UTEP Prepares Professionals in Health, Business

UTEP’s nearly 100-year commitment to the Paso del Norte region has long translated into collaborations that benefit the community while educating our students. This issue of UTEP Magazine contains highlights of outstanding programs that prepare well-qualified professionals, produce innovative ideas and practices, and create enriched opportunities for our students, their families and their neighbors throughout the Texas-New Mexico-Chihuahua border area.

Many recent high-profile “firsts” and accomplishments have helped accelerate UTEP’s momentum toward becoming a nationally competitive research university. While the campus “rock stars” of invention and scientific discovery have often and justifiably been in the spotlight, our health professions and business programs, which are already organically linked to the region’s well-being, have also been making extraordinary strides.

New Nursing Dean Dr. Elias Provencio-Vasquez came to UTEP from the University of Miami to lead an extraordinarily productive school that has been consistently graduating more than 200 baccalaureate nurses per year, the vast majority of whom will practice locally, helping meet the increasing demand for nursing professionals. At the graduate level, another 30-plus nurses annually earn master’s degrees at UTEP, and by next year, we anticipate authorization to offer a new doctoral degree in Nursing Practice. Also by fall 2011, our nursing students and faculty will move to their beautiful new state-of-the-art facility on campus, which will enhance our capacity to provide this community with even more and better-prepared nursing graduates.

Most of the students and faculty in the College of Health Sciences will join the School of Nursing in this new on-campus facility and participate in the enhanced curriculum and research opportunities that it is designed to support. Other Health Sciences programs, especially those at the graduate level, such as Pharmacy, Physical and Occupational Therapy and Speech/Language Pathology, will remain at the Campbell Building Downtown, where they will be able to expand their efforts to prepare highly skilled professionals to meet the growing health care needs of—and conduct research on topics of special importance to—El Paso and the surrounding region. A fast-growing number of degrees—nearly 200 bachelor’s and 50 master’s—are awarded every year in the many Health Sciences specialties, and the College awarded its first doctoral degree, a Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Health Sciences, last December. Moreover, UTEP research in the College of Health Sciences and across the campus in such areas as bioscience and biomedical engineering augments the learning opportunities for future health professionals while also contributing important findings to the growing body of knowledge of the health challenges of our borderland population.

Dean Robert Nachtmann and the College of Business Administration, along with UTEP’s friends and supporters in the Paso del Norte business community, were also guided by principles of real-world productivity and community integration when they collaborated on the new downtown Graduate Business Center that you’ll read about in this issue. MBA graduates of The University of Texas at El Paso can boast of a regionally focused, nationally recognized curriculum that combines specialized mentoring with unique practical experience in a binational, bicultural setting. No wonder this program is rated among the top programs in the U.S. for Hispanic students!

As this issue of UTEP Magazine conveys very well, we continue to take pride in our many outstanding programs, as they trend confidently toward excellence, while affording unmatched access to the residents of this region. As this Paso del Norte region works to achieve its vision for the future, UTEP is proud to be preparing the majority of those professionals whose ongoing commitment and contributions to this region will add immeasurably to our prosperity and quality of life.
## ON THE COVER

34 **UNDER THE WATCH OF THE THUNDER DRAGON**
In a special report, UTEP alumna Xochitl (pronounced SO-CHEEL) Rodriguez ’09 shares her adventures teaching art to children in Bhutan.

## FEATURES

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Lois Hailey ’53 (pictured above), recipient of the Congressional Gold Medal, was one of the Women Airforce Service Pilots who volunteered as a test pilot and trainer during World War II.

## BACK COVER

BLESSING OKAGBARE IS ONE OF THE FASTEST WOMEN ON THE PLANET.

Cover photograph of Xochitl Rodriguez ’09 taken by Ugyen Phuntso in Bhutan.

## NEW THIS ISSUE:

The online icon directs readers to the web for additional story content, photos, podcasts and videos. The entire magazine can be found online at UTEPMAGAZINE.UTEP.EDU.
Mimo Gladstein, Ph.D., professor of English (2009)

Daniel Chacón and Mimi Gladstein, Ph. D.

Sometimes, treasures are found in the unlikeliest places.

Just ask Mimi Gladstein, Ph.D., and Daniel Chacón, professors at The University of Texas at El Paso.

They found dozens of gems in a musty, old basement in Carmel, Calif.

Gladstein, an English professor, and Chacón, associate professor of creative writing, went through 41 boxes in 2005, and the jewels they found were of the literary variety, full of wit, wisdom and compassion.

The treasure can now be found in bookstores—The Last Supper of Chicano Heroes: Selected Works of José Antonio Burciaga, edited by Gladstein and Chacón.

The book recently won the American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation.

“My sense is that the work collected in this book is classic,” Gladstein said.

Burciaga, a native of El Paso, died of cancer in 1996. He was 57. The poet and essayist focused on Chicano culture, often complementing the pieces with artwork that proved as biting and humorous as his words.

An eclectic artist, Burciaga was adept verbally and visually, with both stories and drawings featured in the collection. The essays and stories show a craftsman who performs the most delicate of balancing acts—conveying a caustic wit executed with a gentle touch. Few writers could pull it off as effectively.

The drawings are equally evocative, including his classic take on The Last Supper. It depicts the supper with Latino icons, with Che Guevara assuming the role of Jesus Christ. What might seem gratuitous blasphemy in the hands of a lesser artist became a powerful statement of cultural identity.

“As the years progress, I think his relevance will grow,” Gladstein said. “He will speak to every generation, because he’s addressing what’s essential in our human character,” Chacón agreed.

“Tony was a force in writing about cultural issues in a humanistic way,” he said. “Like any great artist, his significance will increase as time goes on.”

Professor Maceo Dailey, Ph.D., and his wife Sondra Dailey discover and publish lost manuscript.

Maceo Dailey, Ph.D., associate professor of history and the director of African-American Studies at The University of Texas at El Paso, undertook a significant literary project seven years ago—the publication of a lost treasure by the great American writers Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps, perhaps two of the greatest poets of the Harlem Renaissance.

The book, Boy of the Border, became the first work published by Dailey and his wife, Sondra, who started Sweet Earth Flying Press in 2003.

The Daileys know the book could not have been discovered, much less published, without a series of fortuitous circumstances.

“I was reading a collection of letters between Hughes and Bon-
temps,” Maceo Dailey recalled. “In one, they discussed a manuscript they had written, a story about the border. Had I not lived on the border, it probably wouldn’t have resonated with me.”

The manuscript, housed in the Yale University Library, was aimed at a younger audience, and except for an excerpt in an issue of Jack and Jill magazine in 1956, it had never been published.

Sondra Dailey headed to New Haven, Conn., and when she thumbed through the boxes of Langston Hughes papers at the university library, she experienced the sweet, joyous sensation of discovery. It was there, at her fingertips—a manuscript that had been lost to time.

“It felt really wonderful,” she said. “My parents had a library in the house, and they had all these Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps books. It took me back, and it gave me chills.”

Once they found the manuscript, the Daileys had to convince the estates of Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps that Sweet Earth Flying Press would be the ideal company to publish it.

They did just that.

The book, languishing in manuscript form for more than 50 years, tells the tale of a Mexican boy, Miguel, who experiences the greatest adventure of his life—traveling with his uncle Mario to sell a herd of wild horses in California.

Along the way, he discovers that borders are artificial boundaries between nations. Language and culture, he finds, define individuals; they do not limit them.

“By connecting and communicating with other cultures, we all learn and grow,” Maceo Dailey said. “And the publishing company represents an odyssey that is a wonderful part of the border, of transcending our differences in a very humanistic way.”
Diaspora Conference Welcomes Renowned African Writers and Artists

She is a German-Nigerian poet living in London, but she can relate to students of the U.S.-Mexico borderland.

Olumide Popoola grew up in Germany as one of the “other Germans.” Like people from the Borderland, she understands what it’s like to live between two cultures and languages. Popoola’s poetry and other works address her bicultural background and her experiences as a black German with Nigerian roots.

“We had to, quite literally, write ourselves into existence,” she said.

Popoola gave the breakfast address at the two-day Women of the African Diaspora Conference in April at The University of Texas at El Paso. Conference presenters from around the globe discussed a range of women’s experiences, from Malawian political widowhood to Dominica adolescence in the South Bronx.

Popoola read from her poetry and new novella, This is Not About Sadness, while talking about the opportunities for new art and ideas to be created where languages and cultures meet.

“Olumide’s work was a big hit for students. Her work resonated with the lived experiences of our students, whose literal and metaphorical border crossings enable them to have a complex and profound understanding of other diasporas,” said Marion Rohrleitner, Ph.D., UTEP assistant professor of English, who co-organized the conference with Maceo Dailey, Ph.D., associate professor of history and director of African-American Studies; Sarah Ryan, Ph.D., assistant professor of communication; and Joyce Stahmer, administrative assistant for the African American Studies Program.

Other guest speakers and panelists included Ayo Abietou Coly, assistant professor of comparative literature, African studies and gender studies at Dartmouth College; Yvette Christiansë, a novelist, poet and scholar born in South Africa; and Myriam J.A. Chancy, a Haitian-Canadian writer.

“We invited our favorite poets, the students’ favorite novelists, and scholars with important messages to engage in a two-day conversation,” Rohrleitner said.

UTEP panelists and panel chairs included Charles Ambler, Ph.D., professor of history and president of the international African Studies Association; Kathy Stautd, Ph.D., professor of political science; Meredith E. Abarca, Ph.D., associate professor of English; Maryse Jayasuriya, Ph.D., assistant professor of English; and Sasha Pimentel Chacón, visiting assistant professor of creative writing.

The conference was a public event representative of the kind of discourse and thinking that epitomizes a nationally competitive research university, said UTEP President Diana Natalicio.

“It’s not just about dollars. It’s about the kind of culture that we create on campus, the climate that we create, for excellence in everything we do,” Natalicio said in her welcoming remarks. “It is events just like this that are helping us tremendously.”

“Hallelujah,” he said. “Hallelujah, I believe. I believe nothing bad is going to happen to me…”

As the boy looked up, something compelled him to look down again. The wheels popped back onto the wagon, and the bottles started reassembling themselves, as if the whole incident were repeating itself—only backwards.

“Damn!” the preacher said.

“What does that story have to do with anything?” Nolan Richardson asked rhetorically as he finished the tale. “Belief has a lot to do with everything.”

Richardson told that story in February, during his keynote address for Black History Month on the campus of The University of Texas at El Paso.

The UTEP graduate loves that tale, and no wonder. It is about faith and belief, the twin engines that have driven him since he was a child growing up in the Segundo Barrio of South El Paso. It has been a long, hard journey, filled with both triumphs and setbacks.

It is a journey that has been chronicled in the recently released biography, Forty Minutes of Hell: The Extraordinary Life of Nolan Richardson, by former UTEP assistant basketball coach Rus Bradford. The book follows Richardson from his childhood through his career as a basketball coach.

A superb shooter who learned defense under legendary Coach Don Haskins at Texas Western College, now UTEP, he graduated two years before the team made history by starting five African-Americans in the NCAA championship game against the University of Kentucky in 1966. He went on to coach at his alma mater, Bowie High School. Then he coached at Western Texas Junior College and Tulsa University before becoming the head coach at the University of Arkansas, where his team won the NCAA Men’s Basketball Championship in 1994.

“Richardson, through his courage and success, opened the door for a new generation of coaches who don’t have to be as concerned about getting a chance because of their skin color,” Bradford said.

To Read More Visit UTEPMagazine.Utep.Edu

Nolan Richardson ’64

Forty Minutes of Hell

Biography recalls life of civil rights activist, coach

The boy was pulling a red wagon filled with empty soda bottles, a load that would yield two pennies per bottle at the grocery store. What a treasure. As he maneuvered the wagon around a crack in the sidewalk, the wheels popped off, and the bottles crashed onto the concrete. The boy tried to salvage his riches, but each shard of glass represented a loss on his investment.

“Damn!” he yelled.

A preacher, standing on the street corner, witnessed the incident. He approached the youngster, slowly and purposefully. Then he addressed the boy, using the same loud, deep voice he favored in church.

“Instead of using that word, look up at the heavens and say, ‘Hallelujah,’” the preacher said. “Say, ‘Hallelujah.’”

The boy looked down at his wagon, as flat as a palette now that it had no wheels. Then he gazed at the sky. And he started to pray.
Mentoring on the clock

Pre-med students at The University of Texas at El Paso spent a recent Saturday night trying to make connections in five-minute, one-on-one conversations with medical professionals they had never met.

The round-robin event, modeled after “speed dating,” was not designed to make romantic matches. Instead, the students met with mentors in their field to glean valuable information about applying to medical school, preparing for the profession and working in health care.

Seventeen mentors—two cardiologists, an anesthesiologist, a gastroenterologist, an orthopedic surgeon, an ophthalmologist, a medical director, a director for pain management services and several internists—attended the UTEP Medical Professions Institute’s first speed mentoring event in late February.

The mentors, many of whom were UTEP graduates, met with one or two students for five minutes at a time to answer questions about their specialties and becoming a doctor. Following the sessions, the mentors and students continued their conversations over dinner.

“It was extremely gratifying and a confidence booster for me to be able to speak directly with a physician who has gone through what I am going through as a pre-med junior pressured by MCAT studying,” said Paloma Sanchez, a UTEP student who aspires to be a cardiologist. “It also made me 10 times more passionate about pursuing a specialty in cardiology because the two cardiologists who attended described their field outside the scope of surgery in ways that I never imagined.”

The UTEP Medical Professions Institute helps UTEP students prepare for medical, dental, veterinary, optometry and physician assistant schools through summer research programs, test preparation, volunteer opportunities and professional conferences.

Mary Wells, director of UTEP’s Medical Professions Institute, said speed mentoring would be offered annually.

“I realized what a success the event was when the room was suddenly filled with the buzzing sound of conversation between students and physicians,” Wells said. “It was really quite noisy, but everyone was fully engaged in the moment. We have received e-mails from a number of the doctors expressing their enthusiasm to repeat the experience.”

Professor Named Among Top 50 Inspiring Authors

Benjamin Alire Sáenz, professor of creative writing at UTEP, has been named one of the 50 most inspiring authors in the world by Poets & Writers, the nation’s largest nonprofit literary organization serving poets, fiction writers and creative nonfiction writers.

Other authors on the list of inspiring living writers, published in the January/February issue of Poets & Writers Magazine, included Joan Didion, Dave Eggers, Cormac McCarthy, Toni Morrison, Barack Obama, Salman Rushdie and Elie Wiesel.

“I feel a little embarrassed by all of this,” Sáenz said. “There are so many great writers in the universe. I could name you 50 writers that deserve that kind of designation more than I do.

“That said, I am very grateful and humbled that my work is respected by others. Writing is like breathing to me. It’s food. It’s air. It’s water. Knowing that my writing touches others is no small thing. Not to me.”

Luis Echegoyen, Ph.D., an internationally recognized researcher and scholar, will join The University of Texas at El Paso faculty as the Robert A. Welch Chair in Chemistry.

Echegoyen is the director of the Chemistry Division at the National Science Foundation (NSF).

“After an extensive national search process that lasted more than 18 months, we believe that Dr. Luis Echegoyen meets all of the characteristics and possesses the research portfolio and international recognition expected of a Robert A. Welch Chair in Chemistry,” said Anny Morrobel-Sosa, Ph.D., dean of UTEP’s College of Science. “We believe that he will have a significant impact on our quest for national recognition as the first U.S. research university with a 21st century demographic through his intellectual contributions in all scientific arenas and with his strong academic leadership skills.”

Echegoyen is well-regarded around the world for his work on supramolecular and materials chemistry. His current research focuses on carbon materials and their potential application in solar energy conversion. He is also one of two candidates for president-elect of the American Chemical Society, the world’s largest professional organization with more than 160,000 members. The election will take place in the fall.

Echegoyen has served in his current position at the NSF since 2006, while maintaining a very productive and visible research group as a professor of chemistry at Clemson University in South Carolina. He has been a member of editorial boards for scientific journals and other national and international scientific committees. Over the last 10 years, Echegoyen has received more than $2.3 million in grants. With 270 peer-reviewed journal publications, 35 book chapters and monographs and 260 invited presentations at scientific meetings, Echegoyen has established himself as one of the top research-scholars in his field.

 “[UTEP President] Diana Natalicio has a very clear and very compelling vision for where she wants to take UTEP, and that was particularly attractive to me,” Echegoyen said. “Everyone seems to be behind her and very excited. Her vision to make a 21st century demographic institution into a top research university by providing both access and excellence is a tall order, and it’s not going to be easy, but I think it can be accomplished. It will certainly be exciting and challenging at the same time.”

The Robert A. Welch Chair is an endowed chair supported by the Welch Foundation, a Houston-based organization that funds chemistry research. Robert Alonzo Welch was a self-made man who came to Houston as a youth and later made his fortune in oil and minerals. Over the course of his career, he became convinced of the importance of chemistry for the betterment of the world.

Echegoyen has a similar philosophy.

“I’m a passionate scientist who’s looking for what we can do to keep the U.S. competitive globally and to improve our world,” he said. “I’m a firm believer in collaborations across frontiers and borders. In my own research, I collaborate with quite a few people all over the world, and I hope to help UTEP become more engaged in the global world of science and technology.”

Echegoyen received his B.S. in chemistry in 1971 and his Ph.D. in chemistry in 1974 from the University of Puerto Rico. He completed a postdoctoral research fellowship at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1975. He has been a professor and researcher at the University of Puerto Rico, the University of Maryland-College Park and the University of Miami.

A native of Cuba, Echegoyen moved to the United States with his family as a young child and relocated in Puerto Rico. He is expected to start at UTEP in August.
$2.9 Million NSF Grant Attracts Minorities to STEM Fields

The University of Texas at El Paso has received a five-year grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) for nearly $2.9 million.

The “Science for a Sustainable Future: Developing the Next Generation of Diverse Scientists” award will provide fellowships to minority graduate students in NSF-supported disciplines such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

The doctoral students will build their science and teaching portfolios and bring their leading research findings into K-12 learning settings in an effort to inspire the next generation of scientists. The fellows will serve as a STEM resource for El Paso’s Early College High School (ECHS) science teachers and as mentors for the students, helping them build practical understandings of science.

A recruitment effort for beginning doctoral students is under way for the program, called NSF Graduate STEM Fellows in K-12 Education. Aaron Velasco, Ph.D., chair of geological sciences; Vanessa Lougheed, Ph.D., assistant professor in biological sciences; and William Robertson, Ph.D., associate dean of the College of Education and assistant professor of teacher education, are the faculty leaders who are recruiting incoming doctoral students for the program.

The fellows will help develop ECHS’s science curriculum around the theme “Science for a Sustainable Future,” with a particular focus on the arid Southwest. Specific challenges facing our border desert populations will be addressed including:

- Limited water resources in a changing climate
- The potential for alternative energy resources
- A rapidly growing, diverse population and environmental health issues in a multi-national community
- Geological hazards facing the region

“The idea is to give these students real exposure to the scientific challenges of the region and hopefully inspire them to go into STEM fields,” Velasco said. 😊

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT GX12@UTEP.EDU

Novartis Representatives Visit UTEP

Two representatives from pharmaceutical company Novartis visited The University of Texas at El Paso this spring to learn about the University’s cutting-edge science and engineering research related to minority populations and to talk about possible collaborations.

Brigitta Tadmor, Ph.D., vice president and global head of communications for the Novartis Institutes for Biomedical Research, and Amri Johnson, director of diversity and inclusion, traveled to UTEP from Boston in March.

Novartis is a pharmaceutical company that develops medicines, vaccines and diagnostic tools. The corporation spends more than $7 billion a year on research and development and offers a summer internship program for undergraduate and graduate students, post-doctoral researchers and senior scientists.

Two UTEP undergraduates were selected for summer internships with the company. Microbiology major Roberto Viña-Marrufo will do research in ophthalmology and chemistry major Jeffrey Richards will work in chemistry at the Novartis Institutes for Biomedical Research headquarters in Cambridge, Mass.

During their visit, Tadmor and Johnson toured the campus, including the Border Biomedical Research Center (BBRC), and met with faculty and students in the College of Engineering, College of Health Sciences and College of Science. They gave a presentation on their company for students and faculty.

