

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
FALL 2003 CONVOCATION REMARKS
DIANA S. NATALICIO, PRESIDENT

September 18, 2003

The past academic year has, by any measure, been one of the most challenging in this institution's history. Although there has been considerable progress on many fronts, including robust enrollment growth, our attention has been disproportionately focused on an external context that can only be described as sobering.

The Texas legislative session was particularly difficult. Although we are still trying to understand all of the intended and unintended consequences of the Legislature's actions, we certainly know that the financial resources available to us through state appropriations have been significantly reduced, with enormous consequences for UTEP and the students we serve.

The economy has also directly impacted UTEP in a number of ways. Philanthropic support from foundations, corporations, and individual donors has contracted, and securing such support requires a greater investment of time and energy than ever before. In addition, a downturn in local economic conditions directly impacts UTEP students' opportunities for employment to support their families and finance their education.

Global conflicts have sent a number of UTEP students, staff and faculty to active duty and into harm's way. Together with their family members, we pray for their safe return.

Although these indeed are the most challenging times in memory for those of us at UTEP today, there is perhaps some solace in discovering that this institution has faced, and successfully overcome, similar—or perhaps even more daunting—circumstances in the past. Leland “Doc” Sonnichsen, esteemed English professor and administrator at UTEP for more than 40 years, wrote in his memoirs about the College of Mines during the years of the Great Depression:

“The difficulties were almost comical. As students came in increasing numbers, there was never enough of anything. When the new buildings were occupied, there was a shortage of chairs. Any expense had to be cleared through Austin and there was no time to waste. Puckett [the dean] telegraphed: ‘No chairs—no school.’ Mary Kelly taught from a sofa.

And yet there was much to be said for this college. It was desperately needed. El Paso was growing fast. The schools needed teachers. The businessmen needed young men and women with special training. It was 600 miles to Austin, too far for many people to go for an education. No school was ever prayed for and worked for with greater dedication.”

The parallels to our own time are striking, aren't they? Austin is no closer to us today than it was then...some would say that's reassuring in itself! El Pasoans' reliance on this university to meet its higher education needs has become even more salient, as the population and the

demand for an educated workforce continue to grow. Students are coming in increasing numbers, and I have even heard about a shortage of chairs in some classrooms!

What also has not changed is the spirit that helped the College of Mines weather the Depression years and emerge as a stronger and more resilient institution, prepared to serve the Far West Texas region with quality higher educational opportunities. All of the praying for and dedication to this university that Doc Sonnichsen referred to continue to be as true today as they were in the 1930's. UTEP has gained a national reputation for succeeding in a highly challenging context. We have demonstrated that we have the capacity to carefully assess the many variables that affect us, and develop successful and creative strategies, not only to fend off negative consequences, but to emerge with greater energy and resolve to move in new and positive directions. In other words, we are tenacious; we do not give up, even in times of adversity; we know that we have important work to do, and we will find a way to get it done.

The 78th Texas Legislative Session and its Aftermath

A report on the state of the university at this juncture would not be complete without a review of the actions of the Texas Legislature. So, let's have a closer look at what they sent our way this year.

The most challenging action of the Legislature was the reduction in state appropriations to Texas public universities. We began 2003 with news that we were expected to reduce last year's (FY 2003) funding by 7%. Although we were approaching the mid-point of the 2003 fiscal year, and most major expenditures had already been committed in the form of salaries and other institutional priorities, we imposed hiring freezes and travel restrictions, and deferred other planned expenditures. Because a mid-year reduction does not allow for orderly planning, most savings were achieved opportunistically; that is, instead of being able to conduct a thorough analysis and re-budgeting process, we had no choice but to recapture the funds where we found them available at the time.

As we were later to discover, this 7% cut set the stage for an even greater appropriations reduction for the new biennium. As we now calculate it, UTEP's 2003-04 budget reflects an 11.5% reduction in state appropriations, when compared with last year. What makes this significant state funding reduction even more painful and difficult to manage is that it is occurring at a time when UTEP enrollment is growing at a far faster pace than at any time during the recent past. Enrollment has grown by more than 3000 students since the 2001 legislative session. In effect, we have been charged with serving an ever larger student population with substantially fewer state dollars.

In some senses, the 7% appropriations reduction during FY 2003 prepared us both psychologically and practically for the very intense budget analysis, restructuring, and expenditure reduction activities of this past summer. On a practical level, the various cost-cutting measures in which we engaged during the spring, such as hiring and travel freezes, helped redefine UTEP's baseline spending and softened somewhat the impact of the additional reductions required for the next biennium. To illustrate, once all of the analyses and calculations were completed, a determination was made that 82 staff positions had to be eliminated. Fortunately, 59 of those positions had already been vacated voluntarily through

retirements and resignations during the hiring freeze, leaving only 23 positions to be included in the required reduction in force.

Although our success in reducing the number of required layoffs to 23 positions was a relief to us, it was no consolation to the 23 members of the UTEP family whose positions were eliminated. Because this was the first time in anyone's memory—and some of us have long UTEP memories!—that we had a layoff of personnel, we placed a high priority on planning and implementing it carefully and sensitively, and we made a strong commitment to assist the affected employees in every way we could. Although we all wish that it hadn't been necessary, this process showed UTEP at its best. Everyone involved acted responsibly and with enormous good will, and I want to express appreciation again to the many individuals who were called on to participate.

