



Discovery & Impact: Research & Innovation Quarterly Newsletter

Spring marks new milestones, groundbreaking research achievements, and the contributions of individuals driving innovation. This issue features faculty awardees, key updates across Research & Innovation (R&I), and introductions to team members supporting the University's research enterprise. R&I continues to evolve, reflecting a commitment to advancing scholarship and discovery. Discover the latest developments.

Leadership Spotlight: AVP for Scientific Computing and Artificial Intelligence



Meet Dr. Salamah Salamah

Dr. Salamah Salamah has stepped into the role of Associate Vice President for Scientific Computing and Artificial Intelligence, leading efforts to integrate AI into research at UTEP and positioning the University at the forefront of this rapidly evolving field.

Bringing extensive experience in computer science, Dr. Salamah previously served as chair of UTEP's Department of Computer Science for five years and has been a faculty member for seven. A proud UTEP alum, he earned his Ph.D. in Computer Science from the University in 2007. Explore the Q&A below to learn more about his vision for AI and scientific computing at UTEP.

Q&A with Dr. Salamah

What do you expect your first year to look like? What are you most excited about?

I anticipate to be learning a lot. Anytime you move into a new position, it's about knowing the culture in the office, the culture of the people you're working with, and what the job requires. But what I'm most excited about is working with faculty. I love working with people, working with faculty to learn new things in the AI area, and empowering faculty to take advantage of the AI power to do their research and become even more and more successful. That's the piece that I'm most excited about.

How do you see AI transforming research, especially here at UTEP?

AI is very good at doing things we are not interested in. So, it does a lot of the heavy lifting. How it will transform UTEP research will empower faculty to come up with results that they could not

do before by looking at large amounts of data, data that looks different, whether you have medical data or text, video, or audio data. Combining all of that and making sense of it should help faculty and researchers discover new things and problems to solve.

What else do you want the UTEP research community to know?

I want people to understand that this is a position of service. I am here to serve. I was a department chair. I was there to serve primarily the students but also the faculty. In this position, I'm here to serve the faculty whatever they need. And I go back to what I'm most excited about. It's to contact the faculty and let them know I'm here if they need anything.

Research & Innovation Updates

Raul Chavez Earns Certified Research Administrator Designation

Raul Chavez, Post-Award Manager in the Office of Sponsored Projects, has earned the prestigious Certified Research Administrator designation from the Research Administrators Certification Council. This recognition reflects his expertise, dedication, and leadership in post-award research administration.



This achievement demonstrates a commitment to excellence in research management and further ensures compliance and best practices in post-award management. Congratulations to Raul on this well-deserved accomplishment!

What to Know About Controlled Unclassified Information

Federal agencies increasingly incorporate **Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI)** clauses into contracts and agreements to protect sensitive government information. CUI refers to information created by or on behalf of the U.S. Government that requires safeguarding under federal law, regulation, or government-wide policy.

Federally sponsored projects involving CUI must comply with security controls under **NIST 800-171**. UTEP must ensure all CUI-related data (physical and electronic) meets compliance standards. Projects funded by the Department of Defense (DoD) may also require compliance with the **Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC) Program**, which ensures that NIST 800-171 controls are effectively implemented. To initiate CUI safeguarding for a research project, contact the **Office for Research Protections** at rso@utep.edu.

Additional information on CUI and CMMC is available on the **Controlled Unclassified**

Post-Approval Verification and Education (PAVE) as a Way to Improve Research Compliance

Research Compliance and Regulatory Assurances now offer a new resource for investigators seeking guidance on research protocols, including IACUC, IRB, and IBC. The Post Approval Verification and Education (PAVE) is designed to 1) Enhance the protection of research participants (both human and animal), 2) Improve the quality and integrity of research data, and 3) Provide training for researchers as they conduct their work. While PAVE visits are focused on compliance, they are also collaborative. Investigators have the opportunity to work one-on-one with a PAVE Specialist to review protocols and identify any outdated information, discuss procedures and policies, troubleshoot challenges, and address any questions related to compliance. To schedule a visit from PAVE, visit our [website](#). We are here to help!

Material or Data Transfer Agreements

Information webpage. Report research-related CUI incidents, such as receiving unsolicited CUI or unauthorized disclosure, to OSP immediately.



