



Tony Rodriguez

## In Gratitude—Tony Rodriguez

When Tony graduated from high school, he wasn't sure college would be an option. "I didn't have any money at all," he said. "We were just going to go out and earn a living after high school."

Tony's football coach, Carl Spoonmore, would offer some valuable words of wisdom—words that made a huge impression. "Coach told me to go college, to earn an education," Tony explained. "He told to me to 'work hard and never give up.' To this day, I'm forever grateful that he encouraged me, that he led me in the right direction."

Tony was an athlete, and a good one. And as graduation neared, he received full scholarship offers to play football and basketball at Blinn Jr. College and New Mexico Highlands.

Tony also received one more offer, from Trinidad State.

"It was a perfect situation for my life. I was having trouble at home with my parents," Tony explained. "It wasn't anything big—no drinking, drugs or smoking—I just wanted to get away and play ball. And Trinidad State was the furthest away from home."

When Tony arrived in his dorm room, he was surprised by a call from Guy Davis, President at TSJC. He asked if he could see Tony in his office. "I wasn't sure why he called," Tony said, "but he just wanted to welcome me to Trinidad State. He told me, 'I expect good things from you in sports.' And I just said, 'yes, sir.' There were no lectures—instead, it was a very cordial, welcoming moment. He wanted me to feel at home at Trinidad State."

"I was totally surprised the College President reached out to me," Tony said. "And I'm even more impressed now than I was back then."

Tony's basketball coach also helped him line up a job through the Work-Study program. "I had no money when I got to Trinidad State," he said. "For them to give me two years of full scholarship, plus room and board—and the chance to earn money, too? It was amazing. It's another part of why I decided to give back."

Attending college at Trinidad State also introduced Tony to people from across the country. “I grew up in Harlingen, TX,” he explained. “Suddenly, I’m at college meeting people from Compton, CA, Lawrence, MA, Muncie, IN, Chicago, and New York—it opened my eyes to life outside of Texas. It was such an inviting atmosphere,” he added. “Trinidad was a perfect world for me.”

Following his two years at Trinidad State, Tony would attend the University of Texas at Austin and earn his Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration. While earning his degree in Austin, Tony worked at the State Capitol as an Assistant to the State Senator, the honorable Raul Longoria. After attending the University of Texas, he was hired by Missouri Pacific Railroad and relocated to their headquarters in St. Louis.

“I first thought I was going into operations,” Tony said, “but they sent me to do an audit of the sales office in Mexico City.” Over the next five years, Tony would advance with Missouri Pacific in St. Louis, before accepting a promotion to Regional Director of Tax in Dallas.

Eventually, in 1984, Tony was invited to join an oil and gas company in Harlingen as their Controller, bringing him over to the operations side. Continuing his education, Tony would also earn his MBA from the University of Texas at Brownsville. And in 1996, Tony decided he would leave to focus more in real estate, and acquired multiple properties along the way.

*“Trinidad State was my springboard, the foundation for everything. My time at Trinidad State has paid dividends throughout my life.”*

“Except for a few bumps along the way, I’ve had just about a perfect life,” Tony said. “I thank God for it, and I’m enjoying it. And even though my knee went out, and the surgeries couldn’t keep me on the basketball court—Trinidad State was my springboard, the foundation for everything. My time at Trinidad State has paid dividends throughout my life.”

“When I look back at the sports, at friends from all over the United States, and the education I received—I appreciate all of it,” he added. “It was beautiful. I’ll never forget those moments. It’s why I’m giving back, to show my appreciation.”

When looking at different ways to help, Tony decided he would also include a future gift for Trinidad State in his estate plan. The *Society of 1925* honors those who create a legacy gift.

The idea to create a scholarship with his legacy gift appealed to Tony. “I want to help people who can’t really afford college. If I can help them, they’re likely to appreciate it the same way I appreciated my scholarship.”

“At first, I wasn’t sure if I wanted to do something in sports,” Tony explained. “Sometimes athletes don’t always appreciate the significance of private support, although my perception changed a bit with a recent

gift I made to help a volleyball player studying biology. Her thank you letter showed how impactful the gift was for her and her family.”

“I also think students with an interest in engineering or accounting are students who are thinking about their futures—the idea they can build upon their time at Trinidad State,” Tony said. “And Toni DeAngelis at the Foundation is helping me consider my scholarship options. I just want to build a legacy, to give back and help others.”

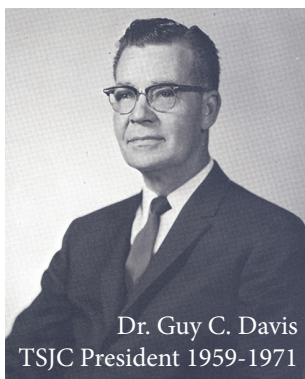
Tony’s future scholarship gift will come as a bequest in his will. “I was very thrifty throughout my life, pinching every penny based on my circumstances growing up. And I’ve paid everything off—I’m now in a position financially to give back. So I hired someone to create a will, to make sure everything is taken care of.”

When asked why others might want to consider giving back to Trinidad State, Tony replied, “if you’re in a position financially to do so, you should! The older I get, the more success I’ve had—I say you need to help other people.”

“If we appreciated our youth,” Tony continued, “when we look back—most people will say, ‘those were the days!’ And even though I’ve had a great life afterwards, I still carry so much gratitude for Trinidad State. I’ve even kept my letterman’s jacket all these years. Every so often, I’ll pull it out on a cold day.”



“Trinidad State gave me everything, without really knowing my skills except as an athlete,” he added.



Dr. Guy C. Davis  
TSJC President 1959-1971

“The day Guy Davis called me into to his office, it wasn’t to lecture me—it was to welcome me. He knew what Trinidad State was offering. I appreciate that moment even more, now. It was a gift. And when I see the letters or updates from TSJC President, Rhonda Epper, I still feel the same connection.”

“Trinidad State made me feel right at home—it fit like a glove,” Tony said. “I’ve had a lot of success in life, but people have helped me along the way. The decision to give back is really just a matter of saying, ‘I want to help.’ It’s a chance to help the people who helped you, and to help others just starting out.”

The Foundation is grateful to Tony Rodriguez, and to all members of the *Society of 1925*.

For more information about scholarships, or about creating a legacy gift to benefit Trinidad State, please contact Toni DeAngelis at [toni.deangelis@trinidadstate.edu](mailto:toni.deangelis@trinidadstate.edu) or 719-846-5520. All inquiries will be held in confidence. And there is no expectation or obligation whatsoever.