

THE RIDER

THE STUDENT VOICE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS RIO GRANDE VALLEY

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SGA PROVIDES UPDATES FOR SPRING SEMESTER

SOPHIA CORTEZ
THE RIDER

The Student Government Association gave updates about previous proposals and how they will be implemented throughout the spring semester, along with a new opportunity to provide a voice for the student body.

Juan Espinoza, SGA president, told The Rider on Jan. 26 the association came together to discuss and recap what has happened in prior semesters.

"We are gonna have to start having Saturday meetings again," Espinoza said. "This upcoming Friday at 2:30 p.m., it rotates every other week at the same times on Friday."

He added the association is working with both senators At-Large and college senators to obtain a student appointed to the Edinburg Downtown district Steering Committee.

"A committee within the Edinburg City Council that kind of oversees a particular part of the city, the student government member isn't appointed as a voting party, but they are appointed as sort of voice and representation for the students to give their input on different developments within the downtown district," the SGA president said.

On Wednesday, Matteo Garza, a senator for the College of Liberal Arts, was appointed as the student representative for the city committee, according to an SGA Facebook post.

Espinoza said the position was a major movement because of their main purpose of extending the government reach, not only in the university but the local community as well.

Alexis Uscanga, senator At-Large for Edinburg, mentioned the student government is working in its entirety to get ready for election as well as fixing internal working of SGA.

Uscanga said a lot of the proposals have to do with the internal functions of the association to make it more transparent.

He said SGA is working on introducing a bill to make its website more accessible.

"Other ones, such as [the University of Texas at] Austin, [have] a very interactive website that lets you see their student body senate," Uscanga said. "... I want to bring that to UTRGV."

Espinoza added SGA will participate in several on-campus events, such as the Vaquero Boots and BBQ at 6 p.m. Feb. 12 at the Quad on the Edinburg campus.



JOSE RODRIGUEZ/THE RIDER PHOTOS

Subhash Chauhan, director of the South Texas Center of Excellence in Cancer Research at the UTRGV School of Medicine and an immunology and microbiology professor, and Tusha Sharma, a member of the South Texas Center of Excellence in Cancer Research at the UTRGV School of Medicine and a postdoctoral fellow, transfer chemical additions using Pasteur pipets Wednesday in the UTRGV Biomedical Research Building in McAllen.

UNIVERSITY TEAM AIMS TO PREVENT CERVICAL CANCER

SOFIA CANTÚ SAUCEDA
SPANISH EDITOR

Two researchers at UTRGV are turning concern into action by leading a research network focused on cervical cancer awareness, one of the most prevalent but preventable cancers in the Rio Grande Valley.

The statistics for women in the Valley diagnosed with cervical cancer are 55% higher than the national average, according to an article in the National Institute of Health.

According to the World Health Organization, one in 78 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer in their lifetime.

A year and a half ago, six researchers in collaboration with Good Days, a national nonprofit organization that facilitates access to lifesaving and life-extending treatments, started the Cervical Cancer Prevention Action Network.

Subhash Chauhan, director of the

South Texas Center of Excellence in Cancer Research at the UTRGV School of Medicine and an immunology and microbiology professor, said their research started in June 2019.

"Our group moved here from Tennessee because we realized there are a lot of cancer health disparities that exist here in the region," Chauhan said.

He said the group wants to understand why cervical cancer is so prevalent in the Valley.

According to WHO, the best ways to prevent cervical cancer are:

- HPV vaccinations for girls 9 to 14 years old to prevent infections and other HPV-related cancers.
- Cervical screenings from the age of 30 can help detect cervical precancer and paired with treatment it can prevent progression.
- At any age, detection of symptoms followed by prompt treatment.

The UT Health RGV Student Health

provides pap smears for cervical cancer detection and HPV testing for students on both campuses.

Tusha Sharma, a member of the South Texas Center of Excellence in Cancer Research at the UTRGV School of Medicine and a postdoctoral fellow, said the research is focused on multiple cancers and is conducted with the community in mind.

"Our team is actually focusing on multiple aspects where this deprived population or the area of the country will get benefits and more awareness for the population," Sharma said.

See **CANCER**, Page 2



Tusha Sharma, a postdoctoral fellow, demonstrates the purpose of the Illumina MiSeq, a benchtop sequencer designed for small genome sequencing.

UTRGV RESEARCH CONVERTS MOVEMENT INTO ENERGY

ETHAN MALDONADO
THE RIDER

Researchers at UTRGV are developing a flexible device that converts everyday motion into electrical energy, a project aimed at creating sustainable, self-powered technologies for future use.

The research centers on piezoelectric nanogenerators, thin, flexible materials that produce electricity when pressed, bent or vibrated, with potential applications ranging from wearable sensors to smart infrastructure. The study was published Nov. 24, 2024, in ACS Applied Engineering Materials.

"Whenever you give force or stress to piezoelectric material, it produces electricity," said Swati Mohan, a lecturer for the School of Integrative Biological and Chemical Sciences.

