



A NEW ERA FOR VAQUEROS

Game days boost students' spirit

KARLA HERNANDEZ/THE RIDER PHOTOS



The Rider reporter Dayra Escobedo (from left) asks chemistry senior Denally Hernandez, sociology senior Seihda Valverde and undeclared freshman Emmanuel Santibanez about their experience assisting tailgates and football games Oct. 4 outside the Robert and Janet Vackar Stadium in Edinburg.



Sophomore integrated health science Alexia Serda (from left), junior biomedical Montse Cantu and exercise science senior Sofia Serda show UTRGV spirit and breast cancer support at the football game's tailgate Oct. 4 outside the Robert and Janet Vackar Stadium in Edinburg.



Theatre junior student Jack Robertson shows UTRGV spirit in the tailgate before the game against Houston Christian University Oct. 4 outside the Robert and Janet Vackar Stadium in Edinburg.

DAYRA GONZALEZ THE RIDER

The inaugural football season kicked off this fall with students saying they are brought together through tailgates, chants and pride.

On Oct. 4, The Rider attended the game against Houston Christian University to obtain student insight about their experiences. It observed Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

Cristina Orozco, a psychology junior, said attending games has pushed her out of her comfort zone and helped her feel more involved.

"It's very exciting just seeing everybody's energy," Orozco said. "Everybody comes together to support the team."

According to students, the atmosphere at the tailgates

has been one of the main attractions.

Jack Robertson, a theatre junior, said the energy before kickoff makes each game memorable.

"There's so much excitement in the air," Robertson said. "It's just better when you're surrounded by people from your school."

Seihda Valverde, a sociology senior, said the football season encouraged her to take part in more campus events than before.

"This is my senior year, and I hadn't really gone to school events until now," Valverde said. "The games give us something fun to look forward to."

According to Christopher Stubbs, assistant director of Student Activities, the student tailgate has helped create a stronger sense of community as students from across the Rio Grande Valley

come together each week to celebrate.

"We have people coming from Edinburg, Brownsville, Harlingen, all over the Valley," Stubbs said. "Just seeing everybody come together and

"We have people coming from ... all over the Valley."

--Christopher Stubbs,
assistant director of
Student Activities

start building a tradition has been really cool."

He said his role is to give students the space and resources to shape the tailgate culture themselves.

"The student tailgate is very much student-run," Stubbs said. "We're just providing the setup. Everything else comes from them."

From field goal contests and competitions to student organizations cooking food for other attendees, each gameday brings something new.

Stubbs said seeing students take ownership of the event has been one of the most rewarding parts of the season.

To make games accessible to all students, Rodney Gomez, executive director of Parking and Transportation, said UTRGV offers free parking and shuttle rides from both the Edinburg and Brownsville campuses.

Gomez added some students depend on shuttle rides services to attend.

"Several students told us they couldn't get to the game without our buses," he said. "That's exactly why we do it, to make sure everyone has the chance to be part of this experience."

Students who attended the games said they feel they are helping build new traditions that will last long after the first season ends.

Robertson said chants such as "iDale gas!" after a first down and the energy at tailgates have already become part of what makes the season memorable.

Jesús Álvarez, a dance junior, said the experience reminds him of his high school days but feels even more special.

"It's fun to see the community coming together," Álvarez said. "We're making new memories that future students will also enjoy."

CLUB SPOTLIGHT

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS CLUB

--Compiled by Emma Castillo



PHOTO COURTESY ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS CLUB
Environmental Awareness Club members pick up trash during the South Padre Island Jetties Clean-up event in April.

The Environmental Awareness Club is a student-led organization dedicated to sustainability, environmental education and creating a more eco-friendly campus for everyone, according to the club's president.

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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

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 at 11 a.m. in the Health Affairs Building West gazebo on the Edinburg campus.

BILLIARDS TOURNAMENT

The **Student Union** will host a Billiards Tournament from noon to 1 p.m. in the Game Room on the Edinburg campus and at the same time in the Game Room on the Brownsville campus. Attendees can **enjoy free food** and a chance to **win V-Bucks**. **A student ID is required.**

LSAT CRUSHERS CLASS

The **Coffee Club** will host **free LSAT classes** from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. in Education Complex Room 1.404 on the Edinburg campus.

HOF POP-UP SHOP

House of Fashion will host a fundraiser Pop-Up Shop from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. on the Student Union patio on the Edinburg campus. Attendees can **thrift clothes.**

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.

DELTA ZETA MEETING

Delta Zeta will meet from 6 to 10 p.m. in the Bronc Room on the Edinburg campus.

PRE-DENTAL SOCIETY GENERAL MEETING

The **Pre-Dental Society** will meet from 5 to 6:30 p.m. in Interdisciplinary Academic Building Room 1.208 on the Brownsville campus and at the same time Wednesday in Science Building Room 1.106 on the Edinburg campus. Attendees can learn and discuss **important topics** about dental school. **Free food** will be provided.

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

The **Center of Excellence in STEM Education** will host a Breast Cancer Awareness event from 2 to 4 p.m. in Math and General Classrooms Building Room 2.412 on the Edinburg campus. Attendees can **craft their own pink bracelet.**

Tuesday

MSA INTRODUCTORY TABLING

The **Muslim Students' Association** will host a tabling event from 12:15 to 2 p.m. on the Student Union north patio on the Edinburg campus. **Free food** will be provided.

SABOR, CULTURA, Y ARTE

The **Center for Student Involvement** will host Sabor, Cultura, y Arte from 12:30 to 2 p.m. in the University Ballroom on the Edinburg campus. Attendees can celebrate **Hispanic Heritage Month** which **honors traditions, creativity** and **cultural pride**. **Free food** will be

provided.

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.

FSA VOLLEYBALL MEETING

The **Filipino Student Association** will meet from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. in the Interdisciplinary Engineering and Academic Building on the Edinburg campus. Attendees will discuss the **practice schedule** and **general updates.**

CARNIVAL OF MADNESS

The **Student Union, University Recreation and Campus Activities Board** will host Carnival of Madness from 7 to 11 p.m. on the Student Union lawn on the Brownsville campus. Attendees can enjoy **free carnival games.**

Wednesday

ALPFA GENERAL MEETING

The **Association of Latino Professionals for America** will meet from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. in Robert C. Vackar College of Business and Entrepreneurship Room 121 on the Edinburg campus.

CONVENTION INFO SESSION

The **Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers** will host an info session from 3:30 to 5 p.m. in Engineering Building Room 1.300 on the Edinburg campus. Attendees will prepare for the **SHPE 2025 National Convention.**

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.

