

FOOTBALL

HISTORIC GAME



Isabelle Mascorro/The Rider

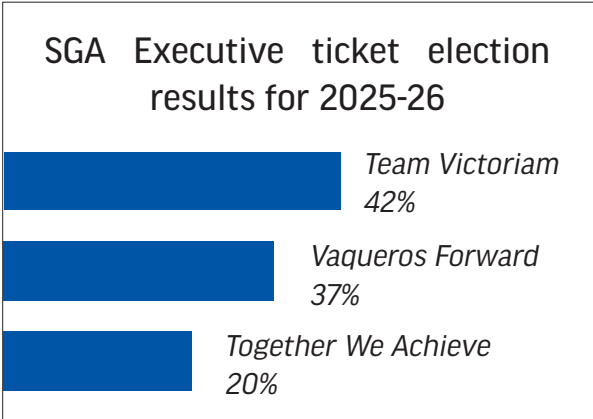
The Vaqueros’ first football game in program history took place Thursday at Veterans Memorial Stadium in Brownsville. The white team won 17-5 in front of a crowd of 3,562 attendees. See football page 7.

Look into the new executive ticket

Team Victoriam talks first steps to its proposals

SOPHIA CORTEZ
THE RIDER

Team Victoriam, the newly elected Student Government Association executive team, said they are going to keep a continuous relationship with student organizations and clubs around campus. The new executive



Rebeca Salinas/The Rider Graphic

team is composed of Juan Espinoza, who will serve as president; alongside Ian Alfaro, external vice president; and Clarissa Rendon, internal vice president, for the 2025-2026 aca-

ademic year. The organization announced the results April 11 and Team Victoriam won with 42% of the vote with their term beginning May 15. In an interview with The Rider, Espinoza talked about the team’s first step into their proposals. “One of our main goals is to just open up the dialogue between student government and organizations on campus,” he said. “Particularly because, when we talked

See SGA, Page 3

New ride in demo stage for Vaqueros

Double-decker bus presents a new mode of transportation

ANDRES ESTRADA
ONLINE EDITOR

There has been a new double-decker bus roaming the UTRGV route for the past week and some have been wondering where it came from. According to the Department of Parking and Transportation Services, the new double-decker bus is a demo to let students experience what the ride feels like and possibly influence transportation decisions in the future. “It’s a bus that tours the U.S. ... so, people can get a sense of what a double-decker is and what kind of features it has,” said Rodney Gomez, executive director for Parking and Transportation Services. The department is partnering with the company Alexander Dennis, which demos the buses and produces them as well. The main purpose of a double-decker is to fit more people in it. The bus has 81 seats in comparison with 56 that the current charter bus has. “The defining feature of the bus is its second floor, but also, it has characteristics of both

See BUS, Page 3

Cancer and surgery center set to open in August

DANIELA CHAPA-REYES
THE RIDER

The UT Health RGV Cancer and Surgery Center is set to open Aug. 4 after experiencing multiple construction delays. Oncology Administrative Director Kimberly Elizondo

said had been completely out of their control. “There have been several construction delays that were out of our control and even out of the construction company’s control for some items that needed to be shipped in for certain components for the HVAC unit,” Elizondo said.

“Unfortunately, because those delays were out of everybody’s control, that did put a set back to June.” She said the second delay was with the surgery center clean room. “The [second setback] was the surgery center in one area needing to be updated to stan-

dards and codes,” Elizondo said. “So, that pushed it to our Aug. 4 opening date. ... The building’s at 93.8% complete already and that was on [April 4].” Vaughn Construction serves as the manager at risk for the project. According to Senior Director of Capital Projects

Agustin Rodriguez, Vaughn Construction was one of the many public bids that were submitted by several different contractors. “There’s criteria that we use to give points to all the contractors and it goes from the

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Baseball co-captain breaks out

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THE
RIDER

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Today
Brushes and Bevs
Freshman Leadership
Academy** and the **Center for Student Involvement** will host a mindfulness awareness session from noon to 1 p.m. outside the Student Union on the Edinburg campus. Attendees can **paint** along with local artists, **learn** about mindfulness and how to **destress**. Supplies and lemonade will be provided.

**Tuesday
Stress & Anxiety Workshop**
The **Learning Center** will host a stress & anxiety workshop from 11 a.m. to noon via Zoom. ID: 819 0401 2324. Attendees can learn strategies to **manage stress and anxiety, stay calm and building habits** for a healthier life.

ACJA Meeting
The **American Criminal Justice Association Sigma Kappa Chi** will meet from 2 to 3 p.m. in Liberal Arts Building South Room 309 on the Edinburg campus. Attendees can **discuss new information** about the organization with members and potential new members.
Earth Day Climbing Competition
University Recreation will host an **Earth Day Climbing Competition** from 4 to 7 p.m. in the UREC climbing wall on the Edinburg campus. The top three students will get a prize and **celebrate Earth Day**.
**Wednesday
Impact Speaker**
Clarissa Martinez, a lecturer in the School of Art

and Design, will speak about her **journey as an artist and the impact of visual storytelling** from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. in the PlainsCapital Bank El Gran Salón on the Brownsville campus. The event is hosted by the Center for Student Involvement and Engaged Scholarship and Learning.
SVA Meeting
Student Veterans of America will meet from 1 to 1:30 p.m. in University Center Room 307 on the Edinburg campus. Attendees can discuss **veteran related issues, upcoming events and potential benefit opportunities**.
**Thursday
Psychology Club Meeting**
The **Psychology Club** will

meet at 3:30 p.m. in Student Academic Center Room 1.112 on the Edinburg campus.
**Friday
SGA Senate Meeting**
The **Student Government Association** will meet from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. in Music, Science and Learning Center Room 1.111 on the Brownsville campus. Students will have a **chance to voice a topic of importance to senators**.
**Saturday
AMSA Health Fair**
The **American Medical Student Association** will host a fair from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the **Brownsville Farmers Market**, located at 1534 E. 6th St. Attendees can receive **free snacks and health checks**.
--Compiled by Sophia Cortez.



