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The Prospector, March 20, 2018

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Diana Natalicio was only supposed to be at UTEP for one year. But that one year turned into a 45-year legacy on campus and 30 years as UTEP’s president.

Her tenure consists of awards and recognitions, including the Texas Women’s Hall of Fame, a spot in TIME’S 100 Leaders, the 2016 Hispanic Heritage Award in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) by the Hispanic Heritage Foundation, and Fortune Magazine’s fourth-annual 2017 list of the World’s 50 Greatest Leaders.

Natalicio grew up in a blue-collar high school, where she said college was not thought of. The boys were expected to go into the workforce and girls were expected to marry them. However, Natalicio was the first in her family to attend college.

“In a role like this, you can make so many decisions that will have an impact,” she said. “I never thought that I would be a university president.”

Before working at UTEP she received her doctorate in linguistics at UT Austin. There she found students were more entitled and appreciated how students at UTEP did not take anything for granted. She decided if she had the opportunity to stay she would, but never imagined it would be so long.

Natalicio recognizes 30 years is unusual since university presidents often use one job as a stepping stone to another. “I wasn’t interested in trying to see how you could have a vision, develop a mission, execute it and live with the consequences of the decisions you make, because if you stay 30 years you make a lot of decisions and you know if you’ve achieved whatever it is you were trying to make a decision on or not.”

“Me, I thought, now that I’ve caught this butterfly, what am I going to do with it?” But 15-plus years of faculty experience put her one step ahead of an incoming president, who would not have understood UTEP’s culture.

“Since I had been on the faculty here before, since 1971, I knew the students. I knew how hardworking and talented they were, but I also knew how stressed they were to get an education because all of the other responsibilities they had and so on. I also knew the faculty quite well. So I really had a very good grounding. In that sense, it really wasn’t very difficult.”

One of the first challenges Natalicio took on was helping high school students from all parts of the region make their way toward UTEP.

“Began digging into data and figuring out who were our students, what high schools do they come from,” she said. “I hadn’t been aware of the odd imbalance between certain high schools that were sending us many graduates. Connally was sending us many graduates, but then other high schools, like Riverside—they weren’t sending us many at all—maybe none in some cases. That was sort of puzzling because if you believe that people are talented everywhere, in every zip code and across gender, ethnicities and races you have to ask yourself ‘why aren’t they coming?’”

After conducting a study, she learned that money was a big factor in students choosing not to attend UTEP. Natalicio grew up in a blue-collar high school, where she said college was not thought of. The boys were expected to go into the workforce and girls were expected to marry them. However, Natalicio was the first in her family to attend college.

“I began to realize, based on my own experience, that I knew there were students just like me who weren’t all that encouraged to go to college, but who had the talent to at least survive, which is what I did. Then I began to do better and better because I built my own confidence that I could do it.”

Natalicio and her team then went on a quest to reach out to high schools and work with them to create a positive culture, to encourage, not discourage, the thought of going to college. The next step was to make sure UTEP had competitive degrees, where a degree could serve as a prize in its competitiveness and brand in the marketplace to get better jobs.

That came to this whole idea of access and excellence,” Natalicio said. “We had to be affordable and accessible, but we also had to be very high quality so that our students could go out and be superstars. They had the talent, it was up to us to make sure that our programs delivered on that.”

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March 20, 2018

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

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ASSAYER OF STUDENT OPINION

VOL. 103, NO. 23

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
We go forward together or we don’t move at all

BY MICHAELA ROMÁN

“A man approached me while I was reading and refused to accept that I wasn’t interested in being bought a drink or further conversation,” Saleem told Mashable. The man’s persistence, despite her protestations, began to irritate Saleem. But, thankfully, a woman stepped in to lend some assistance.

She tried to remain polite so it didn’t escalate, but she became irritated, at which point a woman nearby intervened pretending to be an old friend.

The random woman saw and yelled, “Carla? Hi!” She then leaned in to hug her and whispered “(you okay?)” She said the man looked annoyed and awkwardly hung about before finally leaving.

