



**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
STRATEGIC PLAN FOR RESEARCH UPDATE**



**STRATEGIC PLAN FOR RESEARCH UPDATE
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO**

Submitted to

**The University of Texas System
And
The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board**

March 1, 2025



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Dr. Archie L. Holmes Jr., Ph.D.
Executive Vice Chancellor
Office of Academic Affairs
The University of Texas System
210 West 7th Street
Austin, TX 78701-2982

Dear Dr. Holmes

Enclosed is the 2025-2030 update of The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP)'s Strategic Plan for Research, which serves as a guide to UTEP's growth as a Research Intensive University.

This document describes our plan for developing UTEP's research enterprise holistically and strategically in areas of current and emerging research strengths while continuing to increase access to excellent higher education to advance discovery of public value and positively impact the health, culture, education, and economy of the community we serve. To continue our trajectory, each of the University's colleges and schools will actively support growth in research and scholarship, both broad and strategic, in ways that increase impact and national recognition.

Should additional information be required, we will be pleased to respond.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather Wilson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long vertical line extending downwards from the end of the name.

Heather Wilson
President

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Executive Summary

UTEP, as a comprehensive public research university, will drive excellence in research and innovation while continuing to increase access to excellent higher education to advance discovery of public value and positively impact the health, culture, education, and economy of the community we serve. UTEP has achieved its current level in advancing the discovery of public value and positively impacting our community's health, culture, education, and economy by encouraging research, scholarly activity, and artistic expression in all disciplines across campus. To continue our trajectory, each of the University's colleges and schools will actively support growth in research and scholarship, both broad and strategic, in ways that increase impact and national recognition.

This document is an update to UTEP's Research Strategic Plan for 2025-2030 and is guided the UTEP 2030 Strategic Plan. <https://www.utep.edu/strategic-plan/>

The goal of UTEP's strategic plan is to ADVANCE DISCOVERY of public value and its application.

We will implement the following objectives to advance discovery:

Objective 1: Identify and develop areas of strategic research strength.

Objective 2: Recruit, retain, and develop exceptional research faculty and PhD students.

Objective 3: Support and, where necessary, build research infrastructure in areas of strategic strength.

Objective 4: Build and support strategic partnerships with national laboratories, federal and state research agencies, and higher education institutions.

Objective 5: Create an innovation ecosystem to accelerate the translation of discoveries to industry.

The plans for (i) Elevating the Research Enterprise, (ii) Increasing Research Funding and Productivity, (iii) Doctoral programs, and (iv) Faculty Development are described in relation to the current R1 research performance benchmarks and, growth trajectory, current initiatives in place, key strategies to be continued and, expected outcomes. A cross-campus team of individuals who play key roles in faculty and student development at UTEP and, evaluation of the same contributed to finalizing this Research Strategic Plan Update 2025-2030. Quality improvement during the implementation of this strategic plan will include continuous assessment of processes, deliverables, and outcomes stated with data gathered from the multiple sources listed. Timely communication between stakeholders in relation to best practices and lessons learned for advancing listed objectives will be key in optimizing the implementation of this strategic plan.



UTEP 2025-2030 Research Strategic Plan Update

Introduction

UTEP is a comprehensive public research university that is increasing access to higher education. We advance discovery of public value and positively impact the health, culture, education, and economy of the community we serve. UTEP is America's leading Hispanic – serving university.

Our student body is 84% Hispanic and 96% minority. The university offers over 170 bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs across nine colleges and schools. UTEP is designated by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education as an R1 research university. It is the only R1 university in the United States that has not wavered from its 100% undergraduate student admission rate while it built research excellence and exceptional rates of student success. As a research intensive/doctoral institution, UTEP fosters a climate of scholarly inquiry, with a special focus on applying innovative interdisciplinary approaches to explore and address major issues that confront the multicultural U.S.-Mexico border region.

UTEP has identified four Strategic Advantages that we leverage to accomplish our mission and implement our Strategic Plan:

1. **Leveraging our place.** We are located at the heart of a vibrant city located at the westernmost tip of Texas, where three states and two countries converge along a 54-mile section of the Rio Grande in the mountainous Chihuahuan Desert.
2. **The unique diversity of our people.** The Paso del Norte is one of the largest bilingual, binational, multicultural communities in the Western Hemisphere. Overwhelmingly Mexican-American, our history as a gateway has enriched our region with a unique population of Native Americans, Spaniards, Mexicans and Americans.
3. **Our culture of care.** We have created a culture of belonging for students who have historically been underserved by higher education. We are a generous, family-oriented, closely knit community.
4. **Engagement and strong partnerships.** At a national level, and particularly with respect to research, UTEP will build partnerships with other educational institutions and research sponsors to advance knowledge where we are stronger together. This document is an update to UTEP's Research Strategic Plan for 2025-2030 and is guided by the UTEP 2030 Strategic Plan.

<https://www.utep.edu/strategic-plan/>

Section I: Plan to Elevate Research Enterprise



A. Goals and Priorities:

Who we are & where we are going (2025-2030)

Vision for Strategic Plan for Research: UTEP, as a comprehensive public research university will drive excellence in research and innovation while continuing to increase access to excellent higher education to advance discovery of public value and positively impact the health, culture, education, and economy of the community we serve.

UTEP has achieved its current level in advancing discovery of public value and positively impacting our community's health, culture, education, and economy by encouraging research, scholarly activity, and artistic expression in all disciplines across campus. To continue our trajectory, each of the University's colleges and schools will actively support growth in research and scholarship, both broad and strategic, in ways that increase impact and national recognition. UTEP seeks to deepen the culture of scholarly activity by refining policies, securing resources to engage all faculty in research, scholarship, and artistic expression, ensuring research compliance and integrity, and supporting intellectual property protection and commercialization.

The University research strategic plan (2025-2030) is a natural continuation of UTEP's existing trajectory. To achieve this vision, UTEP will advance research, scholarship, and artistic expression with emphasis on areas of current and emerging strength. We are committed to

leading and fostering the creation of new knowledge and groundbreaking discoveries. We promote collaboration among researchers, government, and industry to advance intellectual property development, research commercialization, and economic growth. We will expand Ph.D. programs, support for Ph.D. students as funding allows, and increase research experiences and productivity of all students in areas of significant strength and need. Through a service-oriented approach, we aim to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of research management while upholding the highest standards of integrity and compliance with all regulations and policies.

Goal: ADVANCE DISCOVERY of public value and its application.

Objective 1: Identify and develop areas of strategic research strength.

Objective 2: Recruit, retain and develop exceptional research faculty and PhD students.

Objective 3: Support and, where necessary, build research infrastructure in areas of strategic strength.

Objective 4: Build and support strategic partnerships with national laboratories, federal and state research agencies, and higher education institutions.

