CAMPUS SNAPSHOTS

Photo by J.R. Hernandez
In 1988, newly appointed UTEP President Diana Natalicio appeared on the cover of Nova Quarterly, the alumni publication that is now UTEP Magazine. Inside, the issue kicked off with a Q&A between President Natalicio and Editor Dale L. Walker. Thirty years later, President Natalicio engaged in a similar interview, this time with UTEP Magazine Editor Jenn Crawford.
A Conversation with Diana Natalicio
30 Years Later

Jenn Crawford: Thirty years ago, you sat down with Dale Walker, editor of what was then Nova Quarterly and is now UTEP Magazine, just after you took office as President of UTEP. You and Mr. Walker talked about your “priorities” for the University, which boiled down to access and excellence – increasing the number of doctoral programs offered, enhancing research efforts and increasing extramural funding, and strengthening programs for undergraduate students, especially first-generation college students. How would you rate UTEP’s and your success in addressing those priorities in the last three decades?

Diana Natalicio: I think we’ve done a remarkable job as a team to define our access and excellence mission, raise our expectations, set aggressive goals, change the scope of the work that we do, strengthen our sense of purpose and the intentionality of all that we seek to accomplish. On the access front, we achieved exactly what we set out to do, and we did it even more successfully than I might initially have thought possible, primarily thanks to our highly talented and totally dedicated and student-centered team across all sectors of the campus, but also to UTEP’s strong alignment with two major national higher education trends at exactly the right time. The first of them was increased attention on Hispanic-Serving Institutions and the extramural funding to support it. Creating a competitive research/doctoral climate was critical to our access mission: UTEP students should not only have access, but access to the highest quality educational experiences which would enable them to compete successfully with their peers across the globe. We were bold in our determination to achieve our highest aspirations as we developed and sustained highly innovative strategies over the past 30 years. As I said at Convocation, lasting change takes time and unwavering commitment. It requires steadily building on existing strengths and addressing head-on needed improvements to achieve ever higher levels of performance. Thirty years seems to have rushed by because we were aggressively building on UTEP’s strong foundation while always trying to add value with each step forward.

JC: What would you consider to be UTEP’s greatest success in the last 30 years?

DN: I think by far our greatest success has been our capacity to achieve both access and excellence for a student population with an unusually broad range of socioeconomic backgrounds and cultures. We’ve been especially successful in figuring out how to create opportunities for economically disadvantaged students and how to offer a university environment that both supports their needs and provides them with a level of quality that will ensure that when they graduate, they are able to compete successfully with their peers anywhere.

JC: What do you think has been the key to your success as President, and your longevity? At so many other universities, presidents stay for only a few years. In fact, at 30 years, you’re the longest-serving current president of a public doctoral research university in the country.

DN: I think most people fall into one of two categories: there are those whose satisfaction is derived primarily from being something, and others whose fulfillment comes from getting something done. I’m a “do something” kind of person. I very much enjoy working hard to do things that lead to clear results. I don’t focus much on titles or status. What’s important to me is getting something done, knowing the progress that we’ve made, and make sure that it is fully ready to serve as a foundation for the next 30 years in our institutional development. We must be proud of the progress that we have made and of our resilience in pushing toward our ambitious goals, and we must be confident in setting ever higher goals for the future. As we move into this leadership transition, we’ve been working on such issues as orderly succession planning for administrative positions. Over the past two years, we have recruited four new deans, and we’re recruiting two more now — in business and nursing — all of whom will be entrusted with sustaining our strong set of values and our deep institution-wide commitment to access and excellence. UTEP’s success has solidly rested on steady, highly intentional progress, and we must ensure that this administrative transition will offer a clearly marked pathway that new campus leadership can follow to capitalize on the progress that’s already been made and ensure continuity in our mission and strategies to achieve it. My expectation as I close this chapter in my personal journey, is that I’ll be able to cheer on the next leadership team members as they confidently grab the UTEP baton and successfully continue the race. For me, it’s absolutely critical that we not lose the hard-won ground we’ve gained.

JC: What do you hope UTEP will accomplish before you turn the University over to its next leader?

DN: I hope we can reinforce and stabilize the progress that we’ve made, and make sure that it is fully ready to serve as a foundation for the next 30 years in our institutional development. We must be proud of the progress that we have made and of our resilience in pushing toward our ambitious goals, and we must be confident in setting ever higher goals for the future. As we move into this leadership transition, we’ve been working on such issues as orderly succession planning for administrative positions. Over the past two years, we have recruited four new deans, and we’re recruiting two more now — in business and nursing — all of whom will be entrusted with sustaining our strong set of values and our deep institution-wide commitment to access and excellence. UTEP’s success has solidly rested on steady, highly intentional progress, and we must ensure that this administrative transition will offer a clearly marked pathway that new campus leadership can follow to capitalize on the progress that’s already been made and ensure continuity in our mission and strategies to achieve it. My expectation as I close this chapter in my personal journey, is that I’ll be able to cheer on the next leadership team members as they confidently grab the UTEP baton and successfully continue the race. For me, it’s absolutely critical that we not lose the hard-won ground we’ve gained.
that my work is having an impact, and having evidence that I am helping others to optimize their impact. I love to attempt to create conditions to enable everyone to succeed and to draw satisfaction from their success, often against all odds. UTEP is not the best-funded university on the planet, we’re located far from major power centers in a relatively isolated geographic region, and we don’t serve affluent students, but we haven’t permitted any of those factors to serve as an excuse for lowering our expectations of ourselves or our students. We fully acknowledge and appreciate our context and determine the best way to make it work for us. As a result, we have developed a national reputation for innovation by tackling issues that many other institutions might allow to become major constraints on their aspirations.

The strategy is really multifaceted. As President, what I’ve really cared about is helping ensure that UTEP’s mission translates into effective activity, bringing all the pieces and parts together. Many people have told us that access and excellence are incompatible goals, that they are mutually exclusive, that there aren’t sufficient resources to do both. Well, we set out to prove that this claim of access and excellence incompatibility is simply incorrect. We worked very hard to demonstrate that you can win by strategically playing the cards that you’ve been dealt, rather than spend time yearning for a better hand. Winning by overcoming odds gives me a lot of satisfaction.

Departing UTEP for a more elite job or institution was never part of my game plan.

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JC: What has been the hardest part of your job?

DN: Resources are always a major issue – having sufficient resources and having to constantly scramble for them. I would, for example, love to be able to award a generous scholarship to every single talented student of modest means – that would be wonderful! – but obvious resource constraints prevent us from doing that. To be sure, limited financial resources restrict our doing many, many things that we would love to be able to do, so that’s definitely frustrating, but the upside is that these same resource limitations make us far more creative and innovative in how we do our work.

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JC: And what has been the most rewarding part?

DN: Spending time with our students is what I enjoy the most, interacting with them, listening to them and learning from them. I especially enjoy learning about their hopes and dreams and love the often disarming perspectives that they offer. They will ask questions or make comments that provoke my thinking about something in a way that I hadn’t considered before. I know that my faculty colleagues appreciate that, too. I recall a faculty member in history who, upon accepting a major teaching award, commented that his research was greatly enhanced by questions that his undergraduate students would ask him, which differed markedly from those his colleagues might pose, and thereby enabled him to think about something in an entirely new way. Faculty and administrators learn much from students with whom they interact in the classroom or laboratory, or anywhere else, and I love to engage in those interactions.

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JC: In addition to your dedication to UTEP and your commitment to its access and excellence mission, there’s something else that stayed constant during the last 30 years, and that’s your iconic hairstyle. There’s even a campaign based around it. Have you intentionally kept it the same all these years?

DN: I’ve never thought much about it, actually. I’m not very hair-focused, nor do I spend any time considering hair options. There are so many other things that are more important to me. When I went to high school I had very short hair and then it grew, and I liked the ease of simply pinning it in a barrette, and moving on to more interesting issues. We all wear clothes, we all manage our hair, but those activities don’t have to consume major attention.

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JC: What do you think about this interest in your hairstyle? I’ve even heard people wonder if you’ll let your hair down in retirement.

DN: Probably not. I have no idea what I’ll do after I retire. Maybe I’ll wear a baseball cap all the time. What’s been interesting to me is the focus on my hair. I never thought that this would become so fascinating ... and it didn’t start with the recent campaign. Through the years, I have received quite a few emails, notes and comments, mostly from women, who tell me how impressed they are that I never colored my hair or changed my hairstyle. They would comment that they considered me very bold to resist making changes which, for me, offered the far easier option. I didn’t feel bold at all. Frankly, I’d rather be known for pitching a no-hitter in the major leagues, but since that didn’t happen, I guess a bold hairstyle is a good fallback.

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JC: You’ve maintained a very fast pace and a very busy schedule as President, and your work has affected tens of thousands of lives – as just one measure of your impact, UTEP has awarded more than 91,000 degrees during your presidency. You’ve been going nonstop for more than three decades. How do you prepare for the changes coming – for the slower pace, for a quieter life less in the spotlight?

DN: I think I’ll adjust to the change of pace in stages. Initially, I will likely enjoy breathing a great sigh of relief. I relish the thought of not having to leap out of bed at 4 a.m., rush off to the airport to fly somewhere, arrive barely in time for a meeting – and sometimes not — and experience the frustrations of flight delays and uncomfortable hotel rooms. I won’t miss that at all. I am looking forward to being able to sit back and say, ‘I am under no pressure to get something urgent done today or even tomorrow or the next day.’ Now, I hasten to add that I’m not sure just how long that mellowness will last and I’ll be ready for the next stage in my retirement. I do get restless or bored fairly easily when I’m not operating at full speed. The trick will be to shift my considerable energy toward reading what I haven’t had time to read, listening to music and seeing art, traveling to interesting places and doing all the other things I’ve always enjoyed but seemed to never have time for. However, it’s almost impossible to know how the transition will evolve. Within three
JC: Transitioning to a new president after we’ve had a steadfast leader for 30 years won’t be easy for the campus, either. Is there any part of you that is worried that UTEP’s progress will stall in this transition?

DN: My concerns fall into two categories. First is the selection of the next UTEP president. I think it’s critical that we get that right. The UTEP president’s role differs from most others because of our unique setting, student demographics and mission. As a result, prepared resumes may or may not be good sources of information about the values and compatibility of specific candidates within UTEP’s ecosystem. It’s critical that values and commitment to a unique student population like ours be a major factor in evaluating candidates’ fit. There are very few universities anywhere that look anything like, or do their work in the same way that UTEP does.

There’s also the strength of the UTEP team on the campus. Faculty, staff and administrators have fully embraced a strong set of institutional values, as is evident in our low turnover rates. UTEP team members enjoy their work here. Gary Shteyngart (read more about Shteyngart on page 8), commented that compared with people across the U.S., UTEP faculty appeared to be far happier and optimistic than people in other settings he visited on his cross-country tour in search of happiness. We love what we do, and I’m convinced that many higher education professionals from across the country would also enjoy being here to experience the joy of playing a role in UTEP student success. So in addition to finding a good candidate fit for the presidency, our faculty and staff must continue to be strong in executing and, when necessary, defending the mission of the institution, not only through their words, but in the powerful results of the work that they do.

With a president who is comfortable and proud to represent UTEP and the students we serve, and a continuing access and excellence commitment from faculty and staff, UTEP can sustain delivering on its huge promise. Without these factors in place, UTEP’s success in creating authentic opportunities for our students, and our momentum toward redefining public higher education will likely slow, because there’s constant pressure to normalize institutions like UTEP, efforts to drive us toward measuring ourselves with the success metrics used in other university settings. UTEP has developed a fundamentally different approach to fulfilling its access and excellence mission and serving its student demographic, and our future success will depend on our continuing to pursue the strategies that have enabled us to succeed in our unique setting with our 21st century demographic, and drove us toward becoming a national model. Successfully educating our 21st century demographic is UTEP’s primary responsibility, to enhance our students’ success, but also to help create a roadmap for those institutions that may want to follow in our footsteps. We have the privilege of working with the talented and hard-working students who come to us with their high aspirations, and our success in serving these students well has propelled us into playing a leading role nationally in effective 21st century public higher education.

JC: What message do you have for UTEP alumni?

DN: Most important for alumni is an understanding of how proud we are of them and their many accomplishments, and how important they are to UTEP and our visibility across the globe. The exciting careers that they are pursuing, and their many accomplishments, represent the strongest validation of UTEP’s success. Their individual successes are a reflection of their talent, and the way in which UTEP has helped shape it. Their success in careers, workplaces and communities will help UTEP become better known for the quality of its graduates. They have a very special opportunity to demonstrate their pride in UTEP’s strengths and their appreciation for the impact that UTEP has had in their lives. Our fast-growing number of UTEP graduates will greatly increase UTEP’s visibility in settings across the country and world.

We also hope that UTEP alumni will remain in contact with and support UTEP in a variety of ways, from mentoring our students and graduates, helping them learn about career options and finding jobs, to urging their employers to recruit at UTEP if they don’t currently do so. And, of course, our alumni are welcomed to contribute financially to UTEP. No gift is too small to make a difference.

Read the full interview, including more about President Natalicio’s retirement plans, at www.utep.edu/magazine
While a chapter in her higher education story is closing, President Diana Natalicio has left indelible marks on the campus she joined as a visiting assistant professor in 1971. Explore a 30-year timeline that touches on the highlights.

President Diana Natalicio summarizes the accomplishments of the year and reflects on the campus’s transformation during the last 30 years.

The work of Arvind Singhal has made UTEP an international hub for positive deviance, a simple yet revolutionary model for social and organizational change.
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UTEP ATTAINS NATIONAL RESEARCH TOP TIER RANKING

In December 2018, as this issue of UTEP Magazine was going to print, The University of Texas at El Paso attained a coveted R1 designation (top tier doctoral university with very high research activity) in the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. UTEP is one of only 130 (4.5%) top tier universities among the 2,883 four-year higher education institutions across the U.S. to earn this prestigious R1 distinction, joining the ranks of such universities as Stanford, M.I.T., Michigan, Arizona and California-Berkeley.

The Carnegie Classification process analyzes higher education institutions in the U.S. on the basis of such factors as research expenditures, undergraduate and graduate instructional programs, enrollment profile, size and setting, and basic classification. It has been a framework for recognizing and describing U.S. higher education institutions for more than 45 years.

“This newly earned Carnegie R1 classification in the top tier of national research universities strongly validates UTEP’s success in delivering on our innovative access and excellence mission,” said President Diana Natalicio. “It also powerfully affirms the stature of UTEP faculty researchers, the quality of their innovative work, and their competitiveness in securing funding to support it. What makes UTEP’s rise to this R1 level even more impressive is our abiding campus commitment to access, which places a high priority on ensuring that research excellence always be accompanied by a deep and sustained access commitment. Engaging our students, both graduate and especially undergraduate, in this growing research activity at UTEP provides them with outstanding learning opportunities and raises their aspirations to pursue advanced degrees and research careers. Of significance, too, is that this R1 classification enhances UTEP’s national brand and increases the value of a UTEP degree.”

Learn more at www.utep.edu/r1.
HAPPINESS IS ...

The insights that faculty members from The University of Texas at El Paso shared about what they did and how it made them feel resonated with author and educator Gary Shteyngart, whose 2015 visit to campus convinced him that UTEP is home to some of the nation’s happiest people.

Shteyngart, associate professor of writing at Columbia University, made his claim during the ‘In My Humble Opinion’ segment broadcast Nov. 14, 2018, on the PBS NewsHour. He said UTEP professors “led lives of relative wealth and contentment, along with a feeling that they were part of something bigger” because they used education to change the lives of their students. This generated hope, optimism and satisfaction among them.

The author was in El Paso as part of a four-month cross-country Greyhound bus tour where he researched happiness in America for his latest book, “Lake Success,” about a New York hedge fund manager who takes a bus trip to escape a failing marriage and an impending SEC investigation. Random House published the novel in fall 2018. A good portion of the story takes place in El Paso.

UTEP Provost Carol Parker said she was grateful for Shteyngart’s remarks, but not surprised because she knows about the dedication of the University’s faculty and staff. She said they work to prepare students for high paying jobs that will move them and their households to higher socioeconomic quartiles.

“People who work in higher education do so because they want to make a difference in people’s lives,” Parker said. “It is very rewarding to work at UTEP, where we are often able to achieve outcomes that are often life changing and transformative. Having this kind of impact on the lives of our students and our community can’t help but instill happiness in what we do as a higher education community.”

Shteyngart said the UTEP faculty members he spoke with saw their vocation as a contribution to society because it helped students achieve the things their parents never had. The educator, who emigrated to the U.S. from the Soviet Union with his family in 1979, said that sentiment resonated with him.

Michael Topp, Ph.D., associate professor of history and former director of the Liberal Arts Honors Program, was among the faculty members who spoke to Shteyngart.

Topp, a guest researcher at the University of Leipzig in Germany
during the fall 2018 semester, recalled telling Shteyngart about his respect for UTEP students, who often do not come from privileged backgrounds. He relayed how they earn what they get through their own hard work, which often includes taking jobs and other responsibilities to help support themselves and their families throughout their academic careers.

“I told Gary it’s a privilege to work at UTEP, where you can help students succeed, and encourage them to achieve all that they can,” Topp said. “I told him how much I admire UTEP, (and) that I feel like I am part of something important ... and inspiring.”

Ezra Cappell, Ph.D., professor of Jewish Studies at the College of Charleston (South Carolina), invited Shteyngart to speak at UTEP while he was associate professor of English and director of the Inter-American Jewish Studies Program. He said Shteyngart visited several times between late 2015 and summer 2017 and was impressed with the students, the community and UTEP’s mission of access and excellence.

“He saw and heard how faculty were making a massive difference in the lives of their students,” Cappell said. “At UTEP, (faculty) were committed to something bigger than themselves.”

Another Miner who was not surprised by Shteyngart’s comments was Gary Edens, Ed.D., vice president for student affairs. Edens was an undergraduate at UTEP in the mid-1980s and has served his entire career at the institution.

“I think people are always happiest when the work they are doing is meaningful,” Edens said. “UTEP is a place where you can directly see how your efforts have an impact on a student’s success. It’s that kind of a place where huge things are happening but at a scale where you still know everyone by name and people can come together to achieve a vision of a university that is inclusive, engaging and life-changing.

“I’m thrilled that outsiders are now taking note of what I’ve always known. UTEP is a great place and a model for other institutions that want to achieve access and excellence.” - Daniel Perez
Mark McGurk

Alumnus Returns Home to Lead Business Affairs Division

Mark McGurk is well-acquainted with The University of Texas at El Paso’s business operations. In fact, he started as a student assistant in the payroll office before he received his Bachelor of Business Administration in accounting and finance in the early 1990s.

McGurk’s career and life experience has come full circle. In July 2018, he was appointed as the University’s vice president for business affairs.

“I consider working for The University of Texas at El Paso a privilege and honor,” McGurk said. “I sincerely hope to use my experience and skills to continue the upward trajectory of access and excellence and to continue the outstanding work and dedication of my predecessors. I take great pride in my association with the University and look forward to the future.”

The UTEP alumnus oversees the University’s operating budget of $500 million and advises campus leaders on the institution’s financial interests, such as controllership, financial planning and revenue cycle functions. He is responsible for managing the University’s balance sheet and capital structure, financial planning, financial reporting, budgeting and forecasting, audit activities, capital planning, and human resources.

Before his return to UTEP, the alumnus served as the University of Arizona’s comptroller for nearly a decade. The institution promoted him to associate vice president and comptroller.

During that time, he earned a Master of Educational Leadership in Higher Education Leadership from Northern Arizona University. From there, McGurk moved to The University of Texas of the Permian Basin in Odessa, where he was vice president for business affairs for three years.

Overall, McGurk has worked in higher education for nearly 25 years and has more than 30 years of supervisory and managerial experience. The seasoned administrator said he is confident that he has the knowledge and skills to make meaningful contributions to the University.

“I’m very proud to be back at my own institution,” he said, adding that he takes pride in UTEP’s students and its graduates, who he has seen make a difference through their work. “Every single person at UTEP should be proud to be here to support the mission and what we are doing.” - Jesse Martinez

Visit www.utep.edu/magazine to see a video interview with Mark McGurk.
Members of El Paso’s legislative delegation joined Evan Smith, chief executive officer and co-founder of the Texas Tribune, at UTEP on Dec. 13, 2018, for the third and final installment in the Tribune’s series of conversations on Texas health care leading into the 86th legislative session.

