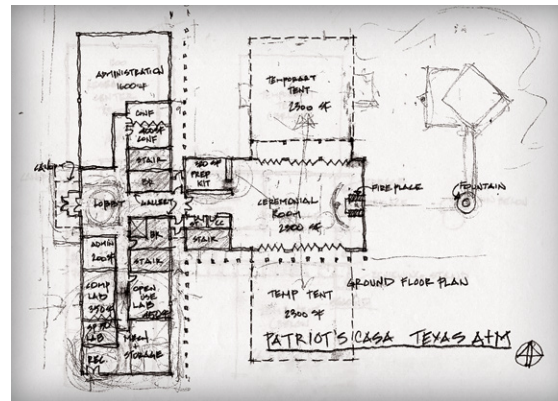
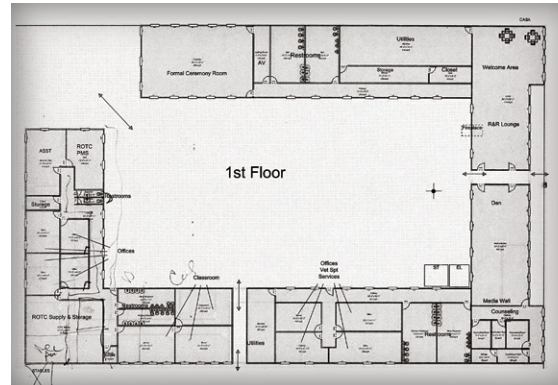
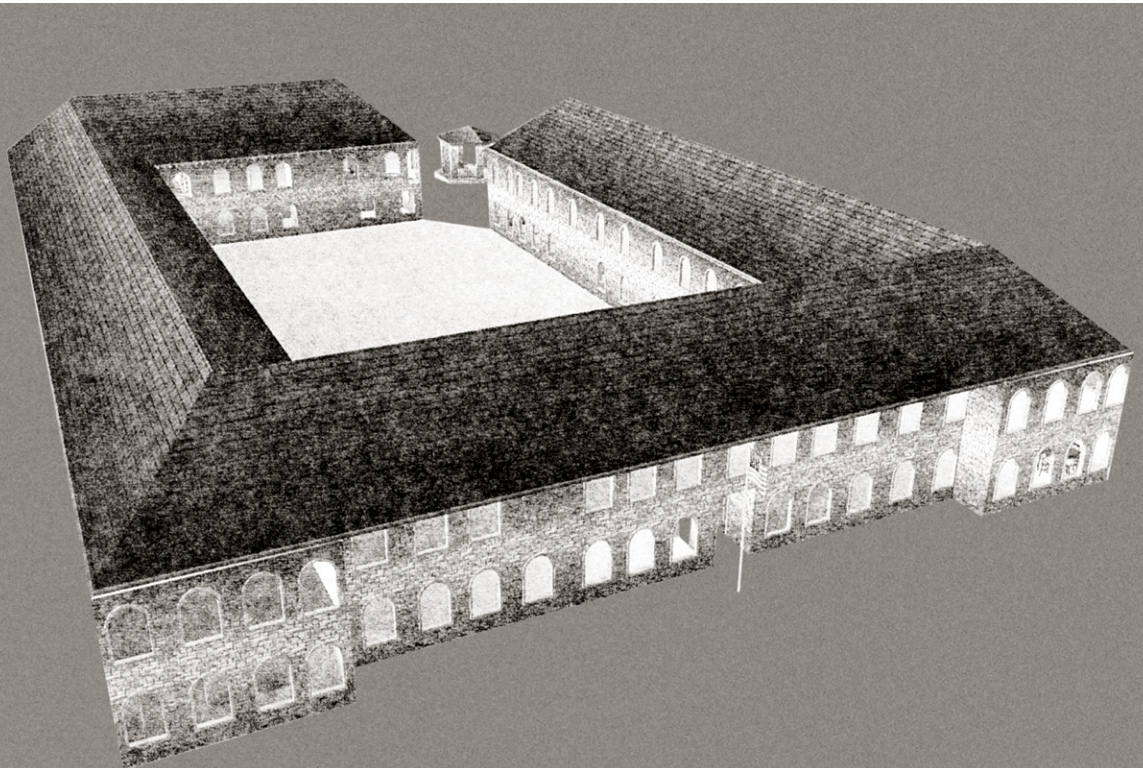
The next step was to take this military-embracing spirit and give it a home and a name: Patriots' Casa.

