Pride and Promise

Another 2,900 Miners can now call themselves proud UTEP alumni. On May 12, UTEP honored graduates of the class of 2018 during three spring Commencement ceremonies. The Don Haskins Center was brimming with the elation and excitement of almost 26,000 family and friends who gathered to wish their favorite graduates well as they closed an important chapter in their lives and embarked on their next journeys.

UTEP President Diana Natalicio shared in the joy and pride of all in attendance. In her Commencement address, she told graduates, “This is a great moment for you and for all of us who have been a part of your higher education journey.”

See a Commencement video at utep.edu/magazine.
The following is a message sent to the campus community by UTEP President Diana Natalicio on May 22, 2018 to announce her plans for retirement.

With the recent commemoration of two major milestones in my long and very happy relationship with The University of Texas at El Paso — 45 years as a faculty member and 30 years as UTEP’s President — I have concluded that this may be an appropriate time to begin bringing to a close this chapter in my higher education story, nearly all of which I have joyfully spent at UTEP. I am therefore announcing today my plans to retire as UTEP’s President once a successor has been officially appointed and assumed the position. To be absolutely clear, this is not a farewell message to you, but rather an early alert about my plans.

Although approaching retirement saddens me — I am as energized today by UTEP’s many assets and future potential as I was 30 years ago! — I’ve always known that this day would inevitably come. Happily, it comes at a time when I have confidence that we will remain true to our core values and continue without interruption the transformative work that has been underway on this campus for the past 30 years.

To that end, we have been very actively engaged, and have already made significant progress, in executing a strategic administrative succession plan. We are immensely proud of the caliber of candidates for the administrative positions we have recently filled — vice presidents, deans and department chairs, athletic director and coaches. Their desire to join the UTEP family strongly validates our enhanced national stature as a public research university that is successfully achieving a highly innovative access and excellence mission.

As we have navigated the challenging issues facing higher education in the 21st century, UTEP has succeeded in fulfilling a promise that most other universities consider impossible: balancing equal and intersecting commitments to both access and excellence. UTEP has received national recognition as a public research university that has been extraordinarily successful at promoting student social mobility, while simultaneously building a reputation for excellence through our externally funded research competitiveness and the development of doctoral program quality across all colleges on the campus. We are very proud of our success in repositioning UTEP on the national higher education landscape, and especially proud to have successfully done so while never defaulting on our core commitment to ensure that all talented young people who entrust us with their aspirations will have an authentic opportunity to achieve them, regardless of their backgrounds or financial means.

To be sure, our work is not done, and many future challenges await UTEP and the students we serve, as the higher education ecosystem continues to change. I will save my reflections on those challenges for another time.

Instead, first and foremost, I want to express appreciation to our UTEP students whose success — on our campus and as alumni — has strongly validated our sustained confidence and investment in them. It has also been a privilege to work with faculty and staff members across the campus, whose expertise and creativity have ensured the rigor and competitiveness of UTEP’s educational programs and served generations of UTEP students exceedingly well. I thank these esteemed colleagues for their deep understanding, their courage, and their unwavering resolve to embrace fully, and work tirelessly, to achieve UTEP’s innovative higher education vision and our mission to deliver on our commitments to both access and excellence for students in this region and beyond.

Finally, I want to assure everyone — students, faculty and staff on the campus, our proud UTEP alumni, and our friends and partners in the surrounding community — that I will continue to support efforts to fulfill the extraordinarily deep commitment we have all made to be the best UTEP we can possibly be. We do that by serving this U.S.-Mexico border region as an exemplary public research university: creating authentic and exceptional educational opportunities for the region’s historically underserved population; conducting innovative research, scholarship and creative activity; and fostering the surrounding region’s prosperity and quality of life. Together, we have earned well-deserved national recognition for the success of the transformative work we have done over the past 30 years. I am confident that, during the forthcoming leadership transition and well beyond, we will continue to build on this strong foundation, working together to ensure UTEP’s competitiveness as a model public research university, while continuing to honor our core mission to promote educational opportunities and social mobility for all talented and hard-working students, especially those in this U.S.-Mexico border region, for whose future life pathways we have clear responsibility.

Go Miners!

Diana Natalicio
President
With the first phase of the UTEP Edge – the campus’ student success framework – nearly completed, much remains to be done.

UTEP civil engineering students built and installed a water treatment system that is giving the residents of Po Ploom, Haiti, a source of safe drinking water.

In 30 years at the helm, Diana Natalicio has made indelible marks on UTEP. She’s done it the same way she has done everything else – through hard work.

If the University follows its current strategic path, models show that it will soon move into the top Carnegie classification: highest research activity.

Diana Khalik, a member of the UTEP Student Alumni Association, is de-stressing at the inaugural SAA Pillow Fight – an event before finals where students took a break to enjoy themselves and release stress.
Whether it is a world-renowned musician on tour or a crowd of fans cheering on monster trucks, The University of Texas at El Paso’s Office of Special Events works tirelessly behind the scenes to give the community a roaring night out.

In the past year, UTEP’s entertainment venues saw performances from big name acts such as Elton John, Journey, Guns N’ Roses, WWE Live and Monster Jam, to name a few.

In the coming months, iconic Latin American singer Luis Miguel will serenade a crowd of screaming fans at the Don Haskins Center, and a few weeks later, the venue will be rocking to the “Young and Menace” that is Fall Out Boy.

Jorge Vazquez, executive director for the Office of Special Events, said UTEP works aggressively to attract big-time promoters and companies to the area.

“Now we have a solid reputation in the business to be truly an amazing partner to our promoters, and it’s a huge blessing for us,” Vazquez said.

Vazquez often says the “planets have to align to do a show,” and they have successfully accomplished that cosmic feat as the rock gods known as Metallica set a course for the Don Haskins Center in early 2019.

As the 2018 season wraps up, Vazquez said an exciting year is in store with lots of surprises that he cannot wait to reveal. He says September and October could see big announcements and even bigger events.

For a list of upcoming UTEP events and performances, visit events.utep.edu.
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eaders of UTEP’s Center for Arts Entrepreneurship (CAE) used the center’s first year to test and refine concepts to enhance outcomes for music students. They believe they have exceeded expectations and look forward to growing the program.

The center, a collaboration between The University of Texas at El Paso and El Paso Pro-Musica (EPPM), was established in April 2017. Its initial objectives were to help students enhance their resumes, create digital portfolios, seek different performance opportunities and develop more ways to communicate with audiences.

The CAE accomplished these goals with the help of multitalented guest artists who shared their technical expertise, worldly perspectives and collateral knowledge during thought-provoking weeklong residencies that coincided with EPPM performances.

“The focus has been to help students in the arts develop an understanding of the business of the arts,” said Felipa Solis, EPPM executive director.

The eclectic group of speakers, which included Department of Music faculty and Pro-Musica personnel, shared insights from their experiences as musicians and entrepreneurs, while others promoted related professional occupations such as film composer and recording engineer.

“Many of our students would come in and think a career in music would be as a teacher or a performer with an institution like a symphony or an opera company,” said Steve Wilson, DMA, chair of the Department of Music and CAE collaborator. “What they’re seeing this year is that there is a whole wide range of career opportunities for people. You just have to be entrepreneurial enough to go find it.”

Moving forward, the CAE will involve more departments within the fine arts such as graphic arts, theatre and dance, and eventually others within the College of Liberal Arts such as English majors. A minor in arts entrepreneurship is also in development. The center’s leaders also have initiated discussions with educators from other UTEP schools and colleges with natural connections to music such as Nursing, Education and Business Administration.

“Collaboration is the key to success, and working alongside members of faculty and the amazing students shows how the center can truly be a successful tool in building a new generation of artists working to build careers in the 21st century,” said Zuill Bailey, CAE artistic director. - Daniel Perez

“The focus has been to help students in the arts develop an understanding of the business of the arts.” - Felipa Solis
Get ready for a week of festivities as UTEP students deck the campus with this year’s student-selected Homecoming theme – “Musicals.” The annual tradition of Homecoming is all about welcoming alumni and friends back to campus to proclaim their Miner pride and display some serious school spirit.

Mark your calendar for the week of Sept. 30 – Oct. 6, when The University of Texas at El Paso will celebrate Homecoming 2018 with reunions, recognitions, celebrations and all that jazz.

Visit [www.utep.edu/homecoming](http://www.utep.edu/homecoming) for a full calendar and up-to-date information on 2018 Homecoming.
## Multi-Day Events
### Sept. 30 - Oct. 6
- **Homecoming ROlympics**
  - Various times and locations
  - Sam Rodriguez | 915-747-5670
  - By invitation only

### Oct. 2, 3, 4 and 6
- **Borderland Music Series Live**
  - 1-3 p.m. Oct. 2-4, 10 a.m.-noon and 1-3 p.m. Oct. 6
  - UTEP Bookstore
  - Cheryl Patterson | 915-747-7421

### Oct. 3, 4, 5 and 7
- **“Bless Me, Ultima”**
  - 7:30 p.m. Oct. 3-5, 2 and 7:30 p.m. Oct. 7 | Wise Family Theatre
  - Box Office | 915-747-5118

### Oct. 4 - 6
- **Golden Grads Reunion Weekend**
  - Various locations
  - Pam Pippen | 915-747-8600
  - Registration required: alumni.utep.edu/goldengrads

### Sunday, Sept. 30
- **9th Annual Miner Dash 5K Run/3K Walk and Family Fitness Fiesta**
  - 8-11 a.m.
  - Centennial Plaza
  - Daniela Lerma | 915-747-6738
  - Registration required: minerdash.utep.edu

### Wednesday, Oct. 3
- **Department of English Homecoming Reception**
  - 3-5 p.m.
  - Centennial Museum – Discovery Theatre
  - Ana Diaz | 915-747-7166

## Thursday, Oct. 4
- **School of Nursing Breakfast in Honor of Gold Nuggets**
  - 7:30-9 a.m.
  - Health Sciences and Nursing Building – 1st floor patio
  - Margie Lopez | 915-747-8194
  - By invitation only
  - RSVP: margarita@utep.edu

- **College of Science Homecoming Breakfast**
  - 9-10 a.m.
  - Chemistry and Computer Science Building
  - 2nd floor lobby
  - Roxanne Giron | 915-747-5536

- **College of Liberal Arts Gold Nugget Reception**
  - 3-5 p.m.
  - Location TBD
  - Cynthia Marentes | 915-747-6790
  - RSVP: 915-747-5666

- **UTEPE Black Alumni Network (UBAN)**
  - 5-9 p.m.
  - Hilton Garden Inn El Paso – Del Norte Ballroom
  - Crystal Saavedra | 915-747-6475
  - RSVP: alumni.utep.edu/uban

## Friday, Oct. 5
  - 8-10 a.m.
  - Geological Sciences Bldg. – Geology Reading Room
  - Nena Gonzalez | 915-747-6050
  - RSVP: megonzalez10@utep.edu

- **College of Education Gold Nugget Breakfast**
  - 8:30-11 a.m.
  - Hilton Garden Inn El Paso
  - University – Del Norte Ballroom
  - Susana Aguirre | 915-747-5783
  - RSVP: saguirre2@utep.edu

- **Civil Engineering and Construction Engineering and Management Alumni Homecoming Luncheon**
  - 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
  - Chemistry and Computer Science Bldg. Courtyard
  - Concha Ruiz | 915-747-5464
  - ruiz@utep.edu

## Saturday, Oct. 6
- **College of Engineering Alumni Homecoming Breakfast**
  - 8 a.m. - noon
  - Union Bldg. East – Tomás Rivera Conference Center
  - RSVP: engineering.utep.edu/homecoming or Alejandra Morton | 915-747-6917

- **UTEPE Black Alumni Network (UBAN)/African-American Studies Roundtable Summit**
  - 10 a.m.-noon
  - Union Bldg. East – Tempelton Suite 313
  - Michael Williams | 915-747-7822

- **Department of Political Science Homecoming Brunch**
  - 11 a.m.-1 p.m.
  - Benedict Hall room 205/ front lawn
  - José D. Villalobos | 915-747-7822

- **Office of Alumni Relations/Miner Athletic Club Homecoming Tailgate**
  - 5-5:30 p.m.
  - Kidd Field
  - Valerie A. Sanchez | 915-747-6742
  - RSVP: alumni.utep.edu/tailgate or 915-747-8600

- **Homecoming Football Game vs. North Texas**
  - Time TBA
  - Sun Bowl Stadium
  - UTEP Ticket Center | 915-747-5234
Crystal Long is adamant that when you embrace education and learning, you give yourself the best opportunity for a successful journey through life. She believes that knowledge imbues people with new thoughts, ideas and experiences. These developments enable people to challenge assumptions and current circumstances, and make a difference in their lives and those of others.

Long’s journey to becoming the first college graduate in her family began in 1979 when she entered the workforce as a file clerk at GECU. Growing up, she believed a college degree was reserved only for wealthy families. But, Long watched as the lives of her co-workers transformed as a result of earning their college degrees. Those observations ignited her passion for education and continual learning. Determined to set a new standard of excellence, she sought higher education to advance her career and set a good example for her children.

While working a full-time job and raising a family, Long would top off a busy day by attending evening classes to earn her college degree. The sacrifices paid off when Long received her Bachelor of Science in Business Management and later an MBA from the University of Phoenix.

Her professional career benefited commensurately. Long progressively moved up the ranks — teller, supervisor, manager and eventually vice president. Today, Long serves as the president and CEO of GECU, the largest locally owned financial institution in El Paso. She said she arrived at the bank’s top leadership position through lots of perseverance, hard work and determination.

But, her desire to keep learning and growing professionally wasn’t satiated. In 2011, Long became a proud Miner when she joined The University of Texas at El Paso’s Executive MBA Program (EMBA). The experience more than met her expectations.

“The instructors had unique insights and real-world experience they were able to impart to students alongside the coursework and theory,” Long said. “It was especially powerful to be able to apply those concepts to my work life in real time.”

Long says she is humbled and honored to be recognized as a Distinguished Alumna, a recognition she feels should be shared with her family, friends, colleagues and community members who have all shared in her journey.

“I’m so proud of the degree that I earned from the University, and I never imagined in my wildest dreams that I’d be here today…”

- Christina Rodriguez
Karla Martinez, co-host of Univision’s highly rated live morning show, “Despierta America,” has always been an entertainer at heart. As a little girl, she was already a triple threat who loved acting, singing and dancing. She enjoyed putting on shows for her family in exchange for a payment of pine nuts for each performance and even recalls at a young age telling her mother that she wanted to go inside the television.

Martinez was born in Chihuahua, Mexico, and moved to the United States with her family when she was 16 years old. She completed her senior year of high school in Warren, Ohio, and enrolled at Kent State University. She and her family moved once more, this time to El Paso, where Martinez continued her college career at The University of Texas at El Paso. While a UTEP student, she got her start in broadcasting at KINT-FM (Channel 26), Univision’s affiliate station in El Paso. She initially worked without pay to gain experience.

Since the days of working without pay or for pine nuts, Martinez has come a long way. In 1995, while doing soft news for Channel 26, the Univision Network took notice of the young reporter’s natural talent and asked her to submit a demo tape. She sent her tape on a Tuesday, and by Thursday she was offered a position as a Texas correspondent for the national news magazine “Primer Impacto.” Later, she served as a reporter for the network’s top entertainment news show, “El Gordo y la Flaca,” and host of Univision’s popular youth-oriented lifestyle program, “Control.”

Martinez credits her UTEP education and one of her early mentors, Barthy Byrd, Ph.D., professor emerita of communication, for helping her get where she is today.

“Dr. Byrd was very strict, tough and demanding, but she brought out the best in me,” Martinez recalled. “She pushed me to reach my full potential and gave me my first letter of recommendation to work at the television network. I thank her from the bottom of my heart and will always remember her.

In addition to her role with “Despierta America,” Martinez has co-hosted numerous Univision specials such as “La Boda Real” and Teletón USA, the network’s fundraiser to help children with disabilities and their families. In 2013, Martinez co-hosted ABC’s “Good Morning America” and “The View” alongside one of her role models, Barbara Walters. She has been named one of People en Español’s 25 Most Beautiful People and 25 Most Powerful Women, and one of Vogue Mexico and Latin America magazine’s 2018 100 Most Influential People.

Recently, Martinez added Emmy award winner to her list of accomplishments when “Despierta America” won an Emmy for Outstanding Morning Program in Spanish. She also has authored “El Poder de Una Sonrisa” (The Power of a Smile), a book focused on ways to overcome life’s bad moments.

“I am an example of a dreamer and am happy to be able to represent UTEP students with my story,” Martinez said of her recognition as a Distinguished Alumna. “This is a recognition for all of them. Being an immigrant makes me feel so proud to be recognized for not only what I accomplished but the example I leave others; showing them that anything, no matter where you come from, your story or past, anything is possible.” - Christina Rodriguez

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Sam Armijo, Ph.D.
College of Engineering
B.S. Metallurgical/Materials Engineering, 1959

Sam Armijo has not only helped power the world, he has helped keep it safe.

Armijo, a native of El Paso, holds a doctorate from Stanford University, and is an internationally recognized expert in nuclear fuels, nuclear reactor materials, water chemistry and advanced nuclear power system designs. He is currently president of JSA Associates Inc., a nuclear systems and engineering consulting firm advising the Electric Power Research Institute and the Exelon Corporation. He is also chairman of Tokyo Electric Power Company’s International Experts Group, which provides technical advice on the decommissioning of the Fukushima nuclear site.

Throughout his career, Armijo has directed major design and development projects for industry and government. He is a retired General Electric executive and former chairman of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission’s Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards (ACRS).

Before joining the ACRS, Armijo was an adjunct professor of materials science and engineering at the University of Nevada, Reno.

Amid all his achievements, Armijo has found a way to encourage UTEP students through the J.S. Armijo-Steinmetz Scholarship, which he established early in his career.

