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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

MAKING THE GRADE
Helping Students Succeed

Opportunity
Outreach
Service
Support
Academic Standards
To achieve our mission of preparing future generations to compete with their peers throughout the world, the university must see itself as a partner in fostering student learning and success.

I am often asked whether the university’s pace slows during the summer months. Although there are fewer students on the campus — approximately half of UTEP’s students enroll in the summer — our overall pace appears to be about the same. One of the major summer activities is preparing for the next academic year by conducting orientation programs for new students, faculty and staff. This annual renewal process re-charges all of us with energy and expectation.

I especially enjoy participating in new student orientation programs. The faces of the new students reflect their and their families’ hopes and dreams for the future. These bright and eager students recognize that to participate successfully in today’s highly competitive world, a bachelor’s degree will be a minimal requirement, and they have come to UTEP to achieve that goal.

This same scene is playing out at universities throughout the country. On those campuses, as at UTEP, there is a growing recognition that, to achieve our mission of preparing future generations to compete with their peers throughout the world, the university must see itself as a partner in fostering student learning and success. The commitment to high academic standards is the same; what has changed is how we work with students to help them meet those standards.

Featured in this issue of NOVA Quarterly is one of UTEP’s new initiatives, the Entering Student Program (see page 14), which exemplifies this institutional investment in student success. Based upon a pilot program in the colleges of Science and Engineering, which was supported by the National Science Foundation’s Model Institution for Excellence, this program builds a stronger and more coherent foundation for students who enter UTEP as freshmen or who transfer from other institutions.

Today’s new students are tomorrow’s alumni. All of us at UTEP want to be as proud of them as we are of our more than 60,000 alumni, whose many outstanding accomplishments are the best measure of the quality of this institution. Through the Entering Student Program and many other initiatives, we have made a commitment to do all that we can to ensure that the next generation of UTEP graduates will be well prepared to follow in your successful footsteps.

— Diana Natalicio
President
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Ben Flores is expanding his sphere of influence to encircle UTEP students.

As director of the Model Institutions for Excellence program, Flores oversees UTEP’s multi-million dollar award from the National Science Foundation to enhance the university’s science, engineering and math programs.

MIE leads the ground-breaking Circles of Learning for Entering Students initiative, which is boosting participants’ self-esteem and grade point averages.

Ninety percent of the students involved in CircLES successfully complete their freshman year better prepared for the academic rigors of upper-level coursework.

By emphasizing teamwork, cooperation and group learning, Flores stands at the epicenter of a nationwide push to train professional engineers and scientists who use their academic preparation to tackle real-world concerns.
**McKee Foundation, Coca-Cola Challenge and Rotary Scholarships**

by Timi Haggerty

Investing in a vision for the future, local and national foundations have turned to UTEP to drive this region toward excellence and long-term success. Realizing that, as a focal point on the border, El Paso is playing an increasingly important role in the global economy, UTEP's benefactors are building the educational foundation of the next generation of leaders.

**Robert E. and Evelyn McKee Foundation**

The generosity of many individuals and organizations has contributed to the strong academic foundation that supports UTEP. But, the McKee family's early relationship with the university bolstered the institution's foundation in a more literal sense.

The late Robert McKee, one of the nation's most important contractors, is credited with shaping the skylines of El Paso, Houston, Dallas, Los Angeles, Denver, San Diego, Phoenix, Salt Lake City and dozens of other cities. He also helped create much of UTEP's magnificent campus.

The El Paso-based McKee firm built the university's Centennial Museum, the Union Building, the Fox Fine Arts Center, the Engineering and Science Complex, Benedict Hall, Magoffin Auditorium and the Geological Sciences Building.

McKee's financial success enabled him to realize his philanthropic objectives through the establishment of the Robert E. and Evelyn McKee Foundation, a nonprofit, charitable corporation that uses its funds to benefit U.S. civic institutions and educational, charitable, religious, medical and community funds. The largesse of the foundation has been instrumental to student advancement at UTEP for decades, contributing hundreds of thousands of dollars to numerous departments, programs and scholarship funds.

David McKee — a grandson of Robert and Evelyn, secretary and treasurer of the foundation, and an alumnus of the College of Business Administration — was pivotal in the foundation's most recent gift to the university. A generous $50,700 grant has provided a new multimedia classroom in the college's Computer Applications Learning Center. This important endeavor will provide hands-on exposure to state-of-the-art teaching and learning technologies that will prepare UTEP students for success in an increasingly competitive workforce.

"My father always stressed the importance of an education," says Louis McKee, Robert and Evelyn's youngest child and the president and treasurer of the McKee Foundation. "We recognize that, as the primary institution of higher education in this region, UTEP is vital to the success of El Paso. We are proud to help the university acquire the resources it needs to help the people of this city reach their fullest potential."

**Coca-Cola Foundation**

The Coca-Cola Foundation has been an important benefactor of UTEP's academic mission since 1992. Pleased with the partnership and impressed by UTEP's commitment to improving education at all levels in El Paso, the Coca-Cola Foundation offered the university a $333,333 grant in 1997 and challenged UTEP alumni to match the commitment.

The response from UTEP graduates has been eager and heartfelt. For every two dollars contributed by alumni, Coca-Cola has contributed one dollar toward its ultimate goal: a $1 million scholarship endowment.

To date, more than 2,100 alumni have answered the call. Funds raised, including the matching money from Coca-Cola, have surpassed $600,000.

**Rotary Club of El Paso Foundation**

The Rotary Club of El Paso holds a long-standing relationship with the university, and that relationship has extended to a first-time gift from the club's foundation. In March, the foundation awarded eight UTEP students with $20,000 in scholarships. With a potential payout of $20,000 per student, the scholarship is one of the most beneficial in the El Paso area.

Gay Brown, chair of the Rotary's Leadership Development Committee, says the scholarships were developed to nurture and promote good talent in El Paso. The scholarships are meant to alleviate the necessity for students to work so they can concentrate on their studies, as well as their leadership and citizenship development.

