

UT DALLAS

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Jill Blevins is a marketing communications manager who works with a variety of areas across campus. She joined UT Dallas in 2013. Previously, she was a corporate market director at the American Heart Association and held several marketing and community relations positions at Texans Credit Union. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in communications from Waldorf College.



Michael Merschel

Michael Merschel is an editor who supervises books and "Healthy Living" coverage for the Arts & Life section of *The Dallas Morning News*. As a freelance humorist, he's had his work performed on "A Prairie Home Companion" and by Dallas' Ground Zero Theater Company. He has been known to boast of owning a Starfleet Command ID badge autographed by Nichelle Nichols. *(photo by Evans Caglase)*

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ON THE COVER



Shot on Chess Plaza, the cover photo brought together an eclectic mix of students representing the many facets of campus culture. Left to right are the University mascot Temoc, junior Natch Azure (in her mother's vintage "Battlestar Galactica" jacket), cheerleader (and former student government president) Brooke Knudtson and former *Mercury* photographer Yang Xi MS'13, PhD'15.

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

In response to the Spring Issue ...

Wow! Was I impressed when I touched the summer issue front cover! The subtle 3-D, fabric alphabet letters spelling "FUN" couldn't have been more classy. It's obvious UTD is on its way to becoming Tier One when they produce such a professional magazine. Hats off to LeeDon Moore, MFA'14.

Dolly Patterson, BA'82
Redwood City, California

[Editor's note: Brentney Hamilton explained her thoughts behind writing about the "Brewmasters" Alumni Profile on GuideLive.com]

As an arts writer, I've followed the university (in addition to other local ones) for many years, and I am always impressed by its impact on Dallas' changing identity. Each of UTD's alumni brewers pushed the forefront of a needed, and rightly lauded, new culture. My suggestion on GuideLive.com that they collaborate on a Comet beer was partly facetious, but would seem a fitting tribute. Either way, it was great fun imagining Temoc-inspired brew names.

Sincerely,
Brentney Hamilton
Dallas, Texas

Join the conversation!

Send letters to the editor to utdallasmagazine@utdallas.edu or UT Dallas Magazine, AD14, 800 W. Campbell Road, Richardson, TX 75080-3021. All submissions may be edited for clarity or length. Please include contact information such as phone number, email address and/or mailing address.

Thanks for putting such a high quality publication out for us to keep in touch with the various new activities going on at UTD.

"Ethnic Diversity Can Prevent Stock Market Bubbles, Study Finds" by Katherine Morales caught my eye. Definitely timely if you look at S&P and NASDAQ indexes and bond yields. I find the column generally refreshing and informative.

However, I did want to take the time to point out that the second sentence in the first paragraph is not altogether true and deserves more attention. Speaking as an engineer, if the root cause of a problem is known, effort should be on attacking that root, rather than spending scarce resources on the side effects.

There are many great economists of the 19th and 20th centuries who have provided very sound theories as to the existence of "bubbles" in market economies. Speculation cannot account for an entire market of entrepreneurs making simultaneous mistakes, whether they are ethnically diverse or not (see worldwide market downturn of 2008-2009 — not sure how much more diverse we can get on this planet!).

The Austrian School of Economics — stemming from 19th century economists in Austria such as Carl Menger, Ludwig von Mises and Frederick Hayak and extending to contemporary scholars such as Murray Rothbard and Joe Salerno — has provided a very sound basis for understanding the root causes and solutions of business cycles.

Good luck, and thanks again for the great publication!

Randy Rosales BS'07
Houston, Texas

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of creating the future.*

From developing research to unleashing new technology to providing first-class educations, the University is paving the way for the next generation. And much of this progress begins with you.

Your contributions help educate and enrich the many lives affected by UT Dallas. Consider a gift today to support a school, center or program important to you.

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ON CAMPUS



Construction is underway on the expansion at Callier's Richardson location, which will allow more patients to be treated and will attract top researchers.

Callier Center Expansion to Provide Additional Clinical, Research and Educational Programs

An expansion of the Callier Center for Communication Disorders will bring an increase in patient services, as well as research and student training, growing what already is one of the largest graduate school programs in the U.S. for communication disorders.

Construction has begun at Callier's Richardson location, resulting in larger clinical

facilities, additional research space, and more classrooms and offices.

The project will include a new 50,000-square-foot facility as well as a repurposing of the current 20,000-square-foot building, totaling 70,000 square feet of program space. The expansion is expected to be complete in August 2016. **-Phil Roth**



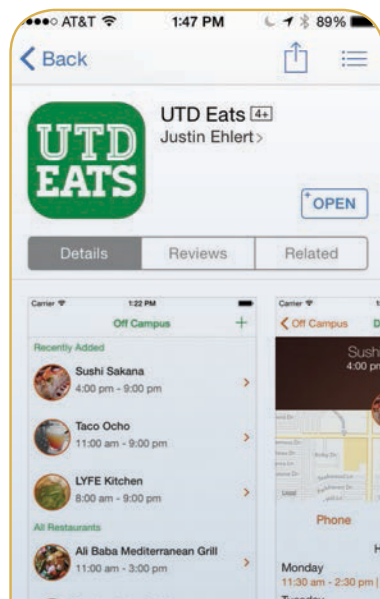
An artist's rendering of the Callier Center expansion's interior.

Creator of UTD Eats Franchises Dining App at Other Universities

When Justin Ehlert was a freshman, he and his friends occasionally became frustrated when they would walk to the dining hall and realize that it had already closed.

That irritation drove him to develop UTD Eats, a website and iOS app that shows students when and where to eat on campus, and which area restaurants have student discounts.

"I got tired of the fact that I didn't know when things were open. I put the hours in my pocket and it grew



into UTD Eats," said Ehlert, a computer science major in the Erik Jonsson School of Engineering and Computer Science.

Since its inception in fall 2012, UTD Eats has accumulated more than 2,500 users and has grown into much more than Ehlert originally anticipated. Positive feedback from those using it has prompted Ehlert to create a version called University Eats that offers the same functionality for a wider range of schools.

Through his network of friends at different schools, Ehlert has expanded University Eats to Baylor University, the University of Washington, the University of

Portland, the University of Florida, Arizona State University and UT Austin, which already has more than 4,000 users.

The app has grown in popularity due to word-of-mouth, Ehlert said. He has chosen to keep the app



Justin Ehlert

free to make it available to any college student who can use it, but hopes to attract investors to help him grow his idea into something larger. **-Robin Russell**



The Naveen Jindal School of Management's online graduate business and online MBA programs were ranked No. 2 and No. 6, respectively, in *U.S. News & World Report's* **2015 Best Online Programs** rankings.

Residence Hall Southwest was named **Community of the Year** during the 2014 regional Southwest Affiliate of College and University Residence Halls conference at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. The award recognizes outstanding programming, atmosphere and campus involvement by students and staff.

Dr. Moon Kim, Louis Beecherl Jr. Distinguished Professor in the **Erik Jonsson School of Engineering and Computer Science**, was awarded the 2014 grand prize by microscopes manufacturer JEOL USA Inc. for his transmission electron microscope image, "Birth of a Nanostar."



Chess Team's Stellar Season Ends With Second Place Finish at Final Four

After a strong season and a farewell pep rally, the chess team traveled to New York City for the Final Four of chess in March. There it faced other powerhouses including Webster University, Texas Tech University and the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC).

In the final round, with the team in last place and needing a comeback, UT Dallas faced UMBC, its oldest rival. Conrad Holt and Leonid Kritz scored quick victories, and freshman Dennis Kadric, who came off the bench to play, won his game after three hours and 35 moves.

"This was my first Final Four, so I was a little nervous coming in to play in the last round when I knew we had to win," said Kadric, a mathematics major who is originally from Bosnia-Herzegovina. "I was excited to win. This is my first year at UT Dallas and in America. So playing in the Final Four representing the University in New York City was really special for me."

In the end, the Comets won three out of four games in the last round, securing second place. The University has qualified as a top four team every year except 2014 since the tournament began in 2001. The Comets have won or tied for first five times, and this is the ninth time the team has taken second place.

"It was the end of the season, our last weekend after a year of hard work. We had our backs to the wall, but we weren't going to give up," said Jim Stallings, the chess program director. "We met the challenge. We were faced with a tough situation and stayed with it to the end."

The final results placed Webster University in first, followed by UT Dallas, Texas Tech and UMBC. **-Chaz Lilly**

Academic Bridge Students Recognized by Texas Lawmakers on House Floor

Students in the Academic Bridge Program met with Texas lawmakers while touring the state Capitol in the spring. The students were accompanied by Dr. George Fair, vice president for diversity and community engagement, professor and dean of the School of Interdisciplinary Studies.



Academic Bridge, which recruits underrepresented, first-generation college students who have good academic performance, receives funding from the Legislature and private donors. Longtime supporter Rep. Helen Giddings, D-DeSoto, told fellow legislators about the program and how it gives students the chance to succeed in college.

“Some of these students wouldn’t be in college without this program,” Giddings said. “It says that if you show students you care, if you give them a little bit of help, they’ll do what they need to do. This is a model for what other bridge programs need to look like.”

The recognition on the House floor came at the end of a whirlwind day of meetings the students had with legislators to discuss how the program, founded in 2000 by Fair, has increased enrollment at the University from the Dallas Independent School District and adjacent districts.

The students attended a series of meetings with Sen. Van Taylor, R-Plano, Sen. Royce West, D-Dallas, House Speaker Joe Straus, Rep. Angie Chen Button, R-Richardson, Rep. Linda Koop, R-Dallas, and Rep. Trent Ashby, R-Lufkin. **-Kim Horner**





Texas Instruments Supports Innovative Research with New Lab

Texas Instruments and the University celebrated the company's creation of the 1,100-square-foot Texas Instruments Innovation Lab at UT Dallas, a facility for student and faculty engineers and computer scientists to build electronic and electromechanical solutions to a variety of engineering problems.

"Our ties to UT Dallas run deep and our partnership dates back to the school's inception and a shared vision by TI's founders more than 50 years ago," said Stephen A. Anderson, senior vice president and general manager of TI's analog business. "They knew that we needed a partner in innovation here in North Texas that would help us make our area a destination for PhD-level engineering talent.

"UTD shares TI's passion for turning ambitious dreams into realities, and we are thrilled to support them in their efforts to provide their students with the kind of hands-on engineering education that it takes to create the next generation of engineers and Tlars," he said.

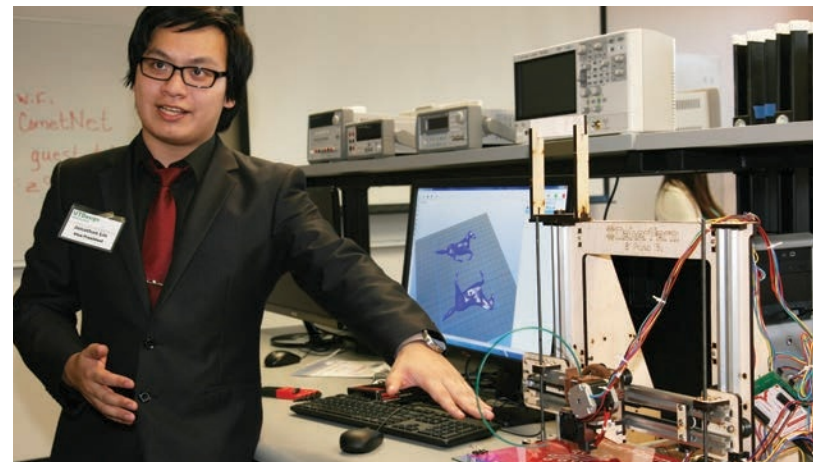
The TI lab is within the UTDesign Studio. It will be used for academic classes, student projects and workshops taught by TI staff. The TI workshops will focus on how to design well-rounded products that take into account reliability, cost savings, product size and harsh environments.

"TI's partnership with UTD is a true, deep mark that we're doing things right at this University because this great company is tying in with us more and more in a mutually beneficial relationship," said Dr. Hobson Wildenthal, University president *ad interim*. **-Sara Mancuso**

▲ Dr. Mark Spong, dean of the Jonsson School, Ayesha Mayhugh, analog university manager at Texas Instruments, and Stephen A. Anderson, senior vice president and general manager of analog business at TI, learn about a project.

► Computer engineering graduate student Lu Sun MS'15 demonstrates a device that can translate sign language into typed words on a computer.

▼ UTD student Jonathan Lin, vice president of Makerspace, a startup designed to help hobbyists bring their ideas to life, shows off some work.



Marion Underwood Selected as the New Dean of Graduate Studies

Dr. Marion Underwood is the new dean of Graduate Studies and associate provost, succeeding Dr. Austin Cunningham, who retired as dean and continues on the faculty as a professor of physics.

"Replacing Dean Cunningham's 20 years of experience requires a person with exceptional skills as both an administrator and an academician. Dr. Marion Underwood is one of our foremost researchers, and she has shown the necessary drive and skill needed to build on our previous successes and, indeed, help the graduate school grow and prosper," said Dr. Hobson Wildenthal, president *ad interim*.

Wildenthal said the graduate studies office will be giving additional attention to the University-wide operations of recruiting and graduating doctoral students, while also providing leadership of the mandated periodic review of the University's doctoral programs.



Dr. Marion Underwood

"UT Dallas was founded as an institute of graduate studies. Dean Cunningham has done a fantastic job guiding and building the graduate program," Underwood said. "I'm happy to have the opportunity to continue to improve the quality of graduate education here.

"Our graduate programs are a key part of the University's path to becoming a Tier One school," she said. "We want to make sure we have high-

quality programs, and we want to ensure that faculty and grad students are equipped to succeed in attracting research funding."

Underwood, Ashbel Smith Professor of Psychological Sciences in the School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences (BBS), has served as associate dean for programs and administration for BBS since 2013, and has been a faculty member since 1998. **-Phil Roth**

A book written by **School of Arts and Humanities** professor **Dr. Mark Rosen**, *The Mapping of Power in Renaissance Italy*, was awarded the Sixteenth Century Society and Conference's inaugural **Founders' Prize** for best first book manuscript in early modern studies.

Dr. Babak Fahimi, a professor in the **Erik Jonsson School of Engineering and Computer Science**, was named a fellow of the **Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers**, the world's largest association for technical professionals.

For the third consecutive year, the University's **Phi Kappa Phi** honor society chapter was among 29 nationwide to be recognized as a Chapter of Excellence, the highest commendation a chapter can receive from the Phi Kappa Phi organization.

Dr. Bruce Gnade, vice president for research and the Distinguished Chair in Microelectronics, was elected to the board of directors of the **Oak Ridge Associated Universities**, a consortium of 115 PhD-granting institutions that includes UTD.



Developers Begin Construction of Northside

Developers have begun work on Northside, a new mixed-use development that will include housing as well as retail businesses on 13.2 acres north of the University. Balfour Beatty Campus Solutions LLC and Wynne/Jackson Inc. are developing and will manage the project on land leased from the University.

It is the first phase of what has been envisioned as a transit-oriented development. A collaborative master plan between the University, the city of Richardson and Dallas Area Rapid Transit proposes a Cotton Belt Rail Line station in the future, as well as additional housing, retail,

office and park space in future phases.

With approximately 370,000 square feet, Northside will offer 20,000 square feet of retail space for restaurants, stores and entertainment venues, as well as a mix of apartments and townhomes. A parking garage, surface parking lot and residential amenities, such as a pool and dog park, are also expected. The central "spine" of the development is planned to provide a park-like pedestrian mall that can be closed off to accommodate events.

The development is projected to be completed by late fall of 2016. **-Chase York**

Dean Gene Fitch Selected as New Vice President for Student Affairs

Dr. Gene Fitch Jr. has been named vice president for student affairs, replacing Dr. Darrelene Rachavong, who retired after 32 years.



Dr. Gene Fitch Jr.

"There is no way I will be able to fill her shoes. All the departments and offices, all the school traditions, all those things are her legacy," Fitch said. "I'm fortunate the president has put his confidence in me. This is what I've been training to

do throughout my professional career. I'm looking forward to continuing to impact students in significant ways."

Fitch, who has been associate vice president for student affairs since 2014 and dean of students since 2010, now reports directly to the University president. A national search is underway for a new dean of students.

In his new role as vice president, Fitch said he will focus on growing the on-campus population by adding student housing, boosting student participation at athletic events, collaborating with faculty to build stronger partnerships that will enhance student development, and hiring an assessment director to identify and evaluate student learning outcomes within the division of student affairs. **-Robin Russell**

Jindal School Launches Master's Program in Energy Management

The Naveen Jindal School of Management's new master's program in energy management is designed to create economic leaders in the oil, gas, wind and renewable energy business.

"The Jindal School has built a program focused on the finance and managerial aspects of the energy industry in order to give students the ability to evaluate economics of energy projects, to finance them, to create strong strategies for the industry," said Dr. Anastasia Shcherbakova, program director.



Dr. Anastasia Shcherbakova

According to Shcherbakova, geography presents both a clear advantage and a compelling reason for offering the new degree. "We're a school in Texas, which is the heart of oil and gas. Wind energy, too, will be a focus because Texas has the highest wind capacity in the country. Conventional sources, renewable sources and the power industry are top areas for learning," she said.

Core courses cover energy economics, finance, law and technology. Electives allow students to tailor the curriculum to their needs.

The program, which requires 36 semester credit hours, has been shaped partly by advisory members from industry. Companies represented run the gamut, from Merit Energy to the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas.

"As we go forward, we will continue to consult with advisory board members and adjust the curriculum to reflect the needs of the industry, which will help students remain competitive in the job market," Shcherbakova said. **-Eric Butterman**

FROM THE LAB



Dr. Raquel Ovalle-Robles MS'06 PhD'08, chief research and intellectual properties strategist at Lintec of America's Nano-Science & Technology Center, draws a sheet of material from a carbon nanotube "forest." The center will begin the manufacture and commercialization of carbon nanotube structures, which are produced by a process developed by UTD scientists.

