

Discovery & Impact
September 2026

Purpose at Work

Impact begins long before a discovery is made.

It starts with people willing to ask questions, invest in new ideas, build partnerships, and help others succeed.

Across **UTEP**, researchers, students, staff, and community partners are working together to strengthen discovery and address challenges that matter to our region and beyond.

This issue of ***Discovery & Impact*** explores how research advances discovery through innovation, collaboration, professional development, community engagement, and stewardship. You'll meet researchers advancing solutions for water sustainability, learn about projects improving health outcomes across the Borderplex, discover opportunities for connection and career growth, and see how **UTEP** supports researchers at every stage of the research journey.

Thank you for being part of **UTEP**'s research community. Together, we are expanding what is possible through research, partnership, and service.

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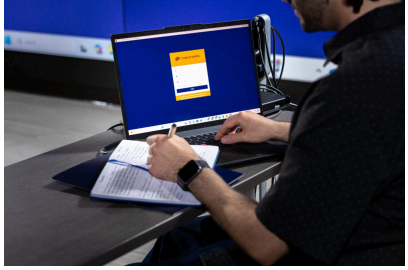
- Investing in People. Advancing Discovery.

DISCOVERY

Research, Evaluation, and Assessment Services (REAS)

Behind every successful research project is a commitment to understanding and demonstrating impact.

For more than a decade, **UTEP**'s Research, Evaluation, and Assessment Services (REAS) team has helped researchers transform data into insight and insight into impact.



Since FY25, REAS has contributed to the development of more than 160 proposals submitted to sponsors across the public and private funding landscape. This includes more than 100 proposals targeting federal agencies, including NSF, NIH, and other mission-driven sponsors, as well as 32 foundation-sponsored proposals and numerous state and economic development sponsors. This breadth reflects REAS's ability to support researchers across a wide range of disciplines and funding environments.

Working alongside faculty throughout the grant lifecycle, REAS develops evaluation strategies that measure progress, document outcomes, and generate evidence to strengthen ongoing projects and future funding opportunities. Beyond sponsored research, REAS partners with community and institutional organizations to build regional capacity for evaluation, assessment, and data-informed decision making.

Evaluation Expertise in Action

As an evaluation partner, REAS examines program implementation, tracks outcomes, and provides data-driven recommendations that support continuous improvement and student success.

Recently, REAS served as an external evaluator for a newly funded NSF Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) program led by **Drs. Yirong Lin** and **Karina Canaba**. The program provides undergraduate students with hands-on research experiences in advanced manufacturing and intelligent systems while helping them develop technical, professional, and research skills. According to Dr. Canaba, REAS's role extends well beyond meeting evaluation requirements. The team's insights, responsiveness, and comprehensive reporting have strengthened program planning, informed decision making, and helped ensure successful outcomes for both students and sponsors.

Why It Matters

By helping researchers measure success, demonstrate value, and communicate results, REAS strengthens projects, supports accountability, and positions researchers for future funding and discovery.

Connect

Research in Conversation



Research grows stronger when conversations connect people, expertise, and resources, creating new opportunities for collaboration and innovation.

This summer, members of **Research & Innovation (R&I)** visited the Civil Engineering Water Research Laboratory to learn more about the work of **Dr. Lauren Kennedy and Dr. Sungmin Youn**, whose research addresses challenges related to water quality, public health, and sustainable water systems.

Located in one of the nation's most water-conscious regions, the laboratory studies microorganisms throughout the engineered water cycle, including drinking water systems, wastewater-based epidemiology, and water quality monitoring.

During a candid conversation, the researchers discussed their ongoing work, future directions, and the challenges associated with expanding the impact and application of their research. The visit also connected the laboratory with additional **R&I** resources, including Michael Martinez, Associate Vice President for Regional Innovation and Partnerships, and Jacob Croft, Director of Technology Commercialization. These discussions helped identify potential regional partnerships, community engagement, and pathways for translating research into practical applications.

Why It Matters

Lab visits help build awareness of the innovative work taking place across campus while creating connections that strengthen research, partnerships, and community impact.

Showcase Your Research
We invite faculty to connect with the **R&I** team and share their research through a laboratory, studio, center, or program visit.