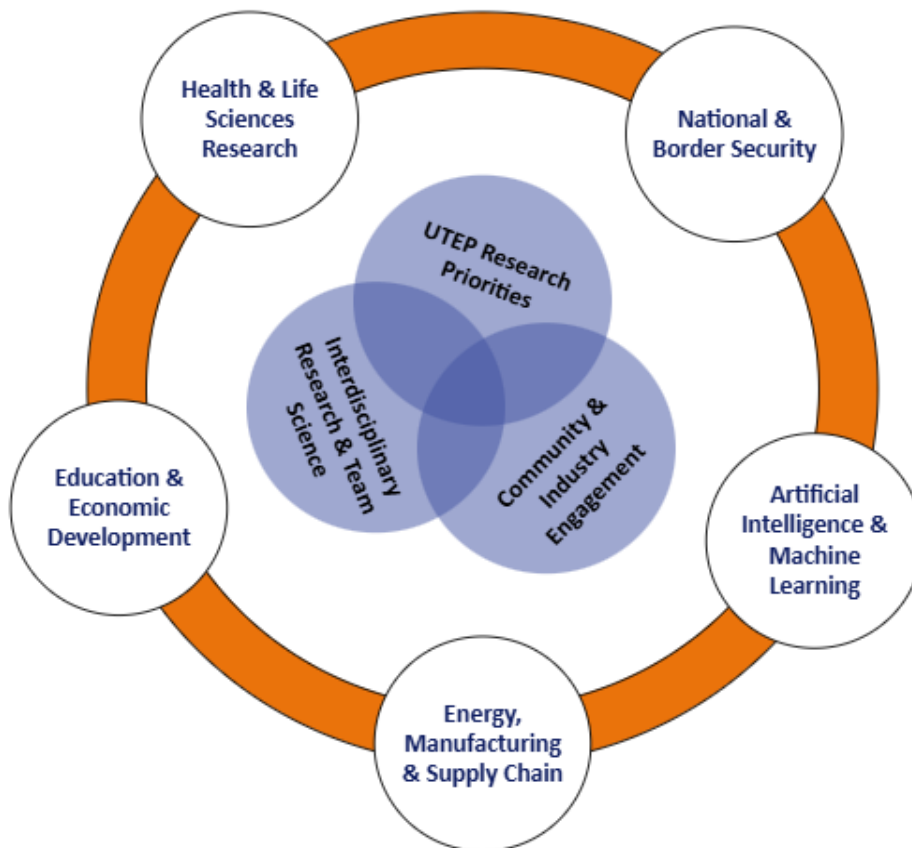
Objective 5: Create an innovation ecosystem to accelerate the translation of discoveries to industry.

Assessing progress towards the goal and objectives listed: Included below in Table 1 are Key Strategies and Expected Primary Outcomes for Objectives 1-5 as applicable to Sections II- VII. We will implement a coordinated formative and summative evaluation for assessing progress towards listed objectives. Annually from 2025, data related to assessing progress towards the listed 2025-2030 objectives will be collected from various sources across campus including UTEP Research & Innovation, Office of Vice President of Academic Affairs, The Graduate School, The Center of Institutional Evaluation, Research, and Planning (CIERP), UTEP Library and, UTEP Colleges and Departments as applicable. The centralized Point of Contact for these data requests and curating will UTEP R&I. Data collected will not only be analyzed for institutional level progress towards listed objectives but also for examining UTEP's regional, national and global stature in terms of both research productivity and research impact. Additional data for research impact tracking points including research funding, publications and, commercialization will be examined annually through a value-driven assessment to ensure that the strategies implemented are data-informed and, are meaningful for all disciplines involved.

Research Priorities: The following UTEP Research Priorities are identified based on evidence related to research potential, impact and strengths, and our response as a regionally-grounded institution to the evolving stakeholder needs, policy and funding priorities. UTEP's geographic location on the US-Mexico Border, faculty research foci and expertise that align with the pressing national and global research needs (e.g. National Defense and Border Security, Artificial Intelligence, Health Disparities, and Aerospace Engineering), and the corresponding workforce development initiatives provide unique opportunities for our research teams to lead in the areas below (Figure 1.).

- **Energy, Manufacturing & Supply Chain** with focus on environment (water sustainability and climate resiliency), critical infrastructure (transportation and power grid), and clean energy (renewable, storage, advanced materials, and bioenergy).
- **Health and Life Sciences** with focus on addressing health disparities through experimental, computational, clinical and community placed research across health and life sciences.
- **National and Border Security/Defense** with focus on space technologies and hypersonic, advanced manufacturing and materials, and energy solutions for directed energy.
- **Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning** with focus on computing (cybersecurity, robotics, and quantum), data literacy and curation, and generative AI in a transdisciplinary manner.
- **Education and Economic Development** with focus on inter-professional research and workforce development to include understanding of bilingualism's effects and inform educational practices and policies.

Figure. 1: Research priorities and Cross Cutting themes



The above cross-cutting research priorities, themes and categories, and resulting discovery and innovation will be fostered through community engagement, and/or interdisciplinary research and team science wherever applicable given the critical need to engage stakeholders, and large interdisciplinary teams to solve current and future ecological and human-centered problems. Multiple crosscutting themes that link and synergize discovery and innovation across and between the research priorities listed above often require interdisciplinary teams that can also engage in translational and transdisciplinary sciences. We will purposefully foster team science while ensuring multi-sectorial partnerships such as those from the community, industry and government are engaged where applicable to ensure meaningful high-impact, user-centered research for solving real world problems.

B. Collaborations and Partnerships:

To enhance interdisciplinary research (IDR) and team science initiatives, UTEP will continue to develop ideation workshops and faculty cohort programs to foster team formation and research development. The University will strengthen such collaborative and interdisciplinary research efforts by providing support through (i) faculty training workshops in various research topics, (ii) facilitating large-scale proposals development, (iii) facilitating multi-institutional/ multi-sectorial teams formation, and (iv) formalizing research partnerships with national laboratories, industry partners, and funding agencies. Faculty exchanges and visiting scholar programs will also be venues to foster cross-institutional partnerships for discovery and innovation, and increase in student engagement in faculty-led research. We will continue to increase the number and types of faculty collaborations (cross-college, national, and international partnerships) growing the number of interdisciplinary research proposals submitted annually, and tracking institutional engagement for research with federal agencies, industry partnerships, and research consortia.

Partnerships with National Labs: We will continue to capitalize on our strategic location to strengthen partnerships with research laboratories and military bases, focusing on key areas where we have deep expertise including cybersecurity and national defense, advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence, and space. Additionally, we will further expand our strong collaborations with national laboratories. These partnerships will involve personnel exchanges through joint appointments and fellowships, joint seminars and publications, as well as collaborative efforts on funded research.

Collaboration with other UT System Campuses: We will also strengthen our collaboration with other UT System campuses to enhance research capabilities, capitalize on system-wide research infrastructure, and contribute to the development of the system's research policies and guidelines.