Smith probed state Reps. César Blanco, Mary González, Joe Moody, Lina Ortega and Sen. José Rodríguez about mental health, women’s health, rural health, opioids, medical professions education and access to health care coverage.

“These events are the tee up for all of you to pay attention, engage on issues and ultimately express yourselves at the appropriate point however you choose to,” Smith told more than 250 people in the Tomás Rivera Conference Center.

UTEP President Diana Natalicio highlighted the University’s growing role in providing access to quality health care in the region.

More than 4,500 students are enrolled in UTEP’s health care professions programs, which include nursing, rehabilitation sciences, clinical laboratory science, kinesiology, public health and social work.

“Most of the graduates of these programs remain in this region, sharing their healthcare and bilingual/bicultural skills, and thereby greatly enhancing our collective health and wellness, and our prosperity and quality of life,” President Natalicio said. - Laura L. Acosta

American Chemical Society President

Luis Echegoyen, Ph.D., a research professor and the Robert A. Welch Chair in The University of Texas at El Paso’s chemistry department, was elected in November 2018 to the highest leadership position of the American Chemical Society (ACS), the world’s largest scientific organization.

Echegoyen began a three-year term as president for the organization during which he is responsible for the development of a set of goals with corresponding tasks and events while serving as the society’s primary representative.

“I am really honored by this election and look forward to implementing many new and ambitious programs to benefit the ACS and its many members,” Echegoyen said.

Echegoyen lists several priorities he hopes to work on while in the organization’s top role, including the promotion of inter- and multi-disciplinary education and research. Echegoyen also hopes to advocate for increases in research funding, establish closer ties between industry and academia, and to increase international partnerships and collaborations.

Echegoyen arrived at UTEP in 2010 after four years as director of the chemistry division at the National Science Foundation. - Pablo Villa

Texas Tribune Forum

State Delegation Discusses Health Care

In July 2018, The University of Texas at El Paso’s College of Business Administration (COBA) announced the creation of the Executive MBA (EMBA) Community Engagement Project in partnership with United Way of El Paso County.

Starting in January 2019, EMBA students — typically advancing managers who already have at least five years’ experience in leadership roles — will apply their proven talents and community understanding to help local nonprofits address challenges such as identifying inefficiencies, implementing more effective resource allocation, improving financing mechanisms and resolving breakdowns in governance.

“This project is expected to make a significant and direct impact on the success of our fellow nonprofits by providing them the ability to move beyond short-term goals and instead focus on attainable, long-term goals,” said Deborah Zuloaga, president and CEO of the United Way of El Paso County.

Students who participate in the program also benefit from learning through applied experience, enhanced team and project management capabilities, and plenty of networking opportunities.

Robert Nachtmann, DBA, was dean of COBA when the project was announced, and was instrumental in making it a reality.

“The Community Engagement Project engages our Executive MBA students in the task of advancing the performance of our not-for-profit sector,” Nachtmann said.

“In so doing, all of our region benefits.” - Victor H. Arreola

Community Engagement

Executive MBA Students Partner with Local Nonprofits
UTEP Launches Bilingual Writing Certificate Program

The University of Texas at El Paso’s new Bilingual Professional Writing Certificate (BPWC) program is designed for people who want to embrace their bilingualism, enrich their education and strengthen their professional writing skills.

The BPWC, which started during the fall 2018 semester, is a 12-credit option combining online and classroom courses in translation and rhetoric and writing that is open to graduate and undergraduate students. UTEP will offer a fully online version in fall 2019.

Isabel Baca, Ph.D., associate professor of English and the program’s principal investigator, used a $100,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to develop the program’s curricula. She collaborated with faculty from the departments of English and Languages and Linguistics, more specifically from their translation and rhetoric and writing studies programs, and nonprofit agencies that would benefit from competent workplace writers.

Baca said the program is important because most of the world has become a multilingual, multicultural community where the workplace demands individuals who can understand and translate different languages.

“Those who can write effectively, ethically and dynamically will be the top candidates for employment in the U.S. and around the world,” Baca said. - Daniel Perez
Linda S. Birnbaum
Linda S. Birnbaum, Ph.D., director of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) of the National Institutes of Health, and the National Toxicology Program (NTP), talked about the impact of the environment on human health during her visit to UTEP on Oct. 18, 2018.

Birnbaum was on campus to deliver a Centennial Lecture titled “The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and the Future of Environmental Health,” before a packed audience inside the Bioscience Research Building auditorium.

Birnbaum is the first toxicologist and the first woman to lead the NIEHS/NTP. She has served as a federal scientist for nearly 39 years.

Sbusisiwe Myeni


Through its nutrition, mentoring and family counseling services, the foundation has successfully matched children in socioeconomically disadvantaged families in rural South African communities with opportunities to pursue higher education.

James B. Milliken
The University of Texas System Chancellor James B. Milliken made his first visit to UTEP on Oct. 25, 2018. The trip was part of Milliken’s 14-campus tour of UT institutions since he became chancellor in September 2018.

Milliken began his visit with a brief tour of the Hoover House. The historic residence has been home to UTEP’s presidents since 1965. On campus, the chancellor met with UTEP President Diana Natalicio and with a group of student leaders who talked about their experiences at the University. He also spoke with UTEP faculty members and with “The Prospector,” UTEP’s student newspaper, before taking a tour of campus.

Ron Stallworth
Author Ron Stallworth, the first African-American detective in the Colorado Springs Police Department, participated in a roundtable discussion on race and racism at UTEP on Oct. 6, 2018.

Stallworth joined panelists Natasha Howard, Ph.D., a lecturer in the Africana Studies program at the University of New Mexico, and Jose Medina, community activist and retired immigration attorney, for the presentation titled, “Race, Racism and Resistance: The Social, Individual and Communal Impact of Practiced Racism” in UTEP’s Union Cinema.

Director Spike Lee turned Stallworth’s memoir “BlacKkKlansman,” which details his experience infiltrating the Ku Klux Klan, into a movie of the same name in 2018.

Borderland residents shared their thoughts about the qualities they believe the next UTEP President should possess with the UT El Paso Presidential Search Advisory Committee on Oct. 2, 2018.

During the town hall in UTEP’s Fox Fine Arts Recital Hall, committee members also discussed the selection process with faculty, students, staff and community stakeholders in attendance.

The committee was appointed by The University of Texas System Board of Regents to make recommendations on possible successors to UTEP President Diana Natalicio, who announced in May 2018 that she would retire as soon as a new President is named and takes office.
The University of Texas System Board of Regents recognized two UTEP faculty members with the 2018 Regents’ Outstanding Teaching Award.

Giulio Francia, Ph.D., associate professor of biological sciences, and Irma Montelongo, Ph.D., associate professor of practice and online program coordinator with the Chicano Studies Program, were honored by the Regents at a reception in August in Austin, Texas.

This recognition is a highly prestigious and competitive award of excellence bestowed on faculty members in the system’s eight academic and six health institutions. Each of the 27 honorees received a monetary award. The Regents have presented these awards since 2009.

Both UTEP recipients thanked their colleagues, mentors and students for helping them achieve this honor. To date, 70 faculty members from The University of Texas at El Paso have earned the award.

“This well-deserved acknowledgment of Dr. Giulio Francia and Dr. Irma Montelongo is a source of great pride to all of us,” UTEP President Diana Natalicio said. “They are powerful examples of the many talented and passionate UTEP faculty members whose deep commitment to teaching profoundly impacts our students as they develop and successfully pursue their highest aspirations.”

Nominees undergo a series of rigorous evaluations by students, peer faculty and external reviewers. The review panels consider a range of activities and criteria in their evaluations of a candidate’s teaching performance, including classroom expertise, curricula quality, innovative course development and student learning outcomes.

“We are indebted to these educators who exemplify great teaching on every level,” said Sara Martinez Tucker, who was chair of the Board of Regents at the time the awards were announced. “These are educators, researchers and health care professionals who – no matter how long they’ve been teaching – never stop thinking about new and innovative ways to enhance the learning experience.”

- Daniel Perez
The University of Texas at El Paso recently opened a third location on campus where nursing mothers can express milk or nurse their child in a private, comfortable and quiet space. The newest lactation room is in University Towers, room 208. Other available rooms are located in Union Building West (room 112) and the Health Sciences and Nursing Building (room 400). Each space gives nursing mothers a venue to peacefully and comfortably maintain this beneficial relationship with their child while working or studying on campus.

The rooms are available to University employees and students. For more information and to book a room, visit www.utep.edu/human-resources/lactation-rooms.

- Jesse Martinez

Roger Gonzalez, Ph.D., professor and chair of engineering education and leadership at The University of Texas at El Paso, found much of the inspiration he needed for a lifetime of work dedicated to helping others in his experiences as a child growing up in a binational region.

Gonzalez is an El Pasoan, a UTEP alumnus, a UTEP faculty member and also the founder of LIMBS International, a nonprofit organization that bridges the gap between affordability and functionality by designing, donating and supplementing affordable prosthetic limbs for the developing world.

In November 2018, the financial services firm TIAA recognized Gonzalez’s work by naming him one of its 2018 TIAA Difference Maker 100 Honorees.

“It is a true honor to be nationally recognized for the work that LIMBS has done over the last 15 years throughout 50+ countries,” Gonzalez said. “I hope that this recognition will help LIMBS expand our partnerships, and thus help LIMBS expand our mission.”

Every year, TIAA recognizes 100 individuals like Gonzalez who are making significant contributions in their community or the world. TIAA recognized Gonzalez with a monetary award to support and advance the work of LIMBS International.

- Victor H. Arreola

**Lactation Stations**

**Rooms Available on Campus for Nursing Mothers**

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**Difference Maker**

**UTEF Professor Recognized by TIAA**

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**Alumnus Also Earns Regents’ Award**

The University of Texas at El Paso not only employs excellent faculty, but also produces exceptional educators, and alumnus Russell Broaddus is one example.

Broaddus, M.D., Ph.D., a professor of pathology at The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, joined the ranks of highly accomplished faculty from The University of Texas System to earn the highly competitive Board of Regents’ Outstanding Teaching Award (ROTA) in 2018.

Broaddus graduated from UTEP in 1987 with a Bachelor of Science in microbiology. He credits many University faculty members, in science and other fields, for inspiring him to join the professoriate.

“UTEP offers so many advantages to undergraduate students,” Broaddus said. “When I was a student, I had a number of outstanding professors and teachers ... All devoted tremendous time and enthusiasm to teaching and learning. Their enthusiasm was infectious.”

Broaddus said two UTEP professors – Lillian Mayberry, Ph.D., and Jack Bristol, Ph.D. – primed him for academic success. The pair mentored Broaddus while he was an undergraduate researcher and eventually introduced him to another formative mentor in his career: Gilbert Castro, Ph.D., from the U.T. Health Science Center at Houston, where Broaddus completed his medical and doctoral degrees.

Today, Broaddus models his teaching and mentoring style on what he learned from these three mentors.

- Christina Rodriguez
HOMECOMING 2018

Let the Memories Live on

While the curtain has since fallen on 2018’s UTEP Homecoming celebration, the memories made by the myriad of students, faculty, staff and alumni who came together throughout the week to share their Miner pride are sure to remain.

The crowning of the Homecoming court at the annual Homecoming Pageant on Sept. 28 ushered in a week of musical-themed events and activities that hit all the right notes for those seeking to get in tune with their Miner spirit. The week concluded with the football game between the Miners and the University of North Texas Mean Green at Sun Bowl Stadium on Oct. 6.

- Christina Rodriguez
2018 Higher Education Community Impact Award

Governor’s Office Honors UTEP for Dedication to Community Engagement

The Center for Civic Engagement at The University of Texas at El Paso heads toward a milestone with fresh evidence of its commitment to a long-standing mission of enhancing higher education and contributing to the public good through community-based teaching and learning initiatives. The center is preparing to mark its 20th anniversary. In summer 2018, it received an important statewide distinction, the latest recognition in its efforts to build an engaged institution throughout the past two decades.

On Aug. 15, 2018, Texas First Lady Cecilia Abbott, honorary chair of the 35th annual Governor’s Volunteer Awards, announced that UTEP was a recipient of the 2018 Higher Education Community Impact Award, which recognizes a Texas university or organization that encourages civic engagement as a core value and demonstrates how students are engaged in intentional cross-sector collaboration to address identified needs within the community.

Last year, UTEP’s commitment to strategically engage faculty, students and the community led to more than 1.5 million hours of community engagement – 22 percent in community service and 78 percent in service learning. To effectively engage nearly 8,000 students in academic-based service, UTEP integrated community engagement into 386 courses, and had more than 150 faculty members working with students in community-based learning and research.

“This recognition further validates the efforts of our outstanding faculty, staff and students who generously share their talents, expertise, time and energy to a variety of organizations and initiatives in our community,” UTEP President Diana Natalicio said. “Their sustained efforts to reach out to community partners contributes significantly to this region’s prosperity and quality of life, and creates valuable opportunities for UTEP students to apply what they learn on the campus to real-life settings across this community. Public research universities, such as UTEP, have a responsibility to extend their impact far beyond the teaching and research that occurs in their classrooms and laboratories, and UTEP has deservedly become a national model for our deep commitment to community engagement.”

The Governor’s Volunteer Awards, administered by OneStar Foundation, honor the contributions of individuals, businesses and organizations in Texas that have made a positive impact in their communities or across the state through service and volunteering.

- Christina Rodriguez

Russell Chianelli
Professor is Campus’ 1st National Academy of Inventors Fellow

Russell Chianelli, Ph.D., a professor and research faculty member at The University of Texas at El Paso who holds more than 60 U.S. patents, has been named a National Academy of Inventors Fellow.

Chianelli is the first UTEP professor to be named an NAI Fellow. The honor was announced Dec. 11, 2018, in recognition of Chianelli’s “highly prolific spirit of innovation in creating or facilitating outstanding inventions that have made a tangible impact on quality of life, economic development and the welfare of society.” He will be inducted into the NAI on April 11, 2019, during a ceremony at NASA Johnson Space Center in Houston.

Since his arrival in 1996, Chianelli has served at UTEP in various teaching, research and administrative capacities, including as director of the campus’ Materials Research and Technology Institute (MRTI).

With his selection, Chianelli joins more than 1,000 NAI Fellows worldwide representing more than 250 research universities and government and nonprofit research institutes. The 2018 Fellows are named inventors on nearly 4,000 issued U.S. patents, bringing the collective patents held by all NAI Fellows to more than 35,000 issued.

- Pablo Villa

Lecture Series
Prominent Leader in Regional Water Issues Celebrated Through New UTEP Lecture Series

The Edmund G. “Ed” Archuleta Distinguished Lectureship was established to mark the career of one of the region’s most renowned leaders on water issues. Archuleta is the former CEO of El Paso Water Utilities and now director of water initiatives for UTEP’s Center for Environmental Resource Management (CERM).

The first lecture in his namesake series took place Nov. 7, 2018, at the Undergraduate Learning Center.

The inaugural address, titled “Water Myths and Realities: The Times They Are a Changin’,” was delivered by Michael Hightower, University of New Mexico research professor.

Archuleta was manager of El Paso Water Utilities from January 1989 until his retirement in January 2013. He joined UTEP in September 2013. He said the campus is in a position to utilize the “living laboratory” at its disposal to evolve and employ total water management strategies.

- Pablo Villa

See a video of Ed Archuleta talking about the lecture series at www.utep.edu/magazine

- Pablo Villa

Photo by Laura Trejo
Jaime Regis, a University of Texas at El Paso mechanical engineering doctoral student, is everything the GEAR UP program represents.

UTEP Receives $13M Grant for GEAR UP Program

Jaime Regis, a University of Texas at El Paso mechanical engineering doctoral student, is everything the GEAR UP program represents.

The 2014 Del Valle High School graduate was the first in his family to earn a college degree when he graduated from UTEP in spring 2018.

But, if it were not for the federally funded GEAR UP program, it might not have happened.

“I knew I wanted to get a college education, but I didn’t know much about how to go about it,” Regis said. “With GEAR UP, I had the opportunity to go on field trips to different colleges and universities, and that really helped me get an idea of what college really was.”

UTEP’s GEAR UP program received a 6-year, $13 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education that will help more than 2,700 local middle school students get more out of high school and navigate the path to college.

The Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs, or GEAR UP, program will provide comprehensive support to students in 10 Ysleta Independent School District (YISD) middle schools through academic counseling, tutoring, mentoring, community service opportunities, academic workshops and activities, college tours, college and career awareness and readiness activities, and financial aid planning.

“The GEAR UP program has proven to be a catalyst for educational attainment and progression to a post-secondary degree,” said Gary Edens, Ed.D., vice president for student affairs at UTEP. “This grant will result in more students completing high school and pursuing a college degree.”

Since 1999, UTEP’s GEAR UP has secured more than $49 million in research grants and has guided 10,688 students in the Ysleta, Socorro and El Paso independent school districts.

Lifetime Achievement Award

Physics Professor Recognized by Journal Nature for Mentoring in Science

A UTEP professor’s momentous year closed with a monumental honor.

Jorge A. Lopez, Ph.D., the Schumaker Professor in The University of Texas at El Paso’s Department of Physics, was recognized with a lifetime achievement in mentoring award as part of the 2018 Nature Awards for Mentoring in Science. The honor – given by Nature, the world’s leading multidisciplinary science journal – was formally presented Dec. 18.

Lopez said he is elated to be named a recipient of the award. He maintains that any recognition of his efforts is a tribute to the work of the students with whom he has been associated.

For Lopez, the announcement from Nature caps a year in which he received another grand honor. Lopez entered the 2018-19 academic year as a recipient of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring, the highest national mentoring award bestowed by the White House. Lopez received the prize with 38 other winners at the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C., during the summer.

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- Pablo Villa
UNIVERSITY AVENUE ENHANCEMENTS

UTEP Campus
Master Plan Continues

The end of 2018 saw the completion of one construction project on University Avenue and the beginning of another. Both had the same goals – to increase safety and enhance the pedestrian experience on the thoroughfare that cuts an east-west swath through campus.

The University Avenue Pedestrian and Bike Enhancement Project began in May 2018 and concluded in October. The stretch of road from the Liberal Arts Building to Oregon Street was updated to match campus aesthetics and add safety features. The project widened the sidewalks for easier pedestrian access through the area, added shared bicycle lanes, improved lighting and added foliage. The project also included a new Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant ramp next to the stairs between Union Building East and Union Building West.

On the opposite side of Centennial Plaza, another project broke ground in October 2018 at the intersection of University Avenue and Wiggins Way. The work included removing the stop sign and widening the road’s curve for easier vehicular access. A water feature and seating will be added to the area near the intersection between Leech Grove and the Geological Sciences Building. Metal panels listing University donors also will be installed.

“The most urgent objective of these projects is to increase pedestrian safety, bicycle access and campus aesthetics,” said Greg McNicol, associate vice president for facilities management. “The projects will resemble what students, faculty and staff currently see along Hawthorne Street and Centennial Plaza.”

The University Avenue Pedestrian and Bike Enhancement Project and the University Avenue/Wiggins Way Project are both part of The University of Texas at El Paso’s Campus Master Plan, McNicol said.

The plan is a 10-year initiative that addresses the “anticipated needs of near-term capital projects within a long-range strategic framework for development directed toward improving the quality of campus life,” according to the plan’s introduction.

- Jesse Martinez

RESET @ UTEP

UTEP Hosts Binational Innovation and Entrepreneurship Summit

The University of Texas at El Paso co-hosted RESET, the largest binational innovation and entrepreneurship summit on the U.S.-Mexican border.

RESET featured a combination of unique experiences including state-of-the-art workshops, panel discussions, immersive presentations by world-class speakers and a cultural music event.

The November 2018 event was a partnership between Technology Hub, a tech center and boot camp for start-up companies, and UTEP.

“The team behind RESET sees the value of the partnership with UTEP and of being on campus,” said Ben Gonzalez, UTEP’s vice president for asset management and development. “As the hub of university technological activity in El Paso, this is an ideal cross-border partnership to benefit students in our region.”

The three-day event took place at the Technology Hub in Juárez, Mexico, and at UTEP’s Undergraduate Learning Center.

