Pipeline of Hope
ON THE COVER:
in the small Peruvian town of Viña Vieja, the air is dry, the land is arid and clean water is a luxury most who live there can’t afford.

Photo courtesy of Jessica George

ON THIS PAGE:
The villagers work hard to maintain their modest lifestyles. There is no municipal water source, so many get their water from a man-made canal system, sometimes trekking long and far to bring it home.

Photo by Eleazar Hernández

Healing Water
In a small village in Peru, clean water is a luxury most can’t afford. A group of UTSA students is installing a water distribution system to sustain all 500 residents.

A Tangle of Memories
UTSA’s leading researcher on Alzheimer’s disease will get a $1 million boost to find out more about the mind-robbing disease.

Behind the Vault
Sometimes the most impactful—and interesting—gifts are those without dollars signs before them.

THE PASEO
4 TEAM APPROACH
Student teachers and children with autism both benefit from a new center

5 GIRL POWER!
The Institute of Texan Cultures celebrates 100 years of Girl Scouts with an exhibit that showcases artifacts and memorabilia.

6 INFECTIOUS FUTURE
What is genomics, anyway? For high school students from San Antonio’s John Jay and Edison high schools it’s an opportunity to peer into the world of microbiology.

7 BEYOND EXPECTATIONS
One UTSA student defies the odds and pursues her college education with the aid of her service dog.

Advanced online publication
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LETTERS

Sombrilla Fall 2012
Thank you so much for the latest issue of Sombrilla. Every time I see this magazine in my mailbox, I rush inside to begin reading it—and I’m never disappointed. Not only is it a beautiful publication, but also the articles are always informative and well written, relevant and inspiring.
I’m always proud to be a Roadrunner, but I feel especially proud when I read stories about my university and the amazing work my peers and professors are doing.
Keep up the good work.
Renee a Roadrunner
VERONICA FERNANDEZ ’05
I just received the hard copy of Sombrilla and read it from front to back. It has so many fascinating and diverse articles in it as I reminiced with editor Lety Laurel on “Oh, How I Miss reading it from front to back. I just received the hard copy of Sombrilla in my mailbox, so I rushed inside to begin reading it—and I’m never disappointed.

Forever Roadrunners
What a pleasure it was to read the article on UTSA’s Retired Faculty Association. It’s exciting to see how those remarkable individuals continue to benefit UTSA and the outside world. I’d like to add my thanks to all our retired faculty who have so generously given gifts to UTSA, but I’d also like to point out that since your publishing date we have received additional gifts or pledges of several hundred thousand dollars from this group. What an impact that will make on UTSA!”
CAROLYN LOWERY
Director of Gift Planning, UTSA

I Miss College
I just read your piece on “the good of college days” and it made me close to home. I taught a class (Pfeiffer Seminar) for the first time this semester and couldn’t help but laugh when I heard students talk about how they couldn’t wait to graduate.
JESSICA ALVAREZ-ALVAREZ ’07
Assistant director, Office of Orientation and Family Programs, UTSA

Unraveling a Mystery
As a Ph.D. student of Kat Brown and Jason Yaeger, I have been working in Belize for the past few years and I wanted to thank you for the amazing article you ran in the last issue of Sombrilla about the Belize field school. The article did a great job summarizing the work done by UTSA faculty and students while highlighting the beauty of Belize and Maya culture. The photos used were also excellent choices. They were a great mix of the Belize environment, culture and archaeological investigation.
The article was a nice tribute to the students who have worked on the projects in the past and to the professors who run the projects and strive to make this experience rewarding to each of their students. The article illustrated all facets of the learning experience beautifully. I was so impressed that I made sure to post the online version to the Legacy Programs’ Facebook page.
Thank you again for running this article and getting the word out about this unique opportunity available to UTSA students!
WHITNEY LYTLE
Legacy Program Coordinator, Center for Archaeological Research

We need more information? check out these UTSA websites:

For back issues of Sombrilla, go to utsa.edu/sombrilla
To discover ways to give back, go to giving.utsa.edu

For campus news and events, visit utsa.edu/athletics
Check out the latest sports stats and information at utsa.edu/athletics

For The Graduate School, go to utsa.edu/graduate
Reconnect with old classmates at utsa.edu/alumni

Chat with us at facebook.com/utsa twitter.com/utsa
So mobile: utsa.edu/mobileapp
For everything else, go to utsa.edu

We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.
—Winston Churchill

Go mobile:

facebook.com/utsa

EIC’s Notebook

Goosebumps

To be around truly selfless people is so inspiring, so moving, that it gives me goosebumps. And it seems that here, even in South Texas where winter days can reach into the 90s, I’ve always got them.

Goosebumps.

When I met with a group of students who had traveled to a struggling, earthquake-ravaged community in Peru, I had them. There were four college guys, with a bond like that of brothers, who shouldn’t be worried about much more than passing their next final. Instead, they spent almost two years trying to find a way to deliver clean water to villagers who drink the same water their livestock use to bathe.

It wasn’t an assignment. It wasn’t for class credit. It was simply to do the right thing for a community that so badly needed a little help.

I got goosebumps again when I spoke with a graduate student working at one of UTSA’s newest centers, the Teacher Education Autism Model. With a small smile, she recalled sitting still while a preschooler punched her and spit in her face. Repeatedly, she’d try to redirect him. And repeatedly, she’d get hit.

Why do you do it? I asked her. The answer was immediate: “Want to make a difference,” she said.

That is altruism to the core, and it’s inspiring.

There are so many more goosebump-worthy moments, not just within the pages of this issue of Sombrilla, but throughout the hallways and classrooms of UTSA. And they happen all the time, even in the middle of the night.

Like the group of students who stayed on their feet for 18 hours straight, through pain and exhaustion, dancing to raise money for children with cancer and to show them that they care about their struggle and will not give up the battle to find a cure.

Or the like the world-renowned researcher who has dedicated his entire career, and most of his life, to trying to understand the disease that ravages the brain and steals people’s memories, so that someday, maybe he can help stop it.

I hope that while you read these stories, you also get goosebumps, even in the midst of summer. And I hope it’s not from the air conditioning.

Saludos.

ELEAZAR HERNANDEZ M.A. ’12

The Sombrilla

Goosebumps

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A TEAM Approach

Student teachers and children with autism both benefit from a new center

BY LETY LAUREL

Autism both benefit from a new center

The TEAM Center: a fun place to learn

The TEAM Center is one large room of places for children to play. There’s a small trampoline and a slide, but the most-loved item in the room is a wooden jungle gym that features a swinging sack that the children can use to spin and swing. On one wall is a one-way mirror that allows parents and students to observe the sessions.

The idea is just to make it a playful place where students can come in and hopefully be motivated by a variety of stimuli for engaging in whatever activities we’re focusing on for those students,” said Lee Mason, assistant professor of special education. Graduate student therapists work with the children on social skills and verbal communication. They praise correct responses and ignore inappropriate ones. The children are frequently rewarded with playtime, which is interspersed with lessons. And through all of it, the therapists are documenting what the child is doing, how many opportunities were given for the child to complete a task, how much assistance the child needed and how many times the child completed the task.

“The more things we have for the children to talk about and engage in, the better off we’ll be in building communication skills and at the same time reducing problem behavior,” Mason said.

Autism can affect one in 50 American children, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. While children with autism can range from low- to high-functioning, most display communication and social skills deficits, restricted and repetitive interests. As many as 25 percent never learn to talk but instead communicate through problem behavior.