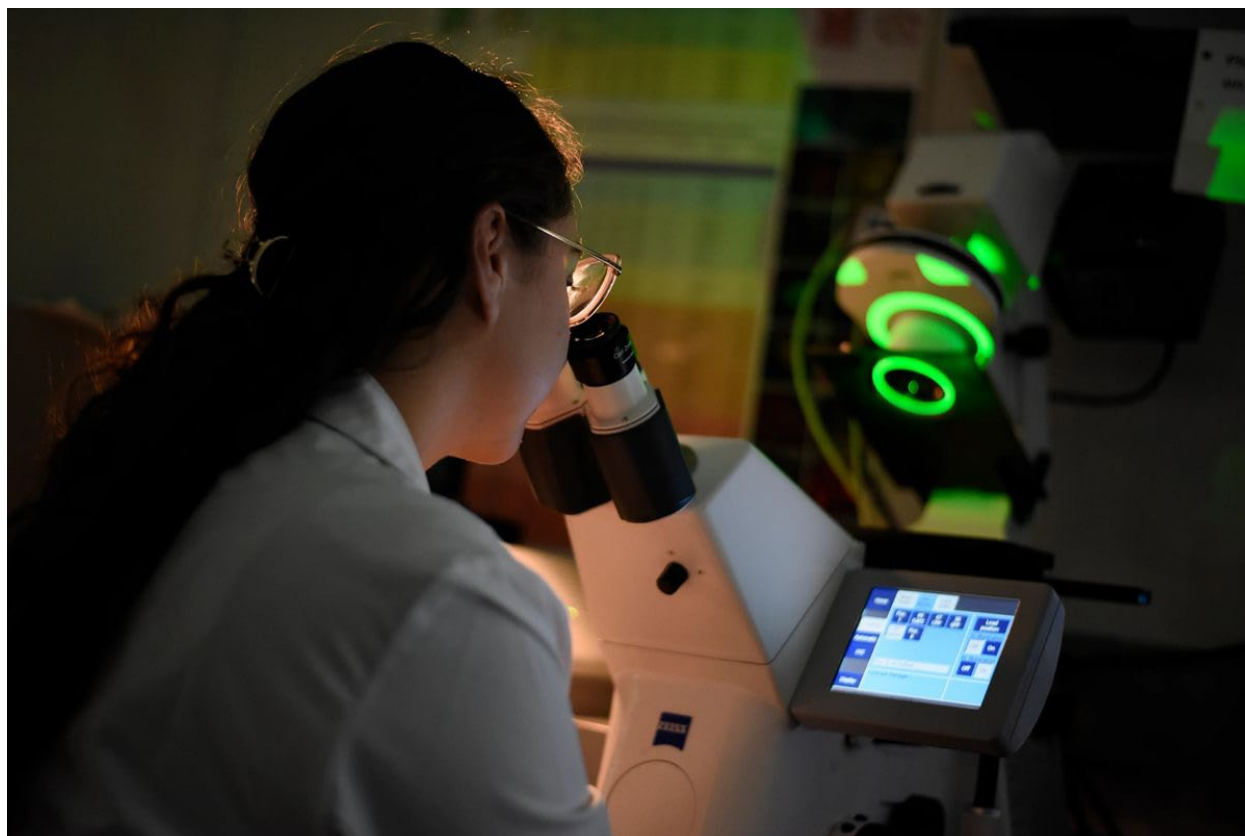
Formal Partnerships for Faculty Joint Appointments and Core Facilities and Equipment Usage: Over the next five years we will continue to increase the scope and contexts of collaborations with other Institutions of higher education for research including faculty joint appointments, visiting professorships, and formal agreements for mutual use of core facilities and equipment. We expect that having such processes in place will provide a platform to propel faculty and

student research. We plan to collaborate with institutions within and outside the Paso Del Norte Region for such initiatives.

C. Economic Impact:

In alignment with the five listed UTEP strategic research plan objectives for the 2025-2030 period, Research & Innovation will allocate annually an appropriate and feasible fiscal year budget derived from indirect cost recoveries to support implementation of key initiatives to advance the objectives. The distribution of these funds will be strategically structured across current and emerging research priorities for initiatives including providing competitive startup packages to attract and retain distinguished faculty, enhancing research infrastructure and facilities, expanding opportunities for student engagement in research, and fostering interdisciplinary collaborations. This targeted investment is designed to strengthen UTEP's research capabilities, drive innovation, and elevate the university's national research impact. UTEP will continue to assess the economic impact of its discovery and innovation at the regional and state levels through multiple metrics related to research workforce development, impact of commercialization and entrepreneurship, quality of life in communities served/impacted and, how these metrics align with local and regional economic priorities. UTEP Research & Innovation will work with all UTEP colleges and departments, the Graduate School and CIERP to examine data that will inform the economic impact of our research at regional and state levels.

Section II: Plan to Increase Research Funding and Productivity



A. Institutional Targets Related to Increasing External Research Funding:

We will utilize an implementation science-based approach guided by the inner and outer setting factors that shape our intent and capacity related to the updates for the UTEP strategic plan over the next 5 years to advance the stated objectives for 2025-2030. We focus on the 4Ps (People, Processes, Products, and Partners) of Design to enhance our research impact including research funding, scholarly products, commercialization, partnerships, and research workforce development to ensure **that our strategic plan is designed to foster systems level to individual level progress towards our stated goal and objectives (2025-2030) while (i) enabling our teams (stakeholders) to own and utilize this strategic plan to continuously revisit and improve implementation and (ii) document tangible metrics and outcomes to facilitate quality assurance and recognition of milestones achieved.**

Table 1. Key Strategies and Expected Primary Outcomes for Implementation of the UTEP Research Strategic Plan Updates 2025-2030

**Please note: Some Key Strategies, Expected Primary Outcomes and/or Data Sources are common to more than one of the five objectives listed.*

Goal: ADVANCE DISCOVERY of public value and its application.	
Inner Setting Factors UTEP faculty, students, staff, campus resources for research (core facilities, faculty and student development, proposal development, grant management, and research incentives), faculty research interests and expertise, intramural research funding and policies.	Outer Setting Factors UTEP’s geographic location, regional research needs, regional, national and global competitiveness and impact, state and federal funding priorities, stakeholder priorities, state and federal policies, THECB, and UT System.
Objective 1: Identify and develop areas of strategic research strength.	
Key Strategies:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct analysis of research productivity and impact of UTEP faculty. • Examine regional, national and global trends and funding priorities in research areas. • Align UTEP’s identified areas of strategic research strength with emerging trends and funding priorities. • Continue to provide resources for research development in identified research areas. • Strategically align faculty hiring with identified areas of research strength. • Continue to expand student engagement in research experiences. • Foster development of current UTEP centers and research facilities. 	
Expected Primary Outcomes: Focused research resources allocation in identified areas of strategic research strength; faculty and student-related research productivity growth in current and emerging research priorities; enhancement of UTEP’s research impact and visibility in areas of strategic research strength.	

Data Sources: R&I, CIERP, Graduate School, THECB, UTEP colleges and departments.

Objective 2: Recruit, retain and develop exceptional research faculty and PhD students.

Key Strategies:

- Implement multipronged/multi-contextual faculty development research initiatives at UTEP (Examples: R&I grant proposal workshops. ideation workshops; Pilot Seed Fund Grants, Faculty Travel Incentive Program etc.);
- Establishing faculty and PhD student research mentoring programs per research priority areas;
- Continue to institutionalize student engagement in real-world research at undergraduate, Masters and Doctoral levels;
- Strategic Faculty Hires in identified areas research strength;
- Competitive faculty recruitment and retention packages;
- Maintain a robust process and adaptable infrastructure for faculty promotion and tenure that purposefully and meaningfully incorporates metrics related to the evolving research landscape and methodologies;
- Continue to provide financial assistance needed for Doctoral students;
- Mentor undergraduate and Master's level students to aspire and pursue Doctoral degrees;
- Continue to identify opportunities for student scholarships and fellowships.

Expected Primary Outcomes: Continued growth in R1 research performance benchmarks related to T/TT faculty, annual research expenditures per T/TT faculty, overall institutional annual research expenditures, doctoral degrees awarded and. doctoral programs offered; Increase in retention and graduation rates annually; Growth in students securing highlight competitive fellowships; UTEP graduates meaningfully employed in highly competitive settings in academia, industry, government and community settings; growth in faculty and student research productivity AND impact measured in terms of research funding, publications and commercialization.

