CAMPUS SNAPSHOTS

PHOTOS BY IVAN PIERRE AGUIRRE, J.R. HERNANDEZ AND LAURA TREJO
new decade brings the promise of continued excellence at The University of Texas at El Paso.

In this issue of UTEP Magazine, we highlight research being done by faculty and students to address 21st century challenges of regional and national importance. We are advancing knowledge on the desalination of water for direct potable reuse, studying the effects of thirdhand smoke on platelet function and cardiovascular disease, and learning how to recognize and treat cancers that affect the Mexican-American population of our region.

UTEP is where artistic expression takes the form of rays of light that traverse our southern border. It is where our students joined together to support each other and to support our community and our first responders in the wake of the senseless act of violence that rocked El Paso last August.

UTEP is also where government departments and foundations, along with companies such as Lockheed Martin and Prudential, seek partnerships to prepare a highly skilled workforce. And it is where students from the lowest socioeconomic backgrounds are given the tools they need to move up the ladder to the top 20% of income earners.

UTEP makes a difference in our community. A college degree doesn’t just benefit the person who earns it; we all benefit when we live in an educated community, where everyone has the opportunity to develop their gifts and talents to the fullest.

The UTEP of today is the best this University has ever been. And it is the foundation on which we will build an even better University to meet the needs of tomorrow.

The regions of the world that educate people will thrive in the 21st century. I encourage you to deepen your connection to UTEP and join us on our journey.

Heather Wilson
President
UTEP President Heather Wilson finds joy in higher education. She is especially excited about the campus’ commitment to access, excellence and driving discoveries of public value.

UTEP’s history is laden with exceptional moments. Its future will be focused on becoming a national leader in positively impacting the health, culture, education and economy of the region it serves.

For several decades, UTEP’s ability to help students ascend the social mobility ladder has been evident. Sustaining that notion remains one of the University’s primary goals.

In 2018-19, UTEP surpassed $100 million in annual research expenditures for the first time in its history. This feat augments the University’s power to innovate, give back, and advance discovery of public value.

The Interdisciplinary Research Building (IDRB) — an $85 million, 150,000-square-foot facility devoted to UTEP’s burgeoning research enterprise — is scheduled to open in spring 2020.

Photo by J.R. Hernandez

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Happening on Campus Key

Campus Research Athletics Arts
Two faculty members from The University of Texas at El Paso were recognized for their extraordinary classroom performance and innovative instruction in the classroom as recipients of The University of Texas System Board of Regents' 2019 Outstanding Teaching Award.

This year's UTEP awardees are Martine Ceberio, Ph.D., associate professor of computer science, and Denise Lujan, director of developmental math.

"I am incredibly pleased at this external validation of what we have long known about two of our strongest teachers at UTEP," said John Wiebe, Ph.D., UTEP's interim provost and vice president for academic affairs. "Dr. Ceberio and Ms. Lujan represent the best of our access and excellence mission, as both work tirelessly to make our academic affairs more accessible to those who are motivated to pursue a top-notch education through innovative approaches to instruction in the classroom, laboratory, field and online." Wiebe added that the Board of Regents has presented the awards to approximately 700 UT educators including more than 70 UTEP faculty members since its inception.

"This awards program is an investment in both faculty and students, because when it comes to student success – and subsequently real-world success – recruiting and retaining great faculty is the key," UT System Chancellor James B. Milliken said. "I'm grateful to the Board of Regents for its continued commitment to great teaching, and I'm thankful that these exceptional educators are serving our students and Texas." - Christina Rodriguez

The University of Texas at El Paso saw enrollment increase for the 21st consecutive year as the campus reported a new record-high fall enrollment figure of 25,177 for the 2019-20 academic year.

"UTEP provides a great education at a price families can afford," UTEP President Heather Wilson said. "I was particularly pleased to see the 57% growth in the freshman class and 16% growth among new doctoral and master's students. Many of our students have commitments outside the classroom, and our faculty and staff work to create an engaging environment in which they can successfully complete their degrees," said Vice President for Student Affairs Gary Edens, Ed.D., who also serves as UTEP's dean of students, adding that he is excited to see the strong improvement in student success.

Although UTEP saw a record number of students complete their degrees during the 2018-19 academic year, the departure of these graduates has been offset by the increased year-to-year retention among undergraduates along with growth among new doctoral and master's students.

"Retention is a top priority, and we're excited to see the strong improvement in student success," said Edens. "UTEP provides a great education at a price families can afford." - Elizabeth Ashby

The University of Texas at El Paso
REGENTS' OUTSTANDING TEACHING AWARDS
DR. CEBERIO AND MS. LUJAN
REPRESENT THE BEST OF OUR ACCESS AND EXCELLENCE MISSION..."
When Felipa Solis has an idea, she sees it through to the end. The El Paso Pro-Musica executive director, who is based on campus and works closely with The University of Texas at El Paso’s Center for Arts Entrepreneurship (CAE), had a plan to spread the joy of music across the campus during Homecoming Week. She pitched the concept to several administrators on campus and received approval to work with the Office of University Communications, who helped her make it happen in less than two weeks. The result was a series of impromptu music performances by students and faculty at multiple campus venues.

Music ensembles featured flutes, clarinets, cellos, trumpets, saxophones, steel drums, singers and others in simultaneous performances on Friday, Oct. 4, 2019, at 11 locations across campus. Grammy Award-winning cellist Zuill Bailey, the CAE’s artistic director and senior music lecturer, performed in front of the Lhakhang. Students walking between classes, Homecoming visitors touring campus, and staff and faculty who happened to pass by one of the performance locations were pleasantly surprised by the musical treat.

#FollowtheMinerMusic, as the event was dubbed, “was an idea created alongside Zuill Bailey to share all the talents of the Department of Music with all of the other departments on campus,” Solis said. “Early morning rain did not deter the musicians or the exciting Miner spirit. The exercise was a success as the musicians loved sharing their talents, and faculty and students enjoyed the engaging campuswide serenade.”

- Jenn Crawford
James B. Milliken, Chancellor of The University of Texas System, introduced new UTEP President Heather Wilson to the El Paso community Sept. 5, 2019, during a welcome reception in the Larry K. Durham Sports Center. The event served as an official welcome on behalf of the UT System for President Wilson, whose first day as UTEP’s leader was Aug. 15, 2019. Among the notable attendees were UT System Regent Nolan Perez, Student Regent Daniel R. Domínguez, a UTEP doctoral student, and many other dignitaries and community members. - Pablo Villa
PHOTOS BY LAURA TREJO
When three UTEP student-athletes made a surprise visit to Juárez, Mexico, one Saturday morning in October 2019, they were not sure what to expect. But the trip left them and many children with an experience they will not soon forget.

Members of the UTEP football team were invited by the U.S. Consul General in Ciudad Juárez to take part in an annual flag football tournament called “Tochito.” The tournament, which is hosted by La Fundación del Empresariado Chihuahuense, Asociación Civil (FECHAC) in coordination with NFL Mexico, allows boys and girls ages 7-14 to compete for a chance to qualify for the organization’s national championship game.

Jimmy Quemado, a defensive tackle who completed his senior season in November 2019, said he was overwhelmed by the way the UTEP contingent was greeted, and he hopes their visit inspires the children to play sports at the highest professional levels.

“They were very excited to meet us and to just talk to us and give us high-fives,” Quemado said. “It made me feel happy because it felt like we were making a difference in the smallest way possible, and just appearing at an event for them can make their day.”

Despite the language barrier, the student-athletes played catch, ran football drills and signed autographs on anything the children could find.

“They were treating us like NFL players who won the Super Bowl,” said Kalaii Griffin, a linebacker who played his senior season in 2019.

The U.S. Consulate General in Juárez regularly participates in the event. This year, the agency had the idea to invite UTEP football players. When the request was brought to the team, freshman wide receiver Adam Cousins, Griffin and Quemado quickly volunteered.

“Adam, Kalaii, and Jimmy are great role models and ambassadors for UTEP who, thanks to their kindness and generosity, have made a difference in the lives of these children,” Consul General John Tavenner said. “We’re sure the kids will always remember that special morning.” - Jesse Martinez
Esparza. Notable speakers also included Jorge A. Rodriguez, deputy chief of the Los Angeles Police Department, and Juárez Independent Government representative of Binational Affairs Juan Acereto Cervera. The committee also discussed the impact of anti-immigrant rhetoric and the rise of racist attitudes and domestic terrorism.

5. TEXAS COMPTROLLER GLENN HEGAR
Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar visited UTEP on his Good for Texas Tour: Cybersecurity Edition on Oct. 28, 2019. Cyber crimes are becoming a more prominent threat to national, corporate and personal security, a new comptroller study finds. UTEP is one of only 21 universities that have been designated as a Center for Academic Excellence by the National Security Agency in the focus areas of cyber defense and cyber operations. UTEP’s partnership with the Army Research Laboratory and its S-STEM scholarship program make cybersecurity graduates highly recruited and quickly employed.

6. SUSAN GORDON
Former Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence Susan M. Gordon chronicled the trials and successes of her extensive career in her Centennial Lecture, titled “How I Joined the CIA,” on Dec. 9, 2019. A graduate of Duke University, Gordon served in a multitude of executive positions over nearly three decades with the U.S. Intelligence Community. Gordon expounded the imperativeness of inclusion and diversity in developing successful collaborative projects and the decisive qualities that yield effective leaders.

7. ROSALYN W. BERNE
Director for the Center of Engineering Ethics and Society at the National Academy of Engineering Rosalyn W. Berne, Ph.D., visited the Sun City for the first time to deliver a Centennial Lecture co-sponsored by the College of Engineering at UTEP’s Undergraduate Learning Center. Her lecture, titled “Finding a Personal Ethics Compass in an Increasingly Unethical World,” emphasized the importance of every individual turning inward to evaluate the ethical and moral compass within themselves. Through illustrative examples, Berne explicated the philosophy of moral principles and shifting values and explored the intricacy of navigating the self through tribulation in contemporary society. ■ - Julian Herrera
UTEP HONORED FOR SUPPORT OF MINORITIES IN COMPUTER SCIENCE

The University of Texas at El Paso was named the third recipient of the University Award given by the Center for Minorities and People with Disabilities in Information Technology (CMD-IT). UTEP’s Ann Gates, Ph.D., chair of the Department of Computer Science, accepted the recognition Sept. 19, 2019, at the ACM Richard Tapia Celebration of Diversity in Computing conference in San Diego, California. The award recognizes U.S. universities that have retained students from underrepresented groups in computer science programs.

CMD-IT leaders selected UTEP based on the campus’ impressive quantitative reported results, which reflect high retention and graduation rates, and qualitative reporting on various retention programs.

“We want to express our immense gratitude at being named the recipient of this award,” Gates said. “At UTEP, we have long recognized the importance of inclusion and equity as a means of advancing discovery. The unique perspectives of our 21st century student demographic and faculty are vital contributions to research and innovation. We look forward to collaborating with CMD-IT and other partners to continue to create pathways for diverse approaches in computing.” — Pablo Villa

UTEP’S NEW TEACHER PREP PROGRAM LONGER, WITH PAY

The University of Texas at El Paso’s College of Education launched a “game changer” initiative during the fall 2019 semester that organizers believe will enhance student teacher preparation and benefit the region’s K-12 students.

UTEP President Heather Wilson, college leaders and community partners gathered outside the University Library on Sept. 26, 2019, to announce the start of the Miner Teacher Residency Program (MTRP) in front of an audience that included many of the 19 students who made up the pilot cohort. These students will co-teach a class with an experienced mentor teacher for an academic year at one of two elementary schools and get a stipend for it. Another benefit is that the college assigned a faculty member to each of those campuses in the El Paso and Socorro school districts to provide intensive site-based coaching. The expectation is that students who complete this program will be better prepared to lead their own classrooms after graduation. The college’s student teachers usually only serve for one semester-long session and it is unpaid.

Clifton Tanabe, Ph.D., dean of the college, said that this new program was in the works for about two years. It started with meetings with the college’s recent graduates to discuss ways to enhance the teacher preparation program. That led to a three-year partnership with the University-School Partnerships for the Renewal of Education Preparation (US PREP), a national organization that of-
Leslie K. Robbins, Ph.D., professor of nursing at UTEP, was appointed interim dean of the School of Nursing, effective Sept. 1, 2019.

Robbins has served as associate dean of graduate education at the UTEP School of Nursing. She has more than 40 years of experience in nursing with a special focus on nursing administration and nursing education. A member of the UTEP faculty since 2009, Robbins was instrumental in the school’s efforts to establish the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program in 2010. She served as the DNP program’s first director until 2014.

“Dr. Robbins’ stature in her profession, along with her intimate knowledge of the UTEP School of Nursing and its vision, position her well to lead during the coming year,” said John Wiebe, Ph.D., interim provost and vice president for academic affairs.

Robbins holds the Orville E. Egbert Endowed Chair in Nursing and Health Sciences and is a fellow of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners.

Approximately 2,400 students are enrolled in the School of Nursing’s undergraduate and graduate programs.

- Laura L. Acosta
HAPPENING ON CAMPUS

The Center for the Study of the Presidency & Congress (CSPC) presented UTEP President Heather Wilson with its Eisenhower Award for her prominent leadership.

President Wilson accepted the award Oct. 21, 2019, during the organization’s 52nd Annual Awards Dinner in Washington, D.C. CSPC recognized her for her commitment to the American people and their security throughout her career as a U.S. Air Force officer, member of Congress and Secretary of the Air Force.

The Eisenhower Award salutes enlightened leadership, strategic vision and character in the mold of the 34th President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower.

– Pablo Villa

EISENHOWER AWARD

UTEP PRESIDENT ACCEPTS PRESTIGIOUS RECOGNITION

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UTEP AND LOCKHEED MARTIN

SIGN AGREEMENT TO EMPLOY STUDENTS IN EL PASO

As part of the agreement, Lockheed Martin will open a location in El Paso near The University of Texas at El Paso campus where it will employ UTEP undergraduate students as interns. In addition, Lockheed Martin will hire UTEP doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers to serve as supervisors. The partnership provides opportunities for students and gives Lockheed Martin access to a talented, diverse pool of potential employees.

“UTEP is an invaluable asset to El Paso and key in training the next generation of workforce and promoting our binational region’s economic development,” Congresswoman Escobar said. “This partnership with Lockheed Martin will support growth and innovation in the aerospace and defense industries and open the doors of opportunity to a vibrant community of talented, highly trained, highly skilled students.”

The Lockheed Martin location may also provide an opportunity for existing Lockheed Martin employees from El Paso to return to their hometown while continuing to work for the company.

“This a great partnership with Lockheed Martin that’s going to
create opportunities for our students to have jobs right here adjacent to campus while they are going to school,” President Wilson said. “Through this agreement, we are taking the next step in our relationship and bringing more engineering and business jobs to El Paso. We educate students from the region for jobs in industry, but UTEP will also work with community leaders to attract companies willing to employ people here in El Paso.

“UTEP is one of only nine top tier research universities in Texas,” President Wilson said. “It educates 35% more undergraduate engineers than the University of New Mexico, and is the largest university between Tucson, Arizona; the Colorado border; and Lubbock, Texas.”

For Lockheed Martin, the partnership provides opportunities to recruit a highly educated and diverse workforce while continuing to work closely with other high-tech UTEP facilities, including the W.M. Keck Center for 3D Innovation and the NASA MIRO Center for Space Exploration and Technology Research (cSETR).

Lockheed Martin is one of the most active and successful recruiters of UTEP graduates. Its F-35 manufacturing plant in Fort Worth, Texas, employs more than 100 UTEP alumni.

“Lockheed Martin and UTEP have a strong history of partnership,” Coomer said. “With the establishment of this program, we see great potential for the UTEP interns to make invaluable contributions to the engineering community and to the future of our business.”

Leaders and policymakers from across the Paso del Norte region said they’re encouraged by the prospects this latest addition to the partnership between UTEP and Lockheed Martin presents.

“The City of El Paso fully supports UTEP’s commitment to economic development efforts that harness the talent of this community’s students,” Mayor Margo said. “Lockheed Martin’s increased presence in El Paso will bolster our city’s reputation as a place where Fortune 100 companies, like Lockheed Martin, can grow their businesses by seizing on the opportunity that our homegrown, dedicated workforce presents.”

“The County of El Paso stands with UTEP in its efforts to create local jobs for a highly educated and competitive workforce that continues to grow in our region,” County Judge Samaniego said. “Both the County and UTEP take great pride in the preparation of our future leaders who, through their vision and leadership, will create growth and prosperity in our region. We are pleased to have Lockheed Martin as a partner in this endeavor.”

Headquartered in Bethesda, Maryland, Lockheed Martin employs approximately 105,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture, integration and sustainment of advanced technology systems, products and services.

- Darlene Barajas

“LOCKHEED MARTIN AND UTEP HAVE A STRONG HISTORY OF PARTNERSHIP…”

- TRAVIS COOMER
LOCKHEED MARTIN MISSILES AND FIRE CONTROL VICE PRESIDENT OF ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY

GO TO UTEP.EDU/MAGAZINE TO SEE A VIDEO ABOUT THE LOCKHEED MARTIN PARTNERSHIP.
APPRECIATION EVENT

UTEP SGA HONORS PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCIES

In the wake of the Aug. 3, 2019, tragedy in El Paso in which 22 people died after a gunman opened fire on civilians at a Walmart less than 10 miles from campus, many members of The University of Texas at El Paso and El Paso communities came together to provide aid in any way they could.

