

**Script for Fall Convocation Program**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL  
PASO  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2002  
3:00 P.M.  
MAGOFFIN AUDITORIUM**

For many years, you have heard me claim that UTEP is a model for what other higher education institutions must become in the future. Recent analyses of data from the 2000 Census reveal trends in Texas, and indeed across the United States, that suggest that this is far more than a bold institutional assertion. The population of this state and this country is changing rapidly, and Hispanics represent the fastest growing segment. In Texas, for example, Hispanics accounted for 25.5% of the total population in 1990; by 2000, Hispanics represented 32%, and demographic projections suggest that this rapid growth will continue. By 2013, Texas will be a majority-minority state, with Hispanics accounting for 39% of the total population.

These population trends have captured the attention of elected officials, business leaders, and educators throughout the country, not only because of the startling demographic shifts that they represent, but also because of their clear implications for our future economic competitiveness and quality of life. Indeed, one of the most sobering aspects of these data is that the fastest-growing segment of the population is also the lowest in educational attainment. In Texas, the situation is even more critical than in other large states. The overall college participation rate in Texas is lower than in those states, and that rate is actually declining. Steve Murdock, Chief Demographer of the Texas State Data Center, has observed that, "If participation and graduation rates remain low, the

poverty rate in Texas will increase by 3% and the average Texas household income will decline by \$3000 in constant dollars by 2030."

Recognizing the impending crisis in Texas if current trends are not reversed, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board issued a report entitled, "Closing the Gaps," which charts a statewide plan for meeting four major goals by the year 2015:

1. Closing the gaps in student participation by increasing higher education enrollment by 500,000;
2. Closing the gaps in student success by increasing the number of degrees, certificates and related higher education attainments;
3. Closing the gaps in research by increasing by 50% the level of federal science and engineering research funding to Texas institutions; and
4. Closing the gaps in excellence by substantially increasing the number of nationally recognized programs or services at Texas universities and colleges.

Now, what does this have to do with UTEP as a model institution? Well, many of the issues with which the state is now attempting to grapple have been on UTEP's radar screen for quite some time. El Paso's demographic changes were at the forefront of what is now occurring across Texas, and indeed across the entire nation. The UTEP 2001 Commission's report in 1990 and UTEP's ongoing strategic planning have consistently recognized these demographic trends, and we have worked to incorporate them into program and policy development on this campus. What is interesting is how closely the Coordinating Board's goals track what UTEP has worked so hard to achieve during the past 15 years. Although we did not coin the phrase "closing the gaps," we have certainly been busy doing just that. In many ways, UTEP has confronted issues of human and economic development, of competitiveness and quality of life, within the context of major demographic changes,

well in advance of other institutions, and now serves as a model for them. We are not only at the forefront of demographic trends, but also leading higher education's response to them.

At last year's Convocation, I reported on our decade-long effort to respond to the goals expressed in the 1990 report of the UTEP 2001 Commission. Those accomplishments serve as a solid foundation upon which to build UTEP's future, and they have provided us a head start in responding to the Coordinating Board's goal of "Closing the Gaps." Let's take a brief look at the four goals identified by the Coordinating Board, and review UTEP's recent contributions toward the achievement of each of them.

## GOAL I: PARTICIPATION

UTEP enrollment has grown significantly during the past two years. Fall 2002 head count enrollment totals 17,232 a 6% increase over Fall 2001, and the highest enrollment ever at UTEP. This substantial increase in enrollment means that more residents of the El Paso-Juarez region are pursuing higher education, an absolutely essential ingredient to this area's future development. From a Closing the Gaps perspective, Fall 2002 enrollment has already surpassed the forecast for 2005, and is within 300 students of exceeding the total UTEP enrollment projected for 2010.

81% of the students come from El Paso County, of whom 75 % are Hispanic, consistent with the demographics of the region we are here to serve, and contributing significantly to the State's goal of encouraging more Latinos to pursue post-secondary education. UTEP accounts for approximately 13% of all Latino enrollments in Texas public universities, and continues to be the largest Mexican-American-majority university in the United States. 55% of our students are female, reflecting the growing trend in U.S. higher education for women students to outnumber men.

Graduate enrollment increased by 10.5% this year to a record-high

2,848, including 234 doctoral students.

UTEP's enrollment also includes 1,749 students from Mexico, a 4% increase over last year. These students represent approximately 15% of all Mexican nationals enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities. This enrollment increase is all the more impressive in the context of the extraordinary challenges faced by our mostly commuter Mexican student population since September 11 of last year. Crossing international bridges on a daily basis has never been easy, but added security precautions since 9/11 have created even more daunting challenges, including longer waits and changing regulations.