Data Sources: R&I, CIERP, Graduate School, THECB, UTEP College and Departments.

Objective 3: Support and, where necessary, build research infrastructure in areas of strategic strength.

Key Strategies :

- Continue to assess baseline research infrastructure;
- Identify best practices and opportunities for improvement in areas of strategic in relation to UTEP and, aspirational peer institutions;
- Identify Institutional and College based points of intervention to support faculty in proposal development and grants management;
- Strategic Faculty Hires identified research areas.
- Develop research facilities at UTEP based on research priorities and needs identified;

Expected Primary Outcomes: Continued increase in growth in areas of current and emerging research priorities evidenced by growth in Annual R1 research performance benchmarks; development and maintenance of an agile and competitive research enterprise that fosters high research productivity, attracts highly talented faculty researchers, and enhances faculty development and retention.

Data Sources: VPAA, R&I, CIERP, UTEP colleges and departments, external research data engines/sources/consultants.

Objective 4: Build and support strategic partnerships with national laboratories, federal and state research agencies, and higher education institutions.

Key Strategies:

- Engage faculty and students across colleges in interdisciplinary and team science ideation and training initiatives;
- Engage stakeholders from multiple sectors (community, industry, national labs, government departments and offices) in on-campus research agenda and initiatives;
- Connect faculty and students with stakeholders to partner in translational research activities;
- Continue to foster community-engaged scholarship and research fund-seeking;
- Foster coordination between on campus interdisciplinary teams for large scale team science;
- Implement recognitions specific to team science research productivity;
- Facilitate processes to help faculty with commercialization of research products (patents, licensures, and Start-ups);
- Review and enhance internal system for formalizing partnerships with external stakeholders.

Expected Primary Outcomes: Formal agreements in place serving as platform to propel faculty and student research; Increase in number of faculty who can serve as PI on large scale grant proposals; Increase in large scale research proposals awarded; Optimal utilization of UTEP's research facilities.; Continued growth of UTEP's specialized research institutes and centers.

Data Sources: R&I, CIERP, UTEP CCE, Graduate School, colleges and departments, community partners/ partnering agencies.

Objective 5: Create an innovation ecosystem to accelerate the translation of discoveries to industry.

Key strategies:

- Facilitate processes to help faculty with commercialization of research products (patents, licensures, and Start-ups);

- Expansion of faculty and student engagement in campus-industry partnerships through UTEP’s Commercialization, Entrepreneurship, and Economic Development (CEED) team;
- Continue to increase engagement of CEED with industry partners.

Expected Primary Outcomes: Growth in UTEP’s benchmarks for commercialization, entrepreneurship and economic development (annual revenue through copyright and licensing agreements, start-ups, and student entrepreneurship opportunities and internships); National visibility and impact of UTEP’s discovery and innovation.

Data Sources: R&I, CEED, UTEP CCE, colleges and departments.

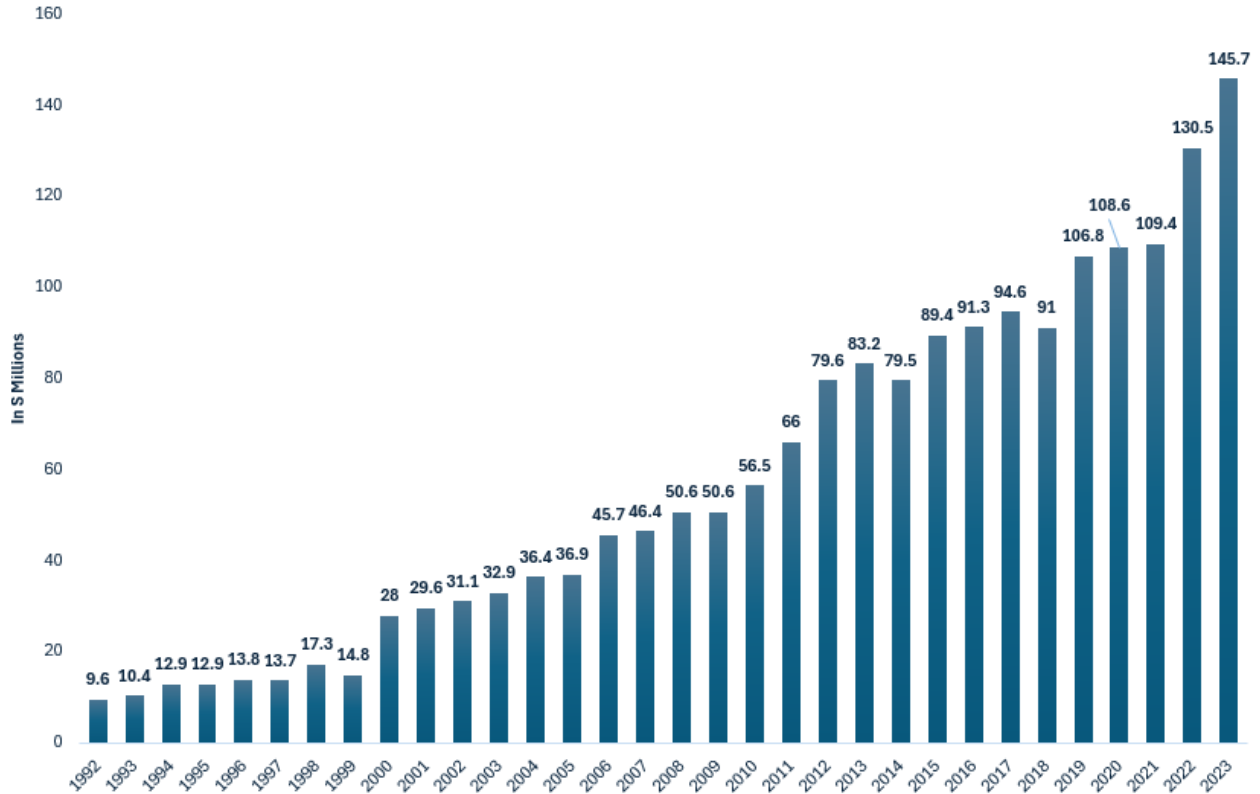
We will implement strategies to assist faculty and student succeed in creating and disseminating new knowledge and innovations; bolster and build areas of research excellence; increase external grants and contract funding ; engage with federal agencies to understand future research directions; and provide services in support of research ethics, integrity, safety and security. UTEP’s research enterprise milestones achieved as of 2024, comparison of similar benchmarks for emerging research institutions in Texas (Tables 2-5), and aspirational peers nationwide (Table 6) guide us in updating our research target metrics for 2030. Table 2 lists the current milestones achieved from Fiscal Year (FY) 2020- 2024 for the primary benchmarks (metrics and outcomes) stated in our strategic plan implementation logic model above (Table 1). These tangible metrics include annual research expenditures, number of doctoral degrees awarded, growth in tenured/tenure track (T/TT) faculty, student enrollment, and student enrollment/FTE faculty enrollment ratios. Our Doctoral degree counts listed in Table 2 include research and professional doctoral degrees awarded annually. Although the research Doctoral degrees are a primary focus for the Carnegie R1 classification, we include the professional Doctoral degrees awarded annually since at UTEP, given our commitment to student engagement in research as part of workforce development, many of our professional doctoral degree students engage in real-world research experiences.

