

## **UTEP's truths are in the facts**

By Roberto A. Osegueda / Guest columnist

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From beginning to end, the El Paso Times Opinion guest column, "Exposing some untruths about UTEP's status," was replete with inaccuracies about The University of Texas at El Paso's status as a research university and other key issues.

On Jan. 5, 2009, the El Paso state delegation announced a unified agenda for the 81st legislative session, making UTEP's designation as a national research (Tier One) university its top priority.

State Sen. Eliot Shapleigh, along with state Sen. Carlos Uresti and state Reps. Joe Pickett, Norma Chávez, Chente Quintanilla, Marisa Marquez and Joe Moody, issued a press release stating, "The top priority for the delegation is guaranteeing UTEP participation in Tier One formula funding."

Obviously, El Paso's legislative delegation recognizes the accomplishments of UTEP as do the university's 89,000 alumni, its supporters and community leaders.

As a point of clarification, the opinion piece incorrectly stated that only universities ranked in the Top 100 of the National Science Foundation's annual listing of academic research and development expenditures can be called "research universities."

This is a grievous error, as the National Science Foundation "does not have a policy on, nor creates specific terminology to say what is or what isn't a 'research university,' " according to John E. Jankowski, program director of the Research and Development Statistics Program, which produces the NSF's annual "Academic Research and Development Expenditures" report.

"If we were going to describe research activity of universities, we often may group them according to the Carnegie Foundation classifications of research universities, which has and does change over time, or we may group them according to their rank. Such rankings are not synonymous with the term 'research university'," Jankowski said.

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching classifies UTEP as a doctorate-granting research university with high research activity --which places UTEP among the top 7 percent of all colleges and universities in the United States. The foundation's classifications are regarded as an authoritative source for education researchers to identify and compare educational institutions in America.

In regard to UTEP's research spending total, UTEP is ranked sixth among Texas public universities in total annual research expenditures (including state funding), and fourth in federal research expenditures. These rankings are based on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's Research Expenditures report for 2006-2007, published in June 2008, and on the THECB's Web site [www.thecb.state.tx.us/](http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/)

In 2005-2006 the THECB report "Accountability in Higher Education: Promoting Excellence in Texas Public Universities through Institutional Groupings, Peers, and Benchmarks," named UTEP as one of seven Emerging Research Universities defined as "resource centers committed to the three-fold mission of teaching, research and service."

Under UTEP President Diana Natalicio's leadership, the university's annual research spending in 2007-2008 surged to more than \$50 million -- when she became president in 1988, this figure was \$3 million.

UTEP faculty and staff have attracted national recognition for their cutting-edge research in many disciplines, among them bioinformatics, biomedical science, bioengineering, transportation, computer and computational sciences, and nanomaterials and manufacturing, to name but a few. The university has nearly \$75 million in active multi-year awards for research and educational programs from such sources as the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health.

Students in search of quality Ph.D. programs are increasingly looking to UTEP for post-graduate degrees as evidenced by the increase in doctoral-level enrollments, which saw a 13 percent growth at UTEP this spring.

For these reasons and so many more, UTEP is far more than just a "good city university" -- it is in fact an exceptional regional, national and international university. UTEP is an institution that continues to gain momentum and will confidently take its place among other prestigious national research universities.

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