Reading Takes Us Places

UTSA literacy programs impact San Antonio
ARTISTIC INNOVATION

Interactive Technology Experience Center teaches elementary students to build and test their own robots at the EV3 Robotics Summer Camp. Students’ models were inspired by Leonardo da Vinci’s artwork.

VISIT WEBSITE  itec.utsa.edu/camps
Welcome

Dear Friends,

We are pleased to share this fourth issue of Community Connect magazine, highlighting the extraordinary ways our students, faculty and staff are engaged in outreach and service to the community. Having been recognized in January 2015 with the Community Engagement Classification of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the university remains committed to community and civic engagement.

This commitment is evident in the work of more than 20 centers and institutes empowering our community through their programming and support in areas from college readiness to architectural consultation. Student organizations are giving time and treasure, contributing more than 75,000 hours of service and raising $161,000 for local charities this past academic year. More than $18 million has been awarded to the university in the past year to support outreach and educational programs in the community.

Last fall, Chancellor William H. McRaven laid out an ambitious vision for the UT System. One of the “quantum leaps” he detailed in the plan was to “foster unprecedented levels of engagement and collaboration between higher education and pre-K-12, with a focus on improving literacy.” UTSA has been engaged with literacy programs across the region for some time now, and this call doubles our resolve to combat illiteracy and to continue our engagement with college readiness initiatives. We have highlighted a few of those initiatives in our cover story [Reading Takes Us Places on page 23].

Complementing UTSA’s global impact as we reach for Tier-One status, the UTSA Institute for Economic Development has inspired students and business advisors to develop a small business model that has now reached Latin America and has been recognized by Secretary of State John Kerry as one of the most outstanding business centers at work in today’s global economy [UTSA Business Advisers and Students Impact Latin American Economy on page 14].

We hope you enjoy reading this issue, and we welcome your comments and feedback at communityconnect@utsa.edu.

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Community Connect is published annually by the Community Services division at The University of Texas at San Antonio. The magazine is dedicated to the mission of Community Services: extending UTSA beyond its campuses and into San Antonio and across the state through public service, outreach and community education.

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ON THE COVER

UTSA Roadrunner Readers participants celebrate the culmination of a summer reading program with one last session.

Photo: Jo Ann Jones

UTSA students share stories about others who have had a positive impact on their lives during The Impact Project national campaign of the American Counseling Association.
This summer hundreds of children and teens enjoyed more than 25 summer camp programs at UTSA. These summer camps cultivate a college-going attitude in youth. Participants develop cutting-edge academic skills, and are pushed to new heights of creativity.

The Pathway to Health Professions camp began this summer under UTSA’s Policy Studies Center and graduated 140 high school juniors and seniors, some recently admitted as UTSA freshman. These aspiring health professionals spent six weeks at the UTSA Downtown Campus learning about diabetes, hypertension and obesity. They conducted research and clinical studies on these health topics and developed team presentations at the end of each week. A total of six university faculty, four writing tutors and five peer mentors gave classes and one-on-one support to the participants.

"Participants gain better understanding of what it takes to be a college student in order to become a future health professional," said Natalia Garcia, program coordinator at the Policy Studies Center.

Participants were recruited from 15 Bexar County high schools. Program organizers targeted disadvantaged students and first-generation college prospects in the selection. Participants submitted an online application and a personal statement. Those accepted received a stipend to supplement any summer wages that a student might have lost as a result of attending the camp. The Pathway to Health Professions camp will return next summer and cover three new topics: lung cancer, liver disease and Alzheimer’s disease. At the end of each camp students, receive diplomas, awards and a reception with faculty and family members.

UTSA Supports San Antonio’s Tricentennial Commission

San Antonio is turning 300 years old on May 5, 2018 and the city is planning a colorful, culturally rich yearlong celebration. Mayor Ivy Taylor and the City Council appointed a Tricentennial Commission charged with planning, identifying partners, and integrating events into this major festivity. The commission established committees to plan programs to commemorate this milestone. Executive Director of the UTSA Institute of Texan Cultures Angelica Docog is co-chairing the History and Education Committee. UTSA faculty Scott Scherer, art department, and Jack Reynolds, history department, also will serve on this task force. The committee will identify topical initiatives that can be launched throughout the year or in preparation for the tricentennial. Three initiatives are already underway, including the creation of a chronological timeline of San Antonio’s history that will be for display at a local museum exhibit and online. A San Antonio city passport that will encourage children and their families to explore San Antonio and Bexar County historical sites. A new Teacher Institute that will re-introduce San Antonio’s history to school teachers in the city. Joining her colleague’s efforts, UTSA Linguistics Professor Bridget Drinka will coordinate an international linguistics conference for this celebration.
Mariah Kilbourne has become an inspiration to people with disabilities across the nation. In the past eight years, she has advocated for individuals in wheelchairs to have better access to public spaces and for equal employment opportunities. This work led to her achieving the titles of Ms. Wheelchair Texas in 2012, Ms. Wheelchair America in 2013 and a stellar spot in the U.S. Department of Labor “No Boundaries” program. She fights so that all people with disabilities, like herself, can achieve equity and opportunity. At UTSA, she is the training coordinator at the Small Business Development Center in the Institute for Economic Development. In just a year, she conducted 180 workshops to help small-business owners in San Antonio have better skills and tools to be more competitive and successful. “I am very fortunate to be part of the community at UTSA, she says. It is amazing to be part of a team that truly encourages the unique strengths that each individual brings to the team.”
On the Road to Health and Wellness

How the Mobile Health Lab is taking diabetes screenings to communities in need

By Jo Ann Jones

It’s an early Sunday morning in May at the Mission Open Air Market on the Southside of San Antonio. Dozens of early shoppers have arrived and begun browsing through the rows and rows of vendor booths.

Just beyond these booths stands a 38-foot, white RV. Its bright blue and orange label reads Mobile Health Laboratory and can hardly go unnoticed. Two smiling faces are sitting right in the front, eager to make a difference in the community.

These friendly faces are part of the 24 UTSA student Health Ambassadors and certified community health workers that have participated in the Roadrunner Diabetes Screening and Education Project aboard the Mobile Health Lab- a customized mobile home that features state-of-the-art health and wellness equipment.

The goal is to provide San Antonio with as many free diabetes and health screenings as possible to underserved and economically disadvantaged communities. Under the direction of Dr. Zenong Yin, Loretta J. Lowak Clarke Distinguished Professor in the College of Education and Human Development and director of the Mobile Health Lab, the students and workers have been able to do just that, taking health and wellness to those that need it the most.

“We have been very successful in places like the Mission Open Air Market,” said Yin, who received funding from the Kronkosky Charitable Foundation and Firstmark Credit Union to support the project. “The people we give screenings to don’t usually have a place to go and receive these tests or information on diabetes.”

In seven months, the RDSE Project has provided free screenings for height, weight, blood pressure, cholesterol, and glucose levels aboard the Mobile Health Lab to nearly 2,000 people at a variety of locations across the city. Many of the beneficiaries spoke little or no English.

“People would arrive to the health screenings with questions already in mind,” said Claudia Martinez, a COEHD student who participated in the RDSE Project. “With the help of the amazing community health workers, we were able to give them answers, and guide them in making better health choices.”

At each location, the community health workers, who are graduates of Northwest Vista College’s Community Health Worker program, carefully review results with participants and provide them with information or referrals to programs that can help them manage their health.

“In the past, we were just able to do the screenings and hand the participant...

“I will take with me the experience of meeting and conversing with so many people who have struggled with their health. The engagements I’ve had with them will definitely help me in my future career as a health educator and registered dietitian.”

- Claudia Martinez, UTSA student
a piece of paper with the results for them to take with them to their doctor,” said Yin. “Now, because of our connections, we are able to refer people we identify as ‘at-risk’ for diabetes to the YMCA of Greater San Antonio’s Y Diabetes Prevention Program and we are able to refer people we identify as diabetic to the Metropolitan Health District’s Diabetes Self-Management Program.”

