The Prospector, January 19, 2021

UTEP Student Publications

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UTEP becomes a COVID-19 vaccine provider

Anahy Diaz
The Prospector

UTEP is set to assist with COVID-19 vaccination efforts in El Paso by serving as a COVID-19 vaccine provider starting the week of Jan. 18.

According to a campus wide email sent out by UTEP President Heather Wilson, the Texas Department of State Health Services has approved and provided 975 doses of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for the university’s faculty, staff and students based on risk.

“...Our School of Pharmacy, our software team, our environmental health staff, our facilities workers, our managers and dozens of others chose to develop their gifts in a way that is desperately needed at this moment!”

The University’s new Interdisciplinary Research Building (IDRB) will serve as the vaccination program site, which according to Wilson, is prepared to vaccinate 480 people a day, scalable to 960 a day in an 8-hour shift.

The University plans to have the site operational by the week of Jan. 18 for individuals in the highest priority group. According to the email, this includes healthcare workers in clinical settings working directly with COVID-19 positive patients, those who work in long-term care facilities, emergency medical teams, home health care providers, hospice workers, outpatient staff who work with symptomatic patients, community pharmacy staff, public health workers, people involved in COVID-19 testing and vaccination programs, school nurses and those who work in mortuaries.

As of Jan. 11, 1,634 faculty, staff and students were signed up in this group. If doses remain, Wilson said the University will begin vaccinating individuals who are 65 and older or 18 and older whose health conditions makes them vulnerable to COVID-19.

As of Jan. 11, 1,634 faculty, staff and students were signed up for this group. According to Wilson, there will be no walk-in vaccinations. Only UTEP faculty, staff and students who have signed up and completed all of the paperwork at vaccinequestionnaire.utep.edu will be contacted for vaccination.

However, while Wilson said the UTEP vaccine system is set to vaccinate the 27,000 faculty, staff and students who are enrolled or employed at the University, it is also prepared to serve families, alumni and citizens generally, if state or local authorities require assistance.

“This may be particularly important as the supply of vaccines increases in the coming weeks,” Wilson said in the email. “We want to take care of our people so that we can teach, research and serve without the constraints that the pandemic has put on us.” Individuals will be asked to remain at the vaccination site for at least 15 minutes after the injection to monitor any immediate side effects. They will also receive follow-up instructions by email, including when to return for the second dose of vaccine, with UTEP policies on masks and distancing on campus set to remain in effect.

“All of us benefit because we live in an educated community where people have sought knowledge and discovered solutions,” Wilson wrote. “...Our School of Pharmacy, our software team, our environmental health staff, our facilities workers, our managers and dozens of others chose to develop their gifts in a way that is desperately needed at this moment!”

UTEP President Heather Wilson denounced the assault through a news release sent out to the University’s community.

University responds to riots at the U.S. Capitol

Anahy Diaz
The Prospector

On Wednesday, Jan. 6, chaos erupted in Washington when a mob of mostly White rioters stormed the Capitol building in an attempt to stop legislators from certifying the results of the 2020 presidential election. As the country continues to grapple with the day’s events leading up to Joe Biden’s inauguration, UTEP faculty, staff and students weighed in on the attack, America’s double standards and what the future of U.S. democracy looks like.

Within hours of the day’s violent events that left structure damages and resulted in five deaths, UTEP President Heather Wilson denounced the assault through a news release sent out to the University’s community.

“What we saw at the United States Capitol today was unlawful and undermines our self-governing Republic,” said Wilson, who served as a Republican member of the United States House of Representatives from 1998 to 2009. “A mature self-governing country engages passionately and respectfully in healthy debate. We must begin to restore our ability to listen to each other, not listening to refute or to shame, but listening to understand and with an open mind and the loving hearts of countrymen.”

In the statement, Wilson stated the importance of respecting the election results and supporting a peaceful transition of power.