Saleem says she “profusely” thanked the woman who helped her, who also invited her to join her and her friends. She says she was so touched by the woman’s gesture that she tweeted about it. Her tweet clearly resonated with many people as it gained almost 430k likes and 84k retweets.

We can learn from this one incident and together work toward a day where women can go to their favorite coffee shop and not be put in this type of situation.

Practicing intersectionality can also be done by getting to know the women who do not look the same and live what we perceive as different lives. Respectfully asking questions and getting to know one another in just short conversations can really help break down stereotypes and help us feel connected. Here in El Paso, a lot of us have similar social classes and fundamental values. However, around the world women in developing countries face horrifying practices, such as genital mutilation, acid attacks and child marriages. In 2015, 28 transgender individuals were violently killed in the United States. Over 80 percent were women and over 67 percent were people of color.

Be there for women and stand up for them, whether it may be in a work place, in class and out about.

The Prospector is committed to the accuracy. If you think we have made an error of fact, email the editor at michaelaroman@gmail.com

ACCURACY WATCH

As the saying goes, “Well-behaved women seldom make history.” The phase was coined in the 70s by historian and Howard professor Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, who wrote a book with the same title. Although I haven’t read the book, I took some time to think about what this means to me and how this phrase can be interpreted.

When you look back at women who have made a big impact and contributed to society such as Susan B. Anthony, Margaret Fuller, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Rosa Parks, Dolores Huerta, Katharine Graham, Oprah Winfrey and so on, you will notice that these women made a difference in history because they did not stay quiet.

Each woman had a different motive, but at the end of the day their determination was the same. These women chose to speak up, whether it was in their writing or by using their voices or taking an action.

With movements such as #MeToo, TimeUp and the Women Marches, the voice of women continue to gain strength. And the truth is, that these movements are not new, they’ve been around for well over a century.

In 1848, a group of mostly women and some men, came together to discuss the problem of women’s rights and the lack of these rights. The two women who were the primary organizers of the first convention known as the Seneca Falls Convention, were Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott. Over the next few years, with rising awareness amongst supporters like Susan B. Anthony, this would go on to become the first Women’s Rights Movement.

After decades of women’s rights activism in pursuit of political, social, and economic freedoms, women were finally given the right to vote. But, the crusade didn’t stop there. During the same era, a writer by the name of Margaret Fuller had already published “Woman in the Nineteenth Century” which is considered to be the first full-length work in the United States.

She was also an activist for women’s rights, particularly for education and the right to employment. Fuller was well ahead of her time as she challenged the traditional role women take in households.

She believed that men and women needed to be their own individuals and be self-reliant. She called for men to eliminate dominance over women and for women to remove themselves from a man’s influence in order to become independent. Fuller also stressed that women needed to teach other women how to become individuals. Much of her work inspired the leaders of the first Women’s Rights Movement, including women suffragists.

If you fall in love, there is a pattern here. Although these weren’t the first women to speak up about what they demanded for themselves and others, each woman who spoke up and took some type of action was inspired by another woman who also did the same.

With countless powerful female leaders along with way who paved the way for more significant female figures, this wave of women only grows with every injustice that is encountered. It is important to understand that these continuous movements led by women, have never been solely for women, but for those who society continues to suppress time after time.

Think about the current climate and the ongoing social justice movements the world is experiencing now. Reminiscent of the ‘60s and ‘70s when other movements were prominent, only with slightly more progress.

Women’s History Month is a time to reflect on all the women who have had an impact on society since the beginning of time. Each era in history had its own powerful woman breaking the mold, not going along with what society says women should or do so how women should act. It was because women decided not to “behave” in the patriarchal society expects them to do. That women made a difference, even in the slightest way.

Just like Margaret Fuller said, women need help to other other women. That’s not a standard for others to follow suit and demands respect from those who don’t.

Although many strides have been made in women’s history, there is still a long way to go.

For the women who are reading this and the men who support and respect them, let’s continue to break the barriers. Challenge the rules because we’re not going anywhere but up.