Increased enrollment is the result of successful recruitment and retention. Students enrolled in elementary, middle and high schools throughout this region, whatever their ethnicity or financial means, must be encouraged to aspire to and prepare for higher education long before graduating from high school. The El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence has been working for a decade to raise the academic achievement level of all young people in this community and to close the achievement gap between Hispanic and Anglo children enrolled in area schools. Thanks to the outstanding leadership of Susana Navarro and her Collaborative team, educators, parents and community leaders have set higher expectations for all children, and, through statewide assessments and heightened community expectations, schools have become more accountable for the performance of the children they serve.

Playing its role in the Collaborative, UTEP has worked hard to increase the production of teachers and to ensure that future teachers are well prepared and more likely to continue in the profession. Both the undergraduate teacher education and the alternative teacher certification programs have grown in enrollment, as UTEP attempts to meet the demand for teachers in regional school districts. Consistent with national trends, however, and despite our best efforts to meet it, the demand for teachers

continues to grow as local teachers leave the profession long before their expected retirement.

Teacher quality is also a priority. The colleges of Education, Liberal Arts, Science and Health Sciences have joined together to ensure that UTEP graduates are competitive in statewide assessments. Recent ExCET test results show that these efforts are clearly on track. In fact, improvement in ExCET scores at UTEP has been so remarkable that other Texas universities are now seeking our advice on how to improve their programs! Special thanks to Interim Dean Josie Tinajero, Sandra Hurley, Sandra Lloyd, Elena Izquierdo, John Daresh, staff members in the College of Education, and the multi-college faculty team for their efforts to ensure that our students are well prepared for the ExCET and for their teaching careers.

The Collaborative's success has become a national model for school-university partnerships. It is regarded as one of the few preK-16 partnerships that has been successful in improving student performance over a sustained period of time. UTEP is recognized as an institution that early on understood the importance of joining with-rather than blaming-school districts and the community college from which it draws the majority of its students. And, despite often debilitating administrative instability in the districts and at EPCC, the partnership has succeeded in pursuing its important work.

Complementing the Collaborative's work, UTEP staff and faculty are attempting to underscore with teachers, parents and middle and high school students the importance of completing the recommended high school curriculum, which not only better prepares students for success at the university, but also determines eligibility for TEXAS grants. These grants, sponsored by the Texas Legislature, provide students who qualify for federal financial aid, with additional support to attend Texas colleges and universities. The socio-economic background of most UTEP students makes them eligible for TEXAS grants, if they successfully complete the recommended high school curriculum.

To spread the word about TEXAS grants and related financial aid, UTEP staff members in Admissions and Recruitment, Financial Aid, and Scholarships conduct workshops at high schools throughout El Paso County each year. Last year, 54 workshops were conducted at 34 high schools, for more than 4,700 students and their parents. The key message is that lack of financial resources should not be a barrier to enrollment at UTEP. UTEP awarded \$48.5 million in financial aid during the past year, including \$4.2 million in TEXAS grants alone. In addition, and thanks to generous alumni and supporters, UTEP also awarded \$5.1 million in scholarships during the past year, a 36% increase over the year before. Congratulations to Irma Rubio, Linda Gonzalez, Sandra Gonzalez, Audrey Price and their teams for their success in encouraging more young people to pursue higher education and helping them understand the financial resources that are available to them.

Special attention has been focused during the past year on increasing scholarship support for students who transfer to UTEP from the El Paso Community College. Most scholarship support has traditionally been directed at incoming freshmen students, and students who choose to begin their post-secondary education at the Community College have not been eligible. To encourage more EPCC students to pursue a bachelor's degree, UTEP began in 1997 to interest donors in creating scholarships for transfer students with outstanding academic records at the Community College. Early support was received from Coca-Cola Bottling and Bank of America. More recently, the RGK Foundation has supported these efforts, and this year, for the first time, we have received a generous commitment from the Wolslager Foundation. We are pleased that Stephen Wolslager is with us today. Please stand to accept our thanks for your support of this important program.

The performance of EPCC transfer scholarship winners at UTEP has been outstanding. Of 64 recipients prior to this year's awards, 27 have graduated, and 37 are still enrolled-a 100% retention

rate. Moreover, of the 27 who have already completed their bachelor's degrees, 13 are enrolled in graduate school at UTEP. Quite an impressive record!

Increased scholarship support is only one aspect of UTEP's efforts to partner with EPCC to ensure a seamless higher education experience for the students we share, and to encourage more students to continue their education. Maggy Smith, Dean of the University College, and Ted Johnston, Coordinator of English and Education at EPCC's Rio Grande Campus, co-chair a permanent articulation committee whose ongoing charge is to eliminate impediments to transfers and concurrent enrollments, and develop collaborative strategies to enhance educational opportunities in this region. As an example of their good work, our institutions recently signed two agreements, one that authorizes a joint admissions application, both paper- and web-based, and the second that permits full-time financial aid for students who are enrolled part-time at both institutions. We are delighted that Dr. Richard Rhodes, president of the El Paso Community College, is with us today. Thank you, Richard, for your commitment to this productive partnership.