Effective February 1, 2025, the Contracts & Agreements (C&A) team within the Office of Sponsored Projects (OSP) will oversee the review and processing of all Material and Data Transfer Agreements (MDTAs). All inquiries and requests should be directed to mta@utep.edu. Elizabeth Quezada-Lung will reach out to faculty directly to initiate the process. While MDTAs will still be processed through the CLM portal, faculty are no longer required to submit requests through the system. The standard processing time for MDTAs is up to two weeks, though timelines may vary depending on negotiations and stakeholder coordination. Faculty should be prepared to provide 1) points of contact for the external party, 2) details on the data and materials being transferred, and 3) relevant intellectual property (IP) terms that may need to be addressed. This transition is designed to streamline the agreement process, reducing administrative burden for faculty while accelerating negotiation and execution.

Research Administrators: Partners in Funding Success

Research Administrators (RAs) in the Office of Sponsored Projects play a vital role in supporting faculty as they pursue external funding. OSP ensures that all research proposals and projects comply with UTEP's academic and research policies while meeting the requirements of external sponsors. Through collaboration and expertise, research administrators provide guidance at every stage of the funding process, building strong partnerships with support and relationships with principal investigators to facilitate successful proposal submissions. Every UTEP researcher has a dedicated pre- and post-award research administrator for tailored support. Click the button below to connect with a research administrator

[Connect with an RA](#)

Pre-Award



Danielle (Dani) Baeza
Pre-Award Manager



Maria D. Banales
Pre-Award RA



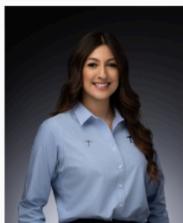
Maribel Gomez
Pre-Award RA



Yazmyne Hallback
Pre-Award RA



Alma I. Hernandez
Pre-Award RA



Karen Hernandez
Pre-Award RA



Omar Lira
Pre-Award RA



Nicole Setzu
Pre-Award RA

Post-Award



Raul Chavez
Post-Award Manager



Emily Baeza
Post-Award RA



Anaise Escobar
Post-Award RA



Mehnaz Rahman
Post-Award RA



Andrea Seanez
Post-Award RA



Daniel Lopez
Post-Award RA

Recognizing Research: Honorific Achievements



Dr. Emre Umucu, from the College of Health Sciences, has been recognized as the top-ranked scholar in chronic conditions research by ScholarGPS. This distinction is based on research publications and citations over the past five years. ScholarGPS, a leader in scholarly analytics, assessed nearly 31,000 scholars worldwide, evaluating publication volume, citation impact, and research quality (h-index). Their rankings highlight the most influential contributors in the field, with Dr. Umucu earning the #1



College of Education faculty member Dr. Sang Min Shin has received the Outstanding Counselor Educator Award from the Texas Association for Counselor Education and Supervision. This prestigious honor is awarded annually to one counselor educator in Texas and recognizes excellence in research, teaching, services, and mentorship. Dr. Shin's contributions to the field and dedication to shaping the next generation of counseling professionals exemplify the highest standards of excellence.



Dr. Erika D. Edwards, a faculty member in UTEP's Department of History, has been awarded a highly competitive National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Faculty Award for her research project, A Family History of Race-Making in Argentina, 1580-1850. This distinguished fellowship recognizes exceptional scholarship in the humanities, and only 17% of applicants receive funding. Dr. Edwards' work sheds light on the historical complexities of race and identity in Argentina, contributing to a

spot among the top five scholars. This achievement significantly impacts chronic conditions research, demonstrating the strength of UTEP's research community. Ranking scholars for research contributions over the prior five years, they analyzed nearly 31,000 scholars to rank the top five.

deeper understanding of the region's past.

Have an accomplishment to highlight or a researcher to recognize in the following newsletter? Please email researchdev@utep.edu.

Federal Regulations Updates

Stay informed and ensure your research projects stay on track by regularly checking this resource for the latest information and strategic advice on navigating federal funding landscapes.

Click the button below for updates, guidance, and communications on federal funding.

[Federal Research Updates](#)

Celebrating First-Time Grant Recipients



Securing a grant for the first time is a significant milestone in a researcher's career, marking the beginning of discoveries and scholarly contributions. On January 29, the Pioneering Researchers Reception brought together faculty and scholars to celebrate groundbreaking research and innovation. First-time grant recipients from FY 2023-2024 were recognized at the Tomás Rivera Conference Center for this achievement. Honorees received framed prints of the Lhaxhang, symbolizing dedication, craftsmanship, collaboration, and impact. Attendees had the opportunity to connect, share insights, and reflect on the impact of research at UTEP. The evening highlighted the dedication and achievements of faculty committed to shaping the future through scholarship and innovation.

[View Recap](#)



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