I am pleased to welcome all of you to the Fall 2000 Convocation of the University of Texas at El Paso.

Let me first take a moment to introduce some special guests who are with us today—individuals whose commitment to UTEP has had a profound effect on this university and the students we serve.

I’ll ask them to stand as I present them, and you to hold your applause until they have all been introduced.

- Bob Heasley, Chair of the UTEP Development Board

- Shirley Bird Perry, Vice Chancellor for Development and External Relations, and Barbara Brier, Director of Development, University of Texas System
• Other Development Board members and/or elected officials.

Thank you for all your support.

APPLAUSE

Last, but certainly not least, I am very pleased to introduce Mr. Julian Bernat, whom we honor today for his abiding support and service to this university. Julian, will you and your wife Elayne please come forward? As they do, I am pleased to introduce members of their family who are here today, their daughter Dr. Juli Furgeson and her husband, Judge Royal Furgeson, and the Bernat’s daughter-in-law, Pam.

[Julian and Elayne Bernat come to the stage]

Julian and Elayne Bernat have been friends and supporters of UTEP since they arrived in El Paso more than 50 years ago. They have been
loyal Miner basketball fans for many years, even traveling to Maryland in 1966 to watch Texas Western win the NCAA Championship. But their support of UTEP goes far beyond Athletics. They have sponsored scholarships for deserving students and an Endowed Excellence Fund for Undergraduate Education to support a variety of academic programs. They have also given generously of their time. Julian has served on the Development Board for many years, and he chaired the Planned Giving Council, an important component of the recently completed Legacy Campaign.

For that service, and for too many other reasons to enumerate here, I proudly present to Julian Bernat the Gran Paseño Award, the highest honor UTEP bestows on friends of the university. Thank you, Julian—and Elayne—for all that you have done—and will continue to do—for UTEP.

The beginning of another academic year is always exciting. A campus that is relatively quiet during the month of August suddenly comes alive
as students and faculty members return with new energy, new ideas, and new hopes and dreams. The rhythm of the academic calendar gives each of us at UTEP an annual opportunity to set new goals, and to renew our basic commitments to excellence and access.

If the UTEP campus seems busier than usual, it may be because enrollment has grown this fall to 15,224, a 3.5% increase, and the largest increase since 1989. Of special importance is the 10% growth in freshman enrollment, continuing a trend from the previous three fall semesters. Significantly, approximately 40% of the first-time freshmen were in the top 25% of their high school classes, with 11 valedictorians among them. The number of transfer students has also increased, by more than 7%.

Much of the credit for this enrollment growth goes to Irma Rubio and the Undergraduate Recruitment Office staff, who have developed a comprehensive plan which involves students, teachers, parents and counselors in schools across this community. Thanks to the participation of UTEP faculty, staff and students, a wide variety of pre-
college programs are offered on this campus throughout the year.

Working together as a team, we are helping young people in this community recognize that education will be the key to their success in the 21st Century.

Crossing into the new century will be remembered at UTEP, not because of the dreaded Y2K conversion, which was a non-event, thanks to the good work of Anna Hines and the Information Technology staff, but because of two major milestones that will have a huge long-term impact on this university and its future development.

First, UTEP surpassed by nearly 20% the $50 million endowment target that was established five years ago as we launched the Legacy Campaign. To put this achievement in perspective, we should recall that UTEP's total endowment prior to the beginning of the campaign was approximately $25 million. Once all funds pledged to the Campaign are received, that endowment will have grown to approximately $85 million.
Although there were those who doubted our wisdom—perhaps even our sanity!—in establishing such an ambitious goal for UTEP's first-ever endowment campaign, we were confident that with the support of dedicated community volunteers and Development Office staff, we would succeed. As in so many situations, leadership was a key to our success, and we could not have found a stronger, more capable leader for the Legacy Campaign than Peter de Wetter. At his side, as chair of the Board of Fellows, was Charles Leavell, another of this community's outstanding leaders. Sadly, we lost both Peter and Charles before reaching the end of the campaign in which they played key roles, and we regret deeply that they will not be able to join us in celebrating with us during Homecoming festivities in October.

Much of the success of the campaign was the result of a major of time and expertise of community volunteers, members of the Legacy Campaign Cabinet and the Planned Giving Council. Although they are too numerous to mention all by name here, I would like to express special appreciation to Bob Hoy, who assumed the chairmanship of the Campaign last year. I would also like to recognize the Development staff, who kept their focus during changes in both volunteer and staff
leadership and who are now laying the foundation for a sustainable fundraising effort at UTEP; and Richard Adauto, who has agreed to add Institutional Advancement to his already bulging portfolio.

