

## ON CAMPUS



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# DÉJÀ VU?

## University begins semester online amid COVID-19 surge



Fatima Gamez Lopez/THE RIDER

Jessica Vera, a physician assistant, administers a COVID-19 test Jan. 7 at the UTRGV Community Engagement & Student Success Building parking lot in Edinburg. UT Health RGV is conducting tests for COVID-19 in Edinburg for UTRGV students, staff, faculty and the community. Drive-thru tests are available by appointment. To make an appointment, call the UT Health RGV COVID-19 line at (833) 888-2268, or register on the patient portal at [uthealthrgv.org/covidtest](http://uthealthrgv.org/covidtest).

**Gabriella Garcia**  
THE RIDER

With the rising number of COVID-19 cases in the Rio Grande Valley, classes at UTRGV are being conducted remotely until Jan. 28.

Classes will resume according to their assigned modality Jan. 31, according to a campuswide email sent by the Office of the President on Jan. 7.

Integrated health sciences freshman Olivia Rodriguez

was hoping classes would not go virtual this semester.

"I have some classes that I registered for that are in person and I'd rather just stay in person than go online,"

VISIT [UTRGV.EDU/COMMITMENT](http://UTRGV.EDU/COMMITMENT) TO VIEW THE COVID-19 DASHBOARD

Rodriguez said.

Some of the COVID-19 cases are of the Omicron variant.

As of Jan. 4, Hidalgo County reported five cases of the Omicron variant, according to a news release, and as of

Jan. 3, Cameron County had reported one.

"The vaccines are helpful against the Omicron variant," said Michael Dobbs, vice dean of Clinical Affairs with the School of Medicine and chief medical officer for UT Health RGV. "They're very helpful. Actually, they're our best tool."

Dobbs said Omicron can evade immunity better than other variants. All of them have the capability to do this, but Omicron seems to have

See **OMICRON**, Page 10

AT UTRGV

## 93 COVID-19 positive cases

**Natalie Lapsley**  
THE RIDER

UTRGV reported 93 new COVID-19 positives between Dec. 31 and Jan. 6, according to a university official.

Doug Arney, vice president for Administrative Support Services and chair of the Infectious Disease Committee at UTRGV, said among the 93 were 31 students, 43 staff and seven faculty members.

The remaining 12 are students who tested positive, but remain at home.

UTRGV updates the number of cases reported for campus individuals weekly through the Confirmed Cases Dashboard. The numbers on the website are provided by the university COVID-19

See **COVID**, Page 2

## HOW MUCH DOES A COVID-19 TEST AT UTRGV COST?

### For insured patients:

-UT Health RGV will submit your claim to your insurance provider. You must provide your health insurance information at the time of scheduling an appointment.

-If you visit a UT Health RGV clinical site, there may be a fee for the doctor visit and test, and you may have additional out-of-pocket costs depending on your health plan coverage. Contact your insurance provider for details about your coverage.

### For uninsured patients:

-If testing is medically necessary, there is no cost (federal uninsured program will cover the costs).

-If you would like to get tested for traveling purposes or requirements by an employer, the fee for the PCR test is \$100.

Source: [uthealthrgv.org](http://uthealthrgv.org)

# Endowment to enhance graduate college scholarships

**Brigitte Ortiz**  
THE RIDER

The UTRGV Graduate Select Scholarship became available for the first time this spring to newly admitted accelerated online and traditional graduate students.

Funds from the \$5 million Rio-South Texas Education and Community Development Foundation endowment will be used to enhance the scholarship for students in certain fields.

According to an email sent to the campus community on Dec. 15, the funds will

be designated for graduate students in the fields of agriculture, food and natural resources, business, finance, marketing, education, health sciences, information technology, manufacturing and STEM.

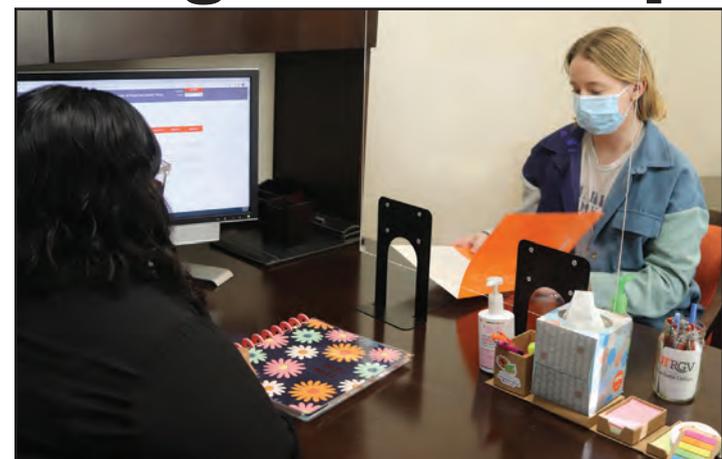
The scholarship priority deadline for the spring semester was Jan. 7. Students may apply for the scholarship depending on availability of funding until today. The Summer I & II priority deadline is April 15 for traditional graduate students and March 1 for accelerated online programs.

Graduate students must

be enrolled a minimum of six hours or three hours per module for the award semester. Students must also have a minimum 3.0 institutional GPA to maintain eligibility for their subsequent awarded semester/module. The award consists of a one-time, up to \$1,000 scholarship for one academic year, according to the UTRGV Scholarships and Enrollment Communication website.

Sandra Hansmann, interim dean of the Graduate College, said the university will support as many students as possible with this award.

See **GRADUATE**, Page 10



Alejandra Yañez/THE RIDER

Devon Bradley, a graduate student, speaks to Angelina Buitron, a graduate student recruiter on the Brownsville campus, about the Graduate Select Scholarship, a one-time award available for newly admitted graduate students in both traditional and accelerated online programs.

## THE RIDER

The Rider is the official, award-winning student newspaper of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. The newspaper is widely distributed on and off campus in Brownsville and Edinburg, Texas. Views presented are those of the writers and do not reflect those of the newspaper or university.

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS



**Today**  
Info Depots  
**Student Activities, Student Union and University Recreation** will host

**information depots** from 9 to 11 a.m. today and Wednesday at the Main Courtyard on the Brownsville campus and at the same time in the lobby of the Student Services Building on the Edinburg campus. There will be free breakfast goodies, brochures and giveaways. The depots are part of UTRGV's Week of Welcome.

**Wednesday**  
Information Tabling

The **Access for Sex-Education organization** will host an **informational tabling** from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. in **Student Union 1.300** on the Edinburg campus to educate students about sexual health, where to find services and how to advocate for

reproductive health care programs.

Meet and Greet

**Christians at RGV** will host a **meet and greet** from noon to 1:30 p.m. in Student Union 1.30 on the Brownsville Campus.

Drive Inn Movie

The **Campus Activies Board and Student Union** will screen **"Venom: Let There Be Carnage"** from 6:30 to 10 p.m. on the Student Union lawn in Brownsville.

**Thursday**

Welcome Back Bash

Students can participate in **camping activities** and learn about student organizations, spring events and campus resources from 3 to 5 p.m. on the **Student Union** lawn on the Brownsville campus. There will be food and games. The event is part of UTRGV's Week of Welcome.

WoW Tailgate

**Student Activities and Athletics**

will host a **tailgate** before the UTRGV Women's Basketball game from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Vaquero Village on the Edinburg campus. There will be activities, such as face-painting, free food and music. The event is part of UTRGV's Week of Welcome.

Tabling

**Christians at RGV** will host an **informational tabling** from 10 a.m. to noon at the Student Union lawn on the Brownsville campus.

**Friday**

Playlist Rewind Bingo

Students can participate in **playlist rewind bingo** from 2 to 4 p.m. via Zoom.

Drive Inn Movie

The **Campus Activies Board and Student Union** will screen **"Venom: Let There Be Carnage"** from 6:30 to 10 p.m. at the Edinburg Baseball Stadium parking lot E-32.

--Compiled by Diana Alvarez-Tovar

## POLICE REPORTS

The following are among the incidents reported to University Police between Dec. 15 and Jan. 12.



**Dec. 15**

**4:13 p.m.:** A staff member at the Financial Services building on the Edinburg campus reported receiving three forged checks bearing the university insignia. At the moment,

the university has not suffered any monetary loss. The case is under investigation.

**5:49 p.m.:** A student residing at Unity Hall on the Edinburg campus reported that her father had arrived unannounced to pick her up and she did not want to leave with him. The student confirmed that she had not been threatened by her father. An officer informed the father of the situation and he left without incident.

**Dec. 20**

**5:19 p.m.:** The Edinburg Fire Department and an officer were called to the Dining and Ballroom Complex on the Edinburg campus for an active fire alarm. After the fire department checked for fire and smoke, the building was cleared for reentry.

**10:11 p.m.:** A UTRGV police officer was called in reference to a disturbance between a non-affiliated man and woman at Lot E-34 on the Edinburg campus. The man falsely identified himself to the officer, fled on foot and resisted arrest. It was discovered he had active arrest warrants from the Texas Department of Public Safety.

**Dec. 21**

**10:42 a.m.:** UTRGV Police Communications observed activity of an individual via border cameras on the Brownsville campus by the U.S. border fence. A UTRGV officer contacted the man, the U.S. Border Patrol arrived and took custody of the unaffiliated individual.

**Dec. 22**

**7:22 a.m.:** A UTRGV police officer saw a group of individuals running from a UTRGV parking lot on the Brownsville campus toward the Casa Bella Apartments and climbing a wooden fence. One individual was

caught and transferred to the U.S. Border Patrol.

**Dec. 23**

**7:31 a.m.:** The U.S. Border Patrol requested assistance from University Police on the Brownsville campus after several individuals were seen in the area. A UTRGV police officer detained four non-affiliated men.

