

THE RIDER FILE PHOTOS

Homecoming: a week of traditions

# THE SEASON OF SPIRIT



UTRGV Housing and Residence Life representatives hold up their banner during the Homecoming Parade Feb. 13, 2024, on the Student Union lawn on the Brownsville campus.

**DAYRA GONZALEZ**  
THE RIDER

UTRGV's Homecoming Week will take place for the first time during the fall semester, aligning with football season and bringing students several events to attend.

Scheduled from today to Saturday, the celebration features a variety of activities across both campuses. From art contests and fitness games to community service initiatives and tailgates, the week will culminate with the Homecoming football game against the University of the Incarnate Word Saturday at the Robert and Janet Vackar Stadium in Edinburg.

Cristina Rodriguez, assistant director for Student Activities, said the move to fall reflects the university's growing football culture and aims to connect students through school spirit.

"Homecoming initially was connected to basketball," Rodriguez said. "But with the transition to football, we've aligned it with the season so students can have a new experience that ties into the energy of game days."

She said while the university previously hosted

Homecoming in February, future celebrations are planned to continue in the fall semester.

Hashim Elshafie, a biology sophomore, and Bobbie Caldwell, an early childhood studies sophomore, said they agreed the move to fall "makes sense." Caldwell added Homecoming is a great way to engage with campus life.

The Student Union hosted Paint Vaquero Pride, a spirit painting contest, Thursday and Friday on the Edinburg and Brownsville campuses. Students decorated boards representing their organizations which, according to Rodriguez, will be displayed throughout the week.

According to university officials and the university's Homecoming webpage, Homecoming Week officially begins today with the Touchdown for Good: Canned Food Drive Competition, benefiting the UTRGV Student Food Pantry. Also today, the Homecoming Block Party will take place from 2 to 4 p.m. on the Student Union lawn on the Brownsville campus and at the same time Tuesday on the Edinburg Chapel lawn. Both will feature local performances, food and

giveaways.

Students can participate in the Vaquero Games, hosted by University Recreation, testing agility and strength at 1 p.m. Tuesday on the Student Union lawn on the Brownsville campus and at 3 p.m. Wednesday on the Edinburg campus.

A new event, Vaquero STAMPede, will take place at 1 p.m. Wednesday in the Main Building on the Brownsville campus, where students can design art pieces using custom Vaquero-themed stamps, some of them created in a collaboration with the art department, according to Rodriguez.

The traditional Wrapping of the Letters returns at 2 p.m. Thursday on the University Ballroom lawn on the Edinburg campus, where students prepare the UTRGV letters for the following day's Burning of the Letters, a long-standing tradition scheduled for 7 p.m. Friday in Lot E-16.

On Saturday, students can join the Homecoming Student Game Day Experience tailgate starting at 2 p.m. in the Robert and Janet Vackar Stadium.

Christopher Stubbs, assistant director of Student Activities for Evening and Weekend Programming, said



UTRGV Sculpture Club President Yvette Larios paints international business sophomore Wesley Martinez's face at the Homecoming Parade Feb. 13, 2024, on the Student Union lawn on the Brownsville campus.

the tailgate event will feature plenty of giveaways and entertainment.

"We're planning to have a dunk tank, a field-goal competition and a mechanical bull," Stubbs said. "There'll also be free Homecoming shirts, 100 free student tickets, a cookoff hosted by [the Student Government Association] and live music at the Amphitheater."

Berta Maldonado, assistant director of Center for Student Involvement, said organizing Homecoming involves teamwork across several departments under Student Affairs.

"It's like a big family," Maldonado said. "We all come together to create experiences for our students, whether they're in organizations or not, because we want everyone to have a good time and feel connected."

Laycie Avila, a visual communication design freshman, said she is excited to attend for the first time.

"It's a way for everybody to just have fun and also come together and meet new people," Avila said.

Maldonado encouraged students to participate, even if they plan to attend alone.

"Don't be afraid to come by yourself," she said. "You're part of a monumental time at UTRGV, so come to at least one event and maybe you'll want to come back for the rest of the week."

For a full schedule and event details, visit [utrgv.edu/homecoming](http://utrgv.edu/homecoming).

"We all come together to create experiences for our students."

--Berta Maldonado,  
assistant director of Center  
for Student Involvement

**ON CAMPUS:**

Technology issues?  
Take the survey

Page 3

**OPINION:**

The film world through  
a woman's eyes

Page 4

**AGE:**

Faculty steps into  
a paranormal course

Page 6

**SPORTS:**

The best of both worlds

Page 7

## 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

### MONDAY TABLING

**Christians at RGV** will host a tabling event from 9:45 to 11:45 a.m. on the University Library lawn on the Brownsville campus.

### WRITING FOR YOUR SOUL

**Baptist Student Ministry** will host a writing event from 11 a.m. to noon in the Health Affairs Building West gazebo on the Edinburg campus.

### CEO-ENTREPRENEUR TALK

Lawyers **Omar Ochoa** and **Leah Wise** will give a talk regarding their entrepreneurial and legal journeys as well as the challenges and opportunities they have faced from 2 to 3 p.m. in the University Ballroom on the Edinburg campus. The event is hosted by **The Collegiate Entrepreneurs' Organization**, the **American Marketing Association of Edinburg**, the **Pre-Law Society** and **The Lawtina Student Network**.

### NMDP REGISTRY EVENT

The **National Marrow Donor Program** will host a tabling event from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. through Thursday at the Student Union on the Edinburg campus. Attendees can learn about **donating stem cells and bone marrow**.

### Homecoming Block Party

**Student Activities** will host a **Homecoming Block Party** from 2 to 4 p.m. on the Student Union lawn on the Brownsville campus and at the same time Tuesday on the Chapel lawn on the Edinburg campus. Attendees can enjoy

a **kickoff to Homecoming and free food**.

### K.I.S.S MEETING

The **Korean International Student Society** will meet from 3:15 to 4:45 p.m. and at the same time through Thursday in the Student Academic Center on the Edinburg campus.