Nanotech Discoveries Move from Lab to Marketplace with Lintec Deal

An agreement between UT Dallas and Lintec of America could propel scientific discoveries from the University's laboratories into the global marketplace and create jobs in North Texas.

The University's Office of Technology Commercialization has licensed to Lintec of America a process developed by Dr. Ray Baughman, the Robert A. Welch Distinguished Chair in Chemistry, and his colleagues at the University's

Alan G. MacDiarmid NanoTech Institute, which he directs.

The patented process transforms tiny tubes of carbon, which are 10,000 times thinner than the width of a human hair, into useful large-scale structures, such as sheets and yarns, that are super-strong and extremely light. The carbon nanotube materials have unique thermal, mechanical and electrical properties, making

them potentially suitable for use in areas such as wearable electronics, electronic displays, solar panels, sound projectors, batteries and harvesters of waste energy.

Lintec of America is a subsidiary of Japan-based Lintec Corp., a leading manufacturer of pressure-sensitive adhesives. The company's advanced materials and industrial products are used in items ranging from electronic devices and computer displays to building and automotive materials.

Lintec recently opened the Nano-Science & Technology Center in Richardson. Less than 5 miles from the University, the center is devoted specifically to the

manufacture and commercialization of the carbon nanotube structures.

Two UTD alumni lead efforts at the center: Kanzan Inoue MS'01 PhD'05 is managing director of the facility, and his wife, Raquel Ovalle-Robles MS'06 PhD'08, is the chief research and intellectual properties strategist. Both worked in the NanoTech Institute with Baughman and Dr. Anvar Zakhidov, professor of physics.

Dr. David E. Daniel, immediate past president of UT Dallas, said the entire process — from lab to marketplace — exemplifies how research universities impact the economy and society.

"One of the important roles a research university plays in the community is to translate the creativity and human talent developed on campus into the private sector," he said.

"This agreement is an example of UT Dallas doing exactly what it should be doing — fostering an ecosystem of hugely creative faculty who educate and train exceptional students, who then contribute significantly to business and add value to society." **-Amanda Siegfried**



Dr. Ray Baughman (left), director of the Alan G. MacDiarmid NanoTech Institute, and Dr. Kanzan Inoue MS'01 PhD'05 wear protective gear while inside the "clean room" at the Nano-Science & Technology Center in Richardson. Inoue is the director of the new center.

Kelsey Morrison, a marketing major in the **Naveen Jindal School of Management** received a \$1,500 Morris Hite Memorial Scholarship from the American Advertising Federation of Dallas. The scholarship is open to marketing students who attend a university in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

A team of **Naveen Jindal School of Management** graduate students placed first at a student case study competition hosted by the North Texas chapter of the American College of Healthcare Executives. It was the third time in four years a UTD team won the annual challenge that tasks competitors with developing solutions to hypothetical problems drawn from issues on the business side of medicine.

Dr. Mike Peng, the O.P. Jindal Chair of Management in the **Naveen Jindal School of Management**, received the prestigious **2015 Journal of International Business Studies Decade Award** from the Academy of International Business for a paper he co-authored about transition and emerging economies in Central and Eastern Europe.



Dr. Jacquelyn Gamino

Training Improves Brain Performance of Students in Poverty

The cognitive effects of poverty can be mitigated during middle school with targeted intervention, according to researchers at the University's Center for BrainHealth.

In a paper published in the journal *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, researchers examined the effectiveness of cognitive training in a large and diverse group of seventh- and eighth-grade public middle school students as compared to students who received no specific training.

"Previous research has shown that growing up in poverty can shape the wiring and even physical dimensions of a young child's brain, with negative effects on language, learning and attention," said Dr. Jacquelyn Gamino, director of the center's Adolescent Reasoning Initiative and assistant research professor in the School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences. "What this work shows is that there is hope for students in poverty to catch up with their peers not living in poverty."

The research team studied 913 middle school students from varying socioeconomic backgrounds, accounting for any diagnosed medical or learning differences. Of those students, 556 received cognitive training and 357 served as a comparison group.

Cognitive tests indicate that students living in poverty showed as much as a 25 percent increase in gist reasoning after training, which is the ability to derive abstracted meaning from information presented. Those results were comparable to the gains made by their peers living above the poverty line. Additionally, the trained group, regardless of socioeconomic status, showed significant generalized gains and as much as an 18 percent improvement in increased memory for facts.

-Shelly Kirkland



Dr. Leonidas Bleris (left), assistant professor of bioengineering, and Richard Taplin Moore MS'11 helped create a new delivery system that may change gene therapy.

Team Creates New Approach to Gene Therapy

Bioengineers in the Erik Jonsson School of Engineering and Computer Science have designed a novel gene-delivery system that shuttles a gene into a cell, but only for a temporary stay, providing a potential new therapy strategy for treating disease.

The approach offers distinct advantages over other types of gene therapies under investigation, said Richard Taplin Moore MS'11, a doctoral student in bioengineering who was lead author of a study describing the new technique in the journal *Nucleic Acids Research*.

"In other gene therapy approaches, the therapeutic genetic messages being delivered can persist for a long time in the patient, potentially lasting for the patient's entire lifetime," Moore said. "This irreversibility is one reason gene therapies are so difficult to get approved."

The study describes experiments in which a gene carrying instructions for making a particular protein self-destructs

once the cell has "read" the instructions and made a certain quantity of the protein. In experiments with isolated human kidney cells, the research team successfully delivered, and then destroyed, a test gene that makes a red fluorescent protein.

More research is needed to determine whether and how well the system might work in living organisms. But Moore said the ultimate goal is to refine the method to deliver genes that produce therapeutic proteins or drugs.

Dr. Leonidas Bleris, assistant professor of bioengineering, was senior author of the study. Alec Spinhirne, Michael Lai and Samantha Preisser are all co-authors. The remaining co-authors are Dr. Yi Li, a postdoctoral researcher, and research assistant Taek Kang Biomedical Certificate'13. The research was funded in part by the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation and the Welch Foundation. **-Amanda Siegfried**

The **Callier Center for Communication Disorders** was selected to receive \$630,000 from the **Crystal Charity Ball** for a project that will provide hearing aids and follow-up services to 360 children from low-income families in Dallas County over a three-year span beginning in 2016.

Dr. Carlos Busso of the **Erik Jonsson School of Engineering and Computer Science** is the inaugural recipient of the **10-Year Technical Impact Award** given by the Association for Computing Machinery International Conference on Multimodal Interaction. Busso earned the award for his work on one of the first studies about audiovisual emotion recognition.

The **Naveen Jindal School of Management's full-time MBA program** was ranked 33rd in the nation in the *U.S. News & World Report's* 2016 ranking of graduate schools. Also, the school's Professional MBA program tied with two other universities at No. 29, and its MBA specialty of Information Systems tied for 16th.

Study Finds Which Brain Skills Are More Likely to Last over a Lifetime

Research from the Center for Vital Longevity has shed new light on which cognitive processes tend to be preserved with age and which ones decline.

A study published in *NeuroImage* confirmed behavioral findings that verbal ability — the accurate memory of words and vocabulary — remains intact during a lifetime while reasoning ability decreases in older adults.

In the study, 316 participants, who were ages 20 to 89, judged word meaning to test their cognitive abilities as scientists measured brain responses with functional magnetic resonance imaging. The brain regions that were activated during difficult judgments and declined



Dr. Kristen Kennedy

with age included those that are usually rich in a neurotransmitter substance called dopamine.

"Dopamine plays a critical role in orchestrating responses to cognitive demands or challenges, and levels of this neurotransmitter are known to decline with age," said Dr. Kristen Kennedy, the study's

primary investigator and an assistant professor in the School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences.

Older participants in the study tended to activate additional brain regions beyond those used by younger participants during simple judgments, suggesting they either need more brain activity to maintain and access word and language knowledge or have less-efficient processing, Kennedy said.

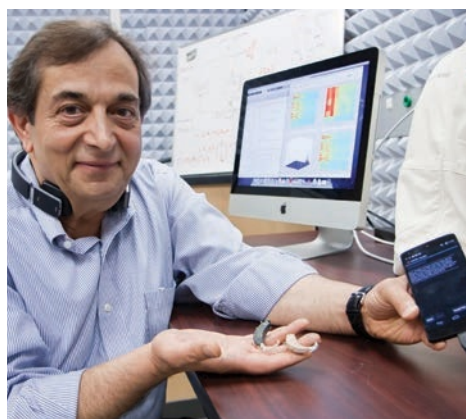
While the findings suggested that brain responses during a language task are largely preserved through age, responses to reasoning demands appear to decline beginning in middle age.

Other UTD researchers involved in the study were Dr. Karen Rodrigue, Dr. Gérard Bischof MS'12, PhD'14, Andrew Hebrank and Dr. Denise Park, who directs the Dallas Lifespan Brain Study and is co-director of the Center for Vital Longevity and the Distinguished University Chair in Behavioral and Brain Sciences. Dr. Patricia Reuter-Lorenz from the University of Michigan also contributed to the research. The work was supported by grants from the National Institute on Aging. **-Alex Lyda**

Scientists Target Smartphone Technology to Improve Hearing Devices

With the support of a \$522,000, two-year grant from the National Institutes of Health, a UTD Dallas team is harnessing the power of smartphones to improve the quality of life for people who wear hearing assistive devices (HAD).

"Current hearing assistive devices are able to fit inside or behind the ear, but come with small, not very powerful processors," said Dr. Issa Panahi, associate professor of electrical engineering in the Erik Jonsson School of Engineering and Computer Science and



Dr. Issa Panahi is the principal investigator of the UTD research team seeking to improve hearing devices via smartphone technology.

principal investigator of the research.

"On the other hand, smartphones used by billions of people have very powerful processors and other features such as large memories, microphones, speakers, wireless technology and long-lasting batteries that could aid HAD wearers."

Researchers are especially interested in the automatic classification of various background noise signals and enhancement of both quality and intelligibility of speech signals in noisy environments and crowded places.

The research team also includes Dr. Nasser Kehtarnavaz and Dr. Linda Thibodeau. **-LaKisha Ladson**

Public Affairs Professor Explores Immigration of High-Skilled Workers

Dr. Meghna Sabharwal, who teaches public affairs in the School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences, came from India to the United States to pursue her PhD. And like many others from her native country, she decided to stay.

The assistant professor's experiences inspired her to study why some foreign-born science and engineering PhD graduates stay in the U.S., while others return to their home countries. For her contributions to understanding the immigration of high-skilled workers, Sabharwal received the Julia J. Henderson International Award from the American Society for Public Administration.

Sabharwal's work stems from a \$197,000 National Science Foundation grant to research a trend of increasing numbers of skilled immigrants returning to their home countries after graduation. The study, "Scientific Diaspora: Stay Plans of Indian Faculty in the United States," was recently published in *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology*.

The top reason the respondents gave for staying in the United States was the ability to work on cutting-edge research. They wanted to continue working with up-to-date technical resources, administrative support, well-trained graduate students and a large scientific community. **-Kim Horner**



Dr. Meghna Sabharwal

Dr. Seth Hays, assistant professor in the Erik Jonsson School of Engineering and Computer Science, received the **Robert G. Siekert New Investigator in Stroke Award** from the American Heart Association at the 2015 International Stroke Conference in Nashville, Tennessee.

The Mercury student newspaper, student opinion magazine *A Modest Proposal* and UTD TV garnered 32 awards at the 2015 Texas Intercollegiate Press Association convention in San Antonio, including seven first-place accolades. **Miguel Perez BA'15**, former editor-in-chief of *The Mercury*, also was named Division 2 Editor of the Year.

Salvador Moreno BS'14 and **Maria Angelica Burbano Salazar BS'15** were awarded 2015 Graduate Research Fellowship awards from the **National Science Foundation**. The program provides financial support to students pursuing master's or doctoral degrees in NSF-supported science, technology, engineering and mathematics disciplines.

Engineers Create Structures Tougher Than Bulletproof Vests

Researchers have created new structures that exploit the electromechanical properties of specific nanofibers to stretch to up to seven times their length, while remaining tougher than Kevlar.

The structures absorb up to 98 joules per gram. Kevlar, often used to make bulletproof vests, can absorb up to 80 joules per gram. The new structures could form material that reinforces itself at points of high stress, potentially useful in aircraft and defense applications.

In a study published in *ACS Applied Materials and Interfaces*, a journal of the American Chemical Society, University researchers twisted nanofiber into yarns and coils. The electricity generated by stretching the twisted nanofiber formed an attraction 10 times stronger than a hydrogen bond, which is considered one of the strongest forces formed between molecules.

The study sought to mimic earlier work on the piezoelectric action (how pressure forms electric charges) of collagen fibers found inside bone, in hopes of creating a high-performance material that can reinforce itself, said Dr. Majid Minary, a member of the Alan G. MacDiarmid NanoTech Institute and senior author of the study.

"Our country needs such materials on a large scale for industrial and defense applications," he said.

Other authors on the paper are Mahmoud Baniasadi, Zhe Xu, Dr. Yang



Dr. Majid Minary was senior author of the study.

Xi MS'13, PhD'15 and Salvador Moreno BS'14, all research assistants in the Erik Jonsson School of Engineering and Computer Science; Jiacheng Huang MS'14; Jason Chang; Dr. Manuel Quevedo-Lopez; and Dr. Mohammad Naraghi, an assistant professor of aerospace engineering at Texas A&M University.

The project was funded by the Air Force Office of Scientific Research Young Investigator Research Program and the National Science Foundation.

-LaKisha Ladson

Engineering Professor to Unlock Science Behind Motherhood

While the topic of fluid dynamics has always interested Dr. Fatemeh Hassanipour, an assistant professor of mechanical engineering, motherhood brought women's health issues to the forefront: Specifically, she became curious about the mechanics of breastfeeding.

That curiosity has landed her a \$500,000 National Science Foundation Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) Award, funded over five years.

"I saw a great need for research explaining the scientific and engineering principles governing the lactating breast," Hassanipour said. "Millions of individuals are affected by health outcomes, all linked to the anomalies of transport processes in the human breast."

"Despite the scientific importance and impact on public health, processes in the human breast have not been comprehensively studied, and are currently not well-understood," she said.

The proposed CAREER project addresses the gap in scientific knowledge. Hassanipour plans to use computerized models and to build a fully controlled model of the breast to mimic breastfeeding and to study and experiment with the breast ductal system.

The final piece of the project will be to study mathematically what happens when caffeine, alcohol or other foreign substances move from the blood flow to the milk glands. **-Chaz Lilly**



Dr. Fatemeh Hassanipour

Study Connects Credit Default Swaps to Mortgage Delinquencies

Drs. Harold H. Zhang and Feng Zhao, professors in the Naveen Jindal School of Management, have connected credit default swaps to mortgage defaults that helped lead to the 2007-08 financial crisis.

Published in *The Journal of Finance*, the duo's research indicates that credit default swaps (CDS) further stimulated the strong demand for mortgage-backed securities, which led to lax lending standards in the mortgage origination market and encouraged predatory lending and borrowing practices. Lenders increasingly offered subprime mortgages that drove mortgage default rates much higher.

When investors buy mortgage-backed securities, a CDS protects the investor if the borrower defaults on the loan.

A direct effect was found between credit default swaps and higher loan default rates, with analysis showing that loans originated with CDS coverage were more likely to become delinquent. The study also found that banks allocated the riskiest subprime loans to mortgage pools with CDS contracts.

-Brittany Magelssen



Dr. Harold H. Zhang



Dr. Feng Zhao

ARTS AND CULTURE

Rapidly Growing Programs Lead to New Arts, Technology School

The School of Arts, Technology and Emerging Communication was formally introduced this fall as a new academic unit for several interdisciplinary programs.

Since inception, both the Arts and Technology (ATEC) and Emerging Media and Communication (EMAC) programs have seen rapid growth. At the end of 2014, the enrollment in these programs included 1,096

undergraduates, 167 master's students and 28 PhD candidates.

University administrators consulted with deans, faculty, student government and the faculty senate about the concept of establishing the new school.

The ATEC program was created to explore the intersections of science and engineering with the creative arts and the humanities more than a decade ago. In 2008, the EMAC program was introduced to study the uses, impact and implications of digital technology in contemporary culture.

The programs are housed in the Edith O'Donnell Arts and Technology Building.

Dr. Hobson Wildenthal, president *ad interim*, said the new school "will have the same status as the seven other currently constituted UT Dallas schools, and will be able to facilitate faculty collaborations among them all on an equal footing."

A national search for the school's first dean is underway. **-Chaz Lilly**



At the end of 2014, nearly 1,300 students were enrolled in the Arts and Technology and Emerging Media and Communication programs.



From left: Drs. Carol Cokely and Linda Thibodeau helped create the Hear Us Now program with Barry Epstein.

Audiologists Help Set the Stage for Better Theater Sound Experience

Drs. Carol Cokely and Linda Thibodeau of the Callier Center for Communication Disorders collaborated with Dallas Summer Musicals to create the Hear Us Now program, which uses five different technologies to help individuals with hearing loss to fully take in the experience.

Barry Epstein, a Dallas Summer Musicals executive board member and electrical engineer, said theater sound systems strengthen the lower frequencies in bass to make the listeners feel like a part of the show. Most hearing loss begins in the higher frequencies where speech occurs. While it does not cause a problem for most theatergoers, emphasizing the lower frequencies may make speech or singing even harder to hear for those with hearing loss.

To counteract this problem, a method was developed to dampen the music while emphasizing voices and to conduct syllable-by-syllable volume corrections using electronics and improved headsets. The team also implemented four methods for connecting to hearing assistive devices, which accommodate the varying needs of patrons.

Thibodeau, Cokely and Epstein are hopeful these improvements will be adopted by other theaters.

