

**UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO**  
**FALL 2004 CONVOCATION**

Diana Natalicio, President

Ninety years ago this month, a group of students began their studies at the Texas State School of Mines and Metallurgy in pursuit of their dreams to become mining engineers. These 27 young men were the first students to enroll at the institution known today as The University of Texas at El Paso.

This new educational opportunity was created for them through the vision of a group of El Pasoans, who saw higher education as a key to this community's future. In the Spring of 1913, the Texas Legislature authorized the establishment of a mining school in El Paso, if El Pasoans were able to raise sufficient funds to acquire facilities to house the school. The facilities in question belonged to a military boarding school near Ft. Bliss that had served dependents of U.S. families living in Mexico until the Mexican Revolution disrupted the flow of students, causing the school to close. The price tag was \$50,000, a large sum of money in 1914, and the timing was less than propitious with the revolution strongly impacting the El Paso-Juarez region. Undaunted, a group of visionary civic leaders accepted the challenge, raised the \$50,000 and purchased the boarding school buildings, all in less than one year. In April 1914, The University of Texas Board of Regents accepted the \$50,000 commitment and formally established the Texas State School of Mines and Metallurgy in El Paso.

During the past several months, we have been celebrating these major milestones, commemorating the events and individuals who helped launch this institution. In April, we recognized the descendants of the 80 civic leaders who pledged the initial \$50,000 to establish the School. Tomorrow, we will recognize the descendants of the first group of 27 students. These recognitions not only allow us to recollect and enjoy our institution's 90-year history, but also to appreciate the strong foundation upon which today's UTEP rests.

The contrasts between the Texas State School of Mines and Metallurgy of 1914 and The University of Texas at El Paso today are obvious and significant: from that first class of 27 young men to today's enrollment of 19,000, more than half of whom are women; from a single program in mining engineering to 81 bachelor's, 72 master's and 12 doctoral programs offered by six colleges and the Graduate School; from a faculty highly focused on preparing undergraduate students to pursue a single career path, to a faculty whose interests and expertise create a broad range of high-quality learning experiences for both undergraduate and graduate students, and national recognition for UTEP.

What has not changed, however, is this institution's commitment to the El Paso-Juarez region, and this region's commitment to us. From those 80 El Pasoans whose vision for the future launched this mining school in 1914, to the many productive partnerships between UTEP and this region today, our mutuality of interests has been clear and energizing to us all. As our 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary slogan has proclaimed: In 1914, we were El Paso's future.....We still are.

We all knew that our 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary year would be special, as all such major milestones tend to be. What we could not have predicted was just how extraordinarily eventful the past year would become. Every aspect of UTEP's operations appeared to have experienced a sudden surge of energy, and all of us have been moving as fast as we can to keep up with what appears to be an ever accelerating pace of activity.

Consider these numbers, which reflect just a small sampling of the volume of business conducted across the campus during the past year:

- 14,300 purchase orders were issued
- 3.3 million documents were produced by the Copy Center
- 35,000 pounds of paper products were recycled
- More than \$80 million in Financial Aid was disbursed to 12,771 UTEP students
- 1 million visitors came to the campus for events, conferences and other business....42,000 of them for the Monster Truck Show in the Sun Bowl
- 270,000 tickets were sold by the UTEP Ticket Center
- 117,380 books were sold by the UTEP Bookstore
- 25,000 Miner Gold Cards were issued, and they were swiped 500,000 times

Although most of the transactions described here are conducted behind the scenes, they are extremely important to the smooth and efficient functioning of the University. Managing UTEP's continued growth in a constrained budget climate obviously requires innovative solutions, and UTEP staff members across the campus are meeting the challenge of providing ever better and more efficient services. Special thanks to Cindy Villa for her leadership in this important area.

The most visible sign of UTEP's growth and increased activity is new campus construction: cranes silhouetted against El Paso's blue sky and construction-related headaches on our campus streets. The past year has brought to UTEP the largest facilities expansion program in our history: more than \$50 million in new construction and major renovation projects. Although some of us have been inconvenienced by temporary parking lot closures and detours, we all know that we are contributing to an investment in UTEP's future.