“My engineering education at UTEP helped immensely in my career,” Armijo said. “This experience taught me to set tough goals for myself and not to be intimidated by hard work. Although I later received advanced degrees from [other] schools, I credit UTEP for providing the sound, technical foundation and work ethic that helped me the most throughout my career.” - Pablo Villa

Orlando Bejarano
College of Health Sciences
B.S. Occupational Therapy, 1998

Orlando Bejarano is the definition of hard work and perseverance. While navigating different career paths throughout the years, Bejarano didn’t find his calling until age 50 when he earned a bachelor’s degree in occupational therapy.

In the mid 1990s, Bejarano’s wife encouraged him to return to school and fulfill his quest for a bachelor’s degree that began in 1965. He attended multiple El Paso Community College campuses in order to complete the prerequisites for UTEP’s occupational therapy program.

In 2004, Bejarano started his own business in the greater Houston area that now employs about 40 therapists across physical therapy, speech language pathology and occupational therapy. Focus Therapy provides services more than 600 times a week to a mostly geriatric population.

“What I’ve learned at UTEP has enabled us to help our patients safely remain in their own homes,” Bejarano said. “We have also given back to our profession by mentoring and providing a vehicle for others to pursue careers in therapy. Personally and professionally, UTEP has made a huge difference in my life! I do not have a clue where I would be without my education from UTEP.”

In honor of his single-parent mother, Bejarano recently established the Ignacia Aguilar Bejarano Annual Scholarship. The scholarship targets UTEP occupational therapy students who are in need or are single parents. - Jesse Martinez
PETER CHAN

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING
B.S. CIVIL ENGINEERING, 1989 / M.S. CIVIL ENGINEERING, 1990

Peter Chan chose to enroll at The University of Texas at El Paso for one reason — affordability.

The native of Malaysia had limited financial resources when considering where to further his education. His decision to attend UTEP has paid off handsomely.

Since earning his master’s degree in civil engineering, Chan has embarked on a 20-year career in engineering. He worked as a project manager before starting his own engineering design consultancy in 1999. A decade later, he merged his firm with an international engineering firm. In 2004, Chan founded Professional Concepts, a multi-faceted real estate company, which he still runs. In addition to his professional activities, Chan has served as a mentor in Big Brothers Big Sisters of Arizona, and as a volunteer for St. Vincent de Paul and Boy Scouts of America.

He is currently serving on the Development Board of UTEP’s Asset Management and Development arm.

Chan also has established two endowments at UTEP – the Anthony Tarquin Endowed Scholarship and the Peter Chan Endowed Scholarship in Engineering – as a way of giving back to the University that gave him so much.

“I know that many students still choose their colleges based on cost,” Chan said. “If there is one thing my years at UTEP have taught me, it’s that I must also help other aspiring students. Offering access and opportunity is the best gift for the next generation.” - Pablo Villa

ANNIE L. GARCIA

SCHOOL OF NURSING
MSN NURSING SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT, 2013

The master’s program in Nursing Systems Management (NSM) at UTEP enabled Annie L. Garcia, a nurse for 15 years, to transition from the patient’s bedside into one of HCA Healthcare Inc.’s top nursing leadership positions.

In UTEP’s NSM program, Garcia enhanced her knowledge and leadership skills to advance her career at HCA, the largest hospital operator in the United States. Garcia started as a registered nurse at HCA’s Del Sol Medical Center in 2003. The El Paso native was named Del Sol’s chief nursing officer in 2017.

A year after completing her graduate degree in 2013, Garcia was hired as the chief nursing officer at another HCA hospital, Methodist Texsan Hospital in San Antonio.

As Methodist Texsan’s top-ranking nursing management professional, Garcia was instrumental in the hospital’s efforts to improve nursing engagement, patient experience and quality outcomes, resulting in a number of recognitions.

“The master’s program at UTEP prepared me with the skills I needed to transform Methodist Texsan from an underperforming hospital to a leading hospital within HCA,” Garcia recalled.

Garcia leveraged her UTEP connections to enhance nursing practices at eight of HCA’s Methodist Hospitals. She implemented an internship program for student nurses similar to the one established at Del Sol in partnership with UTEP.

Since returning to El Paso, Garcia’s ties to UTEP are stronger than ever. She serves on the School of Nursing’s advisory board, helping to shape the future of nursing education at UTEP. - Laura L. Acosta
Ruth Ellen Jacobson’s time under the tutelage of faculty in the College of Education served as a multitool for a career that has spanned a number of leadership roles.

Jacobson served as a director of physician services at Providence Memorial Hospital before joining Columbia Healthcare System’s West Texas division as a director of development for maternal child services and volunteers. Jacobson later returned to The University of Texas at El Paso to prepare for the certified public accountant exam, which she passed on her first attempt. Nowadays, Jacobson uses her educational background to empower children through music. As the executive director of the El Paso Symphony Orchestra, she has developed youth-focused educational initiatives such as “Tocando,” an after-school program that supports children experiencing challenging social and economic conditions.

“My job requires me to use all that I have learned at UTEP, leveraging pieces from both the education and business courses,” Jacobson said. “Using my education background, I developed education programs for the El Paso Symphony Orchestra, she has developed youth-focused educational initiatives such as "Tocando," an after-school program that supports children experiencing challenging social and economic conditions.

Christina Ilene Paz, DNP, chief operating officer at Centro San Vicente Family Health Center in El Paso, learned about the vital role nurses play in shaping health care policy while she was a student in UTEP’s first Doctor of Nursing Practice cohort.

The program prepared Paz with the skills to advance her clinical practice and to advocate for patients who lack adequate access to health care in the U.S.-Mexico border region.

“The education UTEP has given me has allowed me to grow,” said Paz, a 2013 UTEP DNP program graduate. “It has allowed me to change my way of practicing so that I provide the best evidence-based care to my patients.”

Paz was a family nurse practitioner at Centro San Vicente — a low-cost medical services provider in El Paso — for nine years before she was named COO in 2017.

As a member of the Texas Association of Community Health Centers, Paz has met with members of Congress to advocate on behalf of community health centers and the vulnerable populations they serve. Paz also serves on the board for the Down Syndrome Coalition for El Paso.

She gives back to UTEP by educating the next generation of nurses as a clinical assistant professor in the School of Nursing.

- Laura L. Acosta

Felipa Solis grew up in an artistic household where hard work was expected, but the goal was to work for the greater good. The Hollywood, California, native projected that spirit as a busy undergraduate who had a full-time job with El Paso’s KTSM-TV before her first college class.

While busy with work and school, Solis joined MEChA, a student organization that offered a voice to the voiceless. She continued those efforts throughout a life as a journalist, public relations specialist, community advocate and executive director of El Paso Pro-Musica.

Solis said her UTEP education made her a better person who could understand and appreciate the bigger story. Today, she uses her communication skills to promote the soothing, healing powers of the arts.

Among her numerous honors are the LULAC Humanitarian of the Year Award, the YWCA Reach Award and the Ruben Salazar Journalism Award.

“At the end of the day, I just always want to make a difference,” said Solis, a voting member of the Broadcast Film Critics Association.

Through El Paso Pro-Musica, she helped Grammy-winning cellist and faculty member Zuill Bailey launch UTEP’s successful Center for Arts Entrepreneurship, which helps music students broaden their career paths by exposing them to concepts and industry leaders. - Daniel Perez
For Joe D. Wardy, receiving the Gold Nugget Award for the College of Business Administration is the culmination of a career that included leadership roles with several companies and a stint as mayor of the City of El Paso.

“I’ve been very fortunate,” Wardy said. “It all started with my studies at UTEP.”

Wardy enrolled at The University of Texas at El Paso in 1971. He said his time on campus laid a foundation for success on the strength of diligent professors, some of whom Wardy remains in contact with.

After graduating, Wardy had a 25-year-career in transportation and logistics before he entered politics in 2003. He oversaw El Paso’s move to a city manager form of government and passage of a $110 million bond issue.

He left office in 2005 and went back into the business sector until he retired in 2017.

“I really value my UTEP education,” Wardy said. “I think UTEP offers students a great chance to advance themselves. The business school has a great undergraduate business program with fantastic professors. It’s a good basis to enter the workforce or continue your studies to a master’s or beyond.” - Leonard Martinez

Richard Westbrook, M.D., changed locales with his family several times as a youth. The constantly changing environs helped prepare him for a life in the medical field.

“Coming to a new city with a new culture and starting at a University with a varied student population has helped me throughout my career in medicine to adjust to new and changing situations,” said Westbrook, who earned a bachelor’s degree in biological sciences at The University of Texas at El Paso. “Each person has a wonderful story. It has made me aware of the diversity of my patients but also the array of treatment options I can choose from to care for each patient in a very personal and respectful way.”

Westbrook said his experience at UTEP spurred him to continue his education and eventually become an orthopedic surgeon.

Westbrook works at Orthopaedic Surgeons Associates, a Providence Medical Partners Practice. He received his medical degree from The University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston and completed his residencies in orthopedic surgery at the University of Washington in Seattle and at Shriners Hospital for Children in Spokane, Washington. He is certified by the American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery and a fellow of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons.

- Leonard Martinez
The UTEP Alumni Association annually presents the Top Ten Seniors Awards to some of UTEP’s most promising future alumni. Graduating or recently graduated seniors are evaluated on a combination of academic achievement, involvement, leadership and service both in the community and on campus. The award reflects the true spirit of what it means to be both an outstanding student and a proud Miner.

**Rachel Ann J. Arreola**

**MAJOR:** Theatre Arts – Generalist Concentration

**FUTURE PLANS:** Attend graduate/film school, and work as a director and producer in the theater and film industry.

During her time at UTEP, Rachel Arreola has worked on Capitol Hill and traveled to New York, Boston, Ireland, Italy and Cuba. She feels that the education she received, along with her participation in various UTEP Edge experiences, has thoroughly prepared her for the professional competition she will experience after graduation. Arreola was actively involved on campus, and traveled to Washington, D.C., as an Archer Fellow during the spring 2018 semester while interning at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts as part of a capstone experience.

**Victoria Marie Diaz**

**MAJOR:** Biological Sciences – Biomedical Concentration

**FUTURE PLANS:** Attend medical school and become a doctor of obstetrics and gynecology.

Victoria Diaz believes that an education is what you make of it. Armed with that notion, she came to UTEP ready to seek opportunities and challenges in order to make her academic career as rewarding as possible. She was part of the University Honors Program and the Mentored Experiences in Research, Inquiry, and Creativity for Undergraduate Scholars (MERITUS), and completed a National Science Foundation BioNetworks summer internship at Rice University in Houston. Diaz also was one of 30 students in the second cohort of the A-PRIME TIME partnership, an accelerated medical education program.
Victor Hurtado’s participation in high-impact experiences while at UTEP positively affected his academic, professional and personal life. He gained a passion for historic preservation and strongly advocated for the protection of El Paso’s historical and cultural legacy through an internship with the Texas Historical Commission in Austin and the Texas Trost Society’s Architectural Preservation Committee. Hurtado served the University as a peer leader and developed student tours and presentations to instill an appreciation for UTEP’s Bhutanese architecture. He presented his paper at the 2017 National Security Studies Colloquium and participated in a study abroad program in Morocco.

Lana Hussein had two full-time job offers from major oil and gas companies lined up months before she graduated. She credits her UTEP education with setting her up for success. She served in leadership roles with the EXCEL Freshman Leadership Program, the Student Government Association, the Zeta Tau Alpha women’s fraternity and the National Panhellenic Council. As a BUILD Scholar, she researched breast cancer, diabetes, 3-D cell printing and biomedical engineering. Hussein completed an internship with Texas Gas Service, where she found a passion for positively changing people’s lives through engineering.
Paloma Vianey Martinez would not trade her UTEP experience for any other university. She embraced every opportunity presented to her. Martinez was selected to intern at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. She studied art in Florence, Italy, through a study abroad experience, completed an artist residency in the United Kingdom and was invited to represent her home country of Mexico at the Tokyo International Arts Fair. Marcos Bucio, consul general of Mexico in El Paso, selected Martinez to paint a mural depicting the unity of Mexico and the United States.

Christian Morales-Castañeda became fluent in French, learned to sing and was exposed to cultures around the world. He served as a Miner Ambassador, was the founding president of the Society for Collegiate Leadership and Achievement Honor Society, and held leadership roles with the Student Alumni Association, the Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia Fraternity and the Student Government Association. The confidence he gained through his leadership enabled him to do things he never thought he could, such as backpack through Europe and speak in front of crowds with ease.
MALVINA GUADALUPE MUÑOZ

MAJOR:
Biological Sciences – Biomedical Concentration

FUTURE PLANS:
Attend graduate school at UTEP to pursue a Ph.D. in biomedical engineering.

During her time at UTEP, Malvina Muñoz pushed herself to become a leader. She served as president of the student organization Miners Against Hunger and was a key player in the establishment of the Campus Kitchen Project at UTEP, whose mission is to end hunger and malnutrition in the community. She worked closely with the El Pasoans Fighting Hunger Food Bank and UTEP leaders to bring a food pantry to campus. She credits her active membership in various organizations on and off campus with thoroughly preparing her for graduate school and anything else her future holds.

CARLOS OSCAR ONTIVEROS

MAJOR:
Biological Sciences – Biomedical Concentration

FUTURE PLANS:
Attend medical school, then pursue a career as a physician-scientist.

Carlos Ontiveros’ work in biomedical research began as a high school senior after he knocked on the door of German Rosas-Acosta, Ph.D., associate professor in UTEP’s Department of Biological Sciences. Ontiveros expressed his interest in studying influenza, and days later he was in the lab. He enrolled in UTEP’s Phage Hunters program, a Freshman Year Research Intensive Sequence course. He participated in the University’s prestigious Maximizing Access to Research Careers (MARC) program, a scientific fellowship program funded by the National Institutes of Health, and studied Zika virus as a Summer Undergraduate Research Fellow at Scripps Research Institute.

AILEEN A. TAPIA

MAJOR:
Industrial and Systems Engineering

FUTURE PLANS:
Move to Houston to start a development program with Accenture.

As a Latina and first-generation college student, Aileen Tapia faced many stereotypes that challenged her decision to pursue engineering, but her UTEP support system set her up for success. She joined the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE) and traveled to Ensenada, Mexico, with a multidisciplinary team to implement a project through the Engineering Together Sustainable Communities program. She participated in several research experiences and took part in five internships with companies including Boeing and Eaton. Tapia enrolled in the B.S./MBA Fast-Track program with the intent of merging her engineering background with business.
**Outstanding Employees**

Two UTEP Staff Members Receive Inaugural Award

Two long-serving employees of The University of Texas at El Paso were honored as inaugural recipients of The University of Texas System Regents’ Outstanding Employee Award (ROEA). Azuri Gonzalez, director of the Center for Civic Engagement (CCE), and Alberto “Beto” Lopez, assistant vice president for university relations, received the awards in spring 2018. The ROEA was created to recognize full-time, non-faculty employees who have shown outstanding performance, innovation, enthusiasm and dedication in their jobs.

In 1983, Lopez joined UTEP as the first director of the Office of New Student Relations. He has held numerous leadership positions during his 34-year career with the University. Lopez currently directs several of the University’s biggest events, including Convocation and Commencement, as well as programs for UTEP students, faculty and staff.

Gonzalez has served as the director of the CCE since 2008. During her tenure, the University has received national recognition among public universities and colleges for the breadth and depth of outreach and engagement with the community.

Lopez and Gonzalez traveled to Austin to be recognized and receive their awards from UT System Chancellor William H. McRaven during a luncheon ceremony earlier this year.

- Christina Rodriguez

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**Regents Honor Student Trumpet Quintet**

The University of Texas System Board of Regents awarded its Outstanding Student Award in arts and humanities to five trumpet-playing Miners – Jacob J. Aun, Elijah I. Ontiveros, Juan P. Palacios, Isaac Ponce and Paul Reid – in the Group Performance category in spring 2018.

The quintet won for its performance of “Voice of the Prophets,” an original piece composed for the group by UTEP alumnus Eddie Lewis. The students will divide the $2,500 prize.

“To win one of these awards is truly a remarkable accomplishment,” wrote Regents’ chairman Sara Martinez Tucker in an acknowledgment letter also signed by UT System Chancellor William H. McRaven.

The surprised students said that the recognition generated a sense of accomplishment.

“It made me proud of the fact that as a group we achieved something this great by just going out and having fun doing what we love to do,” said Palacios, the group’s lone senior.

Steve Wilson, DMA, chair of the Department of Music, said this honor recognizes the level of talent and commitment among UTEP students.

It is the first time that a music ensemble from an institution other than UT Austin has won in this category.

- Daniel Perez

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Investing in Pharmacy’s Future

When it comes to value in pharmacy education, UTEP delivers a unique educational experience for students looking to maximize their investment.

The School of Pharmacy’s curriculum, called “IDEAL,” promotes innovation, diversity, engagement, access and leadership in pharmacy education. It has attracted aspiring pharmacists from across the region eager to serve a diverse patient population.

“I like the hands-on learning that we do,” said Robert Gutierrez, a graduate from the University of New Mexico who started UTEP’s Pharm.D. program with the inaugural class in fall 2017. “We go out into the community and work with pharmacists and other health care providers to get firsthand experience so we know what to expect when we start working.”

Although UTEP’s pharmacy program offers the most affordable tuition in West Texas, New Mexico and Arizona, Gutierrez was attracted to the distinctive educational experiences the program provides.

Pharmacy students learn technical Spanish, participate in study-away, capstone projects and 3-D printing research, and engage in practical, hands-on experiences with trained preceptors.

“There are some unique things that we are doing in the School of Pharmacy that are not only different in the region, but also at the national level,” explained School of Pharmacy Dean José Rivera, Pharm.D. “It’s important for our students to participate in these experiences in order for them to become well-rounded and culturally educated pharmacists.”