Inspired by those actions, The University of Texas System Board of Regents presented the UTEP Student Government Association (SGA) with $10,000 to assist with relief efforts. The SGA utilized those funds to thank the men and women who responded during the tragedy.

“We want to show them that we do appreciate the hard work that they do today, and not only for the Aug. 3 event, but every single day,” SGA President Jessica Martinez said. “We want to make sure that they are aware that the student body cares about them and the population looks to them for safety.”

Students wrote notes of appreciation to area public safety agencies. The notes were compiled, framed and presented to representatives from dozens of agencies that responded to the tragedy.

“It’s a great opportunity to let them know that we know their work, we know that they do this every day and we appreciate it and we are grateful about it,” said Mynel Gomez, a freshman engineering major at UTEP.

The agencies were invited to an appreciation lunch where many uniformed officers were joined by students to share a meal and their gratitude for one another. Ray Rodriguez, assistant chief of police for the UTEP Police Department, thanked the students for the event on behalf of the agencies in attendance.

“It means a lot to the men and women of law enforcement.”

– Jesse Martinez
NEW BUSINESS MINOR

UTEP’S NEW MINOR GIVES STUDENTS A COMPETITIVE EDGE IN REAL ESTATE

The University of Texas at El Paso’s College of Business Administration (COBA) launches a new minor this spring aimed at providing students with a competitive edge in the booming commercial business landscape at a local and national level.

UTEP’s Commercial Real Estate (CRE) minor, expected to launch in January 2020, will consist of four courses taught by local industry experts Carleen Barth and Jonathan Robertson, who each hold a Certified Commercial Investment Member designation in addition to their MBAs. The CRE courses will convene primarily in the evenings and will provide UTEP students critical insight into real-world, professional applications.

Erik Devos, Ph.D., associate dean for faculty development at COBA, said the Certified Commercial Investment Member (CCIM) Institute, which serves as the leading standard in commercial real estate certifications worldwide, has provided substantial input for the new program.

“Our curriculum mirrors the industry standard and will give students a competitive edge in a field with many promising career opportunities locally and nationally,” Devos said.

The CRE minor was developed in response to the combined interest of UTEP students and local industry stakeholders. The program’s curriculum was guided by input from top commercial real estate and development companies including MIMCO Inc., Stewart Title Co., CBRE Group and Hunt Companies and aims to provide COBA undergraduate students with an academic foundation for future professional certifications in the field. - Christina Rodriguez

The University of Texas System Chancellor’s Centurions, a volunteer group of young UT System alumni, were in El Paso on Sept. 5, 2019, to launch “Centurions in Service to Education,” a program supporting new teachers who recently graduated from UT System institutions.

A contingent including UT System Chancellor James B. Milliken, UTEP President Heather Wilson and UTEP College of Education Dean Clifton Tanabe, Ph.D., celebrated the launch at Ascarate Elementary School in the Ysleta Independent School District.

Ascarate Elementary teacher Korina Arras was presented with the Educator’s Torch Award – a $500 gift card – that will help pay for classroom supplies for her fourth-grade class.

Arras is one of 50 randomly selected new and soon-to-be graduates of UTEP’s College of Education to be the first beneficiaries of the award. - Elizabeth Ashby

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The University of Texas at El Paso has teamed up with financial service institutions ADP and Prudential to offer students in the College of Business Administration (COBA) opportunities to enhance their future careers in the finance industry.

The Financial Services Boot Camp is open to all COBA majors but is geared toward students interested in pursuing careers in the securities sector who plan to obtain a Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) qualification. The FINRA awards a series of licenses necessary for investment advisers to conduct business.

Students are selected by the college each semester to participate in the immersive 13-week program to learn more about careers in financial services directly from leading executives with ADP and Prudential. Participants also prepare to take the Securities Industry Essentials (SIE) exam, which covers the basic foundations of FINRA licensing exams without the need of employer sponsorship. Passing the SIE demonstrates to prospective employers that the individual has basic industry knowledge and the potential to successfully pass licensing exams.

Each participant receives test prep materials and a series of workshops, guest speakers and site visits from the program’s corporate sponsors. Once they complete the program, students are able to sit for the SIE exam at no cost.

“Because engagement with the corporate sponsors is so close and extensive throughout the course, this program is a huge benefit for COBA students,” said Juan Bolaños, the college’s student success manager. “Students are learning about the industry directly from the companies they could potentially work for after graduation.”

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An estimated 17,000 Americans suffer a spinal cord injury each year. Yet, according to spinal cord injury statistics, only 12% of them are employed one year after their injury.

In an effort to increase job opportunities for people with disabilities, The University of Texas at El Paso’s Master of Occupational Therapy Program (MOT) will launch a new vocational rehabilitation program in 2020 to help individuals with spinal cord injuries obtain sustainable employment.

Thanks to a $100,000 grant from the Craig Neilsen Foundation, the MOT program will operate a coffee shop in UTEP’s Campbell Building where individuals with spinal cord injuries will receive on-the-job training and support to help them transition into the workforce.

“A person diagnosed with a spinal cord injury can be a productive long-term employee,” said Dahlia Castillo, OTD, MOT director and the grant’s principal investigator. She is also the College of Health Sciences’ Charles H. and Shirley T. Leavell Faculty Fellow in Community Engagement. “This program aims to first provide individual skills training to increase employability, and second to educate employers to increase employment opportunities for them and others who have a disability.”

Castillo will work with Volar Center for Independent Living, Texas Workforce Commission, UTEP’s Center for Accommodations and Support Services and Sodexo catering services to train up to 20 individuals with a spinal cord injury in one year.

At the conclusion of the project, the coffee shop will remain open, and UTEP occupational therapy and rehabilitation counseling students will continue to assist participants under the direction of licensed faculty in those fields.

- Laura L. Acosta

- Christina Rodriguez
For more than a year, nurse practitioner students in The University of Texas at El Paso’s Master of Science in Nursing program have been delivering hands-on patient care in a virtual examination room.

Through digital clinical experiences (DCE), students interact with virtual patients performing such tasks as a health assessment, physical exam, diagnosis, and treatment plan.

“Students can safely interview patients, examine them, and take care of their patients in a digital environment,” said Sondra Skory, DNP, assistant clinical instructor and Shadow Health course coordinator. “This allows them to build confidence and expertise before interaction with real patients. Students learn how to develop the needed critical thinking skills, as well as refine their physical assessment skills.”

Created by Shadow Health, an educational software developer, DCEs use leading-edge technology, including a state-of-the-art conversation engine and interactive 3D imagery, to provide students with practice opportunities in a safe learning environment.

UTEP’s nurse practitioner program prepares registered nurses beyond their initial professional training to provide a higher level of patient care. Future nurse practitioners will be able to examine patients, diagnose and treat acute and chronic illnesses, and prescribe medications and other therapeutic modalities.

To maximize their clinical education, Shadow Health DCEs have been incorporated into their advanced health assessment and pharmacology coursework.

By making use of DCEs, students receive individualized feedback on their developing skills, including therapeutic communication, patient examination, patient education and empathy.

“Shadow Health has helped shape my approach to performing a physical assessment and I feel very comfortable performing certain tests and assessments,” said Fukamanji Sikazwe, a graduate student in the Nurse Practitioner program.

Students log into one of nine Shadow Health modules. In the exam room, they met Tina Jones, who is one of several virtual patients with whom students interacted with. They typed questions or statements in the program’s chat box to communicate with her.

Jones has a language capacity of 128,000 words and can verbally respond to hundreds of questions.

“They learn to effectively communicate with patients using basic, everyday language, which is vital to the proper diagnosis and treatment of patients,” said Guillermina Solis, Ph.D., assistant professor of nursing and coordinator of the Family Nurse Practitioner program. – Laura L. Acosta
From free health screenings for incoming freshmen to a new clinical psychologist, The University of Texas at El Paso Student Health and Wellness Center (SHWC) rolled out enhanced services in 2019 to help students remain healthy Miners.

Students have access to mental health and occupational therapy services and drug and alcohol recovery and screening programs in the SHWC’s pharmacy area. The space was remodeled after the pharmacy closed in 2018.

“We are taking a proactive approach to ensure that we have a healthy student population,” said Shafik Dharamsi, Ph.D., dean of the College of Health Sciences, which operates the center. “Our students can’t afford to miss school. By keeping them healthy, we are also ensuring that they are successful in their education and their trajectory toward graduation is not compromised by a health crisis.”

Hoping to maintain students’ health and prevent illnesses through regular on-site visits, the college has created greater awareness of the SHWC’s preventive and wellness services.

Outreach activities include tabling events across campus and an annual student health fair. The center offered free health screenings to all incoming freshmen such as Virginia Hernandez to assess their overall health and detect medical problems early.

“I don’t get sick often,” said Hernandez, an accounting major, “but I think it’s important to know how healthy you are. Not only do you not have to pay for the exam, but it’s also a good way to get familiar with the student health center. This way you know where to go in case you don’t feel well.” - Laura L. Acosta
Crowds of children in costumes lined up at UTEP’s Hoover House, the official residence of the UTEP President located in El Paso’s historic Kern Place, to trick-or-treat. President Heather Wilson, her husband, Jay Hone, and UTEP mascot Paydirt Pete distributed candy to hundreds of neighborhood residents.

While picking up candy, the visitors and their parents also had the opportunity to greet their dog Miss Money Penny and Hoover House student ambassadors.

The house, which has hosted distinguished guests and serves as the setting for many ceremonial University events, was visited by children of all ages dressed as characters including the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man from “Ghostbusters,” Storm Troopers from “Star Wars,” Pikachu from “Pokemon,” and many more.

- Elizabeth Ashby

LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS HISTORIC HOME AT UTEP.EDU/HOOVERHOUSE
Eli Greenbaum, Ph.D., an associate professor of biological sciences and director of The University of Texas at El Paso’s Biodiversity Collections, is the senior author of a study recently published in the Journal of Natural History that documents a newly discovered natural defense against predation by the Congolese giant toad. Greenbaum led the study in collaboration with UTEP doctoral students Gene Vaughan and Mark Teshera, undergraduate Theresa Edmonston, and Congolese colleague Dr. Chifundera Kusamba.

**UTEP BIOLOGY PROFESSOR CHRONICLES TOAD’S ABILITY TO MIMIC LETHAL VIPER**

Greenbaum’s investigation into how the toad mimics the appearance and behavior of the venomous Gaboon viper to avoid being eaten by predators has received worldwide attention. The grapefruit-sized amphibian is a master of disguise and has an astonishing resemblance to the head of the highly venomous Gaboon viper.

“We’re convinced that this is an example of Batesian mimicry, where a harmless species avoids predators by pretending to be a dangerous or toxic one,” Greenbaum said.

After years of fieldwork in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Greenbaum and his colleagues discovered that the toad (Sclerophrys channingi) occurs only in areas where the viper (Bitis gabonica) is present. The toad also looks like the viper — its body has some of the characteristic colors and triangular shape of the snake’s head. Also, like the snake, the toad emits a hissing noise resembling the sound of air being released from a balloon.

“Because the toads are relatively large compared to the vast majority of other frogs in the region, they are likely to be very tempting prey to a suite of generalist predators that are known to eat frogs, including mammals, birds, large lizards and snakes,” Greenbaum said. “Predators likely avoid the toad because they fear its resemblance to the Gaboon viper, which has the longest fangs and highest venom yield of any snake in the world.”

The researchers reached their conclusions after scrutinizing natural history specimens in the UTEP collections, as well as animals in captivity and the wild. These comparisons showed that the color pattern and shape of the toad’s body matched up well with those on the viper’s head.

“This is the first example in the world of a toad pretending to be a snake to avoid predation, so the results are both unique and important,” Greenbaum said. “It makes me speculate about other amazing things we have yet to discover in the poorly explored forests of Democratic Republic of the Congo.”

“I think this project is a wonderful example of UTEP students engaging with faculty to make an exciting discovery,” said Robert Kirken, Ph.D., dean of the College of Science at UTEP. “The student in Dr. Greenbaum’s class, Theresa Edmonston, made the initial observation that the Congolese giant toad looked like the Gaboon snake. The inquisitive faculty member then delves into this research area and generates and tests this hypothesis, consults with other experts in the field and together they subsequently publish their work for the scientific world to review and consider new studies and models by which animals protect themselves from predators. All of this came about by a student making an observation in her genetics class. That’s science in its purest form.”

- Darlene Barajas
THIRDHAND SMOKE
CONCERNS UTEP PHARMACY RESEARCHERS

Although research shows that smoking cigarettes and breathing secondhand smoke can increase your risk for heart disease, there is growing concern that thirdhand smoke can be just as hazardous to your health.

That is why researchers at The University of Texas at El Paso’s School of Pharmacy are studying the effects of thirdhand smoke on platelet function and cardiovascular disease thanks to a $1.8 million grant from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

“We want to understand the mechanism by which thirdhand smoke increases the risk of cardiovascular disease in the form of heart attacks and strokes, so that in the future we can design better drug therapies or more specific therapies that can manage certain forms of thirdhand smoke-induced cardiovascular disease,” said Fadi Khasawneh, Ph.D., associate professor and chair of pharmaceutical sciences.

Khasawneh will lead the five-year study with co-investigator Fatima Z. Alshbool, Pharm.D., Ph.D., assistant professor of pharmacology. They will collaborate with Manuela Martins-Green, Ph.D., professor of cell biology at the University of California, Riverside.

The project will look for biomarkers of cardiovascular disease in the blood of individuals who have been exposed to thirdhand smoke, the residue from tobacco smoke that stays on clothing and indoor surfaces and can lead to serious health problems. Researchers will also examine the chemicals in thirdhand smoke to determine which substances become more toxic over time and directly affect cardiovascular health.

Thirdhand smoke is particularly harmful for children who inhale or ingest the residue as they crawl on carpets or play on furniture.

“We also hope to educate the public about their behavior,” said Alshbool, whose research interests also include the health effects of e-cigarette vapor. “Smokers may believe they are not putting their children at risk if they don’t smoke in front of them. But in fact if you smoke on this chair and your son or daughter sits on it, they get exposed to thirdhand smoke.”

In 2018, Khasawneh and Alshbool received a grant from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences to examine the effects of thirdhand smoke on the cardiovascular health of children who are exposed during pregnancy.

In 2015, Alshbool and Khasawneh were among the first group of researchers to demonstrate that thirdhand smoke could cause blood clots. - Laura L. Acosta

UTEP INSTRUCTOR STUDIES INFLUENCE OF ONLINE LEARNING

Alyse Hachey, Ph.D., associate professor of teacher education at The University of Texas at El Paso, is part of a multi-institutional team that will study how online opportunities affect college enrollment and degree completion, especially among nontraditional students who pursue degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The National Science Foundation awarded a five-year, $2.5 million grant for this study.

Hachey said the results would provide critical information about students and the challenges that affect their academic choices to obtain a degree. Registrars, administrators, policymakers and schedule coordinators will use this information to decide course structure, advisement and course availability as well as insights into student thought patterns. - Daniel Perez
Research has shown that college students often will delay the purchase of textbooks because of price, and that frequently leads to negative academic outcomes. Some researchers at The University of Texas at El Paso will spend part of the 2019-20 school year investigating solutions.

An interdisciplinary group of 19 faculty members who use high-priced textbooks to teach medium- to large-enrollment courses will work with staff from the University Library and UTEP’s Creative Studios to develop Open Educational Resources (OER) or other inexpensive instructional materials that will replace high-priced textbooks with low-cost to no-cost options. This is part of the campus’ annual TeachTech Research program.

The participants in the Affordable Course Materials Initiative will discover and curate print, digital and video resources and share their results with other educators via the University Library’s Digital Commons website, an institutional repository for academic and creative output.

“We can help (faculty) find the appropriate materials,” said Angela Lucero, a UTEP scholarly communication librarian and the program’s co-director. “One of our focuses is affordability. We know how to explore library resources and how to use them within the ‘fair use’ of copyright so that people will not have to pay extra for them.”

Lucero’s pre-initiative research of 20 University courses, student enrollment in those courses from fall 2016 through fall 2018 and the assigned textbooks priced at the University Bookstore, found that students spent more than $11 million on required textbooks. She added that the price of textbooks continues to increase faster than inflation.

Organizers expect to test their results during the fall 2020 semester, but it is possible that parts of it could launch as early as spring 2020.

Among the students excited about the possibility of lower textbook costs was Wilmarie Velazquez, a senior accounting major and married mother of three young children. The student, who remembered her first accounting textbook cost $230, said she has waited to buy textbooks because of costs.

“I think that’s an awesome idea,” Velasquez said. “I’m positive students are going to love it.”

The TeachTech directors developed this program in part because of Texas Senate Bill 810, which became law in June 2017. It directs state organizations to develop and support the use of OERs in higher education.

