

TOP DRAFT PROPOSAL



**Summer 2005
Senator Eliot Shapleigh**

Introduction

El Paso has failed to capitalize on its greatest asset--talented young adults. When there is no opportunity to provide students like Dasanj Aberdeen, a valedictorian from El Paso High School the promise of a great career after college, she is forced to move elsewhere. At only 18, she feels that she "has done the most growing [she] can do as a person in El Paso."¹ This "brain drain" is one of the most unfortunate problems that seems to reoccur each high school graduation season in El Paso.

Having young adults choose El Paso as their home opens up many economic factors that are lacking in the community. If El Paso is to create growth in its economy, then it must create opportunities in El Paso for our youth. The *Top Draft* program is an inventive solution for the continuous "brain drain" in El Paso by meeting the needs of students in this area, while simultaneously developing the economy.

The Need for *Top Draft* in El Paso

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, only 16.6 percent of people in El Paso over the age of 25 have a bachelors degree, while the state average is 23.2 percent.³ The current four-year graduation rate at the University of Texas-El Paso (UTEP) is 4.5 percent.⁴ The majority of household incomes in El Paso fall under \$25,000 while the majority of Texas enjoys a median income of \$45,861.⁵ El Paso's per capita income is much worse at a mere \$13,421.⁶ These are only a few educational and economic disparities in El Paso that call for change.

Major companies have shifted jobs elsewhere. This lack of career opportunities in El Paso for talented young adults have forced them to reside in other parts of the country such as Austin, Dallas, San Antonio and even Albuquerque, New Mexico. These urban areas may not have a larger population in comparison to El Paso, but their economic development is based around opportunity and potential. El Paso has consistently refused these opportunities and, therefore, suffered economic depletion. With the loss of its youth as a source of economic growth, El Paso has been subject to a decline in gross economic stability. Major companies and our youth are forced to find areas where they will thrive versus a city that lacks the educational qualifications and career opportunities to sustain their existence.

Goals of *Top Draft*

The ultimate goal of the *Top Draft* program is to invest in El Paso's talent. Through the *Top Draft* program, more of El Paso's youth will attend UTEP, graduate, purchase their homes and establish their businesses in El Paso. The educational level of the El Paso will increase and eventually lead to the elimination of the brain drain in El Paso.

Top Draft will rely on the collaboration between UTEP, the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce and the City of El Paso. Specific objectives for the program include:

- Identify and implement early recruitment of 8th through 12th grade students in the El Paso area schools.
- Create a relationship between area parents and students with the UTEP.
- Implement rigorous summer institutions that will direct area middle and high school students in various fields of study before college.
- Create direct competition between the UTEP and area colleges.
- Provide college internship opportunities for talented youth who join the program to allow for hands-on experience in their field before they enter the workforce.
- Provide participants with a forgivable loan for investment in a home or business contingent upon remaining in El Paso upon graduation from UTEP.

The *Top Draft* Structure

Early identification and recruitment of regional talent

Top Draft aims to identify talent and intellect in El Paso at a young age beginning in the eighth grade. It is well noted that today there are many requirements for youth to succeed academically. They must be adequately prepared to graduate, they must look forward to attending college to financially support themselves in the future, and, they must have the proper preparation to endure a college level curriculum. By pin pointing these students early, *Top Draft* will cultivate and motivate a goal oriented group of young people that will choose UTEP for their college.

Summer institutes dedicated to five areas of study

To help prepare student with the necessary skills for college level material, *Top Draft* will rely on summer institutes at UTEP in five major disciplines: engineering, computer technology/math, health science, law/business and education. Grade level students from the eighth to twelfth grade will be exposed each summer to various areas of learning at the collegiate level in a university atmosphere. The ultimate goal is to gear grade level students into successful college paths early.

These summer institutes are modeled after the TexPrep Pre-Freshman Engineering Program, a collaboration between UTEP and NASA. This program identifies area students

starting in middle school and for eight weeks provides them with scientific skills and peer on peer mentoring. Participants also receive high school credit. Tex-Prep has been very successful in producing motivated students who pursue college after high school and enroll in science and engineering studies. Since the Tex Prep Program is the only one of its kind established at UTEP, there will need to be some aggressive developments of the other summer institutes. To begin this process, a general discipline camp can be created until all institutes have been formed. This will also give various UTEP departments the opportunity to develop a program that will coincide with the structure of the youth summer programs created.

Admission and full ride scholarship packages to UTEP

Top Draft not only equips middle to high school age students for college, but it also grants them the opportunity to enrich their post high school education by giving them first “draft” status at UTEP. At the beginning of their senior year of high school, *Top Draft* participants will be guaranteed admission to UTEP and a full four-year scholarship through the “Contract For Our Future.” The Contract is designed to give students a full ride at UTEP while creating a support system for them to successfully complete their degree in four years.

The scholarship will include tuition, fees, room and board, books and supplies, and transportation. By offering financial and academic incentives to prospective students, UTEP will strengthen competition with other local universities such as New Mexico State University (NMSU), which has had a strong increase in El Paso residents enrolling at NMSU since 1996, when El Paso residents were given in-state tuition.⁷ This is in addition to the fact that due to tuition increases through tuition deregulation, UTEP students will have to pay \$140 more per year than if they attended NMSU.