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Natalicio finds it gratifying to see student demographics that now mirror the city. Thirty years ago, El Paso was already around the 80 percent Hispanic student body, but now it is under 50 percent Hispanic at the time.

“If we look like El Paso, which is a talent spread across all sectors, we should look like El Paso,” she said.

Going forward, Natalicio still sees financial resources as an ongoing project.

“Financial resources are always a major issue because state funding has not increased and its either leveled out or in some years declined. Because of the demographics of our student population, the socioeconomic level of many of our students, it’s very very hard for us to raise the socioeconomic level of many of our students,” she said.

Natalicio understands that at a certain point students will not pay for a high-price education. She has encouraged UTEP to keep tuition as low as possible.

“UTEP keeps tuition as low as possible. Unfortunately we can’t do that because we are not a four-year institution at that price,” she said.

Natalicio explained the grants usually contain a section on student support. This enables students to earn the money that they need to pay for school by working on campus.

“UTEP is now working on tech and engineering in other parts of El Paso by testing machines and other devices out in Fabens and the outskirts of the city. “Now, we’re starting to work with students in the Lower Valley who have difficulties getting to campus. It’s a long trip to get from Fabens to UTEP through public transportation,” she said.

Seeing El Paso growth outside of UTEP has been exciting for Natalicio.

“I think it took a while to get some of this momentum, but I think the momentum is there now and a lot of people are involved in all sorts of creative activities, and opening businesses, and renovating old buildings and all of these things. I think it’s very exciting and I think that will help UTEP leverage opportunities that we wouldn’t have otherwise been able to leverage because it will enable us to sit higher because we have more assets to offer,” she said.

Natalicio said that she still has a really long list of things she would like to do before retirement.

“This list is probably unrealistic, but that’s because I don’t set limits on anything. I don’t set limits on my own career or on what UTEP can accomplish. The list always grows long and the more you do, the more you can think of and do what you can do,” she said.
El Paso family law attorney becomes strong voice for civil rights groups on the border

Lyla Ness García speaks at the 2018 Women’s march of El Paso on Jan. 21 at San Jacinto Plaza.

BY PAULETTE VILLO

A single mother, a family law attorney, a committee representative and an activist of a civil rights group—these are all the roles that 46-year-old Lyla Ness-García has in the city of El Paso.

Ness-García was born in North Carolina and moved to Athens, Greece, with her mother at the age of 4. She still has family living in Greece and considers them her most valued memories while living there.

“I think that’s why I fell in love with El Paso because it reminded me of the family parties I grew up in Greece and considers them her most valued memories while living there. ’’

In 2002, Ness-García opened her own law office, currently located in 501 N. Kansas St., to focus on child protective services such as child welfare law and representing parents and children.

“This is what I envisioned was to enhance the opportunity for UTEP to become more engaged with the community. ’’

She graduated from UT Austin in 2001 with a bachelor’s degree in English literature.

“I moved to Austin and started working for an environmental group that sued companies that were polluting in order to make them clean up,” Ness-García said.

“I thought, you know what, I’m going to school and get a law degree to continue doing this.”

While pursuing a law degree at UT Austin, Ness-García worked under the supervision of a practicing attorney at children’s clinic to represent those in the foster care system.

“I remember I had this client at the time, who was HIV positive, and I realized that if her mother had just taken medication twice during her pregnancy, she wouldn’t have been born HIV positive,” said Ness-García on what influ­enced her to work for children’s rights.

She graduated from the University of Michigan, with a bachelor’s degree in English literature. “I left Michigan and moved to the U.S. to start high school in Ann Arbor. That’s when I decided to move to the city, with the intention of returning to Austin. ’’

“I worked with then-county attorney Jose Rodriguez as an assistant attorney to prosecute child abuse cases, ” Ness-García said.

“Then I met my ex-husband, but ended up staying because I did love in the city.”

“I’ve been blessed to have some really incredible children, who are very social­ly active in their own way,” Ness-García said.

“My oldest daughter went to see Bernie Sanders, reads the news and she comes and tells me what worries her.”

During Donald Trump’s presidential race, Ness-García said her children were worried for their caretaker from Cd. Juárez, believing a wall would be built overnight and not being able to see her again.

