FALL 1992 CONVOCATION REMARKS

UTEP is a very special university. We are at the forefront of major national demographic trends. We are located on the border of one of the most rapidly developing countries in the world in a dynamic, binational metropolitan area of two million people. We are increasingly well-known for the quality of our academic programs and research. We were recently listed among the top ten Texas universities in research spending by Nature, an international science weekly published in Great Britain. We are featured in a recent book\(^1\) as one of the ten most successful universities in the United States in educating and graduating Hispanic students. We are recognized for successful student retention and degree completion in a recent Department of Education study, and for our record of producing the largest number of Hispanic graduates at any U.S. university who completed doctoral degrees. In other words, we have attained a highly successful balance between achieving quality in our academic programs and research initiatives, and fostering the academic excellence of a largely non-traditional student population. We are the acknowledged leader among institutions serving majority Hispanic student populations, and we are uniquely positioned to capitalize on these many assets as higher education gradually transforms itself to meet new challenges and changing contexts.

Because we are at the forefront of change in higher education, we are sometimes misunderstood. John Updike said, "... An old world is collapsing and a new world arising; we have better eyes for the collapse than for the rise, for the old one is the

\(^1\)Richard Richardson Jr. and Elizabeth Fisk Skinner, *Achieving Quality and Diversity: Universities in a Multi-Cultural Society* ...
world we know." And, so it is in the world of higher education. Those of us privileged to be in the new world have the imagination to see what those whose vision is limited by old world concerns cannot, and it is our special challenge to create and disseminate the models that will pave the way to this new world of higher education.

Like you, I am at UTEP by choice, intellectually committed and emotionally tied to the enormous challenges and opportunities before us. I was recently encouraged to become a candidate for the presidency at the University of Texas at Austin. Rumors circulated about my succeeding Bill Cunningham in that position. From the outset, I stated clearly that I was not interested, but convincing people that I really would far rather be at UTEP than at U.T. Austin was not easy. When I tried to explain, differing values and the conceptual gaps they created were often too great to bridge. Ultimately, I realized that my decision was based on a vision that others have not yet seen. I know that many of you have seen that vision. You see beyond the day-to-day ups-and-downs, through budgetary constraints, lack of legislative resolve, and other frustrations, to the profound effect that we have had on this region and the enormous potential for a more significant impact in the years ahead.

Because universities are quintessentially human organizations, our greatest assets are those individuals who have committed their professional talent and skills to this university, and through whose efforts our extraordinary progress has been achieved. The faculty and staff members to whom we have presented service awards today represent a cross-section of the dedicated individuals whose commitment to excellence at UTEP has made it possible for this university to strive constantly for ever higher levels of institutional accomplishment. Individuals like Bob Toller, Associate Professor of Economics and Finance, who, for the past 20 years has served
UTEP in a variety of capacities including Chairman of the Faculty Senate, and Faculty Representative to the NCAA; Damaso Gonzalez who has worked tirelessly for over 15 years to keep the Administration Building looking its best; and Esther Sanchez, Administrative Assistant in Housing, who for the past 20 years has dedicated herself to the well being of students who live on campus. Although there is no truly adequate way to express our appreciation to all of you, we want those being honored today--and all of the rest of the faculty and staff--to know that what you do and how you do it is critical to UTEP's success, and that what we have achieved is the result of our collective commitment to this institution and the students it serves.

Each year brings new faces to UTEP, and with our growing national visibility, we have been able to attract larger and much more competitive applicant pools for many of these critical positions. The professionals whom we have recruited during the past year have come to UTEP because they are aware of our success and the momentum that has been building here for the past several years; they are challenged by our ambitious institutional mission and goals, and they are eager to participate in our vision of the future. We are pleased indeed to welcome Charles Fey, Dean of Students; Raquel Bauman, Director of the Border Community Health Education Institute; Richard Bratcher, Director of Information and Telecommunication Services; George Walker, Director of the Master's program in Public Health; Bert Navar, campus architect; Rebecca Salcido, Equal Employment Opportunity Officer; Alan Chesney, Director of Human Resource Services; Gretchen Schmalz and Stanley Hartgraves, directors of Occupational and Physical Therapy programs; Jane Williams, Director of Materials Management, Roy Malpass, Professor of Psychology and Director of the Criminal Justice Program, and the many other new
faculty and staff members who have joined us this year.