Hundreds of UTEP students had the opportunity to connect to a world of ideas, thanks to the participation of more than 15 international speakers, including an Emmy-winning screenwriter, the first robotic psychiatrist, and the Chief Science Officer of SENS Research Foundation.

The segment hosted by UTEP included the RESET 2018 Hackathon, where students competed to creatively solve a problem using different technologies.

Ricardo Mora, CEO of the Technology Hub in Juárez, said the facilities at UTEP and the caliber of speakers added to the success of the event.

“RESET is uncommon because it is realistic, aspirational and interdisciplinary,” he said. “It inspired different ways of thinking and acting.” - Victor R. Martinez
Whether it's about promoting sexual health to young adults through social media, counseling women from underserved communities about substance abuse disorders, or providing services such as HIV and hepatitis C testing, Thenral Mangadu, M.D., Ph.D., UTEP associate professor of public health sciences, is committed to improving the health of the Paso del Norte region's residents. Throughout August and September 2018, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the U.S. Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) awarded Mangadu $5.1 million in grants to address multiple health-related disparities in the region through a community-engaged approach.

“The funding we have received allows UTEP and our community partners to address the collective health needs of individuals in our community,” Mangadu said. “Along with providing much needed health services, we are also focusing on the foundational risk factors that contribute to substance abuse, mental health and violence-related health disparities while negatively impacting the health span of our priority populations.”

SAMHSA funds will support programs to reduce HIV infections among Hispanics with serious mental illnesses or concurrent mental health and substance use disorders; increase access to substance abuse support services for pregnant and postpartum minority women and their families; and train UTEP first responders on Mental Health First Aid to respond to the signs of mental illness and substance use. UTEP was the only university in Texas to be awarded a grant from the OVW to continue its coordinated community response for sexual assault and violence prevention on campus, which is led by Mangadu.

- Laura L. Acosta

Since January 2018, Michael McGee, Ph.D., a senior research associate with The University of Texas at El Paso’s NASA MIRO Center for Space Exploration and Technology Research (cSETR), has led cSETR’s work in unmanned aerial systems (UAS). In less than a year, he has made UTEP the focal point of efforts to significantly improve public safety and bolster border security through the utilization of drone technology. His ability to bridge communication between various governmental agencies has not only elevated the heights of UTEP's drone program, it also has increased the campus’ footprint.

Test Site Bravo in Tornillo on the eastern fringe of El Paso County will serve as the flight test range for cSETR’s burgeoning UAS program. The site will see a runway and other infrastructure development within two years. The center already has grown its UAS fleet to 11 aircraft and expanded laboratory facilities to support research and development. UTEP's growth in east El Paso County represents the realization of efforts to turn the region into a vital component of meeting the workforce needs of a rapidly-growing segment of the aerospace industry. - Pablo Villa

To learn more about UTEP’s drone program, watch a video at www.utep.edu/magazine

- Laura L. Acosta

Materials Research Center

UTEP, NSF Mark Establishment of Center for Advanced Materials Research

The University of Texas at El Paso’s role in shaping the future of energy and biomaterials research is highlighted with the establishment of the Partnerships of Research and Education Materials (PREM) Center for Advanced Materials Research.

The new federally funded center focused on energy and biomaterials initially was announced in August 2018 after UTEP was named a recipient of a National Science Foundation award totaling nearly $4 million.

The PREM grant is aimed at fostering next-generation materials research between UTEP and the Materials Research Laboratory at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), as well as advanced degree attainment of underrepresented minority students in materials science and engineering.

“The PREM Center for Energy and Biomaterials will provide students a number of opportunities,” said Ramana Chintalapalle, Ph.D., professor of mechanical engineering and the new UTEP PREM center’s director. “The caliber of the educational experience UTEP students receive will be enhanced by hands-on laboratory experiences, research mentoring, professional development, research seminars, joint UTEP-UCSB workshops and student exchanges.” - Pablo Villa

Drone Program

Unmanned Aerial Systems at UTEP are Soaring

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UTEP Grants

Partnerships Boost Region’s Health

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- Laura L. Acosta
The University of Texas at El Paso continues to enhance its standing within the higher education landscape as a national research university with a 21st century student demographic. One of the initiatives that continues to play a key role in this effort is the Campus Office of Undergraduate Research Initiatives (COURI).

The overall goal of COURI is to harness the rigor of undergraduate research to prepare students to compete effectively for the world's best graduate and professional programs, and prime them for roles in a new workforce that is globally engaged.

To achieve this goal, COURI employs a series of tactics including support of existing undergraduate student-faculty research projects; initiating new projects; involving students and faculty in research collaborations with other U.S. and international institutions; and showcasing research conducted by student-faculty teams.

For students, the first step in involvement with COURI is to identify faculty mentors with whom they would be interested in working and contacting them. Once the students have identified a mentor, they can choose to apply for one of the programs offered by COURI. These include the Mentored Experiences in Research, Inquiry, and Creativity for Undergraduate Scholars (MERITUS) program for students conducting research in the fall and spring, and the Summer Undergraduate Research Program Assistantship (SURPASS) program for students conducting research in the summer. These competitive programs provide a monetary award and professional
development opportunities to support highly motivated undergraduate students who are conducting research or creative activities under the mentorship of UTEP faculty.

The platform where the students’ research is ultimately showcased is the two symposia COURI hosts throughout the year – one in the spring, one in the summer. All undergraduate students involved in research, scholarly or creative activities are encouraged to participate.

Lourdes Echegoyen, Ph.D., is the director of COURI. To her, a student’s COURI experience would simply not be complete without participating in one of the symposia. “This is when they present all the work they conducted over the summer – some of them the work that they conducted during the year,” Echegoyen said. “To me, this is one of the best experiences of the year.”

With projects in fields such as science, engineering and liberal arts, the symposia bring together student researchers not only from nearly every college on the UTEP campus, but also from places such as Puerto Rico and Colombia.

COURI held its first symposium in the spring of 2011 with the participation of 46 undergraduate presenters from the College of Science. Since then, the symposium has more than tripled in size. The most recent symposium took place Aug. 4, 2018. That day more than 160 students gathered in a packed Undergraduate Learning Center to present the findings from team research projects to an audience that included a set of judges, their peers, their families and the public.

Nataly Delgado, a junior biological sciences major who participated in the 2018 Summer Symposium, said she was enriched by the experience. “It allowed me to grow as a student and as a presenter,” said Delgado, who worked on a project that looked at how exposure to ethanol, commonly referred to as alcohol, affected the brain functions and the behavior of certain fruit flies. Delgado said one of the most useful parts of the COURI experience was having to discuss her team’s work with the general public. “We are able to familiarize ourselves with our project even more by explaining it to others who may or may not be in our field of research and helping them understand the relevance of the work.”

Those who are familiar with the kind of work and preparation that goes into events such as the COURI symposia agree that the mentors’ commitment to the academic development of the students under their tutelage is one of the main reasons why the symposia keep growing every year.

“The COURI Symposium is an event where UTEP faculty exemplify their commitment to access and excellence through undergraduate research experiences,” said Roberto Osegueda, Ph.D., vice president for research. “I always am impressed by the quality of the research done by the students and high level of engagement by our faculty.”

With its demonstrated impact on learning, retention and graduation rates, COURI administrators say a strong emphasis on undergraduate research is a solid strategy that has allowed UTEP to increase its productivity in increased graduation numbers and shortened time-to-degree, two areas of emphasis highlighted in recent years by The University of Texas System Board of Regents.

- Victor H. Arreola
Chagas Disease

UTEP Scientists Awarded $6M to Improve Treatment for Chagas Disease

Scientists at The University of Texas at El Paso received a $6 million grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to improve treatment and develop new diagnostic tools to assess post-therapeutic outcomes for patients with Chagas disease.

Igor Almeida, Ph.D., professor of biological sciences, is the principal investigator of the five-year award from NIH's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. Almeida will work with Katja Michael, Ph.D., associate professor of chemistry, as well as several other investigators from the United States, Bolivia and Spain including Faustino Torrico, M.D., Ph.D., (Fundación CEADES, Cochabamba, Bolivia), and Joaquim Gascón, M.D., Ph.D., (ISGlobal, Barcelona, Spain).

They will conduct a phase II clinical trial in Bolivia with new regimens of the drugs benznidazole and nifurtimox, and new biomarkers for the chemotherapy follow-up. This is the first clinical trial with UTEP as the leading institution.

The drugs for Chagas disease are toxic and have low efficacy in the treatment of chronic infection. Almeida, Michael and colleagues hope to improve their safety and efficacy by testing new regimens and biomarkers that will provide a more efficient measure of disease state and treatment outcomes. - Pablo Villa

Time Poverty

Parenthood Limits Time for College

Alyse C. Hachey, Ph.D., associate professor of early childhood education at The University of Texas at El Paso, co-authored a research paper that for the first time uses empirical methods to prove that students with preschool-aged children have significantly lower quantity and quality of time for college than their peers with older or no children.


The study shows that the main reason for the time differential is the amount of time spent on childcare. It also shows that a greater availability of convenient and affordable childcare likely would lead to better college outcomes for students with young children.

The researchers conducted their study from 2015 to early 2017. They based their findings on institutional data and surveys of students who attended a large, urban U.S. university.

“My hope is our research gets policymakers to re-think current support programs and to create new ones for student parents that will really address the issue, time poverty, which is holding them, and potentially the next generation, back,” Hachey said. - Daniel Perez

Hispanics in Computing

UTEP to Help Increase Hispanics in Computing With $10M Grant

The University of Texas at El Paso, with a consortium of more than 40 other institutions and organizations from the public and private sector, is at the forefront of a national effort to increase the number of Hispanic students who participate in computing.

The work will be led by Ann Gates, Ph.D., professor and chair of UTEP’s Department of Computer Science, who recently was named a recipient of a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant worth nearly $10 million. Gates; Enrico Pontelli, Ph.D., left, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at New Mexico State University; and Andrea Tirres, right, interdisciplinary network manager within UTEP’s Office of Research and Sponsored Projects, along with counterparts at other institutions, make up the Computing Alliance of Hispanic-Serving Institutions (CAHSI). CAHSI will serve as the lead partner in a collaboration through NSF’s Inclusion across the Nation of Communities of Learners of Underrepresented Discoverers in Engineering and Science (INCLUDES) program. NSF INCLUDES is a comprehensive effort to enhance U.S. leadership in science and engineering discovery and innovation by proactively seeking and effectively developing science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) talent from all sectors and groups.

The alliance’s vision is to ensure Hispanics comprise 20 percent of graduates in computing disciplines, nationally, by 2030.

“We are grateful and pleased to be a part of this NSF initiative,” Gates said. “NSF INCLUDES recognizes the importance of inclusion and equity as a means of advancing discovery. We cannot advance research unless we are inclusive in who contributes to research efforts. We are now poised to help further diversify the workforce. Our efforts will lead to innovation because we’re involving students and faculty who provide unique perspectives to solve problems that require computing and technology knowledge.” - Pablo Villa
Keck Center Marks Milestones With External Partners

The University of Texas at El Paso’s W.M. Keck Center for 3D Innovation celebrated two momentous feats during the past year. On Nov. 8, 2018, the Keck Center announced an expanded agreement with America Makes, which positions the center as a pivotal leader in the collection of critical performance data for the 3D-printing industry while offering immense benefits to students.

Managed by the National Center for Defense Manufacturing and Machining (NCDMM), America Makes is the nation’s leading public-private partnership to innovate and accelerate additive manufacturing technology. In 2015, America Makes designated UTEP’s Keck Center as its first America Makes Satellite Center with the goal of promoting America Makes’ mission and expanding its regional, industrial and technological footprint to innovate and accelerate 3D printing as well as increase domestic manufacturing and economic competitiveness.

Under the new memorandum of understanding with America Makes, UTEP’s Keck Center will be the focal point of an effort to provide America Makes’ membership community greater access to critical performance data for 3D-printed components.

On Aug. 7, the Keck Center announced it would serve as the North American base of operations for Aconity3D, one of the world’s emerging technology leaders in the production of 3D printing equipment.

Aconity3D, which is based in Herzogenrath, Germany, develops laser-based 3D printing machines for fabrication of complex metal parts for use in airplanes, automobiles, medical implants and more. Aconity3D leaders say they were drawn to UTEP because of the prominence, expertise and facilities offered by the W.M. Keck Center for 3D Innovation. UTEP has been a leading force in the worldwide revolution of 3D printing since 2000 when the Keck Center and UTEP’s College of Engineering made strategic investments in additive manufacturing technologies, known more popularly as 3D printing, to assist manufacturers in prototyping parts before investing in costly manufacturing tools needed for production.

“We have long worked on leveraging our expertise in 3D printing to build a new economy in El Paso around additive manufacturing,” said Ryan Wicker, Ph.D., founder of the Keck Center.

“As a research university, UTEP must be – and is excited to be – fully engaged in stimulating economic development for the benefit of our region.” - Pablo Villa
The fortunes of The University of Texas at El Paso women’s golf program have changed during the last two years. Lily Downs has been at the center of the resurgence.

The senior from the United Kingdom has paced the squad in scoring average since her sophomore year, picking up a plethora of top-10 finishes along the way. She tied for fifth place at the 2018 Conference USA Championships, helping the Miners to a runner-up showing. This year, the Miners have posted multiple tournament wins for the first time in school history.

“I feel so proud,” Downs said. “Now that we’re winning more and everybody wants to do well, it’s a whole different atmosphere and feeling. Our attitude going into every tournament is ‘Let’s win,’ not ‘Let’s see how we do this week.’”

Downs has come a long way since her freshman year, when she admitted that she “Didn’t really think, I just came and hit the ball.” Now she has a much better idea of where she’s going with her shot, and possesses the deft touch to get the ball where she wants it to be.

“Lily is the kind of student-athlete that every coach wants to have because she excels in the classroom and on the course,” UTEP women’s golf coach Jere Pelletier said. “She has steadily improved every year and has led the program to where it is now.”

There’s one goal left for Downs and her teammates to achieve – win Conference USA.

“That would make my whole life,” she said.

A business management major, Downs is on track to graduate in December 2019. Then she’ll reluctantly have to bid farewell to the Sun City.

“It has definitely grown on me to the point where it’s my second home now, and I never thought I would be saying that,” she said. “It will be hard to say goodbye, that’s for sure.”

- Jeff Darby
Kirsten Prelle was 5 years old the first time she picked up a tennis racket. The native of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, wielded the accoutrement to emulate her sister, Madison. She has since proven her mettle, winning 11 provincial championships in her native Canada en route to becoming one of the most impactful freshmen on the UTEP tennis team.

Prelle arrived at UTEP after being recruited by Eastern Washington University and Rutgers University. She took a liking to UTEP and its “persuasive” head coach, Ivan Fernandez.

“I felt like it was a good fit for me,” she said. Prelle continues to acclimate to college life and plans to major in kinesiology.

“The weather is great here,” Prelle said. “I like my classes and the campus is nice.”

On the court, the 5-foot-9 right-hander compiled a 9-3 singles record during the fall season. She captured the singles flight championship at the New Mexico State Aggie Invite in September, making her the first UTEP freshman to win a fall title in eight years. Prelle also took runner-up honors at the San Diego State Fall Invite and won a pair of matches at the prestigious ITA Mountain Regional Tournament in Las Vegas.

“I have been extremely impressed with Kirsten,” Fernandez said. “She plays with great poise and self-control in very stressful situations. Her composure at such a young age leaves us very excited to see how far she can go as a player and as a person. I am proud of her accomplishments thus far and how well she represents UTEP Tennis.”

“It’s been a good start to the season,” said Prelle, who also credits assistant coach Rodrigo Almeida with developing an on-court fitness program that has helped her game.

She’s looking forward to a spring season that will see the Miners play eight matches at the El Paso Tennis Club.

“I just want to keep improving, keep working hard, and hope the team can come together and keep fighting in the spring,” Prelle said.

- Jeff Darby

Photos by J.R. Hernandez
When Diana Natalicio, Ph.D., first set foot on The University of Texas at El Paso campus as a visiting assistant professor in 1971, she never imagined she would one day lead the University as its President for 30 years and positively impact thousands of lives along the way.

Four decades later, Ngozi Ubani Ochoa, Ph.D., arrived on a UTEP campus that was on the cusp of a physical transformation. It was fitting, since Ochoa possessed a desire to further her own academic career by changing course.

That notion of shifting focus is a significant part of what put President Natalicio on the path to the University's highest leadership role. After graduating from Grover Cleveland High School in her native St. Louis, President Natalicio found employment as a switchboard operator at Nordberg Manufacturing. It was a job she quickly mastered and grew disenchanted with. Before long, she enrolled at St. Louis University and subsequently became the first in her family to earn a college degree.

For Ochoa, the move to El Paso was prompted by her then-fiancé, who had been accepted into UTEP’s Doctor of Physical Therapy program. Ochoa was fresh off earning her bachelor’s degree in Spanish from The University of Texas at Austin. At UTEP, she was drawn to the numerous degree programs offered by the College of Engineering and set off on a path to a bachelor's degree in industrial engineering.

The same year Ochoa shifted her educational goals, President Natalicio announced UTEP’s 2011 Campus Master Plan, the latest salvo in a long line of physical and academic enhancements to the campus. The 2011 Campus Master Plan promised a core campus that provided unprecedented access to pedestrians and bicyclists. In addition to a host of other projects, the document seeded plans for an interdisciplinary research space on the campus’ western fringe.

Both of those changes have come to fruition – the Campus Transformation Project, headlined by Centennial Plaza, was dedicated in 2015, and construction is ongoing on the $85 million, 162,000-square-foot Interdisciplinary Research Building (IDRB). Ochoa saw her educational goals through as well, completing her bachelor's degree in industrial engineering in 2013 before earning her doctorate in materials science and engineering in May 2018.

While the stark changes to the campus’ landscape were visually striking and served as evidence of academic and student population growth, when Ochoa was considering graduate-level opportunities, she benefited from UTEP’s burgeoning research capacity, a facet of the campus that has continually strengthened throughout the last three decades – a timeframe that coincides with President Natalicio’s storied tenure.

**Research Growth**

President Natalicio was named to the University’s top leadership role in 1988. She is the longest-serving president of a public doctoral/research university currently in office, a run that began its closure in May 2018 when she announced she would retire once a successor is named and takes office.

While a chapter in her higher education story is ending, President Natalicio has left indelible marks on the campus she joined 47 years ago, including a commitment to research.

“One of President Natalicio’s biggest contributions was to make sure that faculty understood the implications and advantages of having that combined mission of access and excellence,” said Roberto Osegueda, Ph.D., vice president for research in the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects.

When President Natalicio took the reins of the campus, few faculty members were submitting grant applications, Osegueda said. At the time, there was a small set of professors who would compete for the limited opportunities available.

“There was a stigma among the faculty that, ‘No, we are not good enough to get the big, national grants. So, we have to wait for this minority set-aside funding,’” Osegueda said. “What President Natalicio did was set a very clear expectation that if you are going to be a faculty member here, you are going to write proposals to seek external funding to conduct and support research, and support the students.”

President Natalicio points to a specific grant – one acquired through the National Science Foundation’s (NSF) Research Improvement for Minority Institutions (RIMI) program – as the catalyst for setting UTEP on a trajectory that continues to ascend.

“We were one of the first Hispanic-Serving Institutions to get a RIMI grant many years ago,” President Natalicio said. “It was critical because it enabled us to purchase a piece of equipment – it was an electron microprobe – and it was the first large piece of equipment that we bought. The reason that we were able to do it was that it was a matching grant. We didn’t have the full amount of money, but we were able to get it in collaboration with NSF. That really got us going. That enabled us to recruit people, to build out the lab. It’s a small seed that you plant and then it grows. This one has grown very well with the wonderful ecosystem that we have created here at UTEP.”

That ecosystem has fostered a nearly 1,500 percent increase in research expenditures from $2.6 million to $95 million during President Natalicio’s tenure, and enhanced the educational experiences of UTEP students.
‘Exactly What UTEP’s Mission Outlines’

Such has been the case for Ochoa. To complement her graduate-level work, she sought out the assistance of Stephen Stafford, Ph.D., professor of metallurgical, materials and biomedical engineering, who in 2013, began his involvement in the Center for the Advancement of Space Safety and Mission Assurance Research (CASSMAR).

