

## CITY OF RICHARDSON

# UTD brings more than education to Richardson

While its educational contribution is clearly recognized, the **University of Texas at Dallas** also provides an economic boost to the **city of Richardson**.

By *Delmetria L. Millener*

"Indirectly, the city of Richardson generates about \$1 million dollars annually from UTD alone," said Richardson Mayor Gary Slagel. "UTD is a significant generator of Richardson revenue, through university research, collaborations between UTD and major companies and students in the area with university-related activity."

The university was established in 1969 by Texas Instruments co-founder Cecil Green, along with businessmen Eugene McDermott and J. Erik Jonsson, to fill a need in North Texas for educational opportunities in science and technology, said Da Hsuan Feng, UTD's vice president of research and graduate education.

"The founders' assumption that UTD would be a [liberal arts] university has evolved into a top hiring spot for advanced tech companies," Dr. Feng said.

UTD is conveniently located within five miles of the "Telecom Corridor," an area heavily populated with advanced technology firms. And, according to Stephen McGregor, UTD's program manager of news and information, the university has developed long-term relationships with major advanced technology companies in the area to secure employment, internships and research programs.

"UTD established collaborations with high tech firms that promote economic and academic development," Mr. McGregor said.

Dr. Feng believes working with technology businesses such as TI, Alcatel, Lockheed Martin, Bell Helicopter, Raytheon and others benefits the school and the city.

"We have developed strong, ongoing, intense relationships with technology businesses that both entities will benefit from," he said. "TI is building a plant on Renner Road, therefore Richardson gets a plant, which means more jobs, and the school gets funding because of research contracts."

Dr. Feng says the school's academic excellence in engineering, science and technology allows it to produce some of the most highly skilled technical talent in Texas.

"Zyvex is a company located in Dallas that was started by a UTD alumnus," Dr. Feng said. "James R. Von Ehr II started the company in 1997 and it's the first molecular nanotechnology company created."

Texas Instruments is another technology company that promotes economic development for the City of Richardson in collaboration with UTD.

Advanced technology firms are not the only Richardson businesses that benefit from UTD.

"Having UTD near helps our business tremendously," said Corinna Smith, manager of The Abbey Grill. "I would say about half of our clientele are UTD students and staff," she said. "They come so often, we offer menu discounts and drink specials to the students and staff."

Others agree that UTD is good for business.

"About 15 percent of our business comes from UTD students and staff," said Greg Woodbury, manager of Starbucks at Renner and Custer roads. "I'm farther away from the school than our Coit at Campbell store, but during finals, I get a lot of overflow business from their store when students are buckling down."

Local companies also hire students, whether they are graduating and pursuing high-tech careers, participating in internships or working part-time while in school.

"We always hire students," Ms. Smith said.

Oddly, Dr. Feng said, "there is a shortage of restaurants near UTD."

"Anyone with a good business plan could open a restaurant near UTD and thrive," he said.

At-your-fingertips accommodations make it convenient to live and go to school in Richardson.

"Compared to 10 years ago, shopping, dining, banking, entertaining



Photo provided by UTD

The University of Texas at Dallas contributes highly skilled technical talent to the North Texas job pool.

and even living is more accessible in Richardson," said Monica Thornton, a former Richardson resident. UTD now boasts an apartment complex exclusively for UTD students.

While convenient shopping and dining are among UTD's benefits, the quality of education is the reason for rising enrollment. Dr. Feng expects enrollment to increase by 2,000 students within the next six years.

"Students come here because they are well-placed in jobs all over the country after their undergraduate studies are completed," Dr. Feng said. He also attributes the school's academic reputation as a major draw.

"Because of its reputation, students come to get a world-class education from a school capable of competing with the top universities in the nation," he said. "Currently, UTD is regionally and nationally recognized for its variety of research and academic programs."

One such program is the Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson Lecture Series on Math and Science. Rep. Johnson, D-Dallas, facilitates lectures on science and mathematics for about 500 elementary and high school students biannually at Townview Magnet School in Dallas to promote career opportunities and expose students to some of the nation's noted scientists and technologists, Dr. Feng said.

In addition to celebrated research and educational programs, school officials report that UTD students have the highest standardized test scores of any institution in Texas.

But the university isn't resting on its laurels.

According to Dr. Feng, "We would like UTD to be the University of California San Diego and Georgia Tech in Texas in the coming decade."

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