



UTEP RESEARCH & INNOVATION

Impact & Discovery December 2025

Purpose in Action

Research creates momentum when people commit to work that strengthens communities and delivers public value. This issue of *Impact & Discovery* highlights faculty who embody that commitment. Their leadership, curiosity, and discipline reflect a shared belief that knowledge gains meaning when it serves others.

With this December edition, we begin a new name and communication pace. *Impact & Discovery* will now be published every other month to provide timely updates on the work shaping **UTEP** research. The next issue will arrive in February 2026.

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2025 President's Honors

Leading the Way in Research, Scholarship, and Impact

Each year, the President's Honors recognizes the top three departments whose faculty advance the University's research mission with exceptional focus. Rankings for 2024 to 2025 reflect the highest levels of external funding per tenure and tenure-track faculty member. This highlights collective strength, shared purpose, and the impact of faculty moving ideas into action.



1st Place: Social Work

Over the year, Social Work secured \$3,056,730 in research awards. All five faculty members received funding, averaging \$611,346 per person. Their work centers on human well-being, driving social innovation that benefits Borderplex communities.

2nd Place: Electrical and Computer Engineering

Nine of seventeen faculty members in Electrical and Computer Engineering brought in \$9,369,804 in awards. With an average of \$551,165 per faculty member, this achievement reflects a research culture that pushes technological boundaries while supporting a more connected future.



3rd Place: Industrial, Manufacturing, and Systems Engineering

Industrial, Manufacturing, and Systems Engineering received a total of \$4,244,663 in external funding, averaging \$530,583 per faculty member, with 4 of 8 faculty members receiving awards. Their research advances critical industries and improves the quality of life through applied solutions.

These departments model what it means to lead through inquiry, collaboration, and purpose. They show how research creates public value and strengthens the region we serve.

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.



Druk: Thunder Dragon

Presented at the President's Honors, this work by Antonio Castro H., Professor of Graphic Design, captures the spirit of discovery, engagement, and transformation. The dragon, inspired by Bhutanese folklore and imagery found in the Lhakhang, rises with an energy that mirrors the force of the ideas shaping the University's mission. The blood-orange background evokes the vivid El Paso sunsets and the signature **UTEP** palette.

Castro's international design career, grounded in social engagement and regional identity, reinforces the connection between innovation and public value. As co-founder of Posters Without Borders, his work demonstrates how visual communication can serve as a catalyst for justice and shared narratives.

Leaders Shaping Discovery and Impact *Research Development Profiles*

Associate Deans for Research influence **UTEP**'s research environment and foster opportunities that support faculty across the University. Each ADR represents their college, providing unique perspectives and priorities that forward collaboration, innovation, and impact. Beginning with this edition, we will feature ADRs from the College of Liberal Arts, Woody L. Hunt College of Business, and College of Education, with additional profiles to be included in the following two editions.



Caitlyn Muniz

Building a Research Culture Grounded in Care and Insight

As Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies, Caitlyn Muniz, Ph.D., advances research on justice, safety, and victims' experiences. Her scholarship explores the stigma and barriers that deter individuals from seeking help. She believes research should equip communities to respond with clarity, compassion, and informed action. Guided by this, Dr. Muniz strengthens collaborations and prioritizes faculty support. Her approach advances the College's mission to improve lives and builds a connected research community at **UTEP**, focused on public value.



Erik Devos

Curiosity with Purpose

Erik Devos, Ph.D., lives by a simple motto: question everything. Discipline guides his work as Associate Dean for Faculty, Research, and Graduate Programs in the Woody L. Hunt College of Business. He views research as a public act that enhances the understanding of communities, markets, and institutions. Dr. Devos measures success by others' achievements, reflecting a leadership style grounded in service. He encourages researchers to focus on the questions that influence long-term understanding and emphasizes resilience as a core academic skill.