"I don't have to worry 24 hours a day anymore about financing my education — the scholarship has really made that much of a difference," says Beatriz Alvarado, a senior psychology student who received one of the eight scholarships. "It has really been such a huge help."
University Programs Support Student Success

by Christian Clarke, Jeryl Marcus and Walli Haley

For many students, the value of their education is defined by more than just the classes they take. Today's students lead complex lives — balancing family and financial obligations with school — and universities are responding by expanding their traditional student support services.

The "old-school" demand that students find their own path to academic success has been replaced with an earnest commitment by UTEP and other forward-thinking universities to foster the academic and personal development of students.

NOVA Quarterly examines how the university partners with its student-scholars through programs that reward high academic achievement, provide financial support, offer insight into campus life, reach into the community and prepare the next generation of graduates to lead successful and productive lives.
El Paso's Brightest Choose their University

Increasing numbers of El Paso-area valedictorians are choosing UTEP over other highly regarded universities, enticed in part by generous Presidential Excellence Scholarships that recognize their academic achievement.

Natalie Martinez, an honors student and valedictorian of Irvin High School's class of 1999, chose UTEP over other regional institutions. She will follow in the footsteps of her older sister, Daniella, who graduated from UTEP in 1997 with a bachelor's degree in metallurgical engineering.

UTEP was the only university to offer Natalie a scholarship based solely on her academic credentials, which sent the high-school honors student a strong message. “It made me realize that UTEP is interested in supporting students who are academically strong and willing to work hard. It says something about the quality of students UTEP is looking for.”

UTEP also is offering Natalie another unique opportunity. This summer, Natalie will begin working in the metallurgy lab as a research assistant, a rare and almost unheard of opportunity at any other institution.

This fall, Natalie will be among about a dozen high-school valedictorians attending UTEP, each of whom will receive a $3,000 annual Presidential Excellence Scholarship — representing a university commitment of $12,000 per student. This is just one of the many academic awards available at UTEP, where students earn approximately $3.4 million scholarships annually.

The growing number of top-ranked graduates and other high-achieving students who are choosing UTEP is an important indication that the university is doing an outstanding job meeting the expectations and needs of these students.

Natalie Martinez

Of the first-time freshmen enrolled at the university last year, 45.6 percent were in the top 25 percent of their high-school classes. These students indicated that the quality of the faculty, the many academic and research opportunities, and the university's affordable tuition made UTEP their number one choice.

“We are making a commitment to our local talent and UTEP is dedicated to helping them meet the high standards they have set for themselves,” Irma Rubio, director of Undergraduate Recruitment (see page 20), says. “With these scholarships, the university is aggressively recruiting these exceptional students, who have worked very hard to achieve their goals.”

UTEP: Solidifying student Support

EP offers its students a wide array of courses that fuel their academic and personal success. Throughout the university, committed faculty and staff members develop students' strengths and interests through academic challenges, outreach programs and hands-on experiences in research labs.

Academic Breadth

UTEP is a comprehensive regional university whose six colleges (business administration, education, engineering, health sciences, liberal arts and science) and graduate school offer 60 bachelor's, 53 master's and eight doctoral degrees.

Rich Campus Life

UTEP's students have the opportunity to participate in more than 120 student organizations, sororities, fraternities, leadership programs and honor societies.
Easing the Transition

At the undergraduate level, one of the most significant achievements of the past year has been the strengthening of ties between UTEP and the El Paso Community College.

UTEP has developed a smoother pathway from EPCC to UTEP, eliminating unnecessary impediments to the transfer of credits and completing technological links to transmit academic records electronically between the two institutions. To ease the personal transition from community college to university life, UTEP created EPCC Day to acquaint students and their counselors with the university's campus facilities, programs, and faculty.

As tuition and fee costs at the two institutions diverge, more students are likely to consider undergraduate degree programs at the community college, a pattern which is increasingly prevalent across Texas. To reduce the sticker-shock of the cost of a university education, UTEP created 10 annual scholarships in the amount of $1,000 for academically qualified transfer students.

Gilbert Cedillo, who was among the first scholarship recipients, transferred to the university with a 3.95 GPA. Now, the senior accounting and computer information systems student will be among the first graduating class of 2000.

"I was both pleased and surprised at the ease of the transfer between the two institutions," Gilbert says. "I chose my classes at EPCC carefully so I didn't have a problem transferring credit to UTEP."

Once he began his coursework at UTEP, he enjoyed his professors and their challenging courses. "The accounting courses are tough. I knew it would be hard, but that's what college is all about."

As he prepares for graduation, Gilbert is weighing his options — his current job as a detective for the El Paso Police Department has piqued his interest in a career with the FBI, but a private sector career also appeals to him.

Gilbert is already making plans to pursue a master of business administration degree, a direct result of his positive experiences at UTEP. "My preference has always been to attend a traditional college and UTEP has been good to me."

First Impressions and

Yadira Ubina, a 19-year-old freshman who graduated from Montwood High School, is the first in her family to attend college. When she signed up for new student orientation at UTEP, she was a little nervous, but the university's Gator Camp soon quelled her fears.

For three years, Gator Camp has helped incoming students such as Yadira gently ease into university life. The three-day, two-night ice-breaker combines social activities such as swimming, karaoke and a barbecue with the more serious business of providing information about financial aid, university services, personal safety and social organizations.

Throughout Gator Camp, student mentors guide participants through every step of the orientation and registration process.

Community College

UTEP enhanced its communication with El Paso Community College through the work of a Permanent Articulation Committee and created special scholarships for qualified EPCC students who transfer to the university.

Scholarships and Financial Aid

UTEP students earn approximately $3 million in scholarships annually. Last year, the Office of Student Financial Aid disbursed more than $34 million in merit and need-based aid — a new UTEP record. The university also offers Quick Help Loans, which are available at registration to help students pay for their tuition.

Entering Students Programs

Through ESP, UTEP links five university services to build a strong foundation of support for students: undergraduate recruitment, new student orientation, undergraduate advising, academic programs and the Tutoring and Learning Center.
**Orientation**

**Fast Friendships**

These peer leaders have a profound impact on entering students such as Yadira. "I was scared because I wasn't sure what to expect. Then I met other students who helped me feel better," Yadira says. "New student orientation was fun. In fact, I want to join the program and become one of the orientation leaders."