One of my principal tasks as UTEP's president is to attempt to convey to both internal and external constituencies a vision of this university and its role in creating educational opportunities in this fast-growing, highly dynamic, binational, bicultural region. I am greatly aided in this effort by mounting evidence of the extraordinary progress that we have achieved during the past several years. 1991-92 has provided me with far more examples of major accomplishments than can be enumerated here; suffice it to say that each year the pace of our progress accelerates, and each year our expectations of what we are capable of achieving rise yet another notch.

I mentioned earlier our listing among the top ten Texas universities in annual research expenditures. What is remarkable about this achievement is that although all of the other institutions on that list offer a broad array of doctoral programs, UTEP has managed to keep pace with their levels of research funding. My prediction is that with just a little bit of help from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, in the form of authorizations to offer additional doctoral programs, UTEP will emerge as an even more serious competitor for research funding in the future.

Speaking of doctoral programs, two consultants engaged by the Coordinating Board recently visited UTEP to review our proposed doctoral program in materials science and engineering. They concluded that UTEP was more than ready to offer this program. In fact, they pointed out that the combination of quality resources—faculty, students, and facilities—and UTEP's location will make this program a "conspicuous national treasure." Even I might blush at such effusive praise! This
program has been approved by the U.T. System Board of Regents and will receive formal review by the Coordinating Board in October. If all goes according to plan, we will begin implementation of this important program in the Spring 1993 semester. Special thanks to Larry Murr and Rey Elizondo for their leadership in this effort.

Although progress in gaining authorization for a doctoral program in psychology has not been as rapid, there are now good signs that the long wait may be nearly over. The department has greatly strengthened its research base through external funding (we are now ranked third among Texas institutions in research funding for psychology), and through the addition of capable and committed new faculty members. The demand for this program is great, the need has been clearly demonstrated, and its quality is a matter of record. All that is lacking is the Coordinating Board's authorization, which we anticipate receiving this year. Doctoral programs in other areas of institutional strength should follow, as UTEP emerges as the major comprehensive research university in the border region.

Several other academic programs have recently been authorized for implementation at UTEP. Programs in physical and occupational therapy will be initiated this year in cooperation with the U.T. Medical Branch in Galveston. In a similar cooperative effort with the U.T. Health Science Center in Houston, UTEP will begin offering courses this fall leading to a Master's degree in public health. Three new degree options will be offered at the master's level in Nursing, supported by funding from the Department of Health and Human Services: Nurse Midwifery, Nursing Administration, and Women's Health Practitioner. A Master of Fine Arts degree program in creative writing, jointly offered by the English and Languages and Linguistics Departments, was recently approved by the U.T. Regents, and will soon
be considered by the Coordinating Board. The relocation of Kinesiology and Sports Studies to the College of Nursing and Allied Health, and the recruitment of a new program director and two new faculty members, is expected to move that program in new directions. In the College of Business Administration, departmental reorganization and the recruitment of new faculty and administrators have laid the groundwork for major program developments in the coming year. The Honors Program with its new director, Lillian Mayberry, was recently given a great vote of confidence by the Houston Endowment, which has committed $250,000 in scholarship awards for the next five years to permit Honors students who would otherwise work to support their education to be full-time participants in all of the program's activities.