The second major legislative action in terms of impact on UTEP was its decision to deregulate tuition. In principle, institutional flexibility in setting tuition is probably a good thing. Those of us who are closest to the students we serve ought to be in a better position to gauge our needs and our students' capacity to pay. If, however, such authority is coupled with a reduction in state appropriations, the clear signal being sent is that students will be expected to bear a greater share of the cost of their education, while legislative funding declines.

We have spent the past summer and most of this month analyzing data, reviewing scenarios, and consulting with UTEP's many constituents, especially our students, about how best to manage tuition deregulation at UTEP, beginning with this fiscal year. Our primary goals are to protect the quality of all our academic programs, and at the same time, ensure that UTEP remains affordable to the students we serve. This is not an easy assignment, especially at an institution like UTEP where so many students are already struggling to finance their education.

I want to express appreciation to members of the Tuition Advisory Committee, ably chaired by Vice President for Student Affairs Richard Padilla, who worked hard to ensure that we are all proud of both the process and its outcome. Key to this process has been communication with all UTEP's constituencies, and we have conducted extensive communication sessions for a broad range of members of the UTEP community. Inasmuch as students are the most directly affected by our actions, we have worked hard to keep them well informed and to encourage their input into our plans for tuition increases this year and next. Special thanks to Gbenga Asedeko, President of the Student Government Association, and his leadership team for helping us ensure that student voices have been clearly heard during this process, and for their strong commitment to the continued quality of UTEP's academic programs.

Based upon the feedback we receive, we will prepare a set of tuition increase recommendations to the UT System for final approval by the Board of Regents in November. These recommendations, whose implementation will begin in the Spring 2004 semester, will likely consist of a two-step tuition increase, and enhanced financial aid in the form of grants and work-study jobs to assist students in bearing the additional cost of their education. Once approved by the Regents, the details of our plans will be widely disseminated.

We trust that these recommendations will provide us with the resources to continue our success in offering highly competitive academic programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels. We trust too that the financial aid commitments embedded in tuition increases will ensure accessibility and affordability for today's students, and for those who seek an education here in the future. UTEP's commitment to both excellence and access has enabled us to achieve unparalleled success during the past decade, and it will continue to guide us in the future.

Revenue Diversification

As we implement these tuition increases, we are mindful of the growing responsibility we have to seek other sources of revenue, to continue to diversify our revenue base, to mitigate the financial burden on students and leverage their investment. We approach this challenge with confidence, because UTEP's record of revenue generation and diversification during the past several years has been truly outstanding.

Despite the downturn in the economy, annual support for UTEP from alumni and our own faculty and staff grew significantly in terms of both dollars and number of donors. Last year, UTEP again ranked second among all academic components in the University of Texas System in total external funding received from private sources. In fact, last year's private fundraising at UTEP exceeded the totals of UT Arlington, UT Dallas, and UT San Antonio...combined!

Foundation support for UTEP continued to be strong, despite national trends to the contrary. We are particularly grateful for local and regional foundations whose continued commitments to UTEP help us contribute to the human and economic development of this region. For example, the Wolslager Foundation's investment in UTEP has assured the continued operations of the Community Partnership clinics in underserved areas of El Paso County, and supported the transfer to UTEP of high-achieving students from the El Paso Community College. The selection process for these transfer scholars has been right on the mark: they have achieved an unprecedented 100% retention and graduation rate.

Thanks to the good work of Audrey Price, Sandra Gonzalez, and the Faculty Senate Scholarship Committee, UTEP awarded more than \$5.3 million in merit-based scholarships this past year, a 5% increase over the year before. Raul Lerma and the Financial Aid staff administered a record allocation of need-based grants and loans last year, including \$6.2 million in Texas Grants. This program, sponsored by the Texas Legislature, has been highly successful in encouraging young people to follow the recommended high school curriculum and pursue higher education; so successful, in fact, that its entire appropriation was exhausted before all eligible Texas Scholars could receive support this year. If it is to continue to be an incentive to pre-college youth, this program will have to be funded by the Legislature at a far higher level in the future. This kind of scholarship and financial aid support becomes even more critical, as UTEP's tuition continues to rise.

Corporations play a role in UTEP's revenue diversification as well. A very interesting investment in UTEP students has been made by Lockheed-Martin Space Operations, for example, through the establishment of a "Storefront" on our campus. Basically, Lockheed-

Martin has brought some of its business operations to UTEP, so that our students can do real-world work while continuing to make progress toward their degrees. Thus, instead of traveling to another site to serve an internship for a semester, these students earn while they learn on our campus. We hope that Lockheed Martin will expand this kind of on-campus, real-world learning opportunity at UTEP, and that other corporations will see this as a model worth emulating.