What Ochoa found through CASSMAR – a cross-functional, multidisciplinary center focused on risk reduction research to make commercial human spaceflight safe and successful – was an opportunity to conduct pivotal research on one of the aerospace industry’s highest-profile disasters: the catastrophic failure of Space Shuttle Columbia, which disintegrated upon reentering the Earth’s atmosphere on Feb. 1, 2003.

“We are fortunate to have received nine pieces of Columbia debris as part of a loan program with NASA,” Ochoa said. “This speaks directly to UTEP’s mission in advancing the El Paso region through education, application and commercialization of key discoveries, and the dissemination of knowledge.”

Ochoa looked at sub-structural components located near the shuttle’s overhead windows. In particular, she analyzed thermal damage to titanium and aluminum portions of the craft and found features of combustion that differed from previous hypotheses. Ochoa’s work, in combination with others at CASSMAR, has yielded a clearer picture of how the disaster unfolded.

“These are findings that will be considered in the design of future space vehicles,” Ochoa said. “Our work also demonstrates to the aerospace industry the critical need for more comprehensive materials investigations for reactive materials in high-temperature, low-oxygen, low-pressure environments. That dissemination of knowledge is exactly what UTEP’s mission outlines.”

Striving for Exceptional Standards

While increased access to exceptional research opportunities has been a noteworthy development during the last 30 years, there has been another concurrent evolution that has enhanced the value of a UTEP education.

“One of the most significant and noticeable changes that I have witnessed over the years relates to the President’s personal investment in University life,” said U.S. District Judge Philip R. Martinez, who graduated from UTEP in 1979 before moving on to Harvard University, where he earned his law degree. “When I was a student, the University President was not a presence on campus. At that time, the ‘ivory tower’ style of management did not afford students the opportunity to witness and appreciate the leadership efforts of the administration. President Natalicio has personally invested herself in the life of the campus by participating directly and consistently with the professors, the students, the staff and the community in a way that is unprecedented.”

That recognition of the role that UTEP plays in the life of the region has yielded record enrollments and exponential growth in academics, Martinez said. He has had a unique view in watching that progression play out. Martinez was co-chair of UTEP’s Centennial Commission, a body of 100 individuals formed in 2004 tasked with developing a vision for the University in 2014, UTEP’s 100th anniversary.

The commission’s charge was “not to foresee the future, but to enable it.” Martinez said the panel did that, in part, by adopting the same embrace of the campus, community and region as President Natalicio has throughout the years. Martinez added that her ability to encourage others to become invested in a common vision has produced a campus that affords a high degree of access, yet has accomplished it without sacrificing the exceptional standards required to successfully complete educational requirements.

“We should all be particularly grateful to those who were involved in her selection as UTEP’s President years ago,” Martinez said. “Their confidence and trust has been well placed and validated. Undoubtedly, the two pillars which she embraced in recognizing their importance and compatibility in the educational dimension (though considered mutually exclusive by others) will hopefully continue to play a significant role as we continue forward in allowing UTEP to become all that it can be. President Natalicio has been, is, and will forever be that good and faithful servant to which each of us called.”

President Natalicio’s contributions to the annals of UTEP’s history are many. In the pages ahead, look back at key milestones in campus history from the past 30 years, monumental construction projects and some of President Natalicio’s notable personal accomplishments.
Diana Natalicio’s transformational accomplishments as UTEP President over the last 30 years are the success of the engineering mindset. Perhaps she is not degreeed as an engineer, but she thinks like an engineer.

As engineers, we look at the product, process, or system we’re responsible for and question: What is it supposed to do? Is it delivering the intended outputs? What are the underlying assumptions? Are those assumptions correct? And, critically, is it capable of more?

Education is the path to success for individuals and the community. Dr. Natalicio saw that UTEP wasn’t fulfilling its purpose – too many students were not attending who should have been. Among those who entered, too many were not succeeding. UTEP was not a powerful engine for economic development.

In fall 1988, there were 14,971 students enrolled and for all of 1988, 1,485 students graduated – about 10 percent. The fraction of Hispanics in the student body was less than in the community, total annual research expenditures were less than $5 million for the University, and there was only one Ph.D. program in the entire University.

Great engineering is marked by deep insight that is obvious in retrospect. For example, the Wright brothers did not invent the airplane. Their insight, after looking at the work of others, was that no one was working on the most critical element of flight – three-axis control. That was their most important invention.

Dr. Natalicio’s insight was that intelligence and ability are not distributed by family income, gender, race, SAT scores or ZIP code. Most college rankings are effectively based on wealth – the highest-ranking schools have the richest, most privileged applicants.

Genichi Taguchi, whose concepts have driven higher quality, higher performance, and yet more economical engineered products, said, “The engineer’s work is to convert low-quality raw materials into high-quality product.” That is not the mindset of higher education. Most academics believe outcomes would be better if only the students were better.

To be clear, Dr. Taguchi didn’t say that only low-quality raw materials are the source of high-quality products – you use high-quality raw material where it is required. He really was articulating the Pareto Principle: there are a few vital elements that create most of the effect. You need to know what are the most critical inputs and ensure they are present and capable.

What are the vital elements that Dr. Natalicio identified? Well, prospective students needed to believe they should be here. The local schools needed better teachers. Pathways needed to be created for entering students. Students needed systemic support. Faculty who share the vision needed to be recruited. The whole campus had to be redesigned.

Dr. Natalicio imagined the machine that is UTEP and set about building it. PreK–16 programs and College of Education ties were made with the local school districts, the Mother–Daughter program was created, faculty and administrators who shared the vision were recruited, innumerable support systems were implemented, and Dr. Natalicio engaged UT System leadership and leadership across a range of fields at all levels to provide necessary resources.

Successful engineering is about failure and iteration. It requires persistence and dealing with reality. It also means working under challenging cost constraints and time limits. Speaking of cost constraints, UTEP squeezes blood from a turnip to maintain significantly lower tuition than any peer institution.

Where is UTEP today? It is an institution recognized across the country and the world for both research and the ability to educate nontraditional students. This fall, there are 25,151 students, and for the 2017-18 year, 4,842 degrees were awarded – just over 19 percent, almost double the rate of degrees awarded compared to 1988. Two-thirds of all UTEP degrees ever awarded have been during Dr. Natalicio’s tenure – that’s about 90,000 degrees. There are 22 doctoral programs, six in the College of Engineering. There is about $95 million in annual research spending now. The student population reflects the El Paso population, including the fraction of students whose family income is less than $20,000 per year.

Dr. Natalicio, for 30 years your formal title has been UTEP President, but your true role is UTEP Chief Engineer.

You re-imagined higher education and then tenaciously went about re-engineering it to show others that what was thought impossible is, in fact, achievable. UTEP and the landscape of higher education are transformed. The work is not done, but a powerful system has been built for creating prosperity for the Paso del Norte region and its citizens.

We thank you and congratulate you for the transformation that you have made to UTEP and our region.
The Early Years

1988

• Diamond Jubilee celebration of the University’s 75th anniversary begins.

• The National Science Foundation recognizes UTEP with a Minority Research Center of Excellence grant.

• Miner football team plays in Independence Bowl vs. Southern Mississippi.

1989

• UTEP forms the 2001 Commission, charged with assessing the campus’ capacity to contribute to the human and economic development of this region, and to set benchmarks for what UTEP should accomplish by the year 2001.

• UTEP receives $19.7 million in extramural funding, nearly tripling the previous year’s total.

• UTEP’s enrollment surpasses 15,000.

• UTEP introduces a touch-tone telephone registration system.

1990

• UTEP begins offering a doctoral degree in Electrical and Computer Engineering. It represents the first doctoral degree established at the University since 1974, when a doctorate in geological sciences was introduced in the College of Science.

• Minerpalooza festival is launched.

• UTEP Dinner Theatre production of “Chess” selected as one of six among 466 universities to perform at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.

Diana Natalicio Achievements 1988-2018

1988

• Appointed President by the UT Board of Regents.

1990

• Elected to the El Paso Women’s Hall of Fame.

1991

• Appointed by President George H.W. Bush to the Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans.
1991

- Regional educators and business/civic leaders begin plans to raise educational aspirations and attainment at all levels through systemic reform.

- Soma Dutta, a UTEP women’s rifle smallbore shooter, wins an individual NCAA championship title.

1992

- UTEP is listed among the top 10 Texas universities in research spending by Nature, an international science weekly published in Great Britain.

- Miners reach the Sweet 16 round of the NCAA men’s basketball tournament after toppling No. 2-ranked Kansas.

- UTEP approves the creation of a first-in-the-nation bilingual MFA program in creative writing.

1993

- The South Texas/Border Initiative, an outcome of the LULAC v. Richards lawsuit, enables UTEP to launch growth in doctoral degree programs. The same year, UTEP begins offering doctoral degrees in Psychology and Materials Science and Engineering. Psychology was the first doctoral program available in the College of Liberal Arts.

- Heritage House, the campus historical repository for many items and exhibits that create a snapshot of our University’s past, opens.

1994

- UTEP is awarded a five-year, $15 million grant as part of the National Science Foundation’s Urban Systemic Initiative, a program aimed at bringing about systemwide improvements in science, mathematics and technology education for urban students.

- Nolan Richardson is named UTEP Distinguished Alumnus after coaching the Arkansas Razorbacks to the men’s basketball national championship.

1994

- Appointed by President Bill Clinton to the National Science Board, where she served two six-year terms, including three two-year terms as the NSB’s vice chair.

- Appointed to the NASA Advisory Council

1995

- Selected chair of the board of directors of the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE).
UTEP MILESTONES DURING DIANA NATALICIO’S PRESIDENCY

Focus on Access and Excellence

1995

- UTEP designated a Model Institution for Excellence by the National Science Foundation.
- Growth in number of graduates leads UTEP to divide Commencement into two ceremonies.
- UTEP fares well in first-ever alumni survey, which targeted 2,000 alumni who completed undergraduate degrees between 1989 and 1993.

1996

- Four new research centers begin operations — the NASA-funded Pan American Center for Earth and Environmental Studies (PACES), the Air Force Office of Scientific Research-supported FAST Center for Structural Integrity of Aerospace Systems; the U.S. Army-supported Center for Electronics Manufacturing (CEM), and the UTEP Anthropology Research Center, initially supported by a major contract from Fort Bliss.
- The African-American Studies program is established.
- UTEP creates closer ties with El Paso Community College to ensure that students who wish to pursue baccalaureate degrees have a smooth pathway to transfer.
- UTEP begins offering a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership and Administration. It is the first doctoral degree in the College of Education.

1997

- UTEP launches the $50 million Legacy Campaign, the University’s first major fundraising initiative.
- Don Haskins is inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame, and the Special Events Center is renamed Don Haskins Center.
- UTEP begins offering a doctoral degree in Biological Sciences in the College of Science.
- The Undergraduate Learning Center opens as UTEP’s largest classroom/laboratory facility.

1998

- The Sun Bowl serves as the site for two large community events — a Dallas Cowboys scrimmage and the first-ever major boxing card featuring Oscar De La Hoya.
- UTEP more than doubles its annual budget over the previous 10 years from $65 million in 1988 to $145 million.

President Natalicio’s vision stands on two pillars — access and excellence. She has imbued every aspect of the campus with these tenets.

Diana Natalicio Achievements 1988-2018

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<td>• Recognized with the Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Prize in Education.</td>
<td>• Elected to the Hall of Honor, El Paso County Historical Society.</td>
<td>• Elected to the Texas Women’s Hall of Fame.</td>
<td>• Appointed to the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities by President Clinton.</td>
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<td>• Appointed to the Education Advisory Team for the Bush Presidential Transition.</td>
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1999

- Enrollment begins two decades of steady growth.
- Legendary basketball coach Don Haskins retires.
- The Chihuahuan Desert Gardens at the Centennial Museum officially opened.

2000

- The Legacy Campaign ends, raising $66 million, $16 million above its goal.
- UTEP is designated by The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education as a doctoral/research-intensive university.
- The Miners play in the Crucial.com Humanitarian Bowl vs. Boise State University.
- UTEP launches the Millennium Lecture Series, which became the Centennial Lecture Series in 2011, to bring new national and international perspectives to the UTEP campus.

2001

- UTEP announces achievement of nearly all the goals outlined in its 2001 Commission Report.
- The W.M. Keck Center for 3D Innovation is established.
- UTEP receives the single largest gift in school history: a $7 million endowment from the estate of Les and Harriet Dodson, early owners of the Mountain Pass Canning Company, which introduced the “Old El Paso” label.
- Miner Village student housing opens.
- The NASA MIRO Center for Space Exploration and Technology Research (cSETR) is established.

2002

- Hispanic Outlook Magazine ranks UTEP the No. 2 university in the nation for Hispanic students.
- Larry K. Durham Sports Center opens.
- Maymester and W Intermester 10-day accelerated semesters inaugurated.
- Graduate enrollment hits record 2,848.

2004

Appointed to the Rockefeller Foundation Board of Trustees.
Appointed to the NASA Education Advisory Committee.

2005

Appointed to the Internet2 Board of Trustees.
1988/2018 UTEP MILESTONES DURING DIANA NATALICIO’S PRESIDENCY

Continuing the Momentum

2003

- UTEP is awarded $29.3 million from the National Science Foundation’s Math/Science Partnership (MSP) program to support the work of the El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence for five years.
- UTEP begins offering a doctoral degree in International Business. It is the first doctoral degree in the College of Business Administration.
- The Center for Transportation Infrastructure Systems in the College of Engineering is established.
- Construction begins on the Helen of Troy Women’s Softball Complex.

2004

- UTEP is awarded $29.3 million from the National Science Foundation’s Math/Science Partnership (MSP) program to support the work of the El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence for five years.
- UTEP begins offering a doctoral degree in International Business. It is the first doctoral degree in the College of Business Administration.
- The Center for Transportation Infrastructure Systems in the College of Engineering is established.
- Construction begins on the Helen of Troy Women’s Softball Complex.

2003

$44 MILLION IN CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON THE ACADEMIC SERVICES AND BIOSCIENCES BUILDINGS AND AN ADDITION TO THE ENGINEERING AND SCIENCES COMPLEX.

2004

- The $10 million Academic Services Building opens.
- UTEP celebrates its 90th anniversary.
- UTEP begins offering a doctoral degree in Interdisciplinary Health Sciences. It is the first joint doctoral degree in the College of Health Sciences and the School of Nursing.

Diana Natalicio Achievements 1988-2018

2006

- Voted El Pasoan of the Year.
- Received Distinguished Alumnus Award, Texas Exes, UT Austin.

2007

- Awarded Reginald Wilson Diversity Leadership Award, American Council on Education (ACE), and the Alfredo G. de los Santos, Jr. Award for Distinguished Leadership in Higher Education, American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education, Inc. (AAHHE).
2005

- UTEP’s Centennial Commission, co-chaired by alumni Larry K. Durham and Philip Martinez, presents its vision for UTEP in 2014, its 100th anniversary.
- UTEP enables Internet2 high-capacity U.S.-Mexico connectivity through a partnership with Mexican universities.
- UTEP Athletics joins Conference USA.
- UTEP organizes the first Bhutan Days celebration, introducing UTEP and the El Paso community to Bhutanese music and culture.

2006

- U.T. System approves $124 million for new and upgraded science and engineering buildings at UTEP.

2007

- The 1966 Texas Western College NCAA champions are inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame.
- UTEP joins the Army High Performance Computing Research Center.
- UTEP alumnus and NASA astronaut John “Danny” Olivas travels to the International Space Station aboard the shuttle Atlantis.
- UTEP’s enrollment surpasses 20,000.

2008

- Named one of the 2008 Most Powerful and Influential Women in Texas, Texas Diversity Magazine.
- Named one of 35 people who will shape the future of Texas, Texas Monthly Magazine.
- Marked 20th year as President of UTEP.
1988/2018

Campus Transformation

2008

▶ UTEP is designated as a Center of Excellence for Border Security and Immigration.
▶ The UTEP Center for Inland Desalination Systems is established.
▶ Construction begins on the $60 million Health Sciences and Nursing Building.

2009

▶ The UTEP Library building celebrates its 25th birthday.
▶ Construction begins on the $70.2 million Chemistry and Computer Science Building.
▶ The new University Bookstore opens.

2010

▶ UTEP launches “At the Forefront: The Centennial Campaign for UTEP,” the most ambitious fundraising campaign to date with a goal of raising $200 million by 2014.
▶ UTEP forms the 2014 Commission, charged with envisioning and planning the Centennial Celebration. El Paso business leader Paul Foster serves as Honorary Chair. The Commission is co-chaired by UTEP alumni Ed Escudero and Laura Tate Goldman.
▶ Hispanic Business magazine ranks UTEP as the No. 1 MBA program for Hispanics in the United States.

2011

▶ UTEP awards its 100,000th degree.
▶ The UTEP Cheerleading Squad takes first place in the National Cheerleading Co-ed Championship.
▶ UTEP receives the largest single gift to date — $10 million from alumnus Mike Loya.

Diana Natalicio Achievements 1988-2018

2009

- Selected to the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) Executive Committee.

2010

- Received Christiaan Petrus Fox Citizen of the Year Award, Fort Bliss.

2011

- Received Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree, honoris causa, Georgetown University, School for Continuing Studies.
- Received the Orden Mexicana del Águila Azteca (Mexican Order of the Aztec Eagle), the highest honor bestowed on foreign nationals by the President of Mexico.
2010

“MINING MINDS,” AN ICONIC PIECE OF PUBLIC ART CREATED BY MICHAEL CLAPPER, IS INSTALLED IN THE ROUNDABOUT AT UNIVERSITY AVENUE AND SUN BOWL DRIVE.

2010

UTEP earns the coveted Carnegie Foundation designation as an Engaged Institution, one where “teaching, learning and scholarship engage faculty, students and community in mutually beneficial and respectful collaboration.”

UTEP begins offering a Doctor of Nursing Practice. It is the first doctoral degree by the School of Nursing.

UTEP is designated by the Department of Defense as a “Military Friendly School.”

2012

The U.S. Department of Education lists UTEP as having the lowest out-of-pocket cost, or net price, of all research universities in the nation.

The Chemistry and Computer Science Building opens its doors.

2013

Washington Monthly magazine ranks UTEP among the top 10 of all U.S. universities. In the social mobility category, UTEP was ranked No. 1.

The Texas Legislature commemorates the 100th anniversary of UTEP’s founding.

2013

A GROUP OF UTEP STUDENTS AND FACULTY TRAVEL TO BHUTAN TO PERFORM THE FIRST WESTERN OPERA PRODUCED IN BHUTAN.

2013

• Received the TIAA-CREF Hesburgh Award for Leadership Excellence, which recognizes leadership and commitment to higher education and contributions to the greater good.

• Sworn in as board chair of the American Council on Education, the largest national higher education organization.
Centennial and Beyond

2014

- The Hunt Institute for Global Competitiveness, funded by the Hunt Family Foundation, was established.
- NSA designates UTEP as a Center for Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense. The Director of National Intelligence designates UTEP as an Intelligence Community Center of Academic Excellence.
- The women’s basketball team finishes a winning season in the Women’s National Invitation Tournament championship, a sold-out game held at the Don Haskins Center.
- UTEP presented with the sculpture, “Esfera Cuántica Tlahtolli” by Mexican artist Sebastián, to recognize UTEP’s success in educating thousands of Mexican students.

2015

- UTEP’s School of Pharmacy is approved, clearing the path for the Doctor of Pharmacy degree.
- Construction of Centennial Plaza is completed, and the Bhutanese Lhakhang opens.
- Miner Canyon student housing opens.

Diana Natalicio Achievements 1988-2018

2015

- Awarded the national Academic Leadership Award by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

2016

- Named to the TIME magazine 100 Most Influential People list.
2017
A STUDY BY THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION RANKS UTEP NO. 1 FOR ITS SUCCESS IN ACHIEVING BOTH COMPETITIVE RESEARCH AND STUDENT SOCIAL MOBILITY.

2017
CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON THE $85 MILLION INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH BUILDING.

2016
- The National Science Foundation and Department of Homeland Security designate UTEP as a CyberCorps university and fund a five-year Scholarship for Service grant.
- Players from the 1966 men’s basketball team return to campus to celebrate the 50th anniversary of their NCAA championship title.
- UTEP women’s basketball standout Cameasha Turner named one of nine finalists for NCAA Woman of the Year Award.