“In the coming weeks, in our homes and our workplaces, at our
Meet The Prospector’s new editor in chief

The knowledge you possess is the base of every argument, opinion, or idea. This was a value my parents instilled in my sisters and I at a young age as they left the comfort of the life they knew to pursue better opportunities for their three daughters in El Paso.

Now more than ever, I pride myself in carrying this value with me as I step into the role of editor in chief at The Prospector.

Although I still have many things to learn, I’ve always considered myself an individual prepared to take on opportunities meant to challenge my knowledge and nurture my leadership skills. This year, the opportunity has presented itself through the role of managing a biweekly newspaper, leading a group of more than 20 talented individuals and producing accurate news at a time when the world needs it the most.

During my time at The Prospector, I have contributed to its coverage as a multimedia journalist and copy editor. Through those roles I have learned more than just the rules of journalism. I learned the power of unity by being at the forefront of the paper’s coverage of the Cielo Vista Walmart mass shooting. This included Khalid’s “A Night for San City” concert, the store’s reopening, the unveiling of the grand candela in honor of the victims and the court trials that followed.

I learned the power and value of voices by covering the pandemic. Matter related protests and the 2020 presidential election, including Dr. Jill Biden’s visit to El Paso. Above all, I have learned true strength by covering tragedies, frustrations and drastic changes brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. These lessons have been fueled by the opportunity to write feature stories for UTEP’s College of Engineering over the past year and a half and publish stories for news outlets like KTEP, KTMV, KERA News and Our Border Life. Here, I was mentored by notable journalists who have only increased my eagerness to join the field after graduation.

I plan on carrying these lessons with me as I step into a role, which produces pieces that compete with other publications, this includes monitoring the University’s COVID-19 vaccine program and its future plans to fully welcome students back to campus.

I also look forward to expanding our multimedia coverage, as UTEP’s journalism talent is beginning to be recognized by national news media companies. Like The Prospector’s previous editor in chief, the brilliant Bryan Mena, I would not have come this far if it weren’t for the Terry Foundation, which has given me long lasting friendships and a full ride scholarship to fund my studies at UTEP.

On behalf of everyone working at The Prospector, I would like to thank Bryan, Valeria Oliveros and the various skilled editor in chiefs that came before me. Your support for our newsroom to this day is something I admire and appreciate as a student journalist.

Finally, although this year presents itself with renewed opportunities and beginnings, I hope you continue pursuing your health and the wellbeing of others. I invite you to send your arguments, opinions, or ideas our way, knowing they will be valued.

Anahy Diaz
The Prospector

The Prospector

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Due to COVID-19, the office of Student Media and Publications is working remotely. This issue was not printed and is only available in this digital PDF format.

The Prospector is published by the Student Media and Publications Board, 105 Union East, 500 W. University Ave. El Paso, Texas, 79968. The Prospector appears in print once per week on Tuesdays during the fall and spring semesters. This newspaper is not printed during holidays and when classes are not in session. The Prospector does provide news online at www.theprospectordaily.com.

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Professors welcome spring with lessons learned

Andrea Valdez-Rivas

As the coronavirus pandemic put most classes online and shifted classes to online and hybrid methods, professors across the country found themselves needing to adjust to the new normal. A well-deserved and long-needed winter break let UTEP professors’ recharge and reflect on the lessons learned during fall 2020 to prepare for the spring semester.

For political science professor, Cigdem Sirin, having empathy was essentially a prerequisite for teaching students. Sirin believed that the lack of human interaction was taking a toll on her students, by limiting them from the classroom. Sirin figured the need to adjust in her teaching style, shifted classes to online and hybrid, and reflect on the lessons learned during fall 2020 to prepare for the spring semester.

According to Sirin, deanna varela, professor, and utep's rector showed empathy was imperative for online learning. As she noticed how the pandemic was taking a toll on her students, the university’s rector, DeAnna Varela, tried new techniques to increase student engagement on top of her 10 years of online teaching experience. Varela implemented an engagement project that led students to participate in campus activities, which she called a "digital story".