INITIAL VISIONS & PLANNING

Early planning for the Patriots' Casa began with the staff members of the Division of Strategic Initiatives and Military Affairs in 2010. The circle of contributors enlarged to consider input from other veterans, ROTC

cadets, and experts from Fort Sam Houston who support and treat wounded warriors, service members returning from overseas deployments, and university faculty in the counseling program.

INITIAL CONCEPTS AND SKETCHES FOR PATRIOTS' CASA.



“WHEN THE TEAM INVOLVED IN THE VISION FOR THE CASA TALKS ABOUT HOW PAINSTAKINGLY CAREFUL THEY WERE TO LISTEN TO THE NEEDS OF OUR VETERANS, TO MAKE SURE TO HONOR THEIR EXPERIENCES, AND TO TAKE THEM INTO ACCOUNT IN THE DESIGN, IT JUST UNDERSCORES HOW SAN ANTONIO TRULY EMBRACES THE MILITARY. WE WANT TO DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO CELEBRATE, APPRECIATE, AND PREPARE THEM FOR THE NEXT CHAPTER OF THEIR LIVES, THEIR EDUCATION. IT’S AWESOME.”

— Elaine Mendoza, Member,
Texas A&M University System Board of Regents

THE HOUSE THAT SERVICE BUILT

The Texas A&M University System and its flagship school, Texas A&M University, has a rich cultural tradition of honoring and serving the military. So it was no surprise that when President Ferrier shared the vision and purpose for the Patriots' Casa with then-new Chancellor John Sharp,

he immediately understood the need. The Board of Regents showed overwhelming support and approved the building's design and construction. Ground was broken on November 3, 2012.



“WHEN I PRESENTED THE IDEA OF THE PATRIOTS’ CASA, EVERYONE JUST SAID YES. THE REASON IT WAS ACCEPTED, IN MY OPINION, IS BECAUSE THE ENTIRE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM IS LIKE THIS UNIVERSITY: MILITARY EMBRACING.”

— *Dr. Maria Hernandez Ferrier, President
Texas A&M University-San Antonio*



WHY IS THE BUILDING NAMED PATRIOTS' CASA?

Veterans have sacrificed for their country and their buddies, some paying the ultimate price. We honor them. But veterans count their strength in both their personal faith as well as their families – spouses, children, parents, siblings, good friends, and co-workers. Family members also serve; friends and neighbors also grieve when our service members are no longer with us. So, all of them are patriots – the wind under the wings of those who serve wearing our nation's cloth. Consequently, we honor all our patriots in the building's name.

Because the building is designed to refresh, enlighten, and restore our student patriots, it is most fittingly their *home* on campus. In keeping with the Mission heritage and

Hispanic culture that celebrates family and home, and in which *mi case es su casa* is a greeting and heartfelt invitation, the building's title is bilingual and indeed *su casa*.

“Patriotism has been a great part of the warp and fabric of Texas A&M System, Texas A&M College Station, and now Texas A&M-San Antonio. I think it was just a perfect fit for the Texas A&M System and Texas A&M-San Antonio, and also the San Antonio community.”

— *Dr. Richard A. Box,*
Chairman Emeritus
Texas A&M University System





COLLABORATION

Texas A&M University-San Antonio brought in the expertise of the U.S. Army Medical Department Center and School, the largest training brigade in the Army and a national think tank, as well as the Warrior and Family Support Center at Fort Sam Houston and the Veterans Administration. For the counseling and healing functions, the school's faculty from the Guidance and Counseling graduate program provided their expertise.

