



Agenda, as of February 20, 2025

Competitiveness Conversations Across America: Fortifying the Future — Innovation in Critical Infrastructure Security

March 10, 2025 (Central Time): @ Southwest Campus

6:00 pm – 7:00 pm:

Networking & Registration

7:00 pm – 9:00 pm:

Competitiveness Conversation Dinner & Keynote

March 10 Venue:

The University of Texas at San Antonio
Southwest Campus
300 Augusta Street
San Antonio, TX

March 11, 2025 (Central Time): @ San Pedro I / National Security Collaboration Center

8:00 am – 8:45 am:

Breakfast

8:30 am – 12:05 pm:

Competitiveness Conversation Programming

12:05 pm – 1:00 pm:

Lunch and Keynote

1:00 pm – 4:00 pm:

Competitiveness Conversation Programming

March 11 Venue:

San Pedro I / National Security Collaboration Center
The University of Texas at San Antonio
506 Dolorosa St.
San Antonio, TX

Competitiveness Conversations Across America: Fortifying the Future — Innovation in Critical Infrastructure Security

Monday, March 10, 2025

Venue

The University of Texas at San Antonio
Southwest Campus
300 Augusta Street
San Antonio, TX

6:00 PM REGISTRATION AND PRESIDENT RECEPTION

7:00 PM WELCOME

- **Dr. Taylor Eighmy**, President, University of Texas at San Antonio; Acting President, UT Health San Antonio
- **The Hon. Deborah L. Wince-Smith**, President and CEO, Council on Competitiveness

7:15 PM COMPETITIVENESS CONVERSATION DINNER

- **The Hon. Peter Sakai**, Judge, Bexar County, Texas

9:00 PM DINNER CONCLUDES

Tuesday, March 11, 2025

Venue

San Pedro I / National Security Collaboration Center
The University of Texas at San Antonio
506 Dolorosa St.
San Antonio, TX

8:00 AM BREAKFAST AND NETWORKING

**8:45 AM PUTTING COMPETITIVENESS IN CONTEXT:
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN TEXAS**

To launch the Texas edition of the “[Competitiveness Conversations Across America](#)” series — taking place under the auspices of the “[National Commission on Innovation and Competitiveness Frontiers](#)” — the Cohosts will frame the grand challenges and opportunities facing Texas and the United States, with a specific focus on the imperative of critical infrastructure security (CIS) for U.S. competitiveness.

- **Dr. Taylor Eighmy**, President, University of Texas at San Antonio; Acting President, UT Health San Antonio
- **The Hon. Deborah L. Wince-Smith**, President and CEO, Council on Competitiveness

**9:00 AM SECURING AMERICA’S FUTURE: HARNESSING THE STATE’S
INNOVATION CAPACITY AND CAPABILITIES TO BUILD THE
INDUSTRY THAT PROTECTS ALL INDUSTRIES**

As threats to our digital and physical assets grow increasingly complex, effectively harnessing the full spectrum of resources within Texas’ innovation portfolio is vital for developing cutting-edge solutions that enhance resilience and security. In this session, leaders from across sectors and domains will examine the pivotal role of Texas’ innovation ecosystem in positioning the state as a global leader in technological innovation, cybersecurity, and critical infrastructure protection.

Key Questions to Consider:

1. How is the state rethinking traditional models to define, coordinate, and support local, state, and regional innovation?
2. Why has the state been successful in attracting innovative talent and firms?
3. What major investments in infrastructure, technology, and talent are shaping the Texas innovation ecosystem?
4. Looking at the grand challenges facing the world — and focusing on Texas’ strengths — what is the state doing to leverage technological disruption for competitive advantage?

