UTEP Student Engineers Defend ‘Steel Bridge’ Title in Houston 2012

The team competed against nine universities in the Texas-Mexico region and will move on to the National Competition May 25-27 at Clemson University in South Carolina.
Letter from the Chair

I am once again very excited to be releasing our Fall 2012 Civil Engineering newsletter with new and exciting things occurring in our department.

This past year we conducted a faculty search that has culminated in the hiring of two excellent faculty members. Dr. Guirong (Grace) Yan started her appointment this Fall 2012 semester as assistant professor in the area of structural engineering. Her research focuses on structural health monitoring and damage detection, sensor technologies and smart materials. Dr. Reza Salehi Ashtiani will start his appointment in November 2012 as assistant professor in the area of geotechnical and pavement engineering. His research focuses on the analysis and modeling of unbound and stabilized aggregates pavement layers. Please read our Faculty News section for more details about Dr. Yan and Dr. Ashtiani.

Our Steel Bridge Competition team once again obtained first place in the regional competition hosted this year by the University of Houston. This is not only a testament to the commitment of our students and faculty but also of the many members of our alumni that have invested resources and time in the mentoring and advising of our students. We are very excited that the next regional competition in January 2013 will be hosted here at UTEP. Students and faculty advisors are already working on the organization of the event and the design of our new bridge. I hope that you can join us in supporting our students in this very important extracurricular activity.
Student engineers from The University of Texas at El Paso decisively earned their second straight first place finish at the regional AISC-ASCE Steel Bridge Competition on January 13th - 14th at the Pasadena (Texas) Convention Center.

Judges, who based their decision on six categories, gave the UTEP bridge and its team top marks in four categories – economy, efficiency, speed and stiffness – as well as a second-place in weight. The team competed against nine universities in the Texas-Mexico region and will move on to the national competition May 25-27 at Clemson University in South Carolina. This will be the second year in a row that UTEP’s team has competed at the national level.

The 26 team members, who include 14 students from last year’s team, range from freshmen to a doctoral student. They worked diligently since August to prepare for the contest, said team captain David Ledesma, who led the UTEP squad to nationals last year and earned his master’s in structural engineering from UTEP in December.

“We pretty much swept the table,” said Ledesma, who added that the win tasted sweeter because UTEP’s name was not called in any category of the competition when he joined the team four years ago. “There’s a new sheriff in town.”

He said the team, whose faculty adviser is W. Shane Walker, Ph.D., assistant professor of civil engineering, will push itself to do what it can to increase its efficiency and the strength of its bridge to improve its chances of winning nationals.

The achievement is a source of pride to the University, said Richard Schoephoerster, Ph.D., dean of UTEP’s College of Engineering.

“This contest provides an opportunity for our students to gain practical experience and display what they have learned in our classrooms. It is critical to their professional development,” he said. “Their victory also displays the capabilities of our students, as well as the faculty who teach them. Both are clearly top notch.”

The plan is to display the winning bridge in the near future in the lobby outside the dean’s office in the College of Engineering.

The University of Houston hosted the event, which is sponsored by the American Institute of Steel Construction and the American Society of Civil Engineers.

As part of the competition, the UTEP-EPCC team will design, build and operate a cost-effective, energy-efficient and attractive solar-powered house, which will be displayed at Orange County Great Park in Irvine, Calif. The house will be judged in 10 different categories to include architecture, engineering, energy balance, market appeal, affordability and communications. The multidisciplinary team includes students from the colleges of Engineering, Liberal Arts and Business Administration.

“We look forward to working with our partners, the El Paso Community College and the El Paso Electric Company, to compete against highly ranked schools across the globe,” Schoephoerster added.

In April 2011, UTEP received an initial gift of $200,000 from the El Paso Electric Co. to support the team’s entry into the decathlon. Richard Fleager, senior vice president for external affairs and customer care at El Paso Electric, said that the company is pleased to assist UTEP’s participation in the Solar Decathlon, and it has high hopes for the student team to have a successful entry that will serve as a model for solar home construction in the El Paso area.

“This project once again demonstrates the commitment of UTEP and EPE to the development of renewable energy,” Fleager said. “It is our hope that this project will serve as a model for the next generation to learn more about and to advance the technology of renewable energy.”