Among the first of the major projects to be completed this fall is the \$2.1 million conversion of Seamon Hall into the Stanlee and Gerald Rubin Center for the Visual Arts, which we will formally dedicate tomorrow. Converting Seamon Hall, a retired 1927-vintage mining engineering building, into a visual arts center was, for some, a daring—and perhaps even counter-intuitive—prospect. But, thanks to the confidence and generosity of the Houston Endowment and the Brown Foundation in Houston, and of UTEP alumni Stanlee and Jerry Rubin, the creativity of the architects and designers, the leadership of UTEP Art Galleries Director Kate Bonansinga and Art Department Chair Greg Elliott, the cooperation of Kate Miller and the Geology Department, and the hidden beauty of venerable Seamon Hall, the transformation has been not only successful, but inspired. An underutilized Geology storage facility has become a major campus and community center for the exhibition and study of contemporary art. If you haven't yet seen it, stop by sometime soon to share in the excitement of what has been accomplished. The sleepy South end of the Sun Bowl parking lot has awakened with the energy and creativity of artists and those who appreciate their work

A second major renovation project will be completed this fall when the first three floors of Kelly Hall on Sun Bowl Drive convert from an old-style dormitory into the Paso del Norte Research and Business Complex. This \$1.8 million project was led by Dennis Soden, Director of UTEP's Institute for Policy and Economic Development, and funded by the Economic Development Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce. Once again, UTEP has been able to secure external funding to convert an unused campus facility into a busy and productive center of outreach to this community, in this case to Paso del Norte regional businesses. The first phase of this renovation will be completed later this fall, and the first occupants will include IPED and a number of other special outreach initiatives. The UTEP Purchasing Department will also occupy space in Kelly Hall to provide improved service to both on- and off-campus customers, including our highly successful outreach to Historically Underutilized Businesses. And, there are high expectations that we will be successful in securing additional grant funding to complete the second phase of the Kelly Hall conversion.

A host of other renovation and remodeling projects were also undertaken during the course of the past year, ranging from such life safety projects as the installation of fire sprinklers in the Stanton Building and upgrades in emergency lighting in the Sun Bowl, to campus climate improvements such as renovating the Roderick Auditorium in the College of Health Sciences, and refurbishing the El Paso Natural Gas Conference Center. Even UTEP's remote Indio Ranch in Hudspeth County has a striking new bunkhouse to accommodate student and faculty researchers, thanks to the fine work of UTEP's Facilities Services Department.

Several new buildings are also changing the campus skyline. Among the first to be completed will be a \$7 million, 44,000 square foot addition to the Engineering Building, which includes classrooms, a student support center and offices for faculty and staff, to accommodate the rapidly growing enrollments and externally funded research in that college. Once faculty offices are moved to the new addition, the current facility will be reconfigured to create much needed laboratory space for student and faculty research activity. Just as engineering was envisioned in 1914 as a key factor in this region's future development, we know that it will continue to be a cornerstone to progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

A second major facility is the splendid new \$10 million Academic Services Building which many of us have watched rise along Schuster Street. A 52,000 square foot building designed to provide students with one-stop service for a variety of their enrollment needs, this new facility will bring together in one convenient location such operations as Financial Aid, Registrar and Records, Student Business Services, Scholarships, Admissions and Recruitment, and the Graduate School. We expect to complete construction late this fall, and to be open for business at the beginning of the spring 2005 semester.

On the opposite end of the campus, the \$2.1 million Helen of Troy Softball Complex is taking shape on Sun Bowl Drive near the Swimming and Fitness Center and the soccer field. With a projected completion date of December, this new facility will provide a 600-seat stadium for the women's softball team and locker rooms and offices for both women's softball and soccer. This will be a terrific addition to the recreational opportunities at the north end of the campus and one of the finest women's softball complexes in the U.S.

Finally, a major new building has risen majestically next to the Library to accommodate UTEP's fast-growing research portfolio in the Biological Sciences. Scheduled for completion next summer, this \$27 million, 100,000 sq. ft. building will provide UTEP faculty, students and staff with state-of-the-art laboratory facilities to enable them to compete successfully for external funding in biomedical and health-related basic research. Thanks to Tom Brady, Eppie Rael and Biology faculty members who helped secure funding and added their expertise to the design of this very important new research facility on our UTEP campus.

Special thanks go as well to Greg McNicol, Juan Guerra, Carmen Byers, Robert Moss, and the many members of their teams for their outstanding work in overseeing these many construction and renovation projects. I know that their rpm's have been in the red zone all year!

