



Amilcar Shabazz shares a moment with his mother, Winona Frank '58, at Nu World of Books.

THE HEART OF THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

The voice is gentle, steady, eloquent. The spirit is activist, intense, possessing an almost religious zeal seized with a love of learning. The soul is at one with his forebears, his roots, lit with a passion for the richness that binds past, present and future. There beats the heart of the African-American experience.

Amilcar Shabazz '90 stands more than 6 feet tall. The impeccably tailored suit and silk tie he wears contrast with the sensible shoes and the dreadlocks, now tinged with gray, that bespeak the places he has been, the roads he has traveled and a fervor for his life's work.

He grew up Eric Frank in Beaumont's Pear Orchard, savoring memories of tagging

along with his grandmother to buy fresh yard eggs from a woman in the neighborhood and hearing stories about Creole life in Louisiana.

As a youth, he stood on stage at Monsignor Kelly High School to present a dramatic reading drawn from the speeches of Martin Luther King Jr. – inspiring a lifelong quest to explore his ethnicity.

In a moment of epiphany as a college student, he felt moved to change his name in honor of Malcolm X, the African-American activist also known by the religious name El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz who died in 1965.

In Harlem, he helped lead the way to the naming of Malcolm X Boulevard.

As an historian, he chronicled the African-American struggle for access and

“Education had always been presented to me as the passport to my future”

– AMILCAR SHABAZZ

equity in Texas higher education in the book *Advancing Democracy*, published by the University of North Carolina Press earlier this year, evolving from a master's thesis at Lamar University.

Now, Shabazz gives voice to the black cultural experience as director of the African-American Studies Program at the University of Alabama-Tuscaloosa.

“I guess the exclamation point for me is about a love affair with history and culture, particularly one about which so much has been forgotten,” he says.

“I'm trying to mine the memory – and the archives and resources – that allow us to not forget from whence we came and how we got where we are. For me, this love affair is about how I've been shaped from the stories of my grandmother and the people of the community to how I now work to try and shape the next generations to remember some of these important things.

“So I've become a real troubadour, if you will, a clarion for the South as the critical geographical region from which to teach and from which to take another look at the African-American experience.”

Amilcar Shabazz is shaped by his own history and that of his family. His mother, Winona St. Julian Frank, was among the first African-Americans to attend Lamar after the institution opened its doors to blacks in September 1956, earning her elementary education degree in 1958.

On May 19, 1985, the birthday of Malcolm X, he shared the stage in Harlem with a platform of dignitaries, including

Betty Shabazz, the widow of Malcolm X, and served as master of ceremonies for the name-change ceremony for the boulevard.

This year, he'll mark the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the landmark case that ended segregation of public schools, as a member of Alabama's commission planning the observance.

To become a historian, Amilcar Shabazz came home, returning to his own history and that of his forebears.

He had grown up in Beaumont, attended West Oakland (now Price) Elementary and Odom Middle School and graduated from Kelly. He earned a degree in economics from the University of Texas at Austin and spent eight years in New York City where advocacy projects brought him together with such figures as Betty Shabazz; Japanese-American grassroots organizer Yuri Kochiyama, who was a friend of Malcolm X; international affairs leader and educator Elomb Brath; and former New York City Mayor Ed Koch.

“Education had always been presented to me as the passport to my future,” Shabazz said. “The resolve when I started on my master's at Lamar and chose history. I believe, had to do with my coming back after many years away from home and living again with my grandmother, who had raised me. She was a wonderful storyteller, and I lived through her stories.

“When I returned, it evoked all of the memories. I realized this is something I was called to do: to be a storyteller.”

Shabazz keeps coming home. He stays connected to his mother, Winona, his father, Edward Frank Jr., his older brother Ed Frank, and his half-sister and two half-brothers, plus an extended family in the Pear Orchard. For a book-signing in January to promote his new book, he chose Nu World of Books, only blocks from where he grew up. He came to town for a presentation at the Beaumont History Conference where townspeople and academicians joined former teachers and mentors to greet this native son.

Eric Frank left Beaumont for Austin “because I wanted something bigger and different.” There, professors, white and black, encouraged him to delve deeper into the African-American experience. “In so many ways, I became shaken at my roots, and that was a big turning point.”