**Dec. 24**

**3:35 a.m.:** A UTRGV police officer found a non-affiliated man asleep on the 1200 block of West Van Week Street on the Edinburg campus. The man was found to be intoxicated. He was arrested on a charge of public intoxication and was booked into the Edinburg Municipal Jail.

**Dec. 30**

**4:49 a.m.:** A UTRGV police officer found a non-affiliated man loitering near the sidewalk area of the UTRGV North Office Building on the Brownsville campus. It was discovered he had a criminal history that included an arrest warrant (no extradition) from Maryland. He was issued a written criminal trespass warning for all UTRGV property. The man left without incident.

**Jan. 3**

**1:04 p.m.:** A UTRGV police officer was dispatched to the Student Services Building on the Edinburg campus in reference to a fire alarm. The fire panel indicated a smoke detector, and there was the smell of smoke coming from an elevator and the roof access area. The Edinburg Fire Department responded and cleared the building for reentry. The cause of the smoke was determined to be malfunctioning elevator machinery.

**Jan. 6**

**1:24 p.m.:** A faculty member reported a UTRGV-owned projector as missing from the Coastal Studies Lab on South Padre Island. The faculty member reported that a contractor had permission to use the device while on campus, and took the projector home without authorization. The faculty member said the contractor told her he had taken the device to prevent it from being stolen and said

he would return it. An officer contacted the contractor.

**4:16 p.m.:** A staff member on the Brownsville campus of the UT Regional Academic Health Center Houston found a small plastic baggy containing what appeared to be marijuana. A UTRGV police officer took custody of the bag and conducted a presumptive field test, which indicated it was marijuana.

**5:55 p.m.:** A contractor found a small, partially burnt marijuana cigar in the lobby area of the UTRGV Institute of Neuroscience Building on the Harlingen campus. A UTRGV police officer took custody of the item and conducted a presumptive field test, which indicated marijuana inside the cigar.

**Jan. 9**

**5:06 p.m.:** A UTRGV police officer was dispatched to Lot B-1 on the Brownsville campus after two men were observed via surveillance cameras crossing over the border fence. The U.S. Border Patrol caught the two men.

**Jan. 10**

**7:01 p.m.:** A staff member in the Student Services Building on the Edinburg campus reported being short \$100 in her cash box.

**Jan. 11**

**12:51 a.m.:** A UTRGV police officer responded to a single vehicle traffic collision on the 600 block of North Sugar Road. The driver, a UTRGV student, hit a university parking sign, causing minor damage to the sign and his vehicle. An investigation confirmed the driver was intoxicated. He was arrested on a charge of driving while intoxicated and was taken to the Edinburg city jail.

**Jan. 12**

**12:18 p.m.:** A staff member at the UT Health RGV/Knapp Family Health Center in Mercedes reported a suspicious vehicle parked at the location. The Mercedes Police Department assisted university police in checking the area, but the vehicle had already left the parking lot.

--Compiled by Gabriella L. Garcia

### COVID

*Continued from Page 1*

#### Response Team.

Arney said five UTRGV students were quarantined on campus the week of Dec. 31 to Jan. 6.

On Jan. 10, UT Health RGV announced in an email that the university will offer drive-up testing services to internal and external UTRGV community members.

Members of the public can schedule an appointment at [uthealthrgv.org/covidtest](http://uthealthrgv.org/covidtest).

This week, services will be provided at the UTRGV CESS Building parking lot from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday through Friday.

Other available times and locations for the week of Jan. 17 include:

–8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday in Lot B-4, located at 2651 FJRM Ave. in Brownsville (across from the Casa Bella Apartments and the University Police Department)

–8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday and Friday at the HACRB Building parking lot in Harlingen.

In Hidalgo and Cameron counties,

COVID-19 cases continue to increase.

Hidalgo County reported an additional 320 cases last Thursday, raising the county's total to 127,075, according to its website.

As of last Thursday, the county reported six additional deaths, raising its death toll to 3,547.

Cameron County reported an additional 958 cases last Wednesday, raising the county's total to 58,883 cases.

As of last Wednesday, no additional deaths were reported, leaving the county's death toll at 2,039.



# UTRGV to host collegiate women's chess tournament

## MSA places third at national championships



PHOTO COURTESY ALEX MISTA

UTRGV Women's Chess Team members FIDE Master Maria Malicka (left) and Woman Grandmaster Maili-Jade Ouellet will represent UTRGV at the upcoming Shining Chess Jewels Top 4 Tournament. The top four collegiate chess programs in the nation will compete in the event, which will be organized in three different time constraints: classical, rapid and blitz.

Reprinted from [utrgrider.com](http://utrgrider.com)

### Natalie Lapsley

THE RIDER

UTRGV will host the Shining Chess Jewels Top 4 Tournament, its first women's competition, this weekend.

"One of the main reasons why we are organizing this event is to promote women's chess," said Bartek Macieja, UTRGV's head chess coach. "There were never women's official tournaments [or]

championships, and we're trying to change that."

The event will take place Friday through Sunday in the Student Union on the Brownsville campus and will be attended by the top four teams in the nation: UTRGV, Texas Tech University, Saint Louis University and the University of Missouri.

The tournament will consist of three matches with three time controls: classical, rapid and blitz.

"The only difference is how much time the students will have to think per move," Macieja said. "Blitz is very, very fast. You, like, almost have

to instantly react. If not, you will just lose."

Viewers will be able to watch the event remotely.

"We want to take some safety measures," Macieja said, regarding COVID-19 protocols. "What we will do is we will put lots of cameras inside the playing hall so everybody would be able to see the games online, live."

For every game, there will be a camera set up showing both players, the chessboard and the time they have left.

"Hopefully, one day we can organize a big event [and] invite the entire university to watch it," Macieja said. "At [this] point, we prefer to have smaller groups of people."

Representing UTRGV at the event are Woman FIDE Master Ana Shamatava, Woman Grandmaster Maili-Jade Ouellet and FIDE Master Maria Malicka.

"We're going to do our best," Shamatava said Jan. 6 in a phone interview with The Rider. "We've had some trainings with our coach. We started in a previous semester, [and the] whole semester we were training with him."

Before a tournament, the team looks at the participants list to prepare.

"Usually, we like to, like, look at who we are playing, and we are preparing specifically against our opponents," she said. "Our preparation is our opening preparation. So, how we start the game ... it depends on who we are playing against."

Shamatava said a blitz chess game, which can take just minutes to complete, is entertaining, but that classical is still her favorite

time constraint.

"You can have more time so you can show what you know," Shamatava said. "I have more time to think, and I love thinking."

The UTRGV Mathematics and Science Academy chess team just completed its fifth semester competing and training with Macieja.

The team traveled to Orlando, Florida, for the 2021 National K-12 Grade Chess Championship Dec. 3-5, finishing third in the competition.

Representing MSA were seniors William McNutt, Adolfo Balderas, Carlos De Leon and Keith Biteng.

"The tournament was bigger than I expected because there were 74 students representing 32 high schools," Macieja said. "Finishing third is a very good result. It's just the third place in the nation so, of course, that's an extremely big success."

The points of the three top players of each team were added together at the end of the event, with McNutt scoring 5 points, Balderas scoring 4.5 points, and 4 points each for De Leon and Biteng.

McNutt said he was glad to compete in person again and hopes to see more in-person tournaments in the spring.

"Fall 2021 was the first time I was really able to compete [in person] since 2019," McNutt said. "Being able to go to Florida was nice, and playing chess in person was so great."

He said given the circumstances created by COVID-19, everyone's health is a priority.

See **CHESS**, Page 10

# Enrollment steady

## Spring decrease was expected

### Natalie Lapsley

THE RIDER

UTRGV has a preliminary enrollment of 28,892 students this spring semester, according to a university official.

As of last Thursday, undergraduate enrollment totaled 23,661 students, followed by 5,009 students in the Graduate College and 222 in the UTRGV School of Medicine, according to Maggie Hinojosa, UTRGV's senior vice president for Strategic Enrollment and Student Affairs.

The preliminary numbers for spring are lower than those of the Fall 2021 semester, but that is typical for institutions across the nation, according to Hinojosa.

"Typically, spring is about 90% of fall semester," Hinojosa said. "Spring is never more than fall, and we are trending right now at about 91%. So, we're trending how we should be for our fall comparison."

Enrollment is higher in the fall because of incoming students. Last fall, the freshman class was 5,439, but in spring, UTRGV usually gets about 150 to 200 incoming freshmen.

"You're going to have a lot of students who graduate from high school and you're going to have a huge

freshman class [in the fall]," Hinojosa said. "You may have some students ... who graduated in May or June but didn't come in the fall, who now come in the spring, but that number is very, very low."

Hinojosa said UTRGV is doing everything it can to keep the campus community safe.

"The fact that we have a school of medicine is huge," she said. "Our students, our faculty and our staff have access to not just [COVID-19] testing, but more importantly, vaccinations."