2017
- Total new grant awards for 2017 hits $43.7 million.
- Fall enrollment surpasses 25,000.

2018
- UTEP attains coveted R1 designation for doctoral universities with very high research activity in the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. It is one of only 130 universities among 2,883 four-year higher education institutions to earn the distinction.

2017
- Named among the Top 50 World Leaders by Fortune magazine.
- Conferred an honorary Doctor of Science degree from St. Louis University and a Doctor of Humane Letters degree from Northeastern University, Boston.

2018
- President Natalicio starts her 30th year as UTEP President. She is the longest-serving president of a doctoral research university currently in office, and the all-time longest-serving female president of a four-year public university or college.
When UTEP President Diana Natalicio announced her retirement, we knew all of us were searching for a way to express our gratitude for her profound impact on students, faculty, staff, alumni and the greater community. Finding the right way to do so wasn’t easy at first. And suddenly, the answer was simple: the best way to say “thank you” is to sustain and enhance UTEP’s commitment to access and excellence.

We, as a Miner Nation, have the opportunity to build on a shared 30-year success story. Whether we are aware or not, our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren are beneficiaries of President Natalicio’s leadership in making a college education possible for everyone in the Paso del Norte region.

The El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence (EPCAE) is a perfect example. Established in 1992 through UTEP’s partnerships with El Paso Community College, Region 19 Education Service Center, the El Paso Interreligious Sponsoring Organization and the superintendents of the region’s three largest school districts, EPCAE ensures academic success for all young El Pasoans. Today, Region 19 is the state leader in graduating students who enroll in college, many of whom choose to attend UTEP. More than 80 percent of our more than 25,000 students graduated from regional high schools.

President Natalicio’s portfolio of partnerships also has contributed significantly to degree completion. Collaboration with NASA, Fort Bliss, Automatic Data Processing Inc., IBM, Boeing and Lockheed Martin, to name only a few, has created avenues for UTEP graduates to find success on campus and when seeking employment after graduation.

State-of-the-art facilities have encouraged innovation, and research expenditures have grown from $2.6 million to $95 million.

Doctoral programs have grown from 1 to 22, and the number of doctoral students has grown from 21 in 1988 to 921 this year. Full-time faculty positions have grown by more than 53 percent, and UTEP has added more than $1.4 billion into the local economy each year as El Paso’s fifth largest employer.

Today, students in the Paso del Norte region see college as a natural progression in their education. When they graduate from high school, UTEP will provide unmatched educational experiences that enable them to compete successfully with their peers anywhere across the globe. I oversee eight of those students in the area I manage at UTEP, and they are second to none by any measure in talent, aspirations, resourcefulness, ambition, potential, excellence and humility. Most importantly, UTEP graduates – you, your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren – are among the most successful in the world, proudly representing who we are as a region and a culture.

Launched on Nov. 1, “Thank You for 30” is unlike any other fundraising campaign in UTEP’s history. It grew out of deep admiration for President Natalicio, and provides all of us an opportunity to thank her for her resolute dedication to our future by continuing along the path she has set before us.

Whether you choose to support the “Thank You for 30” Endowed Scholarship Fund with a $30 gift or establish a scholarship or program endowment for $30,000, any amount you choose to give is an investment in UTEP’s continued progress as a world-renowned research university, and, going forward, an investment that will continue to positively impact the future of our region.

Join us on our journey toward a bright future by saying, “Thank You” at 30.utep.edu.

To see a Thank You for 30 video, check out www.utep.edu/magazine
One of the ways I prepare to write my annual Convocation remarks is to read through the presentations I’ve made at previous Convocations, which, when combined, create an interesting history of UTEP over the past 30 years.

Taken together, these Convocation remarks document a rich range of what was considered at the time, the previous year’s highlights, based on reports submitted annually by all vice presidents and deans. To give you just a flavor: In 1989, we launched a major strategic planning effort, which has continued to guide UTEP’s progress since then. In 1993, we celebrated reaching a major milestone of $10 million in annual research expenditures. In 1997, the Undergraduate Learning Center welcomed its first classes. In 2001, UTEP enrollment climbed to 16,200 students, 1,700 of whom were from Mexico. In 2003, the Texas Legislature delivered the shocking news of a major reduction in state funding for all Texas public universities – which amounted to a 12% cut at UTEP – while at the same time easing legislative caps on tuition increases. The message was clear: state universities should plan to rely less on state support and more on tuition and fee revenues from students. Since then, this new funding model has presented especially daunting challenges to institutions, like UTEP, that serve large numbers of economically disadvantaged students. In 2008, the UT System Board of Regents approved PUF funding to construct the Health Sciences and Nursing Building; and two years ago, we broke ground on the Interdisciplinary Research Building, which will soon become another splendid addition to the beautiful UTEP campus.

Oh, and along the way, in 2014, we celebrated UTEP’s 100th birthday with a reconfiguration of the campus center, and creation of Centennial Plaza, which has transformed UTEP’s campus and our campus climate.

I could continue citing many more fascinating UTEP historical nuggets, but I’ll resist that temptation. Instead, let’s focus on some of this year’s contributions to our growing UTEP highlights list and their validation of both our success in achieving UTEP’s access and excellence mission ... and our raised aspirations for what can be achieved going forward.

During the past year, UTEP’s enrollment continued its steady growth. This fall’s enrollment of 25,151 students set yet another record, adding to our more than 50% growth since 2001. This is especially good news in our historically underserved region because it means that more young people have chosen – and prepared themselves well – to pursue a college degree. In fact, the El Paso area now ranks first among all Texas regions in the percentage of all high school graduates who continue on to post-secondary education. Noteworthy, too, is that UTEP is attracting this region’s “best and brightest” high school graduates: UTEP now enrolls more than half of all the Top 10 Percent high school graduates in this region who attend public universities in Texas.

The total number of UTEP graduates also rose again this year to 4,842, setting another record. Especially satisfying is the growth in the total number of graduates per year, which has more than doubled (127%) over the past 20 years. This is one of the best indicators of the success of our
more focused efforts to work closely with our students to prevent stop-outs, achieve efficiency in the pursuit of their degrees, and reduce their time to degree completion.

A majority (55%) of UTEP’s students continue to be the first in their families to attend college, and, by any measure, they have very modest financial means. During the past year, the more than 24,500 students who applied for financial aid at UTEP reported an average family income of $36,700, and 37% of them reported annual family incomes of $20,000 or less.

Respecting our students’ financial challenges, UTEP has sought to ensure affordability in a context of declining state support, by keeping a tight rein on tuition and fee increases. Today, our average tuition is just over $8,000 for the two-semester academic year, which is $2,000 less per year than UT San Antonio, the next lowest among all our peer institutions, and $5,000 less than UT Dallas’, which is the highest among our peers.

The past year has been significant in many other ways, with great progress on many fronts, all contributing to UTEP’s growing reputation for successfully fulfilling our public research university mission. On the leadership front, we learned just how competitive UTEP has become in recruiting new faculty, staff and administrators. Two new deans – Clif Tanabe in Education, who came to UTEP from the University of Hawaii, and Denis O’Hearn in Liberal Arts, who was most recently at Texas A&M. Both bring extensive experience, a strong commitment to UTEP’s mission, and high aspirations for the future of their colleges and, especially, for the students they serve. In addition, Vice President for Business Affairs Mark McGurk and Athletic Director Jim Senter joined us to provide leadership in their respective areas. We’ve already learned that Jim Senter moves fast! Within one month after arriving, he recruited new head coaches in football and men’s basketball, Dana Dimel and Rodney Terry, who are themselves now off to running starts. A warm UTEP welcome to all of you!

Implementation of UTEP’s QEP, now branded as the UTEP Edge, has focused attention over the past year on two key areas that directly impact student success – academic advising and financial support – and the convergence between the two. Closer cooperation between Academic and Student Affairs has led to a re-design of Academic Advising, ably directed by Heather Smith; tighter articulation between UTEP and EPCC, steered by Gary Edens; and, with Ivette Savina’s capable guidance, a re-energized El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence. Deeper dives into data on students’ financial challenges have enabled the development of such strategies as enhanced investment in student employment on campus. The 3,314 UTEP students who are employed on campus today reflect nearly 70% growth since 1996. Through these and other strategies, we are making real progress in weaving together a far stronger safety net to ensure that students who enroll at UTEP will be able to progress more efficiently toward graduation.

University fundraising across the U.S. has changed dramatically over the past couple of decades. A new team in Asset Management and Development, under Ben Gonzalez’s leadership, has brought refreshed energy and innovative ideas to lay a foundation for increasing and diversifying UTEP’s revenue base, through such research-driven entrepreneurial ventures as the Keck and cSET laboratory’s off-campus operations; participation in regional economic development initiatives; and stage-setting for a strategic fundraising campaign within the next couple of years. In addition, we view these initiatives as offering potential to stem the tide of UTEP graduates, especially those in STEM, who now leave this region for more attractive offers of employment across the U.S. and the world.

As I reviewed deans’ and vice presidents’ reports of the past year’s accomplishments, I was once again impressed by the sheer
volume of major strides that have been made across the entire campus – far too many to capture in today’s remarks. With so much growth in UTEP’s size, scope and list of major accomplishments, it’s not only difficult, but perhaps even misleading, to feature just a few. Perhaps the bigger story is best captured in a quote from Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who said, “Real change, enduring change, happens one step at a time.” Indeed, in our pursuit of UTEP’s vision and mission, each year’s major milestones are the single steps that have contributed to bringing about real and enduring change at UTEP, and in the lives of the students and the community we serve. They have interwoven to become cross-cutting themes, and they have delivered cumulative impacts, reflecting, shaping and growing our appetite to set ever-higher aspirations for UTEP’s future. That’s enduring change. The vision and mission adopted 30 years ago have been strongly validated by UTEP’s progress in becoming one of the very few large public research universities in the United States today that is authentically and successfully delivering on both access and excellence commitments.

It’s those cross-cutting themes that I’d like to focus on briefly now. Let’s start with access.

As all of you know, UTEP has over the past 30 years placed high priority on delivering on its responsibility to welcome and serve well talented and motivated young people in the Texas-Mexico border region in which we are located. From the first Convocation, my remarks underscored the importance of fostering student access in an educationally underserved region like ours. At that time, UTEP’s students didn’t accurately reflect the demographics of the surrounding region which was home to more than 80% of them. Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students were disproportionately underrepresented. If you believe, as I did then and do now, that talent is equally distributed across gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, and socioeconomic level, then you also recognize that public universities like UTEP have a responsibility to provide high-quality educational opportunities to all young people in their surrounding regions, whatever their backgrounds.

It was clear in 1988 that too many talented young people in this region, who had earned an opportunity to pursue their higher education dreams and aspirations, were, in effect, being discouraged from pursuing a pathway – for most of them, probably the only pathway – to a better life for them and their families. A shared mindset across the region – in families, neighborhoods, teachers, schools, and even at UTEP – reminded young people constantly of the many reasons why they did not have whatever it took to be university students. College-going was considered to be exclusively for those
who had more talent and, especially, more money.

From my vantage point as UTEP’s new president, this message resonated very strongly. Like many of you, I graduated from a blue-collar high school that did little or nothing to inspire or prepare me or my fellow graduates to pursue higher education. We understood the collective expectation that we would get jobs, and to prepare us for those jobs, we were provided special high school courses – machine shop for the boys, and secretarial studies and home economics for the girls, the latter to come in handy when we married those boys, which many of my high school friends did shortly after graduation. To be fair, I should add that my high school experience wasn’t all bad: I continue to be fast-fingered on the keyboard, and can still sew on a button!

Of course, those were different times, when a university degree was far less common than it has become today. What’s striking, however, is that today – more than 50 years later – far too many economically disadvantaged young people in this country continue to have a very low probability of completing baccalaureate degrees.

When viewed through the lens of socioeconomic levels, less than 10% of young people in the lowest quartile of the U.S. population today now earn baccalaureate degrees, a figure that has grown only 2% over the past 40 years. This dismal statistic becomes even more alarming when compared with the 70% of their peers in the highest socioeconomic quartile who complete bachelor’s degrees today, a figure that has doubled during the same 40-year period. This widening baccalaureate degree gap is alarming; 9% vs. 70% college completion rates as a function of family income! Last time I checked, there’s no evidence that talent has been, nor is now, disproportionately concentrated in the highest socioeconomic quartile.

For most of its history, UTEP – in all of its name incarnations – was, like most other universities across the country, a destination for those who were able to find their own way to them. Graduates of a small number of high schools – Coronado, Eastwood, El Paso and Burges – comprised the majority of UTEP-bound students. Many of them were the sons and daughters of college-educated parents, and they were from better resourced backgrounds ... not necessarily wealthy, but comfortable. Conversely, we learned from studying feeder patterns that other El Paso area high schools, especially those enrolling predominantly Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students, sent only one or even none of their graduates on to UTEP.

To address this unacceptable disparity, UTEP reached out to build partnerships with area school districts, the El Paso Community College, and business and civic leaders across El Paso County. (I should mention here that we had a head start on this outreach because an estimated 80% of school professionals in this region were UTEP alumni, and 80% of UTEP students were graduates of area high schools. In effect, UTEP was – and still is! – part of a closed Pre K–16 educational loop.) We called this partnership the El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence, whose mission was to pave – or in many places build from scratch – smooth pathways from Pre-K through baccalaureate degree completion. Our goal was to engage all educators in the region in a shared commitment to prepare all young people to aspire to and achieve a higher education credential.

More than 25 years later, the collaborative continues to serve as a convener, innovation generator, data manager and evaluator for what has become widely recognized as the national model for success in fostering access and Pre K–16 educational attainment across ethnic and socioeconomic boundaries.

U.S. higher education is often segmented into two sets of institutions: elite colleges and universities, which include both high-profile private and public state flagships that serve students from across the U.S. and which have historically tended to serve a majority student population from the higher end of the socioeconomic scale. By contrast, comprehensive universities – usually public – primarily serve students from the regions in which they are located, and sometimes reflect the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity of those regions. There are many ways to characterize these different university models, but my favorite is one that a group of UTEP faculty members and I worked up some years ago.

The express train depicts the elite university model. Once students embark as freshmen, they speed along together for four years and, with few outliers, the entire cohort graduates in the same year. Fellow graduates were fellow freshmen four years earlier.

At most of these universities, a commitment to diversity and access has
In general, it has been these comprehensive universities, and more recently, community colleges, that have enrolled the majority of economically disadvantaged students. In the past, and thanks to strong state support, many of these institutions were able to offer a high-quality education at an affordable cost. However, demographic changes and declines in public education funding over the past several decades have disrupted that model, and the educational opportunity gap between haves and have-nots in our society has grown wider.

At UTEP and many other public universities, especially those using relatively open admissions to counteract the socioeconomic bias of traditional metrics, the commitment to ensure access cannot end with a student’s initial enrollment. UTEP students are clearly talented, they tend to be disciplined, hardworking, and resilient, and they fully understand that completing their degrees offers a trajectory to a better life for them and their families. However, even these highly positive student attributes are too often not sufficient to take them across the graduation goal line. Students’ often complex life issues and responsibilities disrupt even the best planned and tenaciously pursued pathways.

Deeply embedded in the UTEP culture is a constant commitment to foster access, a shared and sustained responsibility for students’ success in achieving their goals, whether completing baccalaureate or advanced degrees, or discovering a deep passion for philosophy, graphic design or physics ... or all three! For UTEP faculty and staff, that usually means playing a more active role in nurturing a climate that is intensely focused on supporting the achievement of students’ goals during the full span of their engagement with us. It means stepping out of our roles as faculty and staff members to see our students as human beings with complex lives, and to allow them to see us as human beings who truly care about their well-being and success. This mutual respect pays huge dividends, building students’ trust in us and in their own self-confidence, and giving us the privilege of sharing in the joy of their successes.

I hasten to add that this sustained responsibility for ensuring access does not, in any way, mean lowering standards or expectations of students, which would do them no favor. Instead, it entails vigilance and responsiveness by all faculty and staff to support students when they are faced with such major life circumstances as homelessness and food insecurity, or the sudden disruption of their progress toward degree completion by the loss of a job or a family member’s health crisis. We can demonstrate this sustained commitment to accessibility by optimizing scholarship and financial aid awards, accommodating test or class schedules, setting aside restrictions on who is allowed on the train and at which station while passengers get on and get off. There are generally fewer restrictions on who is allowed on the train and at which station they may board, and many of the passengers may transfer from and to other trains. Still others discontinue their journey along the way because they don’t have enough money for a full ticket or they are discouraged by the slow ride they are taking. By the time the commuter train arrives at its destination four years later, the cohort of those on the train who have arrived at their graduation destination does not resemble the one that boarded the commuter train together four years earlier. In fact, at UTEP, only 30% of the graduating students actually make the full trip together, and, consequently, 70% of the students with whom we work over a four-year period, are not counted in UTEP’s four-year graduation rates.

In general, it has been these comprehensive universities, and more recently, community colleges, that have enrolled the
funds for emergency loans, providing a full range of context-sensitive student support services, even advocating for improved local public transportation options or state policy changes ... but never lowering standards, which would deny our students the very opportunities that we pledged to offer them. Our highly intentional efforts to address the myriad access issues that our students face during their enrollment at UTEP will strongly increase their likelihood of success and degree completion, and our satisfaction in having had a positive impact on their and their families’ lives, and on the future quality of life of all residents of this region.

Changing a campus climate to assure sustained access not only involves responding to challenges. It is the result of highly intentional efforts made over many years to understand more fully both the daunting challenges and the remarkable strengths that students develop through their life experiences, which they bring with them to the campus every day: such assets as resilience, bilingual/biculturalism, responsibility, perseverance, and time management. UTEP’s goal has been to identify, leverage and build on those assets.

Extending well beyond classrooms, laboratories and other formal education settings, the collective commitment to student success involves the engagement of the entire campus community, creating an “all-in” culture in which everyone at UTEP has a role to play. Whatever our official duties, and wherever we are located on the campus, we must all share responsibility for, be committed to, and strive to promote, student success. All of us have the capacity to help new students navigate the campus, mentor student assistants in our workplaces, submit grant proposals that incorporate undergraduate student assistantships, console students who have suffered a setback of some kind, and express interest in their experiences, or in their big dreams and aspirations. More recently, this “all-in” culture with its UTEP Edge branding, is expected to develop further a comprehensive and asset-based campus climate that ensures that all students are respected, and encouraged to participate in a rich array of experiences, both in their classes and labs and everywhere else across the campus ... and beyond.

UTEP’s commitment to embed in our culture a commitment to sustained access is critical but not sufficient to ensure students’ success upon graduation; an equally strong commitment must be made to quality and excellence. So, another critical dimension of our shared responsibility to serve UTEP students well is the quality of the academic programs they complete, and the assured opportunities offered by the degrees they earn. Degrees earned mean little if they do not offer graduates a pathway to post-enrollment success; they must authentically be – and be recognized by future employers and graduate and professional schools – as highly competitive. The UTEP brand must be well-known for its success in offering students both access and excellence.

Challenging the widely held notion that universities fall into two distinct categories – those committed to access and those that are excellence-driven – and that an institution’s success requires making a choice between the two, UTEP set about proving that no such trade-off was necessary. In fact, we believe that making that choice is seriously problematic for public institutions, especially those like:

... AND ANNUAL RESEARCH EXPENDITURES FROM $2.6 MILLION IN 1988 TO NEARLY $95 MILLION LAST YEAR.
UTEP, that are the sole universities in large, highly populated, relatively isolated and historically underserved settings. Thirty years ago, we understood that to be worthy of the students to whom we offered access — who were, in effect, entrusting entirely to us their dreams and aspirations for the future — we had to do all we could to ensure that their UTEP diplomas would enable them to compete with their more affluent peers for graduate and professional school admissions and employment opportunities. We also knew that this commitment to the quality of UTEP’s degree programs would require successfully recruiting highly productive research faculty who are equally committed to teaching and mentoring undergraduate students. We also knew that recruiting such faculty would require us to be successful in developing doctoral degree programs and building a more robust research infrastructure, including both physical facilities and a more proactive and supportive Office of Research and Sponsored Projects. Despite many doubters and naysayers, UTEP embarked on its access and excellence quest, determined not to emulate traditional models, but rather to create our own context-sensitive UTEP model ... to do it our way!