One of the primary drivers of facilities expansion and reconfiguration at UTEP has been our transformation during the past 15 years from a comprehensive undergraduate teaching institution into a Research Intensive University in the Carnegie classification. Fast-growing graduate and research programs require additional and often highly specialized space, such as that in the new Biological Sciences Building.

This institutional transformation is well documented in a recent report of the Washington Advisory Group, consultants engaged by the University of Texas System to assess the research accomplishments and capacities of eight of its nine academic institutions. For the purposes of this study, UTEP was grouped with its three peer institutions in the System—UT Arlington, UT Dallas, and UT San Antonio. All of us at UTEP can be very proud of the outcome of this objective external assessment, which strongly validated our progress during the past fifteen years, and our enhanced capacity for future research and graduate program development. Our next challenge will be to prepare a plan which will define the areas of UTEP's strategic research development over the next ten years, provide a roadmap to guide that development, and identify policies, practices, metrics and investments that will be required to implement it.

New grants awarded during the past year reflect both UTEP's success in securing highly competitive funding, and the breadth of our research activity across colleges and research centers. Thanks to the good work of faculty and staff and support from Sponsored Projects and Institutional Advancement, 443 grant proposals were submitted by UTEP faculty and staff members during the past year, with a total face value of more than \$140 million. 225 grants were funded for a total of \$56.5 million, up from \$44 million last year and \$33 million the year before. That's progress! UTEP ranks second in total federal research funding among academic institutions in the University of Texas System and fifth among all public universities in Texas.

It is impossible to cite here all of the major grants received during the past year, but a few examples may give you a sense of the scope of this successful grant activity:

- UTEP was one of only 11 universities nationally to be awarded a grant through the Teachers for a New Era program sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation. This \$5 million grant will enable UTEP to strengthen the partnership of faculty in the colleges of Science, Liberal Arts, and Education to enhance teacher preparation.

Thanks to Pablo Arenaz, Howard Daudistel, Josie Tinajero and Steve Riter for their leadership in coordinating this large cross-college initiative.

- In Business, Frank Hoy is director of a major university-community partnership to enhance entrepreneurship education at UTEP and in the El Paso community, with support of a \$2 million grant from the Kauffman Foundation.
- In Geology, Professor Jose Hurtado received a research grant from NASA to study earthquake hazards and the effects of groundwater migration in the El Paso area.
- In Health Sciences, a team led by Bob Anders collaborated with colleagues at the UT Houston School of Public Health to secure a \$4.1 million grant from the National Institutes of Health to establish a Center for the Advancement of Hispanic Health Disparities. These funds will enable UTEP to build its research capacity in an area of profound local impact and growing national concern.
- The U.S. Department of Education is sponsoring two new UTEP projects: in Mechanical & Industrial Engineering, Professor Rong Pan has received a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education to infuse international supply chain management into the engineering curriculum; and in the College of Business, Professor Christine Haynes was successful in securing support for UTEP's new doctoral program in International Business.
- To help increase faculty diversity and develop faculty leadership potential at UTEP, an interdisciplinary team—Evelyn Posey, Ann Gates, Pat Witherspoon, Elizabeth Anthony and Tine Reimers—secured a \$3.4 million grant from the National Science Foundation, whose benefits have already been demonstrated in departments and colleges across the campus.
- Faculty diversity is also the focus of a grant from the National Science Foundation awarded to a collaboration between UTEP and Howard University in Washington, D.C. Thanks to the good work of Chuck Ambler, the two universities are partnering to increase the number of underrepresented minorities who complete Ph.D. degrees and pursue academic careers.
- A research team in Engineering, led by David Zubia, received a \$1 million grant from the Texas Instruments Foundation for development of semiconductor and electronics materials and wireless communications.
- Maggy Smith is leading a UTEP team that partnered with EPCC to receive a \$2.8 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education to enhance the transfer program with the El Paso Community College through technological interface and a variety of expanded communication strategies.
- A \$400,000 grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to the Center for Civic Engagement will support the establishment of a Community Partnership Center at UTEP. Led by Kathy Staudt, this Center will foster community development through a variety of strategies, including technical assistance to non-profit organizations in the region.
- In an interesting interdisciplinary partnership, faculty in Sociology/Anthropology joined with colleagues in Civil Engineering and other departments to secure a grant from the National Science Foundation to study the consequences of “extreme events” at the U.S.-Mexico border. Congratulations to Soheil Nazarian, Joe Heyman and their many faculty partners across the campus for this successful joint venture.

