

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO  
FALL CONVOCATION PROGRAM  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1999

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Later this afternoon, we will dedicate the new Chihuahuan Desert Garden at the Centennial Museum. Beyond enhancing our campus with its beauty and providing all of us with a haven for quiet moments, the garden is a living laboratory of more than 100 species of indigenous plants that will serve as a rich educational resource for the campus and the El Paso community. Although we will have an opportunity to recognize them later, I want to take a moment here to thank Wynn Anderson for his commitment to this project and to the extraordinary expertise and affection that he brings to it; the donors whose generosity enabled us to create it; and the many Facilities Services staff members who brought it to life. I'd also like to take a moment to introduce Dr. Robert Breunig, Director of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, who has joined us for the Garden dedication and for Convocation this afternoon.

The Chihuahuan Desert Garden in many ways serves as a metaphor for this university. Like the garden, UTEP is indigenous to this region. We were established to respond to the needs of the region's mining industry, and for more than 80 years we have created educational opportunities that are responsive to the dreams and aspirations of the people of this binational region. Just as we identify and nurture native plants in our garden, help them achieve their full potential, and gain well-deserved recognition for their beauty and sustainability in this environment, our

primary mission at UTEP is to identify the enormous talent residing in this region, nurture it, and gain for it the opportunities and recognition that it so richly deserves.

This is a special year...the Millennium...a new century...a new beginning...a time for all of us to take stock, to assess where we have been and plan where we want to go. As we look back over UTEP's many accomplishments during the past year, and especially the cumulative progress that we have achieved during the past several years, we can be confident that we are very well positioned to move successfully into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This is truly a time for all of us to celebrate our past achievements and reaffirm our determination to pursue aggressively the rich set of opportunities that lie before us. True to our regional roots, fully committed to serving the residents of this binational metropolitan area, and well prepared to capitalize on our institutional assets, UTEP has achieved national recognition as a model of higher education for the next century.

As I think back about the events of the past year that will have the most significant impact on UTEP's future directions, the work of the 76<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature figures most prominently. The Texas Legislature always plays a major role in determining UTEP's opportunities and constraints. This year, thanks to the energy and cohesiveness of the El Paso delegation, opportunities far exceeded constraints. Several members of El Paso's legislative delegation are with us today, and I would like to express our appreciation for their outstanding work in supporting UTEP's efforts to serve this community. Senator Eliot Shapleigh. Members of the House of

Representatives, Paul Moreno, Pat Haggerty, Joe Pickett, Norma Chavez, and Manny Najera. On behalf of the students and the community we serve, all of us at UTEP thank you.

Among the important outcomes of the Legislature is funding to support UTEP's equipment, library, and facilities needs. Although the constitutional amendment that would have led to a long-term resolution of the disparity in capital funding between PUF and HEAF institutions did not pass, funds were appropriated to UTEP and other PUF institutions to address this inequity during the current biennium. These funds will enable us to carry out much needed building maintenance and repairs, and to purchase essential library materials, technology, and equipment to support teaching and research programs. I know that our entire delegation joins me in extending special thanks to Representative Rob Junnell and Senator Bill Ratliff, chairs of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance committees, for their leadership in recognizing and addressing this long-term capital funding disparity.

A second major outcome of the 76<sup>th</sup> Legislature, with long-term implications for our future development, is UTEP's participation in the endowments created with funds from the Texas tobacco settlement. UTEP is the only academic institution included in the allocation of endowment funds, which were earmarked for health science centers throughout the state. UTEP's \$25 million endowment, together with a similar endowment at Texas Tech's El Paso campus, form a \$50 million base upon which we can jointly begin to develop the Border Health Institute. We are fortunate to have a

third major partner, the Paso del Norte Health Foundation, which has made a significant commitment to work with UTEP and Texas Tech to create a broad-based medical and allied health science education and research center in El Paso. Working together, we will create health career opportunities for residents of this region, foster research on the critical health issues affecting the U.S.-Mexico border, and position El Paso as a major health science center in this region. Texas Tech's recent announcement that they will initiate planning for a four-year medical school in El Paso will greatly strengthen the Border Health Institute, and we applaud the Tech board's commitment to pursue this long-awaited goal. [Introduce Manny de la Rosa, Dean, Texas Tech Regional Health Center in El Paso, if present.]

