



Discovery & Impact

April 2026

Purpose at Work

As spring unfolds, ideas burst into action, tested and refined until they come alive. In this April issue of *Discovery & Impact*, we shine a light on research and research support that is driving real solutions, forging powerful partnerships, and transforming expertise into benefits for all. The stories within capture a community energized by the pursuit of not only discovery but meaningful impact.

Discovery & Impact is published every other month to provide timely updates on the work shaping **UTEP** research. The next issue will arrive in June 2026.

In this Issue...

- 2026 R&I Honorific Awards Ceremony
- Where Art Meets Impact
- Accelerating Research Excellence
- EXPLORE Fellowship Opportunity
- UTEP Accepted into ORIC Cohort
- Research Relations & Strategy
- Research, Evaluation, and Assessment Services
- Research Compliance and Protections
- Office of Technology Commercialization

2026 R&I Honorific Awards Ceremony

Emerging Leaders Driving Research with Impact

Each year, the **R&I** Honorific Awards Ceremony celebrates faculty at every career stage, from emerging scholars to distinguished experts, whose achievements reflect **UTEP**'s spirit of public impact, excellence, creativity, and innovation.

On April 8, 2026, **Research & Innovation** hosted an award ceremony to recognize the many ways faculty push boundaries, turning research, scholarship, and bold ideas into innovations that truly change lives. This ceremony reflects **UTEP**'s commitment to uplifting and supporting our faculty whose excellence and leadership in innovation and research have made a tangible impact on people's lives.

President Wilson

Kedron Silsbee - Science

Cynthia Wiltshire - Education

Dean Meissner on behalf of Thomas Boland* - Engineering

Eva Moya - Health Sciences

James Chapman - Science

Palvi Aggarwal - Engineering

Shashwati Geed - Health Sciences

Sasha Pimentel - Liberal Arts

Jie (Kevin) Yan - Business



Ahmad Itani - VP for Research

*Not pictured

Connect

Where Art Meets Impact

UTEP Artists Commemorate Faculty Achievements

R&I is dedicated to supporting the arts by commissioning artwork by regional artists connected to **UTEP** to recognize faculty achievements. This initiative celebrates both the rigor of research and the creative courage rooted in the University's identity.

Bianca Cabrales, Adjunct Faculty in Chicano Studies, and **Angel Cabrales**, Assistant Professor of Sculpture



UTEP Pick with Bhutan Prayer Flag

The story of **UTEP**'s bond with Bhutan began when the university adopted a Bhutanese-inspired architectural style that still defines its spirit today. At the R&I Honoric Awards Ceremony, faculty were celebrated with sculptures of UTEP picks, each one alive with the vibrant hues of Tibetan prayer flags and the spirit of the *Om Mani Padme Hum* (jewel in the lotus) mantra. These sculptures, colored blue for sky and space, white for air and wind, red for fire, green for water, and yellow for earth, embody the harmony and connection of the five elements. They stand as tributes to

faculty whose creativity and dedication, from emerging scholars to accomplished leaders, push the boundaries of knowledge and uplift the community.

Accelerating Research Excellence

Faculty Achievements Advancing UTEP's Mission

Dr. Ahmed El-Gendy Awarded IAAM Marie Curie Medal

Dr. Ahmed El-Gendy has received the Marie Curie Medal from the International Association of Advanced Materials (IAAM), recognizing his innovative research with significant societal impact.

Central to his research is the development of magnetic nanoparticles intended to enhance cancer treatment through a dual approach of targeted drug delivery and tumor-cell heating. Compared with



traditional methods, this approach may reduce side effects and improve patient outcomes, demonstrating its substantial impact at regional, national, and global levels.

He values mentorship and student success, crediting his achievements to teamwork with students, colleagues, and mentors. “For me, any award I receive is for everyone,” Dr. El-Gendy shared. “My success is my students’ success.” His lab unites students from engineering, chemistry, physics, biology, and pharmaceutical sciences, using interdisciplinary research to tackle public challenges.

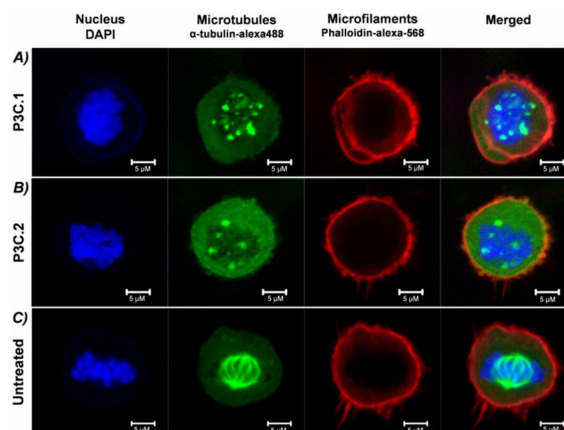
The Marie Curie Medal confirms Dr. El-Gendy as an emerging leader. His work shows how **UTEP** research drives global innovation and empowers students to make an impact.