More information about the contest can be found at: http://www.asce.org/Content.aspx?id=12884905620
STUDENTS AWARDS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Proud Miners Awarded with the IRF Fellowship

In a worldwide competition, the International Road Federation (IRF) awarded two proud miners Mouyid Islam (Bangladesh), and David Salgado (Spain) the distinguished IRF Fellowship. Twenty-seven international graduate students from 11 countries participated in a 10-day intensive Road Scholar Program from January 18-27, 2012 in Washington D.C. In this program, IRF fellows received executive leadership training on leadership skills, knowledge, insights, and advice for developing a successful career path.

Mouyid and David also visited with fellows of the American Association State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO), World Bank (WB), American Equipments Distributor (AED) National Harbor Show, Turner-Fairbank Research Center, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), American Road and Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA), Virginia Department of Transportation and, Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Headquarter. Besides these visits to governmental offices, IRF fellows also attended sessions at 91st Transportation Research Board (TRB), and participated in related corporations. The IRF Road Scholar Program also hosted an ‘Alumni Dinner’ and the 2012 IRF fellows had the opportunity to meet with former IRF fellows who are currently in top positions at governmental and private organizations. IRF Chairman, H.E Eng. Abdulrahman Al-Mogbel, the Deputy Minister of Transportation of the Kingdom of Arabia Saudi, attended the alumni dinner and expressed his vision on transportation challenges and the IRF role.

The IRF Fellowship program has contributed to the development of young professionals over the last 50 year. Since 2009, UTEP has participated in the program with seven graduate students who were able to expand their knowledge and learn networking skills. For more information about the fellowship program at UTEP, please contact Dr. Carlos Chang Albitres (cchangalbitres2@utep.edu), or visit IRF Fellows Latin America Facebook and LinkedIn group UTEP IRF Fellows & Friends.

An interdisciplinary team of twelve undergraduates from the Civil, Industrial, and Mechanical Engineering departments at The University of Texas at El Paso competed in the Texas-Mexico Engineering Students Competition that will be held in coordination with the ASCE Texas Section Spring 2013 meeting in Corpus Christi, TX.

Shane Walker, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Civil Engineering is the faculty advisor for the team.

An El Paso native who dreams of working in the transportation field in her hometown said a year studying in the Czech Republic has made her a better engineer and a more confident person.

Alejandra Gallegos, a civil engineering graduate student at The University of Texas at El Paso, earned a Master of Engineering in Technology in Transportation and Telecommunication from the Czech Technical University (CTU) in Prague in May. She will receive her master’s in civil engineering from UTEP when she returns to El Paso in late June.

She is the first UTEP student to participate in the Transatlantic Dual-Degree Master Program in Transportation and Logistics Systems, which involves UTEP, CTU, and the University of Zilina (UNIZA) in Slovakia. It is UTEP’s first dual master’s program.

Gallegos called her nine months at CTU academically and personally enriching. The experience has broadened her knowledge and abilities in the transportation and logistics field to include emerging technologies. At the same time, her interactions with an international cadre of peers and mentors have allowed her to re-examine her own strengths and weaknesses and reassess her capabilities.

“I am more than satisfied with the experience in the Czech Republic,” the 24-year-old Gallegos wrote in an email. “I know it will definitely impact my life in a positive way and open the door to many opportunities.”

The University entered into this partnership in September 2010 to enhance its global presence and provide its students with international experience in such subjects as mobility growth and research projects in infrastructure engineering.

The first four cohorts are funded by the European Union (about $475,000). The program’s goal is to have 24 graduate students each from the American Union (about $416,000) and the European Union ($416,000). The program’s goal is to have 24 graduate students each from the United States and the European Union learning about transportation and logistics systems, regional planning and related business studies and technologies.

“This program gives opportunities to our students to get global experience,” said Carlos Ferregut, Ph.D., professor of civil engineering and director of Global Engineering Programs. He initiated the discussions for the dual master’s program about five years ago. “It complements their knowledge and develops their adaptability skills. It makes them more tolerant of different cultures and exposes them to different ways to conduct business in those fields. Of course, they also earn two master’s degrees at the same time, which makes them more marketable.”

The first cohort, which started in fall 2011, included four students from CTU and two from UNIZA. All of them successfully completed their studies at UTEP and graduated in May. One of the CTU students, Marketa Vavrova, is enrolled in UTEP’s civil engineering doctoral program.