1991-92 was another record-setting year at UTEP for external funding for research projects, student support, and academic program development. Nearly $17 million in new awards were received during the fiscal year just ended, and an all-time record of 271 proposals were produced by UTEP faculty and staff from every sector of the campus. The Office of Sponsored Projects currently administers more than $55 million in active projects. New grants of major significance include:

- a five-year, $5 million grant from the National Science Foundation's Alliance for Minority Participation program in which UTEP will serve as the lead institution in a joint effort involving all nine academic components of the U.T. System and five partner community college districts to increase the number of minority students who receive degrees in science and engineering;

- five major grants totaling over $750,000 to The Center for Environmental
Resource Management for environmental outreach, education and research;

- more than $2 million to the College of Nursing and Allied Health for instructional programs and student support;

- nine grants totaling over $1.3 million for UTEP's precollege outreach efforts.

As UTEP continues to expand and strengthen its linkages to other universities and to federal research-related agencies, such as Sandia National Laboratories and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, and to assume a leadership role in several national consortia of universities such as the QEM-MSE Network, the HBCU-MI Environmental Technology and Waste Management Consortium and the Southwest Center for Environmental Research and Policy, our national visibility and the opportunities such visibility creates for us will be enhanced.

Stimulating national visibility, by getting UTEP's message out and encouraging visitors to come in, is a constant challenge, especially when nearly everyone thinks that El Paso is "far away." Our efforts have been greatly aided by the high quality of publications produced by Art Vasquez and his colleagues in University Communications--remember the beautiful "Shangri La On the Border" insert in the Winter issue of NOVA?--and by the capable support provided to UTEP-hosted conferences by Robert Stakes and his staff in Professional and Continuing Education. During the past year, UTEP was the site of a major bilateral meeting of the Secretaries of Education of the U.S. and Mexico, involving over 600 participants, as well as meetings of such diverse groups as the Society of French Historians, the Wildlife Disease Association, the Electroluminescence Association, the Society for the
Study of Amphibians and Reptiles, the National Campus Ministry Association, and the Rocky Mountain Educational Research Association, as well as a host of locally based organizations. Everyone who participates in such events is very favorably impressed with our campus facilities and with the excellent service provided by the Continuing Education, Union, and Catering Service staffs.

UTEP's beautiful campus is an enormous asset. Visitors are intrigued and impressed by our border Bhutanese architecture, and they regularly note how well-kept the facilities and grounds are, when compared with campuses elsewhere. We acknowledge with appreciation the fine work done by the Facilities Services staff to maintain the functionality and beauty of our buildings and grounds, and we thank all UTEP students, faculty, and staff for the pride and respect we all show for this very special campus.

Campus planning must be a constant activity, as enrollments and research activities grow and as new academic programs are implemented. During the past year, UTEP dedicated three major new facilities, the Geological Sciences Building, the Liberal Arts Center for Instructional Technology, and, most recently, the newly renovated Burges Hall, which houses the Institute for Manufacturing and Materials Management, and a variety of human and economic development outreach programs. Although funds for Geological Sciences and partial funding for the LACIT laboratory came from the U.T. System's Permanent University Fund, an historically important source of support for UTEP's physical facilities, funding from the private sector (in the case of the Liberal Arts lab) and from federal sources (in the case of Burges) is becoming increasingly important. Of special note are the efforts of Don Michie, who secured the necessary funding for the renovation of Burges Hall, converting
what was an unused and increasingly unattractive former dormitory into a beautiful and greatly needed materials research and outreach facility in which we can all take pride.

Work is nearly complete on other campus renovation projects. The Computer Science Department will soon move into the former Geological Sciences Building, providing this growing program with the attractive and highly functional facilities it needs, and alleviating space pressures in the College of Engineering. The laboratory facilities for the physical and occupational therapy programs in the College of Nursing and Allied Health are well on their way to completion, thanks to a major grant from National Medical Enterprises, and an interactive video classroom will be readied this fall to transmit classes for the new master’s program in public health from the U.T. Health Science Center in Houston.