Table 2. UTEP Current Data and Milestones FY2020-2024

	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
<i>Tier One Performance Benchmarks</i>					
Research Expenditures (THECB)	\$105,788,779	\$106,594,279	\$125,037,379	\$139,664,811	\$151,516,960
All Doctoral Degrees Awarded (Incl. Professional)	171	179	218	228	206
PhD & EdD Doctoral Degrees Awarded	130	95	111	132	122
<i>Growth</i>					
T/TT Faculty (Fall)	528	530	528	538	537
Number of Doctoral Programs	20	20	21	22	23
Total Headcount Enrollment (Fall)	25,177	24,879	24,003	23,880	24,351
<i>Quality Assurance</i>					
FTE Enrollment/FTE Faculty Ratio (Fall)	20 to 1	21 to 1	20 to 1	19 to 1	20 to 1
<i>Efficiency</i>					
Research Expenditures per T/TT Faculty	\$208,538	\$201,121	\$236,813	\$259,600	\$282,154
<i>Student Success - 21st Century Demographic</i>					
Annual Doctoral Degrees - Total	171	179	218	228	206
Annual Doctoral Degrees - Hispanic	82	100	114	132	107
% Hispanic	48%	56%	52%	58%	52%

An analysis of UTEP’s R1 research performance benchmarks from 2020-2024 (Table 2) demonstrates consistent growth annually in research expenditures, number of research doctoral degrees awarded, number of Tenured/Tenure Track faculty, FTE Enrollment/FTE Faculty ratio, and research expenditures per T/TT Faculty. Our strategic plan objectives (2025-2030) are designed to ensure that we will continue to also ensure the progress made in the R1 research performance benchmarks through for the key strategies and activities we are currently implementing. Since achieving R1 status in 2019, UTEP’s research expenditures continued to witness significant increases annually, going from \$106.5M in 2019 to over \$151.5 M in 2024 (Table 3).

Table 3. UTEP’s Annual Growth in Total Annual Research Expenditures (Source: NSF)



Comparisons of Annual Restricted Research Expenditures with Texas Emerging Universities and UTEP’s Aspirational Peers

Table 4. Annual Restricted Research Expenditures among Texas Emerging Research Institutions. (Source: THECB)

Annual Restricted Research Expenditures among Texas Emerging Research Institutions

Institution	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022
The University of Texas at Arlington	\$45,381,710	\$46,008,457	\$52,086,621	\$45,865,947	\$54,421,892
The University of Texas at Dallas	\$53,822,907	\$64,142,138	\$68,413,866	\$66,627,406	\$66,036,906
The University of Texas at El Paso	\$50,568,017	\$51,439,709	\$49,420,984	\$50,630,010	\$62,702,393
The University of Texas at San Antonio	\$36,820,014	\$44,128,961	\$43,351,063	\$48,545,003	\$50,278,572
University of Houston	\$85,796,355	\$91,334,021	\$91,551,332	\$90,089,154	\$121,675,892
University of North Texas	\$17,683,569	\$18,182,377	\$16,346,249	\$20,407,729	\$24,671,082
Texas Tech University	\$57,600,944	\$59,275,406	\$56,116,447	\$55,443,464	\$66,849,475
Texas State University	\$35,593,930	\$34,914,947	\$30,913,314	\$33,945,434	\$41,811,801

Table 5. Annual Federal Research Expenditures among Texas Emerging Research Institutions. (Source: THECB)

Annual Federal Research Expenditures among Texas Emerging Research Institutions

Institution	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023
The University of Texas at Arlington	\$34,446,108	\$40,562,593	\$44,313,526	\$46,277,261	\$52,645,345	\$52,479,937
The University of Texas at Dallas	\$40,045,792	\$48,465,999	\$55,983,458	\$58,248,830	\$58,406,486	\$64,581,240
The University of Texas at El Paso	\$44,352,723	\$42,631,235	\$41,019,104	\$45,849,015	\$60,681,785	\$70,791,319
The University of Texas at San Antonio	\$29,824,525	\$34,588,199	\$34,334,601	\$42,951,983	\$52,831,134	\$55,448,894
University of Houston	\$62,139,033	\$67,767,298	\$71,679,888	\$77,057,134	\$77,781,196	\$96,022,132
University of North Texas	\$19,026,304	\$17,344,938	\$13,653,477	\$18,712,198	\$22,696,129	\$30,839,134
Texas Tech University	\$31,636,329	\$35,135,572	\$31,474,870	\$33,937,567	\$45,006,628	\$58,499,101
Texas State University	\$30,398,282	\$29,614,339	\$26,950,033	\$31,116,056	\$38,936,339	\$44,296,432

UTEP has consistently ranked in the top three among Texas emerging research expenditures every year from 2018 to 2022 in Annual total restricted research expenditures (Table 4) and from 2018-2023 in annual federal research expenditures (Table. 5). An analysis of UTEP in comparison to its aspiration peer institutions is presented in Table 6. To identify aspirational peer institutions for UTEP, we used a data-driven approach that groups universities with similar characteristics. We analyzed key factors like federal research expenditures, the number of tenured/tenure-track faculty, Carnegie classification and others, to determine which institutions are most comparable. Using cluster analysis, we grouped universities into three categories, ensuring that each group contains institutions with similar levels of funding and faculty resources. This approach helps us understand which universities share similar research and academic profiles, allowing for better benchmarking and strategic planning.

B. Research Facilities:

UTEP will take a comprehensive approach to developing and managing shared equipment and facilities to create a robust infrastructure that fosters innovation and competitiveness.

Table 6. 2023 Research Related Indicators: UTEP Peers and Aspirational Peers

Institutions	Rank (HERD 2023)	T/TT Faculty	Total R&D Expenditures (HERD 2023)	Federally Financed R&D expenditures (HERD 2023)	Control	Carnegie Classification	Institution Size Category	Total Enrollment (Fall 2023)	Percent Admitted	Percent Hispanic or Latino	Student-to-Faculty Ratio	Total R&D Expenditures per T/TT Faculty
University of Texas at El Paso	155	465	\$145,724	\$70,873	Public	R1	20,000 and above	24,351	100%	84%	20 to 1	\$313.38
Peers												
New Jersey Institute of Technology	149	338	\$161,078	\$70,080	Public	R1	10,000 - 19,999	13,007	67%	22%	16 to 1	\$476.56
University of Louisiana at Lafayette	130	383	\$225,924	\$84,898	Public	R1	10,000 - 19,999	15,345	89%	5%	18 to 1	\$589.88
University of California-Santa Cruz	138	651	\$203,883	\$112,847	Public	R1	10,000 - 19,999	19,764	63%	27%	22 to 1	\$313.18
The University of Tennessee-Knoxville	92	1,177	\$338,847	\$153,637	Public	R1	20,000 and above	36,304	46%	6%	18 to 1	\$287.89
Georgia State University	123	705	\$237,493	\$91,331	Public	R1	20,000 and above	34,974	62%	13%	25 to 1	\$336.87
The University of Texas at Arlington	153	621	\$147,265	\$56,337	Public	R1	20,000 and above	43,992	81%	33%	23 to 1	\$237.14
University of California-Riverside	136	836	\$214,802	\$120,524	Public	R1	20,000 and above	26,426	63%	37%	23 to 1	\$256.94
University of Houston	126	1,047	\$231,942	\$99,450	Public	R1	20,000 and above	46,676	70%	34%	21 to 1	\$221.53
Texas Tech University	122	1,141	\$240,107	\$58,922	Public	R1	20,000 and above	40,773	71%	27%	21 to 1	\$210.44
University of New Mexico	101	909	\$316,026	\$205,351	Public	R1	20,000 and above	22,700	95%	46%	15 to 1	\$347.66
Aspirational												
Texas A&M University - College Station	22	1,991	\$1,277,814	\$546,481	Public	R1	20,000 and above	76,633	63%	23%	19 to 1	\$641.80
The University of Texas at Austin	32	1,879	\$1,035,838	\$621,223	Public	R1	20,000 and above	53,082	29%	25%	18 to 1	\$551.27
The University of California - Irvine	56	699	\$609,614	\$335,393	Public	R1	20,000 and above	36,582	26%	24%	18 to 1	\$872.12
Arizona State University Campus Immersion	36	1,841	\$955,424	\$434,700	Public	R1	20,000 and above	79,593	90%	23%	18 to 1	\$518.97
University of Illinois at Chicago	67	1,390	\$492,936	\$274,424	Public	R1	20,000 and above	33,522	79%	29%	17 to 1	\$354.63

