

**ETHAN MALDONADO**  
THE RIDER

As the leaves begin to turn colors once again this fall, UTRGV celebrates its 10th anniversary with a year of events, football and plans to expand programs that prepare students for future careers.

“We wanted to be the best value in American higher education,” said UTRGV President Guy Bailey. “And what value is, is a combination of high quality and reasonable price. And so, I think we’ve done that, and I think the rankings of Washington Monthly magazine verifies that for us.”

UTRGV was ranked No. 7 nationally and No. 1 in Texas for the third consecutive year in Washington Monthly’s 2025 College Guide published Aug. 24.

UTRGV is the only Texas university in this year’s Top 30; the next Texas institution does not appear until No. 46.

The big celebration is UTRGV Day on Wednesday, said Patrick Gonzales, vice president for University Marketing and Communications.

“We have UTRGV Day every year where we celebrate our anniversary,” Gonzales said. “So, UTRGV Day this year is where we’ll kick off our 10th anniversary celebration. And so, you know, we’ll have cupcakes and goodies to give away, and that’s where we do our annual T-shirt giveaway as well.”

The Vaqueros football team will honor the university during its second home game on Sept. 13, with more giveaways and recognition of the 10 years.

The vice president said the anniversary comes at a time of record growth for the university.

“We will likely have another record-breaking first-day enrollment when we start school,” Gonzales said in an interview Aug. 21. “That will be ... maybe our fifth straight. Our fundraising is higher than they’ve ever been. In our academic programming, we’ve added more than 40 new programs since UTRGV has started. That’s been our mission from day one and, as we look to the future, we’re just going to continue to expand on that mission.”

Bailey said the mission has always been rooted in the Rio Grande Valley.

“The Rio Grande Valley is our home, and most of our students’ home,” the president said. “We’ve tried to be the Valley’s university, not just in location but in our service to our communities and to our students. And so, that’s absolutely at the forefront of what we do.”

Looking ahead, Bailey said the next decade will focus on enhancing student life.

“What we want to do is enhance student life on campus and football is a good first step in that,” he said. “We want to create more living opportunities on campus, more opportunities for students to become engaged and to have a richer student life.”

When asked about his thoughts and feelings about these last 10 years, Bailey replied they were the “best 10 years of my life.”

“I’ve lived a long life so far,” he said. “I say that for several reasons. First of all, I’ve never enjoyed living anywhere as much as I like the Valley. I love the people of the Valley, just love everything about it. And I think my own life is kind of emblematic of life in the Valley. It’s about family, it’s about hard work, and that’s what I’ve enjoyed and I couldn’t be more grateful for all of it.”

THE RIDER FILE PHOTO

**ON CAMPUS:**

Rounding up new Vaqueros

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Brownsville football game scrapped

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ENTRE the RGV film scene

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## 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

UTRGV Trailblazers will host **information depots** from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. through Thursday and from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday across both campuses. Attendees can collect **campus maps, directions, snacks,** and learn about **resources and events** the university offers.

### Vaquero Dive-In

Campus Activities Board, University Recreation and Housing & Residence Life will host a poolside screening of **“How to Train Your Dragon”** from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Casa Bella pool on the Brownsville campus and from 8 to 10 p.m. in the UREC leisure pool on the Edinburg campus. Attendees can enjoy **free snacks and giveaways.**

**A student ID is required.**

### Wednesday UTRGV Day

UTRGV will celebrate its **10th anniversary** from 8:30 to 10 a.m. in the Health & Physical Education Complex training gym on the Edinburg campus, 11 a.m. to noon in the McAllen Rio Bank fifth-

floor conference room, noon to 1 p.m. in Clinical Education Building Room 1.100 on the Harlingen campus and 2 to 3 p.m. in the PlainsCapital Bank El Gran Salón on the Brownsville campus. **Students, faculty and staff** are invited to receive a **free shirt, cupcakes and drinks.**

### Vaquero Clubs: Campus Takeover

The **Center For Student Involvement** will host **Campus Takeover** from 4 to 7 p.m. on the Chapel lawn on the Edinburg campus and from noon to 3 p.m. Sept. 10 on the Main Building courtyard on the Brownsville campus. Attendees can enjoy **fun activities, free food, connect and explore organizations.**

### 1 Million Cups Brownsville

The **Entrepreneurship and Commercialization Center** hosts 1 Million Cups at 9 a.m. in the eBridge Center for Business and Commercialization, located at 1304 E. Adams St. in Brownsville. **Local, regional and international entrepreneurs** can come

together to **share stories, make connections** and **find opportunities** within the community. The event is **free** and open to the public.

### Thursday Psychology Club

The **Psychology Club** will host a **general meeting** followed by **bingo** from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. in Student Academic Center Room 1.112 on the Edinburg campus. Attendees can enjoy **free snacks and make connections** whether they are new or returning members.

### Part-Time Job Fair

The **Career Center** will host the **Fall 2025 Part-Time Job Fair** from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the PlainsCapital Bank El Gran Salón on the Brownsville campus and at the same time in the University Ballroom on the Edinburg campus. Students can connect with employers who are looking to **hire on campus and off campus positions.**

**Brightspace Orientation**  
The **Center for Online Learning and Teaching Technology** will host a

**Brightspace orientation** from 3 to 3:30 p.m. online. Students can **learn to navigate Brightspace** and can **enhance their learning experience.** For more information, visit the COLTT website.

### The Stomp

**Student Activities** will host **The Stomp** from 8 p.m. to midnight in Lot E-8 on the Edinburg campus and at the same time Sept. 9 in Lot B-4 on the Brownsville campus. Students can **connect with fellow Vaqueros, enjoy live music, giveaways** and interact with **local vendors.**

### Friday

#### Welcome Back Game Party

The **Student Union** and **Student Activities** will host a **Welcome Back Game Room Party** in the Game Rooms from noon to 3 p.m. on the Brownsville campus and from 2 to 5 p.m. on the Edinburg campus. Students can enjoy **free snacks, karaoke, bingo, consoles and prizes** every hour.

--Compiled by Mariah Escobar.



## POLICE REPORTS

*The following are among the incidents reported to University Police between Aug. 18 and 24.*

### Aug. 18

**1:14 p.m.:** An officer responded to the Village Apartments on the Edinburg campus regarding a suspicious person. The area was searched, but no one matching the description was found.

### Aug. 19

**12:10 p.m.:** An officer responded to the Academic & Clinical Research Building parking lot on the Harlingen campus regarding a two-vehicle collision. No injuries were reported.

**1:45 p.m.:** An employee reported witnessing a verbal altercation between two men in the Village Apartments

parking lot on the Edinburg campus. He said he did not see any physical contact. The area was checked, but no one was located.