The new endowment base provides a solid foundation on which we can build future excellence at UTEP, touching programs and people across this campus. Through the campaign, we have established:

- 124 new endowed scholarships
- 50 new departmental excellence funds
- 37 new professorships and chairs
- 11 new athletic endowments
- 10 new endowed library funds
- 3 new endowments for technology
- 52 new endowments for other purposes to be designated

These endowments will have a major impact on the quality of UTEP’s academic programs, enabling us to recruit and retain talented students and outstanding faculty members, and to enhance academic programs across the campus.
Endowed scholarship support is critical to attracting to UTEP this region’s best and brightest young people. Competition in recruiting these students has become more intense, as universities and colleges from throughout the U.S. seek greater diversity in their student populations. We applaud the broad range of higher education options available to young El Pasoans today, and we encourage them to weigh each offer carefully. We also encourage them to recognize the very special opportunities that are available at UTEP, including generous scholarships that, together with UTEP’s highly affordable tuition and fees, greatly reduce financial pressures while they are students, and student loan obligations once they graduate.

The Legacy Campaign’s success in creating faculty endowments will ensure that UTEP can be competitive in recruiting and retaining outstanding professionals who will set high standards of quality for our academic programs. Universities not only compete with each other for outstanding faculty talent, but with a private sector that is increasingly information driven, requiring ever better educated professionals. UTEP’s enhanced national reputation has helped us attract the interest
of a broader range of talented academics. Endowed professorships and chairs enable us to make attractive offers to them, and to retain them once they have joined us. Newly created endowments will also enhance academic programs for students and faculty by providing sustainable support for technology upgrades, library acquisitions, and departmental operations.

The success of the Legacy Campaign in strengthening UTEP's infrastructure has been accompanied by increasing attention from national media and from corporations and foundations. The New York Times, the Boston Globe, the Philadelphia Enquirer, the Dallas Morning News, and other major newspapers have begun to notice UTEP, as have national news magazines such as Time and U.S. News and World Report. What is perhaps most important is that we have moved from an "exotic outpost" in higher education, to a model for achieving excellence in a context which previews what higher education will be in the future, as student demographics and urbanization increasingly impact where and how education is delivered.
UTEP now ranks third among the 3700 U.S. colleges and universities in the total number of bachelor's degrees awarded to Hispanics, and 12th in the total number of master's degrees. With the growth in doctoral programs, UTEP will also soon be among the top universities in the production of Hispanic Ph.D.'s. During the past year, more than 2000 graduates received their UTEP degrees. In December, we were honored that Richard Riley, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, joined us for commencement, and in May, Sara Martinez Tucker, president and CEO of the Hispanic Scholarship Fund.

These recognitions are important not only to enhance UTEP's image and broaden awareness of our mission and our success in achieving it, but also to attract interest in recruiting UTEP graduates. Thanks to UTEP's reputation for excellence in a diverse context, and the good work of Career Services staff, corporations and graduate and professional schools aggressively recruit UTEP graduates. For example, in Engineering last year, 300 companies sought to recruit 150 UTEP graduates. The many opportunities that await our students are exciting and lucrative; it is not unusual for bachelor's-level graduates in Engineering or Computer Science to receive offers of $55,000 to
$60,000. And, we are frequently told by recruiters that they will continue to be eager to hire UTEP student because they are so well prepared for, and so successful in, their professional careers.

Interest in recruiting UTEP graduates translates into more UTEP alumni well placed in large corporations, which, in turn, often translates into financial support. A good example of this cycle is a recent commitment of $1.4 million from the Texas Instruments Foundation to the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering. Al Griffin, a 1984 UTEP Metallurgical Engineering alumnus and TI employee, recognized that TI could be helpful to UTEP in building a teaching and research program in Digital Signal Processing, one of the fastest growing segments of the semiconductor industry. He contacted Professor Sergio Cabrera, who, with his colleagues, developed a proposal which was funded by the Foundation, and a new partnership has been built between TI and UTEP. [Al is with us today, and I’d like to thank him and Texas Instruments for their support.]
Alumni like Al Griffin represent an enormous asset to this and all universities. Their professional and personal accomplishments bring indirect recognition to UTEP, and their ongoing advocacy and support help increase awareness and financial resources. Under the dynamic leadership of Yolanda Ingle, UTEP is making great strides in strengthening its ties with alumni throughout this country and in Mexico. And, we have some great ones! Alumni chapters are growing in locations such as Dallas/Ft. Worth, Houston, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Juarez, and Chihuahua City; and the Alumni Association’s sponsorship of such events as Homecoming, Season of Lights, Senior Week, Minerpalooza and Teacher Appreciation Day, all contribute to a greater sense of community among alumni and current students, faculty, and staff.