The results of our highly intentional strategies to build excellence by developing doctoral programs and a robust research agenda at UTEP have, by any measure, been remarkable. The number of doctoral degree programs offered on our campus has increased from 1 to 22, and annual research expenditures from $2.6 million in 1988 to nearly $95 million last year.

Equally important, and perhaps one of the very best examples of the interplay of access and excellence at UTEP, is our commitment to ensure that all students benefit from our quest for excellence. Research faculty are not sequestered in ivory towers; they do cutting-edge work while also dedicating their time and talents to undergraduate mentoring and teaching. Many of our most successful — and successfully funded — researchers actively engage UTEP undergraduates in their work, and often incorporate funding for undergraduate assistantships into their grant proposals, thereby creating opportunities for financially strapped students to simultaneously learn and earn. Over the past two decades, the number of student employees on the campus has grown by 75%, from just under 2,000 to more than 3,300 today, most of whom are supported by external funding competitively generated by UTEP faculty and staff. The following examples provide just a small window into the remarkable success stories resulting from UTEP faculty’s strong and sustained commitment to achieving excellence through highly competitive grant funding, while never losing sight of our shared access responsibilities:

Dr. Thenral Mangadu in the College of Health Sciences was successful this past year in securing four major grants from the Department of Health and Human Services, totaling more than $5 million, to conduct evidence-based education and training in such areas as substance abuse, serious mental illness and mental disturbance, sexual assault, and dating and domestic violence. More than 100 undergraduate students will participate in these grant activities.

Dr. Igor Almeida, professor of biological sciences, received a five-year, $6 million grant from the National Institutes of Health for a clinical trial study, “New Chemotherapy Regimens and Biomarkers for Chagas Disease,” a disease caused by a parasite that affects millions of people in Latin America and is emerging in the U.S. and elsewhere across the world. With this grant and additional NIH funding, Dr. Almeida will develop new chemotherapy regimens and biomarkers for the disease, and in addition to engaging research partners across the globe, he will involve 10-15 UTEP students in this work.
...THANKS TO THE

TALENT, COMPETENCIES, DISCIPLINE AND TENACITY OF BOTH VETERAN AND ROOKIE PLAYERS ALIKE.

Dr. Ann Gates, faculty member and chair of the Computer Science Department, is a recipient of a $9.9 million grant from the National Science Foundation to advance the work of the INCLUDES Alliance: a Computing Alliance of Hispanic-Serving Institutions, which she launched in 2004, and which now comprises more than 40 public and private institutions and organizations across the U.S. This project seeks specifically to build a process for change through collective impact strategies. Dr. Gates is well known for her leadership and research in computer science and for her success in building partnerships, at UTEP and across the world, and she will engage both postgraduate and graduate students as well as 66 undergraduate students in this grant-funded project.

Evidence of the long-term impact of UTEP’s excellence climate on student success is clear and powerful, from accelerating their progress to degree completion and raising their aspirations to pursue postgraduate education, to successfully securing elite fellowships, admission to highly prestigious postgraduate and professional programs, and offers of highly competitive employment.

One indicator of UTEP’s success is the number of employers who interview UTEP students annually. These employers range from major technology, accounting and engineering firms to energy and health care companies, government agencies, as well as higher education institutions seeking to recruit our accomplished doctoral degree recipients for faculty positions.

Another good indicator of UTEP’s quality is the steady growth in the number of UTEP graduates who enroll in graduate or professional school within one year of their UTEP degree completion. In 2016-17, for example, more than 550 UTEP students enrolled in graduate or professional school within one year of earning their bachelor’s degrees, by successfully securing slots in extremely competitive graduate programs.

So, that’s UTEP’s story over the past 30 years as we’ve developed more intentional and nuanced approaches to serving the population of the surrounding region. Initially, we pledged to all young people across this region that, whatever their backgrounds, UTEP would make every effort to represent for them an authentic opportunity to achieve their dreams of pursuing a university degree. Once they enrolled, we worked very hard to sustain our commitment to access by providing a safety net of support services, which both enhance the quality of their academic programs and minimize the disruption to their progress that may be caused by the life challenges they sometimes face. As we’ve seen, the results of these efforts have not only had a strong impact on UTEP students’ successful degree completion, but have also ensured that the degrees they earned will be well-known for their high quality, positioning them well for continued success wherever their lives may take them after graduation.

And, in the process, our students’ success has determined UTEP’s success. All of us – students, faculty and staff – have been the beneficiaries of UTEP’s remarkable transformation from comprehensive regional university to national and international recognition as a highly competitive public research university that never lost sight of its fundamental responsibility to provide social mobility pathways for the population of its surrounding region.

Arriving on this campus as a rookie faculty member, I knew immediately that this UTEP franchise had enormous unrealized potential. As a new member of the team, I learned from students, from alumni and friends in the community and beyond, and from my fellow faculty and staff team members and my colleagues across the world, a process that has continued every day for the past 45 years.

When I received a contract extension, sometimes known as tenure, and was later named coach, then manager and finally general manager, the learning curve accelerated, with exciting new insights every single day. As general manager over the past 30 seasons, I’ve enthusiastically participated in this UTEP team’s long and highly successful run on a range of playing fields, thanks to the talent, competencies, discipline and tenacity of both veteran and rookie players alike. We learned from our playbook, “Moneyball,” whose subtitle is “The Art of Winning a Rigged Game,” and we applied its focus on the use of data to play our game, not a game invented and played out in far wealthier franchises. We’ve learned to understand very clearly who we are, whom we serve, and why we serve them.

In addition to the many veteran members of our team, we’ve been intentional in recruiting outstanding new players – staff and faculty – whose decision to join our team was based on a shared commitment to our access and excellence mission; they, too, understand why they are here and whom we all serve. Their loyalty to our team and to the surrounding community that supports us is deep and steadfast, and their skill in playing their positions is well aligned with our ballpark, and the aficionados we play for every day. With smart and dedicated coaches and talented, hard-working and skilled players on the field, a highly strategic and effective playbook, and a determination to follow it through, we’ve learned to compete successfully and win, rising ever higher in the national standings. I am so pleased and grateful to all of you for making that field of dreams come true.

But, we’re not finished. There’s still so much more that can be done to achieve our own and UTEP’s full potential to serve our students, this bi-national metropolitan area, and our state and nation, as a model institution successfully committed to both access and excellence. So, let’s get on with making my final season as general manager the best ever.

Go Miners!

I AM SO PLEASED AND GRATEFUL TO ALL OF YOU FOR MAKING THAT FIELD OF DREAMS COME TRUE.

GO MINERS!
FINDING WHAT WORKS
PROFESSOR’S EFFORTS MAKE UTEP A HUB FOR POSITIVE DEVIANCE

By Daniel E. Perez

Photo by J.R. Hernandez
Arvind Singhal, Ph.D., UTEP’s Samuel Shirley and Edna Holt Marston Endowed Professor of Communication, learned about positive deviance (PD) by chance while at a 2004 conference in Durham, New Hampshire. At the time, Singhal was a full professor at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, whose research specialty focused on the diffusion of innovations and entertainment-education.

Singhal said the PD concept shook him to his academic core because it flipped the familiar problem-based method in favor of an assets-based approach. It derives solutions from finding out what works among those for whom it should not be working. For instance, if you have a community where most residents are malnourished with a few who are better off under the same circumstances, you find out what the better-fed residents are doing and design a program that amplifies those actions with the rest of the community.

In 2007, Singhal joined UTEP where he built a PD program. The native of Delhi, India, initially offered a PD module as part of a course, recruiting students into global and local PD research. He has written three books and more than two dozen case studies and peer-reviewed pieces on the topic. Since 2009, he has offered the country’s only full semester PD course. Add to that a full calendar as a guest lecturer or speaker at institutions of higher education throughout the world and side visits to share his PD knowledge with Fortune 500 companies and one can imagine the ripple effect.

Because of Singhal and his global contacts, UTEP has a reputation as a leader in codifying, disseminating and carrying out PD research, and training graduate and undergraduate students in PD.

"The satisfaction comes from opening a world of ideas to others,” Singhal said during one of his weekly “coffice” (coffee and office) hours in the lobby of the Hilton Garden Inn near UTEP’s eastern entrance. "We’re creating conditions in different ways, in radically flipped ways."

Through his courses, workshops, collaborative research and conference presentations, Singhal empowers communities throughout the world to overcome their health, education and nutrition problems and to positively deal with issues such as child marriage, human rights, poverty alleviation, HIV/AIDS, sustainable development, civic participation, democracy and governance, and infant and maternal mortality.

A few of his collaborators shared their PD experiences, which involved such topics as disabilities, self-confidence, family planning and emotional healing.
artine Bouman, Ph.D., scientific director and founder of the Center for Media and Health in the Netherlands, said she worked with Singhal to use PD to help immigrant children with their resilience and self-esteem. Her agency funded the research through UTEP with Singhal as the principal investigator. This was the first PD project in the Netherlands. Bouman said the project’s goal was to enhance psychological resilience among students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and minority immigrant groups who attend the city of Rotterdam’s preparatory vocational training schools. She wondered how the students could better handle the stresses and anxieties that are a normal part of their lives.

Researchers found that small practices had a positive ripple effect on parental and student engagement with the school. For example, teachers called parents to compliment their children to affirm positive behavior, and a concierge welcomed students every morning to build familiarity and trust. The concierge encouraged the students to arrive to class on time and to enter the building in an orderly way. This daily contact allowed the concierge to notice when a student was out of sorts, and he or she would ask the student’s mentor or team lead to check on the student.

Bouman’s team shared these small practices with educators throughout the system to enhance the lives of all involved. The program won a prestigious national award for its innovation in health communication.

**POSITIVE DEVIANCE IN JAPAN**

Yoko Kawamura, Ph.D., associate professor at the Shizuoka University of Art and Culture in Japan, said she met Singhal through a U.S. mentor and invited him to Japan in 2011 to discuss entertainment-education (EE) with health care specialists. The UTEP professor mentioned PD a few times in his presentation, which sparked her interest.

“It was as if the scales had fallen from my eyes,” Kawamura said in an email. Singhal made his presentation about nine months after Japan had suffered mass casualties and destruction from a magnitude 9 earthquake and subsequent tsunami. She said the PD concept was comforting. “From the bottom of my heart, the message I got was that together, we have the power to make change. We should live our lives respectful of one another.”

In 2012, she again used grant money to invite Singhal to speak, but this time his focus would be PD. That year’s audience also included business leaders. After his third visit in 2013, Kawamura organized PD Japan, which now includes more than 100 individuals across the country’s major cities and universities.

The educator and researcher, who translated one of Singhal’s EE books into Japanese, brought 12 of her country’s scholars to UTEP for a week in December 2014 to learn more about PD. She said every meeting with Singhal deepens and widens her appreciation of the concept and its ability to improve people’s lives globally.

“The world recognizes UTEP among the foremost promoters of positive deviance,” Kawamura said. “Dr. Singhal and the University empower prospective changemakers through academics and inspiration.”
PD ON INDIAN TV

oonam Muttreja, executive director of the Population Foundation of India (PFI), worked with Singhal on PD research to enhance a media intervention that reached an estimated 400 million people.

Muttreja’s organization launched “Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon” (I, A Woman, Can Achieve Anything) in 2013 as the foundation’s main behavior communication initiative for change. PFI based the popular television show on Singhal’s PD field research. The program looked for feedback for better family planning methods. The audience responded and the show’s writers incorporated the real-life case studies into the scripts.

The PFI leader said the effort enhanced positive interpersonal communication, promoted healthy and positive social norms, and discouraged negative norms such as child marriage, son preference, domestic violence, gender inequality and lack of contraceptive use.

USING PD TO STUDY PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Davi Kallman, a doctoral candidate who is finishing her studies at Washington State University, said one of the first things she learned through positive deviance was the importance and the ease with which people can flip a script to change how they see the world and the people in it.

Kallman, who has a learning disability, earned her bachelor’s and master’s degrees at UTEP in 2010 and 2012, respectively. She did her graduate thesis on PD and disabilities with Singhal as her adviser.

She said PD shows how small communicative acts can make big differences, especially where there needs to be behavioral change, but the solution is not obvious. Because of her disability, she chose to study why some students with learning disabilities flourish academically while others do not.

Kallman found that clear and consistent messaging were important. She said daily positive affirmations from students, parents, family members, friends, peers, teachers and mentors about the students’ ability to overcome obstacles, not to use their disability as a crutch, and to find ways to compensate for their disabilities made a difference. Such communication is often internal, repetitive and self-evaluated. This builds up the students’ courage to accept their disabilities and ask others for help. That often leads to success, said Kallman, a member of the Washington Governor’s Disability Task Force.
Initial discussion of PD started in the 1960s, but it became better known because of the work done by the husband-and-wife team of Jerry and Monique Sternin, director and assistant director, respectively, with Save the Children, an international non-governmental organization that promotes children’s rights and supports children in developing countries. The Vietnamese government gave the couple six months in 1990 to fix the child malnutrition problem in their rural communities.

Because of the time limitations, the couple focused on four villages and asked why some village children appeared well fed compared with others. They did a lot of listening and learned that the mothers of better-fed children encouraged their children to eat; fed their children more, smaller meals; and added small shrimp, crab and sweet potato greens to their daily portions of rice. In this way, villagers helped discover these solutions with the Sternins, who shared this information with other families and then shared the same solutions with families in an additional 10 villages.

Overall, the problem decreased by 65 percent to 85 percent during the next two years. That groundbreaking work served as a model that would help tens of thousands of children in 20 countries.

Singhal said he had been formulating solutions for complex problems for the better part of 15 years before...
he heard Jerry Sternin talk about PD during that 2004 conference in Durham, New Hampshire. His reaction was the same as that of many of his PD students: “Why was I not taught this before?”

The UTEP professor said PD is still an idea in its infancy among social scientists. He said that new concepts take time to mature and likened them to some of Albert Einstein’s theories that Newtonian physicists originally dismissed.

“I see my mission to codify, write, teach and speak about positive deviance to create a stream of social science,” Singhal said.

He has had a busy fall 2018 semester, which has included speaking engagements throughout the United States and visits to Canada and the United Kingdom to discuss PD. He said he is filling his spring calendar with similar requests. On occasion, the University will host a PD conference, but Singhal said it is more convenient for him to travel to spread the PD word.

The UTEP professor said he plans to offer his popular cross-listed PD course in spring 2019. Both the graduate and the undergraduate PD courses attract a spectrum of UTEP majors, but mostly students from the colleges of Education, Liberal Arts and Business Administration. He even has occasional guests from the United States and beyond who work at the highest levels of government and in public health who want to sit in on a class.

Among his recent students is Ana Rey, a junior multimedia journalism major, who took the PD course in spring 2018. Her intention was to learn how PD research works to make a change in her hometown of Juárez, Mexico.

The first-generation college student said there was a shortage of young truck drivers in Juárez. She said that field needs younger drivers to carry on the trade. Her plan was to use a PD approach to find a solution. She admitted that her initial efforts fell short, but she plans to revise her strategy. She meets with Singhal occasionally to discuss her project.

Singhal said that PD’s best days are still to come and that includes at UTEP. He said the University is in a position to take advantage of the PD network because of its student demographic and border location with the region’s health disparities.

“There is a reason why it’s flourishing here,” Singhal said. “The potentiality of it really making a big difference in the lives of people is untapped, but that will happen. We’re on a roll.”

...the message I got was that together, we have the power to make change. We should live our lives respectful of one another.”

Yoko Kawamura, Ph.D.
1970s

Victor Arias (BBA ’78) was selected by the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce to lead its national search for a new CEO and president. He is managing director at executive search and leadership consulting firm RSR Partners.

H. David Arredondo (B.S. ’77) retired from his role as executive medical director of Presbyterian Medical Group in Albuquerque. It is part of Presbyterian Healthcare Services.

Ransom B. Jones (BBA ’71) was named chief financial officer, secretary and treasurer for Greenway Technologies, Inc. based in Arlington, Texas. He has over 40 years of diverse financial management and business experience.

Susan A. Melendez (BBA ’79) was reappointed by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott as presiding officer of the Camino Real Regional Mobility Authority. She is senior vice president of investor relations at The Borderplex Alliance in El Paso.

Rick Parr (B.S. ’75, M.Ed. ’77) was named the first president of the El Paso Sports Commission. The commission is in charge of sports tourism and the El Paso County Coliseum.

Elijio Venegas Serrano (BBA ’79) is ranked in the top quartile of BSS News Bites’ Mid Cap performers for the past quarter. Serrano is the chief financial officer of TETRA Technologies, an oil and gas services company headquartered in The Woodlands, Texas.

1980s

Salvador Balcorta (BSW ’80) was honored by the Sacred Heart Jesuit Parish as the 2018 Segundo Barrio Person of the Year. He is the CEO of Centro de Salud Familiar La Fe in El Paso.

Yolanda Flores (B.A. ’83, M.S. ’85) was presented with the Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award by Marquis Who’s Who. She is a speech language pathologist who specializes in both English and Spanish.

Alfredo Corchado Jimenez (B.A. ’87) published a new book titled “Homelands: Four Friends, Two Countries, and the Fate of the Great Mexican-American Migration.” He is the Border-Mexico correspondent for the Dallas Morning News. He was also inducted into the Texas Institute of Letters. The 82-year-old literary organization’s elected members are made up of Texas’ most respected writers.

Marcia A. Daudistel (B.A. ’86) was inducted into the Texas Institute of Letters. The 82-year-old literary organization’s elected members are made up of Texas’ most respected writers.

Gypsy Marie Denzine (M.A. ’88) has been named the senior vice provost for faculty affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University. She previously served as dean of the College of Education and Human Services at West Virginia University.

Barron Armstrong Edwards (B.S. ’89, M.Ed. ’92) was named superintendent of the Bastrop Independent School District in Bastrop, Texas. He had served as interim superintendent since Jan. 1.

David Scott Feitl (BBA ’86) was inducted into the Pima County Sports Hall of Fame in Arizona. He played on the UTEP men’s basketball team under Coach Don Haskins and played in the NBA for five years.

Nancy A. Lowery (M.A. ’89) has been named chief operating officer at Incite Consultancy, an El Paso-based strategic research firm. She previously served as vice president of operations at the Hub of Human Innovation.

Jeffrey Walker Martin (MPA ’89) has been named chairman of Sempra Energy, a San Diego-based energy services holding company. He has served as Sempra Energy’s CEO since May 2018.

Liliana G. McDowell-Schnell (B.A. ’87) was named the undersheriff for Doña Ana County, New Mexico. She previously served in the FBI.

Diane Burn Monsivais (MSN ’88) was inducted into the National League for Nursing Academy of Nursing Education. She is the director of the Master of Science in Nursing program.

Jennifer Parker (B.S. ’89, M.Ed. ’00) was named the Texas 2018 National Distinguished Principal by the Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association. She is the principal of Purple Heart Elementary School.

Leslie Kaye Robbins (MSN ’89) was inducted into the National League for Nursing Academy of Nursing Education. She is an associate professor and assistant dean of graduate education in the School of Nursing.

Tresa P. Rockwell (BBA ’82) is the new executive director of Progress321, a regional community development group targeted at young El Paso-area professionals. She previously worked for Red Bull Energy Drink.

Sandra B. Vasquez (BBA ’87) was named associate vice president for human resources at UTEP. She has served as UTEP’s assistant vice president for equal opportunity and compliance services, ADA coordinator and Title IX coordinator.

1990s

Alejandro Armendariz (B.S.’99) was appointed the new principal at Loma Terrace Elementary School in the Ysleta Independent School District in El Paso. He was previously the principal at Valley View Middle School.

Rachael Marie Blair (BIS ’99, M.Ed. ’14) was appointed principal of Sageland Elementary School in El Paso. She was previously...
UTEP Alumni Association Welcomes New Board President

The University of Texas at El Paso Alumni Association officially installed Bonny Schulenburg as its new president Sept. 1, 2018. Her one-year term coincides with the 2018-19 academic year.

Schulenburg, a social media relations specialist with the Ysleta Independent School District in El Paso, graduated from UTEP in 2001 with a degree in media advertising. While living in Austin, Texas she joined the University’s Austin Alumni Chapter. In 2011, the association’s Board of Directors added her to its ranks.

The new president took a few minutes to share some of her agenda and perspectives.