### Aug. 20

**11:43 a.m.:** A student accidentally damaged university equipment while working on a project at the Rio Grande Center for Manufacturing on the Edinburg campus. No injuries were reported.

**2:01 p.m.:** An officer was dispatched to a two-vehicle collision in Lot E-7 on the Edinburg campus. No injuries were reported.

### Aug. 21

**7:51 a.m.:** An officer responded to the Mathematics & General Classrooms Building on the Edinburg campus regarding employees

trapped inside the elevator. Employees reported they were fine. The elevator was shut down, and a work order was submitted for repairs.

**9:31 a.m.:** An employee reported the theft of two trees from the front landscape area of the UT Health Multispecialty Clinic in Edinburg. The case is under investigation.

**1:01 p.m.:** A student reported a metal shelf fell and struck him in Portable Building 9 on the Edinburg campus, causing a shoulder bruise and a cheek scratch. He refused Emergency Medical Services.

### Aug. 23

**8:02 a.m.:** An officer observed broken windows while conducting a foot patrol of the portable buildings next to Lot B-1 on the Brownsville

campus. No one was found in the building. The case is under investigation.

### Aug. 24

**1:22 p.m.:** A mother called to request a welfare check on her daughter, a student living in the Unity Hall on the Edinburg campus. After investigation, the officer found the student, who said her cellphone was down. Soon after, she called her mother.

**11:38 p.m.:** Officers responded to an active fire alarm in the Engineering Building on the Edinburg campus. Officers found no smoke or fire upon arrival, and the fire panel was reset.

--Compiled by Dayra Gonzalez

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.*

# WELCOME, NEW VAQUEROS!

**SOPHIA CORTEZ**  
THE RIDER

New Vaqueros are getting ready to start their first semester at UTRGV today, marking the first step toward a college career.

The event took place Aug. 22 on the Brownsville campus and Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday on the Edinburg campus.

Andrea Yen, director of Undergraduate Recruitment, said this year the university is anticipating another record freshman class.

“We learned that students were really interested in student life and spirit,” Yen said. “And so, we really added some of those experiences around campus.”

Students were able to participate in interactive sessions with their individual colleges, as well as activities like face painting and karaoke.

Yen said the idea was to keep the day interesting while connecting with colleagues and organizations.

Xochitl Hinojosa, coordinator of Recruitment and Orientation Programs,

said this year’s event also reflects feedback from the incoming class.

“I think with this class that has come in, we have really listened and heard to the wants of the students while they were coming in through orientation, and we are providing some of these new programming through various campus partnerships,” Hinojosa

“We learned that students were really intrested in student life and spirit,”

*—Andrea Yen, director of Undergraduate Recruitment*

said.

One of the highlights for students, she said, will be the chance to meet important teachers and leaders in smaller groups.

“Some colleges will break out into smaller areas where they’ll be able to go ahead and interact personally with the students in a smaller sense versus speaking to the whole entering class,” Hinojosa said.

Orientation leader Rafael Benitez, a nursing senior, told The Rider that being punctual and teamwork was part of his preparation for

welcoming students.

Along with the orientation leaders’ instruction, students participated in activities such as karaoke and a bubble party hosted by the Campus Activities Board. A scavenger hunt and a “Find the Vaquerito” game allowed incoming Vaqueros to win prizes while exploring campus.

During the event, students were provided free food and, on the Brownsville campus, Southern Rose Coffee offered a selection of drinks for purchase.

Hinojosa said Roundup connects new Vaqueros to upcoming traditions beyond orientation.

“Coming to Vaquero Roundup will definitely get them connected with professors, key campus staff,” she said. “They’ll be able to kind of see a little bit of what it is as they’re coming into with different things that we are preparing for them in the start of the semester, like Welcome Week, the Stomp and different things that we are definitely going to make sure that they know are happening.”



KARLA HERNANDEZ/THE RIDER

UTRGV students receive their lunch from the Dining Services staff during their break session at the Vaquero Roundup Aug. 22 outside the PlainsCapital Bank El Gran Salón on the Brownsville campus.



KARLA HERNANDEZ/THE RIDER

Haley Rodriguez (left), a marketing freshman, cools off with a popsicle provided by Michaela Ruiz, UTRGV Trailblazer staff, during the Vaquero Roundup Aug. 22 on the Student Union lawn on the Brownsville campus.



KARLA HERNANDEZ/THE RIDER

Michaela Ruiz (left), UTRGV Trailblazer staff, provides a popsicle to Gloria Paz, a marketing freshman, during the Vaquero Roundup Aug. 22 on the Student Union lawn on the Brownsville campus.



KARLA HERNANDEZ/THE RIDER

Students head to their lunch break during the Vaquero Roundup Aug. 22 in the PlainsCapital Bank El Gran Salón on the Brownsville campus.



THE RIDER/FILE PHOTO



THE RIDER/FILE PHOTO

# STOMP INTO THE FALL

**SOPHIA CORTEZ**  
THE RIDER

UTRGV will welcome Vaqueros back to campus with The Stomp, a semester kickoff event celebrating community and school spirit from 8 p.m. to midnight Thursday in Lot E-8 outside the University Center on the Edinburg campus and at the same time Sept. 9 in Lot B-4 in front of Casa Bella on the Brownsville campus.

This year’s edition will blend traditions from past events with new updates based on student feedback, offering students a

chance to connect, celebrate and start the semester.

“The Stomp is actually an event that started off with the creation of UTRGV,” said Raul Leal, program coordinator for Student Activities. “So, it existed for a few years. In its previous iteration, it was more of a student organization tabling opportunity for people to learn more about the organizations and opportunities to get involved on campus.”

Leal added that previous editions of the event featured live music and fireworks, which they

intend to bring back to commemorate the event’s start.

Students can expect interactive activities and new elements. A student ID is required.

“One thing that I’m super excited for is our mobile zip line, so people can zip from one side of the event to the other, apart from our business showcase, which is an opportunity for students to get a lot of cool, free deals and samples from local vendors and really learn about what other opportunities or resources that they have for students on campus,” Leal said.

Monica Vera, assistant director of Residence Life, said staff members are actively promoting The Stomp and Welcome Week.

“That’s the whole point of being on campus and living on campus,” Vera said. “They have, like, front row seats, and so we want to make sure that they take advantage of everything that’s available to them.”

Housing and Residence Life will volunteer alongside student organizations to welcome students and advertise Welcome Week and events this upcoming semester.

# DIVE INTO THE SEMESTER SEAMLESSLY

**EMMA CASTILLO**  
THE RIDER

UTRGV Student Activities kicks off Welcome Week today, inviting new and returning students to explore campus and celebrate the start of the Fall 2025 semester.

