

Spring 2012

Orange & white - Spring 2012

University of Texas at Brownsville

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ORANGE & WHITE





PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This past December, we enjoyed our largest ever Winter Commencement, awarding 1,422 certificates and degrees to graduates who will now take their newly minted credentials out into our community to improve the quality of life through a broad range of professions including teaching, accounting, nursing and engineering.

At UT Brownsville, we have nurtured a culture of innovation. Our faculty, staff and students continue to set the highest of goals to launch our university toward excellence. In this issue of Orange & White, you'll read about programs and initiatives that boost student success such as the new First-Year Seminar course, as well as teaching and research that will make a positive impact on our community.

We embrace our spirit of growth and are honored to design a new university together that will help transform our region.

UT BROWNSVILLE MISSION STATEMENT

The University of Texas at Brownsville draws upon the intersection of cultures and languages at the southern border and Gulf Coast of the United States to develop knowledgeable citizens and emerging leaders who are engaged in the civic life of their community. It embraces teaching excellence, active inquiry, lifelong learning, rigorous scholarship, and research in service to the common good. The University promotes the interdisciplinary search for new knowledge that advances social and physical well-being and economic development through commercialization, while honoring the creative and environmental heritage of its region.

ON THE COVER: Brownsville sophomores Brenda Lopez and Alejandro Peña enjoy a few minutes before class at the new Biomedical Research Building's courtyard fountain.



COLLEGE OF BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES AND HEALTH PROFESSIONS



FACILITY ADDITION BOOSTS RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES

The Department of Biomedicine in the College of Biomedical Sciences and Health Professions moved into the [Biomedical Research Building](#) in fall 2011.

Located behind the Life and Health Sciences Building, the new facility is already being considered a catalyst to boost the more than \$6 million in external research funding that flows yearly into the university. It will allow faculty and student researchers working on [diabetes](#), epilepsy, drug addiction, infectious disease and other topics to expand their efforts.

Dr. Jorge Duran, an Assistant Research Professor, continues analyzing the presence of the beta amyloid peptide related to [Alzheimer's disease](#) and its role in causing oxidative stress inside the body's cells.

"We are looking for another pathway to Alzheimer's disease," Duran said.

[Dr. Andrea Schwarzbach](#), an Associate Professor, looks forward to growing her own rotifers, multicellular microscopic aquatic animals found in puddles, lakes and soil, in an incubator for future toxicology and botanical extracts research.

"I learned that they are a good model organism to test toxins or treatments against toxins," Schwarzbach said. "They are also used for aging studies."

The new 58,558-square-foot structure has four classrooms, 12 laboratories, three technology labs, eight faculty research facilities, 12 science research facilities and an outreach space. There are also two hot and cold storage rooms with specific "clean" and "dry" areas to house laboratory animals.

The building's third floor is the campus Emergency Operations Center for university personnel during man-made and natural disasters. The center has a situation room, sleeping areas and a computer server room.

Funding for the building comes from \$33.8 million in Texas tuition revenue bonds issued by the state Legislature.

Join Dr. Juliet V. García, UT Brownsville President, and Dr. Francisco G. Cigarroa, UT System Chancellor, for the dedication of the Biomedical Research Building at 11 a.m. Monday, Feb. 20.





COLLEGE OF SCIENCE, MATHEMATICS AND TECHNOLOGY



SOARING IN STUDENT SUCCESS

This fall, the College of Science, Mathematics and Technology received a three-year, [\\$748,832 grant](#) from the U.S. Department of Education's Minority Science and Engineering Improvement Program.

The project "Readiness, Recruitment, Retention, Graduation – Four Dimensions for Achieving Hispanic Student STEM Success" targets increasing learning and research opportunities and boosting the number of students graduating in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields.

The grant will enable the college's faculty and staff to create a summer bridge program consisting of engineering and calculus readiness workshops for area high school students. High school students will also get to design, build and program their own robots to enter in the For Interest in [Robotics](#), Science and Technology Tech Challenge Tournament.

"We held the Tech Challenge last spring for the first time, and it was extremely successful, giving high school students valuable hands-on experience," said Dr. Mikhail Bouniaev, Dean of the College of Science, Mathematics and Technology.

Improved articulation agreements with state community and technical colleges are another benefit from the grant that will positively impact university students. Existing agreements will be enhanced with Texas State Technical College Harlingen and South Texas College in McAllen.