Recruitment efforts have also focused on special populations that might not otherwise consider pursuing a degree. Sandra Braham very capably oversees a portfolio of highly successful outreach programs that help raise the educational aspirations of talented young people in high-risk populations: Upward Bound, High School Equivalency, Educational Talent Search, GEAR UP, Comprehensive Youth Services, and National Youth Sports. Participation of another important group of students, the children of migrant farm workers, will be encouraged through the newly funded College Assistance for Migrants Program.

Another special population that has been the focus of our attention this year are teacher aides in area schools. A year ago, UTEP joined with the Community College in surveying teacher aides in all local school districts to ascertain their interest in pursuing degrees and becoming certified teachers. The response was overwhelmingly positive, and the two institutions then began the task of working with each of these teacher aides to develop a program matched to their prior educational experience and goals. This fall, 175 teacher aides are enrolled at EPCC and UTEP. Thanks to our collaboration with EPCC and the school districts, we expect this program not only to increase the higher education participation of a group whose employment and family challenges previously precluded it, but also to help meet the demand for additional teachers for area schools. Thanks to Josie Tinajero, Sandra Hurley, and Sally Andrade for their leadership in developing this program in partnership with EPCC.

New degree programs also contribute to increased participation. During the past year, UTEP has received approval to add several new programs at the bachelor's, master's and doctoral levels. At the bachelor's level, for example, UTEP is offering for the first time this fall a new degree in Music Theatre. Thanks to Myron Nadel for his leadership in moving this program along and to the faculty in Theatre Arts and Music for their enthusiastic support. This is a very exciting new opportunity for talented residents of this region.

At the master's degree level, UTEP is offering a new program in the rapidly growing field of Bioinformatics. A grant from the Sloan Foundation supported this cross-disciplinary program, and the cooperative efforts of Tom Brady, Carl Lieb and colleagues in Computer Science guided its development. Recognizing the growing importance of non-degree specialization programs at the graduate level, Charles Ambler has worked with faculty in several



departments to establish new certificate programs in such areas as International Manufacturing, Latin American Studies and Women's Studies. And, thanks to the good work of Deans Daudistel, Crespy and Swift and faculty members in their colleges, three new doctoral proposals-in English, International Business and Civil Engineering-were developed during the past year and recently approved by the U.T. System Board of Regents. They will be reviewed this year by the Coordinating Board, with an expectation that they will enroll their first students in Fall, 2003, and bring UTEP's total doctoral degree programs to 13.

Close attention to class scheduling has also contributed to increased participation at UTEP. The Provost's Office has worked with deans and faculty to develop more flexible class schedules that enable UTEP students to attend classes at times that may be more compatible with their often daunting family and employment responsibilities. Increased evening and weekend course offerings, such as engineering master's courses offered on Saturdays, enable working professionals to pursue their education and career goals. Maymester and Wintermester courses, as well as a completely revamped summer calendar, offer students more enrollment options and enable them to move more efficiently toward completion of their degrees. Thanks to Pablo Arenaz for his leadership in this academic calendar makeover and to all of the deans, department chairs and faculty for their cooperation in implementing it. Although there is still work to be done to spread course offerings across the entire day, much progress has been achieved, and increased student participation is the result.

Technology has also helped enhance student participation at UTEP, primarily through the UT Telecampus. UTEP played a key role in developing and offering the online MBA program and the master's degree in Kinesiology. This fall, a total of 282 students are enrolled in distance learning courses at UTEP, nearly 100 more than were enrolled last fall.

Increased student participation is also fostered through efficient and integrated student academic services. Thanks to Maggy Smith and the University College, significant progress has been achieved in consolidating Enrollment and Financial Services. Although there is still much work to be done, particularly on the policy front, great strides have been made by staff members who put themselves in students' shoes as they seek to design efficient and user-friendly procedures. Planning for the new Academic Services Building near Schuster and Hawthorne is well underway, and its campus-perimeter location and reconfigured lay-out should enhance these consolidation efforts even more.

Attractive campus facilities are also a factor in increasing student participation. Visitors repeatedly comment that UTEP's long-term commitment to Bhutanese-style architecture has created one of the most beautiful campuses in the United States. UTEP's Facilities Services staff work hard to increase the efficiency and maintain the attractiveness of our buildings and grounds. During the past year, we have been quite busy acquiring property, completing construction, and planning for future development that will increase campus capacity for anticipated enrollment and research growth, and will make this campus even more appealing in the years ahead.

On the acquisition front, UTEP purchased 4-1/2 acres of property between Sun Bowl Drive and Mesa Street. When vacated by Rudolph Chevrolet later this year, this property will provide much needed flat land for future expansion. We also completed our purchase of the Sun Bowl from El Paso County for \$1600, in what has already become a legendary real estate transaction. A highly satisfying by-product was a partnership between UTEP and County Commissioners to award ten scholarships each year to highly meritorious young people in El Paso County.