Pharm.D. graduates can expect to earn a six-figure income upon graduation. In a high-demand area like El Paso, the average pharmacist’s salary is about $125,000.

For Gutierrez, pharmacy offered him a career that is both personally and financially rewarding.

“The salary is a really good perk, but I love the diverse opportunities pharmacy offers,” he said.

- Laura L. Acosta

Visit utep.edu/magazine to see a video of the quintet performing “Voice of the Prophets.”
The cost of education has always concerned Miguel Lopez, a senior engineering leadership major. Even when Lopez was studying at Bel Air High School, his thoughts were squarely focused on paying for his college education.

“I knew about some scholarship options in high school,” Lopez said. “I applied for a Terry Foundation scholarship, which I was a finalist for but not awarded. But that helped with my UTEP scholarships because through that process I was informed about other scholarships. That’s how I started applying.”

In fall 2017, Lopez, who will earn his degree in May 2019, was awarded a $5,000 Boeing scholarship. In all, Lopez estimates he has earned more than $20,000 in academic scholarships while attending UTEP.

“Without the help of these scholarships, I would have to work full-time, which would mean taking fewer classes per semester,” he said.

Rosa Flores, the assistant director in UTEP’s Office of Scholarships, said there are numerous opportunities for students to apply for scholarships.

“The application process really begins for our students as incoming freshman or at the end of their junior year in high school,” she said. “Students already enrolled at the University who are interested in scholarship opportunities should look at our Scholar Mine, which is our database of available scholarships.”

Students can sign up at utep.academicworks.com.

Flores said more than $1.7 million in institutional dollars will be awarded to incoming freshmen for the upcoming 2018-19 academic year.

The scholarships come from an array of sources, both donors and external agencies, and range from $500 to $2,500 a semester.

During Lopez’s three years at UTEP, he has received money from the Presidential Excellence Scholarship, College of Engineering Leader Scholarship, Bob and Diane Malone Leadership Scholarship, the Judith K. Solis Memorial Scholarship and NACME Scholars Block Grant.

“I definitely appreciate the financial help I received,” he said. “Because I have seen the impact that it has had on me, once I graduate, start my career and hopefully become successful, I want to do the same for others and give other students an opportunity like I had through a scholarship.” - Victor R. Martinez
Approximately 1,000 members of the Miner Nation participated in The University of Texas at El Paso’s ninth annual Project MOVE (Miner Opportunities for Volunteer Experiences) on Feb. 24, 2018, at about 50 borderland sites and beyond.

Students, staff, faculty, alumni and friends cleaned, patched, painted, landscaped, organized and performed other duties for dozens of nonprofit agencies.

Project MOVE was created as a community service vehicle to build camaraderie, citizenship, leadership and volunteerism within the UTEP family. An associated goal is to introduce participants to different parts of the community, and the diverse agencies that serve it and its residents.

In one case, an interdisciplinary group of 20 volunteers from UTEP’s Student Support Services Program painted the inside and outside of a Lower Valley home and cleared debris from the property owned by a disabled veteran and his wife.

“It was fun and humbling,” said Chris Favila, a junior mechanical engineering major. “At the end of the day, we were tired, but we felt as if we had accomplished something. We made a difference.”

This year’s event also included some out-of-town alumni groups in Texas, Maryland and Colorado who coordinated their own community service projects. - Daniel Perez
Miners in action, clockwise from opposite page, cleared trails for an archaeological site near Mount Cristo Rey in Sunland Park, New Mexico; alumni in Maryland cleaned a storage area at Central Middle School in Edgewater, Maryland; Denver area alumni accepted, sorted, priced and displayed donations at the Sister Carmen Community Center Thrift Store in Lafayette, Colorado; Miners at the previously mentioned archaeological site trail helped the Insights Science Center; volunteers with the Student Support Services Program painted the outside (bottom right photo) and inside (bottom left photo) of a Lower Valley home in need of renovations with Rebuilding Together El Paso; Miners associated with Delta Sigma Pi assembled baby welcome packages for Guiding Star El Paso in Central El Paso.
Distinguished Guests

**FRASER STODDART**
Nobel laureate Sir Fraser Stoddart, Ph.D., delivered a Centennial Lecture titled “My Journey to Stockholm,” on Feb. 1. Stoddart is a board of trustees professor in the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences at Northwestern University. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry together with Bernard L. Feringa and Jean-Pierre Sauvage in 2016 for the design and synthesis of molecular machines. Stoddart was recognized for his work to develop a rotaxane, a mechanically interlocked molecular architecture. The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences stated, “The development of computing demonstrates how the miniaturization of technology can lead to a revolution. The 2016 Nobel Laureates in Chemistry have ... taken chemistry to a new dimension.”

**JOHN BRENNAN**
Former CIA Director John Brennan spoke Feb. 14 to graduate and undergraduate students enrolled in UTEP’s National Security Studies Institute (NSSI). Brennan, a distinguished nonresident scholar at The University of Texas at Austin, shared stories about his 25 years with the CIA and commented on some of the current challenges that face the U.S. intelligence community at the regional, national and international levels, especially in the digital realm.

He lauded NSSI students for their interest in the intelligence field, and advised them to study foreign languages and to pursue study abroad opportunities. Brennan also met with NSSI faculty and UTEP President Diana Natalicio during his visit.

**ANGELA Y. DAVIS**
Renowned scholar and civil rights advocate Angela Y. Davis spoke about the importance of Black History Month, social movements, prison reforms and current immigration concerns during her Feb. 7 presentation at UTEP that drew more than 1,600 people. Davis said she was honored to be in El Paso, which she called a historical epicenter of the Chicano movement. The distinguished professor emerita from the University of California, Santa Cruz, became well-known for her involvement in the black liberation movement starting in the late 1960s. She has continued her activism as an author, humanitarian and powerful voice for social justice. Her visit was sponsored by UTEP’s African-American Studies Program and Black Student Union.

**DEBORAH LIPSTADT**
Internationally known Holocaust historian Deborah Lipstadt, Ph.D., told a UTEP audience on Feb. 15 that education is the key to keep the truth of the Holocaust alive. The author and educator is the Dorot Professor of Modern Jewish History and Holocaust Studies at Emory University in Atlanta. She advocated for students to think critically and to ask questions.

She said she hoped her presentation would caution her audience to the dangers of Holocaust denial along with other forms of “fake news” and factual distortions that have proliferated throughout the internet. Ezra Cappell, Ph.D., director of UTEP’s Inter-American Jewish Studies Program, organized her visit.
DOLORES HUERTA

“¡Sí, se puede!” “Yes, we can!” The iconic slogan was coined in 1972 by Dolores Huerta, co-founder of the United Farm Workers and right-hand woman of Cesar Chávez. The phrase remains the inspiration behind her message to empower everyday people to rise up and demand change.

On March 3, UTEP’s Student Engagement and Leadership Center (SELC) welcomed the American labor leader, feminist and civil rights activist as the keynote speaker for the annual UTEP L.I.V.E. Student Leadership Conference.

In line with the conference’s theme, “Make it Happen, Make it Matter,” Huerta spoke to an energized crowd of students and community members about the power within each of them to make societal changes through direct nonviolent actions such as boycotts, strikes and voting.

JOHN MATTESON

Pulitzer Prize-winning author John Matteson, Ph.D., mesmerized his sizeable audience with a highly interdisciplinary presentation on April 5 that wove elements from history, health care, literature and military science.

Matteson, a distinguished professor of English at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York, was the keynote speaker for UTEP’s 33rd Annual Literature Lecture.

The charismatic scholar engaged his audience with stories about novelist Louisa May Alcott and poet Walt Whitman, whose lives and literary works were influenced by their roles as Civil War nurses. His overriding message was to care for one another and treat others with compassion for the common good.

BRAD SMITH

Brad Smith, president of Microsoft, visited UTEP March 19 to deliver a Centennial Lecture and meet with computer science and business students.

Smith’s address, “The Impact of Artificial Intelligence: What Will It Mean for the Future of Jobs?” touched on how technological innovations could eliminate some jobs but also create new career fields.

Smith also spoke about Microsoft’s TechSpark program in El Paso. The initiative fosters greater economic opportunity through partnership with rural and smaller metropolitan communities. In each community, Microsoft will work with local partners to help accelerate economic growth through regional internet connectivity, digital and career skills development, nonprofit support and digital business transformation.

AUNDRE F. PIGGEE


Piggee, who oversees policies and procedures used by all Army logisticians throughout the world, spent the afternoon looking at UTEP’s additive manufacturing capabilities. He met with UTEP officials including Bob Currey, UTEP assistant vice president for research, and Ryan Wicker, Ph.D., director and founder of the W.M. Keck Center for 3D Innovation in the College of Engineering.

The visit included tours of the Keck Center and UTEP’s EM Lab.
New Deans Join the UTEP Family

College of Liberal Arts

Denis O’Hearn, Ph.D., said UTEP’s commitment to access and excellence for its students and its genuine connection with the Paso del Norte region were among the key factors in his decision to join the institution as dean of the College of Liberal Arts.

O’Hearn, a native of Carlsbad, New Mexico, added that he was impressed with the University’s cross-border connection and vowed to strengthen ties with Mexico. His other initial goals are to increase the number of the college’s graduate courses and to enhance service-learning opportunities, especially for undergraduates.

“I’m excited about the University’s mission,” said O’Hearn, who started on July 1, 2018. “It’s serious about educating students.”

The former Fulbright Scholar had been chair of the Department of Sociology at Texas A&M University. Prior to that, he held academic positions at institutions in New York, Wisconsin and Indiana, and in countries in Asia and Europe.

The first-generation college student earned his doctorate in sociology (1988) and his master’s degrees in sociology (1985) and in economics and Russian and Eastern European Studies (1978) from the University of Michigan.

He received his bachelor’s degree in economics from the University of New Mexico in 1975.

The new dean is a prolific and award-winning author. Most of his publications are about the effects of transnational corporations on socio-economic development, and on communities in prisons. His book subjects range from Irish economic history to Cossacks in Russia and the Zapatistas in Mexico.

“My father was a potash miner in Carlsbad,” O’Hearn said. “Potash is the nutrient form of potassium. I am glad to follow in his footsteps to become a Miner.” - Daniel Perez

College of Education

Raised in Honolulu, Hawaii, Clifton Tanabe knew about The University of Texas at El Paso from its days as a Western Athletic Conference rival to the University of Hawaii at Manoa (UH).

As a higher education professor, researcher and administrator, he learned more about the University through the national attention it received for its successful access and excellence model and its leadership role with the El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence, a community partnership hailed for its transformational education reforms.

“That was truly a powerful light for me,” said Tanabe, Ph.D., new dean of UTEP’s College of Education as of July 1, 2018. “I saw what some folks who come together could pull off. It was very impressive.”

Tanabe said he was excited and grateful to be at UTEP to serve its students and those of the larger El Paso community. He also looks forward to contributing to the growth of the college and the University.

The Indiana native came to UTEP from UH, where he taught educational policy and law and was a lecturer in law at the university’s William S. Richardson School of Law. He served in the chancellor’s office as director for institutional transformation and executive assistant chief of staff. He also directed the Leaders for the Next Generation Program and co-directed the Hawaii Educational Policy Center.

Tanabe earned his doctorate in educational policy studies (1998) and a law degree (2004) from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He received his Master of Education in educational foundations from UH in 1994 and his bachelor’s degree in humanities from Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado, in 1988. - Daniel Perez
The UTEP Office of Admissions and Recruitment hosted more than 1,000 high school juniors and seniors during its annual Orange and Blue Day open houses.

This year, the University split the campus experience into two events – one in February for seniors and another in April for juniors.

Orange and Blue Day provided the students and their families with an opportunity to tour the campus and learn about student support services and admissions and financial aid processes.
Additive manufacturing, or 3-D printing, has revolutionized how circuit boards, to artificial limbs and many other items are manufactured. At The University of Texas at El Paso, advances in 3-D printing techniques may one day make it possible to custom-print medications tailored to specific patients or 3-D print food that’s healthy enough to eat.

The expansion of 3-D printing applications in health care has led to a new collaboration between UTEP’s School of Pharmacy and College of Engineering. It will introduce pharmacy students to 3-D printing and engage faculty in research pertaining to drug delivery systems and food printing.

“The adaptation of novel 3-D printing techniques may one day make it possible for pharmacists to utilize this technology to produce personalized drug delivery systems and dosage forms,” said School of Pharmacy Dean José O. Rivera, Pharm.D. “Our collaboration with engineering will create opportunities for our pharmacy students to gain experience working with 3-D printing and potentially expand their scope of practice.”

In January 2018, Jongwha Chang, Ph.D., assistant professor of pharmacy, and Namsoo Peter Kim, Ph.D., associate professor of metallurgical, materials and biomedical engineering (MMBME), established the Center for Advanced Food Printing and Pharmacy Training (CAFÉ-PPT) in the School of Pharmacy.

In the CAFÉ-PPT, students from the College of Engineering’s Printing Nano-Engineering (PNE) Lab are building 3-D printers using technology Kim designed as part of a cooperative agreement with Seokyeong University in Seoul, South Korea.

Chang and Assistant Professor of Pharmacy Jwala Renukuntla, Ph.D., plan to use the PNE technology to print a microneedles-based nicotine patch. They will be working with Rina Koyani, an MMBME research fellow. Chang also will use the technology to conduct research on printing customized food for people with chronic diseases, such as diabetes, or for people with food allergies or food sensitivities.

“I believe a lot of our students are interested in research related to using 3-D printing,” said Chang, who plans to incorporate 3-D printing into the School of Pharmacy’s curriculum in the near future. “The study of drug delivery systems is an important part of the pharmacy program, and students who are interested will be able to take part in this innovative research.”

- Laura L. Acosta
**A First at UTEP**
Chemistry Assistant Professor Awarded Sloan Research Fellowship

Skye Fortier, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at The University of Texas at El Paso, is the campus’ first recipient of the Sloan Research Fellowship.

Fortier was among the 126 top prize winners announced by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation on Feb. 15. The fellowship is a highly regarded honor that recognizes early-career scholars whose achievements mark them as the next generation of scientific leaders.

Fortier will use the $60,000 he received to further his research in synthetic and organic chemistry, and in the making of metal-containing compounds.

The fellowship is open to scholars in the fields of physics, chemistry, economics, mathematics, neuroscience, computer science, ocean sciences, and computational and evolutionary molecular biology. - Pablo Villa

**A New Kind of Team**
Health Disciplines Practice Real-World Collaboration

UTEP health sciences, pharmacy and nursing students got a dose of reality as they learned to work as part of an interprofessional health care team.

During the spring 2018 semester, UTEP’s Health-Focused Interprofessional Education Community of Practice hosted an interprofessional education (IPE) experience that enabled students from occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech-language pathology, rehabilitation counseling, social work, nursing and pharmacy to work collaboratively to address the health care needs of a fictional patient from a vulnerable population.

About 150 health professions students were divided into groups and assigned a case study involving a transgender individual.

The interdisciplinary activity was an opportunity for students to discuss their roles, learn from each other and work collaboratively to provide the best possible care to the patient.

“Even though most of us are in the same building, we all stick to our own disciplines,” said April Gutierrez, a speech language pathology student. “So (IPE activities) are really cool because we’re getting to know the different disciplines. We get to connect with each other and learn about the different roles we do to take care of the patient.” - Laura L. Acosta

**South by Southwest**
UTEP Puts Innovations on Display

The University of Texas at El Paso was well represented in a showcase of the El Paso region during the South by Southwest (SXSW) festival in Austin, Texas, in March 2018.

A UTEP delegation joined an El Paso contingent that sent a representative group to the popular festival March 10-15. UTEP’s presence at the SXSW trade show was geared toward letting attendees know about the technological advancements and learning opportunities the University is creating.

Several campus departments had direct representation, including the W.M. Keck Center for 3D Innovation, the Cyber-ShARE Center of Excellence, the Discovery Analytics Laboratory, the Center for the Advancement of Space Safety and Mission Assurance Research (CASSMAR), the Center for Arts Entrepreneurship, the Border Biomedical Research Center, and the School of Nursing Center for Simulation.

Festivalgoers who visited the booth were greeted by a sleek rectangular prism emblazoned with UTEP graphics and a video detailing recent campus highlights. Interactive displays included demonstrations of 3-D printing technology by the Keck Center and a look at an apparatus that allows wearers to sing in tune invented in UTEP’s Department of Computer Science.

The final two days of the festival featured visits by UTEP alumnus Danny Olivas, Ph.D., former astronaut and director of special initiatives for CASSMAR.

More than 70,000 people from throughout the world attend the annual festival, organizers said. - Pablo Villa

Above photo: A delegation from The University of Texas at El Paso attended the South by Southwest festival in Austin in March to showcase the University’s growing list of technological advancements and learning opportunities. Attendees included, from left, Jose F. Motta, graduate research assistant for the W.M. Keck Center for 3D Innovation; Xavier Jimenez, graduate research assistant for the Keck Center; Erik Pavia, clinical professor in UTEP’s College of Business Administration; and Laurie Banitch, development officer for Asset Management and Development. Photo: Courtesy

Visit utep.edu/magazine to see the UTEP video shown at South by Southwest.
The goal of Anita Quintana’s research at The University of Texas at El Paso is to understand what happens during development to cause children to be born with birth defects.

More specifically, she is looking at birth defects that affect neurological and craniofacial development. Quintana, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Department of Biological Sciences, begins by studying human patients who have these diseases and disorders. She combines the genetic studies conducted on these patients with developmental biology studies of zebrafish.

“That same gene or similar gene that is mutated in the human patient, we find its parallel gene in zebrafish,” Quintana said. “Then, we look to see what happens in the fish when we delete that gene or we cause a mutation in that gene. So, we hope that by studying the cells and the responses in the fish that we can understand what might be happening during human development a little bit better.”