Cristina Rodriguez, assistant director of Student Activities, described the goal of Welcome Week as a time to introduce students to the many opportunities available on campus.

Events will start with the Vaquero Dive-In, taking place at 7 p.m. today in the Casa Bella pool on the Brownsville campus and at 8 p.m. in the University Recreation leisure pool on the Edinburg campus.

“For those students who are nervous about starting the fall semester, we have Welcome Week’s events designed to help calm those nerves,” said Annette Livas, associate director of Programs. “These events are to help them find their community.”

Livas added the event will be the first of its kind hosted at the UREC’s new lap pool and hopes it becomes a new tradition.

On Wednesday, students are invited to celebrate UTRGV Day. Students, faculty and staff are invited to receive a free shirt with cupcakes and drinks provided. The event will take place from 8:30 to 10 a.m. in the Health & Physical Education Complex training gym on the Edinburg campus, 11 a.m. to noon in the McAllen Rio Bank fifth-floor conference room, noon to 1 p.m. in Clinical Education Building Room 1.100 on the

Harlingen campus and 2 to 3 p.m. in the PlainsCapital Bank El Gran Salón on the Brownsville campus.

Integrated health science

11:30 a.m. in the University Ballroom on the Edinburg campus and at the same time in the PlainsCapital El Gran Salón on the Brownsville

8 p.m. to midnight in Lot E-8 outside the University Center on the Edinburg campus and at the same time Sept. 9 in Lot B-4 in front of Casa Bella on

The following week will kick off with Picnic with the President, honoring UTRGV’s 10th anniversary. Students, faculty and staff are invited to complimentary hamburgers and drinks from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Sept. 9 in the PlainsCapital Bank El Gran Salón on the Brownsville campus and at the same time Sept. 10 in the University Ballroom on the Edinburg campus.

To close out the week, at 9 p.m. on Sept. 11, the University Recreation Center will host its 10th annual Late Nite celebration on the Edinburg campus, a night of fun and information, according to Livas.

“While we’re going to show off this beautiful building and all of the activities and programs that are happening here today, we also want this to be a catch-on for wellness resources that are available across UTRGV that students didn’t know about,” she said.

The event will feature yoga and Zumba demonstrations throughout the night, along with intramural and sports league signups and information for any students interested in joining. Students will also have free access to the recreation center facilities until midnight, including the new lap pool. Music, food and drinks will be provided.

Livas added that this year’s event will debut a unique T-shirt design in honor of the 10th anniversary. Students are encouraged to bring their student IDs with them to participate at the UREC and all other events.



**DRAYA RIOS/THE RIDER**

Vaquero Dive-In will screen “How to Train Your Dragon” today in the University Recreation leisure pool on the Edinburg campus and in the Casa Bella pool on the Brownsville campus. A student ID is required.

junior Elijah Rodriguez said he looks forward to being a part of Welcome Week.

“I think it’d be cool to find opportunities related to my major,” Rodriguez said.

On Thursday, the UTRGV Part-Time Job Fair will take place. Students can take this opportunity to expand their career prospects and connect with employers offering both on-campus and off-campus job positions, according to the Career Center website.

The event will take place at

campus.

“If you want to work on-campus or if you want to work in an internship or externally, that’s the place to come and visit,” Cristina Rodriguez said. “They love doing things like open houses and letting [students] know all the resources that are available.”

Also that day, Student Activities will host The Stomp, an annual UTRGV tradition, featuring live music, activities, prize giveaways and a business showcase with local vendors. The event will take place from

the Brownsville campus.

“To celebrate 10 years, we’re actually doing a firework show at 10 p.m.,” Cristina Rodriguez said. “We want it to be for everyone to see.”

Friday’s highlight will be the Student Union Game Room Party, offering bingo, karaoke, console gaming and ice hockey challenges alongside hourly prizes and snacks. The event will take place from noon to 3 p.m. on the Brownsville campus and from 2 to 5 p.m. on the Edinburg campus.

## NEW APP TO SIMPLIFY TRAVEL

**DAYRA GONZALEZ**  
THE RIDER

UTRGV Department of Parking and Transportation announced the transition from the Ride Systems app to TransLoc.

The new app will allow students and staff to plan their rides more easily with real-time tracking, instant notifications and updated shuttle information.

The transition began Sunday, and the app became fully available for official use today.

Maribel Contreras, director of Transportation Services, said the update will help riders follow buses more efficiently.

“With the TransLoc app, you’re able to track the bus in real time, get alerts and updates on our services, and view arrivals and stops,”

Contreras said. “You can also get information on other transit partners within the area that provide transportation.”

The switch comes after TransLoc acquired Ride Systems earlier this year.

According to Rodney Gomez, executive director of Parking and Transportation Services, the transition is part of the company’s updates.

“TransLoc serves many communities across the U.S.,” Gomez said. “Because they’re a larger company with more resources, we expect to see improvements and updates to the app over time.”

For students who depend on the shuttle, the app could ease their time-scheduling.

Lorraine Pedraza, a film senior, rides the shuttle every day to Edinburg. She said

tracking in real time will make her ride easier.

