

**President's Remarks As Given
2001 Fall Convocation
The University of Texas at El Paso
September 20, 2001**

It's 2001...a much anticipated year in UTEP's recent history! More than ten years ago, a group of El Pasoans were invited to serve on a Commission to help UTEP assess its capacity to contribute to the human and economic development of this region, and to set benchmarks for what UTEP should accomplish by the year 2001. This dedicated group, comprising both community representatives and UTEP faculty, was called the UT El Paso 2001 Commission. It was chaired by Mr. Robert C. Heasley, distinguished UTEP alumnus, and supported at UTEP by Dr. Mimi Gladstein, Professor of English and director of the University's Diamond Jubilee celebration. I would like Dr. Gladstein to stand and be recognized at this time, and I ask Bob Heasley to join me at the podium.

Robert C. Heasley has been one of UTEP's most dedicated alumni. He has served the University in just about every possible capacity since completing his bachelor's degree in business in 1953. He has been a member of the board and president of the UTEP Alumni Association. He has been a member of the University's Development Board since 1974, and has chaired that board for the past two years. He was an active participant in our highly successful fund-raising effort, the Legacy Campaign, and he and his wife Mary Lou have been regular contributors to UTEP. His interest in the University has never flagged, nor has his commitment of energy, time and expertise. To recognize the extraordinary contributions that Bob Heasley has made to UTEP, we take great pleasure in presenting to him today, the Gran Paseño award. Thank you, Bob, for all that you continue to do to support our efforts to bring high quality educational opportunities to the residents of this region.

Some of you may recall that as part of the University's 75th anniversary celebration in 1989, UTEP representatives went to first-grade classrooms across this community to talk with the children who would be members of UTEP's entering class in 2001, and to release balloons with them as a symbol of the high hopes and aspirations that we all had for their academic achievements.

I am pleased to report that, on schedule, many of those young people have begun their studies at UTEP this Fall, and I extend to them our warm welcome. They represent the future of this community. We are pleased at the educational progress that they have achieved, and look forward to working with them as they pursue their degrees at UTEP. Representing this class, and carrying the University's 75th anniversary banner today is UTEP freshman political science major, Tessa Gross, who was valedictorian of the Eastwood High School graduating class of 2001. Let me ask all of the members of the Class of 2001 who are with us today to stand and be recognized.

The story of the full cycle of the 2001 Commission report, and the University's follow-through on it, is one in which we can all take pride. Most planning documents are "old

news” by the time that they are printed, and forgotten long before their target dates of completion arrive. Not this one! Instead, this is the story of a strong commitment on the part of both the University and community to work together to serve the economic and human development needs of the region. It is also the story of persistence and sustained commitment to a set of goals.

First, the University reached out to a community group for guidance in developing programs that would match well its assessment of its major needs and goals. Second, a large and diverse group of community representatives responded enthusiastically to the University’s invitation, devoting their time, energy and expertise to the preparation of a carefully deliberated and debated set of recommendations. Third, the University used the Commission’s report during the next ten years to help guide program planning and direction setting. And, finally, after a decade of work, the University prepared a report for the Commission to let its members—and the community generally—know how effectively UTEP has met the Commission’s expectations.

What is even more satisfying about this process is that the University not only achieved nearly all of the goals set by the Commission in its recommendations; it far exceeded most of them. Let’s take a quick look at some of these accomplishments.

- In 1988, UTEP offered one doctoral program. Today, we offer ten.
- In 1988, UTEP’s endowment funds totaled \$22 million. Today, that figure has more than quadrupled to \$112 million.
- In 1988, UTEP ranked 10th among public universities in Texas in federal funding for research. Today, we are ranked 4th, after UT Austin, Texas A&M, and the University of Houston.
- In 1988, our total annual revenue was \$80 million. Today, it is \$197 million. Using a conservative multiplier, UTEP’s annual expenditures translate into a \$321 million impact on the economy of the El Paso-Juárez borderplex.
- In 1988, annual scholarship awards totaled \$1.8 million. Last year, we awarded \$3.5 million in scholarships.
- In 1988, UTEP had four computer labs, 120 PC’s, and only two electronic titles in our Library. Today, we have 31 computer labs and nearly 8,000 PC’s, and 5,000 online books, journals and other publications in the Library.
- UTEP’s physical facilities nearly doubled in value, from \$158 million to \$275 million, including such high-profile new facilities as the Undergraduate Learning Center, and major renovations such as Old Main.