The Center for Inland Desalination Systems (CIDS) at The University of Texas at El Paso will analyze the conversion of municipal wastewater into drinking water and the desalination of water for direct potable reuse as part of a three-year, $400,000 Desalination and Water Purification Research grant awarded by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

Led by director Shane Walker, Ph.D., associate professor in the Department of Civil Engineering, and associate director Malynda Cappelle, Ph.D., CIDS research seeks to increase water recovery, decrease energy consumption and recover minerals from waste streams with the central goal of desalination and the development of potable reuse technology.

Walker and Cappelle are collaborating with executives and operators from El Paso Water, researchers from New Mexico State University, and engineering consultants from Garver to assess the state-of-the-art technology to produce water suitable for consumption. The pilot study hopes to demonstrate high water efficiency through the implementation of a series of advanced purification processes.

“This project is very exciting because we are demonstrating high-efficiency advanced water purification, starting with treated municipal wastewater,” Walker said.

The study is expected to conclude in October 2021.
The University of Texas at El Paso BUILDing SCHOLARS program was awarded a $15.2 million grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to train the next generation of biomedical researchers in the U.S. Southwest and to enhance the diversity of the biomedical research workforce.

BUILDing SCHOLARS, which stands for Building Infrastructure Leading to Diversity: Southwest Consortium of Health-Oriented Education Leaders and Research Scholars, is currently in Phase II of three linked awards for a total of $15.2 million since the program started in 2014. Some of the areas of focus include cancer, addiction, environmental health, health disparities, infectious disease, translational biomedicine, and degenerative and chronic diseases. Its visionary approach addresses individual, psychosocial and institutional-level needs by synergistically enhancing institutional, faculty and student development.

The program had 58 undergraduate scholars enrolled in the fall 2019 semester. Program participants receive a monthly stipend and 60% of their tuition costs covered, which allows students to immerse themselves in their UTEP research.

UTEP’s BUILDing SCHOLARS is one of the nation’s 10 BUILD sites that train the next generation of scientists who will increase diversity in the biomedical research workforce. The program also offers faculty training opportunities to improve as mentors and grant writers so they can share those skills with their students. It also provides research opportunities throughout the academic year for students, to include freshmen.

Research experiences within the first two years are critically important to student success, said Lourdes Echegoyen, Ph.D., the program’s principal investigator and director of the Campus Office of Undergraduate Research Initiatives (COURI). Students’ research participation can start at the freshmen level through Course-based Undergraduate Research Experiences (CUREs), which help retain students as they become excited about their professional future with hands-on experiences in their field.

“Evaluation results from Phase I of the program are showing that an early research experience allows students to feel part of a community of researchers and learners, which instills in them an early sense of belonging to the University and their profession,” Echegoyen said.

The program also includes partnerships with pipeline collaborators – institutions that send students to UTEP and other research partner institutions for summer research and may participate in other programs designed for faculty development. Pipeline partners include El Paso Community College, Northern New Mexico College, Western New Mexico University, Texas Southern University and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute. - Darlene Barajas
The University of Texas System Board of Regents approved $70 million for a major new facility at The University of Texas at El Paso that will house its growing research and teaching program in additive manufacturing. The funding also will improve UTEP’s test facilities for rocket engines and drones currently located in East El Paso County.

“El Paso/Juárez is the fourth largest manufacturing region in North America,” UTEP President Heather Wilson said. “The support of the Regents for this project will help us educate the next generation of engineers and expand the research we are doing in advanced manufacturing.”

This region is one of the largest manufacturing centers in North America, providing access to the Department of Defense’s (DoD) largest military complex for homeland-security research and development. The regional military complex, consisting of Fort Bliss, White Sands Missile Range, and Holloman Air Force Base, is comprised of more than 7,100 square miles of DoD-controlled ground and airspace, providing a unique environment for military-related activities and support.

The Center for Advanced Manufacturing and Aerospace will substantially increase the number of students engaged in advanced manufacturing and aerospace research, with plans to train more than 600 graduate and undergraduate students annually to create unparalleled employment opportunities for students upon graduation.

UTEP is a national leader in additive manufacturing using specialty materials and embedding electronics in 3D-printed materials. The University has completed advanced research in this field during the past decade worth more than $100 million sponsored by NASA, the DoD, the National Science Foundation and other agencies.

UTEP also conducts significant research work with NASA, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Energy and other agencies on rocket propulsion, unmanned aerial vehicles, spacecraft design and aircraft safety. The aerospace and manufacturing industries will need more than 10,000 engineers throughout the next few years just to maintain the current workforce.

The number of engineering students enrolled at UTEP has increased by more than 30% during the past five years, with more than 4,300 students enrolled in engineering alone. — Darlene Barajas
Ivana Biliskov cannot help but smile as she reflects on her time at The University of Texas at El Paso and her personal and intellectual growth as a musician due in large part to UTEP’s Center for Arts Entrepreneurship (CAE).

Biliskov, a native of Croatia, moved to the United States in 2014 to study cello performance at the University of North Texas in Denton. She decided to pursue her Master of Music in cello performance at UTEP under the tutelage of Grammy Award-winner Zuill Bailey, CAE’s artistic director.

The center is a partnership between the University’s Department of Music and El Paso Pro-Musica (EPPM), a nonprofit chamber music organization. The CAE’s mission is to provide students in the fine arts with opportunities to go beyond the traditional university curriculum through workshops, seminars, guest speakers and internships that will help prepare students for life as professional artists in the 21st century. One of the primary activities of the CAE, which launched in April 2017, is to provide weeklong residencies of professional musicians brought in by EPPM. These professionals work with the University’s music students on concepts related to the state of the arts today, to include working with the media, the business of the arts and audience engagement.

Biliskov said she became involved with the center as soon as she arrived at UTEP in fall 2018. She said the main things she has learned are to engage her audiences verbally as a performer, as well as to have diverse interests and to weave the essence of those interests into her performances.

While the majority of the center’s student participants come from the music department, Steve Wilson, DMA, department chair and professor, said that the sessions are open to non-music majors because the lessons about preparedness are universal.

He said CAE sessions are so popular that center leaders plan to develop a six-course minor in arts entrepreneurship that will launch in fall 2020. The courses will focus on business and communications in relation to the arts, portfolio creation and the state of the arts. Wilson said the goal of the minor is to give students ideas on how to promote themselves and their art.

“The students act surprised that the center is not twice as big and doing 10 times as many things,” Wilson said. “It’s great that we’ve tapped into this demand that they have. It tells us we’re doing the right thing.”

He also mentioned 10 mini-semester internships for UTEP students in January 2020 that will coincide with the two-week EPPM Chamber Music Festival. The interns will shadow the guest artists throughout the festival, which will include numerous behind-the-scenes views of productions and rehearsals. Each intern will earn a stipend.

One of the center’s most recent speakers was Bryan Wallick, an award-winning pianist who has performed in venues around the world for more than 20 years. Wallick, an assistant professor of music at Colorado State University, was an artist in residence in October 2019.

Wallick praised Bailey for his work with the CAE, which includes “Business in the Arts” seminars, and said the center should be a model for universities around the country because of how it promotes performance as well as the best ways to bring performances to the public in a relevant way. He said the information that professionals share takes the student beyond a “conservatory mindset” and gives them a better idea how to apply their skills after graduation.

“This center is a place where students and artists like myself can learn from each other,” Wallick said. “We can all find ways to make our art more meaningful to society.”

Felipa Solis, executive director of EPPM, said that the speakers always weave in the non-artistic side of the business into their narratives. They offer stories of how they got started in the business and share the lessons they learned through experience.

Solis, who has 35 years of experience as a broadcaster, said she is working with the music department and the CAE to create the curriculum for a communications in the arts course that will focus on how artists can best deal with the media to market, express and represent themselves as entrepreneurs.

She said that the center plans to involve students and faculty from other departments within the College of Liberal Arts, and eventually other schools and colleges that have natural ties to music such as nursing, education, engineering and business administration.

“As the center grows, so do the initiatives,” Solis said.

- Daniel Perez
BORDER ART

UTEPP’S RUBIN CENTER EARN RAISE FROM ART PARTNERS

“THE RUBIN CENTER CONTINUES TO SUPPORT, HOST AND CULTIVATE SOME OF THE MOST INNOVATIVE AND IMPORTANT ART OF OUR TIME.”

– RON RAEI
PROFESSOR OF ARCHITECTURE
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

The recent “Border Tuner” public art project where people in El Paso and Juárez, Mexico, could use beams of light to communicate with one another was a successful collaboration of artists, academic institutions and governments at various levels.

One of the main reasons for that success was The University of Texas at El Paso’s Stanlee and Gerald Rubin Center for the Visual Arts under the direction of Kerry Doyle, the project’s curator.

Internationally recognized artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, who conceived “Border Tuner,” has created similar light-show based projects since 1999 at sites around the world. He wanted to produce a comparable effort along the U.S.-Mexico border and sent a Facebook request for good site suggestions. Three international artist friends recommended the El Paso-Juárez area, and added that if he did choose it, he should contact Doyle at the Rubin Center.

Lozano-Hemmer, born in Mexico and based in Montreal, Canada, called Doyle in 2017. That started rounds of site visits and presentations to artists, academics and government agencies on both sides of the border. The project was on display Nov. 13-24, 2019, at Bowie High School on the U.S. side and at Chamizal Park on the Mexican side. The artist said he was grateful for all the work done by the Rubin staff.

“Kerry Doyle is a beacon of clarity in an otherwise very complex region,” Lozano-Hemmer said. “She is a facilitator, a catalyst, a mentor and an enthusiastic collaborator with a deep intellectual rigor and moral compass. I was lucky to work with her and the Rubin Center to make ‘Border Tuner’ a reality.”
Doyle said “Border Tuner” is the latest example of projects that have succeeded in part because of the years of positive relationships the center has built with students, artists, academics, museum representatives and governmental agencies since it opened in 2004.

The Rubin Center director said the center's international reputation started under its founding director Kate Bonansinga, who often curated shows of national and international artists to give area residents an opportunity to see works usually shown in larger cities.

“Kate brought in artists who were bigger than our budgets but they wanted to work on border projects,” Doyle said. “We introduced them to our institutional and artistic partners in Juárez, which was somewhat unique. We provided them with meaningful access to immersive experiences and they’d produce good work.”

Doyle, a native of Chicago, said she always had been a fan of contemporary art, but she took a crooked road to her directorship.

She earned her bachelor’s degree in political science from DePaul University in 1991 and moved to the Paso del Norte region to assist migrants on both sides of the border on and off for the next 16 years. She joined the Rubin Center as its assistant director in 2007 and became interim director five years later before being named director in 2013. Doyle earned a second bachelor’s degree in drawing and printmaking from UTEP in 2006, and her Master of Arts in Latin American and Border Studies five years later. Her thesis was on the art and politics of Juárez in the 1980s and ‘90s.

Doyle said the partnerships that she and Bonansinga nurtured have generated an international reputation that have led to good word of mouth throughout the United States and beyond. Among those who speak highly of Doyle and the center are prominent artists Ron Rael and Brian Maguire.

Rael, a professor of architecture at the University of California, Berkeley, was part of the “Sections: New Cities, Future Ruins at the Border” show during the spring 2019 semester. He said the center benefited from its embrace of a “border as center” model.

“The Rubin Center continues to support, host and cultivate some of the most innovative and important art of our time” Rael said. “Calling the Rubin Center an international contemporary arts organization is not an adequate description, because it far transcends that definition as its international presence is so fundamental to its reach and scope. Perhaps it is one of the few, if not only, extra-national arts organizations in the world.”

Maguire, an Irish expressionist painter based in Dublin, echoed the praise for the center. His show, “Scenes of Absence,” was at the Rubin during the fall 2019 semester.

“The Rubin Center is known throughout the world as the most exciting platform for engaged art in Texas,” Maguire said. “In the past year, I have met people in the art world in Paris, in New York, in London and in Chicago who knew of border pieces initiated by the Rubin Center.”

- Daniel Perez
For Valeria Mendizabal, golf has provided lessons of patience and determination that have helped her excel in the classroom as well as the course.

At the conclusion of the UTEP women’s golf team’s historic 2018-19 season, the Guatemala native was named co-most valuable player. That year, the Miners won four tournaments for the first time in school history and posted three consecutive tournament wins in the fall season. Mendizabal placed in the top 10 at three of those tournaments.

“What has helped me the most is my mental game,” Mendizabal said. “I’ve really learned to stay patient and just not give up on the course. Everyone can have a bad shot, but it’s up to you to see how you recover from it.”

The junior finance major continued to make headlines soon after. She was named Conference USA female golfer of the week in October 2019 for her performance at the Pat Bradley Invitational in Lakewood Ranch, Florida. Mendizabal finished the event with the lowest three-round total of her career with a score of 208, and she shot a career-low round of 67, five under par.

Mendizabal said that in between rounds there is time to think and calm down. When she finds herself frustrated, she relies on a phrase that UTEP women’s golf head coach, Jere Pelletier, once told her: “When you try to force things, when you push something, it pushes back even stronger. So, just try and let things happen and not force anything because in the end, it just gets worse.”

“She’s what every coach hopes for,” Pelletier said. “[Valeria] is very dedicated both in the classroom and on the golf course. She started off at a high level as a freshman and she’s getting better every year. She’s going to be one of the elite players in the country in the next year-and-a-half.”

Mendizabal has her sights set on winning a conference title at the end of the spring season not only as an individual but as a team. Mendizabal said she thrives on the pressure and adrenaline found in tournament play, and it fuels her desire to win. — Jesse Martinez

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Winny Koech likes to stay focused and run her own race during competitions. That solitary mindset has spurred the UTEP runner to an impressive career that she hopes to continue after graduation.

In Koech’s mind, she only competes against herself because, in the midst of a race, navigating her nerves and patience are the chief obstacles.

“I don’t compete with anyone because you never know what’s going to come,” Koech said. “Maybe someone is behind you and will surprise you to be in front of you. Run your own race; be patient. You never know what’s going to happen.”

That mentality has led Koech to win several medals throughout her UTEP career, including two gold medal finishes at the Conference USA championships in 2017 that helped the women’s track and field team claim its first conference outdoor title.

The Iten, Kenya, native made history again in 2018 when her performance helped the women’s cross country team earn its first conference title in school history.

Koech credits her head cross country coach, Paul Ereng, for always pushing her toward success.

“UTEP is like my second home,” Koech said. “I know I am a runner, and I can’t deny running because I love running. I want to be good to be a marathon runner in Kenya. That’s my aim, my cause.”

Koech earned her bachelor’s degree in kinesiology in December 2019. Now, she has her sights set on attending graduate school at UTEP to continue training with her coach. She has one more year of eligibility to compete at the collegiate level before she begins her professional career. — Jesse Martinez
Sean Bailey is at the starting line of his senior year and hopes to reach the finish line as the latest point of significance in a celebrated program.

The UTEP men's track and field athlete joined the team during his junior year after a brief stint at Western Texas College in Snyder, Texas. In his debut season with the Miners, Bailey achieved five top-two finishes along with a fourth-place finish at the NCAA West Preliminary. Bailey holds the fourth-best time in program history for 400 meters with 45.19 seconds.

“UTEP has such a rich history in track and field,” Bailey said. “We’ve had multiple NCAA record-holders, Olympians, world champions and professional athletes over the years. It means a whole lot to me just to put on the UTEP jersey and go out there and represent UTEP as a whole.”

It did not take long for head track and field coach Mika Laaksonen to recognize Bailey's determination. Bailey got his first taste of the NCAA Championships last season, and Laaksonen said fans can expect to see him reach that stage again.

“He’s a very driven individual, a very dedicated athlete, and he knows what it takes to be the best,” Laaksonen said. “You can tell just from his face that he’s fierce; his body language shows he is determined. He's on a mission.”

To prepare for the spring season, Bailey said he needs to maintain a sharp mind to stay above a 3.5 GPA, and keep his body strong and healthy to be ready to compete. He has big goals in mind for his senior year. He not only wants to break UTEP records in the 400 meters, he has his eye on an Olympic gold medal.

“If you want anything in life, you've got to work hard for it,” Bailey said. “Nothing in this world comes easy. There are a million people out there working basically for the same thing you want, so you always have to be at the top of your game, whether it's in the classroom or on the track.”

— Jesse Martinez

“HE'S A VERY DRIVEN INDIVIDUAL, A VERY DEDICATED ATHLETE, AND HE KNOWS WHAT IT TAKES TO BE THE BEST.”

— MIKA LAAKSONEN
GETTING TO KNOW YOU

President Wilson Shares Insights, Initial Goals for UTEP

By Daniel Perez

SINCE PRESIDENT HEATHER WILSON ARRIVED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO IN AUGUST 2019, SHE HAS MAINTAINED A HECTIC SCHEDULE MEANT TO FAMILIARIZE HERSELF WITH AS MUCH OF THE CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY AS POSSIBLE, AND TO START THE PLANNING THAT WILL SET PRIORITIES AND DIRECTION FOR THE NEXT DECADE.

Wilson’s resume is impressive by any standard: Rhodes Scholar, Air Force Academy graduate, Congresswoman from New Mexico, President of South Dakota School of Mines & Technology as well as Secretary of the U.S. Air Force. Over her first semester the campus community has gotten to know more about her as a person: Miner sports fan, dog lover, first-generation college student, wife and mother of three adult children.