As part of the entering student program at UTEP, which aims to help first-year, and transfer students transition to UTEP, Varela and other professors in the program are required to meet with students at certain dates and times to increase live group interactions and increase engagement.

Communication professor, Frank Perez, adapted his courses to a fully online teaching technique. He found that creating discussion boards, in which students can converse at any time, increases activity and engagement from his students. But no matter how efficient discussion boards could be for communicating and engaging, Perez still found barriers between him and his students.

"It just isn’t the same. You know, you miss that immediately," Perez said. Although UTEP will continue blending online, hybrid, and in-person classes during the spring, Sirin shared her optimism for increasing activities on campus this semester after spring break. March 22, as UTEP becomes a COVID-19 vaccine provider.

"We expect campus operations in Fall 2021 will not be constrained by COVID-19, and that may begin as early as Summer 2021," Wilson wrote in an email addressed to UTEP faculty, staff, and students. "That will give us the opportunity to use what we have learned during this pandemic and come back better than we were before."
Campus services announce hours of operations

Daniel Lopez
The Prospector

With the spring semester officially beginning Jan. 19, UTEP has announced its campus services’ hours of operations amid the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a news release from the Office of the Vice President for Business Affairs, the university bookstore will be open to the public Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., while remaining closed on Sunday. Customers will be able continue to shop online at utepbookstore.com or opt for in-store pickup available for web purchases.

UTEP’s Texas Western Café, located inside the library, will operate Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Friday from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., with closed services on Saturday and Sunday. According to the UTEP library website, the café is open for takeout only, as no food is allowed in the building due to health and safety regulations brought by the pandemic.

Counter services for the print shop are scheduled to run Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. New orders and quotes can be submitted to utepprintshop@utep.edu. Similarly, counter services for UTEP’s e-mail service are Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Campus services will continue to operate at low density during the spring semester, under its recovery matrix. The University’s current recovery level in its matrix remains at low density operations, with faculty and staff who can work remotely continuing to work remotely.

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Chamizal from page 4

As El Paso’s hospitalization rate is currently at an “orange zone” with its rate remaining below 20%, according to Region 19’s COVID-19 and mitigation plan, the number allows students to return to school. According to EPISD, classrooms will only be at 50% occupancy or loss on Tuesday, January 4, but the University of Texas, parents will have until Feb. 1 to return children to the in-person school setting. Feb. 1 is also the day the Texas Education Agency waives expenses.

“If their intentions were in good faith, they would do more to ensure that our children’s health and mental state would not be further compromised,” the statement said. “These children are in a very fragile state yet local authorities, as well as EPISD only see what this pandemic has cost them or is causing them.”

According to the Familias Unidas del Chisamal, the only adequate information families received was presented on Jan. 14 and Jan 15 at a Douglass parent meeting by the principal of the school.

“Our children have lost a sense of security because they don’t know if they will get sick if they go back to school,” the advocacy group wrote. “They live in a constant fear of going back to school and the district’s staff actions only agitate these fears.”

Currently, the City of El Paso is following COVID-19 guidelines to first responders and healthcare personnel, including clinic personnel, 9-1-1 EMS, residents and staff at long-term care facilities, urgent/community clinics and school nurses. Individuals in Phase 1, Group R, which are people 65 years of age and older and those 16 years of age and older with at least one chronic medical condition, have also begun receiving the vaccine, to ensure immediate use of the vaccine.

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Riots from cover page

universities and our houses of worship, with our children and with our neighbors, we should take some responsibilities as citizens,” Wilson said.

The statement came a few days before President Donald Trump was impeached by the House of Representatives on Jan. 13 for inciting violence against the government. The impeachment makes him the first U.S. president to be impeached twice.

“No president has ever been impeached twice, and the efforts this time look to be, to some extent, bipartisan,” said Todd Curry, a political science professor at UTEP.

“Furthermore, no president has done more to erode American democracy or faith in the American system. It is unprecedented.”

Curry and leaders across the country who have since spoken up about the attack, raise the concern of what this may mean for the American government and its democracy.