This is indeed progress! We have received state and national recognition as one of the universities that has achieved more in a shorter time than any institution in the country. Among the benchmarks of this progress is UTEP's designation in the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education as a Doctoral/Research-Intensive University, placing us in the top 7% of all universities in the U.S.

Such progress also builds confidence on the part of potential investors in UTEP. They know that we will not only make good use of the funds that they provide to us, but that there is a high probability that we will successfully leverage those resources to achieve even more than might have been anticipated from their initial investment.

Today, we are delighted to announce an extraordinary vote of confidence in UTEP, and an exciting culmination to our 2001 celebration. We have recently received the single largest gift in the history of the university: a \$7 million endowment from the estate of Les and Harriet Dodson, early owners of the Mountain Pass Canning Company, which today may be best remembered for introducing the "Old El Paso" label to America's food stores. Although the Dodsons did not have children of their own, they wanted to give a gift to all of the young people in our community, the gift of a bright future made possible by education.

What is extraordinary about this gift, in addition to its size, is the fact that there were no restrictions placed on the use of the proceeds, other than that they be used at the discretion of the UTEP president to benefit students. Now that is a vote of absolute confidence! The best way to express our appreciation to Mr. and Mrs. Dodson for their generous commitment to UTEP is to ensure that every dollar earned by their endowment will be effectively and efficiently focused on students as primary beneficiaries, and we intend to do exactly that. Special thanks to Steve Meador and staff in Institutional Advancement for their fine work in helping bring this and so many other generous private gifts to UTEP.

I think you will agree that there is considerable cause for celebration in the progress that has been achieved at UTEP during the past decade. Everyone who has been associated with the University during this period of extraordinary institutional growth and development is to be congratulated and thanked for their individual and collective contributions to this success. Please join me in giving a standing ovation to everyone—including most of you—who have been a part of this exciting period in UTEP's history.

Other achievements of the past year certainly brought the 2001 Commission process to an outstanding conclusion. Among the most visible signs of progress achieved during the past year have been in our physical facilities. Construction and renovation appear to be happening everywhere on this campus!

Perhaps the most important new construction, from the point of view of students and this University's commitment to them, is Miner Village, the new \$15 million student apartment complex whose official opening we celebrated earlier this week. We have invested in spacious and attractive facilities, because we believe that the presence of more

residential students will change the campus climate at UTEP. Thanks to Richard Padilla, Bill Schafer, Karen Knight and all of the other staff members in Student Affairs for their commitment to this important initiative.

Thanks too to all those associated with the architectural firm of BOKA-Powell for their vision in designing our new Bhutanese village, and to the contractor, the C.F. Jordan company, that worked so hard to ensure that the apartments were ready for occupancy this fall.

Another major investment in facilities, and in UTEP's students, was the significant expansion of the Fitness Center. With more than 7,500 square feet, this facility is reputed to be the largest, most outstanding fitness center in El Paso, and certainly the best utilized. No matter what time of day, or which day of the week, you can bet that the center will be filled with students, faculty, staff and alumni, training on more than 50 exercise machines, 12,000 pounds of free-weights and a state-of-the-art cardio-theater. The Center's attendance has grown to more than 1000 visitors each day, not including participants in classes. We are already beginning to get suggestions about expanding it even more!

Also focused on students are the new multi-purpose field developed near the Swimming and Fitness Center, and major facelifts in the Union Building. If you haven't been in the Union lately, I encourage you to have a look. In addition to refurbishing most spaces, we have added a large number of dining options, thanks to our contract with Sodexo Marriott. A building that had become far too quiet is once again buzzing with student activity, just as it should be. Many thanks to the Union staff, Victor Pacheco, and George Rankin for spearheading these efforts.

Student athletes, and those who cheer them on, are delighted with the major improvements made to the Sun Bowl and the Don Haskins Center during the past year. The Sun Bowl sports new turf, a new field configuration to accommodate soccer games, and new scoreboard and video technology, enabling the University's beautiful stadium to meet 21st Century expectations. The Don Haskins Center has been upgraded with a beautiful new floor and video boards. Finally, construction of the Larry K. Durham Center is well underway at the north entrance of the Sun Bowl.

Overseeing all of this construction and renovation activity is Greg McNicol, who joined UTEP this spring as Associate Vice President for Finance and Administration. A native El Pasoan and architect by training, Greg came to us by way of the Office of Facilities, Planning and Construction at the UT System. We welcome him and his commitment to UTEP and the students we serve.

