



FALL CONVOCATION 2015

STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY ADDRESS

PRESIDENT DIANA NATALICIO

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*“ UTEP’s research growth, and our unwavering commitment to ensure that our undergraduate student population is engaged in it, have been major factors in UTEP’s increased excellence and heightened national prominence.”*

**2014-15** was a very special year on the campus of The University of Texas at El Paso, as we commemorated the 100th anniversary of our establishment in 1914 as Texas' State School of Mines and Metallurgy. As I often said during the commemoration, a 100th anniversary only comes around once in 100 years, so we were presented with both a very special occasion to celebrate, as well as a major responsibility to ensure that this milestone in our history would become a key building block for our second century of outstanding service to this region.

The Centennial offered an exceptional opportunity to honor our distinguished history, to celebrate and increase awareness of our many recent accomplishments, and to build visibility and pride on the campus, in the surrounding community and among our alumni and partners across the world. So we were fully committed to leaving no stone unturned in identifying ways to commemorate UTEP's Centennial, and I think we'd all probably agree that any unturned stones were surely very small pebbles!

To ensure sufficient lead time to make this the best 100th anniversary ever, planning actually began in 2010 with the establishment of the 2014 Commission, which comprised 100 UTEP alumni, faculty, staff, students, friends and supporters, and was ably co-chaired by Ed Escudero and Laura Tate Goldman, for whose leadership we will always be grateful.

UTEP's Centennial was conceptualized to be conducted along two primary dimensions: real-time celebratory activities, and longer-term investments in UTEP's future, including both our ambitious campus transformation project and a Centennial fundraising campaign. I think most would agree that we were highly successful in achieving our goals in both those categories.

Celebratory events began with a number of "precursors" in early 2014, including a New Year's Eve gala at the Centennial Museum to launch the official celebration, the grand opening of a special UTEP history exhibit at the El Paso International Airport, an Orange Mass at Sacred Heart Church, an El Paso City Council proclamation honoring UTEP's major role in and impact on this community, a commemorative exhibit at the El Paso History Museum, the première of Hank Cohen's documentary film, "UTEP: First 100 Years," and a campus Open House coordinated by Dean Pat Witherspoon and Professor Carolyn Mitchell in Liberal Arts.

At the beginning of the fall 2014 semester, the Centennial celebration picked up full steam with a whirlwind of activities, starting with a special New Miner Convocation to recognize entering students who will forever be members of the UTEP Centennial class. We welcomed Opera Bhutan to the Don Haskins Center where the international cast, including UTEP vocal and instrumental musicians and Bhutanese dancers from the Royal Academy of Performing Arts, presented the same production of Handel's *Acis and Galatea* that they had performed a year earlier in Thimphu, Bhutan's capital city. That first-ever production of a Western opera in Bhutan was attended by members of both the Bhutanese Royal Family and government officials, UTEP's Bhutanese alumni in Thimphu, and a delegation of UTEP alumni and friends who traveled there to be with us on that very special celebration of UTEP's nearly 100-year ties to the Kingdom of Bhutan. One year later, at the Haskins Center, an estimated 5,000 appreciative audience members from across the El Paso region, and including as our special guest the Bhutanese Ambassador to the United Nations, enjoyed a once-in-a-lifetime opera experience.

UTEP's special Minerpalooza in Fall 2014 had as its theme, "Party of the Century," and it certainly was that! A partnership between Student Affairs and Special Events, led by Nicole Aguilar, Jorge Vazquez, Catie McCorry Andalis, Corey Bailey, Christian Corrales, and Jaime Mendez, programmed an exciting variety of activities and entertainment options for the estimated 40,000 UTEP and El Paso-Juarez community members who gathered in our Sun Bowl-Glory Road neighborhood for UTEP's 100th birthday party. Among our special guests was a delegation from Victoria University in Melbourne, Australia with which UTEP has enjoyed a highly successful student, faculty and staff partnership for many years, and which will be celebrating its own Centennial in 2016....with UTEP's participation!

Another major event early in the fall 2014 semester was a special version of today's annual Fall Convocation, which was, for that occasion only, renamed "University Partners Convocation," to recognize nearly 100 individuals and organizations that played a role in our development from the State School of Mines and Metallurgy through the College of Mines, Texas Western College, and finally to The University of Texas at El Paso that we've become today. It's both humbling and empowering to recognize that no one—and certainly not any large organization like UTEP—does anything alone, and our University Partners

Convocation served as a wonderful opportunity to remember the important role that our many allies and supporters play in our successes.