Aside from being a compact, cost-effective option, Quintana said she works with zebrafish because they externally fertilize their eggs. That allows her to analyze development from a single cell to a complete organism, a process that takes five days.

Quintana’s work is supported by a research scientist development award from the National Institutes of Health. The grant, known as a K01, from the NIH’s National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, is part of a cross-disciplinary research program and is worth $700,932 during a three-year period. It marks the first time a UTEP faculty member has received a K01 award.

-Pablo Villa
Drone Safety

UTEP Sets Pace in National Low-Altitude Airspace Safety Initiative

The NASA MIRO Center for Space Exploration and Technology Research (cSETR) at The University of Texas at El Paso is at the forefront of a nationwide effort to improve low-altitude airspace safety.

Unmanned aerial systems (UAS) experts from cSETR are leading a team comprised of leaders from El Paso County, the City of El Paso, El Paso International Airport and many other local government entities to install the country’s first countywide-area operational low-altitude UAS Traffic Management (UTM) system. The University and community teamed up with California-based AirMap, a global airspace management platform for drones, for this implementation.

A UTEP research team began installation of the UTM infrastructure in February 2018. The system achieved initial operational capability March 15, and was expected to be fully operational by late summer.

“Unmanned aerial systems research, development and commercialization is a rapidly expanding part of the U.S. economy,” said Ahsan Choudhuri, Ph.D., cSETR director and chair of UTEP’s mechanical engineering department. “The cSETR research team under the leadership of Dr. Michael McGee is positioning UTEP and our region as a national leader in this new frontier. Our effort will create incredible educational and economic development opportunities for the El Paso community.”

Drone use throughout the United States has risen significantly. There are currently more than 1,000 drones in El Paso registered with the Federal Aviation Administration. The actual number of drones in El Paso is likely much larger since not all owners register their aircraft with the FAA.

“The use of unmanned aerial systems will continue to exponentially grow throughout the U.S.,” said Michael McGee, Ph.D., cSETR senior research associate. “This UTM system sets the foundation for UTEP and our greater community to be national leaders in this arena, serving our 21st century student population.”

The primary focus of the UTM system is to increase safety throughout the Paso del Norte region. Airplane pilots will be able to avoid mid-air collisions with unmanned aircraft during takeoffs and landings in low-altitude airspace. Helicopters will be able to coordinate with other pilots and assets on the ground as well as avoid collisions with other low-flying aircraft. Drones will be better detected and managed through use of the system.

Benefits from utilization of the UTM infrastructure include helping farmers increase production by identifying problems in crops more quickly, clearing traffic accidents faster, inspecting critical infrastructure without putting people at risk, helping firefighters combat blazes more effectively, assisting in search-and-rescue missions, and inspecting buildings to identify energy efficiency issues. - Pablo Villa
New Coaches Ready to Lead Miners
Dana Dimel
No Stranger to Adversity

Some NCAA football coaches might be intimidated by the idea of taking the reins of a team that went winless the previous season. But Dana Dimel, UTEP’s new head football coach, sees it as an opportunity.

Dimel has faced similar adversity before. In 2002, he spearheaded a major rebuilding effort in his first year at the University of Houston, where the Cougars went 0-11 the previous season. In Dimel’s first year, Houston won five games, including an upset of eventual Conference USA champion Louisville.

Dimel most recently served as the offensive coordinator, running backs coach and tight ends coach at his alma mater, Kansas State University, where he had worked since 2009.

“We’re putting together a great offense and defense … and I think the fans will really enjoy coming to see the product we’re going to put on the field and see where the program is moving,” Dimel said of UTEP’s upcoming 2018 season. “We have a great plan on how to get this program going and be in a great position in years to come. And hopefully, everybody will come out and really enjoy the progress.”

Dimel was a member of the Wildcats’ All-Decade Team for the 1980s. He received a B.A. in marketing from Kansas State in 1986. Dimel began his career at Kansas State as a graduate assistant in 1987 and was elevated to offensive line coach in 1989. He took over as offensive coordinator in 1995. Overall, Dimel spent 10 seasons at the university before accepting the head coach job at Wyoming.

At the time, he was the youngest Division I-A head coach in the nation at the age of 34. Dimel’s three seasons at Wyoming produced a record of 22-13.

Dimel spent 2000-2002 as the head coach at Houston. While with the Cougars, Dimel brought in the top-ranked recruiting classes in Conference USA in 2001 and 2002.

He continued work on his graduate degree at Kansas State before taking over as Arizona’s tight ends coach in 2005 and, eventually, run-game coordinator. In 2008, he was promoted to associate head coach. The 2008 Arizona squad finished 8-5 while posting a bowl victory for the first time in 10 years.

“We are very pleased to find a coach with the talent, expertise and experience of Dana Dimel,” UTEP Director of Athletics Jim Senter said. “He has strong ties to the state of Texas. He will immediately impact recruiting in the state of Texas and he is a proven winner.” - Leonard Martinez

Rodney Terry
Returns to Lone Star State

Rodney Terry, who led Fresno State University to the 2016 Mountain West Conference tournament title and three postseason bids in the last five years, was named the 19th head coach in UTEP men’s basketball history in March 2018.

“We are delighted to welcome Coach Terry to El Paso and we’re excited about the future of UTEP basketball under his leadership,” UTEP President Diana Natalicio said. “He’s enjoyed a very successful tenure as Fresno State’s head coach, and he’s well-known as an effective recruiter with deep ties to the Lone Star State. We look very much forward to bringing him back to Texas to usher in a new era of Miner Ball.”

Terry, 49, guided Fresno State to a 126-108 record in seven seasons as head coach (2011-2018), including 20-win campaigns in four of the last five years. The Bulldogs compiled a 62-58 mark in Mountain West Conference play during the last seven years, with double-digit victories in each of the last four campaigns.

“I want a homecourt,” Terry said of why he chose to come to UTEP. “We played in a very competitive league in the Mountain West. We played in many great venues. We got a chance to build that program to a very high level. But there were nights where we had to create and bring energy to the building … I know the passion when Miner basketball is playing at a very high level. You’re able to have an unbelievable homecourt here.”

Jim Senter, UTEP athletics director, said Terry is a great fit for the University because of his connections to Texas and his proven track record as a coach and recruiter.

Terry, a native of Angleton, Texas, played basketball at St. Edward’s University in Austin, and began his collegiate coaching career as an assistant with the Hilltoppers in 1990. Following three coaching stints at high schools in Texas – including as the head coach at Somerville High School and his alma mater Angleton High School – Terry served as an assistant coach at Baylor (1996-1998), UNC Wilmington (1998-2002) and Texas (2002-2011) before landing the head coaching position at Fresno State.

Terry earned his bachelor’s degree in business administration with a minor in physical education from St. Edward’s University in 1990. During his collegiate career, he was a three-year starter at point guard and a three-time Academic All-Big State Conference selection. - Leonard Martinez

Jim Senter Says…

“We are very pleased to find a coach with the talent, expertise and experience of Dana Dimel … He will immediately impact recruiting in the state of Texas and he is a proven winner.”

“Rodney Terry is a great fit for the University because of his connections to Texas and his proven track record as a coach and recruiter.”

Photos by Ivan Pierre Aguirre
Raise the Pick

Raise the Pick shares the unique stories of UTEP student-athletes and how athletic scholarships have made a difference in their lives. Each of these students reflects on the value of their UTEP experiences and the opportunities they create for the future. Visit minerathleticclub.com to learn more about the Raise the Pick campaign.

Alyssa Palacios

Some people are just born to play certain positions on an athletic team.

"A lot of people were scared of the ball," Alyssa Palacios said of her position as a soccer goalkeeper. "Also, my older sister was a goalie first and I wanted to be like my bigger sister. Once I was put at (goalie), I didn’t want to go anywhere else."

That prowess between the posts allowed Palacios, a kinesiology major who started playing soccer as a young girl, to earn a Division I scholarship from The University of Texas at El Paso to continue her passion for soccer and earn a college degree.

Her family — especially her extended family — were nervous about her attending UTEP because they were from the Dallas area and didn’t know anything about El Paso. Now they are unofficial ambassadors for Palacios’ adopted city.

"My parents come to so many of the games and they try to bring different family members, too," Palacios said. "My family would say, 'Now that we see it, we love it. We’re comfortable with you being there.'"

Palacios has been solid on and off the field, earning a spot on the Conference-USA Commissioner’s Honor Roll in 2016, 2017 and 2018.

"Alyssa embodies UTEP soccer," said Kevin Cross, UTEP Soccer head coach. "She is tough as nails, and she will do anything for UTEP soccer to make a save."

Palacios is ready to enjoy her senior year in her second home, and continue to be thankful for the opportunity a Division I scholarship to UTEP has provided.

"It’s meant everything (to me)," Palacios said. "I just knew if I didn’t go through soccer I wasn’t going to get the full college experience of getting to live in a dorm and the whole campus life. I’ve been able to meet all these people from different places and do different things. I am so grateful."

- Leonard Martinez

Palacios has been solid on and off the field, earning a spot on the Conference-USA Commissioner’s Honor Roll in 2016, 2017 and 2018.
Aaron Terrazas

After a year-and-a-half at the University of Oklahoma, Aaron Terrazas needed a mulligan in his college golf career.

“I just decided I needed to get more playing time because I wasn’t accomplishing what I wanted to accomplish,” said Terrazas, who just completed his junior season. “Then I started looking for options.”

Terrazas remembered The University of Texas at El Paso recruiting him in high school and chose to give it a closer look.

He enrolled in 2016 and is studying communication.

“I’ve loved El Paso since the first day I was here on my recruiting visit,” said Terrazas, who grew up in Veracruz and Mexico City, Mexico. “It felt like home coming from a culture that’s pretty similar to El Paso’s culture. The people around here are great. I didn’t have to go through an adaptation process and that was huge for me because I could just get to work in school and on the team stuff.”

Terrazas’ father played for the Mexican national soccer team, so the younger Terrazas grew up playing sports. At age 14, his family said he needed to choose between soccer and golf.

“I picked golf because I just fell in love with the process of getting better because of me, not because I have to depend on a team,” Terrazas said.

He became the No. 1 junior golfer in Mexico for three years in high school, a four-year member of the Mexican national team, and placed in the top 10 at the Toyota Junior Gold World Cup and the U.S. Junior Amateur Championship.

Earning a Division I scholarship to play at UTEP is something for which he will always be grateful.

“The degree means a lot to me,” he said. “As soon as I get that degree … I won’t have the words to describe how thankful I will be to UTEP. Ultimately, all of the athletes want to accomplish that goal, and the scholarship gave me a path to follow my future.”

-Leonard Martinez

See videos about Alyssa Palacios and Aaron Terrazas at utep.edu/magazine.
Record Breaker
Runner Sets World and NCAA Records

UTEP runner Michael Saruni had a memorable track season. The capstone moment came Jan. 19, 2018, at the Albuquerque Convention Center, where the sophomore ran a world-record time of 1:14.79 in the 600-meter indoor race.

"Saruni’s world-record race was very impressive," said Mika Laaksonen, UTEP track and field head coach. "He’s a special athlete and he’s only going to improve." The win for the Kenya native beat the previous site record of former teammate and 2017 NCAA champion Emmanuel Korir (1:14.97). Saruni’s time also topped the previous world record of Casimir Loxson (1:14.91, 2005).

On April 28, Saruni set another impressive mark when he clocked the NCAA record time of 1:43.25 in the 800-meter run at the Desert Heat Classic in Tucson, Arizona during the outdoor season.

"Michael Saruni made the most of the opportunity to run a great 800-meter time tonight," Laaksonen said. "His time was one of two collegiate records set tonight and that just proves what a special athlete he is." Saruni’s time broke the NCAA record previously held by Donavan Brazier (Texas A&M), who ran 1:43.55 at the 2016 NCAA Championships. His time ranked as the fastest in the world this year and breaks the school record held by Korir (1:43.73).

Saruni’s 2017 indoor and outdoor seasons were so successful that he was named an All-American in both categories.

- Leonard Martinez
FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

What is #EPMAD?

New Athletic Director Engages With Community

When Jim Senter was named UTEP's new director of athletics on Nov. 22, 2017, he delivered a simple message to Miner fans.

“I am a big believer that 'Every Person Makes a Difference,' and we will work tirelessly to engage the community to be a difference maker for UTEP Athletics,” he said.

If you follow Senter on Twitter – his handle is @JimSenter2 – you will see that he has more than lived up to the promise. He posts photos almost daily with fans, students and staff with whom he has interacted, all dedicated to the cause of making a difference for UTEP Athletics.

Perhaps you have seen him meeting and greeting countless Miner supporters at athletic events, or maybe you have attended one of the UTEP Athletics town halls throughout the city.

It is an exciting new era for UTEP Athletics with Dana Dimel taking the reins of the football program, and Rodney Terry coming on board as men's basketball head coach. But as Terry said at his introductory press conference on March 14, “We're only going to be as successful as our community support and our student support. We need you guys to help us be successful.”

If you want to make a difference for UTEP Athletics, purchase football or basketball season tickets, donate toward UTEP student-athlete scholarships, or support a UTEP Athletics sport of your choice. For more information, go to utepathletics.com/epmad or call 915-747-6150.

- Jeff Darby

Sun Bowl Renovations

UTEP, GECU Partner on New Vision For Stadium

The University of Texas at El Paso and GECU are working together to modernize Sun Bowl Stadium, with the first phase of renovations scheduled for completion by the start of the 2018 football season.

The project will bring spectacular, widespread enhancements to the 55-year-old iconic venue — from a new press box and Sky Lounge to the introduction of the GECU Terrace. Other components of the Sun Bowl project include a renovated concourse with modernized fan amenities, restrooms and ADA capabilities.

“The planned renovation of Sun Bowl Stadium is a key step in our continued campus transformation that enhances the overall experience of our students, faculty, staff and visitors,” UTEP President Diana Natalicio said. “We are grateful for the collaboration and support of our longtime community partner GECU as we begin modernizing this iconic facility that serves not only the UTEP campus but the entire region.”

Located directly beneath the press box, the GECU Terrace will feature club seats, loge boxes and outdoor cantinas. GECU Terrace will be a collaborative place for families to gather year-round to support UTEP, and will also impact the lives of community members through GECU’s financial education and free tax preparation initiatives. It is targeted for completion in 2019, along with the all-new press box and Sky Lounge, which will replace the existing Captain’s Club.

“As a proud partner with UTEP, we work together and share the common goal of improving lives for generations to come,” said GECU President and CEO Crystal Long. - Jeff Darby

For more information, visit www.utep.edu/sunbowlproject.
**Alejandra Nevarez** was a freshman in high school the first time she stepped into a classroom in the United States. Her family had moved from El Paso to Juárez when she was just two months old. That meant Alejandra began high school knowing very little English. She worried that she would not meet the expectations of her teachers, family and even herself. She felt under-qualified, ill-prepared and lacking potential.

But, she persevered. And when she enrolled at The University of Texas at El Paso in fall 2017, she was surprised to discover that what she perceived to be her shortcomings might actually be assets in preparing her for lifelong success. She gained this insight through the UTEP Edge – the University’s student success culture that seeks to identify and build on the strengths that students bring with them to the campus, and propel them toward successful degree completion and personal and professional success after graduation.
The UTEP Edge officially launched during Miner Welcome Week in fall 2017, the same semester Alejandra arrived on campus. Since its implementation, the Edge has sought to enhance the overall student experience at UTEP and, specifically, to continue developing and integrating the University’s high-impact practices, with a goal of preparing students for leadership and success, both on campus and beyond.

**A Culture Change at UTEP**

The UTEP Edge culture evolved from the successful execution of the University’s access and excellence mission. It was first conceived in 2016 by a large team of UTEP faculty, staff and students who were responsible for developing a Quality Enhancement Plan, or QEP, as part of the University’s accreditation review process. Through research and a series of focus groups and conversations with a broad range of UTEP stakeholders, the team identified increased student engagement in high-impact practices as a potentially powerful factor in enhancing their success at UTEP and in their careers and lives after graduation.

“UTEP’s QEP recognizes that our students’ often limited financial means are complemented by huge assets – talent, motivation, and life experiences – which will enable them to succeed on our campus, in the world of work, and in the global community,” said UTEP President Diana Natalicio. “The UTEP Edge approach begins with these special strengths and attributes that our students bring to the campus, and builds on them through a range of experiences designed to foster their development and ensure that, upon graduation, they are fully prepared with the competence and confidence that they will need to compete successfully with their peers anywhere.”

Research on student success (e.g., Kuh and Pascarella) has revealed that students who engage in two or more high-impact practices while in college have better retention rates, graduate faster, are more connected, and have a greater sense of belonging to a university. For first-generation and Latino college students, the benefits of high-impact practices appear to be even greater.

Well before the Edge got its name, Louie Rodriguez, associate vice president for student affairs, played a key role in its development. He served as the Edge’s Student Affairs liaison and initially helped conduct focus groups, a series of conversations with students to determine whether such an approach made sense as UTEP’s focus over the next 10 years. According to Rodriguez, it became clear early on that the UTEP Edge had become more than merely a strategic student success plan.

“The UTEP Edge has become a culture change,” Rodriguez said. “We wanted to set the expectation that a UTEP education equals engagement and meaningful high-impact experiences that are reflective of student needs. If you are choosing to come to the University, you’re going to do more than just go to class; you’re going to be engaged and use your limited time in meaningful ways to get you prepared for your future.”

**An Asset-Based Approach**

One of the earliest accomplishments of the UTEP Edge was the development of an asset-based approach to serve as the core of the Edge philosophy. The basic premise is that students enter UTEP with many talents, great strengths and big dreams, and the UTEP Edge further develops these assets through high-impact, enriching experiences.