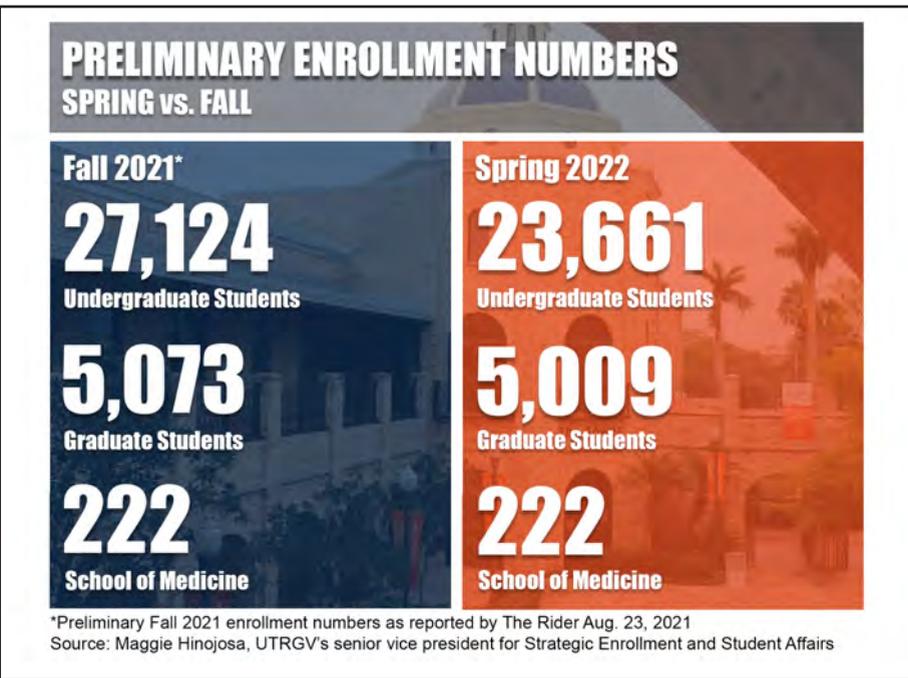
"We're really lucky to be at a place that is on the forefront of working on this pandemic and trying to do everything that we can to mitigate the spread."

With the exception of the first two weeks, which will take place online, this semester's course modalities are about 62% traditional, 24% online and 14% hybrid.

"We've already built in the flexibility," Hinojosa said about course modalities. "Our faculty [and] deans, you know, have been looking at this and really working to ensure that we're going to give our students the most appropriate form of how they should take their course."

Biology senior Alberto Diaz said he does not mind starting the semester online.

"Honestly, it really doesn't bother



Natalie Lapsley/THE RIDER GRAPHIC

me," Diaz said. "It saves me a lot on gas and, I think, as a biology major and medical student, that it's the right choice, just to prevent [the spread of COVID-19]."

Diaz is registered for four classes this spring semester and said financial aid made it possible.

"There's just so many pros and cons, especially with [COVID-19] going on," he said. "My job has been difficult, especially with the hours, so financial aid has helped a lot, especially the grants."

Cassandra Jimenez, a graduate student in agricultural, environmental and sustainability sciences, started her master's degree this semester.

"As long as people are safe and, like,

social distancing, I think it's fine," Jimenez said. "It's a group effort."

The graduate student said she is enrolled in three classes this semester, and that starting instruction online is a smart idea.

"I think it's a smart idea just because everyone's coming back from the holidays and from home," Jimenez said. "I think it will decrease the [COVID-19 case] numbers."

Hinojosa encourages students to take advantage of the COVID-19 testing and vaccination services provided by the university.

"As always, stay vigilant," she said. "Please take care of yourself."

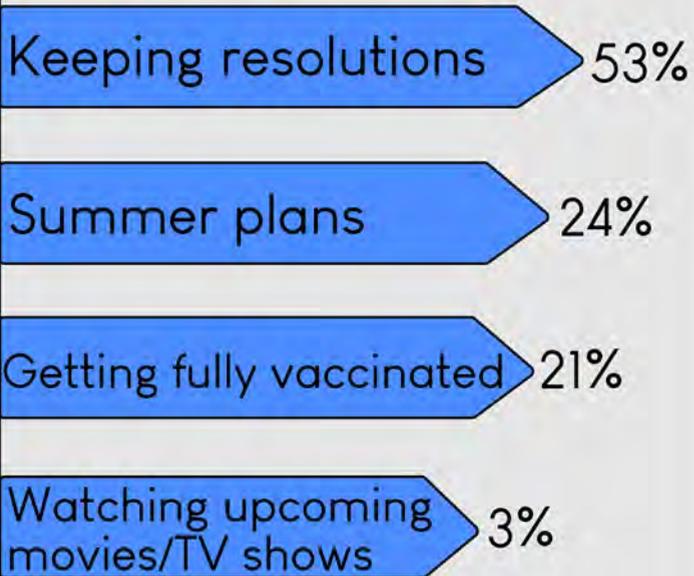
See **ENROLLMENT**, Page 10



**NEW YEAR, NEW ME**

On Jan. 7, The Rider conducted a poll on social media asking students, "What are you looking forward to this new year?" The results are shown below.

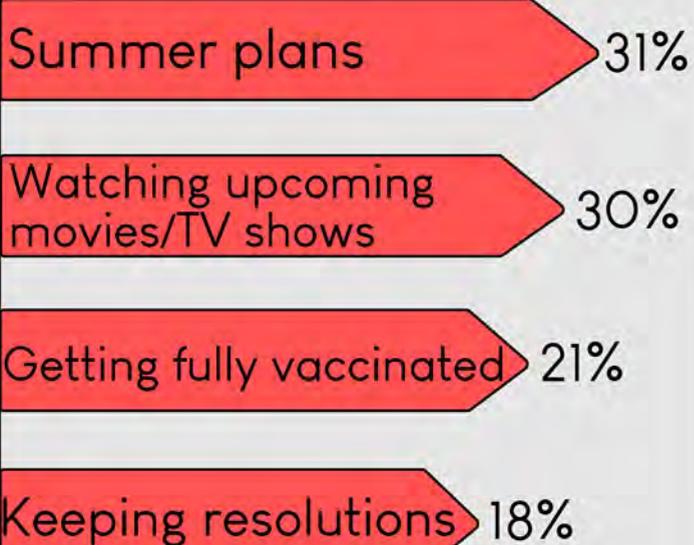
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**Looking forward, not back: What will 2022 bring us?**



**Ariael Ortiz**  
EDITORIAL  
CARTOONIST

COVID-19, this time with the Omicron variant.

I will be real. Hearing all the news about COVID-19 and how a new variant or some other concern rises to the surface is frustrating, especially when you just want to live your day-to-day life in the new normal, where we go out wearing masks and keeping our distance from our friends and loved ones.

So, instead of fueling the negativity brought on by COVID-19, what if we turn our focus to the other direction, and instead discuss what we hope 2022 brings us?

First, let me clarify: I am not pretending COVID-19 is over. I am just focusing on something else to clear my mind of negativity. And now, with that disclaimer out of the way, what are you looking forward to in 2022?

For me, a new year means the chance to look forward to upcoming games, TV shows, movies and personal achievements I want to accomplish. I want to learn to drive. I want to hang out with my friends and go watch a movie on premiere

night. I want to fuel myself in that hype and excitement of playing a new game that I was looking forward to since it was announced and, probably, hyperfixate on it for almost two months. I want to finish my classes and look forward to graduating this semester.

All of these activities could be enjoyed and accomplished before the pandemic, but in these times of COVID-19 it is definitely not the same anymore. But, to me, that

"We can still write our future, we can still do things, even though it is very limited and potentially risky, but we can stay safe and still do so much. And, most importantly, we can still look forward to the future."

does not matter because with proper precautions, I can still enjoy doing the things I love and accomplish my personal goals. Someone else might think that this mentality is childish and extremely narrow-minded, but here is my question to you: Would you rather look forward to something that brings you joy, excitement, tranquility, self-fulfillment and/or just about any other positive feeling, or do you dread what the future has in

store, in both the short-term and long-term?

I am not going to lie. I am tired of all the negativity and the constant reminders of how bad COVID-19 has been on the world, how many people have gotten sick and died, and how depressing it is to see people's mental health deteriorate because of confinement, burnout or personal issues that they are having a harder time handling.

I am glad that I have found methods to keep my head up and to look forward to the future, despite the almost grimdark bleakness that the world seemed to plunge into with COVID-19. But, not everyone has that luck or support, and it sucks.

One might believe that we have lost control of our lives, future and that this pandemic will last for years to come, changing how we carry on our daily lives after all of this is over. Whenever that is.

But, guess what? We are still here. We can still write our future, we can still do things, even though it is very limited and potentially risky, but we can stay safe and still do so much. And, most importantly, we can still look forward to the future. Whether it is immediate or far ahead, we can still get there.

It is *not* over until it is over.

Visit us online at **utrgvrider.com**



# Comenzando el semestre con una cálida bienvenida

**Fatima Gamez Lopez**  
EDITORA DE ESPAÑOL

El comienzo del semestre de primavera está aquí y UTRGV está haciendo que los estudiantes se sientan como en casa durante su sexta Semana de Bienvenida (*Week of Welcome*) anual, desde hoy hasta el 25 de enero, con numerosas actividades en ambos campus.

Los departamentos Actividades Estudiantiles, Unión Estudiantil y Recreación Universitaria organizarán actividades, Depósitos de Información (*Info Depots*) y rifas durante toda la semana con el propósito de dar la bienvenida a los Vaqueros actuales y entrantes.

La directora de la Unión Estudiantil, Edna Zambrano, explicó el propósito de la Semana de Bienvenida.

“La Semana de Bienvenida pretende ser la semana de enero en la que damos la bienvenida a los estudiantes”, dijo Zambrano. “Entonces, todavía tenemos algunas actividades para ayudar a los nuevos estudiantes a navegar por el campus”.

Ella dijo que los Depósitos de Información están destinados a ayudar a los nuevos estudiantes a aprender más sobre los recursos de UTRGV.

