



Office of  
the President

April 29, 2016

Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education  
2401 Walnut Street, Suite 102  
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

As President of the University of Texas at El Paso, I am pleased to submit the first STARS self-assessment of sustainability for our campus. I can affirm that our reporting team has done "due diligence" in seeking the most accurate information available for this comprehensive report. We have engaged a wide range of campus sources to gather this information. Our assessment team has thoroughly vetted it, and we are confident that the information presented is the best available.

UTEP's commitment to sustainability is embodied by our record of more than 100 years of providing access and excellence in higher education to the people of the Paso del Norte region, which today comprises some 2.4 million residents in the binational metropolitan area of El Paso-Ciudad Juárez. Of more than 23,000 students, 77% are Mexican-American, 6% are Mexican nationals, most are of modest means, and the majority are the first in their families to attend college. UTEP's success in preparing these students to excel in the 21<sup>st</sup> century global economy has been strongly validated nationwide. For a second consecutive year, *Washington Monthly* magazine has ranked UTEP among the nation's Top 10 universities and, for the third year in a row, UTEP has been ranked #1 by the magazine for serving as an engine of student social mobility, a prime indicator of social sustainability. This is a strong endorsement of UTEP's success in providing many talented young people in our region with access to enriched educational experiences, engaging them in a collective quest for excellence, and preparing them to compete successfully with their peers from across the globe.

UTEP's commitment to sustainability extends of course to our physical campus. As part of our recent centennial celebration, we completed a central campus transformation project that incorporated sustainability principles. We converted the inner campus to pedestrians only and developed both a student-friendly and environmentally friendly Centennial Plaza by eliminating streets, parking lots, and vehicular traffic. The Plaza recaptures the charm of the unique geologic setting and natural arroyos and offers a large open area reminiscent of Southwestern urban plazas located across the Paso del Norte region. A paseo for strolling, mingling and relaxing, or for studying with classmates, is shaded by groves of native and locally abundant trees. Rainwater harvesting and other innovative water management practices were adopted to promote sustainability and reduce UTEP's maintenance and utility costs. Innovative landscape design

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concepts capture water to replenish the plant and wildlife that use the arroyo as home and help support the year-round beauty of this natural desert landscape. This expansive and versatile green space at the heart of the UTEP campus has become an oasis for campus and community events, as well as an outdoor classroom.

I have described briefly some important ways in which UTEP lives out its commitment to sustainability. The report that we submit herewith provides a more detailed account. As we begin a second century of serving our region through higher education, we renew our commitment to sustainability principles. We will be using our STARS assessment and your feedback to identify ways in which we can further enhance our efforts, while also celebrating what we have achieved. We look forward to your feedback and we are appreciative of this mechanism for improving sustainability in higher education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Diana Natalicio". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Diana Natalicio  
President