

**Fall 2009 Convocation
President's Remarks
The University of Texas at El Paso
September 24, 2009**

Alfredo Corchado, UTEP alumnus, and highly successful journalist with the Dallas Morning News, tells a story about his arrival for his first professional job, in the Philadelphia office of the Wall Street Journal. At first, Alfredo was intimidated by the perceived luster of the academic pedigrees of the other journalists, and he even tried to emulate them in a variety of ways. His editor noticed, pulled him aside and told him that he valued Alfredo for who he was personally, culturally and professionally, not for how well he might be able to imitate others from more traditional backgrounds.

This lesson is also one that has to be learned and re-learned by UTEP as a higher education institution with a distinct profile. We are at our best when we are who we are, doing what we do in our own way, rather than trying to imitate others. We clearly aren't Harvard on the Border, nor should we ever aspire to be that. We are no longer the small mining school of our origins, no longer the self-deprecating regional institution into which we evolved. Instead, we've discovered that we are unique—the only research university in the entire United States with a Mexican-American majority student population. And as we approach our 100th birthday, we are at the very forefront of major trends in U.S. higher education. We have also learned that we will make the greatest contribution to this region and to higher education in the United States not by imitating others, but by being the best and proudest UTEP we can be.

We should have considerable confidence that we can achieve this goal, because we have been successfully making major strides in moving toward it over the past 20 years. We successfully defined ourselves and established an authentic institutional identity. Recall with me a couple of good examples of this success:

- We sought to achieve both access and excellence, despite the insistence of skeptics that there had to be a trade-off between these two goals, and we've gradually gained widespread respect and financial support for our success in developing a new higher education access and excellence model.
- We challenged graduation rates because their calculation—which is based entirely on students who begin university enrollment as first-time, full-time freshmen in a fall semester and who graduate from the same institution 4, 5 or 6 years later—fails to capture 70% of UTEP's graduates, and, I might add, a majority of graduates of most large, urban universities. Although it was initially quite difficult to provoke a broad-based conversation in higher education about the inadequacy of this widely accepted graduation rate metric, our efforts have gained considerable traction. For example, the State of Texas shifted the metric it uses to calculate its undergraduate student success incentive awards from graduation rates to growth in the number of graduates, and, consistent with its "Closing the Gaps" goals, giving special weight to "high-risk" graduates and those who earn degrees in high-priority fields such as science, engineering, nursing, and teaching. This shift resulted in UTEP's earning a total of \$3.9 million in State Incentive Funds during the past biennium. Metrics matter! We're also pleased that a number of other major partners have stepped forward at the national level to join UTEP in this effort to expose the misleading graduation rate metric and develop more meaningful alternatives.

Clearly understanding our context and our strengths has prepared UTEP well to step with increasing confidence into a leadership role in the transformation of U.S. higher education. We've moved from emulating inappropriate models, to finding our own voice, striving to do things our way...the UTEP way. And with the major demographic shift currently underway in the U.S., UTEP has become the model that others seek to learn from and emulate. An excellent example of our growing national prominence is our rise to the top of Hispanic Business Magazine's annual graduate program rankings for Hispanics where UTEP's graduate business program ranked second and our graduate Engineering program ranked third among all U.S. colleges and universities this year.

UTEP's attention and resources have for the past several years been focused on two broad priority areas: increasing student success and expanding research and graduate education. A review of our many accomplishments during the past year confirms how much we can achieve when we remain truly grounded in self-awareness and guided by our mission and our exciting vision for the future.

First and foremost, we continued to make progress in achieving UTEP's fundamental commitment to offer residents of this region access to high quality undergraduate education programs and foster their success in completing them. This commitment to competitive undergraduate education is critical, not only to the young people whose lives are forever changed by the opportunities we provide them, but also to the future economic development and quality of life in El Paso and the surrounding region, from which more than 90% of UTEP's students come.

Enrollment this fall grew once again to a new record high of more than 21,000 students, an increase of 2.7% over last year. That means that more of this area's young people are opting to pursue higher education—a very positive trend in this undereducated U.S.-Mexico border region—and that most of them are bringing their higher education dreams and aspirations to UTEP.

Most of the new entering freshmen this year came from area high schools, and we are particularly pleased that a record number of Top Ten Percent high school graduates, who by state law are automatically admitted to all Texas public universities, once again chose UTEP. There was a 19% growth in new transfer students this fall and, not surprisingly, most of them came from the El Paso Community College, with which UTEP has developed increasingly strong ties through our longstanding participation in the El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence and the College Readiness Initiative, which themselves have been recognized as state and national models for preK-16 educational partnerships.

Thanks to the UTEP Enrollment Services and Undergraduate Studies teams, ably led by Craig Westman and Donna Ekal, for their continuing efforts to make sure that such areas as Recruitment, Admissions, Financial Aid, Advising, Testing, and Student Business Services are well coordinated and more responsive to needs of the students we serve. Thanks too to Liz Justice and Audrey Price for their efforts to provide competitive merit scholarships to this region's brightest high school graduates and expand their availability to transfer students. And special thanks to Luisa Havens for her efforts to transform UTEP's admissions and recruitment processes, especially for transfer students, and for the statewide honors that these outreach efforts have earned.