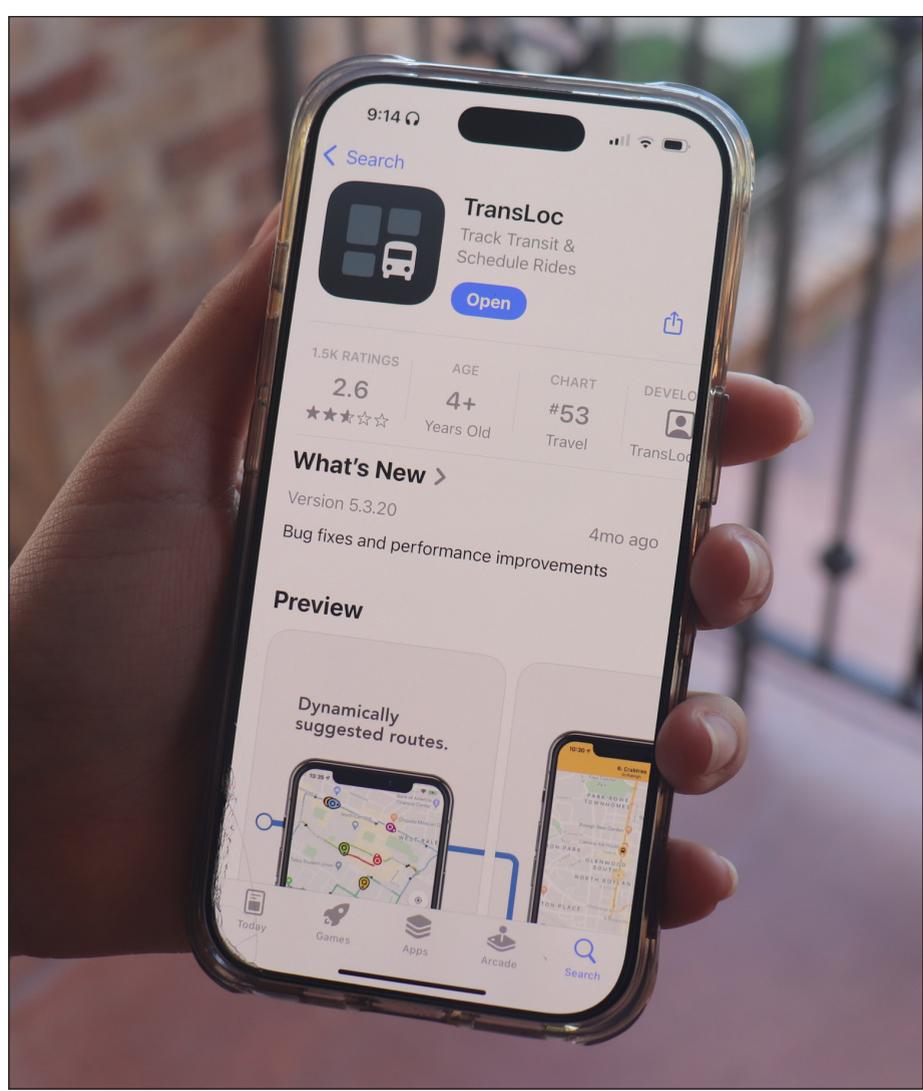
“Sometimes the bus is late, and you don’t know where exactly it is,” Pedraza said. “So, it’d be good to know.”

Mechanical engineering senior Brandon Aranda, also a daily rider, agreed the app will improve confidence in the service.

“It would make me a bit more confident in the shuttle overall,” Aranda said.

To help students prepare for the change, the department has sent emails informing about TransLoc. Additionally, it will post on its social media a video on how to download and use the app.

For questions about the TransLoc app, students can contact transportation@utrgv.edu, or through the department’s website or social media.



**KARLA HERNANDEZ/THE RIDER**

The TransLoc app will be used to track university buses starting the Fall 2025 semester.

COLUMN OF THE WEEK

# WALKING WITH PURPOSE



**DANIELA MARTINEZ SALAZAR**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

I am one of those people who believes we walk with a purpose, not by coincidence. As we step into a new semester, I can't help but think back on everything that has led me to where I am today.

Fall 2025 is my last semester at UTRGV, and I am incredibly grateful for every learning experience I've received at this institution. As a believer, I've seen how each year of my life and education has equipped me with the

resources, knowledge and faith to face challenges and remain rooted in Him.

Staying anchored in God has taught me to trust Him in every step of the process. I see life as a constant journey in which God shapes character, strength and faith and, at the end of the day, even when we don't understand, He has a purpose for every season.

This verse reminds me that life itself is a process and reassures me that everything is made beautiful at its time. I've faced difficult situations that affected my everyday life but, when I fixed my eyes on Him, it became clear His love and open arms were always there, holding me and guiding me. And though at the time I didn't know why, I now

to keep my eyes on God and taught me to trust His timing.

When I was a freshman, I never imagined working as a photographer at a newspaper. Three years later, in His time, He opened the door. Today, I serve as Editor-in-Chief of The Rider Newspaper. I know His grace will continue to guide me and my team as we cover stories that impact our university and uphold our slogan, "The Student Voice of UTRGV."

Looking back, I can say Daniela from freshman year never imagined how her senior year would look, but He did.

As I walk into my last semester, I will keep this verse close to my heart. I might not know what the future holds after graduation, but I do know that these final months at UTRGV. He will continue to shape, root me and guide me to walk with faith and purpose in every season He takes me.

"I am one of those people who believe we walk with a purpose, not by coincidence."

Recently, I came across Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NLT): "Yet God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end."

understand He was shaping me into who I am today, and that He will continue to do so.

My time at UTRGV has been incredible. Over these four years, I've met people who have been crucial in my life, people who encouraged me to grow, reminded me



**How has your 2025 been & what's still on your 2025 bucket list?**



**Carlos Hernandez**  
entrepreneurship freshman

"My 2025 has been good. I look forward to this new school ... new friends, new people to talk about."



**Marissa Padron**  
accounting sophomore

"So far, my 2025 has been full of new experiences. ... And in my bucket list for this year, probably, maintaining my GPA."



**Savannah Ramirez**  
elementary education senior

"So, my 2025 has been amazing, definitely blessed. ... On my bucket, finish the school year strong."



**Juan Rincon**  
freshman

"My 2025 has been chill. I haven't done much, but I did some goals. I accomplished buying a new car and everything."

--Compiled and photos by Venisha Colon

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OR SCAN THE QR CODE  
HERE

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## From Blackboard to Brightspace.

## WACKY WEB POLL

OUR NEW FOOTBALL TEAM IS ABOUT TO TAKE OFF! ARE YOU EXCITED FOR UTRGV'S INAUGURAL FOOTBALL SEASON?

SCAN THE QR CODE TO GIVE US YOUR ANSWER!

[THE RIDER@UTRGV.EDU](mailto:THE RIDER@UTRGV.EDU)

# NO TOUCHDOWNS IN BROWNSVILLE



MYKEL DEL ANGEL/THE RIDER PHOTOS  
The renovations of Sams Memorial Stadium were supposed to finish before Fall 2025 but were delayed due to graduation ceremonies and inclement weather.

**ALI HALLOUM**  
THE RIDER

Over the summer, UTRGV Athletics announced the football game scheduled to take place at 7 p.m. Sept. 13 against Langston University at Sams Memorial Stadium in Brownsville will no longer take place there. Instead, it was moved to the Robert and Janet Vackar Stadium in Edinburg.

It would have been the second time the Vaqueros set foot in Cameron County after last spring's game at Veterans Memorial Stadium.

Delays in a \$3.1 million field-replacement project at the stadium is the reason behind the relocation of the game. The project, which replaces the track with turf and expands the field from 185 to 225 feet wide, was delayed by graduation ceremonies and bad weather.

In a June 10 Athletics news release, Director of Athletics Chasse Conque expressed his disappointment about the relocation of the game while also affirming UTRGV's wish to host a football game in Brownsville.

"We've been planning this Brownsville game for nearly four years, so having to move it is incredibly disappointing," Conque said in the news release.