Mohan said the project is changing mechanical energy to electrical energy,

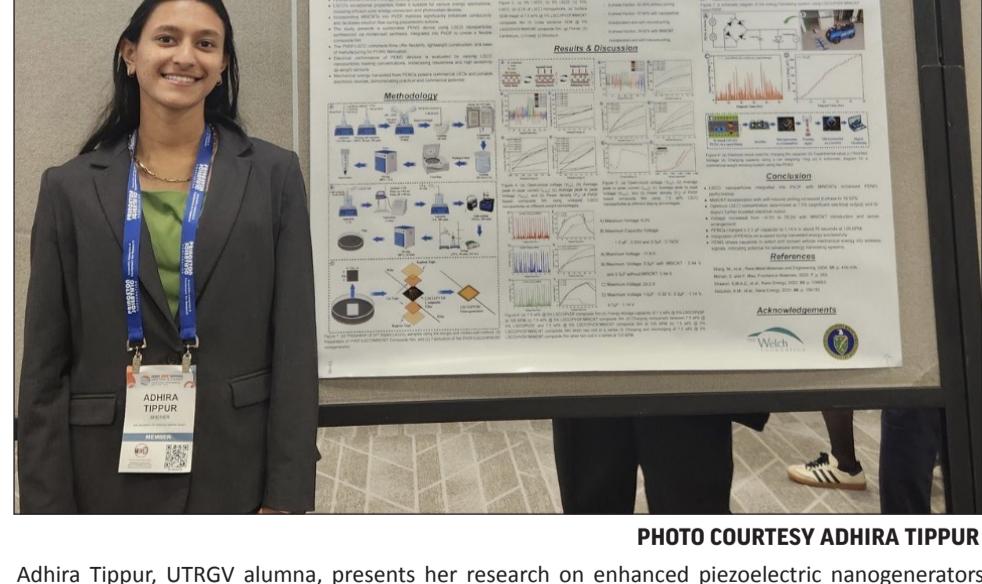
which can be harvested for future use.

She added the project explores ways to capture energy already generated through everyday activity, such as footsteps, vibrations or vehicles traveling over roads, rather than relying solely on batteries or centralized power sources.

"We discussed things like coating roads or tiles with this material, so when cars pass over, mechanical energy is converted and stored," Mohan said. "That's energy harvesting."

UTRGV alumna Adhira Tippur contributed to the project as an undergraduate researcher, assisting with experimental design, material preparation, data analysis and visualization.

See **RESEARCH**, Page 2



Adhira Tippur, UTRGV alumna, presents her research on enhanced piezoelectric nanogenerators during the 2024 Materials Research Society Spring Meeting & Exhibit, in Seattle, Washington.

LOCAL:

More park activities added to Brownsville

Page 3

OPINION:

Some things are health; some things are not

Page 4

A&E:

'And that's all it should be'

Page 6

SPORTS:

Ready for the 2026 season

Page 7

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

Omega Delta Phi Tabling

The **Omega Delta Phi** will host a tabling event from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and from the same time until Friday in the Student Union commons area on the Edinburg campus.

Sundaes on Mondays

The **Student Union** will host Sundaes on Mondays from noon to 1 p.m. on the Edinburg campus. Attendees can enjoy **free ice cream**.

Geology Club General Meeting

The **Geology Club** will meet from 2 to 3:30 p.m. in Science Building Room 1.604 on the Edinburg campus.

Tuesday

Welcome Back Student Media

Student Media will host a tabling event from 1 to 3 p.m. on the Student Union veranda on the Brownsville campus.

SWE General Meeting

The **Society of Women Engineers** will meet from 3:45 to 5 p.m. in Student Academic Center Room 1.101 on the Edinburg campus.

SHPE General Meeting

The **Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers** will meet from 5 to 6 p.m. in Engineering Building Room 1.300 on the Edinburg campus.

Wednesday

ENACTUS General Meeting

ENACTUS will meet from 2 to 3 p.m. in Robert C. Vackar College of Business & Entrepreneurship Room 119 on the Edinburg campus. **Free food** will be provided.

Union Unplugged

The **Student Union** will host Union Unplugged from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the veranda on the Brownsville campus and at the same time Thursday on the east patio on the Edinburg campus.



POLICE REPORTS

The following are among the incidents reported to University Police between Jan. 20 and 28

Jan. 20

9:40 a.m.: Officers responded after an employee reported a student was possibly smoking marijuana in the men's locker room in the University Recreation on the Edinburg campus. When officers arrived, they found the student had already left the location. The employees could not provide any additional details at the time, but camera footage and the check-in database will be reviewed.

1:56 p.m.: Officers were dispatched regarding a collision involving a vehicle and a student on a scooter in Lot E-36 on the Edinburg campus. Emergency

Medical Services arrived on the scene and transported the student, who was riding the scooter, to the hospital.

Jan. 21

1:43 p.m.: An employee handed a knife to an officer she found on the second floor in the University Library on the Edinburg campus. The officer took custody of the knife and submitted it for safekeeping.

3:35 p.m.: An officer contacted a student who attempted to pay a student loan with counterfeit bills in the Student Services Building on the Edinburg campus. The bills were recovered and submitted as evidence. The case is under investigation.

Jan. 22

7:07 a.m.: An officer

The alumna said potential applications include wearable devices, smart infrastructure and motion-detecting sensors.

"The whole goal is to eventually use this kind of technology in places like wearable devices, roads and smart sensors, essentially any place where energy can be captured from motion that's already happening," Tippur said.

She said she was involved throughout the entirety of the research.

"I worked from the beginning to the end of the project, from experimental design and visualization to analyzing results and helping with the manuscript," Tippur said.

Mohan said undergraduate researchers played a central

role in advancing the work, noting Tippur's involvement.

"[Tippur] learned how to make the materials, characterize them and run experiments," she said. "At the undergraduate level, she did very well and was involved in experiments, writing and analysis."

Interdisciplinary Engineering and Academic Building Room 2.209 on the Edinburg campus.

Black History Month

The **Center for Student Involvement** will host an event to celebrate Black History Month from 1 to 2:30 p.m. in the University Center on the Edinburg campus.