“We hear about how dangerous it is that we’re right here with Mexican, not realizing that’s one of the blessed gifts this town offers,” said Ness-García.

“Being a family law lawyer is really emotionally exhausting because people are good people, but they’re the most stressed people,” Ness-García said.

“I’m doing children’s rights is­sues because it provides me with per­spective and helps me remember there are some bigger picture out there.”

Ness-García has represented El Paso and the State Democratic Executive Committee (SEDEC) since 2015. She also ran for state representative in U.S. Congress, in 2018.

“I kept being asked how I was go­ing to be able to be a politician as the state representative if I was a mom,” Ness-García said.

“Somehow, I was a bad mother for taking time away from my children and wanting to make this world better, which for me was the ex­act reason why I was doing it.”

Ness-García felt El Paso was a good community to raise children and cur­rently has two daughters and a son. She kept her maiden name in order to stay connected with her roots along with her married name to stay connected with her oldest child, the only one from her previous marriage.

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The Prospector
Embracing women’s roles in the arts throughout El Paso

Cristina Goletti, a dancer and associate professor and chair of the theatre and dance department at UTEP, listens to her dance pedagogy students present their research.

BY ELIEINE GONZALEZ

A traumatic accident changed the course of Cristina Goletti. While walking on the streets of Italy, she was hit by a motorcyclist from the back, causing a life-altering injury. Goletti, a dancer and associate professor and chair of the theatre and dance department at UTEP, found herself bedridden for a little while, but the stillness was enough to make her determined to dance again.

Goletti currently serves as president for the World Dance Alliance Americas, and is one person on campus that seeks to change how women and minorities succeed in the arts.

Before moving to El Paso, Goletti had an elaborate career of dancing and traveling around the world. Her education includes a master of fine arts from the University of Colorado at Boulder with a secondary emphasis in gender studies and somatics (study of bodywork and movement). Born in Italy, Goletti received her first taste of dance when she began taking ballet lessons.

Despite the setbacks she may have encountered, including the lack of dance training in school, she found a way to make it work.

"In Italy, unfortunately, dancing is not a part of the school curriculum, so I always have to have my academics first and my dance on the side," Goletti said. "So, from an early age I’ve been working really, really hard."

She sought to improve her craft and decided that she would audition for the London Contemporary Dance School, which according to her, is the best in the world.

Goletti was called back for a second audition, which she was forced to miss due to her obligation to a temporary Dance School (LCDS),” Goletti said. “So, from an early age I’ve been working really, really hard.”

Goletti said. "I was like, ‘I didn’t even go to the final audition. How did that happen?’"

The LCDS congratulating her on her admission to the school.

"I came back from holiday and there was a letter from the school that said ‘Congratulations, you’ve been admitted to the London Contemporary Dance School (LCDS),’" Goletti said. "It was like, ‘I didn’t even go to the final audition. How did that happen?’"

"We didn’t feel it was really a battle. We were there for the same reason as everyone else, to play a good show and hang with all of our friends and the fact that we won was really cool," Razo said.

For Pilots of Venus, the good times are barely taking off, as they are one of the many local bands that will have to chance to perform at the Neon Desert Music Festival this May.

"(Neon Desert) is a big deal because we really want to get on that," Razo said. "Last year in battle of the bands, the winner got a spot to play at Neon Desert, and this year we got the call to play on Neon a week before the battle of the bands started."

For the band, this is the perfect opportunity to share their sound with people from outside El Paso. Razo said this is the chance they need to see how their sound builds up with people from different backgrounds as they have a mixed genre.

"We want to do punk music, indie, pop and we even do some hip-hop music because we don’t want to get bored of our own set and sound," Chavez said.

Chavez said this time was a redemption moment as last year at the same event they faced the worst technical difficulties they ever had at a live show.

"We couldn’t use any effect pedals or my voice pedal so it was completely dry, and it sucked because everybody was there and they saw me break," Chavez said. "This show was important to us. We didn’t care about winning we just wanted to do it right."

