The University of Texas at El Paso
Centennial Commission Report
2014
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Foreword

"Your goal is not to foresee the future, it is to enable it.

- Antoine de Saint-Exupery

As UTEP begins the countdown to its Centennial celebration in 2014, there will be many opportunities to review the university’s fascinating history. From our origins as the Texas State School of Mines and Metallurgy in 1914, we have moved into national leadership for achieving the balance between access and excellence that will be required for success in 21st century higher education. It is an exciting story, and we look forward to celebrating our many major accomplishments with members of the extended UTEP family—our students, faculty and staff members on the UTEP campus, and our alumni, friends and supporters in the Paso del Norte region and throughout the world.

The approaching Centennial also creates a context for planning UTEP’s future, a special opportunity to step away from the rush of daily business and consider what we would like UTEP to be and do by 2014. To help us develop that vision, we established a Centennial Commission in 2004, modeled after the highly successful UTEP 2001 Commission, which on the occasion of our 75th anniversary in 1989 helped us create a vision for UTEP in 2001. Like its predecessor, the Centennial Commission sought the perspectives of external stakeholders, in this case 100 UTEP alumni, friends and supporters from the Paso del Norte region and beyond. A special effort was made to invite the participation of some individuals who had had little prior association with UTEP to ensure that we weren’t thinking entirely “within the box.” The result was a diverse mix of outstanding individuals whose generous commitment of time and talent presented us with a broad range of perspectives to guide UTEP’s future development.

Chaired by UTEP alumni Larry K. Durham and Philip Martinez, the Centennial Commission was divided into 10 ten-member committees, each focused on a topic of special relevance to UTEP’s mission. UTEP faculty and staff members served as committee liaisons to provide easy access to institutional information and any other support that might be required. The charge to each committee was to create a vision for UTEP in 2014 and beyond from the perspective of the topic on which it was focused, and to offer specific recommendations about how best to move the University toward that vision between now and the Centennial celebration in 2014. Participants reported that committee proceedings were enlightening, sometimes provocative, and always lively. “Exciting” was the adjective most often used to describe the process.

Exciting too are the results of this work, which are gathered together in this Centennial Commission Report. Each of the ten chapters corresponds to the final report of one of the ten committees, and each captures not only the vision and recommendations of a specific committee, but the collective intellectual energy of its membership. Together, they present a multi-faceted vision of UTEP in 2014 and a robust set of recommendations to help guide the University toward achieving it.

Not surprisingly, the vision presented here bears some
similarities to the one presented in the 2001 Commission Report. For example, UTEP was encouraged in the earlier report to become more involved in outreach to the surrounding community, and there is similar encouragement expressed here. However, the expectations expressed in this volume are far more ambitious than those articulated 15 years ago because the baseline level of UTEP’s outreach to the community is so much higher today than it was in 1989. Working together with our external constituents, we have clearly raised the bar on expectations.

Another good example is the set of recommendations concerning graduate programs. In 1989, UTEP offered only one doctoral-level program, and the 2001 Commission strongly urged that the University secure authorization to offer more. Today, with 13 active doctoral programs, UTEP is again encouraged to increase the number of such programs, but there is added emphasis now on achieving both sustained alignment with regional needs, and greater national and international stature.

This Centennial volume also appropriately acknowledges changes in UTEP’s external context since the publication of the 2001 Commission report. A good example is the recently announced expansion of Fort Bliss and the potential industrial development associated with it, both of which offer UTEP opportunities to build capacity through new partnerships. Another is the rapidly rising demand for health care professionals in the Paso del Norte region and a growing expectation that UTEP will play a major role in their preparation, as indeed we have sought to do during the past several years. Today, more than 2,500 students are enrolled in such programs as Physical and Occupational Therapy, Speech/Language Pathology and Audiology, Nursing, Clinical Laboratory Science, Kinesiology, Health Promotion, and Pharmacy. In addition, UTEP has strengthened all of these health-related programs through successful competition for external funding for a broad range of health-related research projects. Reflecting this changed context, both external and internal, the Centennial Commission’s recommendations for health-related activity at UTEP are far more aggressive than could have been foreseen in 1989.