POLICE REPORTS

The following are among the incidents reported to University Police between April 7 and 13.
**April 7
9:34 a.m.:** An employee reported her vehicle was burglarized and several items were taken from it April 4 in Lot E-29 on the Edinburg campus. The case is under investigation.
1:45 p.m.: A non-affiliated man reported several tools were taken from the Clinical Education Building on the

Harlingen campus. The case is under investigation.
**April 10
10:49 a.m.:** A student reported striking a parked vehicle in Lot E-19 on the Edinburg campus. No injuries were reported.
1:38 p.m.: A staff member reported several computers lost while conducting inventory in the Mathematics & General Classrooms Building on the Edinburg campus.
4:07 p.m.: A staff member reported missing computer

tablets while conducting inventory in the Life & Health Sciences Building on the Brownsville campus.
4:31 p.m.: Officers responded to a smell of gas in the University Library on the Edinburg campus. Officers checked the library and surrounding areas, and no odor of gas was found.
**April 11
11 p.m.:** An employee reported a suspicious man entered an unsecured office in the Health & Physical Education

II Building on the Edinburg campus after hours but left before an officer arrived. The area was searched, but he was not found.
**April 13
7:09 p.m.:** A student reported he was assaulted by an unknown man while walking outside the Interdisciplinary Engineering and Academic Building on the Edinburg campus. The case is under investigation.
--Compiled by Narda Serna

VMOCK,
Continued from Page 1

Mass communication sophomore Itzamara Villarreal said she had challenges getting started on her resume in the past.
“Since I had never done one and I was doing one for school applications, I decided to go to the Career Center so they could help me, and I got some guidance,” Villarreal said. “But I also ended up using ChatGPT to kind of tell me if what I had was good or not.”
She said for students with limited work experience, it can be difficult to decide what to include in the resume.
“Because it was my first year of college, I feel like I’m kind of behind on experience when it comes to applying for jobs or internships,” Villarreal said.
Aylin Beltran, an early care and early childhood studies sophomore, said she had similar issues for resume building.
“I would ask my friends,” said Beltran. “... And I would ask my dad or my boss to check if it needs some modifications, just some feedback. Like I said, I don’t have any experience, so it would be difficult for me.”
Leandro said VMock also offers tailored feedback based on a student’s field of study.
“It has three different types of feedback based on industry, like, the majors that we have here at UTRGV,” he said. “So, it would be like arts and humanities, education and social work, and then business and economics, and then engineering, science, health and medicine.”
Students can access VMock through the Career Center website or directly at vmock.com/utrgv using their UTRGV credentials. There is a limit of 10 resume uploads, though more can be requested through the Career Center.
Despite VMock’s capabilities, Leandro said it is not a substitute for meeting with a career advisor.
“The career advisor is there to help you build [a resume] up,” he said.
For now, the platform only reviews resumes and interview-related activities. Students interested in getting feedback on cover letters or LinkedIn profiles can schedule an appointment with the Career Center.

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CENTER,
Continued from Page 1

price. ... It's also about qualifications based on history with the university or working with the UT System," Rodriguez said. "It is a number of things that we looked at to ensure that this project was going to run smoothly and they had the qualified people in place to do that."

He said with all the construction that has been playing out in South Texas, there have been resources that have been taken away from different projects, especially larger projects.

"There's only so many electricians in the Valley ... so they're all being stretched out to different locations," Rodriguez said. "There were some changes that the School of Medicine requested in the building that caused some delays in the project, so it was a little bit of everything."

Diane Nguyen, medical director for the UT Health RGV Cancer and Surgery Center

and division chief of Medical Oncology at UTRGV School of Medicine, said the center will be similar to a comprehensive cancer center, such as the UT Health San Antonio Mays Cancer Center.

"We basically offer comprehensive cancer care. It will include medical oncology with

"We basically offer comprehensive cancer care. It will include medical oncology with infusion."

--Medical Director Diane Nguyen

infusion," Nguyen said. "We have chemotherapy, immunotherapy, techno-therapy and, hopefully, in the future, we can do more advanced CAR T-cell [therapy], you know all the fancy immunotherapy treatments."

According to the American Cancer Society, CAR T-cell therapy is a procedure that takes immune cells called "T cells" and modifies them in the lab to help identify and

destroy cancer cells. This is modifying the genes of the cells in order to combat the cancer.

Nguyen said the center will also include radiation oncology, surgical oncology, orthopedic oncology and a rehab center.

"Not only [do] we do infusion chemotherapy immunotherapy, but we have a lot of oral oncolytic therapy that we must have specialty pharmacy in house," she said. "I think it will make a huge change in the community and also us, UTRGV, as a whole. We offer the most comprehensive and best cancer care to the whole Valley, which so far we don't have that service in the Valley."

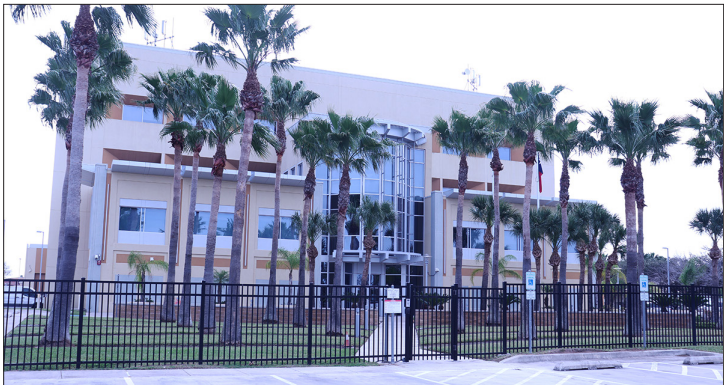
Nguyen said a big part of the cancer center is translational science with clinical research and clinical trials.

"We do have internal medicine resident, family medicine resident and surgical resident," she said. "I think that would be also great for our UTRGV health and School of Medicine overall."



Amara Cazares/The Rider Photos

Shown is the UT Health RGV Cancer and Surgery Center construction site as of Feb. 28. The center will be part of the UTRGV McAllen Academic Medical Campus.

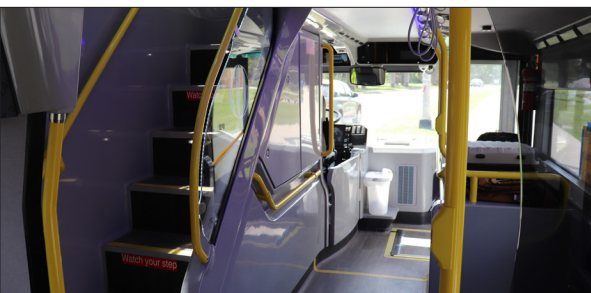


Shown is the UT Health RGV Cancer and Surgery Center main building, located at the intersection of East Pecan Boulevard and North Jackson Road in McAllen.



Andres Estrada/The Rider Photos

UTRGV students board the double-decker, demo bus on Wednesday outside Sabal Hall on the Brownsville campus.



Shown is the interior of the double-decker, demo bus. The bus will be in rotation until Friday.



UTRGV students board the double-decker, demo bus on Wednesday outside Sabal Hall on the Brownsville campus.

BUS,
Continued from Page 1

the charter bus, like the kinds that we currently have in service at Vaquero Express, but also a transit bus, like the kind that you would see in a big city," Gomez said.

