

UT-Arlington image buried in metroplex

United Press International
ARLINGTON — The University of Texas at Arlington has a definite image problem. The president of the burgeoning school, which is still relatively unknown outside academic circles, jokingly suggests UT-A would be better off if it were somewhere in West Texas.

"We're located between Dallas and Fort Worth in a dynamic metroplex area and we don't get much attention," said Dr. Wendell H. Nedderman.

"If we could move the city of 100,000 with the state's fifth largest higher education institution to the plains, there'd be at least one newspaper and some major radio and television systems and we'd get noticed."

UT-A is sandwiched between better known Southern Methodist University in Dallas and Texas Christian University in Fort Worth.

To show how bad things have been, when a new NBA franchise

formed in Dallas two years ago and chose to be called the "Mavericks," UT-A fans protested the pros had stolen their team name. The NBA folks said

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they had no idea what UT-A, just 15 miles down the street, called their teams.

Even locally, many view the University of Texas-affiliated school as a commuter college with only a few degrees to attract a few thousand students. During a summer orientation, many parents paying tuition for their offspring thought the school

only had about 5,000 students.

In fact, the school has seen a truly amazing growth in 22 years from 5,500 students and 18 degree programs to 21,000 students, 97 degree programs, 43 master's degree areas and 15 doctor of philosophy programs. Half of the students live in Arlington.

Faced with rapid growth and overflowing buildings, the school is lobbying hard to receive benefits from the University of Texas and Texas A&M systems' Permanent University Fund. The fund allows the two universities to share in the oil and gas wealth for construction. UT-A is one of 14 components of the UT system.

Nedderman acknowledges it is the school's location between Dallas and Fort Worth that is responsible for its growth, attraction of talent and fine reputation.

UT-A, which started its fall semester Monday, is one of the fastest growing schools in Texas

and has maintained constant growth in a time when many schools are reporting losses.

"Some people have asked why UT-Arlington continues to grow," he said. "We have a very strategic location. We're in an urban setting. We are accessible to people."

The school has a wealth of talent within 25 miles to use as speakers and lecturers. It is accessible to thousands of businesses and institutions where student can get on-the-job training.

UT-A boasts the nation's sixth largest business college with 7,000 majors, an engineering school with 4,000 majors (making it the third largest in the state and one of the 25 biggest in the nation), the Southwest's largest graduate school of social work and one of the largest nursing schools in Texas.

UT-A's Institute of Urban Studies graduate program in urban affairs has been ranked No. 1 in the South and South-

west and seventh in the nation. Its Energy Systems Research Center is rated as one of the top five in the world and its new doctoral of science in chemistry degree is unique in the nation.

Although UT-A draws faculty from across the nation, it is

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not widely known outside academia. But the school shuns using athletics to gain notoriety.

"Traditionally that has been the case with schools like Alabama, Nebraska and Oklahoma,"

Nedderman said. "In the mind's eye of the public, sports has been one of the marks of a major university."

"But I think we are seeing a more discerning public, a more sophisticated public able to make the separation between academics and athletics. We have no aspirations of being a major football power."

Nedderman believes athletics will become less important in the next decade as athletic programs suffer from inflation. UT-A currently competes in sports as a member of the Southland Conference, which includes schools in Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas.

Nedderman does not consider UT-A a commuting college, but acknowledges the student makeup is different from residential colleges. For one thing, the average age is 24½.

"We have a growing student body, what I call a 'working class student body' that is goal

oriented, willing to work," he said.

But he notes UT-A does not shut down at night as at least 8,000 students participate in intramural sports and other extracurricular activities.

While Nedderman wants to see UT-A's image improved, the school needs assured financial support to accommodate growth. That's where the PUF fund is a factor.

UT-A was blocked this year from getting PUF funds that feed UT, Texas A&M and long-established branches such as the UT medical school, but Nedderman said another effort will be made in the next legislative session.

The hang-up is many of the 17 non-PUF state schools, who are blocking the addition of any other Texas A&M or UT system components. They want to be assured of a funding source now that the state property tax is expected to be repealed by voters Nov. 2.

School officials complain

Illegal enrolling a burden

United Press International
SAN ANTONIO — Older school districts say they are not trying to educate significantly greater numbers of undocumented Mexican children year than last, but many say a few is more than their budgets can bear.

"If they all came in and bought \$50,000 homes, we would be fine," said Brownsville superintendent Raul Besteiro. "But when they come, they can't afford to buy the taxable property that offsets the burden they cause the district."

The U.S. Supreme Court in June struck down a Texas law that had allowed school districts to charge tuition to the children of illegal aliens. The court said the children could go to school as long as they lived in the school district, regardless of their immigration status.

Most school districts had

already begun to admit the undocumented children after federal Judge William Wayne Justice originally ruled against the Texas law in 1978.

About 25,000 illegal alien children are believed to be in the Texas schools at an estimated cost of \$62.5 million, state officials have said. They predicted the figure could rise to 100,000 under the Supreme Court ruling, but most school districts along the Texas-Mexico border said only a few more illegal alien children than last year have shown up.