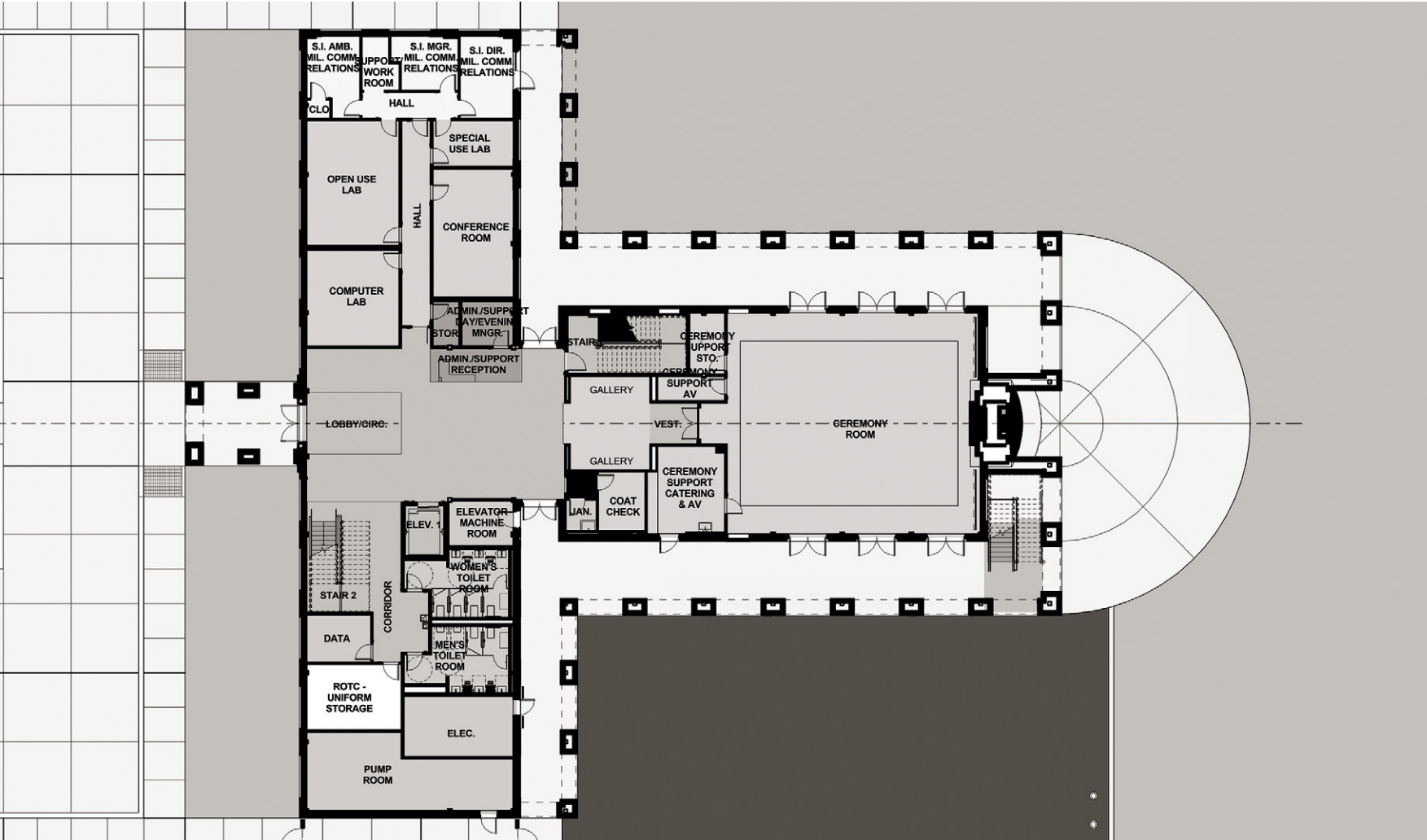
“WE DIDN'T DO THIS ALONE. THE INITIAL CONCEPT AND THE THEME WAS OURS, BUT AS SOON AS WE GOT THE GREEN LIGHT, WE BROUGHT IN OTHER PEOPLE SUCH AS THE VA, AND JUDITH MARKELZ WITH THE WARRIOR AND FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER AT FORT SAM TO ASK HER, “WHAT'S WORKING IN YOUR FACILITY? WHAT'S NOT WORKING?”

— *Richard Delgado, Jr.*
Director of Military Community Development & Army ROTC
U.S. Marine Corps Veteran