Perhaps the biggest event last fall, at least in terms of number of participants, occurred on September 28, when 1,200 UTEP students, faculty and staff members formed teams to visit all 266 elementary, middle and high schools in El Paso County, to share UTEP's 100th birthday party with their more than 180,000 students. Each of the 266 schools added its own special touch to those UTEP birthday parties, with mascots, cheerleaders, drum lines, and birthday cakes. UTEP representatives took with us both a variety of keepsakes—including a UTEP string backpack for each and every one of the 180,000 students!—and messages about how important it is for all young people in this region to continue their education after graduating from high school at UTEP, of course! Accompanied by Paydirt Pete and a group of UTEP cheerleaders, Vice President Gary Edens and I went to three different schools—a middle school in the Ysleta District, an elementary school in Canutillo, and El Paso High in the EPISD. We were all exhilarated by the enthusiastic reception from the promising young people we met, and inspired by the highly committed teachers, principals and other school personnel—most of whom are themselves UTEP alumni—in whose hands these young people's futures are entrusted. Also energizing was the thought of UTEP's yet-to-be-unleashed potential for an even greater impact on this community in the years ahead. What a wonderful day that was!....and what a very special way of celebrating our history while envisioning the future through the eyes of next generations of UTEP students! Special thanks to Gary Edens for taking the lead in organizing and overseeing the logistics of this huge County-wide initiative.

To commemorate UTEP's special Centennial Homecoming, we invited all previous Distinguished Alumni and Gold Nuggets to return to celebrate with us. We had an innovative Homecoming Block Party In a magical setting created by Liz Thurmond at the end of Wiggins Street. I was honored to join Alumni Association President Dr. Willarda Edwards in cutting the first slice of a giant UTEP birthday cake. The following evening, we hosted a gala dinner at the Haskins Center honoring all 110 Distinguished Alumni and Gold Nuggets who returned to be with us. It was truly inspiring to be in the presence of this group of highly accomplished UTEP graduates and to consider their collective impact, both in this region and across the world. Thanks to Richard Daniel and his team for their coordinating efforts, and to Liz Thurmond for the success of the Block

Party and the Gala Dinner, which will long be remembered for its grazing menu, spectacular s'mores and confetti cannons.....and, yes, for my dance with 1942 alumnus Thomas Hope!

A third major Centennial event occurred in early November when The University of Texas System Board of Regents held their meeting on the UTEP campus. This board meeting was significant, not only because the Regents and UT System leadership joined in celebrating UTEP's Centennial, but because they made a major commitment toward strengthening the foundation for UTEP's second century of excellence with matching funds to support our Centennial campus transformation project. Special thanks to Liz Thurmond for creating yet another beautiful gala dinner event in the Don Haskins Center. For the record, I didn't dance on that occasion!

There were many other special Centennial events such as the unveiling on the Fox Fine Arts Plaza of Sebastián's "Tlahtolli" sculpture gift from the people





of Mexico, special Centennial commencement ceremonies, The Prospector's publication of an impressive 100-page Centennial issue, the dedication of the "Mandala Sunrise" roundabout sculpture at the intersection of Glory Road and newly widened Sun Bowl Drive, special Centennial Museum exhibits, the Glory Road Glow Run 5K, and pep rallies, tailgates and Orange Fridays sponsored by such business friends across this community as GECU, Del Sol and Providence Hospitals, and Wells Fargo, Chase and WestStar banks, and so many others.

While all of these events and activities kept us hopping and happy throughout the fall semester, work continued on our longer-term, Centennial-legacy campus transformation project. Large equipment was noisily making the earth move behind a high construction fence that surrounded the entire center of our campus. This major construction zone kept us all finding new ways to reach our campus destinations. Paydirt Pete's "UTEP On The Move" campaign was very effective in keeping us informed of construction news and directing us to



buildings we could see but not reach along old pathways, often sending us on circuitous routes through campus areas we'd never visited before! Special thanks to Catie McCorry Andalis for her leadership of this successful effort. A few folks, both UTEPers and visitors, may have been temporarily misplaced, but I'm very happy to report that we didn't actually lose anyone!

As many of you know, the goal of eliminating vehicles and parking from the center of our campus had been a dream for a long time. In fact, in re-reading my previous Fall Convocation remarks, I discovered many references to this goal over the past 25 years. As time went on, large increases in UTEP's enrollment and research activity made these campus improvements even more crucial. UTEP's Centennial presented the perfect opportunity to accomplish the transformation of our campus center, converting an area dominated by streets and parking, to space that fostered pedestrian access and a welcoming aesthetic, re-creating the natural terrain, and promoting water conservation and indigenous plantings. Our initial plan had obviously been to complete and celebrate the grand opening of this new Centennial Plaza during our 100th anniversary year, but like most construction projects, this one had "issues."

As we began the removal of asphalt which covered so much of our campus center, and started the excavation to re-shape the drainage patterns that were visible on photographs taken in the 1930s—before major paving of the campus center to accommodate vehicle traffic and parking—we discovered that the space underground was even less attractive than what we were seeking to transform above it. After nearly 100 years of incremental growth, our utility infrastructure—water, sewer, electric, gas and fiber—some of it dating from the 1930s, was clearly in need of untangling and upgrading. Our first reaction might have been to save both time and money by ignoring the obvious need to sort things out under there. But, recognizing that the Centennial Plaza was to serve both as a celebration of our past 100 years and a foundation to ensure our second-century success, we knew that we had to postpone the landscaping work until the infrastructure upgrade was done. Although it's true that a lot of time and resources were expended on improvements that none of us will ever see, they will silently and invisibly reduce disruptions of our work and greatly enhance campus quality of life.