At the east entrance to the campus, two vacant buildings (which formerly housed the Speech and Hearing program) are being renovated for the campus police department and a drive-up information center for campus visitors; this facility will also serve as a 24-hour emergency center for the campus community. You have also undoubtedly noticed that we are completing the installation of campus signage to identify buildings and the departments housed in them, as well as directional signs at major intersections on the campus. Although UTEP veterans may easily find their way around a campus without signs, this is far too large and too complex a community not to offer some "hints" to our many visitors and newcomers.

Technology is also high on the priority list at UTEP, and during the past year additional strides were made to improve information access on the campus. A new
and much needed telephone system was installed, and all of us are learning to use its many helpful features. This system also accommodates an enhanced 911 service as well as emergency telephones which have been placed at strategic locations on the campus. The fiber optic network installation project continues apace, with the ultimate goal of connecting all campus facilities. Planning has also begun for a new student information system to replace the increasingly inadequate ISIS. The Library has begun its transformation into a learning/information center with the acquisition of electronic access to a broad range of bibliographic tools and services, and through the generosity of IBM, multi-media laboratories will be installed in both the Library and the College of Nursing and Allied Health within the next several months to foster increased use of technology in instruction. Many of these initiatives will be funded by a newly authorized technology fee which recognizes the growing importance of technology in teaching, learning, and a broad range of support functions.

Recreational facilities are an important facet of this and all other university campuses. UTEP's aging gymnasium, tennis, and swimming facilities have begun to receive much-needed attention. A new security system is being developed for Memorial Gym. The tennis courts have been resurfaced, enabling UTEP's men's and women's tennis teams to practice on campus for the first time in many years, and providing both tennis classes and recreational tennis players improved facilities. The tennis complex that we hoped to build in Charlie Davis Park, in cooperation with the City of El Paso, is on hold, but the concept of working with community partners remains viable, and we will continue to pursue such cooperative ventures. Charlie Davis Park is the home of a beautiful new soccer field, which we hope will serve as the initial phase in the development of a variety of recreational facilities in that area.
One of those facilities will likely be the new swimming pool, a fee for which was supported in a student referendum last spring. The importance of recreational facilities to our students is underscored by their willingness to assess themselves a substantial fee each semester, and we will do all that we can to respond to their challenge.

The Centennial Museum also received a major facelift this year. The first-floor galleries were refurbished through the generosity of El Paso Natural Gas, and the Jubilee Square at the Museum's entrance, containing over 1,000 bricks engraved with the names of UTEP supporters and those they honor, was dedicated. Proceeds from the Square will be used to create a desert garden at the Museum, featuring drought-resistant plants native to this region. The Museum welcomed over 110,000 visitors in 1991-92, a large number of whom were children from area schools for whom this Museum serves as a major educational resource.

Following national trends which reveal increasing private support for public universities, UTEP has received very generous contributions from the private sector: foundations, corporations, alumni and friends. The level of foundation and corporate support for UTEP programs increased dramatically during the past year with major grants from Kellogg, Ford, Coca-Cola, Gannett’s Freedom Forum, Tinker, the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Houston Endowment, EXXON, ARCO, and El Paso Natural Gas, for such diverse activities as water resource research and pre-collegiate outreach programs. Private gifts to UTEP increased 72% from the last reporting period, compared to a national rate of increase of 6.2%. UTEP alumni have become more involved in our programs and committed to playing a more significant role in helping us achieve our important and very ambitious agenda. Alumni pledges
during the last Alumni Fund for Excellence phonathon increased by 16%. UTEP also received over $1 million in deferred gifts last year, compared to $50,000 the year before, and the number of endowment gifts to the University increased by 38%, with a 116% gain in endowment dollars. Jan Cavin, Marcia Cohen, and the staff in the Development/Alumni Office are to be congratulated for these significant gains and for the foundation they have laid for even greater support in the future.