“When a child throws a tantrum or engages in self-injury, what are they trying to tell us? A lot of time it is to gain access to a preferred item or to get attention from a parent or teacher,” Mason said. “A lot of time it is just to escape or avoid demanding situations where we’re asking them to perform a lot of different activities. We often provoke problem behaviors that way.”

The goal is to evaluate those behaviors, identify what function they might serve for the child, and then teach a more socially acceptable behavior. It’s not easy work, he added.

In her first week of the center, Emelin Laynez, a graduate student in special education, worked with a 5-year-old boy who frequently threw temper tantrums that included spitting and lashing. Laynez realized the boy was trying to avoid having to complete an assigned task. So she ignored the behavior and continued prompting him to complete more tasks.

“To intervene in this behavior wasn’t easy,” Mason said. “Every time he slapped Emelin in the face or spat at her, she had to pretend like it didn’t happen.”

But the tactic worked. The next session, the boy did what she asked. Laynez said the experience reinforced why the TEAM Center is an important place for him to be.

“We weren’t sure how it would be when he came back for the next session, but when he did, he was just like a completely different person,” she said. “He did the tasks as we asked him to do, it blew my mind. There is a lot for me to learn.”

Often, graduate students have studied special education but haven’t applied their skills in a classroom. Working at the center is a crash course that quickly bridges the theoretical to the real with hands-on experience.

“When a child gets accepted into the program, the staff knows his or her name and age, but that’s it. We don’t know the level of severity they have or the extent to which they are demanding situations or whether they are physically aggressive or engage in self-injury. We don’t even know if they are toilet trained,” Mason said. “So students have to be really prepared for almost anything in terms of who they are going to be working with.”

But by the time the semester is over, the graduate students will have gained experience working in real-world situations, which will help them toward certification in applied behavior analysis. And the children also will benefit, Mason said.

“We have 15 weeks to work with families and their children,” he said. “We will see progress.”

Two weeks into her therapy, Cambria is doing well. But her mom said there is more work to do.

“I want her to improve how she acts and behaves and the amount of tantrums she throws,” Johnston said, adding that she wants Cambria’s therapist to provoke her daughter’s bad behavior. “I told him to do that. It’s why we’re here.”

A TEAM Approach

A STROLL AROUND CAMPUS

The TEAM Center: a fun place to learn

Graduate student Emelin Laynez works with 5-year-old Cambria Johnston, who has autism. Cambria is part of UTSA’s first class of students participating in the Teacher Education Autism (TEAM) Center. At RIGHT: Central UTSA campus. The walls of the TEAM Center. Photos by Mark McClendon.

THE PASEO

SOMBRILLA

SPRING 2013
Infectious Future
POSTGRADS BRING MICROBIOLOGY TO HIGH SCHOOL
BY GUILLERMO GARCIA

I wasn’t long ago that Betty Duran, a junior at San Antonio’s John Jay High School, had no idea what microbiology was. But after a science fair project on the topic and a little help from some UTSA students, she has decided it may very well be her career pursuit.

The 15-year-old enrolled in her school’s increasingly popular microbiology class in which UTSA master’s and doctoral students help high school students to study microscopic organisms and their role in human illnesses.

She was excited about being exposed to an area of biology that fascinates her but which she might not otherwise have come to learn about, said she.

The high school class is part of a five-year, $4.6 million program that is funded by the Department of Defense and managed by UTSA’s South Texas Center for Emerging Infections Diseases. The center was established to focus state and national attention on the university’s research in molecular microbiology, immunology, microbial genomics, biodefense and other areas of biological research. It leverages established faculty and utilizes their expertise in the various research areas through the recently created Center for Excellence in Infection Genomics.

Since fall 2012, the program has provided everything from texts and educational materials to microscopes, petri dishes and other laboratory supplies to Duran’s school and another local high school, Edinburg. The program administrators create the curriculum that the high school teachers follow. Throughout the semester, UTSA students supplement what curriculum with guest lectures and lessons.

It is intended to expose more high school students to the laboratory experience and encourage them to pursue post-graduate microbiology degrees, said program administrator Raquel Shrager.

The program also provides grants and scholarship opportunities so that participating high school students’ college education, from undergraduate to doctoral degree programs, can be transferred to UTSA.

UTSA students and faculty benefit, too. The program pays them to teach and mentor the high school students.

As part of the curriculum, the high school students are assigned a case history. During the course of the semester-long class, their job is to find the disease that is affecting their theoretical patient and devise a treatment plan.

Through this exercise, the students gain a hands-on feel for the kinds of research a professional microbiologist conducts in the laboratory.

For another of the program’s coordinators, Jesus Romo, the unique project was both a way to help him attain his Ph.D. and an avenue for providing career guidance to dozens of students.

“I am fascinated by how things work, and I try and transfer that to the students because they are the next wave of scientists, and all future discoveries will be in their hands,” Romo said.

High school students are at a stage in their lives where they are naturally curious, he said.

“These students, the vast majority of whom are [racial] minorities, might not have otherwise been exposed to this new field of study, and it is exciting to see them getting so stimulated about what they are learning in class.”

The popularity of the medical microbiology class has grown so much that John Jay administrators plan to double the number of students in the class next year, and university officials are planning to expand the program by offering the class to other area school districts, Shrager said.

“The more high school biology teachers we get involved and exposed to this microbiology project, the more students those teachers will be able to reach, which will mean that many more students get an opportunity to go to college,” she added.

In February, UTSA received the largest private matching gift in its history. The $1.5 million, 1:1 match committed from H-E-B will support the recruitment of world-class faculty.

The H-E-B Faculty Research Excellence Initiative matches other private gifts, providing a total of $1.1 million for endowed professorships and chairs. The endowment will enable the university to attract and recruit leading scholars and researchers through financial support for their research and teaching. This is a watershed moment for UTSA,” said President Ricardo Romo. “The generosity of H-E-B was the spark that ignited giving by others who consortium matches every additional gift. We are deeply grateful to everyone who has contributed to this effort so meaningfully to the recruitment of faculty excellence.”

H-E-B recently named the University of Texas at San Antonio’s H-E-B University Endowed Chair in Microbiology the Excellence in Infection Genomics. Students at San Antonio’s John Jay High School prepare a petri dish as part of the school’s medical microbiology class, which is mentored by UTSA graduate students and faculty.
Beyond Expectations

BY STEPHANIE SANCHEZ

LORATOMPINS WASN’T SUPPOSEDTORUNAMILE
in first grade. She wasn’t supposed to graduate from
high school. College was supposed to be impossible. Yet the history
major, who is also a student worker with the UTSA Libraries’
Special Collections, is expected to graduate in May.

Tompkins, 26, was born with cerebral palsy with spastic
diplegia, a condition caused by trauma to the brain during
fetal development. Some doctors didn’t think she would
survive more than 24 hours, and others thought she would
spend her life in a vegetative state.

“I kind of knocked their expectations out of the park,
which I like doing,” Tompkins said with a giggle. “I don’t fit
the mold very well.”

Throughout life, she continues to do things that shock
medical professionals, family and friends, such as her first-
grade run. Although, she said, her body didn’t take that mile-
stone well.

Tompkins also broke the mold at the libraries. She is be-
lieved to be the first employee to use a service animal since
the John Peace Library opened in 1976.

The animal, Loki, is a 3-year-old, 60-pound, purebred poo-
dle. He has been Tompkins’ pet since he was seven weeks
old and recently started training as a service dog.

Service animals are specifically trained to perform cer-
tain tasks, and are working animals, not pets.