“They were interested in the work that we have been doing at UTEP with regard to biomedical research in areas that affect a minority community,” said Anny Morrobel-Sosa, Ph.D., dean of the College of Science. She said Novartis is known for its unique approach to pharmaceutical development; instead of focusing exclusively on medications developed for diseases that primarily affect Caucasians of European descent, they recognize the diverse need for medicines to combat diseases prevalent in underdeveloped countries and communities. 😊
Ensuring Academic Success

EL PASO COLLABORATIVE IS NATIONWIDE MODEL FOR K-16 EDUCATION

The scene at Parkland High School in the Ysleta Independent School District is very different from what Katherine Meraz experienced when she was a student at the Northeast El Paso high school nine years ago. After earning a degree in microbiology from The University of Texas at El Paso, she returned to Parkland to teach science.

"Since I was here in high school until now, the instruction has become more relevant, more hands on, more engaging," Meraz said.

Parkland High School is in its second year of the Texas Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (T-STEM) program, which provides training for teachers and funding for projects like the Robotics Club. It also allows for collaborations between Parkland students and engineering students at The University of Texas at El Paso.

Meraz attended T-STEM training in the summer of 2009.

"It not only provides a rigorous curriculum (for teachers to implement), but it also helps the kids relate to that real-world career," she said. And because the curriculum is provided to her, Meraz can focus on how she’s teaching, instead of what she’s teaching.

T-STEM is one of several programs that make up the El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence, a 19-year-old initiative based at UTEP that has become a national model.

The collaborative began in 1991 when founder and Executive Director Susana Navarro, Ph.D., and UTEP President Diana Natalicio began talking about how to improve academic achievement from kindergarten through college.

"We recognized at that time that more than 75 percent of our (UTEP) students were graduates of high schools in El Paso County, and that more than 60 percent of teachers in area schools were UTEP graduates," Natalicio said.

"This ‘closed loop’ strongly suggested that collaboration among educators at all levels—from pre-K through the University—would be essential if we intended to raise the educational aspirations and academic achievement of all young people in this region," Natalicio added.

Natalicio and Navarro brought together a group of leaders who would make up the El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence Board of Directors. They represented school districts, community organizations and government entities.

Work began in earnest in 1992, when the collaborative hosted several professional development training sessions for teachers in Ysleta ISD schools to help them look at student achievement data and figure out why some groups of students were not achieving at higher levels.

In 2006, UTEP and the Maricopa Community Colleges were recognized as the nation’s two best programs for enrolling and graduating Latino students, according to the nonprofit Latino education organization Excelencia in Education. The award honored UTEP’s Model Institutions for Excellence program and Maricopa’s Achieving a College Education program.

Transfer to UTEP Seamless for Maricopa CC Students

The University of Texas at El Paso is taking steps to provide students at the 10 Maricopa Community College campuses in Arizona with an easy transition to UTEP so they can earn a four-year degree.

Representatives from the two institutions signed a memorandum of understanding establishing their partnership in March in Phoenix.

The agreement ensures that students who transfer to UTEP from one of the 10 Maricopa Community Colleges in the Phoenix area can easily transfer their college credit from one school to the other.

"I am very pleased that The University of Texas at El Paso and the Maricopa Community Colleges finalized this agreement," said UTEP President Diana Natalicio. "Modeled after our very successful partnership with the El Paso Community College, this agreement paves the pathway for Maricopa students who wish to transfer into UTEP programs and provides new opportunities for collaborations between our two institutions."

The agreement is scheduled to take effect in the fall 2010 semester.
Ben Flores, Ph.D., professor of electrical and computer engineering at The University of Texas at El Paso and associate dean of the Graduate School, received the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) during a reception at the White House in January. President Barack Obama honored educators from across the country at his second “Educate to Innovate” Campaign event for excellence in STEM education. Flores was selected for the time, encouragement and expertise he has offered to thousands of students throughout the University of Texas System since joining the UTEP staff in 1990. He leads several University and statewide programs that promote increasing the number of minorities in the workplace with the hope that the next generation of scientists and engineers will better reflect the nation’s diversity.
Coronado Selected by Obama for International Advisory Committee

Irasema Coronado, Ph.D., associate provost at The University of Texas at El Paso, will be one of five individuals appointed by President Barack Obama to the Joint Public Advisory Committee of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation.

The commission, established in 1994 by the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC), is an international organization that facilitates collaboration among partner countries—Canada, Mexico and the United States—to protect the shared environment of the continent. The 15-member advisory committee, which serves as the source of information and guidance to the commission, is comprised of five citizens from each country with significant back-grounds in environmental affairs.

“Dr. Coronado’s background in environmental policy and her extensive experience with U.S.-Mexico border issues will enable her to contribute unique and valuable perspectives to the deliberations of this important international advisory committee,” said UTEP President Diana Natalicio.

Coronado, who is an associate professor of political science and a contributing faculty member in the Environmental Science and Engineering Ph.D. program at UTEP, was a member of the National Advisory Committee of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from 2003-06. She has conducted extensive research and published several articles about legal, political and environ-mental issues in the U.S.-Mexico border region.

“This appointment will help me provide my students with real world examples and contribute to the understanding of policy-making in the environmental arena,” Coronado said.

Obama announced on May 13 his intent to ap-point her and four others to the committee.

“The expertise and commitment these men and women bring to their roles will make them tremendous assets to my administration, and I look forward to working with them in the months and years ahead,” Obama said.
Campus News

London Called... UTEP Answered

We pick UTEP!
From left: Andy Lightfoot, Nicholas Brooke and Shaun Chante

Imperial College U.K. students rock at UTEP!

Imperial College Assistant Prof. Cedric John and UTEP President Diana Natalicio

Buckingham Palace

Eyjafjallajökull Volcano, Iceland

Imperial College Graduate Students from left: Lucy Nyanneh, Shaun Chante, Nicholas Brooke, Andy Lightfoot and Laura Smith
They were finishing their last leg of a three-week geology trip around the United States, expecting to spend the night at a hotel near the El Paso International Airport and start their journey home to the United Kingdom the next day. Instead, the 53 graduate students and four professors from Imperial College in London were stranded in El Paso for an extra week.

Volcanic ash from Iceland had shut down airports across Western Europe for several days in April, cancelling thousands of international flights.

“When I first found out we would be stuck in El Paso for 10 days due to the Icelandic volcano, I really thought things couldn’t get any worse,” said Lucy Akua B. Nyamaah, an Imperial College student from Ghana. “As it turned out, I couldn’t have been more wrong.”

With the help of the University of Texas at El Paso Department of Geological Sciences, she and her classmates were able to make the best of an inconvenient situation.

“I marveled at the generosity of the people and their willingness to offer assistance,” Nyamaah continued. “[UTEP’s geology department] opened their hearts to us, gave us access to their computers and library, and organized a barbecue for us as well as other programs. In a day, we knew exactly where everything was and we were virtually students of the University…Now, it’s almost sad to leave because we felt so at home.”

The Imperial College group, most of whom were master’s students in petroleum geology, began their U.S. trip March 29, heading first to Salt Lake City, Moab and Bryce Canyon in Utah. They spent several nights in New Orleans for the American Association of Petroleum Geologists conference before arriving in El Paso for a tour of the nearby Guadalupe Mountains and Carlsbad Caverns.

When they learned that their flights home had been cancelled, Assistant Professor Cedric John of Imperial College e-mailed Aaron Velasco, chair of the UTEP geology department. He asked if UTEP could help his students gain access to computers and geology textbooks so they could study for their upcoming final exams. He also asked if some UTEP students could show the Londoners around campus and town.

“Anything that gets them out of the hotel will help relieve the pressure that they are under, not knowing when we will get back to London,” he wrote.

The University community immediately sprang into action. Within a day or two, the Imperial College students had been set up with guest user accounts for the campus computers, knew their way around the Geological Sciences Building and the University Library and had spent time with UTEP students and professors at social events.

Still, the thought of their final exams, scheduled to start just a few days after they arrived home, was weighing on the minds of many students. Most had left their study materials in Britain, expecting to have time to review when they returned to London. For some students, their future jobs depended on passing the exams.

“I don’t get my job if I fail,” said Thomas Harris of London, who had been offered a job with a German oil company. “I’m sure I’ll be fine, there’s just a little bit more pressure in this situation.”

The one-year master’s program in petroleum geology began in October 2009. After their final exams, the Imperial College students will spend the summer doing research and writing their theses, which they will present in the fall.

The well-respected international program attracts students from all over the world. The current class included students from England, Denmark, Nigeria, and many other countries.
Fine Arts

An electronic media major, he has created “The Paydirt Podcast” to help raise awareness among the students of what a quality university UTEP is, thus increasing student pride in the institution. He plans to pursue a graduate degree in film.

Fine Arts

A recipient of the Manuel Acosta Art Scholarship, he has had his art exhibited in the Juried Student Art Exhibitions in 2008 and 2009. He is the student education coordinator for the Stanlee and Gerald Rubin Center for the Visual Arts, assisting with events such as Portfolio Day and Open Studio Day.

Fine Arts

Having recently graduated with her Ph.D. in environmental science and engineering, she has become a noted researcher and author in theoretical modeling and calculations for radionuclide release.

Research

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Research

Working alongside UTEP professors to find methods of using inexpensive metals to supplement more expensive metals, he plans to pursue a postgraduate degree to expand his research. His work has earned him a first place award in inorganic chemistry research at the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos/Latinos and Native Americans in Science.

Research

Having recently graduated with her Ph.D. in environmental science and engineering, she has conducted research and presented her findings at numerous conferences. She also has published her results in several highly regarded journals.

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The Student Government Association recognizes that heroes are not confined to comic books or action movies. Heroes walk among us, achieving and leading, sometimes quietly, by example. Spurred by UTEP President Diana Natalicio, the SGA solicited nominations for heroes in four categories—fine arts, philanthropy/community service, leadership and research. Natalicio announced the winners during a ceremony in March at the Stanlee and Gerald Rubin Center for the Visual Arts.

**Leadership**

**As president of Kappa Delta Pi, an honorary organization for education students, she has been an active member of the Bilingual Education Student Organization. She also has organized and volunteered for events at the College of Education, including helping children at the Ronald McDonald House and the Child Crisis Center of El Paso.**

**Rebecca Nunez**

**Leadership**

After living in Brazil, she worked to create the Brazilian Culture Center in 2008, a project that has helped other students embrace the importance of global education. She also has helped sponsor events such as the annual Brazilian festivals.

**Deane Sosa**

**Leadership**

She founded the New Delta Sorority, which promotes community service. After earning a degree in psychology and mathematics, she plans to pursue a graduate degree in student affairs and administration in higher education from Texas A&M University.

**Amber Calvin**

**Leadership**

**Philanthropy/Service**

She has distinguished herself with her tireless commitment to women’s health issues, including breast cancer awareness as a volunteer for the Susan G. Komen Foundation. After completing her education degree with a focus on higher education administration, she plans to work in the student life department at a university in the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

**Virginia Bustos**

**Philanthropy/Service**

An accounting major, she is the community service director for the Hispanic Business Association, which has created ties with the community for fundraising projects. Both she and her mother contributed to the project, “Creando Una Sonrisa Con Amor,” (Creating a Smile with Love) which helps to feed and provide Christmas presents for children in Juárez.

**Stephanie Hernandez**

**Philanthropy/Service**

A communications major who works for the Student Development Center, Rivera is the head of the Queer Student Alliance, which sponsors the SpeakOUT program, part of the Rainbow Miner Initiative that encourages students to educate others about homophobia. She wants to pursue a graduate degree at UTEP in Borderland Studies.

**Cristina Rivera**

**Philanthropy/Service**

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As their loved ones looked on, students from The University of Texas at El Paso’s largest graduating class to date walked across the stage May 15 to receive their diplomas.

And for the first time in UTEP’s 96-year history, the three commencement ceremonies were broadcast live on the Internet.

The University awarded 2,569 undergraduate and graduate degrees, including 25 Ph.D.s, adding to the ranks of more than 95,000 students who have earned degrees from UTEP.

They began arriving long before the start of the University’s first commencement ceremony at 9 a.m.—students in their long black gowns, proud Miner families and friends, children staring in awe at the big, happy crowd. For these graduates, the moment was the culmination of years of dedication, commitment and hard work. And for many, it was also confirmation that their decision to pursue a college education, even as they met family and job responsibilities, was the right one.

UTEP President Diana Natalicio gave the crowd a warm welcome and thanked the families for their support.

“Every year, more UTEP Miners are meeting the high standards we have set for them in earning their bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees,” Natalicio said. “Today, we honor not only your achievements as UTEP students, but also your many future accomplishments as UTEP alumni.

Those who could not attend commencement were able to watch the ceremonies streaming on the University’s website, a new feature designed to make the event accessible to all.

“We are providing this service because so many of our graduating students have family members and friends serving overseas in the military,” said Beto Lopez, UTEP’s assistant vice president for institutional advancement. “Streaming video enables everyone who can’t be here in person to celebrate with their graduates in real time.”
The University of Texas at El Paso is proud to announce the recipients of the Top Ten Senior awards, presented by the UTEP Alumni Association.

These outstanding seniors—selected for their academic success and University and community involvement—represent the quality education that UTEP provides its more than 21,000 students. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the Top Ten Senior awards.

Amber Bridges-Arzaga received her bachelor’s degree in health promotion from the College of Health Sciences in December 2009. She previously has been recognized as a banner bearer for the College of Health Sciences during the winter commencement, a scholarship recipient, a researcher and a published author. Besides her interest in research, she has been a volunteer for the American Red Cross and for the Socorro and San Elizario independent school district health fairs, and vice president of the Eta Sigma Gamma honor society. She modestly credits her professors for her success, for her love of research and the pathway she has set to complete her Ph.D. Her professors describe her as “simply the most talented undergraduate that I have ever known,” and note her skills in research. She is also lauded as a “leader among her peers.”

Amber Calvin received her bachelor’s degree in interdisciplinary studies from the College of Education in December 2009. After the loss of a family member, she dropped out of high school and later received her GED. As a student at UTEP, she has been a scholarship recipient, received the Yellow Rose of Texas Award from Gov. Rick Perry for her work with the military, and earned the Commander’s Award for Public Service for the U.S. Army. She has been an outstanding officer for the Kappa Delta Pi International Honor Society and for the Bilingual Education Student Organization, as well as a banner bearer for the colleges of Education and Business Administration. She has been a leader and active member of more than 20 organizations on and off campus. Her professors describe her as a “phenomenal student” who has “exceptional skills as a future educator and student leader.”
Rebecca Hernandez graduated in May with a nursing degree from the School of Nursing, and already has accepted a position with University Medical Center in El Paso. She is the recipient of numerous scholarships and has an impressive list of leadership roles on and off campus. She has been the president of her nursing class student council, a peer leader, public relations officer of the Texas Nursing Student Association, vice president for internal affairs for UTEP’s Student Alumni Association, a Miner Ambassador and the first Student Government Association Collegiate Senator from the School of Nursing. UTEP Provost Richard Jarvis, Ph.D., said, “she showed why student leadership is so critical to the future of our University.” Dean of Students Gary Edens, Ed.D., described her as an “outstanding student with a strong commitment to UTEP activities and student organizations.” She also is viewed as an “outstanding example of excellence in student leadership.”

Davi Kallman graduated in May as a political science major from the College of Liberal Arts. This continues a family legacy, as she is a third generation UTEP graduate. Her list of campus activities is extensive. She is affiliated with the Law School Preparation Institute; a member of the Alpha Chi, Phi Kappa Phi and Alpha Lambda Delta honor societies; a former Sun Princess; and recipient of the Praxis Certificate of Excellence for work in the Child Development Laboratory. Her leadership positions include senator-at-large and vice president for internal affairs for the Student Government Association, and founder of the Disabled Student Services Task Force. Her off-campus activities are no less significant—she was a precinct manager during the 2008 presidential primary and a delegate to the 2008 Democratic National Convention, secretary of Susan G. Komen Teens for the Cure and was a science fair judge at Cooley Elementary School; and was a fundraiser for the Humane Society of El Paso. Her professors describe her as “one of the best, smartest and hardest working students,” “one of those rare, quietly deserving students (who) will make UTEP proud,” and someone with “character above reproach; dedicated, honest and hardworking.”

Sylvia Natividad graduated in May with a major in metallurgical and materials engineering from the College of Engineering and is the first female member of her family to receive a college degree. Among her activities has been her work as a research assistant, partially to help support her family. An Albert S. Holbert Endowed Scholar, she has received engineering awards from the American Society of Civil Engineering, the Texas Society for Professional Engineers and the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering. Her campus activities include serving as a board member of Women in Science and Engineering (WISE), treasurer of the UTEP Rotary, fundraising co-chair for the Materials Advantage Society and president of the Alpha Sigma Mu materials engineering honor society. In the community, she has organized holiday events for La Posada, a domestic violence shelter; was a science fair judge at Cooley Elementary School; and was a fundraiser for the Humane Society of El Paso. Her professors said they “never knew a student more motivated to excel,” adding that she has a “real thirst for learning and challenging herself” and an “outstanding level of academic achievement. She personifies the tireless spirit of academic excellence.”

Anthony Jimenez graduated in May with a double major in sociology and communication studies from the College of Liberal Arts. He is an El Paso native and has worked as a research assistant to help support his mother and siblings. His interest in research and academics already has paid off—he has presented his research at a national forum, been a scholarship recipient and remained very active on campus. He is the president of the Lambda Pi Eta honor society and a member of five other honor societies. He has been president of the employee association for a former employer, a court watcher, a museum aide, an actor and a food server at the St. Pius X Community Rescue Mission. His professors describe him as “one of the best, smartest and hardest working students,” “one of those rare, quietly deserving students (who) will make UTEP proud,” and someone with “character above reproach; dedicated, honest and hardworking.”

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Carlos Natividad Licón graduated in May with majors in finance and international business from the College of Business Administration. He has been a teaching assistant and a peer leader on campus, and his activities have straddled both sides of the border region. He has received numerous awards, including the Chartered Financial Analyst Scholarship, a scholarship from the American Society of Women Accountants and the Orientation Leader of the Year Award from the National Orientation Directors Association. He has demonstrated his leadership skills both on and off campus. Some of the organizations he has participated in include the UTEP Accounting Society, the Financial Management Association and the Monster career development website’s Diversity Leadership Program. His professors describe him as being “a natural leader with an overwhelming love for education” who “demonstrates the finest characteristics of a Top Ten Senior” and “a perfect blend of academic excellence with community involvement and commitment.”

Danielle Riddick graduated in May with a major in early childhood education from the College of Education. She is an El Paso native and proud of her roles as writing tutor, peer mentor and substitute teacher. She is a University President Inaugural Scholar, an Honors Cord recipient and a leader in numerous campus organizations. She has been president of the Student Alumni Association, historian for the Education College Council, a Miner Ambassador, secretary of the UTEP branch of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars, a member of several honor societies and the Black Student Union, and an active member of the Westside Christian Fellowship. Her professors say “she will fulfill her life goals and will be an asset to the community,” and that “she is the ideal person to receive the Top Ten Senior Award” because she demonstrates “excellence in every sense of the word.” She is also the 600th graduating senior to receive the Top Ten Senior Award from the UTEP Alumni Association.

Javier Rios, a B. Marshall and Barbara H. Willis Memorial Endowed Scholar, graduated in May as a microbiology major from the College of Science. He has been a tutor and a product development technician, and helped his family by working as he became skilled in both teaching and research. His awards are numerous—he has earned more than 12, plus membership in several honor societies and the UTEP Symphony Orchestra. He also found time to be a big brother in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. His achievements include earning the President’s Leadership Scholarship Award, the UTEP Music Department Service Award and the State of Texas Honor Graduate Certificate. He is also a skilled athlete. He has been recognized as an intramural champion in volleyball, basketball, sand volleyball and soccer. His professors describe him as “an outstanding student” who “will be an outstanding UTEP graduate, a fine doctor and a great community worker.” His academic and leadership roles and involvement with the Medical Professions Institute have given him the opportunity to accept early admittance to the Boston University School of Medicine. He will start there in the fall.

Lela Ruck graduated in May with a microbiology degree from the College of Science. She has made the Dean’s List, is a member of several honor societies, and is the recipient of the Al and Willamary Viste Scholarship for Scholastic Achievement and the Army Aviation Association of America Scholarship for Scholastic Achievement. She has held several leadership positions on campus, including serving as the president of the Medical Professions Organization. In addition, in her role as a peer leader, she helped to establish peer leader training programs in chemistry at two universities in New York City. The Richard E. Van Reet, M.D., Memorial Scholar has been active with the Alzheimer’s Association, helped to build homes in Mexico for those in need through the Casas Por Cristo program, and presented at the American Chemical Society’s Southwest regional meeting. She is also an accomplished dancer. Her professors said she has “a stern will to succeed” and “sets a standard and superior example for her students and peers.” She also “exemplifies the Miner spirit of self-sacrifice for community service.”
NEW STUDENT HOUSING COMPLEX SERVES NEED, BOOSTS ACADEMICS

There will be an extra spring in the step of about 200 UTEP students this fall because they will be the first residents of Miner Heights, the University’s newest housing complex.