### RGV GERMAN CLUB MEETING

The **RGV German Club** will meet from 3:30 to 4:45 p.m. in Interdisciplinary Academic Building Room 1.204 on the Brownsville campus. Attendees can discuss **important topics** about the club.

### Tuesday

### TAIT TABLING

**Talk About It UTRGV** will host a tabling event from 10 a.m. to noon on the University Library lawn on the Brownsville campus. Attendees can learn about sexual and reproductive health **workshops**.

### ACJA MEETING

The **American Criminal Justice Association Sigma Kappa Chi** will meet from 2 to 3 p.m. in Health Affairs Building West Room 1.274 on the Edinburg campus.

### EAC MEETING

The **Environmental Awareness Club** will meet from 4:45 to 6 p.m. in the Student Union Salón Jacaranda on the Brownsville campus.

### RUN CLUB MEETING PRACTICE

**Club Running-Vaquero Runners** will meet from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. and at the same time Thursday outside the Life and Health Science

Building on the Brownsville campus. Attendees can enjoy a **20-minute run**.

### ACTIVE MINDS GENERAL MEETING

**Active Minds at UTRGV** will meet from 4:30 to 6 p.m. in Life and Health Science Building Room 1.316 on the Brownsville campus. Attendees will listen to a **brief discussion** by the **Office for Advocacy and Violence Prevention** on **domestic violence**, discuss upcoming events and paint pumpkins.

### Wednesday

### ENACTUS

**Enactus** will meet from 12:30 to 1:45 p.m. in Robert C. Vackar College of Business and Entrepreneurship Room 121 on the Edinburg campus. Attendees can enjoy **free food**.

### BAA MEETING

The **Brownsville Accounting Association** will meet from 5 to 6 p.m. in Music, Science and Learning Center Room 1.111 on the Brownsville campus.

### BIBLE STUDY

**Christians at RGV** will host a Bible study from noon to 1:45 p.m. in Music, Science and Learning Center Room 1.217 on the Brownsville campus. **Free food** will be provided.

### RGV COLLEGE DEMOCRATS MEETING

**Omar Ochoa**, lawyer and Edinburg mayoral candidate, will speak during the **RGV College Democrats** meeting from 6:15 to 7:15 p.m. in Interdisciplinary Engineering and Academic Building Room 1.212 on the

Edinburg campus.

### Thursday

### WRAPPING OF THE LETTERS

**Student Activities** will host **Wrapping of the Letters** from 2 to 5 p.m. on the Ballroom lawn on the Edinburg campus. **Free food** will be provided.

### DSAA MEETING

**Data Structures and Algorithms Architects** will meet from 5 to 6 p.m. in the Interdisciplinary Engineering and Academic Building on the Edinburg campus.

### SOCIAL STUDY NIGHTS

The **Filipino Student Association** will meet for a study night from 7:45 to 8:45 p.m. in the Science Building Room 2.102 on the Edinburg campus.

### TALK ABOUT IT: BOO PARTY ED AWARENESS

**Talk About It** will host a **Boo Party** from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Bronc Room on the Edinburg campus. Attendees can enjoy **pop-culture trivia**, **conversation on healthy and unhealthy relationships**, and **free food**.

### Friday

### IEEE ESB GENERAL MEETING

The **Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers** will meet from 4 to 6 p.m. in Engineering Building Room 1.268.

### HOMECOMING: BURNING OF THE LETTERS

**Student Activities** will host **Burning of the Letters** from 7 to 9:30 p.m. outside the Fieldhouse in Lot E-16 on the Edinburg campus.

--Compiled by *Mariah Escobar*



## POLICE REPORTS

The following are among the incidents reported to University Police between Oct. 6 and 11.

### Oct. 6

**8:38 a.m.:** An officer responded to an active fire alarm in Troxel Hall on the Edinburg campus. After arrival, it was determined the alarm was activated due to a water leak. The area was cleared and a work order was placed.

**10:57 a.m.:** An officer responded to a report of graffiti on a The Rider newspaper box located near the Engineering Building on the Edinburg campus. The case is under investigation.

**4:17 p.m.:** An officer responded to a report of a damaged door in the Academic Support Facility building on the Edinburg campus. After investigation, it was determined no crime occurred.

### Oct. 7

**7:42 p.m.:** An officer detected damage on an interior door lock plate in the Garza Gym

on the Brownsville campus. It could not be determined if a crime had occurred.

### Oct. 8

**7:26 a.m.:** An officer found markings inside an elevator in the Life and Health Science Building on the Brownsville campus. A work order was placed for removal.

**3:18 p.m.:** An officer responded to reports of individuals panhandling in the Mathematics and General Classrooms Building on the Edinburg campus. The people were promoting a business and were advised on the proper procedure before being escorted off campus.

**4:09 p.m.:** Officers responded to a report of a suspicious man around the Visual Arts Building on the Edinburg campus. The man was described as bald, wearing shorts and a gray tank top, and carrying a black backpack. Officers checked the area, but found no matching description.

**7:11 p.m.:** An officer responded to a vehicle

burglary in Lot E-7 on the Edinburg campus. A student said someone broke her back passenger window, took several items and damaged the steering column. The vehicle was processed for prints, and the case is under investigation.

### Oct. 9

**12:51 p.m.:** An employee reported a suspicious man asking a student for money in the Visual Arts Building parking lot on the Edinburg campus. Officers searched the area but did not find him.

**4:19 p.m.:** A student reported her lunch bag containing a phone was stolen after she left it in a classroom in the Mathematics and General Classrooms Building on the Edinburg campus. The case is under investigation.

**4:32 p.m.:** Officers and Emergency Medical Services responded to the Child Development Center on the Edinburg campus after a student fainted. The student was taken to a hospital for

treatment.

### Oct. 10

**4:14 p.m.:** Officers responded to the third floor of the Science Building on the Edinburg campus after reports of students acting inappropriately. No crime occurred, and they were cleared.

**3:32 p.m.:** A student reported a tree branch fell and caused damage to his parked vehicle in Lot E-19 on the Edinburg campus.

### Oct. 11

**3:14 p.m.:** An officer found markings made with a permanent marker in a restroom in the Student Union on the Brownsville campus. The case is under investigation.

