

LOS ARCOS

The University of Texas-Pan American

Spring 2011, Vol. 17, No.1

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The University of Texas-Pan American
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On the Cover: Mike Mancias (far right), UTPA alumnus, preps Lebron James before the start of the 2009 All-Star game in Phoenix. Photos courtesy of Mike Mancias.



From the EDITOR

Springtime for me is special. It was the season I was born, it was the time of year I graduated from UTPA, it was when I got married, and it was the moment when I learned I was pregnant with my daughter, Emma. Ah, spring, a time of rebirth, renewal and regrowth.

Another thing about springtime, it's also when I started working at UT Pan American. I think I've been here 10 years – I can never remember how many years it's been, because time really flies when you're doing what you love. For me, UTPA is a very special place that brings hope and a renewed purpose in life for many people, especially its 80,000-plus graduates who have made an impact – big and small.

That's what this issue of Los Arcos is all about – rebirth, renewal and regrowth. You'll see the theme echoed throughout our stories about our alumni who are making a difference in their communities and professions. You'll read it in our story about the University's role in bringing financial growth to the Rio South Texas economy and personal growth to its citizens.

UTPA has plenty to be proud of, and I am glad that we can share stories of hope with you at a time when budget cuts are looming for higher education institutions across the country. Even during these hard times, there are bright spots – our successful students, faculty and alumni who every day go out and represent their alma mater in their academic, personal and professional lives.

Because of that, I can truly say that I am proud to be a Bronc and be among some great alumni who have come out of this University. I look forward to next spring. Whatever comes my way and UTPA's way, I know that it will bring rebirth, renewal and regrowth again. ■

-Melissa Vasquez



Leading in Small Ways Earns UTPA SBDC Big Recognition

Chosen from among 1,100 centers across the nation, the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at UT Pan American has garnered the U.S. Small Business Administration's Service Excellence and Innovation Award for 2011.

"For many entrepreneurs, the presence of an SBDC in a community is a significant driver to their success. Especially in a time with so many market challenges, SBDCs across the nation are vital for a stable economy. This award only revitalizes our commitment to service," said Maria Juarez-Serna, UTPA's SBDC director.

The U.S. Small Business Administration will present the award to Juarez-Serna during National Small Business Week 2011 in Washington, D.C., May 16-20.

The UTPA SBDC is a service center of the South-West Texas Border SBDC Network, which covers the southern part of Texas. Al Salgado, director of the South-West Texas Border SBDC Network, called UTPA's best-in-class results among 1,100 SBDC service centers nationally a significant accomplishment.

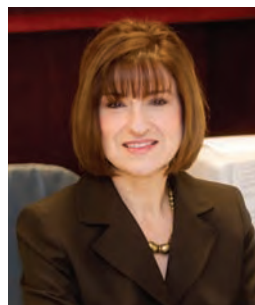
"Your (center's) success of helping small businesses is the best solution to recover from this protracted economic recession," Salgado said. "This is a tribute to Maria, her staff and UTPA for their dedication and commitment to improving and fostering small business growth and job creation for this great state of Texas."

SBDC provides business counseling, research and planning assistance, and training for prospective and existing small business owners. In 2010, the center served 1,192 clients, trained 3,284 individuals, helped with 88 business startups and 27 expansions, and saw \$12.9 million in business investment.

To learn more about UTPA SBDC, visit ea.utpa.edu/sbdc or call (956) 665-7535.



Joaquin Spamer, president of Colimar International, with assistance from UTPA SBDC, was able to secure the largest SBA loan recorded in the Rio Grande Valley and acquire a new 270,000-square-foot warehouse in Mission for his global logistics services company, which has expanded to eight RGV warehouse locations.



Alumna Appointed Acting VP

A product of UT Pan American and the Rio Grande Valley, Dr. Martha Cantu took on a new challenge this March as acting vice president for Student Affairs.

"I am going to work so hard to do my very best. I am so passionate about my work," Cantu said. "I am going to have an open door policy, and I want students to feel comfortable to call me or meet with me if they need to talk. I'm going to spend time with the students, listen to them and look out for their best interests."

As the mother of two sons who are in college, one here at UTPA and one in Boston, Cantu said she knows how difficult it is for students to be away from home. This is why she said it is important to her, not only as the acting vice president for Student Affairs, but as a parent, to meet all students' needs and make them feel welcomed.

"My main responsibility is to serve as an advocate for students and ensure that all their voices are heard," Cantu said.

Cantu's passion for students began 25 years ago as a special education teacher, speech therapist and educational diagnostician for the Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District and as the director of special education for the McAllen Independent School District. She has worked with superintendents, school-based administrators and most recently University officials.

A UTPA alumna, Cantu earned a Bachelor of Arts in speech and hearing in 1985, a Master of Education in educational diagnostician in 1990, and a Doctor of Education in educational leadership in 2002. For three years she also served as a lecturer for the College of Education. Cantu began working with the UTPA Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) project in 2005 as director. For six years she supervised the second largest GEAR UP grant in the nation, managed a \$7 million annual budget for the project and worked closely with 22 high schools in 12 school districts to ensure that close to 9,000 students enroll and succeed in an institution of higher education.

As UTPA's chief student affairs officer, Dr. Cantu replaces Dr. John Edwards, who retired on Dec. 31, 2010, after 10 years as vice president for Enrollment and Student Services, a division that has now been renamed Student Affairs. To read more about Dr. Edwards' illustrious 41-year career in higher education and his tremendous impact on UTPA and on his profession nationally, go to <http://www.utpa.edu/news/index.cfm?newsid=4205>.



Promoting literacy: a bridge to a brighter future

By Gail Fagan

**“Parents
should make
reading, make
literacy a
part of
everyday
life.”**

-STEPHEN LEACH,
*Reading Is Fundamental
National VP for Governmental
Relations and Community
Outreach*

According to the U.S. Department of Education, 50 percent of the adults in Hidalgo County will not be able to read this story – they are illiterate, unable to read material arranged in sentences and paragraphs. Among the 50 states, Texas ranks 44 in the number of people who cannot read.

One person who is not going to let herself become a statistic is Letty Gutierrez, 49, who knows what it is like to struggle with literacy.

A Mexico native, her formal education ended at age 14 with six years of elementary school and three years of secretarial training. After moving to the United States in 1994, her lack of English proficiency resulted in low paying jobs, more difficulty helping her two children with their homework and growing frustration trying to communicate with her doctors. “I realized I needed to be more educated,” Gutierrez said.

Gutierrez earned a GED through the Region I Education Service Center in 2007 and then completed an English immersion program offered by the Pharr Literacy Project and Cultural Arts Center. She also earned certification as a health promoter. The job she obtained as an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer at the literacy center has now turned into being a VISTA leader and coordinator of the center’s programs. Her increased literacy skills and self-confidence also led to Gutierrez becoming a U.S. citizen in 2009.

With her newly found confidence and ability to read and write more clearly, she is no longer overwhelmed in airports and can answer more of her children’s questions regarding schoolwork.

“I told my husband I’ve learned how to fly and now I don’t want to stop,” she said.

Individuals like Gutierrez, whether young or old, who find themselves struggling with literacy are the people who FESTIBA (Festival of International Books and Arts) at UT Pan American wants to reach out to and change their lives with the turn of page.

The University recently completed its sixth year of FESTIBA, an initiative focused on helping more Rio Grande Valley residents achieve literacy. This year’s FESTIBA, “Reading Along the Rio Grande,” was held March 28-April 2. The annual weeklong celebration of arts and humanities has made it its mission to improve the Valley’s literacy rate by increasing the interest in reading, particularly



UTPA President Robert S. Nelsen takes his turn reading to children in the Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) tent at FESTIBA 2011. Joining him is Stephen Leach (in hat), RIF's national vice president of governmental relations and community outreach.

by young children, and improving student success in secondary and postsecondary education. In addition, it promotes parents involvement in their children's education.

"Studies show that early reading is the key not only in academics but in life itself," said UTPA President Robert S. Nelsen during a Congressional Roundtable on Hispanic Literacy held March 28 during FESTIBA 2011. "You can draw a direct correlation between literacy rates and crime rates, dropout rates and graduation rates."

According to the Literacy Coalition of Central Texas, dropouts cost Texas \$9.6 billion annually while low literacy's effects cost the United States \$225 billion or more each year in non-productivity in the workforce, crime, and loss of tax revenue due to unemployment.

Even though FESTIBA is a regional event, it draws national and state figures such as educational and government leaders, including U.S. Congressmen Rubén Hinojosa (TX-15) and Blake Farenthold (TX-27), to talk about this critical issue during the roundtable. FESTIBA offers the community and students the chance to discover a new experience and way of life, through books, poetry, drama and musical concerts and presentations by UTPA faculty and local and nationally known authors, many of whom visited local school districts to read to students during the week. According to University organizer Dr. Dahlia

Guerra, dean of UTPA's College of Arts and Humanities, FESTIBA is making a big difference in the lives of young students and their parents.

"I can't imagine that it hasn't. We have distributed over one million books throughout the Valley and the message that families should work together to read to their children. We have to catch them at a very young age in order for them to be successful later in life. It's connected to college readiness and our future students at the University as well," she said.

The free books are given away every year to students in Valley schools, thanks to partnerships with Reading Is Fundamental (RIF), the Texas Book Festival's Reading Rock Stars program, Target and the South Texas Literacy Coalition (STLC).

Stephen Leach, RIF's national vice president for governmental relations and community outreach, said its literacy advocacy organization targets children from birth to 8 years because research now shows that reading levels of students starting in fourth grade help determine future academic success.

"Parents should make reading, make literacy a part of everyday life," he said. ■

Check out FESTIBA 2011 photos and related stories at <http://ur.utpa.edu>.



The FESTIBA Community Festival was a fun time for children who attended.



Children's book author Matthew Gollub performs for educators during FESTIBA 2011 Librarians and Educators Day March 28.

OUT OF THIS WORLD

Mobile Planetarium brings space exploration to 50,000 K-12 students

By Gail Fagan



Jahaviel Garcia, fifth grade student at Waitz Elementary, experiences UTPA's mobile planetarium during a visit to his school.

“I’ve never seen that many galaxies, so many suns. It really inspired me to be an astronomer when I grow up.”

-NOE GARZA
Waitz Elementary Student

Visit us at
www.utpa.edu/planetarium

New worlds and career possibilities opened up to fifth grade student Noe Garza recently.

“I’ve never seen anything like that,” said Garza after he exited a presentation in a portable planetarium brought to Waitz Elementary School in Mission by UT Pan American students. “I’ve never seen that many galaxies, so many suns. It really inspired me to be an astronomer when I grow up.”

