

The University of Texas at El Paso
Fall Convocation Remarks
September 27, 2012

We will soon commemorate UTEP's Centennial, the 100th anniversary of our establishment in 1914 as the Texas State School of Mines and Metallurgy. Excitement is building and plans are being developed to celebrate this major milestone in the history of our impact on this region and, especially, on the more than 105,000 graduates whose lives have been shaped by their experience on this campus. I'll have more to say later about our Centennial plans, but I want to begin by sharing with you the commemoration of another event that in many ways has helped shape this institution, its mission and its vision for the future.

In late June, more than 100 of my fellow public university presidents and I donned our academic regalia and gathered at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. to commemorate the 150th anniversary of passage of the Morrill Act in 1862. This legislation sponsored by Senator Justin Morrill of Vermont and signed by President Abraham Lincoln, was the first major step toward democratizing higher education in the United States. It created a network of land-grant universities that would offer higher education access to young people not being served by the few existing private universities whose mission was to educate wealthy young men.

The 150-year legacy of the Morrill Act has helped open the doors of U.S. higher education to growing numbers of talented people in our society, whatever their socioeconomic circumstances. It has been re-affirmed with the establishment of such programs as the G.I. Bill after the Second World War and, later, federal financial aid, a.k.a. Pell Grants. It prepared this country for the industrial revolution in the late 19th century and, more recently, for our growing global economic competitiveness and quality of life.

In the 21st century, the spirit of democratization of higher education is alive and well on many public university campuses across the country, especially those in large urban areas where institutions like UTEP are taking the Morrill Act legacy to the next level. We are educating low-income and minority students, segments of the population most seriously underrepresented today in U.S. colleges and universities.

Sadly, however, this investment in building the human resource foundation upon which this country's prosperity has solidly rested has begun to erode, as public—especially state—support for higher education has declined, and cost burdens have been shifted to students.

The consequences are sobering. In 2012, only 11% of students in the bottom quartile of the U.S. family income scale earned bachelor's degrees, compared to 79% in the top

income quartile. Although education has clearly been the most powerful driver of our success as a nation, we now appear to be questioning its value and wavering in our willingness to invest in it.

At UTEP, we are doing all that we can to counter these trends. We take very seriously our responsibility to ensure that we are good stewards of the Morrill Act legacy, by offering all residents of this historically underserved U.S.-Mexico border region access to excellent higher education opportunities. Grounded in our strong conviction that talent is found in all ZIP codes, validated by our students' stellar achievements, and driven by our commitment to provide the educational excellence that all students have every right to expect, UTEP's access and excellence mission has become a national model.

As a result, UTEP is achieving the national recognition that we've earned through our successful quest to become the first national research university with a 21st century student demographic. We are particularly proud that we have been able to implement strategies that contain costs, hold tuition increases to a minimum and thereby ensure continued affordability and access for our students.

Recently, national media reported results of an annual survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Education on the average "net price" of all U.S. colleges and universities. (Net price is defined as the total cost of attendance—tuition, fees, books and other expenses—minus financial aid and scholarship awards.) At \$2,543 per year, UTEP ranked first, offering the lowest net price among all research universities in the U.S. And this wasn't a close race to the top; the second-ranked university in the survey has a net price that is more than twice as high as UTEP's. Clearly, UTEP knows how to invest wisely and do more with less, while remaining firmly committed to quality.

Another recent national ranking of colleges and universities, this one by *Washington Monthly* magazine, placed a very bright spotlight on UTEP's success in fulfilling its public university mission. Unlike *U.S. News and World Report*, whose rankings are heavily weighted toward such prestige criteria as endowment size and alumni giving, and are thus more attuned to small, elite private universities, the *Washington Monthly* rankings seek to capture an institution's impact on the students it serves, on the region in which it is located and on this nation as a whole. They focus on three broad categories of public good: how well the school serves as an engine of social mobility; how successful it is in producing cutting-edge research and Ph.D. degrees; and how effectively students are encouraged to give something back to their region and to the nation. To these three they added this year a new student cost metric. The 2012 results, released earlier this month, ranked UTEP 12th among all U.S. universities, comfortably nestled between #11 Harvard and #13 Michigan. This is an extraordinary

accomplishment indeed, and one in which we should all take great pride. In fact, I'd suggest that we all rise to give each other a rousing standing ovation....Go Miners!!

As if this overall #12 ranking weren't enough, we should take a moment to reflect on the fact that in the Social Mobility category of the *Washington Monthly* rankings, UTEP was ranked first among all U.S. colleges and universities. This is a huge validation of our commitment to both access and excellence: to provide all talented young people in this region access to enhanced educational opportunities equivalent to those offered to their peers in more affluent settings. We welcome the 22,749 students who have brought their dreams and aspirations to the UTEP campus this fall, and assure them that we know full well that they have every right to expect nothing less from us.

Consistent with UTEP's public university mission of serving the higher education needs of this historically underserved Paso del Norte region, 90% of UTEP's students come from this area, including 83% from El Paso County. The demographic profile of these students mirrors that of this community: 77% are Mexican-American, 10% Anglo, and 3% African-American.