“There are both short term and long term effects. Short term, it further erodes confidence that government and its institutions can act effectively to mitigate threats, both internal and external,” Curry said. “Long term, if there aren’t consequences, it will embolden individuals bent on violating state and federal laws and governmental functions. It could set a dangerous precedent.”

Although some pro-Trump rioters have begun to be identified and arrested, the initial lack of restraint Capitol police had against the destrucive mob left many to question the country’s racial double standards, as they recalled law enforcement’s violent response to the Black Lives Matter peaceful protests.

“All my life, I’ve had to endure the unjust murders of Black people. My people’s,” said Fatte Hill, 22, a sophomore majoring in kinesiology at UTEP. “On the other hand, we have White terrorists who stormed the Capitol...If it were any different than the corpse would have started to pile up before they could even get to the steps of the Capitol, and the jails would have been filled.”

Hill was among the hundreds of El Pasoans who attended the Black Lives Matter protest at Memorial Park on May 31, 2020. A peaceful protest that resulted in turbulence after, as the El Paso Police Department (EPD) said protestors began boxing in their officers and throwing bottles. This resulted in

Chamizal from page 4

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EPID’s Tactical Unit deploying gas and non-lethal rounds into the remaining crowd. According to KTSM News, members of the crowd said police were responsible for the quick escalation, as they were hit with tear gas and rubber bullets while trying to run away.

In June 2020, Trump praised Black Lives Matter protests after they would face a minimum of 10 years in prison for vandalizing or damaging federal buildings. On Jan. 6, Trump posted a message on his now banned Twitter account calling the Capitol mob “great patriots” who were reacting to an election victory “viciously stripped away.”

“America will hesitate to reprimand white people, what happened on Jan. 6 is a painfully clear reminder,” said Hill, who also serves as historian for UTEP’s Black Student Union executive board. “As Trump leaves office, we must prepare for what is yet to come. Chaos. We are in the fight of our lives now and we must continue our journey.”

Hill hopes Biden will address the problems of systemic racism in America and work to undo years of unfair treatment in Black communities. She shares this hope for the new administration and people across the nation.

“Educate yourself on what is going on and why it’s going on,” Hill said. “We are still not free. People hold themselves and their loved ones accountable. It all starts with you.”

Anahy Diaz may be reached at prospector@utep.edu

Photograph by Ashley Diaz}/The Prospector

Black Lives Matter protests stand at the edge of police barriers outside the El Paso Police Department on May 31.
Virtual events to look forward to this spring

Reiela Gonzalez
The Prospector

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic and with the mission of increasing engagement among its students, UTEP will continue hosting virtual events in spring. Throughout the semester, Miners will have the opportunity to engage in activities organized by the Office of International Programs and Study Abroad and the Student Engagement and Leadership Center (SELC), among others.

From study abroad information sessions, scholarships workshops to virtual drop-in advising, the Office of International Programs and Study Abroad is set to welcome students looking to travel this year. The virtual events will guide and provide students with information on programs, visiting campus, and funding sources, as according to Judy Moore, assistant director of UTEP’s Student Recreation Center, the department will have opened programs for summer and fall. The deadline to apply for the spring semester is March 1. However, Moore said these programs will more than likely continue to see travel regulations and protocols.

“Some countries for example, require that you have to prove of a negative test, you have to show that right before you leave your home country”, Moore said. “You have to quarantine for two weeks in one of their designated places and then after your two weeks are up, negative tests and everything go well, you can go out into the country”.

Because of this, Moore said the expenses associated with studying abroad programs may be higher than past years. However, students are still invited to emerge themselves in the life and culture of a foreign country through virtual programs.

Although virtual study abroad opportunities became more accessible in 2020, due to a surge in COVID-19 cases across the world, Moore explained this method is new. “It is something we have seen, there are virtual options, those are available regardless of what’s going on with the coronavirus, because you don’t have to physically travel anywhere”, Moore said. “My hope is that some of these virtual opportunities stick around and support students who can’t travel for other reasons.”

The start of the Spring semester will also see virtual opportunities for students organized by SELC.