An extraordinary new building was added to our inventory this past year. The Larry K. Durham Center has given a superb face-lift to the north end of the Sun Bowl Stadium and created one of the finest Intercollegiate Athletics and Kinesiology facilities in the Country. Already a source of pride for all of us, this beautiful new building was designed by El Paso architect David Alvidrez, who also created UTEP's Undergraduate Learning Center. It was built by Urban Associates, whose principal, Oscar Venegas, and project manager, Joe Riccillo, are both UTEP alumni, and its completion, three nanoseconds before the dinner honoring the Board of Regents in early August, gave me a new appreciation for the expression "just-in-time production." Although I certainly don't want to add to Head Football Coach Gary Nord's pressures, I have let him know that his office seems almost presidential ...

The past year also marked the departure of Engine No. 1, the Civil War vintage locomotive that for 40 years occupied the lawn to the south of the Centennial Museum. Two massive cranes lifted it gently out of its shell, placed it on a trailer, and, as we all waved farewell, it left the campus to travel on I-10 East to a warehouse where it is being restored. Its ultimate placement in the downtown Union Plaza area should give this rare locomotive the visibility that it deserves.

We have also engaged in extensive planning of new facilities during the past year, and the UT System Board of Regents recently approved three major construction projects. In addition to the Academic Services Building, we will begin construction next spring on a new Biosciences Building, which will be located adjacent to the current Biology Building, and which will provide greatly needed research and teaching space for one of the fastest growing fields on this campus and nationally. A major renovation of Seamon Hall, which was originally constructed in 1927 as a chemistry building and expanded with WPA funds during the

1930s, will be undertaken during the coming year to create new exhibition and studio space for the Art Department. In addition, we will soon request approval for the design of a major addition to the Engineering Building, as we seek to expand teaching and research space for the growing programs in that college.

Finally, with significant input from students, faculty and staff, our consultants have completed the Campus Master Plan, which will serve as a template for future development. Special attention will be directed this year at parking and traffic issues, which are a major topic of conversation on this and all campuses I know, and which, with enrollment growth, become increasingly critical. We will begin implementing our plans to close the central campus to vehicle traffic with a trial run next summer. Should be exciting!

## GOAL II: SUCCESS

Building on its participation goal, the Coordinating Board's success goal calls for increasing the number of degrees and certificates awarded by Texas institutions. It is not enough to enroll more students, we must also work to ensure that a higher percentage of them successfully complete their educational programs. Indeed, a recent Pew study suggests that Hispanics in the U.S. participate in higher education at rates that exceed those of other ethnic groups, but their success in completing degrees falls far below that of their non-Hispanic counterparts.

Translated into the UTEP context, that means providing support services to increase retention and developing strategies to increase efficiency in the completion of degrees and certificates. Many of the strategies that have already been mentioned as keys to increasing participation also serve to enhance student retention and degree completion. For example, the more flexible academic calendar and class schedule options that increase participation also

enable working students, who are the vast majority of UTEP's enrollment, to access the courses they need to make steady progress toward their degrees. The orientation, advising, and University Seminar features of the University College program not only encourage participation, but also help ensure that UTEP students have the support they need to build a foundation for academic success.

Facilities can also play a role in fostering student retention and graduation. Miner Village, the student apartment complex that opened a year ago is filled to capacity this fall, confirming the projections of student demand. These attractive on-campus living accommodations provide students with all amenities, including access to the UTEP technology network, and proximity to all campus facilities, as well as to the commercial and entertainment options in the neighborhood. Student's lives can be far more efficient when they live on campus and their full-time presence helps foster a more active campus climate for all students. Numerous visitors from other universities have confirmed that UTEP now has one of the most attractive and student-friendly residence hall complexes in the country. So successful has been our experience that there is already talk of Miner Village, Phase II!

Other on-campus services and activities also contribute to retention and success by helping students maintain balance in their lives and develop the interpersonal and leadership skills that will serve them well as they pursue their education and career goals. Among these are the Student Development Center and Leadership Development programs, student organizations, recreational sports, Campus Activities Board, and the Student Health Center. The beautiful and greatly expanded Swimming & Fitness Center now averages more than 17,000 user visits per month. Installed near the Center is a new Challenge Course (also known as a Ropes Course), developed through the cooperative

efforts of Recreational Sports, Kinesiology, and Student Affairs. We welcome Kim Keeton-Petit, who will manage the Challenge Course and help us expand the University's Outdoor Adventure Program.