This past year also taught us that private fundraising can be fun. Sam Donaldson, one of UTEP's most highly visible alumni, agreed to be roasted to raise funds for the Sam Donaldson Center for Communication Studies. In May, UTEP representatives, a group of UTEP alumni and supporters from El Paso, and Sam's many friends in Washington, D.C. gathered there for a gala evening. The mistress of ceremonies was Cokie Roberts, and roasters included Helen Thomas, Marlin Fitzwater, Jody Powell, Ted Koppel, Cong. Bill Tauzin, and Gov. Bill Richardson. A group of five students from our Music Department, accompanied by Professor Curt Warren, provided the musical background. By most accounts, the roasting high point came when, as the Washington Post later reported, Ted Koppel "crooned a little ditty to the tune of 'My Heart Belongs to Daddy.'" While all of us snapped our fingers to the beat, Ted sang to Sam: "You've heard it said/That your friend Ted/ Has so much hair that he can't wear it/ I'll grow some more/That's what friends are for/And the two of us can share it." What an evening! And, after all of that fun, the Sam Donaldson Center netted more than \$100,000. Special thanks to Liz Thurmond, Estrella Escobar, and Zita Arocha, and all those who worked with them, for making it happen.

UTEP was equally successful in securing grant funding from the public sector as well during the past year. According to the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects, UTEP faculty and staff received 285 new grant awards totaling more than \$63.8 million during the past year, a new record.

There are several striking themes that emerge in reviewing these new grant awards. First, many of them involve teamwork and partnerships. Whether the teams consist of UTEP faculty and staff from across this campus, or whether they involve partnerships with other institutions around the country, it is clear that many of the most successful projects today involve multi-disciplinary and, often, multi-institutional collaborations. What is especially positive is that UTEP faculty and staff increasingly recognize the value of collaborations, and UTEP's growing research reputation has drawn us into the inner circle of institutions involved in them.

The largest grant--\$29.3 million--came from the National Science Foundation's Math/Science Partnership program to support the work of the El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence for the next five years. Our thanks to Susana Navarro and Alicia Parra for the excellence of their leadership and to Dean of Science Tom Brady, and the many other UTEP faculty and administrators who have worked closely with them. The El Paso Collaborative is widely acknowledged to be the most successful preK-20 partnership in the entire United States. Quite an accomplishment!...and proof positive that a sustained, broad-based commitment over more than a decade is what is really required to make such partnerships work.

The National Institutes of Health awarded two major grants to UTEP. The Border Biomedical Research Center received a five-year renewal of its funding in the amount of \$6.2 million, and an MBRS/SCORE grant of \$5.5 million for four years will support the work of 10 faculty members in Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics and Mechanical & Industrial Engineering. Special thanks to Eppie Rael, who successfully wears many important hats, and to all other faculty and staff who worked to secure this critical support for UTEP's growing biomedical research portfolio.

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) of the NIH awarded a grant of \$1.5 million to Michael Zarate, Art Blume, and Osvaldo Morera in Psychology and Fernando Rodriguez in Sociology. Special thanks to Michael Zarate for his continued successful leadership of these highly collaborative proposals.

The National Science Foundation's ADVANCE program will support UTEP's efforts to increase opportunities for, and foster the development of, female faculty members in Science, Engineering, Liberal Arts and Business. Evelyn Posey took the lead on this \$3.4 million proposal, strongly supported by Ann Gates, Libby Anthony, Pat Witherspoon, and Tine Reimers. We look forward to working with them on this important new initiative. Soheil Nazarian in Civil Engineering continued to secure major grant support for his work. This year he has taken the lead on two large collaborative projects. The first, funded at \$450,000 for three years by the National Science Foundation, brings together UTEP faculty from Civil Engineering, Sociology, and Economics and Finance to assess the vulnerability of the U.S.-Mexico border-crossing infrastructure to natural and terrorist threats. The second finds UTEP leading a national partnership with the University of Illinois-Chicago and the Army Corps of Engineers to develop new quality acceptance program criteria for the construction of concrete airfields. Another multi-institutional project, led by Professors Andronicos, Miller, and Hurtado in Geological Sciences, involves colleagues at Virginia Tech, Arizona, Wyoming, and Princeton, as well as two Canadian universities, in British Columbia and Saskatchewan.

A second theme of these grant awards is a focus on infrastructure development and capacity building. Foundation grants to renovate Seamon Hall and federal grants to renovate Kelly Hall and equip the new Biosciences building are good examples. Another, an IBM Shared University Research Program grant awarded to Pat Teller and a highly interdisciplinary team of colleagues in Computer Science, Biology, Chemistry, and Electrical and Computer Engineering, will launch a multi-phased set of research collaborations between IBM and UTEP in the areas of High Performance Computing, Linux technology enhancements, and Life Sciences/Bioinformatics. A number of the other grants already mentioned will also provide laboratory and instrumentation enhancements that help lay a foundation for funding competitiveness in the future.

UTEP's overall success in securing grant funding will soon bring additional resources to our research infrastructure, as a result of the Texas Legislature's recent action to permit us to retain the full indirect cost return that we earn. The previous state policy, which captured half of the indirect cost generated by grants to public universities in the state, served as a disincentive to the very entrepreneurial activity that Texas claimed it wanted to foster. After many years of working this issue in the Legislature, we are very pleased to have succeeded in making the case for this re-investment in the state's research capacity. In addition, UTEP's

negotiated indirect cost rate has increased by two points, to 48%, as a result of the good work of our Financial Services team.

