Ricardo Romo’s first 10 years at UTSA
FEATURES

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During Ricardo Romo’s 10 years as president, UTSA has evolved from a quiet, regional school with a handful of graduate degree programs to a vibrant academic center poised for national research university status. Friends and observers credit the ebullient Romo, UTSA’s No. 1 cheerleader.

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Photos by Mark McClendon
EDITOR’S NOTE

A sense of promise

When Ricardo Romo celebrated his 10th anniversary as president of UTSA, in May, letters from well-wishers around the state and the nation poured in. Friends and colleagues including Frost Bank Chairman Tom Frost, former Texas Gov. Dolph Briscoe and UT System Chancellor Francisco Cigarroa all offered their congratulations. “I remember our conversation when you asked me if you should be interested in the position,” wrote Peter Flawn, who served as UTSA president from 1973 to 1978 and now is president emeritus of UT Austin. “It’s hard to believe it’s been 10 years!”

His friends have plenty of good things to say about the work Romo has done in his 10 years at UTSA, even though Romo’s record speaks for itself: Enrollment has increased by 50 percent in the past 10 years. Where once only three doctoral programs were offered, there are now 21.

Sure, there’s still more to be done. Texas Higher Education Commissioner Raymond Paredes, who first met Romo when they were undergraduates at UT Austin and later served on Romo’s dissertation committee at UCLA, talks of Romo’s goals of improving undergraduate graduation rates and taking the university to national research university status.

“He created a new identity for UTSA. … He created the campus of opportunity,” Paredes said, adding that Romo also has created “a sense of promise and hopefulness” among the UTSA community.

But Paredes’ favorite story about Ricardo Romo is a personal one. When Paredes’ father died and his son was sorting through all his father’s belongings, he found a scrapbook full of press clippings about himself, particularly after he became the Texas Higher Education Commissioner. All the articles had been sent to Romo by the elder Paredes, along with handwritten notes that said, “Look how well your son is doing. Look at the great things Raymund’s been up to.” Until he found that scrapbook, Paredes didn’t know how close his father and his friend had become.

“A sense of promise and hopefulness toward a better future for everyone,” Paredes said. “That’s what he created.”
Is a case of small talk sparking a big idea. In the fall of 2006, UTSA doctoral student Efraim Padilla was attending a cocktail party and fundraiser hosted by psychiatrist Fermín Sarabia. Padilla, already a licensed counselor, had met Sarabia when both worked at the Bexar County Center for Health Care Services. “Dr. Sarabia was trying to raise donations for the Guadalupe Community Center, where he sits on the board,” Padilla recalls. Lacking space change, Padilla wondered aloud if the center offered mental health services. If so, he’d be glad to volunteer his skills as a professional counselor.

The Guadalupe Community Center (GCC), a sprawling complex located at the corner of Frio and West Durango streets, is a program of Catholic Charities of San Antonio that offers food and clothing assistance, after-school programs, chess tournaments, summer camps, even folklorico dance classes. At the time, it did not run a mental health clinic, though Sarabia said he had always wanted to provide this service for the vulnerable population served there. Hearing this, Padilla’s response was instant. “How ‘bout wecreate one?”

The timing was perfect. Padilla and four cohorts in UTSA’s counseling Ph.D. program—Sue Clifford, Margaret Costantino, Martiza Lebron-Striker, and Gabriel Valdez—were looking for a practicum site, a venue where they could provide counseling under the supervision of an experienced clinician. If Sarabia would supervise them and if Catholic Charities and the GCC would provide a space, they would get to work. As part of their training, graduate students in counseling are required to complete a total of 700 hours of practicum and internship experiences.

The students’ initial set-up was modest. “We started in a small room that we shared with the ballet folklorico dancers, where there were costumes and candy and pickles and sodas,” Padilla recalls. But clients—largely uninsured or underinsured working poor—found their way there. Inevitably, the project began to outgrow its space.

Enter the Stardust Club, a local foundation dedicated to improving the lives of families in the Guadalupe Community Center area. The foundation donated $5,000 to renovate a spacious room in the GCC into a reception area and small offices. When the renovations were complete, the practicum site was officially dedicated as the Sarabia Community Family Life Center. Today, masters’ and doctoral students provide free counseling to families, couples, children, and adults. Since its modest beginnings in 2007, the students have provided care for 120 clients—three quarters of whom are women.

“The demand is great,” says Robert Gee, clinical assistant professor in the College of Education and Human Development’s Department of Counseling. “For us, it provides the clinical training for students with clients having real-world problems.” Gee cites economic stressors, parenting and family relationships, substance abuse, criminal involvement, health concerns, marital issues, couple counseling and domestic violence as problems that clients seek help for at the Sarabia Center.

The Sarabia Center serves “people who fall between the cracks” of the health care system, Padilla says. “There are people out there who work, and their insurance doesn’t cover psychotherapy. … And they don’t have Medicaid. They’re the working poor.”

Recently, the Sarabia Center has begun providing services off-site for families from Parent Child Incorporated, Any Baby Can, University Hospital’s Secesso OB-GYN Clinic and the Guadalupe Home for pregnant women escaping abusive relationships.

One of the most exciting developments, says UTSA staff members, is an outreach counseling effort for families associated with the Wounded Warrior Project at Operation Homefront Village, a free housing development for those injured service members receiving rehabilitative treatment at area hospitals.

With continued support and a highly collaborative model, Padilla sees more growth for the Hispanic population, go to UTSA,” Padilla says.

—Lynn Gosnell

Alumnus loses bid for presidency

James Nyondo, B.B.A. ’05, lost a May 19 election along with five other candidates for president of his native Malawi to incumbent President Bingu wa Mutharika in what many observers called a flawed process due to a government-controlled media. Mutharika’s ruling Democratic Progressive Party was also winning control of the country’s parliament, while Nyondo was losing a concurrent race for a seat in parliament.

Nyondo, a 42-year-old lawyer and son of a tribal chief, ran on a platform of aid to the poor and anti-corruption. Malawi is a land-locked African country of 14 million that is grappling with the problems of a developing nation: population growth, HIV/AIDS, access to education and economic resources, and political corruption.

Nyondo arrived in San Antonio in 2003 to pursue a degree in business administration. While at UTSA and in travels throughout the United States, Nyondo soaked up knowledge about American culture, government and politics. While Nyondo was losing a concurrent race for a seat in parliament, the Progressive Party was also winning control of the country’s parliament, due to a government-controlled media. Mutharika’s ruling Democratic Progressive Party was also winning control of the country’s parliament, while Nyondo was losing a concurrent race for a seat in parliament.

Nyondo’s Christian faith is a driving force in his work and pursuit of leadership that truly serves the people is critical to bridging the divisive gap between the haves and the have-nots. The legacy of tomorrow is dependent on the servant-leadership of today. … For this country to rise, we need safe government that looks out for all the people’s well-being.”

UTSA Professor Richard Gambitta and Nyondo in a political science independent study focused on legislative behavior. Gambitta became a mentor to Nyondo, showing him both the city’s poverty and its wealth, as well as taking him to Austin to visit the Legislature in session and introducing him to state representatives, senators and staff.

“He was very surprised at the way the Legislature actually worked, the informality of it, compared to his own country’s parliament,” Gambitta said. “I told him, ‘I am always surprised by it, too.’”

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An Even Exchange

UTSA graduate students offer free counseling services to gain experience

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UTSA archaeologists find 3700 B.C. artifacts

Researchers from UTSA Center for Archaeological Research are examining artifacts they recently discovered that date from 3700 B.C. to A.D. 600. The artifacts were discovered during a three-month dig at Miraflores Park in San Antonio. The researchers were hired by the San Antonio design firm Rehler Vaughn & Koone to conduct an archaeological site inspection before construction of a pedestrian bridge over the San Antonio River from Brackenridge Park. What was expected to be a one-day observation turned into a three-month project, which CAR researchers completed in March.