The Legislature also addressed this community's aspirations to strengthen legal education, by appropriating funds to enhance and expand upon the outstanding work of Bob Webking, Bill Weaver, and Richard Aduato, in developing the Pre-Law Institute at UTEP. The success of the initial year of the pre-law program is best measured by the extraordinary student outcomes. All ten of the students who took the LSAT examination after participating in the Institute last summer were accepted to prestigious law schools throughout the country, including: Harvard, Columbia, Michigan, Indiana, Oregon, and Virginia. The newly appropriated funds will enable us to acquire critical legal materials for the Library, which will serve as a resource for both Pre-Law Institute students and El Paso's legal community. These funds will also serve as a foundation upon which we will develop a specialization in border legal studies at UTEP.

Kinesiology and sports studies will be enhanced as a result of the Legislature's appropriation of \$2 million toward a much-needed facility for that program. With Intercollegiate Athletics taking the lead, we are working to secure additional private sector funding to construct and equip a facility that will accommodate both programs.

There were many other legislative actions that were beneficial to UTEP, far too numerous to mention here. Once again, let us thank the members of El Paso's legislative delegation for their outstanding work, and express special thanks to Richard Adatao, whose seat-time on Southwest Airlines flights to Austin set a new record this year.

Another El Pasoan who spent a good deal more time in Austin this year is Woody Hunt, who was appointed by Governor George W. Bush to serve a six-year term as a member of the University of Texas System Board of Regents. This appointment of the first El Pasoan in 42 years to serve on the nine-member UT Board provides UTEP and this community with an opportunity to articulate the special perspectives and needs of this region. Regent Hunt is here today, and I would like to ask him to stand to be recognized for the commitment of expertise, energy, and time to this university and others in the UT System.

Other El Pasoans who have dedicated time and talent to higher education issues statewide, are Adair Margo and Carlos Villa, members of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. This Board is charged by the Texas Legislature with a broad

range of responsibilities, which directly affect most of our academic policies and programs. The statewide higher education strategic planning initiative that the Board has inaugurated will likely have a major impact on the future development of UTEP and other universities throughout Texas. Adair and Charlie, we thank you for your efforts to ensure that residents of this fast-growing and undereducated region are provided the comprehensive set of educational opportunities that they deserve, and that this community needs, to be economically competitive in the next century.

With the support of the UT System Board of Regents and the Coordinating Board, UTEP now offers nine doctoral degree programs, adding this year a new Ph.D. degree in History with emphasis on the U.S.-Mexico Border. The growth in doctoral enrollments, in the range of doctoral programs offered, and in the number of doctoral degrees granted annually, enabled UTEP to meet for the first time this year the Carnegie criteria for “Doctoral Institution” status, a major milestone in our quest to be recognized as a Tier 1 University in Texas.

At the master’s level, the first graduates of the UTEP Physical Therapy program received their degrees this year, and authorization was granted to begin offering a new master’s degree in Information Technology, a partnership between the colleges of Business and Engineering. Another collaboration, this one among sister institutions in the UT System, has led to the development of two web-based Master’s programs in Business and in Educational Technology, which will enable students to pursue these degrees asynchronously and at a distance. Thanks to Henry Ingle, Associate Vice

President of Technology Planning and Distance Learning; Frank Hoy, Dean of the College of Business; and faculty members Laura Hall and Santiago Ibarreche in Business and Rey Martinez in Social Work, for fostering UTEP's participation in these System-wide efforts to capitalize on new technologies.

The growth in UTEP's health science programs continued during the past year with the inauguration of a cooperative doctoral program in nursing with the U.T. Houston Health Science Center and the acceptance of 11 El Pasoans into the cooperative Doctor of Pharmacy degree program with U.T. Austin's School of Pharmacy. Having completed their prerequisites at UTEP, these Pharmacy students will spend the next two years in Austin, and then return to El Paso for their practical experience in pharmacies throughout this community. Congratulations to Lloyd Young, Director of the Cooperative Pharmacy Program, and his staff, for the success of their efforts to launch this important new career opportunity for residents of this region.