ASOC GENERAL MEETING

The **Accounting Society** will meet from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. in Life and Health Sciences Building Room 1.102 on the Brownsville campus. **Free food** will be provided.

Thursday

PAINT VAQUERO PRIDE: SPIRIT PAINTING CONTEST

The **Student Union** will host a Spirit Painting Contest for UTRGV clubs from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. in the Student Union veranda on the Brownsville campus and at the same time on the Quad lawn on the Edinburg campus.

CECS HALLOWEEN FESTIVAL

The **American Society of Civil Engineers** will host a Halloween Festival from 4 to 11 p.m. in the Academic Services Building on the Edinburg campus. Attendees can enjoy a **haunted house, snacks** and **social activities.**

RUN CLUB MEETING

Club Running-Vaquero Runners will meet from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. outside the Life and Health Science Building on the Brownsville campus. Attendees can enjoy a **20-minute run.**

Friday

KNOTTED TOGETHER GENERAL MEETING

Knotted Together will meet from 5 to 6 p.m. in Interdisciplinary Engineering and Academic Building Room 1.208 on the Edinburg campus. Attendees will **practice and learn how to crochet.**

--Compiled by Mariah Escobar



POLICE REPORTS

The following are among the incidents reported to University Police between Sept. 29 and Oct. 4.

Sept. 29

11:30 a.m.: An officer responded to a hit-and-run after an unknown vehicle struck a light pole and fled the scene in front of the Performing Arts Complex on the Edinburg campus. A work order was placed to repair the pole. The case is under investigation.

8:42 p.m.: A student reported receiving several threatening calls and text messages from a non-affiliated man. The case is under investigation.

Sept. 30

12:05 p.m.: An officer responded to reports of a student speaking loudly and causing concern in the Student Services Building on the Edinburg campus. The student said he was speaking loudly due to hearing loss. No crime occurred.

9:54 p.m.: Officers responded to a burnt smell in the University Library on the Edinburg campus. The

smell came from a blowtorch used by construction workers on the roof. The building was temporarily evacuated while Environmental Health and Safety staff conducted an inspection.

Oct. 1

11:18 a.m.: An employee reported a man sitting on a window ledge, which may pose a safety issue, on the third floor of the University Library on the Brownsville campus. The man left before officers arrived.

2:40 p.m.: Officers investigated a report of a student watching a concerning video in the University Library on the Brownsville campus. It was later determined the student was researching the Uvalde school shooting for a class project.

4:50 p.m.: Officers responded to a report of a suspicious man in a truck approaching women in Lot B-1 on the Brownsville campus. The officers searched the area but were unable to locate the man.

Oct. 2

7:47 a.m.: An officer

responded to a report of a possible disturbance in Lot E-9 on the Edinburg campus. A non-affiliated man said he had a verbal altercation with another driver off campus. The second man left before officers arrived. No crime occurred.

3:39 p.m.: An officer investigated a suspicious man attempting to enter without authorization to the Engineering Building on the Edinburg campus. After a search of the area, the officer was unable to locate the man.

4:02 p.m.: A student reported receiving multiple concerning messages via social media and phone from two other students in the Robert C. Vackar College of Business and Entrepreneurship building on the Edinburg campus. The student was provided university police resources. The case is under investigation.

Oct. 3

8:11 a.m.: Officers were dispatched regarding a loud noise outside the University Library on the Brownsville campus. No suspicious

activity was found.

1:20 p.m.: An officer responded to an active fire alarm in the Research Education Building on the Edinburg campus. Environmental Health and Safety staff determined the alarm was caused by a dusty smoke detector scheduled for servicing.

Oct. 4

3:21 p.m.: A student reported another male student had thrown an empty beer can at him after asking for his fraternity president at the H-E-B Festival Grounds in the Robert and Janet Vackar Stadium in Edinburg. The student was issued a criminal trespass warning and advised of potential charges. The case is under investigation.

7:42 p.m.: An officer met with a non-affiliated woman who experienced heart palpitations in the Robert and Janet Vackar Stadium in Edinburg. Emergency Medical Services transported her to a hospital for evaluation.

--Compiled by Dayra Gonzalez

WI-FI OR WI-NOT

UTRGV community faces connectivity issues across campuses

SOPHIA CORTEZ
THE RIDER

Students around the UTRGV community have experienced ongoing Wi-Fi connectivity issues across several buildings on both Brownsville and Edinburg campuses, bringing awareness on how it has affected their performance.

“Absolutely,” replied Laura Balboa, an integrated health science junior, when asked by The Rider if she has had Wi-Fi problems. “Every day, every day since I started school.”

Balboa said some areas, such as the university libraries, have stronger connections; however, “every place on campus sort of flakes.”

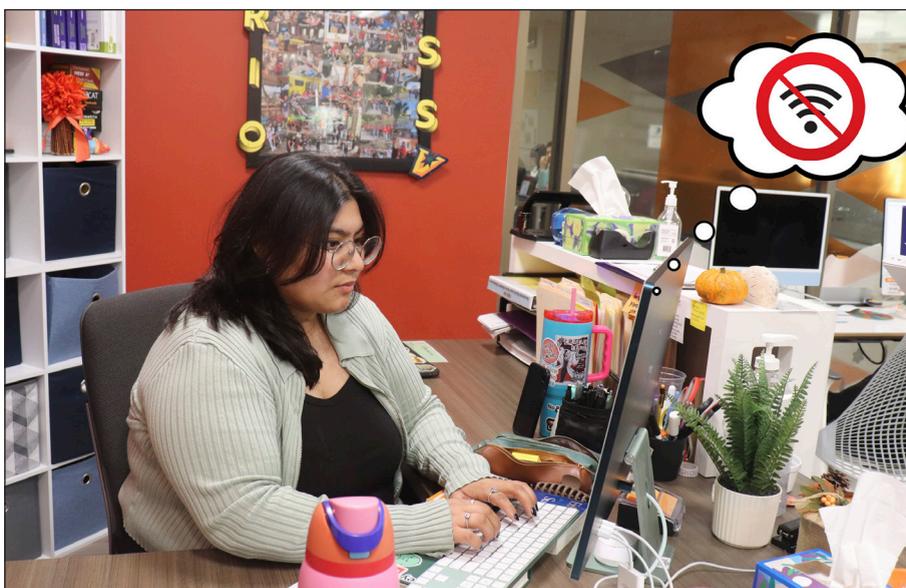
“Sometimes, I am unable to connect to classes on time, or I have become really stressed if I’m going to be able to send an assignment on time since there’s no connection,” she said.