Next year, Yadira will join the ranks of these student orientation leaders who also help educate parents about the demands of college—from social pressures to the importance of studying and researching in the library.

"Many of our students are the first in their families to go to college, so their parents don’t always have all of the answers," Gary Edens, director of student orientation, says. "University life is a whole new world for them, too. It is just as important for them to understand what their child is experiencing."

This unique overnight experience has become a popular component of UTEP’s orientation activities because students build friendships that last throughout college.

"When students arrive, they are both excited and nervous," Gary says. "At the end of the orientation, they leave armed with information about how to succeed at the university. They also build a support network of schoolmates. Instead of seeing a mass of strangers passing them by on the way to class, our students see familiar faces and new friends."

**A Successful Lesson**

In 1998, Mark Lorilla was an athlete with celebrity status among his classmates at Irvin High School. He was a top-ranking wrestler in the state and district and had competed nationally. But, the comfort level of this high-school graduate dropped seriously when he entered college.

"As a freshman, I didn’t know one single person. I didn’t have any of my old high school buddies around me. I felt awkward. The campus was so big that you never saw the same person twice," the sophomore remembers.

Mark made it through the critical transition from high school to college with help in the form of the University Seminar. Faculty members direct the curriculum and student peers provide support and encouragement to help entering students overcome the sometimes intimidating hurdles of the first-year experience.

Since it was created two years ago, the seminar has become an important freshman-level class that fulfills part of students' core curriculum requirements. By offering three hours of credit for the course, UTEP is affirming the seminar’s contribution to student retention.

The small classes led by an instructor and peer leader meet three times each week to develop study skills, pinpoint priorities and learn more about university life. To maximize the interactions of this small-group network, the course is designed to be one part of a three-class cluster, in which the students enroll together.

"I'd rather be in a cluster," Mark says. "I gained an instant study group because we all have the same homework assignments. There were other benefits academically. By working in a group, I learned different study methods. It also was more fun because we had the same schedule, so we could go to lunch together or study at the library during our breaks."

Seeing the same faces every day raised Mark’s comfort level and provided the friendship that formed the foundation of his academic success. "To succeed anywhere you have to make friends," he says. "That's true everywhere. If you try to do everything on your own, you're just making it harder on yourself."

**Yadira Ubina**

**Mark Lorilla**

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**Tutoring and Learning Center**

UTEP’s nationally-recognized Tutoring and Learning Center offers extensive free tutoring and study skills classes. TLC also created supplemental instruction groups in math, biology, chemistry, engineering and social science.

**Customer Service**

Training programs for staff and student employees have been developed, and a variety of procedures — student access to grades via telephone and applications for admission and course availability listings on the UTEP Web site — have been implemented.

**Student Retention**

Inspired by a successful pilot program conducted under the Model Institutions Excellence grant, UTEP introduced an important initiative to increase first-year student retention. Many entering students form a support network of peers who enroll together in blocks, or clusters, of courses.
Completing the Circle

Aimee Black

As a teenager, Aimee Black never thought about college. No one from her working-class family had attended a university and Aimee planned to enter the workforce immediately after graduating from Mountain View High School in Montana Vista.

After participating in the Upward Bound program at UTEP, which helps students improve their grades and successfully enter college, Aimee changed her post-high-school plans — and her future. “When I joined Upward Bound, I did not think that college was for me. I didn’t really care about my grades and I had no intention of attending a university,” Aimee says. “Upward Bound staff members made me believe that I could be a successful college student. They opened so many doors for me and I began to believe that I could go to any college in the world.”

Through Upward Bound, Aimee visited universities throughout Texas — touring campuses in Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio — and other Southern states. After weighing all of her options, she chose to attend the university whose campus first welcomed her.

“There are a tremendous amount of opportunities at UTEP. Staff members work well into the night to help students — granting them access to computers to search the Internet for information about colleges and helping them fill out scholarship and financial aid forms,” Aimee says.

UTEP staff members also introduced Aimee to the “Up with People” program, which will take the 20-year-old across the globe next year. Once she raises the $13,000 participation fee, Aimee will join nine other Texans and representatives from across the United States as members of the international performing arts and community service group that will tour North America, Europe and Asia.

Locally, Aimee volunteers at the El Paso State Center for Mental Retardation. At the university, this active student advocate encourages her peers to stay in school through UTEP’s Student Support Services, which provides academic assistance to first-generation college students from low-income families.

“Everyone needs a little help,” Aimee says. “I was fortunate that someone at UTEP took an interest in me — a scraggly young woman who had no interest in college. And, now it is my turn to support other students.”

Aimee Black

Outreach Programs

UTEP reaches into its community through programs — from Upward Bound to the Mother-Daughter program — to train and prepare young people for a college education and a better life. Once enrolled at UTEP, many of the beneficiaries of these programs offer their time and talents to help other El Paso area young people succeed.

Talented Faculty

UTEP employs 805 full- and part-time faculty committed to fostering the achievement of students’ goals and aspirations. UTEP’s top-notch educators (more than 90 percent of the university’s tenured and tenure-track faculty hold doctorate or equivalent degrees in their field) are focused on student learning, development and success.

Research Opportunities

With annual research and sponsored projects expenditures of more than $40 million — which places UTEP fourth among all Texas universities — students gain valuable hands-on experiences in research laboratories that focus on technical excellence and encourage students to work alongside faculty and staff members.

Research
"Being a role model for younger generations is important," Lori says. "At UTEP, professors paid special attention to me and made me believe in myself. Now, I want to make a difference in students' lives by sharing my experiences with them.

"We need to hit them at every age because the more positive things they hear about UTEP and the opportunities available here, the more encouraged they will be to persevere while preparing for their own education."

As UTEP's academic standards continue to increase, the university's students rise to the challenge, successfully tackling the rigors of the demanding degree programs in each of our six colleges.

Our graduates, in turn, are better-educated and better-prepared for the toughest, most demanding jobs — in engineering, science, medicine, education and law.