Reflecting the broadened base of programs now offered by the College, including physical and occupational therapy, nursing, speech pathology and audiology, clinical laboratory science, and kinesiology and sports studies, its name was changed this year to the College of Health Sciences. Our thanks to Dean Pat Castiglia and the faculty and staff for the outstanding work that they have done to transform the "nursing school," as so many El Pasoans still refer to it, into a comprehensive health sciences college. As we look toward the future, the growth in UTEP's health professions programs, and the research conducted under the auspices of the Border Biomedical Research Center,

lay a solid foundation for the development of a major health science center in El Paso. A feasibility study, to be conducted this year by consultants engaged by the Paso del Norte Health Foundation, will help us determine how best to proceed with this important development.

A major new initiative begun this year is the Entering Student Program, directed by Maggy Smith, Associate Vice President for Undergraduate Programs. Based upon feedback from UTEP students, from freshmen to graduating seniors, and drawing on the success of a pilot conducted at UTEP as part of the Model Institution for Excellence program, the Entering Student Program is designed to ensure that entering students have the kind of support they need to get off to a good start and, ultimately, to succeed in achieving their dream of earning a degree. Greatly expanded academic advising, clustered courses, and a university seminar course are among the strategies designed to build stronger ties between students and the university, and thereby improve student retention and success. Like other metropolitan universities across the country, UTEP recognizes that creating access means far more than merely offering degree programs and scheduling classes. The complexity of today's students' lives—their family, employment, and financial responsibilities—all demand new approaches to both the content and the form of post-secondary education. Instead of assuming that the student must adapt to a university's procedures and practices, we have taken a student-centered approach, where their needs and constraints help guide our planning, and their learning determines our success.



The Division of Student Affairs participates actively in the Entering Student Program and in many other student support efforts at UTEP. We welcome John Seveland, Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Services, who has been charged with overseeing such areas as Admissions, Financial Aid, and Scholarships, to ensure that they understand and are responsive to students' needs, and efficient in their operations. Similarly, academic departments and deans' offices have been asked to think carefully about the policies and procedures they implement, to, as it were, put themselves in the shoes of their students, to understand clearly the impact of their actions on students' access and on their progress toward degrees.

New Student Recruitment and Orientation are important components of the Entering Student Program. We congratulate Irma Rubio and the Recruitment staff for their success in attracting new students to UTEP. Although enrollment figures for the fall semester are not yet final, we do know that freshman enrollment set a new record this year. We are particularly pleased that 20 valedictorians from high schools in El Paso County elected to enroll at UTEP this fall.

New Student Orientation also grew and developed during the past year, under Gary Edens' able leadership. UTEP set records this summer in the number of new students who participated in orientation programs—nearly 2500—and in the number who participated in the increasingly popular Gator Camp, an expanded orientation program conducted with support from UTEP's Alumni Association. These programs

effectively ensure that students get off to a good start in their educational programs and in their awareness of the many extracurricular opportunities at UTEP.

Financing higher education continues to be a major challenge for many students, and UTEP is working hard to increase available support, in the form of both merit-based scholarships and need-based financial aid. The number of applications for Presidential Scholarships, UTEP's most prestigious, increased by 29% this past year, and, thanks to our many generous donors, the dollar value of scholarships offered to this fall's incoming freshmen increased 34%. Scholarship awards were presented to more than 1,500 students and exceeded \$1.6 million this year. Special thanks to John Seveland for adding Scholarships to his direct management portfolio.

Need-based financial aid is extremely important in a community with El Paso's socioeconomic profile, and disseminating information about such aid to students and their families is a high priority. The Office of Financial Aid presented 45 workshops to more than 3,300 students and parents in area schools during the past year, providing information on available federal and state financial assistance, and aiding in the preparation of required documentation. More than \$35 million in need-based aid, both grants and loans, was distributed to approximately 7000 UTEP students during the past year.