UTEP students also have access to an ever-increasing number of civic engagement opportunities, which not only provide them with access to learning through community service, but also help shape their academic and career goals and strengthen their resolve to complete their degree programs. Thanks to the leadership of Kathleen Staudt and Howard Daudistel, and support from faculty members across the campus, UTEP is at the forefront of service learning programs nationally, and UTEP students have opportunities to serve their community through activities ranging from restoration of the Socorro mission church, to literacy training programs in a variety of settings. Also contributing significantly to-and learning from-the community are faculty and students in the College of Health Sciences who for the past ten years have worked cooperatively with colleagues at Texas Tech at four health clinics in medically underserved areas of the Lower Valley and East El Paso County.

Recent data confirm that UTEP is making steady progress in responding to the Coordinating Board's goal of increasing student success. First-year student retention-the number of full-time freshmen who return for the second year-has increased. Because the freshman year is considered to be the most vulnerable, first-year retention is a strong predictor of future graduation. 63% of UTEP's graduates last year were the first in their families to earn a degree. UTEP ranks among the top universities nationally in the graduation of Hispanics, and was first among all U.S. universities last year in the number of Hispanic engineering graduates. These students' success in earning degrees impacts not only them and their families, but the future development and competitiveness of this community, this state, and this nation.

Another highly positive sign of student success at UTEP is that more students are aspiring to continue their education beyond the bachelor's degree. Many of them are encouraged in these aspirations by programs such as AMP, directed by Pablo Arenaz; MIE, directed by Ben Flores; MARC directed by Keith Pannell; and McNair directed by Chuck Ambler. These federally funded programs create opportunities for students to work with faculty mentors on research projects that give them the flavor of, and the confidence to pursue, graduate education.

Equally positive is the fact that graduate and professional schools compete aggressively for UTEP graduates. They are enrolled in growing numbers at graduate programs at major research - universities throughout the country. In fact, a recent study reported that UTEP ranked first among all universities in the U.S. in the number of Hispanic bachelor's degree recipients who have gone on to complete doctoral degrees in science and engineering. On the professional school front, competition for UTEP graduates is equally intense. For example, of 34 UTEP students who completed the Law School Preparation Institute last year, two-thirds received offers from Top 25 law schools including Berkeley, Harvard, Columbia, and Michigan, and 17 of the 34 were admitted to UT Austin School of Law. That's a terrific record and one in which Bill Weaver and Bob Webking, who founded and continue to lead the Institute, can take enormous pride. We welcome the addition of Shelli Soto's expertise, experience and commitment to the Center for Law and Border Studies.

### GOAL III: Research

The Closing the Gaps report sets statewide goals for increasing externally funded research activity at universities and health science centers. Texas ranks a disappointing sixth among all states in federal R&D expenditures.

Within this context, UTEP has begun to be recognized as a contributor to achieving the Coordinating Board's research goal. At the present time, UTEP's total portfolio of 340 active awards for research and sponsored activities totals more than \$122 million. These are projects that have been funded by external sources in response to proposals submitted by UTEP faculty and staff members.

Among UT System institutions, UTEP ranks second in federal research expenditures, after UT Austin. Among 35 public universities in Texas, UTEP ranks fourth, with only Texas A&M, UT Austin, and the University of Houston ahead of us. These rankings are surprising to many people across the state, because for many years UTEP's blip on the federal research funding radar screen was quite small. In 1988, for example, UTEP's research expenditures were in the neighborhood of \$3 million annually. Today, thanks to the competitiveness of UTEP's faculty and staff, that number has grown to approximately \$30 million, a tenfold increase.

One of UTEP's most remarkable research funding statistics is the ratio of federal-to-state dollars. Among the five top public Texas institutions in research funding, UTEP ranks first, generating approximately seven federal dollars for every state dollar invested in research at UTEP. This high yield is a reflection of both UTEP's greatly enhanced competitiveness for funding at the federal level, and state's failure to invest adequately in UTEP's research enterprise. For example, in 2001, Texas invested only \$3.2 million in research-related activity at UTEP, compared with \$16 million at Texas Tech, while Texas Tech's federal funding of \$17.4 million was substantially less than UTEP's \$23 million in federal funding. While UTEP's federal research funding has grown



significantly since 1988, support from the state has not. Although we can only speculate on reasons why the state continues to favor one institution over another in terms of research funding, it is easy to demonstrate that the State's failure to invest in institutions like UTEP, with a proven record of leveraging high yields on those investments, is counter-productive ...IF Texas is serious about achieving a higher national ranking in research funding. This will be an issue that we will continue to raise with policy makers.

The past year has been a very active one in the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects. Nearly 400 proposals were processed seeking external funding of \$176 million. We appreciate the efforts of Flo Dick, Claudine Riccillo and other staff members for their technical assistance and support during the proposal preparation process. Our success in generating new external funding also continues to be quite impressive. New grant awards during the past fiscal year totaled \$33.3 million.