UTEP's strong record of academic achievement was affirmed by the National Science Foundation which recognized the university as a Model Institution for Excellence — one of only six in the nation.

The university's academic strength is attracting a growing number of outstanding students, including high-school valedictorians, Presidential Scholars and other high-achievers who choose UTEP over other quality institutions.

Undergraduate and graduate students, alike, have more opportunities to participate in out-of-class learning experiences than at most universities. UTEP students work on high-level scientific research, participate in programs that serve the community, and tackle real-world business challenges.

UTEP graduates seeking advanced degrees gain admission into some of the most prestigious schools in the nation, including MIT, Harvard, Stanford, and Yale. They also are highly recruited by major corporations, including General Motors, IBM and ALCOA, as well as by governmental agencies including the FBI and NASA.

UTEP is phasing in more demanding academic admissions standards, which will be fully in place by 2004. The El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence, a nationally recognized organization housed at UTEP, is working with El Paso schools to raise academic standards.

UTEP has opened the door for countless students reaching for a brighter future. This is important, because UTEP — by offering a quality education to the people of this region — plays a dynamic and vital role in shaping the lives of its graduates and the economic future of our city, state, and nation.

— Stephen Riter
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Maggy Smith plans the perfect strategy to help students succeed.
All The Right Moves

It’s your first day of class at UTEP, and like many students, you are the first in your family to go to college. Determined to do well, you envision your family beaming with pride the day you receive your diploma. But that day seems far off as you hurry to your 8 a.m. biology class surrounded by a sea of unfamiliar faces.

by Walli Haley

Though this scenario is imaginary, it’s all too real for many entering freshmen and transfer and returning students. To ease their transition into college, UTEP has created a bold new program designed to help students succeed in college. The newly christened Entering Student Program combines the resources of academic and student affairs, creating a new resource to promote the personal, academic and social success of every student entering UTEP.

Patterned after the highly successful CircLES pilot program (see page 2), which fosters the achievements of new science, math and engineering students, ESP links five university services to build a strong foundation of support for students: undergraduate recruitment, new student orientation, undergraduate advising, academic programs and the Tutoring and Learning Center.

The program, which will gear up this fall, combines professional advisers and peer mentors with student leaders who work to ensure that new students understand the vast array of services available to them — from the courses they take, to the Counseling Center, to the movies and concerts held on campus.

“It’s important for our students to know that we sincerely care about their success and we will do everything we can to help them,” Muzzy Smith, associate vice president for undergraduate studies and program coordinator, says. “President Diana Natalicio wants to make sure that students are treated well and that we provide them with the tools they need to become future leaders. This program will help students get off to a good start.”

From the moment a student makes the decision to come to UTEP, he or she will be able to access a network of resources. “We will begin to communicate with our students before new student orientation,” Smith says. “Establishing these relationships early on will help make the students more comfortable and enhance their chances for success.”

A critical component of the program comes in the form of a unique new course, University 1301: Seminar in Critical Inquiry, designed to acquaint students with the university. The inaugural course, which fulfills core curriculum requirements, will be taught by faculty and staff members from many disciplines across campus. Each course will involve a theme, spanning such topics as “Science, Technology, and American Diplomacy,” “You Don’t Understand: Communication Across Gender, Generation and Culture” and “Fictional Women Detectives.”

Assistant history professor Michael Topp, a faculty member who is helping to organize the university seminar, says the course will offer two important benefits to students: “First, instructors will teach topics that they’re passionate about — which will excite students intellectually. Secondly, faculty will teach basic skills to help students make their way through college — for example, how to read and analyze text, hone writing skills and organize their time.”

Topp foresees faculty helping students develop skills to succeed in the classroom and beyond. “We want to entice students into staying in college so that they’ll succeed in life,” he says. “Through this course, we are giving students the tools they’ll need to do so.”

Students may take this course independently or as part of a group, or “cluster,” in which they join fellow students in three freshman-level courses, such as composition, history or sociology. Creating this sort of learning community bolsters friendships between the students and strengthens relationships between students and their professors. Students also will have the benefit of a student leader or peer facilitator, who will help guide them through their academic experience.

UTEP advisers will take inventory of students’ strengths and weaknesses to determine if students have chosen the major best suited to their interests and abilities and are taking the right courses toward their degrees.

In the final analysis, ESP, by providing a satisfying and challenging first-year experience for UTEP students, becomes a guidepost to help students make the right moves for success in college and life.
THE NEW CIVIL ENGINEERS

FACULTY PROFILE

by Jeryl Marcus
CIVIL ENGINEERING has come a long way from the time mankind first realized that mud and stones could be used to build a bridge. Carlos Ferregut, civil engineering department chair, says it's time to update the image to more accurately reflect the exciting research of the modern field.

"These days, civil engineers still create bridges and buildings, but we also build rocket ships and space stations," Ferregut says. "We still build railroads, but now we design them to support high-speed trains."

At UTEP, students conduct innovative research with the university's civil engineers in labs where information — from space stations to waterways — is gathered, tested and analyzed.

A scaled-down, mock-up portion of the international space station hangs in the university's Structure and Materials lab. Professor Roberto Osegueda explains how electrical sensors monitor the natural vibration of the structure — allowing earth-based scientists to assess any damage to the space station.

In the Future Aerospace Science and Technology Center, a red laser beam darts across the exterior wall, or "skin," of an airplane. This laser detects subsurface defects that may weaken the structure. The sensor and laser technology being designed and tested at UTEP allows scientists to pinpoint trouble spots remotely and holds other exciting applications for the aerospace industry.

Closer to the ground, professor Soheil Nazarian, working with student research assistants, uses remote vibration sensors to identify defects in roads and interstates. By detecting structural defects before they become visible, roads can be repaired before they become major problems.

Finding the shortest route from point A to point B is the job of UTEP researchers working in the Center for Highway and Materials Research. The Texas Department of Transportation is funding the work to answer the question: given the size and weight of a large truck or rig, what is the shortest and safest possible route from its origin to its destination taking into account contingencies such as bridge clearances and weight-bearing capabilities? While this may seem simple enough, it actually requires thorough data-gathering and intensive computer analysis.