This includes transitioning programs to a virtual format such as the Student Organization Advancement Program (SOAP) and MineTracker,101, among others, to focus heavily on resources and tools that help lead an organization remotely.

“Registered student organizations, like everyone else, have had to adapt to the new normal we are all working to create,” Peterson said. “It’s still for us to see student leaders tabling around campus but our students are resilient and they are still finding ways to engage new students and maintain their organization engagement.”

Another resource available for students is funding through the Student Organization Advancement Fund, Peterson shared, as organizations will be eligible to request funds for support during the spring. A resource that proved to be helpful for MBGS in fall 2020 as it allowed access to virtual games not available for free.

“Club officers understand that college students often lack financial security, particularly during this pandemic, so we were very hesitant to ask our members to spend their money on games,” Peterson said. “Fortunately, MBGS had enough funds from UTEP to purchase a few copies of the game so which we had to lend out to members who did not have them so that they were able to participate in games nights.”

Other organizations like the Rotaract Club, focused on shaping future leaders of the community through local, national and international community service, will continue to utilize tools like Instagram and Facebook to keep members informed. According to president of the UTEP chapter and Finance major, Luis Sanchez, the club has been able to make international connections and collaborate virtually with people from Nepal, India and Mexico states’ like Aguacalientes, Tabasco and Nayarit.

“I believe having these meetings open to everyone has made a difference during these times of staying at home. We have never had this increase in membership before,” Sanchez said. “Since the pandemic started, we had an increase of 47% in membership, majority ranging from freshmen to sophomores, giving the club an expected life of at least four years as an active club”

The clubs annual in-person “Rotaract Night,” which typically invites college and high school students to learn more about the club, will continue to be hosted virtually as the executive board prepares for another semester online.

“Every semester we try to have at least one recruitment event for new members,” Sanchez said. “This past semester, due to the pandemic, we had to do it virtually. We talked about the club, the organization, events we have done, and how to join. We also had time to talk and interact with our current members, and at the end we played Among Us’. It was definitely a dynamic meeting.”

Like Rotaract Club, UTEP’s Academic Revival of Indigenous Studies and Education (A.R.I.S.E), which strives to educate the UTEP community on Indigenous cultures, histories, and current events, is also planning to increase its recruitment strategies.

“We are planning to do more recruiting at the start of the semester,” said Veronica Cruz, rhetoric and composition PhD candidate at UTEP and president of A.R.I.S.E. “The student organization services have done an excellent job in hosting events such as Miner Welcome that provides spaces for student organizations to recruit new members, and we plan to recruit through those events.”

This year SELC is set to host its annual Miner Welcome from Jan. 18 – 22. The event will be a week-long kick-off to the new semester full of activities and prizes, Peterson said. This includes Virtual Table-Tabling Fairs for both organizations and colleges and a Student Miner for students to come together and share common interests.

“Student organizations provide a sense of belonging and help create bonds and relationships that aren’t found by just going to class,” Peterson said. “On-campus has been the main interaction between students, and with those opportunities unavailable, joining a student organization can facilitate that interaction. Organizations are a great way to provide those interactions though be it through a virtual format.”

Virtual events will guide and provide students with information on programs, visiting campus, and funding sources, as according to Judy Moore, assistant director of UTEP’s Study Abroad, the department will have opened programs for summer and fall. The deadline to apply for the spring semester is March 1. However, Moore said these programs will more than likely continue to see travel regulations and protocols.
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The most anticipated films set to release in 2021

Alyson Rodriguez

The idea of a new year bringing new beginnings has never applied more to a year than 2021. After a disappointing cloud doomed over film release dates throughout 2020, 2021 brings a thrilling wave of entertainment with the most anticipated movies set to release this year.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, more studios have begun releasing films on streaming services, like Amazon Prime and HBO Max, at the same time as they’ll hit theaters. Although this method has been debated among film enthusiasts, Amazon Prime will continue to adapt it as “Coming 2 America” is set to join their platform on March 5.