MILITARY EMBRACING BY DESIGN

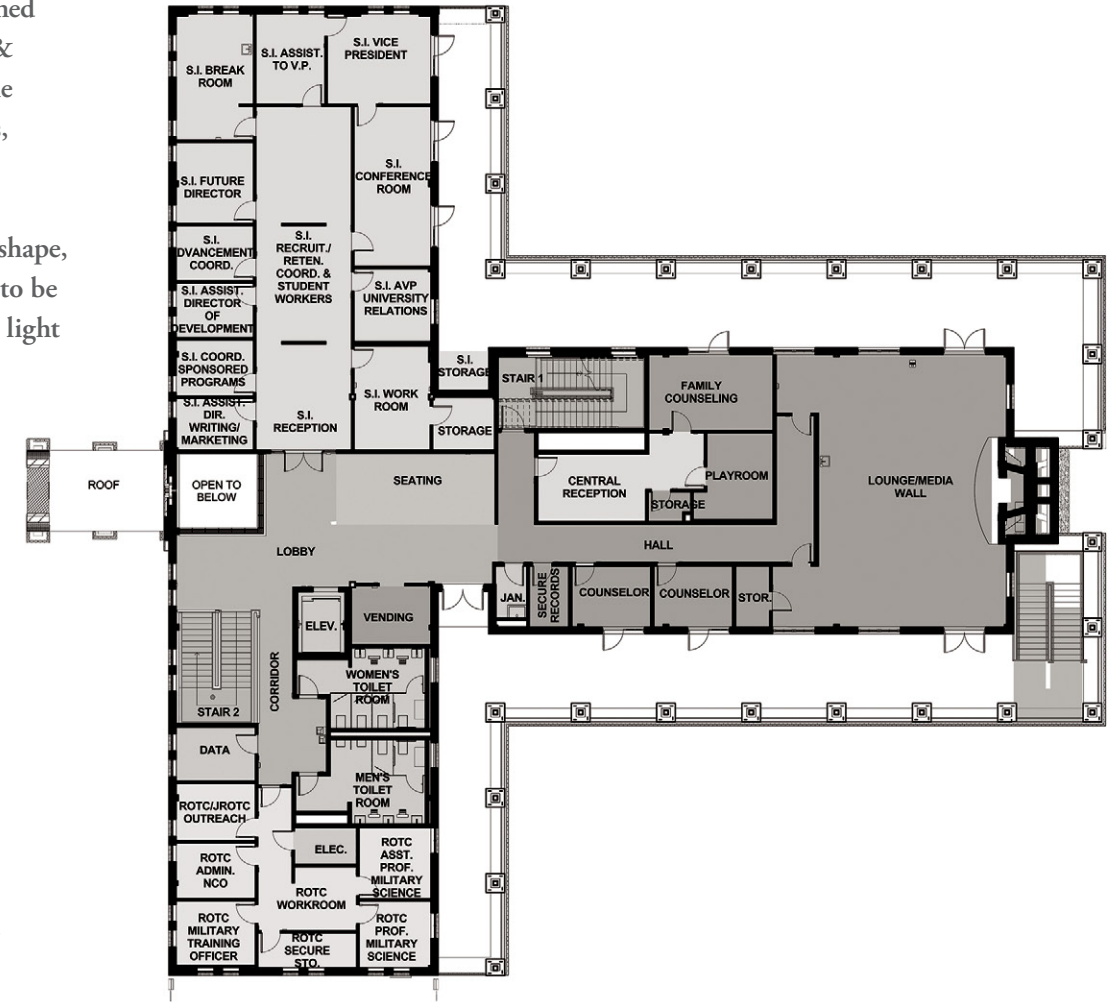
A covered walkway to honor and protect all who enter. An intricate window that alludes to the historic Spanish missions that define San Antonio's origins. An inviting lobby with comfortable furniture, awash in natural light. A hallway that extends through softly lit spaces and soothing hues, inviting passage through a display of cherished military possessions. At the end of the hallway, a grand ceremony room with a majestic fireplace that celebrates the five military branches on its mantle. Every element of the Patriots' Casa was designed for one purpose: to welcome, comfort, and guide its beneficiaries through the transition.





The project enlisted the renowned architectural firm of Muñoz & Company, who designed all the buildings on the main campus, to design the Patriots' Casa.

The building's footprint is a T-shape, which allows for the building to be penetrated by as much natural light as possible throughout.



ROOM ASSIGNMENTS DEPICTED HERE WERE FROM THE ORIGINAL PLANS.



“PATRIOTS’ CASA TAKES CARE OF THE FAMILIES OF THE MILITARY COMMUNITY. IT’S NOT JUST FOR SERVICE MEMBERS, IT’S FOR THEIR SPOUSES AND THEIR CHILDREN. THEY HELP THEM DO THE PAPERWORK THEY NEED TO GET THE BENEFITS THAT THEY’RE ENTITLED TO. THEY HELP THEM FROM THE MOMENT THEY STEP IN THE DOOR TO THE NEXT PHASE OF THEIR LIVES.”

