2017 FALL CONVOCATION

The beginning of each new academic year brings with it renewed energy and enthusiasm, and this year has been no exception.

BURIED PICKS

The “Buried Pick” monuments along Interstate 10 near UTEP serve as gateways to mark the University’s most traveled entrance.

P. 7

LOVE BUGS

UTEP COUPLE SHARES PASSION FOR FINDING CHAGAS CURE

P. 36

FACILITATING SUCCESS

Data-informed support programs consider students' financial and social realities.

P. 42
On Oct. 24, 2017, UTEP joined millions of people around the country in biting apples to support healthy, affordable food. The Institute for Healthy Living at UTEP coordinated Apple Crunch Day events throughout the region as part of National Food Day 2017. Free apples were distributed at Leech Grove. Students, faculty, staff, alumni and others posted photos of themselves biting into apples on social media to support the inaugural campus event.

See more campus life photos at utep.edu/magazine
**MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT**

very two years, The University of Texas at El Paso is invited to submit a proposal to The University of Texas System Board of Regents for approval of recommended tuition and fees for the next biennium. Developing these recommendations is always a difficult and highly deliberative process at UTEP because all of us take very seriously our responsibility to make a high-quality education accessible to all talented students in the Paso del Norte region, regardless of their financial means.

As context for our recommendations, we begin by re-evaluating ongoing efforts to reduce expenditures and achieve savings in all campus operations. Recent cost-saving measures have included eliminating “non-mission critical” positions, a freeze in flexible purchasing and travel, aggressive energy management, a hiring freeze, strategic outsourcing of non-core functions, and conservative budget management.

These measures are clearly paying off. A recent U.S. Department of Education report recognized UTEP’s success in achieving our access and excellence goals, concluding that UTEP offers students one of the lowest net costs of attendance of any public research university in the nation.

Declining state appropriations have played a significant role in UTEP’s struggle to keep tuition low. The University’s anticipated operating expenses for 2017-18 will total $436 million, compared to $284 million in 2008 – a 33 percent increase over the past decade. During the same period, state appropriations to the University have grown less than 20 percent – from $91 million to $108 million.

Noteworthy too has been the major shift in UTEP’s funding sources: the contribution of legislative appropriations to UTEP’s total operating expenses has declined from 60 percent in 1984, to only 23 percent today.

Unfortunately, and despite UTEP’s best efforts to offer a high-quality education at an affordable price, state appropriations reductions and rising costs have continued to outpace our capacity to absorb them through additional savings measures alone. Modest increases in tuition appear to be the only option available to serve the growing number of UTEP students – a record 25,078 in fall 2017 – and to retain and recruit outstanding faculty and staff who provide the quality educational opportunities that our students deserve and that so many of you – our alumni – have experienced firsthand.

To that end, a committee of students (the majority), faculty and staff worked diligently this past fall to develop tuition and fee recommendations for the next two years. In December, these recommendations were included in UTEP’s proposal to the UT System to increase tuition by 6.4 percent for the 2018-19 academic year, and another 6.3 percent for 2019-20. The committee also recommended instituting differential tuition rates for individual colleges, based in part on the average starting salaries of their graduates. These recommendations and those from all other UT System academic institutions will be reviewed by the Board of Regents early in the spring 2018 semester.

You, our UTEP alumni and friends, are among our strongest and most steadfast partners in efforts to provide our students a high-quality education at an affordable cost. Many of you generously contribute to a variety of scholarship funds, which not only benefit our students financially, but also validate and celebrate their talents and aspirations. In addition, you offer UTEP students internships, you mentor them, you secure commitments from your companies to invest in the quality of their educational experiences, and you volunteer your time and expertise through the UTEP Alumni Association and in countless other ways for their benefit. You are our students’ role models, offering exemplary professional success and pride in being a member of the Miner Nation. Thank you for all you do to make us proud!

**Go Miners!**

Diana Natalicio
President
The beginning of each new academic year brings with it renewed energy and enthusiasm, and this year has been no exception.

Triatomines, nicknamed “kissing bugs,” often carry a parasite that causes Chagas disease. UTEP researchers are developing vaccines for the potentially deadly disease. Photo by J.R. Hernandez.
Aims of Education
President Natalicio Speaks at Georgetown Convocation

The University of Texas at El Paso’s President Diana Natalicio delivered the “Aims of Education” reflection at Georgetown University’s Fall Faculty Convocation on Tuesday, Oct. 24, 2017, in Washington, D.C. Georgetown uses this ceremony to celebrate faculty members who recently have received tenure or promotion.

In his introduction, Georgetown University President John J. DeGioia, Ph.D., referred to President Natalicio as “one of the most impactful leaders in higher education over the past four decades; someone who has changed the landscape of higher education in our nation.”

President Natalicio described El Paso and UTEP before sharing stories of the high-achieving UTEP students who thrive on the U.S.-Mexico border, and the success they see as a result of the University’s mission.

“By challenging traditional policies, procedures and metrics, UTEP has been successful in creating amazing opportunities for large numbers of students who at another place or time might not have had access to them,” she said.

This was the second time President Natalicio made an address at Georgetown. She previously spoke at the university’s 2011 commencement ceremony for Georgetown’s School of Continuing Studies. She was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters that year.

In May 2017, President Natalicio delivered two commencement addresses. One was at her alma mater, Saint Louis University in St. Louis, Missouri, where she received an honorary Doctor of Science degree after her speech. Northeastern University also conferred an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree on President Natalicio after she gave an address at the institution’s 115th commencement ceremony in Boston. - Elizabeth Ashby

To see a video of President Natalicio’s speech at Georgetown, visit utep.edu/magazine.

Picture This:
Icons Help Identify UTEP Edge Experiences

A picture is worth a thousand words, especially when used to describe an experience that could contribute to lifelong success.

To assist in identifying the high-impact experiences associated with the UTEP Edge – the cross-campus culture of student success and empowerment – a series of icons were developed to represent each Edge experience.

When students come to UTEP, they already have many talents, strengths and dreams. The UTEP Edge philosophy helps them to develop and enhance these assets through access to high-impact experiences such as undergraduate research, community engagement, study abroad and student employment. These experiences, made possible through the expertise and dedication of staff, faculty, alumni and community partners, give students a competitive edge in their future academic and professional pursuits.

The UTEP Edge icons will appear in a variety of areas and platforms that promote a particular experience. As UTEP students familiarize themselves with these icons, it will be easier for them to recognize the abundance of available opportunities. The hope is that more of them will participate in their own Edge experiences.

Be on the lookout for Edge experience icons and learn more about what each experience has to offer.

To learn more about the UTEP Edge, visit utep.edu/edge.
Old Main Turns 100

Old Main was built in 1917 as one of the first buildings on the current UTEP campus after the original campus near Fort Bliss was destroyed by a fire.

In its early years, Old Main served as a popular gathering spot for various activities on campus. It later housed departments including math, physics, and sociology and anthropology.

On Oct. 6, 2017, students, alumni, faculty and staff gathered outside the steps of Old Main to celebrate the building’s 100th birthday.

Throughout the years, Old Main has not only served many purposes but also many students. Generations of graduates can recall a time when they walked Old Main’s halls or recount a memory or two of their experiences in the building.

Over the span of a century, Old Main has undergone renovations and repurposing; however, its lasting legacy will continue for many years to come.

Continued on page 6
To hear stories about Old Main from UTEP alumni and faculty, visit utep.edu/magazine.
The sight of the “Buried Pick” monuments installed along Interstate 10 near The University of Texas at El Paso in May 2017 was an exciting moment for David Griffin, one of the more than 110,000 motorists who pass that point on a daily basis.

Griffin, chair of UTEP’s Department of Art, said the iconic pieces of public art speak to the essence of the University. He said he liked how they were slightly abstracted and stylized, and appreciated them as sculptural signage.

Each pickaxe is set on steel and concrete bases that are surrounded by native stone boulders. The pick handles are set at a 75-degree angle. They are about 40 feet tall, 25 feet long and 12 feet wide. The letters “U-T-E-P” are 3-and-a-half feet tall and set in both sides of the axe handle and backlit with LEDs. One is adjacent to the Sun Bowl 2 parking lot and the other is off the eastbound lanes on I-10 across from the Sun Bowl 3 lot.

“I especially think they are fun at night when they are illuminated,” Griffin said. “I think they look great.”

The picks were paid for through the Texas Department of Transportation’s I-10 Corridor Aesthetic Master Plan. TxDOT and University officials initially discussed the project in 2013.

The picks serve as gateways to mark the University’s most traveled entrance, said Greg McNicol, associate vice president for business affairs – facilities management.

“Motorists will get a clean, unobstructed view of both of them from the freeway,” McNicol said. “You can’t miss them. They’re great locations.” - Daniel Perez

SOCIAL MEDIA PHOTO COMPETITION WINNER

Congratulations to Manny Loya (Instagram: @popnfresh013) for submitting the winning photo in our social media competition!
There was a sense of exhilaration among the 41 students who made up the inaugural class of The University of Texas at El Paso’s School of Pharmacy during the group’s White Coat Ceremony on Oct. 26, 2017, in UTEP’s Magoffin Auditorium.

It was a milestone that they shared with an audience of friends, family, faculty, University administrators and special community guests. The students accepted their white coats, which represented service, clinical care and professionalism, and recited the Oath of a Pharmacist.

“I felt so happy,” said Ranielle Espinoza, an El Paso native who had dreamed of being a pharmacist since she was 7 years old and trying to understand the medications her mother needed to overcome a serious eye issue. “I was starting a new journey.”

After the ceremony, attendees moved to an open house at UTEP’s Campbell Building. Well-wishers received tours of the state-of-the-art labs created for the students. They included the IV-Admixture and Compounding teaching labs, research labs and the Student Success Center, which includes a mock retail pharmacy and clinic.

Espinoza, who earned a bachelor’s degree in biological sciences with a biomedical concentration from UTEP in 2014, said she looked forward to being part of the medical team that can enhance health care on the border.

The White Coat Ceremony was the latest watershed moment for the school. The Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education granted the school precandidate status in July 2017.

The school, which offers a doctorate in pharmacy, provides a unique curriculum that promotes Spanish proficiency, cultural sensitivity and a primary care emphasis. It is the first of its kind on the Texas-Mexico border and is among the few pharmacy schools at a Hispanic-Serving Institution. While the majority of the inaugural class is from the Paso del Norte region, school officials expect to draw future students from around the country.

“We are very proud of where we are and where we are going,” said José O. Rivera, Pharm.D., the school’s founding dean and a UTEP educator and administrator since 1996. “Our faculty and staff are committed to create the ideal pharmacist.”

The school, which offers a doctorate in pharmacy, provides a unique curriculum that promotes Spanish proficiency, cultural sensitivity and a primary care emphasis.
To see a video from the White Coat Ceremony, visit utep.edu/magazine.
Established in 1992 to improve the academic success of students in the Paso del Norte region, the EPCAE, a communitywide partnership, is recognized as one of the most innovative and effective urban school reform initiatives in the United States.

To mark the EPCAE’s silver anniversary in 2017, UTEP hosted a lecture on Sept. 19 to celebrate the remarkable achievements that have resulted from the collaborative’s collective efforts.

The event featured presentations from some of the EPCAE’s key players, including Susana Navarro, Ph.D., who co-founded the initiative with UTEP President Diana Natalicio; Robert B. Schwartz, professor emeritus of practice in educational policy and administration at the Harvard Graduate School of Education; and Kati Haycock, former president of The Education Trust.

“What absolutely has to be noted is how very different this community is from the one that we saw in 1991 and 1992,” said Navarro, who retired in 2011 after serving as the EPCAE’s director for 20 years. “In those days, the achievement patterns painted a pretty dismal picture. Few students achieved and were at remotely acceptable levels whether at third grade, at eighth grade, or in high school. What was happening in postsecondary [education] was just as gloomy.”

Today, the EPCAE has been credited with successfully improving high school graduation rates, increasing college readiness programs, and reducing academic achievement gaps across demographic groups. UTEP also experienced impressive growth in enrollment and in the total number of education degrees awarded.

“This region has a very special educational interdependence,” President Natalicio said. “More than 80 percent of UTEP students are graduates of high schools in this region and an estimated 75 percent of area teachers are graduates of UTEP. This means we have a mutuality of interests and a shared stake in our collective success.”

The EPCAE plans to increase the number of dual-credit and advanced courses offered in high schools and prepare more teachers with credentials required to teach these college-level courses. — Laura L. Acosta

Above: (Back, from left) Kati Haycock, Robert B. Schwartz and Armando Aguirre, Ed.D. and (front, from left) UTEP President Diana Natalicio, Susana Navarro, Ph.D., and Ivette Savina celebrate the 25th anniversary of the EPCAE.

Next page, top: President Natalicio congratulates a student from Helen Ball Elementary School. Helen Ball was one of the honored schools at the EPCAE School Awards Ceremony held at the Hoover House on May 11, 1999.

Next page, bottom: Susana Navarro, Ph.D., (center) with a group of elementary school children.
A Timeline for EPCAE

1983
A Nation at Risk launches the modern education reform movement.

1991
First stakeholders meet to discuss the formation of an organization to bring systemic reform to El Paso education at all levels.

1992
The El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence (EPCAE) is established. The EPCAE receives initial grants from the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Coca-Cola Foundation.

1994
Education Week reports on the early success of the EPCAE. The National Science Foundation (NSF) awards the EPCAE a five-year, $15 million Urban Systemic Initiative grant.

1995
The UT System Board of Regents approves new admission requirements proposed by UTEP to align by 2004 with Region 19 schools’ college preparatory curricula.

2000
The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board announces Closing the Gaps’ standards, many of which EPCAE member schools already meet or exceed.

The El Paso Education Summit is held on the UTEP campus.

2002
The NSF awards the EPCAE a $29 million Math/Science Partnership grant.

2005
The first reverse-transfer degree is awarded by EPCC in collaboration with UTEP.

2006
The EPCAE is recognized by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the Education Commission for the States for instilling a college-going culture among all area K-12 students.

2010
Data from the Texas’ Academic Excellence Indicator System show that Hispanic students in El Paso outperform their peers across Texas. The Texas Education Agency rates 37 of 39 Ysleta ISD schools as Recognized or Exemplary.

2015
EPCC records the second-largest dual-credit enrollment in Texas, with more than 500% growth since 2006.

2015
The El Paso Education Summit is held on the UTEP campus.

What absolutely has to be noted is how very different this community is from the one that we saw in 1991 and 1992. In those days the achievement patterns painted a pretty dismal picture. Few students achieved and were at remotely acceptable levels whether at third grade, at eighth grade, or in high school. What was happening in postsecondary [education] was just as gloomy.”