Many grant awards, particularly from foundations, are also the result of the good work of Steve Meador and members of his team in Institutional Advancement. Their research on possible funding sources and technical assistance to those whose projects might be a good match for the philanthropic goals of particular foundations are invaluable in increasing the probability of funding success. We are also pleased to welcome to the Development team, Mary Ellen Kubit, who will provide leadership in the areas of major gifts and annual giving.

Time does not permit us to describe the many new grants that have been awarded to UTEP faculty and staff during the

past year, but perhaps a few examples will help illustrate the range of activity that is supported by federal agencies, foundations and corporations.

- Dr. Maria Amaya in the College of Health Sciences, together with Drs. Jorge Gardea-Torresdey and Nicholas Pingitore in the College of Science, received a \$1.8 million grant from the National Institute of Environmental Health Science to conduct a broad-based study of lead levels in the blood of children in El Paso and Ciudad Juarez.
- Dr. Ryan Wicker in the College of Engineering was awarded a highly competitive \$1 million grant from the Keck Foundation in Los Angeles to create the Border Biomedical Manufacturing and Engineering Laboratory, and to greatly expand the bioengineering capability of UTEP.
- The Rio Bosque Wetlands Park project, near Socorro in El Paso's Lower Valley, was awarded more than \$375,000 from the Meadows Foundation, the Paso del Norte Health Foundation and the TNRCC to help develop an education resources and visitor center, new hiking paths, and parking facilities. Thanks to John Sproul for his fine work.
- The Immigration History Museum, directed by Marguerite Rivera Houze, received major grants from the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations to pursue its planning efforts and to develop oral history and archival resources.
- The Houston Endowment and the Brown Foundation in Houston each committed \$500,000 toward the renovation of Seamon Hall to house the Art Department's galleries and additional space.

## GOAL IV: Excellence

Although we hear a lot about excellence, measuring it presents interesting challenges. Measure what? Measure how? Quantitatively? Qualitatively? Measure internally, comparing the institution's progress against its own history over time? Measure externally against benchmarks at other institutions? If so, which institutions are appropriate peers?

Traditional measures of excellence in higher education have tended to focus on institutional or student affluence, or inputs. Measures such as the size of the institution's endowment, the amount of alumni giving, the average SAT score of the entering student population, and the 6-year graduation rate have historically been regarded as key indicators of excellence. Although financial resources, well-prepared students, and full-time enrollment are clearly desirable, the changing demographics and related demands being placed on higher education suggest that other measures of quality and excellence are greatly needed if we hope to educate populations that have been traditionally underrepresented in higher education, such as low-income and minority students. The "Closing the Gaps" report acknowledges that continuing to do business as usual in higher education will not enable us to achieve the state's goals, and it recognizes the importance of differentiating institutional missions and defining excellence measures that are compatible with them.

The Coordinating Board's recognition that excellence must be viewed as multi-dimensional and that measuring the quality of each university must be context-sensitive is consistent with what UTEP has been attempting to do for the past 15 years.

We have sought to understand our context and the needs of our constituents, clearly define and articulate our institutional mission, and measure our success, not by comparing ourselves to institutions whose missions and student populations are totally different from ours, but by seeking alternative ways to measure our success in contributing to the development of this bi-national region, this state and this nation.

Developing a national reputation in specific areas is also critical to achieving excellence, and UTEP is well on the way toward doing just that. Within the framework of the UT System Strategic Plan, UTEP has been designated as a Center of Excellence in U.S.- Mexico Border Studies, and our faculty expertise and academic, research and outreach programs, ranging from environmental science and engineering to culture and arts, are gaining national prominence.

Much work obviously remains to be done to develop better measures of the value added by higher education, especially by institutions like UTEP, and it is especially important that we be major participants in that work. Although we believe strongly that institutions that have traditionally been committed to access can also achieve excellence, and that UTEP is making major strides toward that goal, every day, the specific measures that will allow us to demonstrate our progress too often remain elusive. This presents us with both an assessment and a public information challenge. First, it is incumbent upon UTEP and institutions like ours to continue to refine-and in some cases re-define- measures of excellence. The traditional measures misrepresent the work that we do and the students we serve. Second, we must communicate effectively with policy makers, accrediting bodies, major national higher education organizations, and the media, whose

traditional and sometimes simplistic notions of accountability may be counter-productive to closing the gaps.

Key to many of UTEP's efforts at developing measures of excellence is the Center for Institutional Evaluation, Research, and Planning, under the direction of Sally Andrade. Working with deans and program directors and with Alumni Relations, the Center develops surveys and other assessment strategies to provide feedback for continuous improvement, and to measure UTEP's performance over time and in comparison with peer institutions.

Let's take a look at some of the current ways in which higher education measures excellence and how UTEP "measures up."

