



Discovery & Impact

June 2026

Purpose at Work

Every discovery begins with a question.

The pursuit of knowledge is driven by curiosity, strengthened through collaboration, and measured by the difference it makes in people's lives. Across **UTEP**, researchers, students, staff, and partners are expanding knowledge, opening new possibilities, and creating solutions that serve our region and beyond.

This issue of *Discovery & Impact* explores how research creates value through trust, culture, collaboration, entrepreneurship, and stewardship. You'll meet faculty advancing trustworthy artificial intelligence, preserving American cultural heritage through music, building new research partnerships, and preparing the next generation of innovators to transform ideas into action.

Thank you for being part of **UTEP**'s research community. Together, we are shaping the future through discovery.

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DISCOVERY

Building Trust in the Age of AI

Advancing trustworthy AI across disciplines and communities

As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly woven into everyday life, one question is shaping its future: How do we build confidence in technologies that influence the way we live, learn, and work?

Through the *Computing Research Association Trustworthy AI Research Fellowship for Early Career Scholars*, Dr. Anantaa Kotal will spend the next year collaborating with researchers from the Computing Alliance of Hispanic-Serving Institutions. Together, they will examine how artificial intelligence can be developed responsibly while helping policymakers, researchers, and the public make informed decisions about its use.



Dr. Kotal's research explores how people understand emerging technologies and the factors that shape their confidence in them. By bringing human perspectives into conversations about artificial intelligence, her work helps ensure technological progress reflects the values, experiences, and priorities of the communities it is intended to serve.

In her words, *"Innovation should not come at the cost of trust, and trust should not come at the cost of innovation."*

Why It Matters

Artificial intelligence is becoming part of everyday life. Research that strengthens public confidence helps communities embrace emerging technologies while encouraging innovation that serves society responsibly.

The Soundtrack of American History

Exploring the connections between military music, American culture, and jazz



Music does more than commemorate history. It carries history forward.

As the United States prepares to celebrate its 250th anniversary, Dr. Brandon Houghtalen is exploring the legacy of James Reese Europe, the pioneering musician and military bandleader whose World War I service helped introduce jazz to audiences worldwide and reshape America's musical identity.

Supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities, *James Reese Europe and the Evolution of American Military Music* combines historical scholarship, live performance, and public engagement to examine how military music influenced American culture and helped establish jazz as a global art form.

By bringing this history to contemporary audiences, the project demonstrates how the arts preserve cultural memory, deepen historical understanding, and connect communities across generations.

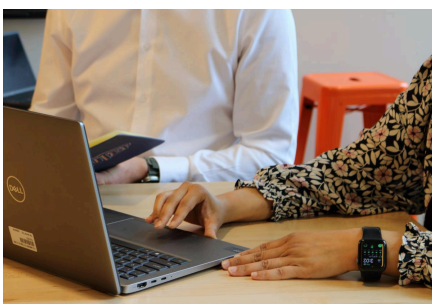
Why It Matters

Research in the arts preserves more than history. It helps us understand who we are, how culture evolves, and why the stories we inherit continue to shape the future.

CONNECTIONS

Global Research. Trusted Partnerships.

Preparing researchers for an evolving federal landscape



Today's research challenges demand global collaboration. As researchers build partnerships across institutions and international borders, federal agencies continue to strengthen expectations for transparency in publications, affiliations, and research activities.

The Office of Research Protections helps faculty navigate these evolving requirements through Publications Wellness Checks, a confidential review of researcher profiles that identifies potential concerns before they affect proposal competitiveness or award

management.

Rather than simply responding to new requirements, faculty gain guidance that strengthens researcher profiles, supports responsible international collaboration, and positions future proposals for success.

Why It Matters

Strong international partnerships expand knowledge, accelerate discovery, and create opportunities that no single institution can achieve alone. Preparing researchers to meet evolving federal expectations helps protect those collaborations while strengthening UTEP's research enterprise.

Ready to review your researcher profile?

[Schedule a Publications Wellness Check](#)

Resources summarizing current NIH and NASA guidance on international collaboration are also available through the Office of Research Protections.

Funding Insights

CPRIT on preparing stronger applications

A compelling research idea is only part of a successful proposal. Competitive applications demonstrate a clear understanding of the sponsor's mission, priorities, and review criteria.