Most of UTEP's research activity involves students, both graduate and undergraduate. In fact, UTEP has gained national recognition for its success in encouraging the participation of undergraduate students in research projects across the campus. It is well known that undergraduate research experiences have a profound impact on students' decisions to pursue graduate study, and the good news is that UTEP is adding more than its share of underrepresented minority students to graduate school ranks, particularly in science and engineering. But, however successful we are at UTEP, this continues to be an ongoing challenge at the national level. The number of Latino students who complete bachelor's degrees has not kept pace with the growth in the U.S. Hispanic population, and the numbers at the graduate level across the country continue to be disappointingly small. UTEP clearly has a major role to play in changing this national demographic profile in graduate schools and professional careers across the country.

And, we are increasingly successful in playing that role. This fall, 18,918 students are enrolled at UTEP, a 2% increase over Fall 2003, and the largest enrollment ever. This is very good news indeed for this region, because it means that more residents are pursuing a post-secondary education to prepare them for more productive and satisfying lives. 72% of UTEP's students are Mexican-American, and 55% are female. We should be proud that UTEP is one of the very few research universities in the United States whose student population mirrors the demographics of the region it serves.

Of the total enrollment, 17.5% is at the graduate level, reflecting continued development of UTEP's graduate programs. Doctoral program enrollment increased 10% over last year to 286 students, continuing the growth that can be expected as new Ph.D. programs are implemented. During the past year, three new doctoral programs were launched—in Civil Engineering, International Business, and Composition and Rhetoric. A fourth, in Interdisciplinary Health Sciences, was approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board this summer for start-up during the coming year. With this approval, all UTEP colleges now offer at least one doctoral program, and UTEP's total number of doctoral programs rises to 12.

Program development is also occurring at the master's level. The Accelerated Master's in Business Administration degree program graduated its first proud class last month. The Master's degree in Public Administration was revamped and revitalized, thanks to Dennis Soden and faculty members who worked with him. And, the first cohort of high school teachers is now enrolled in the new Master of Arts in Teaching Mathematics degree, sponsored by the Math/Science Partnership grant from the National Science Foundation.

At the bachelor's level, the Communication Department has launched a promising new Spanish language media program named for UTEP alumnus Ruben Salazar. The explosive growth of Spanish-language media and marketing in the United States has created a demand for bilingual, bicultural media professionals, and UTEP is well positioned to respond. Thanks to Zita Arocha and Pat Witherspoon for their leadership in developing this exciting new set of opportunities for UTEP students.

Enrollment growth is partially attributable to the recruitment of new students. Although new first-time freshman enrollment declined somewhat, perhaps as a result of increased tuition, transfer student enrollment grew by 44%. Most of those transfer students come to UTEP from the El Paso Community College, whose enrollment, like UTEP's, continues to

grow. Increased higher education participation in El Paso is evidence of the successful efforts of our colleagues in school districts throughout the County who have partnered with us in the El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence to raise aspirations of young people and prepare them well for university-level work. We can be very proud that the three largest El Paso school districts rank first among all major metropolitan areas in Texas in both standardized test scores and high school graduation rates. We are indeed “closing the gaps” in higher education participation in El Paso.

An increasing number of students appear to be choosing to take some courses at UTEP and others at EPCC during the same semester. Thanks to the cooperation between our institutions, students in this region now enjoy the benefits of joint admissions applications, joint financial aid, and a variety of other seamless processes. We can expect these trends to continue, as the gap between tuition rates at our two institutions continues to widen, and students customize their enrollment to accommodate financial and scheduling constraints.

Tuition was a major focus of our attention during the past year. The 2003 Texas Legislature reduced state appropriations to all public universities, in UTEP’s case by more than 11%. The Legislature also deregulated tuition, giving authority to university governing boards to set tuition rates. After the legislative session, UTEP and all other University of Texas System institutions engaged in a six-month-long process to determine how best to address the budget shortfalls caused by the reduction in State appropriations. A UTEP committee, ably chaired by Vice President for Student Affairs Richard Padilla and consisting of UTEP students, faculty and administrators, worked intensively to engage the UTEP campus in a dialogue about how best to increase the quality of UTEP’s programs while at the same time ensure that a UTEP education remains affordable to the students we seek to serve. A combination of organizational and operational efficiencies, phased tuition increases, and enhanced financial aid, was the outcome of this highly consultative process. Continued enrollment growth this year, despite tuition increases, suggests that this process was successful in striking an appropriate balance between quality and affordability goals.