Although as a result of these and other construction delays, we weren't able to hold Centennial Plaza's inauguration before the end of 2014, we did celebrate this major milestone in grand style in April of this year, when the construction



fence finally came down.....well, most of it! We were honored that the Bhutanese Ambassador to the United Nations was present to help open the doors of the handcrafted Lhakhang donated to UTEP by the people of Bhutan after its appearance on the National Mall in Washington D.C. as part of the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in 2008. Following the festival, it was dismantled, shipped to El Paso and stored on campus until we could re-construct it to become a stunning centerpiece of the Centennial Plaza project.

Since its grand opening in April, the Centennial Plaza has become a source of enormous pride for all of us at UTEP and in the surrounding community. Our campus has always been attractive, with the beauty and architectural consistency of its Bhutanese buildings, but the elimination of vehicles at the campus center and the addition of Centennial Plaza and its connecting walkways have amplified the overall harmony and serenity of our campus. Most importantly, and as we had envisioned, the Plaza has become a center of attraction for our UTEP students, faculty and staff, and our neighbors in the community. They meet friends, play a guitar, walk, throw a Frisbee, fly a kite or sit, think and dream. I continue to receive glowing reactions from those who see our new Plaza for the first time. And speaking of glow, if you haven't seen the lighted Plaza after dark, make it a point to do that sometime soon.

As mentioned earlier, the second major long-term goal of our 100th anniversary commemoration was our Centennial fundraising campaign. Following the standard format, UTEP's campaign was designed to extend over a seven-year period of planning and execution. We invited a group of UTEP alumni and friends to form a Leadership Council and UTEP alumnus Russ Vandenburg to serve as its chair. After analysis of both UTEP fundraising data and more general economic and philanthropic trends—as well as the \$66 million outcome of UTEP's \$50 million fundraising campaign in the 1990's—we set a goal of \$200 million to be achieved by completion of our Centennial commemoration.

The Campaign's timing made it something of a roller coaster ride. We were first challenged by an unexpected and serious national economic downturn just as the public phase of the Campaign got underway, eliminating or greatly reducing some anticipated commitments. Shortly thereafter, we were re-invigorated by incentive funding available from the Texas Legislature to match major gifts designated for research, which was attractive to some of our donors.

After all the dust settled, we were pleased to be able to announce this past

spring that we not only met, but exceeded our \$200 million Campaign goal, raising nearly \$227 million from 26,500 donors, more than half of whom (57%) were UTEP alumni. More than \$48 million (21%) of total giving was designated for student support, \$148 million (65%) for academic programs and research, and \$21.5 million for facilities and equipment. Sustainable funding was guaranteed through the establishment of 213 new endowments, including 149 endowed scholarships, 15 new faculty professorships and chairs, and 49 for program support. We are grateful to alumni, friends and organizations whose generosity made this achievement possible, and to the UTEP staff and faculty members who played critical Campaign roles.

As we bring the curtain down on UTEP's Centennial, I want to express appreciation again to the large and dedicated team of students, staff, faculty, alumni and friends who ensured its success through their participation and good will. I'm confident that all of us will long remember the unique opportunity we had to be a part of this very special UTEP anniversary.

Against this robust celebratory backdrop, UTEP continued to make steady progress during the past year in fulfilling our access and excellence mission and achieving our vision of becoming the first national research university with a 21st century student demographic. UTEP's success in providing our largely first-generation, low-income and Hispanic student population access to

*“ Perhaps the most important lesson of our first 100 years was that playing an authentic public university role in a historically undereducated setting requires us to innovate, not imitate. Our success has been greatest when we have identified and played to our strengths rather than seeking to replicate or emulate models that may—or perhaps don’t—work in other settings. ”*

competitive educational opportunities continues to gain highly positive national recognition, including our third consecutive Top Ten ranking among all U.S. research universities by Washington Monthly magazine, and their #1 ranking for student social mobility, for the fourth year in succession. The social mobility ranking should be especially satisfying to all of us because it aligns so well with our access and excellence mission. My congratulations and thanks to all of you here on the stage and in the audience today, and to all other students, faculty and staff members across this campus, for your many contributions to making UTEP a nationally prominent success story.

Among those on stage today is a very special group of UTEP faculty members, representing academic programs across our campus, who play a major role in UTEP's success. We are well aware that faculty are at the heart of all great universities, and one of UTEP's highest priorities has been the recruitment, development and retention of top-quality faculty whose excellence in both research and teaching serves as a powerful inspiration to our students. There are many such outstanding teachers at UTEP, who set high expectations and stand ready to support their students' efforts to achieve them. They are role models, mentors and motivators; they validate and enhance talent and build confidence. They are faculty who fully understand the importance of UTEP's commitment to both access and excellence.

During the past seven years, The University of Texas System Board of Regents has underscored its commitment to teaching excellence across all its 15 institutions with prestigious Regents' Outstanding Teaching Awards that recognize extraordinary performance and innovation. These highly competitive awards carry with them a very substantial cash prize, and we are especially pleased that this year 10 of the 79 recipients were UTEP Miners! As I proudly introduce them, I'll ask them to stand and remain standing and ask you to hold your applause until all have been introduced.