Jose Castilleja, assistant director of networking at UTRGV, said the university’s IT department has been aware of the issues and is actively working to improve the network performance.

According to Castilleja, failed authentications are often caused by user error.

“A lot of times, it is when they couldn’t authenticate,” he said. “It’s [because] they’re putting in the wrong password or the wrong UTRGV email.”

Castilleja added certain devices, such as Apple computers, can cause difficulties.



KARLA HERNANDEZ/THE RIDER PHOTO ILLUSTRATION

Philosophy and rehabilitation services junior Aaliyah Castillo said she was affected by the internet outage Oct. 6 in the Music, Science and Learning Center building on the Brownsville campus.

“That’s not on us; that’s a Mac issue,” he said. “... The problem is a lot of times the owner does not have a UTRGV laptop. So, we cannot work on it [because] there’s a liability issue on that. I mean, yes, we will help them, you know, to the best of our ability, but we really can’t be touching [it] or logging in.”

Israel Valdez, a nursing junior, said the connectivity issues can sometimes affect his performance in school.

“When you’re stressing because you need to turn in an assignment in, but

“Sometimes, I am unable to connect to classes on time.”

--Laura Balboa, integrated health science junior

the Wi-Fi crashes, or even on exam day, sometimes the Wi-Fi crashes as well,” Valdez said.

He said he has heard complaints about “dead zones.”

Castilleja clarified that construction building materials and access points capacity are factors in “dead zones.”

“If it’s concrete or block, it blocks a signal more than just a Sheetrock,” he said. “Usually our [access points], it takes like 30 to 35 people, and most of the lecture rooms ... have more. That’s why we put two.”

Ana Cortez, a psychology graduate student, said she has experienced Wi-Fi issues in the Writing Center on the Brownsville campus.

“I haven’t reported it just because it does, like, eventually load, so it’s not like I don’t have access at all,” Cortez said.

The assistant director encouraged students to submit detailed help tickets, including location, device type and UTRGV email, in order for technicians to be able to trace connection problems.

“If they put their email, we can look after the fact they’re connecting,” Castilleja said. “It’s saying they were connecting good or they had a bad signal and, then, we could go from there.”

Despite the challenges, he emphasized the IT department continues to work to improve campus connectivity.

“We want to help,” Castilleja said. “We really want to help people. But sometimes it’s just hard, you know, I mean to be patient.”

For more information, visit the UTRGV IT services website.

PAINT THE TOWN PURPLE

MARIAH ESCOBAR
THE RIDER

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month and it is important to bring attention to an issue that affects many people, according to Cynthia Jones, director of the Office for Advocacy and Violence Prevention.

According to Jones, one in four women will experience some sort of violence; the phenomenon is not as simple as it may seem and can occur to anyone. Its costs, if there are physical injuries, measure approximately \$1 billion a year in the U.S. alone.

“Domestic violence is broad though lots of people think it’s just about husbands and wives, but it’s not,” she said.

Priscilla Palacios, associate director of Special Programs for OAVP, said the month encourages communities, agencies, advocates and people hoping to end domestic violence to “come together to bring awareness on this important topic.”

Jones added there are many ways a person can be violent.

“Violence doesn’t have to have a physical component; someone who is abusive toward you can never lay a finger on you and, yet, totally



MYKEL DEL ANGEL/THE RIDER

The Office for Advocacy and Violence Prevention placed purple ribbons and posters in observance of October being Domestic Violence Awareness Month throughout the Bronc Trail on the Edinburg campus.

control you, be demeaning toward you, subjugate you in a way that disempowers you and takes away your agency,” she said.

The director said it is important to raise awareness of the issue to try to steer clear of people thinking abuse is a personal issue.

Jones added many survivors of domestic abuse tend to say that being hit, punched or kicked is not as bad as other things they have withstood.

“What we try and do is what I say, ‘Flip the narrative,’” she said. “People always ask me why somebody stays in

an abusive relationship, for example. I think the more interesting question is why someone is abusive toward someone they care about, love.”

Palacios said one way the office raises awareness is by putting up purple ribbons on the pillars in the Bronc Trail on the Edinburg campus for community members to think, “Hey, what is this ribbon about?”

Purple is the color selected “to promote awareness for the first Domestic Violence Day of Unity in October 1981,” which later became Domestic Violence Awareness Month,

according to allagainstabuse.org.

The OAVP offers confidential appointments and resources for anyone that may be struggling.

“Education is a key component to get somebody in a safe way out of what they’re experiencing,” Palacios added.

She said students can support each other especially if they are not ready to speak up.

For more information on resources available and upcoming events, visit the OAVP website and V Link.

PHOTO GALLERY

SWEET START TO THE WEEK



MARIAJOSE GARZA/THE RIDER PHOTOS

Sergio Naranjo (from left), an economics and finance freshman; Haley Reyes, a marketing freshman; and Alexa Naranjo, a biology freshman, enjoy Sundaes on Mondays Oct. 6 on the Student Union veranda on the Brownsville campus. The event will take place Oct. 27 in the commons on the Edinburg campus.



Students wait in line to receive toppings during Sundaes on Mondays Oct. 6 on the Student Union veranda on the Brownsville campus. The Union offered chocolate and vanilla flavors.

COLUMN OF THE WEEK

CAUGHT BETWEEN THE BEATS AND THE BOY



AARYKAH NAVARRO
PHOTOGRAPHER

made it into a beat.

So, I like this boy. A lot. It's the kind of liking where you start to build a quiet little daydream around someone, where you imagine what it might feel like if they actually chose you. If they were consistent, if they weren't so painfully confusing, but he is confusing. He is so confusing that it started to hurt in places I didn't think liking someone could reach. Some days he's sweet: texting me first, making me feel like maybe I actually matter to him. And then, it is complete silence, like I imagined the whole connection and tricked myself into thinking this was something more than a casual flicker of interest.

That's when my playlist starts playing in my head, a soundtrack to my confusion.

"Yes, I'm hurting, yes, I'm jaded." I hear it and I feel it. I'm not trying to be overly dramatic, but there's something so specific about the ache that comes from wanting someone who only shows up for their own convenience, who gets your hopes up only to leave

them unanswered.

And "Hotline Bling"? Don't even bother me with that song. No one understands that song the way I do. That song used to be fun, a vibe. Now as I experience this, it definitely hits. "You used to call me on my cell phone, late night when you need my love." I've stared at my phone so many nights, hoping for a text or a call that doesn't come.

I'm only needed when HE wants. Yet, I'm still wondering if he's thinking about me, or if I'm already a faded thought in his mind.