Susana Navarro, Ph.D.
EPCAE Co-Founder

To see a video about the EPCAE, visit utep.edu/magazine.
“You set high aspirations for yourselves, persevered and worked hard to develop your talents and achieve your goals, and greatly increased the probability that the success you celebrate today will serve as a springboard for other big dreams that you’ll achieve in the future, much as you did this one.”

- UTEP President Diana Natalicio

Photo by Ivan Pierre Aguirre
More than 2,300 summer graduates and winter candidates from The University of Texas at El Paso closed a chapter of their lives built on big dreams and expectations for the future. On Dec. 16, 2017, thousands of friends, family members and well-wishers gathered at the Don Haskins Center to cheer on and support the graduates from the class of 2017. In her address, UTEP President Diana Natalicio encouraged the newly minted graduates to continue to pursue their dreams.

“You set high aspirations for yourselves, persevered and worked hard to develop your talents and achieve your goals, and greatly increased the probability that the success you celebrate today will serve as a springboard for other big dreams that you’ll achieve in the future, much as you did this one,” she said.

To see a Commencement video, visit utep.edu/magazine.
The Honorable Ambassador of Mexico to the United States, Gerónimo Gutiérrez, joined UTEP President Diana Natalicio and Consul General of Mexico in El Paso Marcos Bucio for a scholarship acceptance ceremony and Centennial Lecture on Nov. 16, 2017.

IME Scholarships, a program of the Government of Mexico that seeks to expand educational opportunities for Mexicans abroad, gave UTEP a $17,000 grant for the 2017-18 academic year to award new scholarships to 17 Mexican students. Gutiérrez had the opportunity to meet several of the scholarship recipients.

After the IME-Becas ceremony, Gutiérrez delivered a Centennial Lecture on “U.S.-Mexico Relations at a Crossroads,” in which he discussed the opportunity for Mexico and the United States to have a “much more mature relationship, and one that works for both sides.”

Prior to his January 2017 appointment by President Enrique Peña Nieto as Ambassador of Mexico to the United States, Gutiérrez served as managing director of the North American Development Bank headquartered in San Antonio, Texas.

Ambassador Gutiérrez also served previously under four Presidents in several prominent Mexican federal government positions in the areas of trade, finance, diplomacy and national security.
Bruce W. Bunting

Bruce W. Bunting, DVM, president of the Bhutan Foundation, delivered a Centennial Lecture on Oct. 11, 2017 titled “Bhutan: Development with Values.” He spoke about Bhutan’s history and the country’s pursuit of Gross National Happiness, instead of Gross National Product. He said this approach has worked for Bhutan and has allowed the country to conserve its rich, natural environment and cultural heritage while progressing with its economic and political development.

He first visited Bhutan in 1986 and has been a longtime adviser to the Bhutanese government on a variety of issues, including the establishment of Bhutan’s national park system; the Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation, the world’s first such trust fund; and the Bhutan Health Trust Fund.

Pablo Cuarón

The University of Texas at El Paso on Oct. 9, 2017 strengthened its partnership with Mexico, specifically with the State of Chihuahua, after it signed a memorandum of understanding and collaboration that will provide more scholarship opportunities for students from Chihuahua.

Pablo Cuarón, secretary of education and sports for the State of Chihuahua, signed the agreement that will enhance a program that has benefited about 360 students from the State of Chihuahua since the University and the state signed their first collaboration agreement in 2002.

UTEP has enrolled more Mexican students than most other U.S. universities for several decades. The majority of these students come from the State of Chihuahua.

Jeff Cowton

Jeff Cowton has inspired dozens of UTEP students since 2014 – and thousands of students worldwide through the years – with his unique ability to reveal the “hidden” stories behind the rare published writings of William Wordsworth, who lived in England’s Lake District in the 19th century.

Cowton spoke at an Oct. 26 Centennial Lecture that was a part of the 2017 International Conference on Romanticism at UTEP. He is curator of the Wordsworth Trust in Grasmere, England, and has been honored by Queen Elizabeth II for his creative service to museums.

Martha Kanter

Martha Kanter, former undersecretary of education, was among the featured speakers at the Southwest Diversity Summit on Oct. 20, 2017, at The University of Texas at El Paso. Its theme was “Access and Opportunity in Hispanic Education: Views from the Border.”

Her presentation to local and regional leaders in the fields of business, government and academia touched on the benefits of an educated Hispanic population.

The goal of the conference was to raise awareness of the economic impact of Hispanic-Americans without college degrees, to allow universities, employers and other groups to showcase their resources for Hispanic-American undergraduates, graduate students and faculty; and to provide a platform to share ideas and offer solutions to the challenges created by shifting demographics.
COBA’s 50th Anniversary

Hundreds Attend Gala to Celebrate COBA’s 50th Anniversary

More than 300 faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends of UTEP’s College of Business Administration gathered Nov. 4, 2017, for the college’s 50th Anniversary Gala at the El Paso Country Club.

The gala was the culmination of numerous activities scheduled throughout 2017 to recognize when the college became a standalone entity at The University of Texas at El Paso. Guests mingled, viewed a photo slideshow of the college through the years, shared a sit-down meal, and heard reflections from students, COBA Dean Robert Nachtmann, DBA, and University President Diana Natalicio.

President Natalicio mentioned a few of the college’s milestones, such as its offering of graduate degrees, the completion of its own building, its accreditation and the opening of centers that promote interdisciplinary research and entrepreneurship.

“Ultimately, the college’s success in fulfilling UTEP’s access and excellence mission is best validated through the accomplishments of its alumni,” she said to an audience that included at least 100 COBA graduates.

Nachtmann, dean since 2005, spoke about his vision to transform how COBA students, especially the undergraduates, are educated so they can seamlessly enter the workforce locally and around the world. He said that can be accomplished through additional interdisciplinary work with UTEP’s other schools and colleges, and with continued assistance from the college’s many corporate partners. COBA has launched several academies since 2016 that blend laboratory, classroom and experiential learning that provide students with knowledge that is current, data driven and able to address the issues of the day. More of these academies are in the works.

“That’s an education that excites our students,” Nachtmann said. - Daniel Perez
‘Boy Sociologist’ Retires After 4 Decades

Longtime UTEP administrator and faculty member Howard Daudistel announced his retirement from The University of Texas at El Paso at the end of the fall 2017 semester after almost 44 years of service.

Daudistel, Ph.D., has served as interim provost and vice president for academic affairs, senior executive vice president, dean of the College of Liberal Arts, and chaired several departments. Those are among the many titles he earned at UTEP.

His first was lecturer in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology in 1974 at age 26. Born in Hollywood, the Southern California native chuckled as he recalled how his department colleagues good-naturedly called him “Boy Sociologist.”

The first-generation college student said he decided to separate from the University because it was the right time for him, his family and the institution.

“It’s been a wonderful appointment,” said the son of a homemaker mom and white-collar office worker dad. “I’ve had nothing but fun here. I think I’ve done the sorts of things that are valuable to the institution. I am in a position to leave on a high note.”

Daudistel was modest as he discussed his role in fostering positive changes on campus. He said he felt privileged to be part of teams of faculty, staff and students that created opportunities for others such as degree plans and programs that enrich faculty and enhance their research productivity. These collaborative efforts are what make UTEP special, he said.

University President Diana Natalicio praised Daudistel for his deep and abiding commitment to UTEP that has enhanced the institution during the past four decades. She called him a team player who never hesitated to step up to serve UTEP and its students as a teacher, mentor, researcher and administrator.

“His wealth of experience as a UTEP faculty member and administrator, together with his clear understanding of and strong commitment to our mission, has been of enormous benefit to the University, to his colleagues, and to me,” she said. “Of all his titles — and he has had many — I am most pleased to call him a friend.”

Among his many honors and awards, Daudistel said the ones he earned through UTEP’s College of Liberal Arts (COLA), where he served as dean for 14 years, mean the most to him. They include the college’s Outstanding Faculty Achievement Award for Excellence in Teaching and Research in 1996 and the Vice President’s Award for Academic Excellence in 1981.

Yvonne Carranza Rolph, COLA director of student success, was a Daudistel sociology student in 1991 and, later, worked for him for five years as COLA coordinator of student services. She called him an influential and supportive figure in her academic and professional lives.

“Dr. Daudistel was a life-changing mentor for me because he intuitively understood that in every success or failure, there is a valuable opportunity to learn and evolve,” she said. “He gave me unlimited support in all circumstances, and taught me to always look for and mine the lessons learned that would make me a better UTEP staff member.” - Daniel Perez

Photo by J.R. Hernandez
The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has awarded more than $2 million to The University of Texas at El Paso and El Paso Community College (EPCC) to establish The Humanities Collaborative. UTEP will receive nearly $1.4 million and EPCC will receive $651,000 in support of the program.

The goals of this three-year project are to expand collaboration in the humanities between the two institutions and to invigorate humanities coursework and student research at both institutions through paid internships, community involvement, interdisciplinary mentored research and other high-impact experiences that will lead to increased undergraduate and graduate majors in humanities disciplines such as English, history, languages and philosophy.

UTEP President Diana Natalicio said the Mellon Foundation’s generous investment in this project validates the strong partnership between the two institutions and their abilities to build smooth pathways for students who start at EPCC and complete their baccalaureate degrees at UTEP.

“What is especially exciting is that these funds will be dedicated to encouraging the aspirations of students with a passion for pursuing graduate study and careers in the humanities, an area where such grant support is extremely rare,” President Natalicio said. “This program will surely offer life-changing options for its student participants. I join them and their faculty mentors in thanking the Mellon Foundation for its vision in creating this program and for the extraordinary opportunities it offers for humanities programs at both EPCC and UTEP.”

EPCC President William Serrata also is proud to expand the institution’s ongoing partnership with UTEP.

“Together our institutions are making impressive strides to increase higher education attainment in our region,” President Serrata said. “The generous grant received from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation will further strengthen these ties, increase collaboration between UTEP and EPCC faculty and students, create clearer pathways for EPCC students to transfer to UTEP, and raise the profile of the humanities in our border community.”

Brian Yothers, Ph.D., a UTEP professor of English and the program’s principal investigator at UTEP, said the study of humanities contributes to professional success in many varied fields such as law, business and careers that benefit from enhanced abilities to communicate clearly and evaluate critically.

“We’re excited about this on many levels,” Yothers said. “We want more students to understand the range of exciting options for inquiry in the humanities and to develop research and writing skills specific to the humanities, which also happen to be skills in which many employers are interested. The possibilities for connections within the humanities and between the humanities and other disciplines, particularly the arts, are endless.” - Daniel Perez
UTEP’s College of Business Administration (COBA) launched a two-pronged effort during the fall 2017 semester to better prepare graduates for an increasingly tech-driven, quantitative workplace in financial services.

The college worked with Prudential Financial and other insurance industry leaders to develop a curriculum for the new Risk Management degree concentration, which is part of COBA’s Department of Economics and Finance. At the same time, it opened the Prudential Risk Management Academy as a non-academic component that will involve UTEP Edge activities such as internships, job opportunities, networking, professional development, and study-away periods with corporate leaders at Prudential Financial sites in the United States and Pramerica in Ireland. The academy also includes rigorous preparation for professional certification exams.

Undergraduates who complete this work will be well qualified for jobs in actuarial science, risk management, and quantitative finance in the fields of finance, insurance and financial technology.

“Anything we do in life basically has uncertain dimensions to it,” said COBA Dean Robert Nachtmann, DBA, who commended Prudential for its leadership and support of this concentration. “The analytical assessment, management, and pricing of those risks is risk management.”

Prudential’s decision to work with UTEP is part of a citywide strategy to create a skilled math and technology workforce in El Paso. The Fortune 500 company recognized UTEP’s strong academic programs, student demographic and the University’s important role in El Paso’s economic and workforce development.

The academy will create new academic and employment pathways for UTEP students and help increase the diversity in the actuarial and other financial services professions nationally, a Prudential Financial official said. - Daniel Perez

Learn more about the program at utep.edu/business/riskmanagement.

Record Enrollment
Student Body Surpasses 25,000

The University of Texas at El Paso experienced a significant increase in total enrollment for the 2017-18 academic year, jumping from 23,922 students in fall 2016 to an all-time high of 25,078.

In a climate of decreased education funding and falling enrollment at many institutions, UTEP’s enrollment increased for the 19th consecutive year. The 4.8 percent increase is the largest at the University since the fall of 2010.

“The fact that UTEP’s enrollment has continued to increase year after year is strong validation of the value students see in the University’s access and excellence model,” said UTEP President Diana Natalicio. “Students know that they can get a high-quality education and have special experiences at UTEP that are equal to or better than the opportunities available at other national research universities, and at a fraction of the cost. Moreover, our persistence rate shows that we walk the talk – once students enroll here, they stay.”

UTEP Vice President for Student Affairs Gary Edens, Ed.D., credits retention efforts with contributing to the trend of increased enrollment. He said the hard work of the faculty and academic advisers has helped make sure students are moving successfully toward their degrees.

In addition, Edens believes students recognize the value of a UTEP education.

“The academic quality and student life opportunities UTEP offers are exactly what students are looking for,” Edens said. “Our commitment to keep tuition low enables our students to attend a school of the highest quality and graduate with comparable skills and knowledge to their peers in more affluent communities.” - Jenn Crawford
Mental Healthcare

Federal Grant to Benefit Mental Healthcare Training

The number of culturally and linguistically competent mental healthcare providers who will serve in medically underserved communities should grow in coming years thanks to a four-year, $1.9 million grant directed by The University of Texas at El Paso.

The interdisciplinary and multi-institutional grant involves UTEP’s School of Nursing and Department of Social Work, the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso’s Department of Psychiatry, and four community partners that represent Federally Qualified Health Centers. Candyce Berger, Ph.D., professor of social work and associate dean for research and faculty affairs for the College of Health Sciences, is the principal investigator.

The Health Resources and Services Administration awarded the Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training grant that will fund more internships in integrated behavioral healthcare settings.

“Our success is directly related to the effort put forth by all of the faculty and community partners,” Berger said. “[The grant] provides student stipends, promotes our ongoing relationship with community-based health and mental health providers, and improves the quality of health-care services within our community.” - Daniel Perez

Border Economy

Texas Border Economies Thrive Due to Mexico’s Drug War

Despite Mexico’s drug war, retailers on the Texas side of the border experienced an increase in sales from Mexican consumers, according to a study by UTEP alumna Karen E. Treviño and Political Science Professor Gaspare M. Genna, Ph.D.

The study titled, “The Unexpected Effects of Criminal Violence along the Mexico-Texas Border,” analyzed the effects of drug cartel violence on the economies of Texas border counties between 2002-14. Treviño, who graduated in 2014 with a master’s in political science, and Genna coauthored the paper about the study, which was published in the journal Geopolitics in 2017.