“The asset-based approach transformed the entire mission of the UTEP Edge,” said David Ruiter, associate provost and co-writer of UTEP’s QEP. “This approach is about honoring everybody with their talents and experiences and letting them know that what they bring to the table – language skills and bilingualism; work experience; academic, athletic, and artistic backgrounds; military service; etc. – is valuable and valued here at UTEP.”

UTEP senior Brianna Brogdon-Gilbert possessed extensive skills when she arrived at UTEP as a freshman. In high school, she had served as an officer for her school’s honor society and a JROTC brigade commander for the El Paso Independent School District, and she played a leadership role in various other student organizations.

“I felt like I had good communication skills...
and leadership skills through my high school experiences when I came to UTEP, but I wasn’t sure how to apply those to a college setting,” Brogdon-Gilbert recalled. “I think that the UTEP Edge activities and experiences challenge students to build on the skills they come in with and help them discover who they are and what they are comfortable with to find their passion and further develop their skills.”

New Student Orientation (NSO) for incoming students received a makeover to accommodate the asset-based approach and encourage new students to think about the skills and assets they bring with them to the University.

At NSO, a team of UTEP students talks about the skills they brought to UTEP and how they developed and added to them through their Edge experiences. New students are then offered the opportunity to reflect on their own key assets and identify their core values.

A UTEP psychology major, Alejandra had not worked professionally before attending college, but what she gained through her life experiences was significant. Her parents did not speak English, so she would often serve as a translator for them. She was also able to learn very quickly not only how to function academically, but to thrive in a new country. Through the Edge, she began to understand that she brought with her to UTEP such assets as bilingualism, adaptability and responsibility.

“I never thought about things like being bilingual as a skill; it was no big deal,” recalled Alejandra, who was first introduced to the UTEP Edge at NSO the summer before her freshman year. “The UTEP Edge helped me recognize my skills and highlighted them. I remember feeling proud of myself and accomplished for already bringing something to the table.”

In addition to NSO, UTEP offers to students, faculty and staff a broad range of other resources such as activities and workshops focused on the identification and exploration of participants’ key assets and core values.

“Based on the stories shared at NSO, I think we are getting students to start to reflect on who they are, what they care about, and what their strengths are,” said Erika Mein, co-chair of the Department of Teacher Education and the faculty lead in promoting the Edge from an asset-based approach. “UTEP is on the cutting edge in implementing high-impact practices with an asset-based approach to student success. The University is poised to become a model for other high schools, community colleges and universities that serve diverse populations.”

NSO was not the only student first-year experience to receive a UTEP Edge makeover. University 1301 Seminar in Critical Inquiry also underwent some changes. This core curriculum course is designed to engage first-year students intellectually in an academic theme through which they will further develop their knowledge and skills, as well as their engagement with the UTEP community.

The expectation is that all University 1301 courses will serve as an introduction to engagement. Consistent with the UTEP Edge, building communication skills – both written and oral – is also playing a more significant role in 1301 courses, with additional plans in the works.

“What we hope to introduce in fall 2018 is a sort of embedded student engagement plan for all students enrolled in University 1301 courses, so they know how to sign up for student organizations, community service, know where the Study Abroad office is, and so on,” Rodriguez said.

**Spreading the Word**

When Carol Parker, provost and vice president for academic affairs, arrived at UTEP in fall 2017, she set as one of her main goals to help communicate the UTEP Edge philosophy more broadly across the campus. According to Provost Parker, many UTEP faculty members were already engaging in the Edge’s high-impact experiences in their classrooms and labs, but they were not always making the connection between their work and the goals of the Edge.

“Faculty have the most opportunity to make the greatest difference in our students’ achievements,” Provost Parker said. “For students, the highest-impact practice is a positive, professional relationship with faculty.”

Another major accomplishment of the UTEP Edge has been the development of a new holistic, cohort-based advising model. Previously, advising had generally been structured to assist students collectively,
“As faculty and staff, we all have the opportunity to impact students’ lives and have a responsibility to empower them...”

Florina Barnett
EDGE Steering Committee member

rather than individually. Personalization of the college experience for each student is consistent with the UTEP Edge philosophy.

‘Advisers are now trained to assist students in developing their own academic and co-curricular plans based on each student’s interests, aspirations and commitments,’ said Heather Smith, associate vice president for academic affairs.

Every student is assigned an adviser in the Academic Advising Center who assists them in developing individualized academic, financial and engagement plans that converge to forge a clear pathway to successful degree completion.

“The holistic model is designed to help our students identify and capitalize on their assets in order to create solid foundations during their first three semesters,” Smith said. “By elevating advising to deliberate and meaningful interaction with every student, we can assist students in finding the right balance to stay, to finish and to succeed.”

Training the Trainers

Since the implementation of the Edge, a greater emphasis has been placed on the professional development of faculty and staff who play a major role in student success.

Working groups from divisions and departments throughout campus came together to develop an Edge-driven professional development initiative in which all UTEP employees were encouraged to participate.

“As faculty and staff, we all have the opportunity to impact students’ lives and have a responsibility to empower them, show them by example, and mentor them in their future job goals,” said Florina Barnett, a director in the Office of Human Resources. “To do all these things requires professional development.”

An extensive catalog of trainings was created that focus on Edge-related content, including such soft skills as communication, team building, emotional intelligence and leadership essentials.

The Center for Faculty Leadership and Development (CFLD), led by Marc Cox, associate professor in the Department of Biological Sciences, was established in spring 2017 to further the professional development of faculty and staff across campus. The center has four major focal areas: teaching and learning, scholarship and mentoring, entrepreneurship and innovation, and leadership. The CFLD provides a wide range of programming in these areas for faculty and staff.

“The more successful our faculty and staff are, the more opportunities are available for students,” Cox said. “We are obligated as faculty to continuously improve for the benefit of our students.”

Community Engagement

The UTEP Edge has not only fostered successes on campus but in the community as well. Ivette Savina, assistant vice president for outreach and student access at UTEP, has spent the past year focusing on moving the UTEP Edge philosophy into area schools. The goal is to provide a base of support for new generations.
of students who will enter the University already familiar with the UTEP Edge and the opportunities that it presents for them.

Using the asset-based approach, Savina’s team visits area schools and provides students in grades K-12 with presentations and activities that identify and elevate their assets through the various Edge experiences. They explain how participation in these experiences leads to lifelong success upon graduating from the University.

The UTEP Edge-ucation Exchange was piloted in 2017-18 to facilitate the exchange of inter-institutional best practices. UTEP faculty are encouraged to share their areas of expertise with high school teachers in the community, and those teachers share their best practices with UTEP faculty. The result is a stronger bridge between UTEP and the surrounding community and further support for student success. The goal is to increase the number of schools and faculty joining in the exchange in the future.

“The message that we convey to the community motivates students to pursue higher education, enroll at UTEP, and pursue graduate school or start a career,” Savina said. “I think students at all grade levels intuitively understand the UTEP Edge. When we tell them that we are trying to help them identify and develop their competitive edge, they start to self-reflect, and through that reflection, they make the connection. The Edge philosophy is not something foreign; it becomes exciting for them.”

More Work Ahead

With the first phase of the UTEP Edge implementation nearly completed, much remains to be done.

The second phase will introduce assessment, tracking and metrics. A database created by Ann Gates, professor and chair of the Department of Computer Science, will be used to track engagement activities in which students are participating as a result of the UTEP Edge. After the benchmark year, retention and graduation rates and grade point averages will begin to be assessed and measured.

Phase 2 is also expected to see deeper embedding of the Edge philosophy and additional workshops and trainings for faculty, staff and students. Feedback from faculty will be sought on the impact of implementing the Edge in their classrooms, additional new resources will be introduced, together with trainings on how they can be utilized.

“It is exciting to see the initial response of students to the UTEP Edge,” President Natalicio said. “They are becoming more energized and confident in their abilities to achieve their goals. The good work of the UTEP Edge team will continue, systematically developing, enhancing, and building on successful activities already in place to further extend UTEP’s tradition of access and excellence and our deep commitment to student success.”

The first phase of the Edge offered many insights. Most importantly, it is having an impact on students like Alejandra who had not recognized the talents and skills she had developed before setting foot on the UTEP campus, and her opportunity to build on them at UTEP.

“I appreciate the work that has been done in putting all these experiences together and giving it a name – the UTEP Edge,” Alejandra said. “This is very helpful, especially for students like me who are first-generation college students and have no clue what to do with their lives or how college works, much less what they have to offer. The UTEP Edge gives clear direction for students to get engaged on campus and in the community and shows us how our skills are meaningful and useful. In my first year of college, I have already done so much, and I already feel I have an advantage in anything I choose to do in the future.”
Mission Accomplished

by Laura L. Acosta

Nearly two years after embarking on a humanitarian mission to provide access to clean, readily available water in Po Ploom, Haiti, Ivonne Santiago, Ph.D., raised a cup of fresh drinking water to toast the community’s residents.
Nearly two years after embarking on a humanitarian mission to provide access to clean, readily available water in Po Ploom, Haiti, Ivonne Santiago, Ph.D., raised a cup of fresh drinking water to toast the community’s residents.

"Salud!," an exhausted but elated Santiago said before taking the first sip from Po Ploom’s new potable water supply system.

Santiago, a clinical professor of civil engineering at The University of Texas at El Paso, offered a sip to the other volunteers, who encouraged Po Ploom’s residents to join their mini celebration. Soon they were swarmed by excited children who eagerly reached out their hands for cups of clean water.

"Seeing Dr. Santiago drink that first cup of water was a very important moment," recalled Daniel Castillo, a UTEP senior civil engineering student who traveled with Santiago to Haiti. "Some of the residents looked surprised that we were giving them clean water. They were still skeptical until they saw more of us drink water and then everybody wanted some."

Access to clean water is a constant struggle for the 500 residents of Po Ploom, an isolated community located on a strip of grassland stretching along the eastern border with the Dominican Republic.

Fewer than half of Haitians in rural areas such as Po Ploom have access to clean water and adequate sanitation, putting them at risk for waterborne diseases.

"A Christian organization called the Chadasha Foundation was sending doctors to Po Ploom very often, and they found that most of the illnesses were caused by contaminated water people were drinking," Santiago explained. "So rather than send doctors, why not send someone to fix the water?"

In 2016, Po Ploom’s clean water problem attracted a private, anonymous donor who reached out to New Vision Baptist Church in Tennessee to find a solution.

As a leader in water treatment technologies research, UTEP offered an answer to their prayers.

UTEP students in the civil engineering senior design course developed a solar-powered water purification system for Po Ploom that would be easy to operate and simple to maintain.
SALUD!,” AN EXHAUSTED BUT ELATED SANTIAGO SAID BEFORE TAKING THE FIRST SIP FROM PO PLOOM’S NEW POTABLE WATER SUPPLY SYSTEM.

Santiago and a group of volunteers from UTEP, Solar Smart Living and Industrial Water Services (IWS) in El Paso traveled to Haiti in April 2018 to install the system.

New Vision Pastor Daniel Koon, the on-site missionary, said it was a joy to see the church and UTEP keep a promise to the people of Po Ploom.

“After waiting two years, I imagine many were becoming skeptical that the system would ever arrive,” Koon said. “My hope is that the availability of clean water will improve the quality of life of the residents of the community and give us an opportunity to further develop relationships with them. We owe so much to Dr. Santiago and her team. Without them, this would not have been possible.”

PAYING THE PRICE FOR CLEAN WATER

Like most communities in Haiti’s countryside, Po Ploom has no electricity. Its only water source is Lake Azuéi, the largest lake in Haiti.

Known locally as Étang Saumâtre, or “brackish pond” in English, the western part of Lake Azuéi contains brackish water, which is saltier than fresh water, but not as salty as seawater. Residents have access to fresh drinking water on the eastern side of the lake, which they also use for bathing and washing. Those who can afford it purchase powder bleach to disinfect the water before consuming it.

“It’s a beautiful area, but the water in the lake is not drinkable,” said Paul Diaz, UTEP electrical engineering graduate and vice president of IWS. He traveled to Po Ploom to help Santiago set up the system. “It’s very bad water. The conditions these residents live in are minimal.”

Santiago first traveled to Haiti in 2016 to assess the needs of the community.

Some residents travel two hours to the Dominican Republic or across the lake to purchase pouches or gallons of drinking water.

For 25 gourdes, or 40 cents, they can get a ride across the border to buy a five-gallon bucket of water for 30 gourdes, the equivalent of 47 cents. A family of 15 uses five gallons of water per day. Some residents buy sacks that contain 60 six-ounce water pouches.

But for the majority of Po Ploom’s families who make $20 a month selling charcoal, store-bought water is a luxury they can’t afford.

“Few people can purchase water,” Santiago said. “Many of them use the little pouches for drinking water and then use the spring water for cooking and bathing, but it’s not always safe. But now that they have a new water filtration system, they’ll be able to have a safe source of potable water.”
TAKING THE PLUNGE

When Santiago, an educator for 25 years, was first approached by New Vision to develop a water filtration system in Haiti, she saw it as a unique opportunity for undergraduate students such as Robert Mendez to apply their education to professional practice while making a world of difference.

“I saw this project go from being a couple of doodles in my notebook, to being fully operational and making the community a better place,” said Mendez, who led the group of six students who adapted a design suggested by IWS and Solar Smart Living – two local partner companies that specialize in reverse osmosis and solar power.

The students designed a unique and cutting-edge system that combined reverse osmosis desalination and solar energy to remove contaminants from the water. They initially planned to pump the water from Lake Azuéi, but water samples revealed that the lake’s seawater would be too difficult to clean. Instead, Santiago contracted a well driller from the Dominican Republic to travel to Po Ploom to dig a well 200 feet deep.

Once in the purification system, the water is cleaned by reverse osmosis – a process that removes inorganic solids, such as salts from water by pushing the water under pressure through a semi-permeable membrane. The clean water is then pumped into a storage tank where Po Ploom’s residents can fill up their plastic containers and jugs during the day.

With no electricity to the site, the system is powered by 24 industrial-size batteries that are charged by 42 solar panels.

A week after the system was turned on April 6, 2018, 10,000 gallons of water had been produced.

“We’re producing about three gallons per minute,” explained Santiago, who plans to use Internet of Things (IoT)-based monitoring in the near future to remotely manage and gather data from the system. “It’s interesting because in the United States if you have 120 gallons per person per day, that’s good. In Po Ploom they’re getting less than five gallons per person per day and that’s great!”

FEW PEOPLE CAN PURCHASE WATER. MANY OF THEM USE THE LITTLE POUCHES FOR DRINKING WATER AND THEN USE THE SPRING WATER FOR COOKING AND BATHING, BUT IT’S NOT ALWAYS SAFE. BUT NOW THAT THEY HAVE A NEW WATER FILTRATION SYSTEM, THEY’LL BE ABLE TO HAVE A SAFE SOURCE OF POTABLE WATER.”

-Ivonne Santiago
Santiago, a licensed Professional Environmental Engineer in Texas, New Mexico and Puerto Rico, has worked on water quality projects in the United States, Puerto Rico and Juárez, Mexico. One of the most valuable lessons she has passed on to her students is to hope for the best but expect the worst.

"Anticipating problems is a big part of an engineer's job," Santiago said, "because if we anticipate problems then we can solve problems quickly, especially in environments where you don’t have a Home Depot next door."

That is why after IWS and Solar Smart Living built the system, Mendez and the other students tested it at the IWS facilities in El Paso in August 2016. They then packed the batteries, solar panels, control boxes, a backup generator and a storage tank in a large metal shipping container destined for Haiti. Students also donated clothes and volleyballs to give to the residents.

"My team and I made everything work together and ensured that all the equipment was mounted and secured," said Mendez, who graduated in May 2017 and is now an engineering inspector at the City of El Paso. "Most of the equipment was installed within a 20-foot shipping container and we had to essentially play engineering Tetris to fit all components in a way that would allow maintenance and ensure peak operation."

Santiago and the students were expected to travel to Po Ploom in June 2017 to set up the system, but problems with customs brokers, damaged equipment and hiring laborers caused a nearly yearlong delay.

A major setback was when the container was put in the wrong orientation after it was delivered in Po Ploom. Santiago hired a crane operator to turn it around, but the crane couldn’t support the container’s weight. To lighten the load, residents removed one of the 200 pound batteries, which fell and broke. Santiago ordered a new battery and had it shipped from the United States to Haiti.

"I spent a lot of time on the phone," Santiago said. "But it was a really good experience to test the limits of my leadership skills and my abilities to communicate and convince people to trust me over the phone."

By the time Santiago, Paul Diaz, and David Chacón from Solar Smart Living left for Haiti, the six UTEP students who started the project had graduated in 2017. Instead, Daniel Castillo jumped in to help.

Castillo had recently returned from the Philippines, where he’d spent spring break installing water filters in 100 homes with the student organization Engineers for a Sustainable World at UTEP.
He wasn’t sure what to expect in Haiti, but he knew he was in for a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

“Just seeing the value of what I learned outside of class and the application of it made this such an amazing hands-on learning experience,” Castillo said. “Not only seeing what goes into project management and the system and orienting yourself to do what’s required in the project, but also seeing the application of what I read about in the textbooks. I just felt so lucky to be a part of this.”

The group stayed in Jimani in the Dominican Republic and traveled to Po Ploom in the early mornings. One day when the Dominican Republic’s border patrol refused to allow their truck filled with tools and equipment to cross into Haiti, locals arranged for them to cross the supplies, including a solar panel, on motorcycles.

The first day in Po Ploom, volunteers dug trenches and the team set up the solar panels in three hours. The next day when they were ready to figure out the electrical system, Santiago realized that the control box was not working and she was grateful that David Chacón was there to hardwire the cables.

“We had the perfect team,” she said. “That was the key.”

HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL

For Santiago, Po Ploom’s water quality project reaffirmed her belief that involving UTEP students in service learning projects prepares them to compete in the real world.