The University will continuously evaluate the current state of these resources, identifying strengths and gaps, and provide clear communication with faculty and research centers about available resources to improve accessibility and collaboration. We will seek to develop new facilities based on identified gaps to address critical needs and work with departments and colleges to identify and pursue new funding sources to support establishing these facilities. The University will provide support and guidance in developing effective cost-recovery models to ensure the sustainability of facilities while maintaining affordability for researchers. We will develop guidelines for maintaining service contracts and allocating funds for long-term maintenance and upgrades to extend the lifecycle of essential equipment, ensuring consistent and reliable support for cutting-edge research.

UTEP will seek to sustain and foster the expansion of existing major centers of research, while fostering the development of new major centers of research in areas of emerging national priorities that align with faculty expertise. We will implement institutional policies that promote and incentivize the formation of major interdisciplinary research centers and incentivize collaborative, interdisciplinary research within those centers. Additionally, we will provide comprehensive administrative support to identify funding opportunities and offer technical and direct assistance in securing new funding to support the establishment and long-term sustainability of all centers. We will develop streamlined processes and systems for early identification of major funding opportunities from federal, state, and non-governmental sources. Our focus will be on agencies with the greatest potential for funding growth, including the Department of Defense, NASA, and the Department of Energy. UTEP will support the growth and formation of research teams that align existing expertise with the priorities of major funding agencies while also fostering strong relationships with these agencies and other relevant institutions. Furthermore, we will build support structures to enable our faculty to lead and contribute to multi-institutional grants and promote faculty and student internships with national laboratories, industry, and government organizations, enhancing collaboration and broadening research opportunities.

The following are three major recent and current research facilities and Institutes at UTEP that will be vital in expanding research at UTEP.

- (i) IDRB:** The Interdisciplinary Research Building (IDRB) was completed in 2020. The Interdisciplinary Research Building (IDRB) at UTEP is envisioned as a premier environment that fosters support and advancement in access, excellence, and impact for both the university and its partners in interdisciplinary research and training. The mission of the IDRB is to enhance the UTEP research community by promoting unique interdisciplinary research and large-scale programs that offer innovative approaches to addressing current and future challenges. It aims to prepare faculty, graduate, and undergraduate students for team-based research and community service, creating a model for integrating industry, community, government, and academic researchers. The IDRB also serves as a tool for recruiting and supporting world-class researchers, thereby boosting the overall competitiveness of UTEP students. Guided by principles of responsiveness, flexibility, and adaptability, the IDRB is designed to support dynamic research priorities and trends. It includes advanced technology, core facilities, and shared resources essential for key interdisciplinary research areas. The building promotes reconfigurable, collaborative workspaces and features open spaces for collegial interaction, as well as art and technology displays that highlight UTEP. The IDRB is

designed to be an attractive and welcoming space for visitors, utilizing its vision, mission, and guiding principles in planning, design, and occupancy decisions. The IDRB is designed to foster interdisciplinary research and collaboration among various departments and researchers. It includes state-of-the-art laboratories, collaborative spaces, and offices for researchers. The vision for the IDRB is to provide an outstanding climate of support and advancement of access, excellence, and impact for UTEP and their partners in interdisciplinary research and training. Currently, a State of the Art imaging facility is being completed on the 1st floor of the building. Over the next five years we expect to complete building the shell spaces in the 4th and 5th floor of the IDRB to facilitate “Research Neighborhood” that are collaborative spaces fostering seamless inter and transdisciplinary research to address specific research topics and problems.

- (ii) **AMAC:** The \$80 million Advanced Manufacturing and Aerospace Center (AMAC) is a cutting-edge research facility designed to fuel the rapid growth of innovation within UTEP’s College of Engineering and support sensitive research. Set for completion on March 31, 2025, this 96,000-square-foot facility will be home to UTEP’s Aerospace Center and the W.M. Keck Center for 3D Innovation, housing 37 state-of-the-art research and fabrication laboratories, alongside administrative offices.

A Hub for Innovation and Collaboration

AMAC is more than just a building—it is a catalyst for collaboration. It will bring together researchers, engineers, entrepreneurs, and industry leaders in a dynamic ecosystem where groundbreaking ideas evolve into real-world solutions. In an era where the need for rapid innovation has never been greater, AMAC will accelerate research breakthroughs and seamlessly transition them into impactful technologies, commercialization, and real-world applications.

Unparalleled Opportunities for Students

Students at AMAC will experience hands-on, immersive learning unlike anywhere else. Through strategic partnerships with industry and government, they will gain entrepreneurial experience, access to internships, and mentorship from leading experts. These multidisciplinary projects will equip students with the skills needed to thrive in the high-tech workforce of the future.

Strengthening UTEP’s Impact

AMAC will serve as a powerful bridge between academia, industry, and government, breaking down silos and elevating UTEP’s research capabilities on a national and global scale. It will attract new partnerships, showcase UTEP’s strengths, and position the university as a leader in advanced manufacturing and aerospace innovation.

- (iii) **AI Institute:** UTEP established the AI Institute for Community-Engaged Research (AI-ICER) to provide the infrastructure needed to advance scientific research at UTEP through AI-enabled technologies that integrate contextualized data models and knowledge from multiple sources. AI-ICER was launched with funding from the *UT*

System Regents' Research Excellence Program in 2024. AI-ICER's mission is to impact scientific research in trustworthy and secure AI, apply AI to address regional societal challenges using democratized data models, and advance formal and informal education of the region's students and citizens on the effective and safe use of AI. This mission is novel in that it supports research that addresses challenges faced by border communities and brings a bi-cultural context that needs to be reflected in AI algorithms, models, and applications. As such, AI-ICER extends UTEP's prominence and strengths in bi-culturalism, Hispanic-Servingness, water sustainability, Hispanic health disparities, secure cyber-systems, and other areas.

At a high-level, AI-ICER supports **three community-focused research thrust areas**:

- **Thrust 1: Foundational AI** centers on trust, responsible AI, security, privacy, and computation efficiencies. This thrust considers the different dimensions of AI: AI research-capacity building to advance use-inspired research; infrastructure and resources needed to conduct AI research; and expertise in areas such as trustworthy AI, AI privacy and security, and ethical and responsible AI;
- **Thrust 2: AI Impact on Regional Challenges** centers on challenges faced in the region (e.g., water and food security, Hispanic Health Disparities). This thrust considers use-inspired research and solutions, and AI technologies to enhance economic development and foster innovation for the benefit of all citizens through community engagement; and
- **Thrust 3: AI and Education** centers on innovative, AI-based educational approaches for K-16 members, in particular education of dual-language learners, and considers the use of AI in pedagogical practices, the creation of new educational tools, and education of the community.