Another component of enrollment growth is student retention. Creating access to a UTEP education is only the first step in student success. Once enrolled, students must make progress toward achieving their educational goals, and UTEP faculty and staff are their partners in that quest. First-year retention is one of the metrics used to determine whether the University is providing a supportive environment for student success. The transition from high school to the university is challenging for most students, particularly those who are first in their families to attend college. UTEP has developed a number of nationally acclaimed initiatives to address the special needs of entering students. The real proof of the success of these programs is the outcomes they achieve. Freshman retention—the number of first-year students who successfully return for their second year—has increased significantly, from 63% in 1996 to 71% in 2002. Thanks to Maggy Smith, Dean of the University College, Dorothy Ward, Director of the Entering Student Program, and the many faculty and staff members who work with them, for their strong commitment to student success.

For a majority of students, success is defined as a diploma, or successful completion of a degree, and UTEP’s six-year graduation rate is comparable to peer institutions in the UT System. However, like many other urban universities, where a majority of students commute and maintain active off-campus lives, UTEP monitors data on student persistence and

graduation for up to ten years after initial enrollment. By that 10-year measure, we know that more than half of any given entering cohort of students will have either graduated or will still be enrolled.

Although we are equally proud of all of our successful graduates, no matter how long it takes them to complete a degree, we are also committed to seek ways for all students to make more timely progress toward achieving their goals. The longer a degree program is extended, the greater the likelihood that it will be permanently interrupted by life's many other challenges. Because we understand that many of our students face more than their fair share of life's challenges, we are even more determined to try to ensure that we are definitely part of the "graduation solution," not contributors to the problem.

There has been a good deal of thinking at UTEP during the past few years about student retention and graduation, and you are going to hear more about it during the coming year. We are engaged in our ten-year re-accreditation process by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and we have focused our SACS Quality Enhancement Plan on student retention and graduation. We believe that this is the next natural step in UTEP's undergraduate program development, building on the successful foundation laid by our K-16 Collaborative for Academic Excellence partnership and the Entering Student Program.

We know that many of our students face personal challenges over which we have little or no control, such as their own or family members' health, employment changes, military transfers, or other personal issues. But, we also know that what we do can have a major impact on students' success in progressing toward their degrees. I already mentioned tuition and financial aid, which is critical to a majority of our students. There are other factors, such as the infrequency of required course offerings, the scheduling of classes at times that conflict with off-campus work schedules, and the increase in the number of hours required to complete many degrees (whatever happened to the 120-hour bachelor's degree?). Our challenge is to understand all of these factors better, to distinguish between those over which we have little or no control and those that we can do something about, and then to convert our knowledge into action. One of the tactics we plan to use is to talk directly with students, both those who have successfully completed their degrees within six years, and those who have been delayed, diverted, or even deterred from graduating. Their experiences will guide our thinking and actions. Pablo Arenaz, Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs, is leading our SACS re-accreditation effort and developing the Quality Enhancement Plan. Working closely with him will be Roy Mathew, who recently joined UTEP as director of the Center for Institutional Evaluation, Research and Planning, and who draws on a wealth of experience and a commitment to bringing data to bear on institutional policy and decision-making.

Another major factor in student success, according to research on this subject, is what is often called campus climate. Do students feel comfortable and welcome on the campus? Do they believe that the faculty and staff are their partners in pursuing their dreams? Do they have easy access to services that encourage and support them? Are there spaces where they can congregate, study, recreate, or just hang out? ...they would surely add "park" to this list of their space needs!

Inviting facilities contribute significantly to the climate on a campus. We all know that the UTEP campus is beautiful and that its coherent Bhutanese architectural style is a nationally

recognized asset. We also know that the Facilities Services staff works very hard to ensure that our buildings and grounds are well maintained and attractive, and we are grateful to Juan Guerra and all of his Associates in Facilities Services for their commitment to increased efficiency and continuous improvement. Facilities such as the Swimming and Fitness Center continue to offer excellent recreational and fitness opportunities, and their high utilization level (averaging more than 1000 students per day) attests to their importance. Improvements inside the Union building, and the newly inaugurated stage and shade structures in the Union Plaza provide more attractive gathering places for student programs and relaxation.