“I would encourage employers to hire students who have participated in service learning opportunities because these are students who are problem solvers,” Santiago said. They have communication skills, adaptability and flexibility to work under difficult circumstances, and that’s what an employer wants. These service learning opportunities prepare students for conditions that are not always favorable, but then you get through them and you solve them, and you come through.”

“We had the perfect team. That was the key.”

- Ivonne Santiago
In 30 years at the helm, Diana Natalicio has made indelible marks on UTEP. She's done it the same way she has done everything else – through hard work.
Mentor. Advocate. President.

In 30 years at the helm, Diana Natalicio has made indelible marks on UTEP. She’s done it the same way she has done everything else – through hard work.
One of the great advantages of being a university president is you get to learn about a lot of things that people are doing on a large campus like this. It’s my great privilege to get to know people who are doing every kind of research imaginable, they’re having experiences that I can’t even imagine myself, but I can learn from them about all of these things. So, university life is a wonderful life because it is filled with rich learning opportunities.

— Diana Natalicio, UTEP President

Diana Natalicio has spent three decades leading The University of Texas at El Paso through scores of higher education milestones. Her formidable efforts have rendered a campus with raised expectations and an upward trajectory.

In the decades ahead, she hopes that mindset will continue to provide for the unique makeup of students that the University serves.

President Natalicio announced in May that she will retire after 30 years at the helm, a run that makes her the longest-serving current president of a public doctoral/research university in the country. However, she will remain in office until her successor is named.

In the meantime, President Natalicio will continue to lead the campus utilizing a trait she has always possessed – an unbridled work ethic. She has never shied away from exerting effort in the pursuit of objectives.

“She’s the same person now that she was back then,” said Sharon Croissant, one of President Natalicio’s childhood friends. “She was voted ‘Most Likely to Succeed’ in high school. It’s not a surprise she is where she is today. She’s always been a hard worker.”

That much was evident in the first job President Natalicio secured after graduating from Grover Cleveland High School in her native St. Louis.

She found employment as a switchboard operator at Nordberg Manufacturing. In quick fashion, she was maneuvering the tangle of connection plugs across the phalanx of answering jacks with aplomb.

“I mastered every function on the switchboard,” President Natalicio said of her first job. “I could connect, disconnect, transfer, conference call, everything. I called myself the Lily Tomlin of Nordberg Manufacturing.”

But proficiency didn’t bring contentment. Before long, navigating the jumbled mess of cords became repetitive and monotonous. President Natalicio couldn’t help pining for something more.

‘After a month, I looked at that switchboard and I thought, ‘This is it? This is going to be my life? I’m going to work at this box?’” she said. “So, I began to think, ‘I have got to do something else.’”

That epiphany – and work ethic – led to the first of many bus rides to St. Louis University, where she earned her first college degree. And a route to history.
President Natalicio has long been a linchpin and a catalyst for our fine University but for Dr. Natalicio, it’s not only her longevity that has struck by President Natalicio’s intellect, her focus, and her ability to communicate with UT System trustees and members of the legislature. More impressive, he said, was her commitment and passion for UTEP. “The impact that Diana has had both in developing an outstanding administrative team but also outstanding faculty and staff is incredible,” Cigarroa said. “To see how UTEP has grown under her watch – the growth in student enrollment, to see UTEP become a research/doctoral university, to see the growth of doctoral programs. No matter who you are, no matter what angle you’re looking from, one can only conclude that her vision and her leadership have been profound for El Paso and for the border region. Everybody salutes Diana. I certainly do. She’s been one of my greatest teachers.”

Cigarroa wrote his vision statement for the UT System in El Paso. Apart from the scenic, serene setting, Cigarroa said the knowledge that one of higher education’s biggest success stories is present in the Sun City was substantial motivation for crafting a plan for the course of his chancellorship. “Diana has been able to do unbelievable things probably in the most fiscally conservative manner that anyone could’ve done it,” Cigarroa said. “She’s proven that you can grow excellence on the border and that you can become a research-intensive university with a demographic that reflects the Texas-Mexico border. I think her vision of developing a research-intensive university with a 21st century demographic is right on. I remain in awe of Diana Natalicio. She is a force, a positive force in higher education.”

In addition to being the longest-serving current president of a U.S. public doctoral/research university, President Natalicio is also the all-time longest-serving female president of a public doctoral/research university or four-year public university. But it’s not only her longevity that has been astonishing. She has deftly guided the University to national prominence as a research institution, all the while being relentless in ensuring access and affordability for the student population that it serves. In 2016, the Brookings Institution recognized UTEP with a No. 1 ranking among all U.S. research universities for fostering social mobility.

The accolades bestowed upon President Natalicio have been impressive, too. Over the past two years, she has been named one of TIME Magazine’s 100 most influential people as well as one of Fortune magazine’s top 50 world leaders, honors that validate her leadership. “My long service to UTEP has been an incredible run,” Natalicio said. “It’s been absolutely amazing to me that we have been able to sustain our vision and mission over the past 30 years, and I strongly believe that much of our progress has been directly attributable to the consistency of purpose and commitment of so many UTEP team members who derive great satisfaction from creating opportunities for talented young people, whatever their means.”

Her accomplishments and stature have served as inspiration among the most pre-eminent of names. Paul L. Foster, former chairman and current vice chairman of The University of Texas System Board of Regents, said President Natalicio has long been a linchpin for UTEP and will leave behind a position that is both profoundly challenging and highly coveted.

“Dr. Natalicio has served UTEP and the UT System with distinction for more than 45 years,” Foster said. “Her 30 years at the helm as President are marked with one recognition or commendation after another, not only for our fine University but for Dr. Natalicio, personally. She will be very difficult to replace. But, with the legacy she has created, I have no doubt that her position will be highly sought after. And since she is staying on until her successor is in place, it is not time to say goodbye, but rather it is our opportunity to express our gratitude and admiration for her commitment to higher education and to our community.”

Francisco Cigarroa, M.D., former chancellor of the UT System (2009-14) and a pediatric and transplant surgeon, said he was initially struck by President Natalicio’s intellect, her focus, and her ability to communicate with UT System trustees and members of the legislature. More impressive, he said, was her commitment and passion for UTEP. “The impact that Diana has had both in developing an outstanding administrative team but also outstanding faculty and staff is incredible,” Cigarroa said. “To see how UTEP has grown under her watch – the growth in student enrollment, to see UTEP become a research/doctoral university, to see the growth of doctoral programs. No matter who you are, no matter what angle you’re looking from, one can only conclude that her vision and her leadership have been profound for El Paso and for the border region. Everybody salutes Diana. I certainly do. She’s been one of my greatest teachers.”

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**Competence and Confidence**

UTEP’s growth is easily marked by many tangible numbers. Since President Natalicio took the helm in 1988, the University’s enrollment has gone from about 14,000 to more than 25,000. The annual budget has increased from $65 million to $450 million. Research expenditures have risen from $6 million a year to $95 million a year, and doctoral programs have grown from one to 22. The University has been designated as a research/doctoral university and has been nationally recognized under her guidance.

But UTEP leaders say that growth has materialized in more ways than can be reflected by statistics.

Gary Edens, Ed.D., vice president for student affairs, said President Natalicio has instilled a culture of success that comes from a daily commitment to her vision of offering a quality academic experience. Her drive and enthusiasm is infectious, Edens said. Her work ethic sets a bar that the rest of the campus can’t help but follow.

“Every bit of growth that UTEP has seen in the last 30 years was built on the back of a very strong vision from the President,” Edens said. “It’s not an easy vision. It comes from having a passion for what you’re doing, a collaborative approach to leadership, and possessing a really strong work ethic. No one works harder than the President.”

Edens has had a unique view of President Natalicio’s impact. He was a student at UTEP involved with the Student Government Association when he met her for the first time while attending a University dinner.

“The President at the time was Haskell Monroe,” Edens said. “He, of course, sat at the head of the table. In comes this woman who sat next to me. We started talking and I was very quickly impressed. Since then, I would see her on campus regularly. She was always extremely supportive. A year later, I found out she was named our next President.”

“It’s been amazing to see what she’s brought to UTEP. It’s this excitement, this energy, this development that comes from strong, consistent leadership.”

As it does for Edens, the notion of instilling a culture of success speaks to Elena Izquierdo.

Izquierdo, Ph.D., associate professor in the Department of Teacher Education, had close knowledge of President Natalicio well before she was a University leader.

Izquierdo was one of Natalicio’s students.

The future president arrived on campus in 1971 as an assistant professor in the Department of Linguistics. Izquierdo found her to be a phenomenal instructor. But more than that, she was a master motivator, one who pushed the young Izquierdo to pursue a doctorate at Georgetown University. Izquierdo looks back on the journey on which she was urged to travel and sees the beginnings of a life devoted to offering opportunity.

“She was already doing then what has become the vision and the mission of this University, which is access and excellence,” Izquierdo said. “I didn’t see it then, but I see it now. She knew I was ready so she pushed me out of the nest. She gave me access.”

When Izquierdo reached Washington, D.C., she arrived with feelings of insecurity. But before long, she realized her time under Natalicio’s mentorship had prepared her well.

“Competence is very good. But competence without confidence won’t get you anywhere,” Izquierdo said. “That’s what we offer our students when we make it accessible for them — confidence. They can do it. They’re smart. That’s what President Natalicio has going now.”

That dedication to students has never wavered, said Estrella Escobar, associate vice president for external relations and communications. Escobar has served for 17 years on President Natalicio’s senior administrative team. As such, she has had an intimate view of the torrid schedule President Natalicio maintains and the constraints it can put on her time. Yet, Escobar said, students always make up the crux of the work she does.

“I have been most inspired by Dr. Natalicio’s dedication to the students UTEP serves,” Escobar said. “No matter how many national or international boards she serves on, no matter how many recognitions she and the University receive, she never loses focus and her total commitment to them never wavers. At the core of every decision she makes is how to make life better for our students. Her vision of access and excellence is genuine, and at the end of the day, the voice in the room that always brings the conversation back to our students is hers.”

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**By the Numbers: Then and Now**

**Faculty population:**
- Fall 1987 - 605 • Fall 2017 - 1,378

**Student enrollment:**
- Fall 1987 - 14,056 • Fall 2017 - 25,078

**Annual research expenditures:**
- 1987 – $6 million • 2017 – $95 million

**Number of doctoral degrees offered:**
- Fall 1987 – 1 • Fall 2017 – 22

**Annual budget:**
- Fall 1987 – $65 million • Fall 2017 – $450 million
We're one of the few universities that has successfully achieved a balanced commitment to both access and excellence. A growing number of universities have begun to emulate UTEP's model in their mission statements, and we're pleased with that because there is so much more work to be done to ensure equitable access to higher education across the U.S. today.

— Diana Natalicio, UTEP President

A Balanced Commitment

President Natalicio wasn’t always so self-assured.

When she began classes at St. Louis University, President Natalicio said she battled with the weight of expectations and her own perceived lack of knowledge.

“I was underprepared and scared,” she said. “After I got there, I thought I’d fail because everybody else seemed to be better prepared than I was. So, I was very, very lacking in confidence. But I managed. I’m a very hard worker. So, I worked hard and I studied hard.”

That diligence led to a Fulbright scholarship in Brazil, an experience the President said helped shape her world view and made her feel at home when she arrived in El Paso. Her initial employment at UTEP was meant to be a one-year assignment. But President Natalicio was quickly taken by her students and her newfound home. She moved through the ranks as a department chair, dean and provost, roles that formed her own view of UTEP’s strengths, opportunities and what needed to be done to ensure a more productive path forward.

On Feb. 11, 1988, Natalicio took the first step on that path after being named the institution’s 10th president. Her first challenge was shifting a line of thinking that UTEP’s success rested on its ability to emulate the nation’s most highly lauded institutions.

“We were attempting to imitate model institutions that weren’t anything like us, and so long as we tried to become them, we would never find our own strengths and never achieve our own distinction,” President Natalicio said. “So, I worked very, very hard with colleagues across the campus to understand who we are as an institution, whom do we serve, and how can we do that best? Those were the questions that we wrestled with on campus and in the community.”

She has steered UTEP through those challenges masterfully. In addition to the academic and research growth, there are stark physical changes the campus has undergone, including a project that completely transformed the heart of campus into Centennial Plaza. Construction continues today with the Interdisciplinary Research Building (IDRB). The $85 million, 162,000-square-foot facility is being built on the western fringe of campus. The IDRB is part of a highly intentional strategy to increase UTEP’s capacity to foster interdisciplinary research collaborations among faculty across the campus. It is scheduled for completion in fall 2019.

For all her efforts, President Natalicio has collected a commensurate amount of recognition. In 2015, the Carnegie Corporation of New York honored her with its prestigious Academic Leadership Award. In 2011, the President of Mexico presented her the Orden Mexicana del Aguila Azteca, the highest recognition bestowed on foreign nationals. She was inducted into the Texas Women’s Hall of Fame, honored with the Distinguished Alumnus Award at The University of Texas at Austin, and awarded honorary doctoral degrees by St. Louis University, Northeastern University, Victoria University (Melbourne, Australia), Georgetown University, Smith College and the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo Leon (Mexico).

Despite it all, President Natalicio maintains that any success attributed to her is the product of a collaborative effort and a collective buy-in to a model that is now serving as an example to the rest of the country.

“The UTEP team expects me to push hard, to be aggressive in articulating UTEP’s mission and work toward changing the national narrative about the role of public research universities in the 21st century,” President Natalicio said. “I hasten to add, however, that UTEP’s success has always been the result of a huge team effort; no one does anything alone. Most UTEP faculty and senior administrative staff are individuals who are here by choice, attracted by the opportunity to contribute to our increasingly recognized access and excellence mission, which serves as the solid foundation upon which our success continues to be built.

“We’re one of the few universities that has successfully achieved a balanced commitment to both access and excellence. A growing number of universities have begun to emulate UTEP’s model in their mission statements, and we’re pleased with that because there is so much more work to be done to ensure equitable access to higher education across the U.S. today.”

The seed to pursue that work was planted long ago.

“I get tired just thinking about it,” said Croissant, who met President Natalicio in kindergarten. “She keeps a schedule that human beings cannot possibly keep. But that’s who she is. It’s amazing, here’s this kid that I went to school with. There she is now being recognized by the world.”

While the time to step away is near, President Natalicio said she remains too passionate to not continue delivering her best effort while she occupies the campus’ highest seat.

“I love what I do. I love working with young people,” President Natalicio said. “I love the disarming quality of students who say things that sometimes you would not expect. I think it’s important to be disarmed from time to time, not to be so stiff that you can’t see that you have foibles, be able to laugh at yourself. But more than anything, I think I’m infinitely curious about things. I love to learn new things. I love to hear about people doing work that I couldn’t imagine doing myself, whether it’s in the arts or whether it’s in engineering or wherever it might be. I just find it so fascinating to realize the full range of things that people do.”

Watch a video interview with Diana Natalicio at utep.edu/magazine.
Above AND Beyond

By Daniel Perez | Illustration by Adan Contreras '13
Nadia Herrera enrolled at The University of Texas at El Paso in 2008 with a plan to become a lawyer, but a suggestion from her counselor put her on a different path. It is a path that highlights not only the upward trajectory of UTEP’s status as a national research institution, but also the heights students can reach in the care of faculty and staff dedicated to facilitating student success.
When Herrera graduated from Coronado High School’s International Baccalaureate program in El Paso, she had enough credits to enter UTEP as a sophomore. Her UTEP adviser noted Herrera’s lifelong love of science and suggested she study microbiology to pursue a pre-medical route. The first-generation college student did just that, while keeping her part-time sales job to pay for school before a different counselor suggested she become a volunteer research lab assistant.

A biochemistry professor, impressed by Herrera’s initiative, accepted her into his lab, which allowed her to apply for and earn fellowships that paid for her tuition. She added a second degree plan in biochemistry and was accepted to an internship at California Institute of Technology, where she furthered her love of research. She graduated with honors from UTEP in 2011 and went back to Caltech, where she earned her Ph.D. in 2017 in biochemistry and molecular biophysics. Today she is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine, where she studies microbial pathogenesis. Her goal is to pursue a career in academia.

Her colleagues refer to the El Paso native as motivated, diligent and productive with a positive attitude and willingness to help. She appreciates the compliments, but shares much of the credit for her success with UTEP’s programs and professors who encourage students to dream big.

UTEP has nurtured many like Nadia Herrera in the pursuit of research that has benefited UTEP students, the University, the Paso del Norte region AND BEYOND.
The institution has nurtured many like Nadia Herrera in the pursuit of research that has benefited UTEP students, the University, the Paso del Norte region and beyond. The steady, ever-increasing portfolio of research success, especially in the areas of education and health care, has driven UTEP into the upper echelons of national research institutions in the United States. The University’s Center for Institutional Evaluation, Research and Planning (CIERP) has studied UTEP’s rise and plotted its path under different projected scenarios. Researchers there believe that the institution’s impressive trajectory can continue.

**STEADY CLimb**

During the past 30 years, UTEP has made a steady climb toward the top of the higher education hierarchy in the United States. At the top of this list of 6,000 institutions are a subset of more than 300 four-year research institutions that are responsible for the majority of the higher education research undertaken and for the training of future college faculty and scholars.

The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education further divides these doctoral/research universities into three categories – moderate, higher and highest – based on doctoral degrees awarded and research activity. UTEP is classified in the higher research category. However, CIERP’s replication of the classification model shows that the institution is at the threshold of moving into the top category: highest research activity.

“UTEP is already in an exclusive group,” said CIERP Director Roy Mathew, Ph.D. “It is an extraordinary accomplishment to move up the ladder in a hyper-competitive higher education context.”

CIERP developed scenario models to explore UTEP’s future trajectory. Part of the work focused on identifying academic institutions that reflect milestones, such as the amount of annual research expenditures, that the University likely will achieve in the next decade.