UTEP faculty and staff have described President Wilson as thoughtful, grounded, approachable and professional with an earnest enthusiasm to engage others, which enchants many of them as well as the students.

She sat down during the fall 2019 semester for a wide-ranging interview to answer questions about her personal background, goals for the University and its students, views on higher education, the things that excite her at UTEP, and her unconditional love for green chile. She knows she has a job that will get thorny on occasion, but she also knows that she is at UTEP to lead the institution forward and to help students achieve their dreams.
Her mother’s advice was “Light your own little corner of the world.”

“There are wonderful things happening at UTEP,” President Wilson said during the interview in the Reading Room on the second floor of the Geological Sciences Building. “I like the students. That’s why I came to higher education. There’s a lot of joy in it.”

DEDICATION TO SERVICE
President Wilson comes from a family of service. Her paternal grandfather served with the Royal Air Force during World War I. He and her grandmother came to America after the war and he served as a courier pilot for the United States during the Second World War. Her father enlisted in the U.S. Air Force after high school and was a mechanic before becoming a commercial pilot. Her mother was an operating room nurse at the hospital in the small town in New Hampshire where she grew up. Service and hard work were expected.

President Wilson earned an appointment to the U.S. Air Force Academy in the third class to include women, where she graduated in 1982, becoming the first person in her family to attend college. She spent seven years as an Air Force officer followed by numerous appointed or elected government jobs at the state or national levels.

“I don’t remember talking much about government at home,” Wilson said. “But we were expected to serve others, serve the community in which we lived. My mother told us to ‘Light your own little corner of the world.’”

AIR FORCE ACADEMY
She appreciated her appointment to the U.S. Air Force Academy, which came with a full scholarship. Wilson’s father had died when she was in elementary school and her stepfather had lost his job. The scholarship made college possible and the challenge of the Academy appealed to Wilson. She described herself as an “awkward teen” who was good academically and involved in school activities, but something of a “social introvert.” She liked that every cadet wore the same uniform because it meant there were no class distinctions based on what you could afford to wear.

“The military was a meritocracy,” Wilson said. “They wanted to develop thinking officers of character and I thrived there.”

The academy honed her innate leadership qualities and helped her develop the extrovert skills she would need as a professional.

HIGHER EDUCATION CALLING
President Wilson said college interns involved in her 2012 U.S. Senate campaign encouraged her to consider a leadership role in higher education because of her ability to engage students. The idea intrigued her and she started to look for the right job in the right place. That job was as president of the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology. She said she loved it there.

“The students were serious and they weren’t spoiled,” she said. “They wanted to better their lives.”

When the incoming Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis called to ask her to consider becoming the Secretary of the Air Force, she was initially reluctant.

“After a few conversations, it was pretty clear my draft number was up,” she laughed. “I did not expect to return to federal service, but I couldn’t turn down the call when it came and be true to myself, true to my values.”

By all accounts, Wilson served the Air Force well.

“I understood the culture and enjoyed the Airmen,” Wilson said. “We fixed some problems and I helped them, particularly with the Congress.”

When The University of Texas System called, it was the right time and the right place.

“I’m glad to be back in public higher education in the West,” President Wilson said. “It’s a special place.”

She was especially drawn to UTEP’s mission as a public research university.
“At some point you have these clusters of faculty who can work together on significantly larger and more complex research proposals,” President Wilson said. “We’re kind of at that point in four to six different areas. It’s the clustering that allows you to make the next step from doing $5 million of research with individuals to doing $10 million or $20 million in research in a center of 10 or 15 individuals.”

**HIGHER EDUCATION CHALLENGES**

Higher education faces many challenges, but President Wilson said that the biggest test in the next 20 years will be how to attract more students despite increased costs and the shift of the costs to families and away from taxpayers.

“That is a real challenge for families of modest means,” she said. “Education is still the best pathway to success in America. There is no question. Hands down. Higher education is the ticket to a dream. We need to make sure that ticket is still affordable for every child in America.”

At UTEP, the University will waive all tuition and mandatory fees for students whose families make $40,000 a year or less. The money comes from a combination of Pell Grants and scholarships. President Wilson pointed out that generous donors, many who benefited from
a UTEP education, fund numerous University scholarships as a way to give back. One element of the University’s plan must be to continue to raise money for scholarships, she said. UTEP changed the lives of many of our alumni and many of them are now willing to give back to help the next generation of students.

She said she will also be a strong advocate for continued public funding of higher education.

“A college education benefits an individual and their families, but we all benefit from living in an educated community,” she said. “That’s especially true today. We live in a globally connected, knowledge-based economy. Regions of the world that educate their people will thrive; those that do not will be left behind.”

ALUMNI INVOLVEMENT
President Wilson has proposed to the UTEP Alumni Association that it offer free automatic lifetime membership to all graduates. The University estimates that it has in excess of 100,000 living alumni, but only 2,500 are association members. She said there was a tremendous value in the UTEP alumni network and the association could strengthen itself through inclusion.

Alumni networks provide lifelong value, Wilson explained. Fellowship and friendship endure and grow. Connection to the University provides opportunities for professional development to include graduate and continuing education, networking for a next job, or opportunities for entrepreneurship. She pledged to work with the association during the next year to create significant changes to include more outreach and engagement.

UTEP’S TOP INITIATIVES
President Wilson said she was excited to learn about the interesting studies in such areas as cancer, neuroscience and advanced manufacturing, where researchers are making discoveries of public value.

“I think it’s always exciting to be around people who are discovering new things,” she said. “Helping and supporting that is exciting.”

She also likes the concept of the UTEP Edge – an initiative that develops student assets and talents through high-impact experiences – because it focuses on the kinds of support and interactions that students need to succeed. She mentioned, as an example, how research showed that students who have one meaningful connection to a faculty or staff member in their freshman year, usually in a small class or organization, are much more likely to stay in school and graduate from college.

“I think the UTEP Edge is a great model for what we need to do,” she said. “It’s based on the best research on what practices help students succeed in college, and provides focus for the campus.”

UTEP’S STRATEGIC PLAN
In January, the University will launch the development of a new strategic plan.

“We haven’t done this for a decade,” President Wilson said. It was time to take a step back, consider where the University is, where it wants to go, and why, she said. The development of a strategic plan will force the conversations that will help the University prioritize.

“There are hundreds of great ideas on this campus of things we could do to advance our mission to help more students graduate, or to advance research or engage with the community,” she said. “But we’re not going to be able to do all of them at the same time. So how do we prioritize and sequence those? That’s what a strategic plan will allow us to do.”

She said campus leaders would work with consultants during the strategic planning process, which should take about nine months. The first part will involve listening sessions and data analysis about such topics as who and where we are, and our opportunities and demographics. Then the process will shift to the harder job of looking at various options and their costs.

“The hard thing about strategic planning is to keep holding in mind what we aspire to be, while also making the tough, practical decisions about what we need to do now to move us in the direction of our dreams,” Wilson said.
“It is a wonderful, engaging kind of job.”
– PRESIDENT HEATHER WILSON

STUDENT ENROLLMENT
President Wilson called UTEP’s 21 straight years of enrollment growth “a remarkable feat.” Historically, the University has focused its attention on the region’s 52 high schools and collaborated well with the area’s school districts and El Paso Community College. She said the University has done a good job increasing the percentage of students who enroll to get a post-secondary certificate, credential or degree.

However, she said the numbers of students in the elementary grades has begun to decline so University leaders will need to address that challenge as they develop the strategic plan.

The recruitment of graduate students is a little different, particularly at the Ph.D. level, where what matters is graduate research assistantships and funded research. As we expand our research proposals, we can budget for more graduate assistantships and funded research. As we expand our research grants, we can budget for more graduate assistantships and funded research. As we expand our research assistantships and funded research, the University must focus on some big things such as engaging research sponsors.

As the University’s President, she noted that there is no typical day.

TYPICAL WORKDAY
President Wilson laughed as she said, “It’s kind of cathartic when you get back because you have been away.” She admitted that she does not really care for the cold water in the dunk tank but otherwise enjoys spending time with students. She is a frequent presence at athletic events, walking the sidelines at football games, cheering the basketball team and sitting with the band.

“I actually think it’s fun,” she said. “If you are president of a university, there are all kinds of thorny problems that end up in your office. Usually, if they are easy, somebody else solves them. You have to get out beyond those problems to engage in the life of the University and remind yourself occasionally that not everything is a thorny problem.”

HOBBIES
President Wilson said she loves to read and likes to walk with her husband and dog, Miss Moneypenny. She and her husband already have climbed Mount Cristo Rey.

The dog, an 11-year-old mix between a Beagle and a King Charles Spaniel, has become a friendly presence at the Hoover House.

“She loves people,” Wilson said. “And a ratio of about 25 guests to one dog is about right. She can’t be too annoying to any one person.”

And her name?

“That’s what happened when our two teenagers got to name the dog. Our son wanted a James Bond name. Our daughter said it had to be a girl’s name. ‘Miss Moneypenny’ was the result. We call her ‘Penny.’”

The President, an instrument-rated private pilot, said she enjoys flying her Cessna 152 and that her husband teases her because it does not go as fast as his 2005 Ford 500 on the highway. She tries to find time to fly to clear her head because flying takes complete attention. When she goes for walks, she thinks of the many things she must do when she returns to her home or office, regardless of her surroundings. However, when she flies, her mind must be 100% on flying.

“It’s kind of cathartic when you get back because you have been away,” she said of her travels at 3,000 feet above the ground as opposed to 35,000 feet – the cruising altitude of a commercial airliner. “You get to see the world from a very beautiful angle.”
President Heather Wilson delivered her first State of the University Address during Fall Convocation on Sept. 17, 2019. A transcript of her remarks follows.

A 21st Century University
It was in the depths of the Depression, in 1931, when C. L. Sonnichsen arrived on the train from Boston a few days after completing his doctoral exams.

He was to teach English at a mining school that was adding a liberal arts degree. The school was comprised of a cluster of buildings that looked like a monastery plucked from the Himalayas and dropped at the foot of the Franklin Mountains in the Chihuahuan Desert, almost a mile-and-a-half north of the city of El Paso.

He didn’t initially expect to stay long, but, like Horace Greeley, he had gone west and grew up with the country. Eventually, this long-serving English department head wrote the introduction to a book on the pictorial history of this university.

He wrote of that first year, arriving on campus:

And yet, there was much to be said for this struggling country college. For one thing, it was desperately needed. El Paso was not yet a city, but it was growing fast. The schools needed teachers. The businessmen needed young men and women with special training. It was 600 miles to Austin – too far for many people to go for an education. No school was ever prayed for and worked for with greater dedication. The mining school, it should be said, filled a special need.
Like most American public universities established in the late 19th and early 20th century, this one began with a strong foundation of teaching a practical subject – mining. The trend toward a new kind of higher education began with the Morrill Land Grant Acts and continued with the post-World War II GI Bill.

Teaching not just the children of the wealthy and privileged to prepare them for the clergy or law or medicine, these new universities were to be “accessible to all, but especially to the sons of toil.” (Sen. Justin Smith Morrill of Vermont, 1862)

Higher education is and for over a century has been the single greatest gateway to economic and social mobility in America.

“Teaching excellence results in student success, and we see examples of it all across campus.”

Take, for example, the corporate academies in the College of Business Administration. Curricula developed in partnership with industry enables students to work and learn, giving them a deeper understanding of industry best practices and a greater advantage in the job market after graduation.

Engaged learning is also paying off in the College of Science. Last year, nearly 45% of science-focused students maintained a GPA of 3.5 or higher. Their average time to degree completion is less than four-and-a-half years, and almost 80% of science students who apply to degree programs in graduate schools are accepted.

And we see student success among our athletes because our coaches want our students to not only compete for and win conference championships as athletes but also to be their best selves in the classroom. Last year, 160 UTEP student-athletes – a school record – were named to the Conference USA Honor Roll with cumulative grade point averages of 3.0 or better.

While UTEP has experienced 21 straight years of growth in enrollment, the world of post-secondary education is changing, and we are meeting new needs in new ways.

We are expanding opportunities for professional and distance-enabled education. This fall, our English Language Institute (ELI) collaborated with the Center for Instructional Design to develop and offer fully online courses in English grammar, reading, writing, speaking and listening.

And this year, we welcomed our third cohort of pharmacy students. These 58 future pharmacists will join the more than 90 pharmacy students we enrolled in our first two cohorts – in the only pharmacy school in the country that requires three years of Spanish as well as study in the community.
While UTEP serves as a national model for excellence in higher education, we must also acknowledge the challenges that we face.

Nationwide, following the 2008 recession, states reduced taxpayer funding for higher education. For several decades, the cost of public higher education has shifted away from taxpayers and toward financially stretched families. And, in recent years, some in our society have called into question the relevance of higher education, particularly with the burden of debt that can accompany it.

Let us be clear — the world around us is changing. Coming out of the recession, seven out of every 10 new jobs created required some postsecondary education or training. We are in an era of increasingly global, knowledge-based economies, and this change will only accelerate in the coming decades.

The regions of the world that educate people will thrive in the 21st century. Those that don’t will be left behind. What was good enough for our parents and our grandparents is not good enough for our children and our grandchildren.

Sometimes, people talk about higher education as a service or product that only benefits those who receive it. To be sure, higher education is the ticket to a dream for both individuals and their families.

But that’s not all higher education is. We must continue to advocate for taxpayer support of public higher education because the education of others benefits us all.

When our children are sick, we all benefit when there is an educated nurse at urgent care.

When the rains come, we all benefit because an educated civil engineer designed the arroyo that takes water safely through this campus to the Rio Grande below.

When we touch any of a thousand things today — from the cellphone in our pockets to the report on the investments in our retirement account — we all benefit from the education of the person who brought that product or service to us.

Our lives are longer, healthier, safer, more prosperous, and more filled with beauty and joy when we live in an educated community where everyone has developed their gifts to the fullest.

UTEP must take its place as a national leader, a 21st-century university.

And, yes, it must be cost-effective. We are not here to coddle the sons and daughters of privilege.

UTEP provides an excellent education at one of the most reasonable prices for a top tier university in America, and we will continue to do everything we can to control costs and keep college affordable for individuals and their families.

In that regard, I wanted to personally thank the 45 faculty members who stepped forward to work with Information Technology and Library staff to help UTEP make the shift to low-cost or no-cost textbooks — particularly for freshman and sophomore core courses.

Our early efforts will focus on the largest of those courses, like physics, where the textbook costs over $300. Three hundred dollars is a week’s worth of work for a student making a bit more than minimum wage.

We will keep college affordable for the “sons — and daughters — of toil.”
Exclusion is Not Excellence

But there is another trend in higher education that UTEP must continue to counter. Too many universities have lost their way and bought into national ratings lists that claim exclusivity as a virtue.

Do we think a restaurant is the best in the country because it closes the door on 90% of the people who are hungry?

UTEP chooses to be part of a core group of exceptional universities that will not be judged by whom we exclude, but by whom we include and their success.

Exclusivity doesn’t define excellence. Success defines excellence.

UTEP will . . .

→ advocate for continued public support for higher education,
→ keep the cost of a college degree affordable,
→ be judged by the success of the students whom we include, and
→ be a leader among 21st-century universities.

Of the many struggles faced by the College of Mines in 1931, the most pressing for the faculty was their purpose. President Dossie Wiggins, who succeeded UTEP’s first president, John Barry, told his faculty that they were there to teach – period.

President Wiggins even went so far as to tell his faculty that they were hired much in the same way Wiggins bought his mules – and he intended to get as much mule as he could for his money.

“Dossie’s Mules,” the faculty called themselves, but they knew they had more to offer.

They knew, Dr. Sonnichsen explained, that they were there to acquire, record and disseminate knowledge. So, Dr. Sonnichsen added, the new Ph.D. faculty began doing research on the region. One among them chronicled botany up to the Mescalero Reservation in New Mexico, and another produced a definitive study of the geology of the Franklin Mountains. They dug up fossils and set students to work writing theses on Mexican novelists. They took students to Mexico every summer to study art, and they studied Texas fiction and folklore.

They did the work that came to hand.

This comprehensive public research university with a strong sense of place and engagement in the region grew from the seed they planted.

Imagine what Dr. Sonnichsen and his faculty peers would think of us now.

Research – Advancing Discovery of Public Value

“There was much to be said about this struggling country college.”

(C.L. Sonnichsen)

UTEP boasts $91 million (now $108 million) in research expenditures and a portfolio of 353 research awards that total more than $272 million in committed external funding.

Our Border Biomedical Research Center engages over 80 health care and science faculty and is driving discoveries that will address health disparities in cancer, diabetes and other diseases. It was recently awarded another $19.2 million from the National Institutes of Health to expand its research.

We have developed expertise in space vehicle materials derived from studying the debris of the Shuttle Columbia that fell from the sky over Texas, and we are one of the best in the world at the neuroscience of bilingualism, in water desalination and in understanding patterns of migration.

We don’t just transmit knowledge at UTEP; we create it.

Engaged scholarship – the scholarship of place – has defined this campus from our beginning, and it continues to drive us today.
Impact

Dr. Sonnichsen’s story begins in 1931, but our history of meeting the educational needs of our community dates back to our earliest days in 1914. For over a century, UTEP has been supported by and supportive of the region in which we live.