The RDSE Project has hosted several free bilingual health and lifestyle classes across the community that covered topics such as healthy cooking, exercising, and weight management. More than 500 people have attended these classes.

“Working with the Mobile Health Lab has definitely been an eye-opening experience in finding out that not many people are aware of the risks that they have for developing a chronic disease such as type 2 diabetes and heart disease,” said Martinez. “I will take with me the experience of meeting and conversing with so many people who have struggled with their health. The engagements I’ve had with them will definitely help me in my future career as a health educator and registered dietitian.”

Although the RDSE Project officially ended in August 2016, the work that the students and community health workers have been doing with the project over the last nine years aboard the Mobile Health Lab will continue with additional funding provided by the San Antonio Area Foundation through the help of the UTSA Development Office.

“This work is really needed in the community,” said Yin. “There are not a lot of groups doing free health screenings in the community. We go to where the people are, whether in a church, in a school, or in a community, so that they don’t have to make an extra effort to come to us. I hope this has made the community aware of the college and the work we are doing in the community.”
UTSA recognized by White House initiative for work with Hispanic community

By Jesus Chavez

The University of Texas at San Antonio Academy for Teacher Excellence, the Institute for P-20 Initiatives and the Prefreshmen Engineering Program USA have been recognized as Bright Spots in Hispanic Education by the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics.

According to the government statistics, nearly one in four students in the nation’s public schools are Hispanic. In the next few decades, Hispanics will represent nearly one in three jobholders in the workforce. The White House created the Bright Spots in Hispanic Education National Catalog to ensure the educational success of this population. The Bright Spots included in the catalog are recognized for their work in supporting the educational success of Hispanic students.

“Every child deserves equal educational opportunities that ensure future success,” said Belinda Bustos Flores, founder and principal investigator of the ATE and chair of the Department of Bicultural-Bilingual Studies in the College of Education and Human Development. “It is an honor to be listed as a Bright Spot for the work that UTSA, the Academy for Teacher Excellence and COEHD have done to advocate and support Hispanic education.”

Established in 2003, the ATE serves as a hub where school districts, community colleges and the private sector can interact and collaborate with UTSA on research and the design, implementation and evaluation of educational programs that address the emerging educational issues of the day, especially those associated with an increasingly diverse student population. It is a critical component of COEHD’s teacher preparation programs. The ATE was recognized for its success in training educators to work with diverse student populations.

“We are so thrilled to be a part of this extensive initiative and are thankful for all who have worked with the Academy for Teacher Excellence,” said Lorena Claeys, executive director and research associate of the ATE. “Emphasis on Hispanic education has progressed, but there is still work to do. We look forward to continuing our efforts to ensure educational opportunities for all.”

The Institute for P-20 Initiatives provides the community access to information on pathways to success in post-secondary education. It was recognized for its efforts in helping students develop and achieve educational goals through partnerships with K-12 and post-secondary institutions and from within the greater community, such as its parent engagement summit, which drew more than 300 participants from around the community this year.

“It is an honor to receive this recognition and be a part of our university’s mission to promote college access within our community,” said Joseph Kulhanek, assistant vice president for P-20 Initiatives. “The national acknowledgment will go a long way in helping promote future P-20 parental engagement summits.”

Founded in 1979, the PREP USA program has provided high quality science, technology, engineering and mathematics programming to at least two generations of students. It was established on the vision to advance STEM opportunities for students in underrepresented minority communities. It serves as the first point of access to college and university campuses for many students.

“PREP has been a sustained bright
It is an honor to receive recognition and be a part of our university’s mission to promote college access within our community.”

-Joseph Kulhanek, Assistant VP, Institute for P-20 Initiatives

spot for STEM education in San Antonio for more than three decades,” said Rudy Reyna, executive director of PREP USA. “It has impacted the lives of thousands of students, a majority of which have been Hispanic. Being named a Bright Spot in Hispanic Education reinforces our focus on students who are traditionally underrepresented in science and engineering.”

The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic’s Bright Spots in Hispanic Educational National Online Catalog was announced by Alejandra Ceja, executive director of the initiative at the launch of Hispanic Heritage Month on Sept. 15, 2015, in Washington, D.C.

The Bright Spots in Hispanic Education National Online Catalog is composed of 230 programs, models, organizations and initiatives that invest in key education priorities for Hispanic students. The catalog is designed to encourage collaboration and partnership between initiative stakeholders and fellow Bright Spots. Also included are UTSA-affiliated entities Teachers Education and English Learners and the Latino Education and Advocacy Day Organization, which held its global summit at UTSA in March under the coordination of Margarita Machado-Casas, associate professor in the Department of Bicultural-Bilingual Studies, executive director of transnational educational exchange and intercultural relations for the LEAD Global Network.

ATE helps Crockett Elementary students learn robotics through its program Community Lab School Partnership.

Photos: Jo Ann Jones

VISIT WEBSITES ate.utsa.edu
p20.utsa.edu

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON
“Begin with the end in mind.” This phrase is from business guru and author Stephen Covey’s book Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, and defined the approach for the Inspire U Mentoring Program at UTSA.

The end goal of Inspire U was to continuously mentor students from middle school until high school graduation.

This program is the result of an effort that began in 2009 when Communities in Schools, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and the City of San Antonio—with guidance from UTSA professor Michael Karcher—launched a city wide-effort to partner youth with professional and academic tutors who could support teens in academia.

Students dared to dream big, and Inspire U reflected this vision as a working model where students could link their education to a future career.

The program’s first mentors came from Rackspace, CPS Energy, H-E-B and other local businesses and agencies. Soon, monthly lunches between middle schoolers and professionals were taking place at work sites.

At UTSA, the Institute for P-20 Initiatives led the first student mentorship in 2011 by partnering university faculty and staff mentors with their own mentees from a group of 10 seventh-graders from Mark Twain Middle School. They enjoyed riding the bus to the UTSA Downtown Campus and rushing to get in front of the lunch line.

Supporting teens takes patience, trust and great mentorship. The staff from BBBS worked together with the UTSA faculty and staff mentors on ways to decrease cafeteria line chaos, and developed programming that increased comfort and patience from all mentees.

Then the sign came—one day a young boy sat with his lunch in front of him without touching any of the food. He happened to be waiting to eat with his mentor who was driving from UTSA Main Campus. This moment confirmed the growing value and respect of the mutual relationship.

The program also worked to curb student dropout rates. Although Texas ranked in the top states with 81 percent of high school graduation rates, dropouts continue to be challenge for school districts. In 2012, two students left the Inspire U program during their high school transition. Their experience helped Inspire U upgrade programming for mentees in their second year.

For example, San Antonio leaders such as the Chief of Police along with leaders in other professions were invited to speak at luncheons. Students visited Café College to learn about getting a head-start in researching college applications and financial aid. They attended a UTSA basketball game with their families, and visited the UTSA Main Campus and San Antonio College.

Inspire U committed to the development of the young students’ public speaking and future-planning skills. The mentors created dream boards with their mentees that would display future homes, colleges, careers, cars, families and future vacations. Dreams and plans were half of the conversations with their mentors. As the mentees continued...
through their high school years, other conversations focused on bullying, poverty, teen pregnancy, truancy and academic struggles. With aid from a BBBS support specialist, UTSA mentors encouraged their student mentees to maintain grades and to stay in school despite challenging circumstances.

Mentorship persistence resulted in key life decisions for the high schoolers. For instance, one student, Celeste, stayed in school after the birth of her child. Another student who had previously dropped out of school, returned, and graduated. A third student got a summer job which helped alleviate the family’s financial stress.