**3:25 p.m.:** An employee reported two juveniles riding scooters and entering the weight room inside the Health and Physical Education II Building on the Edinburg campus. Officers searched the area but did not locate them.

--Compiled by *Dayra Gonzalez*

50% Yes

50% No

Uh oh. Your ex texted you. Will you respond or will you ignore and ghost them?

What's the best time to attend classes? Let us know Your ideal time!

scan to answer!

wacky web poll

# I.T. WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU



VALERIA TOKUN HAGA/THE RIDER

## Survey seeks technology feedback

include distinct categories, such as mental health.

“We have over 525, a little bit over 500,” Serna said, referring to the number of UTRGV students who have participated. “... This year, we started doing a variety of areas where to distribute flyers, where to put posters and it’s been very helpful.”

She said IT seeks to improve technology benefits, such as internet access and computers on campus, with the results of the survey.

Irma Hermida, business relationship manager for Information Technology, said students’ feedback helps the future of digital learning at UTRGV.

“Well, we want them to be honest about their experience, right?” Hermida said. “... It doesn’t take that long; it takes about 15 minutes. It’s their opportunity to shape the future of digital learning on our campus.”

She added the survey also evolves depending on current

technological trends.

“Like [artificial intelligence] is the big thing now, right?” the manager said. “So, how in the last year has that impacted them?”

Daisy Guillen, an early care and early childhood studies

“We want them to be honest about their experience.”

—Irma Hermida, business relationship manager for Information Technology

senior, said she has never taken the survey before.

“I thought it was a little sketchy because I read a part where it said that you could win something in a raffle so I thought maybe it was spam,” Guillen said.

After The Rider explained to her what the survey was about, Guillen said she thought the survey can help

students transition fully into technology and can help the transition from Blackboard to Brightspace.

Hermida said the data allows comparison between nationwide universities and the UTRGV community.

“I love the fact that they can, you know, the information that we receive, we can see how we can compare to the rest of the nation, which is nice,” she said. “But we also get our own data so we can see what our particular needs in our campus and how we can make changes and invest in the right technology to get us where the rest of the nation is.”

Students can participate by entering the link sent to their UTRGV email and will have a chance to win a \$50 gift card by Giftogram, a digital gifting platform. Winners can choose directly from a variety of retailers and services.

For more information about EDUCAUSE and the survey, visit [educase.edu](http://educase.edu).

SOPHIA CORTEZ  
THE RIDER

Information Technology invites undergraduate students to participate in the EDUCAUSE Students and Technology Survey, which collects data on how technology impacts students’ academic experience. The voluntary and anonymous survey will remain open through Dec. 12.

Veronica Serna, program coordinator for Strategy and Business Relationships, told The Rider the survey is conducted with the participation of universities all over the country.

“[EDUCAUSE does] surveys to gather information about anything from technology and how the technology is working for the students,” Serna said.

The program coordinator added this year the survey will

# STUDENTS AIM TO END PERIOD POVERTY

SOFÍA CANTÚ SAUCEDA  
THE RIDER

UTRGV biology senior Kylie Torres co-launched the End Period Poverty Campaign a year and a half ago on the Brownsville and Edinburg campuses after noticing a lack of menstrual resources available to students.

Torres said what inspired her to start the campaign was her personal journey with combined oral contraceptives at a young age and to make menstrual items available for others.

“It caused my estrogen to go up,” she said. “So, I bled for a year and a half and I realized that I have the resources and, when I looked in the bathrooms at UTRGV, there were no resources for that.”

Torres said she believes there should be a menstrual budget at the university.

“There’s a 19 to 12 female-to-male ratio at UTRGV and UTRGV ‘maintains student life’ and part of student life is menses,” she said.

Sofia Reyes, a psychology freshman, said having the receptacles in the bathroom is “helpful and for a good cause.”

“Especially for women that aren’t able to have these products at home or just on a daily basis ... they’re able to just go to the bathroom and get something real quick,” Reyes said.

Torres said she does most of the fundraising and events to bring awareness.

Milena Melo Tijerina, co-investigator for the Maternal Health Research Center and anthropology professor, said she budgeted \$3,000 from a larger grant for the organization.

“So, I messaged [the Intersectional Feminist Student Organization] about them possibly being able to hand out flyers about my research study and, then, I was going to donate materials

to them in return,” Melo Tijerina said.

Torres said the money was helpful and used for menstrual products because before she was fundraising “a lot.”

Melo Tijerina added the campaign is “helpful and important.”

“[Not having menstrual items], it’s something that can be stressful,” she said. “So, the idea that there’s somewhere in every bathroom on campus that students can just go to is a really great idea and plan.”

Matthew Moncus, director for Environmental Health, Safety and Risk Management, said he was the “mediator” between IFSO, the Dean of Students and Facilities to continue with the project after a “misunderstood prohibition” from a previous director in the department.

Torres said the first distribution for Edinburg was “confiscated” and had to go with higher-up administration even with previous approval.

Moncus said this was an issue because the custodial staff has orders to remove “anything extra” in the bathrooms.

“So, we had to go through a period of training and communication to make sure that they knew that this was an approved project, and that they should leave those alone,” he said.

Moncus said the organization wanted the menstrual items in every bathroom but, after a discussion, decided to focus on buildings with more traffic of students for “oversight and ease of restocking.”

“The students didn’t have the resources to go to all of the restrooms every single day to make sure that there were enough products there,” he said. “I had proposed the family restrooms. ... Ultimately though, I believe they are just in the women’s restrooms, now, and I think it came down to resources available.”

Torres said Brownsville receptacles

have not had any confiscation issues and in Edinburg; “we just direct people towards buildings that have them.”

Daniela Real, an early bilingual education junior, said UTRGV should “try to put their part in it.”

“If it is much of a health risk ... I mean, maybe, UTRGV themselves should be the one to ... have the little dispenser thing,” Real said.

Moncus said the organization mentioned the campaign should be fully funded by the university.

“We were looking at what it would take to do that; it just really wasn’t feasible,” he said. “One of the things that was proposed was to organize it through the food bank. ... The student organization didn’t really like that idea because they were really set on getting [receptacles] to the restrooms.”