Every day in the brief month since I arrived in El Paso, I have met accountants, marketing managers, lab technicians, high school coaches, musicians, builders, physical therapists, engineers, law enforcement officers, and even a few lawyers – who are all UTEP alumni.

And, more than 8,500 teachers in schools across the El Paso area are UTEP graduates.

But impact is more than the work our graduates are doing. It is also how we, as a university, engage with our community.

33,000 people enjoyed a college football game in a stadium carved into a mountain two weeks ago, and others listened to a stunningly beautiful cello concert at the Fox Fine Arts Center.

We share our expertise with the city to reduce and reuse precious groundwater and to support continuing education and quality improvement for small businesses throughout Texas.

Our students run free speech-therapy clinics for those without insurance, and our faculty and students not only analyze economic trends in the region, they build businesses to grow the economy and create jobs.

UTEPE positively impacts the health, culture, education and economy of the community we serve.

Over the coming months, we will review and seek to revitalize our connections to community, our understanding of the needs of the region, so that we continue to provide what is “desperately needed” in our time.

A Woven Figure

History is a woven figure.

In the north of Chihuahua, Spanish explorers found two mountain ranges that rose from the high desert. The gap between them was El Paso del Norte – the gateway to the north. It was the gateway for not only passage but also opportunity.

For 400 years, this region has been the route of trade and the meeting point of cultures and governments. Who we are and what we do as a university is connected by web and weft to those who have traveled these routes and settled this place long before us.

We are intrinsically connected to those early faculty who started on that first day of class in 1914 and to those first doctoral faculty in the 1930s who chose to advance knowledge by studying and engaging with this region.

Texas International

In the late 1920s, a state legislator from El Paso named Adrian Pool created what Dr. Sonnichsen described as “great clouds of dust” in the Texas Legislature for supporting the College of Mines.

Representative Pool believed that this “struggling country college” could become a great international university.

The pictorial history of UTEP was published in 1989 for our Diamond Jubilee. Reflecting on Adrian Pool’s advocacy, Dr. Sonnichsen said:

“The University of Texas at El Paso, 75 years after its birth, has grown from a small regional college to an important meeting place of cultures. It is, in fact, if not in name, Texas International."

We are that and so much more.

UTEPE is a comprehensive public research university that is increasing access to excellent higher education. We advance discovery of public value and positively impact the health, culture, education and economy of the community we serve.

We are a 21st-century university. That is our mission.

No school will be prayed for or worked for with greater dedication, and I am honored to be a part of it.
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

TRANSFORMING DREAMS INTO REALITY

WRITTEN BY
LAURA L. ACOSTA

PHOTOS BY
LAURA TREJO
In 2013, as drug-related violence surged in Juárez, Mexico, Sairy Cohen Cruz’s parents uprooted their lives and moved with their 13-year-old daughter across the border to the safety of El Paso. With limited job opportunities and a language barrier, the family struggled to make ends meet. At a young age, Cohen Cruz pitched in to support the family financially. She helped her father at the furniture store where he worked and assisted customers at a phone store with her mother. Cohen Cruz never imagined that she would be the first in her family to graduate from college, but she surprised herself. She received her bachelor’s degree in computer science from The University of Texas at El Paso in December 2019, as well as a job offer from Google.
The internships, scholarships, jobs, friends, and opportunities that I’ve had while studying computer science at UTEP have helped me learn and grow as a professional, an engineer, but most importantly as a person,” Cohen Cruz said. Her achievements illustrate UTEP’s ability to help students from the lowest socioeconomic backgrounds move up the socioeconomic ladder to the top 20% income bracket. Her story supports the results of a report by Raj Chetty and Emmanuel Saez – pioneering economists of socioeconomic inequality and mobility – that included UTEP among the top 10 schools that are engines of upward mobility for students from modest backgrounds.

“For several decades, UTEP has worked hard to ensure that everyone in the region has an opportunity to pursue a higher education,” said Gary Edens, Ed.D., vice president for student affairs at UTEP. “We’ve done this through innovative and collaborative work with local school districts and El Paso Community College, an unwavering commitment to keeping tuition as low as possible, and a focus by faculty on preparing students so that they can compete successfully for jobs after graduation.”

DREAM BIG

Cohen Cruz started at UTEP as a biology major in 2015, but the job she took as a web developer at the University to pay for school sparked her interest in computer science. That job took her out of her comfort zone and into a world of new opportunities. Thanks to a UTEP S-STEM Scholarship, Cohen Cruz focused on her studies and professional

“For several decades, UTEP has worked hard to ensure that everyone in the region has an opportunity to pursue a higher education.”

– Gary Edens, Ed.D. Vice President for UTEP Student Affairs
development activities. She took full advantage of the services UTEP offered to help students succeed.

“If you need help, UTEP has the counseling center and career services,” Cohen Cruz said, “In computer science, you have speakers from Google, Intel and Facebook coming to the University and you start learning from them and you start networking with them.”

She mentored female middle- and high-school students through UTEP’s Google IgniteCS program. She also interned with former U.S. Rep. Beto O’Rourke in El Paso and at NASA’s Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida. In November 2019, Cohen Cruz accepted a job offer from Google’s Cloud Technical Residency program in Austin.

“Every day I reminded myself that I was preparing to become the first person in my family to graduate from college and, to this day, I still remind myself of that every time I feel I am struggling,” said Cohen Cruz. “It makes me really proud and I’m really happy for this opportunity at Google. I never thought I was going to get this far.”

**Dreams That Will Change the World**

For more than 100 years, UTEP has attracted students from Mexico who consider a degree from a U.S. university a sound investment for their future.

Among them was Isaac Bencomo, who earned Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Master of Science in Nursing degrees.

Bencomo was born in Juárez, but scholarships enabled him to attend private schools in the United States since age 4. After he earned an associate degree in nursing from El Paso Community College, Bencomo worked for a year and saved enough money to attend UTEP. He received a bachelor’s degree in nursing in 2015 followed by a master’s degree in Pediatric Nurse Practitioner (PNP) three years later.

“My parents thought that it would be beneficial for my sister and I to learn English,” said Bencomo, a pediatric intensive care unit nurse at Las Palmas Medical Center. “They thought there would be better opportunities for us in the United States.”

Bencomo’s UTEP education has provided him opportunities that go beyond the classroom. In 2019, Bencomo was one of four delegates selected to represent Mexico in the British Council’s Future Leaders Connect, an advanced policy and leadership program for emerging leaders who are inspired to change the world through policymaking.

“Isaac is a highly motivated individual who integrates his intellectual abilities, his knowledge and life experiences that help him persevere and overcome adversities to reach his goals,” said Guillermina Solis, Ph.D., assistant professor of nursing and Bencomo’s PNP program mentor. “He has a passion for working toward improving the lives of others, especially children, and I have no doubt that his strong voice will soon be heard throughout the world.”

Bencomo was inspired to apply to the leadership program after he provided care to dozens of Central American children in 2018 at an El Paso hospital.

He spent 10 days in England at the University of Cambridge in Cambridge, and at the Houses of Parliament in London, where he discussed policies to improve the health of Central American and Mexican migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border.

“A UTEP education gives you a unique background and a very unique approach to border health,” said Bencomo, who also volunteers at the Casa del Refugiado or the House of the Refugee, an immigrant shelter at Annunciation House in El Paso. “And in a binational community that is extremely diverse, you have a very unique perspective of the challenges and also the culture and how that culture has an impact on the delivery of health care.”
“UTEP’s education... elevated my capacity to communicate and work with others at a professional level.”

ACHIEVING THE DREAM

By providing access to a high-quality and affordable education, UTEP has created a pathway for graduates to achieve their full potential and lead prosperous professional lives.

“Our students put in the hard work, often at great sacrifice, but over and over again we see that with a UTEP degree they are positioned to have impactful and highly rewarding careers,” Edens said.

UTEP offered Betsy Bañuelos the services and support she needed to become the first student who is deaf to graduate from the Clinical Laboratory Sciences (CLS) program in 2016. Today, she is the first hearing impaired microbiology supervisor at Memorial Medical Center in Las Cruces, New Mexico, and the hospital’s only employee who is unable to hear.

“UTEP’s education was great, but most importantly it elevated my capacity to communicate and work with others at a professional level,” Bañuelos said.

At UTEP, the first-generation college graduate worked with interpreters from the University’s Center for Accommodations and Support Services, who translated what was said during class into sign language.

Rather than finger-spell long and complicated words such as “parasitology” and “electrophoresis,” which didn’t exist in American Sign Language, Bañuelos generated 400 new signs to create a lexicon of clinical terms.

It was that drive that kept her from giving up on her dream to become a medical professional after 11 failed job interviews.

According to a 2019 report published by the National Deaf Center, approximately 53% of people with hearing loss were in the workforce in 2017, compared with 75.8% of people who hear.

Although Bañuelos worked successfully in a UTEP lab, it was up to her future employers to look beyond her deafness and focus on her qualifications.

She was surprised when Memorial Medical Center (MMC) hired her as a medical technologist in 2017, but she was confident enough in her education to know that she could get the job done.

Two years later the hospital promoted her to supervisor.

Sofía Romo, the hospital’s laboratory assistant manager, said she was impressed with how Bañuelos has never allowed her hearing impediment to define who she is.

“It is great to work with Betsy as she is smart, driven, enthusiastic and full of curiosity,” Romo said. “Ever since the first time I met Betsy, I knew how brave she is and I could not wait for her to join the MMC lab team. In her short time with us, she has gained the respect of team members inside and outside the laboratory. I am excited to see how she continues to grow professionally.”

Bañuelos’ lab is equipped with a videophone line and fire alarms.
with strobe lights that catch her attention in case of an emergency. She communicates with the lab’s six employees with speech recognition apps such as Google’s Live Transcribe on her tablet or phone. Bañuelos also reads lips and uses an interpreter during staff meetings.

“During job interviews, people would ask me, ‘How do you communicate because you’re deaf?’” Bañuelos said. “There are so many different ways to communicate nowadays. There’s so much technology today like email and text message. There’s reading lips and writing back and forth. Communication doesn’t stop.”

**INVESTING IN THE DREAM**

UTEP’s reputation for successfully providing students from diverse socioeconomic, cultural and educational backgrounds access to higher education opportunities resonates across the world. UTEP enrolled nearly 1,600 international students during the fall 2019 semester. Among them were 53 students from Bangladesh.

“I heard about UTEP from a friend in Bangladesh who was doing his Ph.D. at UTEP,” said Md Hasan, Ph.D., a native of the South Asian country. “He said UTEP was a great place and I should think about studying there.”

Hasan had moved to the United States to pursue a master’s degree in accounting at the University of Toledo in Ohio. He was working as a sales training manager when he discovered his passion for teaching. After he looked at different doctoral programs, Hasan was motivated to study accounting in UTEP’s College of Business Administration.

“UTEP is a great place for students like us, especially from India and Bangladesh because food wise, culture wise, I felt like I’m at home,” said Hasan, who graduated from the University in May 2019. “Although it’s a different place completely, I didn’t feel like I was in a foreign country.”

At UTEP, Hasan interacted with professors, honed his research skills and taught undergraduate level courses, which prepared him for a position as an assistant professor of accounting at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia.

“Md worked hard, volunteered to teach a challenging class (accounting systems) to undergraduate level courses and traveled around the world to present his research,” said Giorgio Gotti, Ph.D., chair and associate professor in the Department of Accounting and Information Systems. “He approached his time in graduate school at UTEP as an investment in his career, understanding that at the end, you reap what you sow.”
COMBATING CANCER
It was a momentous 2019 for The University of Texas at El Paso’s Border Biomedical Research Center (BBRC). The center, which has devoted more than a quarter century to understanding and identifying the reasons for Hispanic cancer health disparities and their ultimate impact on the people of the Paso del Norte region, initiated the next step in accelerating those aims. In October, the BBRC announced a five-year, $19.2 million grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to continue its work in the realm of Hispanic cancer research.

BY DARLENE BARAJAS
A Fight on Many Fronts

Among the many forms of cancer being studied at UTEP is prostate cancer. Wen-Yee Lee, Ph.D., associate professor of chemistry, and Qin Gao, Ph.D., a postdoctoral researcher in chemistry, are developing an affordable early screening test for prostate cancer that uses a small urine sample and, in the future, could be developed as a kit similar to a home pregnancy test used for early diagnosis of kidney cancer.

“Many patients get diagnosed with kidney cancer only when they experience symptoms or by ‘accidental discovery’ when checking for other disease by ultrasound scan or other scanning tests,” Lee said. “Our test could be fast, easy and a routine test for kidney cancer.”

The test takes less than four hours, from obtaining urine samples to reporting detection results. “This study will reduce the time for early screening of prostate cancer and renal cancer affecting at least 13 million men every year by providing early diagnosis and treatment that could help avoid over-diagnosis and overtreatment of indolent cancer,” Lee said.

Lee’s work is evidence that UTEP is building a robust research program in toxicology made possible, in part, through funds from the BBRC. The Toxicology and Cancer Biology
Research Cluster (TC) promotes and nurtures U.S.-Mexico partnerships aimed at investigating environmental health issues that impact cancer incidence in populations on both sides of the border. To more completely address the issues impacting border health, the TC Project maintains active collaborations with Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center Paul L. Foster School of Medicine, La Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez, the International Boundary and Water Commission and William Beaumont Army Medical Center, among other local and regional agencies.

Another form of research being conducted at UTEP is the development of drugs to treat cancer. Lin Li, Ph.D., assistant professor of computational biophysics, is the sole principal investigator of the four-year study, which will investigate important mechanisms for kinesins, a type of biological motor protein. Li said learning more about the way kinesins move could help with the design of anti-mitotic drugs, which are meant to inhibit cancer cell division.

"Traditional anti-mitotic drugs face two significant issues: serious side effects and strong drug resistance for some types of cancers," Li said. "Due to the unique features, human kinesin-5s (Eg5) become promising alternative anti-mitotic drug targets."

**An Opportunity to Move Forward**

Kirken said the combination of El Paso’s population boom, growing medical community, and advancements by UTEP scientists creates an opportune time to leverage the BBRC’s unique and high-end technologies to address some of the most challenging health care questions.

"Together with regional clinicians, we have the opportunity to advance cancer research that might lead to improved medical care through prevention, lifestyle changes, and the development of new therapeutic strategies," Kirken said.

One such strategy is a social behavioral project that explores the potential barriers and facilitators in the use of the vaccine for the human papillomavirus (HPV). This information could lead to tailored interventions that would increase acceptance of the HPV vaccine. With the new guidelines for HPV vaccinations, adults up to age 45 now can be vaccinated to protect themselves against multiple types of cancers.

BBRC scientists hope that their work will lead to new approaches and therapeutic strategies to address questions about cancers that afflict Hispanics, a population typically not included in clinical trials and research programs.

Armando Estrada, Ph.D., a postdoctoral research fellow in UTEP’s bioscience lab, said the program allows him to work with the community and train scientists hope that their work will lead to new approaches and therapeutic strategies to address questions about cancers that afflict Hispanics, a population typically not included in clinical trials and research programs.

[CHECK OUT UTEP.EDU/MAGAZINE TO WATCH A VIDEO ABOUT UTEP’S CANCER RESEARCH.]
new student researchers, who benefit from their work with the BBRC.

Estrada said these opportunities give UTEP graduates an edge when they apply for graduate or medical school. UTEP students who work in the BBRC have access to next-generation sequencing that allows them to identify novel or previously unreported mutations within cancer. This could lead to research that can identify targets for future therapies and new medications that could be more effective with fewer side effects.

“Traditionally, Hispanics have been underrepresented in research and I think this is a great building block for us to better understand which Hispanic disparities exist within these cancers,” Estrada said.

“What’s really exciting about this proposal is we are using a translational approach, utilizing clinical, social behavioral, and biomolecular research to try and address cancer, which is the leading cause of death among Hispanics,” Kirken said. “The key cancers we are going to research are breast, prostate, liver and leukemia, to name a few. We will also be assessing HPV-related knowledge, attitudes and practices in the community to identify barriers and facilitators of vaccine uptake, coupled with targeted interventions to modify behavior. We are doing a lot of research trying to look at new drugs or small molecules to try to disrupt certain cancers. We are identifying the genes that could be responsible for promoting these types of cancers.”

**Working Together**

Kirken said the responsibility to make headway into cancer’s unique grip on the region’s Hispanic population is not solely UTEP’s. He said a slew of regional partners, to include institutions of higher education, can help meet the needs of 21st century research.

“Along with Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso, we have an amazing opportunity to drive clinical research projects to better address the causes and find solutions to close the gap on Hispanic health disparities in areas such as cancer,” Kirken said. “Both institutions have highly qualified and outstanding faculty, staff, researchers and clinicians to address these challenges.”