David Carrejo, Associate Professor of Mathematics Education

Bradley Cartwright, Visiting Assistant Professor of History

Sandor Dorgo, Associate Professor of Kinesiology

Pei-Ling Hsu, Assistant Professor of Science Education

Helmut Knaust, Professor of Mathematical Sciences

Oscar Macchioni, Associate Professor of Piano

Homer Nazeran, Professor of Electrical & Computer Engineering  
Sasha Pimentel, Assistant Professor of Poetry  
Elizabeth Walsh, Professor of Biological Sciences, and  
Raymond Rumpf, Associate Professor of Electrical & Computer Engineering,  
who is missing from the stage party because, well, he's teaching his class!

Several administrative changes have occurred during the past year which should position UTEP well to move forward on our second-century planning agenda. Senior Executive VP Howard Daudistel made a seamless transition into the Provost's office at mid-year, and Richard Adaauto has been serving as Interim VP for Business Affairs since May. Enrollment Services reporting was re-assigned from the Provost's Office to VP for Student Affairs Gary Edens, who reorganized units within his area to accommodate growth in demand for student support services, and to improve accountability and communication. Finally, with an eye toward enhancing strategic leadership, reporting lines of VPs for Research (Osegueda) and Student Affairs (Edens) were shifted from Provost to President.

Leadership also changed at The University of Texas System during the past year. Dr. Francisco Cigarroa was replaced as Chancellor by Admiral William McRaven, and Pedro Reyes by Steven Leslie as Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. Although these changes were made more challenging by occurring just as the 84th Texas Legislature began its work, the outcome of this legislative session was generally more positive than those in the three preceding biennia, including a modest increase in state formula funding for universities, after six years of debilitating reductions.

Tuition Revenue Bond funding for construction, sought by all higher education institutions for the past six years, was also approved, and UTEP received \$70 million which, together with \$10 million in matching UT System PUF support and additional institutional funding will enable construction of an Interdisciplinary Research Building at the corner of Sun Bowl and University, where we've watched what seemed to be a time-lapse demolition of Burges and Barry Halls. Expanding research space is critical to continued growth in UTEP's research funding, as it enables us to recruit additional competitive faculty and students who, in turn, generate more robust research revenues.

The Legislature also appropriated \$7 million to enable UTEP to convert its cooperative Doctor of Pharmacy program with UT Austin's College of Pharmacy

into a separately accredited doctoral degree conducted entirely in El Paso. Longtime leader of pharmacy programs at UTEP, Dr. José Rivera, has been appointed Founding Dean of the new UTEP Pharm. D. program and the School of Pharmacy which will be established to support it.

El Paso's State Rep. Marisa Marquez, member of the House Appropriations Committee, spearheaded the effort to secure this legislative funding which will enable us to increase annual Pharmacy cohorts from 12 to 45 or more students, and thereby help address the grave unmet need for licensed pharmacists in this region. We are extremely grateful to Rep. Marquez for her dedicated efforts on behalf of pharmacy education and improved healthcare in El Paso, and are very pleased that she is here today, so that Founding Dean Rivera and I can formally express our deep appreciation to her.

Representative Marquez, on behalf of all the residents in this region who will be the direct beneficiaries of improved healthcare as a result of the increased availability of professional pharmacists; and on behalf of all of the young people in this community who will be able to pursue their dreams of becoming pharmacists, I thank you for your tenacious and successful efforts to secure state funding to establish a full Doctor of Pharmacy program at UTEP.

UTEP's effort to develop a full Pharm. D. program is a compelling example of aligning our academic program development with both the needs of this region and the aspirations of its talented young people whose futures are entrusted to us. Like other healthcare professions, pharmacy is an area of high student interest as well as regional need, so this program easily became a priority. Other new UTEP programs launched over the past year are consistent with this approach, including at the undergraduate level a new Bachelor of Science in Engineering Leadership, the first program of its kind nationally, in a new department of Engineering Education and Leadership, chaired by Roger González; and in Civil Engineering, a B.S. degree in Construction Engineering and Management. At the graduate level, new master's degrees were developed to respond to specific professional career opportunities. The Colleges of Engineering and Business merged a BS degree in Engineering and an MBA to create a 5-year, fast-track program, and Civil Engineering added a Water Resources Engineering and Management specialization.

UTEP has also greatly increased the number of fully online undergraduate programs offered via UTEP Connect in such areas as Health Promotion, Security



Studies, Organizational and Corporate Communication, Criminal Justice, and Multidisciplinary Studies; and at the graduate level in Bilingual and Early Childhood Education, Nursing, Defense and Strategic Studies, and Technical and Professional Writing. Although these online programs are primarily intended to meet the needs of former UTEP students whose academic progress was interrupted for a variety of reasons and who are now strongly motivated to complete them, enrollment in them reflects a broad range of other students for whom the online format works best. We thank Beth Brunk Chavez for assuming a leadership role, Steve Riter, Steve Varela and the Academic Technologies team for their support, and the many other staff and faculty involved in UTEP Connect's work for their efforts to navigate new and complicated relationships.