The Rider asked Moncus if the campaign could be included in the campus health budget for the future.

“I believe with the right leadership in the student health, I think it could be possible,” he replied.

As vice president of IFSO, Torres is the Brownsville campus coordinator for the receptacles.

“I do solely Brownsville,” she said. “I do get some volunteers which is good but we’ve been trying to spread the word through Engagement Zone, so we can ... track people’s hours.”

Students can sign up to be volunteers in the Engagement Zone need named Menstrual Item Distribution, depending on the campus.

For more information about donating, contact @ifso.utrgv on Instagram or Torres at (956) 498-9248.



VALERIA TOKUN HAGA/THE RIDER PHOTO ILLUSTRATION

In bathrooms across UTRGV’s Brownsville and Edinburg campuses, boxes offer free menstrual products provided by the End Period Poverty Campaign. The initiative seeks to raise awareness and ensure students have access to essential menstrual resources.

COLUMN OF THE WEEK

# BEING A WOMAN IN FILM AND THEATER



**VALERIA TOKUN HAGA**  
PHOTOGRAPHER

have always loved theater and film. I have been part of many plays, and I can watch movies again and again without getting tired.

I thought studying something I love would be fun and easy. But I was wrong, my classes take almost all my time. Between readings, scripts and projects, I barely have time to watch a movie a month. What used to be my safe place has sometimes become a storm. Still, I stayed motivated by the idea of meeting new people, making connections and being part of a creative community.

Two years have passed and, little by little, I'm starting to find my place. But I can't ignore that this field is still dominated by men. Many times, I have felt intimidated or even ignored by my male classmates.

It's frustrating when women's ideas

are not taken seriously. Sometimes, I feel lost without feminine energy around me to inspire me and keep me going. I feel like my voice is slowly disappearing. I never thought

**"I would love to see more women in theater and film."**

being part of this field would be so complicated.

Sometimes I even wonder if things would be easier if I were a man. Am I under this game of oppression just for being a woman? I am proudly Mexican, born in Mexico and part of the LGBT community, and finding my place here has been hard.

But then, I found Latino Theatre Initiatives, and it gave me a true sense

of belonging. There, I found people who share my love for theater, my roots and my desire to tell stories from a Latina and a woman's perspective.

I would love to see more women in theater and film, not only in front of the camera, but behind it too—writing, directing and creating. We need more role models to help us keep going, especially when doubts come and I ask myself if I made the right choice.

Even with all its challenges, I still find purpose in art. Watching a movie or a play, even when I don't have much free time, reminds me of why I chose this path: Art helps me feel, understand and connect.

Maybe the real challenge is not just to survive in this difficult artistic world, but to change it from the inside so that more voices, especially women and Latino voices, can be heard.

When I started college as a freshman, I was very excited about my major. I

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EDITORIAL CARTOON



PHOTO GALLERY

## OMEGA DELTA PHI



AARYKAH NAVARRO/THE RIDER

Jacob Casas, an integrated health science senior, gets a pie in the face during the Pie-a-Knight event hosted by Omega Delta Phi Wednesday at the Quad on the Edinburg campus.

## KNOTTED TOGETHER

--Compiled by Emma Castillo



PHOTO COURTESY KNOTTED TOGETHER

Shown are Knotted Together club members Aug. 31 during their first UTRGV football tailgate at the Robert and Janet Vackar Stadium in Edinburg.

READ MORE ON OUR WEBSITE

VISIT OUR WEBSITE TO SEE THE FULL PHOTO GALLERY

# GARAJE DE \$6.2M YA ESTÁ EN MARCHA



Funcionarios públicos de la ciudad y el condado inaguran el nuevo proyecto de estacionamiento el 10 de octubre en la esquina de Closner Boulevard y McIntyre Street en Edinburg. El garaje tendrá 268 espacios de estacionamiento.

**MARIAH ESCOBAR**  
THE RIDER

Una ceremonia de inauguración tuvo lugar el 10 de octubre para celebrar el inicio de la construcción de un garaje de tres pisos con 268 espacios, que comenzará a operar en el 2027 en la esquina de Closner Boulevard y McIntyre Street en Edinburg.

“Estamos emocionados de poner la primera piedra hoy; sin embargo, la construcción oficialmente comenzará el 6 de noviembre”, dijo Mardoqueo Hinojosa, ingeniero de la ciudad de Edinburg. “El proyecto tomará aproximadamente 365 días y lo más probable es que concluiremos este proyecto y lo abramos al público a inicios del 2027”.

El alcalde Ramiro Garza Jr. añadió que cuando la nueva corte fue construida, los funcionarios locales sabían que se iba a necesitar más estacionamiento.

“En algún momento, el condado decidió asociarse con la ciudad para tener este terreno disponible para una estructura de estacionamiento”, Garza dijo.

Dijo que, cuando fue electo en el 2021, había fondos disponibles para un proyecto de estacionamiento, pero no tenían planes elaborados o factibles para él.

“Hacerlo de manera tradicional [...] diseñarlo, y luego, mandarlo a subasta, iba a costar dos o tres veces más que los fondos que teníamos”, Garza dijo.

El alcalde añadió que la ciudad

tuvo que ponerse creativa con la elaboración del diseño y trajo consultores de desarrollo de proyectos de construcción para ayudar.

“Estamos emocionados de poner la primera piedra hoy”.

--Mardoqueo Hinojosa,  
ingeniero de la ciudad de Edinburg

Entonces, se mandó a subasta y trajo

equipos de construcción y arquitectura que pudieran ayudar a diseñar planos que se mantuvieran dentro del presupuesto.

Garza dijo que está “emocionado” por la inauguración de la construcción y añadió que tendrá un gran impacto económico en la comunidad.

“Esto será usado para la corte; será usado para los museos, negocios, y los eventos que tenemos en nuestra ciudad, y para los estudiantes de la universidad”, dijo.

El área donde el garaje estará ubicado atrae más de 30,000 personas diarias a Edinburg, según Alex Rios, miembro de la junta directiva de Parques y Recreación de Edinburg y dueño de Kids' Kollege Learning Center.