Researchers found an increase in economic activity from Mexican consumers who fled the escalating violence in Mexico and crossed into Texas to shop safely for goods and services. Texas counties also benefited from Texas consumers who stopped shopping in Mexico and bought from local businesses instead. - Laura L. Acosta

"I AM DEEPLY HONORED TO ACCEPT this award on behalf of the entire UTEP team, and I thank CONAPRED for this recognition of UTEP’s innovative and impactful work."

- Diana Natalicio

CONAPRED Award

President Natalicio Honored for Support of Mexican Students

UTEP President Diana Natalicio was recognized by Mexico’s National Council to Prevent Discrimination, or Consejo Nacional para Prevenir La Discriminación (CONAPRED), with the 2017 Reconocimiento por la Igualdad y la No Discriminación, or Recognition for Equality and Non-Discrimination.

This recognition has been awarded since 2006 to people who have worked to further human rights, equality and non-discrimination. The Consultative Assembly of the organization selected President Natalicio as the award recipient in the international category for her efforts to make a college education accessible to Mexican students and for promoting equality and inclusion at UTEP.

President Natalicio was honored at a ceremony in Mexico City on Nov. 28, 2017.

“UTEP’s faculty and staff are deeply committed to our access and excellence mission — fostering an inclusive environment and creating high value-added opportunities for all our students, regardless of their backgrounds or financial means,” President Natalicio said. “I am honored to accept this award on behalf of the entire UTEP team, and I thank CONAPRED for this recognition of UTEP’s innovative and impactful work.”

CONAPRED is a Mexican federal agency created in 2003 with the purpose of preventing discrimination. - Elizabeth Ashby
A pair of UTEP geologists deployed to Mexico after two deadly tremors struck there in September 2017 to measure the aftershocks and use the data to better understand the earthquakes.

The first earthquake on Sept. 7, 2017, measuring magnitude 8.1, happened near Chiapas, Mexico. The second occurred 12 days later, about 93 miles from Mexico City, and measured magnitude 7.1. This earthquake occurred on the anniversary of the devastating magnitude 8.0 earthquake in Michoacan in 1985, which caused extensive damage to Mexico City and the surrounding region.

With 61 seismometers in tow, UTEP doctoral student Solymar Ayala Cortez and research assistant professor Hector Gonzalez-Huizar, Ph.D., joined colleagues from the Universidad Autonoma de Ciudad Juárez (UACJ) led by Oscar Dena, Ph.D., and the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico, including Xyoli Perez-Campos, Ph.D., and Allen Husker, Ph.D., to study the geologic causes and effects of those quakes.

The UTEP team buried 51 seismic “nodes” – cylinders about double the size of a Coca-Cola can that record ground motion data including aftershocks – just below the earth’s surface. They recorded for 22 days, registering aftershocks, including several large tremors that measured greater than magnitude 5.

“This is actually the first time the nodes have been deployed in an earthquake aftershock study anywhere in the world,” said Marianne Karplus, Ph.D., assistant professor of geological sciences. “It will be interesting to see how they perform because we are the first people to do this.”

Ten broadband array devices were deployed around the region’s Pacific coastline surrounding the aftershock locations. These more sensitive seismic meters will record for six months.

Researchers hope to use all the data collected to find out exactly what happened and help people be better prepared.

“Those two earthquakes are very unusual; they’re not typical earthquakes for the area,” explained Aaron Velasco, Ph.D., UTEP professor and geophysicist. “The earthquakes didn’t rupture where plates meet, they ruptured the plate itself. We want to be able to understand the basic science of what’s going on.”

- Lauren Macias-Cervantes
The testing will demonstrate that the use of oxygen combustion, rather than industry air combustion, will increase efficiency and help sequestrate 90 percent of the carbon dioxide from fossil energy power plants.
The first tests to demonstrate the use of oxygen combustion were completed in September at The University of Texas at El Paso’s Technology Research Innovation Acceleration Park (tRIAC) in Fabens, Texas. Mechanical engineering students conducted the combustor shakedown tests inside the location’s hangar.

“We have been looking forward to taking this step since the project was first announced in the fall of 2016,” said Ahsan Choudhuri, Ph.D., director of the NASA MIRO Center for Space Exploration and Technology Research and tRIAC project lead. “This larger facility near the airport allows us to conduct testing restricted at our campus location, advancing our ability to research combustion.”

The testing will demonstrate that the use of oxygen combustion, rather than industry air combustion, will increase efficiency and help sequester 90 percent of the carbon dioxide from fossil energy power plants. The next step in the research entails increasing the amount of pressure.

“The success of our initial testing out here validates the work of our student researchers and our program,” Choudhuri added. “We were ready for this opportunity to expand our footprint in the community. This continues our trajectory to positively impact the region and the future of UTEP as a contributor to economic development.”

Also in September, the U.S. Department of Commerce announced that UTEP had been awarded a $500,000 grant to create and expand cluster-focused proof-of-concept and commercialization programs through the Economic Development Administration’s (EDA) Regional Innovation Strategies program.

The EDA grant money will be matched by UTEP for a total investment of $1 million and will go toward the development of the facility. The University partnered with the County of El Paso on the venture and announced efforts for the area adjacent to the Fabens airport on the eastern fringe of El Paso County in fall 2016.

Renovation at the site began in April 2017. Students began working in the facility in August. Once complete, tRIAC will consist of multiple sites, including a test site and data center, a rocket tower and incubator facilities for small businesses.

- Lauren Macias-Cervantes
New Era Dawns
For UTEP Athletics

Bob Stull’s nearly 20-year tenure as Director of Athletics at UTEP produced five football bowl bids, a combined 14 postseason tournament appearances between the men’s and women’s basketball teams, and widespread improvements to the Miners’ athletic facilities.

Now Jim Senter is tasked with building on the Miners’ accomplishments under Stull, whilecharting a new course for UTEP Athletics.
As the ink dries on one chapter of the school's illustrious history, another is about to be penned.

Stull announced his retirement on Aug. 31, 2017, and Senter was ushered in as the Miners' new athletic director on Nov. 22. UTEP coaches, staff, faculty, students and members of the El Paso community were all part of an extensive national search.

Stull completed his second tour of duty with UTEP, the first coming as head football coach from 1986-88. His football run was one of the most successful in school history (21 wins over three years), and the same can be said about his stint heading up the athletic program.

Under Stull, sparkling facilities such as the Larry K. Durham Sports Center, Foster • Stevens Basketball Center and Helen of Troy Softball Complex sprouted on campus and provided the Miners with a significant recruiting advantage. On the playing field, 29 teams captured conference titles in seven sports. Off the field, more than 600 student-athletes have earned their degrees since the Miners' move to Conference USA in 2005.

"What I tried to do was make us a solid Division I program that is recognized nationally, and we've done that," Stull said. "Everyone knows UTEP. Everyone knows the UTEP logo. Our UTEP brand, everyone knows it. We've had national champions in track, we've been to the NCAA Tournament and we've been to bowl games. Everyone recognizes us now, and we think that's important."

Senter comes to El Paso after serving as director of athletics at The Citadel, the Military College of South Carolina, since 2014. Under his leadership, the Bulldog football team posted a 10-win season in 2016 and a nine-victory campaign in 2015. Senter also brings extensive fundraising experience to the Sun City after starting his career in athletic administration as assistant athletic director of development at the University of Idaho in 1998. At The Citadel, 45 percent of the school's athletic budget was self-generated revenue, the highest figure in the Southern Conference. He grew scholarship endowment by nearly $6 million in cash and pledges over the last three years, and the total fundraising numbers over the last two years both set school records.

Senter also worked at Colorado State for seven years (2006-13), spent 18 months at San Diego State, and is a past director of athletics at Idaho State University.

"The things that I talk about all the time with our coaches, staff and student-athletes are what I call my triple A philosophy," Senter said. "The first thing is attitude. Everything starts with a positive attitude. Everybody wants positive people in their organization. The second thing is action. I mean get up early, stay late, roll up your sleeves and go to work. There is no shortcut to success. You've got to put in the time."

"The third thing is the idea of accountability. And the challenge that every human being has every day when they get up is, 'Am I going to own what happens to me today?' Am I going to prepare, am I going to follow a process that I know has been tested and will produce positive results in my life, or am I going to sit around and say, 'Woe is me, I didn't get the recruit, I didn't get the win, I don't have what I need to get my job done?' You're going to own it, right? So attitude, action and accountability. Those are the tenants of my leadership, what I believe and my philosophy as we move forward."

And while the times are changing for UTEP Athletics with the appointment of a new leader, there is turnover in the football and men's basketball programs as well.

Sean Kugler stepped down as UTEP football coach on Oct. 1 after leading the Miners to one winning season (2014) in four-and-a-half years. Tim Floyd announced his retirement six games into his eighth season at UTEP, and his 24th year as a collegiate head coach Nov. 27.

Senter acted swiftly to make his first head coaching hire with the Miners as Dana Dimel was appointed the new head football coach Dec. 6.

Dimel was previously the head coach at the University of Wyoming (1997-99) and the University of Houston (2000-02). He most recently served as the offensive coordinator, running backs coach and tight ends coach at his alma mater, Kansas State University, where he has worked since 2009.

Dimel has the most wins of any active offensive coordinator in college football since 2011 (60), and has been a part of eight straight bowl appearances at K-State. The 2016 Wildcats defeated Texas, Texas A&M, Texas Tech, Baylor and TCU. With Dimel calling the plays over the last seven seasons, the Wildcats have averaged 33.4 points per game and 6.2 yards per play. They have ranked third nationally in fewest turnovers per game behind LSU and Alabama over the last seven years.

"I don't want to call this a turnaround [at UTEP], because it's not a turnaround," Dimel said. "We're going to build a program, and we're going to build it from the ground up. And when I get asked about time and concepts, about how long it's going to take and how you're going to be, we're going to take the 1-0 concept. We're going to be as good as we can be today and we're going to get the most out of every day and if we do that, then tomorrow will take care of itself."

Floyd closed out a stellar collegiate coaching career with a record of 466-279, including 138-99 at UTEP. His teams at Idaho, New Orleans, Iowa State, USC and UTEP combined to garner eight NCAA Tournament berths and five trips to the NIT. The Miners finished 75-43 in Conference USA play under Floyd, with top-three finishes on four occasions in seven full seasons as coach. He ranks second in school history in victories.

"I want to say this. I have coached for 42 years, and I love this school," Floyd said. "My father played here. Nobody wants to win here more than I do. I have coached at this University for 16 years [including eight as an assistant coach under Don Haskins]. And I think it's time for somebody else to have the opportunity to have the joy that I've had, the agony that I've had, the acclaim that I have had, and the heartbreak that I've had in my career. I want what's best for this school. I want what's best as they move forward."

Long-time Floyd assistant Phil Johnson took over as the Miners' interim head coach on Nov. 28. A national search to fill the position on a permanent basis will take place once the season ends in March.

It's the dawning of a new era for UTEP Athletics and it's sure to be an exciting time for the fans. As the ink dries on one chapter of the school's illustrious history, another is about to be penned. - Jeff Darby
Paul Thomas

Paul Thomas, a small forward on UTEP’s men’s basketball team, traveled about 2,600 miles to learn an important life lesson. Thomas and his teammates toured a Costa Rican orphanage that serves several hundred children. It was his first visit to that kind of facility. The players spoke with the orphans, gave them T-shirts and participated in races and games with them. Despite their hardships, the children always were in good spirits.

“It will definitely be something I remember for the rest of my life,” the Houston, Texas, native said after returning from the trip. “Seeing kids like that makes you count your blessings. It was really humbling.”

Thomas said it reminded him to be grateful for his opportunities to attend college and play Division I basketball.

“I did not always like basketball,” the student-athlete admitted. He started playing organized sports at age 5, including basketball. “I used to love baseball, but in seventh or eighth grade I hit about 6-foot-4 or 6-foot-5, and at that moment I knew I had to make a decision, and I chose basketball.” That choice led him to UTEP and an athletic scholarship.

“Paul has been an ideal student-athlete since the day that he first arrived on campus in 2015,” said interim head coach Phil Johnson. “His leadership, combined with his exceptional basketball skills, has allowed our team to grow both on and off the court. His ability to play both tough and smart is a very rare quality in today’s game.”

Thomas, a marketing major, said he plans to pursue a job with a sports team’s marketing department after graduation.

“I’m interested in why people make the decisions they make when it comes to buying or spending their time or money on something,” Thomas said.

Without an athletic scholarship, Thomas may not have attended college, he said. “It was either college or the military,” he said. “I didn’t really have any sort of plan. When I started getting offers, it made me get real about life and start thinking about what I wanted to do.”

"It will definitely be something I remember for the rest of my life, seeing kids like that. It makes you count your blessings." Paul Thomas
Basketball hasn’t just taken Tamara Seda across the world; it’s changed her life completely.

“In my hometown, a lot of females get pregnant at the age of 16,” said Seda, who is from Mozambique, a coastal country in southeast Africa. “I started playing sports and I kind of drifted away. If I wasn’t playing sports, I’d probably be one of those girls back home.”

Seda is the lone senior on the 2017-18 women’s basketball team. The starting forward has become a fan favorite for her propensity to block a shot and then wag her finger back and forth to the crowd like Dikembe Mutombo, a fellow African native who played center in the NBA for 18 years.

“It’s the adrenaline,” Seda said of why she loves basketball. “It’s 40 minutes, but you can go up to two or three hours depending on how good the game is and anything can change in a split second.

Her desire and ability to lead caught the attention of UTEP women’s basketball coach Kevin Baker.

“Tamara is the perfect combination of work ethic, class, humor and drive to be the best she can be at all times. She is any coach’s dream,” Baker said.

Off the court, Seda is majoring in business management because it offers her job flexibility and an opportunity to lead. She has been successful in the classroom, earning a spot on the Conference USA Commissioner’s Honor Roll in 2016 and 2017.

In her spare time, Seda likes to cook, hang out with friends and binge watch “Game of Thrones.” Seda said cooking is fun and relaxing. She likes to try new recipes from around the world and enjoys sharing them with her teammates. About her only criteria for a recipe is that it has be able to be prepared quickly.

Seda’s main goal, after she is done with basketball, is to return to her hometown and create an organized, sponsored children’s basketball program.

“Tamara is the perfect combination of work ethic, class, humor and drive to be the best she can be at all times. She is any coach’s dream.” Kevin Baker
Some people go years, maybe even decades, not knowing what they want to do with their lives.

Courtney Clayton knew at age 4 when she started playing T-ball that she wanted to follow in her family’s footsteps and play softball. “I absolutely loved it,” Clayton said. “Pretty much my whole family is a softball family. Both my aunt and my mom played in college. My grandpa played baseball (in college) and was amazing. I was always on the tractor with him at the games, dragging the field. I’ve been around softball my whole life, but the cool thing is I never felt pressured to play. It was always just a love that I’ve always had.”