She said the challenging program gave the visiting students a unique opportunity to experience learning in different ways academically and socially. For example, the students became members of UTEP’s chapter of the Institute of Transportation Engineers and conducted research in the University’s Border Intermodal Gateway (BIG) Transportation Lab. Outside the classroom, the visitors got involved in community service activities, which is uncommon in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

“All these experiences helped each of us to develop as a person and an engineer,” said Vavrova, who added that attending UTEP’s programs especially Ruey Long “Kelvin” Cheu, Ph.D., associate professor of civil engineering and project coordi-
tor, made the experience easier.

Dr. Cheu praised the program for its versatility and interdisciplinary approach. He said discussions already have begun to expand the program at UTEP to include a Master of Science in Industrial Engineering, which will mean another option for visiting students.

Ladislav Bina, CSc., associate professor of logistic and transportation processes at CTU and project coordinator for the EU initiative, said leaders from CTU and UNIZA will visit UTEP in the fall to talk about other fields, research opportunities and Ph.D. programs.

Bina said the CTU students embraced the opportunity to study at UTEP. “It was a selling point for our transportation sciences program,” he said.

UTEP’s College of Engineering has used this experience to start several other consortiums. Last spring, it began a dual bachelor’s program with Seo Kyeong University (SKU) in South Korea. UTEP provides instruction in metallurgical and materials engineering and SKU offers nanoconvergence engineering. The college also is in the process of starting another dual master’s program in electrical engineering with a university in Chile.

“This is the global trend,” Ferregut said. “We’re among the first in The University of Texas System to create these programs in engineering.”

The Center for Transportation Infrastructure Systems at The University of Texas at El Paso’s College of Engineering was selected to be part of a research consortium funded by a $3.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Tier One University Transportation Center (UTC) program.

The UTC program was cut this year from 60 transportation research centers down to 22, making the competition for funding especially fierce. Of the 22 slots, only 10 were designated for Tier One centers, which can operate on a national level, rather than being limited to regional or transit-related issues.

“This grant will bring the experts from UTEP and our other partners to address the complex and challenging issues that face the efficient renewal and maintenance of our vast transportation infrastructure such as roads and bridges,” said Soheil Nazarian, Ph.D., director of UTEP’s Center for Transportation Infrastructure Systems (CTIS) and a civil engineering professor. “This shows the track record of CTIS as a major player in the area of evaluating, maintaining and managing different elements of transportation infrastructure.”

UTEP is a member of a UTC known as the Center for Advanced Infrastructure and Transportation (CAIT). CAIT’s consortium of research university partners includes Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey; Columbia University; New Jersey Institute of Technology; Princeton University; the University of Delaware; the University of Virginia; Utah State University; and Virginia Polytechnic Institute.

“The real winners of this collaboration are our students who will be interacting with their peers from our prestigious partner universities to solve very real and complex problems,” Nazarian said. “The resources provided by this grant will improve our capabilities to bring our civil engineering graduate program to Tier One status.”

The focus of CAIT is to solve pressing problems regarding the upkeep and improvement of the country’s transportation infrastructure. Researchers from partner institutions will conduct scientific research on critical infrastructure challenges our country faces now and in the future: public safety and security, infrastructure health monitoring and rehabilitation, mobility, congestion, shipping, asset management and economics, and the reduction of impact on the environment.

Submissions for the grant were judged on research capability and track record, results and effectiveness at applying research and education and workforce development; and demonstrated leadership, collaboration and diversity.

The EPA in July awarded a $1.24 million grant to the University’s Center for Environmental Resource Management (CERM). UTEP also will provide a $920,000 in-kind contribution for the program.

“These are very important issues here in the El Paso and Juárez area,” said William L. Hargrove, Ph.D., director of CERM and primary investigator for the grant. “We have a lot of problems.”

Pollution can cause health problems such as chest pain, coughing, congestion, inflammation, throat irritation and breathing difficulties. It also can worsen conditions like bronchitis, emphysema and asthma, according to the EPA.

Among the contributing factors to air pollution are traffic congestion, emissions of pollutants from vehicles, and industrial companies, Hargrove said. With this program, more than 50,000 students in El Paso will learn about the basics of air quality and its impact on public health, he said.

The air quality curriculum will give students a different approach to science, offer content for English-learning classes and closely examine social justice concerns relevant to environmental issues, said Elaine Hampton, Ph.D., a retired UTEP professor of teacher education who is developing the K-12 curriculum.