Food is another dimension of campus climate. Although most UTEP students do not live on campus, appealing and convenient food services are nonetheless very important to them and to the faculty and staff members who bring their appetites to campus. Dining options in both the Union and the recently refurbished El Paso Natural Gas Conference Center have increased during the past year, as have food service extensions in such locations as the Colleges of Education and Business. We greatly appreciate the responsiveness of George Rankin and the Sodexo organization he represents, and we look forward to continuing to develop more such innovations in the future. And, in case you haven't noticed, UTEP is now drinking Pepsi products. Thanks to Victor Pacheco and many other University staff members who helped manage this complex transaction.

An interesting trend during the past several years has been the attention that colleges and academic programs have focused on campus climate issues. In some cases this takes the form of creating facilities that will encourage students to spend more time on campus, in learning communities, study groups, and team activities. At UTEP, the first such facilities were the Academic Centers for Engineering and Science, created by Ben Flores with support from the NSF-funded Model Institution for Excellence program that he directs. Inspired by their success, other colleges have sought to create such student-centered spaces. The College of Education refurbished and furnished lobby and corridor areas to provide attractive and comfortable spaces for study and conversation. Numerous projects were also undertaken to upgrade facilities in the Music, Theater, Dance and Film areas of the Fox Fine Arts complex. The most ambitious such project undertaken last year was the conversion of Neill Auditorium into the College of Business Student Center, funded entirely by donations from friends and supporters of the University.

In other instances, the focus is on bringing state-of-the-art technology to students through wireless and multi-media infrastructure in their facilities and through providing faculty with enhanced technology for teaching, whether it be in the Undergraduate Learning Center, in technology-enhanced classrooms, or from portable classroom kits, consisting of a laptop computer and projector. Thanks to Bill Roberson, Ken Pierce, deans and department chairs, and all those who work with them—including many student employees—for ensuring that UTEP students continue to benefit from and enjoy the latest technological advances in teaching and learning. Special thanks to Richard Aduato for overseeing IT during the past several years. He happily passes that baton this year to Steve Riter, who has assumed the new position of Vice President for Information Resources and Planning.

Technology permeates nearly every aspect of campus life at UTEP. Recent examples include improving access and security to buildings, laboratories, and parking lots through smart card technology; web-based services that provide students with direct on-line access

to Financial Aid and Career Services; a new email-based student account status and billing system; a new grants management system; and a successful integration of UTEP's Goldmine and the Student and Exchange Visitors Information System, best known as SEVIS, which has been critical to ensuring that UTEP and our international students comply with all new federal immigration regulations. Special thanks to the International Programs Office and IT staffs who went well beyond the call of duty to implement this new and often recalcitrant process.

A discussion of campus climate would not be complete without mention of parking and traffic. Enrollment increases, new construction, and growth in UTEP's special events, conferences, and campus visits are transforming what is a chronic source of irritation on most campuses into a major challenge on this one. The fact is that UTEP is relatively land-locked, and much of our land is topographically challenged for construction or parking. As the need for new campus facilities grows, we must convert parking lots into construction sites. We acquired the car dealership property on the north end of the campus between Sun Bowl Drive and Mesa, and it now used for overflow parking. We are delighted that so many students (as many as 2000 per day) welcomed the opportunity to park and ride the Miner Metro shuttle back and forth to the Union Building and points in between. But, the need for additional parking and more efficient traffic flow will have to be a major focus of our attention and investments during the next several years. We have already begun plans to construct a parking garage and bookstore on the site of the Liberal Arts parking lot, and to provide land at Oregon and Baltimore Streets in a partnership with the City of El Paso to construct a transit terminal and parking garage that will serve UTEP students, special events in the Don Haskins Center and the Sun Bowl, and customers of the growing "Cincinnati Avenue Entertainment District" nearby.