That love for the game – and hard work – helped her earn a Division I athletic scholarship to play second base on the UTEP softball team. UTEP almost didn’t get Clayton except for a twist of fate, and having a top-notch nursing program.

Tobin Echo-Hawk, then the head coach at Portland State, recruited Clayton. She had chosen Portland State mostly because she would be 20 minutes from home. Echo-Hawk then took the job at UTEP and Clayton wasn’t sure about following her. “I didn’t even know where El Paso was at that point,” Clayton said. “I was just so overwhelmed with emotions.” Clayton paid a recruiting visit to El Paso and fell in love with the city and its supportive fans after running into a few of them at a local eatery. It also helped that UTEP has a nursing program and Portland State did not.

Once she took the field for the Miners, Clayton made her impact felt. As a sophomore, she was named Conference USA Player of the Year. “I couldn’t think of a more deserving kid,” Echo-Hawk said. “She has definitely put in the work, so it is nice to see it pay off.”

Off the field, Clayton is working toward a degree in health promotions with an eye toward a master’s in nursing.

“\textit{I couldn’t think of a more deserving kid. She has definitely put in the work, so it is nice to see it pay off.}” Tobin Echo-Hawk
With several Division I athletic scholarships to consider, it came down to something very simple for Tobi Amusan.

“I felt like UTEP was like a home,” said Amusan, who is from Nigeria. The University has enrolled other Nigerian student-athletes who have succeeded both in their sports and in the classroom.

In her short time as a track and field athlete at UTEP, Amusan has made quite an impact. She completed her freshman season at UTEP in spring 2016 with a second-place showing in the 100-meter hurdles at the NCAA Championships with a wind-aided time of 12.79 seconds. She became only the second athlete from UTEP since it joined Conference USA in 2006 to be named C-USA Female Track Athlete of the Year.

At the Conference USA Indoor Championships, Amusan finished with the third-best time in school history in the 60-meter hurdles (8.23 seconds) to take gold. She also placed seventh in the long jump (5.84 meters) to earn two additional points. Her 12 total points helped the UTEP women’s team claim its second consecutive C-USA title.

Mika Laaksonen, UTEP track and field head coach, said Amusan had not competed indoors before, but she got better with every competition.

“She is very talented,” Laaksonen said. “Little by little she worked her way up, trains very hard, is very dedicated and always comes to practice ready to compete. She knows you compete the way you practice.”

Amusan is grateful to have found a U.S. family at UTEP.

“I want to thank UTEP for giving me the opportunity to come here to the States and study and then prove myself on the track, because without being here, I might not know what I’m capable of doing,” said Amusan, a health promotions major.

Amusan is no longer competing for UTEP, having turned pro a few months ago, but she still is taking courses at UTEP toward her degree and trains with her former UTEP coach with eyes toward qualifying for the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

“I am the person I am today because of the grace UTEP gave me ... to be on scholarship as a student-athlete,” she said. “I’m really grateful and thankful for this opportunity.”

To see video interviews with each of the Raise the Pick athletes, visit utep.edu/magazine.
THANK YOU ALL AGAIN FOR YOUR MANY CONTRIBUTIONS TO UTEP, AND MOST OF ALL, TO THE STUDENTS WE SERVE...

BY DIANA NATALICIO

UTEP President Diana Natalicio delivered the following remarks during the University’s Fall Convocation on Sept. 28, 2017, in Magoffin Auditorium.
HE BEGINNING OF EACH NEW academic year brings with it renewed energy and enthusiasm, and this year has been no exception. The rhythm on the UTEP campus has picked up more than a beat, and there’s an unmistakable optimism in the air. For students, educators and support staff alike, this annual opportunity to refresh perspectives and reset aspirations and goals is one of the very appealing dimensions of being on a university campus.

Institutions, too – especially those moving as fast as UTEP has been – have a similar opportunity at the beginning of each academic year to review the contexts in which they work, to assess recent and cumulative accomplishments, study changing internal and external trends, identify new opportunities and challenges and, where necessary or desirable, re-calibrate priorities and plans.

This new academic year at UTEP got off to an especially energizing start. Fall enrollment again set a new record with 25,078 students. What’s more exciting is that this represents a 4.8% increase over last year, the largest enrollment increase since 2010, and cumulative growth of 45% over the past 15 years. This is excellent news, not only because more students are choosing to pursue their higher education aspirations at UTEP, but because more young people in this region clearly understand the important role that higher education can play in determining their and their families’ life trajectories. And, in the process, they and UTEP are working together to build this region’s future economic prosperity and quality of life.

Special thanks to Vice President for Student Affairs Gary Edens and his teams in outreach and recruiting, and scholarships and financial aid, for their outstanding work to ensure that all talented and motivated young people in this region have the information and support they need to enroll at UTEP. Thanks, too, to our scholarship donors – individuals, foundations and corporations – who enable us to provide financial support to entering and returning students who excel academically.

The decision to enroll at UTEP has become increasingly appealing for a majority of students in this region, who represent 84% of our total enrollment. In fact, more than two-thirds of the region’s Top Ten Percent high school graduates who attend public universities in Texas now choose to enroll at UTEP. UTEP’s combination of quality and affordability represents a huge advantage to students by enabling them to complete degrees that are very highly valued by employers and graduate and professional schools, without incurring the student loan debt too often required to attend competitive research/doctoral institutions elsewhere. In fact, UTEP has recently received national recognition in the New York Times, and a #1 ranking in a Brookings Institution study of all U.S. research universities for our success in fostering student social mobility.

The healthy enrollment increase this fall also continues a pattern of steady growth in UTEP’s student population over the past two decades, largely attributed to two major factors. First, a college-going culture has been very intentionally and systemically developed across this region through UTEP’s engagement with partners – school districts, EPCC, business and civic leaders – forming the El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence, which celebrated its silver anniversary just last week. The Collaborative was established 25 years ago in response to evidence from high school graduates’ enrollment patterns at UTEP that too many of this region’s talented young people – especially Hispanics from low-resourced backgrounds – were not seeking to pursue higher education. After 25 years, the evidence now shows that UTEP’s growth has been due largely to the enrollment of those Hispanic students who were for the first time strongly encouraged to pursue their big dreams through higher education. Since 1990, UTEP’s Hispanic enrollment has grown from 58% of all students to more than 80% today, and now appropriately reflects the demographics of this region.

The beginning of each year also brings to our campus new members of the UTEP team, faculty and staff who make a major commitment to our access and excellence mission and in whose capable hands we entrust the assets and challenges of our unique student population. I extend a very special welcome to new academic leadership team members: Carol Parker, provost and vice president for academic affairs; Theresa Maldonado, dean of engineering; and Shafik Dharmani, dean of health sciences. Let me also recognize with thanks two UTEP faculty members who have stepped up to serve as interim deans this year: Steve Crites in Liberal Arts and Bill Robertson in Education. Thanks to you all!

Riding the crest of our successful administrative searches last year, we have embarked on three more this fall: dean of liberal arts, dean of education and athletic director. Three outstanding committees will lead this work, chaired by Beth Brunk-Chavez, Charles Ambler and Richard Adauto, respectively. However, knowing that searches for leadership positions are most successful when there is broad engagement across the campus, we hope many of you will join in helping us identify and recruit top candidates to ensure a highly competitive pool, and then participate actively in the on-campus interview and cultivation processes.

UTEP’s faculty members are at the heart of our research and educational programs and the standards to which all UTEP students are held. In classrooms, laboratories, field and study abroad settings and online, they share their
high expectations, innovative ideas and passion for their disciplines, creating a learning environment that excites and motivates UTEP students to achieve at ever higher levels. UTEP’s teaching excellence was again recognized by the UT System this year with the presentation of Regents’ Outstanding Teaching Awards, and the $25,000 prize which accompanies them, to three UTEP faculty members: Dr. Isabel Baca, associate professor of English; Dr. Ann Brannan Horak, associate professor of practice in religious and women’s studies; and Dr. Song An, assistant professor of mathematics education. A number of UTEP faculty members are previous recipients of this prestigious teaching award. Congratulations to all of you and thank you for all you do for UTEP and the students we serve.

Another healthy sign of UTEP’s growth and development has begun to emerge at the western gateway to the campus: a new Interdisciplinary Research Building. This $85 million project, funded largely through Tuition Revenue Bonds, is expected to be completed in early 2020, and will add 150,000 square feet of critically needed space for continued growth in research activity, and enhance our competitiveness for the funding that supports it. Thanks to Bill Hargrove, chair of the planning committee, and to all committee members for their fine work on this important addition to the UTEP campus.

During the past year, UTEP faculty and staff were again successful in securing highly competitive external funding to support research and sponsored programs. A total of 184 new grants valued at $62.3 million were awarded to UTEP. More than $53 million of these funds came from federal sources, especially the National Science Foundation, which awarded UTEP 42 grants totaling $17 million. The College of Engineering was the top producer of grant funding this past year, with 67 grant awards totaling more than $26 million.

One of the major academic program accomplishments of the past year was our success in gaining pre-candidate status toward accreditation of UTEP’s new Doctor of Pharmacy degree program and establishing the new School of Pharmacy. New Pharmacy faculty and administrative leadership were hired and are in place, and the inaugural cohort of 41 Pharm.D. students, 39 of whom are from El Paso, celebrated their White Coat Ceremony in late August. Our sincere congratulations to Dean José Rivera and his capable team for successfully delivering on UTEP’s promise to offer access to an affordable and high-quality Doctor of Pharmacy program in this historically underserved region.

(Let me interrupt myself for just a moment here to mention that the Pharmacy White Coat Ceremony was actually held on this very stage on August 26, which, as you may recall, was the morning after a fierce “microburst” wind and rainstorm that hit the campus the night before, leaving this auditorium in a sorry state: part of the roof collapsed, and water covered large sections of the floor. Our dedicated facilities team went into action, working the entire night to repair and dry out this venue, so that our pharmacy students and their many family members and friends could proceed to celebrate this happy milestone in their lives. I often say that everyone at UTEP plays a role in student access and success. Our facilities staff don’t usually capture headlines for their contributions, but once in a while, their work takes center stage. That night in August was a powerful reminder of just how critical a role they too play. Thanks to all of them and to all the other UTEP staff who competently and, mostly unsung, go about their business to ensure the quality of our campus programs and surroundings.)

The addition of pharmacy to our academic program offerings represents another major investment in health
This is excellent news, not only because more students are choosing to pursue their higher education aspirations at UTEP, but because more young people in this region clearly understand the important role that higher education can play in determining their and their families’ life trajectories.

Attracting external grant and contract support has been a critically important strategy in successfully executing and leveraging the integration of UTEP’s access and excellence mission over the past several decades.

A total of 184 new grants valued at $62.3 million were awarded to UTEP.

With the addition of pharmacy, UTEP now offers 6 bachelor’s, 12 master’s, and 4 doctoral degree programs in the health professions.

One of the major academic program accomplishments of the past year was our success in gaining pre-candidate status toward accreditation of UTEP’s new Doctor of Pharmacy degree program and establishing the new School of Pharmacy.
The rhythm on the UTEP campus has picked up more than a beat, and there's an unmistakable optimism in the air.

GO MINERS
another group of UTEP degree recipients with good prospects for professional careers in El Paso are the teachers and other school personnel who earn degrees and credentials in UTEP’s College of Education in cooperation with the Colleges of Liberal Arts, Science, and Health Sciences. Most of these graduates remain in El Paso to pursue their careers in area school district settings, providing future generations of El Pasoans such high-quality educational experiences as dual language and dual credit programs, while contributing to the region’s economy and civic engagement, and directly impacting our collective quality of life. This region’s educational interdependence — more than 80% of UTEP’s students are graduates of high schools in this region, and an estimated 75% of area teachers are graduates of UTEP — means that we have a mutuality of interests and a shared stake in our collective success, and huge opportunities for innovative collaboration, data sharing, and reciprocal accountability.

Unfortunately, however, this same deep and very positive long-term UTEP impact on this region has not been the norm over the past 10 years for our 15,000 business and STEM graduates, most of whom do not find competitive employment in El Paso. Highly talented, very well educated and 70% Hispanic, these graduates are eagerly recruited elsewhere by such employers as Goldman Sachs, Exxon-Mobil, Google, Microsoft and Lockheed Martin, that offer them both professional experience and nationally competitive salaries, as well as exciting opportunities for future professional growth and career advancement, none of which are available locally. The result has been the exodus of more than an estimated two-thirds of all engineering graduates, than an estimated two-thirds of all engineering graduates, a majority of whom are El Pasoans who will remain here to practice professionally after graduation, and thereby enhance the quality of healthcare for all of us. UTEP is committed to work collaboratively with both EPCC and Texas Tech to avoid program duplication and increase the range of locally prepared healthcare professionals, a majority of whom will have the bilingual skills and bicultural sensitivity that is of critical importance in this U.S.-Mexico border setting. And, beyond the enhanced quality of healthcare that this growing number of health professions graduates will offer, the well-paying jobs they secure locally upon graduation will enable them to contribute to our region’s economic prosperity and quality of life.

professions education on the UTEP campus, a process that began in 1992, when we enrolled fewer than 1,000 students in a set of five health-related undergraduate programs, primarily nursing. With the addition of pharmacy, UTEP now offers 6 bachelor’s, 12 master’s, and 4 doctoral degree programs in the health professions, enrolling more than 4,500 students, a majority of whom are El Pasoans who will remain here to practice professionally after graduation, and thereby enhance the quality of healthcare for all of us. UTEP is committed to work collaboratively with both EPCC and Texas Tech to avoid program duplication and increase the range of locally prepared healthcare professionals, a majority of whom will have the bilingual skills and bicultural sensitivity that is of critical importance in this U.S.-Mexico border setting. And, beyond the enhanced quality of healthcare that this growing number of health professions graduates will offer, the well-paying jobs they secure locally upon graduation will enable them to contribute to our region’s economic prosperity and quality of life.

chain, finance and biosciences, as well as on UTEP’s research strengths in such areas as additive manufacturing, security studies, biomedical sciences and engineering, and water desalination. Under the leadership of Ben Gonzalez, we will also focus on capitalizing more strategically on such UTEP assets as the Keck and cSETR centers in Engineering, the Border Biomedical Research Center in Science, and the Hunt Institute for Global Competitiveness in the College of Business Administration, as well as UTEP’s real estate properties in the region, including our forthcoming acquisition of the Asarco site.

With rapid growth in the number of UTEP alumni – 40,000 over the past 10 years – and their geographic dispersion across the globe, Alumni Relations and Asset Management and Development are placing strong emphasis on developing a more robust and interactive alumni data network, less focused on traditional alumni fundraising, and more on enabling us to maintain closer ties with them, and them to interact more readily with each other. Access to this enhanced alumni engagement will be facilitated by a new Lifelong Email Forwarding Addresses system and a new alumni database called MinerLink, which will include such information as job titles, employers, and current locations that will enable us to strengthen contact with our alumni and, specifically, to link our current students with alumni who are in a position to serve as role models and mentors and assist them as they approach interviews, internships or employment-related relocation.