Join Myriam Casillas, Senior Program Manager for Academic Research at the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT), for an inside look at how proposals are evaluated and what distinguishes competitive submissions.



Participants will explore:

- CPRIT's mission, funding priorities, and review process
- Strategies for aligning research ideas with sponsor expectation
- Practical approaches for strengthening proposal readiness
- Next steps for pursuing CPRIT funding opportunities

Why It Matters

Competitive proposals connect outstanding research with the priorities that matter most to the sponsor. Understanding that perspective helps researchers position their ideas more effectively before writing begins.

Session Information

Date: July 15, 2026

Time: 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Location: IDR 2.204

Ready to strengthen your next proposal?

[Register Now](#)

IMPACT COLLECTIVE

Creating space for ideas, partnerships, and new possibilities

Every meaningful collaboration begins with a conversation. On June 18, faculty from **UTEP**, Texas Tech Health El Paso, New Mexico State University, and UTHealth Houston came together for the second *Impact Collective*, exploring downtown El Paso while discovering new opportunities to connect their research, expertise, and shared interests.

Guided visits to the Mexican American Cultural Center and La Nube encouraged conversations about regional challenges, emerging ideas, and opportunities for collaboration. Throughout the afternoon, one phrase captured the spirit of the experience: "We should collaborate."



Those three words reflect the purpose of *Impact Collective*. Strong research partnerships rarely begin in conference rooms. They begin when people share perspectives, discover common goals, and imagine what they can accomplish together.

The experience concluded with networking at Hotel Paso del Norte's *Sabor*, where conversations continued with colleagues and regional partners, including the Paso del Norte

Foundation and the El Paso Community Foundation.

Why It Matters

Research grows stronger when people build relationships across disciplines, institutions, and communities. Every new connection creates the possibility for ideas that no one organization could achieve alone.

Interested in joining the next Impact Collective?

[Join the Next Collective](#)

INNOVATION

From Ideas to Impact

Empowering students to transform research into solutions



Every innovation begins with someone willing to ask, "What if?"

At the Mike Loya Center for Innovation and Commerce (MLCIC), students are turning that question into technologies, businesses, and solutions with the potential to improve lives. Through mentorship, entrepreneurial training, and industry engagement, the Center equips students from every discipline

to move ideas beyond the classroom and into the marketplace.

This spring, the Miners Pitch Competition showcased ventures that addressed challenges in healthcare, artificial intelligence, and service technologies. Over four weeks, participants refined their ideas, strengthened business models, and presented solutions that demonstrated both commercial potential and public value.

Spring 2026 Miners Pitch Winners

1st Place

Hugo Emilio Cabrera

College of Engineering

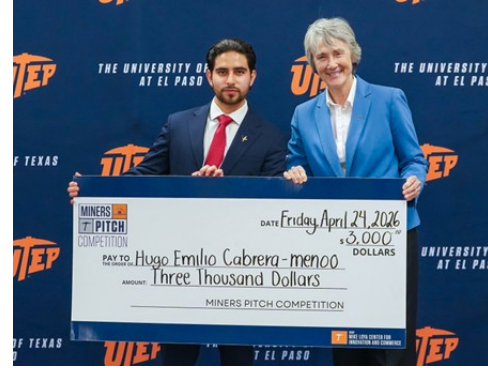
Menoo

Workflow software designed to modernize service technology operations.

2nd Place

Md Mamunoor Islam
College of Engineering
LacSense
Biomedical technology advancing new possibilities for healthcare.

3rd Place
Ismail Hossain
College of Engineering
AI-in-the-Loop
Privacy-preserving artificial intelligence designed to detect and disrupt sophisticated scams.



Celebrating Innovation Across Campus



More than 125 students, faculty, mentors, and community partners gathered this spring for the inaugural End-of-Semester Symposium, celebrating a year of entrepreneurship, collaboration, and student achievement.

Presentations from Loya Fellows and Miners Pitch participants illustrated how research and entrepreneurship complement one another, creating pathways for discovery, commercialization, and regional impact.

UTEP President Heather Wilson and Vice President for Research & Innovation Ahmad Itani joined the celebration, reaffirming the University's commitment to preparing innovators who create value for society.