About 40 El Paso Independent School District teachers and curriculum leaders will help write the modules. They are working in teams to develop and field test a two-week unit about air quality issues with content specific to their grades. Hampton said the curriculum should be finished in three years and it will take two years to distribute the materials and train teachers, she said.

In the second part of the plan, Wen-Whai Li, Ph.D., professor of civil engineering, will oversee a multidisciplinary internship program that will give 50 UTEP students opportunities to gain experience in air quality-related fields.

“One unique feature of this project is that the (UTEP) students must carry out some environmental citizenship project to take action to improve air quality in the region,” Hampton said.
UTEP Collaborative Earns $250K Grant for Ports of Entry Planning

The colleges of Engineering and Business Administration at The University of Texas at El Paso were awarded a $250,000 grant from the Texas Department of Transportation through The University of Texas at Austin to begin research for the El Paso/Santa Teresa-Chihuahua Border Master Plan. The master plan, which will be developed over the next 12 months, will improve bi-national planning, financing, technology and risk management coordination involved with the operation of soon-to-be constructed ports of entry in the region.

“Our objective is to provide data and information in support of the technical analyses and decision processes utilized to construct and existing and future ports of entry in El Paso,” said Salvador Hernandez, Ph.D., assistant professor of civil engineering and co-principal investigator of the project. “At UTEP, we coordinate data collection, public involvement, and quantitative analyses for the Border Master Plan.”

The master plan will support ongoing studies on current ports of entry operations, bridge wait times, and other freight and passenger transportation-related aspects that will encourage collaboration between the United States and Mexico. The plan also will look into enhancing information sharing and improving technologies between the two countries in order for law enforcement to better evaluate and search potentially hazardous persons or vehicles, while streamlining the passage of lower risk passengers and cargo.

According to Tom Fullerton, Ph.D., professor of economics and co-principal investigator, the various tasks on the drawing board also include “several different traffic engineering and economic modeling and simulation efforts.”

Hernandez and Fullerton will collaborate with Carlos Chang, Ph.D., Kelvin Cheu, Ph.D., and Raed Aldouri, Ph.D., from UTEP’s civil engineering department; and Adam Walke, M.S., from the UTEP Department of Economics & Finance, as well as graduate and undergraduate civil engineering and business students.

Civil Engineering Collaborates with City to Build New Fire Station

The Civil Engineering Department at The University of Texas at El Paso has been given an award from the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES) for the project “Multidisciplinary SMART Design of Fire Station 513.”

The development of the Multidisciplinary SMART Design of Fire Station 513 was a collaboration between the City of El Paso and UTEP Civil Engineering’s Senior Project class with support from the Engineering in Practice Program directed by Dr. Carlos Chang. Assistant Professor from the Civil Engineering Department. The Fire Station 513 will be a 14,000 sq ft fire station with seven drive-thru apparatus parking bays that will obtain a minimum Leadership in Engineering and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver Certification, comply with City SMART code regulations, and incorporate local art. To obtain a minimum LEED Certificate the fire station must have green strategies including energy efficiency, water conservation, and material resources.

“The involvement from the Engineering and Planning Department from the City of El Paso and Engineering Consultants was key for obtaining this award, the Environmental Engineering Program and Irene Ramirez, P.E., Assistant City Engineer from the City of El Paso and Mijares Mora Architects, were that awarded the final design of the Fire station, have worked closely with our Civil Engineering department to provide us with real-life projects for the students,” said Dr. Ivonne Santia- go, P.E. and lecturer at the Civil Engineering Department.

Designing Fire Station 513 provided UTEP graduate and undergraduate Civil Engineering students the opportunity to learn a long-term career lesson, that engineering requires working as a team in a professional setting with the aim to design and build facilities that better serve the community. Students collaborated with UTEP faculty and licensed professional engineers to make the fire station a success.

“I was very proud that the students took over the challenge of this new approach to learning about professional practice with this multidisciplinary project. We definitely have raised the bar of our design courses by having a project that incorporates the key areas of Civil Engineering taught in our department, namely, Structural, Geotechnical, Environmental, Transportation, and Construction Management,” Dr. Santiago added.

For more information please contact: Ivonne Santiago at isantiago@utep.edu or 915-747-5464.