Loki, who was playfully named after the Nordic god of
mischief, finishes his training in July, but already is accom-
panying Tompkins to campus and work.

For Tompkins, whose disability causes balance
problems and constant back pain, Loki provides security
and assistance.

“I can get around pretty well without him, but he’s an extra
layer of protection,” Tompkins said. “I have balance
issues as part of the [cerebral palsy] and I fall quite frequently.”

When Tompkins says, “Loki help,” the dog lies down so
she can steady her hands between his shoulder blades and
lift herself up.

At home, she has the help of family. But after gradua-
tion, plans to attend graduate school and will rely only
on Loki. She hopes to get into the religious studies pro-
gram at Yale or Rice.

“I try not to let my disability dictate who I am and what
I can do, although reality says there are just plain things I
can’t do,” Tompkins said. “But I’ve tried very hard to make it
throughout life without the disability taking control.”

LORATOMPINS

“I can get around pretty well without him, but
he’s an extra layer of protection. I have balance
issues as part of the [cerebral palsy] and I fall
quite frequently.”

—LORA TOMPKINS

IN BRIEF/

New Postings
College of Education
Dean Manuel Aguayo is serving an additional
year as interim dean. Shadaram, associate dean for student
affairs and policies and holder of the
Briscoe Distinguished Professor
Electrical Engineering, is serving as the
interim dean of the
college.

IN BRIEF/

Early Selection
Afterreesing past
its initial $120 mil-
ton goal and more than
two years early, UTSA
has announced a com-
plete $155 million
in its first-ever capital
campaign, for a total of $175
million.

The $120 million
in pledges and gifts
was surpassed in
less than one year
after being publicly
announced in April
2012.

To date, the cam-
paign has supported
125 new scholarships,
25 new endowed faculty
positions, and nine new research
centers or institutes. Nearly
200,000 donors have contributed
to the campaign, which
continues through August 2015.

BY THE NUMBERS

812k

YouTube views of President Ricardo Romo dancing
the Harlem Shake

IN BRIEF/

Morale Builder
For 18 hours, there was no sitting and no sleeping. Through
sunrise and sunset, there was energy,
celebration and moral support for children battling cancer and their
families.

UTSA’s For the Kids student organization hosted its annual<br>
marathon April 5-6 at the Convocation Center. The marathon raised<br>$40,445, which will go to the FTK Fund at the Children’s<br>
Hospital of San Antonio and will benefit children with cancer and their families.

The goal of FTK is to raise awareness while providing financial and emotional support for those affected
with childhood cancer. It strengthens young minds. Students who regularly visit hospital-bound children
say it is a great organization. For me, it is just a great way to give back to the community,” said Amanda Perez,
a senior communication studies major. “I get a great sense of satisfaction in helping
out those who are not able to help themselves.”

The dance marathon is a metaphoric way to show the children they have friends who will stand for
them against cancer.

“FTK Dance Marathon at UTSA has an incredible team of dedicated student leaders and volunteers
who work tirelessly all year long to provide comfort and support for San Antonio families struggling
with childhood cancer,” said Eli Embilon, a senior in classical studies and overall chair of FTK. “Be-
sides being able to bring joy to these kids and their families during such a difficult time is not only incredibly
rewarding, it also gives us greater perspective and motivates us to live our own lives to the fullest.”

PHOTO COURTESY OF AMIE MEAUX

—THE PASEO
**SPORTS BRIEFS**

**MEN’S TRACK & FIELD**

Behind a school-record tying six individual and relay titles, UTSA won its eighth consecutive indoor conference championship at February’s WAC meet in Albuquerque, N.M. The Roadrunners, who claimed the first WAC crown in UTSA athletics history, scored a program record 159 points to easily defeat runner-up UT Arlington. Head coach Aaron Fox was named the league’s coach of the year. Richard Garrett Jr. also had a senior season to remember. The Garland native was chosen as WAC First Athletic of the Year after winning his third consecutive conference shot put championship and placing fourth in the weight throw. He holds UTSA’s third-best shot put mark (65.9 ½) and went on to finish fourth at the national level—fourth in program history. That was good for first team All-America honors.

**WOMEN’S TRACK & FIELD**

UTSA accounted for 116 points at February’s WAC Indoor Championships, for its highest total in 17 years, and the Roadrunners just missed their first league title since 1994 with their runner-up showing. 1-35 rival Texas State was able to hold off UTSA by just six points, but the second-place showing was the program’s best in 16 years. Seniors Karol Bago (weight throw) and Eboni Johnson (track jump) both won individual gold medals for the Roadrunners.

**WOMEN’S BASKETBALL**

UTSA finished the 2012-13 campaign with a 16-1 record, which gave the program its fifth winning mark in the last six seasons. After being picked to finish eighth and ninth by the media and coaches in the WAC preseason polls, the Roadrunners placed fourth with a 20-8 league record. Led by third-year all-conference selection Kimura Kim, the team doubled its win total from last season and led the league in scoring defense and field goal percentage defense.

**BASEBALL**

UTSA, which tied the school record with a 5-0 start to the season, has shown its offensive prowess and led the WAC in several different offensive categories. Additionally, the Birds took three of four games from Pac-12 Conference member Washington State, claimed Big 12 Conference member Baylor for the second straight season and defeated all three of their opponents at the UTSA Classic—Penn State, Nebraska-Omaha and Stephen F. Austin—in March.

“Although one person is named the winner, I would not get the award but for my teammates passing the ball and setting me up,” said the 5-foot-10, 185-pound senior. “I was a huge honor and I am so honored and blessed.”

Now the challenge will be the competition in Conference USA. “It will definitely be a step up in competition, for sure,” she said, given that the team will regularly face the University of Tulsa, traditionally one of the top teams in the nation.

**SOFTBALL**

After a successful start to the season, UTSA opened WAC play March 22-23 with a three-game sweep of Texas State in San Marcos. It was the Roadrunners’ first WAC sweep of a Big 12 school since 2004 and the first in San Marcos since 1996.

The six-foot, three-inch outside hitter also became only the third player in WAC history to be named conference player of the week five times in one season—scoring 4.85 points and making 4.55 kills per set, the second best in the conference.

**SPINADEO Y’ALL:**

“Many in the community have asked if I would be the next coach of the UTSA volleyball team after taking our current head coach to a new opportunity,” said Charles. “I am honored and would dearly love to coach UTSA volleyball, but there are other opportunities that are of interest to me.”

**SPINADEO Y’ALL:**

“We want to thank Coach Charles for his dedication and love he has shown to the program during his tenure,” said UTSA Athletics Director Jeff Hune. “I know he will be missed by our fans and the entire UTSA community, but we wish him all the best in his future endeavors.”

**SPINADEO Y’ALL:**

“My goal and dream is the USA national team, and I will regularly face the University of Tulsa, traditionally one of the top teams in the nation. Although one person is named the winner, I would not get the award but for my teammates passing the ball and setting me up,” she said. “I was a huge honor and I am so honored and blessed.”

Now the challenge will be the competition in Conference USA. “It will definitely be a step up in competition, for sure,” she said, given that the team will regularly face the University of Tulsa, traditionally one of the top teams in the nation.

The 24-year-old Schertz, Texas, native remains grateful that she took her older sister’s advice to transfer to UTSA, where she is on a full athletic scholarship, after a year at the University of Virginia. Plus she gets to live with her sister, Ashley, off-campus.

The junior is majoring in multidisciplinary studies, but she doesn’t plan to stay far from the game she has played since taking up volleyball at age 10.