The evening also marked the debut of the Distinguished Innovator Award, recognizing students who have completed the Center's three signature experiences: Studio G, the Entrepreneurial Mindset micro-credential, and the Miners Pitch Competition.

The inaugural recipients demonstrated an important truth. Innovation belongs to every discipline.

Distinguished Innovator Award Recipients



Naomi Gallo
Woody L. Hunt College of Business

NG Leg Bot
A smart knee brace designed to support rehabilitation through programmable motorized assistance.



Cristian Ambriz
Miguel A. Loya College of Engineering

CA Natural
A plant-based shampoo developed to promote healthier hair through sustainable ingredients.

Why It Matters

Entrepreneurship broadens the impact of research by enabling students to transform knowledge into products, services, and ventures that benefit society.

Looking Ahead

The next generation of innovators is already preparing its next big idea. Applications for the **Fall 2026 Miners Pitch Competition** open **August 3**, with **Pitch Day** scheduled for **November 20**.

Whether you're interested in entrepreneurship, commercialization, or industry partnerships, the MLCIC offers opportunities to develop ideas, build new skills, and create solutions with lasting impact.

Ready to take the next step?

Connect

STEWARDSHIP

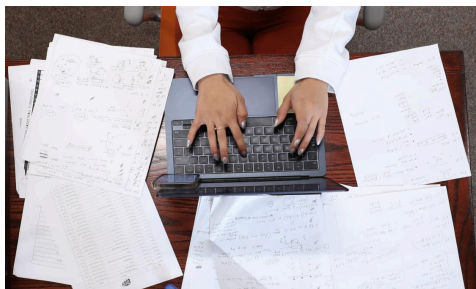
Every Research Dollar Matters

Behind every discovery is responsible stewardship

Every sponsored award represents more than funding. It represents a commitment to responsible stewardship, accountability, and public trust.

While researchers focus on discovery, Grant Management Accounting (GMA) helps ensure sponsored funding is managed responsibly, resources are used appropriately, and projects remain aligned with sponsor expectations. Together, these efforts protect the integrity of **UTEP's** research enterprise while creating a strong foundation for future growth.

This year, GMA introduced several updates that improve proposal and award management, strengthen financial oversight, and streamline processes that support researchers throughout the life of an award.



Purchase Requisitions & IDTs

Beginning September 1, 2025, GMA reviews purchase requisitions and IDTs for allowability, budget availability, and appropriate timing. Principal Investigator approval is required before transactions are processed.

Student Stipends

Beginning May 1, 2026, student stipends transitioned to the Student Notice of Award (SNOA) process, improving coordination with Financial Aid and creating a more consistent student experience.

Space Tracker

Space Tracker enhances documentation of sponsored research activities, supporting accurate reporting and responsible space management.



Sahara Reconciliations

Regular reconciliations strengthen financial oversight and help ensure compliance with sponsor requirements.

Cost Transfers

Cost transfers remain an important mechanism for correcting financial transactions and should be completed within 90 days of the original expense and before certification.

Faculty Appointments

Faculty participating in sponsored projects should be accurately reflected in Notices of Award and supporting budget documentation to facilitate timely approvals and sponsor compliance.

Why It Matters

Responsible stewardship protects every research dollar entrusted to the University. Strong financial management builds sponsor confidence, strengthens institutional credibility, and enables researchers to focus on discovery.

Need additional guidance?



Cultivating Ideas. Delivering Impact.

Research is ultimately about people. It is driven by those who ask bold questions, pursue new perspectives, and apply knowledge to improve lives. Every story in this issue reflects the dedication of faculty, students, staff, and partners working together to expand understanding, solve complex challenges, and create lasting value for society.

Whether advancing trustworthy artificial intelligence, preserving cultural heritage, building research partnerships, supporting entrepreneurship, or strengthening stewardship, each effort contributes to a research enterprise defined by curiosity, collaboration, and purpose.

Share the Next Story

The next issue of *Discovery & Impact* begins with the work happening today across our research community.

If you have a publication, award, research milestone, community partnership, student success, or breakthrough worth celebrating, we'd love to feature it in a future issue and on the Research & Innovation website.

Every achievement strengthens **UTEP**'s story of discovery and the people who make it possible.

[Share Your Story](#)



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