A major breakthrough was achieved this year in the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, as the El Dorados, UTEP's external athletic support organization for the past ten years, was transformed into an internal fund-raising organization called the Miner Foundation, thereby assuring greater stability and institutional control. The Miner Foundation, under the leadership of John Thompson and a board which reflects El Paso's diverse population, is off to a highly auspicious start in securing stable and sufficient funding to support the broad range of men's and women's athletic programs required for participation in the Western Athletic Conference and Division I-A of the NCAA. Inasmuch as no state funds may be used to support athletic programs in Texas, the fund-raising challenge is a significant one, and I am greatly encouraged by the early response from the El Paso-Juarez community. A new television contract, for example, will broadcast UTEP's football and men's basketball games on Channel 5 and Paragon cable in El Paso and, in an innovative cooperative venture, on Channel 44 in Juarez. Another great opportunity for institutional visibility will be the production, in El Paso, of a feature film on the subject of UTEP's (then Texas Western's) 1966 NCAA Basketball Championship and Coach Don Haskins' remarkable career. Rumors are that Coach Haskins will be played by Randy Quaid—not Robert Redford, as he so modestly suggested—and with filming to occur right here on our campus, this could be an interesting year.
1991-92 was a highly successful year in intercollegiate athletics. Although we may question the prominence of athletics in U.S. society today, there is no question that it is indeed a powerful force. Our defeat of the University of Kansas and our trip to the "Sweet Sixteen" round of the NCAA Basketball Tournament made UTEP front-page news for days. It is sad, but absolutely true that similar coverage for other aspects of our institutional life, e.g., major grants, major student success stories, major faculty and staff achievements, is quite unlikely, even locally. Men's basketball captured most of the headlines, including Don Haskins' 600th victory, but UTEP's track and field program, under the able leadership of Bob Kitchens, proved that it is well on the way toward renewed distinction by ranking fourth in Indoor and fifth in Outdoor national championships. UTEP's women athletes competed in the Western Athletic Conference for the first time this year, and the Lady Miner basketball team moved into the Special Events Center where it has begun to attract a loyal following of fans. Perhaps most importantly, two of UTEP's student-athletes, Rob Sesich in football and Chris Brandl in volleyball, were awarded highly competitive and prestigious NCAA Post-Graduate Scholarships.

The intercollegiate athletics program at UTEP presents a clear example of the interdependency between this university and the El Paso-Juarez community it serves. While important to the university in creating educational and athletic competition opportunities for students, the athletic program also serves as a source of entertainment and pride in this metropolitan area of 2 million people. And, it must rely almost entirely on the support of this community for its survival; ticket sales, advertising revenues and donations serve as its major sources of funding. There are many other similar university-community relationships. The Dinner Theatre,
under the creative direction of Greg Taylor, which affords students opportunities to participate in and learn about musical theater productions, enjoyed another record-breaking year, with 16,000 tickets sold, enthusiastic audience response, and rave reviews. The Theatre has also initiated a new outreach program to local schools as a part of its community service mission. The Division of Professional and Continuing Education continues to expand its professional development and personal enrichment courses in response to identified community needs. With gross revenues of over $1 million in 1991-92, it is poised to provide even more extensive educational opportunities to this community in the years ahead. The Division also serves as headquarters for UTEP's highly successful Center for Lifelong Learning, a program for retirees in this region. With over 310 members, the Center offers a wide variety of courses, taught by UTEP faculty and others in the community, and other special events. Under Herbert Schwartz's able leadership, the Center has created opportunities for older adults to continue learning, and this year for the first time, it has sponsored two $1,000 grants-in-aid for UTEP students.

Young people in the El Paso community are the target of many UTEP programs. Some, like Project Lift-Off and the Science Circus, have been sponsored by federal agencies and foundations. Others involve the efforts of individual faculty, staff and students who visit schools and other community agencies or who host groups of youngsters when they visit the UTEP campus. Last year, UTEP's outreach and recruitment programs hosted 10,000 elementary, middle and high school students in a variety of program settings.