This emotional stress is exhausting. I feel stuck in this weird in-between space, not together, but not completely apart either. He gives me just enough to keep hoping but not enough to feel secure. And because I like him, I keep trying to fill in blanks that I wish he felt. That's the exhausting part about liking someone who won't just say what they feel or mean. You do the effort for the both of you. You explain their behavior and the mixed signals to yourself as if it were a different language.

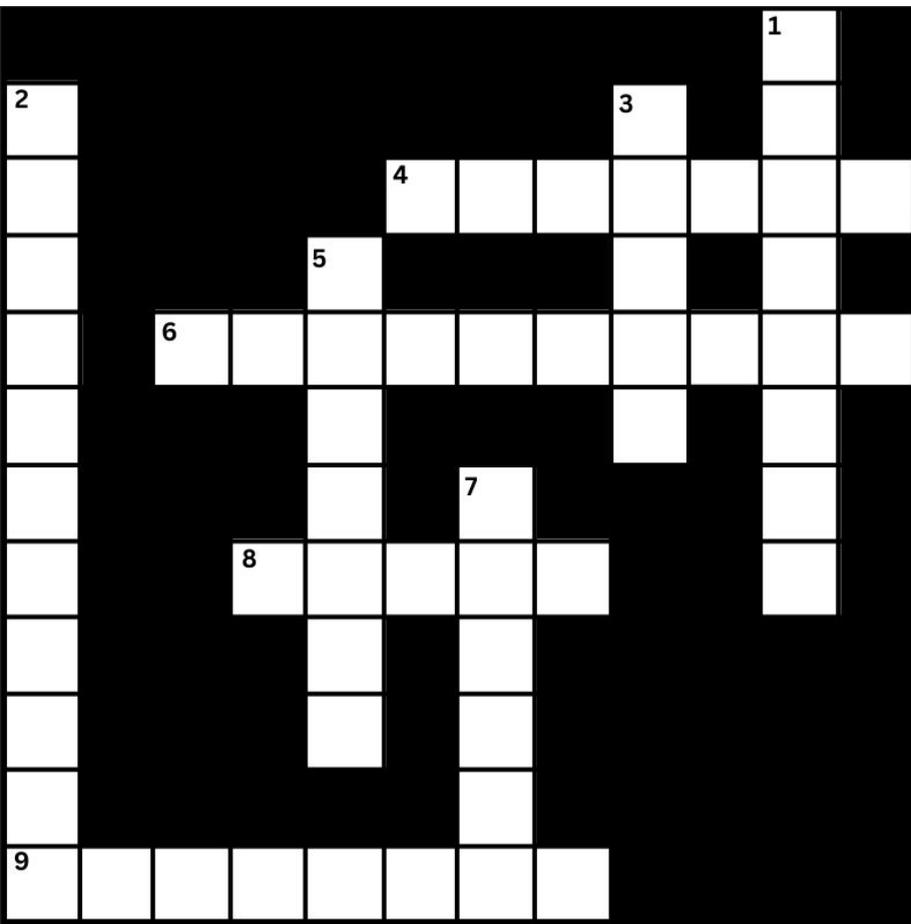
So yeah, Drake is ruining me right now. Not because his songs are sad, but because they are true. They are the exact emotional mess I am stuck in: wanting someone who clearly doesn't want you. Wanting someone who might care, but doesn't show it in a way

"That's when my playlist starts playing in my head, a soundtrack to my confusion."

that feels safe. Wanting someone who's probably not even sure what they want, but somehow, it's still enough to keep me hanging on. I am not sure where this goes. Maybe, he will come around; maybe he won't. But for now, I'm stuck in this confusing, frustrating, heartaching space and, apparently, so is Drake (sometimes).

At least I've got the music to keep me company.

CROSSWORD



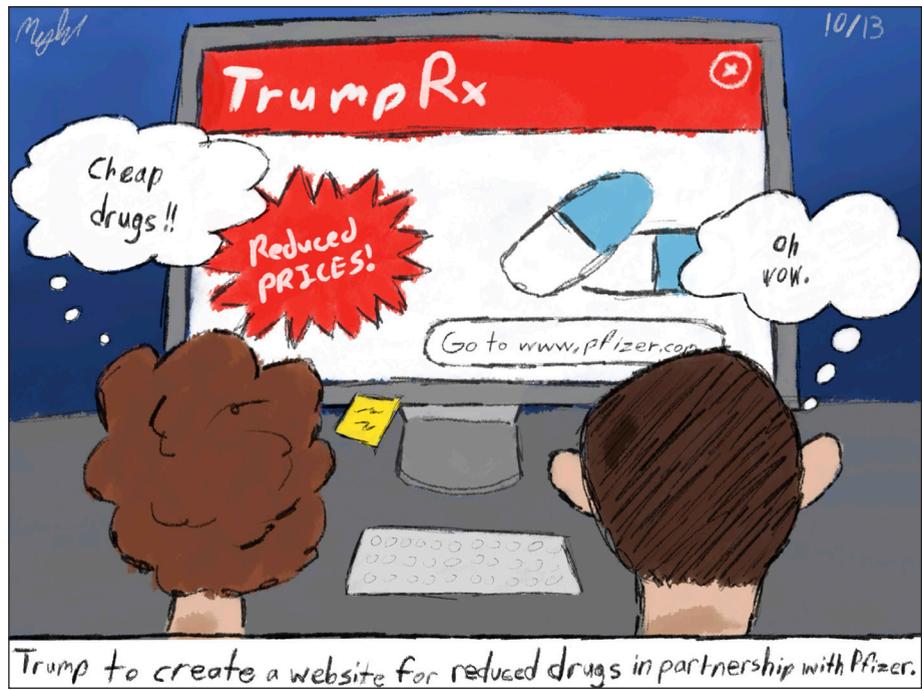
ACROSS

- 4. The official mascot of UTRGV
- 6. Name of the main boulevard leading to the UTRGV campus in Brownsville
- 8. The name of the university UTRGV Football will be playing against this Saturday
- 9. Name of the city known for UTRGV's main campus