Marcus Gay

Championing Research That Improves Learning and Lives

Effective research support removes barriers, allowing faculty to focus on inquiry. In that spirit, Marcus Gay, Ed.D., Assistant Dean of Research, guides faculty across the College of Education as they pursue meaningful questions with confidence and rigor. **UTEP** education research informs programming for students, counselors, educators, and community partners. External funding expands this reach, improving outcomes and opportunity. Dr. Gay's leadership builds a strong research culture and affirms the belief that investing in education research strengthens the future of the Borderplex and beyond.

Research Compliance



Research Compliance and LARC: Strengthening Support for UTEP Research

Effective research thrives when the systems around it are strong and responsive. Research Compliance and the Laboratory Animal Resource Center (LARC) are expanding their capacity to better support faculty. This growth begins with new leaders who bring experience, insight, and a shared commitment to service.



Elizabeth Anaya, MS, joined in June 2025 as **Director of LARC and Research Compliance**. She brings extensive experience in research oversight and animal facility management from Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, El Paso. She returns to **UTEP** with an understanding of the research community she now serves.

Raquelle Rosales joins as IRB Administrator with eight years of experience in human research oversight. Dennis Gruska joins as IACUC and IBC Administrator after more than a decade in animal and biological research at Vanderbilt University. Martha Cardona, a **UTEP** alum, joins LARC as a business manager with ten years of accounting and project management experience.

These colleagues strengthen the systems that sustain research at **UTEP**.



Connect

A More Efficient and Secure TCP



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)



The Export Control Office has updated the Technology Control Plan (TCP) to strengthen oversight and reduce administrative burden for projects subject to export controls. Beginning in October 2025, Data Management Plans (DMPs) will no longer be used for controlled projects. All such projects now require a TCP to ensure consistent documentation and better visibility into personnel changes.

The previous TCP was lengthy, spanning twelve pages and multiple appendices. The new version is 25% shorter while still maintaining strong safeguards. It now includes fields to document equipment purchases and to request access controls through Facilities Management. Principal Investigators (PIs) are also required to notify the Export Control Office before any personnel changes, ensuring greater accuracy and reducing risk.

Appendix 1 has been revised to streamline foreign access approvals, allowing PIs to provide required documentation directly to the Office of Sponsored Projects (OSP). These updates consolidate processes and fast-track projects that involve personnel restrictions. The result is a clearer, efficient system that supports compliance and reduces complexity.

Connect

Research, Evaluation, and Assessment Services *Expanding Partnerships and Regional Impact*

The Research, Evaluation, and Assessment Services (REAS) center exists to help faculty design, strengthen, and demonstrate the impact of their work. REAS brings evaluation expertise that can elevate proposals, inform project design, and show funders how research creates public value. Faculty who engage early increase the competitiveness of their submissions and the meaningfulness of their community outcomes.

The team is expanding its evaluation capacity and strengthening collaborations across the region. REAS supports projects funded by the NSF, NIH, DOE, and ED, and has established new partnerships with the Hogg Foundation and Endeavors. These efforts reflect a commitment to diversifying funding streams and expanding community-engaged evaluation across the Paso del Norte region. Each partnership reinforces REAS's goal to deliver rigorous, community-centered assessment that supports research with lasting impact.

Investing in Professional Growth and Research Excellence

Through its leadership roles and broad engagement across evaluation networks, including the Texas Evaluation Network's Board of Directors, REAS is elevating its visibility. The center has prioritized professional development by supporting staff participation and presentations at national conferences, including the American Evaluation Association and the Center for Culturally Responsive Evaluation and Assessment. Team members are contributing to peer-reviewed publications that advance REAS's mission of research excellence, culturally responsive practice, and sustainable program growth.

Explore how REAS can support your next project. Connect with us and begin a conversation about collaboration.

Connect



A Season of Gratitude and Shared Purpose

As the year draws to a close, we pause to recognize the people who bring **UTEP**'s research mission to life. Because of your work, students gain mentors, ideas find support, and communities across the Borderplex benefit from research that creates public value. You help turn possibility into progress, and we are grateful to share both this season and the future ahead with you.

Thank you for the trust and collaboration that strengthen our research community. We wish you and your families a peaceful and restorative holiday season. May the new year bring renewed energy and continued achievement.

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



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