“I became part of Celeste’s life,” said her mentor, Patrice McElfresh, a senior advisor for the Institute of Economic Development at UTSA. “I visit her home regularly and have meals with her family. I saw the need for support systems for all teens. Although it is easy to complain, is not until you put yourself in their shoes that you realize how much your presence and help are needed.”

In 2015, at the end of their junior year of high school, UTSA mentors and their students decided to give back to a school through a service project. They felt this action was a positive way to conclude the program and celebrate their upcoming graduation.

Former Edison alumna and UTSA Volunteer Center Director Cristina Dominguez spoke to the group about volunteerism and service. Her words inspired a plan to plant a garden at Edison High School. Thanks to the sponsorship of Superior Health Plan, the Inspire U Mentoring Garden became a reality on April 9, 2016. Students, mentors, and staff dug up and arranged patio plants for an entire day. The project taught students the importance of setting goals, keeping commitments, and giving back to the community.

In the end, UTSA mentors realized that the past six years of mentorship have helped students in their education and in becoming young adults. Program administrations hope that the sense of civic responsibility in students continues long after high school graduation.

UTSA and the Institute for P-20 Initiatives are committed to increase the number of mentors for local students, and are proud to serve as the state liaisons to MENTOR, the National Mentoring Resource Center. Together, the agencies and university will continue to create awareness about the need for well-trained mentors across Texas.

For the faculty and staff at UTSA, taking the mentorship challenge will always be rewarding. For the students who were mentored, the program has had a life-changing impact.

“If it hadn’t been for my UTSA Mentor, I might have not stayed in school or graduated,” said Celeste.
Santiago Hyslop, III, an alumnus of the UTSA College of Public Policy, dedicates his free time to inspire individuals with disabilities to unlock their true potential. Through his efforts as president of Iota Beta, the UTSA chapter of Pi Kappa Phi fraternity, he uplifts the humanity of people with different abilities and collects resources to improve their quality of life.

Pi Kappa Phi, chartered at UTSA in 2011, is the only national fraternity to operate under its own philanthropy known as The Ability Experience, which was founded in 1977 with the purpose to serve people with disabilities across the country. Through this service lens, Pi Kappa Phi UTSA has developed premier programming and a strong vision where community awareness about this particular issue is a priority. The group wants to help create a world where the abilities of all people are equally recognized and valued.

Under Hyslop’s leadership, the UTSA chapter hosted a multitude of events to fulfill this service mission in ways only Roadrunners can. Every year, the group puts together 24-hour bikeathons at UTSA’s Main Campus. Since 2011, the organization has built wheelchair ramps alongside the Texas Ramp Project, and every semester the group assists local camps becoming more ADA-accessible.

This year Hyslop plans to lead a massive meal donation to Build America, a six-week journey across the country to promote accessible recreation for people with disabilities.

This impressive civic commitment has left chapter members with real-world leadership experience, and a taste of true compassion and service.

“The skills I learned through Pi Kappa Phi have helped me to be a better person in the relationships with my family, friends and community,” Hyslop said. Although Hyslop is only 22, his acts of kindness have significantly integrated civic engagement into the fraternal culture.

UTSA’s Pi Kappa Phi volunteer efforts, in collaboration with The Ability Experience, have made possible a $30,000 donation to The Children’s Association for Maximum Potential camp, a Texas nonprofit that provides overnight camping experiences to children with special needs.

In summer of 2015, Hyslop participated in The Ability Experience’s Journey of Hope, a 3,600-mile bike ride across 13 states to raise money and awareness for people with disabilities. The event raises more than $500,000 each year. For Hyslop, Journey of Hope was more than just a ride.

“Journey of Hope was about realizing more about ourselves than we ever imagined,” he said. “If the community is more aware of a certain disability, they might be able to change some things around to accommodate or hire a disabled person.”

Hyslop’s achievements are a reflection of the community-oriented spirit Roadrunners possess. He will continue to serve as president of the alumni chapter of Iota Beta and scholarship advisor for the undergraduate chapter. As he embarks on a career in law enforcement, he is committed to continue his selfless mission. His ultimate hope is that one day, “the community will see the ability in all people and not the disability.”

VISIT WEBSITE facebook.com/PKPUTSA
Dance to Heal

By Carolina Canizales
Honors College

IMPACT IN NUMBERS

$100,000+ raised in 8 dance marathons
An average of 110 volunteers per event
117 families helped in 2016

UTSA students dance for 12 straight hours every year in an effort to cure cancer. Legs are about to give out, tingly cramp sensations hit ankles and knees, but then the sight of the children all around the dancers shake off the exhaustion and everybody keeps moving.

This is the warrior spirit that electrifies hundreds of students, children and their families at the annual For the Kids Dance Marathon at UTSA. A marathon that fights pediatric cancer and raises funds for the families that need basic necessities to make their lives simpler.

For the Kids started in 2009 as a leadership initiative effort in the UTSA Honors College, and it is now the largest student-led nonprofit in San Antonio. Year after year, students have strategized, planned and partnered with key supporters to make this annual event a huge success. It is a jumbo size marathon team: 25 board members, five directors, 20 committee chairs, and two faculty advisers. All student positions average 20 hours a week of volunteering, and nobody is paid.

“We have the most passionate team,” said Ghada Ghannam, former FTK executive director. “We fundraise every day even after being told ‘no’ a million times, we just know we have to keep going because there are families struggling.”

The marathon is a high dose of positivity for the kids and families. The entire UTSA community shows up for their cause, and the kids enjoy an entire day out of the hospital.

“The smiles on their faces show the impact we make on real families in real-time,” said Ghannam.

This impact is reciprocal for students; Being part of FTK allows them to develop a commitment to civic engagement and grow in selfless compassion.

Aside from the big April marathon, FTK conducts an annual Zumbathon and fashion show in the fall. They help the children feel like superstars—the lights, the arms being thrown in the air, and the ovation from the crowds are spirit-lifters for everybody.

In the 2015-2016 academic year, FTK helped 117 families city wide.

“I really enjoyed being the director of family relations last year,” said Lial Baki, incoming executive director for this next academic year. “It was emotional, heart-warming and eye opening.”

The group’s sparkle is contagious to younger generations. In 2016, the South Texas Independent School District in Mercedes, Texas, a strong partner of the organization, realized their own dance marathon and contributed $5,940 to the cause. On average, the organization works with 10 partners to conduct the annual events. Its goal is to encourage other events in more school districts and community agencies.

There is a university-wide pride around the success of FTK, and its rigorous commitment to defeat pediatric cancer. The life-changing experiences keep everybody dancing.

“Once we had a child on his death bed with siblings living on the other side of town, and there was no money to keep driving to do hospital visits,” said Ghannam. “We provided funds for the family to have a proper farewell. Another time we paid flights to California for a child to get treatment. These are the stories that make it all worth it.”

VISIT WEBSITE danceforthekids.org/donate
For today’s college graduates who are entering America’s competitive workforce, “real-world” experience is critical. When students join the UTSA Institute for Economic Development’s International Trade Center, they engage in a multitude of institute operations that contribute to the success of business advisors and clients, locally and internationally.

The International Trade Center is one of the largest and most successful trade assistance organizations in Texas. In more than 20 countries across the Western Hemisphere, UTSA business advisers are strengthening economies by training foreign governments on how to start their own Small Business Development Center networks.

The International Trade Center leads the SBDC international expansion initiative through their SBDCGlobal program. SBDCGlobal directly stems from President Barack Obama’s 2012 vision for a Small Business Network of the Americas. The effort would create a hemisphere-wide network of SBDC programs to assist millions of foreign small businesses start and grow their operations, while also serving as a potential market for the U.S.

“We are proud of the groundbreaking work of the International Trade Center, leading the way for Texas companies to go global,” said Robert McKinley, UTSA senior associate vice president for economic development. “International Trade Center Director Cliff Paredes and his team are also leading the expansion of the SBDC Network throughout much of Latin America and the Caribbean for the U.S. Department of State, growing a valuable distribution network of trading partners.”