The organic growth of an entertainment district on the Mesa Street side of the UTEP campus is a welcomed development. Most major universities spawn such activity. Although there have been occasional tensions with residents of the area, UTEP is committed to be a good neighbor, and we will continue to work with the nearby hospitals, the Kern Place, Rim and Sunset Heights neighborhoods, and the businesses on Mesa, Cincinnati, and Stanton Streets to ensure that we all benefit from the synergies that are possible through cooperation.

UTEP's community outreach goes far beyond our immediate neighborhood. Recognizing that we represent an enormous source of expertise and person-power, we have tried to be responsive to community needs and opportunities, ranging from fostering economic development, to volunteering for community projects, to providing entertainment. Among the many examples of UTEP's outreach to the community, let me mention just a few that capture their range and spirit.

- Sandra Braham and her team have administered a large portfolio of highly successful federally funded outreach programs to pre-college youth, including Upward Bound, Student Support Services, High-School Equivalency, GEAR UP, and Educational Talent Search.
- The Criminal Justice program has partnered with Professional and Continuing Education to offer a series of accelerated courses for law enforcement professionals.
- The Communication Department has secured funding from Dow Jones to offer a special summer journalism workshop for high school students.

- The Institute for Policy and Economic Development has completed a variety of economic impact and research studies for Ft. Bliss and other organizations in this region.
- The Financial Aid, Admissions and Recruitment, and Scholarship offices continue to conduct workshops in schools throughout this region; more than 4,300 students and their parents participated during the past year.
- UTEP's expenditures to Historically Underutilized Businesses in this region—nearly one-third of all expenditures—ranked us first among UT System institutions.
- Individual faculty and staff members serve in leadership roles in a variety of local, state, and national organizations: among these, Frank Hoy served as president of the Rotary Club of El Paso and of the U.S. Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship; Richard Padilla as chair of the Local Employee Committee of the State Employee Charitable Campaign; and Maceo Dailey as chair of the Texas Council for the Humanities.

UTEP is also a primary venue for special events in the Paso del Norte region, offering a variety of cultural, artistic and entertainment programs, ranging from art exhibits, theater and dance performances, concerts, and recitals in the Fox Fine Arts Center and Magoffin Auditorium, to Dinner Theatre productions in the Union, to boxing matches and concerts in the Don Haskins Center and Sun Bowl. All such events contribute to the quality of life on this campus and in the community, and we thank Carol Roberts Spence, Greg Taylor, Mike Spence and their teams, and Lowell Graham, Mimi Gladstein, Greg Elliott and Kate Bonansinga and the Fine Arts faculty, staff and students for enriching our lives with the variety of programs they offer.

Our students, faculty, staff, and alumni also bring national recognition to UTEP through the quality of their work.

- In Theater Arts, for example, Joel Murray and the student cast of “Danny and the Deep Blue Sea” received an Award for Excellence from the American College Theatre Festival at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., and UTEP student Rebecca Rivas won first place among 171 candidates in the Irene Ryan Acting Contest at the same event.
- In the Chemistry Department, Professor Jorge Gardea-Torresdey was honored with the prestigious Benedett-Pichler award from the American Microchemical Society, and Professor Keith Pannell received the 2004 American Chemical Society Award for research at an undergraduate institution.
- Two recent recipients of master's degrees in Education were recognized as Texas Teachers of the Year: Kyann McMillie, Texas Elementary Teacher of the Year, and Lorena Salas, Texas Bilingual Teacher of the Year.
- Four UTEP faculty members—Meg Weigel, Irasema Coronado, Frank Perez and Shelley Armitage—received Fulbright awards.
- University Communication's media kits won a bronze medal in the national CASE competition.
- In Occupational Therapy, 100% of UTEP's graduates passed the National Board examination for the second consecutive year; the national passing rate is 70%.

- In Education, the overall pass rate of UTEP graduates on the ExCET examination has climbed from 76% in 2000 to 94% in 2003.

Perhaps the greatest visibility during our 90<sup>th</sup> birthday year was achieved through Intercollegiate Athletics. It has always been clear that athletics gets more regular media attention than anything else that happens on a university campus. Such attention can obviously be a double-edged sword. When there are problems, they are magnified by the extensive and, some would argue, disproportionate coverage. On the other hand, when things go well, there can be huge public relations benefits, as we have experienced during the past year, with our highly successful men's basketball season, the hiring of Mike Price as UTEP's football coach, and our decision to move from the WAC to Conference USA.