Internship opportunities in coordination with the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce

Many jobs today require a student to have some work experience through an internship, volunteering, or an actual job. The *Top Draft* program will provide internship coordination through the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce’s Education department. The Chamber will place each participating student with a job or internship within their respective fields during each summer of their college career. *Top Draft* would eliminate the competition students have with others looking for jobs or internships for the summer. They will also have the opportunity to work in their field first hand, be prepared for a job after college, as well as connect early with the El Paso workforce.

Bonus cash incentives for program completion

For each year the student completes the *Top Draft* program, they will be rewarded with a cash stipend ranging from \$2,000 to \$5,000 per year. After graduation, *Top Draft* students will have the opportunity to borrow from the amount that they have been accredited for completing the program. Through this loan forgiveness program, participants can avoid debt after

graduating from UTEP, and the money can be used towards purchasing a home, the start of a business or any other investments needed to begin a career in El Paso. Students will not have to refund the loan under the condition that they remain in El Paso for a minimum of four years after graduation from UTEP. This supports the idea of bright minds contributing to El Paso and being rewarded for doing so.

This incentive is also another way for UTEP to create direct competition with other institutions such as NMSU. If students are offered the opportunity to graduate from college with \$8,000 to \$20,000 dollars in their pocket, this outweighs the possible debt they will incur from attending schools like NMSU while depending on federal loans or with little financial support.

How Top Draft Will Be Supported

Top Draft will rely on coordinated funds between UTEP, the El Paso Greater Chamber of Commerce and the City of El Paso. Funds will be used to:

1. Purchase materials to create information packets/brochures for advertising to the area parents, students and teachers about the summer institutes and the *Top Draft* opportunities.
2. Implement the complete *Top Draft* scholarship at UTEP, which includes: tuition, fees, books, room and board, transportation expenses and a personal stipend.
3. Purchasing materials or tools needed to conduct summer institutes at UTEP.
4. Create a cash stipend in the form of a forgivable loan as an option after completion of the program.

Steering Group

The progress of *Top Draft* will be monitored by individuals with specific interest and expertise for the *Top Draft* program. UTEP will be instrumental in initiating the relationship with area students for the *Top Draft* program. They will oversee the implementation of the summer institutes and the recruitment and draft of prospective students. Upon acceptance into the program, UTEP will provide selected students with complete funding to attend UTEP for four years.

The El Paso Chamber of Commerce will specifically oversee the various companies that will provide summer internships to *Top Draft* recipients. They will continuously encourage business owners to participate in the recruitment of various fields to enhance the experience UTEP students will receive

each summer. The El Paso Chamber of Commerce will also strive to create a scholarship fund that will be allocated to the *Top Draft* program to defer extra cost that has been incurred because of tuition deregulation.

The City of El Paso will be instrumental in implementing the Education Foundation for *Top Draft* students.

Senator Eliot Shapleigh's office will be responsible for creating a communication infrastructure between UTEP, the El Paso Chamber of Commerce, and the City of El Paso. This office will also conduct an annual evaluation that will be given to each student and company who participates in the *Top Draft* program to determine any refinement of the program necessary for success.

Program Evaluation

Top Draft will conduct a series of evaluations at the end of each year from participating students and participating companies. These evaluations will assess the implementation, process and end product of the programs on an annual basis. The forms will be created *Top Draft* by Senator Shapleigh's office with the guidance of the steering group. Appropriate changes will be made to satisfy the needs of participating students, contributors, and businesses

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- 1 El Paso Times "Large cities' lure: Many students leave El Paso for college, jobs" July 7, 2003
 - 2 El Paso Times "Developing high-tech industries may lure smart El Pasoans back" July 22, 2003
 - 3 Governor's Business Council www.texasgbc.org/pdfs/transcriptpdfallpages.pdf Austin, Texas May 2002
 - 4 United States Census www.uscensus.gov El Paso County QuickFacts 2000
 - 5 United States Census www.uscensus.gov El Paso County QuickFacts 2000
 - 6 United States Census www.uscensus.gov El Paso County QuickFacts 2000
 - 7 The University of Texas at El Paso, Center for Institutional, Educational, Research and Planning. www.cierp.utep.edu/StrategicPlan/sec5e.html Figure E-1

UTEP SUMMER INSTITUTIONS

November through January

- UTEP will identify eligible students for the summer institutes
- Inform parents of students from the 8th through 10th grade about summer camps at UTEP. The teachers/counselors and parents should also be informed about the camp opportunities.
 - UTEP should be the front-men on this project to build a relationship between community and the university
 - Students that are formerly in the programs should also be included in this process

January

- Application process completed which includes reminders of the program along with application. (The application deadline should fall around March.)

May

- Students are notified of acceptance and institute placement

June through July

- Program is implemented in the following disciplines: Engineering, Computer Technology/Math, Health Science, Law/Business and Education
- At the end students evaluate program, various institutes, etc.

UTEP SCHOLARS PROGRAM

November

- Contact all students in the 11th grade about scholars program, including parents, teachers and counselors.

September (of following year)

- Application deadline for graduating seniors. This addresses the issue of early acceptance and guarantees that they will attend UTEP. Contracts should be attached with the scholarships detailing the requirements from the student and the guarantee from UTEP.
- Student are notified by November 1st if they are accepted into the program. This “beats” competing universities who often require student to turn in early acceptance applications by November.

April

- Student’s interests are identified and job/internship placement is conducted by the Chamber of Commerce

May through August

- Students are placed in various college internships for the complete summer.

August (mid-month)

- Students and participating businesses are given the opportunity to evaluate the program.

