

UTEP Awarded \$2 Million for Desalination Research
Nationally-Recognized Desalination Expert to Lead New Center

(El Paso, Texas. October 23, 2008) Governor Rick Perry was on hand Thursday to announce an award of \$2 million from the Texas emerging Technology Fund to create a Center for Inland Desalination Systems at the University of Texas El Paso (UTEP) to be housed in the university's planned 85,000-square-foot engineering and science building, which should open in 2010.

Thomas A. Davis, the new director of the world-class global research center, was recruited from the University of South Carolina, and is a nationally recognized expert in desalination technology with 13 U.S. patents and over 40 years of research experience. Davis is the founder of ZDD, Inc., which signed a commercialization agreement with Dow Chemical Company for its Zero Discharge Desalination technology in 2006.

UTEP received the \$2 million award to establish a desalination and water management research program that could lead to commercial ventures and help solve water scarcity issues in arid regions across the globe. The ETF grant will be matched with \$2 million from UTEP and The University of Texas System. UTEP also will raise another \$2 million in sponsored research from industry partners, to bring the total funding to \$6 million.

UTEP's Center for Inland Desalination Systems will build on a strong foundation of related research already being done at the university by faculty members in geological sciences, chemistry and civil engineering, as well as research at El Paso's desalination plant. The El Paso desalination plant, which is among the largest of its kind in the world, uses reverse osmosis to treat brackish groundwater from the Hueco Bolson aquifer. It produces 27.5 million gallons of water per day.

The new center will focus on technology that will add quality of life for Texans but also commercialize technology to solve global water issues. Applying current desalination technology to address immediate water needs, the facility will research ways to capture and recycle the byproduct of the desalination process; develop small-scale portable desalination equipment for use in remote locations; and develop processes that can reduce energy and water use during desalination.

"Saltwater desalination is a viable remedy for the water shortages we face in inland areas of our state and can help create a sustainable water supply for cities such as El Paso," Gov. Perry said. "The state's investment through the TETF will help position UTEP as a world class center of research and commercialization for this innovative technology and attract top experts in the field to Texas."

"We are very pleased to have Tom Davis joining us to lead this new research effort," UTEP President Diana Natalicio said. "There is a growing need for sustainable water technologies in El Paso and beyond, and we are confident that Tom will help establish UTEP as a leader in desalination research. This center will be another important addition to UTEP's growing research portfolio and will put us steps closer to realizing our vision of becoming a Tier One university."

"The ETF Research Superiority Award for Water Desalination is indicative of UTEP's commitment to undertake world-class research in this critical field," stated Ebetuel Pallares, Executive Director for the Trans Pecos/El Paso Center of Innovation and Commercialization (TPEP RCIC). "I am certain that the research will lead to new technological discoveries which will be the bedrock of commercialization efforts the region will undertake." Pallares is excited by the prospect that the desalination program will entice more water technology companies to set up operations in El Paso. Water technology companies include chemical companies, advanced material companies and engineering firms that develop processes, membranes or other inputs that are used in water

desalination. Large companies currently involved in water technology are Dow, CHMHill, and Fluor.

Additionally, several desalination-related areas have been identified as having potential commercial applications. Some examples include mining the brine concentrate produced during the osmosis process, developing small-scale portable desalination equipment to be used in remote locations, and developing processes that can reduce energy and water use during desalination.

###

About The University of Texas at El Paso

The University of Texas at El Paso is a major research university at the heart of the U.S.-Mexico border committed to the ideals of access and excellence. A leader among Hispanic-serving institutions, UTEP enrolls more than 20,400 students and is the only doctoral research university in the nation with a student body that is a majority Mexican American. UTEP's growing research portfolio boasts more than \$46 million in research spending in a variety of areas, including border security, emerging technologies, Hispanic health, environmental and Earth science, borderland arts and humanities, and the education of U.S. Hispanics.

About the Texas Emerging Technology Fund

The ETF is a \$200 million initiative created by the Texas Legislature in 2005 at the governor's request and was reauthorized in 2007. A 17-member advisory committee of high-tech leaders, entrepreneurs and research experts reviews potential projects and recommends funding allocations to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the House. To date, the TETF has allocated \$115 million in funds to Texas companies and universities. TETF provides Texas with an unparalleled advantage by expediting the development and commercialization of new technologies, and by recruiting the best research talent in the world. Matching and commercialization funds coupled with additional federal and outside investments mean new technology is emerging in Texas.

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.

UTEP Media Contact: Kimberly Miller

Public Information Officer

The University of Texas at El Paso

915-747-5747 or 915-491-8907

TPEP RCIC Media Contact: Cindy Tincher

CameronWeeks Public Relations

512-217-5190

ctincher@cameronweeks.com