Dr. Richard Thomas of Purdue University and Ryan Knox of Idibri Consulting also partnered with Dallas Summer Musicals to create the Hear Us Now program. **-Ben Porter**

ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES

Join us for the third season of the Arts and Technology Distinguished Lecture Series. Hosted by the Arts and Technology (ATEC) program in the spectacular Edith O'Donnell Arts and Technology Building, the series showcases the perspectives of a wide range of speakers with backgrounds in science, technology and art. Visit utdallas.edu/lectureseries for more information.

Dr. John Sibert of the **School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics** was named a **2015 Piper Professor** by the San Antonio-based Minnie Stevens Piper Foundation, which recognizes outstanding college professors in Texas.

A record three UTD undergraduate researchers — **Michael Lee Jr.**, **Melanie Maurer** and **Andrew Wei** — were among 300 students in the nation who received full scholarships from the **Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Program**. The competitive scholarships are awarded to students who intend to pursue research careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Dr. Natalie J. Ring of the **School of Arts and Humanities** has been named an **Organization of American Historians (OAH) Distinguished Lecturer**. The OAH Distinguished Lectureship Program consists of American historians who have made major contributions to the field. The program's distinguished lecturers are invited to speak at institutions throughout the nation.

SEASON EVENTS 2015–2016

TO SEE A FULL LIST, VISIT AH.UTDALLAS.EDU/EVENTS

CLASSICAL

Musica Nova	Dec. 4, 8 p.m.	Jonsson Performance Hall	Free
Gloria Lin & Jesús Castro-Balbi	Jan. 23, 8 p.m.	Jonsson Performance Hall	\$15
Chloé Trevor & Jeff Lankov	Feb. 19, 8 p.m.	Jonsson Performance Hall	\$15
Musica Nova	April 22, 8 p.m.	Jonsson Performance Hall	Free

JAZZ

Brad Leali Quintet featuring Tatiana Mayfield	Jan. 30, 8 p.m.	Jonsson Performance Hall	\$15
Joey DeFrancesco	April 2, 8 p.m.	Alexander Clark Center	\$20

GITAR

Enric Madriguera & Friends — Remembering Sabine Madriguera	Feb. 5, 8 p.m.	Jonsson Performance Hall	\$15
15th Annual Texas Guitar Competition and Festival	March 3-5	Times and venues vary	Prices vary

VOCAL

UT Dallas Community Chorale	Dec. 4, 7:30 p.m.	First Baptist Church of Plano	Free
39th Annual Holiday Sing: Holidays Around the World	Dec. 5, 7 p.m.	Edith O'Donnell Arts and Technology Building	Free
UT Dallas Chamber Singers Concert	April 1-2, 8 p.m.	Jonsson Performance Hall	Free
UT Dallas Community Chorale	April 30, 7 p.m.	Messiah Lutheran Church in Plano, Texas	Free

THEATER

Suburbia	Feb. 18-20, 25-27, 8 p.m.	University Theatre	\$15*
Woyzeck	April 14-16, 21-23, 8 p.m.	University Theatre	\$15*

*Thursday nights are free for everyone.

DANCE

Eisemann Center Residency	Feb. 11-13, various times	Eisemann Center	Prices vary
Elledanceworks Unplugged	Feb. 24, 5:30 p.m.	Jonsson Performance Hall	Free
UTDance Showcase	March 10-12, 8 p.m.	University Theatre	Free

ART EXHIBITIONS

Student Art Festival	Dec. 1-5	Times and venues vary	Free
Drawing Quote Unquote	Jan. 15-Feb. 12, 9 a.m.-9 p.m.	Edith O'Donnell Arts and Technology Building	Free
Comer Collection 2016	Feb. 19-March 12, 9 a.m.-9 p.m.	Edith O'Donnell Arts and Technology Building	Free
The Machine in the Garden	April 8-May 6, 8 p.m.	Edith O'Donnell Arts and Technology Building	Free
Student Art Festival	April 26-30	Times and venues vary	Free

FILM

Cinematheque	Feb. 3, March 2, April 6, 7:30 p.m.	Jonsson Performance Hall	Free
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CREATIVE WRITING

Andrew Hudgins & Erin McGraw	Feb. 25, 7:30 p.m.	Jonsson Performance Hall	Free
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CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE

Chinese New Year Celebration	Feb. 6, 2:30 p.m.	Alexander Clark Center	\$5
Dr. Haun Saussy — Translation and the Zhuangzi: Not Translating the Zhuangzi, but Translating Through the Zhuangzi	March 9, 7:30 p.m.	Jonsson Performance Hall	Free

CENTER FOR VALUES IN MEDICINE, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Lecture series featuring speakers on a variety of topics concerning public health

For details, visit values.utdallas.edu

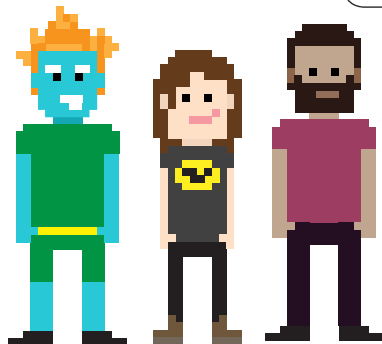
From left:
A Team Fortress 2
Medic (Huy Dang)
posed next to Mario
(Jonathan Poppa).



WELCOME TOGETHER

Smarts Required. Nerdiness Optional.
A Culture of Acceptance Encourages Students to Follow Their Passions.

by Michael Merschel



Not long ago, in a Galaxy Room right in the middle of the Student Union, several dozen students gathered to learn the art of mock sword-fighting and to use 3-D printers to fabricate tiny Pokémon characters.

In the crowd, you might have seen one of the Mario Brothers walk past. Down the hall, a student did a brisk business selling handmade polymer clay charms of Baby Groots (from Guardians of the Galaxy) and Personality Cores (from the game Portal).

An alumnus who has taught classes on “History and Design of the Role Playing Game” is demonstrating a card game he helped create that mashes wizards with superheroes with robots. “Roll your 2d6 against me,” he instructs a potential fan who is holding two six-sided dice. “That’s a 10! You killed me!”

Amid this scene, a group of women — one dressed as a Time Lord, another in a bright blue wig and holding a stuffed leek identifying her as Hatsune Miku, a singing computer program — ponders the question:

Is The University of Texas at Dallas much of a nerd school?
They laugh. “Oh, yeah.”

“I think the majority of people at UTD are pretty nerdy,” declares Bailey Turner, a sophomore studying arts and technology. She is carrying a sonic screwdriver and wearing a homemade mid-calf gray-and-white dress and a red bow tie with a matching fez. She is, as she describes it, a female version of the 11th Doctor Who. “And I have the psychic paper to prove it,” she adds enthusiastically.

Turner and the rest of this crowd are taking part in Comet-Con, which might be a high holy day for campus geekery. So to be fair — this is not necessarily an everyday UTD scene.

And yet — even when it’s not so outwardly visible — everyone agrees that nerd culture is a force that flows through UTD. Surrounds it. Binds it. (As Obi-Wan might say.) It’s a culture partly fostered by the University but mostly, people believe, it’s something that happened organically. It’s a point of pride for many students, the very thing that drew them here. And, again like the Force in the Star Wars series, it has a side that not everyone finds appealing.

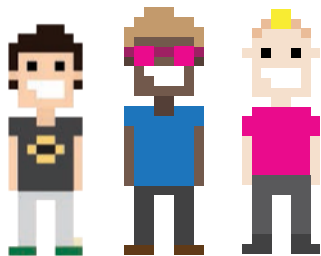
But whether the idea inspires smiles or winces, most people agree that it’s a key and probably permanent component of the fast-changing school’s emerging character.



Bailey
Turner



Brian Cash, Austin Schmidt BS'15 and Katie Risor of "Nerdstatic."



Or, as Diane Trinh, a Keller senior studying Arts, Technology and Emerging Communication, puts it as she sits outside the union, chatting with friends while wearing a Pikachu onesie: "Honestly, there's a bunch of weird students here. I'm one of them."

It might be important to establish just what we mean by nerd. Or geek. After all, entire websites have been devoted to spotting the difference and debating whether a nerd —

which might mean someone who is technically focused and socially awkward — can also be a geek, which often means someone who has an abundance of enthusiasm for a particular aspect of pop culture.

Or maybe it doesn't matter. Because UTD clearly has them all.

Take Austin Schmidt, Katie Risor and Brian Cash. The three were hosts of "Nerdstatic," a weekly program on Radio UTD. On a show, you might hear them discuss fighting robots (Cash, a senior studying mechanical engineering, is on the school's Battlebots squad), the games Minecraft and Dragon Age (sophomore Risor, majoring in both arts and technology and emerging media and communication, is a fan) and book and movie franchises such as the Chronicles of Narnia or Harry Potter (Risor met Schmidt, a senior studying psychology, at their San Antonio high school's Harry Potter club).

UTD, they say, is a magnet for people like them.

Schmidt tells a typical tale of how she became a Comet: "When I was visiting UTD I didn't really consider it as my main option. I was just visiting to appease my parents." But she did her research and learned it was "a pretty nerdy school," which was exactly what she was looking for. And when she saw a computer lounge that was decorated with a mosaic of the TARDIS from *Doctor Who*, she was sold.

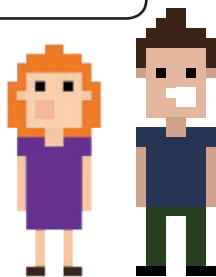
Risor was attracted to the campus by the ATEC program and invited by Schmidt to help with the show. UTD, they agree, is a place where it is OK to let your geek flag fly.

Significantly — and maybe surprisingly for anyone who grew up in an era where the word "nerd" conjures up visions of pocket protectors and black eyeglass frames held together by masking tape — they use the label proudly.

Schmidt says that the campus embraces



Members of the Alpha Gamma Delta (pictured in white dresses) and Sigma Lambda Gamma sororities partnered in the CANstruction event during UT Dallas Greek Week 2015 to benefit the Comet Cupboard.



the philosophy of author John Green. Many people know him as the author of the mega-selling *The Fault in Our Stars*. Risor and Schmidt also know him as one of the “Vlogbrothers” on YouTube, which begat the idea of “nerdfighters.” These are not people who fight nerds, but people who celebrate the nerd identity. Their idea, Schmidt says, is that using “nerd as an insult is counterintuitive.”

“It’s OK to be passionate about stuff,” Risor chimes in. “That’s not like a bad thing.”

The world was not always like this for nerds.

The negative stereotype of the overly studious, socially inept student goes back to the late 19th century, author Benjamin Nugent wrote in his 2008 book *American Nerd: The Story of My People*. As the frontier closed and work shifted from farms into cities, Americans developed an obsession with concepts of health and manliness. Boys were expected to engage in baseball and football. Theodore Roosevelt himself practically equated America’s success in the world with the ability of its young men to engage “in rough sports which call for pluck, endurance, and physical address.” Young scholars who declined to engage in student activities were slapped with the label of “greasy grind.”

The word “nerd” might have originated with a Dr. Seuss creature in 1950, but by 1951 it was noted in *Newsweek* as being slang for “a drip or square.” And by the mid-1960s, it was firm-

ly affixed to the familiar stereotype, thanks to depictions in humor magazines at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In the 1970s, *Saturday Night Live* sketches featuring Gilda Radner and Bill Murray sealed the image.

There was always some affection in these portrayals, Nugent explains in a phone interview from his home in Brooklyn. But things began to change for nerds with the rise of intellectual celebrities such as Bill Gates and, later, Mark Zuckerberg, “who are clearly very nerdy people who have used their very nerdy skills — i.e., skill with computers — to become incredibly wealthy and powerful and influential.”

Suddenly, nerds had prestige — and cash.

People once thought of nerds as merely “economically fine,” Nugent explains, “having a solid job doing computer programming at a corporation in a suburban office park. But the idea that they would be some of the



Diane Trinh at Comet-Con 2015.



From left: Vivian Yim, Brooklynne Palmer and Beth Wilson checked out goods on display sold by Oxygen Impulse Studios during Comet-Con 2015.



most rich, privileged, powerful people in the world is new."

So that happy embrace of the "nerd" label? It might actually be a bit of a humble-brag, according to Nugent. Yes, it's self-deprecating, but Nugent contends it also says: "'Look how good I am. Look how devoted I am.' Because nerds tend to be all about rigid academic focus."

At the same time, the icons of nerd entertainment (comic books, spaceships and the like) have managed to become the very definition of mainstream Hollywood. How?

Well, nerds are not always big on subtle social interaction, Nugent says. In a world where movie studios are just as interested in reaching audiences in China, India and Nigeria as they are in reaching Richardson, movies about complex adult relationships aren't going to cross borders. But robots blowing each other up pretty much hits every culture the same way, he says.

"The things that we thought of as nerdy were the things that didn't depend on the sensitivities of subtle cultural and social interactions," Nugent says. "And those are precisely the things that cross cultures."

The academic focus, the celebration of sci-fi and video game franchises, the social awkwardness — all are things that students and staff at UTD say they see in abundance. As is crossing cultures.

Specifically, many say the UTD environment encourages people to step into unfamiliar areas and feed off one another's interests. As a result, traditionally nerdy interests flourish in all corners of UTD society. "I'm actually in a Dungeons & Dragons campaign with a bunch of guys from Chi Phi," Nerdstatic's Cash notes of his fraternity co-players.

As Trinh, the one in the Pikachu onesie, puts it: "We're not afraid to talk to each other."

Adam Brackin, who earned his doctorate in aesthetic studies at UTD in 2008 and has taught courses on role-playing games, agrees that the University is a place where unusual interests cross-pollinate and spread.

"I am absolutely positive it's a place that it happens," says Brackin, a few days after he attended Comet-Con to show off a prototype of a card-and-dice game he is co-designing called Genre.

"When I was at Comet-Con, a couple of guys walked up to me, shook my hand and said, with

no fear at all, 'This is cool. I'm the president of the Brony Club.'"

(A Brony, by the way, is an adult male fan of the My Little Pony franchise. It's a thing.)

"I said, 'Really?' And he said, 'Yeah, and this is the vice president.'" Brackin asked whether they were aware of the collectible card game related to the show. "With all that knowledge they had of that property, they still hadn't played the game." So he set them up with some friends of his who did.

Brackin has a special relationship with geek culture. As a missionary kid living overseas, watched the movies and TV shows via satellite feeds that were his main connection to the U.S. He binge-watched much of "Star Trek: The Next Generation" as it was beamed to local stations during its first season; when he went to college, he carried 1,683 hours of "Mystery Science Theater 3000" on videotape.

He understands how totems of geek culture help an outsider to understand and blend



Adam Brackin

in with the overall culture, a particular interest on a campus described by *U.S. News and World Report* and *BestColleges.com* as one of the 25 most diverse in the U.S., with a heavy representation of first-generation U.S. citizens among its undergraduates.

And “the unique soup that UTD is...how the school got started, this perfect mix of really intelligent people — because the majority of UTD students are absolutely brilliant — and [at the same time] some of them are extremely culturally ignorant, whether that be because they are nerds who just don’t know how to relate to people, or because they’re these profoundly gifted people” focused on academics, research or other pursuits to the exclusion of most else.

That intensity of focus is one of the attributes that pervades UTD culture, he says. As the University has gone through a period of remarkable change that has seen it grow far beyond its graduate research center origins, he notes, “The one thing that has stayed the same is the seriousness for what we do.”

Let’s pause here to acknowledge that not everyone agrees with this perception of students at UT Dallas.

Senior Brooke Knudtson is not a nerd. She is a cheerleader. And a member of the Kappa Alpha Theta sorority. She speaks about her campus in the positive, encouraging terms one would expect of the student government’s immediate past president. And she finds the label “nerd” to be unfair and disrespectful when applied to her University.

“I perceive it, sometimes, to be a negative term. Derogatory almost,” says Knudtson, who is studying political science and who campaigned on a platform that included boosting campus spirit. To her, a nerd is “somebody who’s standoffish and wants to be in tune just with academics.”

UT Dallas, she says, is “so much more than just a smart school.” But she acknowledges that it can be hard to get students to come out of their textbooks and get involved. There are students who “haven’t necessarily come to one event in their whole four years. And that’s so sad to me.”

Michael Blodgett, a senior majoring in marketing and business administration, also sees the school’s antisocial reputation as problematic. Blodgett, president of the Interfraternity Council and founder of the campus chapter of Delta Tau Delta, says that during recruitment activities, he asks students why they chose to come to the University. They rarely mention social activities.

He would like to see UT Dallas become more well-rounded. He’s not opposed to the academic intensity: “A lot of the freshmen are incredibly smart. That’s why they went to UTD. But they just spend



time in their dorms, playing League of Legends or whatever computer game they want. And they never really get out and socialize.”

Jonathan “GNO” White BA’05, assistant director of student life programs, has watched the culture evolve for years. From his vantage point, which includes time as a student starting back in 2001, “UTD really has these two broad spectrums to it. One, you have your typical college types,” interested in the fraternity and sorority life. And then there’s the side “drawn to anything you can see at Comic-Con.”

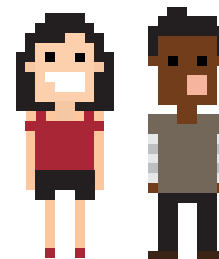
But when it comes to selecting what activities to offer on campus, “It totally comes from the students. We do surveys and focus groups.”

And what do most students want? The numbers speak.

“We’ll show movies that we think are blockbusters, that have gotten all these Academy Awards, and you might have, maybe, at the most, 100-200 people show up. But when you show a Marvel or Star Trek film or something like that, you get 500-plus people who really love those things. *Guardians of the Galaxy*... we had to turn people away.”



Jonathan “GNO” White



Anybody who has visited UT Dallas knows: The school has no football team, and the most celebrated athletes are chess players. They are recruited from around the world, feted by cheerleaders and the pep band. Chess boards are etched into the school’s very architecture.