Accreditation is one accepted standard for measuring quality in higher education. All UTEP's programs are fully accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), our official accrediting body. In addition, most of UTEP's professional programs have their own accrediting processes. During the past year, Clinical Laboratory Science and Physical Therapy were re-accredited, and the College of Engineering just received official notice that the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) has granted full accreditation to all its programs through 2008. One of the interesting aspects of professional program accreditation in such areas as Engineering and Business is their recent emphasis on outcomes-based assessment and on institutional missions as a context for the evaluation process. They too are refining and redefining their measures of excellence.

Test scores of students who complete university programs serve as another standard measure of quality, particularly in professional programs. In Nursing, for example, UTEP's graduates have had a 93% success rate on the Licensure

Examination for Registered Nurses during the past year, and a 100% success rate during the past three quarterly administration, Thanks to the faculty in the School of Nursing for their outstanding efforts to ensure that UTEP students are well prepared for licensure and professional practice.

Another common measure of excellence is recognition of the quality of faculty work through citations, primarily in professional publications. The research and scholarly work of UTEP faculty is cited in publications of colleagues throughout the world. We do not have time to begin to enumerate such citations here, but they can play an important role in evaluating the impact of faculty members' work on their fields or professions, and in establishing this institution's reputation for excellence.

In addition, many UTEP faculty members serve as sources for, and are widely quoted in, the popular media. Analyses taken from Tom Fullerton's Border Region Modeling Project are regularly cited in such publications as the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, USA Today, and U.S. News and World Report. Jorge Gardea Torresdey's research phytoremediation, Russ Chianelli's work on Maya Blue and Dirk Shultze-Makuch's work on filtering bacteria from drinking water, have been reported on by ABC News, National Geographic, and other media around the world. And, Jon Amastae and colleagues in the Center for Interamerican and Border Studies, serve as regular commentators on border issues in newspapers such as the Wall Street Journal, Christian Science Monitor, St. Louis Post Dispatch, Reforma and El Diario in Mexico, as well as ABC News-Nightline and Radio Nuevo Leon. Such visibility contributes significantly to UTEP's growing bi-national reputation as a Center of Excellence in U.S.- Mexico Border matters.

Other forms of recognition include awards and prizes, and

UTEP students, faculty and staff regularly receive such regional and national recognition. UTEP student recognitions during the past year range from the Texas Intercollegiate Press Association's awards to the Prospector, to the Model Organization of American States first-place award to a group of UTEP Political Science students, to the top national honors accorded UTEP's chapter of the Society of Physics Students and faculty advisor, Phil Cole.

UTEP programs also serve as models that other institutions seek to emulate.

- The Undergraduate Learning Center facility and the programs that are conducted there by Evelyn Posey, Henry Ingle, and the CeTAL staff are regularly visited by delegations from other universities, including most recently Jackson State, Tuskegee, and the Universidad Autonoma de Chihuahua.
- The El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence is regularly cited by federal agencies such as NSF, education reformers such as Governor Jim Hunt of North Carolina, and major publications such as Education Week, as the preeminent preK-16 partnership model in the United States.
- The Center for Civic Engagement and the Institute for Community-Based Teaching and Learning have gained national recognition for UTEP as a model for integrated service learning.
- UTEP's Law School Preparation Institute is being replicated at UT Pan American and UT San Antonio.

It is said that imitation is the highest form of flattery. We should definitely be flattered!

In the final analysis, one measure of excellence stands out as absolutely fundamental to evaluating all universities: the

quality of the institution's graduates. Universities must ensure that all graduates are well prepared for the workplace or for graduate or professional school, and that they can compete successfully with their peers at all other institutions across this country. By this measure, UTEP appears to be doing extraordinarily well. We not only hear highly positive comments about our graduates from recruiters, we have data to show that these recruiters return to UTEP year after year, in good economic times and bad, to compete for our graduates. More than 300 companies sought to recruit UTEP's 150 Engineering graduates last year, and our graduates who want to pursue law or medical school have their choice of many outstanding options, usually with generous scholarship offers.

Although not specifically highlighted in the Coordinating Board's Excellence Goal, outreach is an important dimension of this and all universities' missions. Any determination of excellence must include how effectively universities respond to the broader needs of the surrounding region. This is particularly true for an institution like UTEP that serves a geographically concentrated student population and is closely tied to a resource-constrained region. Although UTEP's primary mission is to provide high-quality educational programs to residents of this region, there are many other ways in which we contribute to the quality of life and effectively serve as an intellectual, cultural and artistic resource.

As a starting point, UTEP is a major contributor to the local economy. With a \$200 million annual budget, we are one of the region's largest employers, and we have a major impact on this region's economy. We purchase goods and services from local businesses, and we employ local people. Our success in attracting funding in the form of contracts and grants means that we are bringing significant new resources into this community from the outside. We look forward to seeing the



results of a study by Dennis Soden and Dave Schauer on UTEP's economic impact on this region, complementing a similar study that they recently were commissioned to conduct for Ft. Bliss.