The initiative to establish closer ties with UTEP alumni is also being tightly wound with a major campuswide student success initiative called the UTEP Edge that was introduced to the campus earlier this fall semester. Fostering student success has been and will continue to be UTEP’s primary goal. As proud as we are of the impressive 45% growth in UTEP’s enrollment over the past 15 years, we can take even greater pride in the fact that the total number of degrees awarded has more than doubled (+113%) during the same time period, reflecting significant progress in promoting students’ retention and their success in completing their degrees.

As impressive as total diplomas earned may be as a measure of student success, we all also know that each of those diplomas must serve as a validation of the quality of the preparation provided to and internalized by the student who earned it. A large team of UTEP faculty and staff has been working intensely, and in close partnership with UTEP students, over the past year to develop a new, broader-based and more explicit understanding of UTEP student success, an approach that begins with the special strengths and assets that our students themselves bring to our campus, and builds on those attributes through a range of experiences designed to foster their development and ensure that, upon graduation, they are fully prepared with the robust competence and confidence that they will need to compete successfully with their peers anywhere and at any time. It’s my pleasure now to hand off this Convocation program to a group of UTEP Edge team members who will tell you more about this exciting, campuswide initiative. Thanks again to all of you for being with us today ... and Go Miners!

To see the students’ UTEP Edge presentation, visit utep.edu/magazine.
The “kissing bug” – the nickname for the insect responsible for spreading Chagas disease – certainly does not look like Cupid, but some might say it is symbolic of the chubby, winged cherub for one UTEP couple.
are among the world’s leading Chagas disease experts and, combined, have been researching the global illness for more than 50 years. The University of Texas at El Paso professors reached a major milestone before the summer of 2017 when they moved one step closer to developing the first-ever clinical Chagas disease vaccine. The pair was granted a patent for their vaccine candidate.

The preventive vaccine had been in development since 2008 and in 2017 was tested at the Texas Biomedical Research Institute (TBRI) in San Antonio on nonhuman primates in collaboration with John VandeBerg, Ph.D. Results are promising and may lead to clinical trials in the coming years.

A second vaccine, based on synthetic parasite sugars, in collaboration with Katja Michael, Ph.D., associate professor in UTEP’s Department of Chemistry, also was tested in nonhuman primates at TBRI and yielded very promising results. Almeida started work on that vaccine 27 years ago and is currently awaiting patent approval. The vaccine studies were funded by the Robert J. Kleberg, Jr. and Helen C. Kleberg Foundation and the National Institutes of Health.

“The big problem with Chagas disease is heart failure,” Maldonado explained. “We have determined that the inflammation in the heart and the parasitic load significantly decreased, and this vaccine is protecting the animals from the disease. These are the first synthetic [Chagas] vaccines tested in a nonhuman primate model ever.”

The UTEP scientists said that between 6 million and 8 million people are chronically infected with the potentially life-threatening Chagas disease. The sickness is caused by the parasite Trypanosoma cruzi, which is transmitted to animals and people by insect vectors known as kissing bugs, as well as by contaminated blood, organs, foods and juices, and congenitally (mother to baby). The disease has been endemic to Latin America, but is rapidly spreading through the U.S., Europe, and other regions as a result of globalization. There is no clinical vaccine, although there have been several experimental efforts throughout the years.

“There is genuine excitement in the field for the discoveries Dr. Almeida and Dr. Maldonado have made along with their teams of student researchers,” said Robert Kirken, Ph.D., dean of the College of Science. “They have made significant contributions to the advancement of combating Chagas disease. UTEP is on the cusp of finding a vaccine that could potentially help millions of people.”

Life Partners

While Maldonado and Almeida make undeniably effective research partners, they are also partners in life. Through a common friend from Venezuela, where Maldonado was born, they met at the annual meeting on Chagas in 1991 in Brazil, Almeida’s home country. A year later they reunited at the same conference and have been together ever since.

“I think we complement each other in many areas,” Almeida said. “Although we have similar backgrounds, I have been more focused in structure and function of sugars and lipids of parasites since my doctoral studies, while Rosa has been more dedicated to development of new chemotherapeutic approaches against parasitic diseases and molecular biology of parasites.”

Married now for almost 23 years, the first of which were many times spent away from each other due to research projects in separate parts of the world, the trailblazers in the fight against Chagas disease were brought together by the very disease they are studying.

A career in science was never a question for Maldonado.

“I always liked science since I was little,” she recalled. “I used to watch programs like heart transplants on TV and I used to collect red ants and black ants with my brother.”

Painful chapters in her life, the deaths of her cousin, godfather, grandfather and her beloved “Grandma Lita” as a result of health problems inspired her to focus her studies on improving human health.

Igor Almeida, D.Sc., and Rosa Maldonado, D.Sc., left, work closely with researchers Katja Michael, Ph.D., associate professor of chemistry; and postdoctoral fellow Eva Iniguez, Ph.D., right.
“I think that all those losses contributed to my interest in science,” Maldonado said.
The researcher has found great success in her studies of kissing bugs and Chagas disease, publishing some of the first papers on the topic. She is recognized as a global expert in the subject matter and travels the world sharing her expertise.

Almeida is part of an elite global group of researchers elected in 2017 as Fellows of the American Academy of Microbiology, which includes several Nobel Laureates and members of the National Academy of Sciences. Fellows were selected based on their records of scientific achievement and original contributions that have advanced microbiology.

Though he never had any direct influence from his family, Almeida says his interest in science came at a young age from curiosity.

“When I was an adolescent, perhaps 12-14 years of age, back in Brazil, I started collecting a bi-weekly magazine called The Scientists,” he recalled. “Each issue would come with an article about the life of a famous scientist in the fields of biology, chemistry or physics, and included a kit for conducting at home some basic experiments related to those scientists’ discoveries. I think it was then that I realized I wanted to be a scientist.”

Job openings brought the two experts to the borderland in 2004.

**A Second Vaccine**

In addition to their work with Chagas disease, Maldonado and Almeida also have recently helped make strides in the fight against cutaneous leishmaniasis with an effective human vaccine. The tropical disease also is found in Texas and Oklahoma, and has affected U.S. troops stationed in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Eva Iniguez, Ph.D., who was a doctoral student at the time, and the UTEP team’s collaborators in Liverpool, England, (Alvaro Acosta-Serrano, Ph.D.) and Saudi Arabia (Waleed Al-Salem, Ph.D.), recently published their research findings in PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases, the first journal solely devoted to the world’s most neglected tropical diseases.

Leishmaniasis is caused by the protozoan Leishmania parasites, which are transmitted by the bite of infected female phlebotomine sandflies — flies that are three times smaller than a mosquito. According to the World Health Organization, there are an estimated 700,000 to 1 million new cases annually, and they cause 20,000 to 30,000 deaths each year. The disease affects some of the poorest people on Earth. Though it is found in

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The UTEP scientists said that between 6 million and 8 million people are chronically infected with the potentially life-threatening Chagas disease.
more than 90 countries in the tropics, subtropics and southern Europe, naturally transmitted cases also have been found in the northeastern parts of Texas and in Oklahoma. The disease has impacted at least 2,000 U.S. troops stationed in Afghanistan and Iraq. 

“I think we are in a very good position with this vaccine candidate,” Maldonado said. “I think it is very promising. If things go well, I think we will be able to introduce this vaccine for clinical use in the future.”

During the team’s more than four years of research at UTEP’s Border Biomedical Research Center, they discovered a vaccine formulation for cutaneous leishmaniasis that resulted in a 96 percent decrease in the lesions caused by the illness and showed an 86 percent protection rate in mice. The team once again counted on the expertise of UTEP chemist Katja Michael, Ph.D. Her research group has been synthesizing the molecules, known as antigens, used in this study and several others.

“The advances the team has made against cutaneous leishmaniasis have gained global attention,” Kirken said. “Drs. Almeida and Maldonado are again helping pave the way against deadly tropical diseases outside the lab.

In addition, they are molding future scientists in the field to make an extended impact inside the lab.”

Secrets to Success

Almeida and Maldonado’s passion for what they do is evident through their publications, patents and presentations. Their fondness for each other is obvious when they are in the same room. They finish each other’s sentences and kindly care for each other.

“I think the secret is mutual respect,” Almeida said. “First and above all, we respect each other as professional individuals. I have always been very concerned about her professional happiness and fulfillment. Thus, I have aligned my professional interests and goals with hers. I have never thought about and made plans for my career, but rather our careers.”

You’ll never experience Almeida introducing Maldonado as his wife, though. She is first Dr. Maldonado, then his spouse.

“We have always tried to separate our roles,” Maldonado said. “He has always given me my place so I’m not in his shadow.”

Their labs are also separate, a decision Almeida described as “another important secret for keeping our personal and scientific marriage alive and well for almost 25 years.”

“We have extensively collaborated on several projects, but we have our own space and students,” he said.

The pair travels many weeks out of the year and spends a lot of time conducting research in the lab, but they each take time to unwind and recharge. Maldonado enjoys great food and a day of pampering, while Almeida loves soccer, classical music, reading, and also great food.

They’ve made El Paso and The University of Texas at El Paso their home, Maldonado even bringing her mom from Venezuela to have her close by, and find satisfaction in the difference they are making on and off campus.

“I feel great pleasure and satisfaction witnessing the growth and success of the students I have the opportunity to teach,” Maldonado said.

Almeida added: “We always tell our students, ‘You can do anything and be anyone; most of the time it just depends on you and your efforts. Always follow your dream and your heart, and always believe in yourself.’”

For Almeida and Maldonado, their dreams and their hearts led them to the same place: each other.

“I think the secret is mutual respect. First and above all, we respect each other as professional individuals. I have never thought about and made plans for my career, but rather our careers.”
A PATH FORWARD

UTEP is the best in the country at moving its graduates from the lowest income quartile to the upper echelons. Now, it is leading the way in efforts to keep students mired in financial struggles enrolled and on track for graduation.
by Pablo Villa

RENEE TREJO ENTERED A CLASSROOM FOR A FINAL EXAM IN THE FALL OF 2016 WELL PREPARED, BUT WITH MORE ON HER MIND THAN JUST HER STUDIES.

Trejo was nearing the end of the first semester of her junior year at The University of Texas at El Paso. Her academic career as an English major was thriving, but there was turmoil off campus.

That year, Trejo said, her father abruptly exited her life, leaving her, along with her mother and younger sister, in a precarious position. Trejo’s father had been the family’s main source of income and her mother hadn’t worked in nearly three decades. His sudden absence sent the three of them reeling into a chasm of financial difficulties that seemed insurmountable.

“When my dad left, it took a big toll on us, financially,” Trejo said. “I didn’t have money to get through that week, much less did I know how I was going to pay for the next semester. I was going to quit school.”

The string of setbacks pushed Trejo near a breaking point after the conclusion of that final essay presentation. The distress soon became known to David Ruiter, Ph.D., associate professor of English.

Ruiter took his student – who began the semester as an active participant before receding into a reserved anguish – aside to discuss the potential for student employment. The news spurred a catharsis for Trejo. She opened up, revealing the troubles afflicting her personal life and the uncertainty that lay ahead. Ruiter offered a lifeline – a job as his teaching assistant. It was a position that offered more professional development than the retail job Trejo held at the time. It also would allow the flexibility to attend classes while still honoring her work commitments. Most importantly, it paid more than the retail job, making the financial burdens her family faced less taxing.

“It was a good and important moment for both of us,” Ruiter said. “I was focused on her terrific writing and communication skills, her leadership qualities, her confidence, and her ability to do work that we needed to accomplish. She had a financial need that needed an immediate intervention. It just so happened that those things came together on that day.”

A little more than a year later, Trejo is in the midst of her final semester. She expects to graduate in May 2018 with a degree in English and hopes to become a teacher. She said it wouldn’t have happened without the additional financial assistance that came from student employment.

“It was a huge weight off my shoulders,” Trejo said. “There’s no way I would be where I am without it.”
UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGE

The financial struggles Trejo faced are a common thread among many of UTEP’s 25,078 students.

Of the campus’ undergraduate student population, 32 percent are from families with an annual household income of $20,000 or less. Furthermore, 50 percent are from families in the lowest income quartile (combined annual household income of less than $38,000).

UTEP has been lauded for its ability to help students navigate those financial challenges and vault into the top income quartiles. In 2017, a study released by the Brookings Institution ranked UTEP No. 1 for performing well in both research and social mobility. The study examined the performance of 342 public universities along two value dimensions that are commonly used to justify public investments in them: research productivity and student social mobility. After first identifying the institutions that promote knowledge through research and those that promote social mobility (defined as those with the highest share of students from the bottom 20 percent of U.S. household incomes), the researchers sought to determine which universities perform well in both research and social mobility.

“UTEP is more successful than any other U.S. research university in moving students from the lowest socio-economic quartile to upper-middle and beyond,” said UTEP President Diana Natalicio. “So, let’s suppose a student with a household income of $20,000 a year completes a degree and goes on to a job that pays $95,000. That’s a huge step in social mobility, likely to change the life trajectory of that student’s family. Brookings says we do that better than any other research university.

Although we are already doing a good job of fostering social mobility, there’s always more that can be done, and to that end, we’re working hard to gather and analyze data that help us become more strategic in helping students with their financial challenges.”

During the last three years, approximately 2,800 students did not re-enroll at UTEP because they couldn’t afford to pay the balances they owed to the University. Of this total, 450 students owed less than $500, and 1,100 owed less than $1,000.

Although not colossal, these amounts owed are nonetheless the most common obstacle to student progress toward degree completion, according to President Natalicio.

“UTEP IS MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN ANY OTHER U.S. RESEARCH UNIVERSITY IN MOVING STUDENTS FROM THE LOWEST SOCIO-ECONOMIC QUARTILE TO UPPER-MIDDLE AND BEYOND.”

-UTEP PRESIDENT DIANA NATALICIO
“THE PRIMARY REASON STUDENTS STOP OR DROP OUT OF UTEP ISN’T ACADEMIC. IT’S FINANCIAL,” she explained. “It’s what most of us would consider to be relatively small amounts of money: it’s a $250 brake job, or a broken tooth, or a cost increase in a child’s daycare. So, finding themselves in a financial jam, students consider the big picture — what it is that they can sacrifice, at least temporarily, to get on better financial footing. They think, ‘Maybe what I need to do is drop out of school, work more hours and plan to return to school next semester.’

But that may not be the best solution over the longer term, President Natalicio said. Her assertion is backed by research conducted by UTEP’s Center for Institutional Evaluation, Research and Planning, or CIERP, throughout the last 12 years. In 2005, CIERP received a grant from the Lumina Foundation to begin developing an analytics structure to provide UTEP with actionable insights that are most likely to improve student success and degree completion.