More than 80% of UTEP's entering students, both freshmen and transfers from El Paso Community College, are graduates of high schools in El Paso County, and a majority of teachers in K-12 schools are graduates of UTEP. Capitalizing on this closed loop with our educational partners in this region has been a UTEP priority for more than 20 years. Through the fine work of the El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence, we have offered enhanced professional development to help teachers in this region strengthen the academic preparation and raise the aspirations of the students they serve. Area teachers and counselors have, in turn, developed greater appreciation for the enhanced educational experiences that UTEP offers to their well-prepared students at a highly affordable cost. We are very pleased that UTEP has once again enrolled a substantial number of this region's most accomplished high school graduates. Of the El Paso area's Top 10 Percent high school graduates who attend a public university in Texas, more than 60% enroll at UTEP. Merit-based scholarships play a major role in enabling UTEP to compete for El Paso's best and brightest talent, and thanks to generous donors, we were proud to be able to offer members of the fall 2012 entering class 428 new scholarship awards with a total value of \$5.6 million.

UTEP's longstanding collaborative relationships with area teachers and schools have become even more critical as this community works its way through painful school district issues. An innovative UTEP team created an exciting Opportunity Days event which brought 8,000 fifth and seventh grade students and their teachers to the campus for a day of highly engaging and aspiration-raising activities. My ears are still ringing with the energy generated by this enthusiastic group of young people! We are pleased that Dr. Armando Aguirre has assumed leadership of the Collaborative; his successful

experience in bringing out the best in young people in this region reminds us all that, ultimately, what really matters are the interactions between talented and energized students and the many skilled and hard-working teachers and other school personnel who are deeply committed to their success.

We also applaud the recent appointment of the El Paso Community College's new president, Dr. William Serrata, whose extensive expertise and experience ensure that the UTEP-EPCC partnership won't skip a beat. I am especially pleased that President Serrata is with us today, and ask you to join me in welcoming him.

UTEP has also sought to offer expanded higher education opportunities to specific populations in this region. With the growth of Ft. Bliss, UTEP has made a strong commitment to provide more comprehensive and effective services to active-duty military and veterans and their families, whose enrollment increased 34% last year. We are proud of our designation as a "Military Friendly School"; of a laudatory audit of our performance by the Veterans Administration; and a grant from the Kresge Foundation to support a UTEP/EPCC-led effort to form a national network of colleges and universities located near major military facilities with a goal of developing smoother and more effective educational pathways for a highly mobile military population. Thanks to the fine work of Junius Gonzales, Craig Westman, John Wiebe, Pat Witherspoon, Robert Stakes, Holly Denney and many others at UTEP, we are systematically building UTEP's capacity to serve this region's active and retired military and their families far more effectively.

Mexican students have always represented a special population at UTEP. As we begin to see encouraging signs of increased social and economic stability in northern Mexico, we hope to re-energize UTEP's formerly close collaborations with sister universities and organizations in Juárez and other locations in Mexico, and the cross-border educational opportunities that they enabled for both U.S. and Mexican students. We remain convinced that the future prosperity and quality of life of this bi-national region will require far greater economic and social integration to leverage the mutuality of our interests and achieve the long-promised but not yet realized reciprocity of benefits. This generation of UTEP students from both sides of the border is especially well positioned to play a leadership role in this long-term integration process, and UTEP is uniquely well-positioned to prepare these future regional leaders. We are honored today to have with us recently appointed Mexican Consul General in El Paso, Jacob Prado. Please join me in welcoming him!

UTEP's nearly 23,000 students are full of talent and motivation, but often short on financial resources. More than a third of them report a family income of \$20,000 per year or less and 75% receive some form of financial aid, including \$14 million in merit-based scholarships, \$78 million in need-based grants, and \$95 million in loans. Most

students must also be employed while attending UTEP, and we work hard to expand the number of student employment opportunities on the campus. More than 2,500 such on-campus jobs have been provided during the past year, earning students more than \$2 million in wages. Ably led by Gary Edens and Louie Rodriguez in Student Affairs, in partnership with deans, department chairs and faculty and staff, this effort to expand on-campus employment and off-campus internships is a very high priority for UTEP because we know that they offer our students rich opportunities to both earn and learn.

Although UTEP's strong commitment to access distinguishes us from many other public universities, it is our remarkable progress in combining both access and student success that has enabled UTEP to rise to the top on the *Washington Monthly* social mobility scale. Fostering student success begins with developing policies and practices which through systematic data analyses are shown to be effective in helping students complete their degrees in a timely manner. But we also know that timely degree completion is not enough. We must make an equally strong commitment to require that our students meet high academic standards to ensure that, as UTEP graduates, they will be prepared to compete successfully with their peers from universities across this country and beyond.