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Now the challenge will be the competition in Conference USA. “It will definitely be a step up in competition, for sure,” she said, given that the team will regularly face the University of Tulsa, traditionally one of the top teams in the nation.
Although it strikes one in six Americans in their 60s—and one of every two in their 80s—fundamental aspects of Alzheimer’s disease remain unknown and in need of new avenues of research, says UTSA College of Sciences Dean George Perry.

A nationally recognized expert on the disease, which produces profound changes in the brain and is characterized by the loss of cognitive function, Perry refers to the complex, debilitating disorder as “the disease of our time.”

Great strides have been made over the past 30 years in understanding how the illness can rob otherwise healthy individuals of their mind and memory, he noted. But there is still much work to do. >>>
Having spent decades studying Alzheimer’s, Perry hopes to add to the body of knowledge after being named to the newly created Patricia and Tom Semmes Endowed Chair in Neurobiology. The $1 million is made possible by a Semmes Foundation gift of $500,000, matched by the HEB Faculty Research Excellence Fund.

Such luminaries as Winston Churchill, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Ford, Norman Rockwell, Rita Hayworth and James Doohan, best known as Scotty on television’s Star Trek, have fallen victim to the illness, for which there is no known cure.

More recently, Pat Summit, the University of Tennessee’s legendary women’s basketball coach who chalked up the most wins in any sport in collegiate history, stepped down after being diagnosed with it. As recently as last year, more than 1,500 clinical trials were launched to evaluate new treatments, but it is not known if any of them are effective.

Current treatment focuses on the disease’s symptoms, but nothing has yet been found that reverses its progression, which can sometimes be rapid. A common symptom, dementia, causes a person to lose his or her ability to think, recall and reason to such a severe extent that it interferes with daily function.

While it was once thought to be typically age-related, studies have shown that Alzheimer’s is not a normal part of the aging process.

The theory is that over time, organisms age due to the damage done by free radicals, molecules with unpaired electrons in their shells, which leads to DNA mutations that are thought to speed up the aging process.

Cells damaged by free radicals have been associated not only with Alzheimer’s but with other illnesses such as diabetes.

The Semmes endowment will help Perry—who is considered one of the top scientific investigators in the world—continue his research efforts on the brain cells’ response to free radicals and the damage they cause.

Perry said he hopes that this research will provide an unprecedented opportunity for worldwide collaboration as well as stimulate and expand research into the debilitating affliction. The endowment will also support the coordination of research efforts at UTSA into more than 20 nervous system disorders, some of which are commonly associated with the dementia brought on by Alzheimer’s, Perry said.

“George is one of the top 10 authorities on Alzheimer’s in the world,” said Provost John Frederick. “To have such an authority in our midst will provide a place where other experts in this text and other areas will want to come and collaborate.”

Perry, the editor in chief of the Journal of Alzheimer’s Disease, one of the leading research periodicals in the field, has published more than 500 studies on various aspects of the disease.

He noted that because the illness is so widespread, just about everyone knows someone who suffers from Alzheimer’s.

Over the last several decades, what was once considered almost exclusively an “old person’s” illness has been increasingly diagnosed in otherwise healthy individuals in their late 30s and early 40s.

While more than five million Americans have been diagnosed with various stages of Alzheimer’s, whether early-onset or advanced, projections are that millions more will be affected as the baby boomer generation ages.

Early-onset Alzheimer’s, the least common form of the disease, can present symptoms early, but the person affected tends to worsen more rapidly. The most common form is late-onset, occurring in people in their mid-60s.

Studies have shown that once a person reaches age 65, the risk of getting Alzheimer’s doubles, and the risk factor continues doubling every five years after that.

“The risk just doesn’t stop, it increases as the person gets older, so that by the time people reach age 65, one of two people will have been diagnosed with some form of Alzheimer’s,” Perry said.

Some of the most feared components of the disease are the mood changes, depression and confusion triggered by the onset of dementia, which impacts just about every aspect of the affected person’s life.

Over the long term, Perry suspects that Alzheimer’s will have a higher impact in Third World countries, especially in Latin America, because those nations have significantly higher birth rates than European and Far Eastern nations.

As people in developing countries approach older ages, the incidence of Alzheimer’s diagnoses is most likely to increase, Perry pointed out.

“The greater the number of people who live longer, the greater the problem of dealing with Alzheimer’s patients and the greater the impact will be on the society that has to deal with a larger population which is aging and which is most susceptible to being diagnosed with it, he said.

He notes that the “greatest research challenge to date” is the apparent connection to other disorders.

“There appears to be little doubt that the diet and lifestyle habits of Hispanics make them more susceptible to Type 2 diabetes,” Perry said. “Consequently they suffer significantly higher rates of Alzheimer’s than their Anglo counterparts.”

He cited study results that noted that Hispanics over age 65 were diagnosed with Alzheimer’s at a rate of 60 percent, in contrast to the 38 percent rate for Anglos. Other studies indicate that African Americans are also diagnosed at higher rates than Anglos.

Nancy Rhains, support assistant with the Alzheimer’s Association San Antonio & South Texas Chapter, said its statistics show that more than 20 million people in the United States live with the effects of Alzheimer’s. The incidence is expected to go to 15 million by 2020.

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Just feet from where a pig slops contentedly in the water, children play and bathe. Later, they will take some of the water home with them to drink.

In the small Peruvian village of Viña Vieja, there is no municipal water source. Many of the 500 villagers get their water from a man-made canal system, sometimes trekking long and far to bring it home. Getting water is not as difficult for the many agricultural companies that operate in the area, though. A few feet from the poorest homes in Viña Vieja—where houses are little more than adobe brick or tarp-enclosed lean-tos with roofs of banana leaves or straw—is a line of luscious tangerine trees fed 24 hours a day by soaker hoses.

Steven Byers, a senior civil engineering major and member of Engineers Without Borders, takes a water sample from a residential well in Viña Vieja. The water may look fine to drink, but every time the area floods, fecal matter from area livestock spills into the well and contaminates the water.

Healing Water

BY LETY LAUREL

JUST FEET FROM WHERE A PIG SLOPS

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“Those trees are on soaker hoses, but the people living next to them can’t get water,” said Steven Byers, a UTSA senior civil engineering student. “It’s so close they can see it over their fence, yet it’s still not theirs. And the residents can’t do anything about it.”

But Byers is doing something about it.

Guided by John Joseph, a lecturer in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Byers traveled with three other UTSA students to Peru over Christmas break to begin the arduous process of building a water system that, once complete, could sustain the entire village with clean, naturally filtered water. They’re tapping into an existing well that once provided water to an agricultural company and was recently turned over to the residents. However, it lacks a storage and distribution system.

“The capacity can serve the entire community with ease,” Byers said. “We have tested the water quality and it is good. And if there’s a problem in the future, they’ll be able to chlorinate. We plan on teaching them how to test the water when we’re not there.”

The 12-day excursion was the third trip that UTSA’s chapter of Engineers Without Borders made to the South American country. It’s a component of a larger effort to provide medical support and begin rebuilding the earthquake-stricken region, part of a five-year agreement with the tiny town in cooperation with Texas Partners of the Americas, a non-governmental organization.

Viña Vieja is an arid farming community about a three-hour drive south of Peru’s capital of Lima. In 2007, the region was devastated by consecutive earthquakes, leaving residents without housing and further complicating the existing problem of obtaining potable water.

Some residents survive by drinking and using unfiltered canal water, rife with human and animal waste and trash. Others tap an artesian well, an uncovered pit about 40 feet deep.