— *Casey Annunzio, Project Architect*
Muñoz & Company



2014 GOLDEN TROWEL AWARD
FIRST PLACE, BLOCK CATEGORY
SAN ANTONIO MASONRY CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION

THE EXTERIOR

White stucco honors San Antonio’s rich culture of historic missions and Spanish Colonial architecture such as that of the Spanish Governor’s Palace. Brick accents tie the Casa to its fellow buildings on campus.

ENTRY

“The Patriots’ Casa team felt strongly about having a covered walkway as a drop-off point for dignitaries and VIPs – and by VIPs, they mean wounded veterans. Some of them can’t have a lot of sun on them because they have been badly burned, or they just need to be dropped off right at the front door.”

— Casey Annunzio, *Project Architect,*
Muñoz & Company

COPPER DOORS

The copper doors, used on several buildings on campus, are a symbol of students’ entering a bright new future – they celebrate the students’ “walking in” to a new phase of their life in which they achieve their educational goals.





“THE WINDOW IS AN ABSTRACTION OF A STAR THAT YOU MIGHT FIND ON A MILITARY UNIFORM, WHICH ALSO LENT ITSELF TO THE IDEA OF A SPECIAL ICON THAT REPRESENTS THE DIFFERENT BRANCHES OF THE MILITARY. THE POINTS IN THAT WINDOW REFER TO THE DIFFERENT BRANCHES OF THE U.S. ARMED FORCES.”

— *Henry R. Muñoz, III, Chief Executive Officer
Muñoz & Company*

THE WINDOW

Inspired by Mission San Jose, the window not only echoes the local culture and history but also contributes to a wealth of natural light inside the Casa in daytime. At night, the window casts a stunning beacon of light to the outside.

The project brought in a noted expert in the design of healing spaces, architect Paul Alt, to assure that every space inside the building offered the most healing properties. The T-shaped footprint of the building allowed for the most natural light to penetrate the space. Soothing colors were used throughout that also hearkened to the San Antonio native landscape.

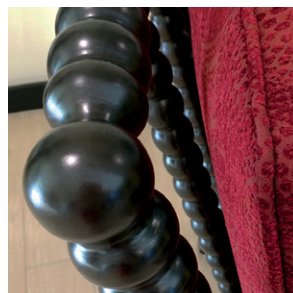
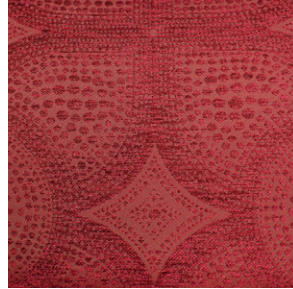
“A lot of people don’t understand what it’s like to transition, whether you’re injured or not. Transitioning from the military is tough no matter whether you did four years, two years or whether you retired.”

— *Richard Delgado, Jr., Director of Military Community Development & Army ROTC
U.S. Marine Corps Veteran*

THE LOBBY

“The space is personalized by art created by veterans. What that initial entry and initial experience does is it signifies the veterans’ domain. It’s not another university building. It’s a veteran university building.”

— *Paul Alt, Principal
Alt Architecture + Research Associates, LLC*





“WITH THE SELECTION OF FURNITURE AND OTHER THINGS, WE REALLY WANTED TO GIVE IT A HOMELIKE QUALITY—WHICH IS SO IMPORTANT FOR VETERANS BECAUSE THEY’VE BEEN IN THE INSTITUTION FROM FOUR TO OVER 20 YEARS. A VETERAN-EMBRACING ENVIRONMENT IS REALLY NON-INSTITUTIONAL, BUT IT STILL EMBRACES THE SYMBOLS AND HISTORY OF THE SERVICE THEY GAVE.”

— *Paul Alt, Principal*
Alt Architecture + Research Associates, LLC

CEREMONY ROOM

The ceremonial room offers a space for large, formal gatherings and celebrations. The room features French doors that open to the outdoor space to expand for larger events, and audio visual technology allows the events inside to be streamed to an outdoor audience.

“What the Patriots’ Casa addresses so beautifully is that yes, it’s veteran embracing, but it’s also community inviting. And by bringing the community in, they get to understand the veterans as individuals. By creating this communal series of environments, it allows everyone to get to know one another as human beings.”