“We found a lot of Early Archaic materials from approximately 3700 B.C., which are of significant interest, including two Guadalupian tools that were used either for woodworking or the defleshing of hunted game,” said Jon Dowling, CAR project archaeologist. “It was a really small area that we expected would be open and quiet, but it turned out to be a treasure chest of archaeology.”

“It’s no surprise to us when we find evidence of prehistoric occupation along a fresh-water resource. It’s an ideal place to live, whether it was 6,000 years ago or 400 years ago.”

According to Dowling, the artifacts will be cataloged and analyzed so CAR researchers can quantify and synthesize the data for better comprehension and understanding.

Discovered artifacts include:
• Ensor projectile point (spear point) from the Transitional Archaic period (200 B.C. – A.D. 600)
• Tortugas projectile point (spear point) from the Middle Archaic period or earlier
• Early triangular projectile point (spear point) from the Early Archaic period (3700 – 3600 B.C.)
• Remnants/segment of a historic relief dam used to stop flow into the old San Antonio Water Works Raceway (dam built circa 1877 and 1878).

To date, CAR has administered more than 500 contracts and grants. Research activities have focused on numerous prehistoric sites and historic archaeology at Spanish colonial missions, the Alamo, historic churches and forts, and early Texas settlements. Staff members also have conducted archaeological investigations in Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Mexico, Belize, Africa, Turkey, Europe and South America. Results of these investigations are published in more than 300 volumes in 10 publication series.

—Kris Rodríguez

UTSA Looks East

By the end of the year, UTSA could become the state’s third university to house a Confucius Institute dedicated to Chinese language, culture and history, in partnership with the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing (UIBE).

In March, officials from the Confucius Institute Headquarters in China approved UTSA’s application to establish the local center. An agreement must now be signed between UTSA and the institute before final approval can be granted by the University of Texas System Board of Regents. Only two other Texas universities have Confucius Institutes, the University of Texas at Dallas and Texas A&M–College Station.

If a local branch is approved by the UT System Board of Regents, it will be part of UTSA’s new East Asia Institute, established in October 2008 to promote understanding of East Asian societies and culture through research, outreach, networking, education, student/faculty exchanges, and business development and cooperation, said Donald Lien, the Richard S. Liu Distinguished Chair in Business and director of the East Asia Institute.

International businessman Richard S. Liu recently donated $2 million toward the East Asia Institute, making him the university’s largest individual donor. Through Liu’s Family Foundation, he has given UTSA a total of $6.3 million.

If the Confucius Institute agreement is approved, it could fund $100,000 yearly for up to five years for cultural programming, such as a Chinese film festival, martial arts demonstrations and Chinese orchestral performances, Lien said. To spearhead the program, the Chinese Institute Headquarters will provide 3,000 Chinese books and videos. Two Chinese language professors from UIBE also will teach Chinese language and culture classes at UTSA.

“If the Confucius Institute will promote language, culture, society, business, politics—everything related to China,” he said. “We’re going to offer courses for our UTSA students, but also we’re going to offer courses for the community.”

There are 314 Confucius Institutes in a global network that includes 81 countries. The Confucius Institute Headquarters, located in Beijing and administered by the Chinese Ministry of Education, is a nonprofit educational organization.

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The National Intramural Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA) recently honored the UTSA Recreation and Wellness Center at the Main Campus with the 2009 Outstanding Sports Facilities Award.

The center has the highest indoor climbing wall in Texas, four basketball courts, a juice bar, indoor soccer gym, lap pool, lazy river, indoor track and demonstration kitchen. Judges evaluate each facility on the intended and actual impact of the recreational program, unique aesthetic or architectural features, innovative construction materials or methods, technological benefits for the customer and correlation to the campus master plan and mission.

“We are thrilled that the Recreation Center was selected as one of the Outstanding Sports Facilities for 2009” and campus recreation director Laura Munroe.

“We are very proud of our facility and pleased to be recognized by our colleagues as having one of the outstanding facilities built or renovated within the last two years.”

Five other schools from across the country also were recognized with the award. Additional 2009 winners are Colorado School of Mines Student Recreation Center, Springfield College Wellness Center, Stephen F. Austin State University Student Recreation Center, University of Texas–Pan American Recreation and Wellness Center, and University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh, Student Recreation and Wellness Center.

NIRSA began presenting the annual OSF awards in 1988 for creative, innovative designs of new or expanded facilities. Winners are considered a standard or model by which other collegiate recreational facilities should be measured and from which others can benefit.

NIRSA selects and publishes information on the facilities as a resource for campus master planners, recreational sports directors, designers, architects, contractors and recreational sports students.

—Omar Hernandez

UTSA ranks No. 4 in the nation in the number of undergraduate degrees awarded to Hispanic students and No. 12 nationally in the number of master’s degrees awarded to Hispanics, according to the May 2009 edition of The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education magazine.

During the 2007–2008 academic year, the magazine surveyed the top 100 predominantly Hispanic serving colleges and universities in the United States and Puerto Rico. “UTSA’s vision to provide access to educational excellence is demonstrated once again in the Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education magazine’s annual ranking,” said UTSA President Ricardo Romo.

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To have … our programs ranked in the top 10 among the nation’s leading Hispanic-serving institutions shows UTSA continues on the right path in building the Next Great Texas University.”

UTSA earned the No. 4 national ranking with 1,666 Hispanics out of 3,553 graduating bachelor’s degrees, representing 47 percent of the graduating class.

UTSA earned a No. 12 national ranking for master’s degrees awarded with 306 Hispanics out of 868 graduates, or 35 percent of the class.

For nearly 13 years, the College of Sciences has led the nation in the number of undergraduate degrees awarded to Hispanic students in the biological sciences. That trend continued with 169 undergraduate degrees awarded to Hispanics in the 2007–2008 academic year.

Additionally, the College of Architecture ranked first, awarding 73 undergraduate degrees. The Department of Health and Kinesiology ranked second in the parks, recreation, leisure and fitness studies program with 63 bachelor’s degrees awarded to Hispanics.

—Kris Rodriguez

The 2009 University Excellence Awards were given to a number of faculty and staff, including Kelsey Bratcher, assistant director of Risk Education and Alcohol and Drug Programs, Office of Student Activities, Rising Star Award; Leticia Duncan-Broman, executive director, Tomás Rivera Center for Student Success, Leadership Award; the Teaching Education Student Services Team, the Team Spirit Award; Andrea Almanes, administrative associate I and lecturer II, Department of Political Science and Geography, the Extra Mile Award; Robert Garza, Institute for Economic Development manager, the Order of the Roadrunner Award, and Ann Eisenberg, associate dean, Honors College, and Andrea Almanes, Richard S. Howe Excellence in Service to Undergraduate Students Awards … Lizanne Cano, lecturer in Spanish (non-tenure track), and Małgorzata Oleksiwicz-Peralba, associate professor of Latin American studies (tenure track), received 2009 Distinguished Faculty Awards … Outstanding Sophomore Scholarships were awarded to 10 first-year UTSA students as part of the UTSA Graduation Initiative. Each student received a $3,000 scholarship toward tuition and fees for their second year at UTSA. Recipients and their majors were Bonnie Caufield (interdisciplinary studies—elementary education), Cassidy Chesser (undeclared), Jon Edwards (political science), Joshua “Blue” Garcia (biology), Nick Garcia (biology), Prakash Manmum (pre-business/accounting), Nichole Montalbano (criminal justice), Rachel Skarke (music studies), Derek Smith (kinesiology) and Christina Starkey (mathematics). … Marchet Evans, associate professor and chair of the Department of Counseling in the UTSA College of Education and Human Development, has been selected to serve as president of the American Counseling Association, the world’s largest counseling association with nearly 45,000 members. Evans will be named president-elect July 1; her term as ACA president begins July 1, 2010. … Cristina Forbes, a UTSA senior business major, was named a Next Generation Leadership scholarship for the 2008–2009 academic year from American Humanics. UTSA’s nonprofit management certification program … UTSA sophomore Devin Gibson and senior Joey Shank were named to the Capital One Bank/Southland Conference All-Academic Team for men’s basketball … George Perry, dean of the UTSA College of Sciences and professor of biology, has been named one of the world’s top 100 Alzheimer’s disease researchers, according to a study conducted by Collexis Holdings Inc. and published in the Journal of Alzheimer’s Disease. The Top 100 list was released in the journal’s March online edition … UTSA debateurs Chris Thomas (junior) and Andy Montee (junior) finished 14th in a field of more than 200 teams from across the nation at the Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) championship hosted by Idaho State University in Pocatello. Both were honored with CEDA’s All American Debater Award, placing them among the top 25 debate teams in the country … Akshay Thussu and Megan Graham were crowned Mr. and Ms. UTSA 2009. The competition is sponsored by the UTSA Alumni Association. … UTSA’s team from the Office of the Vice President for University Advancement won eight awards, including three grand awards, at the 2009 CASE (Council for Advancement and Support of Education) District IV Conference. Awards went to the Office of Alumni Programs and the Office of University Publications.
G ayle Nicoll has dedicated much of her research to finding what factors will most encourage people to take the stairs. “So when she steps on an elevator, well … she feels a little guilty. ‘I do use the elevators,’ she says. ‘But I have to admit I feel like Martha Stewart baking a Betty Crocker cake.’”