Students are at the heart of UTEP's mission, and we are very happy to report that enrollment continues to rise, as more young people elect to pursue their educational dreams on this campus. This fall's enrollment totals 16,220, an increase of nearly 1,000 students over last year. Most of this growth is the result of the successful recruitment of new students. Freshman enrollment has increased by more than 5%, and the number of

transfer students has grown by 36% over last year. All of us are grateful to Irma Rubio and the recruitment staff who have worked hard to deliver the message to high school seniors in this region that UTEP offers them a high-quality educational experience. Students have gotten that message: in a recent survey of entering students, 85% reported that UTEP was their first or second choice. Thanks too to Mike Sifuentes and the Registrar's Office for their help in ensuring class availability for entering students, and in making personal contact with students whose registrations were incomplete.

Although the majority of UTEP's students—an estimated 85%—come from El Paso County, Mexican students represent a growing segment of the UTEP student population. This year, nearly 1700 Mexican students are enrolled at UTEP, an increase of 13% over last year. We recently received good news from the Governor of Chihuahua, who committed funds to provide 50 scholarships to UTEP for students from his State. UTEP's Mexican enrollment is nationally significant as well: our Mexican students represent approximately 15% of all Mexicans enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities. As the relationship between the U.S. and Mexico is redefined, UTEP's role in providing post-secondary education opportunities for Mexican students has become highly visible and increasingly valuable to both countries.

UTEP is not only enrolling more students; we are also attracting many of the best and brightest graduates of high schools in this region. Fifty-five percent of those graduates in the top 10% of their high school classes, who receive automatic admission to all public universities in Texas, choose to attend UTEP. Six of the valedictorians and salutatorians in El Paso area high schools, who are always offered highly attractive educational opportunities across the country, have chosen to attend UTEP this year, the largest concentration at any institution. Talented young El Pasoans certainly know that they can get a high quality education at UTEP.

Enrollment growth is also the result of efforts to help students succeed once they are on our campus. The Entering Student Program provides support to new students, to ensure that they get off to a good start in achieving their educational aspirations. UTEP's first-year retention rate of 70% is the highest among peer institutions, and we believe that this rate will continue to improve as we build on the successful student support programs that have been developed.

We are also confident that improved student retention, starting in the first year, will lead to an increase in the number of students who successfully complete their degrees, however long it takes them to finish. Indeed, the total number of UTEP graduates is steadily climbing as well. Approximately 25% of those graduates complete their degrees within six years; many others take longer. The length of time required to complete a degree depends far more on the life constraints that our students face, than it does on their talent or this institution's quality. UTEP's six-year graduation rate is similar to those at peer institutions in large metropolitan areas that serve a primarily working-class, commuter student population.

We once again call on media and elected officials to stop applying to our setting measures of affluence, which diminish the accomplishments of students who struggle through major family and financial challenges to get their degrees. Such rhetoric adds no value to public understanding of this issue, and it undermines serious efforts to contribute to the future development of this region. Instead, we ask that they join us in recognizing that each and every degree granted at UTEP, regardless of the speed of its completion, is a major collective achievement.

To coordinate student retention efforts and to integrate and improve services to students, a new organizational unit, the University College, has been established with Maggy Smith as Dean. The University College draws together all components of the Entering Student Program as well as such administrative units in Enrollment Services as the Registrar's Office and Financial Aid. Planning is well underway for a new Academic Services Building to accommodate these integrated operations, thanks to a \$10 million PUF commitment from the UT System Board of Regents.

Student spirit reached new heights during the past year, thanks to the hard work of the Student Government Association and support from staff in Student Affairs. We especially appreciated the leadership of Arturo Barrio, SGA president, and his team of officers and Student Senators, for their efforts to organize activities such as Minerpalooza and the trip to Ft. Worth for the TCU football game. Thanks too to the Student Development Center staff for the key role that they play in ensuring that UTEP offers students a vibrant campus climate. We look forward to working with Gbenga Asedeko, newly elected Student Government Association president, and his leadership team, to build on the solid foundation that their predecessors have laid.

Academic programs are at the core of the university's mission, and much progress has been made in developing innovative strategies to ensure that these programs are competitive in quality and accessible to UTEP's diverse student population. We especially appreciate the leadership of so many UTEP faculty members, who have eagerly accepted the challenge of creating special opportunities for UTEP students. Although it is not possible to acknowledge all of these dedicated faculty members here, a few examples might convey the depth of this faculty's commitment to UTEP student success.