When a popular morning team for the Dallas all-sports radio station “The Ticket” broadcast from campus this spring, chess players were featured. During the show, chess director Jim Stallings told listeners about how the program started in 1996 when officials decided that it would be “an excellent vehicle for recruiting top young players and academic scholars as



A spring 2015 graduate wears a mortarboard adorned with a quote from the Harry Potter books.



Madi Hess, the University's first-ever nominee for NCAA Woman of the Year, captained the women's team to the national tournament in 2015.



well as getting publicity for the University."

And it worked.

"Chess is shorthand for being smart," he explains. "Think about movies, TV — your protagonist, in the corner of his apartment, you see a chess board."

White sees the interests on campus evolving as UT Dallas appears to be growing beyond being "that chess school." He's observed that as students mature, sometimes they begin to shake the "nerd" label.

"They'll surprise you," White says. "You think you're stuck in Nerdville, and all of a sudden they're going wild for Katy Perry." Campus culture, he says, has "changed to a point where it's a hybrid now. The nerd is kind of growing up, or experiencing new things."

During the same "Ticket" broadcast that featured the chess team, Director of Athletics Bill Pettit boasted of actual athleticism. He noted the Comets' recent successes in men's and women's basketball, men's soccer and men's and women's tennis.

Madi Hess, a senior studying emerging media and communications, had an excellent view for some of those successes as point guard for the women's basketball team. Hess, who transferred to UT Dallas her junior year from Concordia in Austin, has seen a huge turnaround in support in just the past few years.

She remembers playing as a freshman against the Comets on their home court before very small crowds. But something changed in 2014, when the men's team built a 27-4 record and made it to the Sweet 16 in the Division III NCAA Tournament. "A range of everybody you saw on campus was at the game," she says. Athletics has always been "something smaller at the school," she says, but the success of the men's team "was kind of a spark."

This year, when her Comets team built a 26-5 record en route to its own Sweet 16 appearance, she says she played before full stands.

Hess has awards for being a scholar-athlete, but her team, she says, is not really that nerdy. Her list of the team's favorite programs for communal watching does not include a single program with "Star" in the title. She is not aware of any 3-point-draining Doctor Who fans.

"We don't watch any of those shows," she says.

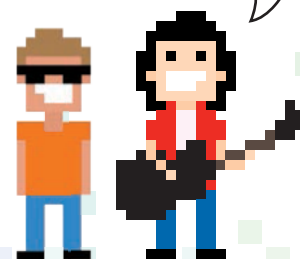
But part of the team's success comes from understanding the campus. Early in the season, she says, the team started using a hashtag on Twitter: #geeksquad. (It was inspired by the Stanford women's team's use of #nerdcity.)

"We started to get a lot more fans, and we reached out to a lot more people than just ath-

Come Together continued on page 47



Members of Onomatopoeia take a selfie during the student group's annual Zombie Walk fundraiser.



What a Difference a Decade Makes

Dr. David E. Daniel served as the fourth president of UT Dallas from 2005 to 2015. In July, he began a new role as deputy chancellor and chief operating officer for the UT System. Here are a few highlights of the Daniel Decade.

UT Dallas in 2015 bears little resemblance to its 2005 version. During those 10 years, the University was reimagined and challenged to claim its place among the nation's top public research universities.

In his first few months as president, Dr. David E. Daniel identified a path to reach the ambitious Tier One goal he set forth. The road map — “Creating the Future,” a strategic plan with six key initiatives — was embraced by the University and its supporters.

Dramatic changes to the appearance of campus are the most visible signs of what has taken place since then, with more than \$1 billion in building and infrastructure upgrades as the core of campus was transformed and the campus population grew from 14,000 to 24,000. But that spirit of reinvention also transformed nearly every aspect of the University, from faculty hiring and student housing to academic offerings and fundraising. The energy has created momentum and established an ambitious hub for change that continues to draw greater numbers of excellent students along with the accomplished faculty and staff who serve them.

It is certain that more changes are on the way for UT Dallas. By the time this year's freshman class graduates, thousands of plantings installed through the campus mall enhancement project will be mature, a new president will have been installed and new chapters of the University's story will have been written.

The following photos and comments show the journey the campus took during the Daniel Decade.



Enrollment increased more than 60 percent, from 14,000 to 24,000.

*"UT Dallas was incredibly lucky when
the powers that be and David Daniel
mutually agreed that he would become
our president 10 years ago."*

**Dr. Hobson Wildenthal, UT Dallas president
ad interim**





June 2005
David E. Daniel becomes the fourth president of UTD.

March 2006
Dr. Daniel installed as president during first-ever investiture ceremony. Unveils strategic plan, "Creating the Future."



Fall 2007
Guaranteed tuition implemented to lock in tuition for up to four years.

"David Daniel is the best example ever of 'right time, right place.' UTD has been a shining light locally for many years, but Daniel created state and national awareness of this treasure."

David Canine, Dallas resident

2005

2006

2007

"We can compete with any of the public or private (universities) in the state. And I think we match up very well with schools across the country. There's a reason that [almost] 30,000 students want to come to school here. It's because of the direction set by Dr. Daniel."

Bill Petitt, UT Dallas athletic director

November 2005
Dr. Daniel chairs American Society of Civil Engineers review panel on New Orleans levee failure during Hurricane Katrina.



October 2006
"Comet Connection," offering a flat tuition rate for transfer students, is launched.



"One of the things that students love most about UT Dallas is how accepting and open the administration is to our wants and needs and just hearing us out on many issues. And I think that that atmosphere is at the top, with Dr. Daniel. He's very open to talking with students, especially student government. He's just been so receptive to our ideas"

Caitlynn Fortner, student government president, junior international political economy major

Highlights from the Daniel Decade

2005

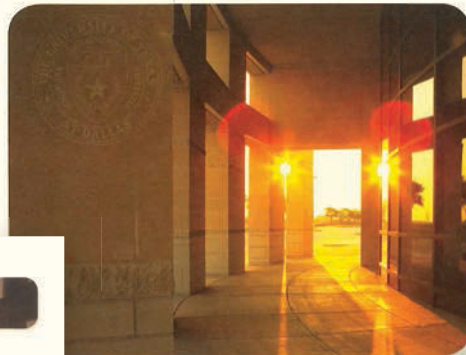


During his investiture as president, Dr. David E. Daniel quoted the late scholar John Schaar, "The future is not some place we are going to, but one we are creating." And with that, The University of Texas at Dallas had both a rallying point and a focus.

The foresight and planning articulated in "Creating the Future" — the strategic plan that Daniel crafted during his first few months as president — guided UT Dallas through a decade of increased academic stature.

As a result of the strategic initiatives, UT Dallas is one of the fastest growing universities in Texas. Enrollment growth, in turn, is fueling an increase in faculty numbers as well as classroom and laboratory space.

Creating the Future: *Our Plan*



UTD
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS

National Merit Scholars
(entering freshmen)

23

Tenured/Tenure-Track Faculty

362

Endowment

\$222.4m

Research

\$43.1m

Strategic Initiatives

The University will invest in six strategic initiatives that are deliberately interconnected, will engage the entire UT Dallas community, and will transform UT Dallas into a top-tier public research university.

UT Dallas Strategic Initiatives

- 1 **Tomorrow's Inventions** Strengthen research productivity, the engine that drives innovation.
- 2 **Preparing Students for Tomorrow's Challenges** Prepare students for a lifetime of contribution and leadership.
- 3 **Managing Change in a Changing Society** Lead the constructive adaptation to our changing world.
- 4 **Securing the Safety of the Future** Create innovative means of ensuring the safety of the area's people and infrastructure.
- 5 **Improving Health and Quality of Life** Contribute to the health and vitality of the people of the region.
- 6 **Making a Great City Even Greater** Interact with our community to strengthen the University and the surrounding region.

Strategic Imperatives

The Strategic Plan lists eight specific imperatives.

UT Dallas Strategic Imperatives:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| <i>Imperative One</i> | Build faculty size. |
| <i>Imperative Two</i> | Add 5,000 new students. |
| <i>Imperative Three</i> | More than double external research funding. |
| <i>Imperative Four</i> | Tell UT Dallas' story better. |
| <i>Imperative Five</i> | Improve annual giving and endowment. |
| <i>Imperative Six</i> | Increase the number of Ph.D.s awarded. |
| <i>Imperative Seven</i> | Enhance graduation rates. |
| <i>Imperative Eight</i> | Improve operating efficiency. |

"Dr. Daniel is a true visionary who really has put UTD on the world map, creating a first-class university."

Angie Chen Button MS'80, a Texas state representative whose district includes Richardson



October 2008

Construction begins on the Science Learning Center, one of more than 30 buildings, structures, renovations or expansions completed from 2005 to 2015.

January 2009

Dr. Daniel serves as president of the Academy of Medicine, Engineering and Science of Texas.



November 2009

Dr. Daniel joins former UTD presidents Franklyn G. Jenifer and Robert H. Rutford for a special program during the University's 40th year celebration.

2008

2009

2010

May 2008

Dr. Daniel's "white paper" outlining the need for more Tier One research universities in Texas spurs legislative action, resulting in House Bill 51.



November 2008

Transformative campus enhancement initiative gets underway.



August 2009

First residence and dining halls open.



March 2010

Dr. Daniel receives the American Society of Civil Engineers Projects and Leadership Award.

December 2009

The Dallas Morning News names Dr. Daniel a finalist for Texan of the Year.

The Dallas Morning News

The first phase of transforming the campus included a new entrance drive and a greenery-lined waterway along the central mall.

2015

"I can't imagine having had a more effective president these last 10 years. He was very ambitious from the start and very interested in building up the school's academic and research profile."

Dr. James Bartlett, interim dean and professor,
School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences



Above, Dr. Daniel leads faculty, staff and students in the UTD "whoosh." Left, Susan and David Daniel.

Daniel Honored for Decade of Leadership

Amid celebrations, handshakes, pomp and tears, Dr. David E. Daniel officially stepped down on June 30 as president of the University and began his new assignment as deputy chancellor and chief operating officer of the UT System.

Daniel was honored at several receptions and special events for his 10 years of service to the University.

He spent much of his last day with community leaders, supporters, faculty, staff and students at campus events. Hundreds of people crowded into the Galaxy Rooms in the Student Union building for the largest event.

Susan Daniel was also on hand throughout the day to thank the University community for providing support for her husband during his presidency and for her as UT Dallas' first lady.

"I want to thank you all for being our friends," she said to the crowd gathered in the Student Union. "It's been a pleasure to get to know you, and it's been an honor to be part of The University of Texas at Dallas."

Dr. Hobson Wildenthal, who has served as UT Dallas' chief academic officer since 1992, is now serving as president *ad interim* (read more on page 26). To commemorate the leadership transition, Daniel bestowed the chain of office on Wildenthal.

"UT Dallas was incredibly lucky when the powers that be and David Daniel mutually agreed that he would become our president 10 years ago," Wildenthal said. "It would have been impossible for us to do better. I already miss him. Tomorrow, I am going to miss him infinitely more."

Daniel said he was leaving UT Dallas with many warm memories and good friends.

"I could not have had a more rewarding professional honor than the privilege of serving as your president for the past 10 years. I feel a deep sense of gratitude and joy from the honor of having known the people who are UTD and for the privilege of being part of the UTD story," he said.

Daniel particularly noted his appreciation for his staff and for the students.

"Of all the special people at UT Dallas, none are more special than our students. You energize and challenge us. You make us feel optimistic about the future. You're uplifting. You're the best," he said. **-Phil Roth**

National Merit Scholars
(entering freshmen)

102

Tenured/Tenure-Track Faculty

552

Endowment

\$392.7m

Research

\$98.6m*

*Preliminary 2015 figures



September 2013

Dr. Daniel receives the Tech Titans Technology Advocate award from the Metroplex Technology Business Council.



April 2014

Campaign goal of \$200 million surpassed for Realize the Vision: The Campaign for Tier One & Beyond.

The Celebration of Support and Campaign Finale included pyrotechnics and a laser light show.

"Daniel is a first-rate leader moving into a No. 2 position that will only propel the UT System into greater excellence. His successor will do well to carefully review the inroads already made and model his leadership after what is already in place."

LaRuth Morrow, Richardson resident

February 2015

Dr. Daniel named the Richardson Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year.



2014

2015

February 2014

Arts and Technology Lecture Series launches with sellout crowd to hear Robert Edsel, author of *Monuments Men*.



October 2014

Inaugural Founders Day, honoring the legacy of J. Erik Jonsson, Eugene McDermott and Cecil H. Green, celebrated.

Busts of the founders, gifts from Texas Instruments, were unveiled at Founders Day.



June 2013

Dr. Daniel begins a three-year term on the National Academy of Engineering governing council.



"The impact that this University has had on the community, through the leadership of Dr. Daniel, has been amazing. There's been a billion dollars' worth of development here on this campus."

Paul Voelker, mayor of Richardson



May 2015

UT System Chancellor William H. McRaven announces the hiring of Dr. Daniel as the System's deputy chancellor and chief operating officer.

May 2010

Award of Excellence bestowed on Dr. Daniel by the Texas-Israel Chamber of Commerce.



Vice President for Research Bruce Gnade and Dr. Daniel cut the ribbon to open the Venture Development Center.

October 2011

Venture Development Center opens.



THE HONOR SOCIETY OF
PHI KAPPA PHI

Spring 2011

Chapter of Phi Kappa Phi honor society established.

realize the
VISION

The Campaign for Tier One & Beyond

May 2012

First comprehensive campaign, "Realize the Vision: The Campaign for Tier One & Beyond," announced.

2011

2012

2013

CE

ives
ociety of
Outstanding
aders award.

October 2011

The School of Management and its honors program are named in honor of alumni Naveen Jindal and Charles and Nancy Davidson, respectively.

From left: Naveen Jindal MBA'92, Dean Hasan Pirkul, Charles Davidson MS'80 and Nancy Davidson BS'80.



2012

New tradition of faculty investiture established.



Holders of endowed chairs and professorships are honored during investiture ceremonies that also recognize the benefactors who support their work.

"The silver lining in University of Texas System Chancellor Bill McRaven's decision to promote David Daniel. ... Texas should benefit from Daniel's wider role in building universities of renown."

May 6, 2015 Editorial, *The Dallas Morning News*



Wildenthal Begins New Role as University President *Ad Interim*



The Biosciences and Bioengineering Building, shown in this rendering, will open in late 2015.



On July 1, Dr. Hobson Wildenthal, executive vice president and provost of UT Dallas, assumed the responsibilities of president *ad interim* of the University, succeeding Dr. David E. Daniel, who now serves as deputy chancellor and chief operating officer of the UT System under Chancellor William H. McRaven.

Dr. Wildenthal, who has served as the chief academic officer at UT Dallas since 1992, has stated that his overriding priority is to accomplish a seamless transition between the presidential administration of Daniel and the administration of the next president of UT Dallas. The new president will be appointed by the Board of Regents after a search process conducted by the UT System according to its carefully structured guidelines.

“My goal is very simple. It is to do everything in my capability to assist our faculty and staff to continue our impressive progress toward educating many of the best students of Texas and the world and to making major contributions to America’s efforts to discover, invent and create new knowledge.

“During the coming months we will surpass the criteria established for full participation in the National Research Universities Fund, created by the Texas Legislature to foster the development of more nationally significant research universities in Texas. However, those criteria are only a starting point for our ambitions, not a ceiling, and our goal is continued progress toward providing Texas and Texans with one of the nation’s outstanding universities as a choice for its most promising young men and women.

“Our dynamic growth in numbers of outstanding students and faculty has been partially matched with new facilities. Last fall, we opened a

Naveen Jindal School of Management addition, completed in 2014.



Rendering of Student Services Building addition projected to open in 2016.



Rendering of the Callier Center Richardson addition, which will be completed in 2016.

major addition to the Naveen Jindal School of Management and this fall we complete 200,000 square feet of research space in the new Biosciences and Bioengineering Building.

“Major additions to the Callier Center and to the Student Services Building are underway. However, additional space is critically needed for research, teaching, student activities and student housing. While maintaining our

progress in teaching and research, we must solve the challenges of providing the facilities in which these activities must take place. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the UT Dallas administration and with the new administrative leaders of the UT System in finding solutions to these problems.”

Dr. Inga Musselman, senior vice provost, is serving as acting provost during the time of Wildenthal’s service as president *ad interim*.



Dr. Inga Musselman

Wildenthal holds a doctorate in physics from the University of Kansas. Subsequently, he held positions at Rice University, Oak Ridge National Laboratory and Texas A&M University, and at Michigan State University for 13 years. During these 20 years of his pre-administrative career, he carried out experimental and theoretical research on the structure of atomic nuclei, publishing more than 200 articles, and taught principally large sections of introductory physics courses. Wildenthal entered into academic administration at Drexel University as department head of physics and atmospheric science, later moving to the University of New Mexico as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences before he joined UT Dallas. **-Amanda Siegfried**

Presidential Search Advisory Committee Formed

A committee to advise The University of Texas System Board of Regents on the selection of a president for UT Dallas was announced in August by Regents’ Chairman Paul L. Foster.

The UT Dallas presidential search advisory committee makes recommendations on possible successors to Dr. David E. Daniel, who assumed a new leadership position as the UT System’s deputy chancellor and chief operating officer this summer.

The search advisory committee is asked to present names of potential candidates to the board, which will make the final decision. Committee members were selected in accordance with the Board of Regents’ Rules and Regulations, which include a provision for representation on such committees by various constituencies of the institution.

“UT Dallas is a renowned academic institution that conducts innovative research, offers new discoveries and provides a world-class education for our next-generation leaders. It is on a beautiful trajectory, and we will seek a leader who can continue that accelerated path,” Foster said. “The distinguished individuals who will serve on this advisory committee bring a broad perspective, varied experience and sound judgment to this important selection process. The board is grateful for their willingness to serve and looks forward to receiving their recommendations.”