A third theme observed in UTEP's external funding this year is that many grants enable us to reach out to our community, providing a much needed boost for strategic partnership building on a variety of fronts. The El Paso Collaborative is an obvious example of such outreach, as is the work of the Center for Civic Engagement, ably directed by Kathy Staudt, which has been aggressive in securing funding from the Paso del Norte Health Foundation and other sources to foster students' active participation in issues of importance to this community. UTEP also coordinates a range of pre-college outreach programs funded by the U.S. Department of Education including Upward Bound, Educational Talent Search, GEAR UP, High School Equivalency Program, and the College Assistance Migrant Program. Thanks to Sandra Braham and all those who work closely with her to create opportunities for young people who would otherwise not have them. Another major grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Title V program will support UTEP's efforts to build more seamless ties with the El Paso Community College. Thanks to Maggy Smith, her team at UTEP, and her partners at EPCC for their productive collaboration.

The Carnegie Foundation recently announced a \$5 million grant to support continued innovation and excellence in teacher preparation. Special thanks to Pablo Arenaz, Josie Tinajero, Steve Riter, Howard Daudistel and Tom Brady for their fine teamwork in preparing our highly competitive proposal.

And, perhaps the most important cross-cutting theme in UTEP's external funding is that all of these grants have a major impact on our students. Most grants directly benefit students by creating jobs on campus, jobs closely related to students' academic programs. NASA's investment in the Pan American Center for Earth and Environmental Studies (PACES), for example, supports 42 UTEP students, and support from EPA and other sources has enabled the Center for Environmental Resource Management to employ 68 undergraduate and graduate students.

In addition to jobs, the research training opportunities provided by these grants build aspirations and skills to pursue graduate education. An impressive statistic recently came to my attention. According to the National Science Foundation, UTEP ranked among the top 10 universities in the United States in the number of Hispanic bachelor's degree recipients who went on to earn a doctoral degree between 1997 and 2001, together with UT Austin, UC Berkeley, Cornell and Stanford. Not bad company to be in!

This summer, Chancellor Mark Yudof challenged UTEP, UT Arlington, UT Dallas and UT San Antonio to raise externally funded research to a \$100 million-per-year level within the next several years. The grant funding success that UTEP has achieved during the past several years will certainly serve as a solid foundation upon which to launch that aggressive effort on this campus. We have clearly demonstrated what some consider impossible: research excellence can be achieved while maintaining a fundamental commitment to student access.

One of the keys to achieving this kind of rapid growth in externally funded research will likely be building a successful partnership with a health science center. Unlike our sister

institutions in the Dallas/Ft. Worth and San Antonio areas, UTEP is not co-located with a research-oriented UT System Health Science Center with which we can partner. Because our potential partner is a member of the Texas Tech University System, and is only beginning its efforts to develop into a research-based, four-year medical school, UTEP's challenges are somewhat more complex than those in Dallas and San Antonio. The next several years will be critical in shaping the development of El Paso's medical school. With our broad range of allied health programs and our growing biomedical research portfolio, UTEP must be prepared to play a leadership role in that development.

Meeting Community Needs

UTEP is more closely tied to the community that surrounds it than most universities. We have always served a highly regional student population, and, from our earliest days as the Texas School of Mines, we have sought to offer programs of importance to this region. But, beyond that, we have also clearly understood the mutuality of interests that exists between the university and this community, and we have actively sought to develop strategies to ensure that UTEP's financial and intellectual resources are effectively leveraged to meet community needs. Whether it is offering new degree programs, defining research questions that will help address regional issues, seeking funding for community projects, or providing professional expertise or entertainment, UTEP stands ready to partner with organizations and individuals in this community, as we all work together to improve our quality of life.

First and foremost, UTEP responds to this community's needs by offering high-quality academic programs at the bachelor's, master's and doctoral levels, and making those programs both accessible and affordable to residents of this region. During the past year, UTEP has added several new programs to its offerings, including doctoral programs in Civil Engineering, International Business, and Composition and Rhetoric. We also celebrated major milestones when the first recipients of the doctorate in Pathobiology and the master's degree in Bioinformatics and the Doctor of Pharmacy graduated in May.

Other examples can be found in the College of Health Sciences, where numerous new health professions programs have been developed, as needs for professionals were identified in local health care settings. In response to regional needs, a new master's degree in Health Promotion was developed, as well as a new doctoral proposal in Interdisciplinary Health Science, which was recently approved by the UT System Board of Regents and will be considered by the Coordinating Board during the next year. Despite the daunting challenge of recruiting nursing faculty, the Nursing program recently responded to the demand for more nurses by increasing its undergraduate student enrollment. We thank the Nursing faculty and major health care organizations in El Paso for their support of these efforts, and we welcome the leadership of Dr. Robert Anders, new Director of the Nursing School and Associate Dean of the College, who has brought a wealth of experience and energy to UTEP and this region.

We also want to take a moment to express appreciation to Jack Conway for his contributions to the College during his tenure as dean, and to Dr. Karen Schmaling for her willingness to dedicate her many talents to service as interim dean.

