

# Where Will We Grow Now?

**UTD President  
Dr. David Daniel shares  
his vision for the next  
decade and beyond.**

*by* CARLY L. PRICE  
*photo by* LISA MEANS



**T**HE ARRIVAL OF Dr. David Daniel as the new UTD president has generated a lot of excitement and optimism. Now that he has grabbed the reigns, everyone is asking the proverbial question: "Where will we go from here?"

While many wonder what visions lie in the mind's eye of the University's new leader, Daniel wants to know just the opposite: What do faculty members, staff, students, and friends of the University envision for UTD's future? To find out, one of Daniel's first moves was to ask for everyone's help crafting a strategic plan for the University.

"We'll have a draft that will be circulated within and outside of UTD to hopefully get stakeholder engagement in our plan," Daniel explains. "And that plan will really define who we want to be in 10 to 15 years or so."

At press time, the first draft of UTD's strategic plan was not well formed; alas, it did not even have a title yet.

"It's still bubbling up from multiple committees," as Daniel describes it. "People can expect [the strategic plan] to reflect the perspective of faculty and students who are on the committees developing the first draft. They can also expect the first draft to have strong influence from me [after] I put my own stamp on it. Then we will broadly distribute the draft into the community, including students, faculty, industrial leaders, chambers of commerce, philanthropists, and others who might be in a position to help us meet our goal."

The goal, of course, is to become a top-tier institution. If Daniel's overall vision must be limited to a nutshell, it probably would be: to move UTD closer to that goal. And even though the official strategic plan is still in the works, Daniel already can share a few key points it will likely address.

### **Achieving Critical Mass**

"I don't think there's going to be any dramatic earthquake change that will occur," Daniel says. "We will continue, and maybe accelerate, the trajectory of growth and excellence. If I look down the road, one change I see is that the size of the faculty will increase rather substantially. We're at about 400 faculty now, but we're going to need around 800 to 1,000 faculty to be on par with places like MIT, Stanford, or UC San Diego, or other highly recognized top-tier research universities. That's one of the things that's going to have to change."

In addition to having a larger pool of smart minds and more intellectual property, more faculty also means the breadth of

## **The Man Behind the Vision**

If you haven't yet had a chance to get to know Dr. David Daniel, following are just a few of the highlights of his distinguished career in academia.

- **AN EXPERIENCED RESEARCHER.** Daniel's focus of study (a subject of increasing importance, as we wonder what to do with the world's waste) is engineered containment systems for waste disposal, and on the cleanup of contaminated waste disposal sites. In 2000, Daniel was elected to the National Academy of Engineering.
- **A WIDELY PUBLISHED EXPERT.** Daniel has edited, written, co-written, and been published in dozens of books and academic journals. And he has won the American Society of Civil Engineers' highest award for papers published in its journals.
- **AN EXPERIENCED TEACHER.** Daniel has instructed more than 125 continuing education and training courses, and he spent more than a decade working as a professor of every rank.

### **College Education:**

B.S. University of Texas, 1972 (Civil Engineering)  
M.S. University of Texas, 1974 (Civil Engineering)  
Ph.D. University of Texas, 1980

### **Academic Experience:**

Dean, College of Engineering, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2001-2005

Gutgsell Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering, University of Illinois, 2000-2005

Professor and Head, Department of Civil Engineering, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1996-2001

Associate Chairman for Academic Affairs, University of Texas, Department of Civil Engineering, 1994-1996

L.B. Meaders Professor of Civil Engineering, University of Texas, 1992-1996

Professor, University of Texas, 1991-1996

Associate Professor, University of Texas, 1985-1991

Assistant Professor, University of Texas, 1981-1985

study and research would expand, and UTD would reach the sort of critical mass it needs to gain recognition in prestigious academic circles.

"If we're able to get that critical mass," Daniel explains. "We'll have more depth in our existing programs, we'll have some new programs, and we'll be able to have a level of research productivity and output that will be far more competitive in the national and international research community."

As the size of the faculty—and the student body—continues to grow, Daniel actually hopes to see the faculty-student ratios do just the opposite. Currently, there are approximately 23 students for every faculty member, but he hopes to eventually see a ratio of 17 to one, which is more typical of highly competitive public universities. And instead of focusing all these expansion efforts on certain areas, Daniel expects these changes to affect every academic discipline. He points out that the very best technical institutions have a broad academic base.

the campus change, but it's changed dramatically over the last 10 to 20 years, so this is what I mean when I say it's a continued evolution and progression."

### Utilizing the Business Laboratory

Beyond campus, the dynamics are also likely to change. UTD has already come a long way in its efforts to engage the community—from alumni to businesses to local residents—who stand to gain from the University's presence.

"We have enormous opportunity to interface more proactively with what I call our community," Daniel says. "And by community I mean our business community, our arts and humanities community, and our technology community. The Dallas-Fort Worth region produces about one-third of the gross domestic product of the State of Texas. In a global sense, this is one of the most significant regional metropolitan areas in the world.

"I see us building on our strengths. We will build on our strengths in science and engineering, management, behavioral and brain sciences, and arts and humanities. In all the areas where we're strong now, I expect us to get even stronger." —Dr. David Daniel

"Take MIT, for example. They have a world-class business school even though it's a technical university," Daniel says. "I see us building on our strengths. We will build on our strengths in science and engineering, management, behavioral and brain sciences, and arts and humanities. In all the areas where we're strong now, I expect us to get even stronger."

He also sees UTD playing a more important role in the growing field of biomedical research—and as a result he envisions a stronger partnership with nearby UT Southwestern Medical Center. It's a logical fit, especially since they are in the same university system.

If the plans for doubling the faculty pan out, all of this human brainpower is going to need someplace to work. UTD will also have to continue adding facilities—from classrooms to labs to offices—to accommodate the enormous influx of faculty and students.

"The infrastructure will continue to grow," Daniel projects. "The University will build more buildings, and everyone will feel

This is a very rich environment of business. Headquarters of lots of companies are here, with great diversity—from technology to real estate to food service to transportation. Almost every major business sector is here in a big way. It's as if we're right in the middle of a fabulous business laboratory."

Indeed, a study ranked Dallas-Fort Worth among the top 20 largest metropolitan areas in the United States, yet it was the only one on that list without an AAU (Association of American Universities) university.

"It's interesting to me that you often find great universities in great cities, and I think Dallas is a great city that needs a great university," Daniel says. "I think UTD has all the right fundamentals in place to succeed, so the bottom line as I look to my tenure as president would be that we at UTD plan to play a major role in making a great city even greater. And I am absolutely determined to leave the institution a stronger, higher-quality university when I'm done with my period of service." **UTD**