These days, civil engineers also develop research methods to find solutions to environmental concerns that involve air, water and soil.

Wen-Whai Li, associate professor of civil engineering, leads a consortium of five universities to quantify the types and amounts of pollutants in the air moving across the El Paso-Juarez international border. The research team has identified dust, brick kiln emissions and home and industrial emissions as specific sources of air pollution.

Professors John Walton and Charles Turner are tackling the water issues of the region, which researchers predict will face a drought if the Hueco Bolson aquifer runs dry. With a team of student engineers, these faculty members are studying ways to remove salt from the Rio Grande River.

In another UTEP research lab, a cylindrical soil sample rests on a long countertop surrounded by computer equipment. A wire extends from the side of the sample to a nearby computer. When the research assistant takes a hammer and gently taps one end of the cylinder with a hammer, the vibration sends the digital green line on the computer screen into a spasm of peaks, similar to an electrocardiogram. The test measures the stability of a soil sample to determine if a roadbed will be able to support an existing or proposed structure.

TODAY, civil engineering is a multidisciplinary science — combining electronics, electrical engineering, geophysics and computer technology. Although their field has expanded and changed throughout the centuries, civil engineers remain focused on finding solutions that make life easier.
Each year, UTEP receives heartfelt contributions from individuals who pay tribute to beloved friends and family members through financial gifts to the university.

NOVA Quarterly shares the names of these special individuals who have been honored by those close to their hearts. By providing financial support that builds the foundation of UTEP’s educational mission, each act of generosity celebrates the lives and preserves the memories of hundreds of precious loved ones.
Inside each building, the sounds of learning can be heard. From business to biology and education to engineering, UTEP students are proving their mettle as they work toward degrees that will unlock the doors to a more productive and gratifying future.
UTEP ranks second in the nation for
the total number of bachelor's degrees
awarded to Hispanics in the health
sciences. The hands-on experiences
UTEP students receive in campus
laboratories are made possible in part
through generous endowments and
scholarship awards created to honor
friends and family members.
The culmination of years of hard work shows on the faces of these newly minted UTEP graduates. For many students, the opportunity for a richer and more satisfying life that a UTEP degree provides is built on a foundation of giving, which helps fund many scholarship awards.
Team UTEP Masters GM Proving Grounds

UTEP's mechanical and engineering students and their faculty adviser drove away with top honors at the Ethanol Vehicle Challenge at the General Motors proving grounds in Michigan.

Ryan Wicker, assistant professor of mechanical engineering, received a $10,000 faculty adviser award for creating the best educational experience in automotive engineering for his students.

UTEP's team captured second-place honors — only six points behind the first-place team — at the competition that challenged the engineering students to convert a full-size, gasoline-powered Chevrolet Silverado to run on ethanol fuel.

UTEP's students placed in the top five categories in all but three events at the competition, which is administered by Argonne National Laboratory and sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy, General Motors and Natural Resources Canada.

Driving home the need for an educated community, El Paso volunteers spent four weeks calling area business leaders asking for support of the university's academic and athletic programs. More than 150 local businesses contributed to the motorcycle-themed "Cruising with UTEP" Local Business Campaign, pledging more than $71,000.

Business Campaign Revs Up
UTEP Ranks Second in the Nation For Degrees Awarded to Hispanics

As the largest Mexican-American-majority university in the United States, UTEP plays a significant role in preparing the next generation of professionals and future leaders. This role has been affirmed by U.S. Department of Education reports that rank UTEP second in the nation for the total number of bachelor’s degrees awarded to Hispanics. UTEP also ranks eighth for the total number of master’s degrees awarded to Hispanics.

UTEP is nationally ranked in several categories as one of the top 10 Hispanic degree producers, according to the most recent listing, which was published in an issue of Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education dedicated to “The Best Colleges for Hispanics.”

As an institution, UTEP has created a niche for itself in a vast expanse of higher education options. Because the university has capitalized on its unique binational and multicultural setting, its students gain educational experiences not available on most university campuses.

“Ten years ago, UTEP was one of the few universities in the country addressing the population of the future,” UTEP President Diana Natalicio says. “Today, we receive a lot of national attention because we have defined who we are and honestly committed ourselves to provide opportunities for the people we serve.”

For more than a decade, student enrollment trends at UTEP have evolved to closely reflect the demographics of the El Paso region. Nearly two-thirds of UTEP’s students are Mexican-American, 85 percent of these students are from El Paso County and another 9 percent are from Mexico, most commuting daily from Ciudad Juárez.

“At UTEP, we recognize the critical need for higher education opportunities in our historically underserved binational region,” Natalicio says. “We have a special responsibility to ensure that our programs and our institutional policies and procedures enhance achievement rather than serve as a barrier to it.”
21st-century Thespians, Filmmakers and Journalists

The College of Liberal Arts is restructuring its programs to offer theater, film and communication students a broader education that will better prepare them for their professional careers.

“We are training students for 2020, not 1980,” Stephen Riter, provost and vice president for academic affairs, says. “Our students are prepared to tackle the issues of today, but we need to prepare them for the demands of the future, which will require a broader set of skills.”

Under the new plan, which has been in the works for three years, the college will create a UTEP center for the performing arts and a media, film and theater arts department. The college also will enhance its professional writing and rhetoric degree programs.

Liberal arts students also will tap into the marketing expertise of the university’s well-regarded business faculty.

“We will be able to provide our students with a better education by capitalizing on the wonderful expertise that the entire university has to offer,” Howard Daudistel, dean of the College of Liberal Arts, says. “We also will be able to attract additional faculty members who are interested in a broad range of programs.”

Current and entering students will not be affected by the proposed changes, which will be implemented with faculty assistance during the next year.

IRMA RUBIO At the Ready: Reaching Recruits at Home

With pencil and application in hand, Irma Rubio welcomes El Paso’s best and brightest into UTEP’s community of student scholars.

Each year, the director of Undergraduate Recruitment meets with hundreds of area high-school students to answer questions about higher education issues — from college admissions to financial aid.

