ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC & LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITIES

UTSA



CECE | INNOVATION AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AWARDS PROGRAM

2024 CASE STUDY

IEP CATEGORY - PLACE

The University of Texas at San Antonio

Downtown Innovation District

HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO

Before 1969, San Antonio lacked a public four-year higher education institution. Seeking to address the high demand for local, high-quality educational opportunities, a combination of Mexican-American community activists, San Antonio business leaders, and political champions came together to create a university of the community, by the community, and for the community. From its first graduating class of 82 students to the nearly 35,000 enrolled today, UTSA has grown into San Antonio's university and serves as a symbol of the city's upward trajectory.

From humble beginnings at its peri-urban campus in 1969, UTSA now boasts five campus locations city-wide: MainCampus, Downtown, Southwest, Hemisfair, and Park West. According to former Mayor and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Julian Castro, in 1995, UTSA's Downtown Campus expanded access to a major public university for people who previously could not overcome distance, transit, and/or financial challenges. By 2010, the Downtown Campus consisted of four buildings on the historic Hispanic-dominated West Side. Today, this downtown campus is home to the Henry Ford Academy: Alameda School for Art + Design (HFA: Alameda School), San Antonio's only tuition-free college preparatory high school focusing on art and design as essential components of a world-class education. It is also home to the Valdez Institute for Economic Development and the College of Health, Community, and Policy, as well as other college departments with deep community connections, such as architecture and education.

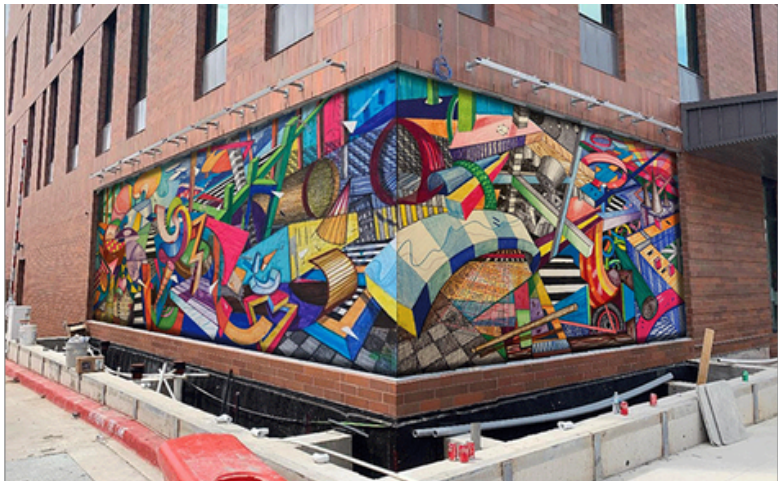
UTSA DOWNTOWN EXPANSION

San Pedro I Building

University of Texas at San Antonio's San Pedro I building, which opened in 2022, houses the School of Data Science, National Security Collaboration Center, and CyManII. It is the first of three new academic, research, and community engagement buildings in the urban core.

Looking to the future, the San Pedro I building sits a few blocks away from the original downtown campus and exemplifies the community impact that UTSA is having. Across the creek from San Pedro I, construction has begun on San Pedro II, which will house the UTSA's Innovation, Careers, and Entrepreneurship programming with a planned completion date in Spring 2026. A third parcel of land contiguous to these new downtown campus buildings has been acquired and will further expand UTSA's presence and community connections in the heart of the city.

The expanded Downtown Campus presence fosters public art displays such as Cristina Sosa Noriega's Mural and Mark Hogensen's Mural (figure 1)



Celebrating the collision of Hispanic mural tradition, Tejano Art and Science at the San Pedro I building downtown

Infrastructure for Inclusivity

UTSA regularly works with the city of San Antonio on the completion of street upgrades along and leading to the Downtown Campus buildings, particularly near the Dolorosa Street Corridor – an important commercial district that the San Pedro Creek traverses. These improvements will include six to twelve-foot sidewalks, two-way bicycle tracks, and multi-purpose lanes for public transportation. Lighted walkways under the IH-10/IH-35 overpasses will serve to better connect the legacy Downtown Campus with new buildings and development. The goal of these efforts is to connect communities, focus on equity and the removal of barriers, and improve overall quality of life. Further projects planned for the Downtown Campus include the development of the Monterrey and Cattleman's Square sites for academic buildings and mixed-use – including commercial, partnering with local developers and landowners.