— *Paul Alt, Principal*

Alt Architecture + Research Associates, LLC



THE MISSING MAN TABLE IS A PLACE OF HONOR COMMONLY FOUND IN DINING FACILITIES OF THE U.S. ARMED FORCES. THE TABLE IS SET IN MEMORY OF FALLEN, MISSING, OR IMPRISONED MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS.





PLAZA & EAST APRON

In the back of the Casa, a grand semicircular plaza features decorative concrete and an outdoor fireplace for hosting celebratory gatherings and further extending ceremony space beyond the building. Seven flagpoles flank the perimeter of the semicircle featuring the American and Texas flags, five flags honoring the five military branches of service, and a flag to honor prisoners of war.



COUNSELING SUITE

The Casa's plan included space for four counseling rooms where students in the University's Guidance and Counseling Program, under faculty supervision, could offer services to veterans and their families while obtaining

the practicum hours required to complete their degrees. Young children would also be served by student counselors in a play therapy room equipped with space for drawing, painting and imaginative play.



“A HUGE STIGMA FOR ANY VETERAN WHO SAW COMBAT IS THE STIGMA OF ASKING FOR HELP. SO WE ADDED A MORE DISCREET ENTRY, A STAIRWAY LOCATED SUCH THAT THEY COULD COME IN THROUGH THE SIDE FROM WHERE THE PARKING IS AND ENTER THE SUITE WITHOUT PEOPLE WATCHING THEM. THIS DISCREET ENTRY WILL ENCOURAGE VETERANS TO GET HELP.”

— *Paul Alt, Principal*
Alt Architecture + Research Associates, LLC



THE GALLERY

A vestibule between the entry lobby and the ceremony room features ten locked display cases with soft lighting, positioned at a comfortable level for standing and wheelchair-bound visitors alike, to display cherished possessions that helped veteran students and families carry them through their time in service. Recording devices will allow veterans to add their story along with their artifacts, for another self-healing opportunity.

“You hear the tone, the crack in their voice as they’re about to tear up, all those things that you can’t get from reading a piece of paper. It allows me, as a veteran, to hear somebody else’s story, and it may spark something in me. If he or she can share their story and open up just a little bit, maybe it’s time for me to open up that little bit.”

— *Richard Delgado, Jr.*

“THE GALLERY SPACE CAN HELP
OUR MILITARY COMMUNITY IN
THE SELF-HEALING PROCESS.”

— *Richard Delgado, Jr.*

*Director of Military Community Development & Army ROTC
U.S. Marine Corps Veteran*

THE HEALING GARDEN & GROUNDS

A healing garden with native plants was included at the Casa to extend its self-healing properties outdoors. Certain native plants were selected not only for easy maintenance but for their ability to attract butterflies, hummingbirds and other living symbols of renewal.

The grounds also feature an area for service dogs that is shared with the entire campus.

“THE NORTH SIDE OF THE BUILDING HAS A WELCOMING, BEAUTIFUL, MEDITATIVE QUALITY, WITH BENCHES AND PATHS THAT MEANDER THROUGH IT TO CREATE A SENSE OF STILLNESS AND RESPITE.”

— Casey Annunzio, Project Architect
Muñoz & Company



PREPARE, EMPOWER AND EMBRACE

*Texas A&M University-San Antonio had its arms
around the military community long before the walls
went up and the paint was dry on the Patriots' Casa.*





“WE KNEW THERE WAS A CHALLENGE RELATED TO ADJUSTMENT, TRANSITION, AND IN SOME CASES POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS, FOR ALL THESE SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN. THE LITERATURE WE WERE READING SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT TO HAVE NOT JUST A PLACE FOR THEM, BUT MORE PARTICULARLY, SERVICES TO REACH OUT AND HELP THEM.”

— *Major General (USA Retired) Charles G. Rodriguez*
Chief of Staff and Vice President of
Strategic Initiatives and Military Affairs

ACADEMIC OMBUDSMAN

An important part of the Patriots' Casa mission is *"to help ensure our students in the military community and their families achieve their academic objectives and are equipped for post-graduation success."* To that end, the Military Community Development team, now housed in the Patriots' Casa, routinely assists active duty and veteran students with:

- VA certification for education benefits
- Degree planning and class selection
- Translating military experience into college credit
- Transferring credits from other colleges

COLLEGE CREDIT FOR HEROES

A partnership between the Texas Workforce Commission and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board ensures that active duty, retired and separated service members receive college credit for their military experience and training. It can help students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio create a fast-track plan toward their degrees.