For Nicoll, an associate professor and chair of the Department of Architecture at UTSA, taking the stairs isn’t just about burning off the calories from Betty Crocker brownies (or Martha Stewart’s, for that matter). It’s about the functionality of architecture. And her research, which explores how buildings can do a body good, may well change the future of American design.

The key, she says, is exploring “how buildings can impact health, both positively and negatively, and specifically how building design can promote health.”

In other words, making staircases more convenient than elevators. Planning well-lit hallways so people will walk to one another’s desks to talk rather than firing off an e-mail. Offering employees who want to bike to work a safe place to stow their bikes. And so on.

“Stairs don’t require any special membership, or special clothing or special skills. But climbing them will improve your health.”

So why don’t more people do it?

Mainly, Nicoll’s research has found, because elevators are just so darn convenient. And stairs? Not so much. It’s a chicken-and-egg situation: as elevators grew in popularity, architects could build taller buildings, and as buildings grew taller, elevators became more important. That meant architects tended to tuck the stairs away in an out-of-the-way corner, which meant people turned to the elevators, even when they were only going up or down a few flights. “That’s bad for health and for architecture,” Nicoll says. “Think back to those wonderful buildings with a grand staircase, she says. “The staircase was an important part of your sense of entry or exit in a building. It gave it drama.”

—Jennifer Roelf Easter

On the move

The Latino immigrant experience, especially Latinas of African descent, has long been of interest to Margarita Machado-Casas, an assistant professor in the bilingual studies department. And a recent memorandum of agreement between UTSA and Bluefields Indian and Caribbean University (BICU) in Nicaragua has afforded her the opportunity to delve deeper into her field.

Bluefields, Wayne State University in Detroit and UTSA’s College of Education and Human Development are collaborating in Bluefields’ master’s program in English education.

Bluefields is unique because of its diversity; a half dozen indigenous and African languages are used at the school, making it a perfect lab for Machado-Casas’ work. “She not only taught a course for the master’s in English education program, but also was able to conduct a research study that addresses the migration, mobility and survival of Afro-Latino immigrants within the new Latino diaspora.”

Recent scholarship has identified the rapid growth of migration to the U.S., particularly in rural and indigenous Latin American communities. Machado-Casas’ study aims to explore personal narratives of Latinos who are of African descent and who reside in Bluefields, Nicaragua, and the United States.

Let there be light

For more than 30 years, UTSA associate psychology professor James Dykes has studied human visual information processing, detect visual stimuli and view color.

Over that period, most of his research focused on two areas: photopic vision, how people view the world in the daytime, and scotopic vision, how it appears to them at night.

But about 15 years ago, both in speech development and in his background in mathematics, he saw an opportunity to apply his background in mathematics to conduct research in the UTSA Neurosciences Institute.

Along with bats and aquatic mammals, birds are the only known animals to learn to “speak” the way humans do—by imitating adults. Troyer’s research focuses on zebra finches, a small bird that is native to Australia. Birdsong is used as a model for understanding how the mechanisms that control learned behaviors work in human brains. Troyer says there are similarities between bird and human brains that are used for learning and memory. Over time, most of his research focused on two areas: photopic vision, how people view the world in the daytime, and scotopic vision, how it appears to them at night.

“With the rise in attention to disorders such as autism and ADHD, the ability to switch off the circuit for producing repetitive behaviors has become a particular behavioral task. In normal behavior, the two circuits are balanced, but in some disorders, there’s a shift in balance. Thus the researchers can measure how acuity and color perception change as vision adapts from day through dusk to night. According to Dykes, the Air Force is interested in the research because many of their flights take off at dusk and the cockpit displays are dimly lit to avoid detection by other aircraft. “If a pilot can’t tell what color his warning light is, then it can be a problem,” Dykes says.

Dykes says the research is not only important to the Air Force, but the Department of Transportation is also interested because many accidents occur at dusk.

—Kris Rodríguez

Birdsong

From the pages of UTSA Catalyst—A small bird chirps a song somewhere in the trees above. The song plays over and over, and other birds join the chorus, each with its own unique melody. While these songs may conjure pastoral, peaceful feelings for many, for assistant professor of biology Todd Troyer they stir up thoughts of complex sequences of vocal activity.

Troyer maintains a nest of nearly 50 birds whose songs he listens to for pleasure, but in hopes of shedding light on the mysteries of the human brain.

After receiving his Ph.D. in mathematics from the University of California, Berkeley, Troyer accepted a postdoctoral position in the W.M. Keck Center for Integrative Neuroscience at the University of California, San Francisco. In 2007, he joined UTSA’s Department of Biology and began using computational methods based on his background in mathematics to conduct research in the UTSA Neurosciences Institute.

Ethnographic research methods, such as oral narratives, were used to collect detailed information about Latino family members and their lives. These research methods provided an understanding of both the Latino family experience and their interpretation of it, particularly in the context of migration.

In addition to migration histories, literacy and/or multiliteracy development are examined. Of particular note, the study explores how identity shifts are negotiated after Afro-Latinos migrate to the United States.

—Amanda Beck

Stepping up

Architect’s research explores how buildings can do a body good

Well-designed and well-placed stairs such as those in these UTSA buildings can impact health and fitness, says architecture professor Gayle Nicoll. Pictured are the Main Building (left and right) and the Biotechnology, Sciences and Engineering Building.
Coker, Hickey have plans to score big with Roadrunner football

When Larry Coker took over the head coaching duties at The University of Texas at San Antonio early this year, the athletics department was expanding to include football for the first time.

They had a helmet. "That’s it," says UTSA Athletics Director Lynn Hickey. "That’s how we’re starting. I think we’ve actually added another helmet. Now I think we have two helmets!"

Hickey invested the better part of this decade backing, suddenly the end zone doesn’t seem so far away. Yard-by-yard, Hickey and her coaches think they’ll make it there just fine. "I have one of the most experienced coaches in America by my helping me know how to plan this and to put things in place one step at a time," says Hickey.

Coker led the 2001 Miami Hurricanes to an undefeated season and a national championship. He earned the Rose Bryant and American Football Coaches Association Coach of the Year honors for the feat. In the seasons that followed, he guided the ‘Canes to the Bowl Championship Series title game and three BCS bowl games, finishing with a 60–15 overall record.