The $6.5 million project at the intersection of Schuster Avenue and Randolph Drive has earned positive visitor feedback since model apartments were unveiled in late April. But officials at The University of Texas at El Paso hope that students look beyond the Wi-Fi, modern interiors and refrigerated air to see the academic benefits.

The proximity of students to campus and positive peer pressure among Miner Heights’ residents should create a living and learning center of excellence.

“This isn’t just about housing. It’s about students having a common goal to succeed at UTEP,” said Charlie Gibbens, Ed.D., director of Residence Life.

He mentioned numerous studies that show students, even those who may be at higher risk of dropping out, do better if they live on campus. The reason is students build camaraderie, and the positive qualities of good students rub off on others.

Gibbens made his comments during a tour of the 80-unit complex that will include laundry facilities and access to a community room that students can use to study or just congregate. The buildings, which are about 50 years old, have undergone extensive renovations to include new plumbing and more efficient electrical appliances.

Sophomore education major Nicole Quintana planned to reside in Miner Heights in the former Williamsburg Apartments building that faces Schuster. She said the proximity would help her get to class on time, but she preferred to talk about the furnished apartment's amenities.

She spoke about the white tile entryway, the wood pattern floors, the faux leather sofas, the kitchen with the electric stove, the living room furniture with the cherry wood finish, and the bedrooms with ample storage space.

“It’s really nice,” Quintana said of the one- and two-bedroom units that range from 550 to 825 square feet. Six of the units are accessible to people with disabilities.
When the Centennial Museum, the Department of Geological Sciences and the Department of Art at The University of Texas at El Paso work together, the sky’s the limit. Faculty, staff and students from each of the three departments collaborated this spring to revitalize the Geology Gallery on the second floor of the Centennial Museum.

The renovated gallery features a touch-screen interactive kiosk, new geological displays and most notably, a ceiling mural created by members of the school’s art department. “The transformation is miraculous,” UTEP President Diana Natalicio said at the reopening ceremony held in early May.

It took art students Irene O’Leary and David Rey, and UTEP alumna Lily Perez about two months to paint the bare white ceiling, which features a blue sky backdrop with white and gray clouds. Some of the time was spent on their backs or reaching up to the highest points of the room. “It was really terrifying, but I got used to it,” said Perez, a 2009 graduate who earned her bachelor’s degree in graphic design.

Another new feature is the Active Earth Interactive Kiosk installed on the south wall of the second floor gallery. The display gives patrons a live look at the world’s recent earthquake activity, as well as informational images and animations that explain more about the science behind the natural phenomena. Bridget Smith-Konter, professor of geology, designed the kiosk with senior geology major Perry Houser as part of a National Science Foundation career grant she received last year.

The upgrades to the gallery are big improvements to the 73-year-old museum, according to Scott Cutler, museum curator. “I am really pleased and excited to see how the public is taking to the exhibit,” he said.
When one of their students with an excellent GPA and superb writing skills was not accepted to a single law school, professors William Weaver, Ph.D., and Robert Webking, Ph.D., were confounded.

“I thought, ‘There’s something not right here,’ because I knew this student would perform well in law school,” said Weaver, who has a J.D. and knows what it takes to be accepted to law school.

Weaver and Webking started a pilot program that year—1998—to help prepare students from The University of Texas at El Paso for law school. It was successful, and with the help of UTEP Executive Vice President Richard Adauto, the state legislature funded the Law School Preparation Institute (LSPI).

The institute was one of the first in the country and remains the most rigorous prelaw program at any United States university, Weaver said. It won the Texas Higher Education STAR Award in 2004 and has been cited as a model program in numerous publications.

Professors interact with the LSPI students regularly over the course of two years. During two summers, the students attend classes eight hours a day and have three to four hours of homework each night. They receive one-on-one advising and help with their personal statements, advice about where to apply for law school and assistance with special situations.

“We mainly tell them it’s possible,” Weaver said. “A lot of our students are completely convinced that there’s no way they can go to law school.”

Jessica Martinez Loy (see story page 63), a 2004 graduate of UTEP, is one former LSPI student who had no law background and no lawyers in her family to support her interest in the legal profession. She learned about the program from a friend and decided to apply.

“Even when I was in law school, people who had parents or family who were attorneys had a better idea of what they were getting into,” she said. “If I had not had the LSPI, I wouldn’t have known at all what to expect.”

Loy received a scholarship to the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s law school. She graduated in 2007 with her J.D.

“I don’t know how I would have done it without [the LSPI],” she said. “I wish more people knew about it. It helps so many people go to law school.”

Each student in the program receives a stipend as well as experience reading and presenting cases, doing research, writing, and preparing for the LSAT, the law school entrance exam.

Since its inception 12 years ago, more than 95 percent of the institute’s graduates who applied to law school—220 students—have been admitted, and 60 percent of them have attended top tier law schools, as defined by U.S. News & World Report magazine, Weaver said. Nationally, only about 63 percent of law school applicants are admitted to any school.

The institute recently received a grant of nearly $200,000 from the Law School Admissions Council to help recruit more minority law school candidates. Weaver said it is especially important to increase the number of Mexican-American applicants. According to research he did in 2009, only 1.4 percent of first-year law students are Mexican-American, but the ethnic group makes up 10 percent of the country’s population. From 1971 to 2008, the total number of Mexican-Americans in law school has stayed steady at about 700 students. But during that same period of time, the number of Mexican-Americans in the country increased from about 6 million to more than 30 million.

“This is a recipe for disaster,” Weaver said. “If you have a replacement rate of 700 attorneys per year, assuming they all graduate from law school and pass the bar, you’re not even meeting the replacement rate to service that community.”

The LSPI will use the grant money to develop high school outreach and training programs to introduce students to case law analysis and steer them toward a law career.

The institute also has added two other programs: a four-week Summer High School Law Prep Camp to introduce high school students to the legal field, and a two-week Law School Boot Camp to prepare students who have been accepted to law school for their examinations.

Undergraduate students with a GPA of 3.0 or higher who do not already have a bachelor’s degree can apply to the LSPI. A four-member committee judges the applicants and selects each class.}
They study the reliability of eyewitness testimony. They look into factors that influence the decisions of juries. They learn which tactics can be used to elicit the truth from a witness or suspect. They take into consideration what causes criminals to seek mental health treatment or not. They study police lineup procedures.

They are not lawyers, judges or law enforcement officers; they are legal psychologists at The University of Texas at El Paso.

Applying psychology to the legal field is a relatively new discipline, and only a handful of legal psychology doctoral programs exist in the United States. Since it began admitting students in 1993, UTEP’s legal psychology Ph.D. program has attracted high-quality faculty and applicants who are interested in experimental rather than clinical psychology.

“The same high-quality people are applying to this cluster of programs,” said UTEP Psychology Professor Harmon M. Hosch, Ph.D. “When they want to come to UTEP, that suggests that we’re among the top group.”

Fifteen doctoral students have completed their Ph.D.s in legal psychology at UTEP since the first degree was awarded in 1996. The graduates now work at academic institutions such as Florida International University, Central Michigan University, Western Illinois University and Arizona State University, and in research, government and private sector jobs with the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the American Institute of Research, the Federal Sentencing Commission and other agencies.

Assistant Professor Jennifer Eno Louden, Ph.D., the newest member of the University’s legal psychology faculty, said she was attracted by the strength of the program and faculty. “This department has the well-respected researchers that encompass many areas,” she said. “They’re open to new ideas.”

The UTEP legal psychology faculty are at the top of their field—Hosch is a former program director for the Law and Social Sciences Program at the National Science Foundation, and Associate Professor Chris Meissner, Ph.D., will take on the same position in 2010. Meissner is also the recipient of the Early Career Award for Excellence in Research by the American Psychology-Law Society and the American Academy of Forensic Psychology. Professor Roy Malpass, Ph.D., is a former executive director of the Society for Applied Research in Memory and Cognition and former president of the Society for Cross-Cultural Research. The legal psychology faculty members sit on the editorial boards of elite journals in their field and have served as editors of the journals in recent years, Meissner said. “Our faculty are the best in their field and we’re very proud of the program we’ve built here at UTEP to serve both the legal system and the local community,” he said.

UTEP’s legal psychology students are required to work in the field so they have experience in real world situations, Hosch said. Students have completed internships with the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security. They also help to develop and assess local programs, including the El Paso juvenile probation program, the El Paso mental health court and the city’s adult probation program.

“UTEP’s program is known as one of the handful of legal psychology programs where you can go and do empirical research,” said Roy Malpass, Ph.D., one of UTEP’s longest-serving legal psychology professors. Malpass said he feels honored to work with the group of graduate students who are at the top of their classes. “I get to sit around the table with people who have been pre-screened to be very smart,” he said.
Launched in 2000, the Millennium Lecture Series is sponsored by the Office of the UTEP President, and it has brought dozens of speakers to campus, each one an expert on subjects as urgent as today’s headlines.

Those speakers have included doctors, demographers and ambassadors; professors, astronomers and historians; journalists, bankers and corporate executives.

The current series features topics centering on “Contemporary Issues” that involve Mexico and Latin America as well as energy resources and sustainability. Speakers have included Jeffrey Davidow, President of the Institute of the Americas, and Andrés Rozental, former Deputy Foreign Minister of Mexico.

As the University marks the 10th anniversary of the Millennium Lecture Series, it provides an opportunity to examine the significance of this outstanding series, originally designed to last only a year as a celebration of the new millennium.

“The quality of the speakers that we were able to attract and the enthusiastic response of campus and community audiences to the speakers provided strong justification for continuing the Millennium series after the initial year,” UTEP President Diana Natalicio said.

The response dramatized that UTEP, as an educational institution, turns the community into a giant classroom, enlightening students and non-students alike.

“All quality universities seek to bring interesting and provocative speakers to their campuses to create additional learning opportunities for students, as well as for faculty, staff and members of the surrounding community,” Natalicio said.

As the world becomes more complex, people are bombarded by issues that seem to defy comprehension, and it is through forums such as the lecture series that individuals gain a better grasp of such topics.

“I think attending a lecture in the Millennium series enables us all to stop the rush of daily activity, listen and think about these often monumental issues and what our role might be in attempting to address them,” Natalicio said. “I hope that in addition the lectures stimulate further thinking and conversation among us.”

In the 10 years since the series started, the University has hosted dozens of brilliant speakers, but one stands out for Estrella Escobar, Assistant to the President, who has coordinated the series for the Office of the President.

“All of the speakers we have brought have been fascinating, but one that stands out in my memory is Dr. Walter Persegati, former Secretary General and Treasurer of the Vatican Monuments, Museums and Art Galleries,” she said. “He ran the Vatican museums for 19 years, and for nine of those years, he was involved in the renovation of the Sistine Chapel, which has been hailed as the conservation accomplishment of the last century.

“The images he brought to share with us, along with his perspectives, were incredibly inspiring.”

Such lectures seem to shrink the Earth, giving residents of the Paso del Norte region an opportunity to learn about important achievements and projects throughout the world.

“It’s probably the one forum through which the people in the community at large can get an update on important topics, and that seems to resonate with the public,” said Robert Currey, Director of the UTEP Center for Environmental Resource Management, which co-sponsored the 2006-07 series on climate change. “Change is one of the few constants in life, and certainly the magnitude, range and scope of climate change merits our attention. All the topics in the series merit our attention.”

Dennis Bixler-Márquez, Ph.D., Director of the Chicano Studies Program at UTEP, agreed.

“The lectures are an opportunity to bring in major players in a broad range of fields—not just the humanities, but also health and science,” he said. “They have an important message. The series helps enlighten all those who attend and participate.”

1. Willard V. Edwards ’72, M.D., M.B.A.
   President
   National Medical Association (NMA)
2. J. James Rohack ’76, M.D.
   President
   American Medical Association (AMA)
3. Ambassador Larry L. Palmer, Ed.D.
   President
   Inter-American Foundation; Former Ambassador to Honduras
4. Ambassador Jeffrey Davidow
   President
   Institute of the Americas in San Diego, Calif.; and Former United States Ambassador to Mexico
5. Susan Hackwood, Ph.D.
   Executive Director
   California Council on Science and Technology
6. Robert A. Malone ’74
   Former Chairman and President
   BP America Inc.
7. Walter Persegati, Ph.D.
   Former Secretary General and Treasurer
   Vatican Monuments, Museums and Art Galleries
8. Ambassador Lyonpo Om Pradhan
   Former Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Bhutan to the United Nations
9. Diana Villiers Negroponte, J.D., Ph.D.
   Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy
   The Brookings Institution
10. Robert O’Rear ‘64
    Former Director of International Operations
    Microsoft Corp.
11. Dan E. Arvizu, Ph.D.
    Director
    National Renewable Energy Laboratory
12. Vera Rubin, Ph.D.
    Senior Fellow, Astronomy
    Department of Terrestrial Magnetism, Carnegie Institution of Washington
All quality universities seek to bring interesting and provocative speakers to their campuses to create additional learning opportunities for students, as well as for faculty, staff and members of the surrounding community."

–Diana Natalicio
UTEP President
Series Speakers

MARCH 1, 2006
The Honorable Dana Gioia
Chairman of the National
Endowment for the Arts

MARCH 27, 2006
John Friend
Sr. Vice President
Cartoon Network Enterprises

SEPTEMBER 21, 2006
Dr. Dan E. Arvizu
Director
National Renewable Energy
Laboratory

OCTOBER 26, 2006
A Special Presentation of Discovery
Channel’s “Global Warming: What You Need To Know,”
with Tom Brokaw

DECEMBER 7, 2006
Dr. Kelvin Droegemeier
Regents’ Professor of Meteorology
and Weathernews Chair
Center for Analysis and Prediction
of Storms
University of Oklahoma

FEBRUARY 27, 2007
David Satcher, M.D., Ph.D.
Director
Center of Excellence on Health
Disparities and Pouissant-Satcher-
Cosby Chair in Mental Health,
Morehouse School of Medicine,
and former Surgeon General of the
United States

MARCH 20, 2007
A Special Presentation of
“An Inconvenient Truth”
Documentary Film

APRIL 9, 2007
Dr. Charles Kennedy
Director
Environment and Sustainability
Initiative
University of California, San Diego;
Former Director
Scripps Institution of Oceanography

SEPTEMBER 13, 2007
General Gordon Sullivan
President and Chief
Operating Officer
Association of the United States Army

OCTOBER 23, 2007
Dr. Demetrios Papademetriou
Co-Founder and President
Migration Policy Institute

NOVEMBER 14, 2007
William Dee
President and C.E.O.
Malcolm Pirnie, Inc.

FEBRUARY 26, 2008
Dr. Susan Hackwood
Executive Director
California Council on Science
and Technology

MARCH 18, 2008
Ambassador Larry L. Palmer
President
Inter-American Foundation and
former United States Ambassador
to Honduras

APRIL 2, 2008
James Steinberg, J.D.
Dean
Lyndon B. Johnson School of
Public Affairs
The University of Texas at Austin

OCTOBER 1, 2008
Dr. James Duderstadt
President Emeritus
University Professor of Science
and Engineering
University of Michigan

DECEMBER 8, 2008
Eduardo Sanchez, M.D.
Vice President and Chief
Medical Officer
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas

JANUARY 29, 2009
Wilson Compton, M.D., M.P.E.
Director
Division of Epidemiology, Services
and Prevention Research, National
Institute on Drug Abuse

FEBRUARY 12, 2009
Willarda V. Edwards, M.D., M.B.A.
President and C.O.O.
Sickle Cell Disease Association of
America and President-Elect of the
National Medical Association

APRIL 23, 2009
Robert A. Malone
Former Chairman and President
BP America, Inc.

OCTOBER 27, 2009
Dr. Diana Villiers Negroponte, J.D.
Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy
The Brookings Institution

JANUARY 28, 2010
Ambassador Andrés Rozenfeld
Former Deputy Minister of Mexico
and Senior Fellow
The Brookings Institution

MARCH 4, 2010
Ambassador Jeffrey Davidow
President
Institute of the Americas in
San Diego, California and Former
United States Ambassador to
Mexico

APRIL 8, 2010
Dr. Dan E. Arvizu
Director
National Renewable Energy
Laboratory

APRIL 15, 2010
Dr. Raymond L. Orbach
Director
Energy Institute
The University of Texas at Austin

APRIL 27, 2010
Mark Anielski
President
Anielski Management Inc.
Adjunct Professor
School of Business
University of Alberta
UTEP’s leadership in health professions education began when the Hotel Dieu School of Nursing became part of The University of Texas System in 1971.

UTEP boasts programs in nursing, pharmacy, speech-language pathology, occupational and physical therapy, rehabilitation counseling, clinical laboratory sciences, kinesiology, public health, social work and interdisciplinary health sciences.
Among the research projects within the college is an effort launched by Paula Ford, Ph.D., an assistant professor who is cataloguing “health resources” in the community, including access to parks, playgrounds and grocery stores selling fresh produce.

“The practical applications of the study are enormous,” she told UTEP Magazine. “For example, it’s important to create healthy places, and in terms of city planning, it could be very helpful to look at park availability,” (see full story on page 31).

Another health researcher, Anthony Salvatore, Ph.D., a speech-language pathology professor and chair of the Department of Rehabilitation Sciences, recently was honored by the Texas Speech-Language-Hearing Association for his work with the UTEP Concussion Management Clinic. The clinic performs baseline neurological assessments of athletes in contact sports to compare their neurological function before and after a concussion (see full story on page 31).

Read more about UTEP’s outstanding health professions programs and their community impact in the following pages.

UTEP’S SCHOOL OF NURSING provides up to 60 percent of the nursing staff at El Paso’s hospitals and William Beaumont Army Medical Center.

DEAN OF THE SCHOOL OF NURSING

Elias Provencio-Vasquez, Ph.D., R.N., F.A.A.N., F.A.A.N.P., was the first male in the country to obtain a doctoral degree in nursing.

He earned that distinction in 1992 at the University of Arizona. Now, the pioneering nurse has returned to his hometown as the first Hispanic male in the country to serve as a school of nursing dean.

Born in El Paso, Provencio-Vasquez left the city for 45 years to attend school and work as a clinician, educator, researcher and administrator. Since 1978, he has worked at hospitals and universities in Arizona, California, Texas, New Jersey, Maryland and Florida. He is well known nationally and internationally for his work with at-risk women and their families and has expertise in primary care and developmental assessments of HIV and drug-exposed infants, children and adolescents.

Provencio-Vasquez also served as president of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, where he raised awareness, value and appropriate compensation for nurse practitioners during his term.

He returned home in 2010 to lead The University of Texas at El Paso’s School of Nursing, a position he started Feb. 1.

“I really find that UTEP and El Paso as a community are hidden treasures in terms of the potential not only to educate but also to conduct incredible science. That is one of the reasons that I found UTEP attractive and a place where I wanted to continue to build my career,” he said. “I was pleasantly surprised at the potential that UTEP has to become a Tier One institution.”

One of Provencio-Vasquez’s tasks is to recruit more top scientists to UTEP, as well as support and cultivate the school’s faculty and their research.

“As a new dean, I certainly want to make sure that I support up-and-coming researchers within our own ranks. There are some incredible junior faculty and scientists here.”

Kathleen Curtis, P.T., Ph.D., dean of the College of Health Sciences at The University of Texas at El Paso, has been awarded the 2009-10 Public Citizen of the Year Award by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Texas Chapter, Rio Grande Branch.

The award is granted annually to an individual who is not a social worker, but who has made significant contributions to an area of concern to the social work profession, such as vulnerable populations, quality of life in communities and social issues.

Curtis, who was appointed dean in 2007, has more than 30 years of leadership experience in clinical, education, research and higher education administrative roles in the health and rehabilitation sciences. Since then, she has fostered the development of three new graduate programs to meet the region’s needs for health professionals.

With her leadership, the College of Health Sciences will launch new graduate degree programs offering the Master of Social Work, the Master of Rehabilitation Counseling, the Doctor of Physical Therapy and a graduate certificate in public health in summer and fall 2010.

“These new programs will make a huge impact on our regional community and provide multiple new dimensions to our health and human services workforce,” Curtis said. “The College of Health Sciences degree programs are characterized by community engagement, which is not only critical to student learning but also to our research and service.”

