El Paso's Quality of Life

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At the heart of an international metroplex, UTEP has unique opportunities to provide the community with expanded prospects for an enhanced quality of life. This committee was charged with exploring the diversity and quality of cultural offerings, entertainment activities, intercollegiate athletics and recreational events, museum exhibits, library programs, and lifelong learning opportunities.
Introduction

Since 1914, UTEP has provided El Paso and the region with intellectual and cultural resources that have enhanced the quality of life of students, members of the UTEP family, and the community at large. UTEP’s academic programs in the visual and performing arts enhance these quality of life resources and provide students with venues to share their talents. Many people in the area remember the first time they saw the Nutcracker in Magoffin Auditorium or attended a men’s basketball game in the Don Haskins Center. They take advantage of the art galleries and the musical events on campus and enjoy tailgating before Miner football games. Older adults attend classes where UTEP professors share their knowledge and experience. Miner athletic teams generate a spirit that unites the El Paso community.

As we look toward 2014, UTEP has the opportunity to expand the resources that enrich the quality of life of students and the community. To help shape its recommendations, the committee developed the following definition of quality of life: “Integrating the community and UTEP for the enrichment of the region by providing excellence, equity, and access through intercollegiate athletics, performing and visual arts, museums, and continuing education.” The committee’s recommendations follow four guiding principles:

I. Strengthen the educational pipeline: UTEP should create degree programs and performance opportunities that are relevant to El Paso’s future economic development, so that local students will remain in El Paso and work in fields that enhance quality of life.

II. Market to the right audiences: UTEP should promote its resources to recruit students and market its intellectual, cultural, and performing arts programs to the entire community, both young and old, taking note of a potentially large retirement community.

III. Develop partnerships: UTEP should develop partnerships with community cultural and arts organizations to provide educational and programming opportunities.

IV. Strive for excellence in intercollegiate athletics: UTEP should enhance its programs to provide students and the El Paso community with athletic events that enrich quality of life.

The committee’s recommendations in these four areas follow below

Recommendations

I. Strengthen the education pipeline
   • Create an opera degree program in the Department of Music to take advantage of the popularity of opera in the El Paso/Cd. Juárez region.
   • Create a hotel/restaurant management degree program in the College of Business Administration to include a culinary program emphasizing Southwestern and Mexican foods.
   • Create a film degree program and a technical program to train theater technicians in the Department of Theatre, Dance and Film.
   • Create an art history degree program in the Department of
Art and consolidate works of art currently housed in various buildings across campus into one building for study and care.

II. Market to the right audiences
- Create a program of visiting professorships in the performing and visual arts to bring nationally known talent to UTEP.
- Expand Center for Lifelong Learning and Continuing and Professional Education programs that are relevant to the needs of adults and retirees and build a new library building/annex to accommodate extended services.
- Create a monthly “Lyceum” lecture program and market it throughout the community.
- Enhance the Centennial Museum through expansion and incorporate a Children’s Museum.

III. Develop partnerships
- Construct a performing arts complex, including a conference center with a multi-use theater (500 seats) to accommodate the UTEP Dinner Theatre and other community events.
- Consider a public/private partnership to develop a retirement complex close to campus to take advantage of University resources.

IV. Strive for excellence in intercollegiate athletics:

Areas of enrichment include conference affiliation, sports programs, facilities, football game atmosphere, and miscellaneous recommendations.

- Conference Affiliation (currently a member of Conference USA)
  - Continue membership in an elite (Top 60 Division I-A conference to provide four to five bowl game opportunities, a long-term and financially lucrative regional and national television agreement, three to six NCAA post-season opportunities for men’s and women’s basketball, and conference championships for all sponsored sports programs.

- Sports Programs (to be implemented by 2014)
  - Baseball—based on UTEP’s regional location and “citywide” interest in baseball (high school programs, El Paso Community College, professional baseball, baseball academy). Possible facility partnerships may be available within the city.
  - Swimming and Diving (Women)—based on “citywide” interest in swimming and diving (high school programs, private swim programs) and Title IX legislation. Sharing facilities with the current UTEP Swimming and Fitness Center is a possible option.
  - Bowling (Women)—based on the relatively low start-up cost of implementing a program, “citywide” interest in bowling (league bowling), Title IX legislation, and the possible availability of a state-of-the-art facility near the UTEP campus.
  - Equestrian (Women)—based on the relatively low start-up cost of implementing a program and on strong potential community support and access to both a facility and horses. Title IX legislation is also a consideration.
  - Rodeo (Women)—based on local interest and Title IX legislation. Additional research is needed.
  - Competitive Cheerleading (Women)—based on a current nationally recognized UTEP Cheerleading Squad and the possibility of developing a competitive UTEP Cheerleading Team. Title IX legislation is also a consideration.