The movie directed by Craig Brewer, will be starring Eddie Murphy and Arsenio Hall as Prince Akeem and his sidekick Semmi. In the comedy sequel to the 1988 movie “Coming to America,” former Prince Akeem is set to become King of Zamunda when he discovers he has a long-lost son living in America. Wanting to meet and build a relationship with his heir, the prince journeys to America once again.

Another movie reaching theaters on March 5 is “Raya and the Last Dragon” directed by Don Hall and Deer Willens. The computer-animated film stars Kelly Marie Tran and Awkwafina as warrior Raya and water dragon Sisu. It is the latest animated film made by Walt Disney Pictures, centering around Raya’s search for the last dragon, in order to save her home Kumandra from monsters. The film was originally issued to hit theaters on Nov. 25, 2020, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, was delayed nearly a whole year. Two months later, a new sequel of one of Disney’s most beloved movie series begins. The Prospector

In Review: Disney’s ‘Soul’ celebrates life and new beginnings

Victoria Almaguer

Pixar has given us many beautiful films since the 90’s, from “Toy Story” to “Inside Out” to “Up”, the studio has yet to run out of life lessons. Originally set to be released theatrically, the studio returned last year by premiering “Soul” on Disney+ Dec. 25, 2020, giving the world another beloved story at a time when it needed it the most. “Soul”, a film by Oscar-winning director of “Inside Out” and “Up”, Pete Docter, from a script he co-wrote with Mike Jones and Kemp Powers. Being Pixar’s first film to feature a Black protagonist, “Soul” delivers a beautiful message involving new beginnings. Although it is not Pixar’s top-ranking film, the detailed animation, jazz soundtrack and fun characters invite the audience to sit back and enjoy the little things in life.

The story follows Joe Gardner, voiced by Jamie Fox, a middle school teacher who dreams of becoming a jazz player, although those around him would rather he focused on having job security. When he finally gets the chance to perform alongside jazz legend, Dorothy Williams, he dies. As the form of a soul taken across to the “Great Beyond”, Joe becomes a mentor to Tina Fey’s character, 22, a new soul who agrees to give her life badge to Joe but is uninterested in finding the “spark” that would complete the ticket to Earth. Unable to help 22 find her passion, the characters seek help from a lost soul rescuer, Graham Norton’s Moonwind character, who succeeds in getting Joe out of the Great Beyond world.

However, Joe accidentally brings 22 along, resulting in 22 entering his body and his soul ending up in a therapy cat. As they embark on their adventures to try and return themselves to their respected body and place, Joe and 22 begin to find their new lives in Joe’s body and teach each other a great deal about what truly means. Along the way, the film tries to translate an often-difficult message about death and what some believe comes after it, it is often hard to focus on the subject as a viewer is simultaneously trying to focus on the “spark” 22 needs to find. In addition, while we follow Joe and his struggle to fulfill his dream, the message of the movie feels rushed by the third act. Nevertheless, it makes the lesson clear: a person’s devotion to what they think is their life’s purpose doesn’t matter much if they don’t find time to enjoy life’s other moments while pursuing it. This includes a scene and feeling described beautifully by the filmmakers called “the zone”, a passionate inner space people enter when they are intensely inspired by their art; but also houses the lost souls who become obsessed and broken by their own passions. It is truly a beautifully described space and scene many can relate to.

Fox and Fey are a great comedy duo that bring laughter to a harsh topic and year. With their animated characters helping them, the duo carries the movie from beginning to end. There are other notable performances like Rachel True as a soul working for the “Great Beyond,” and Daved Diggs’s Paul, a bully who tries to bring Joe and his dream down any chance he gets. The film’s 3D-piece soundtrack by Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross also deserves a notable mention for creating an authentic jazz sound fitting to the film’s literal and figurative depth. This element, along with a detailed animation that excludes racist imagery and stereotypes, brings a heartfelt warmth to its characters battling something bigger than themselves.