Stage Setter:

- **Dr. Nicole Beebe**, Assistant Vice President, Faculty Research Development, University of Texas at San Antonio

Panel:

- **Mr. Charles “Chuck” Bondurant**, Director, Critical Infrastructure Security and Risk Management (CISRM), Public Utility Commission of Texas
- **Mr. Adam Hamilton**, President and CEO, Southwest Research Institute
- **Lt. Gen. Allan M. Pepin**, Commander, United States Army North (Fifth Army), and Senior Commander, Fort Sam Houston and Camp Bullis
- **Mr. Geoffrey Urbach**, Product and Partnerships Lead, Emerging Technology, City of San Antonio
- **Moderator: Mr. Charles Woodin**, CEO, Geekdom

9:45 AM QUANTUM TECH TALK: REVOLUTIONIZING HEALTHCARE, MANUFACTURING, AND CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE SECURITY

- **Dr. Jeff Prevost**, Assistant Director, University of Texas at San Antonio Open Cloud Institute

10:00 AM BREAK

10:15 AM CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE SECURITY: INDUSTRY, THE PUBLIC SECTOR, AND THE MILITARY

Critical infrastructure security requires cross-sector, highly integrated collaboration between the private sector, government, research enterprise, and defense forces. Leaders from across these stakeholder groups will discuss how they are working together to secure Texas’ infrastructure, and what more can be done.

Key Questions to Consider:

1. What is the biggest threat to Texas’ infrastructure today?
2. What are the biggest challenges that must be overcome in protecting U.S. critical infrastructure?
3. Why is close collaboration between different sectors a necessary step?

Stage Setter:

- **Dr. David Brown**, Executive Director, National Security Collaboration Center (NSCC), University of Texas at San Antonio

Panel:

- **Mr. Rick Driggers**, Cyber Practice Lead, Accenture Federal Services, Accenture
- **Lt. Gen. Thomas Hensley**, Commander, Sixteenth Air Force; Commander, Air Forces Cyber, and Commander, Joint Force Headquarters-Cyber (Air Force), Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas
- **Mr. David Mendoza**, Information Security Manager, San Antonio Water System
- **Mr. Jim Perschbach**, CEO, Port San Antonio
- **Dr. Francine Romero**, Professor, University of Texas at San Antonio, and Member of Board of Trustees, CPS Energy
- **Moderator: Lt. Gen. (R) John Evans**, President and CEO, Evans Strategic Solutions, LLC

11:00 AM MORNING KEYNOTE: POSITIONING TEXAS AS THE GLOBAL CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE SECURITY LEADER

We are honored to be joined by Congressman Tony Gonzales who will give his view on what Texas must do to safeguard the nation's critical systems, and how Texas' leadership role benefits the security of the United States.

Introduction:

- **Dr. Michelle Atchison**, Director of Federal Relations and Senior National Security Strategist, University of Texas at San Antonio

Keynote:

- **The Hon. Tony Gonzales**, United States Congressman, U.S. House Texas District 23

11:20 AM BEYOND BORDERS: EXPANDING ECONOMIC COLLABORATIONS ACROSS TEXAS AND THE REGION

South Central Texas (San Antonio/Austin) is a rapidly-evolving innovation ecosystem and a key reason why Texas is the second fastest-growing economy in the United States. Drivers of economic development from across the state highlight how Texas is expanding its regional innovation identity through a strategic vision, greater collaboration, and increased investment. The Interstate 35 corridor (that connects the St. Lawrence Seaway/Great Lakes to Mexico) is a backbone of innovation zones in Texas. Industry sectors including automotive, aerospace, chips, and food rely on this geographic artery for R&D and movement of goods, services, and labor.

Key Questions to Consider:

1. What is Texas' strategic economic vision for the future, and how is the state uniting to bring this vision forward?
2. Texas shares a large international border, across which goods, ideas, and people move rapidly. What challenges and opportunities does this present?
3. How can organizations within Texas better collaborate with each other, and with those outside of the state?

Stage Setter:

- **Mr. Rod McSherry**, Associate Vice President, Innovation and Economic Development, and Director of the Valdez Institute for Economic Development, University of Texas at San Antonio

Panel:

- **Lic. Emmanuel Loo**, Secretary of Economy, State of Nuevo Leon, Mexico
- **Mr. Luis Rodriguez**, President and CEO, San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- **Moderator: Mr. Glenn Hamer**, President and CEO, Texas Association of Business

12:05 PM LUNCH KEYNOTE

Introduction:

- **Dr. Taylor Eighmy**, President, University of Texas at San Antonio; Acting President, UT Health San Antonio

Keynote:

- **Ms. Jenna Saucedo-Herrera**, President and CEO, Greater: SATX

1:00 PM LEVELING UP TEXAS TALENT: BUILDING AN UNMATCHED TECH WORKFORCE

To build a secure future, Texas needs a workforce of innovators ready to tackle the evolving security problems facing the state. This panel will discuss how to cultivate a highly skilled and adaptable talent pool that can develop and implement the innovation needed to protect U.S. critical infrastructure. Topics will include investment needs across education, new training approaches, and fresh models of collaboration with industry leaders to ensure the Texas workforce remains at the forefront of technology, security, and innovation.