At the doctoral level, UTEP received approval from the UT System Board of Regents for its proposed Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering, an innovative program that focuses on preparing engineering scientists for the public and private sectors and supports research aimed at stimulating regional economic growth. Special thanks to Ahsan Choudhuri, Richard Shoephoerster, Roy Mathew and Charles Ambler for their fine work. This program now awaits final approval by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

El Paso has been fortunate to have had representation on the Coordinating Board for the past decade or more, including business leaders Bob Wingo, Paul Foster, and, most recently, Harold Hahn. Although it carries with it considerable prestige, this gubernatorial appointment is also well known as a very demanding volunteer assignment because of the number of board and committee meetings, the frequent travel to Austin and to campuses across the state and, especially, the heavy homework assignments.

Originally appointed in 2010, Harold Hahn served through this past summer, first as a Coordinating Board member and, beginning in 2013, as chair, while concurrently meeting the many responsibilities of his own business, Rocky Mountain Mortgage Company, and his extensive civic engagement with the Yucca Council of the Boy Scouts of America, the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce and numerous other professional commitments. I can assure you that Harold Hahn's leadership of the Coordinating Board will be greatly missed, not only by those of us at UTEP, but by our colleagues across the state. I invited him to be with us at Convocation today so that we can express to him our appreciation. Harold, will you please come forward?



Harold Hahn, in appreciation for your extraordinarily generous dedication of time and energy to Texas higher education and, especially, for your genuine interest in, and commitment to, UTEP's access and excellence mission, and our potential to impact the future prosperity and quality of life of this region, I am proud and pleased to present to you the UTEP President's Medal. Thank you again for your abiding support of the transformative power of public higher education.

UTEP's academic programs have received considerable recognition for both their quality and significant contribution to increasing the diversity of nearly every profession nationally. UTEP is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission on Colleges, and our professional programs are accredited on an ongoing basis by their respective accrediting bodies. During the past year, for example, the Bachelor of Social Work program in the College of Health Sciences was re-accredited, as were all six undergraduate programs in the College of Engineering.

An especially exciting recent development was a new accreditation by the American Psychological Association of the UTEP Counseling Center's doctoral internship program, whose training of emerging mental health professionals will positively impact both UTEP and the El Paso community. Congratulations to Brian Sneed, Assistant Director of UTEP's Counseling Center, and to all who worked with him on achieving this major milestone, and special thanks to Associate Provost John Wiebe who guided this initiative from the start, and to our community partners, including the Paso del Norte Health Foundation, and Texas Tech Health Sciences Center in El Paso.

Another prime indicator of UTEP's excellence has been our success in competing for external funds to support research, education and scholarship. I'm pleased to report that UTEP has had another banner year, securing \$88.8 million in new awards, an increase of almost 32% over last year. This brings our total current grant portfolio to more than \$317 million, an 18% increase over last year. Equally important is the fact that this increased external funding supports research, education and training programs that extend across the entire UTEP campus.

Appropriately, for a university located in a desert environment, UTEP has received significant new funding for water-related research. An interdisciplinary UTEP team led by Dr. Jorge Gardea-Torresdey, Chemistry Department Chair, and

including Juan Noveron and Dino Villagran in Chemistry, Shane Walker in Civil Engineering and Eva Moya in Social Work, has partnered with Rice, Arizona State and Yale Universities in an NSF-funded Engineering Research Center on Nanotechnology-Enabled Water Treatment Systems. Bill Hargrove, Director of the Center for Environmental Resource Management, and Joe Heyman, Director of the Center for Inter-American and Border Studies, received \$4.8 million from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for a project focused on sustainable water resources for irrigated agriculture in a desert river basin facing climate change and urban growth.

The Department of Defense has awarded grants to several UTEP researchers, including Anupama Kaul in the College of Engineering, Cristian Botez in Physics, Nigel Ward, David Novick and Olac Fuentes in Computer Science, Norman Love, Ahsan Choudhuri, Evgeny Shafirovich and Pavana Prabhakar in Mechanical Engineering, and David Roberson in Metallurgical and Materials Engineering. The Office of the Secretary of Defense awarded \$1.8 million to Larry Valero in Liberal Arts for the UTEP National Security Studies Institute: Intelligence Community Center for Academic Excellence.

NASA granted a second five-year award to Ahsan Choudhuri, John Chessa, Evgeny Shafirovich, Ryan Wicker and Norman Love for the Center for Space Exploration and Technology Research, or cSETR for short!

A highly innovative research training project led by Associate VP for Research Steve Aley was funded by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute to provide authentic research experiences to entering students in science by replacing current laboratory sections of freshman STEM courses with a three-semester sequence designed to enable students to learn by modeling what scientists do in the laboratory.