Bob Webking and Bill Weaver continue to achieve remarkable results with their Pre-Law Institute. During the past year, 27 of the 29 participants were accepted by at least one law school. Of these, seven were offered admission to one or more law schools ranked in the top ten, including three to Harvard, and one each to Columbia, Virginia, Cornell, Duke and Berkeley. Thirteen were offered admission to UT Austin, breaking last year's record of 11. The success of UTEP's Institute has now spawned similar programs at UT San Antonio and UT Pan-American. And for the first time this year, the Institute organized a summer outreach program for high school students who are interested in attending law school. We are also very pleased to welcome former El Pasoan and UT Austin Law School professor, Jack Ratliff, as a visiting faculty member this semester.

Several faculty members in the Colleges of Science and Engineering have done a fine job of providing leadership for a variety of important enhancement opportunities for students: Ben Flores has steered the NSF-funded Model Institution for Excellence program on a highly successful course; Pablo Arenaz has continued his important work as director of the UT System-wide Alliance for Minority Participation Program; and with funding from the National Institutes of Health, Eppie Rael and Rey Elizondo direct the Border Biomedical Research Center; and Keith Pannell continues to provide leadership to the Minority Access to Research Careers program.

Community outreach activities combined with student learning is the focus of the Center for Civic Engagement, energetically directed by Kathleen Staudt. Although the scope of the Center's activities is far too extensive to describe here, the impact of UTEP students on a variety of community programs and projects is enormous and growing every day. Students are sharing their skills and energy with public schools and community-based and non-profit organizations in projects ranging from applied research on the City's Empowerment Zone, to an adult education initiative of the Mexican Consulate in El Paso. In addition to the benefits to the community that they serve, these civic engagement activities also bring important new insights and perspectives into UTEP classes, where faculty and students relate course content to its real world context. The success of the Center for Civic Engagement has served as a model for the development of centers at other universities such as Southwest Texas State and U.T. Brownsville.

Thanks to the efforts of Michael Huerta and his colleagues in Mechanical, Industrial, and Manufacturing Engineering, a master's degree program is offered on Saturdays to respond to the demand for advanced training for engineers on both sides of the border whose job responsibilities prevent them from attending classes during the week. Charles Zlatkovich has led a similar effort in the College of Business, where an MBA program is offered at the Boeing Corporation facility in El Paso. Faculty in the College of Education, including Josie Tinajero, Elena Izquierdo, Jorge Descamps, and Helen Hammond, have been highly successful in securing federal funding for a variety of programs to cover the enrollment costs of local teachers who wish to pursue master's degrees.

We thank these faculty members and many of their colleagues for the extraordinary efforts that they have made to ensure that UTEP continues to provide residents of this region with enhanced educational opportunities.

Leadership is critical to the success of academic program development efforts, and there were several key leadership changes at UTEP during the past year. Pat Castiglia retired as Dean of the College of Health Sciences, and was replaced by Jack Conway, who came to UTEP from the State University of New York. Frank Hoy elected to return to full-time faculty duties in the College of Business, and his replacement is Charles Crespy, who returned to the Southwest from Miami University of Ohio. We thank Deans Castiglia and Hoy for the outstanding work that they did during their very productive tenures, and we welcome Deans Conway and Crespy, whose expertise, interests and experience are especially well matched to UTEP's mission.

In the College of Education, Dean Arturo Pacheco has taken a leave to pursue research and writing goals, and Josie Tinajero has brought her enormous talent and energy to the role of Acting Dean. As mentioned earlier, Maggy Smith has become dean of the newly established University College. Pablo Arenaz has joined the Provost's Office as Associate Vice President, and among his many new duties will be working with deans, department chairs, and the Faculty Senate to develop an academic calendar that is more flexible and more responsive to UTEP students' needs. Charles Ambler has traded in his Associate Vice President title, as we re-establish the Graduate Dean position. Dr. Ambler has been working closely with colleges and departments on innovative graduate program offerings such as weekend, intersession and online classes, and on the development of new master's and doctoral-level programs.

A very positive step has been the development of master's degree programs that are designed to meet the needs of working professionals in El Paso-Juarez; for example, a new master's degree program in Information Technology, which is offered jointly by the Colleges of Engineering and Business. Enrollment at the master's level has grown significantly this year, 16% over last year. There is clearly a demand for such applied master's degree programs, in fields ranging from Engineering to Education and Health Sciences, and UTEP has committed resources to respond to that demand.

Doctoral program enrollment also continues to grow, and the number of doctoral degrees granted each year is rising. During the past year, UTEP granted 27 doctoral degrees, and as new programs mature, this number is expected to steadily climb.