The department is looking to hear feedback from students and has placed flyers inside of the bus that students can fill out regarding their experience and feedback can influence planning regarding future buses.

A double-decker is significantly taller than the charter buses that are currently used on campus and requires more experience and skill to drive.

Two trained drivers came with the demo, but the department also trained its own drivers to ensure safety for everyone.

"The bus is designed to tilt a few degrees either way, and it won't flip over," Gomez said. "... It's also been tested by federal standards against all kinds of weather conditions."

Maribel Contreras, director of Parking and Transportation Services, said the department did not pay for the demo and the trial runs for two weeks.

"This implies that there is something more definite coming in the future if funds are available," Contreras said.

Isaiah Hernandez, a mechanical engineering student, said, "I honestly think that a double-decker would be very useful mainly because the buses fill up very quickly."

The demo will run until Friday. The university community members can visit the Department of Parking and Transportation Services website to share their experience.

SGA,
Continued from Page 1

to a lot of organizations during campaigning, some of the things we were told immediately [were] 'We don't want to talk with you. You're related to the student government,' because they could never reach out to those people."

Espinoza continued to explain the team's distinctions from past administrations.

"We have different, like, beliefs, we have different goals of things we want to achieve, but I think that [it was] uniqueness in our team that made us so strong and allowed us to win," he said.

The Rider asked the external vice president how they intend to maintain an active and accessible way to connect with the student body throughout their term.

"What we can really do is use SGA as a platform, not to highlight the students in student government, but to highlight students on campus," Alfaro said. "We should highlight individual

student success, not just our own."

He said their primary technique will be to keep students informed.

"What we wanna do is we wanna bring SGA to the students instead of being vice versa," Alfaro said. "Instead of the students coming to SGA, we want SGA to [go] to the students."

The external vice president told The Rider about their idea of coming up with new proposals to make students feel comfortable.

"We have some ideas," he said. "Like I said, having constant meetings with these senators and stuff. It goes back to what I said, take an initiative going out and reaching out [to] them instead of waiting for them to reach out to us."

Rendon told The Rider about how students feel in regard to the lack of recognition given to student organizations and clubs.

The internal vice president said the team wants the best for the university.

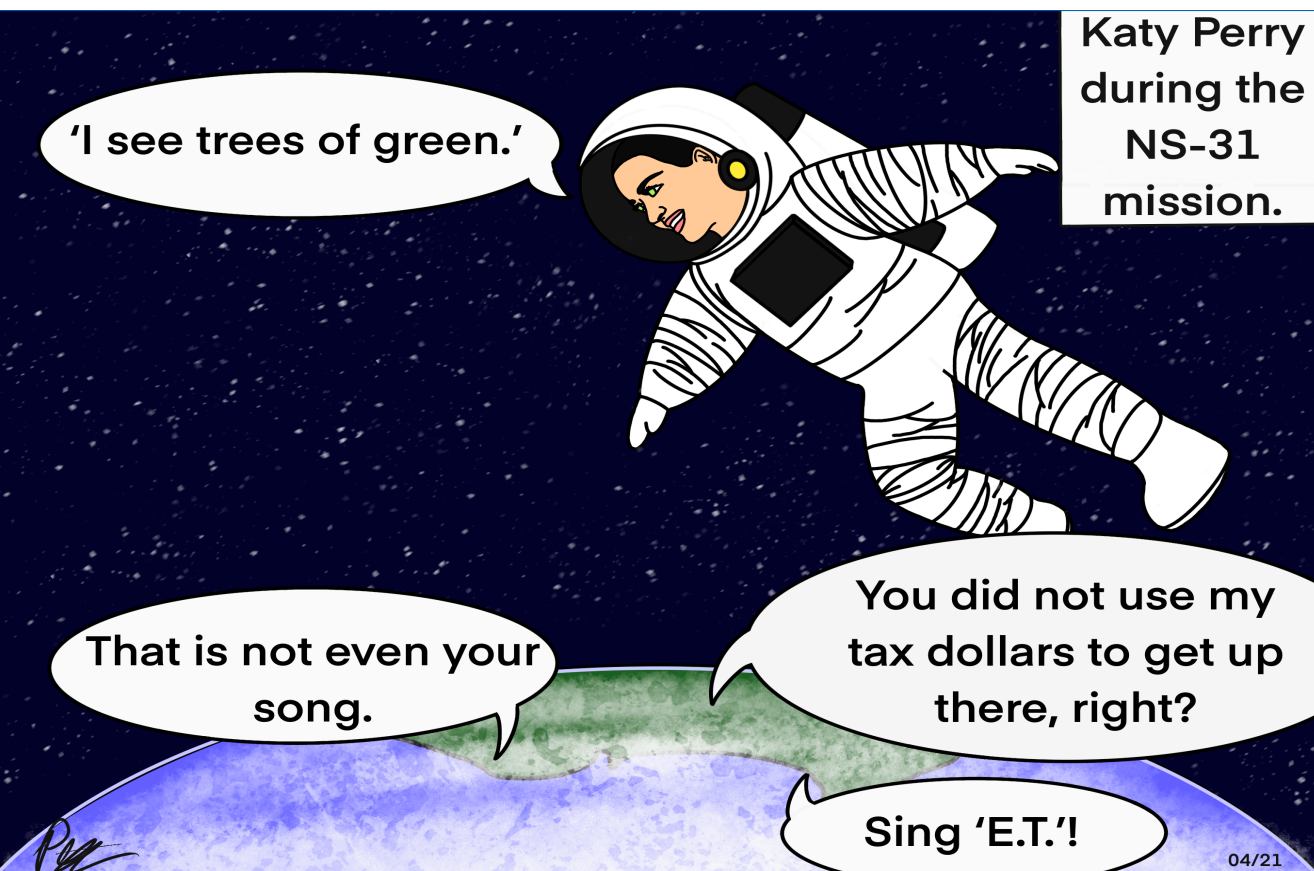
"We're gonna work together to work towards it," Rendon said.

For more information, visit the SGA website.



Angel Ballesteros/The Rider

Shown are Clarissa Rendon (from left), Student Government Association internal vice president; Juan Espinoza, SGA president; and Ian Alfaro, SGA external vice president.



Do not read this



EDUARDO ESCAMILLA
THE RIDER

In moments of reflection, the mind can function like an aging slide projector, casting stark images onto the screen of our consciousness. Recently, one such image resurfaced: a frame from a wilderness photo essay glimpsed long ago in the sterile quiet of a waiting room.