Friday

The Finance Hub General Meeting

The **Finance Hub** will meet from noon to 1 p.m. in the Robert C. Vackar College of Business & Entrepreneurship Building on the Edinburg campus. **Free food** will be provided.

Bible Study

The **Baptist Student Ministry Brownsville** will host a Bible study from 2:45 to 3:45 p.m. on the Student Union lawn on the Brownsville campus.

--Compiled by Mariah Escobar

booking.

11:34 a.m.: An employee reported a water leak in Liberal Arts Building South Room 160C on the Edinburg campus. A work order was submitted, and the cooling plant staff were informed.

Jan. 28

1:41 a.m.: An officer conducted a traffic stop on a vehicle for a traffic violation at 1600 W. Schunior Road. During the stop and investigation, the officer noticed the driver showed signs of impairment. After further investigation, it was determined the driver was intoxicated and was subsequently arrested on a charge of driving while intoxicated and resisting arrest, search or transport. The driver was transported to the Edinburg Municipal Jail.

--Compiled by Narda Serna

While the technology is still in development, Mohan said the project still requires improvement of efficiency and output.

"The next step is commercialization, but before that we need to enhance the power and voltage," she said.

SAN JOSE JEWELERS
THE UNIVERSITY COLLECTION

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"They are not aware; those who are not having access to the education or medical setup or health system, are getting more affected," she said.

Chauhan added women should have regular screenings and HPV vaccination, commonly known as Gardasil.

"We are utilizing social-health workers, and we are creating an educational module to provide awareness to the society," he said.

Chauhan encouraged students to take the HPV vaccination and tell others they know to do the same thing.

"It's a good thing to do, and they need to just educate their family members to go for a regular pap smear and HPV testing," he said. "We are trying to communicate this message through the students to their family, so that they will get more education and knowledge about this disease and its prevention measures."

She added it is also a way of involving medical undergraduate and graduate students.

Aldo Gonzalez, a biochemistry and microbiology graduate student and member of the research team, said he joined because of the results it could bring to the community.

"Every lab is different but, for my lab, we do research that, hopefully, will help in the near future with cancer research," Gonzalez said.

He added that after joining the research he saw how innovative the Valley is.

"I wasn't expecting it," Gonzalez said. "But after seeing how many people are doing research, it gave me a new way of seeing the research field here."

Sharma said most students do not have misconceptions about cervical cancer, but there is a lack of awareness which makes

A REFRESHED PARK EXPERIENCE CITY DEPARTMENT BRINGS NEW PROGRAMS

HUGO SEPÚLVEDA

THE RIDER

Brownsville Parks and Recreation department provides an update about upcoming programs and events it will have for the spring and speaks about projects looking forward.

Sean De Palma, director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Brownsville, said the department added new programs to the parks for the new year.

"We've added [programs] to the Senior Center, to the Downtown [Recreation] Center, Gonzalez Park Community Center and Oliveira Park Community Center, which are Pilates, Zumba [and] boot camp," De Palma said.

He added the department kept a lot of other programming, such as the after-school programs, senior programs and other arts and crafts programs.

"We've also added a gardening with birdie program recently at the Gonzalez Park garden area, which is very popular," the director said.

"And that program is about gardening and learning how to really become productive as a gardener in your own realm."

De Palma said the department is "excited" for all the programs added, with a total of 100 activities going throughout the year, increasing special events by 30% from 2025.

As previously published on The Rider Sept. 29, the Brownsville Parks and Recreation department launched a public free Wi-Fi initiative at Southern Pacific Linear and Dean Porter parks for the use of city residents.

De Palma said, this year, more parks will become online with public free Wi-Fi as his department is working on the next phase of that project, along the city's Information Technology department.

The updates are part of the Park, Health and Recreation Master Plan. After a review, the final draft will be presented to the City Commission for a vote next month, according to the director.

"Then, once we have that, we can publish it digitally," he said. "People can go and read through it and highlight things."

De Palma mentioned the creation of the Parks and Recreation guide, which captures the different programs Brownsville has to offer. It is updated every four months.

"Like on [Saturday], we have Black History Month; on March 21, we have Lunada at Linear Park," he said. "... So in the park guide, it will have that. They will have, you know, different special events and activities that are going on for the first four months of the year."

Alfredo Garza, a Brownsville resident and mathematics sophomore at UTRGV, said he visits a city park at least once a month with family and sometimes with friends. Garza said his experience has been "pretty good."

Daniel Reyna, an exercise science freshman, said he frequents parks three times a week to play basketball or run.



MARIAJOSE GARZA/THE RIDER PHOTOS

Brownsville residents enjoy a playground Wednesday at Dean Porter Park.



Brownsville Parks and Recreation will host the Lunada Artisan Market on March 21 at Linear Park, located at East Sixth Street and East Ringgold Street.

COUNTRY SINGER RETURNS TO THE UNION



THE RIDER FILE PHOTOS

The Drifters perform country covers on Feb. 5, 2025, on the Student Union veranda on the Brownsville campus. The concert was part of the Union Unplugged series.



Eros Garcia sings his single "Better Off Alone" Feb. 5, 2025, on the Student Union veranda on the Brownsville campus.

MARIAH ESCOBAR
THE RIDER

Union Unplugged will feature local country artist Eros Garcia from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the veranda on the Brownsville campus and at the same time Thursday on the east patio on the Edinburg campus.

"Every month at the Union, we do an event called Union Unplugged, which is where we bring a local musician or artist for them to perform an acoustic session," said Anahi Esquivel, program coordinator for the Student Union.

Esquivel said the main goal of the event is to showcase local talent, promote and engage students about upcoming events to build community.

She said the main purpose of the series is for students to have the opportunity to see all the talent the Rio Grande Valley has to offer.