UTEP increasingly recognizes the importance of its partnership with the El Paso Community College in creating educational opportunities for the residents of this region. Let me take a moment to thank Dr. Bill Campion, President of the College, for the

genuine spirit of cooperation that he has brought to the college and to this community. As evidence of that cooperation, UTEP and EPCC recently announced an agreement that will enable students who earn Associate's degrees at EPCC to transfer all 62 hours required for those degrees to UTEP. This step was made possible by the College's restructuring of all Associate's degrees, to limit the course credits required to no more than 62 hours. This important step should enable students who complete Associate's degrees to make more efficient progress toward their bachelor's degrees, and eliminate the many misunderstandings that have arisen when EPCC students sought to transfer course credits beyond the 66 maximum that UTEP is permitted to accept by law.

Another important aspect of cooperation between UTEP and EPCC is the adoption by both institutions of a common core curriculum consisting of 14 courses, which not only fulfill the core curriculum requirements at both institutions, but also are fully transferable between institutions. As we look toward the future, cooperative efforts such as these will be essential to ensure that El Pasoans have opportunities to pursue the education necessary to prepare them for entry into the workforce, and to engage in continuing professional development, as dramatic changes occur in how work is done.

Cooperation has also been ongoing with school districts in El Paso County, primarily through the work of the El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence. The Collaborative's success has been widely and frequently recognized at national meetings and in major publications, including a recent honorable mention for UTEP by TIME magazine for our work with schools in this community. Thanks to Dr. Susana Navarro

who has led the El Paso Collaborative for the past eight years, and to the many UTEP, school district, and community partners who have ensured that its work is done...and done well. We are pleased that Gilbert Anzaldua, superintendent of the El Paso ISD and a new Collaborative partner, and Don Schulte, superintendent of the Socorro ISD, and a veteran partner in the Collaborative, are with us today. Thank you both for all that you do.

UTEP's College of Education has also received many accolades for the comprehensive restructuring of its programs and for its commitment to reform teacher preparation. It was cited this year as one of three exemplary teacher preparation programs in the country by the U.S. Department of Education. Dean Arturo Pacheco has more invitations than he can possibly accept to speak throughout the country on the important work that he and his colleagues in the College have done. But, it is clear that teacher education is no longer the sole responsibility of the College of Education, and Dean Pacheco has been able to count on the strong and steadfast commitment of Dean Tom Brady in the College of Science and Dean Howard Daudistel in Liberal Arts, who, with the faculty in their colleges, have worked hard to understand and effectively play their role in teacher preparation.

Faculty from several colleges have become involved in a new Community Partnerships initiative led by Professor Kathleen Staudt in the College of Liberal Arts and funded by the Kellogg Foundation. As part of a service learning consortium, which includes Northeastern University in Boston, the University of West Virginia, and East

Tennessee State University, UTEP is creating opportunities for students to engage in service in schools and other community settings and to use their experiences to enrich their courses on this campus. Several faculty members have become mentor faculty at Alliance Schools in the community, working side by side with teachers, principals, parents, and EPISO to ensure that all children have access to the full range of educational opportunities that they deserve. But, not all of the Partnership work occurs in schools. An interesting example of the special experience that students gain through this program is a public relations campaign that four UTEP students designed for the El Paso Lighthouse for the Blind, under the supervision of a faculty member in Professional Writing, Diane Fox. Look for that campaign to appear this fall. Another involves a partnership between UTEP students and faculty, and high school students in the Socorro ISD, to restore the Socorro Mission. Special thanks to Kathy Staudt and Carla Cardoza for their good work in coordinating this program, and to all of the faculty members and students who are making it a success.

Underlying the work of so many of the outreach initiatives at UTEP is external funding. The El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence has benefited from recent funding from the Lucent Technologies Foundation and the Pew Charitable Trusts, and I am particularly pleased to report that the Collaborative has just received word of renewed National Science Foundation funding in the amount of \$11.5 million for the next five years.