UTEP also continued to attract substantial external funding for research and sponsored projects during the past year. Nearly \$30 million in new competitive grant awards were received to support 232 projects. The range of such grants and the agencies that award them is broad, including:

- \$1.9 million for the Entering Student Program from the Atlantic Philanthropies;
- \$5 million from NASA to continue the research of the Pan American Center for Earth and Environmental Studies;
- \$1.25 million from the National Science Foundation to the Department of Computer Science for graduate education;
- \$375,000 to enhance the Campus Police force from the Department of Justice;
- \$950,000 from the Department of Health and Human Services to support graduate programs in nursing; and
- \$99,000 from the National Science Foundation for research infrastructure at the Indio Mountain Field Camp.

Congratulations to the PI's of these projects, and to their many other faculty and staff colleagues, for their success in bringing external support to UTEP. Such support is obviously contingent upon the preparation of competitive proposals, and we thank the faculty and staff members who submitted 412 proposals last year, seeking more than \$107 million in support, many of which are still under review. Thanks too to the staff in the Office of Sponsored Projects for their help in processing this large volume of proposals, often within tight time constraints.

UTEP continues to be ranked among the top institutions in Texas in leveraging state resources to generate federal funds. UTEP's ratio of more than seven federal dollars generated per state dollar invested, ranks among the top five institutions in Texas, together with four health science centers.

These statistics on research and graduate programs are important because they reflect the opportunities that UTEP is creating for students on this campus and residents of this region. In addition, both research funding and graduate degrees granted are critical metrics in the new formula calculation for "Excellence Funding" that now comes to UTEP: the greater the number of graduate degrees awarded and the greater the dollar volume of externally funded research, the larger the appropriation of Excellence Funds from the State. We can be proud that UTEP ranked second among 34 Texas public universities in the total amount of Excellence Funding received per full-time student.

This funding resulted in part from a growing recognition in the Legislature that Texas has under-invested in the research and graduate program capacity of UTEP and other large public universities in major urban centers. It is increasingly clear that building the capacity of these institutions is in the State's long-term interest, both to compete more successfully for federal R&D funding and to provide quality educational opportunities to the increasingly diverse population of the state, most of which is concentrated in large metropolitan areas.

Establishing a precedent for excellence funding for large urban universities is potentially the most significant long-term outcome for UTEP from the last legislative session. We are one of four UT System institutions in which additional State and System investments are promised. Competition for such funding will be intense, however, and all of us will have to work to ensure that our graduate programs and funded research continue to grow in productivity.

The legislative session also brought UTEP a commitment of Tuition Revenue Bond funding to construct a Biosciences building on the campus to accommodate the increasingly robust research and teaching activity in this area. We are grateful to the members of El Paso's legislative delegation, some of whom are represented here today, for their efforts to secure this major investment in biosciences research and teaching at UTEP.

With proceeds of the tobacco settlement endowment, and support of the Paso del Norte Health Foundation, UTEP and Texas Tech have begun to build productive research

collaborations. UTEP strongly supports Tech's goal of establishing a four-year medical school in El Paso, recognizing that it is the lynchpin for the successful future development of the Border Health Institute

Legislative funding for the new Biosciences facility will be matched by a commitment of the UT System Board of Regents. We are fortunate indeed that a member of that Board, Woody Hunt, is an El Pasoan who understands UTEP's mission and needs, and who communicates them effectively to other Board members. In addition, Regent Hunt has played a leadership role on the Board in preparing a long-range plan for UT System institutions that will help guide our development as major contributors to the human and economic development of this State.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board also plays a major role in ensuring that Texas' public colleges and universities contribute effectively to the State's future development. El Paso's representative on the Coordinating Board, Adair Margo, is with us today. Please join me in thanking her for her generous dedication of time and talent to the Coordinating Board's important work.

The Coordinating Board's recently published report, *Closing the Gaps*, underscores the enormous higher education challenge that faces Texas during the next several decades, as the state's population grows and becomes increasingly diverse. Nine of ten future Texans will be minorities, and seven of those nine will be Hispanic. Inasmuch as Hispanics represent the least well-educated segment of the Texas population, Texas' future will be prosperous only if more Hispanics are well educated. UTEP has already demonstrated that it can serve as a model for helping Texas increase the enrollment and graduation of previously underrepresented populations, especially Hispanics, and, thanks to the fine work and strong commitment of many UTEP faculty and staff, we can confidently predict that we will play a leading role in the years ahead.