C. Commercialization, Entrepreneurship, and Economic Development (CEED):

In alignment with the University's goals for research for 2025-2030, CEED aims to develop new skill sets and strengthen the impact and effectiveness of our department. In the realm of commercialization, we have three key benchmarks that will mark the growth and success of the Office of Technology Commercialization (OTC). First, we plan to grow the number of companies we interact with in efforts to commercialize the technology and thereafter through the utilization of LinkedIn, company contact pages, and the incorporation of AI tools to build an internal contact list for companies with an interest in UTEP research. Next, we will track the number of sponsored research dollars initiated by the OTC through these company contracts and will measure the profits to continually increase the annual amounts we receive in new licenses and royalty percentages. Our goal is that by 2030, the OTC will be at a net zero operating cost, where the annual amount of revenues achieved through licensing or copyright agreements offsets the annual budget.

The Mike Loya Center for Innovation and Commerce (MLCIC) partners with Studio G (NMSU) and the Blackstone Launchpad to provide basic entrepreneurship training and guidance through a business accelerator bootcamp and internships. Experienced mentors also assist students in taking their ideas to pitch competitions. Our goal is to enhance student enrollment per semester in our entrepreneurship bootcamp, increase the number of students placed in entrepreneurial

based internships, and grow our pitch competition to include more categories with increased cash awards. Our Mike Loya Graduate Research Fellows perform a variety of studies for both on- and off-campus organizations designed to provide them with real world experience. The MLCIC is also broadening education efforts to include cultivating an “entrepreneurial mindset” (EM), where students are equipped with knowledge on how to identify and make the most of opportunities, overcome and learn from setbacks, and achieve in a variety of settings. EM will be integrated in UNIV 1301 (semester course for Entering Students) beginning fall 2025. Our goal is to identify and teach EM to other groups of students on campus in various settings. Finally, UTEP’s Economic Development office focuses on engaging with private and public sector entities – seeking ways to connect students, faculty, and researchers to help in solving enterprise challenges while, in turn, providing experiential learning experiences that could not be gained without these connections. Our goal is to consistently implement “high impact” engagements annually, where we work with the entities to help them access student/graduate talent, get them into the classrooms so they can impart experiential knowledge, connect them to sponsored research opportunities with our research faculty and labs, offer them professional development training through our Extended University division, and help them know how to make financial or material contributions to UTEP. In addition to working with those high-impact engagements, we seek each semester to add five new connections – expanding awareness of UTEP regionally and nationally.

Section III: Doctoral Programs



A. Doctoral Awards:

The Graduate School has initiated a multi-year effort to improve student metrics (retention, time-to-degree, productivity) by providing training, feedback and support to faculty and students for milestone agreements, individual development plans, and mentoring agreements. The latter two have been recognized as “best practices” and are required by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and National Institutes of Health (NIH). However, if and how these best practices may help depends on how they are applied to UTEP and program specific contexts. Hence, the Graduate School is implementing efforts to improve the quality of graduate education, communication between students and mentors, and identify concerns early, and to provide support for students struggling with medical or personal emergency situations during their graduate studies.

B. Support for Doctoral Candidates:

The Graduate School is also initiating a procedure to track student research publications using ORCID iD, which will help us assess and improve student research. In addition, the Graduate School is exploring strategies to improve and increase its professional development programming, including programming to help students receive competitive national fellowships. The Graduate School will lead a strategic review of existing and potential doctoral programs in 2025. The purpose of this review is to develop a plan to optimize the size of and quality of our PhD programs. Given the cost of PhD programs, it is important that we align the number and size of our programs with our resources to ensure that we have sufficient resources to have high quality programs. This is necessary to help us plan whether and when any expansion should take place.

The UTEP Graduate School initiated a process to help increase national awards several years ago. There has been strong progress with the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship in the last few years (working with Office of Student Fellowships and Awards). We will work in the coming years to expand this to other competitive awards. This process includes:

- Working with R&I to identify faculty who have grants that are eligible for student supplemental awards.
- Implementing a system to identify and support students who are planning on submitting a fellowship.
- Providing feedback and support to students during the preparation of the fellowship.
- The Graduate School also uses its internal funding mechanisms for research and travel to incentivize submission of external awards. Students are asked, for example, to identify sources of support and are asked to discuss submissions in their close-out reports.
- UTEP just completed a 5 year initiative to provide tuition remission to graduate students. Starting the fall of 2024, all PhD students in their first 5 years receive tuition remission. Doctoral student employees now receive a package of support that is generally equivalent to what other institutions offer – stipend, tuition remission, and health insurance. The Graduate School is currently conducting a survey to assess whether our stipends are comparable to other institutions and initiating a strategic review of our doctoral programs. The focus of the strategic review is to optimize the size and scope of our doctoral programs; an important aspect of this will be assessing the stipends that are

necessary to ensure that we are attracting strong students and adequately supporting them.

Sample metrics: Number of students who submit applications for national fellowships, number of students who receive national fellowships; Increase in retention and graduation rates annually; Annual increase documented for number of students securing highlight competitive fellowships; Annual increase in number of students co-authoring or authoring publications/conference abstracts; documentation of the productivity and impact of scholarly products; Increase in funded student research assistantships and associateships through faculty research; and Employment outcomes tracked for UTEP graduate in academia, industry and other workforce sectors.

C. Areas of Emphasis:

UTEP continually reviews all doctoral programs; these reviews include assessments of important metrics (e.g. enrollment, graduation rates), comparisons to peers, and alignment of program to UTEP's strategic plan. This process leads to actions that help us focus resources on ways that align with our mission and strategic plan. The Graduate School will initiate an update of this review process in the next year to help increase the benefit of these reviews. A PowerBI dashboard provided by the UTEP graduate school helps each doctoral program examine important metrics and compare themselves to other UTEP programs. All doctoral programs at UTEP are encouraged to use these dashboards to identify strengths and challenges and implement changes to improve. In addition, an annual report with program-specific key performance metrics provided by the Graduate School to all doctoral programs facilitates each program in conducting an internal assessment and in comparing themselves to other UTEP doctoral programs.

The Graduate School has an annual report on each doctoral program to give them an idea about how they are doing. UTEP uses data from IPEDS and NSF to help assess how UTEP's doctoral programs are doing relative to programs from peer institutions. The doctoral programs also undertake a more comprehensive individual comparison process in their periodic reviews. The primary metrics used for this comparison are in Table 2.

UTEP will continue to support graduate student participation in research by providing doctoral students in good standing with full tuition remission for up to 5 years.

Specifically, the UTEP Graduate School will:

- continue to provide internal funding to graduate students for research and travel via mechanisms that incentivize fellowship application submission.
- expand an existing program that helps students identify and prepare applications for competitive fellowships.
- work to track student publications using ORCID iD.
 - collaborate with Research & Innovation to identify and assist graduate students supported on grants that might be eligible for supplemental awards.