Outcomes measures relating to student success in the UT System Chancellor's Framework for Advancing Excellence, and in many other accountability reports, confirm that we are indeed achieving these ambitious goals. UTEP awarded 4,329 total degrees during the past year, 3,120 at the undergraduate level and 1,209 graduate degrees, including 79 at the doctoral level, which sets another new record. Special thanks to newly appointed Graduate Dean Ben Flores for his leadership in developing data-driven policies and procedures to support the growth and quality of UTEP's doctoral programs, whose success will be key to achieving our national research university aspirations.

We are especially pleased that as a result of our partnership with area school districts and the El Paso Community College, as well as our own focused efforts to enhance pathways toward degree completion on this campus, the number of undergraduate degrees awarded by UTEP annually has grown by 85% over the past ten years. We are also pleased to note that the average time to degree for all UTEP undergraduates is now 5.9 years, and we expect this figure to decline even further as we build our capacity to manage enrollment more effectively, by increasing students' access to timely information about progress toward their degrees, and departments' and colleges' access to data that enable them to design degree programs and schedule courses and sections more efficiently, on- and off-campus and online. Special thanks to Roy Mathew and his team in the Center for Institutional Evaluation, Research and Planning, who continue to provide us all with the data that drives our decisions and validates our outcomes, to Craig Westman and the many UTEP staff and faculty who have worked

with him to create a solid information resource platform to support our efforts to enhance student success, and to the Provost, deans, department chairs and program directors for whom student success is the highest priority.

Although enormously important in the lives of our students, their families and this region, and a core metric in assessing UTEP's performance, degree completion is not the only or ultimate goal. A UTEP degree must also serve as a launching pad for graduates to achieve their longer term personal and professional goals. Continued feedback from alumni helps us understand how well we've prepared our more than 105,000 graduates for their future success and quality of life, and thanks to the fine work of Richard Daniel and Roy Mathew, we are developing ever improved strategies to strengthen our ties with UTEP alumni and secure feedback from them.

An early indicator of our students' success is their initial step after graduation, whether toward professional employment, military service, or graduate or professional school. For example, our students' competitiveness for highly prized graduate and professional school admissions strongly confirms the high quality of our undergraduate programs. Since 1998, when we established the first of its kind pre-law preparation program, more than 300 UTEP graduates have been accepted into law schools across the U.S., 60% of them into schools ranked as first tier, and 30% into a top-15 law school, including this past year, the University of Michigan, U.C. Berkeley, and U. T. Austin. Today, under Bill Weaver's fine leadership, UTEP's Law School Preparation Institute is now widely known as a national leader in preparing students not only for admission to law school, but also for success once they enroll. Playing strong support roles too are such UTEP alumni and highly successful attorneys as Paul Yetter and Bob Black who, in recognition of UTEP's key role in their professional development, have contributed their time and financial support to this impressive program. Our thanks to them and our many other generous donors!

UTEP graduates' medical school admissions have also been impressive, with UTEP pre-med students enrolling this year at such highly ranked schools as Baylor College of Medicine, Brown University, and a joint M.D./Ph.D. program at the U. of Maryland. Other UTEP graduates in a variety of disciplines are recruited to pursue highly competitive master's and doctoral programs at major research universities across the country, and many of our doctoral graduates, such as Luis Natividad in Psychology, receive prestigious post-doctoral fellowships to continue their research in such settings as the University of California San Diego. Notable too, is the fact that 100% of the graduates of UTEP's doctoral program in International Business have accepted tenure-track faculty positions at AACSB-accredited business schools.

UTEP has also been aggressive in developing new graduate-level programs to enable our own graduates and those from institutions across the world, to pursue high-quality

advanced educational opportunities on this campus. Many of these relate in special ways to our U.S.-Mexico border and Chihuahuan Desert region. In the College of Science, for example, the new doctoral program in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, which is the only such program in the world to focus on the Chihuahuan Desert, celebrated its first graduate this year. Several other new graduate programs have responded to the growing regional and national need for health researchers and practitioners, including two new master's programs in the College of Health Sciences—Social Work and Rehabilitation Counseling—which graduated their first cohorts this past year; and, in Nursing, the Doctor of Nursing Practice program which admitted its second, and 90% larger, cohort of doctoral students. In Engineering, new masters and doctoral programs in Biomedical Engineering were recently approved by the UT System Board of Regents and are now headed to the THECB for review and final approval.

Another measure of UTEP's quality is that, despite a more challenging economic climate, UTEP graduates are increasingly securing positions with major businesses and industries across the world, successfully competing head-to-head with graduates of renowned programs. UTEP engineering graduates are consistently in very high demand, accepting positions with such companies as Microsoft, General Motors, GE Energy, State Farm, CF Jordan and Boeing; and Business graduates have had similar success in competing for positions at such firms as Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan Chase, Stanley Black & Decker, and Lockheed-Martin. We thank the faculty and deans who successfully work to develop our students' core competencies and to build relationships with their potential future employers. Thanks too to Gary Edens for his vision in seeking to develop stronger collaborations between Academic and Student Affairs to ensure that students develop the competitive edge required to move confidently onto highly attractive professional career pathways. And very special thanks to UTEP alumnus Mike Loya whose generous donation to our Engineering and Business colleges will enable them to be even more effective in enhancing the interdisciplinary preparation and competitiveness of their graduates.