The largest single contributor to UTEP’s Legacy Campaign was Larry Durham, a 1964 mathematics graduate and successful entrepreneur. His commitment of up to $5 million toward the construction of a new facility for intercollegiate athletics and kinesiology challenged other alumni and friends of the university to contribute to this project and
enabled us to begin its planning. David Alvidrez, the El Paso architect whose great talent we enjoy in the Undergraduate Learning Center, was selected to design this new facility, which will be known as the Larry K. Durham Sports Center. David’s concept, which wraps the facility around the north end of the Sun Bowl Stadium, will give a facelift to the north entrance, an entirely new look to the stadium, and a major boost to the annual Sun Bowl game, and to the UTEP Athletic Department in recruiting and national image.

The Larry K. Durham Sports Center also brought UTEP into interesting negotiations with El Paso County, owner of the Sun Bowl Stadium. Because the Center’s proposed design encroached onto the 12 acres of land under the Sun Bowl, UTEP’s lease required the university to seek the County’s approval to proceed. The County used this opportunity to propose new conditions on UTEP’s use of the stadium, which were unacceptable to the university. UTEP then offered to purchase the Sun Bowl from the County for its appraised value, $1600. To show its good faith, UTEP further offered to establish a scholarship endowment of $250,000 for residents of El Paso County, to be known as the El Paso County--Sun Bowl Scholars. As negotiations continue, we
extend special thanks to Jim Wilson, Executive Director of Real Estate at the U.T. System, for his expertise and support. I know we will all stay tuned for the next chapter in this unusual story.

A number of other major facilities on the UTEP campus are either under construction or being planned. Expansion of the weight room in the Swimming and Fitness Center is nearing completion, increasing that facility’s size from 1700 sq. ft. to 7000 sq. ft., in response to demand from students, faculty and staff. The enlarged Swimming and Fitness Center is the nucleus of a growing recreational complex in the Charlie Davis Park area, which includes new lighting for the soccer field, and a new intramural field.

On the site of the former Family Apartments and the Oregon field, ground has been broken to construct a new $15 million, 125,000 sq. ft. student apartment complex. Scheduled to be completed by August 2001, the apartments will accommodate 428 students in 2-bedroom, 4-bedroom, and efficiency units. The configuration of the complex and its many amenities, including hard-wiring for 24-hour computer access, will offer students a lifestyle that is far more appealing than the current
high-rise residence halls on Sun Bowl Drive, which will be vacated.

Another bonus to student residents will be their proximity to campus buildings, recreational facilities, and area businesses. We are excited about the potential of this new UTEP “neighborhood,” and the sense of campus community that it will foster.

On the drawing board are two additional projects that have been granted support by the University of Texas System through Permanent University Fund bonds. The first will be a new $10 million Academic Services Building, which will enable us to consolidate in a single location all Enrollment Services departments. A second PUF-bond project, will enable us to construct a $6 million addition to the Engineering Building to accommodate rapid growth in enrollment and in funded research activity in that college.

Older facilities are receiving our attention as well. As UTEP has become more successful in attracting funding for research, and as technology has changed the way we teach and learn, most vintage buildings on the campus require major renovation and upgrading to accommodate our new needs. Because of the long-standing disparity in
capital funding in Texas public higher education, UTEP has been
greatly disadvantaged in its efforts to bring older facilities up to today’s
standards and to construct new space where needed. We will continue
to present our specific needs for both renovated and new space to the
UT System and the Texas Legislature, and to press for a long-term
resolution of the PUF-HEAF funding disparity. We express special
thanks to Regent Woody Hunt for the time and expertise that he has
dedicated to analyzing this problem and proposing strategies to resolve
it. In addition, with leadership provided by Juan Sandoval, we will be
hard at work this fall to update the university’s Campus Master Plan as
a blueprint for responding to anticipated growth, changing teaching and
learning strategies, technology development, and the need for more
efficient use of campus land and facilities.

Creating a campus environment that is conducive to effective learning
and teaching, productive research, and efficient support operations is a
team effort. Committed staff members in Facilities Services,
Environmental Health and Safety, Disabled Student Services, and the
University Police Department work effectively, and mostly behind the
scenes, to ensure that the campus is safe, secure, and barrier-free for all,
permitting us to focus our full attention on achieving UTEP’s educational mission.

Moreover, we are fortunate indeed, that our campus is more than merely an efficient and imperceptible backdrop for our day-to-day business. UTEP is acknowledged to be one of the most beautiful university campuses in the United States, the result of adherence to our Bhutanese architectural tradition; the talent of local architects who have adapted it in such facilities as the Undergraduate Learning Center, the Swimming and Fitness Center, and the new Student Housing complex; the hard work of Juan Sandoval, Cindy Villa and those who work with them in Financial Services to stretch limited resources to meet our ever growing needs; the expertise of Greg Nichols and others at the UT System Office of Facilities Planning and Construction; and the commitment of buildings and grounds staff members across this campus.