This excitement about learning, particularly in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), was the outcome Dr. Steven C. Tidrow, UTPA’s Department of Physics and Geology chair, hoped to see when H-E-B provided funding to purchase the 14 by 25-foot inflatable planetarium in April 2008. The fixed planetarium on campus was also upgraded at that time with a new digital projection system, surround sound and other enhancements.

By the end of March 2011, more than 52,000 Rio Grande Valley K-12 students from 116 schools had experienced the exciting 3D presentation at their own campuses. The total number of visitors — students and adults — to the portable and the fixed planetarium is now over 109,000 since 2008. All presentations, which include subject matter related to what the children are studying, and, if time permits, one of seven space-related videos, are led by a knowledgeable and spirited staff of UTPA student presenters.

Currently there are 15 presenters from a variety of majors who operate equipment, develop lesson plans and establish set-up procedures and viewing rules. A four-person team travels to each site with the portable planetarium and sets up by 8 a.m. for

a daylong schedule.

“The University budget allowed one visit to a school per week. Recently, H-E-B provided funding to make possible another visit each week for this spring semester and the fall semester,” said Lisa Smith, planetarium office assistant. Smith said the response from the schools has been enthusiastic.

“We are booked for the entire school year by November. They (schools) like our ability to show what goes along with what they are learning in the classroom. Also, a lot of principals we have visited said the only ‘field trip’ these kids might get this year is our coming to their school because of limited budgets,” Smith said.

Depending on grade level and teacher requests, presentations can range from information on the constellations to meteor showers.

“We zoom in and zoom out. They get to see things they’ve never seen,” said Roxanne Barrera, a recent psychology graduate who has been a presenter since 2008.

The paid position helped Barrera finance her education and also gave her public speaking confidence, she said. Barrera is also pleased that interest in astronomy by UTPA students has grown. An Astronomy Club was formed last year, and a minor in astronomy that began in fall 2010 with a few students now has 15 enrolled. ■

Anyone interested in providing support to help maintain the planetariums, call the Division of University Advancement at (956) 665-3663.

DR. HAVIDÁN RODRÍGUEZ NEW PROVOST, NEW PERSPECTIVE

By Jennifer Berghom

Dr. Havidán Rodríguez, UT Pan American's new provost and vice president for Academic Affairs, has proven to be a quick study in learning the ins and outs of the institution.

Since he started his new position Jan. 1, Rodríguez has been meeting with students, faculty, staff and administrators to learn their concerns and ideas on how to move the University forward.

So far, he is impressed with what he is learning, especially the caliber of the University's faculty.

"One of the things I discovered very quickly is we have here a very strong cadre of junior faculty, very, very strong faculty, with significant amounts of publications in some top-tier journals in the country and with external funding from grants and contracts," he said.

Rodríguez said on his priority list is helping the University increase its research portfolio and professors find outside funding for their work. He also wants to expand study abroad, research and other experiential learning opportunities for students.

Among the new provost's goals is to foster more communication among department chairs, deans, program directors, vice provosts and the University administration to move the institution forward toward its goals. Rodríguez added that his office has teamed up with the Division of University Advancement to garner more donations and support for the University and its programs.

"What I tell everybody is, 'We all work for the same institution, we all have to move in the same direction, so all that we do is to enhance student success and the success of the institution,'" he said. "So we better coordinate, we better communicate, we better collaborate, because we're not independent islands. We are part of a whole and as part of that whole we need to work together." ■

Before coming to UT Pan American, Dr. Havidán Rodríguez was deputy provost and professor in the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice at the University of Delaware. He is a former director of UD's Disaster Research Center, the oldest and one of the leading social science disaster research centers in the world. Rodríguez, who earned his Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Wisconsin, held a faculty position and several administrative positions at the University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez for over a decade and served from 1995 to 1998 as director of the Minority Affairs Program for the American Sociological Association.





Health Disparities Research

**Illuminates Regional
Challenges and Solutions**

As a sociologist and a demographer interested in health issues, Dr. Dejun Su couldn't find a better place to conduct research than at the South Texas Border Health Disparities Center at The University of Texas-Pan American.

According to Su, an associate professor of sociology and the center's director, South Texas, with its growing, primarily Hispanic population, faces some unique health-related challenges. One third of local residents don't have health insurance, and they have an alarmingly high risk of obesity and diabetes.

"So, the big questions are — why are we seeing these problems increasing so rapidly, what can we do to address these public health challenges, and how can we provide culturally competent health care to these people," Su said.

Initiated in 2008, the STBHDC seeks to enhance the University's institutional capacity to conduct health disparities research, addressing issues particular to the largely Hispanic population along the 32-county Texas-Mexico border.

With funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the STBHDC conducts its own research projects and provides seed funding to UTPA faculty to develop pilot research projects addressing health issues and health disparities.

One of its recent studies, co-authored by Su, examined the use of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) in the United States from 2002 to 2007. CAM includes provider-based therapies such as chiropractic care, massage and acupuncture as well as non-provider based therapies like yoga and relaxation techniques.

The study's results, which drew national media attention, revealed the use of CAM has risen significantly in the last decade, but was more pronounced among non-Hispanic whites.

"The results show an expanding gap in terms of CAM use across racial and ethnic groups. In 2002, CAM use was more common among whites and the gap has expanded over time. It has potential implications to the racial and ethnic disparities in access to health care if you believe some of the CAM therapies are effective," Su explained.

The CAM study, he said, recommended the need to study the effectiveness of CAM therapies, which are unregulated, their side effects and use in combination with conventional medicines, and the possible need for improved awareness of these therapies by Hispanics. The recommendations that accompany STBHDC's research findings will hopefully result in new initiatives and policies, Su said.

Other center research projects have examined cross-border utilization of health care services, health literacy among various population segments and trends of black-white disparities in mortality.

The center's other faculty and staff includes Associate Director Dr. Suad Ghaddar and graduate assistants who gain valuable training working on the center's projects.

The center's staff also maintains a busy schedule of presentations to disseminate their findings, network and develop collaborations with scholars both within and outside the University. The center also sponsors a guest lecturer series featuring renowned scholars from throughout the nation.

At the end of 2010, approximately a dozen faculty research projects had been funded, at generally \$10,000 to \$15,000 each.

The projects have been wide ranging — from the development of a bacterial protein synthesis system for the discovery of new antibiotics beneficial to South Texans to the effectiveness of community health workers in combating Type 2 diabetes in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

UTPA faculty also collaborated on a number of projects, including a study on dengue infection rates on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border with a faculty member from Louisiana State University. Collaborations across disciplines are key to successful health studies, Su said.

"Looking at health issues involves a mixture of all views — sociologists, psychologists, biologists, people from chemistry and math," he said. ■

To learn more about the center and its transformative research, go to its website at www.utpa.edu/stbhdc.

“So, the big questions are — why are we seeing these problems increasing so rapidly, what can we do to address these public health challenges, and how can we provide culturally competent health care to these people.”

-DR. DEJUN SU
STBHDC Director

By Gail Fagan

◀ *Meet the team at the UTPA South Texas Border Health Disparities Center who are in search of solutions to health-related challenges facing the region. Left to right are William Pratt, research assistant; Alma Arteaga, secretary; Dr. Suad Ghaddar, associate director; Dr. Dejun Su, director; Daphne Wang, research assistant; Domenica Nino, research assistant; and Omar Esqueda, research assistant.*

Caring for Community

STUDENT MAKES DIFFERENCE FOR BILINGUAL POPULATION



“Ambulatory care is not really traditional pharmacy.”

-DR. LYDIA AGUILERA
Interim Director, Coop Pharmacy Program

Jose Malacara remembers spending his youth traveling to Idaho for migrant work every summer and the difficulty his family had communicating with health care providers because his relatives spoke only Spanish.

“Whenever anybody in our family got sick, we would go to the clinic and they had no idea what was said. The kids would do the translating for them,” Malacara, a native of Mission, said.

He remembers one pharmacist, however, who worked in the town next to where his family stayed who spoke and understood Spanish.

“Growing up I always said that I want to be like that. He’s actually explaining things to us, he’s not out working in the fields like we all are,” he said.

That experience inspired Malacara to become a pharmacist. Now a 23-year-old fourth-year student in the UT Pan American/University of Texas at Austin Cooperative Pharmacy Program, he had his opportunity to help Rio Grande Valley families earlier this year as a participant in the program’s new ambulatory care rotation.

Dr. Lydia Aguilera, interim director of the cooperative program, began the ambulatory care program during the 2009-2010 school year to offer students another experience in working with patients.

“Ambulatory care is not really traditional pharmacy,” Aguilera said. “This is one facet of the future of pharmacy, the patient care model. We want to bring that to the students in the Rio Grande Valley to have the same training, the same opportunity.”

During the six-week rotation, Malacara worked with a physician assistants and other health care

providers at a chain of clinics throughout the Valley. He reviewed patients’ medical files and helped determine what medications and other treatment might be best for them and also helped run the asthma clinic at the health care centers.

“A lot of our patients are really underserved,” Malacara said. “Our patients have a really difficult time understanding (their medical issues). To be able to explain, where we can actually make an impact on someone’s life and having them trust you to come back and ask you for suggestions, I think that essentially was what I imagined pharmacy to be when I was a little kid. That is what I want to carry over in my practice after I graduate.”

Malacara, whose rotation ended in February, said he enjoyed having the opportunity to learn a broad range of skills during his time at the ambulatory care clinics.

He also conducted a study on fluoride intake by patients to see if they were receiving too much and therefore couldn’t be prescribed multivitamins. Multivitamins have vitamin D, which has been shown in medical studies to be beneficial to people who have asthma. Combining the fluoride and multivitamins could cause side effects to patients. He surveyed patients and found most people did not drink water from the tap and that the cities’ fluoride levels were below standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Malacara’s hard work has not gone unnoticed. He is graduating this spring with high academic honors from The University of Texas College of Pharmacy.

“He’s an inspiration,” Aguilera said. “Somebody like Jose is what makes it all worth it, and he’s an inspiration to other students.” ■

By Jennifer Berghom

SIX BRONCS TO EXPERIENCE AN IVY LEAGUE SUMMER



Six seniors from The University of Texas-Pan American will be Harvard-bound in June as the first students from the University to participate in the prestigious Latino Leadership Initiative Program at Harvard Kennedy School's Center for Public Leadership in Cambridge, Mass.

The program, which debuted in June 2010 with 28 students from other universities, is intended to prepare the next generation of leaders. This year's cohort will expand to 42 students, all college juniors entering their senior year, from UTPA, University of Massachusetts-Boston, University of Houston, Texas A&M-International in Laredo, University of California-Merced, Miami Dade College, and Loyola Marymount in Los Angeles.

Of 37 initial applicants who had to submit two essays, recommendation letters and meet the program's academic criteria, a committee from UTPA's Division of Student Affairs interviewed 15 and sent 12 to Harvard's LLI representatives, who also conducted interviews and then selected six to participate in the LLI June 25-July 3.