Opened in 1957, Sams Stadium typically hosts 30 to 35 high school football games a year across Brownsville Independent School District's

six high schools, while also hosting soccer games.

Its capacity of over 10,000 and proximity to the Brownsville campus led to it being chosen as the venue for the Vaqueros' annual game in the city.

The Rider spoke with BISD Athletic Director Gilberto Leal about the project, the delay and the future of Sams Stadium. He said it was "in the best interest" of both UTRGV

"We've been planning this Brownsville game for nearly four years, so having to move it is incredibly disappointing,"

**--Director of Athletics  
Chasse Conque**

and BISD to postpone it.

"The logistics are involved when you're dealing with Division I football programs," Leal said. "They're not able to, at the spur of the moment, go from one field to the other."

In addition to the field expansion, the renovation adds capacity for ESPN and other media outlets to operate at the stadium, facilitating live streaming and broadcasting of games.

Jonah Goldberg, UTRGV senior associate athletic director for Communications and Championships, said other venues in Brownsville were considered but did not have the necessary capacity or facilities for Division I football,

leading to the decision to host it in Edinburg instead.

"There was nowhere else that was going to be able to seat five figures," Goldberg said. "Sams Stadium can handle a large crowd. There's both the large stands. They just built a new locker room in addition to what they already had."

Reactions to the news among Brownsville students varied when asked by The Rider. Business sophomore Roy Garcia cited traffic concerns between Edinburg and Brownsville for those wishing to attend the game. It is a 64-mile drive between both cities.

"I was thinking of going to the game if it was in Brownsville since it's closer to where I live, but Edinburg, maybe I'll reconsider," Garcia said. "Hopefully, I can get there earlier, so I don't have to deal with all that [traffic]."

Business junior Daniel Machi said it was a "great choice" to move the game, citing the seemingly bigger facilities and events in Edinburg.

"I see that the events are way more energetic over there, so I really enjoy it," Machi said. "The stadium looks really nice, and I can't wait to get there."

Leal added although this season's game at Sams was postponed, there are already plans in place to host next season's spring game at the venue. --Venisha Colon contributed to this report.



Sams Memorial Stadium in Brownsville is undergoing a \$3.1 million renovation to transform it into a dedicated football and soccer complex by replacing the track with a wider, high-quality turf field to accommodate higher-level competition for high school and UTRGV sports.



Brownsville Independent School District high-school football games will take place at the Brownsville Sports Park or Veterans Memorial Stadium until the renovations are complete.

# THE WORLD OF SPORTS MEDICINE



PHOTO COURTESY UTRGV ATHLETICS

Shane Venteicher, director of Football Medicine, pictured waving during a football practice.



JOSE RODRIGUEZ/THE RIDER

Dan Park, assistant strength and conditioning coach, works with the women's basketball, track & field and cross-country programs.

**DANIELA CHAPA-REYES**  
THE RIDER

The Rider went behind the scenes of UTRGV Athletics to learn more about the art of sports medicine and what is done to help student athletes.

Don Sommer, head football strength and conditioning coach, has a 35-year-long career. Sommer said he spent 12 years at the University of Missouri and 21 years at Texas Christian University and is now aiding the Vaqueros.

"It takes a lot longer to set it up than it takes for them to lift," Sommer said. "[Strength and conditioning] is an evolving, ever changing process, but the basics are the basics. I mean you push, you pull, you squat, you hinge, you single leg. If you make your program on those five things, it is always going to be solid."

He said he is old school when it comes to the training and does not follow stuff seen on Instagram nor "jump on a bosu ball and all that B.S."

His philosophy is going as heavy as you can for as long as you can.

"We're going to be tough," Sommer said. "... Our whole goal is to physically beat you up and make you want to quit so the game is easier."

Shane Venteicher, director of Football Medicine, said the programming for athletes is based on their injury, their mentality, their comfortability and the time of game-season.

"You have to take all that into thought when you're making a rehab plan and a treatment plan; you just put that

"[Strength and conditioning] is an evolving, ever changing process, but the basics are the basics."

—Head football strength and conditioning coach Don Sommer

all together and you lay it out to the athlete," Venteicher said. "At the end, we have to make sure each individual person is on board with what you're laying out there with them."

He said there is more to life than athletics, and their goal is to make sure they are "at least healthy going on in daily life."

Venteicher said the better Sommer's strength and conditioning program is, the easier his job is.

"They do a great job with, like, the strength and conditioning aspect of it," he said. "Whenever we do

have guys come in, it doesn't matter if it's just soreness or an injury, we will do some sort of corrective exercise."

Another strength and conditioning coach to highlight is Dan Park, who trains with women's basketball, track & field and cross-country.

Park said it is very hard to prevent all injuries.

"Sports are inherently dangerous," he said. "What we try to do on the strength side is prepare them for all those demands, so that's why we train them so hard ... so, when it is time to get out on the floor or the field, they are as prepared and confident as they need to be."

Brad Phetkhamchanh, associate athletic trainer for men's soccer, track & field and cross-country, said the biggest thing for him is to teach people with new injuries or recurring injuries how to take care of themselves.

"[For] a lot of these kids, it's their first injury that sometimes they don't know how to deal with," Phetkhamchanh said. "For me, it is just helping them develop coping strategies to deal with it and work through it and learning that it is not the end of the world if they are not out at practice or out playing. ... They just have a little setback."

## ATHLETE OF THE WEEK: GUNNER NAIVAR

**DRAVA RIOS**  
THE RIDER

Gunner Naivar is an entrepreneurship redshirt freshman from Dallas. Navier is a wide receiver for the UTRGV Football Team and will be kickstarting the university's first game.

**Q: What's a fun fact about yourself?**

**A:** "A fun fact about me is that I'm a nerd. I love 'Star Wars,' and, like, 'Lord of the Rings,' and 'Batman' and all that stuff."

**Q: What got you into football?**

**A:** "My dad is a coach, so he kind of introduced me to it, and then I fell in love with it."

**Q: What's made you continue football?**

**A:** "My Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I've always wanted to, like, glorify

him through my talents."

**Q: Who's been your biggest inspiration throughout it?**

**A:** "My biggest inspiration is probably Tim Tebow because he really just displayed his faith throughout football."

**Q: Do you have a favorite football player?**

**A:** "I like C.J. Stroud a lot. He plays for the [Houston] Texans."

**Q: What do you like to do for fun outside of football?**

**A:** "I like to fish, I like to lift weights, Bible study. And that's about it."

**Q: What's your favorite music genre?**

**A:** "My favorite music genre, right now, I've been listening to a lot of country but, as the season will go on, I'll start changing it up a little bit."