Esquivel said the event will showcase Garcia and promote Vaqueros Boots & BBQ which will take place at 6 p.m. Feb. 12 at the Quad on the Edinburg campus.

"We really want to promote our Vaqueros Boots & BBQ event because ... it's one of the Union's signature events, and it is also the university's 10-year anniversary," she said. "So, we're making it even a little bigger this time around."

The program coordinator added the performance

is different from others because Garcia, who previously performed at Union Unplugged last February, will also headline Vaqueros Boots & BBQ.

"The students really enjoyed his set," she said. "For this year, we decided to make him the headliner of the event, so he's bringing the whole band."

Esquivel said Garcia often interacts with the students and has asked for feedback to create a set list for the day of the big performance, singing original songs as well as classics.

She added she is excited to see how students react to Garcia's performance with his band joining him.

Silvino Gonzalez, a multidisciplinary studies senior and member of the events team for the Student Union, said students will be able to enjoy live music, food and iced coffee during the event. Gonzalez said it is nice to work and hear live music at the same time.

"The goal of the event is to get students to come first of all and enjoy the music and get them excited for [Vaqueros] Boots & BBQ," he said.

Gonzalez added students can also connect with others and build community around campus.

"It's a really good way to bring people together," he said. "There's been countless times where friendships are formed in our events."

For more information on upcoming events, visit the Student Union social media or V Link.

VOICE, SWALLOWING CLINIC OPEN FOR SPRING

EMMA CASTILLO
THE RIDER

The UTRGV Speech and Hearing Center, located in Health Affairs Building West Room 1.206 on the Edinburg campus, is expanding its services this spring with the launch of a Voice and Swallowing Specialty Clinic, aimed at addressing voice and swallowing disorders.

The clinic, led by Clinical Assistant Professor Julian Garcia, offers specialized evaluations and treatment for issues such as chronic hoarseness, vocal fatigue, throat tightness and difficulty swallowing. Garcia is a board-certified specialist in swallowing disorders and has advanced training in voice evaluation through previous work with UTRGV's ear, nose and throat specialists.

"One thing I felt that we were lacking was treating voice and swallowing disorders," he said. "[The Speech and Hearing Center] serves any kind of issue that a student might be having in the realm of speech pathology or communication. But the specialization in the [voice and swallowing] areas is kind of limited, so people are usually looking for answers and don't have anyone to provide for them."

According to Ruth Crutchfield, chair of the Communication Sciences and Disorders program, the new specialty clinic shows effort to broaden the center's reach.

"We've been moving to create new programs, so we can provide services to different groups

of people," Crutchfield said. "This clinic was the creation of Mr. Garcia. He has a unique interest in the function of the voice, and he wanted to provide an opportunity for individuals who needed help."

Both researchers said one of the clinic's key features is instrumental and endoscopic evaluation, a procedure that allows clinicians to visualize the vocal folds and throat using a small camera passed through the nose. The evaluation helps identify issues such as inflammation, vocal fold weakness, nodules or movement asymmetries that may not be detectable through external examination alone.

"[People come in] because they notice repeated voice loss or hoarseness," Crutchfield said. "That means something might be happening, so that's when you should look into finding out."

Garcia said many cases involve irritation caused by acid reflux, which can inflame delicate throat tissues and lead to chronic symptoms. In those cases, treatment often focuses on education, vocal hygiene and dietary changes, though some patients may be referred to a specialist for further medical evaluation.

The clinic currently focuses on serving UTRGV faculty and staff, particularly those who rely heavily on their voices. Students are also welcome to seek services. Evaluations are offered for a reduced fee as the center operates as a functional clinic and does not accept insurance.

In addition to patient care, the clinic provides valuable learning opportunities for graduate



PHOTO COURTESY JULIAN GARCIA
Clinical Assistant Professor Julian Garcia performs a laryngoscopy on communication sciences and disorders graduate student Vanessa Garcia during a student Voice & Swallowing Lab during the Spring 2025 semester in the UTRGV Speech and Hearing Center, located in Health Affairs Building West Room 1.206 on the Edinburg campus.

students in the speech-language pathology program. Students observe evaluations, assist with assessments and gain exposure to the medical side of the profession.

Garcia said he hopes to eventually expand the clinic's services to the wider Rio Grande Valley community, though capacity is currently limited by staffing and scheduling

constraints.

"[The clinic] is something we want to build slowly, but eventually be able to offer it to the community," he said. "We're trying to spread awareness and provide a service that's not common here."

Those interested in scheduling an evaluation can contact Garcia at julian.garcia04@utrgv.edu.

COLUMN OF THE WEEK

YOUR DEFINITION OF BOUNDARIES IS JUST CONTROL



KAYLA MARTINEZ
EDITORIAL CARTOONIST

In the digital age, a lot of terms designed for therapisized settings between a mental health professional and their client have been used haphazardly in casual conversation. Someone who wants things neat is totally being "OCD" about their space,

and someone who suddenly wants to dye their hair is having "intrusive thoughts."

While these are all misused in day-to-day speech and tend to perpetuate misinformation (No, intrusive is not synonymous with impulsive). Nothing stands out to me more than the misuse of the term "boundaries." I hear it thrown around to and fro, particularly in conversations about monogamous relationships.

In a clinical setting, "boundaries" is a psychological term defined as an action you, the individual, will take to protect your mental or emotional well-being, or your physical safety, according to the L.A Concierge Psychologist website. For example, a

boundary one might have is that in the presence of inebriated adults, they will remove themselves from the situation. The reasoning is that they don't like being around drunk people. Notice how the action of a boundary extends to actions one takes for themselves; you would not tell others not to drink because you don't like it.