UTEP offers many federally-funded outreach programs, including Upward Bound, Talent Search, High School Equivalency, and Student Support Services; more than \$700,000 was awarded to the University this year by the U.S. Department of Education to continue their good work. Thanks to Sandra Braham for her outstanding leadership in overseeing these important outreach programs. The College of Education, in partnership with the Socorro Independent School District and Region 19 Education Service Center, has received two major educational technology innovation grants totaling \$15 million, the largest such commitment to a single program in the U.S. The College also received another grant from the DeWitt Wallace-Readers Digest Foundation to continue its fine work in preparing Returned Peace Corps Volunteers for service as teachers in the schools in El Paso County; more than 50 teachers have completed this program.

UTEP continues to rank among the top-five public universities in Texas in total research and sponsored projects expenditures. To sustain that level of activity, UTEP must submit highly competitive proposals to federal and state agencies, foundations, and corporations. During the past year, faculty and staff members submitted 389 proposals seeking funds in the amount of \$124,000,000, an increase of more than 20% in each category, compared to the previous year. During the same time period, UTEP received 241 grant awards, totaling nearly \$52 million, an increase of 63% over FY 1998, and a new record. Congratulations to all of the faculty and staff members who have written successful proposals, and thanks to the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects staff for their capable support.

On the national level, UTEP ranked 74<sup>th</sup> among all 3700 U.S. colleges and universities in total National Science Foundation funding for the 1996-98 period; ten years ago, UTEP did not even appear in those rankings. For the past several years, UTEP has ranked among the top five U.S. colleges and universities in total grant awards from the National Science Foundation's Education and Human Resources Directorate, joining U.C. Berkeley, Harvard, MIT, and Stanford...not bad company! This significant progress in securing external funding, together with the growth in doctoral programs, positions UTEP well toward reclassification in the Carnegie university categories, and Tier 1 status in Texas.

Biomedical research at UTEP continues to be the beneficiary of significant external funding. Nine UTEP faculty members were recently awarded grants from the National Institutes of Health for their biomedical research: Stephen Aley, Pablo Arenaz, Michael Lehker, Eppie Rael, and Robert Webb in Biology; Keith Pannell in Chemistry, Gavin Gregory and Joan Staniswalis in Math, and Delfina Dominguez in Health Sciences. Their work, and the ongoing efforts of the Border Biomedical Research Center, provide the basic research underpinnings essential to the development of the Border Health Institute.

Research activity has also led to opportunities for the University to secure patents to protect and capitalize on intellectual property developed on this campus. Dr. Soheil Nazarian and Dr. Mark Baker developed a pavement analyzer, which is being

commercially marketed throughout the country. Dr. Jean Robillard, formerly a research scientist in materials science, received a patent for a new process that virtually eliminates forgery or misuse of identification documents through the application of very small holograms. Dr. Don Moss in Psychology received a patent for a new drug for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease, the product of three decades of his research. Several researchers in the College of Science have applied for a patent that will make use of creosote plants, common in the desert Southwest, for the phytoremediation of metal contaminated soils. UTEP shared in the development of these patents and will share in proceeds that are generated.

Adding, upgrading, and enhancing UTEP's technology infrastructure is a constant challenge. The rapid pace of change, and the voracious appetite of students, faculty, and staff for ever more powerful technological tools, require an increasing investment in technology and the human resources necessary to manage it. Some of that investment is achieved through external sources of funding. For example, UTEP recently received \$800,000 from the State's Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund (TIF) to continue developing the infrastructure required for Internet 2 connectivity and for advanced telecommunications and distance learning. Internet 2 connectivity is important to a variety of research and education initiatives at UTEP, as well as to establishing cooperative research and development programs with colleagues and institutions in Mexico. To that end, UTEP recently submitted a major grant proposal to the National Science Foundation to support our Internet 2 plans. Special thanks to



Paul Maxwell, Vice President for Research, and all of those who worked with him to advance the Internet 2 agenda.