However, identifying these aspirational peers is difficult because only a small subset of national research institutions focus on access and excellence. Based on its analysis, UTEP has identified six aspirational peer institutions for the next decade – Florida International University; the State University of New York at Stony Brook; the University of Central Florida; the University of California, Santa Cruz; the University of California, Riverside; and the State University of New York at Buffalo.

In many ways, UTEP’s aspirational peers for the next decade have similar characteristics in terms of student population served. Most students live near the campus, come from families of modest means and juggle academics with outside employment. As institutions, they have larger student enrollment, are located in larger metropolitan areas and have achieved higher-level research programs within the past 25 years.

“They’re kind of like us,” said Stephen Riter, Ph.D., vice president for information resources and planning. “They’re all cut out of the same cloth.”

Riter likened UTEP’s research trajectory to a road race where runners keep an eye on other participants who are alongside or a little bit in front of them; those are the aspirational peers.

“There are the people we can reach,” he said.

**MISSION CONTROL**

The University’s overall ascension among research institutions is the outcome of University President Diana Natalicio’s long-term strategic plan to focus on “access and excellence” – to provide equal opportunity for education and social mobility to all talented students from the Paso del Norte region by offering them access to world-class faculty and opportunities, such as undergraduate research, that usually are found on campuses that serve more affluent students. The dramatic move up the higher education ladder required a bold vision and innovative strategy, and support from many different groups to include The University of Texas System, the Texas legislature, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and UTEP faculty, staff and alumni.

President Natalicio, who started her 30th year at UTEP’s helm in February 2018, has guided the growth of research activity and doctoral program development. Under her leadership, doctoral programs increased from 22 to one, and annual research expenditures grew to $95 million from $6 million. UTEP’s grants portfolio in fiscal year 2017 was more than $300 million.

One of the many UTEP administrators who have helped the University achieve its research success is Roberto Osegueda, Ph.D., vice president for research. He started as an assistant professor of civil engineering 30 years ago and has risen through the ranks. He has served in his current position for 13 years, and is credited with providing support to many top faculty and staff members who have successfully secured grants that bring prominence to the University.

“The research UTEP faculty does is directly related to the mission of access and excellence that Dr. Natalicio has been able to put in place at the University,” said Osegueda, who added that outstanding faculty members deliver the education and provide research engagement to the University’s students. “Research at UTEP enriches the academic experience for our undergraduate and graduate students. We have high expectations.”

For Herrera, the opportunity to do undergraduate research was crucial to her growth as a student and as a researcher. It taught her how things were done in a lab and how to deal with success and failure that come with scientific research. She learned what it took to start an experiment, get it done, put it on paper and get it published.

“Undergraduate research allows you to get your hands dirty with the necessary work,” Herrera said. “You read about it. You get told about it in class, but it’s not until you are in the lab actually doing something that it clicks, and you realize you are doing research. This is what it takes to make discoveries.”

Robert Kirken, Ph.D., dean of the College of Science, called Herrera an outstanding example of someone who took advantage of the mentorship and opportunities presented by the University and the college, especially to participate in undergraduate research at a level not commonly seen in other institutions. For example, she participated in the Howard Hughes Medical Institute program and UTEP’s Maximizing Access to Research Careers program, funded by the National Institutes of Health.

“To complete one of these majors (microbiology and biochemistry) is challenging enough, but Nadia performed very well in both areas while also working and navigating the academic setting as a first-generation student,” Kirken said.

“This speaks volumes about her skills and dedication, which she has carried through her doctoral degree and subsequent postdoctoral appointment at two of the most competitive institutions in the country.”

UTEP’s decision to focus critical research in the fields of health care and education has generated additional opportunities to conduct studies in science, engineering and the humanities with results that have benefited the region and the communities beyond.

**COLLABORATION EXPLORATION**

One of the best examples of how the University fulfilled its mission to advance the welfare of the El Paso region through teaching, research and service was the creation of the El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence. The partnership of academic, business and civic leaders was established in 1991 as an applied research center. The collaborative, initially funded through a $15 million National Science Foundation grant, has been hailed as one of the country’s most innovative and transformational PreK-16 education reform initiatives for its success in establishing...
systemic academic reforms, helping close the education gap, and building a college-going culture.

Today, the El Paso region, despite being the lowest income region in Texas, has the highest percentage of high school graduates completing the college curriculum. In addition, a high percentage of graduates enroll in public higher education after graduation. The region also has the highest share of students enrolling in public four-year institutions.

Armando Aguirre, executive director of the Region 19 Education Service Center in El Paso, which serves more than 185,000 PreK-12 students, recalled noticing the research-based ideas percolating out of the collaborative as a new elementary school administrator in the early 1990s.

“We started to see areas highlighted that needed to be addressed,” said Aguirre, Ed.D., who led the collaborative for four years starting in 2011. “That was helpful because to that point we knew we needed to hurry up and fix something, but we weren’t sure what we needed to fix. Things started to make more sense after we got the (collaborative’s) information.”

Another example of UTEP’s efforts to advance the welfare of the region is the Border Biomedical Research Center (BBRC). For more than 25 years, BBRC faculty members have focused their research on areas that impact human health along the U.S.-Mexico border, specifically in such areas as infectious diseases, cancer and environmental toxicants, and neuro-modulation disorders such as obesity, diabetes, Alzheimer’s disease and Parkinson’s disease. Through funding from the National Institutes of Health, the BBRC has contributed to the development of UTEP’s talented faculty and its resources to conduct research. In turn, this development has created opportunities for students at all levels to become involved in research and prepare for future academic and professional opportunities.

Currently, 85 percent of UTEP’s more than 25,000 students are from the El Paso region, 80 percent are Hispanic, and 50 percent of undergraduate students are from the lowest income quartile. UTEP awards more than 4,500 degrees annually and is one of the nation’s top producers of Hispanic graduates. UTEP also is the country’s fourth ranked institution of origin (college or university where students earn their bachelor’s degree) for Hispanic doctoral graduates. Researchers from Harvard and Stanford universities also have identified UTEP as one of the Top 10 institutions that move undergraduate students from the lowest income quintile to the highest income quintile after graduation.

This focus on access and excellence, and its resulting impact on students, was the reason that UTEP was recognized recently by the Brookings Institution and the New York Times as one of the top academic institutions for social mobility, or the movement within or between society’s social strata, which benefits low-income and other nontraditional students.

Educational researchers have identified undergraduate research experiences among the most effective ways to engage students, which lead to timely degree completion, enrollment in graduate school, and eventual professional success. The growth in research activity and funding allows for more undergraduate students to participate in labs and doctoral programs. UTEP’s growing record of success in this area led to the development of BUILDing SCHOLARS, a research-intensive training program funded by the National Institutes of Health to prepare highly motivated undergraduate students at UTEP and smaller institutions throughout the nation’s Southwest who want to pursue research in biomedical engineering or health, social, behavioral or biomedical sciences. It also aims to support faculty members as effective mentors.

The program’s name is a partial acronym for Building Infrastructure Leading to Diversity, Southwest Consortium of Health-Oriented Education Leaders and Research Scholars.

**BEYOND THE STRATOSPHERE**

UTEP has demonstrated that institutional excellence can be achieved without hindering the University’s commitment to providing access and opportunity for the region’s talented students and, through them, advancing the El Paso region.

The CIERP team conducted additional studies and the results showed that UTEP could continue its upward trajectory for decades to come.

If the University follows its current strategic path, CIERP’s models show that UTEP can achieve parity with major public research universities such as the University of California, Los Angeles within the next 50 years.

Although it will not be easy or inevitable, if the University can maintain its enrollment growth and research productivity, it can achieve the outcome, said CIERP’s Mathew. The challenge is exciting, inspirational and achievable, he said.

The scenario is reminiscent of the early days of the space race when President John F. Kennedy boldly set a course for the nation during a 1962 speech at Rice University.

“We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win.”

**“UTEP is already in an exclusive group. It is an extraordinary accomplishment to move up the ladder in a hyper-competitive higher education context.”**

Roy Mathew
This scatterplot graph shows the research classification of doctoral universities in **moderate (dark blue), higher (light blue)** and **highest (purple) categories**. UTEP, represented by the **orange dot**, is on the threshold of the highest category. The graph was created by UTEP’s Center for Institutional Evaluation, Research and Planning (CIERP) based on information from the Carnegie Basic Classification for Research Activity that was last updated in 2015.
1960s

Rafael Jesús González (B.A. ’62) performed his mix of music and poetry during a reading series in January 2018 hosted by Alameda Island Poets at the Frank Bette Center for the Arts in Alameda, California. González was honored in 2017 as the city of Berkeley, California’s first poet laureate. He is a noted poet, visual artist and professor emeritus at Laney College in Oakland, California.

1970s

Victor Arias (BBA ’78) was named managing director of RSR Partners in Greenwich, Connecticut. He is a trustee emeritus for the Stanford University Board of Trustees, chairman of the Stanford Latino Entrepreneurship Initiative and serves on the UTEP Development Board.

James Stephen DeGroat (BBA ’72, MBA ’75) was elected as a board officer for El Paso Health, a nonprofit health maintenance organization. He is an investment adviser with Lincoln Financial Services in El Paso.

Debra C. Hester (BBA ’77) was recognized as one of the best real estate agents in the United States by Zillow/Trulia. The honor is given to a handful of Realtors for extraordinary customer service and professionalism. Hester is an agent for ERA Sellers Buyers in El Paso.

Kathleen Key (B.A. ’73) was the first speaker in the Feed Your Mind cultural seminar series presented by the Doña Ana Arts Council. Key has taught for 32 years, including presenting a wide range of art history courses at the Art Institute of Houston, Houston Community College and the University of Houston. She is now a professor at UTEP.

Teodoro Marquez (B.S. ’79) was named deputy city manager for public works and transportation for the City of El Paso. In his role, he oversees the departments of Capital Improvement, Streets and Maintenance, Environmental Service, Parks and Recreation and Mass Transit – Sun Metro.

Manuel Ontiveros (B.A. ’71, MPA ’85) was inducted into the El Paso Athletic Hall of Fame in May 2018 in the media/supporter category. He has been a member of the organization for 22 years and has served as its president and historian.

1980s

Jorge De La Chapa (B.S. ’89) recently joined San Antonio Eye Specialists as a doctor of osteopathic medicine. He is a board-certified ophthalmologist.

Lydia C. Nesbitt-Aronnito (BBA ’84, MBA ’99) was recently recognized as outstanding board member for her involvement in several community projects by Workforce Solutions Borderplex’s board of directors.

Fernando Rico (B.S. ’80, M.S. ’02) was named the 2018 Engineer of the Year by the Texas Society of Professional Engineers. He is an engineer for El Paso Water, where he manages the utility’s field operations, water distribution and collection systems, stormwater operations and more.

Leslie Kaye Robbins (MSN ’89) was awarded the 2017 Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award. She is the assistant dean of graduate education in UTEP’s School of Nursing.

Beth Ann Shook (BFA ’85) hosted a portion of the 2018 Arizona State University Ceramic Studio Tour in February. The event, which showcases professional ceramic artists in the Phoenix metro area, included Shook’s studio as part of its exhibition.

1990s

Timothy Paul Adams (MBA ’95) was recently appointed to lead Ascension Tennessee. He previously served as CEO of the 26-hospital Texas Region at Dallas-based Tenet Healthcare.

Victor E. Barroteran (BBA ’94) was recently appointed to the Hospice El Paso Board of Directors. He is a business banking manager at Wells Fargo Bank.

Janette M. Braverman (BBA ’95) was recently named the dean of the College of Business and Management at Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She earned a master’s in business management from Cardinal Stritch in 2009.

Edward Escudero (BBA ’92) recently graduated from the Latino Business Action Network, an entrepreneurial program at Stanford University focused on developing Latino businesses. He founded and is CEO of High Desert Capital.

Peter P. Frey (B.A. ’93) has been named commercial telematics director for Nationwide insurance’s connected business fleet platform in Des Moines, Iowa.

Jorge Eduardo Gomar (B.S. ’97) has been a noted client partner in Korn Ferry’s global industrial market practice. He will be based in the Dallas office.

Kevin J. Hayes (BBA ’98) was recently named general manager at WPXI, the NBC affiliate in Pittsburgh. He had previously been general manager of KDBC and KFOX in El Paso.

Sally Anne Hurt-Deitch (BSN ’90, MSN ’94) was appointed to the board of directors of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas El Paso Branch. Hurt-Deitch is the vice president for patient care services and chief nursing officer for Dallas-based Tenet Healthcare Corp. She was appointed to a three-year term and will provide input on regional economic conditions as part of the Federal Reserve’s monetary policy functions.

Francisco Javier Ordaz (B.A. ’98, M.Ed. ’08) was recently appointed as principal at Bowie High School. He was previously interim principal at the school. He had served as assistant principal at Bowie since 2013.

Continued on page 62
UTEP Alumna Defends World Boxing Title at Haskins Center

Right: During a break at a UTEP basketball game in February 2018, Han chatted with President Diana Natalicio and showed her the proper way to form a fist to throw a punch.

UTEP alumna Jennifer Han defeated challenger Lizbeth Crespo by unanimous decision Feb. 17, 2018, at the Don Haskins Center to retain her IBF World Female Featherweight championship.

It was the fourth title defense for Han, who initially claimed the IBF crown with a unanimous decision win over Nigerian boxer Helen Joseph on Sept. 19, 2015, at the Don Haskins Center. Han – whose small, wiry frame conceals a stinging left jab – beat Crespo in the same manner she bested Joseph, by establishing that jab to set up power shots.

Han, a 2007 kinesiology graduate, boasts a 17-3-1 record with one knockout.

“I’ve fought all over the world,” said Han, a six-time national amateur champion. “But fighting at the Don Haskins Center for my world title fight was truly a blessing. I am extremely proud of how far I’ve come in El Paso and to actually do it in front of my hometown – nothing beats that.”

- Leonard Martinez

Ed Hochuli ’72

Ed Hochuli, a former UTEP football player and renowned referee, retired as an NFL official in March 2018.


Throughout his career, football fans and the media took notice of Hochuli as much for his muscles as his calls on the field, earning the nickname “Hochules” because of his large biceps.

Hochuli was a linebacker on the UTEP football team for four seasons. Four years after earning his bachelor’s degree in political science at UTEP in 1972, he received a J.D. from the University of Arizona James E. Rogers College of Law and became a successful trial lawyer for Phoenix-based Jones, Skelton & Hochuli, PLC, where he specializes in civil litigation such as professional liability and product liability defense. Hochuli successfully juggled both careers through the last 28 years.

- Leonard Martinez

NFL Referee Hangs Up Whistle After 28 Years

Photos by Ivan Pierre Aguirre

See more photos from Jennifer Han’s championship fight at utep.edu/magazine.
Alum Notes

Julie Ann Otero (M.Ed. ’93) was named superintendent of the South Central Nebraska Unified School District No. 5 in Fairfield, Nebraska. She was previously the superintendent of Centura Public Schools in Cairo, Nebraska.

Juan R. Perez (B.S. ’96) was named president of the El Paso County Medical Society. He is a family medicine doctor at El Paso Wellness and Healthcare Center.

Kendra Pauline Rumbaugh (B.S. ’96) was named one of 14 recipients of the 2018 Texas Tech University Chancellor’s Council Distinguished Teaching and Research Awards. These awards recognize excellence in academics and research, and are the most prestigious honors granted to faculty members throughout the TTU System. Rumbaugh is an associate professor in the Department of Surgery at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center in Lubbock.

Noemi Tovar (BBA ’96) recently graduated from the Latino Business Action Network, an entrepreneurial program at Stanford University focused on developing Latino businesses.

Omar Veliz (B.S. ’98, MBA ’03) recently graduated from the Latino Business Action Network, an entrepreneurial program at Stanford University focused on developing Latino businesses.

2000s

Vanessa Barreda-Ramirez (BBA ’00, MBA ’04) was recently named branch manager of a new Wells Fargo Middle Market Banking location in El Paso. She has worked for Wells Fargo since 2015.

Bernardo Mario del Hierro (B.A. ’02) is a new business development and commercial escrow officer at Lone Star Title in El Paso. He previously was director at the Borderplex Realty Trust.

Jonathan Paul Dorenbos (BMS ’09) will receive a Super Bowl ring this fall from the Philadelphia Eagles, his former team. Dorenbos played in the NFL for 15 seasons, 11 of those with Philadelphia. He was traded before the start of the 2017 season. A routine physical with his new team – the New Orleans Saints – revealed an aortic aneurysm, a medical issue that required immediate surgery and forced his retirement from football. The Eagles went on to win the Super Bowl and team owner Jeffrey Lurie pledged to award Dorenbos a ring if they won. The Eagles defeated the New England Patriots 41-33.

Monica Aide Garcia (B.A. ’07) recently joined the news team at 12 News, the NBC affiliate in Phoenix. She was previously at First Coast News NBC 12 and ABC 25 in Jacksonville, Florida.

Gustavo Gonzalez (BBA ’03) was promoted to controller at El Paso Health, a nonprofit health maintenance organization, or HMO. Gonzalez has worked at El Paso Health for 10 years. He has been a certified public accountant since 2004.

Stephen P. Ingle (BFA ’04) recently graduated from the Latino Business Action Network, an entrepreneurial program at Stanford University focused on developing Latino businesses.

Benjamin Beckage Kelly (B.S. ’03) was named a partner in intellectual property practice at Baker McKenzie’s North American division, which is based in Dallas. His practice focuses on patent litigation, trade secret enforcement and associated business torts.

Megan Lynn Link (BMS ’09, M.A. ’10, BSN ’17) was named one of the Worldwide Leaders in Healthcare by the International Nurses Association. She has previously been recognized by the organization as a Top Registered Nurse in California. She currently works with California Cancer Associates for Research and Excellence in Encinitas, California.

Daniel Medina (B.A. ’06) was appointed as principal at Canutillo Middle School. He was previously assistant principal at Clint Junior High School in Clint, Texas.