What's not a healthy "boundary" is making your partner unfollow everyone of the opposite sex on Instagram. If you told your grandpa about this, he'd look at you like you're crazy. If you told your mom about this, she'd shake her head and go, "Ay, no." But this is something I've observed countless times.

What differentiates this

from a real boundary is that this is not an action you are taking; it's an action you are forcing another person to take. Because if they were to not do it, you would punish this partner by admonishing them or terminating the relationship. Ask yourself then, what safety net is cast by this action?

I don't think everyone who does this or something similar is some master manipulator who's out to harm the people they love. There's much more nuance to the world of interpersonal relationships. I would just like honesty and transparency to be people's first thought instead of masking what is controlling behavior as something it is not.

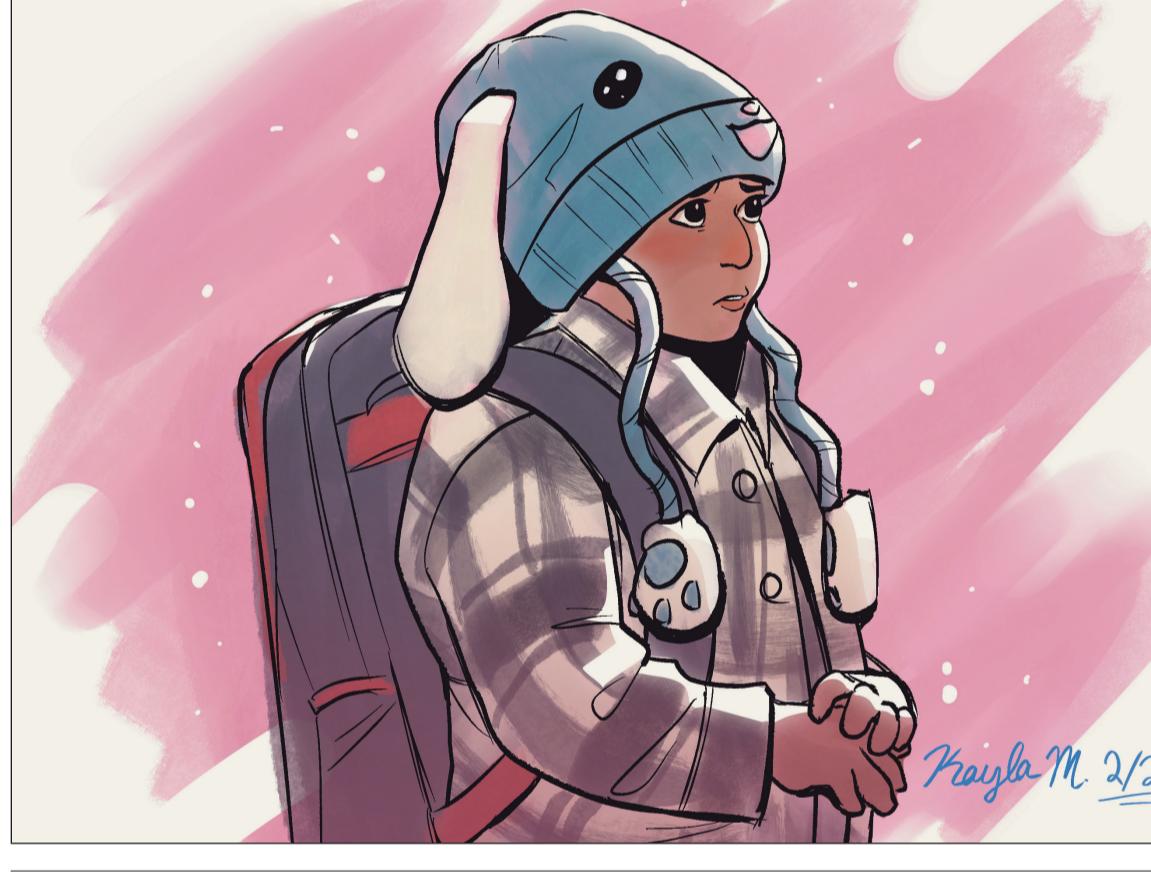
Many therapists and mental health professionals can teach

their clients to reflect inward and lead them to conclusions they must realize about themselves, according to The Jed Foundation. To misappropriate these hyperspecific terms with the intention to control is a disservice to the work they do, and most of all, a disservice to yourself in the pursuit of emotional maturity. You might find that when your partner or a friend has had enough, their own boundaries will lead them to removing themselves from your life. And who wants that?

"I would just like honesty and transparency."

EDITORIAL CARTOON

¿Y TÚ, SOBRINO?



Kayla M. 2/2

SUDOKU

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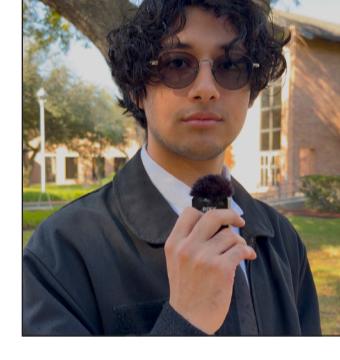
VAQUERO VOICE

IF YOU COULD ADD A CLASS THAT DOES NOT EXIST, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

--Compiled and photos by Jocelyn Garcia Serna



Esmer Escalon
integrated health science
junior
"Book interpretations and, every week, we will read a book and interpret what the book means or what [it] is trying to tell."



Israel Pérez
mechanical engineering
junior

"If I were to add a class it will probably be a rock climbing class."