Rubio’s successful recruitment efforts continue to attract outstanding students, especially at the freshman level. For three years, as the number of freshman applications and admissions has increased, more freshmen have enrolled at UTEP.

Under Rubio’s leadership, UTEP has increased its presence throughout the city with classroom visits by teams of student and faculty recruiters who encourage college-bound El Pasoans to take advantage of the quality education that their university provides.
UTEP Signs Convenio with Prominent Mexican Foundation

In May, UTEP and El Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología — the Mexican equivalent of the National Science Foundation — entered into a partnership that will have a profound impact on educational, industrial and technological development on both sides of the border.

"Many of UTEP’s recent degree programs and grant-funded initiatives have focused on the U.S.-Mexico border region," President Diana Natalicio says. "UTEP is proud to have worked with our colleagues at CONACYT on a variety of initiatives that are mutually beneficial to Mexico and the United States."

The three-part agreement will:
• Expand the Materials Corridor Partnership, which is an innovative science cooperative that pulls together government, industry and research institutions on both sides of the border to improve energy efficiency and minimize industrial waste and pollution;
• Develop Internet 2 advanced networking capabilities on the academic- and science-based alternative to the Internet, which may be 1,000 times faster than its predecessor; and
• Create graduate education collaboratives that provide Mexican students the opportunity to study areas such as the environment, health and materials research.

UTEP has the largest percentage of Mexican nationals studying in the United States. Nine percent of the university’s students are from Mexico, most commuting daily from Ciudad Juárez.

NACME Applauds Educational Access at UTEP

After calling attention to the dramatic declines in minority engineering enrollment since 1992, the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering has released figures that show increases in freshman minority enrollment. NACME commends institutions such as UTEP where approximately 70 percent of the engineering students are Hispanic and where the enrollment of Hispanic, freshmen engineering students continues to increase.
The Best and the Brightest: UTEP's Top 10 Seniors

Each year, UTEP's Top 10 Seniors are selected by a committee composed of alumni, faculty and staff members and students. The selection of these outstanding graduates is based on grade point average and volunteer activities.

The 1999 Top 10 Seniors, listed in alphabetical order, are:

Mark Scott Arrington, 4.0 GPA, a graduate of Andress High School. Arrington received a business administration degree in December with a double major in management and marketing, graduating with highest honors. Arrington was a member of the Beta Gamma Sigma National Business Honor Society, Alpha Lambda Delta and the Golden Key National Honor Society. He also was named to the national and UTEP dean's list. He received a Presidential Scholarship and a National Collegiate Business Merit Award. Beyond the campus, he was a member of the United States Olympic Committee, the Boys and Girls Club and the Colorado Sports Corp. — a non-profit organization assisting the community through sports.

Leonel Chee, 3.90 GPA, a graduate of Preparatoria del Chamizal in Juárez, Mexico. He received a business administration degree with a double major in accounting and marketing. Chee was named as outstanding undergraduate accounting student by the Accounting Society. He received a Beta Gamma Sigma Scholarship, the All-American Scholar Collegiate Award, the Artemio de la Vega Presidential Scholarship and a Stevens Scholarship. He was a member of the Beta Gamma Sigma National Honor Society of Business, the American Marketing Association, the Golden Key National Honor Society and the Alpha Chi National Honor Society. He worked at Nortel (Northern Telecom) and was a teacher's assistant in the accounting department at UTEP.

Michelle Christine Crowson, 3.33 GPA, a graduate of Montwood High School. She will receive a degree in political science with a second major in psychology. She has her eye on going to law school in the fall. Crowson volunteered with the Victim Assistance Program; Chi Omega Toy Drive; Count Me In, a program designed to increase voter turnout; the Holocaust International Conference, and the Texas Law School Forum. She was president of the Mortar Board honor society and the Pi Sigma Alpha Honor Society. She served as treasurer of the Honors Council and was involved in the Honors Alliance and the Pre-Law Association.

Hector Anthony Garcia, 3.74 GPA, a graduate of Eastwood High School and transfer student from Austin Community College. He will graduate with a degree in psychology, following in the footsteps of his father who graduated from UTEP in 1966, also with a degree in psychology. Following the completion of his master's thesis, he will enter a doctoral program in psychology, making him the first member of his extended family to attend graduate school. Hector was on the UTEP dean's list and a member of the...
UTEP Honors Program. He has worked as a researcher for the Center for Law and Human Behavior and as a research assistant for the UTEP animal lab. He also was a member of the fundraising committee for El Paso's Bridge Center for Contemporary Art and a volunteer with the Therapeutic Horsemanship Program.

Tiffany Rene Harmon, 4.0 GPA, a graduate from Montwood High School. Harmon received a degree in psychology in December and will pursue a graduate degree in clinical psychology. The well-rounded student was a member of the UTEP Goldiggers dance team, took karate lessons and volunteered for the Kids Voting Program. She was a recipient of the Presidential Excellence Scholarship and a Golden Key National Honor Society’s Scholarship. Harmon was a member of the Russian Club; the Cardinal Key, Alpha Chi and Mortar Board honor societies; and the Pre-Law Society. She served as note taker for the Disabled Student Services Department. In summer 1996, she participated in a study/tour of the former Soviet Union and Ukraine. She also was an intern with the FBI.

Amanda Marie Loya, 4.0 GPA, a graduate from Socorro High School. She will receive a degree in microbiology. Loya plans to attend UT Austin to pursue a degree in pharmacy and plans to return to El Paso to work. Loya was a pharmacy volunteer at Providence Memorial Hospital and worked as a research assistant in the biology lab. She was a recipient of the UTEP Presidential Excellence and the Robert C. Byrd scholarships. A flutist, Loya was a member of the marching and symphonic bands. She also was a member of the Student Alumni Association, the Medical Professions Organization, and the Alpha Chi, Golden Key and Mortar Board honor societies.