By Claudia Flores

Surf rockers Pilots of Venus to perform at Neon Desert

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PILOTS from page 5

Next month, Pilots of Venus will be releasing their new EP, which includes six tracks. Although they haven’t decided on the final title for their album, the band has in mind the name of “Lady Astronaut” for this project.

The album will be released on April 20 at the Lowbrow Palace. Razo said this is a live recorded album and is a mix of their old stuff, their classics and some of their new sound.

“The songs talk about some dark stuff such as drug addiction and suicide, but also about positive stuff like getting over pain and remembering someone in a good way,” Chavez said.

After the release of their EP and their participation at Neon Desert Music Festival this May, the band has plans to go to the West Coast for their first tour.

“It took us a solid year to make the album, and I don’t want to say the album was an obstacle, but it was something we wanted to do before touring,” Hernandez said.

Chavez said that as a band it was important to make an impact in their city before going somewhere else to promote their music.

“I see bands go on tour immediately thinking that is the answer, but you have to make an impact in the city and then you can go out there,” Chavez said. “Now that we’ve made our point of giving people a good show, I think we can finally start thinking about touring.”

GOLETTI from page 5

She took her once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and moved her life to London, a foreign country to her native Italy, and she spoke little to no English.

“It was very difficult, very complex to get adjusted. I was sharing an apartment, there was a different language, a different currency,” Goletti said.

Goletti stayed there for two years and completed a one-year certificate in art education and soon after, auditioned for the post-graduate company at the school where she was accepted in.

“It’s basically a company that represents work by emerging or renowned choreographers,” Goletti said. “We tour extensively in England and then we also tour in a little bit of Europe.”

Once her time at the LCDS had come to an end, she found herself in Ireland, where she continued to grow her opportunities. In 2007, she and Nick Byrson co-founded Legiti Bodies Dance Company, the dance company in residence at the Birn Theatre and Arts Centre.

The company has toured to some of the most important venues and festivals in Europe, the USA and Mexico, such as Arrowsax Dance Festival at The Robin Howard Theatre London, Dance House Limassol, Auditorium Theatre Rome and the European Parliament in Brussels, just to name a few.

In 2013 she moved to Mexico to work at Universidad De Las Americas Puebla as a full-time professor, becoming the school’s chair of the arts department in 2015. During her time in Mexico, she co-directed the festival Performatica.

Goletti found herself in El Paso just four months ago in October when she became the chair of the theatre and dance department.

She says that the demographics of the population in El Paso and her personal experience with Mexico is what really attracted her to UTEP.

“One of my goals is to make sure that the faculty and the curriculum that we offer are absolutely aligned with the demographic of our population, but also with the mission of the school, of the university,” Goletti said.

The department is revising its curriculum and looking at a way to bring in more performance studies and infuse them within the community and to become more engaged with this community. In dance, specifically, they’re moving toward two tracks. One track is performance and the other one would be a dance studies/community-engaged type of art track. It is not necessarily for people who just want to dance or perform, but for people that want to use dance as a language for social change and social justice.

She believes this will help people understand the value of dance in terms of the larger academic institution and how dance can be absolutely at the same table with social justice.

“Dance is part of the way we understand the world,” she said.

Her colleagues have also spoken highly of her. Professor and head of the dance program Myron Nadel says that in the short time Goletti has been here, she has already had an influence on the community.

“In only four months, our new chair of theatre and dance has been an inspiration for students and faculty in all of our areas including, theater, technical and dance,” he said. “Professor Goletti is intelligent, imaginative, creative, empathetic, and as they say in music, has ‘the chops’ to build a future for a university department of prominence, not only on the border, but in the entire country.”

Goletti knows the potential UTEP and the students in her department have and the way they can make an impact not only on campus, but in the world of arts.

“You have a lot of women entering with this idea of I want to become a dancer or I want to become an actress, but who goes to the top are very often men. So, what I’m hoping I’ll be able to achieve while at UTEP is to make sure that my program is doing everything that we can to provide the tools and the confidence for young women that might not look like what a traditional ballerina might look or that traditional actresses look, that they have the confidence to go out and change the world,” Goletti said.