Among the most pleasant appointments on my own calendar are visits to schools in the El Paso area. I am energized by the young people I see on those occasions, and
inspired by the dedication of the teachers and other professionals who work with them. In the beautiful faces of these youngsters I see the future, not just their individual futures, but the future of this community, indeed of this society. Consider for a moment the hope, the human potential that you see as you look into the eyes of 30 eager second-graders. Consider the impact that this or any other group of 30 promising young people offer for our future. Consider, too, the enormous loss to our society when that talent fails to reach its full potential. It should be clear to all of us that talent is equally distributed across geographic and political boundaries, socioeconomic levels, racial and ethnic categories and genders; what is not equitably distributed is the opportunity to develop that talent. And this, more than any other single factor, underlies UTEP's mission and its commitment to create opportunities for talented individuals in this region to pursue their dreams and aspirations.

Recognizing that success here or at any other post-secondary institution requires a strong pre-collegiate foundation, UTEP has sought through a variety of strategies to enhance the educational experience that is provided to young people in this region. Programs such as the Comprehensive Regional Center for Minorities in Science and Mathematics and the Mother-Daughter Program attempt to foster the educational achievement and raise the aspirations of young people in this historically underserved region. In partnership with federal agencies such as the National Science Foundation and private sector foundations such as the Freedom Forum, UTEP targets specific groups--sixth-grade girls and their mothers, or budding middle-school scientists--and attempts to enrich their educational experiences through a variety of activities designed to reinforce developing dreams and to stimulate new and loftier hopes and aspirations.
This year the Mother-Daughter Program celebrated its fifth anniversary. Results of a formal evaluation revealed, not unexpectedly, that compared to a control group, participants in this program have persisted in school at a higher rate, and their academic achievement exceeds that of non-participating counterparts. Moreover, an unanticipated and very exciting outcome of the program's first five years has been the impetus that it has provided to participating mothers to raise their own educational and life expectations, as they encourage the achievement of their daughters. One of the first mothers to participate in the program, Rosa Juarez, was awarded her bachelor's degree this past May, with a major in bilingual education. Now, in addition to motivating and fostering the development of her own daughter, Jessica, Mrs. Juarez will pass along her very personal educational achievement message to youngsters in her bilingual education classes.

However successful these special programs may be—and we know that they are highly successful—it is clear that broader-based efforts must also be undertaken to ensure that all youngsters enrolled in all area schools have an equal opportunity to develop their talents and skills in a setting that promotes academic excellence. Under the leadership of Dr. Susana Navarro, the University is one of the founding partners of the El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence, a community-wide initiative involving UTEP, the El Paso Community College, the El Paso, Socorro and Ysleta School Districts, Region XIX, the Greater El Paso and El Paso Hispanic Chambers of Commerce, the City, the County, and EPISO. Through this broad-based partnership, efforts will be made to foster school reform and to raise the expectations for academic achievement in this region. Stemming the tide of drop-outs and encouraging youngsters to complete high school must surely be achieved through the Collaborative, but we cannot be satisfied with so modest a goal.
Instead, we are determined to encourage all young people to dream big dreams, and we must provide them with the support to make those dreams a reality through education. The importance of this systemic approach to school reform has been recognized by the American Association for Higher Education which has selected the El Paso Collaborative as one of 10 sites nationally to receive funding from the Pew Charitable Trusts and by the Coca-Cola Foundation which has recently awarded it $150,000 to carry out its important work. Encouraged by such high-level recognition and supported by the National Science Foundation through the Comprehensive Regional Center for Minorities, the Collaborative is well on its way to laying the foundation for new ways of thinking about pre-collegiate education and UTEP's role in enhancing it. Highly successful institutes were conducted this past summer for hundreds of teachers, counselors, principals, and other administrators from the Ysleta, Socorro, and El Paso school districts, and a broad range of follow-up activities are planned for this academic year.