That research has yielded major insights about the many factors and conditions that affect student success. For example, students who experience one stop-out are more likely to experience subsequent stop-outs. Conversely, continuous enrollment increases the likelihood of degree completion. In addition, managing financial aid, student engagement, and external commitments can increase term-to-term retention and improve timely degree completion.

“We knew keeping students enrolled every term is very important,” said Roy Mathew, Ph.D., associate vice president at CIERP. “A lot of our effort has gone into trying to understand the complex set of factors that determine term-to-term retention. As our work advanced, we shifted our focus from understanding the success of students in terms of risk groups — low, middle and high — to a new model that focuses on understanding the likelihood of success of each student, based on their dynamic characteristics, including finances. Advanced analytics have allowed us to fundamentally change the way we look at student success.”

PAYDIRT LOAN

Armed with that insight, President Natalicio and University leaders have spent the last decade methodically crafting plans and programs that take into account financial concerns for students and offer them a clearer path to degrees. The approach is four-pronged, with focuses on academic advising, student employment, and financial aid, including the UTEP Promise Grant and the UTEP Paydirt Loan Program.

Extending beyond traditional support services such as food pantries, emergency loans and book programs, the Paydirt Loan is a unique effort that provides eligible UTEP students with an immediate short-term loan of up to $500 for unexpected situations. Heidi Granger, assistant vice president for student financial services, said the program has been in place for two years. In that span, 174 students have applied for the short-term loan, which is funded by donors. Granger said the top four reasons students request the loans are to pay utility bills, rent, food and car repairs.

She added that 70 percent of students who requested the loan paid it back within the 90-day time frame. Of the total number of Paydirt Loan users, 18 percent are repeat requesters, Granger said. One of those students is Jessica Morales. Morales found herself in a financial bind in fall 2016. She lived with her fiancé, who was also a student, and the couple did not have enough money on hand to pay rent.

Morales, who graduated with her bachelor’s in social work in May 2017 and is currently a Master of Social Work candidate, is a frequent visitor to the financial aid website. She happened upon the Paydirt Loan Program while checking the status of her spring 2017 financial aid package and was immediately intrigued.

“When we had emergencies before, we would tend to fall on payday loans,” Morales said. “But sometimes, since we’re work-study employees, they won’t take that as a valid check. When I saw the Paydirt Loan, I applied for it right away.”

Morales said the process to receive the money is simple. She added that it’s easy to pay back the loan with a little financial planning. She has applied for it every semester since.

“I’m beyond grateful,” Morales said of the program. “When that emergency comes around, it’s a huge relief.”

PAYDIRT LOAN PROGRAM

The Paydirt Loan is a short-term loan that can assist UTEP students with unexpected situations such as car repairs, daycare expenses or loss of a job.

The maximum loan amount is $500.

Repayment of the loan is the responsibility of the student and must be paid in full within 90 days. The loan is administered by the Division of Student Affairs through the Office of Student Financial Aid.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

- Be enrolled at least half-time in the current semester.
- Be at least 18 years of age.
- Have no outstanding tuition obligations.
- Show the ability to repay the loan and processing fee.
- Be in good academic standing.
- Have no pending disciplinary matters with the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.

Information: 915-747-5055
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND EMPLOYMENT

Along with offering financial help, UTEP leaders also are working to create well-informed, well-versed students who are engaged in their academic pursuits.

Revamped academic advising is one component of this mission. In 2017, UTEP was awarded $1.2 million by the UT System Board of Regents to implement a new holistic, cohort-based advising model.

The initiative included strategically redesigned advising efforts that are initiated in the UTEP Academic Advising Center through a student’s first 45 credit hours. One unique component of this advising model is a pilot program that incorporates four Master of Social Work student interns who are embedded with advisers to work with students on their financial literacy.

“The idea comes from an actual financial social work theory,” said Heather Smith, associate vice president for academic affairs at UTEP. “This idea fosters financial literacy by empowering students to make sound financial decisions in the context of their whole life. These four social work interns in the advising center are trained in social work theory to help students gain the knowledge necessary to make sound financial decisions — often in the face of unexpected financial challenges — and the skills to apply that knowledge to reach short- and long-term academic and life goals.”

Smith added that part of the holistic approach to advising includes using data on incoming students gathered by CIERP. Factors that are deemed risks to student retention — such as financial hardship and external commitments — are extrapolated from that data to give advisers a framework from which they work with each student to develop an academic path more conducive to success.

“Isolating the complex impacts of campus employment is difficult,” Mathew said.

“‘What’s interesting is we’ve done this kind of advising for our student-athletes for many years,’ CIERP’s Mathew said. ‘We consider their characteristics and commitments, and make sure their education is balanced with those factors. We recognized that we’ve been doing this well for our student-athletes. But what if we scale this approach to reach all students?’

Mathew said the pilot advising model aims to be proactive, not waiting for students to arrive with issues to solve. It is a team approach in which advisers can have experts on social service programs and financial aid at the ready, hoping to get on the front end of problems students might experience.

UTEP’s student employment experience is another effort in keeping students engaged. Mathew said the full benefits of student employment are difficult to model. However, he contends that working on campus, with higher pay than most comparable jobs outside of the University, means a student is on campus more, is able to work fewer hours, and is less likely to miss class.

“But we’ve grown the program. That’s largely because [the Division of Student Affairs recognizes that it has value].”

The final cornerstone of the University’s effort to lift its students is the UTEP Promise Grant. The grant pledges that qualifying students whose annual family income is less than $33,000 will have their tuition and fees paid by the University.

“These efforts aren’t unique to UTEP,” said Louise Rodriguez, associate vice president for operations and strategic initiatives in the Division of Student Affairs. “But these are hallmark efforts of a broader philosophy that we have in terms of financial access. It’s about creating low- or no-cost engagement opportunities. We’re sending a signal that you don’t have to come from a wealthy family to belong on a college campus.”

For students like Trejo, who was close to leaving school, the University’s efforts are not only well-received, they are life-changing.

“I wasn’t just able to stay in school,” Trejo said. “I became more sure of who I was All it took was one person making sure I was OK, and it opened so many doors. I am 100 percent extremely grateful.”

Jessica Morales

Photo by Laura Trejo
BY THE NUMBERS

A closer look at The University of Texas at El Paso’s student population:

TOTAL ENROLLMENT (FALL 2017): 25,078

ENROLLMENT BREAKDOWN

84 percent from El Paso County
5 percent from Mexico

54 percent of all students are female
61.6 percent are enrolled full-time

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT POPULATION

50 percent of new students are first-generation college students
32 percent are from families with an annual household income of $20,000 or less
50 percent are from families in the lowest income quartile (less than $38,000)
2,800 students did not re-enroll due to inability to pay balance owed
450 of those students owe less than $500. 1,100 owe less than $1,000.

ACCESS

UTEP has the second-lowest out-of-pocket cost of all U.S. public research institutions

2,038 undergraduate students were employed on campus during the 2016-17 academic year

UTEP committed more than $2.2 million in scholarships during the 2016-17 academic year

RANKINGS

8th in the nation, 2nd in Texas in the number of undergraduate degrees awarded to Hispanics
8th in the nation, 2nd in Texas in the number of master’s degrees award to Hispanics

2nd in the nation, 1st in Texas as baccalaureate institution of origin for Hispanic doctoral graduates
The Alumni Lounge

ALUMNI NEWS, PROFILES, OBITUARIES AND PHOTOS

1950s

Mimi Reisel Gladstein (B.A. ’59; M.A. ’66), was the speaker at the 2017 English Department graduation at the University of New Mexico, where she was named “Outstanding Alumna.” She is the interim chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance at UTEP.

1970s

Cecilia Yolanda Cervantes (B.A. ’71; M.Ed. ’73), was selected as interim president of Santa Fe Community College. She most recently worked as a consultant in curriculum development at Minneapolis Public Schools.

Kenneth C. Clarence (BBA ’72), president of V.P. Clarence Co., a commercial mortgage banking firm, has been appointed to Western Heritage Bank’s El Paso board of directors.

Joe Manuel Gomez (B.A. ’70), was appointed by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott to the Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) Advisory Council. The council will make recommendations to the Texas Education Agency commissioner regarding the establishment and administration of the P-TECH program and criteria for a campus’ designation as a P-TECH school. Gomez is director of business development and community affairs for Jordan Foster Construction.

Robert Michael Munoz (B.S. ’77), was selected as one of five finalists for the position of president of the Ruidoso campus of Eastern New Mexico University. He currently serves as vice president of community and industry education at Tarrant County College-Trinity River Campus in Fort Worth.

Ricardo A. Samaniego (B.A. ’73), announced that he will run as a Democrat for El Paso County judge in the 2018 general election. He has been a juvenile probation officer, spent more than 25 years as a human resources director for various companies and was general manager for Rio Grande Materials concrete supplier. He owns two Sports Clips Haircuts franchises.

Andy B. Wallace (M.S. ’72), was named CEO of Allegiant Gold a subsidiary of Columbus Gold Corp. He is a Certified Professional Geologist (CPG) with the American Institute of Professional Geologists and the principal of Cordex Exploration, a gold exploration group.

1980s

Rodolfo A. Barba (B.S. ’83), joined Sundt Construction Inc. as a senior estimator with 27 years of experience in commercial estimating. He is a Certified Professional Estimator and president of El Paso Chapter 40, American Society of Professional Estimators.

Laura Bosworth-Bucher (B.S. ’88), is founder and CEO of TeVido BioDevices, an Austin regenerative medicine company aiming to use 3-D printing technology to construct a more natural nipple in breast reconstruction.

Joseph Wayne Mullings (BBA ’84), former president of Capital Bank in El Paso, has become regional president for Texas and Southern New Mexico for the newly formed FirstSun Capital Bancorp, which operates bank branches in El Paso and New Mexico under the First National 1870 brand.

Linda G. Pearsall (BBA ’82), was named chief executive officer of Energy Capital Credit Union in Houston. She previously served as Energy Capital Credit Union’s executive vice president and has been with the credit union for 20 years.

1990s

Peter John Adamo (MBA ’98), was named president and CEO of Waterbury (Connecticut) Hospital and the Greater Waterbury Health Network. He previously served as regional CEO for Roxborough Memorial Hospital in Philadelphia and Suburban Community Hospital in East Norriton, Pennsylvania.

Rohaida Ali-Badaruddin (B.S. ’90), is the chief executive officer of Scomi Engineering Bhd. In this role, she directs the leadership team to help identify and develop new market opportunities as well as to grow the existing customer base and build strategic relationships across Scomi Transport Solutions’ businesses in key markets of Malaysia, India, Brazil and the rest of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and South Asia. Ali-Badaruddin is a director of Scomi Rail Bhd. and also serves on the board of Scomi Group of Companies.

James D. Boatright (B.S. ’91), was appointed as principal of Eastwood High School in El Paso. He was previously the principal of Eastwood Middle School.

Jaime S. Castillo (B.A. ’90), has been named chief of staff and chief strategy officer at San Antonio Water System (SAWS). Castillo was previously a U.S. Housing and Urban Development executive in Washington, D.C.

John Edward Feighery (B.S. ’99), along with Annie Feighery, are the founders of the nonprofit organization mWater. Last year NASA produced a short documentary, “Know Your Water,” about mWater and its use of technology developed on the International Space Station to test and map water quality in more than 140 countries. The documentary was awarded a regional Emmy.

Renard Ulysse Johnson (BBA ’95), announced that Management and Engineering Technologies International Inc., or METI, an El Paso federal contractor, has been awarded a five-year, $150 million contract from the U.S. Forest Service to provide international forest research and support services to the U.S. Agency for International Development. Johnson serves as METI’s chief executive officer and founder.

Ricardo Lopez (B.A. ’95), was named superintendent of Garland Independent School District in Garland, Texas. He was previously superintendent for Mission Consolidated ISD in Mission, Texas.

Norman D. Love (MPA ’90), along with two other researchers, are owners of two of 11 startups selected to be housed and supported at the Medical Center of the Americas Foundation’s new Innovation Center inside the Caldwell Collaborative biomedical research building. The $29 million building opened 18 months ago in Central El Paso.

Continued on page 50
Jerry Villagrana

ALUMNUS FOLLOWS ROAD TO SUCCESS

Jerry Villagrana said he was more likely to go to prison than to college after high school, based on his childhood circumstances.

Growing up, Villagrana lived with his family in a trailer without running water on the outskirts of El Paso while his father, a construction worker, built their house. Villagrana aspired to become a truck driver like his uncle because that was the best job that any adult he knew had. The odds that he and his younger sister Dianna Michelle Medina would pursue a college education were low.

In seventh grade, Villagrana enrolled in a STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) magnet program at Americas High School, which steered him to The University of Texas at El Paso.

“Once I was in 7th grade, everybody was going to college,” said Villagrana, a first-generation college student. “That made a big difference. If you were in a STEM class, the expectations were real high. I had classmates whose parents were engineers and doctors, and that set the bar.”

At UTEP, Villagrana studied mechanical engineering. Villagrana’s father was a mechanic in Mexico before he came to the United States, and he passed his affinity for cars to his son, who dreamed of working at General Motors.

Hoping to ignite his career, Villagrana interned at GM for three summers before graduating from UTEP in 2007. He was hired as a project engineer at GM’s headquarters in Detroit in 2008, where he works today.

“I always encourage students to pursue STEM careers,” Villagrana said. “In my UTEP graduating class, I’ve got friends who work at NASA and [aerospace manufacturer and spaceflight services company] Blue Origin. We were able to make it happen because we studied engineering.”

Villagrana’s college experience also emboldened his sister to attend UTEP.

“I remember feeling anxious in high school about college, but the fact that Jerry was at UTEP and he was successful made me feel better,” said Medina, a 2010 graduate from UTEP’s occupational therapy program. “He was the trailblazer for me.”

Villagrana said his undergraduate education prepared him to complete a graduate certificate in Design for Customer Value and Market Success from Stanford University in 2013 and a master’s degree in global automotive and manufacturing engineering at the University of Michigan in 2015.

“When I was a kid, I never thought I’d be here,” Villagrana said. “This is above all expectations.”

- Laura L. Acosta
María del Pilar Melero-Avitia (M.A. ’95), was invited to speak at Marshall University on ethnic heritage and identity in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month. Melero is a Mexican-born professor, researcher, writer and journalist. She has received a grant to develop a collection of short stories titled “Mujer Libre” and is working on a novel on gender and violence during the Mexican war on drugs.

Alberto Mesta (B.A. ’99), was elected as chair of the Poverty Law Section of the State Bar of Texas. The section believes in equal justice for all Texans and helps provide legal assistance to those who cannot afford it. Mesta is the branch manager for the El Paso office of Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid Inc.