Other efforts to respond to our community's needs include significant progress in increasing program availability through the implementation of a number of class scheduling innovations, including Wintermester and Maymester offerings as well as more flexible summer schedule options. Special thanks to Pablo Arenaz for spearheading these efforts and to the faculty who have agreed to participate. The College of Business Administration faculty and Dean Chuck Crespy are applauded for establishing an Accelerated MBA program for working professionals downtown, as are the Colleges of Education, Science and Liberal Arts, for continuing to offer courses at area schools to accommodate the schedules of pre-service and in-service teachers.

Responding to the demand for more teachers, the College of Education has greatly expanded its Alternative Teacher Certification program and worked with the Community College and the school districts to establish a job-embedded program for paraprofessionals who wish to become teachers. Thanks to Josie Tinajero, Dean of Education, for her leadership in this and so many other community-based activities. Maggy Smith, Dean of the University College, her Enrollment Services team, and faculty advisors across the campus also deserve our thanks for their successful implementation of a pilot spring registration period for this fall semester. It was enthusiastically received by our students, and helped us manage more effectively our response to student enrollment growth.

UTEP has also continued to work hard to raise higher education aspirations and increase educational participation in this community. In addition to the fine work of the many grant-funded pre-college programs already mentioned, and as a part of the Coordinating Board's "Closing the Gaps" initiative, UTEP has promoted higher education access through television and radio spots and billboards in the award-winning "Our Time is Now" campaign, and a compelling production developed by Theatre Arts faculty member Yvonne Carranza and her GO Theatre troupe have motivated pre-college students across the state to continue their education.

UTEP also conducts extensive outreach activities for a broad range of constituents in area schools and neighborhoods. Ranging from financial aid workshops for high school students and their parents, to the award-winning Criminal Law Research Project, to the Center for Lifelong Learning program for retirees in the community, to an increasingly seamless set of relationships with the El Paso Community College, to the general and customized offerings in Professional and Continuing Education, these programs help greatly to improve the quality of life in our community. UTEP faculty, staff and students seem to be everywhere, expressing with their actions the value that UTEP places on civic engagement.

All of these efforts have resulted in UTEP's largest ever Fall enrollment. 18,542 students are enrolled this semester, a 7.6% increase over last year. First-time freshman enrollment increased 6.5% over Fall 2002, setting a new record and demonstrating that UTEP is the top higher education choice of an increasing number of young people in this region. Especially noteworthy are increases in graduate enrollment. A record 3,457 students are enrolled in master's and doctoral programs at UTEP, a 21% increase over Fall 2002. Special thanks to Chuck Ambler, Maggy Smith, Pablo Arenaz, deans and department chairs for all that they did to accommodate this fast-growing demand for UTEP programs at all levels. We know that it was not easy!

UTEP also contributes to the quality of life in this community through its cultural, arts, and entertainment programming. Through offerings that include special lectures and seminars sponsored by colleges and research centers, Millennium lectures, Theatre Arts and Dinner Theatre productions, women's and men's athletic events, special events such as Homecoming, Minerpalooza and Season of Lights, concerts and other musical productions in Recital Hall and Magoffin Auditorium, and exhibitions in the Art Department Gallery, the Union, and the Library, UTEP presents thought-provoking and entertaining programs to residents of this region. The Special Events office, whose programs range from Cher and Shakira concerts to Smackdown wrestling shows, reported \$6.2 million in revenues last year. There is something for everyone. A very special such event was the Dinner Theatre's 20th anniversary concert presentation of Jesus Christ Superstar to a large and appreciative audience in the Haskins Center that included Sir Tim Rice, its Oscar-winning creator and writer. Another is our Bhutan Days celebration, which will add new cultural dimensions to UTEP's distinctive Bhutanese architecture. We are delighted to welcome Tobgay, a Bhutanese graduate student in Geology, and we hope that all of you will join him and members of the Bhutanese Olympic archery team for this special celebration tomorrow and Saturday.

Regional economic development has received growing attention on the UTEP campus. Efforts are underway to build a more robust tech transfer infrastructure, and to help researchers both protect and commercialize their intellectual property. Economic impact studies of Ft. Bliss and White Sands have been conducted by David Schauer in the Institute for Policy and Economic Development, and Tom Fullerton's econometric models of this region continue to serve as a valuable resource. The College of Engineering, and the Institute for Manufacturing and Materials Management (IM3) are also recognized as assets in regional efforts to promote economic development.

Reciprocally, the business sector has increasingly come to understand that an educated population is an essential ingredient of economic development, and to support UTEP's efforts to ensure both quality and access by endorsing the school districts' and community college's efforts to increase aspirations and improve preparation for higher education. The robust growth in UTEP's enrollment during the past several years, and entering students' improved performances at UTEP, which lead to higher retention and graduation, suggest that the sustained investment in pre-college education is beginning to pay off. Next, we must all focus our collective efforts on ensuring that young people who graduate from UTEP have a greater range of professionally attractive career options in this region. They are talented and well educated, and they represent this community's best hope for a bright future.