DOWN

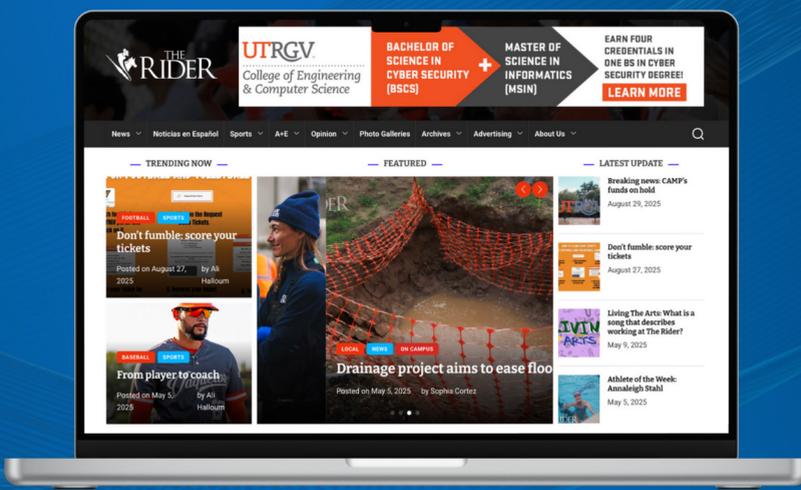
- 1. Name of the coffee shop located on the first floor of the library on the Edinburg campus
- 2. Name of the southernmost city in Texas, bordering Matamoros
- 3. Name of the UTRGV Student Media magazine
- 5. Name of the main academic study space building with 4 floors on the Edinburg campus
- 7. Last name of Robert and Janet _____, also UTRGV's football stadium name

EDITORIAL CARTOON



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WWW.UTRGVRIDER.COM



EL DEPARTAMENTO DE EDUCACIÓN ELIMINA \$350M EN FONDOS

SOFÍA CANTÚ SAUCEDA
THE RIDER

El Departamento de Educación de los Estados Unidos anunció en un comunicado de prensa el 10 de septiembre que oficialmente eliminará \$350 millones en fondos en el año fiscal 2025 de varias instituciones que atienden a minorías, MSI por sus siglas en inglés, según su sitio web.

La decisión surgió de una demanda el 11 de junio, el Estado de Tennessee y Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. El Departamento de Educación de los EE.UU. la cual reclama que las Instituciones al Servicio de los Hispanos (HSI, por sus siglas en inglés) tiene "criterios discriminatorios" y "no persigue el bienestar común".

El ED no solo terminará los fondos para las HSI pero también reprogramará los fondos de los siguientes programas: Fortalecimiento de las Instituciones que sirven a los nativos de Alaska y a los Nativos Hawaianos (Título III Parte A), Fortalecimiento de las Instituciones Predominantemente Negras (Título III Parte A), Fortalecimiento de las Instituciones que sirven a los Asiático-Americanos y a los Nativos Americanos de las Islas del Pacífico (Título III Parte A), Fortalecimiento de las Instituciones no tribales que sirven a los Nativos Americanos (Título III Parte A), Mejora de la ciencia y la ingeniería para las minorías (Título III Parte E) y Promoción de



FOTO CORTESÍA KRYSSEL SAAVEDRA

En la foto se muestra al equipo de PUENTES, profesores de distintas disciplinas de UTRGV y estudiantes, la primavera pasada frente al Hotel San Juan, ubicado en 125 W. 5th St. en San Juan. El hotel es parte de un tour de historia del Valle del Río Grande.

oportunidades de posgrado para Hispanoamericanos (Título V Parte B), según el comunicado.

Se mencionó en el comunicado que los fondos serán asignados a otros programas que no incluyan "cuotas raciales y étnicas discriminatorias y que promuevan las prioridades de la administración".

En UTRGV, PUENTES es un programa que recibe una beca de \$2.9 millones otorgada en el 2023 por el Departamento de Educación con base en el Título V de la Ley de Educación Superior del programa de Desarrollo de Instituciones al Servicio de los Hispanos (DHSI, por sus siglas en inglés).

Stephanie Alvarez, investigadora principal de PUENTES y profesora de estudios mexicanoamericanos, dijo que en el 2025 iban a comenzar su tercer año de cinco planeados con estos

fondos.

"Ahora no recibiremos nada de esa financiación en absoluto", Alvarez dijo. "Sin duda, tendrá un impacto inmediato en nosotros".

Dijo que los fondos eran un "pilar" para las actividades del programa.

"Nuestro personal se reducirá en dos tercios y la gente perderá su empleo en la universidad por esta razón, y ya no podremos ofrecer todos los servicios que tenemos", la investigadora dijo.

El objetivo de PUENTES es mejorar el éxito de los estudiantes en UTRGV, expandir los estudios étnicos y la participación familiar culturalmente relevante para ayudar a los padres de estudiantes universitarios, de acuerdo a su página web.

Alvarez dijo que esto es algo rápido que puede hacer un cambio, "pero se necesita dinero para todo esto, no pasan por sí solas".

"Nuestro personal se reducirá en dos tercios y la gente perderá su empleo en la universidad por esta razón."

--Stephanie Alvarez,
investigadora principal de PUENTES

"Estamos muy tristes porque creemos que este es un programa con un modelo único a través de todos los Estados Unidos", dijo.

Alvarez agregó que la eliminación de los fondos de HSI tendrá un impacto "perjudicial" por décadas.

Joy Esquiedo, vicerrectora de la Oficina de Integración Bilingüe, OBI por sus siglas en inglés, dijo que la oficina tiene como misión mejorar la estructura bilingüe de la universidad y ofrecer programación bilingüe.

OBI no está directamente conectada a fondos del HSI por lo cual no es directamente impactada.

Esquiedo dijo que sí le preocupa lo que podría pasar en otras universidades.

"Instituciones que tienen 30, 35% [de personas hispanas] que están usando estos fondos [...] que apoyan a nuestros estudiantes latinos en otras universidades; eso me preocupa", dijo.

VALLEY SPOTLIGHT

SOFÍA CANTÚ SAUCEDA
THE RIDER

En el 2003, ahora en sus 22 años de servicio, Caminata por Mujeres, Walk for Women por su nombre en inglés, es una organización de voluntariado en la Isla del Padre.

Walk for Women busca ayudar monetariamente a mujeres en el Valle del Río Grande que están pasando por cáncer de mama.

Lisa Graves, miembro de la mesa directiva de Walk for Women, dijo que la organización comenzó con un grupo pequeño de mujeres.

Graves dijo que fue gracias a un grupo de amigas locales que estaban ayudando a una de ellas con su tratamiento.

"Ella tenía cáncer y sus amigas de alguna manera se unieron para apoyarla [...] y a partir de ahí surgió", dijo.

Graves compartió que la organización recibe notas de agradecimiento de mujeres apoyadas que expresan el impacto positivo que han tenido y cómo las han ayudado con sus problemas.

"Es darse cuenta que estás ayudando a estas mujeres que están en estas situaciones y es genial ver la ayuda de la comunidad", dijo.

Hasta ahora, Walk for Women ha donado más de \$700,000 a mujeres del Valle y sus familias, Graves añadió.