“They basically drop a pipe in there, but anything can fall in there: Dead animals. People. It’s not only a danger in and of itself, but it’s also not an ideal source of drinking water,” said Timothy Hayes, a senior civil engineering major.

Once the water is collected, residents boil it, but each year a number of residents fall victim to amoebic dysentery, and there’s a high infant-mortality rate as a result.

“We saw pigs sitting in the water and kids drinking it,” Byers said. “I know every time I’ve been down [there], I’ve heard somebody has passed away due to problems that people in the U.S. don’t usually die from....

“We didn’t even think about that because we always have water. You take it for granted,” said civil engineering senior Diego Gonzalez. “You don’t realize that people really need access to safe, reliable water.”

For a year, the students compiled numerous reports, ranging from a list of Peruvian insects to avoid to implementation and sustainability plans. Then there were the mathematical calculations that needed approval by the national arm of Engineers Without Borders before any work could begin. While Byers tackled how to get the water from the tanks to the people and...
the amount of water pressure that would be required. Hayes and civil engineering major Adam Bazar worked on engineering the earthquake-proof foundations for the tanks.

“About 95 percent of what we do happens before we leave [the U.S.],” Hayes said. “All of these things that are actual practical design engineering calculations will eat up hours and hours of your life for months at a time.”

Design setbacks took months to correct, and the students worked year-round to find solutions. Once in Peru, the challenges intensified. Their supply list wasn’t received, so they spent much of the time working with a single shovel left behind from a previous trip. They depended on locals to provide them with the basics they needed for construction, scrounging homesteads for a piece of rebar or wood. Hours were spent traveling to hardware stores, only to find that the simplest items, such as two-inch pipe, weren’t available.

“The trip was frustrating,” said Joseph, a licensed engineer. But instead of losing hope and giving up, the students did what they could to make progress on the water system. “It’s easy to become hopeless when the plans start to unravel, but [the students] didn’t. It was clear evidence that they weren’t just down there for fun. They all just wanted to get things done for the people.”

Viña Vieja residents could see that, too. By the end of the students’ stay, dozens of townspeople regularly worked at the site, collectively putting in what Joseph estimates to be hundreds of hours outside of their regular jobs digging a trench, setting gusset and making and pouring concrete.

That’s why the students put so much of their spare time into this project, Hayes said. It matters.

“It takes a very specific kind of personality to stick with it,” he said. “There is no big payoff in the short term. There are a lot of late nights and tedious design work and calculations and frustration. But we’re the kind of people who care about others. We are changing lives.”

And their lives are being changed in the process, the students said.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

As seniors, this group will be graduating soon. Like all students, they will take away book knowledge from UTSA. But they now have the added bonus of experience.

Viña Vieja taught them patience and trial and error, and that not every solution is 100-percent correct. They became technically savvy, able to create and present reports to professional engineers. And they learned that any project should always start with water, something they never used to think about.

“This is something we’re doing in school that we actually care about,” Bazar said. “Assignments get graded and that’s it. But this wasn’t just an assignment. We actually used whatever extra time we have to create something for this community, and that memory will last our whole lives.”

In an ironic twist, the students won’t see the water project completed. They laid the groundwork that will ultimately lead to a water-starved community beginning the arduous task of rebuilding after several years of simply surviving. But graduation day will come first, so they’re now doing what they can to pass on their knowledge to the Peruvian community and to the students who will walk in their footsteps over the coming years.

“We might not be able to see it finished, but we’ll graduate knowing we did our best,” Gonzales said. “We made a commitment. It will be finished.”

Four UTSA civil engineering students, Steven Byers, Diego Gonzalez, Adam Bazar and Jessica George, traveled to Viña Vieja, Peru, to build a water system that could sustain the entire village of 500 with clean, naturally filtered water.
Sometimes the most memorable gifts

A university receives are those with a highly symbolic or personal meaning, the type of gift where the dollar sign in front of a donation has less intrinsic value than the story behind it.

The very ground that UTSA sits on was a gift of rocks and Hill Country land and a confidence that from that donated earth, the Main Campus’ buildings and Sombrilla would arise so that a higher education tradition could take root.

Through UTSA’s four-plus decades of existence, the school has received gifts of stocks, sculptures and scriptures, as well as papers that range from the historical to the commonplace. There have been donations of food and water, theme park tickets and entire estates.

It’s easy to think only of the dollar bills that sustain a university. But so much of what the university is and so much of the reason it has thrived is due in no small part to the rocks donated for future geologists to study; to the land given by a pioneering San Antonio restaurant family to bring public higher education to the heart of the city; to the decision of a woman who quit her pursuit of a master’s degree at UTSA but who nonetheless donated her entire estate, including oil fields, to the university; and to the extensive Texana collection left by a philanthropist for future historians to pore over.

Those are the types of gifts that mean as much or more to a university’s sense of wellbeing as cash.
"We treasure the gifts we receive," said Marjie French, vice president for external relations. “We’re talking about something as small as a book or Fiesta Texas passes for an auction, to lab equipment that students can utilize for their research. These gifts are very important. We value them.”

And then there are unique and quirky gifts that are, well, simply interesting.

Here’s a look at just some of the things that have helped build UTSA into the institution it has become and those that will continue to propel it toward what it strives to be:

"The Original Fruitcake"

In 2009, Aline Carter’s family sifted through the attic of her 19th-century home only to uncover treasures hidden in dusty, moldy old trunks. They found the former Texas poet laureate’s special papers, unpublished poetry and written recollections, which they promptly donated to UTSA. An unexpected bonus? The decades-, perhaps centuries-, old fruitcake partially wrapped in a brown paper bag that her son, David Carter, jokingly dubbed “The Original Fruitcake” when it was donated.

“They don’t actually know how old the darn thing is, but it does give every appearance of being the original fruitcake,” said David Johnson, history professor. “It’s a great conversation piece, if nothing else.”

"I Got a Rock"

More than a ton of rocks and minerals, all kinds of them, fill up six cabinets and about 50 drawers in the Science Building. While the vast majority of the rocks received by the university—by folks giving up their collections or by rock firms going out of business—are neither famous nor infamous, they are available for faculty and students to use for teaching and as research tools. Also included with these gifts are books, journals and other reference materials, some dating back to the early 1900s.

"Location, Location, Location"

In 1970, the UT System Board of Regents accepted a gift of 600 acres of land in northwest Bexar County in what was then deer country covered with trees and brush. That property, located between Loop 1604 and Interstate 10, was destined to become UTSA’s Main Campus.

The selection of the site, donated mostly by Mary Ann Smathers Brown, whose parents once owned the largest tackle service business in the Southwest, was influenced by the amount of acreage available for the university to eventually expand. Also influencing the Regents’ decision to pick the property, one of five contenders throughout the city, was the fact that the northwest quadrant of the city had the largest college-age population.

Although it is unknown how much the land was worth back then, today it is valued at more than $51 million.

A SEPARATE GIFT BY BILL MILLER

Bar-B-Q Enterprises in 1993 gave birth to UTSA’s second campus, in downtown San Antonio. This donation of nine acres helped strengthen ties that had been weakening with the community, said Sonia Martinez, special assistant to President Ricardo Romo. The decision to build the Main Campus on the far northwest side caused consternation among many San Antonio residents, who feared accessibility would be a hurdle for prospective students. So when the restaurateur offered to donate land downtown, it was a gift worth more than its $1.2 million in land value.

“The Downtown Campus gift came at a time when UTSA really needed it,” Martinez said. Today, the land is valued at more than $6 million.

