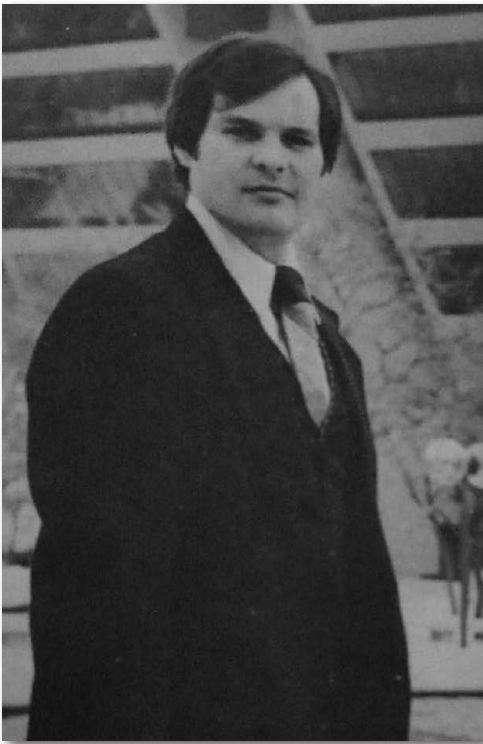




AUGUST 2024

Platinum Donor, Tony V. Rodriguez



Tony V. Rodriguez

Trinidad State is profoundly grateful for the generosity of Tony Rodriguez. With gifts totaling \$320,000, Tony has made a significant impact on our efforts to improve and modernize the Freudenthal Library.

The *Tony V. Rodriguez Atrium*, with its grand two-story entryway, donor wall, and digital display, stands as a powerful symbol of community and support. Honoring the legacy of those who have given selflessly to the College, the Atrium will celebrate the spirit of philanthropy that continues to propel Colorado's oldest two-year college towards new heights.

Along with the Atrium, the *Tony V. Rodriguez Quiet Study Hall* is undoubtedly a major highlight of the Library renovation. With the library stacks removed and the special collections consolidated in the east wing, the Hall now opens to a dramatically tall and impressive space with north-facing windows. It provides a quiet, supportive environment for students to focus on their academic work alongside peers. After seeing the Quiet Study Hall, Tony remarked, "The space truly gives students an environment where they can focus on producing their best work."

Additionally, Tony made two gifts to honor two individuals who each made an impact on his life. Each of these gifts will name a study room in the Library.

The first gift honors James Williamson, who graduated from Trinidad State in 1952, before his career in counseling would take him to Harlingen, Texas, where Tony attended high school. The second honors former Trinidad State basketball coach, Jim Toupal.



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 Rodriguez (front row, 2nd from the right) on the 1970 Trinidad State Men's Basketball Team

Tony also received one more, from Trinidad State.

When the coaches from New Mexico Highlands came to his high school, Tony's football coach was gone that day. His counselor, Mr. Williamson, sat with Tony and the New Mexico Highlands group. "It was a stroke of luck that Mr. Williamson was there," Tony said.

“Mr. Williamson asked if I had any films, saying, ‘we’ll send them to Trinidad State.’ I didn’t know where Trinidad was, but Mr. Williamson said I’d fit perfectly.”

After seeing Tony’s film, Trinidad State football coach, Marv Wetzel, called Tony to offer a scholarship.

“Before I left for Trinidad,” Tony added, “Mr. Williamson also helped me through some tough times. “I was having trouble at home with my parents. It wasn’t anything big—no drinking, drugs or smoking. But I just needed to get away and play ball, and Trinidad State was far away from home. He said, ‘call me if you need anything,’ and he kept in touch with me over the years. I owe Mr. Williamson a lot.”

When Tony arrived in his dorm room, he was surprised by a call from Guy Davis, President at TSC. 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.”



Guy C. Davis | Former TSC President

Knowing that Tony was all-district, captain, and Most Valuable Player on his football team, Davis said, “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,” Tony said. “He wanted me to feel at home at Trinidad State. I was totally surprised the College President reached out to me personally. I knew then I’d made the right choice—Trinidad State had such a personal feel. I’m even more impressed now than I was back then.”