The Environmental Protection Agency has approved an almost $500,000 grant for researchers from The University of Texas at El Paso to study different factors in the feasibility and sustainability of water filtration devices in colonias around El Paso and Doña Ana counties.

The team, which will include researchers from civil engineering and public health sciences, hopes to determine the best, most economical methods to provide water that complies with the U.S. Safe Drinking Water Act.

The research will be coordinated with various local, state and federal health and environmental agencies including the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

“Congratulations to Shane and his team,” said Marcelo Korc, Ph.D., associate professor of public health sciences. Also on the team is Rebecca Palacios, Ph.D., assistant professor of public health sciences. Walker’s team consists of fellow UTEP civil engineering faculty members Ivonne Santiago, Ph.D., lecturer, and John Walton, Ph.D., professor; and Joseph W. Tomaka, Ph.D., associate professor of public health sciences. Also on the team is Rebecca Palacios, Ph.D., assistant professor of public health science at New Mexico State University.

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During the month of April the CRRMA’s Americas Interchange was the site for several community outreach functions. Students from The University of Texas at El Paso were welcomed as they were able to see first-hand how foundations are being built for our direct connectors. Also, National Safety Awareness Week kicked-off at the Americas Interchange as the Texas Department of Transportation held their campaign with special guests from the area.

On April 19th, UTEP Civil Engineering Professor Dr. Scheil Nazarian, Director for the Center of Transportation Infrastructure Systems (CTIS), along with students from his graduate course on foundations visited the Interchange to watch as construction took place.

The students were able to see the processes necessary to create the main foundations, known as the drilled shafts. They observed drilling of the shafts, placement of spiral cages of steel reinforcement below the ground, and the dowel bars that connect the columns to the foundation after the concrete is poured. The class also observed how the concrete for the drilled shafts foundation is tested through a method known as Crosshole Sonic Logging (CSL). The class was given a crash course on how exactly CSL tests are administered, analyzed, and how the test results are interpreted.

The group also visited the retaining walls and walked a portion of the actual bridge deck. The CRRMA festivities kicked-off at the Americas Interchange was built for our direct connectors. Also, National Safety Awareness Week kicked-off at the Americas Interchange as the Texas Department of Transportation held their campaign with special guests from the area.

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Dr. Ashtrainy Reza, Ph. D received his Doctor of Philosophy in pavement and materials engineering from Texas A&M University in 2009. He completed several nationally and privately funded projects for Texas Transportation Institute (TTI).

Prior to joining The University of Texas at El Paso, Dr. Ashtrainy was a researcher and project engineer position at Applied Research Associates (ARA), one of the leading companies in transportation and national defense industry. He participated and managed several multi-disciplinary projects for the US Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL) and the US Air Force Civil Engineering Support Agency (AFCESA) during his tenure at ARA.

Dr. Ashtrainy’s main area of expertise is constitutive modeling and analysis of civil engineering materials with emphasis on geomaterials. Recently, the Aggregate Foundation for Technology, Research and Education (AFTRE) has adopted his anisotropic foundation design protocol for practice. He joined the UTEP family as an assistant professor at the civil engineering department in fall of 2012.

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The students were able to see the processes necessary to create the main foundations, known as the drilled shafts. They observed drilling of the shafts, placement of spiral cages of steel reinforcement below the ground, and the dowel bars that connect the columns to the foundation after the concrete is poured. The class also observed how the concrete for the drilled shafts foundation is tested through a method known as Crosshole Sonic Logging (CSL). The class was given a crash course on how exactly CSL tests are administered, analyzed, and how the test results are interpreted.

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DOCTORAL CANDIDATE AWARDED PRESTIGIOUS SCHOLARSHIP BY AIR & WASTE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

The Air & Waste Management Association (A&WMA) has selected Teresa Sosa as the recipient of the 2012 Milton Feldstein Memorial Scholarship. She was selected for her exceptional work in air quality research. Ms. Sosa’s achievement will be highlighted in the Association’s EM magazine and recognized during an awards ceremony at the 105th Air & Waste Management Association Annual Conference & Exhibition in San Antonio, June 19-22.

Ms. Sosa is a doctoral candidate in the Environmental Science and Engineering program with Dr. Wen-Whai Li, professor of Civil Engineering as her advisor. Her primary research interest is in air quality and public health, specifically on modeling particulate matter exposure and its impact on the community. Sosa received her B.S. in Civil Engineering and M.S. degree in Environmental Engineering from The University of Texas at El Paso.