UTEP Faculty Discover Two Promising Anti-Breast Cancer Agents

Breast cancer is one of the most common cancers amongst women in the United States. Despite progress in treatments and early detection methods, tumor resistance to drug therapies remains a significant challenge. In a study published in the March 2026 volume of *Oncology Research*, researchers from the Department of Biological Sciences at the **UTEP** tested two experimental pyrazole compounds against over two dozen different cancer cell lines and several non-cancerous cell lines. Results indicated that both novel pyrazole derivatives exhibited significant cytotoxicity across a variety of cancer cell lines, particularly breast cancer cell lines. This suggests a promising new direction in the battle against breast cancer and, potentially, other cancers as well. This study was funded by grants from the National Institutes of Health and the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities.

Authors:

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Representative results from Gutierrez et al., *Oncology Research* (2026), showcase that the two new compounds, P3C.1 and P3C.2, disrupt mitotic spindle formation, preventing cancer cells from dividing and proliferating, thereby showing anticancer potential.

Article

EXPLORE Fellowship Opportunity

Expanding Liberal Arts Opportunities for Research Excellence



R&I and the College of Liberal Arts invite applications for the Expanding Liberal Arts Opportunities for Research Excellence (EXPLORE) Fellowship. The fellowship supports research, scholarship, and creative activities in the humanities, arts, and social sciences by strengthening collaboration between College of Liberal Arts faculty and **UTEP**'s research support infrastructure.

Fellowship Purpose

The expansion of the university's research enterprise depends on increased faculty engagement, particularly in disciplines where external funding opportunities, collaborative models, and support structures are less prominent or differ from those in STEM fields. The EXPLORE Fellow will address this gap by serving as a faculty-facing partner who interprets opportunities, emphasizes the distinctive strengths of the humanities, arts, and social sciences, and connects College of Liberal Arts faculty to resources, personnel, and processes that support competitive research and creative activities.

Fellowship at a Glance

- Eligibility: Tenured Associate or Full Professor, College of Liberal Arts
- Role: Faculty Fellowship (service-focused)
- Term: June 1, 2026 – May 31, 2027
- Compensation: Two months of summer salary
- Application deadline: May 26, 2026
- Focus: Research development, faculty engagement, and external funding capacity

Apply

UTEP Accepted Into National ORIC Cohort

UTEP has been selected for the 2026–2028 cohort of the ARIS Organizational Research Impact Capacity Program. Over the next two years, **UTEP** will collaborate with peers nationwide to sharpen its skills in measuring, supporting, and sharing the real-world impact of its research. This opportunity will deepen Broader Impacts, foster community partnerships, and promote sustainable practices across every discipline.



Connect

Research Relations and Strategy

Creating Transformative Research and Innovation Ecosystems

Operationalizing Cybersecurity Innovation Tech Talk

On March 25, 2026, **R&I** hosted a tech talk on **UTEP's** national security research. Over 50 audience members, including faculty and students from the university, joined this hybrid panel, along with a virtual audience from the United States Cyber Command and 80+ partner institutions in its Academic Engagement Network.

Playing a pivotal role during the visit by 16th Air Force leadership, this tech talk highlighted **UTEP's** role as a trusted collaborator in defense innovation, strengthening its standing through workforce development, academic partnerships, and ongoing research in artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and critical infrastructure defense. These initiatives support innovation, talent development, and partnerships that boost the university's impact on national security.



Panel members:

- **Salamah Salamah** (*moderator*), Associate Vice President for Scientific Computing and AI
- **Cauam Ferreira Cardoso**, Executive Director for the Institute of Applied AI Innovation
- **Deepak Tosh**, Associate Professor of Computer Science
- **Sai Monika Errapotu**, Assistant Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering
- **Jaime Acosta**, Visiting ARL Researcher and Adjunct Faculty in Computer Science
- **Joseph Cuozzo**, Assistant Professor of Physics

Connect

Research, Evaluation, and Assessment Services

Expanding Partnerships and Regional Impact

Strengthen Your Proposal with Smart Evaluation

May 13, 2026

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

IDRB, 2.204

The Research, Evaluation, and Assessment Services (REAS) center is advancing its strategic priorities by expanding evaluation capacity, strengthening regional partnerships, and supporting high-impact research across campus and the region. We invite you to attend the upcoming training opportunity.