Key Questions to Consider:

1. What are the innovation, technology and, more specifically, the critical infrastructure security jobs of tomorrow?
2. How can educators and employers better collaborate to fill skill gaps?
3. How can Texas and the country bring more people into the innovation workforce?

Stage Setter:

- **Dr. Diana Huffaker**, Associate Vice President, Research Partnerships and Strategy, University of Texas at San Antonio

Panel:

- **Dr. David Garza**, President, Tecnológico de Monterrey (Tec)
- **Mr. Dean Gefen**, CEO, NukuDo
- **Dr. Heather Shipley**, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, University of Texas at San Antonio
- **Moderator: Mr. Joe Sanchez**, Executive Director and Secretary of the Board, Cyber Texas Foundation

1:45 PM SOUTHWEST RESEARCH INSTITUTE TECH TALK

- **Mr. Victor Murray**, Assistant Director, High Reliability Systems Division, Southwest Research Institute

2:00 PM INVESTORS IN INNOVATION: FINANCING TEXAS' INNOVATION ECONOMY

Consistent and reliable capital is the lifeblood of commercializing and scaling innovation, be it CIS, cybersecurity, or any other tech-driven sector. In this session, leaders of some of Texas' leading innovation investors will highlight how they are providing the backing needed to kickstart a new wave of technology growth in the state, and opportunities that would expand innovation investment even further.

Key Questions to Consider:

1. Why has Texas attracted so much investment, from both inside and out, in innovation?
2. How can investors and innovators be better connected to allow for deeper and more sustainable partnerships?
3. What barriers or risks could be removed to accelerate investment in the state?

Stage Setter:

- **Mr. Rod McSherry**, Associate Vice President, Innovation and Economic Development, and Director of the Valdez Institute for Economic Development, University of Texas at San Antonio

Panel:

- **Ms. Korry Castillo**, Associate Deputy Comptroller, Office of Texas Comptroller
- **Mr. Sebastian Garzon**, Executive Director, Alamo Angels
- **Dr. Gilroy Vandentop**, Vice President Corporate University Research, Intel Labs
- **Moderator: Mr. Aaron Demerson**, President and CEO, Texas Economic Development Corporation

2:45 PM BREAK

3:00 PM MAPPING THE ENABLING CONDITIONS FOR TEXAS' COMPETITIVENESS STRATEGY FOR THE NEXT 25 YEARS

Pulling from insights gathered throughout the Texas Competitiveness Conversation, the hosts will examine the enabling conditions essential for the state's competitiveness strategy over the next 25 years, including the intersection of policy, infrastructure, education, innovation, and workforce development.

Key Questions to Consider:

1. What do you envision as the most significant opportunities and challenges for Texas' economic competitiveness over the next 25 years?
2. What initiatives are necessary to strengthen the culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in Texas?
3. What key learnings from the state should be elevated to the national level to improve the productivity and innovation capacity of the United States?

Stage Setter:

- **Dr. Nicole Beebe**, Assistant Vice President, Faculty Research Development, University of Texas at San Antonio

Panel:

- **Dr. David Brown**, Executive Director, National Security Collaboration Center (NSCC), University of Texas at San Antonio
- **Mr. Brad Morrison**, Board of Directors, Texas Space Commission
- **Mr. AJ Rodriguez**, Executive Vice President, Texas 2036
- **Moderator: Mr. Drew Scheberle**, Executive Director, National Security Innovation Council

3:45 PM CHARTING A PATH FORWARD — REFLECTIONS OF THE CONVERSATION FROM THE COCHAIR

- **Dr. Taylor Eighmy**, President, University of Texas at San Antonio; Acting President, UT Health San Antonio
- **The Honorable Deborah L. Wince-Smith**, President and CEO, Council on Competitiveness

4:00 PM COMPETITIVENESS CONVERSATION CONCLUDES