

**Initial Response of
The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP)
to the Report of the Washington Advisory Group (WAG)
May 13, 2004**

UTEP is very pleased with the report of the Washington Advisory Group (WAG) on research and the potential for its expansion on this campus. Commenting that UTEP has already achieved national “research prominence,” the report shares our conviction that UTEP is well-positioned to achieve recognition as a doctoral-research extensive university and to become a top-tier research institution.

UTEP has had remarkable success during the past 15 years in expanding research programs and attracting federal research funding. As the report points out, UTEP is one of only two UT System academic institutions (UT Austin is the other) that appear on a list of the Top 200 American research universities, based on federal research expenditures.

We are also pleased that the report reaffirms our vision that UTEP can be a model of excellence while offering access to higher education for students who have been historically underserved. Calling our twin goals of access and excellence “nontraditional but exciting,” the report points out that educating Hispanics is of national, as well as regional importance.

Several key elements must be present for a university to reach the top ranks of research institutions. The report states, and we agree, that UTEP has many of these critical building blocks already in place. For example, UTEP:

- Attracts federal funding that leverages our unique assets of location and student demographics
- Wins research grants in open competition with other research universities
- Has built a solid research base that is poised for expansion
- Has demonstrated success in recruiting high-quality new faculty
- Has developed a strategic research focus that cuts across disciplines to address the social and economic issues facing our border region, including health, biomedical science, security and the environment

We are also pleased that the report acknowledges the strong support UTEP receives from the community we serve, and the private fundraising success we have achieved. We know that many of our recent accomplishments have been the result of support from our alumni and friends.

However, for UTEP to become a top-tier research university, we must also see significant short- and long-term investment from both the UT System and the State of Texas. We believe that the single greatest constraint on UTEP’s continued institutional development has been a lack of state funding to build and renovate facilities, acquire technology, support graduate programs, serve as grant matches, and recruit and retain outstanding faculty. Without such investment, UTEP will not only fail to achieve its aggressive goals, but also lose the momentum that has been built during the past 15 years.

UTEP is pleased that the University of Texas System commissioned this WAG review of its academic components in El Paso, Arlington, Dallas, and San Antonio. The report provides us with an in-depth assessment of where UTEP stands today and what we need to do to continue moving toward our goal of becoming a top-tier research institution. As we continue to develop our research strategic plan, with broad-based participation from UTEP faculty and administrators, we will consider carefully the many observations and recommendations contained in this report. We also look forward to working with the UT System to develop the resources and strategies that will be critical to our continued progress in achieving UTEP’s full institutional potential.