The second major milestone that was achieved during this Millennium year at UTEP was our designation as a Doctoral/Research-Intensive University in the Carnegie Classification. The Carnegie Foundation has
for many years provided a framework to characterize the more than 3700 colleges and universities in the United States, placing them in categories that are primarily determined by the level of academic programs offered. In that scheme, UTEP had been classified as a Comprehensive University, together with most other regional universities, whose degree programs are limited to the bachelor’s and master’s levels. UTEP’s re-designation as a Doctoral/Research institution recognizes both the growth in the number of doctoral programs on this campus during the past ten years, as well as in the number of students who have graduated from them.

During the past year, UTEP launched two new doctoral programs, one in cooperation with the UT Houston Health Science Center. That program, a cooperative doctoral degree in Nursing, was developed by Dean Pat Castiglia to enable residents of this region to pursue an advanced degree which would otherwise be unavailable to them. The second program, a Ph.D. in U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History, which enrolled its first students last year and welcomed another impressively diverse group of new students this year, capitalizes on UTEP’s location and on the faculty expertise and library and archival collections upon
which this and all quality doctoral programs depend. These two new programs increase the number of doctoral degrees offered by UTEP to eight, which, with the two cooperative programs in nursing and pharmacy, bring a total of ten doctoral-level opportunities to residents of this region. When you consider that at the beginning of the 1990’s, UTEP offered only one doctoral degree, that is real progress!

Such progress results from the combined efforts of a large number of individuals who work to ensure that the human and infrastructure resources are in place to deliver quality academic programs at all levels. In the case of graduate programs, Chuck Ambler has provided strong leadership on a variety of fronts, as he works with the Graduate Council and with deans, department chairs, graduate advisors, and program directors across the campus to foster opportunities for advanced degrees to residents of this region. He is now implementing plans to restructure the Graduate School administration, create a more coherent context for articulating the development of graduate education at UTEP, and provide improved and expanded services for graduate students.
Last year saw UTEP grant its first doctoral degrees in Educational Leadership and Administration, as five students completed the requirements of this important new program. Demand for this degree is expected to continue to be high, as place-bound professionals in this region seek their advanced degrees. The Environmental Science and Engineering doctoral program has grown significantly during the past year under the dynamic direction of Jorge Gardea, attracting a large and diverse group of applicants, particularly from Mexico. Several of the students enrolled in this program have won highly competitive fellowships from the EPA, and CONACyT (Mexico’s National Science Foundation).

New approaches to applied graduate-level programming are also being explored. A Certificate Program in International Manufacturing has been approved, creating an opportunity for working professionals in this region to pursue advanced training, without committing to a complete graduate degree. An innovative master’s degree program in Computational Molecular Biology is being developed in the College of Science, funded by the Sloan Foundation. UTEP is one of several universities nation-wide to participate in this Sloan initiative to provide
sophisticated graduate-level professional training for talented science students who can contribute significantly to the revolution in biomedical research, without earning doctoral degrees.

UTEP has also been an actively engaged in the development of distance learning programs for students here in El Paso and elsewhere, whose family and employment obligations may not be conducive to regular attendance on campus. Thanks to Henry Ingle and the faculty and staff who work with him, UTEP is a major participant in the UT System Telecampus, contributing courses for an on-line MBA program, and MS in Kinesiology, and a certificate program in Nursing. Enrollment in distance education courses is growing rapidly as both their availability and potential students’ awareness of them grow.

Although research funding is no longer a part of the Carnegie calculation that determines a university’s classification, there is no doubt that graduate education, particularly at the doctoral level, must be offered within a strong research context. UTEP has good news to report on that front as well.
The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board regularly reports comparative data on research funding at all colleges and universities in the State. In its latest report, UTEP ranked 5th among all public universities in the State in annual research expenditures, and second only to U.S. Austin among U.T. System academic components in total contract and grant funding. Perhaps our most extraordinary achievement is in the ratio of federal-to-state R&D funding, where UTEP is the only academic institution to rank in the top five, together with four health science centers. UTEP generated more than $7 in federal research funding for each dollar of State funding, compared to $4 at UT Austin and $1.25 in federal funding for each $1 of state research funds at Texas Tech. What this ratio means is that UTEP has more successfully leveraged the state’s investment in our research enterprise to secure federal funds than any other academic institution in Texas. That is quite an accomplishment and one in which we can all take pride.

During the past fiscal year, UTEP was again highly successful in attracting grant funding. New grants and contracts totaled $36 million to support our research, education, and outreach efforts. Such funding
represents a collective achievement. We are grateful to all of the faculty and staff members who write competitive proposals and who, with their students, conduct the projects once they are funded. Last year 331 proposals were submitted, seeking more than $95 million in grant funding. We also acknowledge the fine pre-and post-award assistance provided by the Office of Sponsored Projects staff.

Some of the major new grants received during the past year include:

- College of Science faculty members—Sid Das, Michael Davis, Barbara Washburn, Rafael Cabeza and Jorge Gardea—received support from the National Institutes of Health for research in biochemistry, bioremediation, and sleep biochemistry.