From the beginning of the Downtown Campus expansion, it was clear that the site could not be a traditional campus. Rather, the provision of full student, researcher, faculty, and staff support had to be delivered in an urban environment. An intentionally inviting design will blend with the public already living and working in the area, enabling campus entities to engage with the downtown community. This will create ways and opportunities for UTSA to connect with the distributed downtown assets.

USTA HEMISFAIR CAMPUS

Preceding the academic downtown campus (circa 1997), UTSA added the Hemisfair campus, home to the Institute of Texan Cultures (ITC), a Smithsonian Affiliated Museum. Hemisfair refers to the 1968 World's Fair hosted in San Antonio, as it marked the 250th anniversary of the city's founding

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In 1718. The Institute of Texan Cultures highlights the cultural traditions, stories, and history that make up Texan culture. In 1973, the ITC became part of UTSA and hosted thousands of K-12 students and history researchers from across the state who visited this one-of-a-kind educational museum to learn about the diversity of Texas.

Today, the ITC is on the verge of a monumental transformation to modernize and refresh the educational and research experience while boosting the cultural experience for visitors and San Antonians alike. The University of Texas Board of Regents gave UTSA conditional approval to have exclusive discussions with the City of San Antonio to buy or lease its ITC property, which makes up roughly 13.5 acres in Hemisfair, for a "potential downtown revitalization project." The ITC will remain in the historical, cultural, and visitor-dense urban core, within walking distance of the other UTSA downtown campuses. By 2028, UTSA wants to have 10,000 students studying and living on 32 acres of its downtown campuses. Micro transit, student housing, and mixed-use development will transform the area and economy.

USTA SOUTHWEST CAMPUS

The Southwest Campus is located on the San Antonio River in downtown San Antonio, on the historical site of the Southwest School of Art, which merged with UTSA in 2022. Southwest School of Art was founded in 1965 and has long been regarded as a nationally recognized leader in visual arts education. An urban oasis, the campus has been a place for learning and growth for more than 165 years. The buildings and campus were originally known as the Ursuline Convent and Academy, which opened in 1851 as the first school for girls in San Antonio. The UTSA Southwest Campus will continue to offer a mix of degree-seeking, community, and children's class offerings.

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LINKS TO FURTHER INFORMATION

Supporting Information:

- University of Texas at San Antonio, San Pedro I Building
- University of Texas at San Antonio, Downtown Campus
- University of Texas at San Antonio, Hemisfair Campus
- University of Texas at San Antonio, Southwest Campus

Articles:

- Mural by Cristina Sosa Noriega adds to vibrancy of UTSA's San Pedro I
- Tiled mural by Mark Hogensen adds bold geometric patterns to San Pedro I
- San Pedro II groundbreaking highlights connections to San Antonio's technology workforce

ABOUT APLU

The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) is North America's oldest higher education association. APLU is a research, policy, and advocacy organization dedicated to strengthening and advancing the work of public universities in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. The association's membership consists of public research universities, land-grant institutions, state university systems, and affiliated organizations.

APLU's mission is to expand access and improve student success to deliver the innovative workforce of tomorrow; advance and promote research and discovery to improve society, foster economic growth, and address global challenges; and build healthy, prosperous, equitable, and vibrant communities locally and globally.

Based in Washington, DC, the association's work is furthered by an active and effective advocacy arm that works with Congress and the administration as well as the media to advance federal policies that strengthen public universities and benefit the students they serve.

ABOUT THE IEP PROGRAM

APLU and its Commission on Economic and Community Engagement (CECE) established the Innovation and Economic Prosperity (IEP) Program to help higher education institutions codify, elevate, and advance their campus enterprise supporting economic and community development.

The **IEP Program** recognizes institutions that have demonstrated a meaningful, ongoing and substantial commitment to economic and community development, growth, and economic opportunity.

The **IEP Awards Program** recognize exemplary and innovative projects in university-based economic and community engagement:

- Talent and workforce development
- Innovation, entrepreneurship, and tech-based economic development
- Place development through public service, outreach, and community engagement

Learn more at: www.APLU.org/IEP