It depicted a gazelle, arrested mid-leap, the nascent terror of a distant cheetah etched into its posture. The accompanying text, a stark annotation to this tableau of vulnerability, described the gazelle's paralysis not as a reasoned response, but as an instinctual shutdown, a desperate, often fatal, wager on invisibility.

This primal scene res-

onates with a disquieting familiarity in contemporary global affairs.

I wonder how often, like that frozen gazelle, we find ourselves immobilized by the mere specter of negative repercussions.

The apprehension of transgressing established norms, of articulating a divergent viewpoint, can calcify into a state of inertia, a self-imposed subjugation that subtly erodes

silent war.

Unchecked, fear becomes a corrosive agent.

Consider the gnawing anxiety that keeps individuals such as Kilmar Abrego Garcia awake in his prison cell.

Reflect on the precarious position of Mahmoud Khalil, facing the potential instrumentalization of his suffering and possible deportation as a mere justification for voicing against

shape our realities wield influence with the quiet authority of signatories on a balance sheet.

Their methods may lack the overt ferocity of a cheetah's attack yet exploit the same fundamental vulnerability: our innate aversion to pain, to ostracization, to the disruption of our precarious stability.

They cultivate an environment where the potential for negative consequences, whether subtle or overt, serves as a constant deterrent, keeping us within prescribed boundaries.

The danger lies in allowing this pervasive fear to become our default setting, to transform us into creatures perpetually poised for flight, forever calculating the risks of utterance or dissent.

For when we succumb to this frozen reflex, we become easy targets for an unchallenged status quo.

The challenge, then, lies in recognizing this primal response within ourselves and cultivating the courage to move, to speak, even when the silhouette of the predator looms in the distance.

I wonder how often ... we find ourselves immobilized by the mere specter of negative repercussions.

the foundations of genuine discourse.

The dread of being branded "difficult," "unrealistic," or even "radical" can act as a potent silencer, compelling individuals back into the perceived safety of the collective, unique perspectives lost to the expediency of compliance, accumulating like the unseen casualties of a

an uncontested atrocity.

Or closer to home, observe the palpable apprehension within university administrations, a fear of governmental reprisal that can stifle their willingness to stand in solidarity with international students facing the abrupt revocation of their visas.

The invisible, yet often detectable, forces that

VAQUERO VOICE

What is one interesting fact about yourself?

Compiled and photos by Amara Cazares and Daniela Martinez Salazar



Kevin Flores
computer science sophomore

"I really like video games. I have a massive library on Steam for my computer, ranging anything from, like, first-person shooters to plane simulations to city builders and things like that."



Hannah Cruz
biology freshman

"I love making jewelry and I love doing arts and crafts."



Angel Pena-Ruiz
mathematics senior

"I'm the oldest from all my family, including cousins and everything."

AIR MAIL
PAR AVION



The Rider encourages letters but does not guarantee publication. We reserve the right to edit letters for grammar and content. Letters for The Rider may be sent to therider@utrgv.edu. All letters must be typed and no longer than 400 words. Letters must include the name, classification and phone number of the letter's author or the letter cannot be published. Opinions expressed in The Rider are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Rider or UTRGV administrators.

REVIEW

A NIGHT OF GRITOS

Senior lecturer leads ensembles through mariachi spring concert

EDUARDO ESCAMILLA
THE RIDER

The Mariachi Spring Concert was a dynamic showcase where four esteemed, student ensembles delivered performances punctuated by heartfelt gritos that underscored the music’s deep emotional resonance Tuesday at the Performing Arts Complex on the Edinburg campus.

The ensembles Mariachi Aztlán, Mariachi Juvenil Aztlán, Mariachi Espuelas and Mariachi Vaquero are led under the direction of Francisco Loera, a senior lecturer in the School of Music.

The fervent enthusiasm of about 500 attendees filled the auditorium, a powerful display of cultural pride that resonated throughout the venue.

From toddlers adorned in miniature charro outfits and families clutching bouquets for their performers, to guests singing along to the mariachi music playing over the intercom while taking their seats, the atmosphere crackled with anticipation long before the first note was struck.

For many in the region, mariachi is more than just music; it is a fundamental aspect of their cultural identity, distinguishing their community

through its recognized prestige and inherent cultural authority.

The evening commenced with the first mariachi ensemble, Mariachi Vaquero, which made a commanding entrance. Its instrumental prowess was immediately apparent, with strings and guitars moving in a synchronized flow that created an invigorating sensation.

The ensemble delivered transcending vocal performances that resonated with the audience’s understanding of love and heartbreak. Harmonies intertwined, conveying a sense of shared emotion and camaraderie.

The ensemble’s musical selections underscored the genre’s capacity to articulate profound emotional depths, clearly connecting with the listeners.

The second mariachi ensemble, Mariachi Espuelas, took the stage to enthusiastic cheers from the audience.

Its performance explored a range of human emotions through music.

Vocal deliveries showcased impressive range and dynamic interplay. The ensemble created moments of joy that were visibly reflected in the audience’s reactions.

Mariachi Espuelas’ collective charisma fostered an engaging stage presence. Powerful vocal performances conveyed both vulnerability and strength. The ensemble’s rhythmic energy proved infectious, inspiring audience members to clap along.

The third ensemble, Mariachi Juvenil Az-

tlán, was met with perhaps the most energetic cheers of the evening. Its performance as a unified group was undeniably powerful, underscoring its recognition and established reputation as a major force in the School of Music.

The diverse instrumentation, including a prominent harp, showcased the breadth and dynamism within the mariachi tradition.

The final ensemble, Mariachi Aztlán, graced the stage as a true tour de force. Its music enveloped the entire auditorium, filling every corner with power and majesty.

Impressive trumpet artistry was a hallmark of its performance, earning strong audience reactions. The ensemble’s

balanced and masterful instrumental work drew rhythmic applause.

The collective poise and professionalism displayed by the performers were breathtaking. Their unified passion transcending the stage cemented their status as accomplished and internationally recognized musicians.

The Mariachi Spring Festival was a vibrant affirmation of mariachi music’s enduring role as a cornerstone of our regional culture.

The unmistakable pride emanating from the performers and the audience underscored its significance as a cultural identifier, a source of deep emotional connection and a testament to the rich artistic heritage of South Texas.



Angel Ballesteros/ The Rider Photos

Music education junior Nayelli Pena plays the harp during the 2025 Mariachi Spring Concert Tuesday in the Performing Arts Complex on the Edinburg campus.



Mariachi Juvenil Aztlán performs during the 2025 Mariachi Spring Concert Tuesday in the Performing Arts Complex on the Edinburg campus.



Interdisciplinary studies senior Melanie Villarreal sings during the 2025 Mariachi Spring Concert Tuesday on the Edinburg campus.

