

# Emerging Campus

University looking to raise its profile



College of Health Sciences/School of Nursing building

The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) is a public university with a rich history of serving the educational needs of the Paso del Norte region. Founded in 1914 as the Texas School of Mines and Metallurgy, UTEP is as well known today for its top business and engineering graduate programs as for its distinctive fortress-style Bhutanes architecture.

UTEP was the first southern college to racially integrate its intercollegiate athletic teams. Today, that cultural diversity continues, as more than 80 percent of UTEP's student population is Hispanic.

Located near the borders of both Mexico and New Mexico, UTEP has recently launched an ambitious effort to become one of the next Tier One research universities in Texas.

The Texas State Legislature has already branded UTEP as an emerging Tier One university, and set about creating a framework of state-funded incentives to reward the school's efforts to build its research prowess.

Today, facility upgrades are underway to aid the school in its efforts to become Tier One.

The campus is on the tail end of a four-year, \$260 million construction boom that includes a Chemistry and Computer Science Building and a College of Health Sciences/School of Nursing building.

"We are delighted that these state-of-the-art facilities will help an-

swer UTEP's need for additional space to accommodate the fast-growing research agenda being carried out by our faculty and students," said UTEP President Diana Natalicio.

Recently completed projects include the Bioscience Research Building, the University Bookstore, a parking facility and the Foster Stevens Basketball Center.

Additional campus improvements include expanding the Swimming and Fitness Center. "We know that promoting healthy lifestyles, as well as competitive academic and research programs, is essential to UTEP's quality of life," says Natalicio.

The unprecedented construction boom has been an exciting challenge for UTEP's Office of Planning and Construction.

"We have more construction going on at this campus than we ever have before," says Robert Parker, Assistant Director of Planning and Construction. Parker's office works with the University of Texas System Office of Facilities Planning and Construction. That office manages the university's large capital improvement projects.

"They provide us with assistance," says Parker. "They have construction managers and project managers on campus full time to manage these larger projects. That helps us with our load, our staffing and our ability to manage projects simultaneously."



**EXCEPTIONAL PROJECTS**

The College of Health Sciences/School of Nursing building is expected to open in the spring of 2011 after 31 months of construction. The \$60 million, 130,000-square-foot building will include classrooms, research space and practice labs outfitted with cutting-edge equipment. It will feature a 16,000-square-foot clinical learning center where students can train on interactive patient mannequins.

“These colleges are in a deficit of space so this project is going to improve the quality of teaching and research at the university. It will give the schools the space they need to grow,” says Parker.

Additionally, the new building will bring many of the health sciences and nursing students back to campus, reduce their commutes and increase their access to resources. Currently, the programs, which serve almost 2,400 undergraduates, are housed about a mile southeast of campus.

“The project is going really well. It’s on schedule and the construction manager is doing a great job of keeping it on time,” says Parker. “Many people from within the university—the colleges, the planning and construction department and the information technology department, all of those different entities—keep this project moving forward.”

Vaughn Construction is serving as the construction manager with Page Southerland Page as the architect.

About four months after construction started on the health sciences and nursing building, ground broke on the Chemistry and Computer Science Building. It will provide enormous academic and research opportunities for the campus. The \$69.2 million, 140,000-square-foot structure will be home to interdisciplinary research projects that can spark new ideas, new technologies and new careers in such fields as computational chemistry, computational science, bioinformatics and nanotechnology. It is expected to debut in September 2011.

The building will have instructional laboratories, lecture space, support areas, graduate and undergraduate research space, and office space. It will also house the administrative offices for the College of Science.

Though the project will not seek LEED certification, it will implement LEED benchmarks and sustainable building efforts—as the university does on all its projects.

“We use reusable, recycled materials; low-VOC materials; energy-efficient light fixtures and low water-use plumbing fixtures,” says Parker. “We have energy management systems in the building, and daylighting is incorporated throughout.”

On the other side of the 420-acre campus, crews broke ground in October 2009 on land adjacent to the existing Swimming and Fitness Center. The \$32 million, 90,000-square-foot upgrade will include a 1/8-mile indoor running track, a rock climbing wall, an expanded exercise area, an indoor soccer arena, racquetball courts and a multipurpose room

for basketball and volleyball. The project also involves renovations to the existing center and improvements to the outdoor field to include lights and synthetic turf. It is expected to be complete by May 2011.

Each of the new buildings will add to the campus’s bold, distinctive Bhutanese skyline while expanding what it means to employ Bhutanese architecture. University officials hope the fresh profile will generate enough intrigue to bring people onto campus. Once there they will learn that what goes on inside is even more impressive than the buildings themselves. 🌈

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