Brownsville registered 219 illegal alien students among nearly 29,000 children who attended classes the first four days of school, but that figure reflected only the new students. Most of the 813 illegal aliens who attended last year will be back, officials said.

Neighboring Harlingen has

signed up 42 undocumented children so far.

To register, the children must show a birth certificate and proof they live in the school district. Those without documentation papers are considered illegal aliens, Gomez said.

The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service has no access to the school records, so undocumented families will not be caught by enrolling their children, said Walter Cheedie of the Harlingen INS district office.

In Hidalgo, across the border from much larger Reynosa, about 300 illegal students are expected — the same as last year, said Superintendent Alejo Salinas, who worries more about children attending Hidalgo schools while living in Mexico.

"We keep a very close eye on the bridge," he said. "We actually have people at the bridge checking the children coming

over. We have to educate them if they're living here but not if they're crossing the bridge every day."

In Tyler, the school district which filed the original lawsuit to keep from having to educate illegal aliens, there are no records yet to tell how many undocumented children have enrolled, said Bob Barr, assistant superintendent for personnel. But Tyler expects no more than 200 among its 16,000 students, he said.

The same is true for the San Antonio Independent School District, said spokesman Robert Zamora.

"For the most part, we've been happy to have them," he said. "I think the feeling is that if we don't educate them now, they'll become a liability to the city and the state and the nation later."

Bell's rate increase request called unfair

United Press International
AUSTIN — Southwestern Bell's \$471.5 million rate increase request places the burden on residential customers by refusing to raise long-distance rates for fear of losing customers to rivals like MCI and Sprint, says the attorney for the Texas Municipal League.

"Somehow in their own mind they come to the conclusion that their cost increases do not affect their long-distance activities where they have competition," said TML attorney Don Butler, whose group has intervened on behalf of the Bell-service cities it represents.

"They attempt an annual snow job of the public and the press whereby they quote a certain figure for the cost of providing local service," said Butler. "We think long-distance should bear some fair share of the increases."

The 13.4 percent request, which would be the biggest utility rate increase in state history, translates to \$471.5 million and would raise basic residential rates by \$4.60 a month. A hearing before the Public Utilities Commission begins Wednesday and is expected to last six weeks.

This is the fifth consecutive year the telephone company has asked the PUC for permission to raise rates for its 4.4 million Texas customers.

The TML has recommended Bell receive an increase of only \$217.9 million.

Last week, the PUC staff recommended a \$304.5 million increase. The PUC traditionally has granted Southwestern Bell increases of less than half the amounts requested. In five separate rate cases filed in 1976 and 1978-1981, the company asked for a total of \$796.1 million in increases, and the PUC granted

\$370.2 million. The company says it needs the increase in revenue this year to keep up with population growth in Texas and to meet continuing cost increases and other capital expenses.

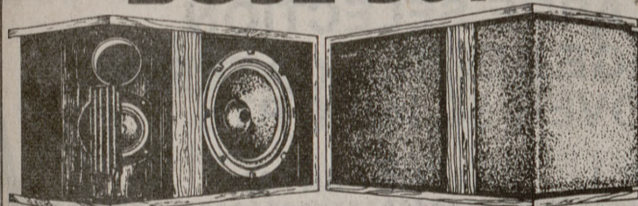
"We've increased sales, we've improved productivity and we've worked at holding down expenses," said Paul Roth, a Bell vice-president. "However, continued cost increases impact our cost of doing business."

In addition to increases in residential rates, Southwestern Bell has asked for increases in one-party business rates ranging from \$1.55 in Houston to \$6.55 in smaller cities, a decrease from 10 to 3 in the monthly allowance for directory assistance calls and a minimum fee of \$63.85 for installing or moving a telephone.

In addition to long-distance, no increases were requested in pay phone rates.

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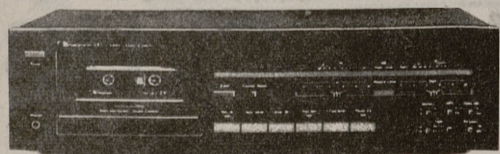
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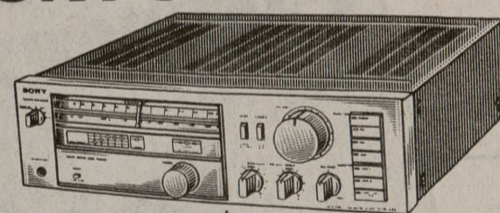
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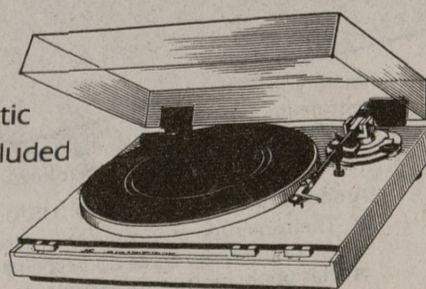
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