In the Northern Triangle of Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala, 30 Small Business Development Centers are currently operational. Because of the services offered by those SBDCs, a total of $9.7 million in sales was generated in those three countries in 2015. During the same year, SBDCs in the Northern Triangle, Belize and the Dominican Republic created 11,536 new jobs and SBDCs in Belize, Guatemala, Costa Rica and Honduras formalized 1,986 small businesses.

“Latin American SBDCs are results-oriented, with a goal of creating economic impact through job creation, productivity, capital infusion and more,” said Minerva Garcia, SBDCGlobal senior international project manager.

In Chile alone, 35 SBDCs are fully operational with 16 more to open by the beginning of 2017.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry joined Chilean President Michelle Bachelet for the October 2015 opening of Chile’s first SBDC in the city of Valparaiso.

“One of our very best centers is operated by The University of Texas at San Antonio; It is going to be working directly with our Chilean friends in helping to ensure that your centers do exactly the same,” said Kerry.

Experiential learning at the International Trade Center goes by many names. Students are the “international market research specialists” and “foreign investment specialists” who provide business advisors with critical information. Senior international business advisor Alberto Rodriguez-Baez oversees a team of international market research specialists and “foreign investment specialists” who provide business advisors with critical information.

Senior international business advisor Alberto Rodriguez-Baez oversees a team of international market research specialists. The team gathers data and produces in-depth market research and analysis for small to medium-size companies. Companies include manufacturers, distributors in the industrial, retail, and food industries and others. Under Rodriguez-Baez’s
guidance, students who assume this role participate in site visits and meetings, and present research results to clients. Rodriguez-Baez’s team has presented directly to company owners, sales departments, and trade promotion agencies. In 2016, the team conducted a webinar-based training on international trade advising for advisors in Latin America.

“Students work on market research that has ‘real life’ impact,” said Rodriguez-Baez. “Clients will typically base many of their international trade decisions on the market. As the International Trade Center opens new SBDC networks in Latin America, the research team provides our clients with the information required for them to succeed in those markets.”

The International Trade Center also runs the Texas International Business Accelerator program, overseen by Senior Project Manager Jaime A. Martinez. Students in this program serve as foreign investment specialists who assist TIBA advisers with developing investment business plans that include a business model, industry analysis, marketing and sales strategies, management, and financial projection. The program assists foreign entrepreneurs and companies start or expand their operations to Texas. Since its inception in 2011, TIBA has helped create 2,175 new jobs and generate more than $167 million in foreign investment to Texas.

The vast majority of TIBA clients have historically been from Mexico, attributed to its close proximity to the U.S., but TIBA has worked with clients from Norway, Brazil, China, Colombia, and Venezuela, among others.

“TIBA is the most valuable tool to invest in the United States,” said Martinez.

Maria Jose Buendia, a former TIBA student researcher, returned to the International Trade Center in 2016 as an international business advisor. She knows TIBA pushes students to test their skills by understanding their clients’ background, vision and needs.

“I was once an intern in the program three years ago and this job is what most students at UTSA need,” said Buendia. “This job puts your skills into practice and pushes you. It exposes you to the real world because you get to connect with clients in the ‘real-life’ business world.”

Beyond the emphasis placed on experiential learning, the Institute fosters career opportunities. International Business Advisor Jorge Sanchez, who joined the International Trade Center in 2014 as part of Rodriguez-Baez’s research team, quickly earned a promotion to advisor.

“The institute and the International Trade Center take great lengths to make sure that our interns and students have the resources to succeed,” said Martinez. “Over the past two years, Alberto Rodriguez-Baez and the rest of the staff gave me the opportunity to continually improve and obtain the hands-on international trade experience that I could not have learned in a textbook or classroom.”

"One of our very best centers is operated by The University of Texas at San Antonio; it is going to be working directly with our Chilean friends in helping to ensure that your centers do exactly the same."

-Secretary Kerry
Excellence In Service

Hugo Guerra: Making a difference by the hour

Hugo Guerra is the UTSA 2015-2016 Volunteer of the Year Award recipient. Originally from El Salvador, Guerra came to the U.S. at age 13. Despite the language and cultural barriers, Guerra graduated from high school and now pursues a bachelor's degree in civil engineering. Volunteering changed his life, and gave Guerra opportunities to attend out-of-state leadership conferences and events.

"I was really shy and this made it difficult to make friends," said Guerra. "It was until my junior year of high school when I decided to join an organization, since my first volunteer event I have been able to network with the kindest and friendliest people around the country."

Today, Guerra participates in more than 10 campus organizations, including VOICES, student government and the Hispanic Students Association. In 2015, Guerra accumulated more than 300 hours of community service and he plans to join two more organizations in the fall. He received the Sandra Cisneros Scholarship for the 2016-2017 academic year. This impressive list of accomplishments is beyond a resume builder for Guerra.

"No matter who you are, where you are from, your gender, race, or religion, you can make a difference," he says, "The time and the kindness you put into a project can inspire someone to be better. This feeling is truly priceless."

Jill Fleuriet: A lifetime commitment to community

Jill Fleuriet is UTSA’s 2016 recipient of the President’s Distinguished Achievement Award for Excellence in Community Engagement. In 2003 she joined the Department of Anthropology in the College of Liberal and Fine Arts. Fleuriet has a lifetime commitment to community engagement: “It’s been a part of my life for as long as I can remember, I come from a family who serves their community... it’s an expectation that you will volunteer.”

Fleuriet implements two clear strategies to support the local San Antonio community: first, as a public anthropologist she helps organizations deliver content or curricula in relation to her field. Second, she helps develop program evaluations or curriculums for non-profits across the city. In total, Fleuriet has conducted 15 probono talks that connect anthropology to community needs, to an array of organizations and institutions. She has developed new curriculum design, trainings and program evaluation to organizations the Children’s Shelter, the UTSA Institute of Texan Cultures, Bihl Haus Arts and the San Pedro Playhouse theater. Her impressive dedication has advanced UTSA’s commitment to serving beyond the San Antonio community and continues to be an enriched experienced for her as an individual. “I get excited when my skills and expertise as an anthropologist can help my local community in immediate ways.”

"The time and kindness you put into a project can inspire someone to be better. This feeling is truly priceless." - Hugo Guerra
Daniel Large ’16, a public administration master’s alumnus with the UTSA College of Public Policy, cares what happens to the environment and the impact this has on society. In 2015, he traveled to Mexico to study the effects that an innovative conservation incentive program is having on their local communities.

“I’ve always been really interested in environmental conservation policy,” said Large. “It’s important to me that we understand the myriad effects that policies can have on conservation efforts and our communities as we get deeper into the 21st century.”

Large traveled to Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico as a UTSA-Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social Occidente research fellow. His research fellowship is funded through a partnership with CIESAS and the UTSA Mexico Center.

In Guadalajara, Large collaborated with Guadalupe Rodríguez Gómez, UTSA faculty advisor and CIESAS professor, to gather data on Mexico’s Payment for Environmental Services program and public policy. He hoped to understand its effects on the environment, the changes in local populations’ socioeconomic status and the political implications of the work.

The programs have grown in number over the past decade. The programs assign monetary value to environmental services, such as healthy watersheds, crop pollination and carbon sequestration, which are provided freely by local ecosystems but are undervalued by mainstream economics and risk being developed.

Participating landowners are incentivized to engage in conserving these natural resources on their land in order to receive PES payments from the Mexican federal government. Mexico’s PES program was founded in 2003 and has expanded to become one of the largest PES applications in the world.

In the course of his research, Large studied and interviewed local landowners, scholars, government officials and other conservation representatives in the region. Additionally, he looked at the implications of the Mexican government’s collaboration with its local communal governments, including “ejidos”, or a farming cooperative, and indigenous agrarian communities.