Juaquin Hinojos
visual communication
design sophomore

"The classes that I will add will be a motor sports class, so we can further improve ourselves in racing. And I think it will be fun to drive race cars."



Ruby González
computer science senior

"I will add a wellness and relaxation course so that we can take naps and learn how to cope with our stress as students."

VALLEY SPOTLIGHT

VG Equestrian Center: Experiencia y tradición

SOFÍA CANTÚ SAUCEDA
SPANISH EDITOR

Dos hermanas del Valle del Río Grande están convirtiendo su amor por los caballos en un sueño compartido, al abrir un centro ecuestre donde buscan enseñar disciplina, confianza y comunidad.

Laura y Alexis Escobedo son las dos instructoras y co-fundadoras de VG Equestrian Center, ubicado en 5413 FM 1732 en Brownsville, que se especializa en clases personales para principiantes o profesionales y escaramuzas.

Alexis Escobedo dijo que no solo son clases de montar sino también de cuidado a los caballos.

"Aprenderán el manejo del caballo, a cuidarlo, darle de comer, bañarlo, cómo tratarlo cuando está enfermo, todo eso", dijo. "Y sobre todo, la conexión con el caballo, eso es lo más importante".



Mariajose Garza/ FOTOS RIDER

Se muestra uno de los caballos que es parte de VG Equestrian Center el 28 de enero, ubicado en 5413 FM 1732 en Brownsville.

Las dos hermanas dijeron que desde pequeñas estaban rodeadas de caballos debido a que sus padres eran charros.

Laura Escobedo agregó que es una actividad que les

gusta mucho a las dos y que era el deporte de la familia.

"Alexis tenía experiencia con los niños", dijo. "Tiene muy buenas ideas, y pensé que sería algo que podría traer nuestros dones y talentos a este proyecto".

Las clases ecuestres, entrenamientos de escaramuzas y equipo de equitación se llevan a cabo en su lienzo charro, Villa de Guadalupe.

Alexis Escobedo dijo que ella empezó a buscar ideas antes de abrir el centro e hizo una propuesta de negocio para presentarla a su hermana.

"No era nada lujoso", dijo. "Pero se lo compartí y le dije, 'Estas son mis ideas. Esto es lo que podemos cobrar. Esto es lo de las redes sociales.' Y así es como comenzó".

Las dos dijeron que, a pesar de que las clases todavía no comenzaban, estaban teniendo muy buenas respuestas al proyecto. Laura Escobedo agregó que sus redes sociales están "explotando".

"Estamos tratando de tomarlo día a día y estamos muy agradecidas", Alexis Escobedo dijo.

Dijo que VG era el único centro que tenía clases de equitación y el tipo de arena en el Valle y eso las distingue de otros.

"También, somos un negocio familiar", Alexis Escobedo dijo. "Entonces, no rentamos a nadie. No dependemos en caballos de nadie más ni en el tiempo de alguien más".

Agregó que también tienen muchos años de experiencia con su equipo de escaramuzas y que esto les brindaba a las dos la experiencia para dar clases en el centro.

Para el futuro de VG, las dos comentaron que buscan hacer un campamento para niños y adultos. Aunque no hay fechas definidas, agregaron que buscan involucrar a toda la comunidad y que las personas que visiten su centro sientan paz.

"Solo quiero que se sientan felices de estar aquí y que sea un tipo de terapia para ellos", Alexis Escobedo dijo.

Laura Escobedo dijo que querían ser un lugar seguro para sus clientes.

"Quiero que sientan que pertenecen aquí", dijo. "Es algo especial y es donde todos los jinetes tienen su lugar".



Laura y Alexis Escobedo, instructoras y co-fundadoras de VG Equestrian Center, el único equipo de escaramuza conformado completamente por mujeres en el Valle del Río Grande, el 28 de enero en 5413 FM 1732 en Brownsville.



VG Equestrian Center ofrece clases de equitación a personas mayores de 5 años en sus instalaciones, ubicadas en 5413 FM 1732 en Brownsville.

CIFRAS EN AUMENTO ALTAS TASAS DE CÁNCER CERVICAL ALERTAN A UTRGV

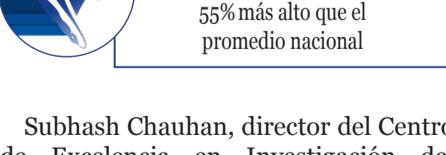
SOFÍA CANTÚ SAUCEDA
SPANISH EDITOR

Dos investigadores de UTRGV están convirtiendo preocupación en acción al liderar una red de investigación centrada en la concienciación sobre el cáncer cervical, uno de los tipos de cáncer más frecuentes pero prevenibles en el Valle de Río Grande.

Las estadísticas de mujeres en el Valle diagnosticadas con cáncer cervical son 55% más altas que el promedio nacional, de acuerdo a un artículo del Instituto Nacional de Salud.

De acuerdo a la Organización Mundial de la Salud, una de cada 78 mujeres son diagnosticadas con este tipo de cáncer a lo largo de su vida.

Hace un año y medio, seis investigadores en colaboración con Good Days, una organización nacional sin fines de lucro que facilita acceso a tratamientos que salvan y prolongan vidas, comenzaron la Red de Acción para la Prevención del Cáncer Cervical.



Subhash Chauhan, director del Centro de Excelencia en Investigación del Cáncer del Sur de Texas en la Facultad de Medicina de UTRGV y profesor de inmunología y microbiología, dijo que la investigación comenzó en junio del 2019.

"Nuestro grupo se movió aquí desde Tennessee porque nos dimos cuenta de que existen muchas disparidades en la atención médica del cáncer aquí en la región", Chauhan dijo.