“Queremos asegurarnos de que tengamos eventos para darles la bienvenida, para mostrarles el campus y darles una idea del



FOTOS ARCHIVAS RIDER

Los estudiantes juegan un juego en el césped de la Unión Estudiantil en Brownsville durante la Semana de Bienvenida en la primavera del 2019. Desde hoy hasta el 25 de enero, los estudiantes, el personal y los miembros de la facultad tendrán la oportunidad de disfrutar de la Semana de Bienvenida en los campus de Brownsville y Edinburg. Los estudiantes podrán aprender sobre organizaciones estudiantiles, eventos de primavera, recursos del campus y mucho más.

tipo de actividades que tenemos durante todo el año”, dijo Zambrano. “Está patrocinado por la Oficina de Actividades Estudiantiles y luego muchos otros departamentos trabajan juntos para tener eventos todos los días”.

Naomi Valdez, coordinadora del programa de Actividades Estudiantiles, dijo que se realizaron algunos cambios en la Semana

de Bienvenida después de que la universidad anunció que las dos primeras semanas de clases serán virtuales debido a la “emergencia y rápida propagación” de la variante COVID-19 Omicron.

“Hemos cambiado algunos detalles menores sobre los diferentes modos en que ocurren los eventos originales”, dijo Valdez. “Uno de ellos, específicamente, es un juego de *rewind*

*bingo* que está siendo patrocinado por [la Junta de Actividades del Campus, o por sus siglas en inglés, CAB]. Al principio, estaba planeado que fuera en persona”.

Ella dijo que para la seguridad de los estudiantes, el *rewind bingo* ahora se reprogramará.

“Algunos de nuestros grandes eventos exclusivos seguirán siendo en persona, por lo que estamos muy entusiasmados con eso”, dijo Valdez. “Los otros eventos que tenemos están realmente afuera, como el autocine. Entonces, en esos eventos tenemos suficiente espacio para los estudiantes, el personal y la facultad”.

Zambrano dijo que es importante que los estudiantes vayan a los depósitos de información.

“Es una pequeña mesa de información agradable para los nuevos estudiantes, en caso de que estén un poco perdidos”, dijo. “Por lo general, los horarios de transporte son importantes porque muchos estudiantes llegan al campus y se dan cuenta, como, ‘Oh, necesito poder llegar a Brownsville hoy o ir a otra parte del campus’. Por lo tanto, es información útil en esos primeros dos días de clases”.

En el campus de Edinburg, puede encontrar los Depósitos de Información en el Centro de Visitantes, Unión Estudiantil (*Student Union*) y en el UREC, y en el campus de Brownsville, en la Unión

Vea SEMESTRE, Página 10

# Metas 2022: un paso a la vez

**Fatima Gamez Lopez**  
EDITORA DE ESPAÑOL

El comienzo de un nuevo año presenta una oportunidad para crear metas y reconsiderar todo lo que es posible, tiempo para reflexionar en el pasado y crear propósitos para el presente.

Saraí Mancías, psicóloga del Centro de Asesoramiento (*Counseling Center*) de UTRGV, ofrece consejos sobre cómo las personas pueden salir de su zona de confort en este 2022.

“Creo que una de las mayores ganancias al salir de nuestra zona de confort es el recordatorio de lo valiente que fuimos al dar el primer paso”, dijo Mancías. “Hay valentía ya que muchos se esfuerzan para dar ese paso y creo que en parte es que tenemos que luchar para hacer las cosas diferente si es que queremos cambiar”.

Ella sugiere empezar en un nivel bajo, poco a poco, en lugar de tratar de tomar cambios exagerados o salir de la zona de confort drásticamente.

Carlos de la Garza, estudiante de último año de ingeniería informática, describió lo que le ayudó a empezar el año adecuadamente.

“Trata este año como un nuevo comienzo, intenta esos propósitos que alguna vez consideraste, reuniendo esa confianza para realizar esas metas”, dijo De la Garza. “Tomen este año para empezar de nuevo”.

Mancías sugiere a los estudiantes el empezar en un nivel seguro, los pequeños cambios son los que animan a las personas a continuar con sus propósitos.

Sin embargo, para que las cosas mejoren en nuestras vidas, tenemos que estar dispuestos a dar el primer paso para hacerlo.

“Creo que es importante tomar en cuenta en quienes están en nuestro círculo social, o quienes son los que rodean nuestro ambiente, ya sea el ambiente físico o las personas que lo habitan”, dijo. “Si nosotros, por ejemplo, estamos en un ambiente o vivimos en un espacio donde hay personas que no apoyen nuestras metas, sería difícil hacer esos cambios”.

Así que si estamos en casa o vivimos con personas que no apoyan nuestras intenciones y metas del año, esto podría afectar nuestra calidad para hacer cambios significativos o que sean de nuestro agrado, dijo Mancías.

“Es importante el tener un ambiente de apoyo, que sea comprensivo de tus intenciones y así poder tener una conversación con los de mi círculo social de cómo podrían ayudar a facilitar mis metas o cambios y saber quienes son los que me apoyan y quienes no”.

De la Garza explicó algunos de los cambios que le gustaría hacer este año.

“Creo que me gustaría ser más consistente en mis metas, con mis pasatiempos o el gimnasio por ejemplo, pero con todo el estrés de COVID-19 y la escuela es difícil ser consistente”, dijo. “Este año estoy tratando de cambiar eso de mi, tener mejor administración de mi tiempo y ser consistente en las metas que quiero alcanzar”.

Con todo lo sucedido el año pasado, de la Garza espera poder continuar haciendo lo que le gusta en este año nuevo ya que ese es uno de sus propósitos.

“Definitivamente regresar al gimnasio, es algo que siempre he disfrutado”, dijo. “Pero, como dije, la escuela y el trabajo dificultan el poder



Diana Alvarez-Tovar/FOTOS RIDER

Carlos de la Garza, estudiante de último año de ingeniería informática, empieza el año ejercitándose en el Centro Recreativo Universitario en el campus de Edinburg.

ser consistentes y eso es algo que me gustaría intentar, el ser consistente con mis metas”.

Mancías dijo que muchas veces es difícil para las personas realizar sus propósitos de año nuevo.

“Creo que una de las metas más comunes que tienen las personas es bajar de peso, ¿cierto? tener mejor condición física y comer mejor”, dijo. “Creo que la sociedad juega un papel en eso, al igual que las familias”.

Mancías explicó cómo cuando las personas intentan hacer cambios drásticos los prepara al fracaso.

“Cuando no cumplen con sus metas al final es porque los propósitos que se establecieron no fueron realistas”, dijo.

Es importante establecer propósitos que sean realistas y realizables para

poder tener seguimiento, ya sea cada una o dos semanas.

“Así que si alguien quiere perder peso, debería decir, ‘OK que puedo hacer durante esta semana que pueda ayudar con mis metas’”, Mancías dijo. “Así tal vez sería comer un poco más de fruta en vez de comer una comida poco saludable o como cuando me siento estresada, en vez de comer papitas mejor elijo una fruta”.

Hacer pequeños cambios en la rutina es mucho mejor que hacer cambios drásticos en un corto periodo de tiempo.

Chloe Cabrera, estudiante de primer año de justicia penal (*criminal justice*) dice cómo aprendió el año pasado que la comunicación es la clave y es algo que va a implementar

Vea PASO, Página 11

# Starting the semester with a warm welcome



THE RIDER FILE PHOTO

Today through Jan. 25, students, staff and faculty members will have the opportunity to enjoy the Week of Welcome on the Brownsville and Edinburg campuses. Students will be able to learn about student organizations, spring events, campus resources and much more.

## **Fatima Gamez Lopez** SPANISH EDITOR

The beginning of the spring semester is here and UTRGV is making students feel at home during its fifth annual Week of Welcome, today through Jan. 25, with numerous activities on both campuses.

Student Activities, the Student Union and University Recreation will host activities, Info Depots and giveaways throughout the week with the

purpose of welcoming current and incoming Vaqueros.

Student Union Director Edna Zambrano explained the purpose of the Week of Welcome.

"The Week of Welcome is intended to be the week in January where we welcome students back," Zambrano said. "And so, we still have some activities to kind of help new students navigate the campus."

She said the Info Depots

are intended to help new students learn more about UTRGV resources.

"We want to make sure that we have events to welcome them, to kind of show them the campus and give them a taste of the kind of activities that we have throughout the year," Zambrano said. "It's sponsored by the Student Activities Office and then a lot of other departments kind of work together to have events every day."

Naomi Valdez, program coordinator for Student Activities, said some changes were made to Week of Welcome after the university announced that the first two weeks of classes will be virtual because of the "emergence and rapid spread" of the COVID-19 Omicron variant.

"We have changed some minor details about the different modes of original events happening," Valdez said. "One of them, specifically, is a rewind bingo game that is being sponsored by [the Campus Activities Board]. It was, at first, planned to be in person."

She said that for the safety of students, the rewind bingo will now be rescheduled.

"Some of our big signature events are still going to be in person, and so, we are really excited about that," Valdez said. "The other events that we have are really outside, like the drive-in [movie]. So, in those events we have enough space for students and staff and faculty."

Zambrano said it is important for students to go to the Info Depots.

"It's a nice little information table for new students, in case they're a little bit lost," she said. "Usually, the shuttle schedules are important because a lot of students get to campus and realize, like, 'Oh, I need to be able to get

to Brownsville today or go to another part of campus.' So, it's good information to have handy on those first two days of classes."

On the Edinburg campus, you can find the Info Depots at the Visitors Center, Student Union and the UREC, and on the Brownsville campus, at the Student Union, Main Building and library.

Valdez said the university has changed the manner of conducting events in order to prioritize health.

"I feel like we have taken into account that COVID numbers are increasing," she said. "And we want to still have fun, celebrating and engaging events for students while being safe."

Christina Rodriguez, UREC marketing and student development coordinator, said the best way to keep everyone safe is by having events outside.

"[We are] trying to space out our events to offer some social distance, as much as we can, especially since it is outdoors," Rodriguez said. "We will have promotional products like hand sanitizers to give away. So, if you don't have one, you can definitely pick one from our table."