According to Dr. Li “This is an extremely competitive award given to only the top Ph.D. students for their research in air quality and waste management.” He adds, “Ms. Sosa’s research makes an important contribution to the understanding of PM pollution in urban areas and the development of methods to assess human exposure to toxic air pollutants.”

Milton Feldstein was a pioneer in the air pollution field and was the past president of the International Air and Waste Management Association. Each year, the Air & Waste Management Association (A&WMA) recognizes an outstanding student who is pursuing courses of study and research leading to careers in air quality and awards the student with a scholarship in his honor.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE TO STUDENT AWARD

Wendy M. Arredondo EIT is an active member of ASCE. She has been a member of ASCE since 2004, first as a student and now as a project engineer at Quantum Engineering Consultants, Inc. Currently, Arredondo is the Secretary for the El Paso Branch of the ASCE Texas Section, having previously served as board director for two years.

The ASCE Texas Section has been a key element to Arredondo’s profession. As an undergraduate student, she was actively involved with The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) Student Chapter of ASCE, not only as a member of the Concrete Canoe Competition team, but also as Vice President and President of the Student Chapter. Her regular attendance to the ASCE El Paso Branch meetings eventually led to her internship and eventually joining Quantum Engineering Consultants, Inc.

Her participation in the ASCE Concrete Canoe Competition as a student was an integral part of her engineering education, by practicing “real life” skills, such as project management, technical writing, and the application of their technical studies, communication, and budgeting.

Arredondo has acted as the liaison between the El Paso Branch of ASCE Texas Section and the UTEP Student Chapter for the past four years. The El Paso Chapter invited her to become the liaison due to the low, almost non-existent student participation in the El Paso Chapter. She has provided the necessary link for the groups to work together, in lieu of them working independently from each other. She has also invited the students to the Chapter meetings to give presentations on the Steel Bridge and Concrete Canoe Competitions where they have gained the exposure to obtain the technical support and sponsorship needed for their competitions. The Branch also developed a sponsorship program where local firms sponsor the student meals to encourage their attendance. As a consequence, the El Paso Branch general meetings now have regular student attendance; the last general meeting had a total of 10 students attend.

One of her goals for this year has been to encourage the UTEP Student Chapter to invite professional engineers to perform presentations at their general meetings. This past year at least two of their meetings have had a professional engineer present. One of the topics for the presentations was about the importance of taking, passing, and completing the paperwork for the Fundamentals in Engineering Exam and about what hiring private sector firms are looking for in new engineers.

The UTEP Student Chapter had been graciously using their funds to provide a free meal to the students attending their student meetings at UTEP; consequently, Arredondo decided to develop a sponsorship program for meals in partnership with professional firms. This enabled the students to focus their Chapter funds on the competitions.

As the liaison, she has coordinated with the Steel Bridge and Concrete Canoe Competition leaders to submit a formal proposal to the El Paso Chapter for funds. These proposals are meant to provide them with proposal writing practice, where they are required to include a description of the competition’s requirements, their scope of work and a breakdown of their project budget. This is just another way for the students to gain experience and valuable practice for the real world.

In addition, as the newsletter editor, she has dedicated a section of the newsletter for any ASCE UTEP Student Chapter news. Arredondo is passionate about ensuring that, as the ASCE Texas Section UTEP Student Chapter to use the resources the organization provides and how becoming an active member augments those opportunities to network for career opportunities and to build relationships with their future colleagues and clients.

In 2010, Arredondo received the El Paso Chapter Young Engineer of the Year Award.

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Alumni News

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Ruey (Kelvin) Cheu said, Associate Professor, Civil Engineering Department. “This program also represents our College’s effort to engage in international collaboration to provide study abroad opportunities for our students as well as for students of other countries” he added.

Special recognition goes to a couple of faculty members whose role has been vital for the success of this Transatlantic Dual Masters Degree Program.

From the Czech Technical University Professor Ladislav Bina, from the University of Zilina Professor Anton Hudak, and from UTEP Dr. Carlos Ferregut and Dr. Kelvin Cheu.

Their entrepreneurial spirit, encouragement, and support to work out the logistical aspect of this program has been invaluable. This is the 1st Dual Masters program at UTEP and the first Dual Masters Program in any Engineering school in Texas.