Thuyan Minh Culver (B.S. ’03) recently joined the hospital medicine department at Mayo Clinic Health System in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. She completed medical school at the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine in Lewisburg, and completed an internal medicine residency at Allegheny General Hospital in Pittsburgh.

Cristina Nuñez (BIS ’02) was recognized by former first lady Michelle Obama during a visit to Washington, D.C., earlier this year. Nuñez, a middle school counselor at the Paso Del Norte School in El Paso, was named the top Texas school counselor of the year for 2017 by the Texas School Counselor Association, which qualified her for the national award from the American School Counselor Association. She was one of six finalists to attend an event with Obama earlier this year.

Ida Yvette Perales (B.S. ’01, M.Ed. ’09) was appointed principal of Del Valle Middle School, which will make up part of a new K-8 combination school that is currently under construction in the Ysleta Independent School District in El Paso. She was previously the principal of Camino Real Middle School.

Mara Portillo (BBA ’06, MBA ’12) was promoted to vice president of compliance at WestStar Bank. Before joining WestStar Bank in 2012, Portillo was a loan servicing agent for the U.S. Small Business Administration. Portillo has been a member of the board of directors of the Women’s Fund of El Paso since 2015.

Rebekah Ann Salazar (B.A. ’04) is the new acting executive director for the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Office of Privacy and Diversity. She has served various roles in CBP since 1995.

Ezekiel James Sanchez (BSN ’01) was honorably mentioned in the Worldwide Leaders in Healthcare by the International Nurses Association. Sanchez is an established psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner serving patients in the Substance Use Disorders Clinic at the El Paso VA Health Care System in Texas.

Humberto Santacruz (B.S. ’08, M.S. ’11) was recognized by Great Minds in STEM, a national Hispanic engineering organization supporting careers in science, technology, engineering and math, for his technical accomplishments, leadership and commitment to Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Santacruz holds a lead position in weapons system engineering and has been with Sandia since 2011.
R. Noel Longuemare values a great education.
In 1952 he received a bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering from Texas Western College, now The University of Texas at El Paso.

The education the young man born on a farm in Ysleta received served as a solid foundation for who he has become.

“Although we had very little, just a small farm with no electric lights until I was a junior in high school, there was never any doubt that I was going to go to college,” he said. “An education is extremely important. Without an education, I would not have been able to start.”

During his four years at the University, Longuemare was influenced by three professors – John Valentine, Tom Barnes and Archie Decker.

“They all had a real impact on my life,” Longuemare said. “I think back about how I learned how to study under them. It’s not so much what you learn in college but how you learn how to study and learn how to learn. That’s what being at UTEP taught me.”

Longuemare earned a master’s degree in electrical engineering from Johns Hopkins University and was part of the Stanford Executive Program.

He founded Longuemare Consultants in 1997 and served in top-level management and technical positions for the Department of Defense and the Defense Aerospace Industry.

Even now at age 83, Longuemare remains active as a member of the Executive Advisory Panel for the U.S. Navy and the Strategic Red Team for the MIT Lincoln Laboratory, as well as the UTEP Engineering Advisory Board.

Longuemare holds eight patents and 17 patent disclosures, and is active in technical and industrial societies in the aerospace field.

His love for the University has not waned through the years. He received the 2005 Gold Nugget Award, which recognizes exceptional graduates from each of the University’s colleges and schools who have distinguished themselves in their profession and life and have given back to their communities.

He recently funded the Noel and Juliana Longuemare Professorship for the College of Engineering, which will help attract faculty members in the fields of electrical engineering and computer engineering.

“Texas College of Mines and Metallurgy, and now UTEP, has always been very affordable,” he said. “You get a quality education for not a huge cost. … That is one of the reasons why I decided to make a gift. I felt that giving to UTEP, the dollars would go much further and do a lot more good, especially for those students who might not have had an opportunity to go to college.” - Victor R. Martinez

“IT’s not so much what you learn in college but how you learn how to study and learn how to learn. That’s what being at UTEP taught me.”
Sonya Annette Saunders (B.A. ’03) is the new diversity programs administrator at the YWCA El Paso del Norte Region. Saunders has more than 17 years of nonprofit and government experience, including two years as the workforce development director for the YWCA. Most recently, she worked as executive director of La Posada Home.

Christa Noel Talamantes (B.A. ’01) is Hospice El Paso’s nonclinical 2017 Employee of the Year. She is manager of the organization’s accounting department.

Saul Trejo (B.S. ’04) was hired as project manager at Moreno Cardenas Inc. He was previously chief engineering manager for the Lower Valley Water District.

Victor Urbina (B.S. ’00, MBA ’04) recently graduated from the Latino Business Action Network, an entrepreneurial program at Stanford University focused on developing Latino businesses.

Faith Borunda (BSN ’11) was promoted to El Paso regional director for the Southwest Transplant Alliance. She previously served as the organization’s El Paso office manager of clinical services.

Jonathan Owen Julis Childress (BBA ’10, MBA ’12) was named the community engagement manager of Microsoft’s TechSpark program in El Paso. The civic program is a Microsoft initiative designed to foster economic opportunity and job creation in communities.

Hugo A. Fernandez (BSN ’10, MSN ’13) was named Hospice El Paso’s clinical employee of the year. He has been with the organization for a year. He was chosen because of his skills and talent and his extreme caring and compassion for his patients.

Marjorie Adele Ingle (B.S. ’12, M.S. ’14) offered commentary on the pace of social progress during a Martin Luther King Jr. celebration event at the Center Stage Theater at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland. She shared the story of her Mexican-American grandmother, who lived at a time of limited opportunity and widespread prejudice.

Chris Ryan Kohunsky (M.A. ’15) became the senior enlisted leader for 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment at Fort Riley, Kansas. He was previously command sergeant major for 2nd Squadron, 13th Cavalry Regiment at Fort Bliss. He attended the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy at Fort Bliss in 2014-15.

Alum Notes

The University of Texas at El Paso is now offering degree-holding alumni lifetime email forwarding addresses (LEFA). LEFA is a free, permanent email forwarding service that redirects email to your personal or business mailbox. This enables UTEP graduates to stay connected with fellow alumni, friends or colleagues, regardless of where they go.

All email sent to an alum’s assigned @alumni.utep.edu address will be forwarded to the designated non-UTEP email inbox. In order to receive messages sent to a LEFA, the forwarding address must be activated.

**INITIATIVE HELPS GRADUATES CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER**

Get in touch with fellow alumni from around the world in two easy steps:

1. Log into your alumni MinerLink profile by visiting [www.utep.edu/MinerLink](http://www.utep.edu/MinerLink)
2. Go to the ‘Edit My Profile’ section
3. Provide your non-UTEP email address

If you have not been assigned an @alumni.utep.edu forwarding address, please email onlinecommunity@utep.edu. A LEFA account is the latest link to keep you connected without publicizing your private email address. Visit [www.utep.edu/MinerLink](http://www.utep.edu/MinerLink) and get connected today.
Miners Around the World

Irene Olivas-Astwood, (Criminal Justice, ’06) visits Taormina, Italy, in March 2018.

Robert M. Lopez, a senior communication major, visits Mahogany Bay in Roatan, Honduras, in May 2018.

MARIA FUENTESP (MPH ’18) SHOWS HER MINER SPIRIT AT THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE IN NEW YORK CITY IN FEBRUARY 2018. SHE WILL START WORK ON HER PH.D. IN INTERDISCIPLINARY HEALTH SCIENCES AT UTEP IN FALL 2018.
In Memoriam

UTEP acknowledges the passing of the following graduates

1940s
Paul R. Coppenbarger (B.A. ’49) El Paso, Texas; Jan. 15, 2018
Martin Molinar (B.A. ’49) El Paso, Texas; Jan. 21, 2018
Miriam Henryetta Crockett Patton (B.A. ’48) El Paso, Texas; Dec. 22, 2017
Genevieve Alice Sewell (B.A. ’49; M.A. ’65) Sun City, Arizona; Dec. 25, 2017
Carolyn R. Taylor (B.A. ’47) San Antonio, Texas; Feb. 6, 2018

1950s
Manuel Xavier Aguilar (B.A. ’58) El Paso, Texas; Jan. 14, 2018
Elva J. Arditti (B.A. ’53) El Paso, Texas; Nov. 17, 2017
Robert Bonunda (M.A. ’56) El Paso, Texas; Dec. 25, 2017
Maravene Gay Brooks (B.A. ’56) El Paso, Texas; Feb. 26, 2018
Carlos Armando Bustamante (B.S. ’52) El Paso, Texas; Dec. 20, 2017
Richard F. Cook (B.S. ’58) El Paso, Texas; Feb. 27, 2018
Cabella Braden Finch (B.A. ’57) Knoxville, Tennessee; March 3, 2018
Daniel Willett Foster (B.A. ’51) Dallas, Texas; Jan. 18, 2018
Richard Wallace Gingery (M.A. ’55) Arlington, Texas; Dec. 23, 2017
James Crawford Harvie (BBA ’59) El Paso, Texas; Dec. 28, 2017
Alfonso H. Holguin (B.A. ’51) San Antonio, Texas; Oct. 6, 2017
Margaret Ledesma (B.A. ’52) El Paso, Texas; Dec. 22, 2017
James Harwood Lundy (B.S. ’54) Globe, Arizona; Dec. 29, 2017
Melvin Archie Lyons (BBA ’57) El Paso, Texas; Feb. 26, 2018

1960s
Edmundo D. Medrano (B.S. ’51) El Paso, Texas; March 1, 2018
Ronald H. Mishkin (B.A. ’53) Lake Hopatcong, New Jersey; Feb. 3, 2018
Barry Morgan (B.A. ’56) Alto, New Mexico; Jan. 24, 2018
Alan Vance Rash (BBA.’53) Mesa, Arizona; Feb. 18, 2018
Allen R. Reaves (M.A. ’57) El Paso, Texas; Feb. 5, 2018
Ricardo V. Romero (B.A. ’55; M.Ed. ’69) El Paso, Texas; Dec. 13, 2017
Fred W. Seymour Jr. (B.S. ’58) San Antonio, Texas; March 10, 2018
Carlos Terrazas (B.S. ’53) Tucson, Arizona; Dec. 2, 2017

1970s
Marvin F. Bell (BBA ’61) Summerville, South Carolina; Dec. 10, 2017
Robert Wayne Clay (B.S. ’68) Fort Worth, Texas; Nov. 24, 2017
Thomas Watson Cline Jr. (B.M. ’65) Ridgeland, Mississippi; Jan. 17, 2018
Victor Hylan Coats (BBA ’65) Edmond, Oklahoma; Dec. 3, 2017
Myrna Lynn Davidson (B.A. ’68; M.A. ’82) Katy, Texas; Feb. 27, 2018
Hansford Fields (B.A. ’62) Salado, Texas; Jan. 1, 2018
Virginia Joan Hooten (B.S. ’64) El Paso, Texas; Jan. 6, 2018
Frank Manriquez (B.S. ’65) San Marcos, Texas; Feb. 25, 2018
Lorenzo “Lencho” Perales Jr. (B.S. ’65) El Paso, Texas; Feb. 20, 2018
Raimundo Ruben Rios (B.S. ’60) San Diego, California; Dec. 14, 2017
Douglas Donald Rittmann (B.S. ’69; M.S. ’90; Ph.D. ’99) El Paso, Texas; Dec. 5, 2017

1980s
Jean Henri Allen (B.S. ’71; M.Ed. ’77) El Paso, Texas; Jan. 9, 2018
Basilio David Borch (B.A. ’73) Corpus Cristi, Texas; Dec. 25, 2017
Maria Raquel “Rachel” Bazan (B.S. ’78) El Paso, Texas; Nov. 28, 2017
Gail Edwin Bauer (B.S. ’76) El Paso, Texas; Jan. 24, 2018
Michael Walter Burke (B.S. ’72; M.A. ’79) Vancouver, Washington; Feb. 27, 2018
Michael Norman Collier (BBA ’70) Missouri City, Texas; Jan. 26, 2018
Thomas Alexander Cooper (M.Ed. ’78) El Paso, Texas; Dec. 11, 2017
James Josephus Crouch (B.A. ’71) El Paso, Texas; March 7, 2018
Lawrence Douglas Durnford (B.A. ’77) El Paso, Texas; Dec. 14, 2017
James Edward Eiland (B.S. ’71) Staunton, Virginia; March 6, 2018
Robert M. Estrada (B.A. ’76) El Paso, Texas; Dec. 11, 2017
Leroy J. McCoontze (B.A. ’80) Colorado Springs, Colorado; Feb. 14, 2018
Debra Veliz Martinez (B.S. ’85; M.Ed. ’90; Ed.D. ’04) El Paso, Texas; Dec. 28, 2017
Kevin Francis O’Toole (BBA ’86) New Braunfels, Texas; Dec. 29, 2017
Edward Vito Servider (B.S. ’85) El Paso, Texas; Feb. 3, 2018
Bernard M. Sutherland (B.S. ’81) Dallas, Texas; Feb. 8, 2018
Karen Elise Wegleitner (B.S. ’88; M.Ed. ’90) Wichita, Kansas; Jan. 26, 2018

Continued on page 68
Obituaries

Professor Emeritus of Mathematics James E. Nymann, Ph.D., was a beloved and highly respected member of The University of Texas at El Paso’s mathematics department. He died Jan. 1, 2018, at age 79.

Nymann grew up in Iowa and graduated from high school in 1956 alongside his high school sweetheart, Carol Jepsen. The two were married for 59 years.

Nymann received a B.S. in mathematics from Iowa State Teachers College in 1961. Soon after, he acquired his master’s degree and Ph.D. in mathematics from the University of Arizona.

He joined UTEP in 1967 and retired in 2002. During his time with the University, he filled many roles, including department chair and graduate school adviser. He also directed high school math teacher training for the National Science Foundation.

Nymann is credited with developing UTEP’s Master of Arts in Teaching degree in 1981.

He was a Fulbright professor at the University of Liberia and the University of Malawi in the 1970s. Nymann was the first person in the math department to be an institutional representative for the Rocky Mountain Mathematics Consortium in 1975. He also served as part of the Texas International Education Consortium in Malaysia in 1987.

Throughout his career, Nymann earned the respect of colleagues, students and family for always fighting to “do the right thing,” whether the issue involved academic research, administrative matters or family affairs, according to Maria Barraza-Rios, who became close to Nymann during her time as a graduate student.

“He was one of the heavyweights in the department (during) a generation of very good researchers,” she said. “He earned that title on his research, his teaching and on his mentoring of graduate students.”

Barraza-Rios described Nymann as a straight shooter who was helpful, serious about his work and never unkind.

- Jesse Martinez

Joan Georgette Staniswalis, Ph.D., was as kind and compassionate to her students as she was dedicated to her research.

Staniswalis joined The University of Texas at El Paso’s Department of Mathematical Sciences in 1990 and retired as professor emerita in 2016. She died April 13, 2018, at the age of 60.

Staniswalis had a strong interest in biomedical applications that stemmed from her experience at The Medical College of Virginia’s Biostatistics Department. When she arrived at UTEP, she utilized her experience in environmental applications such as the health effects of pollution in ambient air and the use of ecological data to study disparities in health outcomes.

Her colleague Xiaogang Su, Ph.D., professor of mathematics, described her as a kind woman who was dedicated to the success of her students and worked hard to find opportunities for them to attend conferences.

“She was helpful to their career and their research,” Su said. “She would try to find the resources to fund their trips and sometimes drove there to help them attend those conferences.”

Even after her retirement in 2016, Staniswalis continued to mentor her students and graduated her final Ph.D. student a few months before her death.

During her time at UTEP, Staniswalis was the director of the National Institutes of Health-funded Minority Biomedical Research Support Program. She also was director of the Statistical Consulting Laboratory from 1997 to 2003.

In 2001, Staniswalis was named a Fellow of the American Statistical Association for her contributions to nonparametric regression and its application to biomedical research, her collaborative research accomplishments, her administrative leadership in consulting and her mentorship of students and junior researchers.

She earned a bachelor’s degree in mathematics from California State University, Fullerton and a master’s and Ph.D. in math from the University of California, San Diego.

- Jesse Martinez
Howard “Randy” Randolph Whitworth, Ph.D., professor emeritus of psychology, died Nov. 13, 2017, at age 88. He joined Texas Western College, now The University of Texas at El Paso, fresh out of graduate school in 1960 upon receiving his doctorate in psychology from The University of Texas at Austin. The eager new psychologist quickly put down roots in El Paso and enjoyed a long, distinguished career at the University.

Whitworth taught in the Department of Philosophy, which then housed psychology, and eventually served as chair of the Department of Psychology. He also led UTEP’s Counseling and Psychological Services and served for many years as associate dean of the College of Liberal Arts.

Eddie Castañeda, Ph.D., Helen M.C. and J. Edward Stern Endowed Professor of Psychology and chair of UTEP’s Department of Psychology, was a first-generation college student when he attended UTEP in the 1970s. He recalls Whitworth as a positive role model.

“Even though he had an air of professorial formality, he was easygoing and disarming, and easy to engage in conversation,” Castañeda said. “These were important qualities for students like me, who may not have been sure why they were even in a university because he truly served as somebody we could potentially emulate.”

In addition to his duties at UTEP, Whitworth was a prolific researcher on Alzheimer’s disease and cross-cultural aspects of psychological testing. Whitworth’s research on the adverse effects of Asarco lead pollution on El Paso children strongly influenced public policies involving lead pollution throughout the world.

Despite Whitworth’s contributions to the field of psychology, his wife of 51 years believes he would want to be remembered for who he was rather than what he accomplished.

“Randy would want to be remembered for his fairness and compassion, and as someone you could talk to about your problems,” Selina Whitworth said. “He loved UTEP and El Paso, and was a strong supporter of the promise of an affordable quality education that the University offered the people of the community he so adamantly adored and served.” - Christina Rodriguez
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