“Daniel is an extremely talented and dedicated scholar, who is carving out an important research niche while still in a master’s program,” said Francine Romero, associate dean of the UTSA College of Public Policy and Large’s faculty adviser, at the time of his trip. “His research trip to Mexico will allow him to delve deeper into the questions surrounding this unique conservation program by giving him the opportunity to work with the people directly involved.”

Large is using the data gathered to craft a series of research papers and presentations, including one to be prepared for the UTSA Mexico Center. This independent study course was part of Large’s fellowship project.

Large hopes to cultivate a career combining environmental conservation with the policy and research skills he picked up as a UTSA student.
Engineering students team up with The DoSeum for STEM outreach

By Deborah Silliman

In November 2015, students in Pranav Bhounsule’s Robotics and Motion Laboratory taught children at the DoSeum, San Antonio’s museum for kids, how to make a paper walking toy that could race down an inclined platform. Graduate student Christian Trevino, who developed a 3D-printed version of the toy, led the one-day workshop.

“We wanted the children to learn about science at our workshop, and we wanted them to have fun!” Trevino said.

Trevino developed the toy for her undergraduate thesis. She named the toy Rowdy Walker because her design was inspired by UTSA’s mascot Rowdy the Roadrunner.

Trevino created a paper version of the toy because teaching children science requires simple yet innovative tactics. The toy was utilized by the DoSeum children taking part in the Inventor’s Workshop.

Trevino’s ingenuity helped the young participants learn the basic principles of mass, momentum, and energy.

“The toy walks by periodically shifting its body weight by swaying its body back and forth,” said Bhounsule. “However, during the process of shifting of weight, the legs collide with each other and the toy loses some energy. But this loss of energy is made up by the potential energy that is gained by walking downhill.”

The Inventors’ Workshop is a new biannual public program at the DoSeum in which high school, college students, and STEM industry professionals create hands-on activities designed to engage kids in STEM topics.

College students from Texas A&M University and San Antonio College also participated in the Inventor’s Workshop.

VISIT WEBSITE engineering.utsa.edu
UTSA Campus Services continually implements new and unique ways to educate Roadrunners about services. The department strives to include potential community benefits in its major projects.

In August 2015, Campus Services launched the Peanut Butter Parking Campaign with the goal to educate students on parking rules and regulations while collecting donations for the San Antonio Food Bank.

The idea of accepting peanut butter for parking citations came from a conversation at the 2014 National Association of College Auxiliary Services Advanced Institute for Managers between Campus Services Director Hillary Klingman and the parking services director for the University of Alaska Anchorage, Glenna Muncy. Muncy highlighted a unique event offered by UAA: once a year, they accept peanut butter and jelly as payment for parking citations. Intrigued, Klingman brought the idea back to UTSA and it quickly took root with the staff.

To further involve the campus community, the UTSA Student Government Association was invited to co-sponsor the event and developed a partnership with the San Antonio Food Bank. The collaboration with the food bank, the recipient of the donations, allowed the campaign to benefit UTSA campuses and the broader San Antonio community.

For the week of August 24 to August 28, 2015, citations for parking without a permit (a $100 violation) and parking without a proper permit (a $50 violation) could be paid with peanut butter: 80 oz. and 40 oz. respectively. Peanut butter payment was valid for one citation per customer and the donation was required within 14 calendar days of the citation date, standard payment applied.

Campus Services used social and traditional media strategies to create on-campus awareness. Staff placed signs in parking lots and high-traffic campus locations, distributed fliers to UTSA departments, and included an informational bookmark in the citation envelope placed on each vehicle. In the campaign’s last stage, UTSA’S University Communications and Marketing department invited local media to campus. As a result, the Peanut Butter Parking Campaign story featured in local TV, radio, and online news outlets.

A total of 702 pounds of peanut butter was collected—172 of which were made as charitable donations by the campus community who wished to participate in the food drive. The campaign resulted in nearly $10,000 saved in citation fees and provided countless meals to the local community. “We take great pride in having a positive impact on the local community as well as the university through this unique campaign,” said Klingman.

The Peanut Butter Parking Campaign provided great momentum to advance our events and promote campus engagement. Through expanded parking education, we hope to further reduce the number of citations issued each year, leading to an even greater reduction in fees paid by students. With every new idea, we strive to fulfill our department motto of Enhancing the Campus Experience.

“We take great pride in having a positive impact on the local community as well as the university through this unique campaign.”

-Hillary Kingman, campus services director

UTSA Campus Services staff donate peanut butter received during the Peanut Butter Parking Campaign to the San Antonio Food Bank.

(Left to right: Two San Antonio Food Bank staff members; Danielle Williams, Hillary Klingman; Javier Munoz, Lauren Beaver, Hilda Guajardo, Elizabeth Messer, and Carissa Gonzales. Photo courtesy of Campus Services.)
Empowering Students through Community Work

By Brian Halderman

During this past academic year, the UTSA Center for Civic Engagement placed more than 20 students with 12 nonprofit agencies as part of the Rowdy Corps program. Rowdy Corps is a community-based program that allows undergraduate work-study-eligible students to be placed off campus in a community-based organization. The intent of the program is to provide students with a quality placement for career exploration, job skill development, and personal growth. The program supports nonprofit organizations with much needed assistance in a variety of roles that enhance and augment their mission.

Matthew Jauregui, a 19-year-old sophomore English major, was placed with Family Service Association in the Best Buy Teen Tech Center at the Neighborhood Place on San Antonio’s Westside. The Teen Tech Center serves at-risk Hispanic teens by providing a space for the exploration of their passions through technology and art. The goal is to inspire, create initiative, and foster community in guiding the teens along a positive path for future education and career exploration.

“I really did not have the best communication skills, but since I got partnered with the Teen Tech Center, I have been answering important phone calls, leading meetings and doing outreach presentations,” he said. “This experience has definitely helped me be a more responsible and engaging person. I feel more prepared than ever before.”

Jesús García, the center coordinator and Jauregui’s supervisor agreed. “Matthew has grown in confidence and leadership while placed with our agency,” he said. “His willingness to learn and experience what happens in the center makes him a great find in a college student who is just starting out in his interested field of education.”

Aside from Family Service Association, students were placed with NowCast-SA, Artpace, Childsafe, Christian Senior Services, the DoSeum, Girl Scouts of Southwest Texas, Good Samaritan Community Services, Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance, KLRN, Providence Place and San Antonio Youth Literacy.

“We are being strategic in our placement sites to provide experiences that would be applicable with a variety of student majors and interest,” said Carolina Canizales the program coordinator for Rowdy Corps. “We are excited to bring aboard additional community partners in the new academic year and we hope to offer this opportunity to more students.”

The program aims to teach civic responsibility to students. “Rowdy Corps is a great opportunity for students with aspirations for personal growth and community empowerment,” said García. “It has been a unique experience for us with mutual benefits for the UTSA student and our agency.”

VISIT WEBSITE utsa.edu/cce
181,300 individuals have attended a UTSA athletic event.

$10,655,800 in awards for the division of Community Services.

377 students have benefited from the Prefreshman Engineering Program (PREP) and received UTSA STEM university courses.

3,708 summer camp participants in 2015.

400+ community-based organizations served by UTSA.

175,797 individuals visited the UTSA Institute of Texan Cultures.

82.5% of students participating in UTSA’s TRiO Educational Talent Search enrolled college in 2014. Since 2011, TRiO has experienced a steady growth.

426,125 hours of community service completed by UTSA students.

Engaged a total of 780,000 community and UTSA participants in 2015. (This number includes all forms of contact with the public.)

2015 Community Impact.
Although faced with grueling class schedules, students who work at the UTSA Institute for Economic Development accept their roles with a mindset prepared for challenges. At the Institute, students become the business research assistants, foreign investment specialists and international market research specialists who provide invaluable services that directly impact Institute business advisors and clients. Students’ contributions lead to client successes, and help them reach major milestones in their career paths.