UTB swept the top three prizes at the 2011 University of Texas System [Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation Student Research Conference](#) held in late September at The University of Texas at Arlington. Senior biology and chemistry major Gerardo Rosas of Brownsville placed first with his research on breast cancer cells during a summer internship at The University of Texas at San Antonio Health Sciences Center. The second place team of biology and chemistry majors Ravi Thakker, Rafael Otero and Anuar Cantu, all from Brownsville, won with research comparing the ultrastructural changes in the hippocampus in normal and epileptic rats. Biology and environmental science major Gloria Alcaraz of Brownsville received third place with research on establishing a water quality index for Brownsville's *resacas*.



COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

The [Guitar Ensemble](#) performed with the Miró Quartet on Oct. 1 as part of an artistic endeavor dubbed Austin Pictures on the new Moody Theater's Austin City Limits Live stage, under the direction of Maestro Peter Bay, Music Director and Conductor of Austin Symphony Orchestra.

The Department of English hosted 125 attendees for the 40th annual meeting of the Linguistic Association of the Southwest ([LASSO](#)) on South Padre Island in late September.

Drama students and members of the Scorpion Theatrical Society performed "The Last Fire" and "Frogs of Carmen County" in early December.

Fifteen visual arts students participated in the "Aurora 2011" art show in Dallas on Oct. 28. The students presented light sculptures at the event and spent an day touring the museums of the Dallas Arts District.

Senior government major [Javed Paiman](#) was selected as one of 32 UT System students and the only one from UTB to spend the fall semester in Washington, D.C., on a Bill Archer Fellowship.

Mississippi Architect [Michael Grote](#) of the Gulf Coast Community Design Studio shared his experiences with architecture students on Oct. 27, encouraging them to "think about an aging and failing infrastructure and urban centers, fresh food access, energy efficiency and fair, equitable access to education, jobs and services."

The Department of Music is planning a celebratory concert in May to commemorate the 15th anniversary of UTB's Bachelor of Music degree.



UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR RECEIVES HIGH MARKS



University College is more than halfway through its inaugural year.

More than 2,000 freshmen have experienced the college's First-Year Seminar, a one-hour course covering the transition from high school to university life, career development and service learning.

Faculty members and staff leading the seminars have guided students through the [Common Reader Program's](#) first selection, "Translation Nation: American Identity in the Spanish Speaking United States," by Pulitzer Prize-winning Journalist Hector Tobar. Tobar is scheduled to visit the university this spring.

University College sponsored an essay contest and an art contest tied to the book during the fall semester. Essay contest winners were: 1st place, Alejandra Flores; 2nd place, Chayce Sundt; 3rd place, Rubi Garcia. At press time, the art winners had not been announced.

Steve DeSutter, President and Chief Executive Officer of Stripes, LLC, spoke to students at the second annual Freshman Convocation in late August. DeSutter encouraged students to make decisions early about their careers and make a commitment to graduate on time.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS UNITE EDUCATORS



“The [Ahead of the Future 2011 Conference](#) was a tremendous success,” said Dr. Janice Butler, Assistant Professor and Conference Coordinator. “We feel we achieved its mission to explore ways to teach the students of today in the educational environment of tomorrow.”

Hosted by the College of Education in October, the five-day, multifaceted conference with a strong science focus was designed for students, parents, teachers and administrators from across the Rio Grande Valley and the state.

The College of Education is partnering with H-E-B and the Brownsville Independent School District in a project designed to help promote and foster literacy skills in preschool-age children.

Twenty-five UTB students are taking part in [H-E-B’s “Read 3”](#) initiative, helping children develop basic literacy skills. Along with H-E-B volunteers, UTB

students are assigned to one of the six BISD elementary campuses selected to participate in the project.

“Our students are provided invaluable experience in working with children in an instructional environment that will benefit them as they continue their academic program to become certified teachers,” said Dr. Miguel Escotet, Dean of the College of Education.

While children are being taught literacy skills, parents are provided healthy nutrition information by BISD dietitians, and H-E-B provides healthy snacks for the parents and the children. “Read 3” encourages parents to read to their children a minimum of three times per week in order to prepare them for pre-kindergarten with reading skills at a level that will enable them to be successful.

The College of Education is establishing itself as a leader in the field of bilingual education.

“Research consistently shows that students who are proficient in their first language do much better academically in their second language,” said Dr. Yvonne Freeman, Professor in the Department of Language, Literacy and Intercultural Studies.