AND THEN THERE WAS THE RETIRED SCHOOLTEACHER

who was so angry at getting a C in her Chaucer class that she dropped out of UTSA. Decades later, she left her entire estate to the university.

Mary E. McKinney’s 2011 gift, which included personal property and a portfolio of stocks and bonds, also includes three ranch sites, all of which sit on the Eagle Ford Shale. The oilfield is expected to become the largest ever discovered in the United States in terms of hydrocarbon production. And since UTSA now owns the rights to the minerals under the ground, the move oil and gas producers, the greater the income to the university.

The entire estate is valued at more than $28 million, all of which will go toward student scholarships.

“This is a spectacular example of a gift in kind,” said Marjie French, vice president for external relations. “The scholarships that have already come from this gift are transforming UTSA students’ lives.”

Take a Chair

Even before UTSA was to be located on 600 acres in northwest Bexar County, a 25-acre estate called Oak Court was given to the yet-to-be-developed university. The estate, owned by Lutcher and Emily Wells Brown, was donated to the UT System in 1965, then quickly turned over to UTSA after the school was established in 1969.

The proceeds from the sale of the property eventually netted UTSA $7 million, which was divided to create seven endowed chairs, the first endowed positions for the university.

“…the Lutcher Brown Distinguished Chairs were then used as leverage to gain other large research gifts. "This was our first little gem of opportunity. We started using the chairs really wisely, and now those Lutcher chairs are prestigious."

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SOMBRILLA | WWW.UTSA.EDU
Bring on the Burritos

It takes a village to raise a child, and it takes food—lots of it—to sustain college students. Throughout the years, the university has been supplied with countless burritos, milhojas, pizzas and even chuckwagon meals from local vendors. Often, the food is used to cater student organization meetings and events. That’s one less meal the university has to pay for.

Magical Music

A gift from librarie’s goddaughter sits tucked away in a practice room in the Arts Building. The red mahogany 1918 A-Series Steinway grand player piano is valued at $25,000, and offers a rich, mellow sound that is rare in an instrument of that age.

“The piano is in amazing shape,” said David Frege, the Roland K. Blumberg Endowed Professor in Music and chair of the music department. “It’s done remarkably well throughout the years.” It sat in storage for 13 years before its owner, Robyn Hines, decided to give it to the university.

“It was a gift of love,” Hines said of the piano, given to her by her father 30 years ago. Hines never did learn how to make a piano sing, she said. So when space became scarce, she stored it away. But she knew it needed to be played in order for it to last.

Now it gets played every day by students who love music as much as she does, but who are much more musically inclined.

“I’m thrilled that the students get to use it because it’s a marvelous piece and I’m thrilled to death that it is getting used on a daily basis,” she said. “To me, any piano should be. To sit as a beautiful piece of furniture is not what it’s meant for.”

An added bonus, she said, is that it is not too fancy.

“It can still visit it,” she said.

Very Old Books

Among the old, handwritten volumes kept under special atmospheric conditions in the John Peace Library are hundreds of original manuscripts. These range from financial forms that conveyed commercial transactions and daily life in 19th-century Texas to exquisite, illuminated books, like an 18th-century Quran.

The Muslim holy book was written in Arabic in 1722 in Lahore, Pakistan. The book features crushed lapis lazuli, a deep blue gemstone, pounded into the beautiful red leather binding.

The hand-painted colors are vibrant and the geometric designs intriguing. William Mastoris Jr., who earned three UTSA degrees in the late 1980s and early 1990s after retiring from the U.S. Army, donated the book.

Other original manuscripts in the UTSA Libraries’ Special Collections include a hand-painted 17th-century King James Bible, a Mexican cookbook dating to 1769 and notes from the life of James Reidford Sr., a transplanted Canadian who had a 160-acre homestead near Sandy, Texas.

Priceless Art

In 1970, a retired UTSA professor donated 15 original photographs by highly regarded Mexican photographer Manuel Alvarez Bravo. Considered to be the main representative of Latin American photography in the early 20th century, Bravo’s work extends from the revolutionary times of the late 1920s to the 1990s. His portraits of women and street signs of Mexico of the past are valued at $75,000.

“Bravo plays with lots of light, and is considered a master Mexican photographer,” said Arturo Almeida, the university’s art curator.

Some of the university’s Bravo photographs are on display on the fourth floor of the John Peace Library on the Main Campus.

The university also boasts a 26-print collection donated by comic and actor Cheech Marin that includes the works of well-known Chicano artists from San Antonio. Another nearly $354,000 worth of art donated by AT&T also hangs throughout the library.

“The beauty of the art collection is there for everyone to see,” said Marjie French, vice president for external relations. “It’s fabulous.”

The entire university art collection includes 1,600 pieces representing some 400 artists, given the collection’s breadth and depth, Almeida noted, “We should already be an [art] museum.”

Super Tasty

Who doesn’t like chocolate? Apparently, people are willing to bid good money for it. In 2012, UTSA staff member Andra E. Kiser, a part-time chocolatier, donated homemade chocolate candy for an Office of Student Affairs auction.

The candy, along with other donated items, helped raise more than $1,700 that will be used for student programming and staff development.

“I’m the weird chocolate lady,” said Kiser, who plans to donate two pounds of chocolate candies for the next auction. “And I have to brag a little bit. I make the best dark chocolate fudge I’ve ever tasted.”

Football fans might have,” he said.

Peace, Man

John Peace, a San Antonio attorney and a former chair of the UT System Board of Regents, donated a collection of early Texas and Mexico history books and documents to the UTSA Library in December 1973.

Peace, an avid collector of Texana, was a driving force in the effort to create the university, and the school’s main library bears his name.

Peace’s collection was the very first ever received by the university, and it was huge. The documents date back to the days before the Civil War and chart the creation of the Mexican government and the history of the Mexican Revolution. There are land grants and sets of correspondence, including that of Santa Anna, whose forces defeated Alamo defenders during the Texas Revolution.

The papers are valuable for students and researchers, said Mark Shelstad, head of UTSA Libraries’ Special Collections.

“Having a collection of primary resource material is a way for us to interact with students as well as for students to interact with documents and resources that can tell a story and provide new light on any sort of topic they might have,” he said.
A Roadrunner Experience

BY GUILLERMO GARCIA

Leah and Roland Pastrano love UTSA’s football tailgate festivities so much, they would not mind having the parties go on year round, instead of only during the handful of home games played at the Alamodome.

Having hosted their own tailgating while the university initiated its football program in 2011, the couple is so involved with the pre-game tradition that they say it is out of the question to miss just one weekend’s worth of action.

In fact, the pair of diehard Roadrunners even decided to buy a house in downtown San Antonio just to be close to the action on Saturday game days.

Joining the Alumni Association and participating in tailgate activities “has afforded us the opportunity to meet many fantastic people that are passionate about the university,” said Leah, a Marquette University graduate. “The sense of pride, camaraderie and school spirit during tailgating season undoubtedly strengthens our community.”

Despite the fact that she hails from another alma mater, she is a life member of the UTSA Alumni Association, as is her husband, who earned his B.A. in criminal justice at UTSA in 1999. Both now work for a federal agency.

“They are passionate about the university, and we are passionate about UTSA,” Leah said.

“It is all part of a big social event,” Roland said of the family’s plans on football weekend. “Getting involved in Roadrunner Football is part of the fun and excitement and pageantry of Division I football. It is just a fantastic atmosphere that has been created as a result of Roadrunner Football, and I hope that never changes.”

On game mornings, things normally get underway for the Pastranos at their home, where they host friends and family for the first party of the day.