Jeannie Meza-Chavez (B.A. ’96), was selected as San Elizario Independent School District’s new superintendent. She was previously superintendent of Tornillo Independent School District.

Armando Romero (B.A. ’99; M.Ed. ’03), was named the head baseball coach at Bel Air High School. He was an assistant to former Bel Air head coach, Mike Beltran, in 2016 and 2017 and was instrumental in helping the Highlanders earn a spot in the Class 5A state playoffs, where they won a bi-district championship against Jefferson High School.

Cindy Ann Stout (MSN ’94), was named CEO of El Paso Children’s Hospital. She is a longtime El Pasoan and former chief nursing officer at University Medical Center. Stout is an adjunct faculty member at UTEP and serves on the advisory boards of the UTEP School of Nursing and the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso Gayle Greve Hunt School of Nursing.

Carlos Villa (B.S. ’96), was named vice president of U.S. Industry Business for Schneider Electric. In his new role, Villa oversees the continued development of Schneider Electric’s digitally enabled solutions and network of distribution partners nationwide to support U.S. industrial customers. He brings more than 20 years of automation experience in sales management and global business management roles in Brazil, Mexico and the United States to the position.

2000s

April Dawn Babbit (B.S. ’03), helped build the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite (GOES-16) weather satellite system that tracked the recent solar eclipse and Hurricane Harvey. The GOES-16 weather satellite provides atmospheric and surface measurements of the Earth’s Western Hemisphere for weather forecasting, severe storm tracking, space weather monitoring and meteorological research. Babbit is a space systems engineer for Lockheed Martin in Littleton, Colorado.

Moises Leonel Barraza (B.S. ’07), was recognized as one of the top in his industry by the Expert Network, an invitation-only service for distinguished professionals. He is the founder of Immigration Law Office of Moises L. Barraza. Barraza has been chosen as a Distinguished Lawyer based on peer reviews and ratings, dozens of recognitions and accomplishments achieved throughout his career.

Leonardo Barreda (B.S. ’07), serves as a mechanical engineer in the Propulsion Systems Department in the Engineering Directorate of NASA’s Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama. Barreda leads a team that works on a key part of NASA’s new deep space rocket, the Space Launch System.

Carlos Alberto Chacon (BBA ’02), was appointed to the State Board of Veterinary Examiners by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott. He is the president and CEO of Chacon Enterprises, a member of the Hispanic owned Fortune 500 technology companies.

Thuyanh Minh Culver (B.S. ’03), recently joined the Hospital Medicine Department at Mayo Clinic Health System in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. She is a member of the American College of Physicians and the American Osteopathic Association and is board certified in internal medicine by the American Board of Internal Medicine.

Samantha Nichole Dominguez (B.A. ’08), received the 2017 STAR Community Service Award, which recognizes and honors her contributions as a Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE) member. After graduating from UTEP, Dominguez worked at Lockheed Martin as an electronics engineer and later a robotics teacher at Loretto Academy. She has taken up leadership roles with the SHPE-LMA chapter, has raised more than $70,000 and has connected more than 500 professionals to STEM causes during the past two years.

Rodrigo Fernandez (BBA ’01), co-founder and chief financial officer of Transtelco, a telecommunications carrier, has been appointed to Western Heritage Bank’s El Paso board of directors.

Aileen Bibiana Flores (B.A. ’07), was among the notable El Pasoans to share stories about their lives on the border as part of the Storytellers Project. The project is a series of live storytelling nights hosted by USA Today Network newsrooms to help people better understand what is at stake in the conversation about the border wall.

Kevin Lamonte Hatcher (Ed.D. ’04), recently opened Caring Transitions of Ventura County (California). Caring Transitions, founded in 2006, is the first national franchising concept specializing in senior relocation and transition services.

Adrian Alberto Herrera (B.S. ’02), recently authored the books “Catechetical Leadership: The Effective Catechetical Leader,” and “2018: Un año lleno de Gracia,” both by Loyola Press, 2017. He is the associate director for the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis at the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston and an adjunct instructor for the theology department at the University of St. Thomas in Houston at St. Mary Seminary.

Gary Leigh Kieffner (Ph.D. ’09), is currently writing a book, “Riding in the Borderlands,” about the history of moto bikers in northern Mexico from the early 20th century through the 1950s.

John Andrew Meza (B.A. ’08), joined the Raben Group, a national public affairs firm, as a director in El Paso. He spent several years on Capitol Hill, where he most recently served as communications director for U.S. Rep. Beto O’Rourke.

Paula Jo Powell (BMS ’09; MPA ’11), was appointed by the City of El Paso to lead a new task force that will focus on the continued implementation of the shelter reform plan and the operational functions of the Department of Animal Services. Powell has been with the City of El Paso for more than 23 years.
Allen Gilmer ’87

ALUMNUS RINGS NASDAQ BELL

UTEP 2017 Distinguished Alumnus Allen Gilmer (M.S. Geology, ’87) had the honor to ring the bell at the NASDAQ Closing Bell ceremony on Oct. 30, 2017 on behalf of the Texas Independent Producers and Royalty Owners Association (TIPRO), a trade association representing the interests of more than 3,000 independent oil and natural gas producers and royalty owners throughout Texas. Gilmer serves as president of the association.

“Ringing the bell is a bucket list experience!” Gilmer said. “Being afforded the privilege comes with either an IPO of a company on the exchange or in recognition to a company or group for exceptional contribution. In my case, it was the latter.”

TIPRO is the oldest organization protecting the rights of independent oil companies to drill and explore.

“Independent producers were honored by NASDAQ for single handedly making the U.S. energy independent during the shale revolution by making accessible an oil resource base larger than Saudi Arabia’s in the last decade,” Gilmer said.

Gilmer rang the bell with Ed Longenecker, TIPRO President. Also present were his wife, Riki; UTEP alumnus Frank Hsu, Ph.D. (M.S. Mathematics, ’75), the Clavius Distinguished Professor of Science and Professor of Computer and Information Science at Fordham University in New York; and retired El Paso Fire Department Captain and UTEP alumnus Etor Castillo (B.A. Sociology, ’77).

After earning a bachelor’s degree in geology at Rice University, Gilmer returned to El Paso and earned his master’s degree in geological sciences in 1987. He worked several years as a geophysicist at Marathon Oil Co. and went on to co-found several companies in the oil and gas sector before starting up Drillinginfo, a leading provider of cloud-based data and analytics software for the oil and gas industry.

- Leonard Martinez

UTEP 2017 Distinguished Alumnus Allen Gilmer (M.S. Geology, ’87), left, had the honor of ringing the bell at the NASDAQ Closing Bell ceremony on Oct. 30, 2017. He was joined by UTEP alumnus Frank Hsu, Ph.D., (M.S. Mathematics, ’75), right, a computer and information sciences professor at Fordham University in New York City.
Cristina Salazar (BBA ’00), a certified public accountant, was named as a shareholder and principal at Peña Brones McDaniel & Co., an El Paso accounting firm. She works in the firm’s tax department, which helps clients with tax returns and tax consulting.

Victor Santana-Melgoza (B.A. ’08; M.A. ’15), was named communication instructor at the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication at Arizona State University.

Zahira Torres (B.A. ’07) was named editor/news director of the El Paso Times, making her the second woman and first Latina to lead the 136-year-old newspaper. She previously worked for the Denver Post and then at the Los Angeles Times, where she was part of the team that won the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for breaking news for its coverage of the San Bernardino shootings. She returned to the El Paso Times last year to lead the newspaper’s investigations.

Ruben John Vogt (B.A. ’06; M.S. ’09), was appointed by the El Paso County Commissioners as County Judge Veronica Escobar’s chief of staff, to fill the county judge seat vacated by Escobar, who is running for Congress. He has worked for the county for 11 years, all under Escobar. He previously worked for state Sen. Eliot Shapleigh.

Olivia Zepeda (B.BA ’05; MBA ’10), was named El Paso Mayor Dee Margo’s chief of staff. She has run five campaigns for Margo and served as his chief of staff after helping him win election to the Texas House of Representatives in 2010.

2010s

Sandra Alonso (BFA ’11), hosts art workshops for refugees in Otero County Prison. She is an El Paso artist who is a graduate of the world-renowned Royal College of Art in London.

Samuel Alvidrez (BBA ’17), was accepted into Yale University’s prestigious Emerging Leaders Seminar: Finance Leadership Across Sectors. The weeklong seminar took place in November 2017 and was only open to 30 candidates nationwide. Alvidrez is currently a financial analyst at UTEP.

Daniel Elton Call (M.A. ’13), was selected as one of three remaining contenders for appointment to the El Paso Independent School District Board of Trustees. He is an insurance agent in El Paso.

Mayra Patricia Cordero-Villalobos (B.S. ’13), was named one of Wast360’s 40 Under 40 award recipients. She launched El Paso Community College’s recycling program eight years ago as the college’s first recycling coordinator. Cordero-Villalobos has helped push the program’s expansion across five EPCC campuses.

Humberto Armando Durón (BBA ’14) was accepted into Yale University’s prestigious Emerging Leaders Seminar: Finance Leadership Across Sectors. The weeklong seminar took place in November 2017 and was only open to 30 candidates nationwide. Durón is currently an investment banking analyst at RBC Capital Markets.

Kristian Oscar Hernandez (B.A. ’13), was named 2017 American University Fellow working with the Consider the Source state politics team. Before joining the center, he worked for The Monitor newspaper in McAllen, Texas, where he covered crime and immigration.

Jessica Lizeth Herrera (MBA ’10), was appointed as the City of El Paso’s director of the Economic and International Development Department. She previously served as the interim director of the department, where she works to build and strengthen public-private partnerships to rebuild key assets of the city and help create an environment that supports a vibrant regional economy.

Adrian K. James (BMS ’15), returned to the Ottawa Redblacks, a professional Canadian football team, as strong-side linebacker after being sent home earlier in the season. The 26-year-old linebacker, a star while at St. Francis Xavier University, signed with the Redblacks as a free agent after two seasons in Hamilton.

Brian P. Kennedy (BMS ’12) won the global championship in the International Negotiation Competition, an intense, four-day tournament in Oslo, Norway, that involves 32 teams of the best law students from 27 nations. He has led the El Paso Sports Commission, which operates the El Paso County Coliseum, since 2003.

Crystal Dawn Long (MBA ’14), serves as GECU’s president and chief executive officer, leading El Paso’s largest locally owned financial institution as it grows and transforms into a 21st-century credit union. Under her leadership, GECU has expanded its offerings, adding trust and investment services.

Julio Enrique Rincon (B.S. ’10; M.S. ’12; Ph.D. ’17), developed a technology that uses glasslike, or artificial, antibodies to test people’s blood for various diseases instead of mice antibodies used by most labs today. He hopes to turn glasslike antibodies for disease detection into a thriving venture.

Danisha Marie Rivera-Nazario (Ph.D. ’15), completed a postdoctoral appointment in the Emergency Response Branch at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. She credits the Partnerships for Research and Education in Materials (PREM) program at UTEP for a successful start to her future in chemistry.

Thomas Quinn (BMS ’10; M.A. ’12), was recently hired as emergency management coordinator in Lewisville, Texas. He previously was a firefighter with the El Paso Fire Department since 1997.

Elisa Monique Samaniego (BBA ’13), has been hired as a lawyer in the Kemp Smith law firm’s Trial Department. The native El Pasoan received her law degree from Louisiana State University’s Paul M. Herbert Law Center.

Jesus Gregorio Smith (B.A. ’10; M.A. ’12), joined the Lawrence University faculty for the 2017-18 academic year at the rank of assistant professor. He came to Lawrence from Texas A&M University, where he was a diversity fellow for the past two years.

Laura Turon (BFA ’14), was awarded $3,500 by the Artist Incubator Program. She is a multidisciplinary artist who used the funding she received to create “Paradox,” a mobile art display. The school bus-turned-exhibit features Turon’s handiwork on its interior and exterior.

Savannah Marie Wilburn (BBA ’15), joined the U.S. Small Business Administration’s (SBA) South Carolina District Office as an economic development specialist. Previously, she was with the SBA in El Paso as an economic development specialist and public information officer.
Peter Chan is a civil engineer turned entrepreneur who credits The University of Texas at El Paso for helping him succeed. He set up an endowed scholarship to help future students almost 25 years ago. Now he is ready to do more, and he wants your help.

Chan earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in civil engineering in 1989 and ’90, respectively. He worked for a West Texas engineering company for several years before moving to Phoenix, Arizona, and eventually started his own consulting firm that specialized in water and wastewater projects. He sold his business in 2009 and invested in real estate. Today the married father of two grown children spends half his time traveling around the world helping communities design water filtration and wastewater systems.

Chan, whose parents died when he was 12, struggled financially through high school in his native Malaysia. He worked many odd jobs to earn enough money to attend college in the United States. He searched Barron’s Profiles of American Colleges for top engineering schools that were affordable, and UTEP was at the top of the list. His plan was to take as many credit hours as he could during his one year at UTEP before heading back to Malaysia to earn more money. He completed 51 credit hours during that year, to include 18 from El Paso Community College, but he also applied for and received scholarships that helped with his tuition. In fact, he earned so much scholarship money that he did not have to go home.

He started his first UTEP scholarship in 1993 to help the next generation of civil engineering students and to pay back the donors and faculty members who assisted and supported his dream.

The Gilbert, Arizona, resident said he hopes the latest endowed scholarship he created for engineering students in August 2017 will help attract top talent from around the world who believe in the American dream.

“It is through diversity and competition that students can benefit and be at their best,” said Chan, who credits the many scholarships he received for helping him get through UTEP. “I want students to think big, think positive.”

He wants the new scholarship to be a platform for recurring donations of all amounts from the community. He hopes the fund will help the University solicit the best and brightest students.

Anthony Tarquin, Ph.D., professor of civil engineering, is one of Chan’s former professors and continues to be a close family friend. He said Chan’s generosity and commitment to his alma mater did not surprise him.

“He recognizes that the University is why he is where he is today,” Tarquin said. “He wants others to benefit, too.”