Representing UTPA will be Carla Valeria Caso, economics major from Mission; Robert K. Danso, premedical biology major from McAllen; Haydee Iris Villarreal, English major from McAllen; Erika Priscilla Gaytan, communication sciences and disorders major from Hidalgo; Jessica Lizette Pena, theatre major from Edinburg; and Maria Luisa Hernandez, a mechanical engineering major from Alamo.

The Latino Leadership Initiative, which is funded by private donations and sponsors, seeks to enhance the leadership capacity of students committed to serving the Latino community. ■



Junior Lilly Lopez (left) and senior Amanda Perez (right).

Students get BIG BREAK

During spring break junior Lilly Lopez from Edinburg and senior Amanda Perez from Harlingen, both communication majors, had the opportunity of a lifetime – a weeklong internship with a premier public relations agency.

Both UTPA students traveled to Fayetteville, Ark. to intern with PR Week's 2011 Small PR Agency of the Year Mitchell Communications Group.

This was the first year the agency hosted the Big Break, a five-day, all-expense paid internship that gave students from various universities, who are interested in a career in public relations, the chance to gain real-world experience at an agency.

"Through Big Break, students had the opportunity to learn what it is like to work in an agency environment, and specifically, the excellent career-beginning opportunities available at Mitchell Communications Group," said Marla Hunt, the agency's director of Agency Resources and Operations.

As interns Lopez and Perez developed communication plans, media kits, public service announcements and website ideas, and presented them to Arkansas clients Life Source and the Northwest Arkansas Association of Latino Professionals in Finance and Accounting.

"Never did I imagine I would have this type of opportunity before graduating from college," Perez said. ■

The Write Stuff



The Professional Counselor's Desk Reference

Dr. Irmo Marini

Professor and Ph.D. Coordinator, Department of Rehabilitation

The publication is the first resource of its kind, serving as an authoritative guide for both pre-professionals working toward counselor licensure and certification, as well as seasoned counselors, counselor educators, clinical supervisors, psychologists and social workers.

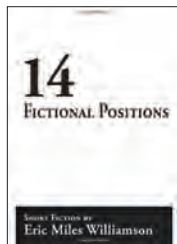


Culture and Communication: An Ethnographic Study of Chinese Criminal Courtroom Communication

Dr. Yanrong Chang

Assistant Professor, Department of Communication

This study tries to provide an interpretive framework for understanding communication practices in the Chinese criminal courts. Using ethnographic research methods, it describes culture-specific patterns of communication in Chinese criminal trials and interprets their culture-specific functions.



14 Fictional Positions

Dr. Eric Miles Williamson

Professor, Department of English

Twenty-five years in the making, "14 Fictional Positions" is a landmark short story collection, and confirmation that Williamson is an author whose energy, talent and wisdom place him among the very best authors at work today in America.

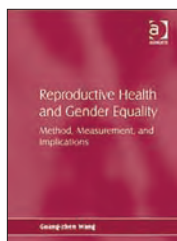


Anthology of Latin American Fantastic Short Stories (1800-1930)

Dr. José M. Martínez, Associate Professor

Dr. Ethan Sharp, Assistant Professor, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures

This is a fantastic anthology of Hispanic Americans, published between 1800 and 1930. Some of its stories have appeared in similar compilations listed, but others like "aura" of Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, "The Flame" by Horacio Quiroga, or "deluded" the unjustly forgotten José Antonio Ramos Sucre are collected for the first time in this anthology.



Reproductive Health and Gender Equality: Method, Measurements and Implications

Dr. Guang-zhen Wang, Department Chair & Professor, Department of Sociology

In this book Wang provides a much-needed empirical study of women's reproductive health. The author assesses data from 137 developing countries (or areas) and challenges the prevailing bioscience and public health models by linking women's reproductive health to gender equality measures and development policies.

FACULTY AWARDS 2011

A young assistant professor who inspires her students through her enthusiasm and dedication to them and for her subject... a seasoned professor who continues to add to the body of knowledge in his discipline as a prolific researcher... and an energetic associate professor who has helped bring in a \$3.7 million grant to boost STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) education in South Texas.

Those are the 2011 recipients of the University Excellence Awards for teaching, research and service presented by The University of Texas-Pan American Office of the Provost and the UTPA Foundation and selected from among the 21 outstanding faculty chosen this year for Faculty Excellence Awards.

All 21 awardees, including three professors from each of UTPA's seven colleges, were honored May 6 at a luncheon by President Robert S. Nelsen, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost Havidán Rodríguez and UTPA Foundation trustee Morgan Talbot of McAllen. Each recipient of the University Excellence Award, which was introduced in 2009, received a check for \$5,000 and a medallion, which was showcased for the first time this year.

The awards program seeks to encourage and value outstanding contributions by faculty in each category. A national selection committee established by the provost selected the university-level award recipients from those recognized at the college level in each of the three categories while a selection committee within each college determined the college-level honorees from the nominations received.



DR. JESSICA RALEY

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, COMMUNICATION STUDIES
UNIVERSITY EXCELLENCE AWARD FOR TEACHING

"The most rewarding thing about teaching is getting them (students) to feel confident in their abilities and skills and getting them to recognize how smart and capable they are of succeeding."



DR. LOKENATH DEBNATH

PROFESSOR AND CHAIR, MATHEMATICS
UNIVERSITY EXCELLENCE AWARD FOR RESEARCH

"It (the awards) means a lot to me. I am very pleased, happy, and delighted to see that UTPA has recognized my research accomplishments."



DR. MARIA CRISTINA VILLALOBOS

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, MATHEMATICS
UNIVERSITY EXCELLENCE AWARD FOR SERVICE

"My aim is to get students to like mathematics, not to be afraid of it. I want them to have a positive joy with mathematics." ■

COLLEGE EXCELLENCE AWARDS



BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

RESEARCH – Andre Mollick, professor, Economics and Finance

TEACHING – Sijin Wu, associate professor, Management

SERVICE – Kai Koong, professor, Computer Information Systems & Quantitative Methods



HEALTH SCIENCES & HUMAN SERVICES

RESEARCH – Catherine Faver, professor, Social Work

TEACHING – Sandra Hansmann, associate professor, Rehabilitation

SERVICE – Shawn Saladin, assistant professor, Rehabilitation



EDUCATION

RESEARCH – Anita Pankake, professor, Educational Leadership

TEACHING – Isela Almaguer, associate professor, Curriculum & Instruction

SERVICE – Layne Jorgensen, professor, Health & Kinesiology



SCIENCE & MATHEMATICS

RESEARCH – Lokenath Debnath, professor, Mathematics

TEACHING – Jose Gutierrez, associate professor, Chemistry

SERVICE – Maria Cristina Villalobos, associate professor, Mathematics



SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

RESEARCH – Guang-zhen Wang, professor, Sociology

TEACHING – Shelia Pozorski, professor, Psychology & Anthropology

SERVICE – Grant Benham, associate professor, Psychology & Anthropology



ENGINEERING & COMPUTER SCIENCE

RESEARCH – Constantine Tarawneh, associate professor, Mechanical Engineering

TEACHING – Javier Kypuros, associate professor, Mechanical Engineering

SERVICE – Arturo Fuentes, associate professor, Mechanical Engineering

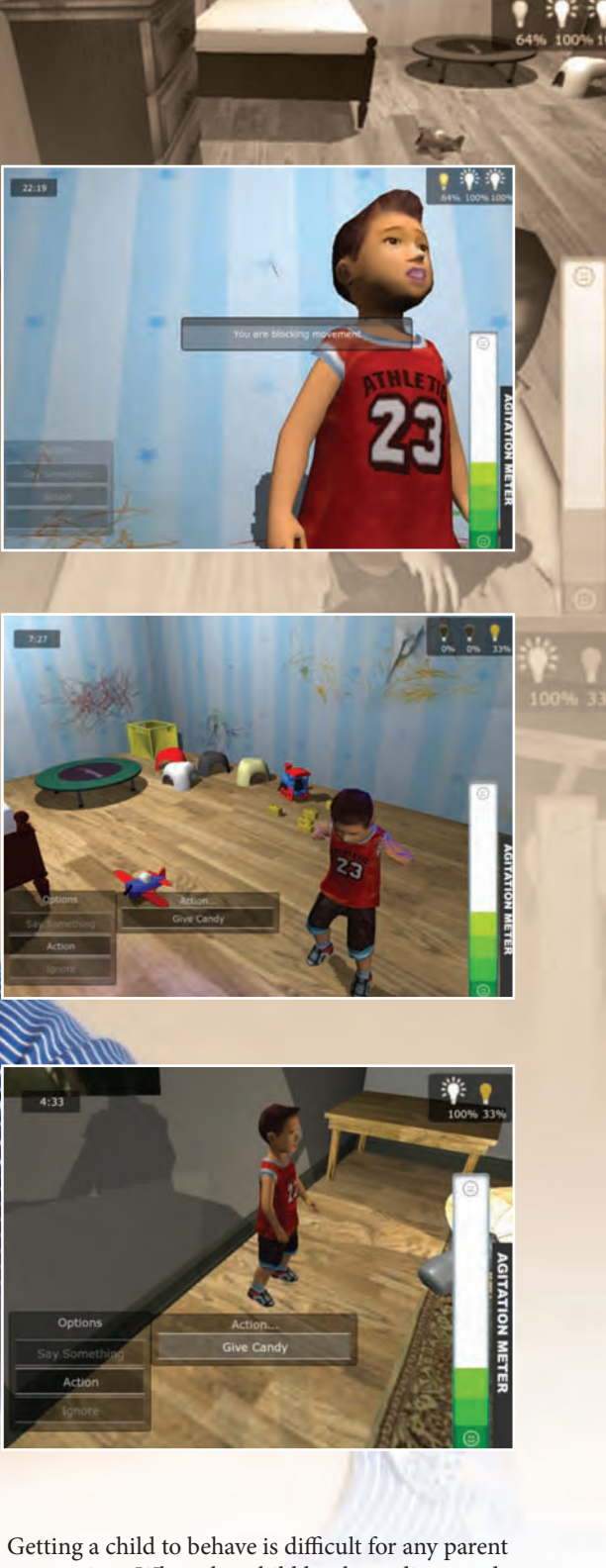


ARTS & HUMANITIES

RESEARCH – Rebecca Mitchell, assistant professor, English

TEACHING – Jessica Raley, assistant professor, Communication

SERVICE – Brian Warren, lecturer, Communication



Behavior Breakthroughs

PROFESSOR CREATES VIDEO GAME TO HELP FAMILIES CALM AUTISTIC CHILDREN

By Jennifer Berghom

Getting a child to behave is difficult for any parent or caregiver. When that child has been diagnosed with autism and displays challenging behavior, however, convincing a child to calm down can be an even greater task.