Q: You’ve had a few years to prepare to take the helm. What are some things you want to do as president of the Alumni Association?

A: The UTEP Alumni Association board has made alumni engagement its No. 1 priority. We recognize the importance to have engaged alumni worldwide in order to connect alumni with current students and recent graduates. As president, my commitment is to continue to engage alumni through Miner Link, as well as increase awareness of the organization and our benefits. I believe communication with alumni is key to the success of the association.

Q: How can UTEP benefit from having more alumni become involved after they graduate?

A: Alumni who are engaged with the University can be a catalyst for our students. When alumni are engaged, they build relationships and grow loyalty to the University. Our students are thirsty for the professional knowledge that our alumni possess. Because the job market changes every day, alumni can give our students the confidence to become successful professionals in their chosen field, as well as open doors to new occupations.

Q: You have been asked to serve on the UTEP Presidential Search Advisory Committee to help find a new president for UTEP. What will you be looking for in the candidates?

A: UTEP is entering a time of change. I am very grateful to be asked to serve on the Presidential Search Advisory Committee. Dr. Natalicio’s vision has transformed the University to a level we never imagined. UTEP and our students are unique. I believe our next president should have a great understanding of the El Paso community and the border region. He or she should be able to rally, inspire and engage those who can further the mission of the University while exuding passion and confidence. And most importantly, our next leader should forge relationships with our students, alumni and community leaders.

Q: What is one of your favorite UTEP memories as a student?

A: As a communication major, my favorite UTEP memory was participating on the advertising team in the American Advertising Federation National Student Advertising Competition. The team’s first attempt to compete regionally was unsuccessful, while our second attempt ranked us in third place. My final time on the team resulted in winning the regional ad campaign for Burger King against other universities such as NMSU, Northern Arizona, Northern Colorado, and the University of Utah. Ultimately, it gave us the opportunity to represent UTEP nationally. The experience and collaboration with advertising professionals gave the team the chance to acquire training from real-world professionals. This experience solidified my career as a public relations professional.

Q: What is something people would be surprised to know about you?

A: People would be surprised to know that I was not a traditional student. As a young mother, I recognized that a college education was imperative in order to provide for my children. Just like many of our students today, I strived for a higher education despite working full-time in a family business. It took an enormous amount of determination and perseverance to complete my education. I implore students to not give up, to become involved, and to support the University. The rewards of a college degree are well worth it.
an assistant principal at Parkland Elementary.

Josefina Carmona (B.A. ’98, M.A. ’07) was appointed the dean of Doña Ana Community College Health Division in New Mexico. She was formerly the assistant dean of Extended University at UTEP.

Carlos Castillo (BSN ’99, MSN ‘04) has been promoted by The Hospitals of Providence to chief nursing officer for the Sierra campus in El Paso. Castillo has worked for the hospital chain since 2000, and previously was administrator for the Providence Children’s Hospital.

Laura Castro de Cortes (B.S. ’90) has been named director of multicultural banking by First National Bank of Omaha in Nebraska. She will be responsible for developing and implementing the company’s Multicultural Banking programs across all its business units and markets.

Jaswinder Singh Chadha (M.S. ’92) was named one of the regional winners of the 32nd annual Ernst & Young U.S. Entrepreneur of the Year competition. He founded Axtria Inc., a big data analytics company.

Navdeep Singh Chadha (M.S. ’94) was named one of the regional winners of the 32nd annual Ernst & Young U.S. Entrepreneur of the Year competition. He is a co-founder of Axtria Inc., a big data analytics company.

Sally Anne Hurt Deitch (BSN ’90, MSN ’94) was named Tenet’s vice president of patient care services and chief nursing officer. She was previously at The Hospitals of Providence over the last 11 years in various CEO roles.

Joel Richard Galloway (B.S. ’92, M.S. ’00) wrote his debut novel “Crusader,” a thriller about a DEA agent’s capture set against the backdrop of the Mexican drug war. He works as a government contractor in national defense.

Miguel Angel Gamiño (BBA ‘99) has been named executive vice president for global cities at Mastercard. He was previously the chief technology officer of New York City.

Eduardo “Eddie” Hernandez (B.S. ’99) was promoted to the associate position at Parkhill, Smith & Cooper’s (PSC) El Paso office. PSC is a multidisciplinary firm that provides comprehensive architectural and engineering design services for a multitude of projects in government, commercial and institutional sectors.

Tasha Phillina Hopper (BSN ’98, MSN ’12) has been named the new CEO of The Hospitals of Providence Transmountain campus in El Paso. Hopper has worked for Providence for 20 years.

Regi Kurien (M.S. ’90) was featured in an installment of the Entrepreneurship Forum speaker series hosted by Western Michigan University’s Haworth College of Business. He is the owner and president of Amhawk, a full-service metal fabrication company.

Charmaine Alicia Martin (B.S. ’91) has been named assistant dean for student affairs at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso’s Paul L. Foster School of Medicine. She had been an associate professor at Texas Tech since 2005.

Juan Ignacio Martinez (BBA ’93, M.Ed. ’96) was one of the state finalists for the annual Superintendent of the Year award in Texas. He is the superintendent at Clint Independent School District.

Celina Munoz (BIS ’98, M.Ed. ’03) was appointed director of guidance and counseling at the Ysleta Independent School District in El Paso. She was previously an assistant principal at Eastwood Middle School.

Mary Jo Ochoa-Hernandez (BBA ’99) was added to the Workforce Solutions Borderplex board of directors. She is a career pathway and transitions coordinator for the Socorro Independent School District in El Paso County, Texas.

Elizabeth Prangner (BIS ’91, M.Ed. ’07) was named principal at Cooley Elementary School in the El Paso Independent School District on a permanent basis after serving as acting principal for several months. She previously served as principal at Hart and Alta Vista elementary schools.

Socorro E. Rodriguez (BBA ’96) was promoted to senior vice president and treasurer at WestStar Bank in the El Paso borderplex. She has worked for WestStar since 2002.

Yvonne Ruiz (BBA ’97) has been named to the Farmers Insurance Presidents Council. Members of the council are in the top one percent of the company’s agents and district managers.

Keith A. Rutherford (B.S. ’93, M.S. ’95) was promoted to the principal position at Parkhill, Smith & Cooper’s (PSC) El Paso office. PSC is a multidisciplinary firm that provides comprehensive architectural and engineering design services for a multitude of projects in government, commercial and institutional sectors.

2000s

Kenith R. Adcox (MPA ’00) was named the new police chief of the University of Texas Medical Branch Police Department. He was previously the police chief in La Porte, Texas.

Haileyesus Bairu (M.A. ’07) took command of the 3rd Battalion, 43rd Air Defense Artillery Regiment at Fort Bliss. He was stationed at Fort Bliss four previous times.

Layla Aida Baem-Bugado (BBA ’08) was named projects and operations manager for Lawton Fort Sill Economic Development Corporation. She has a background in banking, customer service, sales, and project and operations management.

James Alfred Beale (BBA ’01) has been named a partner at the accounting firm Gibson Ruddock Patterson. He has been a certified public accountant for 19 years.

Sandra Elaine Brahman (M.Ed. ’02, Ed.D. ’05) was named a district principal for the Ysleta Independent School District in El Paso. She was previously the police chief in La Porte, Texas.

Marc E. Escareno (M.Ed. ’00) was named new principal at Coronado High School in the El Paso Independent School District. He was previously an assistant principal at Franklin High School.

Mayra Margarita Garcia (B.A. ’02, M.B.A. ’08) is the new marketing and grant director at the YMCA of El Paso.
South American Film Distributor Credits UTEP for International Success

The 2018 international film distributor of the year is a UTEP alumnus who said the challenges of being an international college student helped him succeed in his career.

"I think being an international student definitely challenges you in many ways," said Jorge Licetti, founder and CEO of New Century Films in Peru. "It makes you think strategically. You have limited resources, competition barriers, whether it’s language, culture or geography – so many things you have to overcome."

Licetti grew up in Peru. In his quest to earn a business degree from a university in the United States, he came across The University of Texas at El Paso. As an international student, Licetti qualified for the Good Neighbor Scholarship, which benefits students from countries in the Western hemisphere (other than Cuba and the United States). He graduated in 1993 with a bachelor’s degree in business administration.

After graduation, Licetti returned home to work in marketing at Unilever, a transnational consumer goods company, before returning to UTEP to earn his master’s degree in business administration. In 1999, Licetti went back to Peru with the intention of returning to work at Unilever, but life had other plans.

An advertisement in the newspaper and his love of film led him to apply for a managerial position at a film distribution company. The company was a joint venture between Twentieth Century Fox and Warner Bros. Pictures. Two months after earning his MBA from UTEP, Licetti started his 20-year career in theatrical distribution.

A few years into his new career, Licetti was promoted and moved to Santiago, Chile, where he faced the same challenges as being an international student at UTEP. Soon after, a new business opportunity arose for Licetti, and New Century Films was born.

As founder and CEO, Licetti was in charge of marketing, promoting and distributing Warner Bros. Pictures and Twentieth Century Fox movies into regional theaters in Chile and Peru. Licetti said he called back on his experience at UTEP for help in this new venture.

"I’m convinced that my degrees at UTEP got me this job. There’s no question about that," Licetti said. "The reason I’m here, heading this operation today, is because of my work at UTEP, which I’m very proud of."

Licetti’s hard work was recognized by Film Expo Group, an organizer of events in the motion picture industry. In October 2018, he was honored as the international distributor of the year. - Jesse Martinez

"I think being an international student definitely challenges you in many ways. It makes you think strategically. You have limited resources, competition barriers, whether it’s language, culture or geography – so many things you have to overcome."
### Alum Notes

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<th>Alum Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Jerardo J. Gonzalez (BSN '03)</strong> has been named the chief nursing officer (CNO) at Las Palmas Medical Center in El Paso. He had previously served as interim CNO, associate CNO and chief staffing officer.</td>
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<td><strong>Jennifer Elizabeth Han (B.S. '07)</strong> was named “Best Hero” in El Paso Inc.’s 2018 Best of the Best contest. She is the four-time IBF World Featherweight champion.</td>
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<td><strong>Enrique Herrera (M.Ed. '05)</strong> was appointed principal at Hanks High School in the Ysleta Independent School District in El Paso. He was previously the principal at Slider Middle School.</td>
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<td><strong>Eduardo Jose Hinojos (B.A. '07)</strong> was named a Teacher of the Year by ESC Region 19 in conjunction with Teachers Federal Credit Union. He teaches government and political science at Americas High School in El Paso.</td>
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<td><strong>Benjamin Beckage Kelly (B.S. '03)</strong> was elected partner in Baker McKenzie’s Intellectual Property practice group, which focuses on patent litigation matters that protect and defend a wide array of technologies in U.S. federal courts, the U.S. International Trade Commission, and before the American Arbitration Association.</td>
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<td><strong>Monica Landeros (BIS '08, M.Ed. '11)</strong> was named teacher of the year at Malvern Elementary in McKinney Independent School District in McKinney, Texas.</td>
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<td><strong>Sheryl Luna (MFA '02)</strong> was inducted into the Texas Institute of Letters. The 82-year-old literary organization's elected members are made up of Texas' most respected writers.</td>
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<td><strong>Kristen Louise MacLaren (B.A. '02)</strong> was named head coach of the men’s and women’s golf teams at Queen’s University in Ontario, Canada. She was previously an assistant coach at the university.</td>
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<td><strong>Karla M. Nieman (B.A. '01)</strong> was named interim city attorney for the City of El Paso. She has been practicing law for 11 years.</td>
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<td><strong>Rubi Orozco (B.S. '03)</strong> wrote her debut book “Inventos Míos,” which is a bilingual collection of poetry and prose about the ancient culinary tradition of nixtamalization. The book was funded by a grant from the El Paso Museums and Cultural Affairs Department’s artist incubator program.</td>
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<td><strong>Ebetuel Pallares-Venegas (MBA '05, Ph.D. '12)</strong> was named the Bill and Sharon Sherrif Endowed Chair in Entrepreneurship at New Mexico State University. He was previously the investor-in-residence at NMSU’s Arrowhead Center.</td>
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<td><strong>George Francisco Rodriguez (BFA '06)</strong> unveiled a collection of work called “Lunar Vessels” at the Seattle Art Fair. He works as a ceramic sculptor in Washington.</td>
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<td><strong>Alejandra Romie Ruiz (B.A. '01)</strong> is the new communications and public affairs manager for Workforce Solutions Borderplex in El Paso. She was previously director of mission advancement at the Burbank Community YMCA in Burbank, California.</td>
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<td><strong>Gustavo Enrique Schneider (B.A. '04)</strong> joined the law firm Polsinelli as a senior associate in the Phoenix office. He is a real estate finance attorney with significant experience facilitating commercial mortgage-backed securities and capital markets execution transactions on behalf of lenders and loan servicers.</td>
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<td><strong>Robert Jose Tinajero (Ph.D. '09)</strong> was hired at the University of North Texas at Dallas as a tenure track assistant professor of English.</td>
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<td><strong>2010s</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Pamela Azaeta (BIS '11)</strong> opened the District Coffee Co. in Downtown El Paso. The shop is on the ground floor of the nine-story International Building.</td>
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<td><strong>Jihan Lynn Seman Buniag (M.A. '14)</strong> was named to the first Pacific Resiliency Fellows program cohort by Kupu, a conservation and youth education organization in Hawaii. She also works at the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality, Division of Coastal Resources Management as their Coral Reef Initiative education outreach coordinator.</td>
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<td><strong>Kristopher Deandre Christian (B.A. '17)</strong> is the sports, fitness and day camp director at the Bowling Family YMCA in Northeast El Paso.</td>
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<td><strong>Hugo A. Fernandez (BSN '10, MSN '13)</strong> was named Hospice El Paso’s clinical employee of the year. He has been with Hospice El Paso for a year.</td>
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<td><strong>Miguel Angel Fraga (B.S. '18)</strong> was awarded a $500 prize by the Texas Desalination Association through its Student Poster Program. He was recognized for his poster titled “Solar-Powered Point-of-Use Reverse Osmosis Desalination of Brackish Water.”</td>
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<td><strong>Shane Griffith (MBA ‘11)</strong> has been named director of marketing and sales at Desert Imaging Services. Before this role, he was the public information and government relations officer for the Housing Authority of the City of El Paso.</td>
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<td><strong>William Guzman (Ph.D. ‘10)</strong> was awarded the “Iron Sharpening Iron” Award by the National Action Network’s North Jersey chapter, and was inducted by the City Council of Jersey City into the “Trailblazing Pioneers Wall of Fame” at the Mary McLeod Bethune Life Center.</td>
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<td><strong>Jeanie Mae Horton (BMS ‘14)</strong> signed to play volleyball in Finland with the team Riihitupaan LiigaPloki. She was named the American Volleyball Coaches Association Honorable Mention All-American in 2012 at UTEP.</td>
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<td><strong>Vicente Huerta (MBA ‘15)</strong> was appointed to the East Texas Council of Governments management team as the Director of Transportation. He has more than 20 years of experience in the Texas Transit community.</td>
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<td><strong>Adriana Macias (B.A. '12)</strong> was named a multimedia journalist for Telemundo-owned KDEN Denver (DMA 17).</td>
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<td><strong>Leah Esther Masters (BIS ‘11)</strong> was elected president of Executive Forum, an organization of female executives and community leaders aimed at the economic, civic and cultural development of the El Paso area. She is the administrative officer for United Bank of El Paso del Norte.</td>
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Nubia Zuverza-Mena, Ph.D., has proved exemplary in the field of nanotechnology — the study of the ultrafine particles of material that are the focus of emerging technology in agriculture. Her efforts, initially as a postdoctoral scientist, at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) in New Haven recently earned her a mention in The National Nanotechnology Initiative Supplement to the President’s 2019 Budget, a report prepared for President Donald Trump by each federal agency.

The document highlighted Zuverza-Mena as part of a team working to boost the “immune system” of plants by supplying them with nanoscale micronutrients. Through this work led by Jason White, Ph.D., CAES vice director, and funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Institute for Food and Agriculture (USDA NIFA) and the National Science Foundation’s Center for Sustainable Nanotechnology (CSN), crops such as eggplant and watermelon showed several positive effects and saw a rise in per-acre value of their yields.

“I was shocked, but of course, proud to be mentioned in this document,” Zuverza-Mena said.

What is not surprising, Zuverza-Mena said, is the role The University of Texas at El Paso has played in her professional growth. The Juárez native earned three degrees at UTEP — a B.S. in chemistry (2006), an M.S. in metallurgical and materials engineering (2009), and a Ph.D. in materials science and engineering (2016). She said her time on campus was invaluable and provided her with academic and research opportunities that primed her for success.

As an undergraduate she conducted research on the use of plants to remove heavy metals from the environment. As a master’s student, she engaged in a tissue engineering research opportunity at the W.M. Keck Center for 3D Innovation. After a stint in the private sector, Zuverza-Mena returned to UTEP to pursue her doctorate, beginning her foray into the effects of nanotechnology. She eventually parlayed her efforts into a postdoctoral assignment at CAES as an assistant scientist in July 2018.

“UTEP is growing and it continues to have a big impact on students,” Zuverza-Mena said. “The campus offers so many opportunities and gives students a diverse experience, not just culturally but in fields of study. I’ve seen UTEP become a recognized name and I’m proud to say I’m a UTEP graduate.” - Pablo Villa
In Memoriam

UTEP acknowledges the passing of the following graduates:

**1940s**
- Angel Florentino Esparza (B.S. ‘48) El Paso, Texas; June 26, 2018
- Karl M. Friedman (B.A. ‘48) El Paso, Texas; July 9, 2018
- Erwin E. King (B.S. ‘48) Tulsa, Oklahoma; Aug. 7, 2018
- John W. McCarthy (B.S. ‘49) Arlington, Texas; June 22, 2018
- Nimrod Robinson (B.A. ‘45) Winter Springs, Florida; July 7, 2018
- Lace Vitanc (B.A. ‘43) Palm Beach Gardens, Florida; April 22, 2018

**1950s**
- Gene Wade Baker (BBA ‘51) San Francisco, California; March 26, 2018
- Roger S. Bell (BBA ‘50) Santa Teresa, New Mexico; Sept. 17, 2018
- Carter R. Bennett (B.S. ‘59) Kilgore, Texas; March 10, 2018
- Humberto Berumen (B.S. ‘52) El Paso, Texas; April 17, 2018
- Arturo Borrego (B.S. ‘59) El Paso, Texas; April 4, 2018
- Edward Victor Bravenec (B.S. ‘56) Seabrook, Texas; May 21, 2018
- Arthur O. Brieden (B.S. ‘52) El Paso, Texas; May 19, 2018
- Maria Teresa Campos (B.A. ‘56) El Paso, Texas; April 15, 2018
- Normand Harris Cantrell (B.A. ‘54; M.A. ‘58) Casa Grande, Arizona; March 10, 2018
- Howard Harmon Carvajal (B.A. ‘54; M.Ed. ‘65) Burleson, Texas; Jan. 31, 2018
- Frank L. Coppini (B.M. ‘57) Palm Springs, California; May 8, 2011
- Elaine A. Donohue (B.A. ‘57) Fort Worth, Texas; Aug. 12, 2018
- James Robert Fox (BBA ‘57) El Paso, Texas; June 2, 2018
- Amelia Torres Goslin (B.A. ‘55) Blue Springs, Missouri; March 31, 2018
- John David Guice (M.A. ‘53) Laurel, Mississippi; July 30, 2018
- Carolyn B. Jeffries (B.A. ‘58) New Castle, Kentucky; Jan. 6, 2018
- Dalton M. Johnston (B.S. ‘51) Reno, Nevada; March 15, 2018
- James Dighton Lea (B.A. ‘57) Houston, Texas; Aug. 11, 2018
- Florence Leishman (B.A. ‘52) Albuquerque, New Mexico; May 16, 2018
- Amador Licon (B.A. ‘56) Laguna Beach, California; May 3, 2018
- Richard Dan Montalbo (B.S. ‘59) San Antonio, Texas; June 24, 2018
- Laurance Noyes Nickey (B.S. ‘51) El Paso, Texas; Aug. 21, 2018
- Cleonia Beth Olson (B.A. ‘54) Clifton, Virginia; May 29, 2018
- Joan D. Pacha (BBA ‘54; M.A. ‘57) El Paso, Texas; June 6, 2018
- Luis Perez (B.A. ‘52) Silver City, New Mexico; Aug. 7, 2018
- Robert Eugene Pollard (B.A. ‘51) El Paso, Texas; Sept. 21, 2018
- Marion Eugene Spitler (B.S. ‘53) Dallas, Texas; Aug. 9, 2018
- Dolores A. Vega (BBA ‘54; M.Ed. ‘78) El Paso, Texas; June 1, 2018