As this educational concept gains wider acceptance among school districts, UTB’s graduate program in bilingual education continues to grow with no fewer than 70 master’s degree students each semester.

While students meet for classes on campus, they are joined, through technology, by cohorts of educators from several independent school districts, including Donna ISD, Spring Branch ISD in northwest Houston and New Caney ISD in Montgomery County north of Houston.

“These cohorts are an integral component of our distance education programs,” said René Sainz, Assistant Director of ITS Online Learning. “During class times, students participate from their off-campus classroom via live video-conferencing, and all students have access to MyUTB Blackboard for online course content and interaction among classmates as well as with the professor.



SCHOOL OF BUSINESS



BUILDING EXPERIENCE THROUGH INTERNSHIPS

Senior Vanessa Mancha, born and raised in Eagle Pass, is a marketing major in the School of Business. Knowing she will have greater employment opportunities with some practical business experience before graduation, Mancha last year participated in two internships – one in the marketing department at the Gladys Porter Zoo and another with Kkng Marketing, working on that firm’s Healthy Communities of Brownsville account.

When the door opened in the fall 2011 semester to an internship opportunity with Proyecto Juan Diego, Mancha felt she couldn’t pass up working with this successful non-profit organization in Colonia Cameron Park. Through the [Student Motivation Initiative](#), spearheaded by Dr. Russell Adams, Assistant Professor of Business Administration, she entered into a full-semester internship that will earn her three course credit hours, augmented by a tuition scholarship.

“I’m the first business student to intern at Proyecto Juan Diego since it was formed by Sr. Phylis Peters eight years ago,” Mancha said. “Other interns have been primarily education students who do fabulous work with the children in the after-school programs.”

Future possible projects include computer science students creating a PJD website through classroom service learning or practicum courses.

“This has been an enormous challenge so far, but I’m committed to see it through,” Mancha said. “When my work is finished, there will still be so much more to accomplish, but I am hoping that I will have left Proyecto Juan Diego with a good tool for future use. Sr. Phylis needs more interns in areas such as management, accounting, payroll, IT expertise – there’s no end to opportunities to help organize and streamline the business side of the good work that is being done out there every day.”

Save the date: Dr. Mark Kroll, Dean of the School of Business, invites the Chamber of Commerce members from Cameron and Willacy counties and Matamoros to join him and faculty for the Business Awards Breakfast in the Student Union El Gran Salón on Friday, March 23. The keynote speaker will be Ray Hunt, CEO of Hunt Oil Co.

Proyecto
Juan Diego
2216 Eduardo





INNOVATIVE LEARNING



The College of Nursing opened its first [Simulation Center](#) at the beginning of the fall semester.

Located in the Life and Health Sciences Building, the center is equipped with a new SimMan 3G simulator. When controlled by a faculty member, the SimMan 3G has the capability to create a range of health situations such as a cardiac arrest or an asthma attack. The center also has six new moderate-fidelity manikins that enable nursing students to listen to the heart, lungs and other bodily functions. A portion of a \$495,000 grant received from the Health Resources and Services Administration allowed the university to purchase the necessary equipment.

“The student population is growing faster than the clinical sites,” said Leslie Arnim, Director of the Simulation Center. “We want to give the students the opportunity to practice in the lab before going so that when they go to the clinical sites they have the experience with the skills they will be performing.”

Dr. Anne Rentfro, an Associate Professor of Nursing, continues to collaborate with The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston’s School of Public Health’s Brownsville Regional Campus on research with 2,500 Brownsville residents studying diabetes risks and insulin resistance.

“We know overweight and obesity drive cancer,” Rentfro said. “Many cancers are connected to obesity. So obesity is a big driving force of a lot of chronic illness. If we can prevent obesity, then we will have some answers for our nation, not just here. Here, I think we have a special need because we have a population that has a genetic risk for diabetes.”



STUDENT SUCCESS



WE ARE CHAMPIONS

Congratulations to the Scorpion Volleyball Team who captured the NAIA National Championship in Sioux City, Iowa, last December. It is the first championship obtained in any sport for the Scorpions.



DONORS HEARKEN TO BELL'S TIMBRE



The transformative power of education positively alters the lives of students, their families and communities. While achieving a degree requires determination, it also comes with a high cost. Scholarships can be a godsend, allowing students to remain focused on their goals while lessening the distraction of financial responsibilities.

The newly established Bell Scholarship Endowment has been created in recognition of the 20th anniversary of UTB.