Curtis first developed a community outreach program in 2007 for College of Health Sciences faculty, students and staff to help establish community partnerships. She is now working to develop a collaborative project between UTEP and the Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua (UACH) to create an interactive Web-based model that will enable health research students at both universities to engage in a virtual community health survey experience.

UTEP COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES PROGRAMS provide a unique focus on border and Hispanic health issues.
Margie Perez-Padilla, Pharm.D., clinical assistant professor of the UTEP/UT Austin Cooperative Pharmacy Program, received the American Pharmacists Association-Academy of Pharmacy Practice and Management Merit Award in March.

Perez-Padilla was recognized for her significant contributions to the advancement of pharmacy practice in traditionally underserved populations and the promotion of pharmacy leadership development in the US-Mexico border region.

The Texas Pharmacy Association recognized her leadership and innovation with an invitation to attend the Texas Pharmacy Leadership Institute. She also received recognition for “Best Practice” in the Texas Association of Community Healthcare Centers.

“Dr. Perez-Padilla’s commitment to culturally and linguistically appropriate care helps set a standard of excellence for our University and community,” said Kathleen Curtis, Ph.D., dean of the College of Health Sciences. “We are so proud of her leadership and delighted that she has been recognized nationally for her outstanding work.”

Perez-Padilla received the Merit Award during the American Pharmacists Association annual meeting in Washington, D.C.

The University of Texas at El Paso/UT Austin Cooperative Pharmacy Program is poised for significant growth that officials hope could put a dent in the Borderland’s chronic shortage of pharmacists.

The program, which began enrolling El Paso students in 1999, has contributed 47 of the active pharmacists working in El Paso County since 2003 and directly assisted in the education of dozens of additional El Paso pharmacists.

But a shortage still exists. A 2006 study by the Health Professions Resource Center of the Texas Department of State Health Services forecasted a 27 percent increase in the need for pharmacists in the Upper Rio Grande region between 2006 and 2016.

UTEP’s proposed expansion calls for a program that more than triples the number of students enrolled annually to 40 and moves the entire six-year pre-pharmacy and professional curriculum to El Paso. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board could review the plan this summer.

The new concept would benefit the students who would be able to do more in-depth research of the border population, and the patients who would be served by more pharmacists who are culturally and linguistically sensitive to their needs.

The pharmacy program will join the rehabilitation science programs in Campbell Hall in summer 2011. The move coincides with the scheduled opening of the new $60 million, 130,000-square-foot College of Health Sciences/School of Nursing Building.

“The timing is right,” said José Rivera, Pharm.D., clinical professor and director of the Cooperative Pharmacy Program. “This is the best thing we can do now. This is something we must do.”

After the initial two years of pre-pharmacy work, students would stay at UTEP and use distance learning technology to participate in lectures by faculty members in Austin, San Antonio or Edinburg. They would complete their final year of clinical work with pharmacists in the El Paso community and would earn a Doctor of Pharmacy degree from the UTEP/UT Austin Cooperative Pharmacy Program.

The current program follows a 2+2+2 year format, beginning with two years of pre-pharmacy coursework at UTEP followed by two years of professional studies at the College of Pharmacy in Austin and a final two years of professional coursework in El Paso.

El Paso native Ana Peña entered the Cooperative Pharmacy Program after high school. She said knowing the border helped her to relate to her patients during pharmacy rotations at area hospitals, clinics and with private practices.

Nicole Ocon, who is finishing her pharmacy degree in El Paso, sees the benefits the program can provide to an underserved community.

She especially enjoys the opportunities to discuss how prescribed medicines work with natural remedies that were passed down through generations.

“You have to be sensitive and know your population,” she said.
Nursing education has been a part of The University of Texas at El Paso since 1971. What is now the School of Nursing started as part of El Paso’s Hotel Dieu Hospital. In 1971, the Sisters of Charity transferred the school to The University of Texas System. Five years later, the UT System placed the School of Nursing under UTEP’s administrative oversight.

Today, UTEP’s School of Nursing offers both Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Master of Science in Nursing degrees and can accommodate more than 1,000 nursing students each academic year. A fast-track program allows the school’s top students to complete their degrees a semester early so they can enter the workforce and address the nationwide nursing shortage.

“Sixty percent of our nurses stay in El Paso or the surrounding communities, but they are also in great demand throughout the country,” said Elias Provencio-Vasquez, Ph.D., dean of UTEP’s School of Nursing. “The majority of our nurses are bilingual and bicultural, and that’s the way the rest of the United States will eventually look.”

UTEP’s School of Nursing provides up to 60 percent of the nursing staff at El Paso’s hospitals and William Beaumont Army Medical Center. Graduates also work in the local school districts and community health centers.

The school provides education to ROTC cadets who have agreed to serve as Army nurses upon graduation and trains active duty soldiers.

Students interested in doctoral nursing degrees can pursue a Ph.D. in interdisciplinary health sciences. A Doctor of Nursing Practice degree is being developed.

In recent years, the school’s total research expenditures have increased from $2.5 million to about $18 million. Research has focused on depression and pain management, diabetes prevention and care, health beliefs and patterns of recent immigrants, mammography screening in Mexican-American women and minority health disparities.

UTEP has made a large investment in enhancing the School of Nursing, which will move from its Downtown location on Campbell Street to a new $60 million, 130,000-square-foot facility across the street from the UTEP Library in 2011. The College of Health Sciences/School of Nursing Building will provide more space to accommodate a growing student body and faculty, and enhanced technology and simulation labs for state-of-the-art learning opportunities, Provencio-Vasquez said.

“Our students will be able to practice a lot of the skills they need to learn in our simulation lab. Students will be videotaped and can see the things that they need to improve on,” he said.

“We teach them all the skills they need to learn here before they go to the hospitals and take care of real patients.”

The following are the master’s and doctoral degrees offered in UTEP’s College of Health Sciences and School of Nursing, and the years they started.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nursing (1977)</td>
<td>MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech-Language Pathology (1985)</td>
<td>MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinesiology (1996)</td>
<td>MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy Co-op/UT Austin (1999)</td>
<td>Pharm.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinesiology online (2000)</td>
<td>MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary Health Sciences (2004)</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Therapy (2005)</td>
<td>MOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health (2008)</td>
<td>MPH</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Work (2010)</td>
<td>MSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Therapy (2010)</td>
<td>DPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation Counseling (2010)</td>
<td>MRC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The School of Nursing also offers three postgraduate certificates—Nurse Educator, Evidence-Based Practice, and Health Care Leadership and Management—as well as a post-master’s nurse practitioner certificate for those who have earned an MSN.
Master of Public Health

Graduates with a Master of Public Health degree can respond to the growing issues of obesity, diabetes and other chronic diseases, along with re-emerging infectious illnesses, said Meg Weigel, Ph.D., professor of public health sciences.

Weigel, who directs the program, recognizes a critical shortage of public health professionals trained to work with Hispanic and border communities, especially those with bilingual and cultural competency skills and experience.

“We specifically designed our unique Hispanic and border health concentration to prepare students to work with these communities to help them to reduce their high burden of illness and improve their health and quality of life,” she said.

The expanding program, which could grow to 15 students per cohort, is adding elective courses open to all graduate students, a summer research field school in the Ecuadorian Andes and a graduate certificate in public health to be offered this fall.

Master of Social Work

The huge demand in Far West Texas for people with the knowledge and skills associated with a Master of Social Work degree was among the reasons the college decided to add the plan, said Mark Lusk, Ed.D., professor of social work and department chair.

The program, which will start in the summer of 2010 with 25 students, will emphasize social work in the border region. “Up until now, El Paso was the largest city in the United States without such a graduate program, he said.

“We will train bilingual, culturally competent social workers for practice in the challenging region that extends from Brownsville to San Diego,” Lusk said.

Master of Rehabilitation Counseling

Because the need is just as great for people who can help those with disabilities, the college created a Master of Rehabilitation Counseling degree that starts in the fall of 2010, said Tim Tansey, Ph.D., associate professor of rehabilitation sciences and program director.

While one in five Americans has a disability, there is a higher prevalence of disabilities in El Paso and the border region than other parts of the country, he said.

Those disabilities can create academic, professional and economic limitations that impact a person’s quality of life. To address those needs, the rehabilitation counseling profession is expanding rapidly in Texas, especially in the El Paso region, Tansey said. The program will accept 25 students annually.

Each faculty member will bring his or her own research interest to the program, he said. His focus, for example, will be to evaluate the rehabilitation needs of persons with psychiatric disabilities and the professional preparation of rehabilitation counselors.
Making an Impact

Anthony P. Salvatore, Ph.D., center, and his team in the UTEP Concussion Management Clinic screen athletes’ neurocognitive condition before and after a concussion.

A basketball dunk gone wrong, a wild baseball pitch, a helmet-to-helmet tackle—there are countless ways an athlete can suffer a concussion.

Although that athlete might be eager to “get back in the game” following a bell-ringing impact to the skull, concussions—even mild ones—require serious attention, said Anthony P. Salvatore, Ph.D., a speech-language pathology professor and chair of the Department of Rehabilitation Sciences in the College of Health Sciences.

“One of the potential worst-case scenarios is an athlete who returns to play before they have recovered from a concussion. If they get hit a second time, the long-term consequences are not good. They might get problems that interfere with academic performance and social development,” said Salvatore, who directs UTEP’s Concussion Management Clinic.

The best way to manage a recovery from a concussion is to have a good grasp of an athlete’s neurocognitive condition before an injury occurs. This means having a baseline assessment of a person’s ability to memorize words or solve problems quickly, for example. The baseline can then be compared to a post-concussion test, which helps an athlete’s doctor create an effective concussion recovery plan, Salvatore said.

These neurocognitive assessments make up the bulk of work for Salvatore’s clinic, which has been operating for three years. Staffed by a team of about a dozen graduate and undergraduate students, the clinic conducts baseline and post-concussion screenings of UTEP and El Paso-area student athletes who play contact sports.

“We’ve screened a little over 1,100 athletes in the last year or so, and we’ve seen about 35 athletes post-concussion and taken care of them,” Salvatore said.

Beyond UTEP, the community also has shown appreciation for the clinic’s contribution to the health and wellness of El Paso-area students. Last fall, the Texas Education Agency-Region 19 presented Salvatore with an award for his work, and he also received certificates of recognition from the City of El Paso, State Sen. Eliot Shapleigh (D-El Paso) and U.S. Rep. Silvestre Reyes (D-Texas). He recently received the 2010 Hall of Fame Award by the Texas Speech-Language-Hearing Association (TSHA) for his dedicated service to the profession of speech language pathology, his research and his mentoring of students.

Salvatore is pleased that his clinic has steadily increased the number of athletes screened each year.

“We’ve screened at five high schools over the last year,” Salvatore said. “We try to take care of UTEP first and all the athletes here, then we work on increasing outreach to the local schools.”

Cataloging Health Resources

Ford Studies How Your Health is Affected by Where You Live

Where we live has a huge impact on how we live—socially, culturally and, perhaps even more importantly, in determining our health.

Paula Ford, Ph.D., an assistant professor in the College of Health Sciences at The University of Texas at El Paso, has launched an interesting research project cataloging “health resources,” including access to parks, playgrounds and grocery stores selling fresh fruit and vegetables.

With the help of U.S. Census data and a $5,000 grant from the University Research Institute, she has divided El Paso into 126 neighborhoods, areas varying widely in terms of environment and socioeconomic status.

“This study builds on a strong base of previous research,” she said. “We know, for example, that lower socioeconomic status is associated with poor health outcomes, including obesity, diabetes and certain types of infectious diseases.”

Yet few such studies have focused on the border, where the social and cultural dynamics may create surprisingly different outcomes than those found in other regions of the country.

“One of the big issues is the transition from the traditional diet to what we consider the dominant American diet, is one of the things that can be studied in greater detail on the border.”

“We know that, with each year that you’re in the U.S., your diet gets worse. You go from a diet relatively rich in fruits and vegetables with less emphasis on processed foods, to a diet that includes more processed, calorie-dense foods. So, where you have neighborhoods with a lot of recent immigrants, with the traditional Mexican cuisine and culture, the dietary acculturation process may be different, perhaps slower, than in other areas of the U.S.”

Yet for all the dietary benefits from the traditional Mexican diets, recent immigrants do see negative outcomes in their neighborhoods, many of them stemming from lack of access to parks and health care.

“The practical applications of the study are enormous,” she said. “For example, it’s important to create healthy places, and in terms of city planning, it could be very helpful to look at the availability of healthy foods in grocery stores and opportunities for recreational physical activities associated with parks and green spaces.” 🍎
If it wasn’t for a British government official with a photography hobby, The University of Texas at El Paso may not look the way it does today.

The distinctive Bhutanese architectural style of UTEP’s buildings, with their deep-set windows and sloping walls, are the indirect result of a photo essay by John Claude White published in National Geographic magazine in 1914, the year UTEP was founded as the Texas School of Mines and Metallurgy.

Kathleen Worrell, wife of the University’s first dean, saw White’s photos of dzongs, or fortresses, in the mountainous country between India and China and thought the Bhutanese style would blend well in El Paso.

Recently, two of White’s descendants retraced the steps of their ancestor who helped shape UTEP architecture.
life of a pioneer

John Claude White was born in Calcutta, India, in 1853. He attended schools in England and Germany, and studied civil engineering at the Royal Indian Civil Engineering College in England. After graduating in 1876, he began his career as an engineer in India, then a British colony.

After 10 years in India, he was reassigned as a political officer in Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim, a small country between Bhutan and Tibet, where he stayed for 20 years. He traveled to neighboring Bhutan on official business and to pursue his own explorations, becoming the first westerner to visit many parts of the country. He carried his glass plate camera on his journeys, capturing the buildings, landscapes and people in images that were published in the National Geographic photo essay “Castles in the Air: Experiences and Journeys in Unknown Bhutan” that made such an impression on Kathleen Worrell.

White returned to England after his retirement in 1908, where he lectured on his experiences and published his memoirs, Sikhim and Bhutan: Twenty-One Years on the North-East Frontier, 1887-1908, and other articles on the Himalayan kingdoms. He died in London in 1918.

journey back in time

More than a century after he left Asia, White’s great-granddaughter, Beryl Hartley, a historian of natural history in Oxford, England, and Hartley’s daughter, Claire, traveled to Bhutan armed with more than 80 of White’s photographs to follow in his footsteps and see how much had changed.

“Sometimes, trees had grown up and so the view was obscured, but mostly we managed to get photos similar to White’s,” said Claire Hartley, a jewelry designer, in an e-mail interview from her home in Scotland. “It was interesting to see that outside many of the dzongs, the same cypress trees seen in White’s photos were still there.”

The Hartleys began their journey in the town of Paro, Bhutan. They took pictures of Paro Dzong, below which White had camped beside the river in 1905. The dzong burned down just before his second visit in 1907, but has since been restored.

They visited the country’s capital, Thimphu, and Thimphu Dzong and then continued on to Punakha Dzong, where White presented the insignia of the Knight Commander of the Indian Empire to Sir Ugyen Wangchuck in 1906 and attended Wangchuck’s coronation as the country’s first king two years later.

Wangdicholing Dzong had changed the least of all the dzongs since White’s visit nearly a century earlier, Claire Hartley said. It was one of her favorite stops.

“It is smaller and more intimate, and...it is so similar to when White was there as we saw from his photographs,” she said. “Many of the dzongs had the same external structure as in White’s time, but inside, the various courtyards, with their ladders and railings, had sometimes changed or been refurbished.”

Today, the country still has a strong Buddhist presence, Claire Hartley said. Monasteries and dzongs were prominent in most villages during White’s time, often perched on the ridges and peaks of the hills. The hillsides have more trees now than they did when White was there, many of the dirt tracks are now paved roads, and modern technologies such as power lines, are visible where they were absent in the photos taken by White and his son-in-law, Henry Hyslop.

But the traditional architectural style has been preserved in Bhutan, as it has been at UTEP since Old Main was constructed in 1917.

“Just being in the places described by White and by Hyslop was fantastic,” Claire Hartley said. “We read how they were welcomed by Sir Ugyen Wangchuck, the first king, some miles from the dzongs and where camps had been prepared for them. Dancers and musicians would process ahead of them for the last few miles. After we had read their reports of each place, we took photos from the same positions they had chosen to take their pictures and imagined what their experiences were like.”

The Hartleys were invited to a royal wedding—the marriage of Her Royal Highness Ashi Dechen Yangzom Wangchuck, the sister of Bhutan’s king, His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, to Dasho Tandin Namgyel.

“It was such an honor to be invited and it was so wonderful to meet the royal family,” Claire Hartley said. “They were so welcoming and knowledgeable about White and his close friendship to Sir Ugyen Wangchuck, the first king.”

The Hartleys left Bhutan taking with them hundreds of their own photos and a better understanding of the role their ancestors played in the history of Bhutan, and of UTEP.

“It was a wonderful journey for lots of different reasons—imagining White and Hyslop’s journeys, enjoying the history of that time and experiencing Bhutan for ourselves,” Claire Hartley said. “We were so lucky to be able to go to Bhutan together to do this, and I feel we did achieve what we had hoped—taking the same photographs and reliving for ourselves their experiences—but I hope we can go back.”

In the not-too-distant future, Claire Hartley hopes to make another journey, this time to El Paso’s own “Bhutan on the Border.”

“I do hope to come to UTEP sometime in 2010 or 2011,” she said. “It would be very special for me.”

The sloping, sandy-colored stucco walls, deep-set windows and red tinted roofs have multiplied across UTEP’s 420-acre campus...er, campus. UTEP’s structures, inspired by Bhutanese architecture, combine function and style. Each building can be considered a piece of art on display. Together, the facilities turn the campus into an outdoor gallery. /Kathleen Worrell, wife of the first campus dean, suggested the architectural style after seeing a photo essay, “Castles in the Air,” about the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan in a 1916 issue of National Geographic magazine. She believed the approach would blend in well at her husband’s new campus. Noted El Paso architect Henry Trost designed the first buildings. /It was insightful of the school’s leaders to import the unique “signature look,” said Stacy Schultz, Ph.D., assistant professor of art history. “The angles of the buildings seem to echo the curves of the Franklin Mountains,” she said. “You look up and around, and you see it as a whole. It’s a serene, harmonious experience.” /The University, often characterized as “Bhutan on the Border,” fosters a sense of tranquility that belies its location within a sprawling metropolis, she observed. /Luis Porras, a senior painting major, said the buildings create a sense of spirituality on the campus, while their warm color schemes inspire outdoor social interaction. “These are beautiful buildings that work with one another,” he said. “It’s like a small universe, but it feels like home.” /Erasmo Venegas, a 21st century priest and author, once said that architecture is one of the arts, that the one that acts the most slowly, but the most surely, on the soul. /Each of UTEP’s 84 buildings are unique, from Old Main to the new bookstore, but together they create a tapestry for the eyes, minds and souls that is conducive to learning, living and growing in a sometimes chaotic world.
The Kingdom of Bhutan is like a land in a fairy tale. Hidden deep in the Himalayas, this ancient country is filled with lush forests, flowering plants and wildlife. For centuries, the Bhutanese traditional way of life remained constant, even as the world outside underwent dramatic social, technological and political changes.

Today, Bhutan seeks to preserve its unique cultural identity as it moves toward modernization. In a country where a significant amount of the population is under the age of 15, Bhutan’s young people will play an important role in shaping the course of their country’s future.

Last September artist Xochitl (SO-CHEEL) Rodriguez ’09 packed her bags and headed to Bhutan to spend a year as the country’s first international artist in residence.

Rodriguez, who graduated from UTEP with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in metals and a minor in sculpture, is working with Bhutan’s Voluntary Artists’ Studio, or VAST, a nonprofit organization that helps Bhutanese youth develop their professional skills in the visual arts.

In a special report for UTEP Magazine, Rodriguez writes about her adventures in the country its people call Druk Yul, the Land of the Thunder Dragon.
Artist in residence and UTEP alumna Xochitl Rodriguez ’09 is spending a year in Bhutan teaching art to children. In her spare time, she wanders into Bhutan’s mysterious mountains. Every now and then she stumbles upon a beautiful monastery like this one in Dechhenphodrang Lhakhang, just outside of Thimphu.

Photo by Ugyen Phuntso
Here one can truly see the delicate balance between tradition and change: monks walk by chatting on cell phones, people wear national dress, and shops play both traditional and modern Bhutanese music and American pop songs.