"It’s going to be tough, and we’re not going to wait two years before the Roadrunners get to play their first game. It’s already been too long. Sure, he’s had plenty of game days working as an analyst for ESPN in the two seasons since he left Miami. But those weren’t game days. There was no adrenaline rush. There are no wins to enjoy or losses to endure when the games aren’t. I got to stand around and talk football," says Coker. "But the thing about being an analyst is you don’t have the ups and downs, and you leave the stadium, and you really don’t know if you’ve won or lost."

"No wins and losses? That’s no life for a man who always wanted to be a football coach. So, Coker started searching. The University of Texas at San Antonio, deep in the land of Friday Night Lights glory where football is king, was starting a program and needed a coach to lead the way. He could have gone anywhere, but to coach college football in Texas? It just doesn’t get any better than that," says Coker.

Hickey’s surprise when Coker came calling. Her voice still betrays the shock she felt over the first phone message she received from the man expressing his interest in the job. But he was so easy to talk to, so nice, so sincere. She called more people and it seemed as though each person said the same thing, “Larry Coker is probably the nicest man I’ve ever met.” Knowing Coker would do things the right way, Hickey couldn’t think of a better way to start a football program. "He’s such a stable person and understands long-term goals," says Hickey. "He’s at a point in his career where he wants to do the same thing we want to do. He wants to build a program and leave a legacy. So I think the timing with his career, with the timing of what we want to do, is just a perfect fit."

Coker was just as impressed with Hickey. "She’s really got a detailed plan," he says. "She’s really part of the intrigue, the interest I had in coming here."

The match has been made and the plans are in place. Now it’s up to Coker and Hickey to make the moves and keep progressing toward that 2011 kickoff.

Coker has tripled his coaching staff and doubled his equipment (two helmets) since he took the job in April. Now somehow get this man a clipboard and whistle. He has practices to plan.
Compounding interest

Economics professor stresses both research and teaching

By Jenny Moore

H up through the course syllabus of International Economics and you will immediately notice something about Professor Hamid Beladi. His teaching philosophy is an important component of the course. From day one, students are invited to work in partnership with one of the nation’s leading researchers in the fields of international economics and globalization.

“I approach my courses as collaborative activities between the student and myself. We are all in the classroom to learn. I just have a bit of a head start on the material,” Beladi says.

The class, offered to undergraduates in the fall and spring, is designed for students who have taken two economics courses and want to understand the micro-foundations of international trade and finance. The course presents concepts not just from the business school, but also from other areas of study who want the tools to understand and analyze economies from an international perspective.

For some undergraduates, the novelty of having a professor who believes research and teaching are complementary and equally important is an enormous opportunity.

“It is not often that you find a professor who is an accomplished researcher as well as an exceptional teacher,” says Jennifer Rigler, a senior majoring in geography and minoring in international economics.

Beladi has a worldwide reputation as a leader in the field of international economics. He is the editor of the International Review of Economics and Finance and Frontiers of Economics and Globalization. He serves as associate editor of the Review of International Economics, working and editing alongside other world-renowned economists such as Carl Chen and Paul Krugman, winner of the 2008 Nobel Prize in Economics. He has published more than 150 papers in refereed academic journals with topics focusing on international economics and globalization.

“I really want them to learn something,” he says.

For the 2005–2008 period, he was the highest ranked researcher in the College of Business, and in 2009, in the area of research excellence, was named the Col. Jean Piccione and Lt. Col. Philip Piccione Endowed Research Award recipient. An advocate of multidisciplinary research, he is involved in scholarly research on international trade and policy, analysis of international joint ventures, global financial issues and environmental policies.

“I trust that my research has brought professional recognition not only to the economics department, but also to UTSA,” Beladi says.

That research has a direct advantage for the students and UTSA as a whole when it aims toward national research university status. “The interaction between quality faculty and students ultimately results in graduates who obtain better jobs and positions in society,” Beladi says.

But in the classroom, his top priority is giving students the basics.

“How does collaboration between student and professor work? As Beladi will tell you, teaching is a creative art that requires constant adjustments and modifications.”

Here he is mid-semester, holding court in his own theater. Speaking in a loud, clear voice, Beladi begins a sentence about low-wage labor and trails off, creating space for the students to reflect on his words. “The material is all common sense,” Beladi says. “Forget math or equations. And he has a disdain for multiple choice tests, favoring instead short papers, take-home exams and problem sets that permit students to explore subjects at their own pace.

Over the course of the term, Beladi walks undergraduates through the basics of tariffs, protectionism, trade policy, exports/imports, trade blocs, and supply and demand while giving them a thorough sense of real-world economics. “I really want them to learn something,” he says.

“Keep students from sinking into their seats, he builds on each concept like a storyteller, adding supporting yet directive phrases such as, “Are you with me?” or “I really just want you to listen. Just follow the story?”

Afterward, to fix the information more fully in the students’ minds, he says, “Chew it up and digest it” or “Now I need your help. Let me test you for a second.” Lent any become confused or overwhelmed, he will caution students: “This is very simple. It’s not rocket science.”

To keep students on their toes, Beladi involves them in the smallest decisions. Mid-lecture, for example, he stops a discussion on international trade to ask a student in the front row which color of chalk will best highlight the point he is making on the chalkboard. “White chalk, or orange?” he asks. “Orange” replies the student. However small a gesture, similar tactics keep the students alert. Attendance is high. Students arrive early, clamoring to know Beladi’s opinion of the federal government’s recently approved economic stimulus package. They come regularly to office hours.

Students such as Phillip Carroll are drawn to the class because Beladi translates economic concepts into real-world situations, citing his own research. “A lot of the professors forget that students don’t know anything about economics,” says Carroll. “Professor Beladi explains things in a lot of different ways.”

To get away from the idea that teaching is a solo performance by the instructor, Beladi’s students are expected to participate regularly, even to redirect the conversation.

“The vast majority of students—especially undergraduates—in my courses will never become producers of scholarship in international trade theory and policy,” he says. “So my responsibility is to cultivate in students a keen reflective thinking and critical analysis. They should learn to have a keen perspective, to be responsible, well-informed decision makers.”

Research (production) and teaching (distribution) are so intertwined for Beladi; there’s no separation between the complex research he does with other academics and the simplified explanations he offers to students in jeans and T-shirts. And he has published on this topic as well, encouraging universities to find value in both research and teaching as a way of investing for the future.

“Research without teaching becomes unintellectual and uncommunicative,” Beladi explains. “And teaching without research causes academics to become disengaged from an ever-changing body of knowledge in their field. While Beladi doesn’t expect his students to become leading researchers, he believes UTSA students are well equipped to become responsible citizens and leaders. Because of San Antonio’s unique geography and minority student population, he is pleased by his students’ ability to relate to issues such as migration and international relations.

“If asked to summarize my philosophy of teaching into one word, it would be respect,” says Beladi. Through an earnest dedication to undergraduate learning, Beladi is both advancing scholarly research and helping students become more productive, socially conscious people. Whether they pursue economics as a career choice is unimportant, he says. What really matters is that they become more aware of themselves and their position in the world.

Senior geography major Bigler says the Beladi effect is working, one student at a time. “Personally, I am a better citizen because I now have a much better understanding of what international trade means to the United States,” she says. “Better informed citizens equal stronger democracies.”
It’s Fiesta in San Antonio and thousands line the river for the Texas Cavaliers River Parade, part of the city’s annual weeklong celebration honoring the heroes of the Alamo and San Jacinto. A beautifully decorated barge floats by carrying a lively country-western band. The singer leads the crowd in a ballad. But the singing soon turns into cheering as the crowd recognizes the man with the microphone. It’s Ricardo Romo, fifth president of The University of Texas at San Antonio.

It’s not uncommon to see Romo singing at various events, discussing his artistic photographs or stopping to chat with students between classes. His down-to-earth, friend-next-door character is the reason he is well known and well liked at UTSA, in San Antonio and everywhere he travels.

