The V.G. Young Institute of County Government (Institute) is a part of Texas Cooperative Extension and The Texas A&M University System. Located in College Station, the Institute works to meet the educational needs of county officials and the public by anticipating, identifying, and addressing the challenges and opportunities faced by Texas county government. The Institute fulfills this charge by offering various educational programs, published reference materials, and counsel to county officials, community organizations and citizens across the state. The Institute is dedicated to the Extension mission: “providing quality, relevant outreach and continuing education programs and services to the people of Texas.”

HISTORY AND OVERVIEW
Texas Cooperative Extension serves every county in Texas, with a network of over 1400 employees across the state and a presence in all 254 counties. Through this extensive network, county judges and commissioners have received educational programs from Extension for over 5 decades. Recognizing the need for a formal organization to provide educational programs for county officials, the Texas Legislature created the V.G. Young Institute of County Government in 1969. As the importance of continuing education for county officials rose, the Institute began providing educational programs for county and district clerks as well as county treasurers in 1973. County tax assessor-collectors began receiving continuing education from the Institute in 1982.

The work of the Institute is guided by the County Officials Advisory Committee, comprised of a representative from all county officials professional associations in Texas. Partial funding for the Institute’s efforts is derived from state and federal appropriated dollars; however, most of the funding for the Institute’s programs and activities is generated by conference and seminar tuition.

As a part of Texas Cooperative Extension and the Texas A&M University System, the Institute has many valuable resources at its disposal. The Institute often looks to these resources to assist with educational programs. With 12 Research and Extension Centers located across the state and a presence in all 254 counties, Texas Cooperative Extension and the V.G. Young Institute of County Government are well positioned to serve county government and the citizens of Texas.

CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS
The Institute annually offers continuing education conferences and seminars for county judges and commissioners, county treasurers, county and district clerks, and county tax assessor-collectors. These seminars and trainings attract a large portion of county officials from all areas of the state and are known for providing accurate, timely information and well respected speakers. Attendees earn accredited hours of continuing education that apply towards their state mandated continuing education requirements.

The faculty and staff of the Institute work with the officers and education committees from the various elected officials organizations to plan relevant and effective educational programs. The Institute handles all details associated with planning these events, including selecting and booking speakers, securing a facility and catering, as well as registration and printed seminar materials.

The Institute is recognized as an approved educational provider by the Court of Criminal Appeals Education Committee for appellate, district, and statutory county judges as well as constitutional county judges.
ADVANCED TRAINING
Advanced training for county officials beyond the state mandated educational requirements is an important part of the Institute’s efforts. Partnering with the County Judges and Commissioners Association and the Texas Association of Counties, the Institute worked to develop the Commissioners Court Advanced Curriculum (CCAC) program, an advanced certification for county judges and commissioners. The Institute offers CCAC courses at conferences hosted for county judges and commissioners. Ever aware of the need for relevant and timely curriculum, the Institute, in partnership with Texas Association of Counties and the County Judges and Commissioners Association, is currently assisting with an update and revision of the CCAC program.

The Institute developed a two year advanced leadership program for Texas commissioners court members that began in 2005. The Commissioners Court Leadership Academy takes up to 24 county judges and commissioners to various cities throughout Texas and to Washington, DC where they develop communication and interpersonal skills, enhance their decision making and personal leadership abilities, and improve their ability to serve as an advocate for county issues at all levels of government.

COOPERATIVE EFFORTS
The Institute has a longstanding history of cooperation and collaboration. As a partner with the Lower Colorado River Authority, the Institute helps to guide the curriculum and programs of the Texas Leadership Institute (TLI). TLI works to help local officials sharpen their leadership skills and to inform them of challenges local government will face in the future.

Faculty of the Institute also work with the Texas Association of Counties to plan the educational program for the County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas. The educational committee of the County Treasurers’ Association of Texas also looks to the Institute to help plan the educational portion of their annual association conference. The Institute is also instrumental in assisting to plan and carry out the county judges and commissioners regional association conferences. Faculty and staff of the Institute assist these associations with all details relating to their annual conferences. In addition to these programs, the Institute serves as the official educational sponsor for other programs, conferences, and seminars for county leaders in Texas.

EXPERT ADVICE
In addition to educational programs, seminars, and conferences, the Institute serves as an important resource on county government for the state of Texas. The Institute has published and continues to update resource guides for county tax assessor-collectors and county treasurers and assists with the publication of a resource guide for county and district clerks.

Publications on points of county law, parliamentary procedure, and other county government topics are produced by the Institute. The Institute also publishes a 4-H County Government Guide to promote awareness of county government among young people. County Progress Magazine recently commissioned the Institute to contribute educational articles on six of the offices in a Texas county courthouse.

Regional county judges and commissioners associations often call on Institute faculty to assist in interpreting their association by-laws and offer advice on actions of the association. Faculty of the Institute frequently field calls from County Extension Agents, county officials and members of the public concerning county government topics. Institute faculty are well versed in county government issues and are available to answer questions, offer advice and guidance on topics related to county government.

May 2006