In an interview with Marketa Vavrova, as she is staying at UTEP for her PhD, she shares with us her experiences with the program

1. How has your experience at UTEP with the Dual Masters Program been?

“When I look back, I can say that we gained valuable knowledge, being able to experience the European and American education. As UTEP and CTU alumni, we became more confident and independent. We experienced the different style of studying, learned how to conduct research and attended conferences. As members of the ITE Student Chapter we also experienced community service. I believe that this program gave us a unique opportunity to develop both professionally and personally.

Huge thanks belongs to professors from UTEP and CTU, who were extremely helpful and lead us along the 2-year way.”

2. What are your PhD research interests?

“I want to expand the topic of my master thesis, distance-based tolling. I was amazed when I found out that the highways here in the U.S. are free of charge, because in the EU drivers have to pay. Also, at conferences I realized that this topic is still being explored and there is a lot of potential. I believe that my knowledge gained in Europe will be very useful in my research.”

3. Would you recommend the Dual Masters Program?

“I would recommend this program to anyone who wants to experience new things and be able to think outside the box. With education both from UTEP and CTU alumni benefit from the knowledge of both “worlds” and can apply it in their career.

“This program offers a unique opportunity to live in an incredibly charming city, Prague, home of the Czech Technical University and the capital of the Czech Republic, for 2 semesters, where history breaths on you on every step. You can stand on a railroad bridge built in the 19th century, admiring all transport modes you can think of: rail, water, car, bus, tramway, subway, cable car, airplane; with a 11th century church right behind you on the hill. As you experience the European environment, you gain a new perspective which will benefit both your working and personal life.”

The $90,000 grant distributed among the recipients was the result of a job well done by Workforce Solutions Upper Rio Grande with funds awarded to them three years ago by the U.S. Department of Labor. The Upper Rio Grande office competed against other Workforce Solution offices in the state of Texas and won the additional money for the scholarships through excellent use of the original grant.

“The purpose of the original grant was to foster and cultivate awareness and job opportunities in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics,” said Workforce Solutions Upper Rio Grande Chief Operating Officer Teofilo Ugalde. “The success of our program has paid off for these students.”

Bernadette Flores, Workforce Solutions public relations director, said the competition was based on a number of benchmarks, such as the number of people who attended their workshops and then landed a job, and the number of youth participants enrolled in programs for mentoring, GED prep and rural students who go on to post-secondary education.

UTEP President Diana Natalicio expressed her deep appreciation to the Workforce Solutions dignitaries present at the scholarship presentation.

“Workforce Solutions of the Upper Rio Grande is the kind of partner most universities only dream of,” President Natalicio said. “They are always at-the-ready to augment the needs of our students when opportunities arise — it is natural partnership.”

“Workforce Solutions truly believes that education is the key for advancement in the STEM fields,” Reyes said. “We are asking each of you today to commit to pay this forward — to remember this day and help other students that come after you.”

“Workforce Solutions has been working with Workforce Solutions for three years to support students in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math. None of the scholars knew how much they would receive, so the response was high as Workforce Solutions program manager and presenter, Teresa Vasquez asked recipients not to open their envelopes until all of them had been presented.

“OK, you can open them now!” Vasquez said with excitement. The room was immediately alive as the stunned smiles of the recipients gave way to handshaking and applause.

“I was very shocked and surprised,” said Desireé Martinez, a 2011 UTEP graduate taking prerequisite courses this summer at UTEP in preparation for an upcoming physician’s assistant program. “I have been searching everywhere for a summer job, and this takes a huge load off my shoulders!”

Jesse Valles, a graduate student pursuing his master’s degree in environmental engineering, was thrilled to receive the scholarship that will help cover his educational costs.

Civil engineering senior Anna Hernandez also expressed relief.

“This eliminates so much of the financial worry about where the money would come from,” she said.

Perhaps just as valuable as the scholarship funds was a challenge to the recipients given by Workforce Solutions CEO Lorenzo Reyes.

“This means a lot,” he said. “I am very excited.”
The University of Texas at El Paso is proud to announce the recipients of the Top Ten Senior awards, presented by the UTEP Alumni Association. The Top Ten Seniors were recognized during a banquet hosted by the Student Government Association. “Every year, as we near commencement, we announce a select group of graduating seniors who have achieved tremendous success at UTEP,” said Richard Daniel, Ph.D., associate vice president for university advancement and specials projects, and executive director for alumni relations at UTEP. “We expect that these future alumni will continue to elevate the visibility of their careers and the reputation of the University.”