One of the major challenges is to encourage more young people in this region to aspire to, prepare for and seek a university degree. Far too many of El Paso's talented young people drop out before completing high school, and far too few continue on to higher education. Thanks to Irma Rubio and the Admissions and Recruitment staff who work with her, UTEP does a very good job of enrolling a large percentage of the graduates of high schools in this region. We will build on this good work to help more young people in this community understand that their investment in education now will ensure a far brighter future for them and their families tomorrow.

One major impediment to university enrollment in a modest-income community like El Paso is cost. Many students and their families are reluctant to dream of higher education because they fear that they cannot afford it. Thanks to recent action by the Texas Legislature in significantly increasing funding of the Texas Grants program, those concerns can be alleviated for many young people in this community. Students who can demonstrate financial need and who have successfully completed the recommended high school curriculum are eligible for Texas Grant scholarships, which cover tuition and fees at UTEP annually for up to six years of enrollment. UTEP will successfully allocate \$5.8

million in Texas Grant funds to eligible high school graduates and community college transfer students this year, thanks to the efficient work of Linda Gonzalez and the Financial Aid staff.

Merit-based scholarships are another major source of support for talented UTEP students. The recently completed Legacy Campaign greatly increased the number and size of scholarship endowments on this campus, and during the past year UTEP awarded more than \$3.6 million in scholarships and grants-in-aid to deserving students. Our thanks to the many generous donors who make such scholarships possible and to Audrey Price, Sandra Gonzalez, and all those in the Scholarship Office who have worked so hard during the past year to restructure those operations.

Increased financial support for students falls far short of its intended impact, however, if students and their families do not know that it is available to them. Lack of awareness of higher education opportunities is a major challenge in a community where so many students will be the first in their families to attend college. To increase community awareness about the affordability of higher education, UTEP has expanded its already extensive efforts to conduct financial aid workshops for students and parents at high schools across El Paso County. Fifty-seven such workshops were offered at 30 high schools last year, and more than 3000 students and parents participated.

In addition, a number of federally funded programs successfully reach out to area youth to raise their academic aspirations and achievement. UTEP's Upward Bound program has earned recognition for its remarkable 100% perseverance rate for two consecutive years; nationally, 30% of Upward Bound students leave the program within the first year. Education Talent Search helped 55 of its 85 high school senior students secure more than \$450,000 in scholarships, and 96% of its participants applied for admission to colleges and universities. Thanks to Sandra Braham, Carol Hicks and all of the dedicated staff members who work with them to help young people in this community achieve their potential.

Other community awareness efforts included a media campaign, "Success Begins at UTEP," in response to the Education Summit's recommendation that there be a public awareness effort to encourage more of El Paso's young people to pursue higher education. This campaign will be continued, and perhaps tied to a forthcoming Coordinating Board statewide initiative led by Adair Margo. Beto Lopez, Nacho Cubillos, Richard Aduato, and staff in University Communications have worked hard on this successful effort to communicate with area youth and their families.

UTEP's community outreach extends into numerous other areas as well. The Division of Professional and Continuing Education offers a broad range of programs for professional growth and personal enrichment. Last year, more than 10,000 residents of El Paso and Juarez enrolled in more than 1000 non-credit courses ranging from Advanced Placement Training for area teachers and technology certification programs, to line dancing and wine tasting. The Center for Lifelong Learning continues to offer its rich menu of courses for retirees in this region. With the arrival of Lorraine O'Donnell as director of

Professional and Continuing Education, we anticipate an even more robust set of program offerings in the years ahead.

We host a variety of conferences and special meetings, ranging from the Hispanic Engineer National Achievement Award Conference, to a session of the Texas State Court of Appeals, to the highly successful Children's Literature Conference, coordinated by Keith Pollette in the English Department and attended by more than 600 area teachers. Our thanks to Beto Lopez and the University Relations staff for their fine work in ensuring the success of these many diverse events.

We regularly invite distinguished speakers to give public lectures on the campus. Last year's Millennium Lecture Series included: James Rohack, UTEP alumnus and president of the Texas Medical Association; James Baker, former administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; Hank Cohen, UTEP alumnus and president of MGM Television Entertainment; Gaston Caperton, former governor of West Virginia and President of the College Board; and Jerry Porras, native El Pasoan, noted author, and professor of business at Stanford.