“Será un área donde podamos disfrutar el centro sin tener que recorrer o caminar largas distancias”, Rios dijo.

Dijo que es una oportunidad para promover el centro y escuchar a miembros de la comunidad respecto a qué les gustaría ver.

“Estamos listos para incluso crear un distrito de artes en la ciudad de Edinburg y realmente conseguir que nuestros estudiantes de universidad o jóvenes se involucren con nuestra comunidad de mayor edad”, Rios dijo.

Añadió que existe una desconexión entre la comunidad, y que el proyecto del estacionamiento es un paso adelante hacia promover el centro.

“Si no estás promoviendo esto para tu futuro, entonces, te estás preparando para el fracaso, en mi opinión”, Rios dijo.

Para más información, visite el sitio web de la ciudad de Edinburg.

--Traducido por Carlos Castañeda y Narda Serna

## VALLEY SPOTLIGHT

# SHELLY HAMSA: SUERTE, TALENTO Y CONEXIONES

**SOFÍA CANTÚ SAUCEDA**  
THE RIDER

Shelly Hamsa describió al Valle del Río Grande como una casa lejos de casa.

Hamsa nació y creció en Minnesota pero, desde que era pequeña, tomaba vuelos de tres horas a la Isla del Padre donde pasaba las vacaciones en el condominio de sus tíos.

“Era como un lugar gratis en dónde quedarse o venir y vacacionar”, dijo. “Seguí viniendo y [...] se volvió como una conexión del norte con esta parte del sur de Texas”.

Desde pequeña le gustaba el arte pero “nunca estuve muy inspirada por el arte”.

Hamsa dijo que tiene recuerdos de personas que decían que en el arte no había dinero y decidió adentrarse al trabajo social.

“Siento que ese trabajo me enseñó mucho a ser un ser humano”, dijo. “Estaba cuidando a mis abuelos, estaban enfermos. Necesitaba hacer algo porque dormían la mayoría del tiempo, entonces, comencé a pintar”.

Hamsa vivió en Costa Rica donde pintaba escenas del mar, “donde todo comenzó”.

Compartió que durante la pandemia del COVID-19 tuvo una oportunidad de reflexionar mientras trabajaba remotamente a tiempo completo como supervisora de un equipo de trabajo social.

“Tuve la oportunidad de [...] en realidad solo pensar en cosas”, Hamsa dijo. “Y yo había estado haciendo algunos trabajos de consultoría [...]

poniendo arte en edificios grandes solo como un segundo trabajo”.

Dijo que se sentía muy apasionada de esto, vendía su arte de vez en cuando y se convirtió en algo de tiempo completo junto con su trabajo social.

En el 2021, llegó a la Isla del Padre para hacer su cuarentena y decidió formar parte de un programa de residencia artística, Art Business Incubator.

“Es un programa de un año”, Hamsa dijo. “Entonces, terminó en la primavera del 2022 e hice mi show de graduación sola y, para ese tiempo, ya tenía mi galería de arte”.

Dijo que firmó su contrato de renta por dos años mientras estaba en el programa para el espacio de estudio con otros artistas.

“Llegó un punto donde todos ellos desaparecieron y dijeron, ‘¿quieres tomarlo por completo tú sola?’” Hamsa dijo. “Y yo pensé, ‘no quiero pero lo haré porque no quiero perder el espacio’”.

Después de esto, dijo que comenzó a trabajar en su negocio The Art Lounge para empezar a ganar dinero.

Compartió que, cuando llegó al sur de Texas, se sintió abrazada y experimentó una sensación de pueblo pequeño.

“Todos te ven como familia casi inmediatamente”, Hamsa dijo. “Pero luego, siento que en el RGV hay emprendedores por todos lados y todos saben lo que es intentar esforzarse”.

Ella describe su arte como una parte abstracta con realismo y textura.

“Hay esta parte donde es muy libre y sin control [...] tiene mucha textura”,

Hamsa dijo. “Me gusta añadir detalles realistas a mis piezas, así que aquí se puede ver algo reconocible”.

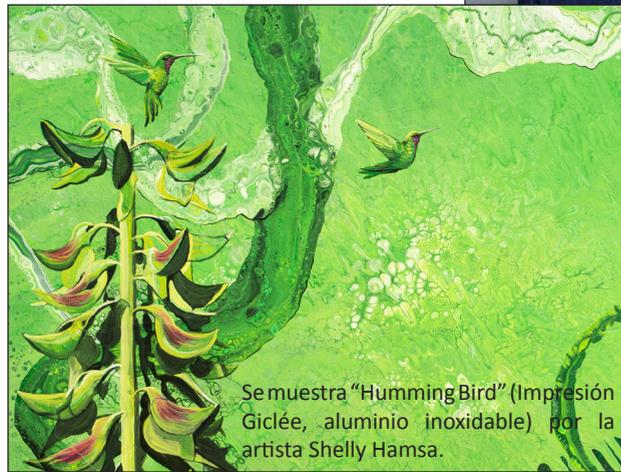
Dijo que una de las partes más difíciles de iniciar con su negocio fue el tratar nuevas cosas para que las personas llegaran.

“En esta área particular de la Isla a veces vienen turistas, a veces no, a veces el clima está mal y es cuestión de suerte el si tienes un buen mes o no”, Hamsa dijo.

Ahora, ella está trabajando con otros artistas en un espacio en conjunto para hacer un centro de arte en la Isla del Padre.

También, Hamsa compartió que empezó una organización sin fines de lucro llamada Art Launch South Texas, donde busca ser una fundación para otros artistas y organizaciones de arte.

“El arte se trata de inspiración y tenemos que dejar que eso pase a través de nosotros”, dijo. “Si tenemos algún talento o un deseo, tenemos que correr con él porque es hermoso”.



Se muestra “Humming Bird” (Impresión Giclée, aluminio inoxidable) por la artista Shelly Hamsa.



**FOTOS CORTESÍA  
THE ART LOUNGE**

Se muestra a Shelly Hamsa, artista y dueña de The Art Lounge. La galería abrió el 13 de mayo del 2022 y está ubicada en 33256 State Park Road 100 #102, en la Isla del Padre.