A UTEP team led by Lourdes Echegoyen, Director of the Campus Office for Undergraduate Research Initiatives (COURI), received a \$22.6 million grant from the National Institutes of Health to extend this innovative model across the UTEP campus, providing outstanding research opportunities to students from their matriculation at UTEP to entrance into the biomedical research community. Other members of the BUILDing SCHOLARS team include Renato Aguilera and Steve Aley in Biological Sciences, Thomas Boland and Homer Nazeran in Engineering, Osvaldo Morera in Psychology, and Timothy Collins and Sara Grineski in Sociology and Anthropology.



The National Institutes of Health also awarded a major \$1.5 million research grant to Charlotte Vines, Assistant Professor in Biological Sciences, and two additional research training grants: a \$2.4 million renewal of Keith Pannell's Undergraduate Biomedical Research Training program; and \$700,000 to Rosa Maldonado to support the Bridges to the Baccalaureate Program which eases the transition to UTEP for STEM students from EPCC.



The U.S. Department of Education awarded Connie Summers and Vanessa Mueller in Speech-Language Pathology \$1.2 million to prepare bilingually certified speech language pathologists; and in Student Affairs Jaime Mendez was awarded a renewal of his grant for our Student Support Services Project, earning a perfect 100 score from all proposal evaluators. Go Jaime!

NSF renewed a \$3.9 million student support grant in STEM through the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation led by Ben Flores in Electrical and Computer Engineering and Helmut Knaust in Mathematical Sciences. In the area of community health, Kathleen Curtis, Dean of the College of Health Sciences, and Leah Whigham, Director of the Paso del Norte Institute for Healthy Living, received a \$7.9 million grant from the Paso del Norte Health Foundation to create a regional culture of Healthy Eating and Active Living; and Thenral Mangadu and João Ferreira-Pinto received \$900,000 from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to promote a



“Partnership with Community-Based Organizations for Integrated Substance Abuse, HIV and HCV Prevention Services.”

UTEP’s research growth, and our unwavering commitment to ensure that our undergraduate student population is engaged in it, have been major factors in UTEP’s increased excellence and heightened national prominence. Our success in serving as a national model for Hispanic Serving Institutions requires creating not only access and affordability for first-generation Latino students, but ensuring that degree completion opportunities offered to them at UTEP are of the highest quality and competitive with those at research universities across the globe. The result is that UTEP programs are the top producers nationally of Hispanic graduates; in fact, nearly all UTEP programs at all levels rank among the top five nationally in the number of degrees awarded to Hispanics, and many rank #1, including Music and Mathematics at the bachelor’s level, English and Engineering at the master’s level, and Education and Ecology/Evolutionary Biology at the doctoral level. UTEP has become widely known as the “go-to” place for recruiters who find a large concentration of well-educated Hispanic graduates in almost any field, and our graduates are disproportionately contributing to the growing diversity in professional workplaces across the U.S., including higher education. One example of UTEP’s national impact is our Ph.D. program in Business where 80% of our graduates, half of whom are Hispanic, have been recruited to faculty positions at universities across the country, a context in which fewer than 3% of Business faculty members today are Hispanic.

In addition, UTEP itself and many specific programs receive special designations for their excellence. Our Computer Science program has been designated a Center of Academic Excellence in CyberDefense Education by the National Security Agency, and the Center for Transportation Infrastructure Systems is the only one in the nation that is designated as both a regional and national Transportation Center of Excellence.

A very special validation of our growing recognition occurred this past year when the Houston-based Terry Foundation added UTEP to the ranks of its public university partners, providing full four-year tuition scholarships, plus housing and study abroad stipends, to academically high-achieving students on our campus. We received 724 applications for these prestigious scholarships, and selected 15 students who are attending UTEP this fall. Each year an additional 16 students will be selected for a sustained complement of 64 Terry Scholars on the

UTEP campus, where they will join more than 3000 meritorious UTEP students who were awarded more than \$13 million in scholarships this past year.

The Terry Scholars and more than 300 other UTEP students are now residing in the beautiful Miner Canyon complex, student apartments recently constructed in response to a growing demand for on-campus housing at UTEP. With an enrollment of more than 23,000 students, nearly 1,000 of whom live on campus; with such amenities as the Centennial Plaza, the Student Recreation Center, and the new Pick 'n' Shovel dining facility in the Union; with several new state-of-the art research facilities and another about to be constructed; with classes scheduled from early morning through evening hours; and with more than 200 student organizations and hundreds of annual activities, from scholarly and provocative lectures to Minerpalooza, UTEP's campus climate has markedly changed. You don't have to have been at UTEP as long as I have—and that surely can't be many of you at this point!—to know that we are a dramatically different university today than we were just a few years ago. Many critics worried early on that a strong commitment to authentically serve the population of this historically undereducated region would relegate UTEP to a second-tier spot on the higher education landscape when, in fact, the outcome has been quite the opposite. It's that very commitment to do what's right for the population we are here to serve, and do it very well, that has led to our success and national prominence.