Our Ties to Mexico

At UTEP, the word "community" refers to the entire binational metropolitan area of El Paso-Juarez. We view our location on the U.S.-Mexico border as a major asset, and Mexico is very much a part of many of our academic and research programs. UTEP is proud to enroll more than 1800 Mexican students this year—significantly more than any other university in the United States. In fact, UTEP enrolls approximately 15% of all Mexican nationals who attend U.S. colleges and universities.

Special thanks this year to Eric Piel and Nick Zweig in the International Programs Office for their success in ensuring that all Mexican students—as well as students from other countries around the world—were properly registered in the new federal SEVIS database. Quite a nettlesome task!

The Center for Inter-American and Border Studies plays a key role in UTEP's relationship with Mexico and other Latin American countries. Working with faculty in departments across the campus, Center Director Jon Amastae and members of his staff sponsor and support a variety of programs, many of which draw considerable student interest and participation. UTEP's Model Organization of American States team has won first place in this international student competition two years running, and another UTEP team is preparing to head to Santiago, Chile to compete—er, win—again this year. Congratulations to the team members, and thanks to Tony Payan, their faculty sponsor. Look for a very special Millennium lecture this fall by Hernando de Soto, renowned Peruvian economist.

On the academic program front, the bilingual MFA program in creative writing made considerable progress during the past year under the energetic leadership of Johnny Payne. Community response to visits to UTEP of such renowned writers as Elena Poniatowska, demonstrated the high level of regional interest in this program and its outreach potential. In the Communication Department, a new Spanish-language media program will enable UTEP to respond to the growing demand for Spanish-proficient communication professionals, as major news organizations such as the Dallas Morning News and the Chicago Tribune move to daily Spanish-language editions. With its large bilingual student population, and its proximity to Mexico, UTEP is ideally situated for leadership in this growing market.

Outreach to our binational community has also been a recent focus of the Paso del Norte Immigration Museum. Marguerite Rivera Houze has worked to establish a local advisory council, and archivist Susan Novick, has used photographs from the Library's extensive Casasola collection to spark local interest in the history of the El Paso-Juarez metroplex. And, spark interest they have! Most of the photographs that have been published in the El Paso Times and the Diario de Juarez and displayed in local malls, have not only been identified by family members, friends, and the subjects themselves, but they have brought us many new regional histories to add to our collections. And the Oral History Institute, under Kristine Navarro's able direction, has undertaken a major project, which involves collecting the stories of braceros, not only here in El Paso, but in other locations around the U.S. and in Mexico. Thanks too to Claudia Rivers, who directs the Library's Special Collections Department, for her support of these and so many other important projects.

UTEP has also taken the lead on a technically and politically challenging initiative to serve as an Internet 2 link between the U.S. and Mexico. Paul Maxwell, Jim Pulliam, and Richard Adatao have continued to make steady progress on this front, despite many complications, and a fiber link between El Paso and Ciudad Juarez will likely be completed during the next year. UTEP was also proud to join with the board of the U.S.-Mexico Foundation for Science to inaugurate its border office on our campus this summer. We are pleased that Mike Acosta will serve as the director of this office, helping to coordinate FUMEC's broad border agenda, from the West Coast to the Gulf of Mexico.

UTEP has a broad range of research ties with investigators and institutions in Mexico. Examples include a recent agreement with CONACyT, which will enable UTEP to focus on Advanced Manufacturing Technologies, including Nanotechnology, Biotechnology, and Microelectronic Mechanical Systems (or MEMS) technology. It is interesting to note that two recent patents filed by UTEP were with the Center for Advanced Materials Research (CIMAV) in Chihuahua. Another grant, from Wells Fargo Bank, places the Institute for Policy and Economic Development in a lead role in developing a robust database for both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border region, from San Diego-Tijuana to Brownsville-Matamoros.

Infrastructure Development

The Institute for Policy and Economic Development is also busily planning for the conversion of Kelly Hall, a vacant high-rise residence hall on Sun Bowl Drive, into the Paso del Norte Research and Business Development Complex, supported by a grant from the Economic Development Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce. This major renovation project, which was launched earlier this month, will bring together in a convenient campus location for visitors many of UTEP's economic development and public policy outreach activities on both sides of the border. We appreciate the efforts of Dennis Soden and Mike Acosta to move forward on this important new coordinated outreach focus.

Work is also underway to transform another vacant facility on the campus. Seamon Hall, originally built in 1927 and used only for storage for the past 30 years or so, is undergoing a complete renovation. Thanks to the generosity of two Houston foundations and local benefactors Stanlee and Jerry Rubin, this former mining engineering building will become a splendid new center for the exhibition and study of contemporary art. We thank Gallery Director Kate Bonansinga for providing leadership for this important project.

UTEP also launched three major new construction projects during the past year, an investment of nearly \$50 million. A new Academic Services building will draw together most academic support services, including the Registrar, Admissions, Scholarships, Financial Aid, and the Graduate School, in one conveniently located facility, just off Schuster. A new Biosciences facility will provide state-of-the-art research laboratory space for our growing portfolio of biomedical and health-related research activity. A new addition to the Engineering building will provide much-needed expansion space for growing student enrollment and research activity in that college.