"They have been the foundation of that school as far as helping veterans transition into the ROTC program. They have allowed us to really make that transition – whether it's reserves to ROTC, or in my case it was active duty. Whatever the case, they did all the dirty work for us. Anything and everything we needed, they were there to help us out."

— *Tavories Davis, ROTC Cadet,
Texas A&M University-San Antonio*

“WHEN YOU’RE IN THE NAVY, YOU’RE ASSIGNED TO A YEOMAN – ACTUALLY, THEY’RE ASSIGNED TO YOU. WHENEVER YOU’RE GOING TO TAKE LEAVE, HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR PAY, ETC., YOUR PAPERWORK GOES TO THAT ONE PERSON. IT’S BASICALLY A ONE-STOP SHOP. THAT’S WHAT WE WOULD LIKE THE PATRIOTS’ CASA TO BECOME.”

— *Joy Hutchinson, Military Community Ambassador
Texas A&M University-San Antonio
U.S. Navy Veteran*

ROTC

The Patriots' Casa houses Texas A&M University-San Antonio's Army ROTC program offices, with training cadre onsite as detailed by the University of Texas at San Antonio Professor of Military Science. In a short time, Texas A&M University-San Antonio has grown its ROTC program from one cadet to just shy of a dozen enrolled cadets as of 2014. In addition, more than two dozen other ROTC cadets currently enrolled at Alamo Colleges as freshmen

and sophomores will train at the Patriots' Casa, attend to hear special lectures, and assemble for their field training on the University's undeveloped acres. Further, the University's Junior ROTC Character Development Program will host hundreds of high school JROTC students every year at the Patriots' Casa to experience the inspiring curriculum developed by the Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation.

“I AM SO IMPRESSED BY THE CORPS OF CADETS AT A&M COLLEGE STATION. IT IS MY DREAM THAT, ONE DAY, WE WILL HAVE SUCH A LARGE CORPS HERE AT A&M SAN ANTONIO.”

— *Dr. Maria Hernandez Ferrier, President
Texas A&M University-San Antonio*





MASTER OF ARTS IN MARRIAGE & FAMILY COUNSELING WITH AN EMPHASIS ON MILITARY FAMILIES

The Marriage and Family Therapy graduate program offers a degree track that trains counseling students how to deal with the specific issues of military veterans and their families. The program – the only one of its kind in San Antonio – responds to the critical and growing need for therapists who bring a deeper understanding of unique challenges of military families to their practice. Developed by faculty in concert with a military advisory board, the program’s goal is to

produce counselors who can counsel effectively for such issues as the effect of deployment on families, children’s social and scholastic struggles as a result of frequent moves, and post-traumatic stress and related challenges veterans can face. The program is popular among both non-military and military students who seek their Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT) certification with an interest in serving military service members and their families.

PREPARING PATRIOTS FOR JOBS THROUGH CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

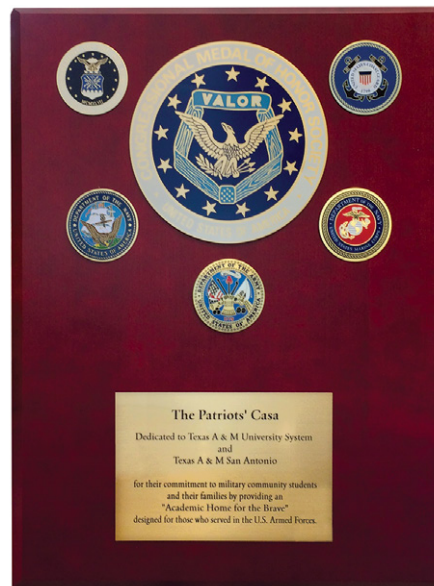
Co-curricular refers to the learning that happens outside a student’s degree program. It includes obtaining valuable certifications and engaging in networking experiences that will make students much more ready for employment after graduation.