We are extremely well positioned now to pivot toward envisioning and planning for UTEP's second century of service to the Paso del Norte region. This planning will include: reviewing the current regional, national and international context for continued commitment to our students' social mobility and this region's prosperity and quality of life; updating our assessment of UTEP's strengths and potential opportunities in this refreshed context; and envisioning UTEP's strategic new directions and developing the specific plans to pursue them. As a complement to this work, we are also actively engaged in UTEP's ten-year SACSCOC accreditation process, whose Quality Enhancement Program, now led by Maggy Smith, will strongly complement our overall planning efforts. There are exciting opportunities ahead for UTEP!

Unfortunately, however, our enthusiasm for future planning has been tempered recently as too much of our time, energy and attention has had to be focused on a set of operational issues that have clouded our vision and severely

tested our patience, our professional and interpersonal relationships, and our collective good will. All of you here today know that no annual report on the past year would be complete—or even honest!—without mentioning the UT System PeopleSoft conversion that has disrupted progress not only at UTEP but at six other UT System academic institutions, making even our simplest transactions extremely onerous. You'll be pleased to know that I'm not going to dwell on the many issues associated with this project, but I do want to take a moment to express my sincere apologies to everyone on this campus who has been touched by PeopleSoft challenges, and my deep appreciation to all of you for your continued forbearance and good will in attempting to cope with their negative impacts on your valuable work. I know that this has been an extremely long and difficult ordeal for far too many of us.



I want to thank especially Richard Adauto for stepping into a leadership role at a very challenging moment, and to Roberto Osegueda for his advocacy and tireless efforts to develop innovative strategies to address the special challenges faced by his contract and grant-funded constituents. I am also deeply grateful to the many members of the PeopleSoft team, too numerous to mention individually here, for their tireless efforts to address immediate crises while simultaneously working toward devising longer term solutions. I also want to assure everyone that I and others have learned far more about PeopleSoft than

we'd ever hoped to know, and that we are all fully committed to work as hard as possible to bring to a close this very difficult chapter in UTEP's otherwise highly encouraging story.

This Convocation today serves as a threshold into UTEP's new century of opportunity. We look forward to engaging in the excitement of our second-century strategic thinking and planning process, with as many members of the UTEP family as possible —students, faculty and staff on the campus and our alumni, friends and supporters in this community and across the world. We are eager to hear the many perspectives on UTEP's future that all of you will share with us, and to work with you to weave them together into a vibrant and energizing strategic plan.

Wherever our second century planning leads us, I know that it will be most successful when resting on a solid foundation of UTEP's core values and guiding principles, which have enabled us to succeed in nurturing the talent and promoting the prosperity and quality of life of the region we were established to serve. That authenticity has not only enabled us to successfully serve our region, but also to achieve a national reputation as a leader in 21st century public higher education.

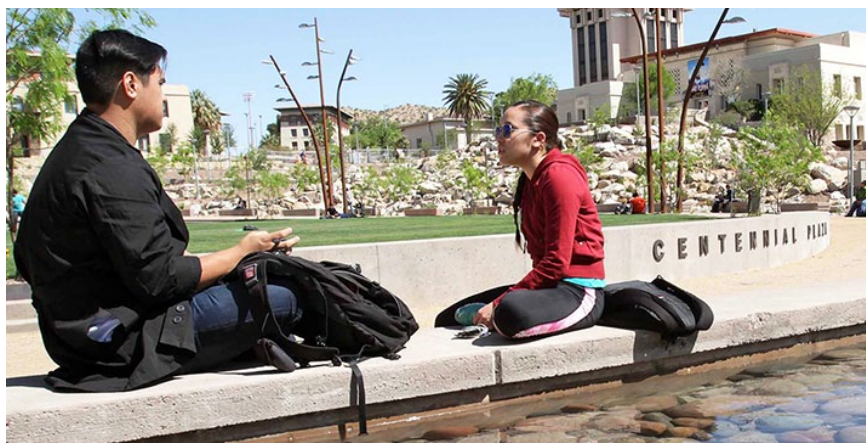
Perhaps the most important lesson of our first 100 years was that playing an authentic public university role in a historically undereducated setting requires us to innovate, not imitate. Our success has been greatest when we have identified and played to our strengths rather than seeking to replicate or emulate models that may—or perhaps don't—work in other settings. “Harvard on the Border” may have been a catchy bumper sticker, but it was obviously a really poor institutional strategy.

Innovating, creating our own higher education model, “doing it the UTEP way,” was not only the right thing to do; it was also the only sure path to institutional growth, progress and success in achieving our full potential. So, what does “doing it the UTEP way” really mean?

It begins with the fundamental assumption that talent is everywhere, equally spread across gender, ethnic, racial and socioeconomic boundaries. Our experience has made us well aware of the high cost of prejudging or underestimating human potential, and of the limitations of most metrics used to predict student achievement. It has also confirmed the huge benefits of investing in talent and persistence, and clearly demonstrated that providing motivated and hard-

working students, whatever their backgrounds, with access to quality educational opportunities enables them to meet our—and their—highest standards.