# GHOSTS, BIGFOOT AND UFO'S: OH, MY!

**EDUARDO ESCAMILLA**  
A&E EDITOR

Students in the UTRGV Writing and Language Studies Department are trading traditional textbooks for thermal monitors and electronic voice phenomena recorders in a new advanced specialization course, “Otherworldly Arguments.”

The ENGL 4340: Advanced Specialization in Rhetoric, Composition and Literacy Studies class, taught by Associate Professor Randall Monte and Lecturer Brittany Ramirez Carter, explores how communities on the “fringe,” use scientific rhetoric and evidence to legitimize their work.

The Rider met with the two educators at The Caffeine Library, a coffee shop in Edinburg, to discuss the topics at the center of their course.

The focus of the course is not on proving whether Bigfoot is real; it is on dissecting how researchers in specialized areas communicate their work to broader publics, according to the professors.

“We’re trying to learn about researchers and everyday folks in these very specialized communities who are very, very interested in these things ... are making sense of the world,” Monte said.

As she took a sip from her coffee with the cautionary name “Midnight Hour,” which Carter joked would likely do the job, she explained the course’s conception was surprisingly casual.

She was listening to a podcast about Bigfoot sightings while cooking dinner and jokingly texted Monte about turning it into a class.

After a year of research and contextualization, the course was born.

Ramirez Carter said the curriculum is structured in three units: Bigfoot, paranormal investigation and ufology.

The central, semester-long project requires students to translate specialized scientific research into accessible, public-facing genres, Monte said.

For the Bigfoot unit, students work on a public science project that requires them to read a technical primatology article and “repackage” the language and concepts into different media, such

as a children’s book or a video-game design, according to the professors.

The exercise is meant to help students understand how academic scientific language is both used by primatologists and co-opted by fringe groups to lend “scientific credibility.”

A key rhetorical concept the class examined during the Bigfoot unit is the “argument of absence.”

“The lack of evidence of the thing becomes evidence of the thing,” Monte said, explaining the rhetorical strategy where researchers cross off all known animals, such as mountain lions or grizzly bears, until Bigfoot is the only explanation left.

Another central feature of the course is experiential learning and cross-disciplinary collaboration.

Students interviewed and observed professionals working at the Gladys’s Porter Zoo in Brownsville and collaborated with UTRGV’s Comparative Psychology Lab, which explores intersections between animal behavior and human psychology.

Perhaps the most hands-on experience will involve the paranormal unit, where students during the week of Halloween will partner with a local investigative group named Revenant Watch.

The paranormal team will guide students through the University Library on the Edinburg campus, which will serve as the location for the ghost hunt. Students will get “firsthand” exposure to the tools and practices of ghost hunting.

“They’re going to be using the tools, the EVP readers, the temperature monitors, you know, all that stuff, touching it, like this visceral ... sort of experience,” Ramirez Carter said.

She added paranormal investigative communities similar to Bigfoot researchers, who use technology such as bioacoustic recorders, are constantly leveraging advanced technology for data collection.

Revenant Watch, for example, uses methods such as “coding audio recordings” to vet potential evidence, a process Monte said is “pretty similar to what we do in academia.”

The goal for students, he said, is to learn not just the writing process,



EDUARDO ESCAMILLA/THE RIDER PHOTOS

Lecturer Brittany Ramirez Carter (left) and Associate Professor Randall Monte from the Writing and Language Studies department discuss pedagogy and ghosts on Oct. 10 in The Caffeine Library, located at 1518 W. University Drive in Edinburg.



Associate Professor Randall Monte (right) talks shop with Lecturer Brittany Ramirez Carter to discuss the direction of their course ENGL 4340 “Otherworldly Arguments,” which they co-teach.

but also the physical and rhetorical dynamics of research—recognizing that the presence of the researcher automatically impacts the space and how meaning is constructed.

“When you are occupying a space, you are automatically impacting what’s happening in that space,” Ramirez Carter added.

Whether analyzing the argument of absence in a grainy photo of a creature

in the woods or reviewing coded audio from a supposed haunting, the core lesson remains constant: all knowledge, mainstream or fringe, is built through rhetoric.

The instructors said they plan for future iterations to continue the science theme, with the next one potentially focused on the deep sea and encouraged students of all majors to consider joining in the fun.

## PHOTO GALLERY

# STUDENTS STEP INTO THE MADNESS



KARLA HERNANDEZ/THE RIDER PHOTOS

Mia Garcia, an integrated health science sophomore, paints a pumpkin during the Carnival of Madness Tuesday in El Comedor on the Brownsville campus.



VISIT OUR WEBSITE TO SEE THE FULL PHOTO GALLERY

The Brownsville Early College High School student folk-dance group perform during the Carnival of Madness Tuesday on the Student Union lawn on the Brownsville campus.

# THE BEAUTY OF SPORTS

## Grand opening caps \$30 million in Fieldhouse upgrades

**ALI HALLOUM**  
THE RIDER

Years of construction and closures in and near the UTRGV Fieldhouse culminated in a grand opening Wednesday as the Athletics department officially unveiled the brand-new atrium and the Lew Hill Memorial Plaza.

Many student athletes, political figures, coaches, and key figures in the university and the Athletics department were in attendance.

It was the first look for the public and the media of the atrium and the plaza, both of which are a part of a \$30 million-dollar project at the venue.

The atrium, which cost \$14 million to build and began construction in late 2023, includes new seating, concessions, a team store and a dedicated Vaqueros Hall of Fame.

The official unveiling of a memorial plaque for the late Vaqueros head coach Lew Hill at the plaza in front of the new atrium was a moving scene, one which drew tears from members of the audience present at the event.

Hill was hired by the Vaqueros following the 2015-16 season, departing the University of Oklahoma where he helped lead the Sooners to a Final Four appearance that



**DRAYA RIOS/THE RIDER**

The news conference for the opening of the UTRGV Fieldhouse atrium wraps up with a ribbon cutting Wednesday on the Edinburg campus.

year.

He led the Vaqueros to three-straight postseason berths in three full seasons (2017-20) before his death on Feb. 7, 2021, a day after a game against Texas Southern University in Houston.