Overall, the vision of the members of the Centennial Commission is considerably bigger and bolder than the one articulated in 1989, because UTEP is a far more competitive institution today than it was 15 years ago. Expectations of us, both on and off the campus, are significantly higher. Several Centennial committees pointed out that the university’s current vision statement is too “tentative” and “modest” for today’s UTEP. According to the Graduate and Professional Development Programs committee, “UTEP is poised to become a top-tier university, uniquely prepared to address critical national and international issues through advanced research and educational programs, while at the same time serving as a powerful driver of regional economic and social development.” The U.S.-Mexico and International Programs committee predicts that “The University of Texas at El Paso will be a premier institution for international studies, programs and research with emphasis on Mexico, on U.S.-Mexico themes, and on international borders.” And, the Image committee concludes that “UTEP has increased in enrollment, extramural funding and academic stature during the past ten years…. [and] now enjoys a window of opportunity to become a preeminent bicultural metropolitan research university.” As we review UTEP’s Vision Statement, these facets of today’s UTEP—and words such as “top-tier,” “premier” and “preeminent”—will enter our collective thinking and vocabulary, thanks to the confidence that the Centennial Commission members have expressed in us.

Like its 2001 Commission Report predecessor, this volume will also serve as a rich resource for UTEP's strategic planning. The vision and recommendations presented here will ensure that UTEP’s future development is aligned with the aspirations of our external stakeholders, both in this region and elsewhere. Paired with reports of three internal task forces (on Student Success, Campus Climate and Research), which served to define the baseline for planning in those critical areas, the vision contained in this report provides us with a clear destination toward which we will travel, and its recommendations a useful roadmap to reach it.

We thank all of the Centennial Commission members for their deep commitment to UTEP reflected in the time and talent that they dedicated to the Commission’s work. UTEP has made enormous progress during the past 15 years guided by the recommendations of the 2001 Commission, and we are confident that we will make even greater strides between now and 2014 as a result of the work of the Centennial Commission.

Diana Natalicio
President
Introduction

Just nine years from now – in 2014 – the University of Texas at El Paso will celebrate its 100th anniversary! Much has changed at the university and in this region since UTEP’s founding as the State School of Mines and Metallurgy in 1914. The university has reached many heights and enjoyed many successes, and is poised for even greater success in years to come.

The future development of the university is of crucial importance to the Paso del Norte region. UTEP’s Centennial Commission was charged with developing a vision for the university in 2014 and a recommended roadmap for achieving it. We are honored to have served as the commission’s co-chairs.

The Centennial Commission’s 100 members, who come from across this region, the U.S. and Mexico, were drawn from a broad cross-section of external stakeholders. Nominations for the Commission were solicited widely – from individuals and organizations – and its membership reflects the diversity of the El Paso-Juárez region and beyond. In addition to UTEP alumni and supporters, a special effort was made to include community members with little or no previous contact with the university. Also targeted were young adults, who have a major stake in UTEP’s future.

The Commission was divided into ten committees which ranged in focus from Undergraduate Education to UTEP’s Neighborhood; the committee chairs form the executive committee, for which we served as co-chairs. The ten committees were asked to review and evaluate UTEP’s opportunities and challenges within their focal areas; to recommend long-range goals; and, where possible, to identify strategies to achieve them. A few topics were provided to stimulate dialogue, and chairs were encouraged to expand this list in response to committee members’ interests and priorities. Committee members were encouraged to think “outside the box” and to strive for ambitious goals.

After the Commission’s launch last October, the ten committees got right to work. Members made time in their busy schedules for meetings where they heard from experts, asked tough questions, brainstormed new ideas and finally drew up draft reports with evaluations and recommendations. Each of those reports comprises a chapter in this final document.

This Centennial Commission Report will serve as a catalyst for strategic planning on the UTEP campus, and for dialogues both on and off-campus.

Since last fall, we have been impressed by the dedication, commitment and innovative thinking of our fellow Commission members. As co-chairs, we thank them for their service to our university and our community. Their work will help our great university chart a path for its future. We are pleased to share the Commission’s work, and we invite the community to join us as we help UTEP reach even greater levels of success as it approaches its 100th birthday.
Today’s fourth-graders are reflecting on their future as the college freshman class of 2014 – UTEP’s 100th anniversary.
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Larry K. Durham and Philip Martinez

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Chana Burton  Debra Koch
Irene Chavez  Cindy Ramos-Davidson
Robert Durón  Lucinda Vargas
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