Until he’d received his scholarship offers, Tony didn’t believe college could be an option. “I didn’t have any money at all,” he said. “I thought I’d look for a job and just go to work. But now, here I was at Trinidad State, ready to play ball.”



Tony's Trinidad State College Letterman's Jacket

“And shortly after I arrived, Coach Toupal helped me line up a job through the Work-Study program. So, they had just given me two years of full scholarship, plus room and board—and now they’re offering a chance to earn money, too? Amazing. It’s another part of why I want to give back.”

Jim Toupal would become the all-time winningest basketball coach in the history of Trinidad State, compiling a record of 605-216. From 1980-1990, his teams won 132 consecutive games in the friendly confines of Scott Gym. In 1998, Toupal was deservedly honored as an inductee into the NJCAA Hall of Fame. In 2016, he was inducted into the Colorado Sports Hall of Fame.

“They were both winners—in life, in sports, and in their communities,” Tony said. “Just seeing how they lived and how they conducted themselves—it was such an inspiration for me. They were unselfish in every aspect. And being in athletics, I looked up to them.”

Upon learning of Tony’s decision, Williamson’s daughter, Rachel, was immediately touched. “My dad was such a kind-hearted man,” she said. “This gift means a lot.”

Rachel plans to attend the grand opening of the library.

“The fact that I can specifically set one room aside with his name—not to mention the brick I purchased for the Trojan Trail in his name—makes me feel good,” Tony said. “I have this opportunity to pay Mr. Williamson back for all that he did for me.”

“It’s the same with Coach Toupal. There aren’t enough superlatives in the English language to describe Coach Toupal—he’s a teacher that just builds you up. I am forever grateful that I fell under his guidance.”

“Coach Toupal and Mr. Williamson amplified a winning attitude—the same winning attitude that Trinidad State is known for,” Tony said. “You can’t help but look up to that. These men believed in me. It feels great to bring this full circle.”



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

“I do remember a tournament game out in Dodge City where I lost my front four teeth,” Tony recalled. “A guy just hauled off and hit me, breaking two and chipping two pretty bad. They had to replace all four with fake teeth.”

“I would also blow out my knee,” he added, “which, of course, impacts everything as an athlete.”

After his two years at Trinidad State, Tony went to Colorado Springs to enlist in the U.S. Army after receiving a low draft lottery number of 007. He tried to enlist in the Army, but his knee injury kept him from passing his physical. He would then decide to 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. Shortly after graduating, 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 his efforts in real estate, acquiring multiple properties along the way.

“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 I’ve achieved.”



When looking at different ways to help, the effort to modernize the Freudenthal Library immediately grabbed his attention. It represents an opportunity to impact the lives of today’s students—to help them work towards building their bright futures.

Tony also decided, however, that he wanted to include a future legacy gift to create a scholarship at Trinidad State in his estate plan.

“If we appreciated our youth,” Tony said, “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 Trinidad State in my heart. I’ve even kept my letterman’s jacket all these years. Every so often, I’ll pull it out on a cold day.”

“That day that 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 the greatest gift.”

“Trinidad State only knew about my skills as an athlete,” he added. “But they believed I could become so much more. I wouldn’t trade anything for this experience, seeing how all the building blocks lead to where I am now.”

The Society of 1925 honors those who create a legacy gift. Tony’s future scholarship gift will come as a bequest in his will.

“To be successful, you must think big, work hard, have faith in yourself, and never, never quit. Important people helped my recognize these things and I will never forget their impact. My decision to give back is really just me saying, ‘I want to help.’ It’s a chance to honor the people who helped me, and to help others just starting out.”



Tony Rodriguez chose to donate appreciated securities when making his gifts to Trinidad State. This option allows a donor to avoid paying capital gains tax on the appreciated portion, while still securing a charitable income tax deduction for the full fair market value of the gift.

For more information about donating appreciated assets, creating a legacy gift, or naming opportunities at Trinidad State, please contact our Foundation Director, Toni DeAngelis, at toni.deangelis@trinidadstate.edu or 719-846-5520.

Trinidad State is extraordinarily grateful for the generosity of Tony V. Rodriguez.