- Daniel Perez

He started his first UTEP scholarship to help the next generation of civil engineering students and to pay back the donors and the faculty members who assisted and supported his dream.
In Memoriam

UTEP acknowledges the passing of the following graduates

1940s
Anne Shamaley Burrows (B.A. ’48) Upland, California; June 13, 2017
Abe Goldberg (B.A. ’43) El Paso, Texas; Oct. 3, 2017
Ann Waller Grice (B.A. ’45) El Paso, Texas; Sept. 29, 2017
Thomas Walker Hope III (B.B.A. ’42) Rochester, New York; Nov. 5, 2017

1950s
Ernest Alvillar (B.M. ’56; M.Ed. ’64) El Paso, Texas; Aug. 11, 2017
George Buchanan (B.S. ’57) El Paso, Texas; Oct. 4, 2017
Royce Cleveland Jr. (B.B.A. ’52) El Paso, Texas; Sept. 21, 2017
John David Douglass Sr. (B.B.A. ’57) Thomasville, Georgia; Oct. 27, 2017
Alice Janet Geno (B.A. ’54) El Paso, Texas; July 28, 2017
Frederick R. “Dick” Gesling Jr. (B.B.A. ’57) Thomasville, Georgia; Oct. 27, 2017
Floyd “Buster” Douthit (M.A. ’55) Huntsville, Alabama; July 20, 2017

1960s
Felix Adame (B.A. ’62) El Paso, Texas; April 10, 2017
Manuel Fernando Aguilera (B.S. ’65) El Paso, Texas; Oct. 24, 2017
Marjorie M. Bengston (B.A. ’66) Tucson, Arizona; July 24, 2017
Barbara Ann Boyles Blackwell (B.S. ’69; M.Ed. ’71) El Paso, Texas; Nov. 8, 2017
William R. “Bill” Britton (B.B.A. ’67) Austin, Texas; Nov. 17, 2017
Joe W. Brown (B.B.A. ’68) Longmont, Colorado; Nov. 20, 2017
Richard Otto Dahlie (B.A. ’60) Round Rock, Texas; July 1, 2017
Paul Dean Daniggelis (B.A. ’69) El Paso, Texas; Oct. 28, 2017
Paula W. Davis (M.Ed. ’67) El Paso, Texas; Sept. 9, 2017
Manuel Gonzalez (B.S. ’60) El Paso, Texas; July 14, 2017

1970s
Joaquín Aguilar (B.S. ’73) El Paso, Texas; Oct. 15, 2017
Hector Daniel Ambriz (B.S. ’78) El Paso, Texas; Aug. 5, 2017
Tony R. Conde Jr. (B.S. ’76) El Paso, Texas; Aug. 22, 2017
John A. D’Ascenzo (B.B.A. ’73; M.B.A. ’76) El Paso, Texas; Aug. 12, 2017
Colin Robinson Doane (M.Ed. ’73) El Paso, Texas; Oct. 9, 2017
Maria de Jesús Olivas Douglass (B.S. ’73; M.Ed. ’89) El Paso, Texas; Aug. 29, 2017
Yolanda Sanchez Euzarraga (B.S. ’74) El Paso, Texas; Oct. 19, 2017
Dominick “Nick” J. Fonte (B.S. ’78) Santee, California; July 20, 2017
Richard Elwin Gitchell (B.A. ’73) Odessa, Texas; Aug. 17, 2017
Wilmer Oscar Gray Jr. (M.Ed. ’78) El Paso, Texas; Sept. 20, 2017
Audrey Ann Ferris Hargraves (B.S. ’71) El Paso, Texas; Aug. 27, 2017
Larry Lee Harmon Sr. (B.A. ’72; M.A. ’94) El Paso, Texas; April 12, 2017
Elizabeth Holmes (M.Ed. ’70) Carthage, Texas; Oct. 9, 2017

Geneva “Bebe” Marion Smith (B.S. ’64) Granbury, Texas; July 20, 2017
Joy Charlene Strachan (B.S. ’67) Fabens, Texas; Feb. 21, 2017
Van Brown Tate (B.S. ’61) Killeen, Texas; Oct. 1, 2017
Ralph Sam Yturralde (B.S. ’66) El Paso, Texas; Sept. 8, 2017
Haskell Moorman Monroe Jr., former president of The University of Texas at El Paso, died Monday, Nov. 13, 2017, in College Station, Texas. He was 86 years old. Monroe served as UTEP's president from 1980 to 1987. His great love of books and his commitment to providing students with access to a world-class selection of volumes, journals and publications resulted in his greatest legacy: the $28 million University Library, which opened in 1984. He also led the establishment of the Junior Scholars Program, which offered middle and high school students the chance to take UTEP courses for credit, the Presidential Scholarship program to attract the region's top high school graduates, and such enduring UTEP traditions as graduation banners and the celebration of fall and spring convocations.

"Haskell Monroe was both an administrator and a deeply committed historian and educator who loved teaching," said UTEP President Diana Natalicio. "He taught large freshman history classes throughout his tenure as UTEP's president, and was always fascinated by the history of this region and the mining school (now UTEP) that helped shape it. His major achievements as UTEP's president, including our beautiful library building, continue to support UTEP's more recent development."

Monroe left UTEP to become chancellor of the University of Missouri at Columbia, but his interest in UTEP, and especially the library, never waned. In 2013, he and his wife, Margaret Joann "Jo" Monroe, established a Library Special Collections Endowment. Three years later, the couple made another major contribution to the Special Collections department, whose research space was officially re-named the Jo and Haskell Monroe, Jr. Special Collections Research Center.

At the time of the dedication, Jo Monroe spoke of her husband's enduring pride in the University he led three decades ago.

"This was a wonderful opportunity for us in recognition of how much Haskell loved UTEP and how proud he was of the University and the library," she said. "With this gift, we hope to enrich Special Collections, enhance research and encourage students to take advantage of the space and resources of the library." - Elizabeth Ashby

A friend once said you could give Nancy (Miller) Hamilton an assignment today and she would have it done yesterday. Hamilton’s association with The University of Texas at El Paso as student, staff and faculty member stretched back 70 years. She died Aug. 31, 2017, in El Paso, Texas. She was 88.

The El Paso native attended Texas College of Mines and Metallurgy (now UTEP), but was part of the first graduating class from Texas Western College, the institution’s new name in 1949. The former Golddigger earned her bachelor’s in journalism and her master’s in English five years later.

She spent the first part of her career as a newspaper reporter and in educational public relations. In 1976, she returned to UTEP and served in media relations for nine years. Hamilton then became associate director of Texas Western Press (TWP), where she served until her retirement in 1990. She spent another 10 years editing books for TWP. In the late ‘90s, she also was a part-time public relations lecturer at UTEP.

One of her proudest accomplishments was the publication in 1988 of her book, "UTEP: A Pictorial History of The University of Texas at El Paso," to celebrate the institution’s 75th anniversary. The pride came from accomplishing the task in three months, according to close friend and archivist Lynn Polk.

"The University has lost a gem," Polk said. "Nancy’s mind was sharp till the end and people would call her about UTEP history. She was proud of her institutional memory."

The College of Liberal Arts named Hamilton its Gold Nugget Award recipient for 2005. It was one of many local, national and international accolades she earned through the years. She appreciated UTEP so much that she donated to the University Library her research files for the numerous books and newsletters she authored. - Daniel Perez
William Doyle Smith, Ph.D., whose prodigious career at The University of Texas at El Paso was honored with the prestigious Minnie Stevens Piper Professor Award for exemplary teaching, died Oct. 5, 2017. He was 71.

Smith, an associate professor emeritus, joined the UTEP Department of Economics and Finance in 1981, where he worked for 33 years.

Students and faculty held Smith in high regard for his dedication to teaching and concern for their well-being. Economics professor Tom Fullerton, Ph.D., remembers a steady stream of students and faculty knocking on Smith’s office door, asking him for help or advice.

Smith would spend hours explaining macroeconomics to students who missed class because of work. He also helped many graduate students complete their thesis projects and publish their work to enhance their job prospects.

“In my view, Doyle Smith’s love, respect and expectations for his students are the embodiment of UTEP’s commitment to access and excellence,” said Timothy P. Roth, Ph.D., chair of UTEP’s Department of Economics and Finance.

After graduating from Ysleta High School in 1964, Smith enrolled at Texas Western College (now UTEP) and received a bachelor’s degree in economics in 1968. He served three years in the Army and returned to UTEP and earned a master’s degree in economics in 1972. He completed his doctorate in economics from Texas Tech University.

During his tenure at UTEP, Smith was repeatedly recognized for his teaching and mentoring. Smith was a dedicated husband, father and grandfather. He often regaled his colleagues with amusing childhood stories of his son, Kelly Smith; his daughter, Rachel Smith; and his grandchildren.

Laura L. Acosta
In Memoriam

Carolyn Elizabeth Huchton (B.A. ’70)
El Paso, Texas; Oct. 1, 2017

Christy Long (B.S. ’78)
Denver, Colorado; July 13, 2017

Elsa D. (Loustaunau) Maldonado (BBA ’77)
El Paso, Texas; Nov. 15, 2017

Gilbert Miranda Sr. (BBA ’75)
El Paso, Texas; Aug. 20, 2017

Lloyd D. Muir (B.S. ’74; M.Ed. ’78)
El Paso, Texas; Aug. 13, 2017

David Stephen Quintd (BBA ’77)
Kingwood, Texas; July 28, 2017

Raul Ramirez (B.A. ’70; M.S. ’76)
Peoria, Arizona; Oct. 2, 2017

Chris John Ropoulos (B.S. ’71)
Hayward, California; July 5, 2017

Harry Eugene Ruckman (BBA ’79)
El Paso, Texas, Aug. 13, 2017

Nicolo Anthony Santangelo (BBA ’72)
Garland, Texas; Sept. 20, 2017

David Paul Womack (MBA ’78)
Georgetown, Texas; July 21, 2017

Earl Harry York (B.A. ’75)
El Paso, Texas; July 5, 2017

1980s

Catherine Ann Berry (B.S. ’85; M.Ed. ’06)
El Paso, Texas; Nov. 4, 2017

Jean Currey (B.M. ’82)
Loveland, Colorado; June 28, 2017

Margarita N. De La Rosa (BBA ’82)
El Paso, Texas; June 6, 2017

Angel Del Toro (BBA ’81)
El Paso, Texas; Aug. 17, 2017

Michael Glenn Dotson (B.S. ’81)
Houston, Texas; Oct. 26, 2017

Virginia Dell Tyree Fields (B.S. ’85)
El Paso, Texas; Sept. 27, 2017

Dwayne Edward Gray (BBA ’84)
El Paso, Texas; Sept. 20, 2017

Timothy Hart (B.A. ’81)
Huntsville, Alabama; June 24, 2017

Mary Elizabeth Hoover (B.S. ’88)
Terrell, Texas; Aug. 3, 2017

Carollyn Jenkins Houston (BBA ’83)
El Paso, Texas; Aug. 13, 2017

Barbara Ring Kowalski (MAIS ’84)
El Paso, Texas; Nov. 26, 2017

1990s

Michael Joseph Bradley (BIS ’95)
El Paso, Texas; Nov. 22, 2017

Kanequa Tanay Chancellor (B.A. ’99; MBA, ’02)
El Paso, Texas; Nov. 4, 2017

Laura Elizabeth Huerta (BIS ’97; M.Ed. ’02)
El Paso, Texas; Sept. 29, 2017

Mary Jean Lueurance (BIS ’97)
El Paso, Texas; Sept. 1, 2017

Laura N. McRae (BSW ’93)
Williamsport, Pennsylvania; June 23, 2017

2000s

Rosalinda Cazares (BIS ’00)
El Paso, Texas; Aug. 31, 2017

Fidel Gomez Jr. (BMS ’06)
El Paso, Texas; Aug. 11, 2017

Patrick Leyva (BSN ’05)
El Paso, Texas; Oct. 4, 2017

Elizabeth Ann Loper (B.A. ’09)
El Paso, Texas; July 25, 2017

Marisela Ramirez (B.S. ’01)
El Paso, Texas; Aug. 29, 2017

Brenda Betancourt Sandoval (BIS ’06)
El Paso, Texas; Sept. 1, 2017

2010s

Kevin Michael Gutierrez (Ph.D. ’14)
Laredo, Texas; Sept. 19, 2017

Arturo Sepulveda (B.S. ’97; MBA ’05)
El Paso, Texas; Aug. 26, 2017

Shannon Waldron (BBA ’95)
El Paso; July 16, 2017

MinerLink:
A NEW ALUMNI EXPERIENCE

MinerLink is UTEP’s latest initiative to help graduates expand their professional network, develop relationships and continue to stay in touch, regardless of where they live or work. Through this platform, graduates can continue to share their successes with their alma mater and each other. Additionally, as the platform continues to develop, alumni can expect to search through a wealth of programs, such as on-campus volunteering and student mentorship opportunities.

MinerLink enables UTEP graduates to create a personal profile and connect with fellow Miners anywhere in the world. Users may search for UTEP alumni by name, class, major, employer, city or state.

This initiative also will unveil a permanent UTEP alumni email address called the Lifelong Email Forwarding Address (LEFA). Stay connected through MinerLink to learn more about getting your alumni email address. LEFA allows graduates to share their permanent @alumni.utep.edu email with friends or colleagues and have that correspondence route to their current, preferred email inbox.

Visit www.utep.edu/MinerLink to register for your free alumni account and get connected. As a UTEP graduate, you will have exclusive access to search the UTEP alumni database. Networking has never been easier: contact an executive with whom you want to have coffee, find a long-lost classmate, or search for Miners living near you.
Miners Around the World

Celebrating the diversity of UTEP students, faculty, and alumni from across the globe.

Celeste Gomez, majoring in marketing, visits Melbourne, Australia, where she met extraordinary people she will keep in her heart forever.

Gonzalo A. Laje (BBA ’81) (bottom left) and daughter Danielle Nicole Laje (far right) climb to the top of Machu Picchu via the Inca Trail in Peru.

Sofia V. Ortega, majoring in industrial engineering, visits Baja California, Mexico as part of Engineering Together Sustainable Communities 2017.

Steve De Avila (B.A. Criminal Justice ’03) and his wife, Gabriela Garcia-De Avila, visit Belize.

Jose Antonio Portilla, majoring in civil engineering, visits Madrid, Spain, where food and differences in business practices between the U.S. and Spain were some of the memorable aspects of his trip.

To submit a Miners Around the World photo for possible inclusion in UTEP Magazine, send the photo and caption information to univcomm@utep.edu.
These aren’t just words. They are a motto that brings pride to thousands of University of Texas at El Paso students and alumni.

Regardless of the degree earned, the pride is there when you see the familiar orange and blue or when a fellow alumnus flashes the “picks up.”

Hundreds of alumni returned to UTEP the week of Oct. 1-7, 2017, to catch up with former classmates and celebrate Homecoming with the “Bring Back the ‘90s” theme. They toured campus and saw how the University has changed since their time as students.

The celebration featured the 100th anniversary of Old Main, which included a remembrance of the time a professor used dynamite near the building and blew out the windows.

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From the student-centered Lip Sync Battle and SGA Pageant to the Distinguished Alumni Dinner, this year’s Homecoming events generated new memories and enhanced Miner pride.
MinerLink enables UTEP graduates to create a personal profile and connect with fellow Miners anywhere in the world. Users may search for UTEP alumni by name, class, major, employer, city or state.

VISIT WWW.UTEP.EDU/MINERLINK TO REGISTER FOR YOUR FREE ALUMNI ACCOUNT AND GET CONNECTED