Preparing students to graduate from UTEP with the personal and professional competencies to compete on a world stage requires not only holding them to high academic standards in classrooms and laboratories but also challenging them to participate in a broad range of co-curricular experiences which build both their skills and self-confidence. Participation in undergraduate research experiences, for example, has been demonstrated to be especially motivating to first-generation students to pursue graduate study upon completing their bachelor's degrees. UTEP's undergraduate research program, so ably directed by Dr. Lourdes Echegoyen, has done a remarkable job of identifying resources to expand undergraduate research experiences and encourage students to participate in them. More than 200 undergraduate students were

engaged in faculty-led research projects and activities over the past year, nearly half of whom were supported by research grant funds.

Internships are another important component of UTEP's concerted effort to offer students an enriched undergraduate experience. Internships range from placements with regional firms and government agencies such as White Sands Missile Range, to opportunities in such major U.S. business/industry/government centers as New York, Washington, D.C., Dallas, Seattle and Houston, and settings across the world. For example, 77 students in the Medical Professions Institute participated in internships this past summer, in such diverse settings as Boston, Galveston, Philadelphia and Costa Rica. For the past three years, a group of UTEP students has had an opportunity to spend a semester working and studying at Victoria University in Melbourne, Australia, while their counterparts from Australia spend their semester in a similar assignment at UTEP. Thanks to Donna Ekal, Gary Edens, Dorothy Ward, Robert Stakes, Steve Riter and many others who have made this innovative program a success.

International experiences are an especially important dimension of UTEP's efforts to develop enhanced undergraduate educational opportunities for our students. Unlike their more affluent peers, most first-generation and low-income students have had few opportunities to travel the world, and creating programs to ensure that they have access to affordable and meaningful international experiences is a high priority for many UTEP faculty and staff. There's been a 50% increase in the number of UTEP students learning in settings across the globe including Indonesia, Italy, Qatar, Spain, the Czech Republic, Brazil, and Taiwan. Faculty-led programs, such as that conducted in Indonesia by Communication faculty Stacey Sowards and Richard Pineda, and those in Europe with Dean Bob Nachtmann and Business faculty and staff, have also increased by more than 50% over the past year, with more than \$400,000 in scholarships awarded to UTEP students to support their study abroad experiences. Thanks to the many faculty who have led such efforts and to Donna Ekal and Niamh Minion for helping facilitate them.

We are well aware too that our students' exposure to cutting-edge technology is absolutely critical to their competitiveness as professionals and their engagement as citizens. We thank Steve Riter and his team in Information Technology and Robert Stakes and the Library staff for their commitment to create and continue enhancing students' access to technology resources and the information they make available. The Library's Collaborative Learning Center has served 87% of UTEP's enrolled students over the past two years, and the Technology Support Center has rapidly become an equally valuable resource to the entire UTEP community. Not surprisingly, IT is also recording rapid growth in the use of mobile devices at UTEP. Thanks to the leadership of Frank Poblano in Technology Support and José Huerta in Telecommunications

Infrastructure, UTEP has greatly expanded mobile coverage while also increasing the number of applications that are accessible via mobile devices.

Technology is also playing a far more significant role in the delivery of UTEP's educational programs. The number of online and blended courses and programs has increased significantly, and many more are in the works. UTEP currently offers 8 degrees and 3 certificate programs online to students in El Paso and across the world, and there's been a 389% growth in online course enrollment over the past five years. Like most colleges and universities, UTEP is preparing for significant growth in online courses and programs over the next several years, driven by: demand from students, especially adult learners whose family and employment constraints often conflict with attending regularly scheduled classes on campus; enhanced technology applications that improve access to online learning; and anticipated investments by the U.T. System's new Institute for Transformational Learning. To increase faculty engagement in online teaching, a number of incentive programs are being offered by the Provost's Office, and the organizational placement of Instructional Support Services has been transferred from Information Resources and Planning to Academic Affairs under the capable leadership of Associate Provost Bill Robertson, who is himself an experienced online teacher.

External validation of the quality of UTEP's academic programs is another important factor in ensuring our graduates' competitiveness. We recently received a very positive response to UTEP's fifth-year accreditation report from our regional accreditor, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, attesting to our overall institutional quality, with a focus on undergraduate student success. Special thanks to Associate Provost John Wiebe and Provost Junius Gonzales for ensuring that UTEP's engagement in the ten-year SACS accreditation cycle didn't miss a step. Discipline-specific accreditations are also ongoing processes, and among those granted this past year was the ten-year accreditation of the Master's in Occupational Therapy program in the College of Health Sciences. Congratulations to Stephanie Capshaw and her OT team.

As critical as regional and professional accreditation is to all colleges and universities, published rankings are often more visible to our many stakeholders. I mentioned earlier UTEP's overall national ranking in *Washington Monthly*, and I'm equally proud of the recognition that specific UTEP programs have received from other publications. This past year, and for the third year in succession, *Hispanic Business* magazine ranked graduate programs in the College of Business Administration #1 among all MBA programs, and programs in the College of Engineering #3 among all graduate engineering programs for Hispanics, the 8th year in succession that UTEP's Engineering programs have been ranked among the top five nationally.