Zambrano said both campuses will have almost the same events for the Week of Welcome.

"It may not be on the same  
See **WELCOME**, Page 10

# Athletics Fee Referendum Timeline

## Sept. 2, 2021

UTRGV senior vice president for Strategic Enrollment and Student Affairs Maggie Hinojosa and Chasse Conque, vice president and director of Athletics, ask the Student Government Association to conduct a referendum to establish a football and women's swimming and diving programs, marching bands and spirit teams for the 2024-25 academic year.

The referendum would increase the intercollegiate athletics fee by \$11.25 per credit hour, capped at 12 hours, and create nearly 500 student involvement opportunities. Students outside of the tuition guarantee would not pay the increase until 2025 if they are still enrolled in the current level.

## Sept. 8, 2021

The Student Government Association votes to approve the Athletics Fee Referendum application during its scheduled SGA meeting.

Town halls on the referendum would be held in the PlainsCapital Bank Student Union Theater on the Edinburg campus and the PlainsCapital Bank El Gran Salón on the Brownsville campus. The UTRGV student body would vote on the referendum from 8 a.m. to 11:59 p.m. Nov. 8 through 10.

## Oct. 5, 2021

During a senate meeting, the Student Government Association Vice President for Brownsville Yahia Al-Qudah presents the Fall 2021 referendum courtesy resolution, which he was an author of, and states the SGA gives its official support of the referendum.

Al-Qudah tells the Rider that once the resolution goes through the committee and back to the senate, if approved, it would be the official opinion of SGA that the referendum is endorsed.

## Oct. 12, 2021

Referendum sponsors Maggie Hinojosa and Chasse Conque answer questions during the first Student Government Association town hall in the PlainsCapital Bank Student Union Theater on the Edinburg campus.

## Oct. 14, 2021

Hinojosa and Conque answer questions during the second Student Government Association town hall on Oct. 14, in the PlainsCapital Bank El Gran Salón on the Brownsville campus.

## Nov. 2, 2021

During its meeting, the Student Government Association rejects the resolution that calls for UTRGV students to vote in favor of the Athletics Fee Referendum in a 10-4 vote.

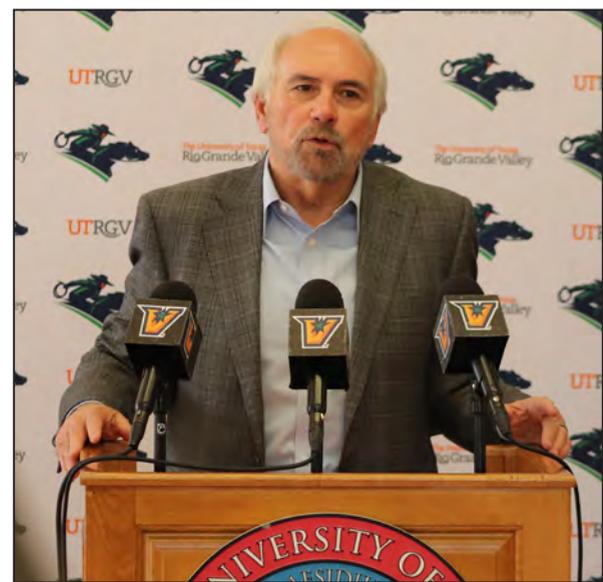
Senate Chair Jose Raul Ruiz announced the results: 10 voted against, four in favor, and two abstained.

## Nov. 11, 2021

In a campuswide email, UTRGV Student Life and Dean of Students announce the results of the Athletics Fee Referendum voting.

The UTRGV student body voted to pass the referendum by a vote of 3,497 to 2,287. The email also mentioned a news conference would be held the same day at 3 p.m. at the UTRGV Visitors Center on the Edinburg campus to discuss the outcome of the referendum.

Later that day at the conference, UTRGV President Guy Bailey addressed concerns students raised during one of the previous town halls regarding the art



Natalie Lapsley/RIDER FILE PHOTO

UTRGV President Guy Bailey speaks about the Athletics Fee Referendum results during a news conference Nov. 11, 2021, at the UTRGV Visitors Center on the Edinburg campus. Bailey, along with referendum sponsors UTRGV Senior Vice President for Strategic Enrollment and Student Affairs Maggie Hinojosa, Vice President and Director of Athletics Chasse Conque, and Student Government Association President Jose Pablo Rojas, answered questions during the conference and addressed concerns raised by students during previous SGA town halls.

facilities on the Brownsville campus and stated a solution would be announced soon.

## What is next?

The referendum results will be presented to the University of Texas System Board of Regents, which is scheduled to meet Feb. 23 and 24 in Austin.

As of Jan. 10, UTRGV President Guy Bailey had yet to announce any details on a solution for the concerns regarding the art facilities on the Brownsville campus.

—Compiled by Editor-in-Chief Verilu Infante

# Starting 2022 a step at a time



Fatima Gamez Lopez / THE RIDER PHOTO ILLUSTRATION

With the arrival of a new year, Saraí Mancías, a psychologist at the UTRGV Counseling Center, recommends starting with small and realistic goals to make it easier to adjust to them. Drastic changes are a common reason why so many New Year's resolutions fail.

**Fatima Gamez Lopez**  
SPANISH EDITOR

The start of a new year presents an opportunity to set goals and reconsider what is possible, a time when many people reflect on the past year and start making goals for the current one.

Saraí Mancías, a psychologist at the UTRGV Counseling Center, explained how people can get out of their comfort zone in 2022.

"I think one of the biggest things about getting out of our comfort zone is that [it is] a reminder to us that it's

going to be quite courageous to have to make that first step to get out of our comfort zone," Mancías said. "There's courage there. There's bravery there that a lot of people struggle with and I think part of it is that we have to be willing to push ourselves to do something different if we want things different for us."

She suggests starting at a smaller level, little by little, rather than trying to make drastic changes or trying to drastically get out of your comfort zone.

Carlos de la Garza, a computer engineering senior,

explained what helped him to start the new year off right.

"See this new year as a new start," De la Garza said. "See the goals that you thought of doing before. See this as a new start so that you can get back at it and start, like, from zero, I guess. From the beginning, building up that confidence to build to reach that goal slowly and, yeah, just take this year to first start."

Mancías advises students to start at the safest levels. Small steps are something that encourage people to continue. However, if we want things to be different, or for things to

be better in our lives, we have to be willing to take that first small step to do so.

"I think it's important to be thinking about who all is in our circle, or who all is in our environment, whether that's a physical environment, whether that's people in our environment," she said. "If we, for example, are in an environment or live in a space where there are people who aren't, maybe, best for our well-being, it might be hard for us to make changes."

So, if we live at home, or we live with people who are not very supportive of our

intentions or goals for the year, that can certainly affect our ability to make any kind of change that we would like, Mancías said.

"It's important to certainly have a supportive environment, an environment that's understanding of, kind of, your intentions and potentially having a conversation with people about how they can potentially help to facilitate some of those changes or those resolutions," she said. "And then it's also thinking about, you know, who all in my circle is supportive, and maybe who is not as supportive."

De la Garza explained some changes that he would like to make in this new year.

"I think I would like to change being more consistent at things, mainly with COVID and school and all that," he said. "It's hard to be consistent at, like hobbies or the gym, for example. It's hard to be consistent ... with all this stress. ... This year, I'm trying to change that of myself, just have better time management and just be consistent at what I'm trying to reach, the goal I'm trying to reach."

With everything that happened last year, De la Garza hopes to continue doing what he likes during this new year since that is one of his goals.

"Definitely going back to the gym, that's something that I've always enjoyed," he said. "But, since, like I said, like, school and all that work has been hard to be consistent, but that's something I like to do so that's something I want to try. To be consistent."

Mancías said many times it is difficult for people to fulfill

See 2022, Page 11

## Election Dates

- Jan. 31:** Deadline to register to vote in primary election
- Feb. 14-25:** Early voting
- March 1:** Primary elections
- April 25:** Last day to register to vote for primary runoff
- April 25-May 3:** Early voting for General Election
- May 24:** Primary runoff
- Oct. 11:** Last day to register to vote for General Election
- Oct. 24-Nov. 4:** Early voting
- Nov. 8:** General Election

For more information about the upcoming elections in Texas, visit [votetexas.gov](http://votetexas.gov).

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DAYS LEFT TO REGISTER TO VOTE IN PRIMARY ELECTION

Verilu Infante / THE RIDER GRAPHIC



THE RIDER FILE PHOTO

**Civic Engagement Alliance**

The Civic Engagement Alliance and the Student Government Association will present in UNIV 1301 courses and register students to vote throughout the semester. The CEA will also conduct a Voter Registration Initiative, titled "It Takes One," in high schools across the Rio Grande Valley to register students to vote.

**CEA Events**

- Jan. 31:** Last Day to Register to Vote (Brownsville and Edinburg, *in person*)
- Days TBD:** Meet

the Candidate Series (gubernatorial and congressional, *in person/hybrid*)

- Feb. 22:** Vaqueros Voting Rally (Brownsville, *in person*)
- March 1:** Vaqueros Voting Rally (Election Day) (Brownsville, *in person*)
- March 8:** I am Women (International Women's Day) (Brownsville and Edinburg, *in person*)
- March 23 and 24:** State of the Rio Grande Valley Conference (*in person*)
- April 25:** Spring Into Voting (Brownsville and Edinburg)

--Compiled by Editor-in-Chief Verilu Infante

# UTRGV students place in Adobe contests

**Kaitlyn Polvado**  
A&E EDITOR

Eight UTRGV School of Art and Design students competed virtually in two Adobe Jam International Competitions along with 315 other student teams from 95 universities, garnering a spot in the top 10 and honorable mentions.

