

The University of Texas
Rio Grande Valley



**DR. MAURICIO SALINAS AND
MRS. MARISSA BORREGO SALINAS**

José Borrego Memorial Endowed Scholarship | The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

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Dr. Mauricio Salinas and Mrs. Marissa Borrego Salinas share a passion for providing educational opportunities to those from their hometown. The married pair of mechanical engineers are among the best and brightest in their industry and they made the decision to give back to the community where they got their start. Both from the Rio Grande Valley, they are now senior principle engineers at Raytheon Company, a global leader in technology and innovation that specializes in defense, civil government, and cybersecurity solutions. When they reached a point in their careers when giving back was an option, the decision to give to the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) was an easy one to make. "We were both born and raised in the Valley, and we wanted to help our community that has a great need," said Dr. Mauricio Salinas.

For Dr. Salinas, engineering runs in the family. He has several uncles and cousins that are successful engineers in Mexico. Mrs. Marissa Salinas came from a family of educators. Her father, José Borrego, was a lifelong educator and administrator. He encouraged his children to pursue higher education and advanced degrees. "It was expected and the natural progression after high school," said Mrs. Salinas. She and her three sisters graduated from UTRGV legacy institution The University of Texas-Pan American (UTPA). Two sisters received their master's degrees from UTPA and Marissa received her master's degree from Southern Methodist University. It's clear that their father's passion for educational achievement had an indelible impact on their family and others.

Mr. Borrego graduated among the top 10 of his class at Edcouch-Elsa High School. He earned both bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Pan American, which later became UTPA. In 1974, at the age of 25, Mr. Borrego became the superintendent of Monte Alto ISD, a small school district in the delta area of the upper Rio Grande Valley. He was the youngest person the state of Texas to achieve that position and he served the Monte Alto community for 18 years. His legacy continues there as the José Borrego Middle School was named in his honor in 2006. Dr. and Mrs. Salinas also chose to continue his legacy by establishing The José Borrego Memorial Endowed Scholarship at UTRGV, which gives preference to high school graduates from Edcouch-Elsa and Monte Alto.



The Jose Borrego Middle School Gymnasium in Monte Alto, TX.

AN ENVIRONMENT OF COLLABORATION AND CONNECTION



The UTRGV College of Engineering and Computer Science in Edinburg, TX.

Dr. Salinas entered the engineering program at UTPA when it was getting off the ground – he graduated among the program’s second class in 1996. For him, the fledgling program provided a great undergraduate experience. “The engineering classes were very small, and we all knew each other well,” said Dr. Salinas. “The teachers really cared about each one of us and knew us all by name.”

Mrs. Salinas echoes those sentiments, stating, “The professors were excellent, and I enjoyed the comradery I shared with my fellow students. I was able to land a job at Raytheon Company after graduation that started with an on-campus interview.”

Dr. Ala Qubbaj, Dean of the College of Engineering and Computer Science at UTRGV, says that for many students in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV), learning at

high-quality engineering program is a dream come true. “They are first generation college graduates, and now they are leaders in engineering and technology. Like Mauricio and Marissa, our students are innovative and being recognized at the national level.”

A standout instructor during Dr. Salinas’s time at UTPA was Dr. Hashim Mahdi, an engineering professor who taught many of the heat transfer and fluids classes. “He really had a passion for teaching and went the extra mile for his students,” said Dr. Salinas. “He is largely the reason why I’m a thermal analyst and computational fluid dynamics expert today.” When Dr. Mahdi passed away unexpectedly in 2009, Dr. Salinas established the Hashim Salman Mahdi Memorial Scholarship in his honor. “I wanted to keep his legacy of caring for others alive.”

“At UTRGV, it is the dedication, passion, and talent of our faculty and students that make all the difference,” said Dr. Qubbaj. “It is an individualized connection and approach that makes our students successful.”

After graduating from UTPA, Dr. Salinas earned a Master of Science in mechanical engineering from Stanford University and a doctorate in mechanical engineering from the University of Texas at Arlington. When first hired by Raytheon Company, Dr. Salinas worked as a thermal analyst designing the thermal architecture of airborne electronics, sensors, and radar. He then became an expert in computational fluid dynamics and completed the aerodynamic design of airborne turrets and pods. Dr. Salinas is now the manager of the mechanical analysis group, which focuses on thermal and structural design.

LEADING THE WAY TOGETHER

Marissa Borrego Salinas was the valedictorian of her graduating class at Edcouch-Elsa High School in 2000. She received a Bachelor of Science degree in mechanical engineering from UTPA, followed by a Master of Science degree in systems engineering from Southern Methodist University. Mrs. Salinas is now a quality engineer at Raytheon Company, focusing on mission assurance. In this role she works to get to the root cause of quality issues in design or manufacturing.

Dr. Mauricio and Marissa Salinas share the bold vision of a brighter future for engineers from the RGV. They acknowledge that an investment in education will empower students and faculty to find solutions to the toughest challenges and cultivate innovation that will sustain the local community for many years to come.

"Mauricio and Marissa serve as great role models to our students, to our faculty, and to me as well," said Dr. Qubbaj. "Their passion, dedication and willingness to give back to their alma mater is remarkable."

The Salinas family feels compelled to give back to UTRGV due to the vital role their education played in the successes they enjoy today. Dr. Salinas, who received a full-ride scholarship during his undergraduate education, said, "I truly believe that the engineering program at UTPA propelled me toward the success I've had in my career."

Reflecting on their decision to give to UTRGV in honor of her father, Mrs. Salinas said, "My father always wanted my siblings and me to accomplish more than he was able to. He believed that his children should build on his legacy to further the success and impact that Hispanics have in this country."

She continued, "In the same line of thinking, I believe it is important to give back to UTRGV, which serves an underprivileged, primarily Hispanic community."

Dr. Salinas is committed to sharing their story with current UTRGV students in the hopes they will not only pursue a career in engineering but also return one day to give back to their alma mater.

"Our success is a product of efforts and encouragement from many people, it is our obligation to give back to recognize that," stated Dr. Salinas.