Some students are concurrently enrolled at both UTEP and EPCC, and thanks to significant advances in linking our technological tools, they have access to integrated information about their financial aid, degree requirements and other enrollment matters at both institutions. Because many EPCC students transfer to UTEP before completing their associate's degrees, we have developed a

Reverse Degree process that tracks these students' completion of their associate's degrees while they are enrolled at UTEP, and when they have successfully completed all their required associate's degree course credits, we notify EPCC, which awards them their degrees. This year, 344 students successfully completed requirements for their associate's degrees in our own version of dual credit! This is a great example of the many benefits to students that result from partnerships such as the one that UTEP has so successfully developed with the El Paso Community College.

An outstanding example of the successful vertical integration of education in this region is the enrollment this fall of 23 students who were eligible to enter UTEP as junior-level transfers upon completing their associate's degrees at the El Paso Community College. What makes their enrollment noteworthy is the fact that they are also concurrently completing their senior year of high school. Their accelerated progress toward a bachelor's degree was made possible by enrollment in dual credit courses at the Mission Early College High School in the Socorro ISD, where they had the opportunity to earn concurrent credits toward both high school and community college diplomas. We are very pleased to welcome them to our UTEP Miner family and to this Convocation ceremony today. I'll ask that they and their family members stand so you can see this great group of new entering UTEP juniors! Congratulations to all of you and best wishes for continued success and happiness as UTEP students!

Let me also take a moment to acknowledge Principal Armando Aguirre and Assistant Principal Yvette Savina of Mission Early College High School, whose leadership has made it a model for similar efforts not only in this region, but across the state and country. I also welcome the new Socorro ISD Superintendent, Dr. Xavier de la Torre, as a new partner in our ongoing collaborative efforts. Thanks to all of you for being here today and continuing to be such terrific partners! Thanks too to Donna Ekal, Audrey Price and others at UTEP who have worked especially closely with this first generation of Early College High School students on our campus.

UTEP's progress in ensuring access to opportunities for students who have historically been underrepresented in U.S. higher education has increasingly been paired with progress in fostering the success of these students once they enroll. During the past year UTEP students earned a total of 3,795 bachelor's, masters and doctoral degrees, a 7.5% increase over the previous year. So significant has been the growth in degrees awarded that we've had to expand the number of graduation ceremonies from four to six each year to accommodate the large number of graduates, their family members and friends. What a great problem to have!

These highly successful outcomes represent a welcome yield on our many investments in undergraduate student success during the past several years, including:

- investments by departments and colleges across the campus to achieve greater coherence, effectiveness and efficiency in determining requirements for their undergraduate degree programs
- investments in the College Readiness Initiative to improve the academic preparation of entering students from this region for successful enrollment in college-level courses at UTEP and EPCC, thereby enabling them to avoid detours into developmental education and dramatically reducing developmental course enrollments at UTEP
- investment in the establishment of an Office of Undergraduate Studies in Academic Affairs to coordinate and enhance undergraduate education across the campus, and the appointment of Dr. Donna Ekal to oversee it

- investments in CETaL, Instructional Support Services and other initiatives that support the work of talented and dedicated faculty members who seek to optimize opportunities for UTEP students to grow and develop as scholars and professionals
- investments in off-site, online, and other non-traditional course and degree delivery strategies, including the Accelerated MBA program, the Bachelor's in Multidisciplinary Studies, and a menu of more than 240 courses and six degree programs currently offered online via the UT TeleCampus, and more in preparation.
- investments in advanced technological tools that provide essential information and support to students, advisors and all faculty and staff, and to the continuous improvement research conducted by the Center for Institutional Evaluation, Research and Planning.

Special thanks to Donna Ekal, Craig Westman, and Roy Mathew for their relentless probing, provoking, and producing new ways of doing UTEP's undergraduate education work while ensuring that we remain true to the UTEP values that undergird it. Thanks too to the Provost, deans, department chairs, faculty and staff for their commitment to help us offer the best possible undergraduate educational opportunities to the residents of this region.

All of us on this campus have roles to play in UTEP student success. Especially important is what happens in every classroom, laboratory and studio in every department and college across the campus on every single day, as faculty members create a learning environment where students can grow and develop as individuals, as professionals and as citizens. UTEP is truly fortunate to have many highly dedicated faculty members who are totally committed to this institution, our mission, and the success of the students we serve.

Among these many outstanding UTEP faculty, nine were recently honored in a new and highly competitive program created by the UT System Board of Regents to celebrate teaching excellence on the System's nine academic campuses. I had the privilege of attending the recent dinner in Austin at which these very special UTEP faculty were honored. To share the pride that I felt on that occasion, I invited them to be seated on this Convocation stage so that their El Paso area colleagues, friends and fans—all of you!—can join in celebrating their excellence. I'm very pleased to recognize:

- Dr. James Becvar, Professor of Chemistry
- Dr. Beth Brunk-Chavez, Associate Professor of English
- Dr. Art Duval, Professor of Mathematics
- Dr. Patricia Nava, Professor and Chair of Electrical and Computer Engineering
- Dr. Juan Noveron, Associate Professor of Chemistry
- Dr. Rockie Pederson, Clinical Associate Professor of Kinesiology
- Dr. Bill Robertson, Associate Professor of Teacher Education
- Ms Mary Stevens, Senior Lecturer in Accounting
- Mr. Steven Varela, Lecturer in English

Congratulations to all of you on receiving this splendid recognition from the UT System, and thank you again for your strong commitment to UTEP and the students we serve. Special thanks too to Dr. Harry Meeuwsen, Director of CETaL, for his support of the UTEP nomination process.