At the core of student success at UTEP and all universities are the talented, innovative and dedicated faculty members who set high standards and work very hard to support students' efforts to attain them. The UTEP faculty proudly includes many stellar teachers, individuals for whom student learning is the highest priority. We know who these teachers are, and for many years we have celebrated their excellence through UTEP's Distinguished Achievement Award for Teaching Excellence. Four years ago, the U.T. System Board of Regents raised the ante by establishing a highly competitive and generous prize to recognize outstanding teachers across all nine academic institutions. Since then, a total of 35 UTEP faculty members have been honored with this UT System Board of Regents Outstanding Teaching Award. Last month, 10 UTEP faculty members traveled to Austin to receive this prestigious honor and the \$25,000 prize that accompanies it. These outstanding UTEP faculty members are seated on our stage today, and I'll ask you to hold your applause until I've introduced all of them: Trisha Ainsa in Teacher Education, Ezra Cappell in English, Peter Golding in Engineering, Virgilio Gonzalez in Engineering, Eric Hagedorn in Physics, Laura Hall in Business, Helen Hammond in Educational Psychology, Kien Hwa Lim in Mathematical Sciences, Gina Nuñez-Mchiri in Anthropology, and DeAnna Varela in the Women's Studies Program. Congratulations to all of you and thank you for all that you do to serve our students so well, and to make us all so proud!

Another UTEP faculty member, Dr. Jorge Gardea Torresdey, Chairman of the Chemistry Department and Dudley Professor of Chemistry and Environmental Science, was one of only ten faculty members from all colleges and universities across Texas to be named "Piper Professor" for superior teaching at the college level by the Minnie Stevens Piper Foundation. I am very honored and pleased to present this prestigious award to Dr. Gardea today and ask that he come forward to receive it.

As we celebrate the accomplishments of these exemplary UTEP faculty members who have received teaching awards this year, we want to take a moment to recognize all those faculty who have been similarly honored in the past and those whose honors and awards are yet to come. We are deeply grateful for your steadfast commitment to excellence in all that you do at UTEP and look forward to future opportunities to work with you to set the pace for universities across the country in educating the 21st century student demographic.

We also extend a heartfelt welcome to all the new faculty and staff members who have joined UTEP this year. We are energized by the expertise, experience and outstanding accomplishments that you bring to us, and we pledge to do all that we can to ensure that the commitment you've made to UTEP and to our students' success is reciprocated through our support of your aspirations to continue your own quest to achieve at the highest level. Your success will be our success too!

And speaking of success, UTEP's accomplishments in securing grant funding once again set new records during the past year. Funding success begins of course with competitive proposals, and Principal Investigators submitted 612 of them this past year, seeking more than \$366 million in grant support. Thanks to all the faculty and staff members who dedicated their expertise and time to preparing these competitive proposals, and to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs team for their support in providing both pre-and post-award services to them. I want especially to acknowledge the outstanding commitment that Vice President for Research Roberto Osegueda has made to continuous improvement, constantly evaluating the effectiveness of the growing size of operations that report to him and creatively developing systems to increase their efficiency and productivity. The consolidation of Contracts & Grants Accounting with ORSP is a good example of this important work, and we thank all the UTEP team members involved for their good will during this organizational transition.

A total of 169 new grant awards were received by UTEP last year, securing \$75 million in new grant funding. There are obviously far too many individual awards to single out all of them today, but perhaps a few examples will offer a sense of the competitiveness of the UTEP faculty and staff members who submit successful proposals, as well as the range of areas in which they work.

- Luis Echegoyen, who holds the Robert A. Welch Chair in Chemistry, received a more than \$3.3 million award from the National Science Foundation for an interdisciplinary partnership between UTEP and UC Santa Barbara that will advance our basic understanding of the structures essential for the production of efficient photovoltaics for solar energy. Exciting dimensions of this project are its student exchanges between UTEP and UCSB, and broad interdisciplinary faculty participation, including José Nuñez and Juan Noveron in Chemistry, David Zubia in Electrical and Computer Engineering, Chintalapalle Ramana in Mechanical Engineering and Tunna Baruah in Physics.
- Another highly interdisciplinary project, this one led by Deana Pennington in UTEP's Cyber-ShARE Center of Excellence, received an \$800,000 award to foster the integration of cyberinfrastructure into STEM research settings. Partners include the U. of Kansas, U. of New Mexico, Los Alamos National Laboratory and the National and International Long-Term Ecological Research Network.
- In Computer Science, Pat Teller received a \$1.6 million award from the Department of Defense through High Performance Technologies, Inc. for research to enable battlefield decision-making and planning through information processing in the DoD "Cloud." The goal of this work is to explore the use of cloud computing to improve information resources for the Warfighter.