- NASA awarded UTEP $5 million to continue the research of the Pan American Center for Earth and Environmental Studies, as well as individual research grants to Larry Murr, Patricia Nava, Javier Rojo, and Dirk Schultz-Makuch.

- Three UTEP faculty members—Harmon Hosch in Psychology, Verne Smith in Physics, and Pat Teller in Computer Science—received highly competitive research grants from the National Science Foundation.
UTEP research is also often recognized for its excellence. During the past year, the Center for Environmental Resource Management was presented the Texas Environmental Excellence Award by Governor George W. Bush, and research conducted at UTEP's Center for Highway Materials Research, directed by Professor Soheil Nazarian, received one of the Top Ten Innovation Awards from the Texas Department of Transportation for the second year in a row. Congratulations to Octavio Melchor and Roberto Osegueda for their successful efforts.

Biomedical and health science research has been at the top of UTEP's list of priorities during the past several years. With the proceeds of a $25 million tobacco settlement endowment from the Texas Legislature, federal grants to the Border Biomedical Research Center, and continued support from the Paso del Norte Health Foundation, UTEP has made significant progress during the past year.

We were pleased to welcome back Dr. Rey Elizondo, former Dean of the College of Science, who has taken the lead in coordinating UTEP's biomedical and health science research agenda. We have signed
memoranda of understanding for research and education collaboration
with both Texas Tech and the U.T. Houston School of Public Health.
We have brought together UTEP researchers from the Colleges of
Science, Health Science and Liberal Arts, as well as Texas Tech and UT
Houston colleagues, to prepare joint proposals and conduct
collaborative research activities. As a part of our strategic plan to build
UTEP's capacity to conduct research on health issues of particular
importance to the U.S.-Mexico border region, we have submitted as our
top priority to the Texas Legislature, a request for $30 million to
construct a new biomedical and health science research and teaching
facility on the UTEP campus. Although these plans have sparked some
recent controversy, we believe that they represent UTEP's most efficient
and effective means of contributing to the goals of the Border Health
Institute.

Beyond the facilities themselves, competitive research requires
sophisticated instrumentation and technology. Because State funding
constraints have also been a barrier to upgrading technology on the
campus, UTEP has aggressively sought support from other sources.
Corporations, foundations, and federal agencies have all contributed to
UTEP's research and teaching infrastructure. This year, for example, we leveraged institutional funds to attract support from the National Science Foundation and the Technology Infrastructure Fund, to connect UTEP to the Internet 2/Abilene high-speed, broad bandwidth research network, joining 170 other research universities throughout the U.S. Participation in this network will also enable UTEP to serve as a host connection to Mexico's Internet 2 network, retracing with technology the backbone known for centuries as the Camino Real. Thanks to Paul Maxwell for his leadership in linking UTEP to this important high-speed network, to the Information Technology staff for their technical support, and to the many UTEP faculty and staff members who are working on the development of applications that exploit the expanded capacity of this network connection.

Access to advanced technology is not only important to UTEP's research agenda. It is also critical to ensuring that UTEP students are provided skills that will make them competitive with graduates of institutions throughout this country and abroad. For they, our undergraduate students, will always be the primary focus of our attention and effort, and their success will always be the best measure of
our institutional progress. We remain fully committed to creating access for young people in this region to achieve their educational and career aspirations. We are equally committed to ensuring their competitiveness as graduates by setting high academic standards and helping them meet those standards by building on their prior preparation. UTEP has a growing national reputation for its success in achieving what is often referred to as "value-added education," where the gap between students’ preparation upon entering and graduating from the university is significant. We are very proud to be an institution that is greatly respected for achieving both excellence and access.

The Entering Student Program had a very successful first year, under the able leadership of Maggy Smith, and with a new $2.1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education, it promises to grow even stronger in the future. Working closely with members of the Enrollment Services team, and with many faculty and staff members across the campus, this program has begun to systematically address the special challenges that face new students, whether they be freshmen or transfers.
[With clustered courses, faculty and student mentors, intensive advising, and a special Seminar course, new students are being provided a supportive context for a successful first-year experience at UTEP. National data tell us that first-year retention is a good predictor of graduation, and preliminary data from the Entering Student Program at UTEP suggest that we are making good progress on that front.] We are delighted to welcome to UTEP the new co-directors of the Center for Effective Teaching and Learning, Bill Robertson and Tine Reimers, who will help us strengthen the faculty development dimension of the Entering Student Program. We also thank Evelyn Posey for her leadership in creating a context for teaching innovation and research at UTEP.

UTEP's teacher education programs continue to receive accolades. Dean Arturo Pacheco and the College of Education faculty are to be congratulated for their success in transforming their programs from a traditional approach to a field-based model that provides prospective teachers with a far more robust set of experiences upon which to base their professional careers. Deans Daudistel and Brady and faculty in
the Liberal Arts and Science colleges have also become major stakeholders in teacher preparation, especially at the secondary level, and their many contributions to this university-wide effort are gratefully acknowledged.