We offer music, arts, and culture programs that appeal to a broad range of community interests and tastes in the Don Haskins Center, the Sun Bowl, the Dinner Theatre, and in the Music, Art, and Theatre Arts departments. The UTEP Ticket Center sold more than 325,000 tickets to 129 events last year, for a total of \$5.2 million in gross revenues. Nearly 40,000 of those tickets were for the 'N Sync concert in the Sun Bowl last month. Congratulations to Carol Roberts Spence on securing another major concert for El Paso-Juárez, and my compliments to everyone involved in the stadium renovation effort for their split-second timing in completing the installation of the new turf three nano-seconds before 'N Sync's multi-ton stage components rolled through the tunnel!

Among the many other events were inter-collegiate athletic contests in men's and women's sports, which enjoyed a highly successful year. UTEP was one of just 27 Division I-A schools—and only two in Texas—to have its football and men's basketball teams reach postseason play. The UTEP men's football team enjoyed one of its best seasons, capturing our first-ever Western Athletic Conference title in 44 years. The men's basketball team won 23 games and reached the Sweet 16 of the National Invitation Tournament. The El Paso community responded with an outpouring of support, placing UTEP at the top of the WAC in average home attendance, including a record crowd of 53,304 for the final home football game last season. UTEP fans would also surely be strong contenders in a tailgate award competition, for their innovative menus and grill styles... and their endurance!

We are proud that coaches Gary Nord in football, Jason Rabedeaux in men's basketball, Rick Todd in men's golf and Revis Ward-Daggett in volleyball earned WAC Coach of the Year honors. And, we are prouder still that student-athletes at UTEP continued to progress in the classroom. The graduation rate of student-athletes has grown from 28% in 1997-98 to 47% last year. Such progress does not occur without leadership, and we all

applaud the extraordinarily fine work that Bob Stull has done to achieve what is widely viewed as a remarkable transformation in the inter-collegiate athletics program at UTEP.

UTEP alumni are concentrated in the El Paso area, and their support of the University's activities is always a source of strength and confidence. Yolanda Ingle works with the Alumni Association board of directors to create special events such as the Distinguished Alumni and Gold Nugget recognitions, and the Golden Graduates luncheon, at Homecoming, the Season of Lights celebration in December, parties before home football games, and Senior Days in December and May for UTEP graduates. Thanks to Pam Phippen for her leadership of the Alumni Association this year.

Many UTEP alumni have moved to other parts of the United States, Mexico and other countries. In an effort to maintain contact with them, Alumni Relations has been actively developing alumni chapters in such places as Dallas, Austin, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, and Denver, where there are concentrations of UTEP graduates. Efforts to organize alumni chapters in Juárez and Chihuahua earned the UTEP Alumni Association a 2000 Circle of Excellence Award from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). Staying in touch with alumni, and enabling them to stay in touch with us and with each other, is also the focus of a partnership between Alumni Relations and Information Technology which provides free, life-long e-mail forwarding service to all UTEP graduates.

Although not as high profile, there are many other units on the campus whose good work is essential to UTEP's success. Working behind the scenes, staff members in Finance and Administration ensure that the campus environment is safe, attractive, and efficient. The Facilities Services staff takes pride in the beauty of the campus and works to make sure that the buildings and grounds are clean and attractive. The campus is large and growing larger, and resources are always constrained, but few would deny that UTEP has one of the most beautiful campuses in the United States.

Although police departments are usually thought of as enforcing rules and regulations, UTEP's Campus Police focus much of their attention on service to the campus. Chief Bill Adcox has placed a heavy emphasis on staff training, and he serves as an excellent model of civic engagement by chairing the State Employees Charitable Campaign this year.

Information Technology has become a core element in UTEP's operations, from enrollment services and academic program delivery to inventory controls, and the demands for more sophisticated systems, such as Internet 2 capacity and smart cards, grow every day. Anna Hines and her staff work hard not only to respond to such demands, but to take the lead in developing innovative strategies to ensure that UTEP continues to keep pace with the amazing technological changes that are occurring at what appears to be an ever-accelerating rate. In Academic Affairs, the Undergraduate Learning Center continues to be the hub of technology innovation, and we thank Evelyn Posey and Henry Ingle for their leadership in ensuring that UTEP students have access to cutting-edge opportunities.

Financial services was especially challenged this year to provide data during the legislative session, often on short notice, and to prepare the University's budget document this summer, once the appropriations process was completed. Thanks to Cindy Villa, Carlos Hernandez and those who work with them for their good work, and grace under pressure. The rapid growth in UTEP's federal funding has made negotiating the official indirect cost rate more critical and required the preparation of new disclosure statements for institutions with research portfolios in excess of \$25 million. I guess you could call that another of UTEP's many problems of success!