UTEP is also a major provider of cultural and arts programs to the El Paso-Juarez community. Capitalizing on the talent of our faculty and students, these programs include individual student recitals and ensemble performances in Music, theatrical productions in Theatre Arts and the Dinner Theatre, and visiting artist, faculty and student exhibitions in Art. This year the Dinner Theatre recorded the largest attendance in its highly successful 20-year history: 4,850 patrons attended its production of "The King and I."

The Millennium Lecture series has brought an interesting group of speakers to the UTEP campus to share their expertise and provoke our thinking. Among them, Dr. Walter Persegati of the Vatican Museum in Rome, who spoke on the Sistine Chapel restoration to a standing-room-only crowd; and Ambassador Frank Ortiz, architect of the Chamizal treaty, who shared with us the remarkable story of the peaceful resolution to the long-standing boundary dispute between the U.S. and Mexico

The Office of Special Events engaged the interests of constituents across this region again last year by bringing a range of shows to the Don Haskins Center and the Sun Bowl, from professional soccer and wrestling matches, to the Trans-Siberian Orchestra, to Alejandro and Vicente Fernandez, Ozzy Osbourne and Eagles concerts. Something for almost everybody ...and everybody seemed to respond. Gross ticket sales for UTEP events totaled \$4.5 million last year, in spite of the post- 9/11 downturn in the entertainment

industry. New electronic marquees on I-10 and on Mesa Street now provide a more effective means of disseminating information about special events on the campus.

UTEP's Center for Lifelong Learning, which offers non-credit enrichment programs to El Pasoans over the age of 50, has become the largest retirement learning center in Texas and among the largest in the United States. Serving more than 1600 retired El Pasoans, the Center offers a broad range of courses taught by UTEP faculty members and other professionals in the community.

Intercollegiate athletics offers the community many opportunities to enjoy both women's and men's sports competitions throughout the academic year. There's always something going on. And, there will be more going on next year when softball will be added to UTEP's women's sports. Under Stephanie Rempe's leadership, a softball coach will be recruited this year, and, given the popularity of women's softball in El Paso, we hope that we will be able to recruit many of the players locally. Special thanks to Bob Stull, Mack Rhoades and members of the Athletics staff for their highly successful efforts to improve all major athletic facilities, and to our generous donors for their financial support.

The UTEP Alumni Association also extends the university into our community through a variety of activities. Events such as Homecoming, Season of Lights, and pre-game parties help UTEP reach out not only to alumni, but also to others in the region. We have also been successful in extending the reach of Alumni Relations to UTEP graduates throughout the country and in Mexico through a major chapter-building initiative. Special thanks to Yolanda Ingle who has provided strong leadership to Alumni Relations, to her capable and energetic staff, the Alumni

Association board, who work so hard to ensure the success of these activities.

And, speaking of working hard to ensure the excellence of UTEP activities, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the enormous contributions of Liz Thurmond, Beto Lopez, Nacho Cubillos, and those who work with them. Their tireless efforts, day in and day out, always make us proud to host events of all sizes and types. Thanks too to George Rankin, UTEP alumnus and Sodexo Marriott manager, for his commitment to excellence. The successful collaboration of this team in hosting the UT System Board of Regents meeting in August, while workers put finishing touches on the Larry K. Durham Center, was amazing. It was an event that the Regents and all of our other guests will long remember.

Excellence was also achieved by a number of UTEP departments that were required to step up to new challenges after the events of September 11. Campus security, Mail Services and Central Receiving all responded with energy and good will as they sought to ensure our safety. Thanks to Chief Bill Adcox, Jerry Cochrane and Armando Losoya and their teams for getting the job done. Environmental Health and Safety, so ably directed by Robert Moss, had a particularly busy year, with post-9/11 and EPA soil contamination challenges added to their regular workload. And, the International Programs Office, Miner Village, the Graduate School, the Counseling Center, and other Student Affairs departments quickly responded to the special challenges faced by UTEP's commuter students from Mexico, in the immediate aftermath of 9/11.

At the end of the day, excellence in any organization is about people. At UTEP, we are fortunate to have some of the most

dedicated, energetic and creative people that any of us will ever know. Some of them are high profile, such as the vice presidents and deans seated on this stage. Others, like many of the individuals whose service we recognized today, work behind the scenes and get little public acknowledgment. Accountants, custodians, police officers, technicians, auditors, buyers, human resource specialists, groundskeepers, librarians, contracts and grants coordinators, administrative assistants and other clerical personnel, all contribute their skills and commitment to this institution and the students we serve. We congratulate again all of those UTEP staff and faculty members whom we honored today for their many years of loyal service to this institution.

We thank each and every one of you, for being here today. Most of all, we thank you for all that you do to fulfill UTEP's important mission to ensure both access and excellence in serving this region, and to help us demonstrate that UTEP is the model institution for "Closing the Gaps" in Texas.

Thank you again for attending Convocation today. Please join us for a reception just outside the auditorium.