Another major technology initiative at UTEP during the past year was the conversion from an outdated student information system to Goldmine, a new and far more powerful tool. Like most such conversions, this one required a commitment of time and expertise from nearly everyone on the campus, and there were moments when patience and good will were sorely tested. But, it was precisely that good will, patience, and expertise that enabled us to complete the task on time and within budget, and although there will continue to be short-term adjustments that will surely have to be made, the long-term benefits are already clear to those who have begun to use Goldmine. Special thanks to Anna Hines, Bea Darancou, Mike Sifuentes, Barbara Hunt, and the countless individuals in departments across this campus who participated in this massive conversion effort.

Technology was also the focus of the Library's efforts during the past year as a new electronic catalog, named Nugget, was brought on line. As the world of teaching and learning grows independent of place and time, libraries are being challenged to make their materials accessible to scholars who may never pass through their doors. Thanks to Pat Phillips and the Library staff for their efforts to ensure that UTEP students, faculty, and staff are provided easy access to the tools they need.

In addition to the external funding that comes to UTEP via grant proposals to federal agencies and national foundations and corporations, we are fortunate to have the support of local El Paso foundations, which are especially interested in our institutional development and well informed about our potential to contribute to the future human and economic development of this region. The Paso del Norte Health Foundation has provided generous and strategically important support for initiatives in the Center for Environmental Resource Management, the Colleges of Science and Health Sciences, and the Social Work program. Special thanks to Ann Pauli, president of the Foundation, and to Woody Hunt, Adair Margo, and other board members for supporting UTEP's role in addressing the health challenges facing this region.

Another local organization that has been consistently supportive of many UTEP initiatives is the Robert E. and Evelyn McKee Foundation, whose most recent commitment enabled us to upgrade computer laboratories in the College of Business. The El Paso Natural Gas Foundation has been a long-time supporter of UTEP, from fine arts equipment to renovation of the Commons Cafeteria, which was renamed the El Paso Natural Gas Conference Center in recognition of this extraordinary support. The Cimarron Foundation has provided support for many UTEP programs, including most recently serving as key to the establishment of the Public Policy Research Center. Biomedical research at UTEP has been supported by the Stern and Coldwell Foundations. The Shiloff Family Foundation has generously supported programs ranging from Chemistry to the Dinner Theatre. Music programs and KTEP have been the beneficiaries of support from the Huthsteiner Fine Arts Trust, and the library from

the Sam D. Young, R. B. Price, and de Wetter Family Foundations. Student scholarships have been the focus of support from the Rotary, Lanward, Blaugrund, Margarita Mascarenas, Virginia Farah, and El Paso Community foundations. We are grateful to all of these local foundations for recognizing the importance of partnering with UTEP, El Paso's university.

El Paso community support of UTEP is also evident in the significant progress that we have made toward achieving our ambitious \$50 million Legacy Campaign endowment goal. I am pleased to report that we have raised more than \$48 million in endowment funds, and nearly all of these endowments have come from individuals and organizations in El Paso. We are confident that we will exceed our goal during the fifth and final year of the Campaign, and we are extraordinarily grateful to the donors for their generosity, and to the volunteers, led by Peter de Wetter, for their commitment of time and talent to the Campaign. I am pleased to recognize Mr. Bob Heasley, UTEP Distinguished Alumnus and Chair of our Development Board, and other members of that Board who are with us today. Let me also take this opportunity to thank David Madeira, Vice President for Institutional Advancement, and the staff members who have worked so hard with him to ensure the success of the Campaign, and to lay the groundwork for an integrated institutional advancement program once the Campaign is completed.

Institutional Advancement is a new organizational unit at UTEP, comprising Development, News and Publications (to be renamed University Communications),

University Relations, and Alumni Relations. Members of this new team will work closely with the colleges, the graduate school, the library and intercollegiate athletics to build awareness and participation across the campus. We are pleased that Yolanda Ingle has accepted the position of Assistant Vice President for Alumni Relations, and we are eager to work with her, her staff, and the UTEP Alumni Association to build stronger bonds with our many alumni in El Paso and throughout the world.