It bears the name and the symbol of UTB moving forward,

an antique cast bronze bell unveiled

on Thursday, Sept. 8 in the courtyard of the Education and Business Complex during the [20th anniversary ceremony](#). When fully funded, the endowment will support students chosen as Bell Scholars.

“A gift to the Bell Endowment is an investment in the future leaders of our community, the nurses, engineers and teachers. I want to have a part in encouraging these students to let them know that others believe in them and their ability to reach their educational goals.”

— Sally Roach, Associate Professor, College of Nursing

“Education touches our lives profoundly, and it helps us achieve our dreams. We must give every child this opportunity. We must help keep their dreams alive. The Bell Endowment will allow our future generations to achieve their dreams here at UT Brownsville. It is a true honor to be part of this as it will have a profound impact on our future.”

— Tomas Guajardo, M.B.A. '05, Financial Analysis Manager, Budget Office

GIFT PLANNING

When you leave a gift to UTB in your [estate plans](#), you create your own extraordinary legacy. Your bequest will make a lasting impact by generating funds that help launch our students into meaningful careers. A planned giving specialist is available to discuss ways to plan for your family's future while retaining the resources to support your charitable giving.

To ask questions or make an appointment, visit utb.edu/giving, email giving@utb.edu or call 956-882-4326.

CLASS NOTES

Vicky de la Garza, B.A. '06, joined a group of Harlingen residents to start the first recreational women's soccer league in that city. Contact Vicky at vicialg5@yahoo.com.

Cindy Vela, B.A. '03, is a model and actress working in Los Angeles. Last fall Cindy was featured on the cover of Special K boxes for their Ximena Valero “Vestido Rojo” campaign.

Jennifer Morales-Muñoz, B.A. '09, a graduate student in the Master of Public Policy and Management program, participated in an Environmental Defense Fund fellowship, documenting and reporting on energy usage in select campus buildings.

Chester Arizmendi, B.S. '07, M.Ed. '09 was named principal at St. Anthony Catholic School in Harlingen.

Vivian Bauer, B.S. '87 (UTPA-Brownsville), M.Ed. '04, was named in late November by the Harlingen CISD Board of Trustees as the first principal of the district's Ninth Grade Academy scheduled to open in fall 2013.

IN MY OWN WORDS – JOSE DIAZ



Receiving the Jose Roberto Hinojosa Scholarship for Accounting Excellence helped me stay on track in achieving my goals. Thank you, Mr. Abel D. Hinojosa.

With the help of your endowed scholarship, I graduated from The University of Texas at Brownsville in December 2010 with a bachelor's degree in accounting. I now work as an auditor at Burton, McCumber & Cortez, LLP.

The scholarship allowed me to graduate debt-free. I had been struggling to pay my tuition, and had I not received the scholarship, my graduation would have been delayed.

As the second member of my family to receive a university education, I made my family proud on graduation day. When I walked across the stage during commencement, it was a sentimental moment for all of us.

I continue to ambitiously work at attaining success in my chosen field. I am now studying to become a certified public accountant. Happily, that goal is in sight; I need just a bit more experience and have one more test to pass to become a CPA.

Education has allowed me to become a contributing member of our community.

Mr. Hinojosa, your help played a big part in getting me to where I am today. I thank you for the honor of receiving your endowed scholarship.

Thank you,
Jose Diaz, '10

ALUMNI

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT BROWNSVILLE

HOW HAS UTB CHANGED YOUR LIFE?

We want to hear your story. Email us at alumni@utb.edu.

For more information, call the Office of Alumni Relations at 956-882-4332, or visit utb.edu/alumni.

YES!

I want to support the Annual Giving programs at The University of Texas at Brownsville with a gift of:

 \$1,000
 \$500
 \$250
 \$100
 \$50
 \$25
 \$_____

My contribution today will be paid by:

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You may also visit utb.edu/giving to make your gift online.

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- My College/School _____
-
-
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- Contact me about my estate plan/will.



ANNUAL FUND: UTB FUND FOR EXCELLENCE

Make a commitment in 2011 to enrich the life of a deserving student with a gift to the [Annual Fund](#).

Every gift – large or small – goes to enhance a student's academic career by providing the means to participate in a life-changing experience.

A gift might allow a student to attend a conference, where they will travel to a new city, hear new ideas, meet other students with passions such as theirs and begin making invaluable relationships.