A similar competition will be held again this year to identify The University of Texas System's most outstanding teachers, and UTEP surely has many worthy candidates for this honor. I should

mention that in addition to the prestige associated with this statewide recognition, each of these teaching excellence awards also carries with it a cash prize ranging from \$15,000 to \$30,000, reflecting the System's commitment to promote teaching excellence. So, when the call for this year's nominations is announced, I hope that we'll all be prepared to nominate the many, many outstanding teachers on this campus.

Recruiting talented new faculty continues to be one of our highest priorities at UTEP, and our growing national visibility, our investments in facilities across the campus and our momentum in building both research and academic programs, coupled with Texas' relatively stronger economy when compared with other U.S. states, have given us unprecedented competitive advantages in recruiting outstanding teacher-scholars. We extend a special welcome to all the new faculty and staff members who have joined us this year and look very much forward to working with you.

The UT System has been a staunch supporter of our faculty recruitment efforts, joining the Texas Legislature in allocating capital funding to enhance UTEP's physical infrastructure, which increases our appeal to highly competitive faculty candidates, and providing support—known as STARS funding—to enhance the start-up packages we can offer those candidates. We are especially grateful to the UT System Board of Regents for their sustained support of UTEP's aspirations to achieve both access and excellence. We owe much of our momentum to their confidence—and investment—in us.

We are also very proud that in becoming more competitive in recruiting new faculty, we've also been successful in increasing faculty diversity. With a student population that is 55% female and 75% Mexican-American, UTEP has a special responsibility to recruit and retain a faculty that increasingly reflects those demographics. Although competition for minority and female faculty members is often intense, primarily because their representation in the national Ph.D. pool continues to be far too small, we have implemented a number of strategies to identify and attract them to UTEP. One particularly effective set of tools was developed over the past five years with a grant from the National Science Foundation's ADVANCE program, focusing on faculty gender diversity, especially in science and engineering. Special thanks to Evelyn Posey, Pat Witherspoon, Libby Anthony and Ann Gates for their leadership of this important and highly successful initiative.

UTEP's special capacity, and thus our responsibility, to contribute significantly to addressing the serious under-representation of Hispanics and women in the pool of U.S. Ph.D.'s, particularly in science and engineering, is one of the reasons that expanding doctoral education continues to be another of this university's high priorities. But there are many other equally compelling justifications, all of which demonstrate that access and excellence are inextricably linked. First, we understand that UTEP's commitment to access cannot be achieved by focusing exclusively on undergraduate education. Many residents of this region have higher aspirations, and many others with talent should be encouraged to raise theirs, to continue their education well beyond a bachelor's degree. Second, strong doctoral programs are a key element in recruiting and retaining competitive faculty, who, in addition to their research and graduate teaching, also teach and mentor UTEP's undergraduate students. Third, UTEP's undergraduates also benefit immensely from the expanded opportunities for learning and on-campus employment offered to them in this more robust doctoral/research environment, and their aspirations for graduate education are nurtured by it. Finally, competitive doctoral programs will also attract to UTEP talented students from across the U.S. and beyond, who can contribute to and learn from participation in UTEP's active research agenda and interactions with the increasingly competitive faculty who lead it. Moreover, UTEP's location and demographic

profile can be valuable differentiating assets in recruiting Hispanic doctoral students from other parts of the U.S., Mexico and throughout the Western Hemisphere.

UTEP's doctoral programs are growing in both number and size. We awarded a record 59 doctoral degrees this past year, a nearly 70% increase over the previous year, and enrollment in UTEP's doctoral programs this fall totals 473 students, another new record and an increase of 12% over last year. UTEP launched two new Ph.D. programs—in Computational Science and in Teaching, Learning and Culture—which brings to 16 the total number of doctoral programs at UTEP, with seven proposals moving through the authorization process in Austin, and many others being developed in colleges across the campus. Our thanks to Dr. Pat Witherspoon for the leadership she has provided to the Graduate School during her first year as dean, and to the many faculty members, department chairs and deans who continue to build quality doctoral education on the UTEP campus.

For many on this campus and in the community, the most noteworthy evidence of UTEP's progress during the past year was the incessant construction activity that is rapidly transforming our campus infrastructure. Indeed, infrastructure development has dominated much of our planning, our investments, and our skyline. Construction cranes—for many, symbols of progress—seem to be everywhere. In fact, approximately \$250 million (that's a quarter of a billion!) in construction and renovation projects have been underway at UTEP during the past year.