The competitions were hosted by Amazon and The New York Times, respectively. Students in the Amazon contest landed in the top 10 and students in The New York Times contest won three honorable mentions.

Graphic design junior Emily Guerra and senior Kenia Salazar won an honorable mention for “No Debate”; graphic design seniors Eva Robles and Cazzandra Rojas won honorable mention for “Tidbit”; and graphic design junior Javier Gonzalez and senior Juan Alonzo won honorable mention for “The Ballot.”

“The project wouldn’t have been possible without the lessons I learned from my teachers,” she said. “It’s not only a win for us, but for the university as a whole.”

Projects were designed with the idea of creating something that increases trust and credibility in election content for readers.

In the Amazon contest, the project’s focus was to create a third-party mobile app for high school students looking for opportunities to fulfill community service hours or volunteer to help their local community, regardless of their background or ability.



Emily Guerra



Juan Alonzo



Eva Robles



Ariana Garza



Kenia Salazar



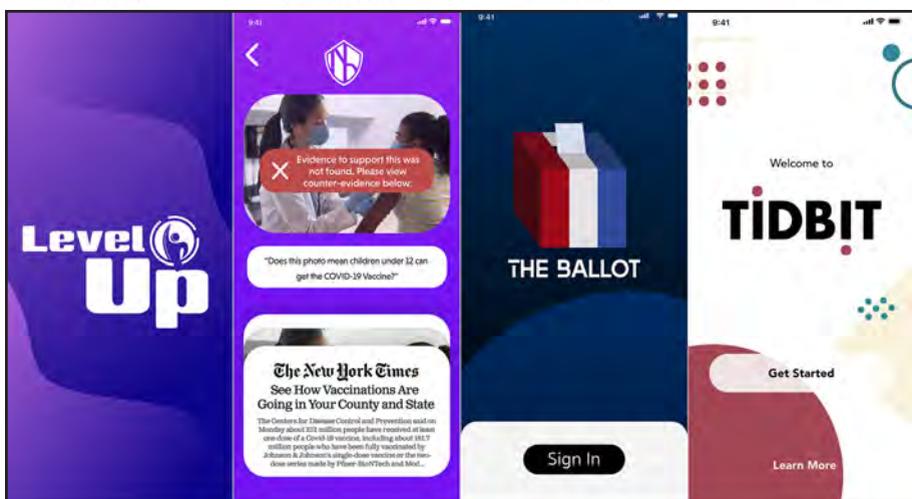
Javier Gonzalez



Cazzandra Rojas



Danna Zapata



COURTESY PHOTOS

The project that landed in the top 10 out of 116 universities that competed internationally was an app, titled Level Up, created by graphic design seniors Ariana Garza and Danna

Zapata. The app was designed to engage students within their school’s voluntary hours by using gamelike elements, such as rewards.

Elizabeth Berger, an associate

professor in the School of Art and Design and design program coordinator, said competitions like these are one of the best ways to learn new skills and learn what needs to be improved.

“The best advantage of these contests [is] that the judges are professionals in their own particular disciplines and industries, so they give really valuable feedback on what they’re looking for [in the projects],” Berger said.

She said the competition wins are not the only new celebratory event that is happening at the School of Art and Design.

“The name of the school is now the School of Art and Design because design is one of the largest and fastest growing [majors],” Berger said. “This is pretty much true across the country because for designers and creative people, in general, I think this degree is an integral part of the next wave of the economy.”

Besides the name change, degrees have been added to the list that the School of Art and Design offers, such as art with a concentration in graphic design bachelor’s degree added this last year.

College of Fine Arts Dean Steven Block said the Bachelor of Fine Arts is long overdue.

“[The Adobe design competitions are] proof of the value that this program already possesses,” Block said. “Graphic design is a marketable skill, and the new degree program certifies the specialization in graphic design that is now happening in the UTRGV School of Art.”

## Astrology Rider: Weekly Horoscopes

**Danielle Perez**  
SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR

**Aries**-Although things seem unclear right now, you will soon see the bigger picture. Step out of the situation and you will receive your answer along with the news you have been waiting for. Afterward, you will find the peace and justice you were seeking.

**Leo**-The world is in the palm of your hands and new opportunities are lining up perfectly for you. It is your choice if you want to take that step further. Surround yourself with good friends and positive energy and you will soon see an increase in happiness.

**Sagittarius**-Being troubled is not always a bad thing. It helps you grow and discover yourself. Soon, you will be at your throne demanding authority and speaking up for what is right. This is part of your journey. Do not let hard times fool you. Stay strong and optimistic, and you will soon break the chains and be set free.

**Libra**-You will soon be surprised by something good or bad. Whichever it is, do not be afraid. You will know what to do when the time comes. For now, you need to remain patient in everything you do as it is a

test from the universe. You will find peace of mind shortly afterward and the love you were searching for.

**Gemini**-Learning how to balance yourself in situations can be hard since there are two sides of you. Although you have leadership right now, it is important to stay humble and not become too greedy. There is light at the end of the tunnel, so make sure you play your cards correctly.

**Aquarius**-Things tumbled down quickly and now everything seems stagnant. However, it is important to not lose sight of the hardworking person that you are. Reach into your heart and mind and pull yourself out of this mess.

**Cancer**-Just because something seems to be valuable does not mean it is. Remember that people can easily fool you due to your kind heart. It is crucial to stay on top of your game before there is a bad ending to the situation. Stay true to yourself and put your foot down wherever it needs to be.

**Scorpio**-Romance is sparking your life up but so is deception and jealousy. Be careful who you reveal your heart to. Even your family can play tricks on you. Soon you will receive your happy ending. Just be patient.

**Pisces**-All the hard work you put into your future will pay off. Just because you may be dealing with something now does not mean your hard work has disappeared. It is still there waiting for you to grab onto. Remember not all losses are a loss. Keep pushing forward. You are closer to your goals than you know.

**Taurus**-Every day that goes by, you are growing stronger after all you have gone through. There will be news reaching you soon and that is when you will finally make the decisions you have been waiting for. You are the judge of your own life, so choose wisely.

**Virgo**-You are right where you are supposed to be. Divine timing has its own way of making things happen so do not worry if you need to do anything else. What is meant for you will find you when the timing is right. Opportunities, money, luck and travel will soon reach you.

**Capricorn**-Your inner child reminds you to look into the future and hold on to the goals you dream of. You have all the confidence you need within. You just need to find it in all the right places. This is your life, your journey, so make it a great one.

### SUDOKU

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### Daily Musings by Ariael Ortiz

Oh, hey guys!

Say,

Did you get taller? I cannot tell since I have not seen you ...

Since LAST year!

1/18/22

# Athlete of the Week: Xavier Johnson

# New kid on the block making some noise

**Omar E. Zapata**

THE RIDER

Midway through the UTRGV Men's Basketball season, junior guard and forward Justin Johnson has become an important player on the team by scoring points, playing defense and stepping up as a leader.

Transferring from the University of Southern Mississippi last April, Johnson averages the team's best 17.1 points per game, along with 5.7 rebounds and 2.6 assists.

Head coach Matt Figger told The Rider that the team has had to depend on Johnson quite a bit this season.

"From a scoring standpoint, from a defensive standpoint, from a rebounding standpoint, he's, you know, one of the leaders in every category," Figger said. "So, without him, our ability to compete would be at a very disadvantage."

Johnson's ability to guard different positions and score has drawn a lot of attention from opposing teams. Despite the extra guarding, he still finds ways to produce.

"He's been dependable," Figger said. "He's been a rock. I mean, he's not missed any time. He's played minutes. He sucks up injuries. ... Good players find a way to play through pain and that's what he's been able to do, and he's been



**Diana Alvarez-Tovar**/THE RIDER

UTRGV Men's Basketball junior guard and forward Justin Johnson dunks during the Jan. 6 game against Grand Canyon University at the UTRGV Fieldhouse in Edinburg. Johnson ended the night with 16 points, seven rebounds and four assists.

one of the few solid guys that just each and every day comes out."

Johnson said it has been a good season, with some bumpy games and setbacks, but he continues to push through them.

"Having a coach that just believes in you, it really helps you," Johnson said. "And, you know, I can continue to be

better."

The confidence Figger has in the Florida native started before this season, when he was the Austin Peay State University head coach from 2017 to 2021. Trying to recruit him to Austin Peay, Figger said he saw a player who

See **BASKETBALL**, Page 11



**Yamileth Rodriguez**/THE RIDER

Graduate student guard Xavier Johnson attempts a layup on Jan. 8 against New Mexico State University at the UTRGV Fieldhouse in Edinburg.

Business marketing graduate student Xavier Johnson of Minneapolis, Minnesota, plays guard for the UTRGV Men's Basketball Team. Johnson transferred from Chicago State University, where he played from 2019-2021. He is 23 years old and his zodiac sign is Taurus.

**Q:** Who has inspired you to continue playing basketball and why?

**A:** "My family and my supporting cast at home. They come to games, travel near and far, and my support system is the reason why I do the stuff that I do."

**Q:** What do you do to prepare before a game?

**A:** "I have, like, a superstitious routine. I usually have to go get shots up before our team stuff, and other than that I have to have a nap, and I have to have an ice bath. Those are mandatory for me."

**Q:** What are some of your favorite hobbies besides basketball?

**A:** "Money. I'm very interested in that type of stuff. I have my own clothing brand, named Greatness Only. So, that's usually what I do when I'm not doing schoolwork, basketball stuff."

**Q:** Who would you say inspires you the most?

**A:** "My family, because I know all the sacrifices they had to [make] for me to be in this position. So, that's where my inspiration comes from."