La organización tuvo dos eventos para recaudación de fondos en octubre.

Una noche de casino se llevó a cabo el viernes en Louie's Backyard y una caminata a beneficio de sobrevivientes el domingo en el Centro

de Convenciones de la Isla del Padre.

En febrero, la organización tendrá un concurso de cocina como evento para recaudación de fondos llamado Exposición de Chile de la Isla del Padre (SPICE, por sus siglas en inglés) y un concurso de gumbo cajún.

"Esas son nuestras grandes recaudaciones", Graves dijo. "Y lo que queremos hacer es ayudar a mujeres que están luchando con cáncer de mama o si están en remisión, si tienen que ir a tratamientos".

Dijo que ayudan a mujeres que no puedan trabajar mientras pasan por este proceso; es "solo ayudarlas con sus pagos".

"Tal vez no solo se trate de gastos médicos, sino también sus recibos de electricidad, su hipoteca, su renta [...] el cuidado de los niños, cualquier cosa por el estilo", Graves dijo.

Uno de los objetivos de la organización es la prevención que "puede salvar tu vida exponencialmente".

"Llegar a las mujeres [...] asociarse con uno de los hospitales locales y realmente difundir eso para mamografías y exámenes de detección", Graves dijo.

Si alguna mujer del Valle requiere de ayuda, la página web tiene un formulario de solicitud que se envía directamente a la organización.

Graves dijo que quiere que las mujeres sepan que no están solas y la organización requiere de ayuda.

"Hay una gran red de apoyo ahí afuera y no estás sola en esta lucha", dijo. "[...] Solo enfatizamos que es local [...] cada centavo nos ayuda".

Para más información, visite spiwalkforwomen.org.



Shelly Hamsa, dueña de The Art Lounge Feature, fue la artista destacada en la noche de casino en apoyo a la concienciación sobre el cáncer de mama el 4 de octubre de 2024 en Louie's Backyard en la Isla del Padre.

FOTOS CORTESÍA WALK FOR WOMEN



Walk for Women organiza una caminata anual cada octubre como muestra de apoyo a todas las mujeres que están luchando contra el cáncer de mama. Se muestra una foto del evento en octubre de 2016.

A HISTORIC WIN IN TEACHING EXCELLENCE

EDUARDO ESCAMILLA
A&E EDITOR

Brendan Kinsella, a professor of piano at UTRGV, received the 2025 Collegiate Teaching Achievement by the Texas Music Teachers Association, which is awarded for outstanding success in teaching at the collegiate level.

Kinsella's win, awarded in June, marks the first time in the organization's history that an educator from South Texas has received the award.

The mission of the TMTA is to advance the value of music study and music making in society and to support the professionalism of music teachers, according to its website.

The prestigious award recognizes Kinsella's sustained excellence in teaching, professional development and service, including community benefit concerts for cancer fundraisers, hunger relief, homelessness and myriad other causes that have helped people across South Texas, according to the professor.

In an interview with The Rider, he recalled how he was judging a competition at the TMTA conference in Houston, when a colleague texted him the news of his award. He said he felt disbelief and immediate joy thereafter.

"I was just totally shocked," Kinsella said. "Once the realization set in, I thought it was just an enormous validation of everything that I've been trying to do here at UTRGV in the [Rio Grande] Valley for so long, which is just to really elevate the level of piano-music education and piano playing in general."

Kinsella's teaching philosophy centers on transforming even "total beginners to piano" into artists.

His students have gone on to graduate

teaching principle is to "always find a way to improve yourself, either as a person or as an artist."

Kinsella's professional development, a key

15 to 20 recitals per year all over the nation and internationally," he said.

Since receiving the recognition, Kinsella said he has seen an increase in requests

the professor is deeply involved in service.

He provides free lessons and judges competitions for the Magic Valley Music Teachers Association, a

about the community's enthusiasm for live music. He added he believes audiences here are very appreciative and fill up the seats at recitals.

The professor also innovated his piano pedagogy class by shifting the focus from just teaching how to instruct to teaching how to serve.

A major class project is a humanitarian outreach concert, where students select a cause they are passionate about—such as food security, playing in nursing homes or chamber music outreach in schools—to apply music in a service-learning context.

"It's just putting people in the community and showing them that they can really make a difference through music," Kinsella said.

He is currently juggling the challenge of learning roughly five hours of new music, with upcoming engagements including chamber-music recitals, a two-piano concert and playing Frédéric Chopin's again in January.

For aspiring young music educators, Kinsella offered a single piece of career advice, "Get your hands dirty," emphasizing the importance of constant effort and growth.

"Usually the thing that is going through my brain right before I walk out is, 'Why do I keep putting myself through this?'" the professor said, reflecting on the stress of performing.

However, he said he finds the reward in the performance itself.

"You put in all that work and, then, you get to have a performance," Kinsella said. "Some people see it as a test, but I, I've always seen it as a reward."



EDUARDO ESCAMILLA/THE RIDER PHOTO

Brendan Kinsella, a professor of piano at UTRGV, was recognized by the Texas Music Teachers Association with the 2025 Collegiate Teaching Achievement award. It is the first time the organization selected an educator from South Texas.

schools of their choice, found full-time jobs as music educators or are pursuing doctoral degrees.

He said his core

component of the TMTA award, involves his busy concert schedule.

"In addition to teaching here at UTRGV, on average, I play about

for master's classes, adjudication and concerts, a testament to the awards prestige.

Beyond his classroom and performance duties,

local subsidiary of the TMTA.

Kinsella said he champions the vibrant RGV music scene and said he feels fortunate

"INNOCENT" 10.13

POP FILM
QUIZ

@utrgvrider

SWINGING WITH CICALA



PHOTO COURTESY UTRGV ATHLETICS

Rodolphe Cicala is a finance junior and a new face on the UTRGV Men's Golf Team. Cicala transferred from Faulkner University, making his Division I debut with UTRGV.

DANIELA CHAPA-REYES
THE RIDER

Rodolphe Cicala is one of the new faces on the UTRGV Men's Golf Team for this fall season.

Coming from Birratz, France, and having transferred from Faulkner University, the finance junior said the change

from the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics to a Division I school is going well.

"[UTRGV] is completely different from where I was," Cicala said. "We have workouts two times a week every morning, practice every day, and it is way more

"We could've done better but the field was kind of good."

--Rodolphe Cicala,
junior golfer

professional and I really like that. It is a pleasure to be here."

During the Trinity Forest Invitational, Cicala tied for 73 after finishing with a total of 226 out of three rounds. He said the tournament was "not very good."