- The Bioscience Research building, UTEP's new state-of-the-art biomedical research facility, was completed this summer, much to the joy of the faculty, students and staff members who spend so much of their time there. We celebrated that joy earlier this month with a wonderful grand opening ceremony that included the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the UT System Board of Regents, the presidents of the three major national medical associations, and Director of the Infrastructure Division of the National Center for Research Resources at NIH. Construction of this building was completed in three stages, over the past five years, as we secured funding from various sources. Although this three-stage construction cycle was surely challenging to many of us, the completed facility and the wealth of equipment it accommodates have added significantly to UTEP's research infrastructure. There are many people who deserve recognition for their role in this highly challenging construction project, but I want to express special thanks to Biological Sciences Chair Rob Kirken whose abiding patience and good will helped us through many difficult moments.
- The Foster-Stevens Basketball Center, adjacent to the Don Haskins Center was dedicated last spring. Supported entirely by generous donors, this facility provides space for our men's and women's basketball teams to practice without worries about scheduling conflicts with concerts, graduations and other events in the Don Haskins Center. This splendid new facility has also placed a UTEP face on Mesa Street, and together with our new Ticket Center, created a very attractive East entrance plaza in front of the Haskins Center.
- The new University Bookstore at the corner of University and Sun Bowl celebrated its grand opening last week. This spacious and highly attractive new facility offers increased access to both on- and off-campus customers and its pairing with Einstein's Bagels creates a convenient and appealing new eating option for us all.
- Once the Bookstore moved to its new facility, work immediately began on renovating the space it vacated in the Union, with top priority given to the re-location of the Student Health Center from its current site to these more spacious and accessible quarters.

- An opportunity to replace our increasingly inadequate Child Care Center facility on Hawthorne Street arose when a decision was made to construct a new Chemistry and Computer Science building on that site. Renovation work was completed this summer to convert an apartment complex on Schuster Street into a larger and more attractive new child care facility that will better meet the needs of UTEP student, faculty and staff families.
- In the same area of Schuster, we are renovating three apartment buildings to create a new student housing complex. UTEP's Miner Village is filled to capacity again this year, and these new student apartments will help accommodate the more than 200 students who are on a waiting list for on-campus housing.
- You've undoubtedly noticed that construction is moving swiftly on the new \$60 million College of Health Sciences and School of Nursing facility on the corner of Sun Bowl and Schuster, whose completion will finally enable undergraduate students and faculty in Nursing and Health Sciences to move from their off-campus location to the UTEP campus, thereby eliminating the many daily trips back and forth from downtown. This large and very beautiful Bhutanese-style building has already begun to generate a lot of buzz, and once completed, it will surely be a signature campus landmark for those driving by on Interstate 10.
- Once the Child Care Center successfully moved to its new location, construction began on the new \$75 million Chemistry and Computer Science building, which will rise on the corner of Hawthorne and Rim, just south of the Engineering Annex. This building also features an extraordinarily beautiful Bhutanese design, and its location will help shape a very attractive new plaza area in that rapidly developing campus neighborhood.
- Ground was broken this summer on a UTEP-City of El Paso joint venture transit terminal and parking garage. Located on a former UTEP parking lot on the corner of Oregon and Glory Road, just across from the new Foster-Stevens Basketball Center, this parking garage will increase available parking for UTEP students, those who attend UTEP games and events in the Sun Bowl and Don Haskins Center, and customers of businesses in the Cincinnati Entertainment District.
- We are about to break ground on a \$32 million expansion of UTEP's Swimming and Fitness Center, which will offer UTEP students a wealth of new fitness and recreational options. This exciting project began with a student referendum to support an increase in their recreation fee and has involved students in all aspects of planning and design of what promises to be a splendid new facility.
- Last but certainly not least, UTEP will begin construction of the Bhutanese temple (lhakhang) that was initially constructed on the National Mall in Washington, DC for the Smithsonian Folklife Festival last year and which, after the Festival, was donated to the people of the United States by the people of Bhutan last year with the proviso that it be re-constructed on the UTEP campus.

As all of this new construction and renovation is completed over the next couple of years, the UTEP campus will become even more efficient and attractive than it is today. What's exciting is that our Bhutanese architectural tradition is not only being maintained in all these new projects, but is rising to another level as architects who work with us learn more about and seek to capture new Bhutanese features in their designs.

Our architecture also serves as the foundation for an increasingly rich relationship between UTEP and the Kingdom of Bhutan. If you haven't already seen it, we have a beautiful new tapestry in the

Library atrium, which was made for us by highly skilled artisans in Bhutan, and which was personally delivered—all 66 pounds of it!—by Sonam Wangmo, one of the nine newly enrolled Bhutanese students at UTEP this year. Thank you Sonam! These new arrivals have increased the size of UTEP’s Bhutanese student family to 16, 12 of whom are enrolled in graduate programs, including one at the doctoral level. We’re also very pleased that recent UTEP Liberal Arts graduate, Xochitl Rodriguez, departed this week for Bhutan where she will work this year with a children’s art program. We hope that Xochitl will be the first of many UTEP students who will help us develop a more robust student exchange with Bhutan.

Other UTEP students also had special opportunities during the past year to expand their horizons through international experiences that are a far cry from traditional Study Abroad programs. One group representing the University College studied Arabic language and culture at Tafila Technical University in Jordan, as part of a partnership with that university. Another group of four UTEP students, together with Dr. Ellen Courtney of the Languages and Linguistics Department, spent a month this summer as participants in a literacy initiative in aboriginal communities in Australia’s Northern Territory. Our partner in this instance was Victoria University in Melbourne, Australia, an institution with which we are growing a number of programmatic ties. Thanks to Steve Riter, Howard Daudistel, Gary Edens, Robert Stakes, Dorothy Ward and many others at UTEP who have been helping us nurture this special UTEP-VU relationship.