**Q: Do you have a favorite song?**

**A:** "Probably 'Tennessee Whiskey,' right now."

**Q: Do you have a favorite movie?**

**A:** "My favorite movie is definitely 'Revenge of the Sith.' It's a 'Star Wars' movie."

**Q: What keeps you going everyday?**

**A:** "Definitely my faith in Jesus and just Christianity as a whole."

**Q: What are your biggest goals right now?**

**A:** "Biggest goal right now is for us to be the Southland Conference Champions, for sure."

**Q: What do you like most about UTRGV?**

**A:** "My favorite part about UTRGV is definitely that it's always hot, palm trees everywhere."



DRAVA RIOS/THE RIDER

Gunner Naivar, an entrepreneurship redshirt freshman, is a wide receiver for the UTRGV Football Team.

REVIEW

# NO RULES, JUST ART

## THE RGV'S EXPERIMENTAL FILM SCENE

EDUARDO ESCAMILLA  
A&E EDITOR

The focus was sharp at ENTRE Film Center, where even the standing room section was brimming with inquisitive eyes locked onto the screen, carefully deciphering the metaphors and symbolism in each film.

Cine Futuros, an experimental short film showcase, captivated audiences on Aug. 23, at ENTRE Film Center in Harlingen. The event was in collaboration with UTRGV's Graduate Creative Writing Program.

The showcase consisted of 10 experimental short-films by regional filmmakers, artists and poets.

Kristin Montez, a UTRGV graduate student in the Creative Writing Program, organized the showcase with a simple yet complex goal, to reclaim and subvert border narratives, challenging how the region is often misrepresented.

To me, what was truly disruptive was presenting film in a format that is alien to most audiences in the Rio Grande Valley.

This style, which is unfamiliar to those outside the experimental film genre, gave viewers room to breathe and wander into fantasies that



JOSE RODRIGUEZ/THE RIDER

ENTRE Film Center hosted Cine Futuros Aug. 23. ENTRE is an artist-run community film center that offers gear rentals, workshops, film screenings, filmmaking and archival practices. It is located at 415 W. Jackson Ave. in Harlingen.

felt both new and familiar.

C. Diaz, ENTRE co-founder and worker-owner, said during an interview after the showcase, experimental films allow creators to break free from traditional narrative structures, improvise and pair stories with different visuals in ways that push boundaries.

The beauty of this genre is its ability to go beyond ordinary storytelling.

Many of the films' use of poetry, both original and found, created a unique visual and auditory experience.

Freed from the constraints of traditional dialogue, the viewer's mind worked in a

natural rhythm to connect images and words.

This active engagement was a powerful catalyst, mirroring how we intuitively interpret conversations, process the news and even understand nonverbal cues in our daily lives.

Whether intentional or coincidental, a common thread throughout the various points of view in the films was the concept of space.

The film "Native Plants of the RGV Haikus," by the RGV Women Poet Society was a poetic encyclopedia of the flora synonyms to us 956'ers, in this space we grow and

nurture our culture.

Director Chloe Vela's film, "Two Stories from the Border," explored the land one must leave behind to seek a space of hope, where dreams are permitted and the crushing cruelty of having those dreams torn away.

Filmmaker Chava Ramirez surveyed the cerebral space we occupy with constructed memories in "Transmission," asking the provocative question of who owns the rights to a collective experience.

Ancestral lands were also beautifully visited through the sublime visuals in "Viviendo

En Huecos," a collaborative film, and "Un Abrazo Del Otro Lado," directed by Omar A. Casas Jr. and Laura Daniela Martinez.

These films shone a light on cultural spaces that have been politicized and terrorized, their history a struggle against assimilation. Still, they powerfully conveyed a profound yearning to intertwine with the ancestral past.

Then, there's the space that echoes the folklore of historical atrocities, which have otherwise been whitewashed from history. Director Adolfo Sandoval Jr. powerfully portrayed this in "Corrido," a visual companion to the poem "El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez," by Américo Paredes.

Even we, as an audience, created a space by congregating in this unique setting to witness the interconnected stories of our own regional experiences.

As I left, I found myself quietly wondering: how do we carry this authority and visibility into places unfamiliar to us, where our culture is not as easily recognized?

I guess all we can do is continue exploring and experimenting. To learn more about ENTRE, visit [www.entrefilmcenter.org](http://www.entrefilmcenter.org).

# Welcome Back, Vaqueros!



• The fall semester, bright and new, Fresh faces gather, Friendships too.



• Then syllabi come, a heavy stack, Reality hits- we're truly back.



• But pumpkin spice and autumn leaves, make study time a little breeze.



• So sip your coffee, do your best, Good luck this fall- ace every test! ♡

# VALLEY SPOTLIGHT

## Emma Salinas: el único poke en Brownsville

SOFÍA CANTÚ SAUCEDA  
THE RIDER

Después de 10 años en Estados Unidos, Emma Salinas decidió abrir un restaurante en el Valle de Río Grande y, en el 2021, nació Kailani Poke Bowl.

Salinas nació en Monterrey, Nuevo León, y creció en Valle Hermoso, Tamaulipas, donde vivió hasta que tenía 16 años.

“Cuando cumplí 16 años, me fui de intercambio un año a Alemania, y yo creo que ese fue el primer gran paso en mi vida que me hizo, pues, pensar diferente”, dijo.

Salinas se fue a buscar una nueva aventura en su vida, sin ver a su familia o amigos.

Después de un año en Alemania, Salinas regresó a Monterrey para terminar la preparatoria.

En el 2012, ella entró a la universidad, en ese tiempo, la Universidad de Texas en Brownsville, donde estudió una licenciatura en traducción e interpretación.

Salinas dijo que quería una

maestría en finanzas pero decidió abrir Kailani Poke Bowl y no pudo terminarla.

“Es algo que traigo ahí pendiente que quisiera terminar”, dijo. “No hubo manera que pudiera hacer las dos cosas”.

Salinas compartió que su mamá ha sido siempre su mayor impulso.

“Mi mamá siempre me ha impulsado a no tener límites”, dijo.

En 2020, Salinas le propuso a Alejandro Nájera, su socio, la idea de Kailani Poke Bowl. En enero del 2021, decidió el nombre y los permisos del negocio y, hasta 9 meses después, en septiembre, Salinas pudo abrir su negocio.

“Siempre tuve la ilusión de tener un negocio porque mis papás tenían su propio negocio”, Salinas dijo.

Pero en realidad, la apertura de Kailani Poke Bowl inició por una ruptura amorosa. Después de esto, encontrar la ubicación perfecta era importante.

Salinas decidió hacer un

estudio de negocio y se dio cuenta que en Brownsville no había ningún restaurante que vendiera poke bowls.