I give this movie three picks out of five due to its losing most of its emotional impact by the third act. Although it does not reach the level of adoration Pixar’s “Up” or “Toy Story” have, “Soul” is still a fun movie to watch and can be set apart for its soundtrack and unique angle to explore the meaning of life. It strikes a chord to what was lost in 2020, matching a person’s eagerness to start living life the fullest in 2021 and the years to come. It may leave some crying and others full of nostalgia, but that just might mean it did its job.
Outdoor track and field season canceled

Heriberto Ponce
The Prospector

On Jan. 13, Jim Senter, the UTEP Director of Athletics, announced the Miners' indoor track and field would not compete in 2021.

The last time the men's team and the women's team competed was at the C-USA indoor track and field championships in Birmingham, Alabama, on Feb. 22-23, 2020. Soon after, seven major competitions were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Last year's canceled competitions were the NCAA (March 13-14), Texas Relays (March 25-28), UTEP Springtime (April 3-4), Bryan Clay Invitational (Apr 15-17), SMU-Sac Relays (Apr 16-18), Desert Heat Classic (May 2), and the C-USA Outdoor T&F Championships (May 14-17).

"We have seen an erosion in the number of indoor meets being held across the nation," Senter said. "As a result of the declining opportunities to compete, we have decided it is in our best interest to focus on preparing for the outdoor season."

UTEP Track and Field Head Coach, Mikael Laaksonen agreed with the team's decision.

"Our team is fully supportive of this decision, and we look forward to competing outdoors very soon," Laaksonen said.

According to the UTEP Athletics website, the Miners are slated to begin their outdoor campaign on March 19 at the Willie Williams Classic in Tuscan, Arizona.

Women's basketball split series with North Texas

Michael Cuviello
The Prospector

On Saturday night, the UTEP Miners (7-6) finished a two game back to back matchup, the Miners gave the Mean Green a 26-24 lead.

In the first game of the back to back matchup, the Miners gave the Mean Green it could handle up until about the five minute mark of the fourth quarter with 19 lead changes. At that point, North Texas took control of the game, scoring six straight points to open up a 7 point lead.

Miner sophomore Avery Crouse brought the Miners back to within 4 points with a clutch 3-pointer with two minutes left on the clock but that would be the closest the Miners would get to the Mean Green losing by 8 points.

Both teams shot a respectable 41% from the field but once again, the Miners shot a dismal 30% from the arc, making only two of 13 shots. The Miners are shooting 28% from the 3-point line for the season, while opponents are shooting 36%.

Gallegos led the Miners in scoring in game one with 13 points, while seven assists go along with two steals. No other Miner scored in double figures. For the Mean Green, the duo of Quincy Noble and N'Yah Boyd both scored 17 points apiece.

"They hit some shots they don’t characterized hit in those situations," UTEP Head Coach Kevin Baker said after game one. "They hit some shots, and when it mattered down the stretch, we turned it over three times in a row. That hurt our chances because it deflates our energy defensively when we do that."

In game two, the Miners took control from the very opening minutes of the game, scoring the game's first 8 points. The Green Wave finally got on the scoreboard at the five minute mark. Defensively the Miners held North Texas to 7 points in the first quarter on 15% shooting from the field.

Taking a 15-7 lead into the second quarter, the Miners could sustain its energy for most of the period. The only time North Texas was able to take the lead was with 20 seconds left in the quarter. Right at the buzzer, UTEP sophomore guard Isis Lopes made that lead short-lived with an open 3-pointer to extend the hole, giving the Miners a 26-24 lead.

Early in the third quarter, the Mean Green briefly took the lead, but Gallegos’ 3-point play put the Miners up 31-28. Freshman forward Elisa Arce hit two jumpers during this stretch of two minutes to help extend the Miner lead to 7 points. At the 37 second mark of the third quarter, the Miners were leading 43-38 but a series of sloppy plays that had both teams driving all over the floor led to a buzzer beating 3-pointer by North Texas’ N’Yah Boyd to close the gap to 2 points going into the final quarter.