Sudoku

April 7
Crossword
answer key:

2		9	4			6		3
8	1			2		4	7	
7	4	3	8	5	6			1
1		2			3		5	
	9		1	8	2			
3			7			1		
	8			3	1	5	4	
			6	9	4	7	3	
	3	4			8	2		

ACROSS
1. Plan Ahead
3. Census
5. Holds
6. Waitlist
7. Courses
8. Credit

DOWN
2. ASSIST
4. Adviser
9. Hours

Astrology Rider: Weekly Horoscopes

EDUARDO ESCAMILLA
THE RIDER

Aries (March 21 - April 19): You experience a high amount of energy, perfect for campus initiatives and volunteer work.
Taurus (April 20 - May 20): Focus on a comfy study space and connecting with classmates.
Gemini (May 21 - June 20): Your head is boiling with lots of ideas and conversations. Network, explore interests, but don’t overcommit.
Cancer (June 21 - July 22): Focus on close-campus friends

and belonging within a genuine friend group, or make time to find them.
Leo (July 23 - Aug. 22): You’re experiencing a major confidence boost for academics and activities.
Virgo (Aug. 23 - Sept. 22): You have a sharp focus for complex assignments.
Libra (Sept. 23 - Oct. 22): You’ll find yourself needing to mediate group situations.
Scorpio (Oct. 23 - Nov. 21): You need to intensify your focus for deep study; create small habits and rituals out of it.
Sagittarius (Nov. 22

- Dec. 21): It’s time to explore new academic areas and connect with a diverse group of people.
Capricorn (Dec. 22 - Jan. 19): Dedicate a strong focus on academic goals and career steps.
Aquarius (Jan. 20 - Feb. 18): Your thought process is innovative for research and campus projects; share your imagination with the world.
Pisces (Feb. 19 - March 20): You’re carrying a heightened intuition and empathy for students on campus. Focus on creative work to solidify deeper connections.

FOOTBALL

HIT THE GROUND RUNNING

Vaqueros Spring ball game marks many firsts for UTRGV

ALI HALLOUM
THE RIDER

While the Vaqueros’ first spring ball game in program history ended Thursday in a 17-5 win for the white team, the game marked a crucial series of firsts before their first game in August.

It is the first time the team played in front of a crowd for four quarters and in front of the newly inaugurated UTRGV Marching Band at capacity of 3,562 attendees at Veterans Memorial Stadium in Brownsville.

Head coach Travis Bush said the game was a “fun” way to end the program’s first spring practice window.

“It was a fun day,” Bush said. “We’re really proud of the way that our guys [played]. ... We’re still young across the board but, definitely, it was a good spring for our team.”

He said with the transfer portal opening Wednesday, the team looks to add seniors and juniors to a young Vaqueros’ roster.

Freshman quarterback Aztel Chavez shined during Thursday’s game, tallying approximately 134 total-scrimmage yards to go alongside a rushing touchdown while seeing limited snaps.

Chavez told reporters it was great to play in front of the crowd and the band for the first time as a team.

“The atmosphere was great,” he said. “White team, we came in with just an energy. ... We were all locked in and it was fun to play against our guys.”

UTRGV’s freshman running back corps tallied great individual performances while splitting snaps. Brennan Carroll and Fabian Garcia both had over 25 yards on 8 touches each.

Cindy Valdez, who is on the season tickets’ waiting list, attended Thursday’s game.

“Seeing the students doing so well and seeing the community coming out to rally behind them is what it’s all about,” Valdez said.

After white’s first drive ended without points, the orange team took over with senior quarterback Eddie Lee Marbuger under center for its first drive.

It ended in a field goal by freshman kicker Jordan Melucci for the first points of the game.

After two false-start penalties, the field

goal unit came on and white team’s freshman kicker Troop O’Neal sent the ball through the uprights, evening the score at 3.

Chavez took over again, taking white down the field aided by huge gains from wide receivers Christian Sasbrook and Kyran Lee.

The white drive ended with a 7-yard touchdown run by the quarterback to put white up 10-3 with three minutes left in the second quarter.

White’s defense, then, forced an orange three-and-out with freshman quarterback Aidan Jakobsohn under center ahead of the two-minute warning.

The first points of the second half came after orange’s defense forced freshman QB Zion Brown to stop in his own endzone, cutting white’s lead to 13-5 on a safety.

Jayden Paluseo then took over under center for white and, during a drive in which he went 3-3 for 38 passing yards, he threw a touchdown pass to wide receiver Justin Kimber, pushing the score to 17-5, which would hold until the end of the game.





1: The Vaquero does a V's up during the Football Spring game Thursday.

2: The UTRGV Dance Team perform during the Football Spring game Thursday at the Veterans Memorial Stadium in Brownsville.



3: Freshman quarterback Atzel Chavez Jr. gets ready to throw the ball as freshman defensive end Ja'Marcus Anderson, with the white team, tries to block him during the UTRGV Spring Football Game Thursday at Veterans Memorial Stadium in Brownsville.

4: Freshman quarterback Atzel Chavez Jr. gets ready to throw the ball during the UTRGV Spring Football Game Thursday.

5: Fans cheer during the Football Spring game Thursday at the Veterans Memorial Stadium in Brownsville. Over 3,500 people attended the game.

University officials talk Denim Day, showing support

HUGO A. SEPÚLVEDA
THE RIDER

UTRGV departments and community agencies are collaborating to host Denim Day as part of the Sexual Assault Awareness Month to raise student awareness and show support to survivors.

Priscilla Palacios, associate director of special programs for the Office for Advocacy and Violence Prevention, said her office and the UTRGV Police Department are the main collaborators of the event.

Palacios said other sponsors for the event are Student Health Services, Student Rights and Responsibilities, Student Accessibility Services, and community resources such as district attorneys’ offices, local law enforcement departments and the local domestic violence and rape crisis centers.

Marco Huerta, a UTRGV police officer and part of the Community Engagement division, said Denim Day is a campaign supporting Sexual

Assault Awareness Month.

“It originates from a controversial ruling that took place in Italy by the Italian Supreme Court,” Huerta said. “It was in reference to a rape conviction that was overturn due to the victim wearing tight jeans. It was interpreted by the court as implied consent.”

He said the event sparked solidarity from women in the Italian Parliament.

The group called Peace Over Violence in solidarity with the Italian Parliament created Denim Day in Los Angeles in 1999 to challenge misconception about sexual violence, according to its website.

“So, what we do here is we ask participants, including community members, officials, business and

students as part of the event to wear jeans to make a visible protest against such misconceptions,” Huerta said.