A critical element in the Collaborative's development will be UTEP's commitment to enhance pre-service teacher preparation. New leadership in the College of Education and an invitation to UTEP to be a participant in the highly regarded National Network for Educational Renewal will advance this agenda significantly, but it is increasingly clear that responsibility for teacher preparation does not rest solely with the College of Education. When we consider the fact that 86% of UTEP's students are products of El Paso County schools and an estimated 80% of the teachers in those schools hold degrees from this University, it is clear that in this closed loop we all have a stake in preparing the best teachers who will, in turn, raise the expectation and achievement levels of our future students. If we would like to be able to raise UTEP's admission requirements by the year 2001 to include specified
units of mathematics, science, English, social studies, foreign languages, and the like, we must commit ourselves--all of us--to partner with our colleagues in the public schools in this region to enhance their capacity to provide the stronger pre-collegiate preparation that we seek. To sit back, take no action, and complain about the underpreparation of new generations of students is not in our self-interest and certainly not likely to lead this region toward academic excellence.

With all of these activities and the many success stories that UTEP has recorded during 1991-92, it is important to remind ourselves that our fundamental responsibility continues to be to create educational opportunities and foster the success of those students who come to us with their dreams and aspirations. With a record enrollment again this fall of 17,209 students, we recognize the great need for higher education opportunities in this historically underserved binational region and the enormous resource that we have become. With a student body that is majority first-generation, majority working class, majority female, and majority Hispanic, we have a special responsibility to ensure that our programs and our institutional policies and procedures enhance achievement rather than serve as a barrier to it.

In this spirit, the University has committed itself to Total Quality Management, and teams across the campus are seeking to identify needs and develop strategies to better serve our many constituents, especially students. Particularly active has been the Division of Student Affairs which has focused its efforts on striving for excellence and continuous improvement of services to all students. To that end, the Division has engaged in substantial reorganization, including the creation of a Student Activities Office dedicated to student development, from new student
orientation to graduation; a restructuring of the Student Health Center to increase and improve services; creation of an Office of Testing and Student Assessment, and the amalgamation of Union Programs and Student Programs offices under a single director. It has also successfully sought external funding for cooperative education, for a comprehensive wellness program including drug and alcohol education, and for a university-wide retention program for at-risk students. Student Affairs professionals have also been active in improving facilities and services in the Union—the successful faculty/staff dining room, new fast-food operations, and a major renovation of the bookstore and of meeting rooms on the third floor—and in planning the new recreational facilities in Charlie Davis Park. The University Childcare Center also enjoyed a very successful year, with a 75% increase in attendance, to an average of 95 children per day.

Ultimately, student success is UTEP's primary goal, and by this measure we are succeeding admirably. We know it by the large number of firms that return year after year to recruit UTEP's well prepared graduates . . . by the number of UTEP students who are awarded highly competitive national fellowships and awards . . . by our graduates' successful admission to prestigious graduate and professional programs throughout the country . . . by the distinguished achievements of our alumni . . . by the recognition we now regularly receive in major national studies and publications . . . and, informally, through the personal interactions we have with our students and former students who want us to know just how important UTEP has been and continues to be to them.

Two recent UTEP graduates whose summer employment took them to the East Coast, found themselves together in New York City watching Fourth of July fireworks this
summer, and wrote Beto Lopez a postcard to let him know that it was UTEP that had created this and so many other exciting opportunities for them. Postcards recently came to me from three UTEP students in the College of Business Administration who spent this summer as interns with EDS Corporation in Spain, two in Zaragoza and one in Barcelona, the last timing track and field events at the Olympic games. They too wanted to let UTEP know that they recognize the role we have played in creating these special opportunities for them.

The vicarious pleasure that all of us can derive from the success of these students and so many others, the pride and joy we share with our graduates and their families and friends at commencement, the knowledge of our collective impact on the lives of our students and this community, is what makes UTEP so special. As we begin yet another academic year filled with promise, I thank you, the members of the UTEP community, for having the imagination to see what others cannot yet see, for sharing our vision of this fine University and its very special mission, and for caring so much and trying so hard to fulfill it. Together, we will make a difference.