"I'm just going to practice harder, try to find key swings and key faults to come back to a better level," Cicala said.

During the Bayou City Collegiate Classic, Cicala found himself tied for 10th on the first day of the tournament with a total of two rounds: first round being an even

par 72 and second round 70, totaling 142.

He ended the tournament tied for 26th place with teammates junior Esteban Gonzales, a McAllen-native, and freshman Brock Porter. Cicala said it was a good performance as a team.

"We could've done better but the field was kind of good, so [we are] still not playing our best," he said. "We made a good position. I really trust the team, and I think we can do big things with the team."

When dealing with pressure during tournaments, he said he typically meditates to ease the nerves.

"I do some respiration drills that can ... calm the pressure and, then, I just try to not think too much about what is going on, try to be a little off that and just think about my game," Cicala said.

He said mental preparation is very important, more so now after the transition to D-1.

"I try to do as much as I can for the mental preparation because I think it's very important, especially going into D-1," Cicala said. "There is way more pressure and stuff."

He said, for tournaments, he does long and short game preparations.

"I go on the course, try to see [if] what I work on is working on the course and, then, I am ready for the tournament," Cicala said.

The next tournament and final fall tournament the team will face is the Monterrey International Invitational in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico. Cicala said the team can go for the win.

"That's going to be the team objective, win the tournament because we want to have a win during the fall," he said. "Individually, we will go for the win also to bounce back from the performance last week."

VAQUEROS CONTINUE PREPARATIONS AMID SCHEDULE ANNOUNCEMENT

ALI HALLOUM
THE RIDER

Following a Sept. 29 news release by the Athletics department announcing the upcoming schedule, UTRGV's Men's Basketball Team remains steadfast in its preparations for the 2025-26 season.

The Vaqueros' non-conference schedule includes games against some of the country's toughest opponents in Baylor University and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, both regular fixtures in March Madness the last five years.

The Vaqueros, with head coach Kahil Fennell, enter with a chance to make history, as they are seeking their first consecutive winning seasons since the Broncs did so in the 1988-89 and 89-90 seasons.

Fennell is entering his second season and is coming off of UTRGV's first winning season (16-15) since 2018-19 under the late Lew Hill (20-17).

The head coach said the games against top opponents provide a great "benchmark" to see how the team stacks up ahead of games against Southland Conference opponents.

"It's a great platform for our guys to play on national television," Fennell said. "There's so much that has to go into our preparation and our building process and our development before we get anywhere near Nov. 3 for Baylor."

One thing that has changed

this season compared to last is team depth. One issue that plagued the Vaqueros, particularly late in conference play, were injuries that forced them to put players out of position.

In both recruiting and the transfer portal, the Vaqueros added players who could both stretch the floor for their bigs and provide depth for the team, both in bench minutes and injuries.

Graduate forward Kwo Agwa, last season, missed time due to injury. Agwa said, this season, his priority, and by extension the team's, is to

"I feel like most teams are not about skills; it's about availability."

--Kwo Agwa,
graduate forward

stay available and to be "100% healthy."

"I feel like most teams are not about skills; it's about availability," Agwa said. "Whoever's available at the end of the day is going to win the championship, so I feel like that's what we've got to capitalize on, getting rehab every day, focusing on getting healthy."

Asked about the readiness of his roster to withstand the injury scenario, Fennell said he is "really excited" about this year's roster.



DRAYA RIOS/THE RIDER PHOTOS

Graduate guard Marvin McGhee III defends the ball against Luis Ramirez (left), junior guard, and Marshal Destremau, redshirt junior forward, during the UTRGV Men's Basketball Team practice Oct. 6 in the UTRGV Fieldhouse on the Edinburg campus.

"Obviously, we'd love to avoid that kind of a scenario again," he replied. "Now, compared to this time last year, we just have so many more available bodies and guys that are really, really competitive and ready to help us win."

Returning to the team is sophomore point guard Jaylen Washington, who said the team is entering the season "with a chip on our shoulder." Washington averaged 13.8 minutes a game as a freshman last season.

"We love to work," Washington said. "We're ready to win, and we're ready to show not just the [Rio Grande] Valley, but the whole world, and put the whole world on the show."

The Vaqueros will play a couple of closed-door scrimmages against Texas A&M University-Kingsville and Prairie View A&M



Head coach Kahil Fennell runs the men's basketball practice as the team prepares for the 2025-26 season Oct. 6 in the UTRGV Fieldhouse on the Edinburg campus.

University before the season opening. Its home opener will be against Southern Adventist University Nov. 17 in the UTRGV Fieldhouse on the Edinburg campus.

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK:

MIA PICAZO



PHOTO COURTESY UTRGV ATHLETICS

Mia Picazo is an exercise science sophomore from Santa Maria, a mid-distance runner for the UTRGV Women's Cross Country Team and a distance runner for the UTRGV Women's Track & Field. Picazo finished ninth in the 800-meter run with a personal record time of 2:14.79 at the 2025 Southland Conference Outdoor Track and Field Championships in Houston.

Q: What is a fun fact about yourself?

A: "I have two younger brothers and I'm the only girl."

Q: Who or what got you into Track & Field?

A: "I think I would say my mom. Yeah, because my mom, her in high school, she would run track and [cross-country]. And she ended up putting me in, like, a summer track thing when I was younger, and I just ended up sticking with it."

Q: Who has been your biggest inspiration or role model?

A: "I would say my mom. She's always been very hardworking for work, being there for us, doing many things at the same time and still being a good mother and friend even."

--Compiled by Valeria Tokun Haga

READ THE FULL STORY ON OUR WEBSITE

CANDIDATES PITCH VISIONS FOR EDINBURG

ETHAN MALDONADO
THE RIDER

Economic development, infrastructure funding and public safety took center stage Thursday as three of the four candidates running for Edinburg mayor participated in a forum hosted by the Edinburg Chamber of Commerce at the DHR Conference Center at Renaissance.

Former mayor Richard Molina, former city attorney Omar Ochoa and former city councilmember Johnny Garcia spoke about their priorities for the city's future. Political newcomer Jonathan Salinas did not attend.

"I will not be doing any more candidate forums or debates for the rest of the campaign," Salinas wrote in an Oct. 5 Substack post.

Thursday's event came more than a week after the Futuro RGV forum, where Ochoa, Garcia and Salinas debated issues including housing, transparency and taxes. Molina, who missed it due to a prior commitment, appeared on stage for the first time this election cycle.

Molina, pointing to economic development, said the city's existing health-care sector is the foundation for future growth.

