

## Ceremonies Pay Tribute to University Faculty and Benefactors

*Year of Investitures Honors More than 100 Holders of Endowed Chairs and Professorships*

Oct. 30, 2012

Earnest gratitude and hearty reminiscence marked the tone for a second round of investiture ceremonies at The University of Texas at Dallas honoring the achievements of scholars holding endowed positions, as well as the benefactors who support their work.

“Today we celebrate some of our extraordinary faculty,” said UT Dallas President Dr. David E. Daniel. “The investiture is both ceremonial and joyous.”

The sentiments expressed by the honorees proved President Daniel's assessment of the ceremony as they reflected upon their own careers and expressed heartfelt gratitude to gathered family, friends and colleagues.

One by one, more than 30 faculty members from six schools crossed the stage in the Davidson Auditorium to accept engraved medallions before sharing their thoughts on the occasion.

The fall ceremonies closed a series of celebrations throughout 2012 that began [last spring](#) to honor the holders of more than 100 [endowed chairs and professorships](#) at the University.

Some described their career treks, many helped along by mentors both at UT Dallas and elsewhere. Several described their experiences as first-generation college graduates whose families and friends made profound sacrifices in



On Oct. 23, President David E. Daniel (center) invested holders of endowed chairs and professorships from the Naveen Jindal School of Management.



On Oct. 22, Dr. Daniel honored holders of

support of their endeavors.



[Dr. Ram Rao](#),  
Founders  
Professor in the  
[Naveen Jindal  
School of  
Management](#),  
spoke fondly of  
the man who brought him to UT Dallas nearly three decades ago – Dr. Frank Bass, former dean of the school.

endowed positions from the School of Economics, Political and Policy Sciences, and some who had not previously been invested from the School of Arts and Humanities, the School of Behavior and Brain Sciences, the School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics and the Erik Jonsson School of Engineering and Computer Science.

### Fall 2012 Investitures

[Endowed Chairs  
and Professors  
Website](#)

[Photos, Speeches  
Mark Heartfelt  
Ceremonies](#)

[Fall Investiture  
Honorees by  
School](#)

[Spring Investiture  
Ceremonies](#)

“Frank Bass was there for me, and I want to think about him today,” Rao said. “[He was] somebody who himself was a great star of the state of Texas ... and had a very cultivated mind.”

Rao was one of 20 faculty members from the Jindal School of Management honored in the fall investitures.

[Dr. Alex Piquero](#), Ashbel Smith Professor in the [School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences](#) (EPPS) was the newest member of the school’s faculty honored.

He thanked his parents who came to the United States from Cuba as exiles in the early 1960s. He also thanked his mentors, those who recruited him to UT Dallas, the University administration who, he added, provide a wonderful working environment and his wife, Dr. Nicole Leeper Piquero.

“This means the world, but it's not me who really deserves this honor. It's the people who got me ... to this point,” Piquero said. “All that is good in me is from these people.”

Husbands, wives and children shared in the moment.

[Dr. Mike Peng](#), O.P. Jindal Chair of Management, thanked his family as his wife, Agnes Peng, recorded the event from the audience. Their children Grace, 10, and James, 8, also snapped photos as their father received his medallion.

At a reception following the ceremony, Agnes Peng lauded her husband for his hard work over the years and for providing a role model for their children.

“He inspires them to work hard,” she said. “We are all very honored by the University’s efforts to recognize him.”

[Dr. Brian Berry](#), the Lloyd Viel Berkner Regental Professor and former dean for EPPS, thanked



Dr. Mike Peng, O.P. Jindal Chair of Management, was supported by his family, including his wife, Agnes Peng, and children James and Grace.

[Dr. Gary Bolton](#), a self-described “newbie” to UT Dallas, said he was thrilled to be among such a distinguished group of scholars.

Bolton, who holds the O.P. Jindal Chair of Management, added that he found the University to be warm, welcoming and on an upward trajectory for the future. He also had the fortune of sharing the experience with his wife, [Dr. Elena Katok](#), Ashbel Smith Professor in the Jindal School, who was also invested.

A chair or professorship lasts as long as the University exists and is among its highest academic honors. The funding generated by the establishment of a chair or professorship plays a critical role in helping faculty members advance their instructional programs and develop new research ideas.

The positions also serve as lasting tributes to the donors who establish them. For example, [Charles and Nancy Davidson](#), alumni and long-time University benefactors, created four of the positions recognized during the recent ceremonies. Alumnus [Naveen Jindal](#), for which the school is named, created two of the positions celebrated.

Among the attendees were representatives from [Ericsson](#), which provides support for two endowed chairs at UT Dallas: the Lars Magnus Ericsson Distinguished professorship held by [Dr. Varghese Jacob](#) and the Lars Magnus Ericsson Chair in Electrical Engineering held by [Dr. Mark Spong](#), Dean of the Erik

Jonsson School of Engineering and Computer Science.

“Our company is tied to UT Dallas in many ways and the relationship is mutually beneficial,” said Paul Miesse, vice president of compensation & benefits at Ericsson North America.

the University administration for creating the ceremony for invested professors.

“I began my academic career almost 60 years ago when I joined the faculty of the University of Chicago. I've since held chairs in several universities, but this is the very first time I've had one invested in this way,” he said. “It's a wonderful and memorable occasion.”



Dr. Varghese S. Jacob, Lars Magnus Ericsson Distinguished Professor, chatted with Paul Miesse, vice president of compensation and benefits at Ericsson North America.



Dr. Sheila Amin Gutiérrez de Piñeres, Mary McDermott Cook Distinguished Chair for Undergraduate Education and Research and dean of Undergraduate Education and [Dr. Brian Berry](#), the Lloyd Viel Berkner Regental Professor and former dean for EPPS, enjoyed the reception after the investiture ceremony.

dissertation committee and I wanted to be here with her when she was honored,” said Osman Kazan, doctoral candidate in operations management. “She’s a very humble person and she always is here for us. She’s an excellent teacher and a wonderful human being.”

Stecke mingled for a bit before hurrying to teach a 5 p.m. class. As she started to walk away, a guest noticed she was still wearing her medallion.

“Do you want to take that off?” they asked.

“No,” she responded. “I’m wearing it to class.”

Ericsson has provided funding not only for the chaired positions but for scholarships and student projects as well.

“We benefit from the excellent education and training students receive here by way of hiring them,” Miesse added. “We’re very pleased to be here today as UT Dallas honors these world-class faculty members.”

[Dr. Kathryn Stecke](#), Ashbel Smith Professor in the Jindal School, chatted with a few of her doctoral students at the reception after the ceremony. They congratulated her and spoke fondly of her dedication to their academic endeavors.

“She’s the chair of my



[Dr. Kathryn Stecke](#), Ashbel Smith Professor, celebrated her honor with some of her students, including, from left: Osman Kazan, Emre Ertan and Qingning Cao.

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