**Q:** What is your favorite holiday?

**A:** "My birthday."

**Q:** What is a fun fact about you?

**A:** "I am a father."

--Compiled by Yamileth Rodriguez

# UTRGV Track & Field excited for 2022 competition



THE RIDER FILE PHOTO

**Yamileth Rodriguez**

THE RIDER

The UTRGV Track & Field Team is running back to the track with enthusiasm and motivation after preparing throughout the fall semester with new Head Coach Shareese Hicks.

Hicks graduated in 2007 from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, where she was a four-time All-American and garnered eight shared and individual program records. The university honored Hicks by retiring her jersey and inducting her in the Charlotte Athletics Hall of

Fame.

Hicks was also a 2012 USA Olympic Trials finalist in the 400-meter dash.

Asked if she likes sharing her athletic experiences with the teams, she replied, "I think it's very inspirational. I think it makes me very relatable with a lot of them. I can relate to a lot of the feelings that they're experiencing within the sport. ... It's like I've literally walked more than a mile in their shoes, so to speak. So, they respect what I have to say. They listen, they buy in, and it's just great to have that under my belt."

The UTRGV Track & Field Team will

compete in its first meet of the year Jan. 28 at the Houston G5 & Super 22 Invitational hosted by the University of Houston.

"I tend to take a more relaxed approach whenever it comes to motivation," Hicks said. "Track and field is one of those sports where it is very easy for you to overstimulate yourself and get anxious. And that anxiety just leads to a competition that doesn't go well. So, for me, you know, my main focus is to make sure that everybody is relaxed, everybody is confident in all the work that they put in, and just focus on execution. So, that's pretty much what we do across the board with all the event groups."

Asked which freshmen to look out for, Hicks replied, "I would say, man, pretty much all of them. All the youngsters, they're going to be led by a lot of great veterans, a lot of great upperclassmen. Jermarrion [Stewart], Miranda [Tcheutchoua], Laura Duma and Alex Canales, who's really, really shown a whole lot of guts, you know. He had multiple [personal records] in the cross-country season. So, he's going to be carrying that over indoor and outdoor."

Last year, UTRGV hosted the 2021 Western Athletic Conference Championships in May. It consists of

See **TRACK**, Page 11

## THIS WEEK IN SPORTS

**Men's Basketball**

**7 p.m. Thursday vs. Utah Valley University**  
(Conference, AWAY)

**8 p.m. Saturday vs. Dixie State University**  
(Conference, AWAY)

**Women's Basketball**

**7 p.m. Thursday vs. Utah Valley University**  
(Conference, HOME)

**2 p.m. Saturday vs. Dixie State University**  
(Conference, HOME)

**OMICRON**  
*Continued from Page 1*

more due to its mutations. He said testing for the variant is not part of routine testing for the COVID-19 virus. Dobbs said the symptoms for the Omicron variant are not much different than the ones for COVID, but they are milder. With Omicron, there are more upper respiratory symptoms, such as nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat, scratchy throat, than lower respiratory, such as pneumonia. "It's better to have the upper respiratory systems than the lower respiratory symptoms and we do seem to be seeing more of that with Omicron," Dobbs said. "That may be one of the reasons that we're not seeing as much hospitalization and death." In comparison to previous

COVID-19 variants, Omicron is a lot more contagious. Dobbs was asked how severe Omicron is and whether it can cause long-term symptoms. "It's only been around for a couple of months," he said. "So, to know if it would cause long-term symptoms, that might emerge later. I would say [it] would be a little early for us to be speculating on that." Dobbs said that to be protected from the variant, people must take precautions. "Get vaccinated, be up to date on your vaccination is the most important thing," he said. Don't think that just because you got, as an example, two doses of vaccine in early 2021 that you are as protected as you could be because getting a third dose would protect you more. You have to do that at the right time, of course, and

also just like in the early days of the pandemic, wearing a good tight-fitting mask in a setting where you are around others will help to reduce the spread of droplets that could contain the virus that causes COVID." For information on COVID-19 testing, visit the [uthealthrgv.org](http://uthealthrgv.org) website. Testing is available to UTRGV students, staff, faculty and members of the community. With the rise of Omicron cases in the Valley, Patrick Gonzales, associate vice president for Marketing and Communications, was asked how the university is monitoring the spike. "We work with local, county and state officials to monitor the current situation," Gonzales said. "We also have some local medical officials from our School of Medicine who also help the university monitor and provide guidance."

The university plans to follow the same COVID-19 protocols for the spring semester as it did for Fall 2021. "Everything that the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] has recommended is what the university has put into place," Gonzales said. "In the state of Texas, we are unable to mandate the wearing of masks. But we will continue to strongly encourage our campus community to wear a mask, to stay [at least] six feet [from] each other when possible and to practice good hygiene." As of Jan. 6, 16,631 students and 2,377 staff and faculty reported to the university that they are vaccinated, he said. "This is self-reported," Gonzales said. "There's a chance that there are thousands more that haven't self-reported to us."

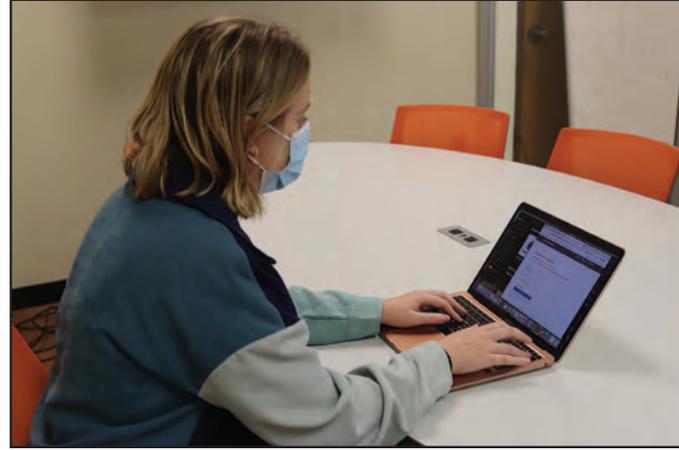
**GRADUATE**  
*Continued from Page 1*

"[President Guy] Bailey is just deeply committed, as is [Janna] Arney, as is this office and this scholarship office ... to easing the financial burden of attending graduate school," Hansmann said. "And we're really excited about being able to offer this." The decisions are made by a review committee, which will look at the different criteria and factors that the student submitted, including a personal statement, a short essay and GPA. "We want the students who qualify for this scholarship to have it applied to their Spring '22 account," Hansmann said. "So, the reviews should go quickly [Jan. 10]. And decisions, I don't have an exact date. The decision should be made pretty quickly so this can be applied to the accounts of the students who do receive the funds." The Rio-South Texas Education and Community Development Foundation's mission is "to ensure residents acquire skills and knowledge and have access to economic opportunities to enable them to pursue meaningful careers and live

prosperous lives in Rio South Texas," according to its website. Regarding the \$5 million endowment, Hansmann said it is an incredible gift to the university. "The endowment itself is considered like the principal gift and the amount of money that's awarded from that toward these scholarships is actually the interest that is earned off that principal amount," Hansmann said. "So, every year it generates this additional interest and gives us the ability to award, sometimes, differing amounts of money, depending on the interest that turns on that principal amount." Devon Bradley, a graduate student, applied for the Dean's Scholarship in 2020, which is similar to the UTRGV Graduate Select Scholarship.

and different from what we have under the dean's scholarship." Bradley said the process to apply for the Dean's Scholarship is straightforward. "They let me know, maybe like a week before classes started," she said. "They were quick to communicate with me." She said the university receiving the \$5 million endowment is a fantastic opportunity. "Coming from a different university and then coming back to the Valley, it's good to see money going into the university system that's doing so much for the Valley," Bradley said. For graduate students who are interested in applying for any scholarships, she advises them to not let their imposter syndrome psych them out from applying to

opportunities that come up. "Because speaking from experience, I was scared to apply for the scholarship because I didn't think I was going to get it," Bradley said. "And just don't let your doubts psych you out from doing opportunities that speak to you." For more information on the UTRGV Graduate Select Scholarship, visit the Graduate Scholarships UTRGV page.



Alejandra Yañez/THE RIDER

Graduate student Devon Bradley browses the UTRGV scholarship website to learn more about the Graduate Select Scholarship for incoming grad students. Bradley was a recipient of the Dean's Scholarship, formerly the Graduate Select Scholarship.

**CHESS**  
*Continued from Page 3*

"I'm glad that I had the opportunity to play, because COVID, you know," McNutt said. "Our team was trying really hard to, you know, get first, but ... the game played out, and it just happened third, and it's still great. Top three is not a bad start." Traveling with the team was Wilma Smetter, principal of MSA, and Grandmaster Alex Mista, UTRGV's chess program manager. "MSA is very, very much supported by the school principal, Dr. Smetter," Macieja said. "It hardly ever happens in other schools. ... I definitely would like to thank Dr. Smetter for that support."