Each of the Top Ten seniors has a unique story of their journey to excel in and out of the classroom. These outstanding students — selected for their academic success and University and community involvement — represent the quality education that UTEP provides its more than 22,000 students.

Civil Engineering graduate, Osvaldo A. Broesicke was awarded Top Engineering Senior in Spring 2012. To be awarded as Top Engineering Senior a graduating senior is evaluated on academic achievements, leadership, service both in the community and on campus, and on the impression they have made on others during their time at UTEP.

To be eligible for this award a senior must:
1. Have a minimum cumulative 3.5 grade point average
2. Show sustained involvement, service and leadership on campus and in the community.
3. Provide three references from university faculty or staff, student or civic organization advisors, supervisors or employers to be contacted by a representative of the Engineering Alumni Chapter of the UTEP Alumni Association.

In Spring 2012, Top Engineering Seniors also included: Mayra Janeth Contreras (Metallurgical and Materials Engineering), Felipe De Alva (Electrical Engineering), Natalia V. Espino (Industrial Engineering), Jose Luis Mena (Mechanical Engineering), Juan C. Munoz (Electrical Engineering), Patrick William Shindo (Metallurgical and Materials Engineering), and Justin Michael Ucol (Metallurgical and Materials Engineering).

The 2012 ASEE Gulf Southwest Section’s Annual Conference was held on April 4-6, 2012 at The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). The conference was sponsored by the College of Engineering, Freeport-McMoRan, and METI. To share successes and struggles in educating students, and to hear how educators balance theory and practice, the theme of the conference was designed to be “Bridging Theory and Practice in Engineering and Technology Education.”

The conference began with a preconference workshop entitled “Success Rates of R&D Funding at Hispanic Serving Institutions and Effect on Educational Outcomes,” organized by Dr. Norman Love of UTEP.

The conference ended with two workshop sessions organized by Dr. Louis Everett and Dr. Eric Freudenthal. Dr. Everett organized a workshop on “ABCs of NSF-DUE Education Proposals” and Dr. Freudenthal organized a workshop on “What does engineering with a speech on “Engineering Education for the Conceptual Age.” Paper presentations started afterwards in concurrent sessions. Dr. Diana Natalicio, President, UTEP delivered the Keynote speech entitled “UTEP: First National Research University in the US with a 21st Century Student Demographic” at a luncheon. The paper sessions continued after the luncheon. At the end of the sessions, an informal mixer allowed attendees to socially meet fellow presenters. The day ended with dinner, an awards banquet, and entertainment (Ballet Folklorico Quetzales).

Dr. Raymond B. Landis started sessions the following day with a presentation entitled “First things first. First an engineering student; then an engineer.” Paper presentation sessions continued till lunch. After lunch, Dr. Michael Alley delivered a lecture on “Rethinking the Design of Presentation Slides.” The conference ended with two workshop sessions organized by Dr. Louis Everett and Dr. Eric Freudenthal. Dr. Everett organized a workshop on “ABCs of NSF-DUE Education Proposals” and Dr. Freudenthal organized a workshop on “What does engineering...
The Department of Civil Engineering at UTEP is very thankful for the generous donation from Gerardo and Margarita Licon, owners of the LEC Group, to purchase student licenses of the Bentley application suit called “Be Careers Networks” which packages more than 50 engineering software. The combination of all the software and training mechanisms provided by the Bentley program will allow us to provide all of our students, inside and outside the classroom, with the very necessary training in the use of commercial software.

The Department of Civil Engineering continuously strives to provide the best educational experience to our students through a well-balanced curriculum that covers the main civil engineering disciplines. However, one of the challenges we have faced is the integration of software-based tools into our courses. Given that our curriculum is already compressed, faculty struggle to balance the time dedicated to the technical content of the course and to the training on the use of relevant commercial software. For these reasons, the software licenses and the access Bentley provides to on-line workshops and education materials that students can follow at their own pace is an excellent addition to our curriculum. This donation will have a significant impact on the future success of our students since they will be better prepared to enter the workforce.

The success of the conference depended on support from University Relations and the College of Engineering. Their contribution of the conference is highly appreciated.

Vivek Tandon, 2012 Conference Chair
Drs. Louis Everett and Arun Pennathur (Conference Co-Chairs)