“It’s not something that he stages for publicity, he just really enjoys people,” says his wife and UTSA sociology professor Harriett Romo. “When we go places and he stops and gets gas somewhere, he’ll start talking to the person across the way getting gas, and they’ll talk for 10 minutes. I think he breaks the mold for everything. He’s a unique person and a very special person.”

Along with charisma, Romo’s foresight and love of education have propelled UTSA to new levels of academic excellence, growth and maturity. Under his leadership, the university has shed its commuter-campus image and is now poised to become a national research university.

Intersecting paths

Romo’s story begins on the West Side of San Antonio, where few graduated from college and many lived through economic hardship. But on the streets of Romo’s beloved Prospect Hill neighborhood, he learned perseverance, discipline, a strong work ethic and loyalty. Beginning when he was 6 years old, hours outside the classroom were often spent working in his family’s grocery store.

His work ethic and focus are evident in his leadership style, says A.J. Rodriguez, deputy city manager for the City of San Antonio and a 1999 M.B.A. graduate of UTSA.
It’s in terms of being humble and being thankful for what you have. Yet, trying to achieve more, not necessarily for yourself, but for that same part of town that he grew up in and the rest of the overall community,” he says.

When Romo graduated from Fox Tech High School in 1962, like many other San Antonio students, he had to make a choice when it came to college—either leave his hometown to pursue a four-year degree from an affordable public institution or stay at home and attend community college. The only four-year institutions in the city were private, and with two other siblings attending college at the same time, private school was just too expensive an option.

Always a strong athlete as well as student, he earned a track scholarship to the University of Texas at Austin.

“I was very fortunate because I had a track scholarship, it was all done for me,” Romo says. “And frankly, I don’t know how I could have done it otherwise.”

Even as a high school student who was advised by one of his high school counselors to forgo attending college, it was obvious to Romo that there was a need for an affordable public university in his hometown. But it took a few enlightened turns before he could return home.

“Romo’s touch is personal, and that’s what makes the difference,” says Kevin J. LaVelle, the University of Texas at San Antonio’s vice president for student affairs and civic participation. “I think that sense of optimism and promise has been contagious, both on campus and in San Antonio.”

In his pocket, Romo carries around sets of cards. On them, he writes comments he collects from students about needs on campus. One student tells Romo he needs more accessible on-campus living. Everything is jotted down for consideration.

“Romo is a very focused individual, and he’s extremely intelligent and wise, but his demeanor is so disarming that it really makes you feel like you can clear the deck of barriers down and you’re able to really talk to him one-on-one,” says Rodriguez.

“At all times, Romo seems to listen and care, say his students.

“When I first came to college, I thought the president of the university was this kind of almighty person who didn’t associate with students, just this stereotypical CEO who has so much business that he doesn’t come out and actually talk to students,” says Christina Gomez, Student Government Association president in 2008-2009. “So when I did meet him it was a shock that you could just talk to him about everything, and he wants to listen and tell these funny stories. He’s able to talk to you and make you feel that you’re not talking to the most important person at this university, you’re just talking to another Roadrunner,” she says.

“There’s a genuine warmth about him that attracts people,” says Jan Steiger, Romo’s chief of staff. “He’s a grand leader and a legend in his own time. People follow him around—he’s like the Pied Piper. People like being inside his circle.”

Just another Roadrunner

Visit a local taqueria during the week and you’re likely to see Romo there, chatting with other customers over breakfast tacos. During Fiesta, he hands everyone he encounters a UTSA Fiesta medal.

And walk down university corridors with him and he’s likely to enthusiastically greet students by name or send an occasional compliment about a shirt color—with always the school colors of vibrant orange and blue—to those passing by.

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Two celebrations, two milestones

As Romo celebrates his 10th year at UTSA, the university celebrates a milestone of its own. This year marks the 40th year of the university’s existence. When construction began on 600 acres just south and west of Interstate 10 and Loop 1604, the land that would become the UTSA campus was surrounded by meandering ranchland and grazing cattle. Today, it is surrounded by homes, a thriving mall, eateries, stores and a theme park.

Just as the city around it grew, UTSA itself has bloomed. The first official class held only 670 graduate students taught by 52 faculty. Today, enrollment is more than 28,400. There are 132 degree programs, including 84 bachelor’s, 47 master’s and 21 doctoral degrees.

“UTSA has flourished under the astute leadership of Ricardo Romo,” says longtime friend Mark Yudof, president of the University of California system. “His broad vision and steadfast adherence to excellence and access has seamlessly guided the San Antonio campus to new heights of prominence.”

Repeatedly, Romo has successfully secured funding from the University of Texas System and the Texas Legislature for needed improvements, and students have voted for higher student fees to pay for more. Each time they do, they’re putting their trust in him that he will make the best decisions for the university.

“I don’t know how many university presidents you see who actually appear giddy about their work,” says Green. “He is just a happy university president. You can tell instantly that he loves the job, he loves his faculty, he loves the students, and he loves the campus.”

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19th century home by famed Texas architect Alfred Giles was Marline and Paul Carter's playground in the 1960s and '70s. With its piles of dusty, old and unopened trunks in the attic and antique toys dating back to the turn of the century, it was a perfect haunted house for kids with wild imaginations.

Little did the children know that 40 years later, the house would become known as San Antonio's treasure chest for the secrets kept within those dusty, old trunks. Inside, sometimes on parchment as thin as sewing pattern paper, are thousands of personal thoughts elegantly and carefully scrolled with a penmanship not often seen today. There are letters to brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers, sometimes about a new silk dress or about the death of a family member. There are telegrams, some still tucked away in their original envelopes, sent by sons serving in wars. And there are detailed reports of wives and daughters killed in violent Indian raids.

The Carter family papers are now a permanent part of the Archives and Special Collections at UTSA and are available for free to the public for viewing and research. Already at more than 4,000 pieces, the collection is still growing as the family steadily empties the attic at the historic Maverick-Carter house at 119 Taylor Street.

For generations, the trunks set untouched and now serve as perfectly preserved time capsules chronicling one family's life on the frontier in the 1800s and on to the 1900s. More than 150 years of family stories, letters, diaries, photographs and maps were stored away, and they all give insight into one of the first Anglo families to settle in San Antonio, as well as the development of the city itself.

"You're supposed to go out with the old and on with the new," says Johnson, also a published historian. "It's really gripping documents there. Many of these documents have not been seen in public for 100 plus years, and they have this immediacy and sometimes poignancy and tragedy that make them extraordinarily attractive as subjects for study."

The White Angel

The house at 119 Taylor Street sits almost hidden in the midst of modern development. Bracketed by businesses and a downtown parking lot, and across the street from Municipal Auditorium, its pointed rooftop just barely peeks out between surrounding trees and buildings.

But when Aline Badger Carter and her husband, Henry Champe Carter, purchased the house in 1910 from William Maverick, son of one of the signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence, the San Antonio River cut right behind it. There were no buildings or bright streetlights to obstruct Aline Carter's view of the planets and stars from the observatory built on the rooftop. That's where she housed her 1918 telescope, which, for several years, she used to predict eclipses for the local newspaper.

Aline Carter, known as the White Angel of St. Mark's Episcopal Church because of her trademark white flowing organdy dresses, as well as for her charitable contributions at jails and with orphans, was passionate about learning. She eagerly explored topics ranging from science and poetry to religion. In her house she kept animal fossils and geological specimens, which remain in the attic today.

"She was a scientist and a naturalist," says Paul Carter, her grandson. "She always thought that science allowed you to discover God's mysteries."

But Aline Carter is perhaps best known as Port Laureate of Texas from 1947 to 1949. A distinguished author, she published two books and, before her death in 1972, was working on a thousand-page historical fiction novel about the life of her grandmother, Sarah Riddle Eagar. The manuscript is part of the collection now housed at UTSA's archives.

Aline's husband, a well-known Texas attorney and former president of the State Bar Association of Texas, was 31 years older than his wife. And, as family stories go, they were so deeply in love that they frequently left each other love notes scattered throughout their home. Love notes will also be in the collection.