The annual events will take place from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wednesday in the Music, Science and Learning Center lobby on the Brownsville campus and at the same time April 30 at the Quad on the Edinburg campus.

“What we’re going to do is we’re going to have some panels set up at BMSLC and at the Quad,” he said. “... Basically, we’re going to have just stories or just people that want to put up quotes ... showing their support for survivors.”

Huerta said police officers will have information regarding the department and free stuff to give away.

“Anything that happens to with

some type of either sexual assault or just assaults itself, you know, I mean that we take seriously and we just want people to be aware of what can happen out there,” he said.

Palacios said her office is in charge of bringing awareness to students about the resources available.

“We hope, of course, that they are never in the situation where they need us but, if they do, or if they know somebody that might need resources, they know where to turn to,” she said.

Palacios said she expects to have students join the event and recognize and understand its importance.

Junior Gabriela Gaona said she was not aware about the event but is considering attending.

Gaona said she believes many people hide they were survivors of sexual assault and the Denim Day event can help them feel supported.

“I would be [going] because, I kinda, I’m trying also going to therapy, so I want to show up for the community,” she said.

“We’re going to have just stories or just people that want to put up quotes ... showing their support for survivors.”

--UTRGV Police Officer Marco Huerta



Photos courtesy UTRGV Police Department

Shown are UTRGV staff participating in Denim Day Vianey Gonzalez (from left), Amanda Quintanilla, Priscilla Palacios, Carmen Villegas, Jessica Martinez in 2024 on the Edinburg campus.



Shown are denim jeans accumulated over the years from the Office for Advocacy and Violence Prevention and donations, which have powerful words written on during the 2024 Denim Day at the Quad on the Edinburg campus.

The Trauma Bay By: Samantha Davila



“I hope something interesting happens today,” I said to my friend Stefanie. We were volunteering at a hospital, stationed in the emergency room (ER). Nora, our supervisor who was a paramedic with years of experience, assigned us tasks for the day. She was one of the most knowledgeable people I’d ever met and loved sharing her insights with us. On my first day, Nora explained the layout of the ER: the waiting room, the rapid treatment unit (RTU), and my favorite - the trauma bay. Our four-hour shifts were simple: observe medical emergencies and help when needed. Saying we wanted “something interesting” to happen was always bittersweet; for us, it meant a chance to learn from doctors and residents, maybe even assist with minor tasks; however, for patients it meant pain and uncertainty.

The trauma bay was always the most exciting part of the hospital. After all, it’s where you go for the most extreme cases. Admittedly, many times trauma codes would be called on the speakers, and I’d rush over hoping for a case straight out of the TV show House MD, only to find elderly patients who had fallen but were otherwise okay. Every now and then, something extraordinary came in. That day, I was hoping for one of those rare cases. Suddenly, I heard the words, “Trauma Bay 1, Trauma Bay 1!” Stefanie and I exchanged glances before rushing toward the bay. Through the ambulance entrance, paramedics wheeled in a man on a stretcher. Blood soaked, the tourniquet wrapped around his leg, and his face twisted in agony. Even with my practically non-existing medical training, I knew two things; this was serious, and that man was getting ketamine soon. Soon we got to Bay 1, where all the staff was expecting the patient. As soon as the physicians laid eyes on the man, they knew surgery was coming. The paramedics gave their report. “He was showing clients a ranch when a wild jaguar charged at them. He tried to stop it, even aimed to shoot, but it got to him first.” Talks of surgery quickly filled the room, and I could feel the excitement soaring through my veins turned to Stephanie and said: “Can you ask Nora if we are allowed to go watch the surgery?”

A few minutes later, we found ourselves chasing residents. I had never walked so fast in my life. I looked back at Stephanie with an expression of nervousness and excitement. I had never watched a surgery performed! I felt like Dr. Gregory House. The hospital is always cold, especially the surgical areas, but I didn’t feel a tinge of cold through my excitement. Instead, I could feel the nervousness and adrenaline rush through every vein in my body.

At the OR entrance, a resident stopped us, “You’ll need to scrub in first,” she said before guiding us to change into scrubs. “Don’t worry, you won’t miss anything. The team takes time to prep.” We barely had time to settle before the double doors swung open. The lead surgeon walked in, hands raised in sterile position, rock music blasting in the background. “Let’s get this done.” Then came the remark that made me pause. The surgeon laughed as he saw Dr. Feyman, a female physician, securing the tourniquet. “Didn’t expect a woman to get it that tight” Without missing a beat, she tightened it further. “It’s a matter of pride now, sir.” I had a small smirk on my face, watching her work with quiet confidence. Surgery was grueling, but at that moment, I looked down and noticed she was wearing cowboy boots. I could not help but wonder, “Does she ever get tired of operating in cowboy boots?”

The surgeon made the first incision, and the moment the scalpel touched skin, the music seemed to intensify, right on cue. The song itself was the kind of track you’d hear in a training montage, the type that makes you want to run upstairs or fight a battle. “Massive vascular damage,” a resident noted; “We need to isolate the femoral artery,” the surgeon said, his voice unwavering. “Clamp!” The scrub nurse handed him the instrument seamlessly. A suction tube whirled as pooled blood was cleared, revealing the shredded artery beneath. The rock song hit its chorus just as the surgeon started repairing the vessel, his hands moving with extreme precision, completely in sync with the beat. Despite the intensity, the team was eerily calm. After all, they did this practically every day. Each member knew one’s role, moving as one, responding to orders before they were fully spoken. It was mesmerizing, the kind of organized chaos that only existed in places like this. As they finished suturing the artery, the music had already shifted to calm track without me noticing. “Nice work,” the surgeon muttered. “Let’s close up.” I exhaled, realizing my hands had been gripping the edge of my scrub top the entire time. As we stepped away, Stefanie turned to me, her eyes wide with awe. “That was unreal!” she whispered. I nodded, still processing everything. The rush, the precision, and the intensity was nothing like what I had imagined, but somehow, it was even better.



BASEBALL

SANCHEZ BREAKS OUT

Vaqueros first baseman and co-captain among standout performers for UTRGV

ALI HALLOUM
THE RIDER

In the midst of a campaign where the Vaqueros are at the top of a stacked Southland Conference in which they are newcomers, many players have shined for UTRGV (26-10, 17-4 SLC).

One of those players is graduate first baseman and team co-captain Jacob Sanchez, whose ascent to captaincy has not been easy.

Joining UTRGV in 2021, Sanchez has battled through injuries, including a torn meniscus that caused him to miss the entire 2024 season.

In an interview with The Rider, he said the adversity of battling through injury and sitting out in 2024 was “the best thing” for his development as a player.

“Being able to see the games in the crowd, it was tough,” Sanchez said. “But it helped me in the long run with my mind and my mental game.”