When I first came to Bhutan, I expected to meet people who were living life easily in the world’s last Shangri La. I think a lot of visitors expect that. The misty mountains and otherworldly landscapes immediately capture one’s soul, and it’s easy to forget that in the midst of this great beauty, real life, with all of its challenges, is taking place. Over these past months I’ve discovered that the strength and resilience of the Bhutanese people is even more beautiful than the scenery that surrounds them. They are truly connected to their faith, to their beliefs and to their land and the precious nature of its existence. They know where simple beauty lives. They don’t go on and on about it, they don’t really even bring it up often; it is simply in them.

Bhutan’s youth is its greatest treasure. A friend of mine once asked me, “If you had to choose three things you want the children to learn from you, what would you choose?” I said, “I want them to be kind to one another and learn from one another. I want them to be brave enough to know when and how to question. I want them to always keep their eyes, ears and minds open.”

I knew when I arrived in Bhutan that it would be difficult to teach my students exact ways of making art and I could never tell them what their art should be about, but I knew I could help them find their own voice. I knew I could help them understand that art has a lot of power in the world and that it is the truest method by which humans can share their existence.

At first, my interaction with the children was very formal. But now, there’s a wonderful change beginning to take seed. They’re not afraid to ask me questions, they’re not afraid to challenge me if they think I’m wrong and they absolutely love to give me their suggestions.

One of the first of my many projects with the students was making kites for the VAST installation on community recycling and environmental awareness. We fashioned the kites from Bhutanese newspaper and the stiff straw they use for their brooms, and the children added their own drawings. Before we began making the kites, I asked the children to share what they knew about Bhutanese prayer flags. Their eyes lit up and they said almost in unison, “They send a message!” So I told them, “Let’s send your own messages!” We attempted to fly the kites in one giant fleet of glistening messages, and while they all flew for at least four seconds, only one climbed up, up and away.

I work with about 30 children, and I enjoy them all. When I think of the children who I feel have grown the most by participating in this program, a few youngsters stand out. There is “VAST Ugyen,” as we call him. When we began our time together he was always staring off into space, never paying attention to what was happening in class. I soon realized that he wasn’t acting this way because he was bad, but because he wasn’t engaged. This is a boy who observes everything. He stares into space because he is examining things, he is thinking and processing, he is imagining. He draws like a dream and has a lively, cheerful spirit. He hasn’t missed a day of class or an adventure. Together, we’ve managed to gain his focus and attention. “VAST Ugyen,” I always say as he begins to drift off, “come back?” He giggles and says “Eh, yes. Okay, Madam. I’m back!”

Then there’s young Pema Lham, who is drawn to photography. Although she’s shy, when she has a camera in her hand she becomes the captain of her very own fleet, capturing everything she sees. During the holiday, she never failed to call me at 8 every morning to make sure we were still going to meet. She was often the only girl in a group of
As Bhutan’s first artist in residence, UTEP alumna Xochitl Rodriguez helps young artists like Lungten discover their creative side. “He rarely smiles when he’s working,” said Rodriguez. “Lungten is very intense about his art.”

Boys, and nearly every day she had to listen to them go on and on about “girls and boys and who is better.” Despite this, she never lost interest or momentum. This little woman warrior is a tough cookie and she’s getting tougher by the day. She gives it right back to the boys now, she lets loose jokes and she’ll help carry anything the boys try to carry. The result of all the talks we’ve had about being brave and bold is obvious in many ways, but her charcoal drawings really captivate me. They’re powerful, her lines aggressive and firm, her use of contrast beautiful and fearless. She is excited to learn and I’m excited to see where she’ll go as she grows.

A month ago, I sat and talked with the youngsters about college and what I’ve learned because I left home, and only because I left home. Later that day, Pema Lham whispered in my ear that she thought that maybe it would be fun if she too “went outside” to continue her education. I smiled and said if there was any way I could help her when that time came, I would.

If I had to choose one thing that has surprised me most about Bhutan, it would have to be the Bhutanese sense of humor. There are deadly cliffs all over the place and they still drive fast and laugh. I’ve heard them say more than once, “Things can be very emotional but in the end they are really very funny.” Life is light in Bhutan, and when something goes wrong, laughter always rules out the negative.

I still have some time left in Bhutan, and I’m sure there are many more surprises still to come. I’m generally excited to see what the children produce for our upcoming sculpture exhibition. We sat by the riverside and as I walked around and discussed their ideas with them, I was so proud of them. They observed the surroundings and thought hard about concept, and when they had no concept they simply said, “It would just be jigs, Madam!” Jigs means ‘cool’ and I love the cool stuff! When I arrived, a class like this would not have been possible. I feel very happy that perhaps I have been able to make some connections with these children through art. I think I’ll be able to go home proud to have shared with and learned from them. Oh, the beauty of art and sharing! Hooray!

To view Xochitl’s Bhutan photo gallery, please visit utepmagazine.utep.edu.

To follow Xochitl’s Bhutan blog, visit xochinbhutan.blogspot.com
These artists teach daily, but only once every two years does the public have the opportunity to experience the results of their studio practice.

Each of the 27 members of the UTEP studio art faculty had artwork on view in this exhibition. Works were selected based on recommendations by Dana Friis-Hansen, the Dr. and Mrs. Ernest C. Butler executive director of the Austin Museum of Art, who met individually with each exhibiting artist.
The 2010 UTEP Department of Art Biennial Faculty Exhibition was dedicated to the memory of Susan Klahr, a former UTEP art professor who passed away on Jan. 1, 2010 after battling cancer. Exhibit visitors were invited to add their memories and thoughts of Klahr in a small, handmade notebook that was given to her family. Klahr painted this untitled self portrait.
THE ARTISTS

Kim Bauer
Therese Bauer
Vincent Burke
Antonio Castro
Clive Cochran
Susan Davidoff
Francisco Delgado
John Dunn
Adrian Esparza
Christine Foerster
Anne M. Giangiulio
Davinia Gomez-Miraval
Manuel Guerra
Becky Hendrick
Anna Jaquez
Coral Jensen
Dana Kroos
Roya Mansourkhani
Alexandra McGovern
Dave McIntyre
James Quinnan
Willie Ray Parish
Daniel Szwaczkowski
Rachelle Thiewes
Miguel Valenzuela
Jean R. Wilkey
Albert Wong

PARTICIPATING FACULTY
STUDENT art exhibit
FROM A CERAMIC BAG OF PISTACHIOS TO DRAWINGS DEPICTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN MEXICO, THE 2010 ANNUAL JURIED UTEP STUDENT ART EXHIBITION SHOWED OFF THE DIVERSE TALENTS OF ART AND GRAPHIC DESIGN STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO.
Fourteen UTEP student artists won awards for their work, on display recently at the Stanlee and Gerald Rubin Center for the Visual Arts. Judges selected winners in each art medium, including print, metals, ceramic, drawing, sculpture, painting, photography and graphic design, as well as best life drawing or painting and overall best of show. David A. Lewis, associate professor of art history at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas judged the fine arts pieces, and Carlos Lopez of Sanders Wingo Advertising, Miguel Ibarra of Mithoff Burton Partners and Sandra Salas of Creative Gong judged the graphic design submissions.
When Lorena Williams graduated from The University of Texas at El Paso with an art degree in 2005, she began her teaching career only to find that new art educators had very little access to support and professional development. Some of her UTEP friends, who taught art in other area schools, were finding the same lack of support. They began to meet occasionally to share lessons and provide a shoulder to cry on. Now about 25 women ages 25 to 64, from brand new teachers to 30-year veterans, meet regularly to create art and teach each other. The women, who call themselves the Unión de Viejas Artistas, or UVAs, teach art in the El Paso, Canutillo, Socorro and Ysleta school districts. About 17 are UTEP graduates.

"Sometimes you get stagnated in creativity," said Beverly Widener, a member of the group and a UTEP graduate. "The group has helped to stimulate us individually as artists and as art teachers."

Williams said the UVAs have filled a need. "When you graduate from college and you go into the workforce, you're unprepared for the reality of the job," Williams said. "I felt lost. That's why I formed the group, because I needed people to help me."

The word spread about the meetings, and more UTEP art alums joined. As they became more confident in their teaching, the women realized that they were no longer making their own art, as they had in college.

"I missed it, and I wanted to bring art back in my life," Williams said. In 2008 she unveiled the first art swap. Now, each time the women meet, they bring a piece of art based on a theme. They talk about the inspiration behind their work and swap their pieces with each other.

For one swap, the women turned old bras into purses. For another, they made jewelry out of recycled items. They also have taken black and white photos of objects that invoke womanhood and made pen and ink drawings of El Paso landmarks. This spring, they planned to do an interpretation of a masterpiece and create a portrait of another UVA member.

"It has made me a better teacher," Williams said of the group. She shares her own work with her students and has them create art based on some of the same themes.

As the UVAs grew, Williams decided they should exhibit their work. In their most recent show in March, 16 UVAs displayed their art at the Crossland Gallery in downtown El Paso. The UVAs also give workshops to each other on specific art skills, such as batik and metal embossing.

In the future, Williams hopes to use money raised at the UVA art shows to create a scholarship fund for art students. "I want to give back," she said. "Our true devotion lies in providing our young art students the best possible art education and to provide a connection with the art community."
It was actually a two-for-one coup for the University to land Justin Sipla, who earned his Ph.D. in Anatomical Sciences from Stony Brook University, N.Y. in 2007. Sipla also happens to be an expert on dinosaur locomotion—the study of the way the beasts stood and walked on land, as well as how they flew in the air.

With this kind of background, it’s hard to assign a title to Sipla. “I’m a sort of ‘functional morphologist’ slash paleontologist,” he said, after reflecting on the question for a few moments.

His office is usually home to a dinosaur skull or two. When he’s not teaching anatomy, neuroscience or kinesiology, you can usually find Sipla traveling somewhere across the country, with the skull of a velociraptor or other ancient creature held in his protective grasp. His destination may be The University of Texas at Austin or even private medical clinics—wherever he can find the appropriate medical imaging machine to scan the skulls.

He is interested in the dinosaurs’ or primitive birds’ ear canals, which reveal the story behind the animals’ plane of movement as they ambled, ran or flew on this planet millions of years ago.

“Peering into the skull with a CT (computed tomography) scanner, we can actually tell from the inner ear shape if an animal was adapted for flight. It can help us understand the process behind the evolution of birds,” said Sipla who, of late, has turned his paleontological focus to birds’ early ancestors.

Understanding the make-up of inner ears also has been useful in determining whether a dinosaur walked on four legs or two, Sipla said.

“It helps museum curators know how to mount their specimens—should they be standing on their back legs, or hunched down on all fours?” he said. But dinosaurs were the last thing on Sipla’s mind when he began his educational journey after high school in his hometown of Thousand Oaks, Calif. In fact, he really didn’t finish high school, in the traditional sense—bored with the curriculum, he received permission to test for a high school equivalency diploma at age 17.

So what would a newly liberated teenager in California do? Become a rock star of course.

“I played and taught guitar for a while… but I quickly realized I didn’t enjoy that whole L.A. music scene,” Sipla said. “Around 18 I realized it wasn’t something I wanted to do for a living.”

So began Sipla’s wandering years, a blur of rather menial jobs, traveling and living with friends and dabbling in a community college education in Tucson. He loved movies, so he found work as a production assistant on film sets, and then moved on to helping build miniature models for special effects in Hollywood films. When opportunities dried up there, he got a “stock-room type job” at Technicolor.

“It was about then that I realized I should be doing more with my life,” Sipla said. His friends back in Tucson had studied cultural anthropology, a subject that piqued his interest. So he took the plunge himself, enrolling in a course in a local community college.

He soon discovered he had a passion as well as a talent for the fascinating field of work. He transferred to UCLA and earned a degree in anthropology in 2001. As an undergraduate, he participated in anthropological field work in Peru and Kenya.

“It was the time of my life,” Sipla recalled. “For the first time, I was doing something that I truly loved.”

At age 28, Sipla moved on to graduate school at Stony Brook University in New York, where he earned his doctorate. He said the degree was a huge relief for his mother, who had long fretted about what would become of her son. Now she could say
she was the proud parent of a Ph.D.

“I finally became the ‘golden boy’ in the family,” Sipla said with a laugh.

Now, Sipla helps the UTEP College of Health Sciences shine with his energetic presence and a youthful sense of humor that keeps students engaged in what could otherwise be dreary neuroscience or anatomy classes burdened with mind-boggling details.

Sipla has become a notable presence in the college—he’s the man you’ll see in the hallways decked out in Green Bay Packer scrubs and Packer Crocs shoes during football season. He’s the man you’ll see lugging a giant T-Rex skull into the elevator and up to his office overlooking downtown El Paso.

His job fits his personality well. He’s quirky, fun-loving and enjoys traveling. He’s looking forward to a possible trip to Brazil this summer with some anthropology colleagues.

“I have a wandering spirit,” he said. ☝️

“\[it\ was\ the\ time\ of\ my\ life.\ For\ the\ first\ time,\ I\ was\ doing\ something\ that\ I\ truly\ loved.\]”

–Justin Sipla, Ph.D.
Common Ground
Two women from conflicting cultures develop an unlikely friendship

They speak different languages, their countries are chilly toward one another and the clash between their religious sects has been the source of bloody conflict in Iraq.

BY JENN CRAWFORD

Maryam Zarei Chaleshtori is a Shiite Muslim from Iran. She is a lively, talkative, outgoing mother with a passion for textile engineering.

Lubna Hamdan, a reserved, quiet Sunni Muslim from Jordan, wears the hijab (head scarf) and has a background in physics.

Lubna Hamdan, Ph.D. and Maryam Zarei Chaleshtori, Ph.D.
Despite their differences, Maryam Zarei Chaleshtori and Lubna Hamdan are remarkably similar. They both recently completed their environmental science and engineering doctoral degrees at The University of Texas at El Paso, they are both interested in bringing peace to the Middle East, they believe that building a water and power plant in the Gaza Strip would help the peace process, and they have become best friends.

Zarei and Hamdan, both named Miner Heroes in the category of research by the UTEP Student Government Association for 2010, met in 2005 in the environmental science and engineering coordinator’s office on campus. Zarei was there to take a test at the end of her first year in the Ph.D. program, and Hamdan was inquiring about the program. The office secretary introduced them.

“When I looked at [Hamdan], she looked like a really tough person,” Zarei recalled from their first meeting. “She was very serious, but she said ‘good luck.’”

They had a class together that year. Because Hamdan had just arrived in the United States and did not know anyone, she gravitated toward Zarei since they were both from the Middle East.

“It was kind of safe to be with her,” said Hamdan, who had come from a protective family that was concerned about allowing her to leave Jordan at all. She had been dependent on her family, and learning to live alone in a foreign country was frightening, but something she wanted to do.

“There are no Ph.D. programs in science and engineering in Jordan,” she said. “I know that the United States is very strong in research and their universities are very respectable, so I thought this was a good place for me to come.”

“When I came it was very easy to make friends in the community and at the University,” she added. “And the first one I met who is a close friend to me is Maryam.”

Hamdan and Zarei found that they had common interests and similar backgrounds, despite the chilly relations between Jordan and Iran.

“I can tell her my concerns and she can understand because she is from a similar culture,” Hamdan said.

The women had several classes together and made a great team. In 2008, they worked with Russ Chianelli, Ph.D., director of the Materials Research and Technology Institute at UTEP, to publish a research paper in the journal Renewable Energy called “Sustainable Water and Energy in Gaza Strip.” In February 2010, they won first place for their poster presentation about the project at the Building Partnerships and Pathways to Address Engineering Grand Challenges conference, an international gathering of engineers hosted at UTEP.

Hamdan and Zarei began working on the project together in Chianelli’s Environmental Problem Solving course for doctoral students in 2007. The goal of the course was for students to work in interdisciplinary teams to solve a real-world problem. Their project was one of only two in the history of the class to be published.

“What I always admired about [Hamdan and Zarei] was their tenacity,” Chianelli said. “They just seemed to complement each other so well…I had a lot of fun with them because I learned from them. They were constantly working together; it was a great team.”

Their project proposed building a solar-powered energy plant in the Gaza Strip, a small territory along the Mediterranean Sea that has been the site of violent conflict between Israelis and Palestinians in recent years, to produce clean water and electricity. Solar energy would produce electricity and desalinate the seawater. The power and water could eventually be exported to the West Bank, another contested Palestinian territory, and the Najaf Desert in Israel.

Hamdan, whose family originates from the West Bank, knew firsthand how serious the water shortage and contamination was becoming, and how it was further straining the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians.

“The roots of most conflicts in the world are economic,” she said. “In addition to the occupation of Palestinian territories, they fight for energy, they fight for their sources of water, so if the situation becomes worse and worse, maybe there will be a new war.”

Hamdan recognized that although the Gaza Strip does not have oil or a source of fresh water, it does have a long shoreline. Building a cogeneration plant to produce both energy and clean water from renewable sources would be an efficient option with potential to help ease the conflict in the region.

“You can’t make people live a miserable life and expect them to make peace,” Hamdan said. “To have peace, you are happy and the other person is happy; you have your rights and the other person has his rights; you live in dignity and the other person lives in dignity. I think this project will be very supportive of peace.”

Zarei and Hamdan combined their talents and knowledge to do the research and help each other understand the technical details of the project. Zarei would bring her children to Hamdan’s house and stay until after midnight, reading and studying with Hamdan while the children slept. Together, they were able to accomplish the work better and faster than either would have alone, they said.

“The four or five years we were together, I felt like I learned how to study efficiently in a group,” Zarei said.

Through those years, their cultural and religious differences have never been an issue. One day the two women were talking with Chianelli about religion, and Zarei said, “She’s a Sunni; I’m a Shiite. It’s not a problem. We’re friends,” Chianelli recalled.

Growing up, neither woman was exposed to conflict between Shites and Sunnis, now the source of violent conflict in Iraq.

“Everybody’s belief is between themselves and God,” Zarei said. “They shouldn’t kill each other for these things. We have the same religion. We are both Muslim. Originally, [Shiites and Sunnis] have the same basic belief.”

Hamdan, whose parents are Palestinians from the West Bank, was born in Kuwait. She went to high school there and taught in schools where it was forbidden to mention the words “Shia” and “Sunnī.”

“I never understood the difference between Shia and Sunni,” she said. “I find it very crazy. We have the same book exactly; we believe in the Prophet Muhammed as the last prophet. Our source of conflict is just who should be the ruler of the Muslims.” The Shiites believe that the leader should be the cousin of the Prophet Muhammed and his descendants, and the Sunni believe that the ruler can be anyone the Muslim community deems worthy.

Zarei had a similar upbringing in Iran, where the majority of the population was Shia.

“As long as I was in Iran, I never knew Shia and Sunni,” she said. “We just read it in books.” The problems, she said, are in Iraq. And they are not problems caused by religion; they are conflicts between individuals.

Both Zarei and Hamdan said they grew up feeling respected and free as Middle Eastern women.

“A lot of people have the wrong idea about the Muslim woman,” Hamdan said. According to the teachings of Islam, women have rights and should be respected. That is usually the case, the women said, but sometimes there is a difference between Islamic teachings and some of the customs and behaviors of Muslim communities.

They were both able to attend universities in their home countries, earning bachelor’s and master’s degrees and teaching before relocating to El Paso. They were able to make their own choice about whether to wear the hijab or not, and both chose to do so at an early age.

Despite their upbringing in open-minded families, not everyone is comfortable with the friendship between the two women. Hamdan said she sometimes receives e-mails about what she calls “fanatical” Shiites that blame her. She ignores them. Her own family supports the friendship, as does Zarei’s. Often, the women will speak to each other’s mothers on the phone, even though Zarei does not know Hamdan’s native language of Arabic, and Hamdan does not speak Persian.

Occasionally, the women argue with each other, but at the end they laugh. Sometimes they pray together or go to each other’s mosques.

Now that they have graduated, they hope to stay together. Both are looking for postdoctoral opportunities—Zarei in desalination and Hamdan in water and energy resources—but they know the chance of finding a job in the same community is slim.

“I am very sad when I feel that the semester is going to be over, because I think this is the last time we are going to be together,” Zarei said.

But no matter where they are, they’ll always remain friends, they said.

“Sometimes you find your match,” Zarei said. “As long as I see [Hamdan] is successful, that will make me happy.”