Recognizing that teacher turnover has become a serious challenge to area school districts, indeed to the profession nationally, UTEP is also working hard to increase its production of new teachers. In addition to expanding its undergraduate programs, UTEP has partnered with the school districts to offer an extensive Alternative Certification Program, which enables individuals with degrees in other fields to become teachers with one year of course work and practical experience. The number of participants in the Alternative Certification Program has been increased this year from 95 to 130, and a recent grant from the Meadows Foundation will permit us to prepare even more prospective teachers, particularly in critical areas such as math and science, over the next several years.

Another UTEP undergraduate program that has received major recognition is the Law School Preparation Institute, which enables
prospective law students to develop the critical thinking skills and study habits required for their successful performance on the LSAT and in law school. Conceived of and directed by Political Science faculty members Bob Webking and Bill Weaver, the Institute has received growing recognition as a model for a creative and highly successful response to the post-Hopwood environment in Texas. The Institute’s success has been extraordinary. Of the 37 program participants who took the LSAT during the past two years, 35 received at least one offer of admission to law school, and most received two or more. Eight of the top ten law schools in the U.S. admitted at least one UTEP student this year, and program graduates are now enrolled at such prestigious law schools as Columbia, Harvard, Cornell, Duke, UT Austin, U. of Virginia, U. of Chicago, and Northwestern.

The Institute is part of the Center for Law and Border Studies, an outstanding example of the convergence of education, research, and outreach to the El Paso community. Chief Judge Carolyn King of the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, joined us as the keynote speaker for the Center’s inauguration, as did State Representative Norma Chavez, sponsor of the legislative appropriation that helped create it. Ably
directed by Frank Lopez, the Center seeks to promote education and research on legal issues of importance to the U.S.-Mexico border region, and to develop links between UTEP faculty and students and the El Paso-Juarez legal communities. A number of activities have already begun, including building a legal library collection, sponsoring conferences, and conducting actual trials in courtrooms set up on the UTEP campus.

Undergraduate programs at UTEP are also nationally recognized for the unusually rich set of research experiences offered to students. The university's externally funded research agenda creates opportunities for students to work on campus, in settings related to their areas of academic interest and expertise; earning while they learn. Programs such as the Model Institution for Excellence and the Alliance for Minority Participation, funded by NSF, and the Border Biomedical Research Center funded by NIH, provide financial support for students while helping them develop research skills that will serve them well in graduate or professional school. We appreciate the fine work of Professors Ben Flores, Pablo Arenaz and Eppie Rael, who direct these important UTEP programs.
UTEP also conducts a broad range of community outreach programs, enabling students to apply their skills and expertise to community issues, deepen their learning, and build civic capacity and commitment to the region. Within the context of a newly established campus-wide Center for Civic Engagement, directed by Professor Kathleen Staudt, UTEP students and their faculty and staff mentors are engaged in such diverse projects as helping restore the Socorro Mission, working with the Mexican Consulate in El Paso to provide basic education skills to Mexican adults living in El Paso, and, in cooperation with AARP, encouraging informed voting by students and their parents. Funding for many of these initiatives has been provided through the Community Partners program of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to the colleges of Liberal Arts and Business, and federal funding through the Americorps program. We thank Deans Howard Daudistel and Frank Hoy, and the many faculty and staff members who work with them to extend UTEP's reach into our community.

The University has also worked hard to apply its intellectual capital and person-power to the many challenges facing this region. Raising the
achievement level of young people throughout this community is the goal of specific outreach programs such as Upward Bound, GEAR-UP and Talent Search, overseen by Sandra Braham, and the broad-based K-12 initiative conducted by the El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence, directed by Susana Navarro.

One of the Collaborative's major initiatives this past year was providing staff support for the El Paso Education Summit, which brought together more than 300 educators, business leaders, elected officials, and representatives from across the community, to review data on El Paso's educational attainment and its critical role in the economic development of this region. We look forward to continuing to work with the Collaborative to pursue the priority goals of the Education Summit:

1. to require all public school students to compete a rigorous, college preparatory academic core curriculum, and be literate in more than one language;

2. to prepare all teachers to teach rigorous courses; and
3. to establish a regional campaign which identifies education as among the community’s highest priorities.

In specific response to the third goal, UTEP launched this past year a community-wide education awareness campaign involving television, radio, newspapers and billboards featuring successful UTEP graduates from all sectors of this community. How satisfying it was to see the accomplishments of those alumni recommended for inclusion in the campaign, and how very difficult for us to select those who would be featured.