“Study Abroad” provides another good example of UTEP’s efforts to create new models rather than attempt to emulate those which, for a variety of reasons, primarily socioeconomic, simply do not work well in our setting. Understanding the importance of globalizing our students’ education by creating unique international experiences that are both more accessible and likely to be life-changing for them, we’ve worked hard to re-invent study abroad at UTEP. Special thanks to Donna Ekal and Catie McCorry-Andalis for their coordination of these efforts and to Dennis Soden, Bob Nachtmann, Letty Paez, David Ruiter, Stacey Sowards and other faculty and staff who have worked to develop new international learning opportunities for UTEP students, in partnership with universities in Brazil, Great Britain, Thailand, Ecuador, Egypt, the Czech Republic and Indonesia.

UTEP’s investments in enriching the undergraduate educational experience on this campus have been extensive, involving all of us in one way or another. The Academic and Student Affairs divisions are most frequently associated with the progress that we’ve achieved, but it’s important to recognize that all of us across the campus, whatever our job titles or descriptions, play key support roles in creating a climate conducive to student success at UTEP. From Facilities Services to Information Resources, from Campus Security to Enrollment Services, from Food Services to Parking, from Environmental Health and Safety to Business Services, all of us are engaged in student success...that’s why we’re here! There obviously isn’t time to thank individually all who have contributed significantly to achieving UTEP’s student success goals during the past year—we’re a really big team!—but I hope that you all know just how much we value and appreciate everything that you do for UTEP and the students we serve.

For example, the many attractive and efficient new and renovated facilities that are popping up across the campus, and the infrastructure projects that endlessly burrow underground, are designed and overseen by Greg McNicol, Ed Soltero and others who work with them, and whose support of both our Bhutanese architectural traditions and our commitment to become an increasingly “green campus,” is especially appreciated. Kudos to Ed Soltero for his successful quest to become a LEED Accredited Professional!

Specific responsibility for the maintenance, safety and security of the campus is the work of Juan Guerra and his large team in Facilities Services, Robert Moss and his colleagues in Environmental Health and Safety, and Cliff Walsh and the UTEP Police Department. We thank all of them for helping create a campus climate that is conducive to productivity, creativity and student success.

Steve Riter and his information resources and technology infrastructure and support teams are critical to all campus operations. We're especially grateful for their efforts to maintain the currency and integration of these rapidly evolving assets, thereby achieving efficiencies and providing improved service to students, faculty and staff. The many new collaborations between IT and the Library, including the recent relocation of the IT Help Desk to the Library's third floor, are transforming the Library into an active center for student learning.

UTEP students' access to information about their academic programs and their business transactions with the University is regularly upgraded through the continuous improvement commitments of Enrollment Services and Business Affairs. Special thanks to Craig Westman for enabling us to more fully exploit the capacity of our student information system, providing more robust tools that enable us to be better informed and more efficient. In Business Affairs, work must be constantly underway to improve policies and procedures across the campus—from tuition and fee payments to parking permits—and to make them more customer friendly. Business Affairs also oversees all of UTEP's auxiliary operations—from food services to the bookstore—all of which contribute significantly to the quality of life on this campus and in the El Paso community. Thanks to Cindy Villa and her team for their efforts to improve services that touch us all, and special thanks to Luis Gonzalez and his Sodexo team, a majority of whom are UTEP students, for their consistent commitment to quality, variety and customer satisfaction in their menu of campus food services and catering.

There's much evidence to suggest that quality of campus life contributes significantly to student success as well. UTEP's calendar of cultural and arts activities and events, lectures and conferences, athletic competitions, recreational sports, special events and Union programs continued to expand during the past year. We hosted events ranging from professional boxing, to Santana, to Monster Trucks (twice!), to the Trans Siberian Orchestra and Juarez Indios soccer. The Centennial Museum and the Rubin Center hosted several high-profile exhibitions, including a collaborative presentation of "Los Desaparecidos," which ended in August with a visit by Argentine Ambassador to the U.S., Hector Timerman. We conducted UTEP's first Earth Week celebration, hosted such high profile visitors as then presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, John Kerry and members of his Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, and a meeting of the University of Texas System Board of Regents, and we welcomed the UT Austin Longhorn football team to the Sun Bowl for our first home game with them since the 1930s. Thanks to all those who worked creatively and tirelessly behind the scenes to bring this widely diverse set of activities and events to our campus.

There are many other examples of accomplishments that are mostly unsung but contribute our well being and quality of life. They help make us more secure, more comfortable, more productive, and increasingly proud of UTEP's service to this region. I'll share just a few examples with you:

- The H1N1 Flu Task Force mobilized quickly last spring to develop a response to the threat of that disease, and they continue to work this fall on the many current H1N1 issues. Special thanks to Robert Moss and Kathy Curtis for their leadership.
- The Office of International Programs helped respond to the huge demand for U.S. passports this year by volunteering to serve as a processing center for nearly 3,500 passport applications from residents of this region.
- We installed a mass notification system on the campus to enable us to send real-time audible alerts in the event of an emergency. Thanks to Cliff Walsh, Robert Moss and Greg McNicol and their teams for their good work.
- In response to a request from Texas Tech, the Languages and Linguistics Department developed and taught a special Spanish course for their new cohort of first-year medical students at the Paul Foster School.
- The Center for Civic Engagement celebrated its 10th anniversary of student service learning in this region, involving more than 13,400 students and 125 faculty and a total of 318,613 hours of community service.
- Our commitment to recycling continued to grow. More than 100 additional recycling containers were placed on the campus and 395,000 pounds of paper and cardboard, 81,000 pounds of steel, and 6,000 pounds of scrap copper were recycled last year.
- The Medical Professions Institute, which has been highly successful in supporting UTEP pre-med students' aspirations to attend medical school, reports that UTEP ranks second (after UCLA) among all U.S. universities in the number of Mexican-American students who submit medical school applications.