Dr. Steven Leslie, UT System executive vice chancellor for academic affairs, chairs the committee.

Representing the Board of Regents on the committee are Regent David J. Beck, Regent Sara Martinez Tucker and Student Regent Justin Drake.

Representing the presidents of other UT System institutions are UT Arlington President Vistasp M. Karbhari and UT Health Science Center at Tyler President Kirk A. Calhoun.

Representing UT Dallas deans, faculty and students are Dr. Mark Spong, dean of the Erik Jonsson School of Engineering and Computer Science; Dr. Murray Leaf, professor of economic, political and policy sciences; Dr. Ramaswamy “Chandra” Chandrasekaran, professor of computer science; Dr. Jennifer Holmes, professor of economic, political and policy sciences; and Caitlynn Fortner, student government president.

Paula Austell, director of endowment services, represents University staff, while Jefflyn Williamson BS’83, CEO of Jefflyn & Company, represents alumni.

The external and community members of the search advisory committee are Debbie Francis, chair of the UT Dallas Center for BrainHealth board; James Huffines, president and COO of the PlainsCapital Corp.; Rich Templeton, CEO of Texas Instruments; and Larry Warder, COO of the O’Donnell Foundation.

Visit utdallas.edu/presidential-search for more information.



THINGS
TO KNOW
ABOUT THE
COMETS
AND D-III
SPORTS



by Bruce Unrue

The UT Dallas athletics program has earned plenty of bragging rights in its 17 years in the American Southwest Conference, racking up multiple conference championships and NCAA tournament appearances.

Yet, misconceptions persist about the program — and Division III athletics in general — from the level of competition to recruiting student-athletes who can excel at the University.

Here are five things that might surprise you about Division III athletics at UT Dallas:

1

DIVISION III: MORE THAN GLORIFIED INTRAMURAL SPORTS

Don't assume that because NCAA Division III schools don't award athletic scholarships that their athletic programs are "small-time." The student-athletes at UTD are far from a "rag-tag bunch of leftovers who show up just wanting to be part of a team," said Athletic Director Bill Petitt.

"There's a perception out there that Division III programs are made up entirely of kids who were not good enough to get athletic scholarships," Petitt explained. "But in reality, these are high-level kids, athletically and academically, who come here because they want to achieve success on multiple levels."

"I think the level of competition shocks people when they see it," continued Petitt, who has worked at several Division I universities during his career. "I believe most of our teams could hold their own against many Division II, and even Division I, programs."

Former assistant men's basketball coach Travis Carruthers BA'07, who spends hours on the road recruiting each year, agreed.

"If we're not going after the same guys who are getting scholarship offers from higher level schools, then we're going after the wrong guys," he said. "Our players have to be just as athletic and physical to compete at this level."

2

NCAA RULES APPLY TO DIVISION III SCHOOLS, TOO

Division I schools get much of the attention when it comes to NCAA regulations. But Division III programs are subject to just as many — although different — rules.

"Because of the emphasis on the total student-athlete experience, many people are surprised to know that there is only a limited amount of time each year that Division III coaches can spend with their teams," said Assistant Athletic Director Angela Marin, who handles compliance.

"The lengths of Division III seasons are strictly limited, so many teams only have a couple of weeks prior to each season to get prepared," she explained. "Then, most of the sports also have a two-week window in the off-season when they can get together for training. But still, most of our coaches only get formal contact with their student-athletes for about 18 weeks in a year. You really have to hope you've got the kind of kids on your team who will work out and stay in shape on their own."

For the NCAA, it's all about the academics. "The NCAA does not allow Division III schools to offer any kind of special tutoring or academic assistance that's not available to the general student population," Marin explained. "But our coaches do a good job in monitoring academic progress. They encourage student-athletes to take advantage of UTD's extensive academic resources if they need help."

That kind of attention certainly pays off. UTD's student-athletes continually surpass the NCAA's minimum academic criteria. In 2014-15, for example, almost half of the University's 260 student-athletes were named to the American Southwest Conference Academic All-Conference teams. And, as a group, student-athletes compiled a cumulative 3.16 grade-point average.



WHOOOSH!

3

NOT YOUR TYPICAL DIVISION III SCHOOL

Of the more than 435 Division III schools — the NCAA's largest division — UT Dallas is the second largest with more than 23,000 students. New York University, with more than 50,000 students, is the largest.

"A typical Division III school is a small, private college with under 2,000 students," said Petitt, noting that 80 percent of these schools are concentrated in the East Coast and Great Lakes regions of the country.

The majority of schools in the American Southwest Conference, to which UT Dallas belongs, fit this model.

"At these conference schools, athletics is typically seen as a huge enrollment driver," he explained. "A group of 300 student-athletes might account for 20 percent of their entire enrollment, so many of these schools invest heavily in their programs and facilities in trying to attract athletes to their campus."

Additionally, many private schools package their academic and need-based financial aid offers to try to bring their costs more in line with public institutions like UTD.

"Still, I think UTD has much more to offer in terms of academic programs and campus facilities than a lot of the smaller-school competition," Petitt said.

4

RECRUITING: A WHOLE OTHER GAME

Finding student-athletes who can excel for the Comets in athletics is a particularly challenging process for UTD coaches, and one that continues on a year-round basis.

Because UTD has some of the highest admission standards in the state, "The first question we always have to ask is, 'Can they get in?'" said Comets men's soccer coach Jason Hirsch BS'05, MBA'11.

"We are constantly looking for student-athletes who can compete athletically at this level, but they also have to have the academic background first to get into school here. If not, there's no use wasting time on them," he explained. "We can't bend the rules a little to get someone we really want."

That process becomes even more complicated when academic scholarships come into play.

"We've all seen kids who score well enough on the SAT or ACT to get admitted here, but don't qualify for any academic scholarships," baseball coach Shane Shewmake added. "That same score somewhere else will not only get them into school, but also get them a big financial aid package. That's tough to compete with."

Another obstacle is the "scholarship mindset" many high school athletes and coaches have in Texas.

"Everyone wants to be able to tell their buddies they got a scholarship to play somewhere," pointed out Shewmake, who is competing for players with Division I and II and other four-year schools in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics, as well as junior colleges that are offering at least some athletic scholarship money.

"What kids don't realize is that most of these scholarships are only partial, particularly in sports like baseball, volleyball and soccer," Shewmake said. "They may be getting just half their tuition covered, or something like that. There are very few full rides."

"So, even with some money, it still might be more expensive for them to go someplace else," he concluded. "We have to help them see the big picture — that they can come here, get a great education and compete for championships."

5

MONEY MATTERS

"A lot of people are surprised to learn that UTD Athletics does not receive a penny of taxpayer money from the state," said Petitt. The program is primarily funded through a modest athletic fee charged to every full-time student, a fee that has not increased in several years.

"People at other schools just automatically assume we have this unlimited gold card and can do whatever we want just because we're a large school. But that simply is not the case," he continued.

For any additional needs, the athletics program must compete with more than 200 other student organizations for funding from the Student Activity Fee Committee, or raise the money through outside sponsorships or donations.

"We put together a budget every year, and have to find ways to make it work," Petitt concluded. "But there is a finite amount of resources, and we have to do a good job of managing them." **UTD**

COMETS BASKETBALL HOME GAME SCHEDULE

Day	Date	Time	Team	Opponent
Saturday	11/14	11 a.m.	Women	Schreiner
Saturday	11/14	1 p.m.	Men	Centenary
Saturday	11/21	3 p.m.	Men	Concordia
Wednesday	12/2	7 p.m.	Women	Austin College
Saturday	1/2	1 p.m./3 p.m.	Women and Men	Howard Payne
Monday	1/4	5:30 p.m./7:30 p.m.	Women and Men	Sul Ross State
Thursday	1/14	5:30 p.m./7:30 p.m.	Women and Men	UT Tyler
Saturday	1/16	1 p.m./3 p.m.	Women and Men	LeTourneau
Monday	2/1	5:30 p.m./7:30 p.m.	Women and Men	Ozarks
Saturday	2/6	1 p.m./3 p.m.	Women and Men	Belhaven
Tuesday	2/9	7 p.m.	Men	Hardin-Simmons
Thursday	2/11	5:30 p.m./7:30 p.m.	Women and Men	Louisiana College
Saturday	2/13	1 p.m./3 p.m.	Women and Men	East Texas Baptist
Thurs-Sat	2/25-27	ASC Tournaments (To be determined)		



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BASEBALL

CROSS COUNTRY

SOCCER

SOFTBALL

VOLLEYBALL

BASKETBALL

TENNIS

GOLF



ALUMNI PERSPECTIVE

BREAKING FROM THE PATH

by Ibrahim Bashir BS'01

STEPPING ONTO the UT Dallas campus for freshman orientation, I had a goal: to learn all of the things I didn't know as quickly as possible, and move on to The Next Thing.

In my mind The Next Thing was a clear, tangible achievement that would mark each step on my self-defined Path. My belief in the Path was absolute — my high school guidance counselor and I had spent hours discussing it — and the plan couldn't have been more thorough. So, when asked by the fellow sitting next to me at orientation why I came to UTD, I told him about the Path. We both walked away a little alarmed, me at his lack of a master plan and he at the thoroughness of mine.

I was a newly minted high school know-it-all who believed that the list of things I didn't know was finite. A degree from UTD would fill in the gaps nicely, I thought.

The Next Thing list included a summer internship at a technology company, which never

materialized, most likely because I was a nervous wreck during interviews. Time and again, UTD gave me a chance to slowly step outside my comfort zone while still evolving academically and professionally. The Career Center connected me with a broad range of prospective employers and I spent my first break working at the University's bursar office. I helped peers register for classes, pay their tuition and generally navigate some practically obsolete mainframe software that I made a mental note to rewrite (give me another 15 years). I distinctly remember looking up the word "bursar" in a now-defunct search engine at a computer lab next to the bookstore.

Other memories: Being asked by a bookstore employee what I was doing as I copied ISBNs for textbooks for future classes, hoping to find them cheaper online. Carrying heavy computer science textbooks around in my JanSport backpack until it finally tore, spilling the contents right outside my Waterview apartment. Watching from my

apartment window as the first athletic building broke ground, seeming to spring up overnight. The quick jog from the apartment to the gym — did I really used to jog that? Could I still jog that? The trek to McDermott library. Passing the building where I had a physics class in a steep basement auditorium, where one time a guy fell while running to submit his final exam. The ECS building (there was just one at the time) where I went to office hours again and again until C++ pointers finally made sense.

I also remember the office I was in when I learned I had earned my first B, because that was the instant when the Path became unclear.

There was also my first fumbling attempt to ask a professor for a letter of recommendation. And the first time I had to work in a group because going solo wouldn't fly. I learned that when the group asked me to present, they trusted me to represent them (also they were afraid of getting up in front of everyone).

I remember things I wish I'd kept. The worn-out course catalog with history elective after history elective circled, a sure indicator of what has become a lifelong love of travel (only two continents left, and Antarctica doesn't really count). The copy of *100 Years of Solitude* that I read in a day without stopping to eat.

Some of these snatches of memory blur. Did I read that book the day it snowed and everything shut down? Was that the semester of all night classes or all Tuesday/Thursday classes? Did I really spend all the time that I saved through class schedule optimization at the library? Did I really walk through the stacks of books thinking some day I would work on something (the Kindle) to replace it all? (Maybe my mind modified that memory so that carrying a Kindle everywhere now has some context.)

More than anything, I remember a slow but steady understanding that I was learning beyond what I needed to simply earn a degree.

Fifteen years later, the thought of that overconfident young man makes me laugh. The need to draw a box around what I didn't know makes sense but ultimately would have ensured that I missed the forest for the trees. The Path feels like a grossly oversimplified notion. What still surprises me, though — the thing I came to know — is the role that UTD would play beyond just being The Next Thing.

I don't remember classes or grades or exams. Instead I recall a montage of random scenes that on their own are of small significance, like the fluttering of butterfly wings that trigger large changes. Whether this is the common experience of all alumni or if it is just my own, I can't say. But every reminisced moment is more deeply etched and more meaningful. There are lifelong lessons I carry from that campus that would be nonsensical to anyone else. It's as if UTD created those memories just for me (as it did for countless other UTD alumni I've since come across in my career).

The Path and the series of Next Things I had conjured up all seem ill-thought through now,

like an attempt to decide the destination without enjoying the journey. If I remember correctly, it was supposed to be orientation, then internship, then degree, then job (then taxes, then death); I skipped the internship altogether and seem to be stuck in a loop with the taxes. The degree was critical; it was what would tell people I was qualified for the job. I think some still view it that way, but to me it's proof that I spent time thinking critically, communicating effectively, building relationships and solving problems. Now, whenever I meet someone new and we chat,

IBRAHIM BASHIR

DIRECTOR OF ENGINEERING
@ TWITTER

Ibrahim is a cross-functional leader in the technology sphere with general management experience building user-focused, delivery-oriented products and engineering organizations.



I don't overwhelm them with my master plan (not that there isn't one), like I did with that poor freshman (if you're reading this, hit me up) years ago. I tell them I think critically, communicate effectively, build relationships and solve problems. Oh, but is that what you went to school to learn? Is that why you went to UTD? Yes, I say, smiling as the montage plays in my head. I say it with the conviction of a person who almost believes it, like a thing they know they knew. Yes, I tell them, that's exactly why I went to UTD.

His current focus is evolving the technical program management function that manages delivery across Twitter's platform and infrastructure. His group is building new features and capabilities, improving reliability and efficiency, and enabling growth and flexibility.

Previously, he led product releases and technical delivery for the Kindle business unit at Amazon. In the past, he has studied computer science, taught algorithms courses, written radiology software, built e-commerce platforms, and been a technology consultant.

He holds a bachelor's degree in computer science from UT Dallas' Erik Jonsson School of Engineering and Computer Science and a master's degree in computer science and engineering from the University of Michigan.

"... the thing I came to know — is the role that UTD would play beyond just being The Next Thing."



2015 UT DALLAS Awards Gala

During the 13th annual Alumni Gala, five graduates were recognized for personal and professional achievements, a former Texas legislator was honored for his support of UT Dallas and emcee Tracy Rowlett MA'80 received a special presentation.



Front row, left to right: former UT Dallas President David E. Daniel, Jerri L. Hammer MS'97, the Honorable Dan Branch and Steven W. Caple BA'89. Back row, left to right: R. Carter Pate MS'03, David Hanson PhD'07 and Daniel E. Schwartz PhD'78.



Rowlett, who had lamented being unable to attend his graduation ceremony in 1980, was surprised with an impromptu graduation ceremony, complete with cap and gown. The former CBS 11 news anchor is a 2012 Distinguished Alumnus.

GIFFORD K. JOHNSON COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AWARD

THE HONORABLE DAN BRANCH The former member of the Texas House of Representatives was a champion for UT Dallas, authoring landmark legislation to encourage more Tier One public universities in Texas.

"The results and the achievements of the alumni, students and faculty are incredibly impressive. It's been an honor to work with and lend a hand to UT Dallas."

GREEN AND ORANGE AWARD FOR ALUMNI SERVICE

JERRI L. HAMMER MS'97 JD, CPA Since she graduated, Hammer has given both time and resources to UT Dallas, serving on the development board and as an advisory council member for gift planning. In 2014, she and her husband also established the Pomberg and Hammer Family Opportunity Fund.

"I owe everything to the people who gave me my foundation — the teachers. They were really interested in giving me the tools to practice in my profession, but they also cared about me and wanted me to be successful."

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

STEVEN W. CAPLE BA'89 Caple serves as president of Unity Hunt Inc., as well as a trustee, board member and officer of various Lamar Hunt family trusts and related companies.

"UT Dallas afforded me an opportunity to pursue a degree plan that was extraordinarily helpful in my educational endeavors."

DAVID HANSON PhD'07 A former Walt Disney Imagineer, Hanson is the founder and chief scientist of Hanson Robotics, which creates intelligent, humanlike robots for use in medical, psychology, autism and artificial intelligence research around the world.

"This convergence of disciplines is emblematic of The University of Texas at Dallas. It's in the very heart of the University. If I had not been in this program, I would not have had the freedom to define this vision of what I wanted to do with my life."

R. CARTER PATE MS'03 Pate retired in 2014 as CEO of Dallas-based MV Transportation Inc., the largest privately owned passenger transportation contracting firm based in the United States.

"I didn't fully understand why and how things worked until I came here. This school opened my eyes, and my career accelerated because of UT Dallas."

DANIEL E. SCHWARTZ PhD'78 Schwartz is manager of strategic business development, new ventures and innovation for California-based Aera Energy LLC, the sixth largest oil operator in the United States. He previously spent 34 years with Shell. In 2011, he created the Daniel E. Schwartz Opportunity Fund for the Department of Geosciences.

"What UTD enabled me to do when I showed up at Shell was to deal with all sorts of uncertainty, deal with a lot of different types of people and a lot of different types of concepts. That all came from UTD: late-night discussions and really enjoying learning. It was the seminar concept of sitting at the foot of the master and learning about your science." UTD

EMBA Class of 2015 Uses Crowdfunding Site to Establish Scholarship



From left: EMBA'15 classmates Tom Allred BS'12, Kilynn Sommer, Ben Mesa and Jeff Steele graduated in May. The class is now raising funds for a memorial scholarship honoring Ben.

Former classmates of Ruben "Ben" Mesa EMBA'15 are raising funds for a scholarship to honor the father of two who died in a boating accident on Grapevine Lake just two weeks after graduating in May.

Memories of the 44-year-old father will live on through an effort led by Ben's Executive MBA 2015 class to establish an endowed scholarship. With the initial goal met, the EMBA 2015 alumni are continuing to use the University's crowdfunding platform, Impact UTD, for the fundraiser that ends Dec. 31.

"Ben was a big part of the personality of our class and one of the people that really made our class weekends an unforgettable experience," said Jeff Steele EMBA'15. "We felt that the best way to preserve his legacy was to establish an endowment that would continue to assist students at UTD."