“The bottom line that every family really wants to know – once they have received the news that their child has autism – is, okay now what do I do?” said Dr. Cheryl Fielding, associate professor of educational psychology at UT Pan American and a Board Certified Behavior Analyst.

To assist those who care for children with autism spectrum disorders and who act out in disruptive or self-injuring behavior, Fielding helped create a video simulation program.

The program, Behavior Breakthroughs, walks users through a situation in which they must help shape the behavior of a little boy named "Asa," who has autism and is displaying challenging behavior. The game objective is to lower the boy's level of agitation and teach him to ask for things by using words. A demonstration of the program is available for free as an iPhone application and the full, six-level game is expected to be out on the market in May.

Behavior Breakthroughs is based on the scientific discipline of Applied Behavior Analysis, which comprises techniques and principles in reducing actions that are disruptive and increasing good behavior, according to the game's website.

"It's stressful when you work your way through the game, but perhaps it desensitizes you to the stress in a virtual environment which will in turn lessen your stress in the real world, so you have the confidence to work it out," Fielding said.

Fielding said the idea for the game came from Alonzo Andrews, her mentor, who was then the director of the Autism Treatment Center in San Antonio.

Last school year, the two took a group of UTPA students to work with families with children with autism in San Antonio.

"We noticed that it didn't seem to matter the socioeconomic status of the family, there are these kids whose behavior is so out of control that parents can't go out to dinner or can't go on a vacation," Fielding said. "Everything revolves around this child who is the king of the mansion, and so they refer to it as maladaptive behavior, but it's extremely adaptive behavior."

Fielding said that many of the parents they worked with in San Antonio, as well as other families she and other analysts have worked with, were giving in to the children's aggressive or even sometimes self-injurious behavior in order for their young ones to calm down. Instead, what they were doing was actually reinforcing the behavior.

"No parent intentionally creates a child who throws a tantrum every time they don't get something they want, or when they have to do something they don't want to do," Fielding said. "The key is to teach the children that when they behave appropriately, great things will happen for them, and that when they do not, they won't get those great things."

Fielding and Andrews noticed that just about every home they have visited over the years had a video game system. That's when Andrews came up with the idea to create the video game.

To develop the program, the two teamed up with Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio, one of the largest and oldest independent nonprofit applied research and development organizations in the country.

Within the first three days of the application's launch, more than 1,750 people downloaded the program, and more than 3,000 downloaded the application within the first week, Fielding said. The video received much praise from fellow Board Certified Behavior Analysts at a conference last year.

Among those who downloaded the application is Teri Lizakowski, a trained psychologist from Minneapolis, Minn. and the mother of an 11-year-old boy with Asperger's Syndrome and Tourette's Syndrome. Lizakowski called the game "so simple, and yet, so brilliant."

"I wish I could have had it when my son was little," she said.

The simulation not only can help parents of children with autism spectrum disorder, but also any parents.

"The trick I've learned over the years is that prevention is key when it comes to meltdowns," Lizakowski said. "So much of the everyday advice from well-meaning family and friends about how to manage these kinds of behavior problems can actually throw 'fuel on the fire.' This app gives caregivers a chance to step back, learn from the experts and practice, practice, practice." ■

For more information, visit www.behaviorbreakthroughs.com.

“The bottom line that every family really wants to know – once they have received the news that their child has autism – is, okay now what do I do?”

-DR. CHERYL FIELDING

*Associate Professor,
Educational Psychology*



ECONOMIC ENGINE

UTPA generates \$492.8 million impact

By Jennifer Berghom

Employees of Monster Car Wash Coffee Bar and Grill in Edinburg spent a humid Wednesday afternoon hammering wooden frames for a kiosk they are building behind the restaurant, stopping every few minutes to assist customers wanting their vehicles cleaned and to check on patrons inside eating lunch.

“One of the good things our owners do is reinvest in the business,” said Adam Gilson, general manager at Monster and a full-time student at The University of Texas-Pan American.

The kiosk, which will be used as a break room for employees, is the latest addition made to the establishment. Previous expansions included adding a deck and additional seating in back of the restaurant.

Since opening down the street from UTPA in 2007, the establishment has expanded services and space to accommodate its patrons, mostly students, faculty and staff from the University.

“It’s a very symbiotic relationship,” said Gilson, who added that the majority of his staff attends UTPA as well.

The business also schedules its events and staffing based on the University’s holidays. “We cater to them, we make decisions on what we serve, on the services we provide, on the prices (we charge) based on what a college student can afford,” he said.

UTPA has provided employees and customers to Monster and the many other businesses that have sprouted up along University Drive over the years – from retail giant Walmart to locally owned shops – as well as those throughout the McAllen-Edinburg-Mission Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).

“Edinburg thrives off of the college; we are the college town,” Gilson said. “I couldn’t staff my business without the college students who work here (and) I wouldn’t have a business without the students and others who live here locally. The college is the heart of our community, it’s our future.”

High Impact

In the 2009-2010 fiscal year, UTPA’s economic impact on the MSA was \$492.8 million, and more than \$312 million came from student, faculty and staff spending. And almost three additional jobs in the local economy were created for every 10 jobs associated with University spending, according to a report compiled by the University’s Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE).

“This report confirms that UT Pan Am is a primary economic engine for this Valley,” UTPA President Robert S. Nelsen said.

The study, titled “Economic Impact of The University of Texas-Pan American,” also indicated that nearly 45 percent (\$217.1 million) of the total impact arose as a result of student spending. It also found that the total employment impact of UT Pan Am, one of the top 10 employers in Hidalgo County, was 5,873 full-time equivalent jobs.

To determine UTPA’s economic impact, OIRE used the Impact Analysis for Planning (IMPLAN), a nationally renowned input-output economic modeling system, to calculate how much money the UTPA community contributes to the local economy and how the institution influences employment. IMPLAN, simply explained by Dr. S.J. Sethi, OIRE assistant director who compiled the report, is an accounting system of economic transactions that take place

among industries, businesses (such as a university) and consumers in an economy.

“When UTPA spends money in the form of purchases, salaries, construction and other forms, it has an economic impact as some of this money is re-spent one or more times in the local economy leading to what is called the multiplier effect,” Sethi said. “Spending by the University and its students, faculty and staff result in multiplier effects that reverberate throughout our entire local economy.”

Increased Revenue

While spending from students, faculty and staff of the University is the most evident impact — Edinburg alone saw its highest-ever sales tax receipts in December 2010 as well as increases in January and February this year, which were the highest in the Rio Grande Valley. UTPA provides even greater impacts to the Valley that are hard to quantify, said Pedro Salazar, executive director of the Edinburg Economic Development Corporation.

Such impacts include the number of students it graduates and the research UTPA faculty conducts. Those two things alone help lure businesses to the area because the University provides them with skilled employees and research and materials that assist them in conducting their business, Salazar said.

“The biggest impact that it has is graduating students in careers that are in demand,” he said. “Jobs are out there; it’s just a matter of having people with the right set of skills at the right time to fill those jobs, and every time that a new batch of students graduates, those are new, highly skilled people who are in the workforce.”

The more college graduates a community has makes that community more competitive in landing more jobs and higher-paying jobs. Salazar said there have been quite a few businesses that have located themselves near the University because of the opportunities to hire current and graduating students.

“The more you can show as a community that you are creating people with the skills that these employers are looking for, the more likely you’re able to attract some of these employers,” he said.

Any reduction in student population or graduation rates can make it more difficult for communities to convince businesses to relocate to their areas because that community would not have a skilled workforce some companies and industries desire, he said.

Steady Growth

In addition to helping bring businesses to the Valley, UTPA also has influenced real estate growth throughout the years, said representatives from the Greater McAllen Association of REALTORS (GMAR).

“It has evolved,” said Kay Kerr, a salesperson for Pharr/McAllen Realty and secretary of GMAR. “Edinburg has just flourished because of the school.” Though it is difficult to quantify how much UTPA has influenced the Edinburg-McAllen-Pharr area real estate market, Kerr and the association’s executive, Lee Jinks, said an example of that influence is the many four-plex apartments that have been constructed over the years because of the University’s continued growth.

“Without the University, they wouldn’t exist,” Jinks said.

Keith Patridge, president/CEO of the McAllen Economic Development Corp., said the report confirms what the community has known intuitively. “Education represents success, success for the student, graduate and community,” he said.

Patridge said it is important that Texas legislators know the financial contribution our higher education institutions make to our community and to the state of Texas.

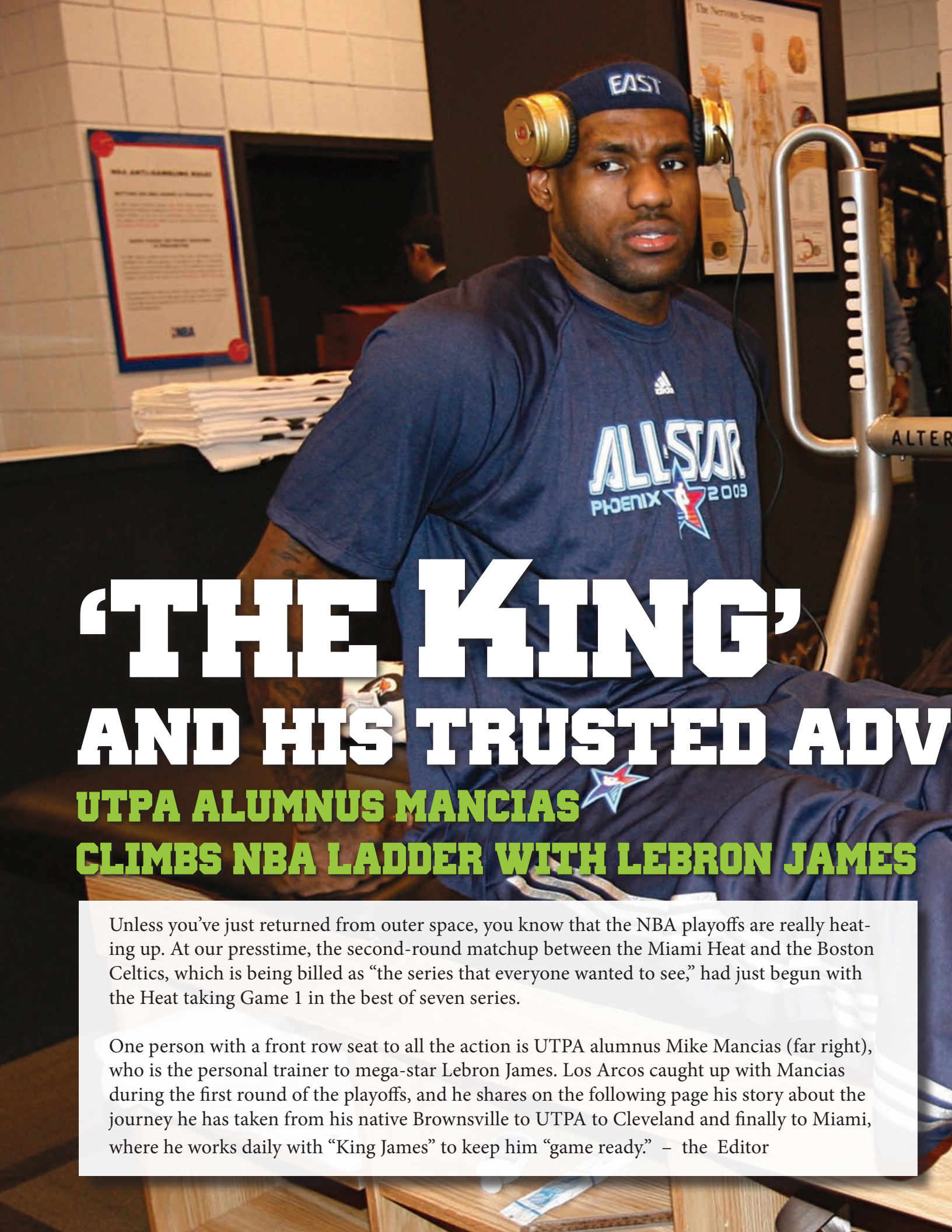
“This report is evidence that education is not an expense, it is an investment with a pretty good ROI (return on investment),” he said. ■

The complete economic impact report is available at <http://oire.utpa.edu/>.