Section IV: Plan for Faculty Development



A. New Faculty:

To build research capacity, it will be important to focus tenure-track and tenured hiring in areas of existing strength and/or strategic advantage. Major external funding sources are shifting towards team research focused on addressing complex societal problems and/or interdisciplinary convergence, and with this shift the institution must focus hiring to compete in these complex areas. Departments and programs may work together strategically to identify complementary hires. With the advent of the UT Regents' Research Excellence Program (RREP), significant funding is available to hire senior faculty in institution-level strategic thrust areas that may entail contributions from multiple departments and colleges. In addition, some institutionally funded searches will be coordinated centrally to hire the strongest faculty available across departments in areas of institutional priority, such as past successful efforts in health disparities and bilingualism. When teaching expertise is needed in areas in which the University does not have significant research strength or advantage, positions for faculty of instruction or practice should be considered.

Recruiting and retaining competitive faculty areas of current and emerging strength at UTEP will require 1) establishing best practices for aligning departmental searches with college and university strategic research goals and across departments and colleges; 2) offering competitive salaries and ensuring salaries remain competitive through time compared with the national market; and 3) investing in the infrastructure and resources needed to ensure the success of newly hired faculty.

With respect to faculty compensation, UTEP engages in market and internal rate analysis by discipline with each faculty hire to ensure we are hiring at competitive rates. These rates are determined by analysis of the College and University Professional Association (CUPA), which provides nationwide median and average salary data by discipline for the prior academic year, obtained from participating universities. A challenge is that new and emerging disciplines – which may be some of the most competitive – are not reflected in the data until they become recognized disciplines by CUPA. Attracting faculty in these highly competitive disciplines is difficult, and retaining those faculty after hiring them is challenging since they are routinely sought after by other institutions where they can negotiate higher salaries. Retention is also an issue for highly successful faculty in all disciplines who receive resources and support from UTEP as Assistant Professors but are frequently approached after they receive tenure by institutions who seek lower risk faculty hires. Therefore, the discrepancy between current salaries paid by UTEP and current market rates for that discipline, or “salary compression,” is a major challenge for retaining our best faculty.

When faculty are recruited, UTEP must invest in the infrastructure and resources needed to support their research. This begins with providing an appropriate startup package to ensure that they have what is needed to be successful. However, resource provision does not end there. Additional resources that are needed to ensure faculty success include, but are not limited to, meaningful faculty mentoring, providing useful professional development opportunities, facilitating interdisciplinary research through purposeful engagement activities, and developing guidelines for recognizing faculty efforts in interdisciplinary and non-traditional arenas. Strategic actions related to faculty recruitment and retention are:

- Develop, disseminate, and apply best practice guidelines for recruitment of faculty in strategic research areas from multiple disciplines across departments and colleges.
- Hire new faculty at or above the College and University Professional Association (CUPA) median for their discipline and routinely compare high-performing faculty salaries to the CUPA median to adjust salaries appropriately.
- Monitor faculty salaries in high demand fields to identify high-performing faculty who are at risk of leaving.
- Develop and implement more effective approaches across UTEP for mentoring, supporting ongoing professional development, enabling interdisciplinary research, and faculty evaluation.

Sample Metrics: Number and disciplines of new faculty hires; Faculty retention rates; Faculty research productive measures in metrics including research funding, scholarly and creative products, tenure and promotion rates, memberships in prestigious professional organizations etc.

B. Faculty Research:

UTEP will continue to implement multiple initiatives to expand successful research teams and Centers by strategically recruiting faculty and postdoctoral researchers to enhance faculty research productivity, innovation, and effectiveness. Three examples are listed below:

- **The UT Regents Research Excellence Fund (2023)** with about \$12 Million per year for 2 years dedicated to extend collaborative research and scholarship by authorizing new tenured/tenure-track and research faculty hires or postdocs whose areas of expertise will build on UTEP strengths and accelerate the creation of new knowledge and its application. This hiring initiative aims to supplement the current hiring practices and norms by adding strategic hires and providing full salary support for new T/TT faculty positions and up to three years for research faculty members.

The initiative's goals include:

- Maintaining and enhancing UTEP's national research competitiveness and positively impacting the economy of Texas and our region.
- Strengthening research leadership and further developing groups of faculty in areas of expertise that enhance our strategic impact.
- Supporting research and scholarship in areas of existing strength and strategic advantage that will have significant influence on addressing grand challenges or solving important societal or technological problems.
- Encouraging and fostering cooperation among an already strong faculty and staff research body.
- The University will increase support for faculty through **internal funding mechanisms from UTEP Research and Innovation (R&I)**. Three recently implemented initiatives - (i) University Research Initiative (URI) funding to catalyze interdisciplinary projects, (ii) the Faculty Travel Incentive Program to support participation in prestigious conferences and networking opportunities, and (iii) Pilot Seed Grants will aid faculty across all UTEP colleges to generate preliminary data for competitive external funding, and external review services for major grant proposals. Faculty development will be further supported through research workshops, grant-writing boot camps, and mentoring programs, while partnerships with funding agencies and industry leaders will be strengthened to diversify research opportunities and increase funding success rates.
- UTEP is implementing a **model for cluster/cohort hire for faculty** who excel in discipline-specific and interdisciplinary research through The UTEP Faculty Institutional Recruitment for Sustainable Transformation (FIRST) program (funded by the NIMHD in 08/2028). This model incorporates building communities of practice and integrating innovative infrastructures, leading to transformative and sustainable changes in policies, procedures, and processes that foster the retention, progression, and promotion of faculty. Six tenure track faculty are hired across disciplines through this program to address health disparities research while receiving continued and customized mentoring for their professional development. Best practices and lessons learned from this program are expected to inform this strategic faculty hiring and mentoring model.

We will continue to focus on increasing annually the number of faculty engaged in externally funded research, growing the number of early-career faculty career award applications submitted, increasing the number of R&I awards by colleges and schools received by faculty, and tracking the types of external prestigious and highly prestigious awards secured with an annual recognition process.

In 2024, UTEP Research & Innovation (R&I) initiated structured recognition programs to elevate faculty recognition and national visibility. These programs include an internal R&I Honorifics programs that awards faculty excelling in eight categories (Table 7), an external R&I Honorifics program to identify and support nominations or prestigious awards such as National Academy memberships, fellowships, and scholarly distinctions. In addition, the R&I Pioneering Researchers Award is conferred upon faculty who received their first external grant as a lead Principal Investigator (PI) each fiscal year. The R&I Millionaires Award continues to recognize faculty with annual research expenditures over \$1 million or more. The R&I Large Grant Recognition Program highlights PIs and teams who are awarded major interdisciplinary grants to foster recognition of team science and discovery.

We will focus on increasing the number of faculty receiving national and international recognition annually with metrics including number and rates for annual grant proposal submissions and awards.

Table 7. Annual R&I Honorifics Awards Categories from 2024

Honorifics Awards : 8 Categories
Innovation Award – Early Career Innovator
Innovation Award – Established Innovator
Outstanding Researcher – Mid-Career
Outstanding Researcher – Distinguished Career
Rising Researcher Award – Arts, Humanities, & Education
Rising Researcher Award – UTEP Health (Health Sciences, Nursing, & Pharmacy) & Social Sciences
Rising Researcher Award – Science, Technology, Engineering, & Math (STEM): Life Science & Engineering Emphasis
Rising Researcher Award – Science Technology, Engineering, & Math (STEM): Physical Science & Engineering Emphasis