Chiefly among those in attendance was the late head coach's wife, Renee Hill, and their two children, LJ and Elle, who still call the Rio Grande Valley home. Fighting tears during her remarks, Hill thanked the university and the audience, and said the process

was years in the making.

"There were so many obstacles telling me, 'Who am I to ask for something so big for my husband?'" Hill said. "Through my faith and constant prayer and God whispering in my ear and Lew in the other ear, 'Keep pressing forward.' Here we are, four years later, and I know he's in heaven. Smiling [and] super excited."

Chasse Conque, vice president and director of Athletics, unveiled the memorial plaque alongside

the Hill family, and later cut the ribbon to the new atrium.

Conque said the day was not just to celebrate the opening of a state-of-the-art facility but to honor an "unbelievable man" who was "a great mentor to the young men that he coached."

"He was a fearless competitor," he said. "He loved the game, but it was much more than just basketball. [His loss] shook all of us. It shook, obviously, at the core with the family but, certainly, our community and

our athletics department."

Hall of Fame coach Lon Kruger, who coached the Broncs of legacy institution the University of Texas-Pan American from 1982-86, was also present. Hill was Kruger's assistant for 12 seasons prior to his hire by UTRGV.

He said his "genius" was his ability to affect the lives around him on and off the court through his love of the game.

"Lew was about the preparation of these young men for life after basketball," Kruger said. "He wanted them to be good husbands and good fathers and contributors to society."

The Rider previously reported on the recent facility upgrades that are a part of a \$180 million effort spanning 13 capital projects, since construction began at the Soccer and Track & Field Complex across the Edinburg campus.

Funding for these capital projects originates both from donations to Athletics as well as internal revenue from ticket sales, concessions and advertising.

Conque told reporters, after the unveiling, the next step for the new facilities is to put them to good use.

"We've invested this for our fans, certainly for our student athletes," he said.

# LIVING THE DOUBLE LIFE



Keamonie Archie transferred from Fort Hays University, a Division II school located in Kansas. Archie is a wide receiver for the UTRGV Football Team.



Shown is Keamonie Archie at the Texas A&M Alumni Muster on April 28 in College Station, where he placed 10th in long jump.

**DANIELA CHAPA-REYES**  
THE RIDER

For most UTRGV Track & Field athletes, the fall serves as their off-season. However, for one individual, the fall semester looks slightly different now.

Keamonie Archie, a kinesiology major, is now part of the UTRGV Football Team as a redshirt sophomore wide receiver, taking on the journey of being a dual-sport athlete for the university.

"I wanted to be a basketball player growing up because my brothers played football, and I wanted to be different; but, then, I didn't compete," Archie said. "I just never got a chance to compete. I've been doing track since junior year high school and football since senior year."

He started his collegiate football career at Fort Hays State University, a Division II school located in Kansas. It was there that he was asked mid-football season to make the switch onto Fort Hays track and field team.

"My mom convinced me to transfer [schools] for track, and I ended up here," Archie said. "During sophomore year, I was fighting through injuries for track. I decided I wanted to play football and it just went on from there."

He transferred to UTRGV in the fall 2024 semester and started practicing with the UTRGV Football Team throughout summer 2025 as a defensive back to later make the switch to wide receiver.

"I decided to switch to the offensive side where I'm

more comfortable to see what happens," he said.

Archie said he prefers playing football over track and field.

"Track helps me get better for football, but I really like football a lot more," he said. "I like track, but I only do it

"I like track, but I only do it because I am good at it."

**--Keamonie Archie, UTRGV dual-athlete**

because I am good at it. ... I would most definitely play football first before jumping." During the 2025 Track &

Field season, Archie qualified for the NCAA West First Round, where he finished 43rd in long jump with a mark of 5.45. He also earned All-Conference Second Team honors in long jump at the Southland Conference Outdoor Track and Field Championships after taking silver with a mark of 7.52 meters.

"Once [the football season] is over, I go straight into [competing for] indoor," he said. "I'd rather be busy all year anyway."

When it comes to managing practice and being a student, Archie said it was hard figuring out his schedule.

"I have mostly online classes; I do have in-person classes, but those are later throughout the day," he said.

"After practice, I go to class, I have meetings, I do homework and, then, I am done for the day."

Archie pushes for young athletes to chase the opportunities.

"If you really want it, just go get it," he said.



Keamonie Archie transferred from Fort Hays University, a Division II school located in Kansas. Archie is a wide receiver for the UTRGV Football Team.

# TRUMP POLICIES AFFECT IMMIGRANTS



MARIAJOSE GARZA/THE RIDER PHOTO ILLUSTRATION

The One Beautiful Bill Act was passed by the U.S. Congress on July 4. According to Alvaro Corral, a UTRGV political science assistant professor, one aspect of the bill increases funding for Border Patrol and Immigration Customs Enforcement.

**HUGO SEPÚLVEDA**  
THE RIDER

President Donald Trump's administration has come with legislation and proclamation that affects immigrants in the United States putting fear in these communities, according to a UTRGV assistant professor.

The Rider tried to contact the U.S. Reps. Monica de la Cruz (R-Texas) and Vicente Gonzalez (D-Texas) for more information about the current U.S. status on immigration and how it affects the community. As of press time Friday, they were not available for comment.

Alvaro Corral, a UTRGV political science assistant professor, in an interview with The Rider, explained the current status of bills and acts related to immigration and how it affects the community.

## One Beautiful Bill Act

According to the U.S. Congress website, the H.R. 1 One Beautiful Bill Act passed on July 4. The act reduces taxes, reduces or increases spending for various federal programs, increases the statutory debt limit, and otherwise addresses agencies and programs throughout the federal government.

Corral said the One Big Beautiful Bill Act extended President Trump's original tax cuts, passed during his first term in 2017, that were set to expire.

He added there is controversy in the way the government has decided to pay those tax cuts.

"Of course, giving very generous tax cuts means that the federal government is hurting its revenue streams," Corral said.

He said another portion of the bill, besides the tax cuts, is to build up financing for the immigration enforcement industrial complex.