“Y aún, hoy [en] día somos el único restaurante [...] exclusivo de poke bowl”, dijo.

Salinas compartió que su desafío más grande durante el proceso de apertura fue el miedo a lo desconocido.

“Sigue siendo el ‘me against me every day’ y el empujarme a hacer las cosas [...] no dejar las cosas para mañana”, dijo. “Yo creo que ese es un un un reto que no se acaba”.

Salinas añadió que el mayor consejo que les puede dar a otros que también quieren tener un negocio es que si se puede.

“Literalmente así suena cliché; hard work pays off”, dijo. “Hablen, pregunten, busquen ayuda, lo que no sepan, y que sepan que el tener un negocio es es el triple de trabajo que tener un empleo”.



FOTO CORTESÍA EMMA SALINAS

Emma Salinas, dueña de Kailani Poke Bowl.

Kailani Poke Bowl está ubicado en 500 Morrison Road Suite C en Brownsville.



# HAGAMOS DE BROWNSVILLE B.R.I.G.H.T. JUNTOS

HUGO SEPÚLVEDA  
THE RIDER

Desde el vertido ilegal de basura hasta el desecho de neumáticos, estos son algunos de los problemas reportados a la Ciudad de Brownsville que ayudaron a la creación del proyecto B.R.I.G.H.T.

La iniciativa B.R.I.G.H.T., que significa Brownsville Residents Improving Grounds, Homes and Tomorrow (Residentes de Brownsville Mejorando los Espacios, Hogares y el Mañana), fue lanzada oficialmente el 5 de agosto.

La iniciativa consta de tres fases, desde septiembre de 2025 hasta diciembre de 2026, y tiene como objetivo involucrar a la comunidad y mejorar la calidad de vida en la ciudad mediante el embellecimiento de los vecindarios.

Con las fechas de la fase uno acercándose, el proyecto comenzará con eventos de limpieza en el área del Distrito 1 el 19 de septiembre y en el Distrito 4 el 21 de noviembre, según Gerardo Villarreal, subdirector de Desarrollo Organizacional y Recursos Humanos.

Villarreal dijo que la planificación de este proyecto incluye a todos los subdirectores de la Ciudad de Brownsville, y que su departamento está a cargo del reclutamiento de “mano de obra” para este proyecto.

Dijo que, con este proyecto, quieren que la comunidad sienta más orgullo de ser residente de Brownsville.

Villarreal explicó que los



Gerardo Villarreal, subdirector de Recursos Humanos y colaborador del proyecto B.R.I.G.H.T., habla sobre las áreas que serán limpiadas como parte de la iniciativa durante una entrevista realizada el 21 de agosto en el Ayuntamiento de Brownsville.



KARLA HERNANDEZ/THE RIDER

Trabajadores de la ciudad recogen basura y eliminan escombros en uno de los esfuerzos de limpieza recientes en las zonas de Southmost Road, Hortencia Boulevard e International Boulevard en Brownsville.

departamentos de salud se encargan de las limpiezas comunitarias, pero están limitados a 20 personas y, con este proyecto, se permitirá

la participación de más residentes para cubrir un área mayor.

El primer evento de limpieza vecinal se llevará a

embellecimiento del vecindario, pintura de paradas de autobús [...] [y] eliminación de grafiti”, Villarreal dijo.

Agregó que también se harán labores de señalización vial y colocación de letreros para informar a la comunidad sobre los servicios disponibles en la Ciudad de Brownsville, con la intención de fortalecer asociaciones con la comunidad, escuelas, negocios y organizaciones locales.

Roberto García, subdirector de Salud, Bienestar y Servicios para Animales, dijo que el departamento de salud ha realizado limpiezas vecinales durante las últimas dos décadas.

García comentó que cada tres meses su departamento realiza una evaluación para determinar qué vecindarios tienen un alto volumen de vertido ilegal, llantas, basura y escombros, lo cual representa un “gran dolor de cabeza” para la ciudad.

Dijo que Brownsville es “muy afortunado” por tener un basural, pero que la gente no lo aprovecha para desechos su basura correctamente.

Según García, desde el lanzamiento del proyecto, personas se han acercado para participar, lo que demuestra interés y disposición de la comunidad.

“Todos vivimos en la misma ciudad, todos somos residentes de Brownsville, hagámosla verse más bonita”, dijo.

Para más información, visite brownsvilletx.gov

--Traducido por Daniela Martínez Salazar

“Esto consistirá en embellecimiento del vecindario, pintura de paradas de autobús [...] [y] eliminación de grafiti”,

--Gerardo Villarreal, subdirector de Desarrollo Organizacional y Recursos Humanos

cabo el 19 de septiembre en el área del Distrito 1, que abarca las zonas de University e International Boulevards.

“Esto consistirá en

# PARKING UP, ISSUES DOWN

**CARLOS CASTAÑEDA**  
COPY EDITOR

UTRGV Parking and Transportation increased the cost of most parking permits by 5% for the 2025-26 school year. The additional revenue would fund parking-lot upgrades, according to a university official.

“It helps fund ongoing improvements like resurfacing parking lots, upgrading signage that has been faded or torn or taken, adding technology such as parking lot counters ... adding or supporting also the shuttle and parking-ride services,” said Pablo Aguilar, director of Parking Services.

Additionally, physical parking permits are no longer required for general parking on campus as registered license plates would act as a permit.

Aguilar said the decision was made by the Parking and Traffic Advisory Committee.

“[The committee] consists of representation from Student Government Association, Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, Facilities Management, Police Services and Parking Services.

The purpose of this Committee is to a) review parking and traffic regulations, b) develop recommendations for regulation revisions, as necessary, and c) to develop an efficient parking and traffic system as it relates to differential parking zones, parking fees, penalties for violations of regulations, arrangements for bicycles, motorcycles, and pedestrian traffic,” according to the Parking and Transportation website.

Aguilar added one of the biggest improvements made recently was the complete resurfacing of Lot E-33 near the Baseball Stadium on the Edinburg campus.

Abigail Carrizales, an environmental science junior, said the increase would feel

justified with more parking spaces and more shade.

Aguilar said Zone 1 permits will remain at \$60 and encourages students to take advantage of the “best value” permit.

“Those remote areas don’t

really get enough people, enough parkers, so that’s the one big thing that I would recommend,” he said. “Students, take advantage of Zone 1. Why? Because the VOLT carts. If you park further, if you park there,

they’ll still bring you closer to the campus core.”

For more information, visit the Parking and Transportation website.