In 2011, Matthew Jackson, an alumnus of The University of Texas at San Antonio, joined the Institute as a part time researcher. Today, he serves as the Director of the Small Business Development Center Network’s National Information Clearinghouse and oversees the selection process of student researchers for the Institute.  

SBDCNet is the only official research branch of the nation’s network of Small Business Development Centers and has completed more than 80,000 small business research projects since its inception. From manufacturing in Pennsylvania, to wine production in California, to medical innovation in Texas, the SBDCNet serves diverse needs in communities far and wide. Just as in other cities across the U.S., the SBDCNet has contributed to numerous projects in San Antonio that have positively impacted job creation and economic development.

When Jackson joined the Institute as an undergraduate, running the SBDCNet was not within the realm of his career plans. But, Jackson says he has always had an entrepreneurial spirit. In 2012, he became a full time Business Economic Research Associate while earning his graduate degree, and won the role of director in 2016. Jackson attributes much of his success to the institute’s growing awareness and focus on the importance of meaningful learning experiences for students.

“At the end of the day, we are about community development, and part of developing our community is developing our students and our youth,” said Jackson. “Through that effort we’re able to fulfill our dual missions of empowering our external communities and developing our internal community.”

He says he tries to empower his researchers, both student and professional, by assigning them to projects that play on their skill set. Whether it is a project on urban development or public policy, Jackson finds the best fit based on a researcher’s field of study or area of growing interest, which also challenges them to develop and diversify their portfolio.

Beyond Jackson’s professional role with the Institute, he serves as a co-lead with Senior International Business Advisor Alberto Rodriguez-Baez, on the institutes’ taskforce for Student Experiential Learning. Together, Jackson and Rodriguez-Baez drive one of the Institute’s major strategic goals toward empowering students through effective and meaningful learning experiences.

The SBDCNet collaborates with another research branch of the Institute known as the Center for Community and Business Research, overseen by Senior Research Director Thomas Tunstall. Students engage in a variety of research projects at the local, state, national and international levels.

To expand its scope, the institute also partners with UTSA’s colleges. Through a collaboration with the College of Business, the San Antonio Small Business Development Center offers a QuickBooks Internship. The internship earns students course credit while they gain on-the-job training. Additionally, the SASBDC seeks motivated students for its Graduate Research Internship Program internship year-round, allowing students to work alongside small business advisors. Both internship opportunities are paid and push students to interact and network with potential employers while learning about financial projections, research, and business plans.

“Student researchers are a critical component of our clients’ success,” said UTSA Senior Associate Vice President for Economic Development Robert McKinley. “Their research provides entrepreneurs with valuable information and solutions. Meanwhile, students gain practical business experience.”

Matthew Jackson discusses the mission of the SBDCNet and its ongoing research projects while serving as a Business Economic Research Associate.

At the end of the day, we are about community development, and part of developing our community is developing our students and our youth.

- Matthew Jackson
Where would you be if you couldn't read?” asks Mary Flannigan, director of communications and partnerships with San Antonio Youth Literacy (SAYL), when she is recruiting reading buddies.

Where would any of us be without reading? A student would not be in class, a doctor would not be with a patient, and a mother would not be able to register her child in school. You would not be reading this article. The overwhelming majority of individuals would not be able to function in the world today without the ability to read. >>
San Antonio, the nation’s seventh largest city, ranks 60th in the country among cities with the highest illiteracy rates.

“The city has an illiteracy rate of 12.5 percent; this means one in eight adults can’t read what you are writing right now,” said Flannigan.

These statistics challenge San Antonians to new heights of civic responsibility. Improving reading outcomes has been part of the SA2020 initiative since it was developed in 2010.

Last year, UT Chancellor William H. McRaven called for all of the UT system institutions to step-up their game in improving literacy rates statewide. UTSA had a head start on this challenge, given the multitude of initiatives already underway in the community.

UTSA hosts a series of programs strategically designed to increase literacy rates for pre-K to 12th grade students. One way the university is intensifying its efforts is through service-learning courses.

This past spring semester, a UTSA history course partnered with SAYL, a nonprofit that provides one-on-one reading assistance to elementary children. In 2015-16, 43 students volunteered with SAYL’s Reading Buddy program, leading to a 300 percent increase in the number of volunteers from UTSA over the previous academic year.

UTSA professor Kolleen Guy taught the European Cultural History course that partnered with SAYL. An instructor in the history department and honors college, Guy often integrates service learning as part of her course work.

“If you want to change the world, you change your community,” she said.

One-third of her interdisciplinary classes have a service learning aspect, which means each student will spend one hour a week for an entire semester engaged in the community. Thirty-six of her students volunteered with SAYL during the spring semester. In her course, students learned about literacy over the course of European history. They explored the consistent challenges and benefits to the populations that have or do not have access to the ability to read and comprehend material.

“The biggest takeaway for me was seeing progress with my students,” said Mark Cohen ’16, Guy’s student and a recent graduate of UTSA.

“One in particular told me he was afraid of reading in class because he thought he may mess up. It felt good to be able to create an environment that allowed him to feel comfortable making mistakes,” said Cohen. “This experience helped connect the class in different ways with people, and it taught me not everyone learns the same way.”

Guy wanted her students to experience a valuable lesson: “We take reading for granted, I needed my students to have a hands-on experience and learn about the importance of this subject. They saw a program that works and became informed and aware citizens,” she said.

Having someone that can help a student learn to read is crucial. At UTSA, the Center for the Inquiry of Transformative Literacies program, Roadrunner Readers, is designed to give children access to a reading tutor.

The CITL was originally established as Plaza de Lectura in 1999, with a mission to aid San Antonio children in reading and writing. There are three key efforts the center pursues to achieve its goals.

First, the Roadrunner Reader program consists of upper-level pre-service teachers and graduate students at UTSA providing tutoring on-site to elementary school children. A total of 800 pre-service teachers have served 2,000 students over the lifetime of the project.

Second, the center took its in-house program to be implemented in new schools. The Roadrunner Reader Initiation piloted in May 2015, is CITL’s effort to outsource their highly successful in-house reading program. This approach started when Somerset Independent School District in Somerset, Texas, reached out for help with declining reading scores of their students. The center started an after-school research-based program focused on reading comprehension within an inquiry-based environment to increase children’s critical thinking abilities. This pilot served 84 children and the improvements were quickly noticed. This year, the program will expand to various Somerset ISD campuses, including pre-K to 12th grade schools, and the district’s Early College Leadership Academy.

“We have inquiry kits that we choose by themes to help the kids increase in their reading levels,” said Marcy Wiburn, coordinator of services at CITL. “The selection of books in the inquiry kits are meant to help the student develop a strong social justice component. For instance, a student can be reading of sharks and their ocean life, but once they populate an inquiry chart with questions with their reading buddy, they will be learning and discussing about water pollution.”

The inquiry kits are thought-provokers.

“When we see a child make that connection between what they are reading and their lives, or something they can relate to in real life, they step
aside from reading as a task. This moment is when children start seeing literacy in the world,” said Wilburn.

The kits allow a structure for the Roadrunner Reader and the student to follow. First, there is a reading assessment, then a reading outline or guided reading, then an inquiry chart must be completed and last, questions are developed for small group discussions, which enhance students’ reading comprehension.

Furthermore, the center kicked off a reading summer camp this year. CITL hosted one camp at the Downtown Campus serving 25 children. The second was held at Mission Library and served 16 students. This camp received support from the Mission San Jose Neighborhood Association and District 3 Councilwoman Rebecca Viagran.

The center’s mission is to promote a more humanizing approach to literacy and its instruction. Its plans are to use literacy development and research as methods to improve education levels for children and youth in the San Antonio metropolitan area and Texas.

Aligning with the CITL’s efforts, the UTSA Athletics department values the importance of civic engagement for its student athletes and began the Rowdy Readers program in 2011 with area schools.