Much like the previous game, one team was able to take control of the game all the way down the line for the final quarter. Unlike Friday's game, that team Saturday was the Miners as the defense tightened, only allowing one field goal in the last four minutes. Over the final two minutes, the Miners held the Green Wave scoreless, pulling out a hard earned 10-point victory. Key down the stretch was Gallegos with her all around play and Lopes, who scored 5 straight points in 30 seconds to put North Texas away late in the game.

Lopes finished the game with a career high 16 points on seven of 10 shooting from the floor. Sophomore Avery Crouse led the team in rebounds with nine and had 8 points with three assists. As a team, the Miners outrebounded the Mean Green by one. The Miners shot 62% from the field while limiting the Mean Green to 35%.

Once again, the Miners shot poorly overall from the three point line with only 20% but in the fourth quarter, UTEP shot 40%.

"We hit timely shots," Baker said. "Yesterday, we didn't hit timely shots we needed to. Today we hit timely shots."

"We had a bunch of kids come through and make big shots in the fourth quarter when we really needed them. It was nice to see we got some payback. We've been losing some close games and we came away with a big win."

The UTEP next heads on the road for another back-to-back series versus Louisiana Tech (9-3), with game one starting at 5 p.m. Jan. 22 in Rustin, Louisiana.

The recruit started 31 games from the 3-point line with no pure shots. No other Miner scored in double figures. For the Mean Green, the duo of Quincy Noble and N’Yah Boyd both scored 17 points apiece.

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Daniel Lopez
The Prospector

Newly acquired transfer junior guard, Jamal Bieniemy, from The University of Oklahoma, is expected to make a big impact for the Miners. Bieniemy is joining the team as the point guard the Miners missed last year.

The recruit started 31 games from his time at Oklahoma and averaged 5.2 points per game, four rebounds, 2.8 assists per game, and shot from beyond the arc at 34.6%.

While being a true point guard and ball distributor, Bieniemy's shooting from behind the arc is the second most important thing he brings to the table coming into this season as the Miners struggled from the 3-point line with no pure shooter.

Last year the Miner's offense seemed to sink and went long minutes without scoring or creating a big-time shot to bring them back, bringing them down by a big margin at times and unable to return from the deficit.

"It's definitely a learning experience, it's kind of the complete opposite from where I came from," Bieniemy said about UTEP's team during a news conference. "It's a lot of up-tempo and high pace, I've been just trying to get used to that."

Before attending Oklahoma, Bieniemy came from Obra D. Tompkins High School in Katy, Texas. There, Bieniemy was a three star recruit putting up good numbers on the stat sheet. His senior year he averaged 17.4 points per game, while also grabbing 7.1 rebounds, 6.3 assists, and 2.0 steals. Bieniemy was also named District MVP and was selected to USA Today's All-USA Texas Boys Basketball second team.

Bieniemy landed offers from four powerhouse schools, The University of Texas, The University of Kansas, The University Of West Virginia, The University Of Oklahoma, and The University Of Oklahoma State.

Ultimately, he committed to Oklahoma.

"During his playing time in Oklahoma, Bieniemy started with 47 games in two seasons, and 30 games during the 2019-2020 season. When he took over the starting job in early 2019, he immediately showed his skills to get the ball in the net, scoring 6-4 points, averaging 4.2 assists, 2.5 rebounds, and 1.3 steals.

What was the most impressive stat when taking over the starting role for that game, was his 40.9% shot from the arc.

Another game where Bieniemy showed impressive skills was against The University Of West Virginia, when he scored a career high 20 points and was 4-6 of from beyond the arc, while shooting 58.8% from the field. He has proven he can score at will and can consistently knock down 3-point shots.

Bieniemy's ball dominating went noticed during his time in Oklahoma as he recorded a season-high seven assists in a game against Texas Christian University. He showed even more himself as Bieniemy recorded two career bests of eight assists twice, as those came against The University of Kansas and The University Of Texas.
WELCOME BACK, MINERS!
Have a great spring semester! We are here to help you.

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