- Facilities (New Construction and/or Improvements)
  - Conduct a feasibility study to determine location, building components, and cost of a Men’s and Women’s Basketball Practice Facility. (Priority)
  - Construct an on-campus dining facility to provide meal plans for student athletes.
  - Conduct a feasibility study to determine the size, scope, and cost of the following additions or improvements to the Sun Bowl Stadium:
    - Luxury suites
    - Club section with chair backs
    - TV monitors at concession stands and upgraded concession stands to provide greater customer service
    - Additional seating—in the event that the UTEP football program continues its progress and thus generates more fan interest both locally and regionally
    - Natural grass—in order to attract potential international soccer matches. However, associated costs and/or resources (e.g., maintenance, water) and a limited use requirement for a grass field may limit the feasibility of this option.
  - Conduct a feasibility study to determine the size, scope, and cost of the following additions or improvements to the Don Haskins Center (Priority):
    - Luxury suites
    - Additional seating (15,000 to 18,000 total seats suggested), in the event that the UTEP men’s and women’s basketball programs continue their progress, creating more fan interest both locally and regionally. Additional seating would allow UTEP to host NCAA Basketball Tournament games and other special events such as concerts.
    - TV monitors at concession stands and upgraded concession stands to provide greater customer service
    - Upgraded arena lighting to provide greater fan entertainment
• Additional office space for Men’s Basketball, Don Haskins Center, and Special Events staff
• Secure a space for the football team to meet as one unit.
• Upgrade the Baltimore Field/Football Practice Facility (lighting, storage, an additional practice field).
• Upgrade the Kidd Field stadium seating and offices, to include a cover over both the track and stands, helping to eliminate sun exposure.
• Construct an on-campus tennis facility for use by UTEP students, the UTEP women’s tennis program, and the El Paso community (e.g., tennis camps).
• Expand UTEP’s Athletics Administrative offices to accommodate current and future growth in the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics. These offices could be built as part of the men’s and women’s basketball practice facility.

• Football Game Atmosphere Enhancements
• Develop a Mesa Street Block Party by closing off Mesa Street and/or working with the City to construct a tunnel under Mesa Street for pedestrian traffic. The area on Mesa Street from Baltimore Street to University Avenue could be named the “Mine Shaft District,” as is done on other university campuses.
• Improve the transportation system to ease access to the Sun Bowl:
  • Coordinate efforts with Sun Metro to offer centralized pick-up and return for UTEP home football games at such places as Cielo Vista and Sunland Park Malls.
  • Organize on-campus shuttle system/customer service carts to take fans from one side of Sun Bowl Stadium to the other as well as to provide transportation to the stadium from parking lots that are not within walking distance.
• Enhance merchandise stands and locate them throughout the stadium.
• Extend the marching band’s activities prior to entering the stadium (e.g., performance on campus for tailgaters) and provide the band with additional scholarship assistance.

• Miscellaneous Recommendations
• Increase UTEP’s athletics budget to $25-$35 million per year so that UTEP can become a Top 25 Intercollegiate Athletics program. In order to achieve this goal, UTEP must become a consistent 40/10 program (average fan attendance of more than 40,000 fans per home football game and more than 10,000 fans per men’s basketball game).
• Develop a Community Steering Committee to assist in the implementation of all initiatives and recommendations.
• Develop satellite Miner Shop(s)/Ticket Centers throughout El Paso (e.g., East, Northeast) that would sell UTEP merchandise and tickets for all UTEP-sponsored events.
• Explore a possible “tie-in” (both at the conference level and individually) with the Sun Bowl football game.
• Host first and second round games of the NCAA Men’s Basketball Tournament.
• Host the conference men’s and women’s basketball tournaments.
• Explore the possibility of creating UTEP’s own men’s and/or women’s basketball tournament as a potential source of revenue.
• Develop elite team camps and/or tournaments to attract prospective students from all areas of Texas and the United States.
• Schedule competition in all sports programs with Top 25 teams as well as with the following regional teams—University of New Mexico, New Mexico State, BYU, Baylor, Texas Tech, Texas A&M, UT-Austin, Arizona, and Arizona State.

Mark Heins worked with other committee members to develop recommendations to expand resources that enrich the region’s quality of life.

The Sun Bowl Stadium is among UTEP’s many venues that provide entertainment and add to the quality of life in the El Paso region.