UTEP’s research expertise is also often called upon to help shed light on important community issues. For example, faculty members associated with the Center for Public Policy Research and the Center for Western Hemispheric Trade have conducted important studies during the past year on such topics as Access to Capital and a Regional Economic Forecasting Model. Although such studies always run the risk of igniting controversy, we consider it UTEP’s responsibility to share the intellectual capital available on this campus with civic, business, and community leaders to inform decisions and policy-making.
A highly visible UTEP activity, affecting the climate on the campus and indeed the mood of the entire community, is Intercollegiate Athletics. Athletics has made enormous progress during the past year, thanks to the leadership of Bob Stull and the outstanding staff that he has assembled. The two highest profile sports, football and men’s basketball, have both undergone a major transition. In the case of the latter, Jason Rabadeaux had the daunting challenge of following in the footsteps of UTEP’s Hall of Fame basketball coach Don Haskins. All of us, including Coach Haskins, are absolutely delighted with Coach Rabadeaux’s success in filling those big shoes.

In football, Charlie Bailey continued his efforts to build a stronger program last year. El Pasoans responded to that progress by filling the stadium to capacity for the New Mexico State game, the first sell-out in the Sun Bowl’s history, and boosting average home-game attendance to more than 36,000, representing the second largest increase in the country. Gary Nord, who was strongly recommended for the head coaching position by the retiring Charlie Bailey and the football players themselves, has brought new energy and enthusiasm to the program.
The Athletics marketing team has greatly raised the program’s visibility throughout this community with Fan Clubs and a variety of promotions. Coaches from all sports have conducted a host of camps for children of all ages, both in El Paso and in Juarez, and they and student athletes, UTEP cheerleaders and Golddiggers, have reached out to the community with more than 600 appearances at area schools, hospitals, non-profit events, and other community functions. The addition of a Miner Town area for children at all home football games has helped attract more families, and new colors and a new logo have generated new excitement, and sales of UTEP items locally and among UTEP alumni across the country. Special thanks to Stephanie Rempe, Mack Rhodes, Jeff Darby, and Rob Sesich and all those who work with them for their very successful efforts.

Often less visible, but perhaps most gratifying, about progress in Athletics is on the academic front. Our coaches emphasize the importance of academic performance, and the graduation rate of student athletes climbed by 39% from 1998 to 1999, with 45 WAC All Academic awards. Kim Daniel, a member of the women’s basketball
team, graduated first in her Electrical Engineering class last year, and Brandon Wolfram, member of the men’s basketball team, was selected to the GTE Academic All American First Team. We are very proud of them and thank them for setting a high standard for their teammates and for gaining recognition for UTEP nationally.

The Division of Student Affairs has recently focused its energies on creating a variety of experiences, organizations and activities for students to build leadership skills, enlarge their circle of friends and acquaintances, and bond them to the University. Vice President Richard Padilla and Dean of Students Bill Schafer, and all those who work with them, have partnered with student leaders during the past year to achieve these goals. The development of the concept for the new student housing complex in many ways epitomizes the success of their efforts, with students and staff working closely together to build a new sense of community, a new campus climate, at UTEP.

In the Enrollment Services area, the focus has been on service to students. Through careful analysis of policies and procedures from a student’s perspective, and through enhanced staff training, John
Seveland and his Enrollment Services team are working to streamline procedures for a seamless recruitment, admissions, orientation, and registration process.

Because of its border location, and the action of the Texas Legislature 12 years ago that permits Mexican nationals to enroll at the Texas resident tuition rate, UTEP is uniquely positioned to create higher education opportunities for students from Mexico. This fall, 1,481 Mexican students are enrolled at UTEP, continuing the steady growth in this enrollment during the past five years. Many of them are among our most distinguished student leaders. I want to give special recognition to Myrna Rodriguez, who served as Student Government President last year, and Arturo Barrio, the current president of the Student Government Association, whose proven leadership skills will surely make this one of the best years ever for students at UTEP. And, Arturo and Myrna’s leadership will extend to the University of Texas System, where they were elected from among the representatives of all fifteen components, chair and vice-chair of the Student Advisory Committee to the Board of Regents. Congratulations to these outstanding UTEP students.
Among other achievements within Student Affairs, we can be proud of:

- Upgraded computer services for students, thanks to the combined efforts of the Dean of Students, Information Technology, Enrollment Services, and Finance and Administration;

- The success of Financial Aid’s student loan counseling program in reducing loan defaults to 7.4%, one of the lowest rates among universities in the entire United States;

- In collaboration with the University of North Texas, and thanks to Eric Piel’s good work, an expansion of study-abroad offerings, from 9 countries on two continents to 38 countries on 5 continents.

The Division of Finance and Administration is also committed to streamlining its procedures and practices and providing high quality customer service. The Information Technology group has worked with faculty and staff across the campus to complete the conversion to a new student information system, and many other technology applications to provide better service and achieve greater efficiency. Nearly two-thirds
of UTEP students now use technology to enroll, and to access their grades and other academic information.