Parking lot closures associated with these construction projects have given a whole new meaning to the "Pardon Our Mess" slogan. In an effort to anticipate parking challenges, Greg McNicol and Bill Adcox added 350 new parking spaces by re-striping several lots, and, working with a broad-based campus team, they developed creative strategies to encourage parking at the north end of the campus where space is available. With 1500 riders per day, Miner Metro shuttle bus service from the north end parking lots has begun to change students' parking habits, and we all probably need to begin to take a cue from them. UTEP's surging student enrollment will soon require us to implement a plan to close the center of the campus to all vehicles. There is a Miner Metro ride in all of our futures!

One of the new parking areas at the north end of the campus is the former Rudolph Chevrolet property. This real estate acquisition is now being master planned by Greg

McNicol, Bill Schafer and Richard Padilla for expansion of student apartments facing Sun Bowl Drive, and commercial development on the Mesa frontage. Additional student housing is needed because Miner Village is 100% occupied, with a waiting list of students who seek to live on campus. This north campus location is desirable because of its proximity to the Swimming and Fitness Center and other recreational infrastructure. And, speaking of the Swimming & Fitness Center, attendance has grown to an average of more than 1000 participants each day. Brian Carter continues to do an outstanding job of ensuring that this facility is first-rate in all respects.

We have also begun development of a Women's Softball Complex, just off Sun Bowl Drive, to accommodate UTEP's newest intercollegiate sport. This complex will not only provide a softball field for the new team, but also dressing rooms and offices for both women's softball and our women's soccer program. We welcome Kathleen Rodriguez, our new coach, and wish her and her new team an exciting and successful first year. You can be sure that I will be among the fans cheering them on!

Less obvious to the campus visitor, but extremely important to academic and research programs, are the many modifications to the interior of facilities, as well as technology infrastructure upgrades. NSF support has enabled us to create an ACES for Math facility in Bell Hall. Students' enthusiastic response to these Academic Centers in Engineering and Science has encouraged us to create similar spaces across the campus. The College of Business has developed plans, and successfully raised private funds, to create a new Student Center. Dean Chuck Crespy often remarks that he would like for Business students to spend more of their day with us on campus, and, based on our experience in science and engineering, this new facility will certainly encourage that.

Demands for more and more technology applications have kept Jim Pulliam, the Information Technology team, the Undergraduate Learning Center team, and many others across the campus quite busy. Whether it's automating our physical inventory, major gift prospects, or parking management systems, implementing UTEP's new Smart Card, installing wireless technology in Education Building classrooms, expanding distance education or applications in enrollment and career services, or converting Horizons to an on-line publication, technology is the name of the game these days. Identifying resources to support this exponential growth in technology applications, and meeting demands for even more in the future keep all of us hopping.

The good news is that critical infrastructure development is being accomplished, largely because we have been successful in developing creative funding strategies, leveraging funds from a variety of sources, both public and private. The bad news is that UTEP and other UT System components continue to lag far behind peer institutions in the state in terms of capital funding for repair and renovation of facilities, equipment, and library materials. The disparity between institutions supported by the Permanent University Fund and those that receive legislatively appropriated capital funding continues to be significant and grossly inequitable. The long-term cost in terms of deferred maintenance and lost opportunities in such areas as grant matches for equipment is enormous. And, this disparity is fundamentally unfair to the students we serve. We will continue to try to focus attention on this major issue as we move toward the next regular legislative session.

Quality and Accountability

Another major theme of the past year has been increased attention to strategies that enable us to be accountable for the quality of all that we do. Accreditation reviews, which occur regularly, serve as one such strategy. The College of Engineering received notification last year of the full re-accreditation of all its programs. Thanks to all the Engineering faculty and staff for helping us achieve this high approval rating. Thanks, too, to Roberto Osegueda, who served ably as interim dean this year, and a warm welcome to Barry Benedict, who brings his extensive administrative experience to serve as Dean of Engineering.

The Occupational Therapy program was also re-accredited this year, and we have already begun initial preparations for institutional re-accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, which will culminate in 2005-06. All of these accreditation reviews validate the quality of our programs and provide us with opportunities for continuous improvement.

Test scores are another indicator of the quality of the preparation of UTEP students, especially in professional programs. Significant improvement in ExCET scores by teacher education graduates and high pass-rates of Nursing graduates on their licensing exams assure us that our students meet stringent professional standards. Thanks to Josie Tinajero and her team in the College of Education and to the faculty in Nursing for their fine work in preparing graduates for these exams and for success in their professional careers.

Placement of UTEP graduates is yet another way of validating the success of our academic programs. Despite major downturns in the economy, UTEP graduates have continued to be recruited aggressively by many corporations, and by graduate and professional schools. Students who complete UTEP's Law School Preparation Institute continue to be admitted—and offered scholarships—to this country's most prestigious law schools. This year, one LSPI graduate has headed to top-ranked Yale University Law School, and half of this year's class will attend law schools ranked in the Top 20. Once again we thank Bob Webking, Bill Weaver, Rob Pallitto and Shelli Soto for their commitment to UTEP's pre-law students.