Ben's sons, Zachary, 17, and Aidan, 14, were the first to donate to the endowment that will assist UT Dallas students.

"Initially, the family wanted to establish something that the boys could be part of to honor their father. When UT Dallas stepped up to do this, we were so emotional because Ben believed in education," said Ben's fiancée, JoAnne Blanchette.

Impact UTD, which launched in the spring, showcases student, faculty and staff fundraising projects. Teams use their social networks to connect with potential donors who share a similar passion for their causes. Donors can contribute gifts of all sizes, and will see updates from organizers about their project's progress. Every donation through Impact UTD counts as a gift to the University, and is tax-deductible to the extent provided by law.

To learn more about the efforts to create the endowed scholarship honoring Ben, as well as other crowdfunded projects at the University, visit impact.utdallas.edu. **-Sara Mancuso UTD**

THREE EDUCATORS PAY IT FORWARD



Dr. Gil Lee (center), surrounded by some of his students, established a scholarship fund at the University.

Engineering Professor Builds Scholarship with Help of Alumni

When electrical engineering professor Dr. Gil Lee established a scholarship fund at the University, he turned to former students to help boost its impact.

Lee began teaching in the Erik Jonsson School of Engineering and Computer Science in 2001 and soon saw how financial assistance attracted potential students, some from his native South Korea. He began recruiting undergraduates from his home country with the help of scholarships and financial support.

In 2014, Lee took it a step further with the establishment of the Gil Sik Lee Scholarship Fund. Not only did Lee write the first check, he asked for contributions from former students who earned degrees due in part to scholarships.

"The only benefit I receive from establishing the scholarship is that I'm happy," Lee said. "This is for the sake of the students and the University."

Fifteen former students have answered the call, and Lee hopes this is just the beginning. The young donors — individuals pursuing other degrees and embarking on new careers — may not have the means to make large gifts, but they understand the importance of scholarships. If these graduates and others contribute in some way annually, Lee envisions making a big difference.

"I hope this program can grow and hundreds of students can be successful," Lee said. "I want to share what I learned, what I earned, so it all goes back into the community." **-Jill Blevins**

Mathematics Lecturer Inspired to Help Academic Bridge Program

Raj Seekri was inspired to create UT Dallas scholarships by his father.

The Ram Lal Seekri Opportunity Fund, named in his father's memory, provides scholarships for students in the Academic Bridge Program, which helps first-generation college students complete their education through additional resources, tutoring, mentoring and advising.

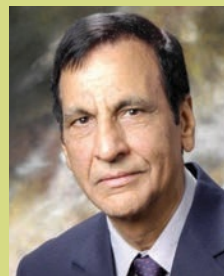
Seekri said his father dedicated his life to educating disadvantaged students in India. Seekri, who is a math professor at Richland College in Dallas and previously taught math as a lecturer at UT Dallas, said he wanted to carry on his father's tradition of helping people change their lives through education.

To that end, the longtime Texas Instruments employee also established The Ram Lal Seekri Endowed Scholarship that helps students from community colleges in Dallas

and Collin counties finish their educations at UT Dallas.

"My father accomplished so much and helped so many people in his lifetime, and he never expected anything in return," Seekri said. "I want to honor that legacy by making it possible for students who need help to get an education. We can all change people's lives."

Seekri has set up several memorial scholarships in Texas as well as the Ram Lal Seekri Endowed Scholarship at his alma mater, Ball State University. In 2008, the Dallas Historical Society honored Seekri with an Award for Excellence in Community Service. **-Kim Horner**



Raj Seekri

Executive MBA Alumnus Donates Teaching Salary to Establish UT Dallas Endowment

Meade Monger EMBA'95, MS'13 teaches executives enrolled in the Executive MBA class of 2016 — without getting paid.

Monger, managing director and founder of the information management services unit of global business advisory firm AlixPartners, began teaching the Technology for Business Executives course this spring.

Grateful for his experiences at the Naveen Jindal School of Management, Monger said he never considered accepting a paycheck when he was asked to help develop a new curriculum for information technology in the EMBA program. Monger is donating his teaching salary to create two Opportunity Funds for the EMBA program: the Meade Monger EMBA '95 Opportunity Fund and the Executive MBA Class of 1995 Opportunity Fund.

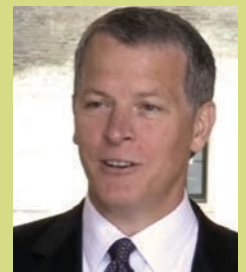
Opportunity Funds can support any part of the University through a permanent

endowment that is established with a gift of at least \$10,000. The gift can be pledged over five years.

"I didn't expect to get paid. We talked about the details and all came to an agreement about what the class would be like, but when I found out they were offering me a salary, I thought, 'This is a great opportunity to really give back to the school that gave me so much,'" Monger said.

The gift to the Jindal School coincides with the 20th anniversary of the EMBA Class of 1995. Monger is encouraging the other 21 members of his class to donate to the endowment as well.

"I thought this was a great opportunity to contribute to the school, and it just so happened that it was also good timing and would be a great way to try to invigorate my classmates to make some contributions as well," Monger said. **-Jill Glass UT D**



Meade Monger

CAMPAIGN IMPACT

Gifts Invigorate University

When *Realize the Vision: The Campaign for Tier One & Beyond* concluded in December, UT Dallas completed an important chapter in its history. The University's first comprehensive campaign (2009 to 2014) surpassed its \$200 million goal, securing resources to advance research, create scholarships, attract top-level faculty and sustain success in existing programs. President *ad interim* Hobson Wildenthal said,

"Reaching a financial target is only part of what this campaign has accomplished. Existing friendships were strengthened and many new ones were generated." Donors collectively contributed more than \$200 million, with many of the donations matched through the Texas Research Initiative Program (TRIP) as well as a similar program through the UT System (UTRIP). See some campaign highlights below.



\$69.7M	Gifts for Academics
\$35.5M	Gifts for Student Scholarships and Fellowships
\$55.1M	Gifts for Other Programs, Facilities, Campus Enhancement, Opportunity Funds
\$45.8M	Gifts for Research
\$43M	TRIP Funds
\$24M	UTRIP Funds

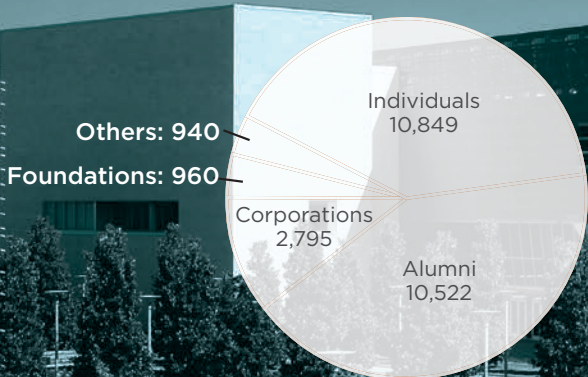


Private gifts made to research during the campaign will result in an additional \$40 million in matching funds this biennium.

These funds are not included in the \$273 million campaign total.

NUMBER OF GIFTS 26,066

VALUE OF GIFTS (in millions) \$206.1





Life on the

Other Side

Gigi Edwards Bryant
MBA'02

by Jill Blevins

"You can come through just about anything if you believe that you can come through just about anything."

These are words Gigi Edwards Bryant MBA'02 lives by.

To get to this point of strength and gratitude, Bryant endured a more than challenging childhood. At the age of 6, she was taken from her mother and separated from her three siblings to enter the foster care system, where she said she was sexually assaulted, beaten and left hungry. Things didn't immediately improve for her when she aged out of the system at 18 years old. She faced multiple setbacks, including teenage motherhood, two abusive marriages and the death row execution of her brother.

Today, the businesswoman and civic volunteer holds an unexpected perspective regarding her past. "I'm just very grateful to God for the life he brought me," the Austin native said.

Bryant became a ward of the foster care system after her mother was institutionalized. She recalls how her emotions at the time were blurred. A sense of loss and confusion resulted, she said, bringing paralyzing fear, countless tears and unanswered questions as to where she might end up.

"At the age of 6, you really don't realize what's happening to you. You don't have a feel for what emotions you should express, except for fear," she said.

For 12 years, Bryant entered and exited home after home, spending brief periods in foster facilities. "You're in a system where you're passed around and don't feel that there's anyone you can connect with," she said.



By the time Bryant became too old for foster care, she was pregnant. She faced limited options, but she was determined that her children would not experience what she had endured. She made a decision that would change her life and the lives of her children, deciding that education was her best way out.

"I knew education would be the only way I could take care of my family," she said.

She enrolled at Austin Community College, taking one class at a time (or more if she could manage it) while working full time to support her young daughter.

"I didn't have anybody to take care of me," she said.

"I was my own backup plan, so I always kept going, regardless of what was going on in my life."

Bryant transferred to St. Edward's University in Austin, eventually earning an undergraduate degree in business and computer science and becoming the first college graduate in her family.

During this period, Bryant worked in information systems and project development for the state of Texas. But after 12 years and the breakup of her second marriage, she wanted a change and opened her own business.

Equipped with seed money, a newly installed second phone line and an answering machine, she founded GMSA Management Services, a business development consulting firm that still serves clients 22 years later.

In 2000, Bryant enrolled in the global leadership program at UT Dallas and earned an MBA. Years later, she said she's proud of her degree and her connection with UT Dallas. She said she enjoyed the close-knit cohort during her studies and found the professors very engaged in serving students.

"There was always somebody to answer any question about anything," she said of the Global Leadership Executive MBA program. "UTD was a great fit."

Bryant is now serving as a member of the Austin Community College Board of Trustees and said she's enjoying the opportunity to effect change through this volunteer role. "The reward for education is amazing, but the costs of education not being accessible and affordable to everyone are high," she said.

Bryant began volunteering as a young woman, initially as a way to briefly escape her living situations. In the process, she discovered satisfaction in assisting and empowering others.

"As I grew up, I always wanted to be able to help people, to give my time and my energy, to give what I had, just me," she said.

Bryant's extensive involvement with civic and nonprofit organizations focuses on causes close to her heart: education, family, children in the foster care system, and drug and alcohol rehabilitation.

In 2007, then Gov. Rick Perry appointed Bryant to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services advisory council. In 2010, she served as chairwoman. Through her post, she was able to influence legislators and champion changes to the foster care system. She's quick to note that there are case workers and foster parents doing good things every day, but she points out that they need help through community partnerships to improve situations for children.

"Once we take them in, as a state, they are our children," Bryant said. "We can't make judicial mandates for love, but we can order the best care possible."

She also uses memories of her personal journey to help youth in the foster care system, including finding ways to fill the emptiness she felt. For example, Bryant doesn't remember having a birthday party, going to a movie theater, celebrating Mother's Day or experiencing many typical childhood occasions. So she founded an organization in 2004 to ensure children don't miss

out in the ways she did. The Write to Me Foundation aims to create experiences of normalcy and typical rites of passage, such as attending prom, having a first manicure or seeing a movie on the big screen.

"I wanted to make sure children experience things just for them," Bryant

said. "Additionally, I wanted to make sure there were resources if young adults from the system ran into hard times, if they couldn't pay their utility bills, pay rent or put gas in their cars."

Today, Bryant has found security and a deep-rooted friendship with Sam Bryant, her husband of 13 years. She and Sam first met more than two decades ago. Years later, they met again through work, finding that they shared common passions for family, faith and community.

Gigi and Sam are proud of their blended family of five children and six grandchildren.

"I taught my children to be kind, to pray and to keep learning," she said.

After facing life's challenges, Bryant said she has come to understand that she is the only person who can make changes in herself. She said she has gained strength in the deep-rooted faith instilled by her great-grandmother and finds herself a bit more philosophical these days.

"Witnessing my brother's execution was a reflection as to what my life could have been," she said. "The difference was that I didn't believe that I wasn't supposed to make it. Although I was told many times I would end up being nothing, I kept praying that I would prove them wrong." **UTD**



Top: Gigi Edwards Bryant received her diploma in a 2002 commencement. Middle: While governor, George W. Bush appointed Gigi to serve on several advisory councils. Bottom: Gigi and her husband, Sam, on their wedding day in 2002.

ALUMNI NOTES

1970s

Deborah Hankinson MS'77 has been selected for the 2014-15 listing of the *Lawdragon 500 Leading Lawyers in America*. Deborah is a Dallas appellate attorney, mediator and arbitrator, and founder of Hankinson LLP. She is also a former Justice of the Supreme Court of Texas and the Fifth District Court of Appeals in Dallas. She is a member of the board of directors and the executive committee for the American Arbitration Association.



Bill Holston BA'78 was the recipient of the 2015 Distinguished Alumni Award for Public Service from the Dedman School of Law at Southern Methodist University.

He is the executive director of the Human Rights Initiative of North Texas Inc.

Stephen M. Holder BS'79 was recently named chief financial officer of Rooster Energy LTD. He has worked in accounting and the oil and gas industry for more than 34 years, most recently at Coastal Energy Co.

1980s



Dana Dunn BA'80, MA'81 is provost and executive vice chancellor of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Dana previously worked for UT Arlington for 27 years, including eight years overseeing academic affairs.

Ken Loudermilk, P.E. MS'82 is senior chief engineer of marketing and sales for chilled beam and underfloor distribution products at Titus HVAC. With more than 35 years of experience in the commercial HVAC industry, Ken specializes in educational, healthcare and LEED facilities. He is a member of a number of professional organizations and has held numerous leadership positions, including chairman of ASHRAE Technical Committee 5.3. Ken holds a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Arkansas, a master's degree in environmental science from UT Dallas, and an MBA from Mercer University.



Lisa Keylon BS'11 MS'12 and **Evan Timmons BA'10 MFA'14** did the Comet Whoosh with friends and family after their wedding on Nov. 8, 2014. Lisa and Evan met through the Residential Housing Association.

Robert Flanagan BA'89 was promoted to chief of the Morristown Fire Bureau in October 2013. He oversees all fire extinguishment, rescue, USAR, airport rescue, EMS and fire prevention and education within Morristown, New Jersey.

T. Stan Limerick BS'89 was elected executive vice president and chief information officer of First Financial Bankshares Inc. in January. Stan's career highlights include having served as chief technology architect and manager at IBM, global enterprise and strategic process architect at General Motors and sales engineering manager at Jack Henry and Associates Inc. He holds several U.S. patents in systems integration and artificial intelligence. In 2010, he received the 500 Innovation Award from *Information Week*.

1990s

Greg Berman MS'91 is president of the Atlanta-based franchise management software company Naranga, which is launching a campaign to expand its presence worldwide. Greg most recently served as chief operating officer of eRevMax Inc.

Michelle Corson BS'91 founded On the Road Lending in March 2013 with the goal of making car loans to impoverished people for purchasing reliable, low-mileage cars without paying loan-shark interest rates. The company's first private equity fund launched a few months later and began making car loans in January 2014. Michelle is a veteran of the financial and real estate world. While studying nights at UT Dallas, she worked full time at Trammell Crow Co. In the mid-1990s, she became a real estate developer. In 2008, she was named CEO of the Real Estate Council.

Daniel Parry BS'93, MBA'97 is co-founder of Praxis Finance Corp. Daniel previously was co-founder and chief credit officer of Exeter Finance Corp. from 2006 to 2014, during which time the company grew to a \$2.5 billion portfolio. Prior to Exeter, Daniel served as senior vice president at AmeriCredit Corp.



Greg Briggs MBA'94 joined the Seattle office of engineering design firm Thornton Tomasetti as a principal. Greg has 25 years of experience in structural design, analysis and project management. Previously, Greg spent 18 years at Magnusson Klemencic Associates in

Seattle, most recently as a senior principal. He has worked on about 25 museum and cultural projects, including the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art expansion; renovation and expansion of St. Louis Art Museum; Philadelphia Museum of Art expansion and renovation (a multiphase project designed by Frank Gehry); LeMay-America's Car Museum in Tacoma; and projects for the Museum of Flight. He holds a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Oklahoma State University, a master's degree in civil engineering from North Carolina State University and a master's degree in business administration from UT Dallas.

Todd Boeding BA'95 joined Academy Mortgage



Corp. as a district manager. Todd has more than 12 years of experience in the mortgage business, including as a branch manager for PrimeLending and

as a district manager at W.J. Bradley Mortgage Capital LLC. He has been a member of the Dallas Mortgage Bankers Association since 2011 and served as president in 2015. Todd spent 14 years as an infantry officer in the U.S. Marine Corps and is chairman of the Dallas board for Carry the Load, an organization dedicated to honoring military, law enforcement, firefighters and rescue personnel.

Pedro Juan Vergne-Morell MBA'95 is the CEO of PCI HealthDev, where he develops and maintains the corporate identity and marketing direction. Pedro concentrates on cultivating investor relationships and partnerships. He has more than 17 years of business leadership experience.

Jason DeRouchey BS'96, an assistant professor of chemistry at the University of Kentucky, has



received a prestigious five-year, \$691,000 award from the National Science Foundation Faculty Early Career Development Program for his project,

"Linking Structure, Stability and Protection in Protamine Packaged DNA." The award supports junior faculty who exemplify the role of teacher scholars through outstanding research, excellent education and the integration of edu-

Continued on page 42



Samatha Morgan BA'07, Teacher Certification'07 celebrates with her students at Clifton Elementary near Waco after receiving the Milken Educator Award.

Alumna Honored for Reaching Young Reading Students

Samatha Morgan BA'07, Teacher Certification'07, a fifth-grade reading teacher at Clifton Elementary School near Waco, was honored this spring with a \$25,000 Milken Educator Award from the Milken Family Foundation. She was one of 40 recipients — and the only one in Texas — to receive a Milken award.

The foundation lauded Morgan for her use of proven, cutting-edge strategies including iPad centers, student-led portfolios and graphs to chart progress. Many of her students have improved their reading by two grade levels. More than 90 percent of her students have passed state reading accountability tests.