Academic classes for degree completion take place elsewhere on campus. However, the Patriots’ Casa features open-use labs and other spaces in which military community students from Texas A&M University-San Antonio and the Alamo Colleges will be invited to attend skills training to help enhance their knowledge and competency to meet civilian employer hiring expectations. Credible trainers, such as

those from the Texas Engineering and Extension Service (an agency of The Texas A&M University System) and other Texas A&M agencies and vetted non-profit organizations will offer a variety of certificate training that is highly valued by employers. Military community students and their family members will be able to attend, learn, and accumulate a customized portfolio of certificates and skill badges at the Patriots’ Casa so that, when they graduate, their academic diploma will be augmented with additional skills that will help them move to the top of the list for job interviews. Other Texas A&M University-San Antonio students will also be able to participate on an alternate registration basis.

MEDAL OF HONOR FOUNDATION EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Texas A&M University-San Antonio is proud to sponsor this inspiring curriculum and youth outreach program, developed by the educational arm of the Medal of Honor Society, for numerous San Antonio high schools every year. Students have the distinct privilege of hearing stories of bravery, duty and honor from America's cherished living recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor. Students come away with a deep sense of the values and purpose that these extraordinary patriots embody and live every day – and the enduring values of character we all wish to instill in today's youth.



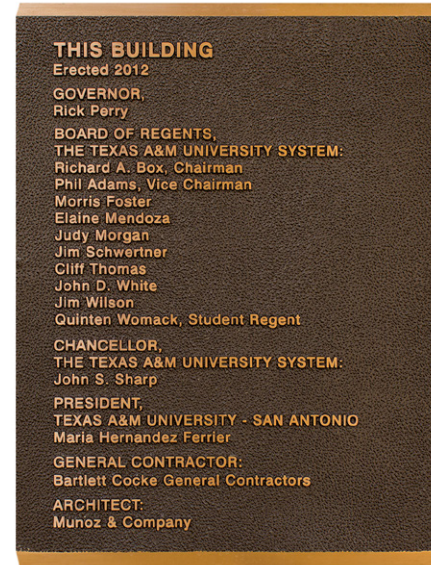
THE MEDAL OF HONOR SOCIETY RECOGNIZED THE PATRIOTS' CASA AND THE MILITARY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TEAM AT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SAN ANTONIO FOR PROVIDING AN "ACADEMIC HOME FOR THE BRAVE" FOR THE MILITARY STUDENT COMMUNITY.

“THE MEDAL OF HONOR CURRICULUM IS POWERFUL. IT CAN BE VERY TRANSFORMATIVE FOR THE KIDS BECAUSE THEY REALIZE HOW CORE VALUES OFTEN REQUIRE HARD DECISIONS TO BE MADE. BRAVERY IS EXPECTED FROM OUR SERVICE MEMBERS. THROUGH THE CURRICULUM, STUDENTS COME TO UNDERSTAND HARD DECISIONS MAY BE REQUIRED OF THEM. EVEN IN THEIR HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAYS, THEY COME TO UNDERSTAND THAT CORE VALUES APPLY TO THEM. THEY GET IT.”

— Major General (USA Retired) Charles G. Rodriguez
Chief of Staff and Vice President of
Strategic Initiatives and Military Affairs

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE TO THE CASA

*Texas A&M University-San Antonio and
President Maria Hernandez Ferrier would like to
thank the following people for their service, dedication
and passion for the Patriots' Casa project.*



REGENTS FROM THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM FEATURED ON THE BUILDING PLAQUE FOR THE PATRIOTS' CASA, WHO APPROVED THE PROJECT AND HELPED THE UNIVERSITY BREAK GROUND.

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“THIS IS AN ASPIRATIONAL ARCHITECTURE THAT SAYS TO THE REST OF THE COUNTRY, RETURNING VETERANS ARE INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT TO THE FUTURE OF OUR COUNTRY, AND THEY DESERVE THE RESPECT OF BEING TREATED IN A MANNER IN WHICH THEIR HEROISM AND THEIR COURAGE CAN BE TRANSLATED INTO VALUE FOR ALL OUR COMMUNITIES GOING FORWARD.”

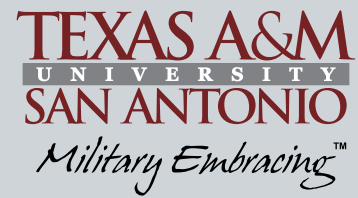
— *Henry R. Muñoz, III, Chief Executive Officer*
Muñoz & Company





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— Henry R. Muñoz, III, Chief Executive Officer
Muñoz & Company



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patriotscasa.org