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NEW ACADEMIC CERTIFICATE TO FOCUS ON SOUTH AMERICAN NATION

Pictured from left: Sandra McGee Deutsch, Ph.D.; César Rossatto, Ph.D.; Moira Murphy, Ph.D.; João Ferreira-Pinto, Ph.D.; Aileen El-Kadi, Ph.D.; Maria-Socorro Tabuenca, Ph.D.; Arvind Singhal, Ph.D.; and Taeko Hiroi, Ph.D. Not pictured: Ricardo Blazquez, Ph.D.
Brazil is breaking out internationally and UTEP is ahead of the curve in providing insight into the emerging South American country that will host soccer’s World Cup in 2014 and the Summer Olympics two years later.

“It’s becoming the center of attention internationally,” said Aileen El-Kadi, Ph.D., assistant professor of Brazilian Studies. “Important foreign countries are looking into tapping that emerging market.”

Brazil, the former Portuguese colony with a land mass slightly smaller than the United States, has slowly evolved into a superpower. Goldman Sachs, the international investment banking and securities firm, selected the country in 2003 as one of the emerging economies that would dominate the world. The others were Russia, India and China.

The University hired El-Kadi from the University of Colorado, Boulder, in 2008 in part to organize a Brazilian studies certificate program that can educate students about the country’s arts, culture, history, politics, language, public health, international relations, business and economics.

The program, which will be part of the Department of Languages and Linguistics, will offer classes centered on Brazil and its relation to the United States and countries in Africa, the Middle East and Europe.

She has recruited eight distinguished faculty members to help her launch the Brazil-focused courses in the fall of 2010. She said it would be the first one of its kind in the nation, based on her conversations with scholars around the country.

Among those recruits was João Batista Ferreira-Pinto, Ph.D., associate research professor and director for research and special projects in the College of Health Sciences.

Ferreira-Pinto, a native of Rio de Janeiro, said the program will provide valuable insights into Brazilian society, which tends to be economically conservative but socially liberal.

This financial conservatism helped the country avoid a deep recession during the recent global economic downturn, while allowing for the continuation of social and health initiatives. In the public health arena, the government instituted universal health care in the 1990s and has been a leading advocate for HIV prevention since the beginning of the epidemic. It has made condom distribution a top priority. As an example of the societal liberalism and commitment to health, leading soccer teams’ logos were put on condom packages, and there was a free distribution of condoms during large public festivities, especially during February’s Carnival celebration.

Ferreira-Pinto is excited about the certificate program’s possibilities and hopes it can lead to more connections between UTEP and leading universities in Brazil and help increase the exchange of students and faculty between both countries.

Senior English major Rebeca Nuñez considers the certificate program an opportunity for students to enrich the international perspective of their education. She added that the collaboration of professors from so many different disciplines benefits students.

“I feel a UTEP student can never have too much awareness of what is out there,” said Nuñez, president of UTEP’s Brazilian Culture Center.

The program’s concept can build on the strengths of UTEP’s international studies offerings by providing specialization in a particular country and adding Portuguese language training, said Neil Harvey, Ph.D., director of the Center for Latin American and Border Studies at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, N.M.

“Brazil has one of the largest economies in the developing world, but also many of the social and environmental problems that accompany rapid growth,” he said. “An interdisciplinary approach can help students from professional fields, such as public health and international business, gain the necessary language skills and cultural awareness that will help them succeed.”

The opportunities for research will benefit UTEP’s efforts to become a national research (Tier One) university. El-Kadi said the unique program will strengthen a major grant application involving Latin American studies.

“This will be fantastic for UTEP,” she said.

In El-Kadi’s short time at the university, she helped students create the Brazilian Culture Center. The group has held the festival UTEP in Brazil: Our Carnaval, twice to bring together different parts of the University and the Borderland community. Along with the festivals, the group has organized informal Portuguese classes and instruction in Brazilian martial arts.

El-Kadi expects the certificate program to grow to the point where the University could host conferences about Brazilian Studies. She’d also like to develop a student exchange program.

“It’s a necessary thing to do,” she said. “You have to connect to different cultures.”

Participants in the Brazilian Studies certificate program come from the colleges of education and health sciences; the departments of history, languages and linguistics, and political science; and the Center for Latin American and Border Studies.
“I never dreamed this day would come,” Bob Kitchens said. “But, then, I never dreamed I would become a coach, either…I’ll tell you something. My parents named me Robert. When I was a little boy, my name was Bobby. When I became a young man, it was Bob. And when I became a coach, it was Coach. And, after August 31, I won’t be Coach anymore. That will take some getting used to.”

If the decision is bittersweet for a man who has coached track and field for 42 years, it must be the same for Miner fans—except with a heavier dose of bitter.

In 22 years at UTEP, Kitchens has won enough titles to fill the résumés of a dozen coaches—six top-five finishes in the nation, 15 conference championships, 21 NCAA champions, 28 Olympians, 133 outdoor All-Americans, 73 indoor All-Americans and 14 cross-country All-Americans.

“The name Bob Kitchens is world-renowned and widely respected among the track and field circuit,” UTEP Director of Athletics Bob Stull said. “The amount of success Coach Kitchens has had on and off the field isn’t limited by the number of All-Americans and championships. He has done an outstanding job of not only continuing and adding to the tradition of athletic excellence, but he has built his own legacy within this University.”

And through all that glory and success, the coach remained at UTEP—a commitment to the University he shared with another legendary coach, the late Don Haskins, who guided the Miners to their historic NCAA basketball championship in 1966.

“Don was just a really, really good guy,” Kitchens said. “One day, he told me, ‘You know, people don’t understand, really understand, just what a great coach you are.’ And I thought, ‘You know, the minute you start thinking you’re great, you’re headed for a fall.’

“UTEP was a great fit for me. It was home.”

For Kitchens, a walk-on sprinter who earned a scholarship by his senior year at Texas Tech University, it all started at West Texas A&M in 1968, when he got his first coaching job. It was a challenge. He did not just have to coach a team; he had to recruit a team.

“I thought I knew something,” he said, smiling. “I didn’t know anything. I recruited five athletes from the student body, and I coached every event. I learned how to budget my time.”

Kitchens transcended those difficulties, performing well enough to land a head coaching job at Mississippi State in 1979.

It was there that he coached perhaps his greatest athlete, Lorenzo Daniel, the Mississippi State sprinter who set the collegiate record of 19.87 seconds in the 200-meter dash in 1988.

“One of the worst hurts I’ve ever experienced was when Lorenzo tore his quadriceps before the 1988 Olympics in Seoul (Korea),” Kitchens said. “He was favored to win the 200. He was a great runner and a great human being, very dedicated.”

A native of Silverton, Texas, Kitchens loved coaching at Mississippi State, but he missed his home state. Whenever he returned to the Lone Star State, he stepped off the plane and inhaled, as if what made Texas Texas was present in the very air he breathed. So, when he had a chance to come back home in 1988,
he took it, and neither he nor UTEP has ever looked back.

“I’ve never regretted it—not for one second,” he said.

When he arrived, however, he discovered that the once proud program had fallen on hard times. The field was strewn with equipment, and outsiders thought they could jog on the track during practice. It was, he said, a mess.

“I started kicking people off the track,” he recalled. “They didn’t like it one bit. Some people would come up to me and say, ‘Do you know who I am?’” Kitchens had a succinct reply for such people.

“I don’t care who you are,” he would say. “We’re practicing.”

Despite the obstacles, he led his team to a conference title during his first indoor season.

In a UTEP career filled with triumphs, one of the sweetest moments came on Feb. 27, 2010 in Houston, when the UTEP women did what they had never done before—win the conference title.

“It was a great day,” he said after the triumph.

As he reflects back on his career, the coach noted how much athletes have changed over the years—and how he has changed with them.

“The greatest thrill for me has been seeing young people change,” he said. “They change from 18-year-old kids who cannot accept responsibility to young men and women who become responsible members of their community.

“I used to be very strict, very hard-nosed. And the athletes responded to that. Now, they’re more knowledgeable, and they question why you’re asking them to do something in a certain way. That’s good. It makes you think. And when they question something, you learn as much from them as they do from you—maybe more.”

Daniel, now a national account manager for Office Max in Dallas, said the coach taught him as much about life as he did about athletics.

“I love Coach Kitchens to death,” he said. “He was like a surrogate father to me, even though my father was still alive and I lived only about eight hours from my hometown. We really bonded. He was a disciplinarian, and I didn’t mind authority, so I loved working with Coach.”

Obadele Thompson, a great UTEP sprinter in the mid-1990s, agreed.

“Everything I know about running, I learned from Coach Kitchens,” Thompson, who now lives in Austin, said. “Every day, before training, I would go into his office to talk. Just to talk. About life, about things I was going through. He was always there for me.”

As his retirement date draws near, Kitchens is already feeling a twinge of sadness.

“It’s just time,” he said. “I really don’t have any plans. My sister and I own a ranch in the Panhandle, but El Paso is my home. This is where I will stay.

“I always wanted to leave when I decided to leave, not when somebody decided for me.”

When the UTEP women competed in the Conference USA Indoor Track and Field Championships in Houston recently, they were chasing history.

And they caught it.

It was Feb. 27 in Houston, a date and place that will be part of University lore forever, because the UTEP women did what no UTEP women had done before: they won the conference title.

“It couldn’t have ended any better for our women,” head coach Bob Kitchens said.

The legendary coach, the architect of dominant track and field teams throughout his 20 years at UTEP, knows all about success, so when he uses the word great, he knows what he is talking about.

“It was very exciting, and we’re beyond elated for our program,” he said.

The coach—and his team—earned that elation the hard way. It came on the last event of the two-day meet. The Miners, half a point behind Rice heading into the 1,600-meter relay, finished second in the race, winning eight points to secure victory overall.

UTEP finished the meet with 113.5 points, while Rice finished with 110. Houston was third with 92. Kitchens was named the C-USA Coach of the Year following the victory.

While the relay team—Siobhian Crain, Marine Menez, Grace Chimakwene and Endurance Abinuwa—ensured the victory with its second-place finish, it was a total team effort that produced the triumph. And no one was more dominant than Blessing Okagbare, who was named the Female Performer of the Meet. The All-American captured gold in every event she entered, including the 60-meter dash, which she won with a time of 7.22 seconds, and the 200 meters, which she won in 23.62 seconds. 
The University of Texas at El Paso men’s basketball team, which ended the regular season ranked 26th in the ESPN/USA Today Coaches’ Poll, made their 17th NCAA appearance this year—and their first in five years.

The Miners won 26 games, two shy of the school mark set by the 1965-66 national championship team, recording 16 straight victories and claiming the regular season conference title before losing to Houston, 81-73, in the final game of the Conference USA Tournament.

During that period, the team won seven road games in a row to tie the school record, a streak that seemed to galvanize the entire Paso del Norte region, from Canutillo to Horizon City.

Guard Randy Culpepper earned All-Conference USA honors when he was named Conference USA Player of the Year, while Forward Derrick Caracter was a second-team selection and former UTEP Men’s Head Basketball Coach Tony Barbee was named 2010 Conference USA Coach of the Year.

Butler defeated UTEP, 77-59, in the first round of the NCAA basketball tournament. The Butler Bulldogs went on to finish as runners-up to tourney champs Duke.
Tim Floyd became UTEP’s 18th men’s basketball head coach on March 30, returning to the place where he landed his first full-time coaching position more than 30 years ago.

“We’re all delighted to welcome Tim Floyd back home,” UTEP President Diana Natalicio said. “He brings Miner pride and tradition to the UTEP men’s basketball program. As a former assistant to coach Don Haskins, he’s uniquely qualified to bring glory back to Glory Road.”

“We are very pleased that Tim is coming back to UTEP,” Director of Athletics Bob Stull said. “Not only has he been a successful college coach, taking three different teams to the NCAA Tournament, but he has been a head coach in the NBA as well. He is an outstanding coach and recruiter, and is well-connected in the El Paso community from his days as an assistant to the legendary coach Don Haskins.”

Floyd, an assistant coach at UTEP from 1978-86, has posted a 328-180 record in 16 seasons as a college head coach. His teams have made eight NCAA Tournament appearances and three trips to the National Invitation Tournament (NIT) in previous stops at Idaho (1986-88), New Orleans (1988-94), Iowa State (1994-96) and USC (2005-09).

Floyd led Iowa State and USC to the “Sweet 16” of the NCAA Tournament in 1997 and 2007, respectively, and New Orleans advanced three rounds in the NIT in 1990. Floyd’s teams also have won three conference tournaments (New Orleans 1990, Iowa State 1996, USC 2009), while posting ten 20-win seasons.

Floyd, 56, was also a head coach in the National Basketball Association for five seasons with the Chicago Bulls (1998-2002) and New Orleans Hornets (2003-04). He led a major rebuilding effort with the Bulls following the departure of coach Phil Jackson, and players Michael Jordan and Scottie Pippen. Floyd directed the Hornets to the 2004 NBA playoffs, where they lost to Miami in a seven-game first round series.

Not only does Floyd have a reputation for being one of the top coaches in college basketball, but he has excelled at player development as well. Thirteen players have made it to the NBA in Floyd’s 16 seasons as a college head coach, including three who did not play high school basketball.

Floyd began his coaching career as a student assistant at his alma mater, Louisiana Tech, in 1977 before moving to UTEP, where he was a part of the Miners’ run to three NCAA Tournaments (1984-86) and three NITs (1990-91, 1993). While serving as UTEP’s primary recruiter, Floyd put together classes of players that won five straight Western Athletic Conference titles (1983-87) and appeared in seven consecutive NCAA tournaments (1984-90).

In his first season as a college head coach at Idaho (1986-87), Floyd orchestrated a 16-14 record with a team coming off three straight last place finishes in the Big Sky Conference. Floyd was 35-25 in two seasons with the Vandals before moving to the University of New Orleans, where he engineered five postseason tournament appearances in six seasons. UNO averaged 21 victories under Floyd, who became one of just four NCAA Division I coaches to win four conference championships in their first five years at a school. He was twice named his conference’s Coach of the Year at New Orleans (American South in 1989 and Sun Belt in 1993).

He compiled an 81-47 mark at Iowa State, becoming the only Cyclone coach to post three consecutive 20-win seasons and lead the team to three straight NCAA Tournament first round victories. Three of his teams ended the season ranked in the nation’s top 20, including the 1997 squad that rose to as high as fourth in the country. ISU won a then-school record 24 games in his second season (1995-96). He was tagged the Big Eight Coach of the Year and was runner-up for AP National Coach of the Year after leading the Cyclones to their first-ever Big Eight Tournament championship.

A native of Hattiesburg, Miss., Floyd spent two seasons as a walk-on at Southern Miss before earning a scholarship at Louisiana Tech. He received his bachelor’s degree in health and physical education from Louisiana Tech in 1977. Growing up, Floyd worked summers for the New Orleans Saints, who held their training camp in Hattiesburg at the time.

Floyd and his wife, Beverly, have a daughter, Shannon. His daughter had a brief role and Floyd served as the basketball adviser for the 2006 movie Glory Road, which chronicles UTEP’s (then known as Texas Western College) drive to the historic 1966 national title.

Floyd’s late father, Lee, was a member of UTEP’s 1941 Border Conference championship team and was also a head basketball coach at the college level. Lee Floyd is the second-winningest coach in Southern Miss history, fashioning a mark of 246-148 from 1949-54 and 1962-71.
PROFILES IN GIVING

When a mutual friend introduced Barbara Price to Jack Curlin in 1947, it was the start of something special.

A Family Legacy

LIVES ON AT UTEP

Barbara Price, who graduated magna cum laude from Stanford University with a degree in languages, had just completed a busy year as El Paso’s Sun Queen, representing her hometown at numerous events across the Southwest. Jack Curlin, who declined an appointment to West Point to pursue studies at Trinity University and The University of Texas at Austin, was an FBI agent who joined the bureau at the start of World War II, after an eye injury kept him out of military service.

Married in 1948, Barbara and Jack Curlin were a well-matched couple: they shared a love of books and the arts, a deep appreciation of U.S.-Mexico border culture and a lifelong commitment to community service.

“Our parents embodied the values of the ‘Greatest Generation.’ They believed in doing good without expecting or seeking accolades,” said Jackson Curlin, the oldest of the couple’s four children.

Thanks to a gift from Barbara Curlin’s estate, work is under way on the Barbara Price and Jack V. Curlin Plaza, a serene, tree-filled oasis that will be at the heart of The University of Texas at El Paso’s new College of Health Sciences/School of Nursing complex. Equipped with Wi-Fi and comfortable seating, and providing ample space for special events, Curlin Plaza also will have a small meditation garden inspired by UTEP’s strong ties with the Kingdom of Bhutan.

Barbara Price Curlin had that rare gift of making life beautiful for others, whether it was through the warmth of her many friendships, her generous support of numerous community organizations, or the magnificent garden she created at her Rim Road-area home. Famous for her green thumb, Barbara Curlin “could make flowers grow through floor tile,” said her daughter Lorez Curlin McGinnis.

The granddaughter of Mary Price, who founded Price’s Dairies in 1906, Barbara Price Curlin for a decade chaired Price’s Producers Inc., the Price family’s dairy, real estate and investment management company. She also served as president of the R.B. Price Family Foundation for 25 years. Active in civic life, she served on the board of Providence Memorial Hospital for more than 10 years, and was a leading supporter of the El Paso Symphony Orchestra, the El Paso Museum of Art, the Pan American Round Table and many other community organizations.

After more than a decade with the FBI, Jack Curlin embarked on a second highly successful career, becoming senior vice president of El Paso National Bank, and later, steward and president of Price’s Producers. In addition to serving on the boards of Providence Memorial Hospital and the Southwestern Children’s Home, he was also an active supporter of the El Paso arts community.

The Curlin children, Curlin McGinnis said, “grew up in a loving environment filled with books, art and lively conversation. Our parents taught us that the pursuit of lifelong learning is essential to a happy life.”

Both Barbara and Jack Curlin were ardent supporters of UTEP. “Our parents had a great love for this University and understood its importance to the community,” said Jackson Curlin. “Throughout their lives, they gave where the need was greatest, whether it was helping fund UTEP student scholarships or underwriting the University Library’s humanities lectures.

“Now that we have our own children and grandchildren, we are carrying the Price Curlin legacy into the future. Our opportunity is to live up to the standards they set for us.”

Jack and Barbara Curlin
Betty Wakefield Haley’s most enduring contribution, however, may be the gift that created the C.W. “Wake” and Betty Ruth Wakefield Haley Endowed Professorship in the College of Health Sciences in 1998.

“My grandmother volunteered in the community, and my mother volunteered in the community, and I wanted to do something for UTEP because I just think the University is such a vital part of this community,” Wakefield Haley said.

UTEP President Diana Natalicio described the professorship as an “enduring gift, which will provide a permanent source of funding to enhance the quality of teaching and research programs.”

The endowment, named for Wakefield Haley and her late husband, is an example of the dramatic ripple effect a donation creates. It produced a chain reaction that has benefited faculty, students and the entire Paso del Norte region.

Maria Amaya, Ph.D., a 31-year member of UTEP’s nursing faculty, has held the Wakefield Haley Professorship since 1999. The award enabled her to intensify her research on childhood lead exposure and environmental health hazards affecting women and children on the U.S.-Mexico border. Her work has led to several significant awards, including The University of Texas System’s Faculty Star Award in 2007 and 2008. The recognition, in turn, led to important grants—including $4.8 million from the National Center for Minority Health Disparities—that have allowed her to expand her research, benefitting both the University and the community it serves.

This dynamic represents a critical cycle, with the impact flowing from the professor to the students to the region. And it started with the initial endowment in 1998. Amaya and her team of student researchers have divided El Paso County into 50 areas, measuring the prevalence of health problems, such as asthma and lead poisoning, for each section—data that could help policymakers and health care providers determine which regions need assistance.

“Mrs. Wakefield Haley is a super lady,” Amaya said. “She is always talking about bettering the community. El Paso is her great concern.”

Vanessa Avalar, a junior in the School of Nursing, said her participation in Amaya’s research has helped her connect with the community in a profoundly personal manner.

“I’ve gotten to meet people throughout the community, and I can see the good that we’re doing,” she said. “It’s very exciting.”

Such reports from the frontline please Wakefield Haley.

“That makes me very happy,” she said, smiling. “What impresses me the most about these students is that many of them are the first from their families to graduate—or even to attend college…Dr. Amaya is making a huge difference.”

Attribute it to her genes, her environment or her upbringing. Whatever the reason, Betty Wakefield Haley loves to give, and one of her favorite beneficiaries has been The University of Texas at El Paso.