Only through clinical trials and research can new treatment strategies be developed. The Hispanic population, one of the fastest growing in the United States, has typically been overlooked, underutilized and must be included in such studies if they are to receive the best care possible. UTEP has a regional advantage in being a leader in addressing issues of Hispanic health disparities, and making findings of clinical significance that can be translated into better medical care, and will serve as a beacon for other communities across the country and globe. A healthy population will make for a more economically healthy country, which will give the U.S. a strategic advantage globally.”
In 2009, big dreams were a murky proposition. A decade ago, the United States was mired in the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, and in El Paso, the unemployment rate would peak at 10% in July. It was amid these trying conditions that the leadership at The University of Texas at El Paso set one of the boldest goals in the institution’s history — to reach $100 million in annual research expenditures. “At the time, when we were planning for growth in research in the University, there were many people who were skeptical,” said Roberto Osegueda, Ph.D., UTEP’s vice president for research. He was part of the team that orchestrated the creation and implementation of a strategic plan that set the University on its current course of sustained growth in research. “There were even some who thought we would never reach that milestone given the situation at the time.” But a decade later, it happened.
By Victor H. Arreola

UTEP Tops $100 Million in Research
UTEP President Heather Wilson announced that in fiscal year 2018-19, the University surpassed $100 million in annual research expenditures for the first time in its history.

Joined by Vice President for Research Roberto Osegueda, Ph.D., and a contingent of some of the University’s top grant-producing faculty members and several outstanding students, Wilson told members of the media that, in fact, UTEP reported $108 million in research expenditures to the National Science Foundation (NSF) for its 2019 Survey of Research and Development Expenditures at Universities and Colleges.

“UTEP is one of the top research institutions in the nation,” President Wilson told reporters gathered for the announcement. “We produce research of high public value and make a positive impact on the community we serve. This achievement is a testament to the quality of our faculty, as research spending at UTEP is fueled through competitive individual grants and contracts that our faculty secure.”

IMPACT

Annual spending totals take into account research and development expenditures across all sources of funds, including federal, state, industry and foundations. The $108 million figure is a measure of UTEP’s research productivity, and members of the University’s leadership and faculty concurred that it is consistent with the R1 top tier research university designation awarded to UTEP by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education in December 2018. They also agreed that surpassing the $100 million mark in annual research expenditures is substantially more than a symbolic achievement.

“I’ve been going through the process of interviewing new faculty members,” Osegueda said. “I can see the difference in the attitude of new faculty trying to come to UTEP. We’re also getting increased attention from many of the recruiters who come to UTEP, as well as from the funding agencies that are paying more attention to the work that our faculty are doing.”

In addition to greater attention from academic and industry recruiters, UTEP students, collectively, reap other more immediate benefits from growing research expenditures. For example, the more than 530 active grants in fiscal year 2019 benefited over 1,500 students through fellowships, paid research positions, scholarships and other forms of financial support.

The $108 million milestone represents a doubling of total annual research expenditures since 2009. That was also the year that the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), following the passage of House Bill 51 of the 81st Texas Legislature, designated UTEP and six other public universities in the state (The University of Texas branches at Arlington, Dallas and San Antonio, as well as Texas Tech University, the University of Houston, and the University of North Texas) as Texas Emerging Research Universities.

The designation represented a challenge from the state, and many of the institutions that received it responded by focusing their research efforts on fields that were trending at the time — fields such as nanotechnology and biotechnology. One common tactic used by other institutions was to hire clusters of faculty members focused on those areas.

But at UTEP, the leadership decided to take a different approach. “We rejected that model,” Osegueda said. “We did so mainly because we did not want to divert resources away from the core mission of the University, which is to provide an education to the students of the region we serve.”

The aim of UTEP’s approach, Osegueda explained, was to include faculty from all parts of the University. That is why the topics in the 2009 strategic plan for research were purposely broad. They included health and biomedical sciences engineering, education for the 21st century demographic, national defense and border security, global enterprise and border studies, and energy and the environment.

“These topics where chosen so that faculty all across the University would find a connection,” Osegueda said.

It is a strategy that has proven successful, with more than 60% of all UTEP faculty involved in sponsored project activities during the fall 2019 semester. Osegueda credited this success in the creation of a culture of grantsmanship and research in large part to the support of the college deans who understood the
importance of this effort from its inception.

Another important factor, Osegueda explained, was the presence of outstanding senior faculty members who, throughout the past decade, have taken on mentorship roles for their more junior peers.

Also essential in UTEP’s journey to the $108 million milestone was an explosion in grant productivity on the part of the faculty that was initially unexpected. Early forecasts made in the period from 2008 to 2012 projected that UTEP would reach the $100 million milestone around 2019. However, those projections assumed the University would employ around 700 faculty members to accomplish the feat. The reality is that since 2009, when there were approximately 500 faculty members at the University, the number has only increased to about 540 in 2019.

“It is an incredible credit to our faculty and staff that we’ve come this far,” Osegueda said. “Thanks to their tenacity and talent, the University’s power to innovate, discover and give back has been augmented far beyond our expectations.”

Administrators and faculty members across the campus agreed that while the $100 million milestone is unquestionably a significant landmark in the life of the University, what it truly represents is the beginning of a new phase in UTEP’s long-standing commitment to the advancement of knowledge and its application. Plans to keep the momentum going remain on the to-do lists of leaders across the campus.

To this end, the expected opening in spring 2020 of the new Interdisciplinary Research Building (IDRB) will provide critical space for researchers, students and faculty to address some of society’s big issues through interdisciplinary research.

Also, in November 2019, the UT System Board of Regents allocated $70 million for a major new facility at UTEP. The Center for Advanced Manufacturing and Aerospace will substantially increase the number of faculty and students engaged in advanced manufacturing and aerospace research.

In light of these developments, Osegueda is confident UTEP can reach the $200 million mark in annual research expenditures within five to 10 years.

“I think we have developed an excellent structure of support for grant activities, and we have outstanding facilities,” he said. “Now we have to sharpen our strategy, and the plan should include tactics that will allow all faculty members in the campus to participate in sponsored research.”

President Wilson echoed Osegueda’s bold optimism in a comment that foreshadowed the research expenditures milestone before it was announced.

“UTEP is the best it has ever been,” she said in an August 2019 meeting of staff and faculty members. “Now, together, we will focus on how we’re going to get even better.”
New Building Aims to Promote Interdisciplinary Research

The University of Texas at El Paso’s burgeoning research enterprise will be poised for further growth with the opening of the new Interdisciplinary Research Building (IDRB) in spring 2020.

Construction on the IDRB began in 2017 at the southeast edge of the Sun Bowl-University Roundabout. As the $85 million, 150,000-square-foot facility nears its completion date — scheduled for spring 2020 — excitement abounds over the possibilities it will provide.

“When we designed the building, we needed to be very, very careful that it served the entire University community, primarily associated with looking at the growth in research, and make sure space is not a limitation for growth,” said Roberto Osegueda, Ph.D., vice president for research at UTEP.

The facility, which Osegueda said could begin occupancy in April 2020, is tailored to allow students and faculty members from a variety of disciplines to share workspaces and laboratories.

“We have a lot of faculty across campus who work across colleges,” Osegueda said. “They may not have adequate spaces to work in interdisciplinary settings, so this building is intended to satisfy that need.”

The spaces are not permanently assigned to one researcher or a group. Researchers can submit requests to use workspaces on a short- or long-term basis, and they will be assigned a work area that suits their needs.

William Hargrove, Ph.D., director of UTEP’s Center for Environmental Resource Management, serves as chair of the building’s planning committee. He said there will be regular calls for proposals for researchers to apply for space in the building, and there will be criteria to evaluate those proposals, such as the research’s regional or global impact, which will be reviewed by a faculty committee.

“We’ve planned our (building) to where almost anybody at this University could participate and could have space in the building,” Hargrove said. “The idea is to cluster together people who are working on the same problem. Maybe they’re coming at the problem from different ways, but by being housed together in this cluster, they’re more creative, more productive. They derive intellectual synergy just by being together and working together.”

Among the spaces available are wet and dry labs, shared workbenches, interview rooms and meeting rooms. Once approved, researchers can gain entry to their workspaces via card key access, which makes the IDRB the first building on campus with complete card key access. – Jesse Martinez
“The idea is to cluster together people who are working on the same problem. Maybe they’re coming at the problem from different ways, but by being housed together in this cluster, they’re more creative, more productive.

ROBERTO OSEGUEDA, PH.D.
VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH
1950s

Charles Quincy Murphree (B.A. ‘59, M.Ed. ‘59) helped break ground for a new school named in his honor. He is a former Coronado High School principal. The upcoming Charles Q. Murphree PK-8 School is scheduled to open in fall 2022.

John B. Ramsay (B.S. ‘50) was presented with the Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award by Marquis Who’s Who. The organization selected him for his leadership qualities and the many achievements he has accrued in his field.

1960s

Lester Leonidas Parker (BBA ‘67, MBA ‘77) retired as founder of El Paso’s United Bank and WestStar Bank after a 57-year career. He served as president of Bank of the West, now WestStar Bank, for 10 years, and United Bank’s chief executive officer since it opened 19 years ago.

Corinne M. Peschka (B.A. ‘68, M.A. ‘71) was one of 22 faculty members representing The University of Texas System’s academic institutions honored for earning a national teaching credential through a UT System initiative to support student success. She is a lecturer in developmental English at The University of Texas at El Paso.

Nolan Richardson (B.A. ‘65) had the basketball court at Bud Walton Arena at the University of Arkansas named after him. He won 389 games at Arkansas, took the program to 13 NCAA tournaments, six Sweet 16s, four Elite Eights, three Final Fours and one NCAA title in 1994. Richardson is also a member of the National Collegiate Basketball Hall of Fame and the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame.

1970s

Maria E. Alvarez (B.S. ’76, M.S. ’79) was named one of the 2019 McDonald’s Hispanics Triunfadores for the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) category. She is a professor and coordinator of the biology and chemistry programs at El Paso Community College’s Transmountain Campus and the director of the college’s RISE to the Challenge Bridge Program, a STEM initiative funded by the National Institutes of Health.

Arturo Bravo (B.S. ’79) was one of five people inducted into the El Paso Baseball Hall of Fame. He was a standout at Austin High School and at The University of Texas at El Paso during his baseball career. He is a dentist in Washington state.

Elena Izquierdo (B.A. ’74, M.A. ’77) was one of 22 faculty members representing The University of Texas System’s academic institutions honored for earning a national teaching credential through a UT System initiative to support student success. She is an associate professor of teacher education at The University of Texas at El Paso.

Tony Perea (B.A. ’73) was inducted into The University of Texas at El Paso’s 2019 Athletics Hall of Fame for football. The former linebacker amassed 459 career tackles, the third-best total in UTEP football history.

Josefina Villamil Tinajero (B.S. ’73, M.Ed. ’76) helped break ground for a new school named in her honor. The Dr. Josefina Villamil Tinajero PK-8 School is set to open in fall 2021. Tinajero is a professor of bilingual education and longtime administrator at The University of Texas at El Paso.

Andy B. Wallace (M.S. ’72) was appointed to Fremont Gold Ltd.’s advisory board. He is a principal of Cordilleran Exploration Company (“Cordex”).

1980s

Judy Annette Balmer (BBA ‘82) was named vice president of credit administration for Western Heritage Bank, El Paso market. Balmer has 38 years of experience in banking and previously served as the Las Cruces market president.

E. Antonio Chiocca (B.S. ’82) was appointed by Immunomic Therapeutics to its Scientific Advisory Board. Immunomic Therapeutics Inc. (ITI) is a privately held, Maryland-based biotechnology company. Chiocca has approximately 25 years of experience in neuro-oncology and neurosurgery. His expertise has long focused on discovering and engineering biologic agents such as viruses into selective anticancer agents, specifically for brain tumors.

1990s

Linda B. Lawson (BSN ’87) was named group chief nursing officer at the Hospitals of Providence. She joined the Hospitals of Providence in 2006 and has more than 32 years of experience as a nurse. In addition to her new role, Lawson will continue as chief nursing officer for the hospital group’s Transmountain Campus.

Nancy A. Lowery (M.A. ’89) was hired at the Medical Center of the Americas Foundation as the director of accelerator programs for the Innovation Center. She has worked with startups for more
Andres Payan, an artist and curator born in Juárez, Mexico, recently returned to the Paso del Norte region to showcase his developing legacy in ceramics, which explores mortality and symbolic interpretations as well as redefines how that art form is experienced.

Payan earned his bachelor’s degree from The University of Texas at El Paso in 2011 in graphic design and ceramics. He said the University’s Department of Art cultivated his vision to pursue the craft as a career. He went on to obtain his master’s degree at the California Institute of the Arts, where he serves as a special visiting faculty member.

The 33-year-old ceramicist travels throughout the Southwest as the curator of public engagement at The Craft Contemporary, a craft and folk art museum in Los Angeles.

He began his career as a graphic design intern at the University’s Stanlee and Gerald Rubin Center for the Visual Arts, where he became involved in research and installations over the course of three years. Payan’s recent curation at the Rubin Center, “Total Collapse,” which ended its run Dec. 13, 2019, granted him the opportunity to return to his alma mater and reflect on UTEP’s role in his career.

“I’ve always been enamored by what I learned at UTEP,” Payan said. “I feel that it was an incredible foundation for my art practice, and for who I am.”

Now an educator himself, Payan met with UTEP’s art students and encouraged them to pursue careers that motivate them and to take advantage of the opportunities presented to University graduates.

“You always have to remember your community,” said Payan, who asked students to recognize the mentors and the environment that nurtured them. “If you have the opportunity, open up those doors for other people.”

Vincent Burke, associate professor of art at UTEP, remembered Payan as an extraordinary talent.

“He was intellectually ambitious, 100% committed to his discipline, and a tireless worker,” Burke said. “He is already, at this early stage of his professional career, recognized as an important voice within the contemporary ceramics field.”

- Julian Herrera
than 12 years and has certificates in incubation management, startup business models and pro forma development.

Eva Margarita Moya (BSW ’81, Ph.D. ’10) was one of 11 women inducted into the 2019 El Paso Commission for Women’s Hall of Fame for their significant contribution and impact on the community. The group recognized her in the civic leadership category, which celebrates leaders in humanitarian causes, civic responsibilities or historic preservation. Moya is an associate professor of social work at The University of Texas at El Paso and she has served as principal investigator or co-principal investigator on several research and service projects.

Michael L. Mullins (B.A. ’84) was hired as president and CEO of Mountain Health Network. He has worked in leadership, operations support and strategic business arrangements for hospitals across the country in his career, including work in Colorado, Tennessee, Indiana and North Dakota.

Serapio A. Oliveira (R.A. ’86) joined Raymond James and Associates’ El Paso branch as a financial adviser. The El Paso native and U.S. Army Special Forces veteran most recently was a financial adviser with First Command Financial Services.

John Gary Pippen (M.Ed. ’81) was one of eight new members inducted into the El Paso Athletic Hall of Fame Class of 2019. The group made its selections from different sports and different fields, and they represent some of El Paso’s best coaches, players, officials and broadcasters.

Guillermina Solis (BSN ’86, Ph.D. ’10) was named one of the 2019 McDonald’s Hispanics Triunfadores for the Education category. She is an assistant professor of nursing at The University of Texas at El Paso.

Lorraine Torres (B.S. ’80, M.S. ’82, B.S. ’85) was appointed to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board committee. The committee identifies the block of courses for health services that may transfer to a public institution of higher education in Texas. Torres is a clinical assistant professor of clinical laboratory science at The University of Texas at El Paso.

1990s

Juergen Klaus Angermaier (BBA ’91, MBA ’96) was one of two loan originators appointed to lead Waterstone Mortgage’s new Texas satellite office in El Paso. He has lived in the greater El Paso area for 35 years and has worked in the finance industry for more than seven years.

Maritza Balderama (BIS ’94) was named the new principal at LeBarron Park Elementary School. An educator for 25 years with the Ysleta Independent School District, she previously has served as a teacher, assistant principal and principal.

Antonio Castro (BFA ’94) had his latest works “Visions of a Borderland” featured in an exhibition at the El Paso Museum of Art. The exhibit featured paintings, illustrations, books and materials created throughout more than 60 years by Castro who is a Mexican painter and illustrator.

Brant Joseph Danley (M.S. ’98) joined the U.S. Dermatology Partners in Bryan, Texas. He has an extensive background in emergency medicine as well as training in dermatology. Danley is also a nationally certified athletic trainer and a nationally certified strength and conditioning specialist.

Diane N. De Hoyos (M.S. ’94, Ph.D. ’16) was a recipient of the Texas Association of Mexican American Chambers of Commerce Women of Distinction Award. The award recognizes outstanding Hispanic women in Texas who affect the country’s economic, political, leadership and social landscape. She is assistant vice president for purchasing and general services at The University of Texas at El Paso.

Jennifer Marie Delgadillo (BBA ’97) was one of eight new members inducted into the El Paso Athletic Hall of Fame Class of 2019. The group made its selections from different sports and different fields, and they represent some of El Paso’s best coaches, players, officials and broadcasters.

Daniel R. Dominguez (M.S. ’97, MBA ’05) was appointed by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott to a one-year term as Student Regent on The University of Texas System Board of Regents. He is a doctoral student at The University of Texas at El Paso and is the first UTEP student appointed to this position.

Enrique Alberto Grajeda (BBA ’98) was named new president and chief executive officer of Mount Franklin Foods, an El Paso candy manufacturing and nut processing company. Mount Franklin, a subsidiary of the Mexican owned Elamex Group, has 3,554 employees at six facilities in El Paso, Texas; Boone, North Carolina; and Juárez, Mexico.