"We're collecting them to put on display so people can see what it is like living in a romance novel," Paul Carter says, quoting from one: "'When I whisper Aline, all the ecstasies of heaven and earth are mine.' That's the kind of thing he would leave around the house."

H.C. Carter died in 1948. Having given much of their wealth to charity, Aline Carter was forced to convert her home into apartments, which she rented out after his death.

After she died, the house sat empty and eventually fell into disrepair. Ceilings leaked. Dust and bugs took over. And throughout, the priceless
papers stored away in trunks remained untouched by anything but silver-fish in the third-story attic. “I didn’t think my mother was a materialist enough to save love letters,” says her son, David Carter. He only recently found out about the love letters sent to his mother, whom he and his brothers grew up calling “my angel” in French. And, like his mother, he has a collection of all the letters his wife ever sent. “It’s a problem with the family,” he says about collecting.

But his daughter says the collection has had a huge impact on her. As a teenager, Marline Carter, now Lawson, would sneak glimpses into her grandmother’s old diaries. When she was in her 20s, she piffled one and read it from cover to cover.

“It opened up a whole new life for me,” she says. “I always looked at them and read them, but it wasn’t until I actually took some things and had a chance to study them that I understood that this is a true piece of amazing history of San Antonio and an interesting woman that was a part of it.”

Paul Carter says he hopes to keep his grandmother’s charitable work, scientific contributions and poetry alive by converting the house into a museum and making his family’s papers available to UTSA for the public. “She was unique and progressive, so that’s why we want to keep that theme going,” he says. “We’re hoping to perpetuate that and celebrate it.”

Leaving a legacy

Walking in the attic on a recent spring afternoon, Paul Carter picks up a yellowed San Antonio Daily Express from 1888. The pages are intact, though delicate. Illustrated pictures of downtown San Antonio show storefronts that look remarkably similar to today’s downtown. And while the writing is not original to the family, he says, they were stowed haphazardly across the attic floor for decades.

Most families throw away grocery bills as soon as they’re recorded in the checkbook. But the Carter family wasn’t like most families. Bills and receipts from grocery stores, candle makers and the meat market are among their collection. Records like these help reconstruct a neighborhood. Bills have letterheads with the names of companies and addresses that have long been paved over by streets and other modern development.

“That’s the value in these sorts of papers in terms of reconstructing to understand San Antonio’s history,” UTSA historian Johnson says. “This is the real stuff that makes history vivid.”

Relics like these are rare, he says. As a city, there seems to be a mass-ive historical loss of memory since the Battle of the Alamo. What records do exist are scattered among various archives throughout the city. But in this one attic, he found a treasure he only hoped existed before.

“I have always said this city is probably full of attics full of family papers, and nobody is doing anything with them,” he says. “I walked into the Carter family’s attic and it was like, for a historian, finding the mother lode. It was just kind of an ‘Oh my God’ moment.”

“The theme continues. And there will be new opportunities. And they will be wonderful,” he says, “because the Carter donation is so important, Johnson says. Finding something so intact and far was kind of like finding El Dorado,” he says of the collection. “It was like treasure hunting, and this really is a treasure.”

As time goes on, there will be fewer opportunities, Wittenbach fears. That presents new challenges to preserving the family’s legacy.

“I don’t know what will be around to collect in another couple of generations,” Wittenbach says. “Who writes letters as much as we used to? There is going to be less output to try to collect in this kind of form.”

And that’s what makes the Carter donation so important, Johnson says. Finding something so intact and far was kind of like finding El Dorado, he says of the collection. “It was like treasure hunting, and this really is a treasure.”

Like his ancestors before him, Paul Carter keeps everything. Take his first cell phone, so big it resembles a field World War II radio. Instead of being neatly in a dusty trunk on the third floor of his grandparents’ home, he keeps it in a barn. The horses are long gone. Stacks of other collec-tibles like the phone surround his first car, a 1960 VW Beetle.

“It’s like I just can’t let go,” he says. He used to feel guilty about it. He used to think eventually he’d get to throwing everything away. But now, he says, he feels justified in being a pack rat.

“Sadly, the reaction to his family papers is reaffirming and it’s mak-ing me work,” he says. And so, “The theme continues. And there will be somebody coming down the line that says ‘Oh my god, you’re so glad you still have that.’”

Aline B. Carter and her husband, Henry Champe Carter.

Top: Aline’s son, Frank Carter, often wrote her mother letters. Each of her beef purchases in the 1860s.

WIBE EXTRA
Peek into the Carter’s third-floor attic and see what other treasures have been uncovered in a slide show narrated by Paul Carter. Go to www.utsa.edu/sombilla for more.
What tool promises to advance research in an untold range of subjects, from cancer therapy to solar panels, electronics to archaeology? This isn’t a trick question or even a riddle, but the answer does boggle the mind: This fall, a microscope with the ability to show atoms more clearly than ever will arrive at The University of Texas at San Antonio. When it does, it will be just the second of its kind in the world, according to the company that makes it. The other sits in Japan, in the factory of manufacturer JEOL, a global supplier of scientific instruments that specializes in electron microscopes.

The Robert J. Kleberg, Jr. and Helen C. Kleberg Foundation this winter gave UTSA $1.2 million, the final amount needed to purchase the second-generation aberration-corrected electron microscope nicknamed “Helenita” for foundation president Helen Kleberg Groves. UTSA physics and astronomy department chair Miguel J. Yacaman, a renowned electron microscopist and nanotechnology researcher, says the capabilities of this microscope, the best aberration-corrected microscope at a U.S. university, are legion. What makes the instrument so useful is its improved resolution and its ability to correct distortion, a problem Yacaman compares to the skewed effect of fun-house mirrors at a carnival.

“What you want is that your microscope doesn’t distort the real image,” he says.

It packs additional features that make researchers swoon, such as the ability to analyze the chemical makeup of a sample and to reconstruct two-dimensional samples into three-dimensional images.

Three other powerful microscopes arrived in the Advanced Microscopy and Nanotechnology Lab on the Main Campus last year. The trio—a scanning electron microscope that shows three-dimensional images at high resolution, and two atomic force scanning probe microscopes that can measure the surfaces of nanoparticles—were funded with an $822,000 gift, also from the Kleberg Foundation. These new tools already have exponentially grown the lab’s sophistication and capabilities and offer their own specialized functions.

“There was no high resolution machine at UTSA,” Yacaman says. “There was no chance to look at nanoparticles on a scanning microscope. … We didn’t have atomic force microscopes before in the university.”

The aberration-corrected microscope “is going to be the first one of this kind in the United States, and it will allow researchers in many fields … to do work at the very high resolution level,” he explains. When it joins the lab, including the three other Kleberg-funded microscopes, the new microscope “will make [the lab] one of the most important microscopy facilities in the world,” he says.

And researchers in a host of fields, including materials science, chemistry, biology, industry and pathology, will be able to take part.
The microscope is making its debut at UTSA because of Yacaman's reputation and longstanding relationship with the manufacturer, as well as the interest and support of the university colleagues agree.

"Professor Yacaman is a world-class microscope," says Donald Paul, professor of chemical engineering and director of the Texas Materials Institute at the University of Texas at Austin. "This is going to be a very important tool for UTSA," he continues. "I can easily envision there will be a number of people from Austin to use the microscope there."

A former colleague and past collaborator of Yacaman's, Paul notes a discovery of Yacaman's in the mid-'80s that garnered widespread attention. He explained the longevity of the brilliant blue paint used by the Maya 1,000 years ago that had been baffling archaeologists and researchers for years. Yacaman found that the Maya blue, as it had come to be called, contained clay with nanoparticles of metal that kept the blue intact for centuries.

The new microscope will allow Yacaman to revisit Maya blue and perhaps resolve yet-unanswered questions.