- Evgeny Shafirovich in Mechanical Engineering and the Center for Space Exploration Technology Research, received a \$600,000 award from the Department of Defense to develop application-customized chemical gas generators based on novel energetic materials that will exhibit improved effectiveness, process stability and fire safety.
- In Biological Sciences, Eli Greenbaum received a large grant from the NSF for his research on amphibians, reptiles, and their endoparasites in the lowland forests of Central Africa, and June Kan-Mitchell received a more than \$2 million RO1 grant from NIH to support her efforts to generate vaccines for HIV prevention and therapy.
- UTEP partnered with the City of El Paso to create a Regional Cyber and Energy Security Center to test and certify alternative energy products and systems. Leading this more than \$3.5 million partnership are Ralph Martinez of UTEP's Center for Environmental Resource Management and Ricardo Pineda of our Research Institute for Manufacturing and Systems Engineering. The goal is to develop methods to secure the commercial and energy systems in this region against cyber-attacks, equipment failures, and natural threats.
- The Paso del Norte Health Foundation is supporting community-wide collaborations led by UTEP to promote behavioral health and wellness. One, led by Provost Junius Gonzales and Health Sciences Dean Kathleen Curtis, creates a partnership with TTHSC-EP and the UT Houston School of Public Health to address the complex challenge of preventing overweight and obesity in children and youth in this region. Another, led by Ted Cooper in Psychology, continues the Foundation's sustained and successful investment in reducing tobacco use and fostering the adoption of smoke-free policies across this region.
- Stacey Sowards and Richard Pineda in the Department of Communication received nearly \$1 million from U.S. AID for a collaboration that includes two universities in Indonesia, the conservation organization RARE, and UTEP's Center for Environmental Resource Management, to address sustainability issues in forests and marine fisheries and to enhance STEM education in Indonesia.
- Bill Tseng, Paras Mandal and Eric Smith in Industrial, Manufacturing and Systems Engineering recently received a \$2.5 million federal grant to partner with Drexel University in Philadelphia to integrate green energy into manufacturing engineering education.
- Research training and workforce development has been the focus of a number of grant awards during the past year. Renato Aguilera in Biological Sciences, who is leading research training efforts in the College of Science, together with COURI Director Lourdes Echegoyen, received a large NSF grant for Scholarships in STEM to promote degree completion and pursuit of graduate

degrees in STEM fields. In addition, with Elizabeth Walsh in Biology and Wen-Yee Lee in Chemistry as Co-PIs, Dr. Aguilera was awarded more than \$4 million from NIH to continue the highly successful RISE program to increase the participation and success of Hispanics in both undergraduate and graduate programs in science.

- COURI Director Lourdes Echegoyen was also involved in a team led by Laura O'Dell in Psychology and including Manuel Miranda in Biology that received an NIH grant to establish a summer program to provide research experiences in neuroscience and drug addiction to undergraduate students and high school teacher-student teams.
- Workforce preparation was the focus of several other new grant awards as well. A multi-university grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture supports a large UTEP team led by Heidi Taboada Jimenez in Industrial, Manufacturing and Systems Engineering and including José Espiritu Nolasco in the same department, Salvador Hernandez and Shane Walker in Civil Engineering, Juan Noveron in Chemistry and Bill Hargrove in CERM, to increase the number of Hispanic students engaged in sustainable energy work.
- In Nursing, Dean Elias Provencio-Vasquez and his team secured a grant of \$4 million from the U.S. Department of Labor to create an innovative nurse residency program designed to increase the number of U.S. graduate nurses, and thereby reduce the pressure on healthcare providers to recruit nurses from outside the U.S.
- In Teacher Education, Elena Izquierdo and Char Ullman received \$1.9 million to enhance pre- and in-service teacher preparation in the Socorro ISD with a goal of better serving English Language Learners. In Engineering, Elsa Villa is leading a grant-funded project to help prepare effective and knowledgeable teacher-engineers for successful placement in K-12 settings. She is joined by colleagues Pat Nava in Engineering, Eric Hagedorn in Physics, and David Carrejo in Teacher Education.
- And supporting UTEP's outreach to pre-college students in this region, a \$16.2 million GEAR UP grant from the U.S. Department of Education will enhance college readiness and success for students in the Socorro ISD, with a focus on STEM preparation.

All these grants, and so many more that we don't have time to talk about today, have a huge impact on UTEP and this community. For starters, the growth in new research funding to UTEP each year through the successful proposals written by UTEP's highly competitive faculty and staff has a major economic impact. The rapid rise in UTEP's annual research expenditures—to more than \$76 million last year—has been a major factor in the steady increase in UTEP's annual budget, from less than \$100 million 20 years ago to more than \$400 million in the current fiscal year, and has resulted in the

creation of a large number of high paying jobs on campus, the attraction of talented professionals to El Paso from across the world, growth in on-campus employment for students, and a large increase in the purchase of goods and services in this region.