“Rowdy Readers teaches our student-athletes the importance of giving back and how to be service-minded leaders,” aid Lynn Hickey, director of UTSA Athletics. “Throughout the years, I have seen our student athletes receive as much as they give from this program.” Hickey is a strong advocate and supporter for the UTSA Rowdy Readers Program.

Rowdy Readers partners all athletic teams at UTSA with an elementary or middle school each semester. Student athletes help one or two kids every week with their reading skills for 20 minutes.

“Seeing the kids progress is pretty awesome,” said Kasey Kiefer, UTSA senior and volleyball player who has been involved in the program for the last four years. “They start getting more confident and stop second guessing themselves when they pronounce big words out loud.”

Jessica Waldrip, also a Roadrunner Reade and UTSA volleyball said: “At the end of the year, students tell us they had fun and that they learned a lot. This is truly validating because it lets us know that taking them away from class for reading support has a positive impact.”

UTSA’s volleyball and soccer teams have been adamant about participating in this program. They have bilingual players who tutor Spanish speaking children. This year, the women’s soccer team received the Jefferson Middle School Sweeps Mentoring Award for their participation in Rowdy Readers and other mentoring activities at the school.

Collectively, these UTSA literacy initiatives give children access to books, to a reading partner and to comprehension and critical thinking skills. Throughout history, populations that are illiterate have been the most vulnerable.

“Literacy changes lives and has the ability to raise individuals out of poverty,” said Guy. “In essence, literacy empowers individuals to take control of their education and destiny.”

These literacy initiatives help San Antonio make a dent in the high rate of illiteracy. UTSA will continue to do its part to help achieve the SA2020 vision of 85 percent of third grade students meeting the STARR test standards by 2020.

High literacy rates will take this city to stronger economic prosperity and lower rates of poverty for the next generation. This is the impact UTSA strives for by offering these literacy services to our community.

“Where would people be if they couldn’t read?” Is no longer the question at UTSA. Rather, we are asking, where will reading take us? 🦅
PARKS AND A LINE IN THE SKY

UTSA architecture team reimagines San Antonio’s Broadway corridor

by Nicole Chavez
The Broadway corridor remains an issue of contention in San Antonio. The pervasive disconnect between residents of the inner and outer rings of the city has become a seemingly impenetrable barrier to downtown development and its perceived value. However, there is growing awareness among “loopleanders” and “downtowners” alike that a revitalized Broadway is vital for this city. The heavily traveled street stretches from the airport to downtown, cutting through a diverse cross-section of the city on its path, and therein lies its inherent potential.

It is not a question of whether or not Broadway will be redeveloped. What remains to be seen is the approach that will be taken and who will be involved. At stake is whether or not this city will gain an urban, mixed-use, pedestrian-scaled space — developed with citizen input to truly reflect San Antonio’s cultural diversity — that could become one of America’s great avenues. Presently, the 8.6-mile stretch of Broadway is centerless, fragmented, and used simply as a thoroughfare. It is bordered by micro-communities that do not strongly identify with it and the pedestrian experience is virtually nonexistent. In a January 3, 2016 letter to the editor for the San Antonio Express-News, UTSA’s assistant professor of architecture Antonio Petrov explored the paradox of Alamo Heights and discussed the complex relationship between the community, its main urban artery (Broadway), and San Antonio.

“At this point, the experience of Broadway only feels urban through the windshields of our cars,” he wrote. “Nearly 50 percent of its urban landscape is flanked by parking space. In fact, nearly all spaces along Broadway are tied to businesses and almost no public spaces exist for people to mingle or gather as citizens without being consumers.”

Petrov is investigating urban transformations and the evolution of sustainable cities through a “think/do-tank” he developed in the UTSA College of Architecture, Construction and Planning. In the Expander Lab, he and a group of students are rethinking urban and suburban conditions and devising new strategies to shape future urban growth in San Antonio. They have conducted extensive research on the Broadway corridor since August of 2015 and proposed 1000 Parks and a Line in the Sky: Broadway, Avenue of the Future — a linear park system paired with a skyride that connects the San Antonio International Airport to Travis Park, and could extend to the San Antonio Missions.

Those who lived in San Antonio between 1964 and 1999 will recall the Brackenridge Skyride (1964) and the Hemisfair Monorail (1968), which allowed them to experience the city from new vantage points, albeit limited to Hemisfair and Brackenridge Park. The UTSA project builds on our nostalgic past by offering a transportation alternative — one designed for experience — that could carry residents and visitors through a system of 1,000 urban parks along Broadway. The spaces for the parks are unused and underutilized interstitial spaces Petrov and the students identified; they now call on the community to activate these spaces with ideas and desires for neighborhood parks. This could provide unique hyper-local experiences while creating needed public space and connecting Broadway’s cultural entities.

An exhibition of the Expander Lab’s 50-foot-long model of Broadway was held at Brick in the Blue Star Arts Complex in April 2016. The event featured a roundtable discussion with Ashley Heeren of Lake Plato Architects, Luis Muñoz of Bauhaus Media Group, Julia Murphy of the Cibolo Nature Center & Farm, O. Ricardo Pimentel of the San Antonio Express-News, Mark Reagan of the San Antonio Current and Petrov.

Together, the panel, students, and audience explored the term “urban,” cited cities that effectively utilize green spaces, discussed connectivity and accessibility in relation to San Antonio’s World Heritage designation, admitted to our love-hate relationship with tourism, contemplated alternative modes of transportation, and challenged preconceived notions of parks to imagine what public space can look and feel like in a city of the future.

“The two biggest things about this project for me are the value of thinking huge without repercussions and bringing in public input from a variety of different sources,” said Reagan. “That should be the future of city planning in San Antonio. Take it out of those boardrooms or commissions and bring it to [places like] Brick to just have a talk.”

The April event was the fourth time the UTSA model and design vision has been presented publicly. The project originated with a micro-scale exploration of how small architectural interventions and
a linear park parallel to Broadway could invigorate the vibrant and diverse Alamo Heights community. The 13 students in Petrov’s fall 2015 studio presented two iterations of their model and sought commentary through events held at UTSA, the Alamo Heights Fire Station, and Brick.

A spring 2016 studio of five students expanded the concept with a macro-level approach for the entirety of Broadway, pairing 1,000 potential park frameworks with the skyride component and constructing the current version of the model. Through the skyride, relevant interest points that reflect the city’s identity form a sequence of events, said Petrov’s student Michelle Montiel, who graduated in May 2016. She studied the Pearl district, developing a path that began with a panoramic view and diverted from Broadway to embrace the river, area buildings, and underpass.

Montiel’s personal role in the process was to critically evaluate the group’s work to keep herself and her classmates from “falling into the trap,” their description of designing something that seems appealing but contributes little to its users.

“Tonight showed the future thinkers of our city,” said Muñoz after the April 2016 Brick event. “I love visionaries. It makes me feel good that the students and other people in this city are thinking beyond the status quo. These type of ideas, grandiose as they may seem, inspire.”

Perhaps vision is the only thing that can solve systemic problems, but vision without action accomplishes nothing. Petrov is interested in the benefits of increasing the degree of public interaction in shaping the city and he believes Broadway could be the first urban infrastructure of its kind completely designed by its citizens. His Expander Lab has engaged in open dialogue with the community throughout the process and now seeks unique ideas to activate 1,000 unused spaces in the city’s collective neighborhoods.

This interactive installation will focus on community outreach, while associated public events, roundtable discussions, photo collection sessions and educational programming will bridge the past and future of Broadway to help imagine its new identity. Visitors will be able to experience a nostalgic moment by taking a seat in a gondola from the original Brackenridge skyride.
At its inception, the UTSA Institute of Texan Cultures was charged with becoming one of the state’s leading resources in multicultural education. Today, the museum continues that mission with the help of a grant from the John L. Santikos Charitable Foundation, a fund of the San Antonio Area Foundation.