Connect

CONNECTIONS

Addressing Health in the Paso del Notre Region

Sobel-Duncan Border Health Research Award





This year, **Dr. Nilotpal Sanyal** and **Dr. Grace Otitoju** were selected to receive the 2026 Sobel-Duncan Border Health Research Award for their project, "*Timely Cancer Detection in Underserved Border Populations in the Paso del Norte Region*." The award provides $40,000 in funding to support research aimed at improving health outcomes in communities across the border region.

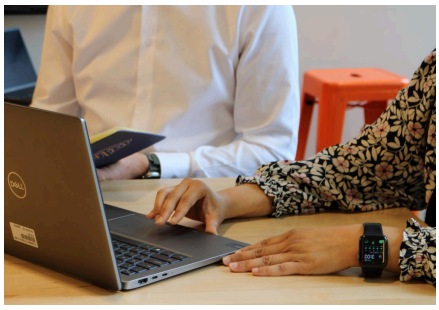
Reviewers highlighted the project's collaborative team, innovative approach to cancer detection, focus on underserved Borderplex populations, and multi-level framework for addressing barriers to early diagnosis.

Through initiatives like the Sobel-Duncan Award, researchers are empowered to pursue promising ideas that address regional priorities while laying the groundwork for larger research opportunities and long-term community impact.

Why It Matters
Early investment helps promising ideas grow into discoveries that improve health outcomes across the Paso del Norte region.

Bring Research Protections to You

Education, Partnerships, and Service



Research Protections is committed to enhancing research security and compliance through education, policy and press development and implantation, while promoting collaborative research through exceptional service. More importantly, Research Protections is committed to partnering with researchers to help navigate the evolving landscape of research security and the increasingly stringent guidelines while empowering them to make informed decisions that protect their research, the University, and their professional reputation.

One of the ways Research Protections fulfills this commitment is by bringing their expertise directly to you! Whether delivered as a brief introduction of the unit, an informal discussion, or a formal presentation, the team can tailor a session or event to meet your needs.

Research Protections is available to provide presentations and discussions on various topics, including Export Control, Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI), Disclosure Management, Research Integrity, Research Security, International Collaborations/Travel/Shipping, and Compliance Training. These sessions are designed to connect directly with researchers, and familiarize them with roles, responsibilities, documentation, and institutional processes.

Have a department meeting or faculty retreat coming up? Invite Research Protections to join!

We look forward to partnering with your department or college and supporting your research endeavors.

Connect

Insights + Impact

Create Your Unicorn Career - A Faculty Workshop

Wednesday, September 23, 2026
8:30 AM - 5:00 PM
IDRB 2.204

Successful academic careers are built through reflection, strategy, and a clear understanding of personal strengths and goals.

This September, faculty are invited to participate in *Create Your Unicorn Career*, a professional development workshop focused on helping researchers align their professional activities with the career they want to build.

Participants will explore strategies for identifying their unique strengths, strengthening their professional narrative, and making intentional decisions that support long-term success.



Alaina G. Levine
Author - Create Your Unicorn Career

Register

IMPACT COLLECTIVE

Ideas, Partnerships, and New Possibilities



From the Socorro Mission to La Nube, the Impact Collective invites researchers to experience the people, places, and organizations that shape our region, creating opportunities to connect scholarly expertise with community priorities.

Through place-based learning and shared experiences, faculty from **UTEP** and partner institutions engage with community leaders, nonprofit organizations, and regional stakeholders whose work intersects with the challenges and opportunities being explored through research. These conversations foster new perspectives, strengthen relationships, and spark ideas that can lead to future projects and engagement.

Why It Matters
Research creates its greatest value when it extends beyond campus boundaries. By bringing researchers into the communities they serve, the Impact Collective helps strengthen regional engagement, deepen understanding of local needs, and cultivate relationships that support discovery and innovation.

The journey continues this **October.** Watch for details on the next Impact Collective and the opportunity to explore, connect, and discover new possibilities for collaboration.

Join the Next Collective

INNOVATION

From Ideas to Impact

Empowering Students to Transform Research into Solutions



Mike Loya Center Featured on Cover of The Real Entrepreneurs Magazine

Innovation flourishes when ideas connect with opportunity.