But the impact of UTEP's research goes well beyond direct economic benefits. It's no coincidence that the second category, after social mobility, that the *Washington Monthly* ranking uses to assess the overall impact of universities is research, the dollars it generates, the products it creates and the future generations of highly successful professionals that it helps prepare. Here again, UTEP excels. Through our success in attracting funding, we are providing students meaningful on-campus employment that not only finances their preparation for highly successful careers, increases their retention and graduation and reduces their time to degree, but also equips them with the skills needed for success after graduation. Our research success also builds UTEP's reputation and brings increased attention and many high-profile visitors to El Paso, thereby greatly enhancing this region's image as well. It's not an exaggeration to say that everyone on campus and in this community benefits either directly or indirectly from UTEP's success in attracting external grant funding. We're going to have a lot more to say about all of this when we share the soon-to-be-released results of a major economic impact study of UTEP. Stay tuned for that!

The third category included in the *Washington Monthly* rankings is service—to students, to the surrounding region and to our nation. Once more, UTEP excels. Through our Center for Civic Engagement, Project MOVE and so many other initiatives in Student and Academic Affairs, UTEP students are encouraged to share their time and talents in settings across this community, which of course happens to be their community too. Thanks to Gary Edens, Azuri Gonzalez, Catie McCorry-Andalis, Richard Daniel, Corey Bailey, Louie Rodriguez, Donna Ekal, Ryan Holmes, Armando Aguirre and so many others who enthusiastically foster opportunities for UTEP students to develop a broad range of professional, social and community engagement skills that will prepare them to become well-rounded professionals and citizens.

UTEP itself offers a powerful model of civic engagement with a wide-ranging menu of cultural, arts, sports and entertainment programs that engage, educate and entertain residents of this border region. The Stanlee and Gerald Rubin Center for the Visual Arts, for example, continued to build UTEP's reputation nationally last year with exhibits by such prominent artists as Mark Bradford. The Music and Theatre Arts and Dance departments and the UTEP Dinner Theatre offered a wonderfully diverse set of concerts, recitals, plays, dance and musical theatre productions to growing and highly appreciative audiences. Especially noteworthy during the past year was the expansion of joint ventures between the UTEP Music Department and musical organizations in the El Paso community, including El Paso Pro-Musica, the El Paso Opera and the El Paso Symphony Orchestra. We're especially excited about an opera production that's in the

works to be performed in Bhutan in 2013 and at UTEP in 2014, as part of our Centennial celebration. Special thanks to Music professor Elisa Wilson for devoting her time and talent to this unique international collaboration.

The UTEP Athletics Program offers a large number of women's and men's sports competitions ranging from track and field to soccer, rifle and volleyball, from football to basketball, tennis and golf. Women's basketball had an especially successful season, winning the Conference USA championship. Congratulations to Coach Keitha Adams, her staff and the outstanding Lady Miner basketball team! We are proud of our student athletes who work hard to represent us well on the field of play, in the classroom and in the El Paso community. At a tumultuous time in intercollegiate athletics, from conference instability to scandals, we are grateful to Athletic Director Bob Stull and his administrative team, and to all the coaching staffs for their sustained commitment to quality and integrity in all that they do.

The UTEP Marching Miner Regiment, under the leadership of Professor André Feagin, energized and inspired UTEP students and the El Paso community again last year with their exciting performances during halftimes at UTEP football games, and their well-deserved honor of being featured at the Texas State Marching Band Competition. Their striking new uniforms, debuting this fall, add greatly to the stellar image that they've earned, and to our pride in their accomplishments.

The UTEP Centennial Lecture Series brought a number of outstanding speakers to the campus last year to share their perspectives and provoke our thinking about issues likely to play a role in shaping the 21st century, including Herminio Blanco, economist and Mexico's chief NAFTA negotiator, Steve Murdock, former Director of the U.S. Census and Texas State Demographer, and Alan Leshner, CEO of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Among regular attendees at the Centennial lectures are members of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, a continuing education program that UTEP is proud to have offered to El Paso area seniors for more than 20 years.

Special Events, under the visionary leadership of Jorge Vazquez, continues to reach new heights. During the past year, more than \$4 million in gross revenues were generated by the five top events: *Cirque de Soleil-Dralion*, and concerts by Enrique Iglesias, Michael Bublé, and Gabriel Iglesias, all in the Don Haskins Center; and Monster Jam in the Sun Bowl. In addition, a range of successful programs were offered in Magoffin Auditorium, including the *Marriage of Figaro* in collaboration with the El Paso Opera; *Festival del Bolero* in partnership with the Mexican Consulate; *Max & Ruby Bunny Party*; and Kings of Salsa...something for everyone! And then there was the Julio César Chavez, Jr. vs. Andy Lee HBO boxing match in the Sun Bowl, preparations for which attracted far more attention than the event itself. Disputes about safety and

beer sales, and a windstorm that damaged the rigging and set-up on the eve of the match, created quite a lot of excitement for Jorge...and for many of the rest of us too!