Connie Nevarez, 3.48 GPA, who received her GED. She will receive a business administration degree in economics. A single mother of a young son, Nevarez first entered the UTEP community as an employee in the library. She enrolled in the university at age 29, eventually becoming a full-time student and member of the Honors Program. Nevarez received the All-American Scholar Award, the National Collegiate Business Merit Award and the Houston Endowment Award. She was a member of the Alpha Chi and Cardinal Key honor societies, the Honors Alliance and the University Honors Council. She volunteered as chair of the Community by the River-Side Association and has been active in supporting local political campaigns and participates in issues involving the local school district.

Aurora Rodriguez, 3.70 GPA, a graduate of Colegio de Bachilleres in Chihuahua, Mexico. She will graduate with a bachelor of arts degree in media advertising. She was a member of the Mortar Board and Golden Key national honor societies and the Student Advertising Federation. Rivas was named to Who’s Who Among Students in American Colleges and Universities and was a reporter for El Minero, a Spanish-language student newspaper, and KTEP. She produced “The Latino Reporter Online” and was an intern with KINT-TV Channel 26.

Maria Graciela Rivas-Blanco, 4.0 GPA, a graduate of Loretto Academy. She received a bachelor of arts degree in French in December, graduating with high honors. This multilingual woman will pursue a master’s degree in international relations. Rivas worked as a teaching assistant and French instructor. She received a four-year Presidential Scholarship and a Houston Endowment Scholarship. She was a member of the Honors Alliance, Honors Council and the Alpha Chi, Alpha Lambda Delta, Cardinal Key, Golden Key and Mortar Board honor societies. She was fundraising event coordinator for the Russian Club and a volunteer for UTEP’s Office of External Relations. In the fall, she will enroll at Georgetown University with a full scholarship.
Daniel Foster (B.A. ’51), chair of internal medicine at the UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, is an endocrinologist who is renowned for his teaching and research.

Rosa Guerrero (B.A. ’57; M.Ed. ’77) was inducted into the El Paso Business Hall of Fame.

Myrna Albin (B.S.Ed. ’63; M.Ed. ’77), a registered representative of Advance Funding Inc., is licensed for securities and insurance sales in Texas and New Mexico.

William Fletcher (B.A. ’63) received the 1999 Teacher of the Year award from the California Association for the Gifted in the Santa Lucia region.

Wendy McCarty (B.S.Ed. ’65) is an assistant professor of education at Illinois College.

Pat Mora (B.A. ’63; M.A. ’71), an author and poet, is a finalist in the PEN Center-USA West Literary Awards competition in children’s literature.

Joe Rosales (B.S.Ed. ’63; M.Ed. ’73), a retired Austin High School teacher and counselor, was elected to the El Paso Independent School District Board of Trustees.

Gerald Rubin (B.S. ’65), chair and CEO of Helen of Troy, was inducted into the El Paso Business Hall of Fame.

Nancy Ackerman (B.S.Ed. ’77) is a teacher at Tierra del Sol Elementary School. She also volunteers for Candlelighters and Special Olympics.

John Birkelbach (B.B.A. ’71) was named to the 1999-2000 list of the “Best Lawyers in America” for his work in real estate law.

Elise Hayden (B.A. ’72; M.A. ’82), an English and journalism teacher at Irvin High School, is the author of Who’s Susan? and When Colette Died.

Debra Hester (B.B.A. ’77) is the director of development for the El Paso Tennis Development Foundation. She also is president of the El Paso Bar Auxiliary, president-elect of the El Paso Symphony Guild and a sustaining member of the Junior League of El Paso.

Pedro Lopez (B.A. ’76; M.A. ’77), chair of the public justice department at St. Mary’s University, was honored at the institution’s faculty appreciation and awards dinner.

James Rohack (B.S. ’76) is president-elect of the Texas Medical Association.

Nancy Smashey (B.S. ’70) is a Texas and U.S. history teacher at Canutillo Middle School.

Robert Vargas (B.A. ’71) is the executive director of the Epilepsy Foundation of Greater North Texas.

Martha Almendarez (B.S.Ed. ’85; M.Ed. ’92) is a mathematics teacher at Charles Elementary School.

Jose Baca (B.A. ’86) was one of many El Paso law-enforcement officers who participated in the 524-mile run to San Antonio to raise money for El Paso Special Olympics.

John Beard (B.S.Ed. ’91) is the head varsity baseball coach at Burges High School and a physical education teacher at Logan Heights Elementary School.

Laura Beard (B.A. ’89) is a teacher at Sierra Vista Elementary School.

Jennifer Chapin (B.B.A. ’82) is a systems analyst for Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas.

Mark Chapin (B.A. ’83; M.Ed. ’91) is a personnel administrator with the Irving Independent School District.

Sylvia Diaz (B.S.Ed. ’87; M.Ed. ’90) is a bilingual teacher at Aoy Elementary School.

Joseph Giron (B.S.N. ’87) is a major in the U.S. Army Reserve assigned to the 399th Command Support Hospital. He also is an operating room nurse at Virginia Army Medical Center.

Lorena Giron (B.S.N. ’87) is major in the U.S. Army Reserve assigned to the 3297th U.S. Army Hospital. She also is a staff nurse in a progressive care unit at the Virginia Army Medical Center.

Beth Mauldin (B.S.E.E. ’85) is a music instructor and charter member of a surfing club.

Randy Mauldin (B.S. ’83; M.S. ’85), a major in the U.S. Air Force, is stationed in Hawaii.

Patrick Mitchell (B.S. ’85), a partner in Affiliated Dental Care, was featured in the winter issue of Texas GP, a publication of the Texas Academy of General Dentistry.

Sharon Pirk (B.S.N. ’88) is the director of the bachelor’s degree program in dental hygiene at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio.

Diana Valdez (B.A. ’83), an assistant city editor for the El Paso Times, was selected by the Institute of International Education to participate in this year’s North American Journalism Exchange program, which is sponsored by the Freedom Forum.

Susan Alvarez (B.I.S. ’95) is a reading teacher and student council sponsor at Montwood Middle School.

Laura Burciaga (B.S. ’95) teaches at Basse Middle School.

Judy Courreges (B.S. ’95) teaches at Helen Ball Elementary School.