By the time he graduated from UT, Texas was too small for him “so I moved to New York, knowing only one person there. I feel like I earned my first Ph.D. just surviving.”

Shabazz got involved in journalism, via the alternative press. But that didn't put food on the table, so he also worked as a counselor at a day-care center, as a research assistant for a management consulting firm and for Ralph Nader's New York Public Interest Research Group. At Pratt Institute, he taught young people how to do public-interest organizing on behalf of causes ranging from health care and the environment to racial equality. His experience at Pratt Institute became a turning point, planting the seeds for what would become his life's work.

“I began to say, ‘Well, you know, I have this knack for communicating with younger adults, and I like the university setting – it inspires and enriches me – so why don't I look at going back and teaching at the university level?’”

Homesick for Texas and his family, Shabazz moved back to Beaumont and, while at home, said, “Let's see what they have going on at Lamar.”

Shabazz met members of the history faculty, seeking out those with interest in African-American studies. One of them was John Carroll, who was then working on his book on pioneering African-American football player-coach Fritz Pollard. “I found the milieu very welcoming, very warm,” Shabazz said. “I was 28 or so, and it was quite inspiring to be related to and spoken





Amilcar Shabazz enjoys a reunion with his older brother, Ed, and father, Edward Frank Jr., during a visit to Beaumont in January.

to as a peer. I was also invited to teach, so I taught my first college-level history courses at Lamar. It was an open door to help me develop and help me enter the profession."

Shabazz earned his master's degree in history in 1990, also leaving a research legacy in his thesis, "The Desegregation of Lamar State College of Technology."

He gained acceptance to a number of doctoral programs, but chose the University of Houston, where the history department and African-American studies program tapped him to teach a course on Houston's black history. He called the course *Invisible Houston*, combining hands-on community service assignments with reading about the black community and class discussion on the students' experiences.

One of his students was Demetria Rougeaux, an English major from Galveston, with whom he shared not only the Afro-Creole culture and family roots in Louisiana but also "a love of life of the mind." After the class concluded, the two began seeing one another. Their son, Amilcar Shabazz Jr., was born in April 1993.

With a family to support, Shabazz accepted his first full-time teaching position, as the Benjamin Benneker Instructor of History at Prairie View A&M University, commuting daily from Houston. But the long commute took a toll on his writing and research, and a fellowship at the University of Houston Downtown enabled him to complete his dissertation, "The Opening of the Southern Mind: The Desegregation of Higher Education in Texas, 1865-1965."

In 1996, he and a colleague became the first African-Americans to earn doctorates in history from the University of Houston.

In a life already rich in challenges, the greatest was about to unfold. Among many offers coming his way, one stood out: In 1997, the University of Alabama-Tuscaloosa invited him to join its faculty as an assistant professor of American studies while also helping to build an African-American studies program as its director.

"This seemed to be an interesting challenge," he said. "Having been rescued by an African-American studies program in terms of my own consciousness . . . and now to start my full-fledged academic career as director of such a program at a flagship institution."

VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY

"Dr. King talks about his epiphany in the kitchen where he felt called on to what he went on to do. I had mine when I was walking back from UT to my little house in East Austin . . . I don't know if you would say it was the spirit of Malcolm X, but certain emotions arose in me of his courage, his life of conviction and his self-determination. I remembered his quote, 'Of all our studies, history is best qualified to reward our research,' and was inspired to take on the work of researching history – particularly pages of history that have been lost or hidden or were distorted . . . He symbolized that for me, so I wanted to make his name part of mine."

A photo on the wall of Amilcar Shabazz's office bears witness to one of the proudest days in his life: the conclusion of a successful campaign to rename Lenox Avenue Malcolm X Boulevard. A massive platform stood at the intersection of streets honoring Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. Through a public address system, the name-change ceremony resonated through Harlem. "They asked me to be the emcee," Shabazz recalled. "So I'm up there with Betty Shabazz – a striking figure almost as tall as I and, oh, so gracious. I felt honored when she embraced me as a member of her family."

Although the program was founded in 1991, Shabazz became the first faculty member to receive a dedicated appointment in that area. It was up to him to "grow" the program.

"To this day," Shabazz explains, "this area of the state has always been more black than white. Whites are in the minority, but they control the economy and you're the oppressed strata. What are the implications of that for the cultural life?"