Dijo que el grupo busca entender por qué el cáncer cervical es tan prevalente en el Valle.

De acuerdo a la OMS, la mejor manera de prevenir el cáncer cervical es:

- La vacunación contra el VPH para niñas de 9 a 14 años para prevenir infecciones y otros tipos de cáncer relacionados con el VPH.
- Las pruebas de detección de cáncer cervical a partir de los 30 años pueden ayudar a detectar precáncer cervical, y el tratamiento adecuado puede prevenir su progresión.
- A cualquier edad, es importante detectar los síntomas y recibir tratamiento inmediato.

UT Health RGV Student Health proporciona pruebas de Papanicolaou para la detección de cáncer cervical y pruebas de detección del VPH para estudiantes en ambos campus.

Tusha Sharma, miembro del Centro de Excelencia en Investigación del Cáncer del Sur de Texas en la Facultad de Medicina de UTRGV y una becaria posdoctoral, dijo que la investigación está enfocada en múltiples tipos de cáncer y se lleva a cabo con la comunidad en mente.

"Nuestro equipo se está centrándolo en múltiples aspectos en dónde esta población desfavorecida o esta zona del país se beneficiará y se generará una mayor conciencia entre la población", Sharma dijo.

Agregó que es también una forma de involucrar a estudiantes de licenciatura y de posgrado.

Aldo Gonzalez, un estudiante de posgrado en bioquímica y microbiología y miembro del equipo de investigación, dijo que se unió por los posibles resultados que podría traer para la comunidad.

"Todos los laboratorios son diferentes, pero para mi laboratorio, hacemos investigaciones que, ojalá, ayudarán en un futuro próximo a la investigación del

cáncer", Gonzalez dijo.

Agregó que, después de haberse integrado a la investigación, vio lo innovador que es el Valle.

"No me lo esperaba", Gonzalez dijo. "Pero después de haber visto cuántas personas están investigando, me dio una nueva forma de ver el campo de investigación aquí".

Sharma dijo que la mayoría de los estudiantes no tienen ideas erróneas sobre el cáncer cervical, pero la falta de concienciación hace que la población esté en alto riesgo.

"No están conscientes; quienes no tienen acceso a la educación, a las instalaciones médicas o al sistema de salud, son los que se ven más afectados", dijo.

Chauhan agregó que las mujeres

deben de tener chequeos regulares y vacunación, comúnmente conocida como Gardasil.

"Estamos utilizando a trabajadores sociales de la salud y estamos creando un módulo educativo para concientizar a la sociedad", dijo.

Chauhan animó a estudiantes a vacunarse contra el VPH y a recomendar a sus conocidos que hagan lo mismo.

"Es una buena medida, y deben informar a sus familiares sobre la importancia de realizarse el Papanicolaou y pruebas de detección del VPH periódicamente", dijo. "Estamos tratando de comunicar este mensaje a través de los estudiantes a sus familias para que adquieran más información y conocimientos sobre la enfermedad y sus medidas de prevención".



Tusha Sharma, miembro del Centro de Excelencia en Investigación del Cáncer del Sur de Texas en la Facultad de Medicina de UTRGV y una becaria posdoctoral, mezcla químicos dentro de la campana de extracción de humos químicos, un instrumento diseñado para proteger al personal del laboratorio de gases, vapores, humos o derrames químicos, el miércoles en el edificio de Biomedical Research en McAllen.

Jose Rodriguez/ THE RIDER

REVEL IN THE UNDERGROUND

EDUARDO ESCAMILLA
A&E EDITOR

Ned Russin has spent over half of his life as a cornerstone of the American underground. His journey started as the 14-year-old co-founder, vocalist and bassist in the seminal Title Fight.

Now, as the creative force behind Glitterer, he continues to discover new ways to challenge himself and the peril of the music industry.

What began as a solo synth-driven experiment has recently expanded into a full-band outfit. The group now features Nicole Dao on keyboard, Jonas Farah on drums and Colin Gorman on guitar. Russin said this shift has only clarified the project's vision.

"I started Glitterer by myself as a test and a challenge," Russin said, explaining the project's early days as a one-person effort. "But collaborating with others was always something I wanted. I never intended to make music alone forever."

He added there is a distinct fulfillment in the communal aspect of the work, as forming relationships with peers leaves a lasting impression on his creative output. Although the project bears his signature, he is quick to credit the collective for its current trajectory.

"The vision has definitely changed because we have different ideas involved," Russin said.

It is a direction the front man said he could not have taken alone. His respect for his bandmates as musicians—and, more importantly, friends—has shaped a collaborative environment. Russin said this environment rejects restrictions.

He added that by blending interpretations, the band connects through a shared musical language: a process built on both trust and taste.

When asked to describe the texture of Glitterer's sound in non-musical terms, Russin replied it is

of the music industry's "metric-first" priority in chasing digital virality. Regarding the modern commodification of music into content, Russin is dismissive of the industry's current direction.

"I find myself to be

face-to-face community building.

Further illustrating his viewpoint, Russin added he is less interested in the "democratic" illusion of social media than in the "tangible, physical things" that grounded the underground scene of the

"If I write a song and it means 'X' and somebody hears the song and they think it means 'Y' to that person, that song is about 'Y,'" he said. "... That's all it is to them, and that's all it should be."

Russin said a song's true meaning is not found

rejection of the industry and more an embrace of an act of intentional simplification.

Russin said he finds a deep, meditative connection in the manual labor of packing records, shipping packages and seeing the names of the



PHOTO COURTESY ALEX SANTOS

Members of Glitterer, Robin Zeijlon (from left), Ned Russin, Nicole Dao and Colin Gorman.

built on layers rather than a singular idea.