Community support has always been a key to the success of UTEP's intercollegiate athletics program. The past year has been quite an eventful one in athletics, culminating in the recent announcement by Don Haskins that he would retire after nearly 40 years as UTEP's basketball coach. There is no way to appropriately characterize the impact that The Bear has had on this university and the El Paso community, and there is no way to adequately express our appreciation to him for all that he has done to bring us recognition and respect. His loyalty to UTEP and to this community, his outstanding record of more than 700 victories, his role in the integration of men's basketball as he and his all-Black starting five players won the NCAA championship in 1966, his election to the Basketball Hall of Fame, all have meant so much to this university. He leaves big shoes to fill -- and probably a few clip-on ties as well -- but we all know that the future of UTEP basketball is bright because of the solid foundation that he has built for us.

A number of UTEP athletic teams and individual athletes excelled during the past year. The Women's Soccer team won the WAC Mountain Division Co-Championship;

Soccer Coach Veronica O'Brien was named Coach of the Year, and Laura Glasspoole, Player of the Year, in the WAC Mountain Division. Two rifle shooters, Rebecca Hamilton and Jennifer Oliver, qualified for the NCAA Championships, the only two student-athletes in the country to qualify as individuals. These same student-athletes completed the season as first-team All-Americans, and Jennifer Oliver became the first four-time All American in the history of UTEP rifle competition. In Track and Field, UTEP's men's team placed eighth at the NCAA Outdoor Championships, and Matti Narhi become UTEP's first-ever national champion in the javelin. Perhaps most important of all, student athletes representing all sports made more than 650 visits to schools, hospitals and other settings throughout the El Paso community, and 29 student athletes were awarded their degrees during the past year.

With a new WAC Conference configuration, many new faces on the coaching and administrative staff, a new logo, new colors, and new energy and enthusiasm, UTEP Intercollegiate Athletics faces the future with confidence. With support from the campus and from the El Paso-Juarez community, 1999-2000 promises to be an exciting year in Miner athletics. Special thanks to Bob Stull for his leadership and to members of his staff, especially Stephanie Rempe and Mac Rhoades, for their fine efforts to re-energize and rebuild this important and highly visible program.

Athletic facilities such as the Don Haskins Center and the Sun Bowl provide excellent venues for special events. Thanks to Carol Roberts Spence for attracting a

broad range of entertainment to El Paso, from concerts to monster trucks, to boxing and wrestling bouts. Last fall, UTEP was privileged to host televised debates for the two highest State offices, Lt. Governor and Governor. These debates were the only such face-to-face meetings between the candidates during the campaign. UTEP's commencement ceremonies also afford us an opportunity to invite prominent individuals to be speakers; this past year, we welcomed Dr. David Satcher, U.S. Surgeon General and Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard of California to our graduations.

The beauty of the UTEP campus continues to be a source of pride and recognition for UTEP. Upgrading facilities and maintaining our buildings and grounds is the responsibility of the Facilities Services Department. Major projects this year have included the renovation of the Fox Fine Arts Recital Hall, the historic Strain Lecture Room in Quinn Hall, and the College of Business. The nearly completed Utility Infrastructure Project, best known for its large water tank adjacent to Memorial Gym, enables us to chill and store water in evening hours, and thereby conserve energy during peak periods. To all of the Facilities Services staff members who received their awards today, and to all those who work with them, we thank you for creating a safe and attractive environment in which all of us—students, faculty, and staff—can be productive.

Let me also express again our appreciation to the other faculty and staff members, whose service anniversaries we celebrate today. This university's success is the result of the collaborative efforts of a large number of individuals, both on and off

campus, who have made a firm and abiding commitment to UTEP and to the students in whose lives we have the privilege of participating. This is a place where dreams do come true, and we are all fortunate indeed to play a role in that process. Thanks to all of you for the many ways in which you create conditions for student success. Your commitment to UTEP's mission and to the students we serve has enabled us to make enormous progress during the past several years, and prepared us well to face confidently the many opportunities and challenges of the new century.

Please join me now in the front plaza of this building where we will enjoy refreshments and the dedication of the new Chihuahuan Desert Garden. Thank you again for being with us.