Graduate student and Woman FIDE Master Ana Shamatava  
PHOTO COURTESY ALEX MISTA

**SEMESTRE**  
*Continuación de Página 5*

Estudiantil, el Edificio Principal (Main Building) y la biblioteca. Valdez dijo que la universidad ha cambiado la forma de realizar eventos para priorizar la salud. "Siento que hemos tenido en cuenta que los números de COVID están aumentando", dijo. "Y queremos seguir divirtiéndonos, celebrando e involucrando eventos para los estudiantes mientras estamos seguros". Christina Rodríguez, coordinadora de mercadotecnia y desarrollo estudiantil de UREC, dijo que la mejor manera de mantener a todos seguros es organizando eventos al aire libre. "[Estamos] tratando de espaciar nuestros eventos para ofrecer cierta distancia social, tanto como podamos, especialmente porque es al aire libre", dijo Rodríguez. "Tendremos productos promocionales como

desinfectante para manos para regalar. Entonces, si no tienen uno, definitivamente pueden elegir uno de nuestra mesa". Zambrano dijo que ambos campus tendrán casi los mismos eventos para la Semana de Bienvenida. "Puede que no sea el mismo día, pero duplicamos todo", dijo. "Entonces, por ejemplo, digamos que este martes habrá un torneo de billar en Edinburg y luego la próxima semana, el martes o el miércoles, estará en Brownsville". Valdez dijo que la única diferencia entre ambos campus es que Brownsville tendrá el Welcome Back Bash mientras que Edinburg tendrá el WOW Tailgate. "Queremos que nuestros estudiantes se presenten a nuestro evento y traigan a sus amigos o compañeros de cuarto para que nos acompañen un poco", dijo. "Y aprenda sobre los recursos del campus o las organizaciones estudiantiles en el campus y cómo participar".

**ENROLLMENT**  
*Continued from Page 3*

If you haven't been vaccinated, we have options for you to be able to do that. ... I want our students to have a successful semester." Hinojosa also asks students to reach out to someone if they are struggling with coursework or outside of the classroom. "If it's finances that a student needs help with, let's talk through it," she said. "If a student needs tutoring, our tutoring services are available. You know, there's a lot of resources out there for our students. ... If they're just not sure where to go, our Dean of Students Office is that first step."

**WELCOME**  
*Continued from Page 6*

day but we duplicate everything," she said. "So, for example, let's say this Tuesday, you will have a billiards tournament in Edinburg and then the next week, on Tuesday or Wednesday, you will have it in Brownsville." Valdez said the only difference between both campuses is that Brownsville will have the Welcome Back Bash while Edinburg will have the WOW Tailgate. "We want our students to show up to our event and bring their friends or roommates to come with us a little bit," she said. "And learn about campus resources or student organizations on campus and how to get involved."



FOTOS ARCHIVAS RIDER

Una estudiante mira los refrigerios que se ofrecen en los Depósitos de Información durante la Semana de Bienvenida de la primavera de 2019. Hoy y el miércoles de 9 a 11 a.m., los estudiantes podrán recoger artículos, folletos y mercancía de la librería de UTRGV en los Depósitos de Información en ambos campus.

**PASO**  
*Continuación de Página 5*

este año.  
“Para mis clases, cuando estoy teniendo un momento difícil, se que debo de hablar con los profesores y la mayoría de ellos son muy comprensivos”, Cabrera dijo. “Ellos nos dan más tiempo si lo necesitas, es básicamente poder hablar con ellos cuando necesites ayuda en algo”.  
De la Garza dijo que el cambio que quiere en su estilo de vida este año es tener paz.  
“Puede ser simple como mejorar mi rutina de sueño, siento que teniendo más energía durante el día me ayudará a estar más activo en lo que sea que esté haciendo”, dijo. “Ese sería un gran cambio que me ayudaría mucho al ser más consistente en mis metas”.  
Mancías dijo que lo más importante es empezar el año nuevo y establecer metas y propósitos.  
“Creo que es muy importante para nosotros el tomar en cuenta cómo

podemos mejorar nuestro bienestar”, dijo. “Y así tratar de pensar cuales son esas áreas de bienestar en las que podemos trabajar un poco en ellas este año, si es nuestro bienestar emocional y mental pensar en los cambios que podemos hacer para realizarlo”.  
Mancías dijo que las aplicaciones *Calm* y *Insight Timer* son muy buenas para aquellos que quieren mejorar su salud mental este año.  
*Calm* es una aplicación de meditación, relajación y calidad de sueño que crea un contenido de audio único que fortalece la aptitud mental y aborda algunos de los más grandes retos de salud mental de la actualidad: estrés, ansiedad, insomnio y depresión, de acuerdo con su página web.  
La aplicación *Insight Timer*, de acuerdo con su página web, está diseñada para ayudar a hacer la meditación y el yoga más conveniente, fácil y agradable para el usuario ya que ayuda a reducir estrés y ansiedad.



**Diana Alvarez-Tovar**/FOTOS RIDER

El propósito de Carlos de la Garza, estudiante de ingeniería informática, es visitar el gimnasio más seguido. De la Garza realizó una rutina de ejercicio el 4 de enero en el Centro Recreativo Universitario en el campus de Edinburg.

**2022**  
*Continued from Page 7*

their New Year’s resolutions.  
“I think one of the biggest goals that people have is to lose weight, right? To be more fit [and] to be able to eat better,” she said. “And so, I think that society plays a big role in that [and] I think families also play a big role in that.”  
She explained that when people try to make such drastic changes that sets them up for failure.  
“When people don’t reach their goals at the end, it’s because they’re not very realistic about the goals that they set for themselves,” Mancías said.  
She said it is important to set realistic, achievable, and measurable goals, to keep track of, whether that is

every week or every two weeks.  
“So, if someone wants to lose weight, it’s like, ‘OK, what can I do over the next week to try to help with that,’” Mancías said. “Maybe, it’s just eating a bit more fruit rather than eating an unhealthy meal, or when I’m feeling really stressed out instead of going for the chips, let me go for some fruit.”  
Making smaller changes to your routine is more helpful than making drastic changes all at once, she said.  
Chloe Cabrera, a criminal justice freshman, said she learned last year that communication is key and it is something that she will implement this year.  
“For classes, when I’m struggling, I know to reach out to the professor now and most of them are pretty understanding,” Cabrera said. “They,

like, give you more time and, like, basically being able to reach out to [them] when you need help.”  
De la Garza said the change he plans to make in his lifestyle is to have more peace this year.  
“It might be a simple change but fixing my sleep schedule,” he said. “I feel like having more energy throughout the day will help me just be more active in whatever task I’m doing. That would just be a big change that would help a lot and just keep being consistent at these things.”  
Macías said the most important thing when starting a new year is setting goals or resolutions.  
“I think it’s very important for us to be thinking about how can we improve our overall well-being,” she said. “And it’s really thinking about what are these

areas of well-being that I can work on just a little bit more this upcoming year, you know? If it’s my mental and emotional well-being, ‘What can I be doing to take care of that?’”  
She explained that the *Calm* and *Insight* apps can be a great help to many people whose purpose is to improve their mental health this year.  
*Calm* is a meditation, sleep and relaxation app that creates unique audio content that strengthens mental fitness and tackles some of the biggest mental health challenges of today: stress, anxiety, insomnia and depression, according to its website.  
*Insight Timer* is an app and website designed to help make meditation and yoga convenient, easy and enjoyable to perform as it helps reduce anxiety and stress, according to its website.

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**BASKETBALL**  
*Continued from Page 9*

could play multiple positions and who he believed was the missing piece for his former team.  
The head coach said he is fortunate that Johnson came to UTRGV and believes he can achieve the best version of himself here.  
Initially, Johnson was supposed to go to Austin Peay, but said everything worked out for a reason.  
“It definitely feels good knowing that we have been talking for probably like two or three years now,” he said. “So just having a coach that believes in you and knowing what your ability is, and, you know, just trusting in you. That’s a really good feeling.”  
Upon arriving at UTRGV, Johnson said he was confident he was going to have a successful year based on “coach Fig’s” plan for him.  
Johnson said some of the skills that the coaching staff has helped him improve on are his shooting, getting shots off the dribble and reading screens.

Figger said Johnson’s work ethic has also improved since joining UTRGV. He said the player is now a better teammate and leader on the court.  
“Becoming an everyday guy, coach Fig is really big on that,” Johnson said. “Coming in and working hard ... whether you’re banged up [or not] ... just coming in, getting better every day, being coachable, being a leader, being a good teammate. That’s most important because ... a locker room that has leaders is going to be a good team, and we just got to stay together and just keep growing as a team.”  
His main goal this season is to qualify for the Western Athletic Conference tournament in Las Vegas this March.  
“This team can grow,” Johnson said. “We’re doing all the right things, really. Everybody’s starting to come together. So, I feel like that’s a big goal for us.”  
The Vaqueros’ next game is at 7 p.m. Thursday at Utah Valley University, where Johnson is expected to shine.  
“When the game is hard, I put trust in him to give us a chance to win,” Figger said.

**TRACK**  
*Continued from Page 9*

running, field and combined events.  
“It’s always really fun to go to those big meets,” said junior sprinter and jumper Elizabeth Ortiz. “Just because the team atmosphere is just completely different than a normal meet. I mean, we all come together and do our part to come out and, hopefully, get the goal done, you know. But even if we don’t get a championship, everyone comes through and pulls through with a big PR, so that’s always exciting to cheer them on and see.”  
Ortiz broke a pentathlon record with 3,284 points and placed fourth in the WAC Championships. She suffered an injury last year.  
Asked about any improvements she has made since the injury, she replied, “I’ve actually had a rough patch for myself. I injured myself last year so I’ve been going through the whole entire recovery process. ... A lot of training

to come back stronger and I think I’m ready for it. So, I’m excited to set some new PRs this season.”  
Ortiz said she looks forward to the Indoor WAC Championship meets the most.  
“It just gives me chills thinking about it right now,” she said. “It’s so exciting.”  
Senior thrower Christian Hall-Gardner was also a competitor in the WAC Championships. He earned bronze in the hammer throw with a distance of 53.45 meters.  
“I feel like I came up short, for me, personally,” Hall-Gardner said.  
His favorite part about Track & Field is seeing his results pay off.  
“Finally seeing that mark that you just wanted to get, it really feels good, honestly,” Hall-Gardner said.  
Asked if he had any final thoughts, Hall-Gardner replied, “I say be on the lookout for us.”  
The WAC Indoor Championships will be held Feb. 18 and 19 in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

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