"We are going to study Maya blue at ultrahigh resolution," Yacaman says. "There is still some controversy on the subject that we will resolve with this machine. Discoveries like this will be common with the new machine."

The microscope will be installed over a three-month period in the new engineering building, where the Advanced Microscopy and Nanotechnology Lab will be moving, and is expected to be fully functional by the end of the year. The plan is to make the microscope available to researchers around the country who will be able to access it remotely.

"They send a sample, we load the sample," Yacaman says. "This instrument should be working 24 hours a day. The idea is to make it a Texas machine and eventually a USA machine."

"What you see is a very clear difference in … how clearly you see the things viewable, to the development of electron microscopes before the advent of optical microscopes in the 17th century that use light to make small things viewable, to the development of electron microscopes before World War II. Light has its limitations and can only go so far in resolution, but electrons, with their shorter wavelengths, go much farther. Electron microscopes continued to improve over the years as well. But at the level of this new microscope, the potential for new discoveries is enormous," says Yacaman.

"Once you can see the atoms, you can learn a lot about how the matter is formed," he says. "It's a whole new ballgame."

Just what kind of ballgame? Yacaman refers to the Hubble Space Telescope's launch in 1990 as an example of a whole new world opened up. With the detailed and frequent images it provides, the Hubble has advanced our understanding of the universe, including the danger of cometary impacts, the evolution of galaxies and details of stellar death, according to the Space Telescope Science Institute.

"When they sent the Hubble to space, the number of discoveries that came from the Hubble were enormous," he says. "So we expect with this microscope to have tremendous discoveries in the nano world."

The Hubble telescope provides another example of the benefits of aberration correction, explains Ulrich Dahmen, director of the National Center for Electron Microscopy at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in Berkeley, Calif. The Hubble experienced its own aberration that required a space launch to correct, he explains. And the difference between the images from before and after that fix was obvious.

"What you see is a very clear difference in … how clearly you see the stars in the galaxy," he says.

Under the microscope

Cancer research stands to benefit tremendously from the new technology. Researchers hope to design localized treatments that target cancer cells without causing damage to surrounding healthy tissue, as happens with conventional radiation treatment. Other applications—and there are many—include finding a substitute for pricey silicon crystals that can be used to make more efficient and cheaper solar panels, as well as developing better armor for military vehicles and creating improved antibacterials. Nanoparticles of silver already are used as an antibacterial in products, but Yacaman says there is more to be learned about them.

"Nanoparticles is one of the great ways to fight bacteria, but then of course we have to check on the negative effects it might have," Yacaman says. "We need to design better nanoparticles for all kinds of applications, and that's one of the ways to do it—we have to know the atomic structure to really design a new material!"

College of Sciences Dean George Perry is planning to use the aberration-corrected microscope in his own research on oxidative stress and Alzheimer's disease. Having such an instrument on campus is going to attract high-quality faculty whose research interests dovetail with the microscope's features, he says.

"It will make it much easier for us to recruit top scientists," he says. "It offers such resolution that it's sort of way above what anyone can imagine."

Gaining a tool as state-of-the-art as the aberration-corrected electron microscope at a university is a notable achievement, says Dahmen of the Berkeley National Laboratory.

It's a small world

It can be hard for the non-expert to fathom the tiny particles that are the bread and butter of researchers in this field. A nanometer is a billionth of a meter. Still tiny! A strand of human hair is about 20,000 nanometers in diameter. Fingernails grow one nanometer per second.

The ability to see small has evolved over the centuries, from the advent of optical microscopes in the 17th century that use light to make small things viewable, to the development of electron microscopes before World War II. Light has its limitations and can only go so far in resolution, but electrons, with their shorter wavelengths, go much further. Electron microscopes continue to improve over the years as well. But at the level of this new microscope, the potential for new discoveries is enormous, says Yacaman.

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"There's no better way of illustrating your commitment to excellence in research," he says. "A world-class machine like that shows you are willing to provide the support and infrastructure to give the best tools to your faculty."

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At the nano level you have to have resolution because yeah, you can create all these little stars and particles of stuff that we're going to be using to target cancer and HIV research and semiconductors. He is using the new scanning electron microscope for his analysis.

"The fact that he is getting the new aberration-corrected microscope was a great bonus, although I would have come anyway even if he did not get that," Mayoral says, adding, "I don't think there's a better place you can go" to pursue doctoral studies in microscopy or nanotechnology.

Before the trio of Kleberg-funded microscopes arrived last year, UTSA researchers were using a two-decades-old microscope with limited capabilities. "We could magnify to 60,000 times, and after that we were having trouble seeing things," says David Olmos, facilities manager of the lab. The scanning electron microscope has ramped that up to 2 million times magnification. Olmos compares the mighty progression of microscopy firepower at UTSA to trading up from a Volkswagen to a fine Maserati.

"At the nano level you have to have resolution because yeah, you can create all these little stars and particles of stuff that we're going to be using for research, but unless you can look at them, what are we going to say? "Well, they're in there … but we can't see them?" he says. "And the new microscope will take it to even a higher level."

The lab also operates on a philosophy of empowering researchers, from undergraduates on up, to use equipment themselves, says Olmos. Already, some students have become adept at running the new equipment.

"Here it's a user facility," Olmos says. "That's the way research is done."

Rosalba Valdez, a UTSA senior majoring in physics, is gratified by the role he is able to play in research using up-to-date equipment on his own. He recognizes the level of learning he is attaining.

"I think he's a key player" in one of the projects.

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UTSA Alumni Gala celebrates its 10th year

The 10th annual Alumni Gala is Saturday, Aug. 15, at the Westin La Cantera Resort. The theme for the gala is Reflections, offering a look at where leaders who reflect the past, the present and the future of UTSA, Money magazine and the future programs scholarships for UTSA students. A portion of the proceeds from the gala also benefits scholarships and programs for alumni.

The Alumni Association will honor two alumni with Alumni of the Year awards: Linda Foster M.A., ’76, principal of Alamo Heights High School; and Cindy Jergensen M.B.A. ’00, senior vice president and chief financial officer of SWBC. The Distinguished Service Award recipient is Alfonso Barrientes III, group vice president, warehouse operations and Mexico supply chain for H-E-B.

Table seats for the gala are available for $5,000; the Emerald level for $10,000; and the Diamond level for $20,000. These sponsors will have a student scholarship named for them for the 2009-2010 academic year. The Sapphire level is $1,500 and individual tickets are $200. Each table seats eight.

This year’s chair is Yvonne Fernandez ’85. Honorary chairs are Yolanda ’92 and Robert Cottolene. Yolanda is president of leadership programs for the North San Antonio Chamber of Commerce.

Dress for the evening is black tie optional for men and cocktail attire for women. To make a reservation, go to www.utsa.edu/alumni/gala or call (210) 458-4133.

Nelson Hackmaster, M.B.A. ’75

Right place, right time

The story of how Nelson Hackmaster ’70 joined the U.S. Marshal Service was told by at least one story about what he did with the agency’s storied history, its famous fictional heroes or the fact that finding fugitives is on the daily to-do list.

“Just was good timing, a case in the right place at the right time,” says Hackmaster, who earned his B.A. in criminal justice at UTSA. The right place was specifically, the office of Patricia Harris, then an associate professor of criminal justice.

Harris had just received an information packet promoting a unique cooperative education program with the Marshal Service called the Centralized Student Experience Program. Hackmaster, an undergraduate who was finishing up a degree interrupted by a seven-year stint in the Air Force, and accepted into the 16-week work-study program.

As a work-study student, Hackmaster received training in a wide range of areas, including warrant operations, handling inmates and learning investigation strategies.

Upon completion of the co-op program and a four-month stint in the USMS basic training academy, Hackmaster was wearing the badge of a U.S. Marshal.