Sally Anne Hurt-Deitch (BSN ’90, MSN ’94) was named to Sunflower Bank’s board of directors. Hurt-Deitch is the chief nursing officer and vice president of patient care services for Tenet Healthcare Corp. She also serves on the board of the El Paso Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas and is chair of the Texas Hospital Association.

Renard U. Johnson (BBA ’95) was appointed to BBVA Compass’ El Paso advisory board of directors. Johnson is president and CEO of Management and Engineering Technologies International Inc., or METI. He also serves on the governing board of the Hospitals of Providence Transmountain Campus and is a former chairman of the board of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas El Paso Branch.

Joseph Victor Riccillo (B.S. ’98, MBA ’03) was named vice president at SunTrust Foundation. He previously has served as a project director at SunTrust’s El Paso office and has been a board member of the foundation since he started working at SunTrust five years ago.

Michelle Patricia Romero (BIS ’95, M.A. ’01) was named the new principal at Tierra Del Sol Elementary School. Romero is a 24-year education veteran who began her career with the Ysleta Independent School District as a teacher at Loma Terrace Elementary School. Since then, she has served as an instructional coach, assistant principal and principal.

Enrique Romo (B.A. ’94) was named the new assistant vice president for student affairs at Weber State University. He joined Weber State in 2015 as the executive director for access and diversity.

Javier Enrique Salgado (B.A. ’94, M.A. ’98) was named the new principal at Desert View Middle School. He is a 23-year veteran educator with the Ysleta Independent School District. He previously served as a teaching assistant, teacher, instructional specialist, assistant principal and principal.

Shelly G. Smallwood (B.S. ’91, M.Ed. ’01) was appointed as the new director of innovative learning with the Ysleta Independent School District. She began her professional career with the district as a teacher in 1991. She also has served as an instructional technology specialist and Project Get Ahead director.
Meet the New Alumni Association President

Laura E. Biggs began her term as president of The University of Texas at El Paso Alumni Association on Sept. 1, 2019. In her new role, Biggs vows to work with UTEP President Heather Wilson to engage UTEP’s alumni base throughout the world.

Biggs earned her bachelor’s degree in business administration from UTEP in 1996. She was first named to the UTEP Alumni Association Board of Directors in 2011 and has held many positions including vice president for chapters and networks, treasurer and, chair of the 2019 Top Ten Seniors Selection Committee.

Q: How do you plan to work with the administration to accomplish your shared goals?

A: The Alumni Association will continue to support and align its goals with those of the mission of the University. We plan to collaborate with Dr. Wilson to further define the role of the UTEP Alumni Association. Alumni engagement will continue to be a high priority.

Q: What is your favorite thing about being a Miner?

A: My favorite thing about being a Miner is the sense of pride, goodwill, bonding and shared beliefs we have about the University. If you are old enough, you can remember the 1966 men’s NCAA basketball championship title. Then, there is the excitement of seeing accomplished alumni leading public and private industries, thrusting UTEP into national headlines. These accomplishments have brought status and prestige to the University and to El Paso and make me proud to bleed orange and blue.

Q: What do you want all alumni to know about the UTEP Alumni Association?

A: The UTEP Alumni Association is a platform for all alumni to showcase their pride for the University. The association is the avenue to stay informed, engaged, and give back to UTEP.

Q: What kind of legacy do you want to leave as president of the UTEP Alumni Association?

A: I want my legacy to be about giving back. I believe that everyone can give back to their University. It doesn’t merely mean giving financial resources, but giving of one’s expertise, talent, experience and passion. I believe that we all want to leave the world a better place.
Irene V. Youngs (BIS ’93, M.Ed. ’08) was appointed as the new principal at Pebble Hills Elementary School in far east El Paso. She has taught all levels of elementary content, including bilingual education, during her 26 years in education. She also has served as assistant principal for nine years.

2000s

Fernando R. Arriaga (B.S. ’06) was named Ysleta Independent School District’s (YISD) Elementary Teacher of the Year. He is a physical education and health teacher at Ramona Elementary School. Arriaga has been a teacher with YISD for 11 years and a martial-arts instructor for 25 years.

Matthew Banales (BBA ’04) was one of five people inducted into the El Paso Baseball Hall of Fame. He has been an umpire for more than two decades at the youth and high school level.

Amy Bejarano-Alarcon (B.S. ’06, MAT ’10) was named principal at Del Valle Middle School. An educator for 13 years with the Ysleta Independent School District, she began her career as a science teacher at Riverside High School before she became assistant principal at Ysleta High School.

Roberto Alejandro Coronado (BBA ’00, M.S. ’02) was promoted to senior vice president in charge of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas El Paso Branch. He also will assume general oversight responsibility for the Dallas Fed’s law enforcement operations. Coronado oversees the branch and its economic research and outreach functions in West Texas and Southern New Mexico.

Adriana Christina Corral (BFA ’08) had an exhibition of her recent works “Unearthed: Desenterrado” on view at Washington and Lee University’s Staniar Gallery. She based her work on her research on the Bracero Program, a government-sponsored worker program that brought millions of Mexican manual laborers (braceros) and farmworkers to the United States in the early-and mid-20th century.

Patrick Edward Couser (M.A. ’08) was appointed new command sergeant major by the South Dakota National Guard. He will serve as the adjutant general’s personal adviser on all enlisted matters that affect training and utilization of resources, health of the force, and enlisted professional development for the South Dakota Army and Air National Guard.

Adriana Dominguez (B.A. ’03) was named one of the 2019 McDonald’s Hispanics Triunfadores for the Arts and Entertainment category. She is an assistant professor of theater and director of audience development at The University of Texas at El Paso.

Joanna Zuzanna Furdyna (B.A. ’05) was named The University of Texas at El Paso’s assistant coach for the tennis program. She is a former Miner tennis standout who combined for over 40 career victories during her playing career with UTEP before she became the assistant head tennis professional at Coronado Country Club.

Azuri Lizeth Gonzalez (B.A. ’02, M.A. ’11) was named one of the 2019 McDonald’s Hispanics Triunfadores in the Community Service category. She is a lecturer and director of the Center for Community Engagement at The University of Texas at El Paso.

Juan Pedro Guzman (BIS ’00, M.Ed. ’10) was named principal of Scottsdale Elementary School. Guzman, whose career in education spans 19 years with the Ysleta Independent School District, also has served as an elementary teacher, assistant principal and principal.

Natalie Littlefield (B.A. ’04) was named vice president of strategy by the Borderplex Alliance. She previously worked at Workforce Solutions Borderplex.

Kristen Louise MacLaren (B.A. ’02) was one of four individuals inducted into the Belleville Sports Hall of Fame. She dominated women’s golf in the Belleville and Kingston areas from 1993 to 1999.

Holly Nicole Cohen Mata (B.A. ’03) was one of eight new members inducted into the El Paso Athletic Hall of Fame Class of 2019. The group made its selections from different sports and different fields, and they represent some of El Paso’s best coaches, players, officials and broadcasters.

Michael Andrew Matthews (B.A. ’06) was promoted to vice president of creative services at CultureSpan Marketing. He has been with CultureSpan, formerly The Laster Group, since 2005 and had been the company’s creative director.

Oscar Mendez (BIS ’05) was named Bel Air High School’s Brenda Sandoval Honored Ex during Homecoming activities.

Jana Lynn Renner (MPA ’08) was awarded a Walking College Fellowship by America Walks as part of the 2019 program. She is a program officer at the Paso del Norte Health Foundation and works with partners in the Healthy Eating and Active Living initiative. America Walks is a national advocacy organization working with communities to create safe, accessible and enjoyable places to walk.

Angela Marie Reyna (BIS ’03, M.Ed. ’05, Ed.D. ’17) was named the new principal of Parkland Middle School. An educator for 16 years with the Ysleta Independent School District, Reyna has worked as a teacher, as well as an assistant principal at the middle school and high school levels.

Armando Isacc Rodriguez (BBA ’08) was elected chair of the National Hispanic Council of School Board Members, a branch of the National School Boards Association (NSBA) tasked with furthering education policy benefiting the Latinx community throughout the United States. In his new role, he will help NSBA to better understand the needs and goals of Hispanic students and communities that continue to grow in numbers in every region of the country.

Norma L. Sierra (BIS ’02, M.Ed. ’07) was named principal at Mesa Vista Elementary School. Sierra, who has spent 29 years with the Ysleta Independent School District, has worked as a teacher, curriculum specialist, curriculum coordinator, assistant principal and principal.

Tracy Kay Speaker (M.Ed. ’06) was named principal of Midland High School. She was formerly the principal of Northwest Early College High School in Canutillo, Texas.

Zahira Torres (B.A. ’07) was named editor of ProPublica’s Local Reporting Network and will help oversee the growing initiative to support investigative journalism at local and regional newsrooms across the country.

Jacob Ernest Valtierra (MBA ’09) was named principal at Riverside Middle School. His career spans 12 years with the Ysleta Independent School District. He previously worked as a teacher and as an assistant principal at the middle school and high school levels.

James Brian Young (B.A. ’00) was inducted into The University of Texas at El Paso’s 2019 Athletics Hall of Fame for football. He closed out his college career with 32 tackles for losses and 14.5 sacks, ranking fifth in school annals in both categories.

2010s

Zita Smith Arocha (MFA ’12) was selected by the National Endowment for the Humanities...
Michelle Sandoval works hard to be a reason for students to want to go to school. The eighth-grade math teacher at Parkland Pre-Engineering Middle School said her path to successful student outcomes begins with relationships.

Her secret sauce is to teach the “who” first, and the “what” will follow. Her people-first style was among the reasons that the Texas Association of School Administrators named Sandoval as the 2019-20 Texas Secondary Teacher of the Year during an Oct. 25, 2019, luncheon in Austin.

The event was livestreamed to her Northeast El Paso campus, which is part of the Ysleta Independent School District, so her students could be part of the celebration. Weeks later, festive posters still decorated her homeroom. “I have the Best Teacher in Texas” read one. Another declared, “We are so proud of you, Texas Teacher of the Year.”

Her room combines fun and function. Balloons and construction paper flowers share wall space with math equations. A black boombox is next to shelves and cubbies with school supplies. A charging station filled with calculators stands a few steps from a colorful volleyball, a reminder that Sandoval also coaches the school’s district champion eighth-grade volleyball team. Furthermore, she is the student council’s faculty sponsor.

Sandoval said she stays aware of the lingo, the music, the dance steps and mannerisms of her students as she also tracks any new best practices among her peers. It all speaks to how she takes her job seriously, but herself not as much.

“I’m passionate about what I do,” said Sandoval, who earned her bachelor’s degree in interdisciplinary studies in 2009 from The University of Texas at El Paso. She added that her UTEP instructors taught her that teachers cannot control who walks into their classrooms, but they could inspire those who walk out of them.

Sandoval, a native El Pasoan who attended Parkland Middle School, said the statewide recognition was important because its message was that people could achieve if they work hard.

“I wanted my students to be proud of where they came from,” she said. “I wanted this to empower them; to build their confidence.”

As for Sandoval, she considers this award a starting point.

“I know I can get better,” she said.

- Daniel Perez

"WE ARE SO PROUD OF YOU, TEXAS TEACHER OF THE YEAR."
as one of 30 Summer Scholars to participate in a four-week study seminar at the University of Tampa in Florida.

Juan Antonio Aguilera (MPh '16) was one of two students selected for Stanford University’s PRISM (Postdoctoral Recruitment Initiative in Sciences and Medicine) postdoctoral interview opportunity. He is a Ph.D. candidate in The University of Texas at El Paso’s Interdisciplinary Health Sciences program.

Orlando Antonio Arriola (BMS '13, MPA '15) was hired as the new fire marshal for the Oakland (California) fire department. He is a former El Paso firefighter, peace officer and fire marshal, who also was a New Mexico fire chief. Jerrold Dante Brooks (B.A. '18) earned a rookie camp invitation with the Kansas City Chiefs. He played in 37 games for the UTEP Miners.

Victoria del Campo (BBA '13) was hired by Kemp Smith law firm as an associate in its labor and employment department. She previously practiced at an El Paso law firm where she handled defense matters for the motor carrier industry.

Carlos Manuel Diaz (B.S. '14, M.S. '16), a doctoral candidate in computational science at The University of Texas at El Paso, was one of 70 graduate students selected for Stanford University’s PRISM (Postdoctoral Recruitment Initiative in Sciences and Medicine) postdoctoral interview opportunity. He is a Ph.D. candidate in The University of Texas at El Paso’s Interdisciplinary Health Sciences program.

Annai Escobedo (B.A. ’11) was hired as a commercial examiner and legal counsel for Lone Star Title Company. She was admitted to the State Bar of Texas in 2015 and previously practiced commercial real estate law, business entities, complex commercial litigation and probate matters at Blanco Ordoñez Mata & Wechsler, P.C.

Vicente Lopez Flores (B.S. ’13, M.S. ’15) was promoted to vice president of concrete operations at VEMAC, where he has worked for seven years.

Phillip Sean Gore (BMS ’12) was named director of veteran services with the Captain Wendell M. Wilson Office of Veteran Services at the University of Houston-Clear Lake (UHCL). As the director, Gore will serve as the leading authority for Veteran Services at UHCL and will work with multiple agencies and programs to provide outreach and services to student veterans and their dependents.

Samantha Mercedes Hall (BBA ’18) finished third in the 100-meter event at the Jamaican National Championships.

Cedrick John Lang (B.A. ’15) was signed by the New England Patriots as an offensive tackle. The 26-year-old UTEP product got his NFL start with the New York Giants as a rookie free agent before the 2016 season.

David Lucero (BMS ’18) earned a rookie camp invitation with the Oakland Raiders. He played 20 games for the UTEP Miners in two seasons and totaled 37 receptions, 451 receiving yards and three touchdowns.

Abiel Ramiro Macias (BMS ’09) released his latest album "Against the Wind” at the Adobe Horseshoe Theatre in San Elizario, Texas. Macias also known as Abe Mac, is an El Paso country singer and songwriter.

Thenral Divaker Mangadu (Ph.D. ’10), associate professor of public health sciences at The University of Texas at El Paso, has received federal funding to collaborate with a consortium of community partners on a plan for opioid use disorder (OUD) response in rural communities along the Texas-Mexico border. The award is part of a $200,000 grant that Aliviane Inc. received from the Health Resources and Services Administration’s Rural Communities Opioid Response Program to establish a multi-sector consortium that will develop strategies to prevent and treat substance use disorder, such as OUD, in rural communities.

Alejandra Maynez (B.S. ’10, M.S. ’11) was promoted to vice president and chief estimator at VEMAC where she has worked for nine years.

Michael L. Mullins (B.A. ’84) was hired as president and CEO of Mountain Health Network. He has worked in leadership, operations support and strategic business arrangements for hospitals across the country in his career, which includes work in Colorado, Tennessee, Indiana and North Dakota.

Nikolas James Needham (B.A. ’18) signed a deal to play football with the Miami Dolphins. He finished his UTEP career with 212 tackles, three interceptions and 33 pass breakups.

Joshua Joe Silvas (BMS ’16) placed third in the super heavyweight division at the United States Strongman Nationals in Columbus, Ohio, which serves as America’s amateur championships.

Anthony R. Tellez (B.A. ’17), a social work graduate student at The University of Texas at El Paso, was selected to receive the 2019 Ima Hogg Scholarship from the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health. The foundation awards the $5,000 scholarship to second-year graduate students who demonstrate a strong commitment to provide mental health services in Texas after they graduate.

Kayla B. Thornton (B.A. ’14) was inducted into The University of Texas at El Paso’s 2019 Athletics Hall of Fame for women’s basketball. She is a member of the Dallas Wings organization in the WNBA and a member of the UTEP Women’s Basketball Centennial Team.

Daniel James Veale (MBA ’11) was named The University of Texas at El Paso’s assistant athletic director for marketing. He previously spent seven years as a member of the Miners’ athletic staff from 2009 to 2016. He most recently was the director of marketing at Southern Methodist University where he oversaw promotional efforts for football, men’s basketball and various other sports.
Houston Attorney Keeps UTEP Close to His Heart

Paul Yetter, founder and a managing partner of the Houston law firm Yetter Coleman LLP, remains grateful to The University of Texas at El Paso for the many opportunities it provided to him.

“In many ways, UTEP helped shape the person I have become, but two are most obvious,” he said in a telephone interview from his office in Houston. “First, it opened my horizons, allowing me to consider taking big challenges and risks, and second, and way more important, I met my wife, Patti, there.”

Yetter, who grew up in El Paso, said his love of UTEP basketball made the decision to attend the University an easy one. He received a bachelor’s degree in business administration in 1980. He subsequently earned his law degree from Columbia Law School in 1983. Since then, he has tried several high-profile cases to include a recent major federal appellate decision that will make Texas’ foster care system safer for children.

He has reveled in his alma mater’s growth in national prominence. Two recent examples were when the University surpassed the $100 million threshold in research expenditures and its designation as an R1 top tier research university by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. Yetter said he admires how UTEP continues to remain accessible and affordable to the community it serves.