The men's basketball team brought us a dream season. With each victory, the level of interest and excitement moved up a notch, culminating in an invitation to be one of the 64 teams to play in the NCAA Tournament. What fun for all of us on the campus, and what a boost for the entire community! Everywhere I went in the El Paso area, people were eager to talk about Miner basketball and proud to be associated with it. And, as I traveled around the country, I enjoyed a steady stream of conversations about UTEP basketball, with alumni, friends, and complete strangers who saw the UTEP logo on my briefcase. Although we are equally proud of many other UTEP academic and research accomplishments, the fact is that they will never generate a buzz equal to that in athletics. Although the athletic roller coaster lurched momentarily with the announcement that Coach Billy Gillispie would be leaving UTEP, it quickly regained its momentum with the announcement that Doc Sadler, a highly successful coach in his own right, would assume the head coaching position. We look forward to another great year under Doc's leadership.

Hiring Mike Price as UTEP's head football coach brought us unprecedented publicity, not only at the time of the initial announcement, which we expected, but following nearly every step that Coach Price has taken since. I think it is safe to say that UTEP has never enjoyed so much positive national media coverage in football. During the summer, all of El Paso bubbled with excitement about the forthcoming football season, reminding us of just how profoundly the fortunes of UTEP athletics affect the collective mood and self-esteem of this community. And, the football team's performance in its first three games has energized us all.

UTEP's decision to leave the Western Athletic Conference after nearly 40 years of membership was another major opportunity for national publicity. Although there are many fond memories associated with WAC membership, we are delighted that our affiliation with Conference USA will enable us to continue to compete against fellow former WAC members Rice, SMU and Tulsa, and to begin regular conference competition with the University of Houston and Tulane. Playing in Dallas/Ft. Worth and Houston is extremely important to UTEP, because it affords us an opportunity for closer contact with our many alumni who live in those metropolitan areas, and for greater visibility in Texas' largest media markets.

By any measure, UTEP's 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary year has been memorable. Our pace has quickened, and our blip on the national radar screen has grown much larger. We are recognized as a success story, an institution that has demonstrated that there does not have to be a trade-off between access and excellence. By being authentic in carrying out our

regional mission, rather than trying to emulate other institutions whose missions are far different from ours, we have gained respect and stature at the national level.

That doesn't happen overnight, nor does it happen because we say it will. It happens because UTEP faculty and staff members make a strong commitment to the students we serve, and work together as a team to ensure that we never become complacent nor satisfied that whatever we do is "good enough." The spirit of continuous improvement and the desire to be a little better every day have enabled UTEP to make huge progress, and to set the stage for our next major leap forward....starting right now.

We are about to launch UTEP's Centennial Commission, an initiative that will help us create a vision for UTEP in 2014, our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. One hundred UTEP alumni, friends and supporters, representing diverse backgrounds and interests, from El Paso and elsewhere, have been invited to serve as members of the Commission, which will be chaired by UTEP alumni Larry Durham and Judge Philip Martinez. Associated with the Commission will be three internal Task Forces whose charge is to assess and make recommendations in the critical areas of Research, Campus Climate, and Student Success. By this time next year, the Commission will have submitted a report whose recommendations will help guide UTEP's development during the next ten years.

The Centennial Commission will keep our focus on UTEP's long-term institutional development. At the same time, our regular business agenda will be augmented by a number of short-term goals, including preparing for the next legislative session and for SACS re-accreditation. We will also take time to move into and celebrate the grand opening of several new facilities that are currently under construction. And, we will enjoy the release of "Glory Road," the Disney movie that tells the story of Coach Don Haskins and UTEP's 1966 NCAA Basketball Championship, and the attendant publicity that this feature film will surely bring to the University.

This is the abbreviated list of the special items on next year's agenda. Each year there are surprises—new opportunities—that test our agility and motivate us to achieve at ever higher levels. This year will be no exception. The good news is that we are better prepared than we have ever been to respond to such opportunities.

Thanks again to all of you—faculty, staff and students—for all that you do to help us achieve our goals. You have enabled us to lay a solid foundation for UTEP's future growth and development. Thanks to you, this University is extraordinarily well positioned to move to the next level and into greater national prominence as a model for access and excellence. And, as a result, UTEP will more effectively serve as a catalyst for the human and economic development of this fast-growing region.

In 1914, we were El Paso's future.....We still are!