“This report is evidence that education is not an expense, it is an investment with a pretty good ROI (return on investment).”

**-KEITH PATRIDGE,
MEDC President/CEO**





'THE KING' AND HIS TRUSTED ADV UTPA ALUMNUS MANCIAS CLIMBS NBA LADDER WITH LEBRON JAMES

Unless you've just returned from outer space, you know that the NBA playoffs are really heating up. At our presstime, the second-round matchup between the Miami Heat and the Boston Celtics, which is being billed as "the series that everyone wanted to see," had just begun with the Heat taking Game 1 in the best of seven series.

One person with a front row seat to all the action is UTPA alumnus Mike Mancias (far right), who is the personal trainer to mega-star LeBron James. Los Arcos caught up with Mancias during the first round of the playoffs, and he shares on the following page his story about the journey he has taken from his native Brownsville to UTPA to Cleveland and finally to Miami, where he works daily with "King James" to keep him "game ready." – the Editor

ISER





“He is one of the most dedicated athletes I have ever seen, he demands excellence from himself and everyone around him.”

-MIKE MANCIAS
BS '00

By Dr. Greg Selber

The voice on the other end of the line hesitated, the cheery, electric ping of an opened car door echoing on the phone. “Hang on a second...I’m just leaving the arena.”

“OK, you going home?” the voice asked of another someone, obviously a few steps away. “OK, catch up with you there later.”

The “voice” belonged to Mike Mancias (BS '00), and the other someone was a basketball player ... maybe the best basketball player in the world, LeBron James.

Between games of the opening round of the NBA playoffs, James and his Miami Heat had just finished a Sunday workout in preparation for Game Two against the Philadelphia 76ers, to come Monday. James, the two-time MVP who joined the Heat for the 2010-2011 season, was making sure that Mancias would be available for the pair’s daily session of workouts, video study and preparation. It is a routine the two have made commonplace since 2004, when the Brownsville native joined the Cleveland Cavaliers, James’ former team, as a seasonal training intern.

Since then, the two have become inseparable – the 6-foot-8, 250-pound hoops marvel and the ambitious and talented kid from the Rio Grande Valley. Mancias, who left the Cavs and his job as assistant trainer for Florida and a full-time spot as the man who readies “King James” for the basketball wars, says that working in this capacity with such a physical genius is a true blessing.

“He is one of the most dedicated athletes I have ever seen, he demands excellence from himself and everyone around him,” said Mancias, who was a student trainer at UTPA and later got into the big time by volunteering at

NBA camps and Summer League events. “The amount of preparation he does on all fronts is phenomenal. He is entirely focused on his game but also on strength and conditioning. He commits to the routine 100 percent, because LeBron wants the upper hand. He has to be ahead of the curve in every aspect, and I think his success in the league shows this commitment.”

While some people may think that all the pros do is just show up and play, the man responsible for James’ physical edge would argue, from experience, differently. Mancias notes that every day the Heat forward is in the weight room, doing extensive yoga work, and improving strength and flexibility using, among other things, biking.

“Some of what he has is God-given, no doubt,” said Mancias, who admits that leaving the team job in Cleveland to join James in Miami as his personal trainer was a calculated risk. “But he also works hard to get better in all aspects of both basketball and conditioning.”

The truth is, accompanying “King James” down south was a natural, seeing as the two have become great friends while building an airtight regimen of toil and sweat.

“He is just an excellent human being, one of the greatest guys I have ever met,” Mancias noted of James, whose career scoring average of 27.7 in eight seasons is the top mark for active NBA players. “He’s far from quiet, very outgoing, always looking to involve family and friends in what he’s doing.

“To be who he is, there is always some caution when dealing with people, he is leery of folks for the obvious reasons. But LeBron and I have developed a high level of trust now over the years; he knows what I bring to the table, the work ethic and the experience, the belief in him and what he can do, so, yeah, it’s a good thing. Maybe it was time for a change for me...I loved Cleveland but Miami, well, this is a super place, the weather is tremendous, and actually, it reminds me a little of home in that respect, warm and humid, with a Latin flavor.”

At 33, the former Bronc trainer is loving the high life of the NBA, and nothing gets the juices flowing for the job like the exciting pageant that is the playoffs. At the time of this writing, Mancias and his “client” were focused on doing what they came to Miami to do, which is win the title.

“I tell LeBron ... we joke around a lot... ‘When you retire, I retire,’” Mancias chuckled. “This has worked out perfectly, starting from the days I volunteered to try and break into the business, to now, working with LeBron on a daily basis. We feel comfortable with one another and we train hard, every day. He is a guy who works hard at his craft and wants to be the best, same as I do.” ■



Diversifying a City's Assets

Education and experience keys for McAllen Mayor

An accountant by profession, Richard Cortez knows the value of his clients' assets and the need for them to be diverse.

This diversity of assets is what the 67-year-old alumnus of UT Pan American set as one of his ambitious goals for the City of McAllen when he was elected its 18th mayor in 2005.

Having this diversity in the city, he said, means McAllen will be a place where people will want to live or visit and where companies will want to relocate and grow.

"We have to cater to all the different lifestyles. If religion is important to you, we want all the denominations to be found in McAllen. If sports is what you are looking for, then we want you to find it in McAllen – this goes for health care, financial services, music, culture and art," he said.

Under his watch, a \$53 million convention center and a new international bridge were constructed, arts and entertainment districts have been created, a historical preservation ordinance was enacted, parks have been built or improved, and the city is currently in the process of "going green." Recently, a Brookings Institute report ranked McAllen as No. 1 in employment growth nationally in the last quarter of 2010.

Cortez, who was re-elected in 2009, points to McAllen's weather and geography as advantageous to its successful growth, but he doesn't know what the Valley would have been like without The University of Texas-Pan American.

"I can tell you that the educational attainment of a lot of our parents was very low. It was rare to

find a Hispanic lawyer, doctor or engineer or a Hispanic accountant or architect, even a teacher or a college professor," he said.

"Now because of UTPA, the Hispanic population is very well represented throughout the spectrum of professionals and other varied disciplines. That then started to help create personal wealth for many people because as you get education you acquire skills that allow you to do things that you couldn't do before," he added.

Cortez, who earned a business administration degree in 1970 from then-Pan American University, is a prime example. After becoming a certified public accountant in 1974, he concentrated on practicing his profession and providing for his family, wife Elva and his four children. He's been with the accounting firm of Burton McCumber and Cortez, L.L.P. since 1998, where he specializes in litigation consulting services.

Recently, Cortez began teaching a graduate accounting class at UTPA, where he shares his expertise on forensics economics with students. He said there are only two CPAs in the Valley who are litigation experts in calculating economic damages in the courtroom.

By teaching, he hopes he also can help his students realize the value of experience. "I told my class that when I got started I didn't realize how little I knew about many things. It took a while to learn," he said. "When I was 35 years old, my head must have been twice its size. I thought I was really, really good but the Richard Cortez at 67 will beat the pants off the Richard Cortez at 35." ■

“Now because of UTPA, the Hispanic population is very well represented throughout the spectrum of professionals and other varied disciplines. That then started to help create personal wealth for many people because as you get education you acquire skills that allow you to do things that you couldn't do before.”

-RICHARD CORTEZ
BBA '70

By Gail Fagan



FINDING SOLUTIONS

Hamers help community realize potential

By Jennifer Berghom

“There were students making C’s. I told them, ‘Do your best!’ I got to see those kids make A’s. I loved it.”

**-JODI HAMER
BA '04**

For alumni Bill and Jodi Hamer, giving back to the community was more than just a feel-good gesture. It was necessary to remind the Rio Grande Valley of its assets even during hard times.

Bill, CEO of Hamer Enterprises Inc., an accounting software company that now has more than 350 clients from government agencies all over the country, started his business with his wife Jodi shortly after he graduated from then-Pan American University in 1974 with a degree in accounting. Jodi is the chief operating officer of Hamer Enterprises and oversees the company’s marketing division.

As the company began to flourish, the Hamers realized their community needed some cheering up. In 1982, the Rio Grande Valley was suffering from a sluggish economy in part due to a devaluation of the Mexican peso. Many of the area’s young people were leaving the Valley to find jobs.

“Bill came to me and said, ‘We need to do something,’” Jodi recalls.

They decided to publish a regional magazine for South Texas, *Successful Attitudes*, that highlighted the triumphs of Rio Grande Valley citizens.

Jodi ran the magazine for 10 years, in addition to overseeing the marketing for Hamer Enterprises and managing her own marketing and advertising firm, *Mythmakers*.

The Hamers, who both worked full-time jobs while attending college, attributed their success to their experience in higher education.

“School taught us discipline,” said Jodi. “We had to go to work, study and make the grades. They held us accountable.”

With only 18 credits remaining toward earning her bachelor’s degree in business, Jodi took a hiatus from college to help start Hamer Enterprises. But she returned in 2003.

“I had to walk my talk,” she said.

Since the University no longer offered the exact program she had been studying, she switched her focus to communication, her former minor and the foundation of her three-decade career. She earned her bachelor’s degree in 2004.

“All the classes were the basics of what I did for a living,” she said. “The coolest part was I met students there who were starving to learn. I love kids who have an ambition to learn.”

Her experience also gave her an opportunity to mentor fellow students. She held study sessions at her home and provided her professional expertise on class projects.