--*Mariah Escobar contributed to this report.*



VALERIA TOKUN HAGA/THE RIDER PHOTO ILLUSTRATION

# IMPROVED LEARNING SYSTEM

**PETE MENDOZA**  
COPY EDITOR

UTRGV stays “up-to-date” with the continued launch of Brightspace in the Fall 2025 semester.

Brightspace is the new “robust and user-friendly learning management system,” according to the UTRGV Brightspace website.

The platform fully launched for Summer I 2025 with the final offered Blackboard classes ending June 17.

Jonikka Charlton, senior vice provost for Student Success and Academic Affairs and dean of the University College, said the change

“This process is similar to when you get a major upgrade to an operating system on your phone.”

She said the university wants the “experience that happens in that online

“Just that initial little bit of fear of change and that time period where you have to get

going to have some people who are less excited and others who are more excited,”

hardest part. “Everybody’s used to Blackboard,” Vasquez said. “I’ve been doing it for two years and I’m used to it.”

He said Brightspace is far more organized and simple to use.

“In the beginning, it was really difficult but, now that I actually kind of know how to use it, I will say it’s better and I prefer it much more,” Vasquez said.

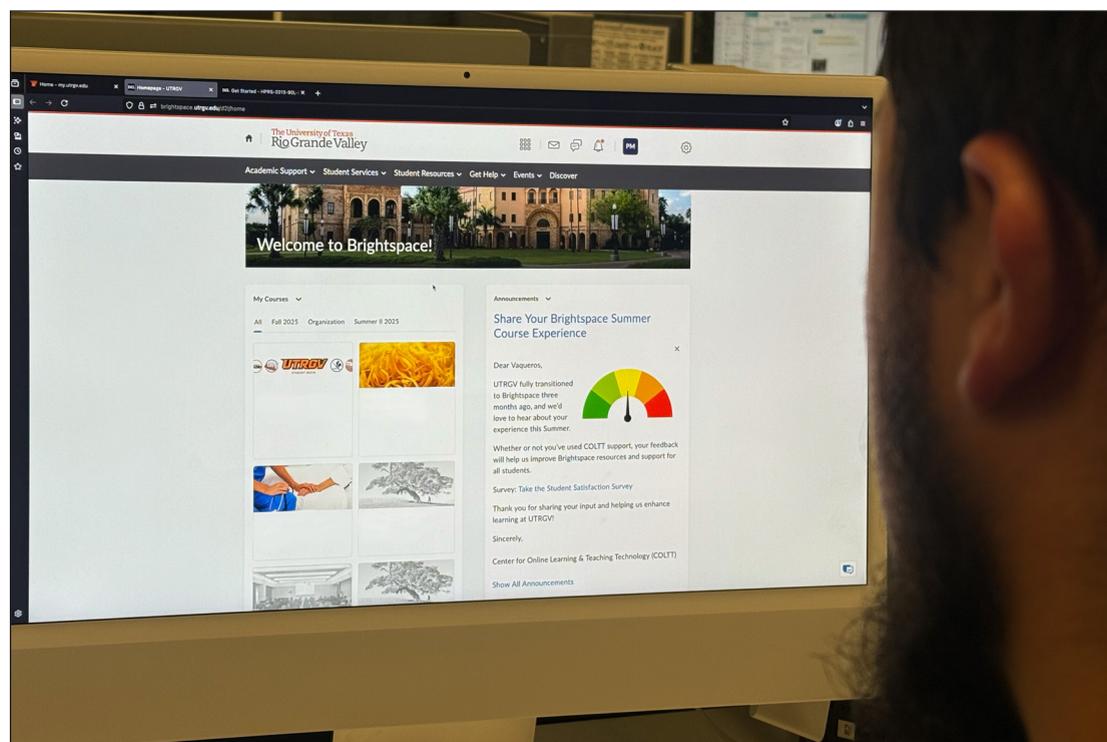
Giovanni Gonzalez, a political science junior and beta tester for the system, said there were a few parts of Brightspace that were difficult to work with.

“I would just say the biggest issue would be understanding the app or the website itself because it’s new to everyone, so you’re not familiar with it,” Gonzalez said.

He said after using the learning system, he noticed it was easier to understand than Blackboard.

Charlton said throughout the semester, the Center for Online Learning and Teaching Technology, will have staff and student employees throughout the university ready to help answer any questions about Brightspace.

To provide feedback on Brightspace, email studentsuccess@utrgv.edu or answer COLTT surveys sent through Brightspace announcements.



DANIELA MARTINEZ SALÁZAR/THE RIDER

UTRGV launched Brightspace as the new learning platform for Summer 2025. Brightspace aims to “improve the quality of teaching and learning of the institution,” said Jonikka Charlton, senior vice provost for Student Success and Academic Affairs and dean of the University College.

environment to be as robust and engaging as an in-person experience can be.”

Charlton added the switch is now just a “learning curve” for both students and faculty and understands that change is hard for people.

used to the new environment, I think that’s the biggest challenge, honestly,” she said.

The senior vice provost said feedback has been mostly positive since the launch.

“Anytime you’ve got a population this large, you’re

Charlton said. “I think that the ease of engagement, for students with one another in class ... I think students really enjoyed [it].”

English education sophomore Benjamin Vasquez said the initial change was the

--Jonikka Charlton, senior vice provost for Student Success and Academic Affairs and dean of the University College

was to find a system that would improve the quality of teaching and learning at the university.

“This process is similar to when you get a major upgrade to an operating system on your phone,” Charlton said. “And it’s just like, ‘wow.’ This is so different than what my phone used to look like yesterday.”



College of Engineering  
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# Welcome WEEK

WELCOME WEEK WELCOME WEEK WELCOME WEEK  
WELCOME WEEK WELCOME WEEK WELCOME WEEK

## PICNIC WITH *the* PRESIDENT



Complimentary hamburgers & drinks will be served.

### BROWNSVILLE CAMPUS

PlainsCapital Bank El Gran Salón  
Tuesday, September 9, 2025

### EDINBURG CAMPUS

Ballroom  
Wednesday, September 10, 2025



Free Food!



11:30 AM TO 1:30 PM



## INTERNATIONAL MEET & GREET



### BROWNSVILLE CAMPUS

Begins at BMAIN Courtyard & ends at BSTUN Patio  
Tuesday, September 9, 2025

### EDINBURG CAMPUS

Begins at EPAC Lawn & ends at Ballroom Lawn  
Wednesday, September 10, 2025

11:00 AM



WELCOME WEEK WELCOME WEEK  
WELCOME WEEK WELCOME WEEK

For more information or accommodations, email [SESAEvents@utrgv.edu](mailto:SESAEvents@utrgv.edu).

[utrgv.edu/welcomeweek](http://utrgv.edu/welcomeweek)