With the Santikos grant awarded to the museum in the 2016 fiscal year, the museum’s education department can expand to support classroom teachers in a 10-county service region by bringing museum education tools and techniques to the classroom.

“Our students are facing increasing challenges and pressure to meet state standards,” said museum educator Christian Clark. “Teachers need strong support systems and resources to help them. Museums can teach them how to reinforce crucial skills.”

With the Santikos grant, the museum looks to provide much needed opportunities in the classroom and beyond, particularly, in the experiential aspects of learning. Lupita Barrera, the museum’s director of education and interpretation, explains that students understand and retain information best when it is presented in three ways: intellectual, emotional and experiential. The intellectual presentation comes from a book or lecture. The emotional connection has to do with making a personal connection to the information. Experiential is to learn by doing.

“Learning takes on a completely different aspect when it becomes hands-on,” said Barrera. “That’s really where museums thrive. Museums are immersive learning environments. We can put objects into students’ hands and give them something real they can relate to. We bring that experiential connection to the subjects in their textbooks, and that way of learning helps students absorb and retain information.”

The museum’s Education and Interpretation department’s role expanded over the past few years, as it developed various training and continuing education opportunities for teachers and aspiring teachers. Through professional development programs, the education team has taught how to use museum-based instructional strategies, in conjunction with museum resources, in the classroom.

“We’ve taken materials from exhibits, from the historic photo archives, from existing museum resources, and developed effective and exciting approaches to teaching in the classroom, based on what we do here at the museum,” said Clark. “Students can understand how artifacts and common objects were used, what historic images can tell, get direct accounts from oral histories, or interpret art and music. The museum has even created a classroom model based on the process of developing an exhibit. Our way of teaching is about critical thinking, analysis, research and inference based on evidence. The process is intense, but above all, it’s engaging.”

Since arriving at the ITC in 2013, Clark tracked attendance at training for pre-service teachers (students seeking degrees in education) and continuing education sessions for teaching professionals. His charts show 203 served in 2013, 349 in 2014, and 498 in 2015. Following growth trends and bolstered by the Santikos grant, Clark projects a 100-percent increase in 2016.

Grant funding will enable museum staff members to travel through the region, sponsoring workshops for educators, where they will instruct on the techniques museums use to engage their audiences. The teachers in turn will use the techniques in their classrooms and in training their peers.

“We understand that not everyone can make it to the museum,” said Clark. “Field trip funding is scarce. There’s also a whole lot more focus on core curriculum — reading, math, science, English. Subjects like social studies are becoming more difficult to supplement with a field trip. When we can train teachers and provide them with resources to help them create similar experiences in their classroom—— for example, we do a class called ‘teaching with stuff’— you can make a huge impact on the students.”

A UTSA education student identified as Delia, who attended a pre-service teacher training at the museum, remarked on the museum’s demonstration items, “Can you imagine how excited younger students will be holding a piece of history in their hands also trying to figure out what it was used for? It’s amazing that they have all the resources for classroom learning purposes. It will help keep the students interested in our history!”

“Student success is a top priority for UTSA and, by extension, for the Institute of Texan Cultures, as educational institutions which serve the community,” said Jude Valdez, UTSA Vice President of Community Services, the division overseeing the institute. “The museum plays a very important role in the professional development of current and future teachers who will teach the next generation of Texans about Texas.”

John Santikos, known for ownership of a movie theater chain...
ITC is charged with being a leading resource on cultural education for the State of Texas. (Top to bottom) Training opportunities include familiarization with museum and library resources such as the Special Collections located at the ITC; “Teaching with Stuff” and using objects to add experiential elements to the classroom; preservice teacher training for UTSA students and incorporating interpretation of artifacts into their teaching techniques.

Photos James Benavides.

and real estate company, arranged his estate into a charitable trust. He had an affinity for the Institute of Texan Cultures, maintaining a museum membership. Only a few weeks before his passing, he called the museum offices to make sure his dues were current.

Santikos’ colleague, Dennis Noll, president of the San Antonio Area Foundation, spoke at the institute’s Smithsonian night in early February about Santikos’ love for the community’s museums, and how a short day at the office probably meant Santikos would be visiting a museum that afternoon. As the son of Greek immigrants, the institute and its mission were close to his heart.

“This is a fitting tribute to Mr. Santikos’ legacy,” said Noll. “What the institute teaches, and how they teach it, will create better students, and more importantly, better citizens. Children will now learn from museum-trained teachers to appreciate other cultures. Funding this grant is an investment on Mr. Santikos’ behalf and it’s going to pay dividends for our community’s future.”

VISIT WEBSITE texancultures.com
Engaging Voters

By Carolina Canizales

Raven Douglas, junior political science major and honors student, spent this summer knocking on college and university students’ doors across San Antonio to convey one crucial message: local politics matter and impact our everyday lives. Douglas is a UTSA leader who hopes to increase political involvement and voter turnout for millennials. Thus fall she is interning at America Votes in Washington, D.C., through the Archer Fellowship Program. Douglas is a fellow for MOVE San Antonio, a nonprofit that focuses on mobilizing and organizing college students to engage in democracy and the voting process. UTSA alumni founded MOVE San Antonio. Today, the organization is led by UTSA alumni and students. In this conversation, Douglas shared how the MOVE SA team is fiercely revolutionizing voter engagement in the city.

What are the major barriers for engagement that you have encountered?

Voting barriers in Texas are inherent and systematic. The need for voter IDs, the limited mail-in ballot and complex forms to register, make this process overwhelming and disenchanting for young voters who are accustomed to immediacy. Texas is a one-party state where progressive young adults feel their issues and voices do not matter and are not reflected in their public leaders. The lack of voter education in Bexar County is alarming. Every year there are more people that do not know how, when or where to go vote, nor how to remain involved in this process. Lastly, Bexar county can and should be doing more, such as, pursuing an online voter registration form for its residents like other counties have already implemented, or providing a simple Spanish registration card.

Texas was second to last in voter turnout during the primaries, what are you and MOVE SA doing to change this for the November election? We are being ambitious and intentional about our goals. In 2013, we increased voter registration for city elections by 400 percent, and our goal for this November is to register 10,000 students amongst all college campuses in the city. As of date we have 3,101 registered voters! We also do the hard but rewarding field work, we block-walk and table three to five times every week. We stay away from preaching about the importance of voting, and instead grab a clipboard and canvass on a campus, host national voter registration days, or do class visits where we register students on the spot. Our strategies also reflect the urgency of the moment and we know that by not voting at all, people are voting for someone they really do not want to elect.

How do you encourage UTSA students to join your effort? UTSA is the largest student community campus in San Antonio, and we want to make active political participation the norm. On a yearly basis we work with close to 60 UTSA volunteers for our get out the vote efforts. We also celebrate our accomplishments by having block gatherings so that students feel rewarded for their participation and effort. Our class visits are probably the most successful for student at-large response. Professor Henry Esparza allows our group to register students in his class. Out of the 350 student-audience, we usually get 70 students registered in less than an hour. These are all great opportunities to start relationships with our UTSA peers, and our hope is to keep the numbers up while building meaningful relationships with faculty and the student community.

VISIT WEBSITE movesanantonio.org
PRESERVING LATINO VOTER HISTORY

UTSA Libraries Special Collections is now home to the historic records of the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project and the William C. Velásquez Institute. This collection contains 500 documents and 154 audiovisual pieces. UTSA received $145,650 from the National Archives of the United States to preserve and digitize this important collection.

VISIT WEBSITE  lib.utsa.edu/specialcollections
PASSING THE TORCH

Former Student Body President Ileana Gonzalez and president-elect Andrew Hubbard finished off the 2016 school year by volunteering at the San Antonio Food Bank during United to Serve Day.

Photo courtesy of Volunteer Services