“There were students making C’s. I told them, ‘Do your best.’ I got to see those kids make A’s. I loved it,” she said.

The Hamers continue to give back to their alma mater and community. They support President Robert S. Nelsen as contributors to the President’s Circle, a “circle” of very special friends to UT Pan American who are helping move the University forward. In addition, Bill chairs UTPA’s College of Engineering and Computer Science Advisory Council while Jodi is on the advisory council for the College of Arts and Humanities, and both also mentor young people at their church. ■



The Great Equalizer

Superintendent encourages students to dream big

For every year that Richard Rivera has served as superintendent of Weslaco Independent School District, from 1997 to now, he hangs a picture in his office of the graduating senior class to remind him why his job is so important.

In his 44 years at Weslaco, he has seen many of his former students achieve success, including some who are now school board members.

“It feels so good when your kids come back and shake your hand and tell you that you were influential in their lives, said Rivera, who previously served as high school principal. “My boys and girls are what give me strength.”

Rivera credits his rewarding career to UT Pan American. “Had it not been for UTPA, I would not be here today,” Rivera said. “UTPA was my savior.”

Rivera, who grew up in Mercedes as one of eight children, said Pan American College — now UTPA — influenced the direction of his life. Seeing three of his siblings drop out of school and enlist in the military, Rivera decided to take a different path.

He earned his bachelor’s degree in government, English and social studies in 1967, making him the first person in his family to graduate from college. He earned his master’s in supervision and mid-management in 1972 and his doctorate in educational leadership in 2008.

While in high school, he participated in sports,

worked on Saturdays as a grocery store delivery boy, and labored in Chicago’s steel mills in the summers. He decided to become an educator to give future students more opportunities.

“In the 1960s there was a lot of discrimination in South Texas against Hispanics,” Rivera said. “I saw a lot of kids drop out because they didn’t fit into the school system. Some teachers looked down at us as inferior. It gave me the incentive to go out and prove them wrong.”

He began his career in 1967 as a teacher and eventually became assistant principal and principal for Weslaco Middle School. He was principal of Weslaco High School for 15 years before being promoted to district superintendent.

“I now tell all my students that education is a great equalizer, and no matter where they go or what they do, education will open doors,” Rivera said. “I want students to know that a high school diploma isn’t enough anymore, and that a college degree is not out of reach.”

Rivera, who said he is near the end of his career in Weslaco, said he would like to teach part-time at UTPA.

“As an alumnus from UTPA, it’s important to stay actively involved to let people know what type of professionals UTPA has produced,” said Rivera. “I’m just one of many who have become successful in the Valley, in Texas and everywhere else. A countless number have gone on to do great things.” ■

“Had it not been for UTPA, I would not be here today. UTPA was my savior.”

- DR. RICHARD RIVERA
BA '67, MEd '72,
EdD '08

By Amanda Perez



Bronc Profile

Ashwin Vijayaragavan

Long before Ashwin Vijayaragavan, a senior finance major, ever picked up a tennis racket, he was playing India's national sport of cricket at the age of 10. He eventually traded in the bat for a racket when he realized he had a knack for tennis. Ashwin, who grew up in Andhrapradesh, India, brings international experience and world rankings to UTPA's Men's Tennis, including winning an ITF (International Tennis Federation) doubles tournament, four semi-final finishes in singles action, and toppling a player ranked 88th in the world. He also competed in several amateur ATP (Association of Tennis Professionals) Futures Tournaments, all while a high school student. At UTPA, he is the reigning Southland Conference Player of the Year and was named to the second-team all-conference at No. 1 singles following a 4-1 conference campaign. He finished his senior year with an 11-4 overall singles record and a 10-2 doubles regular season record. Los Arcos asked Ashwin what he enjoyed about being a Bronc and what his future holds – maybe one day competing in the prestigious Grand Slam tournaments?

When did you start playing tennis?

One day I saw my brother play tennis and I kind of liked the game. But I wasn't really sure about it until I played for a day. Then I was just into the game and I wanted to play it. So I played a few local tournaments and did surprisingly well. Then my parents noticed that I had a special love for the game and they encouraged me to play some junior tournaments. I started performing and I felt I had to do something with this game; so here I am brushing up my tennis skills and getting a degree.

Why did you choose to attend UTPA?

I was looking at a few schools before looking into UTPA. Most of the coaches back in India knew Coach Rob Hubbard and encouraged me to come to UTPA. My parents were very happy to send me here because he was a great human being. It's been a great journey and I have enjoyed every bit of it and will continue to do so in the future.

What do you love about UTPA?

The main thing at UTPA is that the people are amazing. They are very friendly and down to earth, and that is what every individual looks for. My teammates are like my brothers and they make me feel at home.

What do you love about playing tennis at UTPA?

As I said earlier, my teammates keep me motivated each and every time, plus the weather here is very nice, too.

Do you prefer playing singles or doubles?

I prefer playing singles but I like doubles, too. Singles is my first favorite, since it's all you on the court and I prefer handling pressure myself.

What do you consider your best shot in tennis?

I feel my forehand is strong since I build up the point with my forehand.

What are you most proud of in your collegiate tennis career?

The main thing I am proud of is that I have been a good teammate and I have helped the team when they needed me. Overall, I am proud of my accomplishments.

What is your ultimate goal as a tennis player?

My goal is to reach the top 100 in the next two years. ■





ATHLETICS HALL OF FAME

Class of 2011

Honored for being trailblazers in Bronc Athletics, a championship tennis team and three legendary sports icons were recently inducted into the UTPA Athletics Hall of Fame.

Among the honorees recognized April 16 at a ceremony and luncheon at Embassy Suites in McAllen were the 1961 NAIA National Championship men's tennis team, former UTPA men's golf coach Tony Guerrero, former UTPA baseball player and All-American Tony Barbosa (BS '77, MEd '92) of Leander and former women's tennis star Lu Ann Alexander (BA '55) of Edinburg. In addition former UTPA men's basketball player James "Jim" Board (BS '70) of McAllen was inducted into the UTPA Hall of Honor.

"This year's inductees are extremely deserving of the honor of joining the UTPA Athletics Hall of Fame," UTPA Director of Athletics Chris King said. "As a championship team or esteemed individuals, they each represent the proud tradition of Bronc Athletics, and on behalf of our current student-athletes, coaches and staff, it is a privilege to recognize them for their accomplishments."

The tennis team highlighted the Hall of Fame Class as they marked their 50th anniversary of winning the first of five straight NAIA National Championships. The 1961 team was the first team to claim a national team title for Pan American College and was one year removed from being the national runner-up in 1960. The team went 12-4-1 overall during the championship season. Members of that team included current HOF members Ken Lang (BBA '63) (HOF Class of

2009) of Dayton, Ohio; John Sharpe (BA '62) (HOF Class of 2008) of Toronto, Canada; Don Russell (BS '62) (HOF Class of 2007) of Santa Ana, Calif., along with Harold Natho (BBA '68) of Missouri City, Texas, and Jim Watson (BA '62) of San Francisco, Calif.

Guerrero, spent 23 years as a golf coach and professor at Pan American College, Pan American University and UTPA. He left coaching in 1992 to become an assistant athletic director at UTPA and eventually retired in 1997.

Barbosa, was one of the top pitchers in Bronc baseball history and went on to play professionally in the California Angels organization and spent five seasons with a Mexican League. The southpaw played for Pan American University from 1967 to 1970 and amassed 351 strikeouts in 291 collegiate innings.

Alexander, who played for Pan American College from 1951-1955, was part of the women's tennis team that won the 1952-53 Big State Conference championship. She joined the Edinburg Consolidated School District as a teacher and tennis coach and began a career that lasted 42 years at the junior high and varsity level where she produced regional and state champions.

Board played two seasons for the Broncs beginning with the 1963-64 season. He was on the squad that finished as the NAIA national runner-up, and was named NAIA Honorable Mention All-American averaging 9.0 points per game with a 47.2% shooting percentage. As a senior, he averaged 10.7 points per contest on a Bronc team that finished 19-7. ■



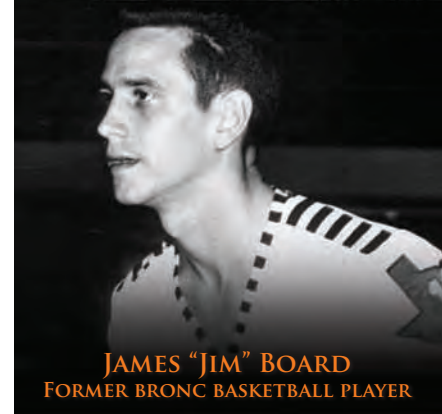
TONY GUERRERO
FORMER UTPA MEN'S GOLF COACH



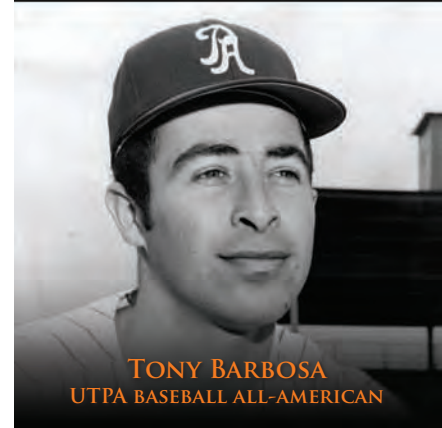
**1961 NAIA NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP
MEN'S TENNIS TEAM**



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MAKING NEW MEMORIES

As Chubby Checker's "The Twist" played in the background, members of the Class of 1961 and earlier grads looked through the pages of old yearbooks and couldn't help but reminisce about their days spent at their alma mater.

**PAN AM
CLASS
50+ REUNION**

When Lydia Gomez Rodriguez first attended Pan American College – now UT Pan American – she recalled it had only one building.

“We had one building and we shared the science lab with the high school,” said the 1960 graduate who earned a degree in health and English. “It was just like family in that time, you know, you knew everybody. But now, my goodness, it has grown so much, I just can't imagine trying to get from one class to another. With us, it was just from one door to the other.”

Rodriguez and her husband, fellow 1960 graduate Ignacio Rodriguez, Jr., were among the more than 125 alumni and guests who came to the inaugural 50-year Reunion Alumni Luncheon Feb. 19, during Homecoming 2011. Graduates of 1961 and earlier were inducted into the first class of the University's 50-Year Club.

The reunion attracted alumni from as far away as Boise, Idaho (Antonio Ochoa, BS '57) and as close as Chapin Street, virtually next door to today's approximately 285-acre main campus in Edinburg (Carrol Kelly Norquest, BA '58). The oldest inductee (Scott Martin, '42), now 88 years old and living in Mission, left Edinburg Junior College 68 years ago.