The first thing Morgan does to help her students become better readers has nothing to do with phonics or vocabulary: She makes sure they're comfortable in her classroom.

The students can grab a book of their choice and a stuffed animal reading buddy and sit on pillows and rugs in Morgan's classroom. The inviting atmosphere helps students relax enough to learn, she said.

Morgan, who holds a degree in interdisciplinary studies, completed her teaching certificate through the Teacher Development Center in the School of Interdisciplinary Studies.

-Kim Horner

ALUMNI NOTES

Continued from page 41

cation and research within the context of the mission of their organizations. Funds from the award will allow Jason to study the ways in which protamines package, protect and store DNA in sperm cells. After receiving his bachelor's degree in chemistry from UT Dallas, Jason earned master's and doctoral degrees in polymer science and engineering from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He joined the UK Department of Chemistry faculty in 2010.

Phil McDivitt MBA'96 has joined Ascend



Performance Materials LLC as president of its global nylon business. He previously worked for Celanese Corp., where he held a series of operations and commercial roles, since 1987. He earned a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from Texas A&M University and a Master of Business Administration from UT Dallas.

2000s

Joseph Massey BA'00 is senior vice president and commercial lender at BancorpSouth's Dallas office. For the past eight years, Joseph served as banking center president of a publicly traded regional financial services company in McKinney.

Robert Nuñez BS'03 was named one of *D Magazine's* Best Mortgage Professionals in Dallas for 2015. He also was included in *Latino Leaders Magazine's* Dallas Club Leaders of the Future list in 2014.

Deborah Mitchell MA'04 is the author of *Growing Up Godless: A Parent's Guide to Raising Kids without Religion*, published in 2014 by Sterling Ethos.

Kati Houser BS'05 recently joined Keller Williams as a Realtor.



Scotti Smart George MS'06 was promoted to senior consultant II at BKD LLP. She is a member of BKD National Health Care Group, the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and Missouri Society of Certified Public Accountants.



Sobia Khan BA'06, MA'08, PhD'14

is a member of the English faculty at Richland College in Dallas. She has published translations of Urdu poetry as well as many short stories.

Her short story "The Fallen" was published in the anthology *Her Texas: Story, Image, Poem and Song*. Sobia is finishing her first novel, *Mariam*.

Todd Zavodnick MBA'06 is president and general manager of Galderma Laboratories LP. He was formerly the vice president and general manager for Galderma's aesthetic and corrective business in the United States and senior regional director for Galderma operations in Latin America. Todd earned a Bachelor's of Pharmacy degree from Rutgers University in 1994 and an MBA in international business from UT Dallas.

Eileen Baland PhD'07 earned a master's degree in writing, with a specialty in poetry, from Spalding University in Louisville, Kentucky, in 2015.

Nancy Latner BA'07 has joined the advisory board for the Academic Bridge Program at UT Dallas.

Jake Frazier MBA'09 was hired by FTI Consulting as a senior managing director leading the information governance and compliance practice in the company's technology segment. Before joining FTI, Jake led the information lifecycle governance group at IBM. He is a founding member of the Electronic Discovery Reference Model and has been a faculty member of the Compliance, Governance & Oversight Council as well as the Sedona Conference.

2010s

Gregory Taylor MBA'14 became a construction administration architect with GSR Andrade Architects in Dallas in April 2015.

Steven Vance BA'14 and his wife, Colleen, welcomed their daughter, Machaela Christine Vance, in January 2015.

One Family, Six Degrees

For the Horner family, Comet pride runs deep. Siblings **Matthew BSEE'07, MA'13**, **Elizabeth BS'09, MS'10** and **Michelle BS'13, MS'15** have made UT Dallas their academic home away from home. As the most recent graduate, Michelle increased the family's total number of UTD diplomas to six when she graduated in the spring with a master's degree in speech therapy. Proud father Larry Horner said, "UTD has been a family passion for this generation." To which we say, "Whoosh!"

From left: Matthew, Michelle and Elizabeth Horner





Call Him Dr. McCaa: News Anchor Earns PhD

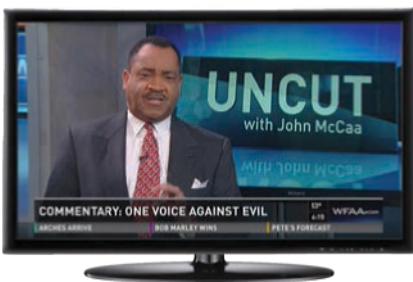
Since 1984, **John McCaa** has worked at Dallas' WFAA-TV (Channel 8) as a reporter, news anchor and newsroom chief, among other roles. If his daily job of standing before millions on live television wasn't challenging enough, he recently finished the most difficult of academic programs — the PhD.

Seven years ago, McCaa came to UT Dallas with an interest in intellectual history. He wanted to better understand the relationship between mass media, society and the notion of celebrity.

"I have always been curious about history and its relationship with American political and intellectual thought, but I wanted to look further in the past than just the Reagan era," he said. "Journalists don't know enough about history. I wanted to see deeper connections and how people are transformed in society."



Top: WFAA-TV news anchor **John McCaa PhD'15** attends a reception with his wife, Nora, after receiving his PhD.
Above: McCaa receives his doctoral hood during a ceremony.



The history of ideas program in the School of Arts and Humanities was a natural fit for McCaa's research. Dr. Daniel Wickberg, associate professor in American studies, guided McCaa through his dissertation.

After many drafts, McCaa finished his dissertation and called

it "Passport to a Parallel Universe: Fame, Celebrity and Media in the Digital Age."

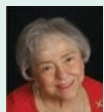
McCaa received his PhD during a doctoral hooding ceremony in the spring. He said he has no intentions of leaving the newsroom, but would like to lecture at college campuses about media ethics.

"Seeing doctor before my name gives me chills. It took seven years, but it's still surreal," he said.

-Chaz Lilly

In Memoriam

REMEMBRANCES OF UNIVERSITY ALUMNI



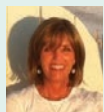
Ann Gillespie Smyth BS'77, March 12, 2015, Tyler, Texas. Smyth was born May 24, 1936, in Gadsden, Alabama, to Dr. J.P. and Dorothy Perkins Gillespie.

In 1983, her husband, Shelly, retired from the U.S. Navy and they moved to Tyler, where she worked in the accounting business until her retirement in 2004. Smyth, a member of Christ Episcopal Church, taught children's Sunday school for many years. She also was a member of the Altar Guild, the Paper Guild, Daughters of the King and Episcopal Church Women. She enjoyed traveling with her husband through most of the United States.



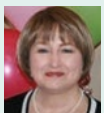
Dallas Lynn Edie BS'78, Jan. 15, 2015, Dallas. Born Sept. 4, 1954, in Red Oak, Iowa, Edie graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School in Dallas. He worked for Sanmina Corp. for 21 years and was director of business development. He enjoyed going to the movies with his sons, golfing, dancing and running at White Rock Lake.

Wallace M. Rose Jr. BA'79, Feb. 10, 2015, Las Vegas. Known to all as "Buddy," Rose passed away after a long bout with pancreatic cancer, with his wife, Kathryn, at his side. Born July 28, 1951, in Dallas, Rose attended Bryan Adams High School. A professional caricaturist, he started the National Caricaturist Network that later became the International Society of Caricature Artists with more than 2,000 members from 33 countries. He also was sole proprietor of Caricature Cinema Corp. One of the highlights of his 43-year career was receiving a small wooden bear from Vladimir Putin as thanks for drawing his caricature. Rose had two children with his first wife, Virginia — Wallace and Harrison. During his marriage to Kathryn, the couple had three children — Grace Bailey, Daniel and Matthew. Rose also was a 32nd degree Mason who was honored for one of his poems, "In My Father's Footsteps."



Pamela Dermid McMullen BS'80, Feb. 24, 2015, Dallas. McMullen was born Oct. 11, 1958, in Morristown, Tennessee. She graduated from Plano High School in 1976. A 14-year resident of Mansfield, Texas, McMullen was a member of Walnut Ridge Baptist

Church. She enjoyed participating in and supporting sports, especially local teams. One of her favorite places to travel with her husband, Dan, was to the beach at Destin, Florida. She was a wife, mother, daughter and friend.



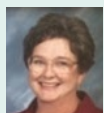
Constance Lee Clark BS'82, May 13, 2014, Waco, Texas. Clark died after a lengthy battle with cancer. Born on Sept. 10, 1952, in Waco, she later attended Richfield High School and married David "Randy" Clark on her birthday in 1971. She worked full time while raising the couple's first son, David, and attending night classes. At graduation from UT Dallas, Clark was eight months pregnant with the couple's second son, Christopher. She and her husband traveled frequently, including nearly 20 trips to Disney World as well as several cruises and Baylor University sporting events. Clark was employed at Wells Fargo Bank as business banking manager. She served on several community boards, including United Way, Girl Scouts of America and Baylor Waco Foundation.



Ronald Weisz BS'85, June 7, 2015, Telephone, Texas. Weisz was born on May 31, 1952, in Dallas. His family moved to Richardson in 1955. Married to Cynthia since 1976, the couple raised their children in Richardson. In 2010, they moved to their ranch outside Bonham, Texas, where he worked with cattle and horses. Weisz loved animals and once worked for Lion Country Safari in Grand Prairie, Texas. Weisz began working in the warehouse of engineering company 3M in 1977 and retired as executive senior salesman in January 2015.

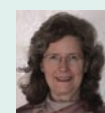


Steven Arthur Hardin BA'88, Feb. 5, 2015, Portland, Texas. Hardin was born Nov. 2, 1964, in Beaumont, Texas. He dedicated his life to education, teaching for more than 20 years at Richard King High School in Corpus Christi, Texas, where he touched the lives of many students and faculty.

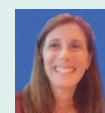


Margaret Jean (Griffin) McCasland BA'88, June 15, 2015, Pensacola, Florida. Born March 6, 1942, in Spur, Texas, she grew up in neighboring Orla

and Pecos, raised her family in Iowa Park and Plano, served libraries in Dallas and Lubbock, and enjoyed retirement in Mineral Wells, Texas, and Pensacola. She married Barney C. McCasland on Nov. 12, 1994. Their family grew to include seven children (and spouses), 17 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. She followed a bachelor's degree in history from UT Dallas with a master's of library science from Texas Woman's University. She had a career as a university librarian at SMU and Texas Tech. After leaving Texas Tech, she and her husband lived for 10 years on a small farm near Mineral Wells. In 2010, she and Barney moved to Pensacola. The couple enjoyed musical performances and plays. She was a gardener and an artist who worked in a variety of mediums, including painting, textiles and jewelry. She volunteered with the Myrtle Grove Baptist Church ESC Food Pantry as well as church libraries.



Nadine Procsal BS'88, March 26, 2015, Richardson, Texas.



Nan Smoot BS'88, June 16, 2015, Flower Mound, Texas. Smoot was born Sept. 19, 1966. She married Glen Smoot on Oct. 30, 1993, at Park Cities Baptist Church in University Park, Texas. Smoot was a member of RockPointe Church in Flower Mound. A 25-year employee of Mary Kay Inc., Smoot was director of U.S. Tax for the company. She served as president of the Dallas chapter of Texas Executives Institute. She enjoyed spending time with her friends and family, rooting for the Texas Rangers, and reading a good book. She is survived by her husband, children Caleb and Lexie, and her parents and siblings, as well as her grandfather.



H. Glyn Jordan PhD'90, May 1, 2015, Dallas. Jordan was born Nov. 13, 1937, in a farmhouse in Munger, Texas. He grew up in nearby Hubbard, where he met his future wife, Ann Manning, when she was in second grade and he was in third grade. They were married for 55 years. He earned a bachelor of business administration degree from UT Austin, an MBA from SMU and a PhD from UT Dallas.

Jordan was a member of Beta Gamma Sigma, Sigma Iota Epsilon and Pi Kappa Alpha. He served in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, first at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, and later as a captain with the 519th Maintenance Battalion in Dallas. During more than 50 years in the information systems field, he worked for Collins Radio, IBM and Cutler-Williams Inc. before founding three small businesses — J-4 Company, MOD-2000 and Strategic Staff Services. He taught at several area universities, including UT Dallas, and was the author of *Getting Jobs*. Jordan volunteered with SCORE, North Dallas Shared Ministries, Highland Park United Methodist Church, North Dallas Chamber of Commerce and the Military Order of World Wars.

Timothy John Worrall BA'91, Fort Worth, Jan. 10, 2015. Worrall was born July 5, 1963, in Dallas. He graduated from Skyline High School in 1981. He earned a bachelor's degree in literary studies from UT Dallas, returning as a doctoral student in humanities after completing a master's degree in English and creative writing from the University of Notre Dame. Worrall taught at Notre Dame, UT Dallas, Trinity Preparatory Academy, and Trinity Valley School in Fort Worth. He enjoyed writing, playing drums, swimming, literature and movies.

Danielle "Danie" Wilson Allen BA'96, March 7, 2015, Dallas. After surviving five earlier bouts with cancer, Allen eventually succumbed to the disease. Born Jan. 25, 1939, in Atlanta, she attended Duke University and married Bill Allen with whom she moved to Texas. Allen raised four children. She enjoyed Colorado, traveling with "the Good Group," meals with people she loved, wine, movies, books, exercise and, above all, her friends and family.



Aaron Nicholas Morrow BS'07, Jan. 18, 2015, Dallas. Morrow, who was born on Oct. 7, 1983, in Fridley, Minnesota, spent much of his childhood in Rome.

There he attended the local schools, including Southlands English School. Throughout his life, he demonstrated courage and resolve in emergency situations that included rescue assistance and crime prevention. Morrow was an

avid gamer, a karate champion and a competitive weight lifter. He traveled extensively, including to Europe, the Middle East and many locations in the U.S. Musically gifted, he played selections on organs in London and Salzburg, Austria. After graduating from UT Dallas, Morrow worked for Trinity Industries Inc. and L-3 Communications.



Mark Alexander Mora BS'13,

Sherman, Texas, Jan. 14, 2015. Mora was born on Jan. 23, 1990, in Sherman. He graduated from Sherman High

School in 2008. Before transferring to UT Dallas, he attended UT Pan American and Grayson College. Mora worked for MAA Property Management. Mora loved life, his job, friends and family. He will be remembered for his ability to laugh, have fun and work hard.



Stephen C. Finney Jr., MPA'14, May 23,

2015, Lake Worth, Florida. Born July 4, 1971, in Wilson Borough, Pennsylvania, he was a 1989 graduate of Notre Dame

High School. He received his bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Kutztown University. He served as a corporal in the U.S. Army during the Persian Gulf War and was a member of the National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve. Finney received dozens of distinguished awards, commendations and recognitions from both his military and his police service for achievement and merit. Finney worked for the state of Florida as a district manager of investigative services. Prior to moving to Florida, he was employed by the UT Dallas Police Department. During his Texas law enforcement career, Finney held several positions, including captain of police and commander of the office of investigative and special operations. He was a life member of Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion Post 597, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Cold War Veterans of America and various other civic organizations.



Renan "Ram" Maramba BS'15, May 2,

2015, Dallas. He was born Nov. 14, 1978, in Manila, Philippines. Maramba lived in Manila until 1986 when his family moved to Santa Monica, California. Maramba

moved to Dallas in 1998 and married Dyan in 2000. Employed at Muratec America Inc. from 1998 through 2010, he began as a bench technician before becoming a technical trainer. He earned a bachelor's degree in business administration, with a concentration in entrepreneurship. Trained by veteran knife maker Larry Davidson, Maramba was a renowned knifemaker, designer and owner of Zero Knives in partnership with Laura Campbell. He pursued other interests, including practicing Brazilian jiu jitsu under Carlos Machado, writing for popular blogs devoted to mixed martial arts, completing a half marathon, collecting guns and traveling.



Ruben "Ben" Rafael Mesa EMBA'15,

June 8, 2015, Grapevine, Texas. Born Feb. 19, 1971, in Silver City, New Mexico, Mesa graduated from Silver

High School. After graduation, he earned an accounting degree from the University of Utah and an Executive MBA from UT Dallas. Mesa, who worked for J.C. Penney in Salt Lake City, transferred to corporate headquarters in Plano, Texas, in 2004. His most recent position was as director of accounts payable at Heartland Automotive Services in Dallas. His life was centered on his family, especially his two sons, Zachary and Aidan. An active member of St. Ann Catholic Parish in Coppell, Texas, he was a 4th Degree member of the Knights of Columbus and played church league softball for 10 years. Mesa is remembered for his smile, laugh and baritone voice. As a cancer survivor, Mesa dedicated his life to caring for and helping young cancer patients. His passion for sports, which included being a diehard Yankees fan, led him to coach his sons in football and baseball. Mesa was happiest spending time with his fiancée, JoAnne, and his sons. He was a devoted son and brother, as well as a loyal friend.

In Memoriam

REMEMBRANCES OF UNIVERSITY FACULTY, STAFF AND FRIENDS



Paula Rupe Dennard
1927-2015

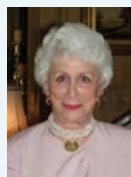
Paula Rupe Dennard, emeritus trustee and past president of the Foundation for the Callier Center and Communication Disorders, died in February after a long battle with Alzheimer's disease. Her family's Rupe Foundation helped make possible the Advanced Hearing Research Center at Callier Dallas, the Callier Richardson satellite facility and the Callier Center Richardson expansion that is currently under construction.

Dennard's father, Dallas Gordon Rupe Jr., was among the leaders who established the Pilot School for the Deaf in the 1940s. Continuing her father's legacy, Dennard was a guiding force when the Pilot School became part of the Callier Hearing and Speech Center in the 1960s.