UTEP's administrative functions, ranging from Internal Audit to Human Resources Services to Financial Services are also challenged by growing accountability and compliance requirements that are unaccompanied by increased infrastructure support. UTEP continues to rank among the top public universities in Texas for the efficiency of its operations, and UTEP's Center for Institutional Evaluation, Research and Planning, under Sally Andrade's leadership, is recognized for the scope and thoroughness of its analyses and reporting. Still, there are growing pressures to respond to the many rules and regulations and to prepare and submit in a timely manner all of the accountability reports that are required of us. Although progress was made during the last legislative session to de-regulate some functions, universities continue to bear an enormous regulatory burden.

One of the areas of evaluation in which we have great interest is customer service. We have developed a number of survey instruments to determine how well UTEP serves its primary customers: our students. We regularly survey incoming freshmen and graduating seniors to gain insight into how we are regarded by those who are beginning their experience with us, as well as those who are about to complete their education. We administer student evaluations of their courses and faculty evaluations of academic administrators. We follow up with non-returning students to determine whether we can help them continue their education. In conjunction with re-accreditation of our Engineering programs, we have developed a model for gaining feedback from our alumni, and the results confirm that UTEP is doing an excellent job of preparing its graduates for success. Off-campus, we collaborated with the El Paso Community College in conducting a survey of teacher aides in El Paso County school districts to determine their desire and readiness to pursue teacher education degrees, and this year we plan to survey teachers in the community about their interest in earning master's degrees. All of this surveying is designed to ensure that UTEP is as sensitive as we can be in responding to the needs of our constituents, both on campus and in the community.

Responsiveness to our region is also the premise upon which UTEP has begun to coordinate a broad range of academic and research programs that focus on the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. Consistent with the goals of the UT System's long-range plan, we have a very good start on becoming nationally recognized for our expertise, research activity, and educational program opportunities related to the U.S.-Mexico border. Capitalizing on our geographic location, and developing additional programs and investing in them, will enable UTEP to become known as one of the major centers of excellence in the U.S. The Center for Inter-American and Border Studies, under Jon

Amastae's able direction, has already demonstrated its capacity to bring together interdisciplinary groups across the campus and to help foster inter-American dimensions in program development. We look forward to working with him and others to bring this center of excellence into sharper focus.

A major new initiative related to UTEP's U.S.-Mexico borderlands focus is the Paso al Norte Immigration History Museum. During the past year, we have made significant progress in developing a foundation for the Museum. We welcome native El Pasoan Marguerite Rivera Houze, who has assumed the position of director of this important effort. We conducted a large and productive conference in El Paso last spring to help develop both the concept and support for the Museum, and we joined the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the Center for Latino Initiatives in hosting an event this summer at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington to build national awareness of plans for the Museum. The response to all of these efforts has been overwhelmingly positive, as Hispanics and non-Hispanics alike recognize the importance of commemorating immigration across the southern border, much as similar immigration from Europe is celebrated at Ellis Island. UTEP looks forward to continuing to provide infrastructure support to launch the Museum and to serving as its intellectual base as it matures.

2001 is indeed a special year in UTEP's history. It is a time for us to recognize and celebrate the unprecedented progress that has been achieved on this campus during the final decade of the 20th century. UTEP is certainly a different university today than it was ten years ago. The progress that we have achieved is truly extraordinary. But, if you have been at UTEP for more than a couple of days, you know that we never rest on our past accomplishments. So, as we celebrate where we have been, we remind ourselves that there is still a lot of work to be done: to create more educational opportunities for the residents of this binational region, especially at the graduate level; to continue to compete aggressively for research funds; to contribute to regional economic development; to serve as a major intellectual, cultural, and entertainment resource to this community, and on and on.

All of you have played a major role in UTEP's success during the past several years, and for that we express our profound appreciation. We are also grateful that you will accompany us as we continue our quest to prove that a commitment to access is fully compatible with an equally strong commitment to excellence. Although there will always be tensions as we strive to achieve both access and excellence goals, we know that there is no necessary trade-off between them. UTEP has been a model in demonstrating that an institution that is fundamentally committed to creating access for students who have been—and continue to be—underrepresented in U.S. higher education, can also achieve high levels of excellence in academic programs and research. It isn't easy, but we know that it can be done. The residents of this region are counting on us, Texas is counting on us, and this country is counting on us. I know that we are up to the task. The road already traveled has been exciting; but the journey has just begun.

To symbolize our continued hopes for the future of UTEP, this region, and this country, we ask you to join us in releasing another set of 2001 balloons as you leave the auditorium today. Thank you again for being with us.