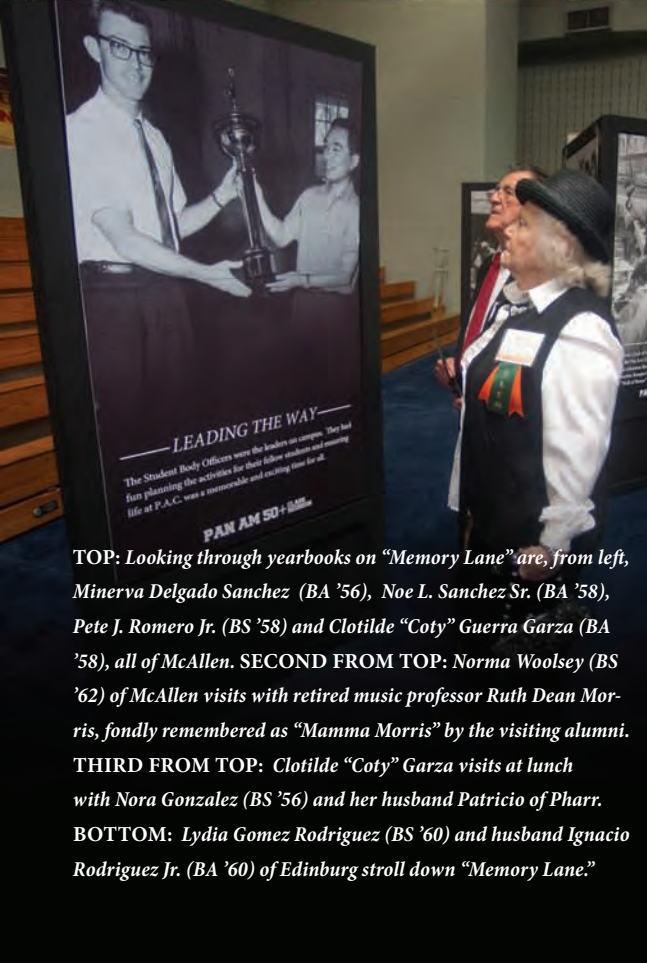
“At least I had the sense to know it would be to my advantage to take advantage of everything that was available at Edinburg Junior College. It was a fine educational institution,” said Martin, who earned his business degree and worked as a chief yeoman in the U.S. Navy.

Plans are already underway for the Class of 1962 reunion. The Office of Alumni Relations and the Division of University Advancement hope to make next year's event an even more special one for alumni.

“The only constant in the life of a University is the alumni,” said Janice Odom, vice president for University Advancement. “We want to make sure that they have a reason to stay engaged and involved and always feel welcomed.” ■

For more information about the Class of 1962 Reunion and the many ways alumni can stay involved with UTPA, call (956) 665-2500, visit www.utpa.edu/alumni, and join us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/UTPAAlumniRelations>.

A Magical Evening Among the Stars



ALUMNI GALA HONOREES

Top: UT Pan American President Robert S. Nelsen, fourth from left, congratulates the 2011 honorees, from left, Aaron Acuna, James "Jim" Board, Sonia Falcon, Carmen Guerra, Dr. Peter Dabrowski, Lynn Miller and Rene O. Farias. Pictured left is honoree Dr. Karen Lozano with UTPA Alumni Association President Joey Gonzalez.

Eight of The University of Texas-Pan American's most outstanding alumni and most devoted friends were honored Feb. 18 at the Alumni Gala as part of Homecoming 2011. They join some 140 others who have been honored since the University and the UTPA Alumni Association first presented the prestigious awards in 1970 to recognize service to the University and the community.

Distinguished Alumni for 2011 were Sonia A. Falcon (BA '91) and James "Jim" Board (BS '70), both of McAllen; Outstanding Young Alumnus was Aaron A. Acuña (BSE '03) of Chicago. The Distinguished Service to the University award went to alumna Carmen Guerra (BA '76) of Round Rock, and the Distinguished Service to the Community award was presented to alumnus Rene O. Farias (BBA '75) of San Antonio.

Receiving the Distinguished Faculty Award were Dr. Peter Dabrowski, associate dean of the College of Arts and Humanities and professor of music, and Dr. Karen Lozano, the Julia Beecherl Professor in Engineering. The Distinguished Friend of the Alumni Association was presented to Gateway Printing and Jones & Cook Stationers and accepted by company president, Lynn Miller. ■



TOP: Looking through yearbooks on "Memory Lane" are, from left, Minerva Delgado Sanchez (BA '56), Noe L. Sanchez Sr. (BA '58), Pete J. Romero Jr. (BS '58) and Clotilde "Coty" Guerra Garza (BA '58), all of McAllen. SECOND FROM TOP: Norma Woolsey (BS '62) of McAllen visits with retired music professor Ruth Dean Morris, fondly remembered as "Mamma Morris" by the visiting alumni. THIRD FROM TOP: Clotilde "Coty" Garza visits at lunch with Nora Gonzalez (BS '56) and her husband Patricio of Pharr. BOTTOM: Lydia Gomez Rodriguez (BS '60) and husband Ignacio Rodriguez Jr. (BA '60) of Edinburg stroll down "Memory Lane."

CLASS NOTES

Where are they now?

1950

ELIZABETH VERNON (BS '54) of Fort Davis served as a lab technician for 10 years then returned to UTPA to earn her teacher certification and for 35 years worked in public schools as a teacher and principal and a professor at the university level.

JOYCE HEFNER PHILLIPS (BA '55) of Houston retired from Southwestern Bell Telephone Company. She has been married for 56 years to the love of her life Bob Phillips.



JERRY LEDBETTER (BS '58) is a retired coach, who also taught mathematics for 15 years. He is currently a self-employed dairy businessman and marina camp ground owner/operator in Nacogdoches.

JUANITA FERNANDEZ (BA '59), who enjoyed her time as a student at then-Edinburg Regional College, retired after 30 years of teaching with Edinburg CISD.

1960



IGNACIO RODRIGUEZ, JR. (BA '60), is retired and currently living in Edinburg, once worked with the Texas Education

Agency and the National Institute of Mental Health, which allowed him to travel the country.



ARTURO CHAPA (BA '60), originally from Mexico, was on a track scholarship when attending Pan American College. He is a retired educator who went back into the workforce and opened his own real estate business. He lives in McAllen.

GUSTAVO ZAPATA (BA '61), once a member of the Pan American College track team, retired as an associate principal from La Joya ISD in La Joya, Texas.

JULIO AVELLO (BA '67), who graduated with honors and in 1965 was an Outstanding Foreign Student (Highest GPA), went on to produce "¿Qué Pasa, U.S.A.?" America's first bilingual situation comedy, and first sitcom for PBS. He lives in Miami, Fla.



ROBERT KERWIN (BBA '69, BA '01) now retired in McAllen, once served as an auditor for the Audit Enforcement Group

in the U.S. Department of Energy where he audited big oil companies and was a member of the group that recovered close to \$8 million in overcharges and fines.

1970

PETE RIVERA (MEd '73), who was part of the first cohort of graduates from the Master in Education program at Pan Am, retired recently and serves on the California Education Board evaluating and monitoring

school test scores and progress. He was previously employed for 25 years with the Boy Scouts fundraising sector in Texas and California and taught math in Los Angeles for 16 years. He was the recipient of the Jaime Escalante Teaching Award. He lives in Agoura Hills, Calif.

DR. LYNDA DE LA VINA



(BBA '72), dean of The University of Texas at San Antonio College of Business, was recently named one of the "Most Powerful and Influential Women in Texas" by the National Diversity Council.



BARBARA RENAUD GONZALEZ (BSW '75), freelance journalist and writer, wrote a novel

based on her mother's journey to the United States in the late '40s called "Golondrina, Why Did You Leave Me?" It was the first Chicana novel to be published by The University of Texas Press, Chicana Matters Series, April 2009.

MARIA A. SHOWERY (BS '76, MEd '80), who retired in 2005, currently works for Showery Insurance and is a substitute teacher with McAllen I.S.D. She previously worked at McAllen I.S.D. as special education counselor for 21 years and at Hidalgo I.S.D. as a special education teacher for four years.

1980

JESUS "CHUY" RAMIREZ (BA '80), an attorney in McAllen, has been on a whirlwind of book tours and



speaking engagements promoting his first novel "Strawberry Fields," which uses his own past to tell his stories through the eyes of his book character Joaquin, an adolescent migrant farm worker. A graduate of UT Law School, Ramirez resides in San Juan with his wife Aida. He is the father of two and grandfather to four grandchildren with another on the way. To find out where Jesus will be next, visit <http://www.strawberryfieldsramirez.blogspot.com/>.



DR. ROGELIO SAENZ (BSW '81) will become dean of The University of Texas at San Antonio College of Public

Policy on June 1, after a 25-year career on the faculty at Texas A&M University.

SHERRY MCDONALD (BBA '83), who currently lives in the Washington, D.C. area, has been working to help the American taxpayers as an employee for the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), an independent, nonpartisan agency that works for Congress and is often called the "congressional watchdog."

Catching up with...



SONIA PENA
BA IN BIOLOGY, 2009
ESL TEACHER IN KOREA

I am an ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher and have been working at a private school named Ivy School for about two years. I absolutely love working here. We are the biggest private school in the City of Gunsan in South Korea with nine foreign teachers. It's great working here because you get to meet so many different people from around the world not just America and Canada, but from the UK, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. I have six classes a day and on average I have 12 students in each class. What I love most about teaching is that it gives me pleasure knowing that I actually taught another person to speak English. When I first got these kids (ranging in ages from 6-9) they only knew their ABCs. Now when I ask them questions and they answer me back in complete sentences, it's awesome. I LOVE KOREA!! My experience has been life changing. I have been here for about two years and I might sign up for another year.

CARLOS GARCIA (BCJ '84) is the police chief for the City of Brownsville and was recently reappointed by Texas Governor Rick Perry to serve as the chairman of the state's Automobile Burglary and Theft Prevention Authority.

1990
YESENIA CERVANTES-AGUILAR (BBA '95) has been a teacher for 13 years and was named 2010-2011 Teacher of the Year at Dwight D. Eisenhower Elementary in Edinburg.

PETER GOLLECK (BA '96) has been employed as a speech-language pathologist for Corpus Christi I.S.D since 1999. He has been married for 11 years to his wife **DALILA** (BCJ '97) and has two daughters, Zilpah and Zoey.

ART DEL BARRIO (BA '96) is owner of Neighborhood Media, a consulting firm specializing in web design, social media marketing, e-commerce, advertising and webisode productions. In addition, he has served his community as a member of the Mission CISD Board of Trustees (2000-2003) and was the executive director of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Mission, Inc. (2000-2004). Art is also the father of two-year-old Marilee, who is the light of his life, and is living in Edinburg.