This season, he has been mashing at the plate. As of press time Friday, he is slashing .365/.447/.574, clubbing seven home runs and driving in 23 runs for the Vaqueros.

“[Sanchez] is a pure hitter,” said Derek Matlock, baseball head coach. “He gets in the box to fight the pitcher and does an outstanding job of hitting breaking stuff.”

Playing in the Rio Grande Valley is nothing new for Sanchez. At Pharr-San Juan-Alamo High School, he played football and baseball, ultimately choosing to commit to playing baseball for the Vaqueros.

Sanchez said he is counting his blessings in not just being one of the co-captains of the Vaqueros, but in inspiring the next generation of baseball players.

“It means a lot [to be] Valley-grown,” Sanchez said. “It’s just a blessing to be a part of, to give kids down here hope and be great for the Valley and put our name out there.”

Matlock told The Rider that, in all the years he has coached Sanchez, his work ethic stands out to him the most.

“He’s always in the cages, always wants extra work,” Matlock said. “He just wants to be good for the Valley. He has pride in UTRGV and he’s gonna have a lot of pride when he puts his degree on the wall.”

Chris Mondesi, first base and infielders coach for the Vaqueros, told The Rider Sanchez is the kind of leader that “leads in the right way both on and off the field.”

“He’s always been a person that’s gonna roll up his sleeves and get to work,” Mondesi said.

When it comes to work ethic, Mondesi said it is the biggest standout



Photos courtesy UTRGV Athletics

Graduate infielder Jacob Sanchez prepares to bat March 22 at the UTRGV Baseball Stadium on the Edinburg campus.

when it comes to players such as Sanchez and graduate shortstop Isaac Lopez, the other team co-captain.

Lopez has played alongside Sanchez since they both came to UTRGV and described him as a “good friend” and a “great teammate” who passes his experience down to the team.

“You can always count on [Sanchez],” Lopez said. “He’s been through a lot of years and successes and injuries. ... He just plays with a lot of energy and grit and just a real passion.”

Offense and leadership have not been the only spots where Sanchez has contributed this season. This year, he has started most of the team’s games at first base, anchoring the infield.

“He was actually my first baseman [in] my redshirt freshman year,” Lopez said. “His effort is always there [and] it’s always a fun time on the infield because our chemistry is so well.”

Mondesi said having a first baseman who can pick throws off the ground like Sanchez gives the other three infielders confidence in making plays.

“[They] know that no matter what type of throw they make, they have a guy that can pick them up on the back end,” he said.

The final stretch of the season is one that could decide whether or



A TCU sophomore outfielder leaps toward first base as graduate infielder Jacob Sanchez prepares to catch the ball March 25 at Lupton Stadium in Fort Worth.

not UTRGV will host games in the conference tournament, with the Vaqueros standing at the top, as of press time Friday.

“We just look forward to keep on

playing our game,” Sanchez said. “A lot of things have been said about us, and we just gotta play with a chip on our shoulder, and we just got to keep going.”

THIS WEEK
IN SPORTS
BASEBALL

6:30 p.m. Tuesday
vs. University of the Incarnate Word

6:30 p.m. Friday & Saturday
vs. McNeese State University

Noon Sunday
vs. McNeese State University

at the UTRGV Baseball Stadium



VAQUEROS THREE-PEAT

Student Media, Gallery magazine secure 52 state awards

REBECA SALINAS
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

UTRGV Student Media members cheered Tuesday when Program Coordinator Jesus Sanchez announced they had taken home the Texas Intercollegiate Press Association Director’s Cup for a third-consecutive year and fourth time in program history after competing in the association’s convention in San Marcos.

Members of The Rider newspaper, KVAQ-TV, Vaquero Radio and Pulse magazine represented the university at the convention held April 9 to 12 and won 52 state awards, beating out schools such as Baylor University, Texas State University and Texas A&M University.

TIPA is the oldest state collegiate press association in the nation and is one of the largest and most-respected collegiate groups in the country, according to its website.

The Director’s Cup is awarded to the school that wins the most points by placing in the on-site live contests during the convention.

Live contests allow students to compete in 30 categories that feature real-world scenarios and include print news writing, copy editing, TV advertising and PR release writing.

Student Media won 11 live-contest awards.

The Rider Editor-in-chief Rebeca Salinas received first place in Newspaper Design; Copy Editor Carlos Castañeda, first place in Spanish News Writing; and Arts & Entertainment Reporter Eduardo Escamilla, third place in Feature Photo.

KVAQ-TV News Director Fernanda Gonzalez received second place in Spanish TV Announcing; TV Web Producer Juan Carlos Marquez Jr., second place in TV Advertising.

Vaquero Radio Station Manager Jan Luis Trejo received first in Spanish Radio Announcing; Sports Reporter Leonardo Guajardo, second in Radio Sports Writing.

Pulse magazine Editorial Cartoonist Quinn Garza received first place in Editorial Cartoon; Graphic Design Editor Yuri Garcia, third place in Yearbook Design and an honorable mention in Magazine Design.

UTRGV Student Media also won third place for the Hype Video.

In the previous published/broadcast competition, Student Media and Gallery magazine won 41

awards, including 14 for Vaquero Radio, 10 for The Rider, nine for KVAQ-TV, four for Pulse magazine, two for Gallery magazine and two for the Student Media advertising team.

Vaquero Radio won first in Advertising/Promo Audio, first in Audio Newscast and second in Advertising Campaign.

Guajardo won first in Sports Reporting-Audio, first in Audio Sportscast and second in Audio Sportscast with News Director Victoria Gonzalez.

Gonzalez also won first in In-Depth News Reporting-Audio, first in General News Audio, second in In-Depth News Reporting-Audio, second in Audio Sports Reporting, and second in Advertising/Promo-Audio with Assistant Station Manager Ariana Gallardo.

Gallardo also won second in Audio Feature Reporting; Program Director Joseph Zambrano, second in Audio Program Production; and former News Reporter Timothy Chapman, third in Audio Feature Reporting.

The Rider won third in Social Media-Overall Excellence.

Salinas won second in Spanish Opinion Writing; The Rider Social Media Editor Daniela Martinez Salazar, third in Social Media-Breaking News and an honorable mention in General News Multimedia with former photographer Venisha Colon and former Editor-in-chief Natalie Lapsley.

Lapsley also won second in Multimedia Slideshow and an honorable mention in Editorial Cartoon; former photographer Silvana Villereal, third in Spanish Opinion Writing; and former Spanish Editor Fatima Gamez Lopez, first in Spanish News Story, second in Spanish News Story and second in Spanish Feature Story.

