

Rounding up a Top Notch Posse in The Town of El Paso *City Draws First Class Talent Despite Misperception as Laid-Back Border-Town*

EL PASO (August 15, 2008) The business of lassoing in the best and the brightest for the hot new technology firms springing up all over El Paso, Texas has been likened to getting first draft pick with a team ranked #6. In other words, not easy when Austin, Houston, Dallas, San Antonio and Corpus Christi loom bright as morning stars on the distant easterly horizons of the Lone Star State.

Despite the allure of its five larger sibling cities, this burgeoning technopolis is obtaining, and retaining, some of the most promising young grads from the University of Texas (as well as luring back some of its seasoned alumni), and stealing away top talent from national and international corporate giants.

So what's their secret?

"El Paso has everything required for a truly dynamic 'innovation ecosystem,'" says Ebetuel Pallares, Executive Director of the Trans Pecos/El Paso Regional Center of Innovation and Commercialization (TPEP RCIC), an organization that vets entrepreneurial ventures and prepares them for funding, while attracting investors to the region.

"We have the entrepreneurs," Pallares continues. "And we have funding sources through ETF (Texas' Emerging Technology Fund) as well as venture capitalists, El Camino Real Angels and other angel investor groups. These are the factors that nurture entrepreneurial enterprises. In addition, we have several universities that provide an incredible pool of brainpower talent with which we enjoy technology transfer. Often, when our students graduate, many of them segue into local businesses with whom they've already established relationships and collaborated on projects. It's an exciting time for El Paso, and that kind of excitement attracts talent."

"El Paso is breaking new ground. They are 'on the frontier'. That excites people and they want to be a part of it", says Mark Ellison, Director of Texas' Emerging Technology Fund (ETF), which has funded several of El Paso's new ventures.

"El Paso is a dynamic place to be right now. The region offers an intriguing mix of vibrant growth against the alluring backdrop of the Southwest," states Hector Holguin, CEO of Secure Origins, a software company based in El Paso that, as an RCIC portfolio company, has received ETF funding. Holguin has not only tapped promising young graduates from UTEP (University of Texas at El Paso), but has also recruited several seasoned notables from GE. Holguin also speculates that part of El Paso's success in attracting top talent is El Paso's stable economy, a workforce well educated by local universities, and "a rich culture and history", alluding to the Southwest charm of the region, as well a population that is 80% Hispanic, which adds a zesty Latino flavor to the city that rests on the border of Mexico.

Ron Wright, CEO of Sands Research, another RCIC portfolio company on the cutting edge of neuromedia analysis, concurs that the culture and community are major attractants. “One of my key employees went to San Antonio to pursue his PhD and to work. However, his wife’s family is here in El Paso, and so when he heard about some of the technological opportunities here, he came right back.” Wright believes the entrepreneurial climate of El Paso has been spurred by some loss in low cost manufacturing now outsourced to markets in Asia and India. “Change is always a catalyst for entrepreneurs; risk takers find themselves out of a job and then start looking for ways to stay here.”

David Nemir of TXL Group, another RCIC portfolio company that is developing thermoelectric as an alternative and renewable energy source, feels talent comes from the technology transfer with universities on both sides of the border. “For a technology company like TXL Group, our business can be conducted almost anywhere,” states Nemir. “FedEx, UPS and the Internet are making the world a smaller place and we can source and purchase parts and materials from California, England or China and have them in-house within days. What we cannot get through FedEx, UPS and the Internet is the face-to-face collaboration made possible by a world class university, and El Paso happens to have one in UTEP. TXL's thermoelectric technology blends materials science, physics and chemistry, and our applications focus requires civil, mechanical and electrical engineering considerations. UTEP represents a huge resource in all of those areas and makes El Paso a great place to do business.”

About The Trans Pecos/El Paso Regional Center of Innovation and Commercialization

Established in 2007, the Trans Pecos/El Paso Regional Center of Innovation and Commercialization (TPEP RCIC), a Texas non-profit, serves as a catalyst for economic development. TPEP RCIC acts as a “cashless venture capital organization” and assists business in meeting the requirements to seek funding by the Texas Emerging Technologies Fund and / or private capital sources.

TPEP RCIC’s in-depth investigative, research and evaluation processes culminate in the presentation of highly qualified candidates to venture capitalists and private funding entities resulting in a verifiable, consistent track record of reduced risks for investors and good rate of returns on investment, which has earned them the respect from the funding community in a relatively short period of time. In addition, the agency excels in facilitating the transfer of technology from universities and national labs into the commercial sector.

The TPEP RCIC is comprised of qualified specialists and network of partners from the Trans Pecos/El Paso region who possess a unique blend of experience in high technology, start-up operations, economic development, venture funding, and globalization. They also have connections with financial institutions and the financial community at-large, which offers a deeper understanding of the requirements posed by funding entities and provides connections with capital resources. For more information, please visit: www.tpeprcic.org

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