An El Paso native who earned a Spanish degree from Connecticut College in New London, Wakefield Haley has supported UTEP for more than 40 years, making generous gifts toward scholarships and a broad range of programs and initiatives across campus, including KTEP, the University Library and the Alumni Fund for Excellence.
The Miner Chronicles

UTEP alumni have made their mark around the world in fields as diverse as chemistry, music, law, athletics and airport management. The Miner Chronicles section highlights the accomplishments of 10 former Miners, including a woman who received a Congressional Gold Medal, a South American supermodel who coaches children’s basketball, the new provost of Rice University, the man who started the El Paso Marathon, a U.S. Census Bureau employee and a geologist who led a team at the Flashline Mars Arctic Research Center.

The octogenarian earned his bachelor’s degree in mathematics in 1952 from Texas Western College and a master’s in interdisciplinary studies from UTEP in 1986. In between the degrees, he served a distinguished 31-year career in the Army that allowed him to live in million-dollar homes and hob-knob with international heads of state.

Not bad for a kid who grew up sleeping on the floor of his family’s humble Central El Paso home.

He credits his success in life to a combination of luck, focus, determination and a hunger to learn, to achieve and to experience new things.

“Where’s the incentive if you’re fat and happy?” he asked.

Give him some time and he’ll spin stories of life on campus when enrollment was around 2,500 and tuition was $25 per semester.

The former TWC cheerleader, fraternity member and student government treasurer may talk about being hired by college personnel who appreciated his intellect and work ethic. One professor noted his abilities in advanced mathematics and hired him for $20 a week to grade papers.

“That was a phenomenal salary for me,” he said, adding that he’d pick up additional revenue as a math tutor to fellow students.

Garibay, who earned the distinction of being a “Men of Mines” and a Distinguished Military Graduate, said the skills he learned through the ROTC program put him light years ahead of his peers when he went to his first Army assignment at Fort Knox, Ky.

He returned to UTEP after his retirement to round out his education. His title eventually escalated from graduate student to visiting professor of political science.

The retired officer joined the Alumni Association’s board as a member-at-large five years ago. Richard Daniel, Ph.D., assistant vice president for alumni and constituent relations, said Garibay added an unparalleled level of humility and experience that enabled him to establish a rapport with students and alumni of all ages.

“As a golden grad, he is a tremendous asset to the organization and the entire University,” Daniel said.

One of Garibay’s friends from those Texas Western College days is retired Army Maj. Gen. James Maloney, who earned his bachelor’s in civil engineering in 1954. Maloney went on to command Fort Bliss from 1982-85.

Garibay retired in 1983 as Maloney’s special assistant.

“(Garibay) has a great sense of humor,” said Maloney, who lives in El Paso. “He’s a funny guy who puts a smile on my face.”

Raul “Gaby” Garibay ’52, ’86 leads the UTEP Golden Grads in a cheer at Homecoming 2009 with the help of the Miner Cheerleaders.
George McLendon, Ph.D., was recently named provost of Rice University in Houston. The move is another step up in the distinguished academic career of The University of Texas at El Paso alumnus.

McLendon, a Fort Worth native, graduated from UTEP magna cum laude in 1972 with a Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry and went on to earn a doctorate in inorganic chemistry from Texas A&M University in 1976. He has taught chemistry at the University of Rochester, Princeton University and Duke University, where he serves as dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and dean of the university’s Trinity College.

He is widely recognized and published in the fields of chemistry and biochemistry and won the 1990 Eli Lilly Award in Biological Chemistry from the American Chemistry Society and the Guggenheim and A.P. Sloan research fellowships.

McLendon said his start at UTEP was a strong foundation. His mother had done postgraduate work at the University in sociology, and he was attracted to its location and academic opportunities. It was in the UTEP science labs that McLendon first experienced what it was like to make scientific discoveries that no one else knew in a laboratory filled with people who shared a common passion.

“I gained a sense of possibility at UTEP that students like me could discover new science and make a difference,” he said.

In March, McLendon returned to the UTEP campus to deliver the Dr. James W. Whalen Endowed Memorial Lecture, titled “Cytochrome C and the Suicide Hotline: From Quantum Biology to Cancer Therapy.” He spoke about how fundamental chemical research has led to a novel therapeutic approach to cancer therapy, currently in early clinical trials.

“Dr. McLendon has had a prolific career in an area of research that is focused on cellular communication,” said Robert Kirken, Ph.D., chair of UTEP’s Department of Biological Sciences. “Specifically, his work has helped identify how molecules comprise a signaling pathway network that tells cells whether to grow or die. His pioneering work has helped shape how many scientists think about new types of drugs to treat a variety of diseases. In essence, a new class of drugs could be developed to trick cells into dying, which would be helpful in treating a variety of human diseases such as cancer.”

McLendon has founded several biotechnology startup companies, including TetraLogic Pharmaceuticals, which works on cancer diagnosis and therapeutics.

He will start his new role at Rice University on July 1.

“George McLendon has a stellar reputation as a scientist, entrepreneur, academic leader and intellectual, and we are thrilled that he is joining Rice as our next provost,” said Rice President David Leebron.

McLendon said he is looking forward to returning to Texas, where “Barbecue is beef, not pork, and boots are not a costume,” he said. “I hope to help Rice build on its excellence to rank among the very best U.S. universities in teaching and research.”
They were the first women to fly American military aircraft, from trainers to attack planes to heavy bombers such as the B-17 and B-29. During World War II, they logged more than 60 million miles on every type of military aircraft.

These aviators were part of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), pioneers who volunteered for noncombat duty as test pilots and trainers to free up their male counterparts, who were needed to fight the war in Europe. Their contribution to the war effort was so controversial that all military records were sealed, stamped as classified and archived by the government. They served as civilians from 1942 to 1944, and it was not until 1977 that they were acknowledged as military veterans.

Now, almost 70 years later, Congress has recognized their efforts with the Congressional Gold Medal—the highest honor Congress can bestow. Wearing their WWII-era uniforms, about 175 of the 300 living WASP, along with hundreds of family members and supporters, packed into Emancipation Hall at the Capitol Visitor Center in Washington, D.C. on March 10, 2010.

Among the sea of people were Andy Hailey, a 1977 UTEP graduate in electrical engineering, and his daughter Dawn. They traveled from Houston to receive the Congressional Gold Medal on behalf of Andy Hailey’s frail 95-year-old mother, Lois B. Hailey, a 1953 Texas Western College (now UTEP) alumna.

“It was overwhelming, too much to take in,” said Andy Hailey. “The recognition is nice, but it’s not something these women sought out.”

When he presented his mother with the medal, she reacted much as he had expected.

“What’s this for?” Lois Hailey asked.

To her, it was like any other job. To her son, this was a moment to cherish.

“You had male pilots doing the same thing, but it was expected of men. It was not expected of women at that time,” he said.

With the men at war, pilots were needed in the U.S. to ferry new military planes across the country. In 1943, the Women’s Auxiliary Ferry Squadron (WAFS) and the Women’s Flying Training Detachment (WFTD) merged to form the WASP in Texas.

Lois Hailey, a music teacher at the time, had become interested in aviation after watching a stunt pilot performance near her hometown of Reno, Nev. She earned her pilot’s license at 25 and became one of the first commercially licensed female pilots in Nevada.

“Once she learned to fly, she couldn’t get enough of it,” Andy Hailey said.

She was initially not interested in joining the WASP, but was talked into taking the physical exam and passed. She had to pay her way to Texas. The job paid $250 a month.

More than 25,000 women applied for the program, but only 1,830 were accepted and 1,074 completed the 21 to 27 weeks of training.

A few days after graduation, Lois Hailey was assigned to a “new top secret program” to tow targets for artillery practice. The A-24, single-engine fighter plane had a banner trailing about half a mile behind, while male trainees shot at it with live ammunition.

“They were flying heavy-duty aircraft. These were major sized aircraft that were not built for women. Physically, you had to be able to handle those aircraft,” Andy Hailey said.

His mother was stationed at Biggs Army Airfield in El Paso. The WASP were stationed at 120 bases across America, doing everything from serving as tow targets to testing repaired airplanes before they were put back in service. They ferried planes, transported cargo and served as instructors.

With America near victory, the group was disbanded in December 1944. Thirty-eight women died in the line of duty, including two of Hailey’s friends, but they were not given a military burial.

After the war, Hailey settled in El Paso, working as an instructor at a local flight school before returning to the classroom. She retired from the El Paso Independent School District in 1985, where she taught music for 31 years. Hailey now lives with her son in Friendswood, Texas, near Houston.

Her story and the stories of the other WASP will live on. In addition to the recent recognition at the U.S. Capitol, Hailey has been inducted into the El Paso Aviation Hall of Fame and the Texas Aviation Hall of Fame.

“They all play this down; they say they were doing their duty,” Andy Hailey said. “To them, it was just an assignment.”

Editor’s note: Lois Hailey passed away April 24, as the magazine was going to print. She was 95.

Top left: Andy Hailey presents his mother, Lois, 95, with the Congressional Gold Medal. The former WASP was not able to attend the ceremony in Washington, D.C. due to failing health.

Top right: Lois B. Hailey ’53, center, partnered with her stepbrother and a friend to purchase a $3,000 single-engine Taylorcraft airplane. She learned to fly and became one of the first commercially licensed female pilots in the country.

Left: Lois B. Hailey, 1944

TO READ MORE ABOUT LOIS HAILEY AND VIEW ADDITIONAL PHOTOS, VISIT UTEPMAGAZINE.UTEP.EDU
IT MAY BE APPROPRIATE THAT A MAN NAMED BIRD WOULD LOOK TO THE SKY FOR HIS CAREER CHOICE.

BUT THIS BIRD—FIRST NAME DAVID—TOOK FLIGHT ON THE WINGS OF DETERMINATION, COMMITMENT AND INTELLECTUAL INTEGRITY.
“I don’t think people are particularly aware [of the Census Bureau’s other projects], and I also don’t think that the average person realizes all the different uses of the census,” said Cheryl Howard, Ph.D., an associate professor of sociology at The University of Texas at El Paso and a U.S. Census expert.

The census is especially important in places that are changing rapidly, Howard said.

“People make all kinds of decisions about funding, about transportation, about how much to charge for advertising based on how big communities are,” she explained. “If you know how many children are under age 5 in a community, you know how many schools you are going to need.”

Population and demographic data also determine how many state and federal legislators represent each area, while also helping social service agencies gauge where help will be needed.

Cynthia Guerrero, a UTEP alumna and one of Howard’s former students, is among nearly 4,300 U.S. Census Bureau employees in the nation’s capital intimately involved in the daily workings of the agency.

Guerrero earned her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in sociology from UTEP, graduating with her master’s in December 2008. By August 2009, she was working as a survey statistician at the U.S. Census Bureau outside of Washington, D.C.

“I wanted to work in research dealing with health issues,” she said. “So I applied to different organizations including the Census, and the second application took.”

Despite her title as a statistician, Guerrero does not deal much with numbers. Instead, she helps create language fluency for the Spanish versions of survey questionnaires.

“I provide cultural relevance to the Spanish text in the surveys. I look at the English questions and the Spanish translations to make sure it makes sense for the Latino population of today,” she explained.

As a native Spanish speaker who also is fluent in English, she is the only fully bilingual employee in her branch of the agency. Guerrero expects that as the nation’s Hispanic population continues to increase, more and more employers will seek Spanish-speaking staff members.

Guerrero does not work directly with the team conducting the 2010 decennial census. She assists with an annual questionnaire called the National Health Interview Survey, in existence since 1957 to monitor the nation’s health. The survey poses questions on health topics to between 75,000 and 100,000 people each year to provide important data about the prevalence and distribution of illness, its effects in terms of disability and chronic impairments, and the kinds of health services people receive. The findings are available at www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm.

The National Health Interview Survey includes a set of core questions that remain the same each year, plus supplemental questions that change depending on the current national health issues, such as cancer, complementary and alternative medicine, immunization and arthritis.

She already is working on the 2011 survey.

“It takes a full year to do the planning and all the work,” Guerrero said.

Her experience at UTEP helped prepare her for the job through the courses she took and the professors who allowed her to help with their research.

“At UTEP, the professors already knew me when I got to grad school, so they challenged my weaknesses and understood my strengths,” she said.

Two other UTEP alumnae, Marcella Jones and Adriana Gonzalez, also have worked at the Census Bureau after completing their master’s degrees in sociology, Howard said.
10 years to graduate, but thank God for UTEP. It was losing focus of your goal,” Rodney said. “It took me of your family first and yourself second while never college, you have to make sacrifices to take care classes during the day.

required him to find a job that allowed him to attend graduate were not offered in the evening, which was that the final core courses Rodney needed to age,” Rodney said. Another significant challenge all F’s and had to make a lot of A’s to get my B aver-

he said. Lost your money and earned an F for the semester, you couldn’t get back to campus to drop a class, you all these transactions had to be done in person.” If you couldn’t drop any courses out of town by phone, as state for six months or a year,” Rodney said. “You jobs I got required that I work out of town or out of

in the Korean War for Phillip, and in 1975 for Rodney, in the 1960s on the GI Bill after fighting in 1984 as the first college graduate in his family. He was in his 50s at the time. But when he started school, the University was still called Texas Western College.

It took Martinez close to 20 years to graduate, and it took his son Rodney 10 years to earn a degree at the school. They both paved the way for Rodney’s daughter, Jessica, to become the third generation in the Martinez family to earn a UTEP degree.

All three Martinez’s were born and raised in El Paso, where attending college was rarely a four-year ritual that started at age 18 and ended at 22. Instead, like many other El Paso families, Phillip and Rodney Martinez started college when they could afford to—in the 1980s on the GI Bill after fighting in the Korean War for Phillip, and in 1975 for Rodney, who took classes when his work schedule allowed.

“I had to work different jobs, and some of the jobs I got required that I work out of town or out state for six months or a year,” Rodney said. “You couldn’t drop any courses out of town by phone, as all these transactions had to be done in person.” If you couldn’t get back to campus to drop a class, you lost your money and earned an F for the semester, he said.

“This is the reason why one semester I received all F’s and had to make a lot of A’s to get my B average,” Rodney said. Another significant challenge was that the final core courses Rodney needed to graduate were not offered in the evening, which required him to find a job that allowed him to attend classes during the day.

“When you are paying your own way through college, you have to make sacrifices to take care of your family first and yourself second while never losing focus of your goal,” Rodney said. “It took me 10 years to graduate, but thank God for UTEP. It was a diamond in the rough.”

During the decade he was in school, the degree requirements occasionally changed and he had to adjust his plan to fit in the new requirements. He finally finished in 1985, earning a Bachelor of Science in criminal justice. The degree enabled him to get a job as a claims representative for State Farm Insurance.

“I graduated one year after my dad,” Rodney Martinez said. “He was going to school while I went to school. When I graduated, they asked, ‘Who here is a first generation graduate? Please stand up.’ I was proud that I couldn’t stand up, all the while looking at my dad cheering for me in the stands.”

When Jessica Martinez Loy started thinking about college, her father suggested that she attend UTEP to figure out what she wanted to do, and then go to whatever school she chose for a graduate degree. She said it was because her father and grandfather paved the way that she was able to attend UTEP and go on to law school at the University of Wisconsin.

“It’s a great thing that I had ended up going [to UTEP], because if I had gone somewhere else and incurred all that expense, I wouldn’t have been able to go to law school,” she said. “I really enjoyed my experience at UTEP. The two main experiences I am especially fond of are becoming a Sun Princess and working with Bernie Olivas and the Sun Bowl Association over the years, as well as the mentoring I received from Dr. [William] Weaver and Dr. [Robert] Pallitto in the Law School Preparation Institute.”

Because Phillip and Rodney together had spent 30 years navigating college life before her, they were able to start professional careers and pay for Jessica’s undergraduate education. She started at UTEP with a knowledge and confidence they had not experienced.

“When you’re the first generation to go to college and graduate, you don’t understand the university dynamic,” Rodney said. “Here in our culture we’re taught to share what we have with those around us in need, and because of the economic situation, it takes longer to achieve personal goals. I believe the difference between the culture here at UTEP and at other schools is that here people genuinely help one another, whereas at other schools, it’s every man for himself.”

Rodney and Phillip proudly watched Jessica receive her bachelor’s degree in political science in 2004. She started law school at the University of Wisconsin-Madison later that year and graduated with her J.D. in 2007. Her father still works for State Farm Insurance, and Phillip is a retired middle school and high school teacher and coach. Now in his late 70s, he hopes to study geology at UTEP and is saving money to send his other grandchildren to college.

“Now I can see the asset of having a college education,” Phillip said. “I love UTEP with an aching heart. I always will.”

Phillip Martinez, ’84
TWC’s Last Mining Engineer Commands Mission to Mars

UREP ALUM WALTER VERNON KRAMER REMEMBERS RUSHING TO HIS EL PASO HOME AS THE SCORCHING DESERT SUN SET AFTER MAPPING HILLS AT BISHOP’S CAP NEAR LAS CRUCES AS PART OF HIS THESIS. HE ARRIVED IN TIME TO WATCH MAN’S FIRST STEP ON THE MOON.

BY DANIEL PEREZ

More than 40 years later, he used some of those same skills as commander of a simulated 30-day mission to Mars in a desolate area near the North Pole.

Kramer, who is considered the last person to earn a bachelor’s in mining engineering from Texas Western College in 1966 and the first person to earn a master’s in geology from UTEP in 1970, said his University training helped him overcome mechanical glitches in the remote habitat on Canada’s jawbone-shaped Devon Island.

“Sometimes things didn’t work, but engineers are trained to find ways to make things work or get around them,” he said during a telephone interview.

The geology teacher at Del Mar College in Corpus Christi, Texas, said he became interested in Mars after two U.S.-built rovers, Opportunity and Spirit, began in early 2004 to relay information about the Martian surface.

Among the minerals found was gypsum, which Kramer knew could be used to produce life-sustaining water, which then could be used to produce oxygen and propellants. The byproduct is a plaster of Paris that could be used for molding, drywall or cement.

He wrote a several academic papers about mining minerals on Mars and consulted for some companies interested in the Red Planet, but that was the extent of his curiosity in space exploration.

That is, until he was encouraged by family in early 2009 to apply for one of six positions on the 12th mission to Flashline Mars Arctic Research Station, part of a $500,000 project funded by The Mars Society, a nonprofit group that hopes to explore and settle on the Red Planet.

The ad called for people who were willing to work hard without pay, Kramer said. On top of that, those selected would have to pay about $8,000 for airfare and other necessities to be part of the mission.

Despite being more mature than the age 60 cutoff, he applied and was surprised to get the telephone call in April that he not only would be part of the team; he would command it.

Kramer, who also would serve as chief geologist, prepared for this project with the same diligence he showed while leading mining projects around the world during a 30-year career. He visited the society’s other Mars habitat simulator in Hanksville, Utah, purchased or solicited the clothes and technology he would need, and started a workout regimen that would help him maneuver in his bulky, 40-pound spacesuit.

“I knew I was going to be with others who were about a third of my age. I didn’t want to have to keep up with them. I wanted them to have to keep up with me,” he said.

While stationed on Devon Island, the well-educated, multidisciplinary crew, which included some NASA personnel, stayed in a two-story, 25-foot diameter tube-shaped habitat perched on the lip of Haughton crater, which is about 12 miles in diameter. Researchers call the site “Mars on Earth” because its terrain and temperatures best represent what is known about the Red Planet.

Although technological problems created some difficulties, he said the experience was enjoyable and worthwhile. He was able to correctly identify several minerals that had been misidentified by previous crews.

One of his bigger fans was Robert Zubrin, Ph.D., president of The Mars Society. He selected Kramer to be part of the mission because of his experience as a field geologist and his commitment to the cause of human Mars exploration. He discussed Kramer and the mission in a recent e-mail.

“He is mature, level-headed, organized, knowledgeable and tough,” wrote Zubrin, whose doctorate is in nuclear engineering. “He was thus suited … psychologically, physically, and intellectually to lead the mission.”

The thought of Kramer involved in any kind of space exploration did not surprise former classmate and friend of 30 years Wynn Anderson, a retired UTEP administrator and botanical curator of the University’s Chihuahuan Desert Gardens.

Anderson recalled how they would hunt rock specimens to help pay their way through college. He said some of the samples were purchased by museums around the country, including the Smithsonian Institution.

Anderson praised Kramer for his abilities as a geologist and mining engineer whose diligence and talents as an administrator were easily marketable. It was the industry’s instability during the last decade that led him to become a full-time educator. As a teacher, he has inspired his share of students to study science at the university level.

“He puts people off with his country ways, but he has a keen intellect and is a superb organizer,” Anderson said.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE MISSION, CHECK OUT WWW.FMARS2009.ORG
Kenneth Bernard Schade describes himself as arguably the longest-serving director of a civic boys choir in the country.