We also know, however, that opportunities to develop talent are not equitably distributed in our society. Sadly, in the United States today, young people's zip codes far too often serve as the primary determinants of their life trajectories. Recognizing that the majority population of the surrounding region is concentrated in the lowest socioeconomic quartile, we know that UTEP has a special responsibility to encourage access, ensuring that talented young people from all backgrounds are encouraged to dream big, and are provided opportunities to achieve their big dreams. We were unflinchingly intentional and successful in seeking to mirror in our undergraduate student population the ethnic and socioeconomic demographic of the surrounding region, from which nearly 90% of our students come. To that end, we actively partnered with area school districts and the El Paso Community College in sharing responsibility for the education of future generations of El Pasoans.



We've learned not to spend our time lamenting, complaining about, or blaming others for perceived liabilities; instead we work to convert them into assets. We re-conceptualized the depiction of our U.S.-Mexico border location as a poor and marginalized region into a set of opportunities for leveraging cross-border educational and research programs, and we gained prominence for



both our successful bi-national collaborations, and our enrollment of the largest number of Mexican students on any university campus in the United States.

We've been successful in dramatically changing the national perception of the surrounding region's human resources, which were once perceived as exclusively undereducated, non-English-speaking, and low-skilled. Today, as a result of UTEP's success, El Paso has become a high-priority recruiting target for graduate and professional schools and employers, who regard our graduates as at the leading edge of a fast-growing, talented, motivated and well-educated U.S. Hispanic demographic.

One unfortunate consequence of UTEP's success has been the departure from this region of large numbers of UTEP graduates, especially in engineering, science and business, who leave to pursue more competitive professional opportunities elsewhere. We hope to be able to work more productively with local organizations to challenge their persistent undervaluing of both the human potential and the quality of educational institutions in this region, and to re-calibrate their economic development strategies toward reversing this brain drain of our best educated young people and its profoundly negative impact on our collective prosperity and quality of life.

We've also learned that we cannot permit others to define us. Instead, we define our student population, our public university responsibility, our access and excellence mission, and our vision to become the first national research university with a 21st century student demographic. Imagine for a moment where we'd be today had we accepted the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's 1980s classification of UTEP as a "single-doctoral-granting institution." We would have jeopardized not only the trajectory of UTEP's development but the future prospects of residents of this region, our state and nation. UTEP's 20 doctoral programs, and the career directions of the diverse group of highly educated graduates who have already completed them, have resoundingly confirmed the wisdom of our challenging that misguided characterization.

We've continued to invest in developing our institutional capacity to generate and analyze data to reflect more clearly the work being done on this campus, and to demonstrate to ourselves—and to others—the efficacy of our innovative educational strategies, which are carefully attuned to the population we serve. The expertise available in the Center for Institutional Evaluation, Research and Planning (CIERP), under Roy Mathew's capable leadership, has enabled us to

redefine our assets, challenge the stereotypes of our students derived from such incompatible norms as SAT and ACT scores and traditional graduation rates, and create opportunities for individual students to achieve their dreams and contribute to our society's prosperity and quality of life.



As we plan, we must dare to dream, to think big, boldly express high aspirations and confidently work to achieve them, never permitting others to limit our expectations or diminish our enthusiasm. There were many naysayers when in the late 1980s, with annual research expenditures in the \$5 million range and a single doctoral degree program, we made a decision to pursue research and doctoral education as major building blocks for our future. Today, as we close in on our \$100 million annual research expenditures goal, ranking second

among our emerging research peers in federal grant funding, and awarding well over 100 doctoral degrees annually, we know that those aggressive goals set the pace for both a successful new revenue diversification model and a complete transformation in our campus culture.

All of us at UTEP—students, faculty and staff members are here by choice. As I often say to new faculty and staff members at orientation, we bet on all of you by selecting you to become members of our UTEP family, and you bet on UTEP by accepting our invitation to join us. We come together on this campus because we want to learn, teach, engage in research, scholarly and artistic production, and enjoy the many benefits that accrue to being part of a vibrant university environment. Although that environment includes our physical space—and most would agree that UTEP's is exceptionally beautiful—it's mostly about people...all of us. Unifying our purpose here are more than 23,000 talented and motivated students whose futures are entrusted to us. Their trust both validates our work and carries with it an obligation to respect and honor their dreams and aspirations by doing our best to create conditions for their fulfillment.

As we join together in envisioning and planning UTEP's second century of service to this Paso del Norte region, let us never lose sight of who we are and whom we serve. Students are at the heart of all we do at UTEP. Everyone on this campus—wherever we're located and whatever our job titles—has a role to play in creating a climate for student success. UTEP's rising stature has also raised our expectations of ourselves, and we all know that we have much to contribute to planning and executing the next critically important steps in fostering our, our students' and this region's bright future.

As the binary code on our iconic Miner Pickaxe sculpture states:

Believe in yourself and in your dreams

Believe in UTEP and its aspirations


Share the dream!

Thank you!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Diana Natalicio". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'D' and 'N'.

*President,*

*The University of Texas at El Paso*



*“As we plan, we must dare to dream, to think big, boldly express high aspirations and confidently work to achieve them, never permitting others to limit our expectations or diminish our enthusiasm.”*