“We need that. We need more Latinas. We need to see people on TV who have accents. I think bilingualism is fundamental. People that can bring this, that can bring forward this culture-this multicultural identity is super important in their work as artists, as citizens.”

Along with the UTEP community, she also believes El Paso can be the start of the change she seeks in her students due to the strengths of the community when it comes to women in power.

“El Paso is great though, it has great women in position of leadership,” Goletti said. “It’s a really wonderful community and I think a lot of positive change are going to come out of El Paso.”

Follow Elisa Emeline on Twitter @ElisaEmeline

Follow Dan Reilly on Twitter @ElisaEmeline
Women prevail throughout sports across the nation

BY MIKE FLORES

Since Title IX, the law that states that no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation or denied admission to any education program or activity, was passed in as part of the Education Amendments of 1972, women and sports have formed an important bond.

Before Title IX, only 7 percent of students in high school sports were female, and women were only 2 percent of the college students participating in sports, according to feminist.org. Slowly but surely, though, women in sports began to grow after President Richard Nixon signed the law.

In 1981, there were 4,776 women’s sports teams in the nation, from Division I to Division III, and over 74,230 female athletes participating in college sports teams in the nation, from Division I to Division III, and over 74,230 female athletes participating in sports, according to feminist.org. Slowly but surely, though, women in sports began to grow after President Richard Nixon signed the law.

The award was given, and until 2012 Hamms held the record for most international goals scored by both men and women. She also led USA to two World Cup championships, five Gold Cup championships, and two Olympic titles.

The U.S. men’s soccer team has never won the World Cup or the Confederations Cup or even the Copa America title. Another is American race car driver Danica Patrick, who is known as the most successful woman in the history of NASCAR racing. She’s not only been a pioneer to the sport, but she has proven that she can compete and even win against men in the sport.

Patrick is the only woman to ever lead in the Indianapolis 500, and is also the first female NASCAR driver to ever win a NASCAR Sprint Cup Series Pole, winning the Indy Japan 300 in 2008 to make her the first and only female to ever win an Indy Car Series Race.

However, not only have female athletes shown the ability to succeed when given equal opportunities, many other women in sports have flourished as sports reporters, anchors, coaches and in many other positions.

Since 2004, Kelli Masters, a graduate from the University of Oklahoma College of Law, began her career in sports law and started representing Olympians with her own agency, Kelli Masters Management.

In 2010, Masters made history by becoming the first female to represent a first-round pick with Oklahoma State University, holding many school records and becoming the 1995 NCAA champion. In 2012, Turner finished in the top five times at the NCAA Outdoor National Championship in the 100-meter hurdles. Over her four-year career at UTEP, Turner finished in the top five times at the NCAA championships, holding many school records and becoming the 1995 NCAA champion.

4. Kim Turner—track and field (1981-84)

During the Miners prolific ‘80s run, sprinter Kim Turner stood out among the shining track and field sprinters. Turner was exceptional in the 60-meter and 100-meter hurdles, claiming seven All-American selections.

In 1984, Turner took the NCAA Outdoor National Championship in the 100-meter hurdles. Over her four-year career at UTEP, Turner finished in the top five six times at the NCAA championships. She is still the fastest hurdle in the 100-meter race in program history, having set records both indoors and outdoors.

5. Camilla Carrera—softball (2008-12)

Carrera led the teams in batting average, slugging percentage, RBIs and hits. Her freshman season propelled her sophomore and junior seasons.

In her senior season, Carrera truly left her mark at UTEP with an impressive .447 batting average and a 1.199 slugging percentage. She led teams in home runs, runs batted in and on-base percentage.

The top UTEP female athletes of all time

BY ARIADNE BROADUS

The Prospector

3. Kayla Thornton—basketball (2010-14)

Born and raised in El Paso, stand-out basketball player Kayla Thornton left her mark at UTEP with her skills on the court. She started her career at Irvin High School, where she was an All-State basketball player and a state qualifier for the 100-meter relay in track and field.