He established the Pocono Boy Singers, now the Singing Boys of Pennsylvania, on Feb. 2, 1970 at East Stroudsburg University in eastern Pennsylvania. This year, the UTEP graduate is celebrating his 40th year leading the choir.

His journey to success as a choir director began in the late 1950s, when his high school band director handed him a scholarship application for Texas Western College (TWC), now UTEP.

Schade went to high school in Lebanon, Penn. His band director, R. Leslie Saunders, made a trip west to conduct the all-state band in New Mexico and Arizona in the late 1950s. While there, he picked up a stack of scholarship applications from Texas Western College’s band director, John Carrico.

Schade filled out an application and won a band scholarship to the school. He spent his first year at Westchester University in Pennsylvania and then transferred to Texas Western when, to his father’s surprise, he learned that out-of-state tuition in El Paso was cheaper than in-state tuition in Pennsylvania.

“I can still recall coming across the desert,” Schade said. “My mother was absolutely aghast. She must have said half a dozen times, ‘If you don’t like it, we’ll come out and get you.’”

Schade remembers walking backwards from Worrell Hall to the Texas Western College cafeteria during sandstorms to keep the sand out of his face.

After his first year in El Paso, he ditched his white cowboy outfit with orange fringe so he wouldn’t have to play a clarinet outside in the dust and took up the organ, he said. Beginning his second year at TWC, he attended with the help of a scholarship from the El Paso Piano Company.

Schade was especially impressed with two of his music professors—Olav Eidbo and Englebert Thormodsgaard, known to his students as “Dr. Thor.”

“They were both very good at what they did,” Schade said. “They were from the St. Olaf Choir tradition, the most famous college choir in America, and they brought that tradition to UTEP.”

Schade organized his first boys choir in 1959 at St. Luke’s Episcopal Church in La Union, N.M., while attending Texas Western. After graduating in 1961 with a degree in music and music education, he worked with the Texas Boys Choir in Fort Worth and taught English at Fort Worth’s Trinity Valley School.

He earned a Ph.D. in music education in 1976 from Pennsylvania State University.

His choir, the Singing Boys of Pennsylvania, includes boys ages 8 to about 16. He also directs the Keystone Girls Choir, formed in 1986. In his 40-year career, he has worked with 4,000 boys and 750 girls who have sung 3,000 concerts in 48 states and sites in Canada, Mexico, England and Japan.

At 71, Schade has no plans to retire. He still teaches the songs’ choreography to his students and boasts that he can do all the moves with them.

“I have my health. If I’d retire and just sit back and do absolutely nothing, I’d drive myself nutty,” he said. “I’m busier than ever with the choir. We’re still touring, we’re still traveling.”
Graduation day was the end of a grueling but exhilarating journey that took Luis Talavera from his home in the city of Chihuahua in Chihuahua, Mexico, to UTEP, where countless hours of study and hard work resulted in a bachelor’s degree in finance.

“Graduating from UTEP was like running a marathon,” said Talavera, a veteran of the Austin and Bataan Memorial Death March marathons. “It’s a long and difficult journey with several ups and downs, but getting my degree was like crossing the finish line.”

In 2007, Talavera, an assistant vice president of commercial lending at Inter National Bank in El Paso, embarked on a new challenge: he launched the city’s first marathon.

Up until that time, El Paso was the only city with a half million people that did not have a marathon, he said. Talavera saw the opportunity to take advantage of the city’s U.S.-Mexico border and culture to create a race that was uniquely El Paso.

With the help of Bill Barry, an experienced marathoner, Talavera hit the ground running, pitching the idea to the City Council and looking for sponsors to help finance the event. But his biggest challenge was trying to convince people that it was possible to put on a 26.2-mile race.

“In the beginning, I think most people thought we did not have runners of that caliber, or that we could not attract runners from other cities,” Talavera remembered.


“We felt it was extremely important to create a first-class event the first year because we knew if the marathon was not a success, it would be difficult to garner support the following year,” Talavera said.

And a success it was. The Fourth Annual Michelob Ultra El Paso Marathon and Spira Half-Marathon on March 7, 2010, attracted more than 2,000 runners, with participants coming from as far away as Australia.

This year’s marathon organizers also sponsored a satellite half-marathon in southern Iraq in which 500 Fort Bliss soldiers from the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, ran 13.1 miles at Contingency Operating Base Adder.

Family obligations and the pursuit of an MBA from UTEP have forced Talavera to slow down. Although he sits on the board of the El Paso Marathon Foundation, he is no longer as active in the logistics of the race. However, Talavera credits his education with helping him draft the marathon’s strategic plan.

“The classes having to do with marketing, logistics and management have been crucial to recruiting 400 volunteers and drafting the specific mission and vision of the organization,” Talavera said.

Proceeds from the event have benefited several local El Paso nonprofit groups. The El Paso Marathon Foundation has donated more than $75,000 to charities such as Avance, the Volar Center for Independent Living, the El Paso Humane Society and the El Paso Police Foundation.

Talavera also acknowledges that he could not have pulled off such a tremendous feat on his own.

“All I did was have an idea,” he said. “You can’t take the attitude that ‘I can do it all by myself.’ You need people who are smarter than you and have more knowledge than you, to be able to do it right.”


dept@miners.utep.edu
A UTEP graduate and former Miner basketball player who also is a supermodel is using her celebrity status for the greater good in her home country.

Claudia Lampe Porras ’08 grew up in Bolivia. By the time she turned 18, she was a well-known fashion model and player for the Bolivian National Basketball Team.

UTEP Women’s Basketball Head Coach Keitha Adams got wind of this rising star and sent her assistant coach to recruit Porras, who left the catwalk in Bolivia for the hardwood floor at The University of Texas at El Paso in 2006.

“Once she arrived we talked about her basketball skills, her game and how she could help our team,” Adams said.

On the UTEP court, Porras was known for her camaraderie.

“What was truly special about her is that she was all about the team and us winning. She was very unselfish, hardworking and had a great demeanor. She was always very positive. She’s great inside and out,” Adams said.

Porras graduated from UTEP in 2008 with a bachelor’s degree in business administration. Her senior year proved to be the most memorable in UTEP women’s basketball history.

The team finished the season with an unprecedented 16-0 record in Conference USA and won the conference championship. They ranked in the top 25 in the country and made it to the second round of the NCAA tournament.

“We hung two banners in the Haskins Center from that team, and Claudia played a part in that,” Adams said.

The former UTEP forward left El Paso in 2008 to play pro basketball in Denmark. Porras has given that up to continue her life in South America.

“I need to help my country out as I did when I was living here (before),” Porras said. She now coaches children’s basketball and participates in fashion shows to raise money for charity.

Bolivia is one of the poorest and least developed countries in Latin America. Good jobs are scarce, and those who do find employment often work 10 to 12 hours a day for a few dollars.

The most popular sport in Bolivia, as in most of Latin America, is soccer. The few basketball courts available for recreation are old and rundown, and most are used for soccer.

“We don’t get to play in big gyms like the ones you have in the states,” Porras said.

The best basketball court that Porras’s hometown of Santa Cruz has to offer has bent hoops and broken backboards.

Some of the children Porras coaches hope to follow in her footsteps and leave their native country to play basketball someday.

“I think her advice is very good,” said 9-year-old Sheila Uriona. “I’d love to be like her.”

To view the story as it appeared on KVIA: www.kvia.com/sports

Listen to Coach Keitha Adams talk about Claudia Lampe Porras at utepmagazine.utep.edu.

Model Miner

UTEP alum and former Miner women’s hoops star Claudia Lampe Porras earned her bachelor’s degree in business administration in 2008. When this 6-foot-2 model isn’t shooting hoops, photographers are shooting her. She has become one of the most well-known models in South America. In addition to being a supermodel, this Miner coaches children’s basketball in Bolivia as well as strutting the catwalks for charity.
Albert Armendariz Sr. (‘), an El Paso judge and civil rights leader who passed away in October 2007, was memorialized in October when President Barack Obama signed a law naming El Paso’s new federal courthouse in his honor.

Charles H. “Pug” Gabriel (B.A. ‘51), a former UTEP football player, in November was posthumously inducted into the UTEP Athletic Hall of Fame.

Mary A. Decker is a self-employed El Paso seamstress. She produces racing silks worn by jockeys for the El Paso Independent School District.

William D. “Doyle” Smith (B.A. ’68; M.A. ’74), an associate professor of economics and finance at UTEP, in October received the Faculty Research Award in Economics and Finance for a co-authored paper presented at the 51st Annual Mountain Plains Management Association Conference in Grand Junction, Colo.

Beate L. Burdett (B.A. ’76) is director of development for Candlelighters of El Paso.

Debra C. “Debbi” Hester (B.B.A. ’77), a real estate agent with ERA Sellers, Buyers and Associates in El Paso, was recognized as the company’s 2009 Premier Agent and also received ERA’s 2009 Circle of Excellence Award.

David C. Chavez (B.A. ’71), a retired teacher, was appointed to the El Paso County Ethics Commission in October.

Elias C. Hernandez (B.S. ’74), a background investigator for the Department of Homeland Security, in October was honored as the Outstanding Ex for El Paso’s Canutillo High School. Hernandez resides in El Paso.

Russell L. Wiggs (B.B.A. ’79), an insurance agent at State Farm Insurance, in May 2009 was elected to the District 4 board of trustees for the El Paso Independent School District.

Mirna A. Aguïnaga (B.B.A. ’89) in June was promoted to vice president of card services strategic planning for Bank of America. Aguïnaga resides in Dallas.

Domingo M. Fuentes (B.S.M.E. ’82), an installation support coordinator for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at Fort Bliss, Texas, received the corps’ 2008 Installation Support Coordinator of the Year Award.

Thomas M. “Tom” Fullerton Jr. (B.B.A. ’81), a professor of economics and finance at UTEP, received the Faculty Research Award in Economics and Finance for a co-authored paper presented at the 51st Annual Mountain Plains Management Association Conference in Grand Junction, Colo.

Henry Gallardo (*), a founding partner of Strategic Wealth Advisors in El Paso, was elected secretary of the Workforce Solutions Upper Rio Grande board of directors in October.

Tim Hardaway (*), a former UTEP basketball player, in October had his jersey number retired by the Miami Heat basketball team. Hardaway, a 17-year NBA veteran who played more than five seasons with the Heat, is the second player in the team’s 21-year history to receive the honor.

Raymond “Ray” Hernandez (B.B.A. ’81), president and owner of RHO Logistics, in August was named Hispanic Businessman of the Year by the Texas Association of Mexican-American Chambers of Commerce.

Carolyn L. Mora (B.B.A. ’84), owner of the El Paso financial services company Carolyn L. Mora CPA PC, was appointed in September to the finance committee of the Paso del Norte Health Foundation board of directors.

Gina M. Païlfox (*), an El Paso attorney, was appointed to the El Paso County Ethics Commission in October.

Rebecca Rayman (B.S.N. ’86) is executive director of the East Central District Health Department and the Good Neighbor Community Health Center in Columbus, Neb.

Carla Sierra (B.A. ’85; M.A. ’98), administrative director of marketing and physician relations at Del Sol Medical Center in El Paso, was elected to the Ysleta Education Foundation’s board of directors in October.

Amparo Suarez (B.A. ’89) and her husband, Rev. Jose J. Suarez (B.S. ’86), co-founded and operate H.O.P.E. Youth Ranch Inc., which provides faith-based therapeutic care for abused youth and their families in Hudson, Fla.

Linda D. Swink (B.B.A. ’89) has published her second book in The Honor: The Men Behind the Names of Our Military Installations, a collection of 524 biographies about heroes honored for their service to our country.

Jorge Vielleldent (B.B.A. ’86), a financial professional with AXA Advisors LLC in El Paso, was awarded the company’s 2009 Regional Honor Associate Award for representing the qualities of a “total professional”: community service, loyalty, leadership and respect.

Albert Arellano (B.B.A. ’91; M.B.A. ’04), business services manager at El Paso Area Teachers Federal Credit Union, was elected vice president of membership for the Ysleta Education Foundation’s board of directors in October.

Eduardo C. Arellano Jr. (B.A. ’93; M.P.A. ’96) joined the faculty at UTEP’s College of Education as an associate professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations.

Susan Wiggs (B.B.A. ’00), a student activities manager at Irvin High School in El Paso, was named District IX Student Council Advisor of the Year for 2009-10. Additionally, her work with the Teens in the Driver Seat Program earned Wiggs the 2009-10 “Sponsor Award” from the Texas Transportation Institute.

Sergio L. Contreras (B.B.A. ’01; M.S. ’08) received the Faculty Research Award in Economics and Finance at the 51st Annual Mountain Plains Management Association Conference in Grand Junction, Colo., for a paper he co-authored. The paper is based on research conducted for Contreras’ master’s thesis.

Mário A. Gutierrez (M.Ed. ’02; B.S.N. ’07) was recognized in September as Nurse of the Year at the El Paso Psychiatric Center.

Jason P. Hungerford (B.B.A. ’03) in October joined El Paso law firm Kemp Smith LLP’s litigation department as an associate.


Cedric A. Lyerly Jr. (B.B.A. ’06) in September was promoted to audit senior at El Paso accounting firm Schmid, Broaddus, Nugent and Gano PC.

David C. Nemir (M.B.A. ’05), president of El Paso-based engineering companies X-L Synergy and Txl Group Inc., was appointed in October to the El Paso County Ethics Commission.

Kelly E. Parker (B.A. ’04), a former UTEP soccer player, is assistant coach for the UTEP women’s soccer team.

In January 2009, Parker was drafted to play midfield for the New Jersey Sky Blue in the Women’s Professional Soccer league. The Sky Blue won the WPS Championship in August 2009.

Karín J. Smith (B.B.A. ’00) was hired in September as tax manager of the El Paso accounting firm Schmid, Broaddus, Nugent and Gano PC.

Elizabeth C. Terrazas (B.S. ’00) in November was named president of Junior Achievement of the Desert Southwest. Terrazas resides in El Paso.

Evelyn Urbina (B.S. ’02) obtained her M.B.A. from UT Arlington in 2009, and was recently promoted to systems engineer staff member at Lockheed Martin in Fort Worth, Texas.

(*) denotes attendance at UTEP.

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Russia, Thailand and Venezuela.

With the help of the British Consulate in Houston, all of the Imperial College students and faculty were able to leave by April 25, a few days earlier than anticipated.

If nothing else, the unexpected stopover was a good way to make a new connection between Imperial College and UTEP, said Laura Serpa, Ph.D., a UTEP geology professor.

“We’ve heard from two or three of them that they’re thinking seriously about coming to UTEP for Ph.D. study at some point,” she said.

Serpa and Terry Pavlis, Ph.D., know what it’s like to be stranded. The UTEP geology professors were both teaching at the University of New Orleans when Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005.

“They had to leave their home on the Mississippi Gulf Coast before the worst of the storm hit.

“We moved about 12 times after Hurricane Katrina, and initially it was like what these students are going through,” Serpa said. “We were staying in hotels, stranded there with our two cats.”

When the couple heard about the plight of the 53 Imperial College students and their professors, they immediately offered to host a barbecue at their West El Paso home.

“It’s not uncommon for geologists to have disasters,” Serpa said. “We travel with students and we go to places that are not necessarily mainstream travel destinations.”

They hosted the dinner Wednesday, April 21 that included the London students and faculty, UTEP geology students and faculty members, and a visit by UTEP President Diana Natalicio.

The students, although stressed about their upcoming final exams, seemed to relax as they ate and chatted around the pool.

“Hopefully we’ll make a good connection with them as a result of this,” Serpa said. “That will just be a bonus that comes out of it.”

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Fred W. Norwood, Ph.D.

Former chairman of UTEP’s accounting department and dean, Fred W. Norwood, Ph.D., died March 17 in El Paso at age 89. His peers remembered him as a leader who held high academic standards.

Norwood joined the University in 1980 as a faculty member, but soon was named chair. He retired in 1985 after almost 35 years in education.

The Mississippi native grew up on his family’s farm in the northern part of the state. His college years at “Ole Miss” were interrupted by World War II. He served in the Army and met his wife, Pat, while visiting Scotland. The couple celebrated 63 years of marriage in January.

He returned to the University of Mississippi after the war and earned his undergraduate degree in accounting while also playing on the basketball team. He earned a doctorate in economics from UT Austin and joined the accounting faculty at Texas Tech University in 1951. He briefly joined the Dallas office of one of the world’s largest accounting firms, but preferred academics and returned to Lubbock.

Norwood became chair of Colorado State University’s accounting department in 1988 and stayed there until his return to Texas in 1980. During the early part of his career, he authored several books about federal income taxes and accounting for agribusiness.

As UTEP’s new accounting chair, Norwood promoted efforts to improve the department, persevering through early setbacks, such as increases in student failure rates and a drop in credit hours, as he remained focused on the long-term goal of enhancing the quality of education for students.

“He had the good sense of what a good university should be about,” said Anne Leachey, assistant professor of accounting. She added that she appreciated the breadth of his experience and the support he offered faculty.

“He was most concerned that the book be a fitting tribute to his great friend, José Cisneros,” she said. “Because of his hard work, it was.”

UTEP reference librarian Juan Sandoval helped West with several research projects. He remembers a man who was friendly, positive and outgoing. The professor’s students often commented on how West’s classes were interesting and entertaining. He often would change his storyteller’s voice to match the characters in his tales.

“He was quite a unique character,” Sandoval said. “He enjoyed living in the moment.”

While many people commented on his gregarious, larger-than-life persona, others talked about his 1966 decision as chairman of the English department to hire Marjorie “Margie” Lawson. She was the first black faculty member at Texas Western College (now UTEP).

“I greatly admired that he had the courage of his conviction when he hired Margie,” said Mimi Gladstein, Ph.D., professor of English.

West felt strongly about being fair, but didn’t wear his feelings on his sleeve, said Juan Lawson, Ph.D., former dean of UTEP’s College of Science and husband of Margie, who died in 1984.

“He made you feel as if he was color blind, and he genuinely was,” Lawson said.

West earned his bachelor’s degree from Texas University, his master’s from Texas Tech University and his doctorate from UT Austin.

His other titles include Cowboy Folk Humor and José Cisneros: An Artist’s Journey.

Fred W. Norwood, Ph.D.

In Memoriam

Jesús L. Tafoya (B.A. ’84; M.A. ’87) Cd. Juárez, Mexico; Oct. 6, 2008.
Patricia Center Arnold (B.A. ’52) Covington, Ga.; March 8, 2009.
Mary Louise Stevens (B.A. ’42) Huntsville, Ala.; April 9, 2009.
David D. Allbright (B.S. ’57) Ballinger, Texas; Aug. 1, 2009.
Leo C. Lange (M.Ed. ’72) Burnet, Texas; Sept. 23, 2009.
(*) denotes attendance at UTEP
As of early April, Blessing Okagbare held the record for the year’s longest jump in the world at 22 feet, 7 inches.

But that is just one of her most recent accomplishments. In March, the nine-time All American won national titles in long jump and the 60-meter dash at the NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships. A few weeks earlier, she took first place in each of her four events at the Conference USA Indoor Track and Field Championships and was named 2010 Conference USA Female Indoor Track and Field Athlete of the Year. She is also the 2010 U.S. Track and Field and Cross Country Coaches Association Female Field Athlete of the Year and the Mountain Region Female Track and Field Athlete of the Year. The medals and awards now sit next to her Olympic bronze medal for long jump from the 2008 Beijing summer games.

But the most important honor for the humble athlete is not one of her individual accomplishments; it was when her team clinched the Conference USA title in February. “This is all about UTEP,” she said in between workouts. “You have to do it for the team.” Okagbare is the first female track and field athlete at the University to win two titles in a single national meet (long jump and 60-meter dash). She joins UTEP greats and world-renowned athletes Bob Beamon, who won the long jump and triple jump in 1968, and Suleiman Nyambui, who won the mile and two-mile runs in 1982.

“Proud doesn’t even come close to how we feel about this athlete,” said UTEP track coach Bob Kitchens. “Okagbare is not only one of the greatest female athletes of all time to have competed at UTEP, but she ranks right up there with all the male athletes that have competed and excelled in a Miner uniform.”

Okagbare grew up in the town of Sapele in Delta, Nigeria. She wanted to play basketball, but the facilities near her home were so poorly maintained that she began running instead.

“ProbableGod gave it to me as a gift,” she said—or a blessing.

BY JENN CRAWFORD