MIRTA RAMIREZ-ESPINOLA (BA '97) is currently working on earning her Ph.D. in educational

leadership from Trident University International. She resides in Austin with her husband Staff Sergeant Carlos Espinola and they are happily awaiting the arrival of their first child in October 2011. Mirta is a freelance book reviewer for VOYA-Voice of Youth Advocates, a bimonthly journal addressing librarians, educators and other professionals who work with young adults, and an editor of children's books and young adult literature. Check out her work at <http://www.espinolaeditor.blogspot.com>.

DR. JEFFREY GRAHAM (MBA '98) was recently appointed Chief Information Officer for UT Pan American's Division of Information Technology. Jeffrey previously served as associate vice president for information technology support. In this new role, he will lead the division and will report directly to the president.



2000
ELIZABETH C. MARTINEZ (BA '02, MA '10) and Paul Mendez announce the birth of their son, Jacob Aiden Mendez, who was born April 20, 2011 in Edinburg. He is also welcomed by big sister Sierra Alisa Mendez. Elizabeth is the owner of



Media Morphosis, a public relations and marketing firm in South Texas.

MARLEN RAMIREZ (BSW '03), works with Northrop Grumman in the Electronic Systems Division in Baltimore, Maryland, received several awards and recognitions for her involvement in the promotion of STEM careers including the SHPE Leadership Award for the Baltimore Chapter, Women of Color in Technology All Star Award, Maryland Life - Women in Business Award for Community Outreach, and the Adelante Recognition Award.

AARON A. ACUÑA (BSE '03), an electrical engineer with Ford Motor Company for eight years, and his wife Rebecca are expecting their second child. They have a two-year-old daughter Sofia Irene. Aaron was the recipient of the 2011 Outstanding Young Alumnus Award at UTPA in February.



ROBERT RODRIGUEZ (BA '03) is the vice president, business banker and relationship manager for Chase Bank in McAllen. Robert was recently promoted to a relationship manager title where now works with larger companies from about \$3 million in annual sales to about \$10 million and focuses on loans of over \$250,000 to \$85 million.

CINDY O. MATA (BA '04) and Louis Vasquez announce the birth of their son, Diego Alejandro Vasquez, born on March 27, 2011. Mata is currently the College Assistance Migrant Program director at Texas State Technical College in Harlingen.



CRYSTAL LAZCANO (BBA '05) is an auditor for the U.S. Government Accountability Office in Washington D.C. and has lived and worked in the Washington, D.C./Virginia area for five years.

JUANITA CRUZ (BIS '06) is a teacher at Dwight D. Eisenhower Elementary in Edinburg. She has taught for the past four years, but has been employed at Edinburg CISD for 20-plus years.

JIM ZAVALA (BA '06) is currently a graphic designer/web administrator for Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD in Pharr.

DIONICIO RODRIGUEZ (BA '10), an aspiring rapper, currently produces his own YouTube Channel called Nunevision, which follows the misadventures of his friends.

YOU HAVE NEWS. WE WANT IT.

UTPA wants to hear from you and find out what you have been up to since graduation. Send us your news and photos about what is going on in your professional and personal life. E-mail us at losarcos@utpa.edu. Please include your degree and graduation year with your information.



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CHALLENGES\$ and OPPORTUNITIES

University looks to private giving to make up for reduced state revenue

Michael Gorena (BS '98) knows an opportunity when he sees one. As a senior in high school, he knew walking a few blocks to UTPA made more financial sense than going away to college like many of his friends were doing. He could live at home and save his mom, a single parent, a lot of money.

At UTPA, he was also able to take advantage of another huge opportunity. He enrolled in the inaugural class of UTPA's Premedical Honors College (PMC) in 1994, a partnership with Baylor College of Medicine that offered Michael a full scholarship.

A year after Michael's graduation from UTPA his new wife, Maria Lozano Gorena (BS '99), also graduated from the PMC and joined him at Baylor in Houston. Now anesthesiologists, Michael and Maria realize what a big break the scholarship program was.

"I'm not sure if I would have become a doctor if it wasn't for that scholarship," said Michael. "It would have been a real struggle for us. Our lives would have been completely different. I have friends that are paying off student loans, and the amounts are astronomical!"

Programs like the Premedical Honors College not only help fulfill the dreams of students, they are also an investment in the local economy. Maria and Michael ultimately came back to the Rio Grande Valley to practice medicine. According to Lydia Aleman, associate vice president for University Advancement, professionals like the Gorenas who come back to the community not only enhance the economy, they also become potential donors to UTPA.

"Michael Gorena is young, and he is already giving back," she said.

But success stories like his could be in danger of disappearing. With drastic cuts to higher education by the state legislature looming, the future of many students at UTPA and across Texas could, quite literally, be in jeopardy. As of late April, the proposed budgets for 2012-2013 from both the state Senate and the House would cut financial aid by

hundreds of millions of dollars. The House's version of the budget cuts it by \$431 million and the Senate's version by \$381 million.

What does this mean for students? It means that many of the 113,000 who now receive the TEXAS (Towards EXcellence, Access and Success) Grant, the most widely accessible source of state financial aid, will get that much-needed help in 2012.

"TEXAS Grants are the second largest source of financial assistance for UTPA undergraduates, second only to Federal Pell Grants," said Elaine Rivera, executive director of Student Financial Services at UTPA. "Without TEXAS Grants, many students may not be able to attend UTPA." Between 40 to 65 percent of incoming students receive TEXAS Grant funds each year, depending on availability of funding. TEXAS Grant funds for first-time recipients for the 2010-2011 school year totaled over \$13 million.

The cuts in state funding mean colleges will have to find new sources of revenue. "We have to get more creative and entrepreneurial," said Janice Odom, vice president for University Advancement. One of the areas with the greatest potential for growth is private giving. Funds from private contributions currently comprise less than one percent of financial awards at UTPA. That's going to have to change if UTPA is to continue its tradition of being a gateway to opportunity.

Alumni like Michael and Maria Gorena want to help. But ultimately, it will take a large community effort to make a difference. "We want people to understand that this is not just a donation to UTPA," said Odom. "It's really a sound investment that will pay off for all of us in the future."

And, with state funding slowing to a trickle for the next few years, there has never been a more critical time to make a personal investment in UTPA. ■

For information about how you can invest in UTPA, contact the Development Office at development@utpa.edu or visit www.utpa.edu/giving.

“We want people to understand that this is not just a donation to UTPA. It’s really a sound investment that will pay off for all of us in the future.”

—JANICE ODOM
*UTPA Vice President
for University Advancement*

By Jackie Nirenberg

Ruben Dardanella Cardenas: Leaving a Legacy in Their Own Backyard

“La mejor herencia que un padre le puede dejar a sus hijos es una buena educación.”

-RUBEN CARDENAS

Ruben Cardenas is a collector of dichos. When he wants to illustrate a point, he selects one from his expansive repertoire and recites it with the eloquence of an experienced raconteur. “*La mejor herencia que un padre le puede dejar a sus hijos es una buena educación*,” is one of his favorites. It means, “The best inheritance a father can leave to his children is a good education.” And he means it. After all, he’s been building that legacy since he set foot in his first college classroom over 60 years ago. He and his wife Dardanella have both demonstrated a commitment to that legacy by donating generously, both their time and their money, to higher education.

Born in McAllen in 1931, Ruben graduated from St. Edwards University in Austin with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1951, and after four years in the U.S. Air Force, was accepted to The University of Texas Law School, where he received his J.D. in 1958. While at UT, he met Dardanella Guerra, a beautiful coed from San Antonio. The couple married and moved to McAllen, where Ruben established a law practice. Soon they were in a position to give back. But while the Cardenases had ties to St. Edwards and UT, the couple made the decision decades ago to give both their time and their financial support to UTPA.

Why give to UTPA when neither was a graduate of the university? For Dardanella, the answer to that question is simple: community. “This is where we live,” she said, “where we raised our family. It makes sense for us to give back to our community.”

The Cardenases have supported the community in many ways over the years, something instilled in them when they were growing up. “We have been very active in the community because that’s the way our parents were,” said Ruben. Since moving back to the area in 1958, he has served on the boards of a variety of civic organizations and as chairman of the Board of Regents for Pan American University. He is also the recipient of numerous awards, including a Distinguished Alumnus Award from The University of Texas at Austin, a Distinguished Alumnus Award from St. Edward’s University, and the Distinguished Citizen of the Year Award from the Rio Grande Valley Boy Scouts Council.

By Jackie Nirenberg

He and Dardanella were co-recipients of the Humanitarian Award from Easter Seals of the Rio Grande Valley. Dardanella has also served on a number of boards, including Texas Easter Seals, St. Edwards University, McAllen United, and McAllen Blood Services, Inc. She also has been board chairman of the HCA Rio Grande Regional Hospital and president of the McAllen International Museum.

Over the years, the Cardenases have donated generously to various programs at UTPA, including the Dr. Sylvia M. Dominguez Distinguished Lecturer Series & Scholarship Endowment. "We give to UTPA because so many young people here in the Valley just don't have the same opportunities others do," said Ruben. "They don't have parents who can afford to send them to Austin or Houston to go to school." He adds that the education they will get at UTPA is as good as what they could get in any other college, and in any other place.

Today, evidence of the *herencia* in Ruben's favorite *dicho* can be found in the accomplishments of his children and grandchildren. They have all learned the value of a good education. And they are now building their own legacies.

Their eldest son Carlos is a physician and a graduate of Austin College and UT Medical Branch-Galveston. Son Oscar is an accountant and a graduate of Texas A&M. Daughter Diana has had a distinguished career in education and is a graduate of Texas A&M. And the first of the Cardenases' six grandchildren is now a student at Texas A&M. But with grandparents like Ruben and Dardanella, that is hardly a surprise. They have, after all, made higher education a priority for themselves and for their community.

So if any of the Cardenases' grandkids or future great-grandkids ever want to see proof of their inheritance, all they have to do is pay a visit to UTPA – the university in their grandparents' own backyard, and where the impact of Ruben and Dardanella Cardenas will live on for generations to come. What an *herencia*, indeed. ■



Even though Ruben and Dardanella Cardenas earned their degrees from UT and St. Edwards University, the couple made a commitment decades ago to donate both their financial and personal support to The University of Texas-Pan American. "This is where we live," Dardanella said. "Where we raised our family. It makes sense for us to give back to our community."

CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2011

*“Do not follow where the path may lead.
Go, instead, where there is no path and
leave a trail.” ~Ralph Waldo Emerson*

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As the late statesman Adlai Stevenson once said, “When you leave here, don’t forget why you came.”



Gabriela Barajas Garza
BA Communication '04

Though she’s stayed busy earning a master’s degree from UT Austin ('06) and opening her own marketing agency in Houston since leaving UTPA, Gaby still remembers to look back...and give back to her alma mater.

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