Undergraduate student success is also greatly enhanced by UTEP's strong commitment to achieve excellence in research and graduate education. Our investments in research infrastructure, especially in science, health science and engineering, and in faculty recruitment and retention have resulted in increased competitiveness in the pursuit of external funding for research. UTEP faculty and staff submitted a total of 582 proposals this past year, requesting more than \$327 million in total grant funding.

UTEP received more than \$57 million in new grant awards during FY 2009. Especially encouraging is the number of grants that involve interdisciplinary teams, comprising departments across the campus as well as external partners. Some examples include:

- NSF's Major Research Instrumentation program awarded UTEP nearly \$700,000 to create a collaborative visualization facility for our NSF-funded Cyber-ShARE Center of Excellence. Principals on this interdisciplinary team led by Rodrigo Romero in Computer Science, include Jose Hurtado, Jasper Konter and Bridget Smith-Konter in Geology and Virgilio Gonzalez in Industrial Engineering.
- The same NSF program awarded \$1.2 million to a team led by biochemist Ricardo Bernal and including Chuan Xiao, Juan Noveron, Kyle Johnson and Russ Chianelli.
- The National Institutes of Health recently announced a \$12 million grant to support UTEP's Border Biomedical Research Center for the next five years. Led by Rob Kirken and housed in our new Bioscience Research building, the Center continues to enhance basic and translational research on pathobiological problems prevalent in the Hispanic-majority population along the U.S. border with Mexico.

- UTEP received a major grant from the Texas Emerging Technology Fund to establish the Center for Inland Desalination Systems, which in partnership with the El Paso Water Utilities Public Service Board, Ft. Bliss and the State of Texas, will conduct water-related research designed to help provide a secure source of water for populations in this and other arid regions of the world and remove water availability as a constraint on their economic development. Thanks to Roberto Osegueda and Barry Benedict for their outstanding work in spearheading this initiative and a special welcome to Dr. Tom Davis who has already made significant progress in developing UTEP's desalination research agenda and quickly become an active and esteemed member of the UTEP family.
- Recently announced is a five-year, \$5 million grant from NASA to establish the Center for Space Exploration Technology Research. Under the leadership of Ashan Choudhuri and an interdisciplinary team of co-investigators including Jose Hurtado and David Borrok in Geology, and Louis Everett, Cesar Carrasco, Jack Chessa and Evgeny Shafirovich in Engineering, the Center will conduct research to develop green propellant-based propulsion technologies and advanced propulsion concepts for lunar and Mars missions.

Individual UTEP faculty were also the recipients of major new research and education awards this past year:

- Christian Meissner in Psychology, who is internationally known for his research on interrogation and intelligence gathering, received three new grant awards during the past year, as well as the prestigious Saleem Shaw Award for Early Career Excellence in Psychology and Law.
- Also in Psychology, Wendy Francis received an NSF grant for a cognitive study of bilingual proficiency and memory; and Ana Schwartz and Christina Sobin both received NIH grants, the former for research on the cognitive nature of adult bilingual reading, and the latter for research on the biological mechanisms by which low-level lead exposure causes neurocognitive deficits.
- Bridget Smith-Konter, a new faculty member in Geology, has had a banner year! She received a highly competitive 5-year NSF Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) award for her work on an integrated geological, geodetic, and paleoseismic study of plate boundary stress, another NSF grant to integrate similar data on the California coastline, and a grant from NASA for earthquake modeling. She's going to be very busy!!!
- Charles Ambler in History, working with Roy Mathew, Sunay Palsole and Ken Pierce, was awarded a highly competitive grant from the U.T. System's "Transforming Undergraduate Education" program.
- Vanessa Lougheed in Biological Sciences received a \$400,000 grant from NSF to re-examine historic tundra ponds in the Arctic, and another NSF grant for an interdisciplinary program to mentor students in research focused on the ecology of disease.
- Chemists Jorge Gardea-Torresdey and Katja Michael received a grant from NSF to acquire a Liquid Chromatography-Mass Spectrometer, and Dr. Michael was also the recipient of two additional grant awards from NIH to support her research. She's going to be very busy too!
- John Wiebe in Psychology received an NIH award for collaborative work with colleagues at the University of Washington on strategies to address depression and Antiretroviral treatment adherence among HIV-Positive adults on the U.S.-Mexico border.
- Also in Psychology, Ted Cooper received \$1.9 million from the Paso del Norte Health Foundation to continue his comprehensive program of tobacco control in the border region.