With approximately 3,300 men and women on its rolls, the Marshal Service is the country’s oldest federal law enforcement agency. Its storied history began with the appointment of 13 marshals by President George Washington in 1789. Since that time, the service has chased counterfeiters, fought legendary Western outlaws such as the Wild Bunch and the Dalton gang, made history as the 9/11 Corral, checked bootleggers and enforced civil rights laws.

In addition to apprehending murderers, sex offenders, gang members and other fugitives, the modern-day Marshals Service hunted down fictional heroes or the fact that finding fugitives is on the daily to-do list.

“The one thing that stands out to me in this case is that when [the officer] was finally extradited back to Waco, I ran into him at the Midland County Jail. He had no idea who I was but after chasing him for so long I knew everything about him. I took the time to stop and introduce myself. It was a pretty rewarding introduction,” Hackmaster recalls.

Hackmaster now holds the title of chief assistant deputy U.S. marshal for the Western District of Texas, overseeing the Waco, Austin, San Antonio and Del Rio divisions of the Marshal Service. Although reluctant to be singled out for any of the successful operations in which he has been involved, Hackmaster takes pride in “talking folks off the street who could come into contact with your friends or family.”

—Lynn Gosnell
Everyone is a child of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. A few of them are also parents or grandparents. To be sure, every age group has its share of leaders — and it's no surprise that the young are rising to the occasion. But they, too, are likely to have more resources than their predecessors. The book examines historical, cultural and political perspectives relating to the United States and the world. It also explores the role of the arts in shaping public policy and understanding complex issues. The book asks what we can learn from the past and how we can use that knowledge to address current challenges. It suggests ways in which the arts can help us think differently about our world and our place in it. In short, it encourages us to look beyond the familiar boundaries of our own experience and to see the world as a whole. The book concludes with a call to action, urging readers to think more broadly about the arts and their potential to bring about positive change. The book is a must-read for anyone interested in understanding the role of the arts in our society. It is also an important resource for educators, policymakers, and community leaders who are looking for ways to bring the arts into their work. The book is available from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. It is also available for download as a PDF.
Dianne Ayon ’08
Following her heart to Africa

F or most, a tragedy such as the Rwandan genocide may elicit a sympathetic moment of sadness or a charitable donation. But for Dianne Ayon it drove an investment of heart and hands to help survivors of the brutal 1994 conflict. Ayon, 22, has just returned from a four-month stint at Urugo Orphanage in Rwanda, a Blessed Opportunity to live out the tenants of her religious faith. “My faith is what led me to come to Rwanda,” says Ayon, who grew up in a devout Catholic family. “I remember how we would pray together as a family… It was this faith that my parents passed on to me, and the selfless giving of strangers and friends that inspired me to give for the less fortunate.”

To make the biggest impact she could through voluntarism, Ayon requested a mission posting to a Third-World country severely affected by poverty when she signed up with Volunteers International for the Development, Education and Service of young people, or VIDES. The program is run by the Salesian Sisters, a Catholic religious order, and places volunteers in missions across the globe. The Rwandan genocide began on April 6, 1994, and saw up to 800,000 Tutsis killed by Hutu militia over a hundred-day span. Most of the killing was done using clubs and machetes, with as many as 10,000 killed each day in the small central African nation, according to the United Nations Human Rights Council. The orphanage has 58 girls, ages 3 to 17, and the school has approximately 500 students. Ayon taught kindergarten each morning and spent the rest of the day helping other teachers with their classes and helping the girls learn English.

But just as satisfying is the time she spent outside of class cooking, doing laundry, playing games and singing songs with the girls who live there. Ayon contrasts her own happy childhood with the horror endured by the girls in the orphanage. “These girls are so young and already carry such heavy burdens of pain and suffering,” she says. “Many have seen their parents killed before their eyes, some have mothers or fathers who have gone crazy after losing so many loved ones during the genocide.”

Most people who lived through the genocide find it “too painful to speak about the horrible things they saw and experienced, but their suffering is evident,” Ayon says. Ayon, who graduated from UTSA in 2008 with a B.S. in community health, says she was inspired to do volunteer work by her parents, Maria and Antonio Ayon, who are also UTSA alumni. Her father, who is a professor of physics at UTSA, and her mother, who is director of a learning program at Colonial Hills Elementary School in San Antonio, showed her the importance of helping others through the sacrifices they made to provide for Ayon and her siblings, all of whom attended UTSA.

Now that she’s returned to San Antonio, Ayon is searching for a career path. She hopes to teach at a Catholic high school and return to college to work on a master’s degree, perhaps in a medical field or theology. But whatever she does, Ayon says, the children of Rwanda and her experiences of a simple lifestyle there will always be in her heart. “Everyone can give of themselves, as we all have been blessed with different gifts and talents,” Ayon says. “Mother Teresa used to speak of the importance of every single person. ‘What I can do, no one else can… and what you can do, no one else can.’ ”

For more information on Urugo School in Rwanda, visit www.vides.us.

—Jason B. Johnson

for Commerce Savings Association and Katinmeyer Investment Company.

87 Linda Nell Cochran McLean, M.A.
In education, of Hico, Mex., passed away on March 27, 2009, at M.D. Anderson Hospital in Houston at the age of 57. Linda was a public school administrator, and Nacogdoches, where she retired as assistant superintendent.

86 Joana L. Clark Schaefer
in accounting, 52, passed away March 10, 2009, at age 47. Ana taught middle school science at Alan B. Shepard Middle School in San Antonio and served as head of the science department. Ana was a member of Bat Conservation International and was proactive in educating others on their positive environmental impact.

85 Jean Baker Paul, B.A.
in history, passed away Feb. 10, 2009, at age 79. Born in New Jersey, Joan traveled to numerous Air Force duty stations in Europe, Asia and the U.S. with her husband, Norman S. Paul. In addition to raising four children, Joan worked for many years at various civilian personnel offices. After her retirement from civil service, she decided to go back to school, and at the age of 65 received her bachelor’s degree from UTSA. After Normal’s death in 2001, Joan moved to Kingwood, Texas, and in 2003 married Richard Ponnall. Joan loved traveling, painting and gardening, and playing bridge with her many friends at the Kingwood Country Club Ladies Bridge Club.

84 Salvador Talamantez Jr., B.S.
in computer science, passed away on Dec. 1, 2008, at age 48. He was born in Pharr, Texas, lived in San Antonio and graduated from East Central High School in 1978. He served in the Army and retired in 1994. He was buried with full military honors at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery in San Antonio.

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82 Dr. Dana Forgione
is the Janey S. Briscoe Endowed Chair in the Business of Health. A distinguished academic and pioneer in healthcare financial management, his research and writings are leading change in the business of healthcare both in the United States and throughout the world. His consulting work is used by the United States Congress and Texas in formulating policy.

Your support allows scholar practitioners like Dr. Forgione to make a difference at UTSA, nationally and internationally. Together we will address local and global challenges that affect all of us as we build the Next Great Texas University.

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Working to Make Healthcare Affordable

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Learn more at utsa.edu/give
The UTSA Alumni Association will celebrate an important milestone this year—the 10th anniversary of the Alumni Gala. Started in 2000, the gala was the idea of then-association president Alicia Treviño ’86. She had successfully developed the event model for the American Institute of Architects San Antonio chapter and was eager to see it come to fruition at UTSA.

Several things came together to make it a success. By the year 2000, there were enough graduates to justify an upscale event to raise scholarship funds. BalloonFest, which had been a main fundraising event for the association, was vulnerable to bad weather and was labor intensive. The association wanted a stylish and sophisticated event where it could present its two most prestigious awards, Alumnus of the Year and the Distinguished Service Award.

The gala has grown every year. The 2000 gala was held at UTSA’s Institute of Texan Cultures, and Lisette Murray ’89 was the first chairwoman; honorary chairs were Aimee ’78 and Ernest Bromley ’80. This year the gala chairwoman is Yvonne Fernandez ’85, and honorary chairs are Robert and Yolanda Crittenden ’92.

—Jane Findling Burton

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