He is also a firm believer in the importance of philanthropy and giving back to a University that provides opportunities to students who might not have been able to obtain a higher education.

In 1998, the College of Liberal Arts opened the Patti and Paul Yetter Center for Law to help UTEP students and community residents understand the legal profession and gain entrance to law school.

“No one ever really achieves anything important all by themselves, so whatever success I’ve had is because of all the support I have received from family and friends and most especially from schools like UTEP.”

Paul Yetter

- Victor R. Martinez
THE ALUMNI LOUNGE

IN MEMORIAM

1940s

Frank Altus (BBA '47) El Paso, Texas; May 6, 2019
Mary Jane Bills (BBA '48) Fabens, Texas; May 5, 2019
Tom Chavez (B.A. '48, M.A. '54) Lubbock, Texas; Aug. 11, 2019
Frances Bell Graves (B.A. '49) Houston, Texas; April 20, 2019
Lillian Romo Hradek (B.A. '42, M.A. '53) El Paso, Texas; March 26, 2019
Joseph R. Mansfield (B.A. '48) Carlsbad, New Mexico; Feb. 9, 2019
Frances Barton Springer (B.A. '49) El Paso, Texas; June 30, 2019
Richard Shain Cohen (M.A. '55) El Paso, Texas; July 5, 2019
Mary Jane Bills (BBA '48) El Paso, Texas; May 6, 2019

1950s

Royce L. Callaway (B.S. '57) Frisco, Texas; Sept. 13, 2019
George Clyde Curry (B.A. '58) Irving, Texas; May 6, 2019
Richard Shain Cohen (M.A. '55) Portland, Maine; March 1, 2019
Dorothy J. Devore (B.A. '53, M.Ed. '86) Albuquerque, New Mexico; April 29, 2019
Rosie Beatrice Edwards (B.A. '52, M.Ed. '73) El Paso, Texas; June 30, 2019
Arlene Blandrup Epstein (B.A. '56) Houston, Texas; Aug. 8, 2019
Dorothy Alice Foster (B.A. '54) Dallas, Texas; April 1, 2019
Marcia V. Harkins (B.A. '55) Palm City, Florida; July 23, 2019
Mary Lou Heasley (B.A. '53) El Paso, Texas; June 26, 2019
Glenn M. Johnson (B.S. '59) Lutz, Florida; April 11, 2019
Elroy Coy Jones (B.A. '52) Brownfield, Texas; May 13, 2019
Janis Melvin Keller (B.A. '55) El Paso, Texas; March 31, 2019
John Muir Kipp (BBA '57) Las Cruces, New Mexico; April 30, 2019
Lou Graham Leonard (B.M. '56) Houston, Texas; Aug. 30, 2019
Jeanette Mason (B.A. '56, M.Ed. '83) El Paso, Texas; Sept. 17, 2019
Irma Gandara Rosas (BBA '58) El Paso, Texas; April 2, 2019
George Rubinstein (B.A. '57, M.Ed. '67) Las Cruces, New Mexico; Sept. 5, 2019
Reynaldo Sanchez (B.S. '57, M.S. '82) El Paso, Texas; April 12, 2019
Larry Allen Tompkins (B.A. '51) El Paso, Texas; July 6, 2019
Jo Ann Tyrrell (B.A. '56) Goffstown, New Hampshire; April 16, 2019
Roberto Viera (B.A. '52) El Paso, Texas; Aug. 17, 2019
Shirley A. (McCormick) Webster (BBA '53) Massillon, Ohio; April 3, 2019
Charles Edgar Woodul (B.M. '59) El Paso, Texas; June 20, 2019
Robert R. Yanez (B.S. '53) Santa Maria, California; Aug. 8, 2019
Juan Omar Aguirre (B.A. '64) El Paso, Texas; Feb. 29, 2019
Arturo E. Atayde (BBA '68) Vista, California; July 6, 2019
William Lowell Barry (BBA '63, B.A. '65) El Paso, Texas; June 16, 2019
James Edward Boatright (B.A. '62) El Paso, Texas; June 30, 2019
Blanche Brown (B.A. '67) El Paso, Texas; June 22, 2019
David A. Burris (B.S. '66) Shavnee, Oklahoma; July 19, 2019
James Lee Carter (B.S. '61) Richardson, Texas; Sept. 21, 2019
David H. Dean (M.S. '68) Las Vegas, Texas; June 12, 2019
Dorothy Jean Fanning (B.S. '64) Gig Harbor, Washington; April 11, 2019
Shirley G. Fouts (B.A. '63) El Paso, Texas; April 28, 2019
Armando N. Garcia (B.A. '60) El Paso, Texas; May 18, 2019
Alden Price George (BBA '64) Paris, Texas; July 4, 2019
Karen Godwin (B.S. '67) Lubbock, Texas; Aug. 21, 2019
Jari Bennett Grimm (B.A. '65) Atlanta, Georgia; June 13, 2019
Raymond Walter Hamarlund (B.S. '69) Minden, Nevada; June 9, 2019
Gloria E. (Ayon) Hoyos (B.A. '69, M.Ed. '98) El Paso, Texas; April 6, 2019
James Wilks Johnson (B.S. '65) Houston, Texas; April 3, 2019
Gayle Ann Kipp (B.S. '65) El Paso, Texas; April 26, 2019
Tommas Macias (B.A. '66) El Paso, Texas; May 9, 2019
Douglas B. Manigold (B.S. '67) Longmont, Colorado; June 26, 2019
Luis Alfredo Garcia (B.A. '60) El Paso, Texas; July 6, 2019
William Fred Riggs (B.S. '60) Arroyo Hondo, Pers; June 30, 2019
Elisa M. Salas (B.S. '61, M.Ed. '77) El Paso, Texas; Sept. 21, 2019
Theodore F. Summers (B.A. '62) Santa Clarita, California; Sept. 9, 2019
Frank Valenzuela (B.S. '60) Phoenix, Arizona; April 19, 2019
Carolyn June De Volin (B.S. '66) New Braunfels, Texas; June 15, 2019
Ray Murrell Warren (B.A. '61) Arlington, Texas; May 29, 2019
Jesse Pool Webb (B.S. '60) Midland, Texas; Aug. 5, 2019
Arnauld D. Whittome (BBA '69) Colorado Springs, Colorado; Sept. 15, 2019
John Edward Whittler (B.S. '62) El Paso, Texas; May 16, 2019
Barbara Virginia Williams (B.A. '65) El Paso, Texas; July 18, 2019
Leonie Ansara Wilson (B.S. '66) El Paso, Texas; May 27, 2019
Dell Dee Wright (B.A. '60) Bryan, Texas; June 17, 2019
Paul Tuesburg Zeek (B.A. '63) Boerne, Texas; June 11, 2019

1960s

Noel Armstrong (B.S. '76) Chestertown, Virginia; May 31, 2019
Ofeilia Morales (B.S. '67) Tampa, Florida; June 25, 2019
Alfred G. Parra (B.S. '60) Palo Alto, California; March 27, 2019
Yolanda Dolores Pickard (B.A. '66, M.A. '71) Kerrville, Texas; April 17, 2019
Sue Ramsey (B.S. '65) Albuquerque, New Mexico; May 8, 2019
William Fred Riggs (B.S. '60) Arroyo Hondo, Peru; May 27, 2019

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO acknowledges the passing of the following graduates.
Miners Around the World

Eduardo Munoz Jr. (B.S. in Industrial Engineering, 2017) wears his UTEP gear while visiting St. Peter’s Church in Munich, Germany, during a business trip.

Retired School of Nursing faculty member Pearl R. Pope (M.S. in Nursing, 1996) visits Mount Fuji in Japan.

Cinthia Rodriguez (BIS in Education, 2002) visits the Monte Albán archaeological site in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Dayami Rodriguez (B.S. in Civil Engineering, 2010), Iskra Rodriguez (B.S. in Civil Engineering, 2010) and Jesus "Chuy" Escobar (B.S. in Industrial Engineering, 2008) show their Miner pride during a family trip to the Taj Mahal in Agra, India.

Robert LeRoy Giron (B.A. in Linguistics, 1973) sports his orange and blue while visiting the Acropolis of Athens in Greece.

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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Degree and Year</th>
<th>Location and Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jose Mario Banales (B.A. ’77)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>Aug. 3, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Betty Alderman Banta (B.A. ’78)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>Sept. 6, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frances D. Berger (B.A. ’70)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>May 12, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Blankinship Sr. (B.S. ’75)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>Aug. 24, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eugene Robert Calabro (B.S. ’79)</td>
<td>Austin, Texas</td>
<td>Dec. 22, 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Douglas Edward Cannedy (B.M. ’70)</td>
<td>Wichita Falls, Texas</td>
<td>April 22, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richard Carson (B.S. ’72)</td>
<td>Dallas, Texas</td>
<td>March 20, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Francisco Estrada (B.A. ’73, M.Ed. ’81)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>May 25, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jean Marie Evans (B.A. ’76)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>July 20, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barry M. Handlin (BBA ’73)</td>
<td>Kermit, Texas</td>
<td>Aug. 23, 2019</td>
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<td>Louella Bash Hartshorn (B.M. ’77)</td>
<td>Camarillo, California</td>
<td>May 30, 2019</td>
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<td>Winnie Pearl George Holt (B.S. ’70)</td>
<td>San Antonio, Texas</td>
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<td>Garry Frank Howe (BBA ’74)</td>
<td>Houston, Texas</td>
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<td>Robert Edward LaBelle (MBA ’76)</td>
<td>Houston, Texas</td>
<td>May 9, 2019</td>
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<td>Robert G. Luttrell (BBA ’70)</td>
<td>Arlington, Texas</td>
<td>April 26, 2019</td>
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<td>Marge H. Martin (B.S. ’78)</td>
<td>Fabens, Texas</td>
<td>June 13, 2019</td>
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<td>Manuel Sosa Martínez (B.S. ’74)</td>
<td>San Angelo, Texas</td>
<td>July 12, 2019</td>
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<td>Ricardo H. Martínez (B.A. ’72)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>March 20, 2019</td>
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<td>Mattie Jane Moore (B.S. ’72)</td>
<td>Fort Smith, Arkansas</td>
<td>June 15, 2019</td>
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<td>Mary Herlinda Olivas (B.M. ’79)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>May 26, 2019</td>
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<td>Indalecio G. Puente (M.Ed. ’71)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
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<td>Enrique Quintana (B.A. ’75, M.A. ’94)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
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<td>Mattie Jane Moore (B.S. ’72)</td>
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<td>Robert E. Strange (BBA ’71)</td>
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<td>James Tate (BBA ’74)</td>
<td>Dalhart, Texas</td>
<td>March 24, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asa R. Tatums (B.S. ’76)</td>
<td>Port Neches, Texas</td>
<td>May 31, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Gena Taylor (B.S. ’70)</td>
<td>Aztec, New Mexico</td>
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<td>Oliver Almeraz Reyes (B.S. ’79)</td>
<td>Deming, New Mexico</td>
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<td>Hugo Ricardo Romero (B.A. ’72)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>April 14, 2019</td>
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<td>Armando Rubio (BBA ’74)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
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<td>Pedro Serrano (B.S. ’74)</td>
<td>San Tan Valley, Arizona</td>
<td>May 16, 2019</td>
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<td>Magda Jimenez Shaw (BSW ’79)</td>
<td>Bakersfield, California</td>
<td>April 21, 2019</td>
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<td>Laura Stell (B.A. ’74)</td>
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<td>Sandra Jean Stroud (M.S. ’77)</td>
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<td>Charles Wist (BBA ’72)</td>
<td>Houston, Texas</td>
<td>Aug. 30, 2019</td>
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<td>Keith H. Biedermann (BBA ’81)</td>
<td>Santa Ana, California</td>
<td>June 4, 2019</td>
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<td>Donald Albert Bohus (MSN ’85)</td>
<td>Dixmont, Maine</td>
<td>March 19, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karen Lee Clay (B.S. ’84)</td>
<td>Alto, New Mexico</td>
<td>Aug. 4, 2019</td>
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<td>Claudia L. Coulter (B.S. ’89)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>May 18, 2019</td>
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<td>Esperanza M. Guerrero (B.S. ’85)</td>
<td>Lewisville, Texas</td>
<td>July 25, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>James Newton Hart (BSW ’86)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>Jan. 7, 2019</td>
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<td>Susan Kay Lewis (B.B.A. ’81)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>May 28, 2019</td>
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<td>Fred Eloy Lucero (B.S. ’82)</td>
<td>Santa Fe, New Mexico</td>
<td>June 10, 2019</td>
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<td>Alicia Arellano Martinez (B.S. ’80)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>April 19, 2019</td>
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<td>Paula Rose Monarez Diaz (B.A. ’84)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>Aug. 29, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gilbert Andre Pippin (BSN ’84)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>Oct. 25, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynthia Savedra (B.S. ’85)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>April 27, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Susan Smiley (MBA ’84)</td>
<td>Las Cruces, New Mexico</td>
<td>Sept. 13, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosemary Berka Stoelzel (M.Ed. ’85)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>July 7, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jeffrey Stephen Thrasher (BBA ’82)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>May 6, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richard E. Treesh (B.S. ’81)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>Aug. 15, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha Leticia Veale (BSW ’83, MBA ’92, Ed.D. ’07)</td>
<td>George-town, Texas</td>
<td>March 23, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>James Hardy Ware (M.Ed. ’81)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>Aug. 31, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roger Dean Williams (B.A. ’80)</td>
<td>Atlanta, Georgia</td>
<td>July 4, 2019</td>
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<td>Philip Reid Aldridge (MBA ’92)</td>
<td>Austin, Texas</td>
<td>April 23, 2019</td>
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<td>Juan Fernando Alonzo (B.S. ’91)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>Aug. 15, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robert Lewis Elliott (B.S. ’94)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>June 27, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>David Michael Hatton (BBA ’94)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>April 5, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jose Gonzalo Lazalde (M.Ed. ’99)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>May 1, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Melissa Isabel Mendoza (BIS ’96)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>June 1, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annie M. O’Brien (BSW ’91)</td>
<td>Houston, Texas</td>
<td>July 11, 2019</td>
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<td>Guadalupe Weaver (BSW ’92)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>Sept. 2, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jennifer Dominguez (B.S. ’02)</td>
<td>San Antonio, Texas</td>
<td>Aug. 18, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Randy Renee Gutierrez (B.S. ’05)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>May 16, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vanessa Jazmin Gutierrez (BIS ’05)</td>
<td>St. Louis, Missouri</td>
<td>May 19, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miguel Humberto Martinez (B.A. ’11)</td>
<td>Houston, Texas</td>
<td>Aug. 20, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jean-Marc Martin Salloum (BBA ’14)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>March 31, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stephanie Marie Torres (BSN ’16)</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
<td>May 7, 2019</td>
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Ron Hufstader, Ph.D.

Award-winning educator and band director Ron Hufstader, Ph.D., professor emeritus of music at The University of Texas at El Paso, died Dec. 9, 2019, at age 73 in El Paso. Hufstader, who grew up in Iowa, Montana and North Carolina, joined UTEP in 1976 and retired 40 years later. Through those years, Hufstader chaired the Department of Music, served as director of bands, taught music education and conductor courses, and conducted the UTEP Orchestra.

Outside of UTEP, the accomplished trombonist founded the El Paso Wind Symphony, and served as the El Paso Symphony Orchestra’s principal trombone player for 27 years.

Colleagues noted his strengths as a leader and musician, as well as his integrity, sense of humor, and commitment to excellence.

Steve Wilson, DMA, chair and professor of music, said Hufstader, his high school and college trombone teacher, inspired him and set him on his professional path.

“He was a great mentor, colleague and friend who will be greatly missed by students, faculty, and the greater musical community,” Wilson said.

Steve Haddad, a UTEP lecturer since 2004, said he has performed with and for Hufstader for 30 years, and really appreciated his friend’s sense of humor.

“We worked hard, but he always saw the humor in a situation,” said Haddad, whose office was next to Hufstader’s for 12 years. “He found joy in his work. He always was upbeat. He never forgot how much he loved his work.”

Hufstader earned his Bachelor of Music degree from East Carolina University and his Master of Music Education degree from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He received his Master of Music Performance (trombone) degree and his doctorate in music education from the University of Iowa.

He was a member of many state and national organizations that promoted music education and band directors. Among his honors were induction into the Texas Bandmasters Association’s Hall of Fame and election to the prestigious American Bandmasters Association.

Hufstader’s survivors include his wife, Nancy Taylor, a UTEP trumpet professor, daughter, Lindsey Hufstader, and many extended family members. - Daniel Perez
UTEP Goes Global

Homecoming 2019
The excitement surrounding The University of Texas at El Paso’s Homecoming 2019 celebration reached around the world as students, faculty, staff and alumni engaged in a week filled with themed events that reveled in the many rich cultures from throughout the globe. The celebration kicked off with the crowning of the Homecoming court at the annual Homecoming Pageant on Sept. 27. The UTEP community erupted with school spirit during the Homecoming Pep Rally on Oct. 3 in Centennial Plaza. The festivities continued with individual college and school celebrations, and culminated with the football game between the Miners and The University of Texas at San Antonio Roadrunners on Oct. 5.
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