Daniel Gonzalez (B.A. ’98) is a naval officer after completing Officer Candidate School at the Naval Aviation Command in Pensacola, Fla.

Adair Margo (NG), owner of Adair Margo Gallery and a member of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, was inducted into the El Paso Business Hall of Fame.

Deborah McElwain (B.S.N. ’98; M.Ed. ’97) is a registered nurse in the medical oncology unit at Columbia Medical Center-West in El Paso.

Eric Nelson (M.Ed. ’98) is the executive director of Radford School where he served as assistant executive director for four years and as a math instructor for 10 years.

Scott Orjada (B.S.N. ’98) is a registered nurse in the oncology unit at Columbia Medical Center-East in El Paso.

Rosaura Rodriguez (B.B.A. ’97) was elected the West-Central city representative for El Paso.

Ruth Smith (B.S. ’91) is a U.S. history teacher at Hillcrest Middle School.

Arturo Uribe Jr. (B.M. ’91), a musician in the El Paso Wind Symphony, is the band director and assistant principal at Wiggs Middle School.

Patricia Vollmer (M.E. ’99) teaches at Crosby Elementary School.

Cindy Williams (B.Ed. ’92), a teacher at Surratt Elementary School, was named last year’s Teacher of the Year.

Reginald Wilson (B.S.N. ’93) is the nurse manager of extended care services for adolescents and children at Linden Cals Hospital in Illinois.
OBITS


William Howard (B.A. '39) Feb. 18, 1999. Howard, a lifelong resident of El Paso, retired from El Paso Natural Gas Co. after 37 years of service. He was president of the American and International Right-of-Way Association and a member of the Tax Appraisal Review Board. Howard was preceded in death by his wife of 50 years, Eva; and his son, John. He is survived by his sons, Raymond, Jim, David, Mark and Alan; and daughter, Melani.

Hortensia Lopez (M.A. '54) March 2, 1999. Lopez, a lifelong resident of El Paso, was a retired assistant principal from Schuster Elementary School. She is survived by her sister, Dolores, and brother, Alfonso.

Elizabeth Gallant (M.A. '59) March 14, 1999. Gallant was a retired teacher and guidance counselor from the El Paso Independent School District. She was the president of the Trans-Pecos Personnel and Guidance Association. She is survived by her husband, Francis; son, David; and stepchildren, Mary, John and Francis Jr.

Leo Cancellare (B.S.Ed. '80) April 2, 1999. Cancellare, was the principal and president of Cathedral High School and the swim coach for the El Paso Aqua Posse. He was preceded in death by his mother, Gloria; and brother, Willy. He is survived by his wife, Vera; children, Sarah, Emily and Vito; father, Anthony; sisters, Mary Ann, Rita, Leslie, Isabel and Antoinette; and brothers, Joseph, Steven, Charles and Michael.

Richard Gerwels (B.S.M.I. '43) April 13, 1999. Gerwels, a resident of Silver City, N.M., was a World War II veteran. He also was the general manager of Continental Copper Mine. He is survived by his wife, Ellis Ruth; sons, John and Richard; and daughter, Ann.

Judith Burr (B.A. '80) April 20, 1999. Burr, a lifelong El Paso resident, was a real estate agent and school teacher. She is survived by her husband, Lawrence, and daughters, Madalyn and Ariel.

Amanda Briones (B.A. '90) April 21, 1999. Briones, a lifelong El Pasoan, was a teacher with the El Paso Independent School District. She is survived by her husband, Albert; son, Edward; and daughter, Megan.

Edna Miller (M.A. '69) April 24, 1999. Miller taught at UTEP and other El Paso schools. She was active in the El Paso County Historical Society, the El Paso Museum of Art, the Women's Club of El Paso, and the PTA at Dudley and Mesita elementary schools and El Paso and Coronado high schools. She was preceded in death by her husband of 50 years, Mallory. She is survived by her sons, Mallory Jr. and Paul; daughter, Patricia; and brother, Raymond.

Francisco Salas-Porras (B.S. '48) May 2, 1999. Salas-Porras retired in 1994 as the owner and president of Sunland Motor Sport Center. During college, he was a member of the Texas College of Mines basketball team. After World War II, he was on assignment with the U.S. occupational forces in Korea. He served on the Board of the Texas Disability Council, the El Paso City Charter Commission and the El Paso Downtown Rotary Club. He is survived by his wife of 51 years, Josefin; daughters, Ana Luisa, Marta and Cristina; and sons, Alberto, Francisco Jr. and Daniel.

Bernardino Hernandez (B.S.Ed. '74) May 15, 1999. Hernandez, a lifelong El Paso resident, taught at Lydia Patterson Institute. He is survived by his parents, Jesus and Juana; brothers, Luis, Alfredo and Faustino; and sisters, Carolina, Alicia and Gloria.

Brenda Lewis (B.A. '61) May 20, 1999. Lewis was a resident of Tulsa, Okla. She is survived by her husband, Frank; son, John; daughter, Amanda; and parents, John and Roberta.

John Navarette (B.S. '64; M.Ed. '69) May 23, 1999. Navarette, a resident of Herndon, Va., was a former special agent in charge of the El Paso FBI office. He was a mentor and reading coach who initiated the Junior Special Agent Program. He was president of the Law Enforcement Association in El Paso and the Federal Executive Employees Association. He is survived by his wife, Oiga; sons, John and Michael; sister, Otelia; brothers, Enrique and Ernesto; and parents, Jose and Ignacia.

Jacqueline Panke (B.A. '68; M.Ed. '86) May 24, 1999. Panke, an El Paso resident for more than 30 years, was a teacher with the Ysleta Independent School District. She mentored students in the Gifted and Talented program and coached the Odyssey of the Mind team. She was a member of the Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented and was active in the Texas State Reading Association. She is survived by her husband, John; daughter, Kari; parents, Robert and Louise; brother, William; and sister, Vikki.

NEWS ABOUT YOU ...

Do you ever wonder what happened to your ex-classmates and friends? We’re sure a lot of our readers do … so update us on what’s going on in your life or send in any interesting news you may have about a former classmate. Fill out this form (or attach additional pages as needed) and send to:

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