A gift might allow a student to participate in an internship, in the Valley or beyond, where they will experience the real-life workings of their future career, perhaps writing stories for a newspaper, learning the intricacies of the banking business or working alongside a city planner or power company engineer.

A gift might allow a student to accept an invitation to participate in a coveted research project – perhaps in chemistry, physics or biology – where they will get a taste of the true dedication of a laboratory scientist.

Each student strengthened by enhancement activities becomes a stronger student. The investment is compounded many times over, resulting in a more vibrant and healthy community.

State and federal funds do not cover such important “extras.” This is why we need the Annual Fund.

Rest assured that every dollar goes toward creating a richer university education for our UTB students. Some of your dollars actually grow as they are leveraged by the highly effective non-profit South Texas Academic Rising Scholars, known as STARS. In 2011, UTB leveraged STARS funds to total \$400,000 in scholarships.

“Your gift to the Annual Fund will enhance a student's degree,” said Marisa Campirano, Director of the UTB Annual Fund and Alumni Relations. “It will introduce him or her to new places, new ideas and new challenges while also opening up important networking doors.”

The University of Texas at Brownsville
Institutional Advancement
80 Fort Brown • Brownsville, TX 78520

WE'LL CHANGE YOUR LIFE.

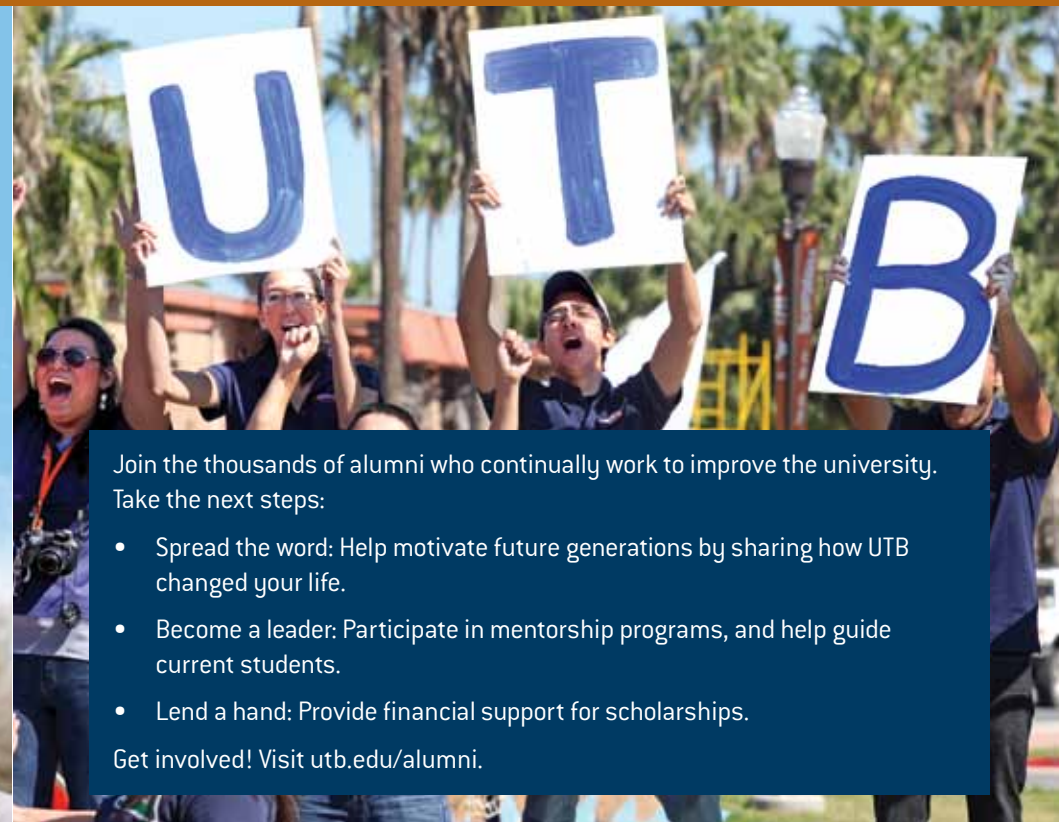
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Visit utb.edu/social.



THE UNIVERSITY
OF TEXAS
AT BROWNSVILLE



Join the thousands of alumni who continually work to improve the university. Take the next steps:

- Spread the word: Help motivate future generations by sharing how UTB changed your life.
- Become a leader: Participate in mentorship programs, and help guide current students.
- Lend a hand: Provide financial support for scholarships.

Get involved! Visit utb.edu/alumni.