"So, everything from increasing historic funding for [Immigration Customs Enforcement] and other departments of [the Department Homeland Security] and Customs and Border Protection, [and] Border Patrol," Corral said.

This bill has the potential to create and fund the level of personnel in these agencies to carry out the President Trump administration's mass deportation plan, according to the assistant professor.

"We've been seeing that over the last couple of months, to ramp up immigration enforcement in the interior of the country ... especially Los Angeles, Southern California

and selected cities like Chicago and Washington D.C. ... requires a level of manpower that would be very costly" he said.

## Texas Dream Act

In 2001, the Texas Legislature passed House Bill 1403, also known as the Texas DREAM Act, which extends in-state tuition and grants eligibility to non-citizen residents of the state.

Corral said, over the summer, the U.S. Department of Justice repealed the act on June 4.

"With that ending, I think higher education has suddenly become out of reach for the many thousands of undocumented students that call Texas home," he said.

According to Corral, the ending of the act has potential effects for colleges and universities, such as UTRGV.

## Fees on H-1B Visas

According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services website, on Sept. 19, President Trump signed a Proclamation, "Restriction on Entry of Certain Nonimmigrant Workers."

This proclamation requires a \$100,000 payment to accompany any new H-1B visa petitions, according to the website.

Corral said there is going to be quite a change in hiring because businesses will think about hiring someone and pay a \$100,000 fee to the U.S. government.

He said there is evidence of affecting UTRGV's ability to recruit and retain international students.

"International students are quite the source of revenue for universities because these students tend to pay higher tuition rates because they're not in-state tuition residents," Corral said. "And suddenly ... a very quick decline in that student population hurts the revenue streams of universities."

## How has this affected immigrant communities?

Corral said immigrant communities across the country are feeling "incredibly scared" at the prospect of being detained and questioned and ultimately deported by the Trump administration.

He said there are cases where immigrants are detained in immigration detention facilities that

have reports of "very negative and deteriorating" conditions with no access to legal counsel.

"For immigrants to sort of fight their deportation in court, many of them are being prevented from meeting with their legal councils," Corral said. "... So, lawyers can't literally access their clients."

He said, locally, there are reports of businesses in areas like downtown McAllen and downtown Harlingen struggling because there is fear of ICE and Border Patrol activity.

"That's really put a sort of chill on

"Higher education has suddenly become out of reach for the many thousands of undocumented students that call Texas home."

--Alvaro Corral, UTRGV political science assistant professor

workers who wish to just go to work and go about their daily lives in peace, so I think it's been just an incredible level of fear that has taken hold within many immigrant communities," the assistant professor said.

## Stop Illegal Entry Act of 2025

According to the U.S. Congress website, the H.R. 3496 Stop Illegal Entry Act of 2025, passed by the House on Sept. 11, establishes or increases criminal penalties for certain non-U.S. nationals who illegally enter the United States.

"The bill establishes a mandatory minimum prison term of 5 years and allows a life sentence for an individual who (1) improperly enters, or attempts to improperly enter, the United States; and (2) is subsequently convicted of a felony," according to the website.

# MCALLEN PUSHES FOR DOWNTOWN COOPERATION

**ETHAN MALDONADO**  
THE RIDER

After weeks of enforcement actions against downtown bars, the City of McAllen is opening a new chapter: collaboration, according to a city official.

On Sept. 22, City Manager Isaac Tawil met with business owners from the Entertainment and Cultural Overlay District to address concerns and outline a path forward that includes more communication between operators and the city.

Tawil said the meeting, which took place in the City Hall's Commission Chambers, was prompted by community discussions and confusion over bar requirements following permit revocations and power disconnections in September.

"There seemed to be a significant amount of comments in the community suggesting that either landowners or business operators hadn't taken the time to educate themselves on the requirements they had to meet," he told The Rider in an interview Oct. 10. "We wanted to create an open conversation about what the minimum

requirements for operating are."

The conversation followed weeks of heightened enforcement in the district.

On Sept. 2, the city revoked permits for 20 downtown bars, citing operators who failed to implement safeguards against underage drinking, such as ID scanners and ultraviolet ink.

Ten days later, power was disconnected to more than a dozen establishments operating without certificates of occupancy.

Tawil said the meeting began with frustration from some operators but ended productively.

"Most [operators] walked away feeling more informed," he said. "There was consensus that there are things operators can do to enhance the safe operations of the establishments."

Some operators, Tawil said, discussed forming their own association, or organized group, to better communicate with the city. He said he encouraged the idea.

"If they do choose to organize themselves, we're willing to continue engaging with them," Tawil said.

The city manager acknowledged the recent spike in enforcement and the online reaction to it has helped spark the dialogue.

"Having an open forum and dialogue where proprietors could ask questions and the city could provide information in an open setting ... would be beneficial," he said.

McAllen bar owner James Alexander, of The Flying Walrus, previously said his venue had already adopted required safeguards and wants clearer communication from city officials.

"We want accountability and we want safety, but the communication hasn't been clear," Alexander said. "Our door remains open to the city, and we'd like to have a constructive conversation about solutions moving forward."

Tawil emphasized while enforcement remains in place, collaboration is key to the district's long-term success, a place where "people can relax, have a good time ... and have a fun night out."

The city manager added he envisions the district as a "lively center for culture and entertainment" in the years ahead and noted many operators have already begun improving their practices.

"We're already seeing some changes," Tawil said. "Bars are being much more responsible in their operations. My hope is that this kind

of dialogue continues well beyond this moment."

Mass communication senior Marcus Alvarez said recent changes in downtown are already noticeable.

"Now that more places are using scanners and stricter checks, it feels a lot safer," Alvarez said.

Mass communication senior Paolo Santiago said the conversation should not stop at rule changes.

"For downtown to really change, the culture has to change," Santiago said. "It can get messy, and that's what makes people feel unsafe."



PHOTO COURTESY CITY OF MCALLEN

Nancy Trevino, director of Health and Code Enforcement; Michelle Rivera, deputy city manager; and Isaac Tawil, city manager, spoke during the Entertainment and Cultural Overlay District stakeholders meeting on Sept. 22 in the McAllen City Hall's Commission Chambers.