"We've already invested millions into the medical school and health systems here," he said. "That's our strength; there's no reason to look elsewhere."

Ochoa agreed on the importance of health care but said the city should expand its economic base to create more opportunities for younger residents.

"The average age in Edinburg is 29," he said. "We have a workforce that's ready to go. The challenge is training them up."

Garcia said the city's leadership will play a crucial role in attracting investment. Citing his experience on the Rio Grande Valley Development Council, he said, "We need the right leadership in place to bring investors to our city."

Infrastructure funding was also discussed, with candidates outlining different strategies to ease the burden on taxpayers. Ochoa said the city should rely more on development

Early voting begins Oct. 20 and will end on Oct. 31. Election Day is Nov. 4.

agreements and grants to support major projects.

"We shouldn't be doing everything on the backs of taxpayers," he said.

Garcia said he would prioritize growing revenue through operations at the landfill and airport, while Molina pointed to his administration's efforts to expand the city's grants department.

"We laid the foundation," Molina said. "Now it's about building on that."

On public safety, all three candidates expressed support for strengthening local police and fire departments. Garcia emphasized wages and



DRAYA RIOS/THE RIDER PHOTOS



Omar Ochoa, former Edinburg city attorney and mayoral candidate.



Richard Molina, former mayor and Edinburg mayoral candidate.



Johnny Garcia, former city councilmember and mayoral candidate

resources, calling first responders "the backbone of community safety."

Molina pointed to endorsements from public-safety unions, saying, "It's not about talking; it's about doing."

Ochoa said improving response times and expanding technology can make the city "safer and smarter at the same time."

In closing statements, Garcia emphasized teamwork and accessibility, Molina focused on his record and community involvement, and Ochoa urged voters to move the city forward with "new ways of doing things."

Early voting begins Oct. 20 and will end on Oct. 31. Election Day is Nov. 4.

CITY PARKS MASTER PLAN ON THE WAY

HUGO SEPÚLVEDA
THE RIDER

Brownsville is ready to begin a master plan which aims to grow the city's park system for the next 10 years, according to leadership.

On Tuesday, the Parks and Recreation department presented a draft of the Parks, Health and Recreation Master Plan to the Brownsville City Commission based on input from public meetings the department hosted.

A final master plan draft will be presented to the city commission for its adoption in January.

Sean De Palma, director of Brownsville City Parks and Recreation department, said the last Parks and Recreation Master Plan was about 10 years old and city leadership felt it was a "great time" to renew it.

"We expanded to be Parks, Health and Recreation because the City of Brownsville is really focused on health intertwined with the quality of life of all its citizens," De Palma said.

He said the planning has been "tremendous" with a great turn out by the citizens' surveys input.

"We're excited about it and we know that this master plan is going to have a lot of good information that we can build off of," De Palma said.

According to the director, all Brownsville parks have different characteristics.

"Some are very older parks and some are modern parks, but ... this master plan is going to show us what the deficiency is between our parks,

so we can really focus on bringing all of our parks to a very high level," De Palma said.

He added based on residents' input, if there are issues in the city's park system, it will be highlighted in the master plan.

De Palma said with the master plan all city parks will have opportunities to grow.

"I'm happy to be part of a commission that is working on the progress and the future of its parks."

--Linda Macias, Brownsville Commissioner District 2

"At [Charles Martin] Cabler Park, we're putting a brand new playground apparatus there," he said. "We're going to be adding a splash pad and we're also putting an outdoor fitness court. ... So, in the next couple of months that park will have these new amenities."

The director said once the plan gets approved by the city commission, the department will start to apply it.

"It's very data-driven, so we're going to be able to focus on those data points," De Palma said. "We're excited about it because that gives us an opportunity to really deliver the service that the citizens are asking for."

Linda Macias, Brownsville Commissioner District 2, said she is

"very excited" about the master plan.

"I'm happy to be part of a commission that is working on the progress and the future of its parks," Macias said.

She said parks are "essentially very important" because they target multiple aspects such as mental and physical health.

Macias added having a proper documented plan would allow them to go for federal or state grants for the project funding.

The commissioner said she represents 45,000 residents in her district, and it has four parks.

"District 2 does not have enough parks compared to its ratio of population and land," Macias said.

She said she will "absolutely" look forward to working with the Park and Recreation department and its master plan.

"So, not only are we working on improvements of [Charles Martin] Cabler Park, we are also adding a 20- to 24-acre park development; this is off

Robinhood and Old Port Isabel Road," Macias said.

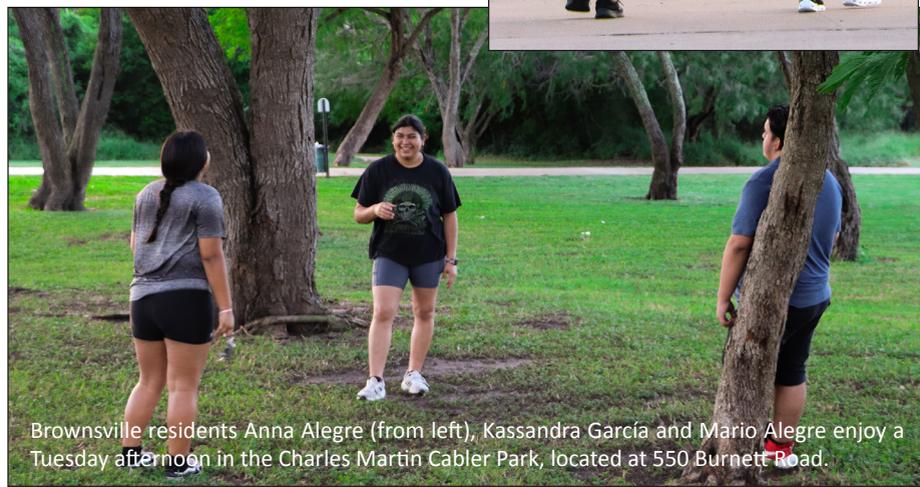
She added the city bought the land to "specifically" attack two issues: drainage and lack of parks amenities in the area.

"We do have some concepts of some parks plans," Macias said. "Just depending on the fundings, we will be adding certain amenities to that area, so this is a great deal."



VALERIA TOKUN HAGA/THE RIDER PHOTOS

Brownsville residents Mirna Villanueva (left) and María Ramírez walk Tuesday afternoon in the Charles Martin Cabler Park, located at 550 Burnett Road.



Brownsville residents Anna Alegre (from left), Cassandra García and Mario Alegre enjoy a Tuesday afternoon in the Charles Martin Cabler Park, located at 550 Burnett Road.