2014 was a ground-breaking year at UT Arlington

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01/05/2015 4:07 PM | Updated: 01/08/2015 11:51 AM

ARLINGTON — The University of Texas at Arlington set enrollment records in 2014, powered by gains in its nursing, education and engineering departments and online programs.

The number of Texas students rose 4.8 percent to 34,899 during the fall semester, a 65 percent increase since 2001. Adding students from beyond Texas, enrollment is expected to climb close to 41,000.

Meanwhile, the university recorded its busiest year in research, which President Vistasp Karbhari called no coincidence.
“I think our faculty and our students are heavily engaged in research,” he said. “The more research being done, the more graduate students get involved, and the numbers continue to grow.”

He said that in August through October alone, the faculty attracted $28.6 million in research grants.

Some research projects drew worldwide attention, especially one involving the creation of micro-windmills to generate energy ultra-efficiently

“It’s not just the funding,” he said. “It’s the awards they’re getting for the work that they’re doing. We have 10 members of our faculty that are in the National Academy of Inventors. That is definitely the highest number in Texas, and No. 2 in the nation.”

Among the enrollment firsts, the College of Engineering surpassed 6,000 students with a 25 percent increase. And U.S. News & World Report ranked it among the top 100 engineering programs in the nation.

“It’s a huge year for engineers, but we also saw steady growth in the College of Nursing and Health Innovation,” said Kristin Sullivan, assistant vice president for media relations, noting the program’s 5.2 percent rise. “Most people would be shocked to hear that there are more than 12,000 students in nursing.”

Karbhari added that 225 students received doctoral degrees last year, compared with 150 in 2013.

Overall, UTA, second-largest in the University of Texas System, awarded more than 10,000 degrees.

Professor J.C. Chiao and Smitha Rao, a research associate in the electrical engineering department, designed the tiny windmill. Made of a flexible metal alloy, the windmill is so small — less than 2 millimeters wide — that 10 could fit on a grain of rice. Mini-armies of them could be installed in the sleeve of a cellphone or on a house to provide renewable wind power.

“The breakthrough is in being able to take something down to the micro level that could realistically be used,” Karbhari said.
From micro to Milky Way, another research team developed a method to help find the moons of distant planets orbiting other stars. Physics professor Zdzislaw Musielak and two Ph.D. student researchers studied how to use radio emissions instead of starlight to detect moons.

“It was really a fun year for research at Arlington,” Sullivan said.

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