UTEP faculty have also successfully pursued major grants to foster greater participation of UTEP students in academic programs and careers in which Hispanics have been traditionally underrepresented:

- Heidi Taboada Jimenez in Industrial Engineering received a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to increase opportunities for Hispanic participation in Sustainability Engineering education and research.
- Ann Gates, who leads the Computing Alliance of Hispanic-Serving Institutions, received more than \$1.7 million in continuation funding from NSF to increase the number of Hispanic students and faculty in computing and develop and sustain competitive education and research programs at Hispanic-Serving Institutions.
- The Health Resources and Services Administration awarded funds to the College of Health Sciences to support scholarships for students pursuing health professions degrees. In Nursing, HRSA has supported an accelerated BSN program and nursing traineeships for graduate students.
- Ben Flores in Electrical and Computer Engineering leads a UT System Bridge to the Doctorate program, which is funded by NSF to support graduate students on a fast track to a Ph.D. in science or engineering and then on to academic careers.
- Igor Almeida in Biological Sciences received renewed funding from NIH for the Bridges to the Baccalaureate program, which promotes the successful transition of students with interests in biomedical and behavioral sciences from EPCC to UTEP.
- Robert Trussell in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Services received nearly \$800,000 from the U.S. Department of Education to enhance an existing Master's degree in Special Education to address autism, and support and train 40 graduate students in this area.
- Norma Chacon was awarded more than \$2.3 million from the U.S. Department of Education to continue UTEP's highly successful High School Equivalency Program, which provides financial, academic and support services to eligible young people from migrant and seasonal farmworker backgrounds, enabling them to complete their GED and move into higher education, or other successful life pathways.

Several other faculty members secured grant funding specifically targeted at mentoring UTEP students in research.

- Ming-Ying Leung in Mathematics, Elizabeth Walsh and Steve Aley in Biological Sciences, and Vladik Kreinovich in Computer Science received NSF support for undergraduate training in bioinformatics.
- Kristine Garza received funding to continue her NSF Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) program in molecular and cellular biology.
- Olac Fuentes in Computer Science, together with faculty in biology, Kinesiology, Geology, Physics and Civil Engineering, is leading an NSF REU project in applied intelligent systems.

Every year the list of new grant awards grows longer, the number of faculty and staff from across the campus who participate in externally funded research and education programs increases, and the total grant dollars earned continues to climb. In addition to the many strategic investments in human and physical infrastructure on the campus, we've also worked to build a campus climate that is supportive of competitive research activity, from initial concept to execution and final reporting. Thanks to the outstanding efforts of Roberto Osegueda and his hard-working team in the Office of

Research and Sponsored Programs, services have greatly improved and expanded, with a focus always on responding more effectively and efficiently to the needs of increasingly busy faculty and research administrators.

As we applaud the very real progress that has been achieved, we also recognize that this continues to be a work in progress. One very promising new direction is the establishment of the Center for Research Entrepreneurship and Innovative Enterprises with funding from the Kauffman Campus Initiative, to help identify opportunities to commercialize the intellectual property developed by faculty in their laboratories. We are delighted that Gary Williams has brought his considerable expertise and experience to provide leadership for this important new UTEP center.

As further evidence of the extraordinary year that 2008-2009 has been in UTEP's history, we've also enjoyed being in the national, world and, well... the galactic spotlight.

First, of course, there's UTEP alumnus and NASA Astronaut Danny Olivas who just a couple of weeks ago completed his second trip on the Space Shuttle to the International Space Station, where he played the lead role in all three of the highly successful space walks. Danny carried not only UTEP pride into space on this voyage, but also, at our request, a Bhutanese flag and other artifacts, which he plans to personally deliver to Bhutan once he wraps up his post-flight duties. The Bhutanese Ministry of Education has been working with NASA to develop science education units tied to Danny's flight, and just before his launch, Danny received many good wishes from Bhutanese children who are learning for the first time about space flight. How we love these UTEP-Bhutan connections!

The past year also brought UTEP into the national spotlight in medicine. Two UTEP graduates, Dr. James Rohack and Dr. Willarda Edwards, became presidents of the American Medical Association and the National Medical Association, respectively. The accomplishments of our alumni are by far the best evidence of our collective success as an institution, and with graduates like Danny Olivas, Jim Rohack and Willarda Edwards, UTEP's reputation for excellence continues to grow.

But that's not all! Two UTEP faculty members, both of whom attended UTEP as undergraduates, were recognized with highly prestigious national awards during the past year. First, Dr. Laura O'Dell, Assistant Professor of Psychology, was invited to the White House earlier this year to receive from President George W. Bush a Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers. Then, Dr. Ben Flores, Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering, was informed that he will be presented a prestigious NSF Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring by President Barack Obama at the White House this fall.

With one UTEP Miner in space, two presiding over major national medical associations and two accepting presidential awards at the White House...we've definitely got momentum!

And that momentum will continue to build, because UTEP doesn't rest on its laurels. We all fully understand that our many accomplishments, however satisfying they may be, serve mainly to raise our expectations for the new opportunities that lie ahead. And at no time in our history have those opportunities been more apparent than right now. With our designation by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the Legislature as one of seven Emerging Tier One universities in the state, UTEP is poised to step to the forefront of U.S. higher education. Our faculty and staff's success in competing for research grants, ranking UTEP fourth among all Texas public universities

in federal research funding, after UT Austin, TAMU and U. of Houston, helped earn us this Emerging Tier One designation.