Connect

Research Compliance and Protections

Strengthening Support for UTEP Research

Stay Safe While Traveling Internationally

**RESEARCH & INNOVATION**

Export Control and International Travel



Why It Matters
International travel supports research, teaching, and collaboration. Even routine trips with a laptop can raise export control issues. Knowing the policy protects you, your research, and UTEP from unintentional violations of U.S., Foreign, and Texas law, as well as University Policy.

Key Risks

- **Destination:** Some countries are sanctioned or have heightened restrictions
- **Materials:** Data, software, or specialized equipment you carry, access or present may be export-controlled
- **Collaborators:** Certain individuals, organizations, or entities abroad may appear on restricted lists
- **Purpose:** The nature of your research or presentation can trigger an export control review

What You Can Take
With an approved **Export Control Certification of Temporary Export of UTEP Property**, you may carry:

- Laptops, tablets, smartphones, USB drives, and smartwatches with standard commercial software
- Presentations, publications, or data that are publicly available or qualify as fundamental research

When to Contact Export Control
You may need an export license if you travel with:

- Devices using specialized encryption or containing export-controlled data
- Research equipment, pathogens, toxins, or genetic materials
- Defense articles regulated by ITAR (e.g., spacecraft components)



As the warmer weather approaches, many researchers are preparing for personal international travel. Research Protections would like to take this opportunity to share a few key reminders and help you safeguard your research, devices, and professional reputation while abroad.

Prior to traveling, please contact Export Control for guidance concerning potential country-specific risks and traveling with devices. Moreover, ensure appropriate risk-mitigation measures are in place by backing up your data, installing the latest software and security updates, removing any possible research data or sensitive information, and uninstalling nonessential applications (e.g., social media).

While traveling, assume that any and all information on your devices could be compromised. Never leave your devices unattended, and report to your supervisor immediately if your device is lost, stolen, or temporarily taken away. Remain aware

of local conditions, and report any significant changes in location, duration, or risk levels to the International Oversight Committee (IOC).

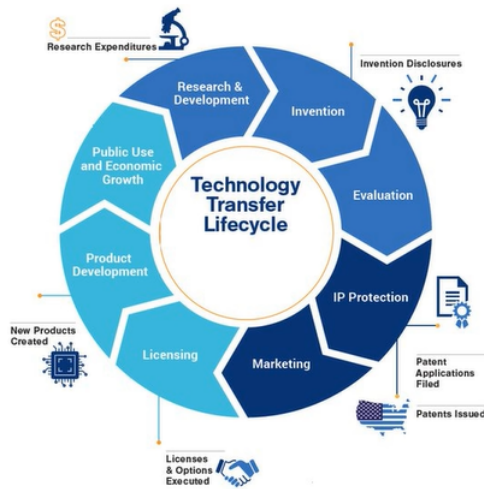
After returning from your international travel, it is important to properly restore devices from a secure backup before connecting to any network, and change passwords used during your travel. The Research Protections Office is committed to supporting your safe travel and promoting awareness.

Connect

Entrepreneur Start-Up Handbook

This handbook guides **UTEP** faculty from idea to startup, covering business planning, IP, funding, and compliance. Through this handbook, we will guide you to turning your ideas into viable companies with clarity and confidence, while providing pathways to regional resources to foster success.

Handbook



Harvard Business School Foundry Bootcamp

The Harvard Business School Foundry Bootcamp guides you from idea to a business-ready plan. This 4-week, fully virtual program empowers faculty and research teams to turn breakthrough research into fundable ventures. Participants apply structured, HBS-designed frameworks and leverage AI-powered mentorship to validate market need, refine commercialization strategy, and craft a compelling pitch, while retaining full ownership of their intellectual property and keeping 100% of their equity. Top teams receive direct exposure to investors and can compete for up to \$100,000 in funding.

Connect



As spring brings renewed energy and momentum, we continue building on the strong foundation of discovery, collaboration, and service that defines **UTEP** research. Your work, through creativity, mentorship, and partnership, continues to generate meaningful impact for our campus and the communities we serve.

We Want to Know

Submit your accomplishments, share your research, or highlight a colleague whose work should be recognized in future issues and on the **R&I** website.

Submit

Correction: February's issue incorrectly labeled the "Thangtong Gyalpo Iron Bridge."



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