In college, Thornton used her athleticism and raw basketball talent to make an immediate impact. She was an off the bench go-to player in her freshman season. Then by her senior season, Thornton became the all-time leader in points, rebounds, double-doubles and field goals made in program history. She joined the winnigest class in program history and shined in those strong years, making the NCAA Tournament and raising both the C-USA regular season and tournament crowns in 2012.


Melinda Sargent did it all for the UTEP track and field program. She starred in 12 conference championships, holding many school records and became the 1995 NCAA champion.

Spring Term One: June 4-July 5
Summer Term Two: July 9-August 9
Registration opens March 26.
Visit tccd.edu/online to learn more.

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Indoor National Champion in the 55-meter dash, Blessing Okagbare—track and field (2008-10) is still the top time in program history, UTEP history. After a long drought, UTEP women’s basketball was home to one of the finest coaches in the nation with Keitha Adams. At UTEP, Adams went 284-209 (UTEPI all-time winner) and is responsible for most of the success the program has experienced. Adams led UTEP to all four postseason bids—two in the NCAA tournament (2008 and 2012) and two appearances in the WNIT (2014 and 2016). During the 2008 and 2010 seasons, Okagbare set a combined nine school records and was undefeated in the 60-meter dash and long jump in 2008. Okagbare helped raise the track and field program and pave the way for its modern-day success that UTEP track and field has achieved.

Tobi Amusan—track and field (2016-17)

In back-to-back years, Tobi Amusan shined not only in Conference USA for track and field, but she made a global impact in the hurdle events. A native of Nigeria, she captured the 2017 NCAA championship in the 100-meter hurdles. She is also a two-time C-USA female track Athlete of the Year. In 2016, Amusan ran for Nigeria in the Olympics. She advanced to the semi-finals in the 100-meter hurdles and was 2 seconds away from being in the finals. After her conference championship, Amusan decided to go pro for track and field and sat out the school. Out of all the coaches in sports, the most successful coach in all of college sports is arguably Pat Summit, Tennessee’s women’s basketball coach from 1974 to 2012 before she passed away. When Summit retired, she was the winningest coach in college basketball history with both men and women combined. In her career, she won eight national titles—a record when she retired. Summit was named the Naismith Basketball Coach of the Century. And in 2009, she was placed in the top 10 on the list of greatest coaches of all time in sports by Sporting News. Needless to say, Summit became one of the greatest coaches in history.

In El Paso, women in sports have also made their influence on the city. From 2001 to 2016, UTEP women’s basketball was home to one of the finest coaches in the nation with Keitha Adams. At UTEP, Adams went 284-209 (UTEPI all-time winner) and is responsible for most of the success the program has experienced. Adams led UTEP to all four postseason bids—two in the NCAA tournament (2008 and 2012) and two appearances in the WNIT (2014 and 2016).

Adams coached UTEP to 29 or more wins three times before she left to Wichita State in 2017. Only nine other programs had accomplished that success. She is also the only three-time Conference USA Women’s Basketball Coach of the Year. While the men’s basketball team has the history, the UTEP women’s basketball team is the one that has tasted the most recent success in the past eight years, where Adams was the main component.

In the three major professional sports—football, basketball and baseball—there has yet to be a female head coach. The stereotype that women can’t lead men as a coach will come to an end sooner rather than later. One of the greatest sports dynasties of the 2000s, the San Antonio Spurs, who have won five NBA championships, have had a woman as their assistant coach since 2014, Becky Hammon. Hammon, the second female assistant coach, but first full-timer, also became the first female head coach at the Summer League for the Spurs. In that 2014 Summer League season, she led the Spurs to a title against all men coaches. She recently was scouted for the head coaching job for the Colorado State Rams men’s basketball job, but turned it down.

I am convinced that once legendary Spurs coach Gregg Popovich calls it quits, the reins to the Spurs will be handed over to Hammon. It may take some time, but within the next 10 to 15 years, I expect women in sports to keep growing. I expect women’s trams to be aired more nationally, for there to be more opportunities for female coaches and for female reporters to get the respect they deserve.