**1960s**
- Lorenzo Alarcon (B.S. ‘64; M.Ed. ‘74) El Paso, Texas; April 21, 2018
- Gwennel M. Barfield (B.S. ‘67) Houston, Texas; March 23, 2018
- James Eldon Boswell (B.S. ‘64) McKinney, Texas; Sept. 17, 2018
- Joel Edwin Brown (BBA ‘65) El Paso, Texas; May 2, 2018
- William Brown (BBA ‘64) Austin, Texas; July 26, 2018
- Robert Lloyd Carroll (B.S. ‘65) Spring, Texas; June 8, 2018
- James E. Coe (BBA ‘68) Anthony, Texas; Sept. 10, 2018
- Delpha Smithwick Garcia (B.S. ‘69) Denton, Texas; June 29, 2018
- Marilyn C. Gross (M.Ed. ’68) El Paso, Texas; March 26, 2018
- Patricia Jack Guyens (B.A. ‘60) El Paso, Texas; Sept. 6, 2018
- Frank K. Hyder (BBA ‘61) Los Lunas, New Mexico, April 28, 2018
- Samuel Michael Isaac (B.A. ‘68) Pflugerville, Texas; May 11, 2018
- Patricia B. Kalinoff (B.S. ‘68) Stillwater, Minnesota; April 4, 2018
- Ted Ulysses Kepple (M.Ed. ’67) El Paso, Texas; May 18, 2018
- Rosbinda M. Legowik (B.S. ‘62) El Paso, Texas; Aug. 9, 2018
- Ronald Joseph McDaniel (BBA ‘61) Mesa, Arizona; April 14, 2018
- Roger Olen Miles (BBA ‘63) Lubbock, Texas; May 5, 2018
- Mary M. Miller (B.S. ‘62) El Paso, Texas; Sept. 4, 2018
- Rafael Manuel Pena (B.S. ‘66) El Paso, Texas; Sept. 21, 2018
- James Lee Puthoff (B.S. ‘69) El Paso, Texas; May 14, 2018
- Robert W. Smiley (BBA ‘63) El Paso, Texas; July 7, 2018
- Frank L. Spittle (B.S. ‘65) Tucson, Arizona; June 14, 2018
- Connie M. Srote (B.A. ‘62) Austin, Texas; July 20, 2018

**1970s**
- Reynaldo Leon Acosta (BBA ‘78) El Paso, Texas; March 19, 2018
- Edmundo C. Amaya (BBA ‘73) El Paso, Texas; Sept. 17, 2018
- Lucy Ellen Antone (B.A. ‘72) Annandale, Virginia; Sept. 15, 2018
- Douglas Antrim (B.S. ‘74) Odessa, Texas; April 12, 2018
- Myra Camille Barrett (BBA ‘73) Sevierville, Tennessee; June 1, 2018
- James E. Brantley (BBA ‘74) Springfield, Virginia; July 21, 2018
- Rosamaria Munoz Briones (B.S. ‘77; M.Ed. ’03) El Paso, Texas; July 9, 2018
- Lois Leigh Burnett (BBA ‘77) El Paso, Texas; April 6, 2018
- Susana Czolgosz (B.S. ‘76) El Paso, Texas; May 10, 2018
- Virginia C. Dominguez (B.A. ‘76) El Paso, Texas; March 31, 2018
- Lydia R. Flores (B.S. ‘72) El Paso, Texas; Aug. 1, 2018
- Melvin William French (BBA ‘72) Port Saint Lucie, Florida; May 13, 2018
- Daniel Gonzalez (B.S. ’73; M.Ed. ’77) El Paso, Texas; June 5, 2018
- Mary Frances Henderson (B.S. ’70; M.Ed. ’83) El Paso, Texas; March 24, 2018
- Jacqueline M. Henry (M.Ed. ’78) Scottsdale, Arizona; Aug. 31, 2018
- Leopoldo Moises Hurtado (B.S. ’75) El Paso, Texas; April 17, 2018
- Carole M. Jones (B.S. ’77) El Paso, Texas; March 10, 2018

*Continued on page 66*
An alumnus, buoyed by the research adventures he undertook with his mentor while a student, recently presented two gifts to The University of Texas at El Paso.

Allen L. Gilmer and his wife, Riki Rushing, presented the $1 million Kenneth F. and Patricia Clark Distinguished Chair Endowment to benefit the economic geology program at the Center for Entrepreneurial Geosciences in UTEP’s Department of Geological Sciences. Additionally, Gilmer announced the establishment of the UTEP Data Science and Informatics Gift Fund in partnership with fellow UTEP alumnus Frank Hsu, Ph.D., Clavius Distinguished Professor of Science at Fordham University in New York. The gifts were announced during a ceremony June 28, 2018, in the Geology Reading Room on campus.

“Allen Gilmer’s creation of the Kenneth F. and Patricia Clark Distinguished Chair will allow UTEP to recruit a highly respected economic geologist to expand student opportunities and increase departmental connections with industry,” said James Kubicki, Ph.D., professor and chair of the Department of Geological Sciences at UTEP. “We look forward to using this educational and research activity to enhance collaborations within Mexico and South America, because these areas are heavily involved in mineral development.”

While a geological sciences graduate student at The University of Texas at El Paso, Gilmer leapt at the challenges posed by Clark. Together, they toured the off-limits chambers of the Cave of Swords in Naica, Chihuahua; explored the underground mines in Santa Eulalia, Chihuahua; and climbed around the old Spanish workings of Velardeña in Durango, Mexico.

Gilmer is co-founder of Drillinginfo, a data analytics company for energy exploration decision support that is a leading provider of cloud-based data and analytics software for the oil and gas industry. He also serves as the company’s executive chairman. Gilmer was named one of UTEP’s Distinguished Alumni in 2017.

“Allen Gilmer is the embodiment of a proud UTEP Miner,” said UTEP President Diana Natalicio. “Since graduating from the University with his master’s degree in 1987, he has remained steadfastly committed and connected to the University through his sustained service on the College of Science Advisory Board and his many efforts to advance UTEP and especially the Department of Geological Sciences. The added faculty expertise and resources made possible by Allen and Riki’s generous gifts will provide UTEP students with many additional opportunities to enhance their education at UTEP and in their future careers.”

- Christina Rodriguez
In Memoriam

Frank W. Keton (BBA ’75) El Paso, Texas; May 13, 2018
Gary William Lasseter (BBA ’74) Norman, Oklahoma; July 6, 2018
Blanca Lilia Madrid (B.S. ’75; M.Ed. ’83) El Paso, Texas; July 27, 2018
Joseph L. McNally (BBA ’75) Tucson, Arizona; April 4, 2018
Julio Montes (B.S. ’72) El Paso, Texas; Sept. 14, 2018
Peter H. Poessiger (B.A. ’73) El Paso, Texas; May 15, 2018
Vernon W. Presley (BBA ’72) Columbus, Georgia; March 22, 2018
Michael A. Rampy (B.A. ’71) El Paso, Texas; July 23, 2018
Salvador Santiesteban (B.S. ’78) El Paso, Texas; July 19, 2018
Lawrence J. Souza (B.A. ’70) San Antonio, Texas; Sept. 11, 2018
Guillermo Villalobos (BBA ’75) El Paso, Texas; July 18, 2018
Antonio Carlos Zuniga (B.A. ’78) Paso, Texas; April 2, 2018
Carl Henry Bogardus (M.Ed. ’82) Las Cruces, New Mexico; March 27, 2018
Winifred Baumer Dowling (M.A. ’84, Ph.D. ’10) El Paso, Texas; May 11, 2018
Richard Flores (BBA ’81) El Paso, Texas; July 12, 2018
Jose Margaro Gonzalez (BSW ’80) Juarez, Mexico; March 6, 2018
Katherine Elizabeth Long (B.S. ’88) Dallas, Texas; July 6, 2018
Richard McDowell (B.S. ’80) El Paso, Texas; March 18, 2018
Carmen Licea Montes (B.S. ’87) El Paso, Texas; June 1, 2018
Susan M. Petrilli (BSN ’80) Crestwood, New York; March 25, 2018
John Robert Pierce (B.A. ’80) Midland, Texas; April 12, 2018
Nancy J. Torres (BSW ’86; M.Ed. ’06) El Paso, Texas; April 20, 2018
Julieana Toth (MSN ’84) El Paso, Texas; Aug. 2, 2018
Joel Roy White (B.A. ’83) Austin, Texas; July 22, 2018
Martha Patricia Camacho (B.A. ’93) El Paso, Texas; May 28, 2018
Geary Don Crofford (M.S. ’94) Tahlequah, Oklahoma; Aug. 11, 2018
Corinne Ann DeGarmo (M.A. ’93) Albuquerque, New Mexico; March 8, 2018
Corina P. Garcia (BSN ’99) El Paso, Texas; June 8, 2018
Elva E. Gutierrez (B.A. ’99) El Paso, Texas; July 5, 2018
Ronald Edward Henry (B.S. ’95) El Paso, Texas; July 11, 2018
Janice M. Morgan (BBA ’94) El Paso, Texas; May 5, 2018
Tima Lucette Velarde (B.A. ’96) El Paso, Texas; April 2, 2018
Ruben Garcia (B.S. ’03; MIT ’09) El Paso, Texas; July 5, 2018
Manuel Parra Holguin (BIS ’06) El Paso, Texas; Sept. 18, 2018
Yedid Ibarra (B.A. ’02) El Paso, Texas; Sept. 19, 2018
Stephen Andrew Knight (BBA ’00) Dallas, Texas; May 26, 2018
David A. Pacheco (B.S. ’08) El Paso, Texas; Sept. 3, 2018
Aurora Isabel Vasquez (BIS ’06) San Antonio, Texas; June 20, 2018
Jorge O. Baeza (BIS ’12) El Paso, Texas; April 3, 2018
Sean Neil Curtis (M.S. ’15) Manchester, New Hampshire; Sept. 21, 2018

1980s

1990s

2000s

2010s

Margaret Belding de Wetter, an acclaimed author, poet, artist, and proud alumna and supporter of The University of Texas at El Paso, died July 11, 2018. She was 95 years old.

A descendant of El Paso pioneers, de Wetter was born and raised in El Paso and was the daughter of the late Charles and Betty Safford Belding. Her late husband, El Paso civic leader Peter de Wetter, died in 1999.

De Wetter, also known as Mardee, graduated with honors from the Texas College of Mines in 1943 with a bachelor’s degree and in 1946 with a master’s degree, both in history.

During her years as a student, she was a member of the Zeta Tau Alpha sorority, which occupied what is now the Peter and Margaret de Wetter Center and houses the Office of Alumni Relations.

Throughout her life, de Wetter manifested her passion for literature and the arts through her involvement with UTEP and in the Paso del Norte region. In addition to publishing historical biographies and poetry books, she served on numerous boards, including the UTEP Library Association and the UTEP President’s Associates.

The University recognized de Wetter’s lasting impact on the community by naming her a Distinguished Alumna in 1999.

The de Wetters remained committed supporters of the University through the years. They established the Peter and Margaret B. de Wetter Library Fund and the Peter and Margaret de Wetter Endowed Chair in Creative Writing.

The couple also sustained and grew the Belding-de Wetter Scholarship Fund, a longstanding gift to the University established in 1953 by Margaret de Wetter’s parents that has supported undergraduate students of all majors through scholarships.

“Our mother was proud of UTEP her entire life – from the 1930s when her parents hosted the coaches and players from both UTEP and the opposing team for pancakes at their home on game days, through her years as a student in the 1940s, to recent years when she regularly heard from graduates who benefited from the Belding-de Wetter Scholarship Fund,” said her son David de Wetter on behalf of the family. “She recognized that education is the key to a successful and contributing life. She was so proud that UTEP has enabled so many first-generation students to achieve their own success and, in turn, give back to UTEP and the community and thus pave the way for future generations.” - Elizabeth Ashby
ROBERT “BOB” GRAVEM WEBB, PH.D.

Robert ‘Bob’ Gravem Webb, Ph.D., a professor at The University of Texas at El Paso from 1962 to 1992 in the Department of Biological Sciences, died Sept. 18, 2018, in San Angelo, Texas. He was 91.

Webb’s former student, Jerry Johnson, Ph.D., professor of biological sciences in UTEP’s College of Science, said his close friend was an accomplished herpetologist who loved El Paso, Mexico and jazz piano.

“We did a lot together,” Johnson said. “We got along well and had similar interests. He could play the jazz piano really well. We even belonged to the El Paso Friends of Jazz.”

Webb was Johnson’s major professor while he earned his master’s degree from UTEP in 1973.

Webb, who became professor emeritus in the Department of Biological Sciences in 1992, received his bachelor’s degree at the University of California, Los Angeles, his master’s at the University of Oklahoma and his doctorate at the University of Kansas.

He served in the U.S. Navy from 1945 to 1946. He was a herpetologist and expert in biosystematics and biogeography of reptiles and amphibians of the U.S. and Mexico. That knowledge led him to become president of the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles in 1980.

Webb was a world authority on softshell turtles and published more than 100 scientific papers and two books, wherein he described 19 new species of reptiles and amphibians. In addition, a snake in New Mexico was named after him.

Webb made El Paso and UTEP home.

“She was an advocate and compassionate person and more than just an educator,” said Diane Ackall Hawley, Ph.D., one of Gail Ackall’s three children. “My mother really infused life lessons into her teaching beyond academia. She really taught the art of living.”

GAIL WAGONER ACKALL, PH.D.

Gail Wagoner Ackall, Ph.D., associate professor emerita of Clinical Laboratory Science (CLS) at The University of Texas at El Paso, taught her students to look at life beyond the cells under a microscope. She encouraged them to pursue their passions and live life to the fullest. Ackall died Aug. 2, 2018, at the age of 80.

“She was an advocate and compassionate person and more than just an educator,” said Diane Ackall Hawley, Ph.D., one of Gail Ackall’s three children. “My mother really infused life lessons into her teaching beyond academia. She really taught the art of living.”

A UTEP faculty member for 20 years, Ackall served as director of the Medical Technology program starting in 1981. The program changed its name to clinical laboratory science in the early 1990s. She also was associate dean of UTEP’s College of Health Sciences and the School of Nursing.

Like many of her students, Ackall was the first in her family to graduate from college. The Chicago native earned her bachelor’s degree at Valparaiso University and her master’s at Western Michigan University. She holds a doctorate from Texas Tech University.

“She very much liked the fact that many of her students were first-generation college students,” Hawley recalled. “They had perseverance and endurance and that is what she loved about them.”

Before UTEP, Ackall was lab coordinator at what is now The Hospitals of Providence Memorial Campus. She oversaw the hospital’s medical technology program, one of three hospital-based programs in El Paso. Ackall was influential in consolidating these programs under UTEP’s Medical Technology program.

She retired from UTEP in 2001. UTEP CLS Director Lorraine Torres, Ed.D., said Ackall helped her discover a passion for laboratory medicine.

“Gail is the reason why I went into teaching,” said Torres, a CLS program graduate who joined the UTEP faculty in 1985. “I’ve been here ever since.”

Ackall’s family has created the Gail W. Ackall Endowed Scholarship to benefit UTEP CLS students. To contribute, contact Sandra L. Lopez-Serio at silopezserio3@utep.edu.

- Laura L. Acosta

- Victor R. Martinez
On a cold, windy November afternoon, the three of us stood alongside her grave to say goodbye. Three vastly different people, separated by 30 years of life, but united in our love for the dear woman we laid to rest.

Helen O’Shea Keleher was 91 years old, and in the fall of 1985, I said goodbye to a woman who profoundly changed my life. As a first-generation college student and scholarship recipient, UTEP had matched me with one of their most generous donors two years earlier. Helen was a funny, lively, garrulous woman who had the spark of a much younger soul within what had become an aging and illness-fraught body.

Helen was unique in her time. She spoke her mind, loved enormously and professed to her closest friends that people were often nice to her because of her money. She was an independent woman and nobody’s fool. Her story in El Paso had begun long before I met her. Born in 1894 in Denver, she had moved to El Paso at the age of 3. The daughter of a railroad engineer and successful real estate investor, Helen lived a life of privilege during those pioneer days on the border. But as an only child, and later a widow with no children of her own, it was a life often marred by loneliness.

Like her mother, Helen was drawn to public service, and spent most of it caring for poor and orphaned children at the Rio Vista Farm in Socorro. She spoke often of her many “children,” how dearly she had loved them all, and how those years were the best of her life. After retiring as a child advocate, she spent her later years as the benefactor and frequent host of many charities and organizations. And after years of funding the education of promising students through UTEP, she endowed a permanent fund at the university.

She made me feel loved from the first time we met. She held my hand tightly in her frail grip, and introduced me as her “baby,” much to the confusion of her friends. When you’re 19 and trying to navigate the new world of college alone, it meant more than I can express to have your “grandma” cheering you on from the sidelines. She bragged about me to everyone with an enthusiasm reserved for my own parents.

And unbeknownst to her, I was not from a wealthy family and would have struggled to pay for college without her scholarship. Helen was kind. She was generous. She was strong. And despite being a woman from a very different generation, she had absolutely no hesitation in speaking her mind. She loved children without regard to their race, nationality, or socioeconomic status.

Her life’s work was that of fierce advocacy for the safety and betterment of those in her care, both the long-ago orphans of Rio Vista Farm, and the college students of UTEP. Helen’s goals were focused on lifting people up and out of poverty, not pushing them further down. Helen was a woman of great privilege, but she knew what it was like to feel alone. I can still hear the pain and loneliness in her voice during a call from the hospital in her final months. The memory of her tearful, frail voice still breaks my heart. Helen would remind us that a child deserves to be loved and treated with dignity, because in spite of their background, they are capable of great things. She saw the promise in people. She invested in their futures, as she did in mine. And in 2018, her love, compassion and dedication to the welfare of our youngest and most vulnerable neighbors should be the guiding principle in our nation.

Helen will never be alone again, because she will not be forgotten. The ripples she created in this world through incredible kindness and generosity continue to spread across the country in the lives of those she cared for. Helen’s legacy is one of dedication to making the world better, one child at a time, in her beloved home on the border. She never let money and influence make her immune to the plight of others.

Let us reflect the light of a heart like Helen’s by speaking for the voiceless and advocating for all children with the same passion we would for our own. Like Helen, we all know what it is like to feel alone in this world. She gifted me with lessons that far exceed the value of money. She taught me that love of others extends far beyond the boundaries of our homes, our neighborhoods, or the Rio Grande.
Miners Around the World

Ivan Valenzuela (front), a senior electrical engineering major, and fellow students participate in a summer research program in Medellín, Colombia, in May 2018.

Mourat Tchoshanov, Ph.D., professor in the College of Education, attends a World Cup match in Russia in June 2018.

Ricardo Palacios III (B.A. Political Science, '77) and Rachel Palacios (B.S. Nursing, '02) visit the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem in June 2018.

Claudia I. Retana (B.A. Electronic Media, '97) traveled to Scandinavia this summer, beginning with a hike to Norway’s Preikestolen, or Pulpit Rock.

MBA student Melissa Rivas visits Cusco, Peru.

Hector A. Rubio, (BSW, '97), left, and Adrian Rubio, (BFA, '99) visit Positano, Italy, in July 2018.

To be part of Miners Around the World, submit a high-resolution photo of yourself in UTEP gear and caption information to univcomm@utep.edu.
An unwavering commitment to deliver on UTEP’s mission and vision of access and excellence is the definition of Diana Natalicio’s tenure as President. Her resolve to provide the people of the Paso del Norte region with access to quality higher education opportunities, combined with her passion to embrace the unique attributes of the University’s talented students, has created a model public research university.

The “Thank You for 30” campaign celebrates President Natalicio’s leadership and sustains and builds the momentum needed to propel UTEP forward in our unprecedented journey.

Learn more and say “Thank You for 30” at 30.utep.edu.