MLCIC was recently featured on the cover of The Real Entrepreneurs Magazine, highlighting the Center's role in advancing entrepreneurship, applied research, and economic development across the Borderplex region.

The feature spotlights Loya Fellows working alongside industry partners to address real-world challenges while developing solutions that create value for businesses and communities. The recognition reflects the Center's commitment to helping students transform research, creativity, and entrepreneurial thinking into impact.

Why It Matters
Entrepreneurship extends the reach of research by turning ideas into solutions, ventures, and opportunities that benefit society.

Welcome the Fall 2026 Cohort of Loya Graduate Research Fellows

This fall, sixteen Graduate Research Fellows from the Miguel A. Loya College of Engineering and the Woody L. Hunt College of Business will partner with organizations across the region to advance projects focused on entrepreneurship, technology, healthcare, and economic development.
Working with industry and community partners, these fellows will apply research, creativity, and problem-solving skills to challenges that matter beyond the classroom.

Why It Matters
Experiential learning prepares students to translate knowledge into action while strengthening connections between the University, industry, and the community.

Texas Internship Initiative: Creating Pathways from Education to Workforce Impact

Workforce experiences help students connect academic learning with professional success.
Through the Texas Internship Initiative, **UTEP** students will gain paid internship opportunities with employers across the region, building experience while contributing to organizations that drive economic growth throughout the Borderplex.

Why It Matters
Internships strengthen workforce readiness, support talent retention, and create opportunities for students to contribute to their communities before graduation.

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STEWARDSHIP

Every Research Dollar Matters

Responsible Stewardship

PIC 2.0: Supporting Informed Research Management



Stewardship begins with understanding how resources align with project goals, timelines, and commitments.

The Project Information Center (PIC) 2.0, available through the Research & Innovation Dashboard, provides principal investigators, project administrators, and research personnel with centralized access to award, budget, expenditure, and project information. By bringing key data together in one location, PIC 2.0 helps research teams monitor activity, stay informed, and support effective project management throughout the life of an award.

A recent enhancement to PIC 2.0 introduces a Project Burn Rate feature, offering an additional way to view project spending in relation to the time remaining in an award period. While spending patterns vary across projects and disciplines, this tool serves as a helpful reference point for financial planning and ongoing monitoring.

To support users, the Dashboard also includes resources such as a PIC 2.0 overview, terminology guide, instructional video, frequently asked questions, and contact information for additional assistance.

Explore PIC 2.0 through the **Research & Innovation** **Dashboard.**

Why It Matters
Successful research depends on both discovery and stewardship. Providing researchers with accessible tools and information helps support informed decision-making, responsible financial management, and the long-term success of sponsored projects.

Need additional guidance?

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Office of Sponsored Projects 5 Day Policy Reminder

As proposal submission activity continues across the University, the Office of Sponsored Projects (OSP) would like to remind all Principal Investigators (PIs) and research teams of **UTEP**'s **Proposal Submission Policy**.

To ensure that proposals receive a thorough review for accuracy, compliance, and institutional requirements OSP requires that a completed proposal containing all final business elements be received by OSP at least five (5) business days prior to the sponsor's deadline. The policy applies to all externally submitted proposals, including subawards to another institution's proposal. The policy does allow PIs to continue to work on the scientific narrative portions of the proposal after the 5 day deadline.

Faculty are encouraged to submit a **Notice of Intent (NOI)** as soon as a funding opportunity is identified and to work closely with their **assigned Research Administrator** (RA) throughout the proposal process. Early engagement helps ensure adequate time for budget development, compliance review, routing, and submission.

Adhering to the policy helps ensures timely, accurate, and compliant proposal submissions on behalf of **UTEP.**

Full Policy Here



Investing In People. Advancing Discovery.

This issue highlights the many ways **UTEP**'s research community creates impact, from strengthening research programs and supporting compliance, to fostering entrepreneurship, expanding workforce opportunities, and advancing responsible stewardship. Together, these efforts help transform discovery into lasting value for society.

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

Your Pick



The most clicked link in the June edition of *Discovery & Impact* was a Insights + Impact session with CPRIT Senior Program Manager for Academic Research, Myriam Casillas, who gave practical insight into how CPRIT evaluates proposals and how to begin shaping competitive submissions.

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