KVAQ-TV won first in Advertising/Promo-Audio, second in Video Newscast, second in Live Video Newscast and third in Video Program Production.

Fernanda Gonzalez won third in General News Audio; Multimedia Journalist Perla Cortez, first in In-Depth News Reporting-Video; former News Reporter Andrea Flores, first in General News Video, former Assistant Station Manager Tristen Cortez, an honorable mention in General News Video; and Assistant Director Dathan Trevino, an honorable mention in Video Sportscast.

Former Gallery magazine Editor-in-chief Maya Wilson and Art Director Anita Garza received an honorable mention for Literary Magazine Design;

and contributor Carolina Cabrera, first place in Literary Writing.

Former Marketing Specialist Bethany Godinez received second in Advertising/Promo-Video and an honorable mention in Static Ad Design.

Former Student Media Director Azenett Cornejo was inducted into the TIPA Hall of Fame on April 11.

Cornejo devoted more than 20 years to student media and grew the Student Media department at the University of Texas at Brownsville from a single newspaper medium to a multimedia program.

She oversaw the merger of the student media programs from UTB and the University of Texas-Pan American after the consolidation of the legacy institutions into UTRGV.

Director’s Cup wins

2019 Corpus Christi
59 awards

2023 Fort Worth
48 awards

2024 San Marcos
52 awards

2025 San Marcos
52 awards




- 1: UTRGV Student Media won 52 state awards, including 11 on-site live contests, at the Texas Intercollegiate Press Association convention held April 9 to 12 in San Marcos.
- 2: Students from different universities and colleges across the state including Rider Copy Editor Carlos Castaneda (middle, second row) compete in the Spanish News Writing on-site contest April 10 during the Texas Intercollegiate Press Association Convention.
- 3: Students compete in an on-site contest April 10.
- 4: Students from different universities and colleges across the state compete in an on-site contest April 10 during the Texas Intercollegiate Press Association Convention.
- 5: Students from different universities and colleges across the state, including KVAQ-TV Multimedia Journalist Victor Ortega, ask questions during an on-site contest April 10.
- Photos courtesy Student Media

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April 21, 2025
THE RIDER


GOT NEWS?



Tell us about it
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The **Student Fee Advisory committee (SFAC)** advises the university president on the allocation of the student services fee in accordance with Chapter 54 of the Texas Education Code.

**SFAC is reviewing
Fiscal Year 2026 budget proposals.**

UPCOMING MEETINGS 2025

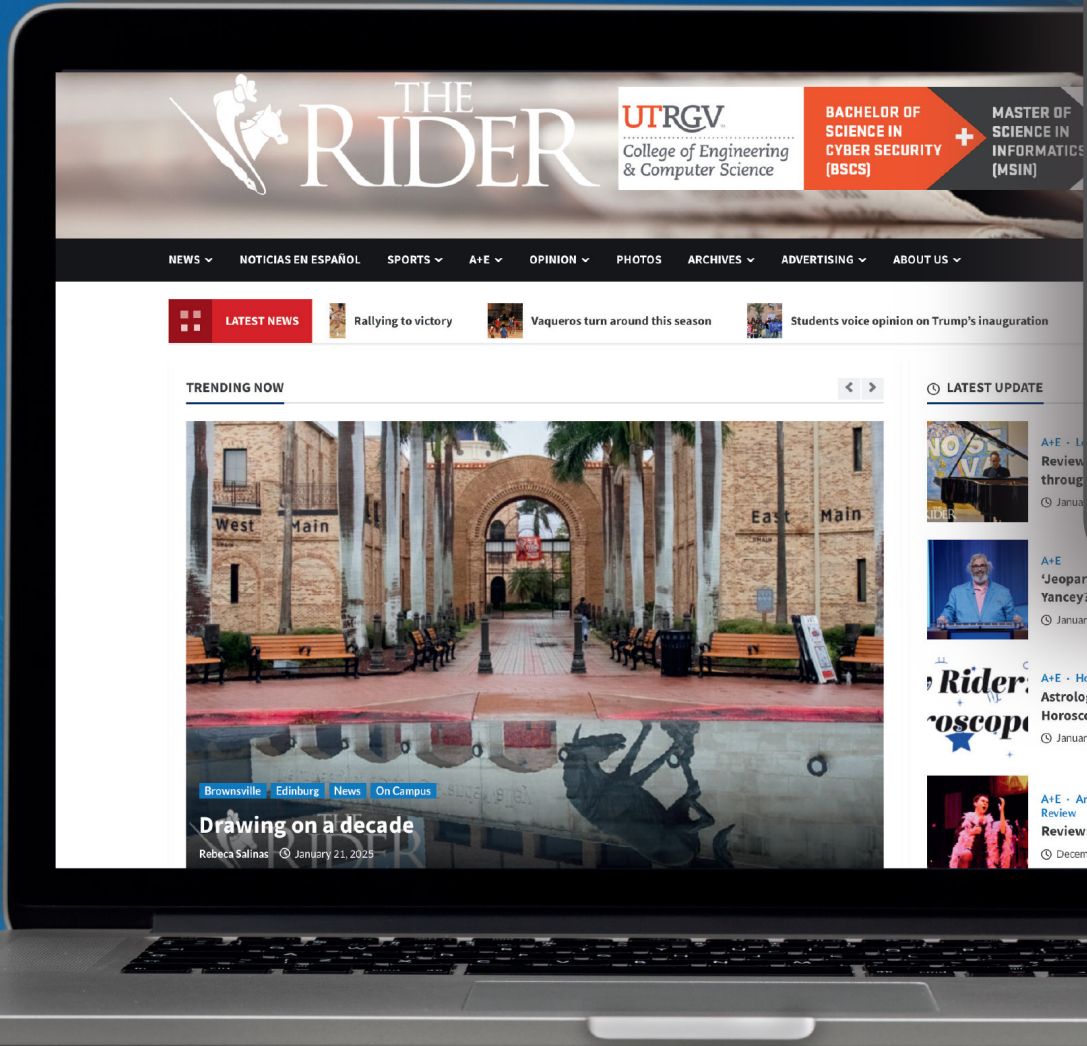
Date	Time
Wednesday, April 23	4:00 - 5:00 p.m.
Friday, April 25	2:30 - 5:00 p.m.
Wednesday, April 30	3:30 - 5:00 p.m.
Friday, May 2	2:30 - 5:00 p.m.

All meetings will be in EUCTR 323.
(Meetings subject to change)


Please contact the Office of the Dean of Students at **dos@utrgv.edu** or (956) 665-2260 to RSVP and/or request accomodations.

For more details and updated information, visit:
www.utrgv.edu/sfac

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