Thanks to the fine efforts of Patrick Calderon, Human Resources has developed more comprehensive training programs, including an expanded orientation program for classified staff. We were also delighted that during the last legislative session, UTEP was granted authorization to waive fees for credit course enrollment of staff members who wish to pursue their education.

In other areas, Carol Roberts Spence and the Special Events staff have scheduled more events in the Don Haskins Center and the Sun Bowl than ever before, culminating in the huge Ricky Martin concert this summer. Continuing Education enrollments have also grown, as we offer a greater variety of programs for professional and personal development. We are especially proud that all of this progress has been accomplished while UTEP recorded one of the lowest administrative cost ratios among public universities in Texas.
As we acknowledge the many mileposts of the past year, we recognize that they not only mark the progress that has been made, but also point us toward the many opportunities that lie ahead. We extend a warm welcome to the many new faculty and staff members who have joined us this year, and we look forward to working with them to achieve UTEP’s mission. We are especially pleased to welcome Dr. Pat Witherspoon as the new chair of the Communication Department. Her plans to establish a Center for Communication Studies, which will offer a variety of academic and outreach programs that capitalize on UTEP’s bilingual, bicultural and binational context, promises to bring international recognition to the university and rich opportunities for our Communication students. Plans for the establishment of the Immigration History Center will accelerate this year with the anticipated appointment of its director this Fall, and a major international conference in January. Special thanks to Chuck Ambler and Michael Topp for their leadership in this very important UTEP initiative. Thanks, too, to Jon Amastae, who is bringing new vision to the Center for Interamerican and Border Studies and units such as the Centennial Museum and Texas Western Press, for which the Center now has responsibility.
The coming year will also bring to a close the planning cycle initiated in 1988 with the establishment of the UTEP 2001 Commission and the designation of the Class of 2001, who were at that time first-graders in schools throughout El Paso County. Those first-graders will enter UTEP next year, and Irma Rubio, Beto Lopez and others plan special events associated with their enrollment. We are also preparing a report on UTEP's success in responding to the many recommendations presented by the UTEP 2001 Commission, which was led by Bob Heasley, now chair of UTEP's Development Board. We will present our report to the Commission members next spring, and once again express appreciation to them for their contributions to shaping UTEP's agenda during the past twelve years. Then, without skipping a beat, we will look toward the future by establishing another community-university planning partnership, UTEP@100, in preparation for our Centennial celebration in 2014.

One of the most important events of the coming year will be the reconvening of the Texas Legislature. Texas is at a critical crossroads
in its development. Demographic changes have been and will continue to be profound, as Hispanics move rapidly toward becoming the largest segment of the Texas population. At the same time, the educational attainment of this fast-growing population remains unacceptably low. Projecting toward the future, it is obvious that if Texas hopes to compete in the world economy and improve the quality of life of its citizens, the educational preparation of Texas’ Hispanic population must become a higher statewide priority. UTEP is surely very well positioned to take the lead in such an effort.

Texas leaders have also expressed dissatisfaction with the state’s performance in attracting federal research and development funds, ranking fifth nationally, behind not only California, but such smaller states as Maryland, and Georgia. UTEP’s demonstrated ability to attract federal dollars, our remarkable success in leveraging the state’s very small investment in our research enterprise, will surely be viewed by state leaders as a strategic asset.

Perhaps more importantly, UTEP’s success in combining research competitiveness and a commitment to access for students who have been
historically under-represented in the state’s colleges and universities, makes us a compelling model for future higher education planning in Texas. Large, urban, and demographically diverse universities—in Dallas, El Paso, Houston, and San Antonio—are clearly where Texas should invest its higher education dollars. The current pattern of concentrating the state’s higher education resources at only two flagship institutions reduces Texas’ capacity to compete with multi-flagship states such as California, and jeopardizes our ability to respond to the higher education needs of the fastest growing segment of the Texas population. We will continue to advocate the Model of Excellence that we articulated during the past year, to ensure that the Legislature, the Coordinating Board, and other statewide organizations engaged in higher education planning, are fully aware of the huge potential that UTEP and other urban institutions offer in meeting Texas’ human and economic development challenges.

Finally, as we look back over the Millennium year and celebrate our many very special accomplishments, it is important to emphasize that they are not the result of the efforts of a single individual, nor of a single year. Reaching the Legacy Campaign goal, or being categorized as a
Doctoral/ Research-Intensive university, is the result of years of planning, preparation, and just plain hard work. Becoming nationally known for our commitment to both equity and excellence is the result of a decade or more of consistent commitment and action on the part of faculty, staff and students on this campus, and our many alumni, friends and supporters. So, as we leave this Convocation today, let us thank each other for the commitment that we have all made to UTEP and the students we serve. Together we have made it happen. Thank you.