After serving with Margaret Jonsson Rogers (daughter of Erik Jonsson) on

the Crystal Charity Ball (CCB), Dennard became a trustee of the Foundation for the Callier Center in 1967. Callier was selected as a CCB beneficiary for the first time that year. Dennard served as president of the foundation from 1992 to 1998.

Born and raised in Dallas, Dennard attended Southern Methodist University, where she met her husband, Robert Edwin Dennard. She served as chairman of the board for Rupe Investment Corp. Dennard is survived by three children, seven grandchildren, four great-grandchildren, a niece and a nephew.



Emilie Faye Schepps
1921-2015

Emilie Faye Schepps, a Callier Center for Communication Disorders patient, volunteer and advocate, died on June 14, the day before her 94th birthday. Her relationship with Callier began in 1978, when she sought treatment for a

hearing problem. Impressed with the care that she received, Schepps regularly volunteered at the center. She joined the center's foundation as a trustee in 1982. Schepps was known for helping patients in need, often designating gifts to the center in honor of Dr. Phillip "Lee" Wilson, audiologist and clinical associate professor. Her legacy lives on through the Emilie and Phil Schepps Professorship in Hearing Science held by Dr. Colleen Le Prell, program head of audiology in the School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences.

Schepps, who was married to Phil Schepps from 1946 until his death in 2003, is survived by two sons, a daughter, five grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.



George Smith
1922-2015

George Henry Smith, a volunteer for the University's History of Aviation Collection, died

in April at age 92.

Smith organized and cataloged information, including a yearlong project to arrange the materials in the Aircraft Manufacturers' Collection.

In 1949, he married Doris June Morrow in his hometown of McKinney, Texas. He attended UT Arlington and Texas Christian University, where he played the cornet in the marching band. A member of the 8th Air Force, 381st Bomb Group of the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II, he was a flight engineer. After his war service, he flew for an oil supply company.

Smith worked at Van Waters & Rogers for 36 years, selling upholstery supplies to manufacturers in several states. When he retired in 1987, he spent his time traveling with his wife, June, to 381st Bomb Group reunions, visiting grandchildren and volunteering at UT Dallas.

He is survived by his son Gary Smith, daughter Mitzi Cardenas and three grandchildren.



Jess Hay
1931-2015

Jess Hay, a higher education advocate and key supporter of UT Dallas, died in April at the age of 84.

"Jess' public service and vocal support of higher education in the state of Texas is well-known, and the legacy of his advocacy will continue to be felt for years to come," former President David E. Daniel said. "He was deeply enthusiastic about and proud of UT Dallas."

Hay's support of the University spanned decades. Along with Peter O'Donnell and Louis Beecherl Jr., Hay was instrumental in securing

\$6 million from the state in the late 1980s to enable the granting of four-year undergraduate degrees. More recently, as honorary co-chair of UT Dallas' comprehensive fundraising campaign, Realize the Vision, he helped in the effort that raised more than \$273 million. When longtime family friend Keith Lankford Taylor BS'93 lost his battle with lung cancer, Hay established a fellowship in Taylor's name that supports graduate students in the School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences.

A former UT System regent and chairman from 1985 to 1987 and chairman of the Texas Foundation for Higher Education, Hay received the Santa Rita Award in 1991. The award is the

highest honor given by the UT System.

He retired as chairman and CEO of Lomas Financial Corp., a diversified financial services company. He also served as chairman of the board for several major corporations and was director emeritus of Viad Corp.

Hay earned two degrees from Southern Methodist University, a bachelor's in 1953 and a law degree in 1955, graduating magna cum laude. He was a member of the law firm Locke, Purnell, Boren, Laney & Neely, becoming a partner in 1961.

Hay is survived by two daughters, Deborah Hay Spradley and Patricia Hay Bush, three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

letes,” she says. “We definitely are a nerd school, but instead of looking at that and being embarrassed, we just tried to embrace it.”

Blodgett, of the Interfraternity Council, agrees that when it comes to nerdy culture, it is what it is. He thinks, though, that leading students to become more socially engaged will produce happier, more-connected alumni.



Michael
Blodgett

White thinks the nerd label is here to stay. And properly so, given the number of “borderline genius, if not genius” students he runs into just walking across campus. Undergraduates who are smart enough to design sonar-enabled shoes for the blind. Experts in 3-D modeling and game theory. People obsessed with film-projector technology. And students who thrill to the idea of turning the Comet Cafe

into an Imperial Star Destroyer. Which has happened.

“I see a lot of people who suggest, ‘Let’s do stuff like the other colleges. Let’s make it more like other colleges and have that feel,’” White says. “I feel UTD is unique in itself. It should carve its own path.”

Many students say that the nerd school label suits them just fine but they disagree with the notion that they don’t know how to have a good time.

The campus group Onomatopoeia has, over several years, earned a reputation for oddball stunts, from turning the campus into a giant Pokémon game to the annual “Brains for the Cure” fundraising zombie walk. If you need a bunch of people to dress up as Stormtroopers for a parade, they’re who you’re gonna call. They also teach improv classes. And have a lot of fun.

As Natch Azure, a sophomore from Saginaw explains during introductions at the start of a meeting at the Student Union, she came to the club because “I wanted a nerd hub. I thought it would be a close-knit community of nerds.”

The discussion around the circle indicates she succeeded. By way of introduction, people are asked to say what weapon they would choose to survive the zombie apocalypse.

“A dirigible,” says president Dennis Kovalev.

“A LARGER dirigible,” Azure counters.

Other choices include a machete, differential equations and nuclear weapons. There is a suggestion of using a nuclear weapon inside of a nuclear weapon, and references to the movie *Inception*.

After the meeting, there are nods all around with the notion that Onomatopoeia exists to let students blow off steam. And the harder students work, the more intensely they need to blow off that steam. “I do a lot of work in the lab,” says Kovalev, a biochemistry major. “And the courses are progressively getting tougher and tougher. Onomatopoeia — it’s a home.”

And in such a comfortable environment, people like Jenna Bastian, a senior studying arts and technology, find ways to grow.

“I was really shy,” she says. “So the first year of Onomatopoeia I just sat in back. But then I guess I got more open because I liked the people in it. They’re not, like, judgmental.”

Adviser Thomas Riccio is an arts and humanities professor and multimedia artist with expertise in indigenous performance. He says that the culture of Onomatopoeia is a microcosm of the whole campus.

The group is heavy with technology-oriented majors, he says. They are “usually very physically awkward in their own bodies. Almost to a person, they’re each in their own way, socially uncomfortable.” They are much more at home talking about a formula, or a computer program, than anything social.

“So that’s maybe the definition of a nerd: They are very much more comfortable with an ordered system of the sciences. Or technology. And structuring their own life within that. They like it to be well-defined and highly ordered. So that’s why they’re attracted to Onomatopoeia. For them it’s disorder; it’s excitement. That’s maybe why they need it.”

It also, he says, is a safe place, “a kind of protective atmosphere for them” to try on different aspects of their personalities and expand into new areas.

Which might not be a bad metaphor for the whole University.

If there is a phrase that comes up more than “nerd school” in asking about UTD’s culture, it might be “things here are changing so fast.” UT Dallas is not the school it was 20 years ago or five years ago or even a few weeks ago. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that one of the school’s colors is reminiscent of the bright orange of a construction worker’s vest.



Theresa
Towner

Arts and humanities professor Theresa Towner has seen much of this growth firsthand. She started as a lecturer in 1994, four years after the University first admitted freshmen and has won awards for her teaching excellence. She also happens to teach a popular course on the literature of fantasy, covering the Wizard of Oz books, the Chronicles of Narnia and Harry Potter.

Towner, whose office decor includes a hand-knitted Gryffindor scarf and a small model of a Dementor staring down at visitors, sometimes playfully engages her students by reminding them, “You go to Nerd University. Embrace it!” But not, she says, for reasons that have to do with its “techno-geek rep.”

“That’s not it,” she says. “It’s the fact that if you want to do something here, you can do it. And the fact that you want to do something is embraced by other people. You’re not going to get shot down for trying to do something different because honestly this University hasn’t been here long enough to say to you, ‘You can’t do that because we’ve never done that before.’”

That idea of a young, evolving, experimental campus, echoed by many others, makes it tempting to think of the entire University as an adolescent in an awkward stage. It is no longer what it was, and not quite what it will become. Maybe nerdism is a personality it’s trying on, in the same way a teenager tries on different personas, until finding one that feels real?

Towner says yes, but takes the metaphor a step further: She thinks that UT Dallas seems to be embracing nerdiness as a model of its adult life.

Students have thrived as nerds, she says. “And I think that what the students are interested in contributing to is the place that lets them be that. They want this place to be that for somebody coming up behind them.

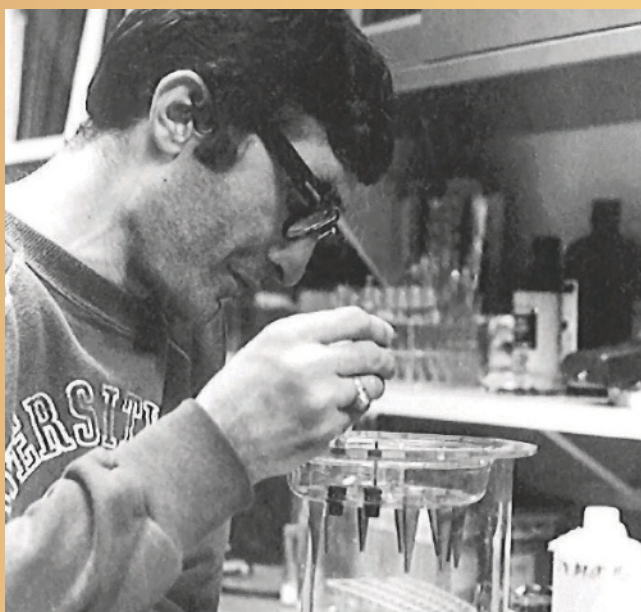
“They seem interested in not harming what has allowed them to be who they are,” she says. “I think that’s what they are proud of. They make the place that makes them.” UTD



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS

congratulates

*alumnus Dr. Aziz Sancar PhD'77
for earning the 2015 Nobel Prize in Chemistry.*



Aziz Sancar working in the lab at UT Dallas in 1975, and then being honored with the Distinguished Alumni Award in 2009.

THE NOBEL PRIZE is a crowning achievement in the career of any scientist, and we are immensely proud that The University of Texas at Dallas played a key role in Aziz Sancar's extraordinary success as both a scientist and a teacher.

Dr. Sancar came to us after earning a medical degree in Turkey, and worked with one of our most distinguished professors, Claud (Stan) Rupert, to earn his PhD in molecular and cell biology.

Dr. Rupert did seminal research on enzymes in bacteria that are activated by visible light and are involved with

repairing damaged DNA. As a UT Dallas student, Dr. Sancar successfully purified and described a bacterial enzyme called photolyase, which is critical to DNA repair.

Dr. Sancar's work at UT Dallas laid the foundation for his later studies of DNA repair in humans, and his discovery of cryptochrome, the photoreceptor that sets the biological clock according to the day/night cycle.

On behalf of our more than 90,000 UT Dallas alumni, and our faculty, staff and students, we salute Dr. Sancar for embodying the University's long-standing emphasis on academic and scientific excellence.

HINDSIGHT: Morris Hite

Morris Hite was a high school dropout whose skill and unrivaled work ethic helped propel him to become president of Dallas-based ad agency TracyLocke. He also used that determination to champion higher education in the Dallas area, in particular the challenging effort to add the Southwest Center for Advanced Studies — UTD’s precursor institution — to the UT System in the late ’60s.



Richard Brown

Richard Brown, who worked for Hite at TracyLocke for more than 20 years, recalled the struggle Hite and UTD proponents faced in Austin and from colleges in the region to see the University become a reality:

“Hite was president of the Dallas Chamber of Commerce at the time, and he ran it well. He was in a position to help. He knew SCAS co-founder Erik Jonsson through business dealings, and that brought him into the fold. There was a need for higher education in Dallas, and Hite was determined to do something about it. He jumped into the middle of it.

“The founders offered to turn over SCAS, with its campus, buildings, equipment and faculty — worth millions of dollars — if the state agreed to establish a graduate-level institution in North Texas.

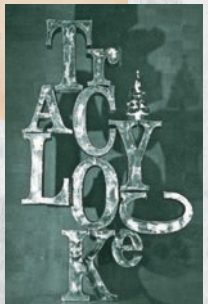
Hite oversaw the placement of this ad promoting the Southwest Center for Advanced Studies in the June 7, 1968, issue of TIME magazine.



“Hite worked behind the scenes to advance the effort. He spent a good part of the spring in 1969 lobbying Gov. Preston Smith and the Texas Legislature in Austin. In June of 1969, House Bill 303 was signed into law, transforming the SCAS into UTD.

“He, Jonsson, SCAS President Gifford Johnson and others were responsible for convincing the state and The University of Texas System to adopt what had been a private research center and transform it into a public university.”

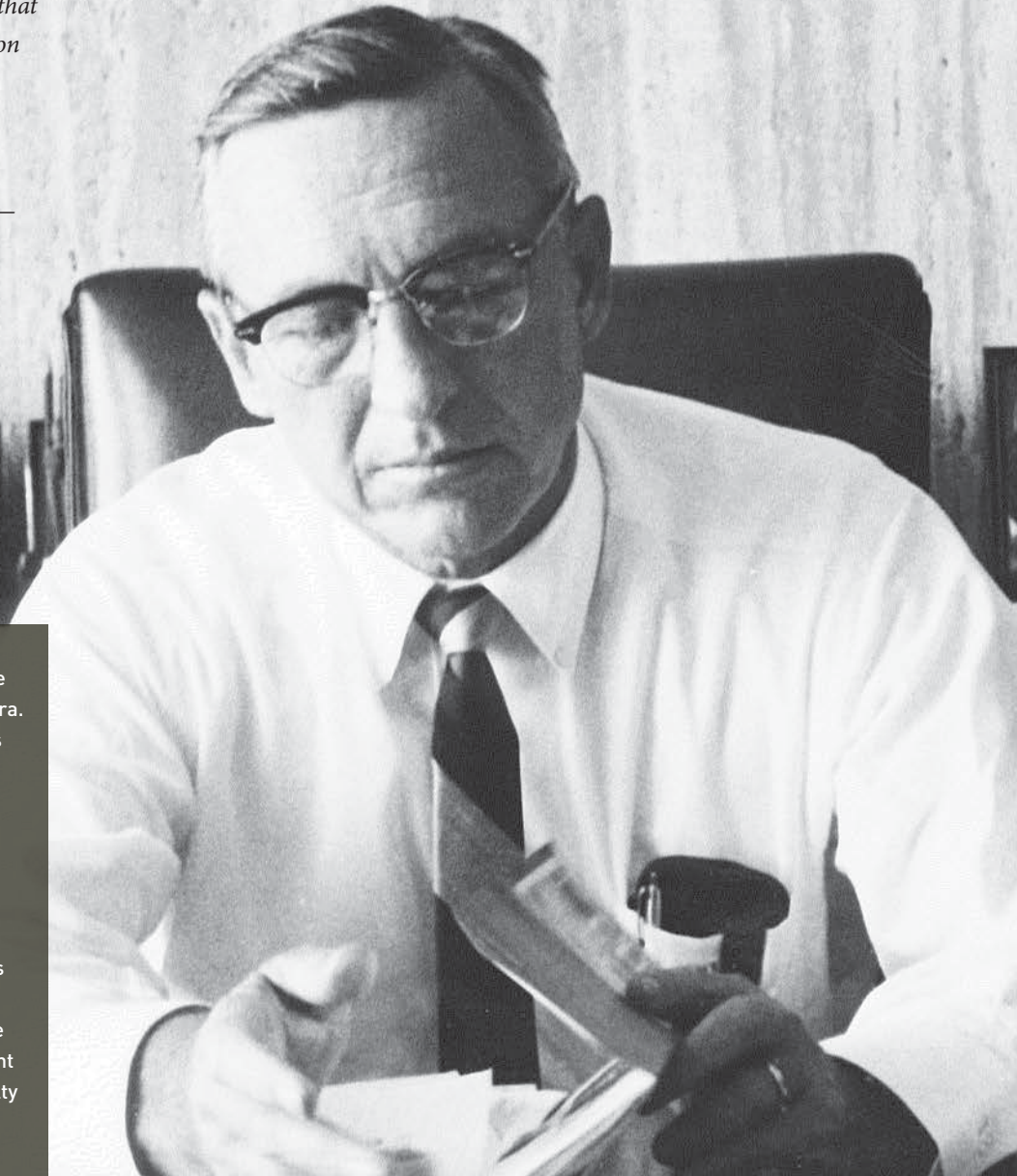
(Editor's Note: We are saddened to report that Richard Brown died from an illness shortly before this issue of UT Dallas Magazine was printed.)



Hite served as president of TracyLocke from 1950 to 1972.

Hite is described as having been a down-to-earth straight shooter, the antithesis of the stereotypical glib New York City ad executive of the era. His career in the ad game spanned more than 50 years. Hite, who was inducted into the American Advertising Federation’s Hall of Fame in 1996, went from operating a small firm in his native Oklahoma to working his way up the TracyLocke ranks. Borden Dairy, Haggard Clothing (he helped coin the term “slacks”), Mrs. Baird’s, Pearl Beer and Imperial Sugar were just a few of the clients he built into well-known brands.

Hite continued to contribute to UT Dallas by serving as chairman of its development board. At the time of his death in a car accident in 1983, Hite was preparing to teach in the School of Management. In 1984, the University established the Morris Hite Center for Product Development and Marketing Research, which supports graduate students and faculty in creating marketing strategies for new and existing products.





A Whoosh Heard ‘Round the World

Healthcare studies junior Randi Baculi does the Comet Whoosh while hiking outside Santa Fe, New Mexico, during the 2014-15 winter break. The University's healthcare studies program was added to the School of Interdisciplinary Studies in 2012.