A major development of the past year was the grand opening of three majestic new buildings: Health Sciences and Nursing, Chemistry and Computer Science and the Student Recreation Center. These striking new facilities have not only added much needed state-of-the-art teaching, research and student support space to the UTEP campus, but also raised our signature Bhutanese architectural aesthetic to glorious new heights and contributed to the transformation of our campus climate. At the Student Recreation Center attendance figures now total more than 2,000 per day, and the re-opening of the swimming pool this fall is expected to stimulate even greater growth this year.

Thanks to all those involved in the many facets of planning, design, construction, and re-location associated with these many new facilities. The expertise and time you devoted to these major projects has resulted in extraordinarily fine outcomes, and I hope that you share our special pride in them. We also greatly appreciate the forbearance and good will that must accompany all such initiatives, from those of you who have been directly impacted by re-location, to those of us who simply worked our way around construction equipment.

Among those directly involved in these projects are staff members in facilities services, campus security, information technology, environmental health and safety, parking and transportation, purchasing, business services, inventory and a host of other behind-the-scenes operations. They surely deserve greater recognition for the critically important work that they do; unfortunately, heightened visibility for them is usually associated with springing into action in response to such emergencies as power outages, building security issues, and weather events. So, let us take a moment today to give another round of applause to all UTEP faculty and staff members whose service we honored earlier in this program, and to the many others whose daily unsung accomplishments ensure that we all can enjoy a clean, safe, secure and efficient campus environment.

Also working diligently behind the scenes, at least until now, is a group of UTEP staff members who have been helping design and develop a new PeopleSoft finance and human resources software system, in collaboration with colleagues from six other UT System institutions. Thanks to Iris Niestas, who has led this conversion effort, to Cindy Villa, Steve Riter, Howard Daudistel and Roberto Osegueda for their administrative leadership, and to the many other UTEP team members who have stepped up to ensure that this huge investment of financial resources, time and expertise will result in more efficient and productive 21st-century data management in these two key operational areas, and support UTEP's continued progress toward Tier One. We'll all be hearing far more about this PeopleSoft conversion in the coming months, including

training opportunities, as we begin the count-down to its scheduled Spring, 2013 implementation.

“Transformation” seems to be the operative term on the UTEP campus these days. Whether it’s our academic and research programs, our campus facilities, our data management infrastructure, or even our attitudes, UTEP is definitely transforming itself as we head simultaneously toward our Centennial commemoration and our vision of becoming the first national research university with a 21st century student demographic. Our distinguished history of service to this region, our designation by the Texas Legislature as an Emerging Research University, and our bold aspirations for the future, are converging at just the right time, and UTEP’s transformation has now begun to touch all campus neighborhoods and those who work within them.

As most of you have undoubtedly heard, we are embarking on yet another transformation, this one of our campus landscape and the enhanced campus climate that we believe it will foster. We will soon begin to close the center of campus to routine vehicular traffic and focus attention on knitting together our beautiful Bhutanese buildings with pedestrian walkways and attractive and shady outdoor gathering spaces that will enable us all to enjoy El Paso’s beautiful weather and each other’s company. Already one of the most striking university campuses in the U.S., UTEP is about to become even more attractive, pedestrian-friendly, and compatible with the surrounding Chihuahuan Desert. Serving as the symbolic centerpiece of this project will be Centennial Plaza, a greatly expanded open area that, together with many other transformed spaces, will serve as a legacy of UTEP’s Centennial commemoration in 2014.

And speaking of our Centennial, excitement continues to build as the 2014 Commission develops plans that will ensure that all of us on campus, everyone in this region and our proud UTEP alumni across the world, have many opportunities to join in celebrating this once-in-a-lifetime event. Thanks to Ed Escudero and Laura Tate Goldman for their continued leadership, and welcome to Keith Erekson, faculty member in History, who accepted our invitation to lead the implementation phase of UTEP’s Centennial, and who has injected enormous energy into this historic commemoration through his wealth of expertise, relevant experience and enthusiasm.

UTEP’s Centennial celebration is meant for everyone. Over the past century, each of us—students, faculty, and staff—have brought our dreams to this University and we have worked hard together to achieve them. Now we want you to share with us your experiences, your memories, and your dreams. Discover the history of your own campus unit or organization. Make a gift toward our Centennial Campaign. Join us in El Paso and across the world at the various events and activities we are planning. Our celebration will not be complete without the participation of each and every one of you.

The next several years are going to be among the most exciting ever on this highly energized UTEP campus. We're striding steadily and confidently toward Tier One, we're building capacity across the campus to achieve even more ambitious goals, we're helping shape public policy, and securing validation from such national publications as *Washington Monthly*. UTEP's access and excellence model is gaining the respect that it has worked very hard to earn through the commitment, creativity and courage of all of you, members of the UTEP family, who have believed in our students and their dreams, in UTEP and our aspirations, and in the critical role that public higher education must play in the future prosperity and quality of life of this nation. UTEP has become one of the most relevant and exciting universities in the United States today, thanks to all of you and the talented students we serve. Our Centennial couldn't have occurred at a better time in UTEP's story, for as we approach our 100th anniversary in 2014, we'll not only be celebrating our history, but also making history, setting the pace and creating a new face for U.S. public higher education in the 21st century.

Go Miners!