"Part of that implication, we come to find, is that this is the real birth of the blues. The Alabama blues, the folk art – it's so rich and that's part of what has kept me in Alabama: seeing many of these culturally and historically rich areas that so little has been done on," he said.

"The other part is that the people have embraced me. They read about me and call up say, 'Oh, Dr. Shabazz, you've got to come and see . . .' My willingness to take a look at what people have, what people are doing, brings me in touch with a lot of folks," Shabazz says. "We have the ability to reach out and bring greater awareness in the state's really wonderful projects with historical preservation, community reclamation and organization. People have begun to see it, and it has had a great measure of success."

"I argue that within African-American studies is a neglected area – the fact that the heart and soul, the place where the majority of the African-American experience has been lived and died – is between Texas and Washington, D.C. I'm right at the center of it. The heart of it is Alabama. They call the state 'The Heart of Dixie,' but it's also the heart of the African-American geo-cultural experience," he said.

"Working out from here, we can tell a new kind of story about the African-American experience. You read about the Harlem renaissance. I lived in Harlem. I love Harlem. I respect Harlem. But Harlem is one little place, one little moment, outside of where the people really live."

Cardinal Club members and fans enjoy lunch at Carabba's and catch the latest news on Cardinal athletics. The club meets monthly. To join, call Donny Coryell, (409) 880-2319.

Cardinal VIEWS



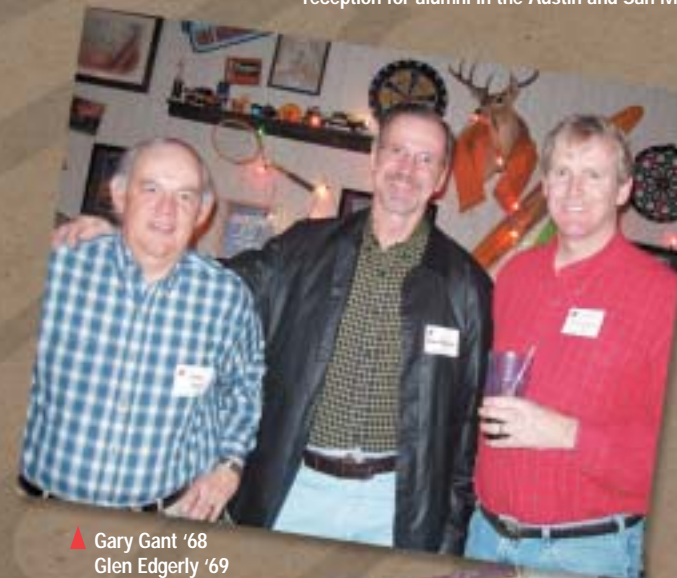
▲ V.F. and Kathryn Lusignan



▲ Carolyn (Stubbs) '70, '80 and club board member Larry Bodin '70

Alumni gather at Joe's Crab Shack in San Marcos for a pre-game reception for alumni in the Austin and San Marcos areas Jan. 21.

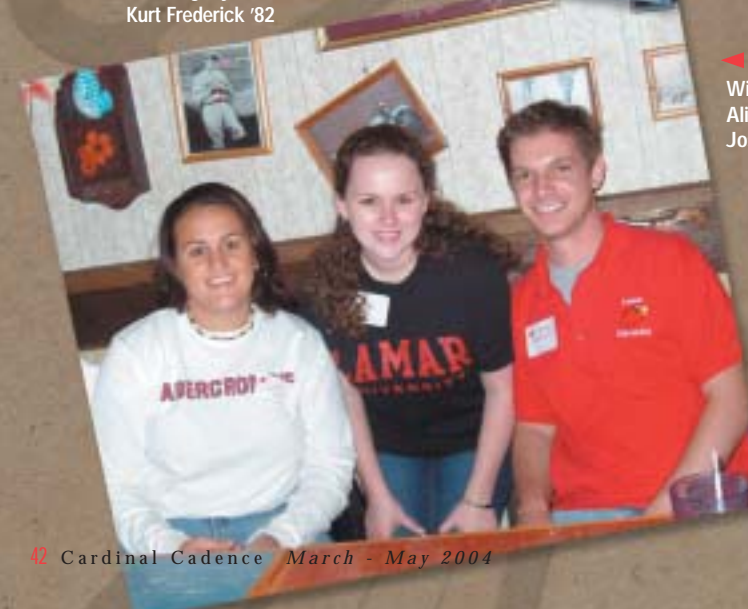
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Kurt Frederick '82