The opportunity to capitalize on our Emerging Tier One designation was extended to us last spring during the 81st session of the Texas Legislature with the passage of HB 51, which creates a pathway toward a major transformation of Texas public higher education. The Legislature has confirmed its intention to support the long-needed development of additional Tier One universities in Texas, and UTEP's success over the past 20 years has ensured that we are one of the seven universities whose progress will be accelerated through this state investment. So, even as we celebrate our many achievements of the past year, we recognize that what is most exciting is that we have successfully reached a critical milestone in UTEP's development and are now faced with perhaps the greatest set of opportunities, challenges and responsibilities, in our long and distinguished history.

Becoming a Tier One University not only means that UTEP will do more externally funded research, develop more doctoral programs, award more doctoral degrees, and gain the national stature associated with that level of activity. It also means that UTEP's undergraduate students will have access to an enriched campus environment that will provide them with the skills and confidence to compete with graduates of prestigious universities across the U.S. and internationally, and that the degrees earned by all UTEP alumni will continue to increase in value. El Paso and the surrounding region will also benefit from our transformation, as UTEP becomes an even more effective catalyst for technology transfer, commercialization, business start-ups and overall economic development.

As we step up to compete to become one of Texas' next Tier One universities, we know that there will be a temptation to adopt tried and true models from other institutions that are already in this category. I think we all know from our experience of the past 20 years, however, that the pathway to UTEP's success is not achieved by emulating models that aren't well aligned with who we are and whom we serve. Just as Alfredo Corchado erred in trying to become like his new peer group at the Wall Street Journal in Philadelphia, UTEP would make a serious mistake in trying to be like the traditional Tier One peer group.

...Beware of Harvard on the Border!

Once again, our primary challenge is to be confident in creating a new model, to transform UTEP into a Tier One University by leveraging our authentic strengths...doing Tier One the UTEP way. We must attain the expected level of research and graduate program excellence while at the same time never losing sight of our commitment to undergraduate student access and success, and to the future human and economic development of this region. Although there will surely be skeptics, and those who will identify us as underdogs, we know that we can become a truly successful Tier One university only by doing it our way.

Our second challenge will be to continue building confidence and investments of the UT System, the Coordinating Board and the Legislature in UTEP's vision, and the many positive student success and research outcomes that regularly validate it. The continued support of these Texas stakeholders, ranging from approval of new doctoral programs to capital funding for facilities, will be absolutely critical to accelerating our journey to Tier One.

We must also turn to our alumni and friends, and to partners in the Paso del Norte region, for additional support in an effort to raise all UTEP programs and activities to a Tier One level. Their support has already ranked UTEP second among the nine academic institutions in the UT System in annual giving, and the announcement of a special fund-raising initiative this summer to earn state matching funds for philanthropic gifts to Emerging Tier One Universities once again demonstrated their strong commitment. Generous UTEP friends responded enthusiastically, and over a few weeks donated \$4.2 million in cash gifts, which once certified, will qualify us to earn approximately \$3 million in state matching funds. What a powerful validation of our vision and what a splendid way to end a highly successful year at UTEP!

This emphasis on fund-raising will accelerate during the next several years as we conduct UTEP's Centennial Campaign which will culminate in 2014, our 100th birthday. We are fortunate indeed that this opportunity to become one of Texas' next Tier One universities has coincided with reaching this major milestone in UTEP's history and the fundraising opportunities associated with it.

Finally, we must ensure that all of us on the UTEP campus—faculty, staff and students—think and talk about, and actively participate in our Tier One transformation. Achieving this goal will require far more than the work of a small subset of faculty involved in grant writing and doctoral education; or the engagement of a few administrators in speechmaking or fundraising. It will only occur when we've all successfully answered the question, "What does becoming a Tier One University mean to me and my department and how can I and my department contribute to achieving it?" A good example is Christine Roquet's work in Facilities Services to complete the first campus-wide research and instructional space survey, which helped support a 1.5% increase in UTEP's federal indirect cost rate. Christine's efforts will have a substantial impact on UTEP's progress toward Tier One for many years to come. All of us have the same potential to contribute to achieving our collective Tier One goal, and we'll all be asked to do just that.

During the coming year we will engage in a series of conversations about what Tier One means for each administrative unit and individual on this campus, what must be done to accelerate our progress toward Tier One, and how every single department and each individual faculty and staff member can—indeed, must!—be a Tier One player. Guided by the University's Strategic Plan, we will develop a set of interconnected college and departmental action plans that will chart the course of UTEP's development over the next ten years, and shape our collaborative efforts to make efficient use of often scarce resources, leverage our considerable assets, and achieve the synergies that will be required to attain our Tier One goal.

This engagement by everyone on the campus will not only foster coordination, efficiencies and progress toward Tier One. It will also ensure that we remain fully grounded in and committed to UTEP's strong institutional values. Our collective commitment and hard work over the past 20 years has placed UTEP at the forefront of higher education transformation in Texas and nationally. We now have another very special set of opportunities before us and powerful momentum behind us. Working hard, working smart and working together, we will complete our journey toward national prominence as the first Tier One University in the U.S. with a 21st century student demographic. In 1966, we changed the face of intercollegiate athletics, today we are changing the face of higher education, and tomorrow we will change the face of Tier One Universities.

Go Miners!