Another measure of quality is the caliber of professional who seeks to join the UTEP team when positions are opened on our campus. In addition to those already mentioned, we welcome new faculty and staff members who join us this year. These new faces are fewer in number than usual, because state appropriations reductions forced us to be more conservative, and that fact probably increases our expectations of them... just a little. I know that four new members of the UTEP team, Billy Gillespie, new men's basketball coach and his assistants, Sergio Rouco, Doc Sadler, and Alvin Brooks, are already more than aware of those high expectations.

Accountability for quality is also revealed in the success of UTEP students, faculty and staff in national and international competitions. Among UTEP student accomplishments, prestigious NSF graduate fellowships were awarded to three UTEP graduates this past year, two in Physics and one in Psychology. A sculpture student, Alejandro Almanza, received the International Sculpture Center's Outstanding Student Achievement in Contemporary Sculpture Award. Students in Advertising took first place in the Southwest region of the

National Student Advertising Competition, besting such universities as BYU, U. of Arizona and U. of New Mexico. Accounting major, Danny Muñoz, will spend a year in Japan with a Freeman Foundation-Asia Scholarship Award. I could go on and on, but, however proud enumerating these additional recognitions might make you, they might also exhaust you, so I will ask you to fill in the many blanks that I have left for significant student accomplishments that you know about.

At the same time that we celebrate the recognitions received by many members of the UTEP family, we should also take time to acknowledge the many unsung heroes and sheroes on the campus, whose good work makes such a difference in the quality of this institution. We recognize the efforts of staff members in Facilities Services, Environmental Health and Safety, and Campus Police, who maintain a clean and secure campus, and who are committed to provide excellent service to us all. Special thanks to Greg McNicol, who not only oversaw Facilities Services during most of the past year, but also managed the development of the largest set of new construction projects in UTEP's history. I know Greg joins me in welcoming Juan Guerra, new director of Facilities Services. We look forward to working with him as we seek to implement cost-savings measures in response to new budgetary realities. We are also pleased to welcome Carlos Subia back to his assistant chief duties in the Campus Police Department.

We thank Mike Spence and his team in Special Facilities Management for their behind-the-scenes technical support of campus events of every imaginable type. Whether converting the Haskins Center overnight from a concert to a graduation ceremony, or building "breakable doors" for the Seamon and Kelly Hall renovation launches, they can always be counted on to do an outstanding job.

We recognize the tireless efforts of staff members in financial services and budgeting, who not only had to respond to the many demands of the regular legislative session, but also to implement the 7% mid-year appropriations reduction last year and this year's 11.5% reduction...and who even now continue to get updated interpretations of legislative actions that affect UTEP's bottom line. Special thanks to new Vice President for Finance & Administration Cindy Villa and her leadership team for their good work, and especially their sustained good will.

Auditing and Consulting Services, Compliance, Human Resources, EEO, and the Center for Institutional Evaluation, Research and Planning, all work behind-the-scenes to provide us with the data and analyses that we need to demonstrate our success in meeting high standards of excellence and efficiency. As the UT System moves into an increased emphasis on accountability, the roles of these units will likely continue to grow.

We thank the Disabled Student Services Office staff and many faculty and staff members across the campus who helped 38 students with disabilities, a record number, graduate in May; and staff in many other Student Affairs departments who foster a broad range of extracurricular opportunities for UTEP students to develop personally and acquire leadership skills.

Enrollment Services staff are only now coming up for air after the frenzy surrounding registration for the fall semester. This team's direct interface with students means that the

quality of their work, and their commitment to customer service, strongly shape attitudes toward UTEP among students and the surrounding community. But, they do not do this alone. Each of us is a representative of UTEP, each of us contributes to UTEP's image in all that we say and do, and each of us must therefore be accountable for the quality of our contributions.

I think you will all agree that 2002-03 was an amazingly good year at UTEP, despite reductions in state funding and the challenges of providing quality higher education programs to a fast-growing student population. We could rest on our laurels, but that is not our style. There remains much to do to solidify the gains that we have made, and to create new opportunities for the future: We will implement new doctoral programs and strengthen graduate education. We will continue efforts to make UTEP programs more accessible to residents of this region. We will begin implementation of deregulated tuition. We will complete construction, renovation and infrastructure upgrade projects that have already begun, and start new ones. We will work with Chancellor Yudof and the Washington Advisory Group to plan for UTEP's strategic research development during the next several years. We will continue to serve as a leading Hispanic-Serving Institution, and a model for preK-20 collaboration on the national level. We will work with Texas Tech, the UT System, and interested members of the community on the development of a four-year medical school in El Paso. We will continue to try to strengthen public health education and research in El Paso. We will recruit new faculty, administrators and staff members. We will prepare for SACS re-accreditation, and we will celebrate UTEP's 90th birthday next spring. And, that's just for starters....

What we have learned at UTEP during the past decade is that with a clear understanding of who we are and whom we serve, a strong commitment to shaping the future of this region, and a willingness to work tirelessly to achieve our mission and uphold our values, we can accomplish almost anything. Our commitment to the development of the next generation of this region's—indeed, this nation's—leaders is critical to them and to our collective future. We thank each and every one of you for your commitment to the students who come to us with their dreams and aspirations, and we wish all of the UTEP family another successful year.