While a salmon is in the smoker, the couple puts up pitas and other decorations in the backyard to welcome their guests.

Roland then hustles across the street to help in the backyard to welcome their guests.

Later, after the salmon is eaten, the Pastranos and their guests cross the street to join the hundreds of Roadrunner fans, friends and family members at the Alumni Association’s food prepping and eating festivities prior to kickoff.

Fans such as the Pastranos add to the excitement already generated by the games, said UTSA President Ricardo Romo, who regularly attends the Alumni Association tailgate.

“I delight in how Roland and Leah and thousands of UTSA alumni have embraced the tailgating spirit,” he said. “The UTSA Alumni Association tailgate makes game day something you never want to miss.”

The Pastranos’ decision to move to the Historic Gardens district across the street from the Alamodome is a testament to their devotion to UTSA Football, Roland said. It was also a matter of convenience.

“Quite a few of our friends decided to move into the Gardens district,” he said. “They have a unique way to be a fan of UTSA Football.”

Leah and Roland Pastrano ’99 may have started a new UTSA tradition when they strolled with a group of mariachi players at Texas State before last year’s season finale against I-35 rival.

The Mariachi Players of South Texas State, mariachi musicians played as they strolled with the Pastranos and their guests through the other university’s stadium parking lot.

“It was definitely a roadrunner-type experience,” Leah said.

“Leah and Roland Pastrano’ 99 may have started a new UTSA tradition when they strolled with a group of mariachi players at Texas State before last year’s season finale against I-35 rival.”

IN BRIEF

The Newest Tradition

Students at Texas State University dip their class rings through river water during their ring presentation ceremony.

When a Texas A&M student dips their ring into the water, it is tradition that only UTSA can say it is 12,000 years old. Students at Texas A&M have to wait over 160 years to reach that age.

The newest tradition at UTSA is for students to dip their rings through river water for their presentation ceremony.

“The river that we dip our rings into is different from Texas A&M’s river,” said UTSA President Ricardo Romo. “We believe having our rings sleep at the Alamo will add to UTSA’s history and will help our students personify the Alamo’s history even more.”

More than 12,000 students have a UTSA ring. And every spring and fall, about 400 students, alumni, families and friends attend the traditional ring ceremony at the Convocation Center on the main campus. Alumni, current students and seniors who have completed at least 60 credit hours are eligible for a ring.

“We believe a way to capture the hearts of future alumni is to have a unique way to present the rings so that only UTSA can say it is 12,000 years old,” said Anne Engelt, director of alumni programs. “We believe having the rings sleep at the Alamo will add to UTSA’s history and will help our students personify the Alamo’s history even more.”

The newest tradition at UTSA is for students to dip their rings through river water for their presentation ceremony.

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Leah and Roland Pastrano ’99 may have started a new UTSA tradition when they strolled with a group of mariachi players at Texas State before last year’s season finale against I-35 rival.
Thirty years ago, they were young recruits trying to find their way along the path of career advancement. One played the banjo in the Army Band. Another found his calling in the computer room. But now, three decades have passed and the members of that inaugural ROTC class look back with satisfaction and perspective at the milestone they achieved, both for themselves as individuals and for their alma mater.

UTSA, meanwhile, has seen its officer preparation program prosper. About 30 aspiring career officers every year capitalize on scholarship offers and career assistance and earn their commissions. The ROTC program is recognized as one of the most productive in the state, said Lt. Col. Scott Sonnalla, professor of military science and director of the university’s ROTC program.

“We used to be the stepchild of St. Mary’s [University],” said Sonnalla, reflecting on the earliest days of officer training in San Antonio, when UTSA’s program was a detachment of the ROTC program at St. Mary’s. “Now, we are the premier ROTC program in South Texas.”

Typically, UTSA has about 180 members in its ROTC battalion, and it nurtures hundreds more through its connections with Junior ROTC programs on about 50 high school campuses in the region, he said. His staff of 14 also offers instruction at regional community colleges.

Graduates from that first class said the ROTC program not only gave them financial assistance, but also provided a career path and instilled a patriotic pride that gave them a direction in life.

“The experience at UTSA shaped my life and career,” said Michael Burns, a retired Army lieutenant who came to UTSA to pursue a criminal justice degree. “Without the guidance of the professors and mentors, I would not have accomplished so much in my life.”

Burns met his wife, Karen, while finishing his degree, “The military has been the cornerstone of her life.” But instead, she quit high school, took a civilian job and joined the army reserve. So soon she ran into career roadblocks. “In both jobs, they required a degree to get the jobs we could have, and I thought, ‘I want to do that,’” she said. “I wanted more than what I had.” She attended flight school and spent 10 years on active duty. “I wanted something different,” she said. “I was找 the military.” He attended flight school and spent 10 years on active duty. “I wanted something different,” she said. “I was找 the military.”

William “Skip” Pope, a retired Army captain, earned a degree at UTSA in data systems management and then spent a career in military intelligence. He traveled the world to help soldiers who had stumbled into pay and promotion issues. He was assigned to the National Security Agency during Operation Desert Storm in Iraq.

“I’ve had an interesting life,” he said. “Part of the reason I stayed in the Army is because you are always doing something different and making a difference.”

William Layden began as an enlisted recruit and a member of the Army Band in the late 1970s. He enrolled at UTSA to earn his education degree and then joined the National Guard.

“I always wanted to be a commissioned officer and fly in the Guard,” he said.

With his ROTC commission, Layden was able to do just that. He attended flight school and spent 10 years on active duty with the Army including service as the pilot of a medical evacuation helicopter during Operation Desert Storm in 1991.

San Antonio native Gloria Hameann remembers sharply-dressed recruiters coming to Fox Tech High School in the mid-1970s with tales of an exciting life in the armed forces. The all-volunteer military was relatively new and there was a push to get women to join.

“The Air Force showed us a film of all the planes, and all the jobs we could have, and I thought, ‘I want to do that,’” she said. “But instead, she quit high school, took a civilian job and joined the army reserve. Soon she ran into career roadblocks. ‘In both jobs, they required a degree to get any more promotions. I told my husband, ‘I have to go back to school and finish this.’”

She remembers her ROTC training at UTSA as a time of self-discovery and commitment to the Army as a way of life. “I wanted more than what I had,” she said. “I definitely gained military knowledge and definitely learned to be a leader.”

Harmsowm worked as a quarterback and got to supervise Army installations around the world. He left in 1992, but after three years of missing the lifestyle, she rejoined the reserve; serving as an evaluator in a recruiting unit until 2010. The military has been the cornerstone of her life.

“Once you join, in your heart, you become part of the corps,” she said. “You pledge your life to it. It is a thing you commit yourself to totally.”

By Cindy Tumiel

Three cadets make UTSA history in 1982, when they pinned on their gold bars and were commissioned as second lieutenants—the first ROTC graduates produced by the university.

Top right: These cadets make UTSA history in 1982, when they pinned on their gold bars and were commissioned as second lieutenants—the first ROTC graduates produced by the university.

Bottom right: Thirty years after its first cadets were given their gold bars, UTSA’s ROTC program is recognized as one of the most productive in the state.
A

SK ALEXIS AMOS HOW MANY ORGANIZATIONS
she belongs to, and she lines them up as she ticks them
off on her fingers.

“It’s a lot,” she laughs.

Indeed, the sophomore biology major is a member
of several student organizations, including Women of Honor
and the Latin Dance Society, as well as others affiliated
with her major. Then there’s the marching band, to which
she was recently named a drum major.