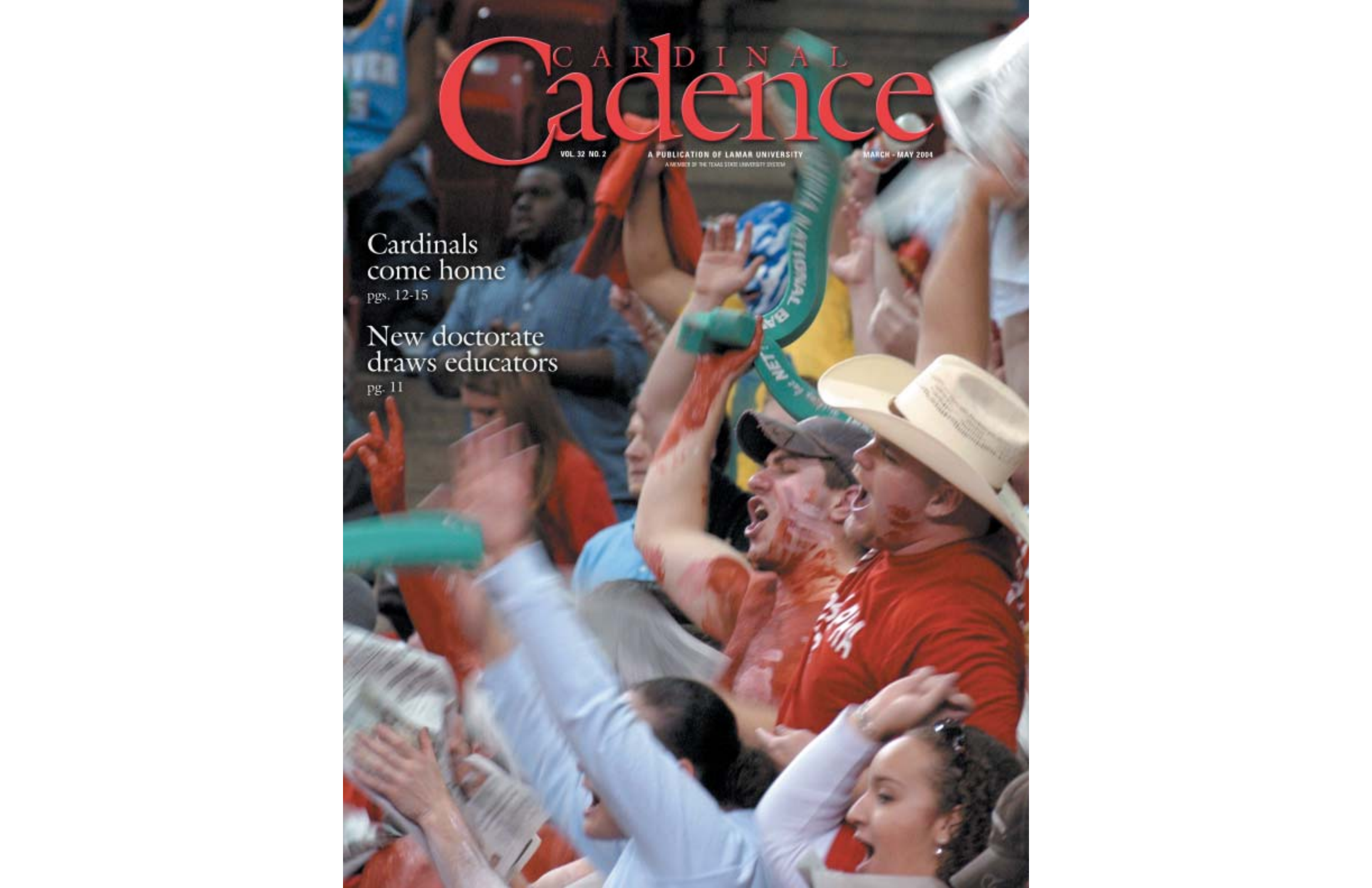
▲ Donny Coryell '98
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▲ Windee Killough '01
Alisa Hicklin '02
Josh Daspit '04



▲ Jo (Booker) Frederick '65, '71
Jo Gartside



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A MEMBER OF THE TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

Cardinals
come home

pgs. 12-15

New doctorate
draws educators

pg. 11



From the President

It is another fast-paced, exciting semester at Lamar University where momentum continues and spring enrollment is the highest since 1990 when Lamar separated from the two-year institutions.