“I have really big goals for myself,” she said. “With
anything I do, I go above and beyond, and I give it my
all. Every class and every organization gets every part
of Alexis. I’m just trying to stand out some kind of way.

It’s working. Amos was recently awarded an Alumni
Association scholarship, which will pay $2,000 each
year for four years. She was one of 75 from more than
450 applicants.

“It’s the only scholarship I have, and it makes me feel
like I did something right,” she said. “This scholarship
means a lot to me and my family.”

Amos’s scholarship is from Cathy Starnes ‘92, CEO
of the Employee Benefits Consulting and PEO Divisions
at SWBC, and her husband, Troy Torres, a cadet and
probationary training commander for the San Antonio
Police Department Training Academy.

They said their decision to fund student scholarships
stems from their passion about education and the
opportunities it has given them.

“We hope that [scholarship recipients] have the
same experience, that through their education and the
opportunities at UTSA that they will get a well-rounded
character, team a lot, and ultimately have a great career
and give back to the city of San Antonio and give back
to UTSA,” Starnes said. “And, we hope that they do the
same and pay it forward for the generations that come
after them.”

That’s exactly what Amos plans to do.

She hopes to someday be a pediatrician. To get
there, she knows she must work hard at UTSA, graduate
at the top of her class, and excel in medical school. It’s
not an easy road, and as the first in her family to attend
college, it’s a path that she expects will be riddled with
twists and challenges.

“Being a first-generation college student actually is a
big deal for me and leaving some kind of legacy behind,”
she said. “I really just want to make an impact right now
and couldn’t find something that compassion is focused first on her own family. Amos

“In certain areas of my life, I didn’t always have that
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 quoted as saying. "I just have this compassion for people and a passion
for helping others," she said. "I’ve always been that way.

That compassion is focused first on her own family. Amos
is the oldest of six siblings; her youngest brother is 3 years
old. Her role as the trailblazer is one she takes seriously.

“in certain areas of my life, I didn’t always have that
good example to follow. I was something that I searched
for and couldn’t find,” she said. “It means a lot to me that
those that come up after me have an example to look to.
If it’s academics, if it’s extracurricular activities, if it is life
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in general. They have an example of some of the major
aspects of what they will go through in life.”
Before there was Rowdy, there was simply the roadrunner.

The stuffy bird suit was Antonio Gonzalez's first appearance as the roadrunner in 1981 from inside the basketball game. "I was hot," said the costume. "It took a little bit of time to get used to. But I was so excited about being out on the floor that it didn't really matter."

"I decided to take gymnastics," the "2001: A Space Odyssey"-played, i believe it was "[music from] 2001," B.B.A. in management, is a cross-country coach at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

"I'm an attorney for Bass Williamson County. She and her political consulting firm, Strategies, were recognized with a Reed Award for excellence by Campaigns & Elections magazine.

One of us.

Birds of a feather... run together. Whether you're a Roadrunner alum or supporter, you can join the UTSA Alumni Association today and become a part of an organization dedicated to building pride and tradition and helping provide scholarships to deserving students. Membership is your direct connection to nearly 100,000 UTSA alumni, plus you'll also receive special discounts available only to association members. Join today and be a part of Building Pride and Tradition.

"UTSA thought I could make a million-dollar donation. I started cogitating and sputtering. After I came down off the ceiling, I began to look at my staff. All that stuff I had collected over a lifetime of work... A million dollars was possible."

—Yvonne Katz '74, at the March 17 dedication of the Katz Alumni Center

“By the Numbers

2,929 Runners at the 29th annual UTSa alumni Diploma Dash 5K San Antonio City Championship Run.

100,000 UTSA alumni plus you’ll also receive special discounts available only to association members.

1987

FLOR CLEMENTE, B.B.A. in accounting, is a vice president and controller at Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio.

1988

ALBANO MARTINEZ-GONZALEZ, B.A., is a sociologist in founder of Webgrund, a San Antonio-based website hosting company that offers cybersecurity support. He is also an assistant professor and director of the Center for E-Commerce, Marketing and Technology.

1997

JAY T. MOFFET, B.A. in political science, was selected by the San Antonio Express-News for the 2012 Outstanding Lawyer Awards. He is an attorney with Katz, Pöppelbohm, Kil蓁, practicing in the areas of land-use, zoning, local law, and government relations.

2006

SANTANA MARTINEZ, B.A. in mechanical engineering, is an engineer at Webgrund, a San Antonio-based website hosting company that offers cybersecurity support. She is also an assistant professor and director of the Center for E-Commerce, Marketing and Technology.

2008

ANDREA EHRLIN, B.A. in communications, was the 2012 San Antonio International Film Festival award winner for the Oscar nominated film "Beasts of the Southern Wild." The film earned a Best Documentary Feature nomination.

2010

MIKE SHULL, M.A. in environmental science and engineering, has been promoted to executive director of Southwest Research Institute's Environmental, Safety and Quality Systems Program. He was previously director of the Environmental and Safety Division in 2012.

2013

CHRISTIAN PORTER, B.B.A. in management, is a district attorney for Texas' 25th District, which includes San Antonio.
CHANGING LIVES
MARTI HATHORN, B.B.A. ’03, M.S. ’08

Some people hate their jobs. Others merely tolerate them. But when Marti Hathorn discusses the life-changing work she does at the San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind as assistive technologies specialist, the joy in her voice is unmistakable.

Hathorn and her team help people who are blind or visually impaired learn how to use technology to reach their goals in school, work and life. Some of the technology is handheld and magnifies small print. Then there are computers that speak words the user types, as well as every typed command. Other technologies include a camera that captures print that can be read aloud, as users can hear what they cannot see.

Learning how to use the equipment means being able to read labels at the grocery store, to read or hear textbooks or to perform various job tasks.

“The technology itself is blow-your-mind amazing, but what is especially amazing is seeing how people use it and how it changes their lives,” she said.

If the 39-year-old seems especially familiar with many of these assistive technologies, it is because she has been using them since learning as a college student that she was legally blind. Hathorn expanded her use of these assistive technologies, especially familiar with the many uses people use it and how it changes your mind amazing, but what is especially amazing is seeing how they are coming to terms.

Eventually, Hathorn enrolled at San Antonio College and then transferred to UTSA in the 2 Plus 3 program. At SAC, Hathorn used her vision to reach her goals and learned to do it,” Hengst said of Hathorn and others who were using technology to reach their goals in school, work and life. Some of the technology was handheld and magnified small print. Then there were computers that spoke words the user types, as well as every typed command. Other technologies included a camera that captured print that can be read aloud, as Hathorn and others who were using technology could hear what they could not see.

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Hathorn has spoken on campus about diversity in the workplace and how that includes those with disabilities.

What makes Hathorn love her job is experiencing the joy of helping someone in a profound way, like the woman who bear-hugged her after Hathorn showed her how to use equipment to magnify small text in a phone book.

“She said, ‘Are you kidding me? I can read that!’” Hathorn recalled. “It’s those experiences, those moments, that make my job so gratifying and so awesome. From that moment, it changes your life.”

— KATE HUNGER
Exceptional Opportunities

At The University of Texas at San Antonio, education is about exceptional opportunities—in the classrooms, in the laboratories, in the studios, in the recital halls and on the playing fields.

World-class faculty, quality classes, hands-on lab experiences and a vibrant campus are the kinds of things that make our university and community top-tier.

Our excellence is made possible by community support. The We Are UTSA capital campaign is providing a foundation for us to do even more, for the benefit of our students and our faculty, and for Texas and beyond. Now is a great time to join us—become part of the Roadrunner family today.