Homecoming and reunion added to the excitement with a week of student activities and the return of an exuberant crowd of alumni. The alumni basketball game – with many of Lamar’s

favorite all-stars from days gone by taking it to the boards – and the cheers of former cheerleaders and Spirit Team members at the men’s basketball game, each added to the excitement in the Montagne.

Across campus, construction continues on the third phase of Cardinal Village. When the state-of-the-art facility opens this fall, it will bring Lamar’s residence hall capacity to 1,500 students. Construction of a new 25,000-square-foot dining facility will begin later this spring.

In academics, we’re making new strides as the new doctorate in audiology is gearing up and the College of Education and Human Development is recruiting the first cohort of students for the new Ed.D. in educational leadership, set to begin this fall.

We continue toward our goal of hiring 100 new faculty in the next four years. These positions will contribute significantly toward the quality of our academic programs as we work to fulfill the vision detailed in the university’s academic master plan.

Great things are happening at Lamar – in the classrooms and across the campus. With help from alumni and friends, we are able to offer quality programs and unique opportunities for our students. We greatly appreciate your support.

With Cardinal pride,

James M. Simmons
President
Lamar University



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Third hall and dining facility join Cardinal Village

While Lamar students enjoyed spring break, American Campus Communities' general contractor, Davis Brothers Construction, was busy building the third phase of Cardinal Village. The new facility will have the same floor plan as Phases I and II, but the ceiling will be raised to 9 feet.

Construction for Cardinal Village III will be completed by fall 2004, adding 500 beds to campus. When completed, the entire Cardinal Village complex will include about 1,500 beds.



The new dining hall, which will match the Southern architectural design selected for Cardinal Village, will also begin construction. The 25,000-square-foot facility will seat 600 and have the capacity to feed 1,200. The hall will be accessible from all sides, allowing service through a food court that offers several different types of food and ample room for students. The building's exterior landscaping will enhance campus surroundings.

The dining hall project should open by spring 2005, with construction completed in December 2004 to allow three weeks training in the new facility before the spring semester begins.

Cardinal Events 2003

- March 29**
Alumni Golf Tournament. Tee time 12:30 p.m. Idylwild Golf Course. Reservations (409) 880-8921
- April 7-25**
High School Scholarship Exhibition. Reception 2-4 p.m. April 25. Dishman Art Museum
- April 20**
Lamarissimo! Cardinal Singers and Dance Company. 7:30 p.m. Julie Rogers Theatre. Tickets (409) 880-8144
- April 22-27**
Art, presented by Lamar Theatre. Nightly 8 p.m., Sunday 2 p.m. Studio Theatre. Tickets (409) 880-2250
- April 28-May 6**
Senior Thesis Exhibition. Reception 7-9 p.m. April 30. Dishman Art Museum
- April 30**
Band Concert. 7:30 p.m. University Theatre
- May 12**
Cardinal Jazz Festival. University Theatre
- May 12-25**
Summer Mini-Session.
- May 14**
Distinguished Alumni Awards reception and dinner. The LUAA's most prestigious award to alumni. 7 p.m. University Reception Center. Reservations (409) 880-8921
- May 15**
Commencement. 9:30 a.m. Montagne Center. (409) 880-8419
- May 10-14**
Master's Thesis Exhibition. Reception 7-9 p.m. May 14. Dishman Art Museum
- May 25**
Summer I registration
- May 26**
Summer I classes begin
- June 22-23**
Orientation. (409) 880-8085
- June 8**
LU-laby of Broadway. Showtune extravaganza performed by area celebrities benefits Lamar University theatre scholarships. Reception 7 p.m. Performance 8 p.m. University Theatre. Tickets (409) 880-8037
- June 20-24**
Band Camp (tentative)

Events open to the public without charge unless otherwise indicated.

www.lamar.edu
Events (409) 880-8419 • Admissions (409) 880-8888

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