Elaborating further, he said he leans toward a sound "a little rough around the edges" while remaining anchored by a sharp focus on melody.

"Like sandpaper on a waterbed, something weird like that," Russin said.

Alongside his creative pursuits, he said he remains a vocal skeptic

very skeptical of people's general trajectory and their beliefs because it's focused so much on growth and numbers," Russin said. "These are things that I don't care for, and I wasn't brought up to believe in."

He said he treats digital platforms as mere utilities, tools to use sparingly to facilitate real work, physical touring, record-store culture and

1990s and early 2000s.

"That's the community that I belong to and the community I want to see improved," he said.

Though he spends immense effort being articulate and well-formed in his writing, Russin said he fully embraces the "death of the author," insisting that his own intent is secondary to the listener's interpretation.

in its own rationale, but in the two-way street of a relationship where the listener's interpretation is the final word.

"That is how I feel, in large part, about putting things out into the world at the current moment," he said.

Russin said the move to launch Purple Circle Records in 2023 alongside his brother, Ben Russin, was less a

people supporting his art.

"I really care about the underground scene ... the vitality of that scene, and so I want to make sure it can exist," he said. "And this is just my little effort into doing what I can for it."

Glitterer is preparing to take the stage on Feb. 11 at The Gremlin in McAllen.

For tickets and more tour dates, visit Glitterer.com.

FELINES FEEL WISE



HIGHER EXPECTATIONS, HIGHER SUPPORT, HIGHEST CONFIDENCE

STEPHEN GUTIERREZ
THE RIDER

The UTRGV Baseball Team is soon to begin its 2026 season on Feb. 13. According to the head coach, the Vaqueros have been at work and finishing preparations in hopes to advance to the regional championship.

Head coach Derek Matlock said the team is "feeling pretty good about themselves" following its successful run in 2025.

"It's a really confident group right now," Matlock said. "You know, when you come off a championship, there's a lot of confidence in the program."

He said most of the team's preseason preparations have been focused on building consistency and learning where each player fits, especially for those on the mound.

"No. 1 priority is you gotta get the pitch count up with your starting pitchers," Matlock said. "You gotta find out who they are, who throws on what days ... and, of course, the infielders [too] just getting a ton of reps, a ton of swings and getting their hamstrings in shape. [They do] those types of things to get ready for the opener."

The Vaqueros' 2025 season concluded with a fall to the University of New Orleans Privateers during the Southland Conference Championship, which prevented the team from advancing to the NCAA Division I Baseball Championship.

"Getting done from last year ... we know we were just short of a few games that we know we could've done better on," said Nick Nolan, senior pitcher. "Going into this year, we know that if we can nip those issues in the bud and dominate in more games ... we're going to have better chances at making the big tournament that we wanted to."

Falling short of the 2025 regionals motivated the team to put in the work during its offseason, according to Nolan.

"In the fall, it was very competitive," he said. "Everyone showed up ready to work, knowing what we missed out on. And we didn't want it to happen again."

Matlock said entering regionals continues to be the team's main goal.

"Win the [Southland Conference] Championship and get into regional—it's really hard to do," he said. "But that's kinda where we're trying to head."

Senior pitcher Anthony Garcia said it is best the team acts with confidence rather than pressure.

"Our identity is 'play loose'... knowing whatever we're facing, we're able to overcome," Garcia said. "If you're not 'playing loose,' then, you're going to be falling behind to yourself. It's just not fun as a ballplayer to be relying on stress and anxiousness."

Nolan added he likes to pair the mentality of confidence with the drive to be competitive on



JOSE RODRIGUEZ / THE RIDER PHOTO

Damien Whitfield, a redshirt senior outfielder, sprints toward home base during practice drills Tuesday in the UTRGV Baseball Stadium on the Edinburg campus.

the field.

"Our identity is to be relentless," he said. "No matter what the score is ... whether we're up or we're down ... we're still going to fight and win."

In a Jan. 20 news release, Athletics announced it had sold 1,100 season tickets for 2026, the fourth year in a row the department has broken its record.

Matlock said the accomplishment is "exciting" and gave credit to the department for its contribution

to reaching it.

"All the people that are involved in that stuff are just killing it, and that's definitely a reflection of them," he said.

For Nolan, the large crowds inspire the team to play its best, rather than a source of pressure.

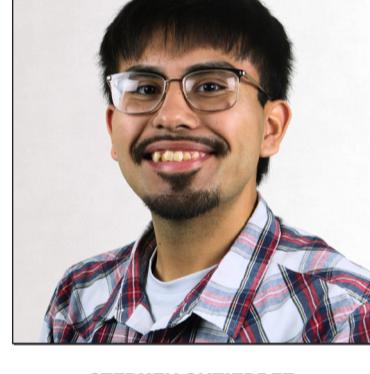
"It's a huge advantage, one that a lot of schools don't have," he said. "One of my favorite parts of last year was seeing how big the crowds got at the games. Seeing that many people come out and support us, it felt like it took the pressure off."

As the season opener approaches, Matlock said consistency will ultimately be the deciding factor on the success against other teams throughout the season.

"We look at all our games the same," the head coach said. "If we play like we can play, then, we feel very confident that we can beat everybody on our schedule. If we don't ... we're going to lose. We just worry about us. What we can control and play to the best of our ability. That's who we are."

SPORTS COLUMN

GO, SPURS, GO!



STEPHEN GUTIERREZ
SPORTS REPORTER

The San Antonio Spurs recently had an outstanding match against the Houston Rockets Wednesday, ending the game with a 111-99 victory.

This game had me on the edge of my seat as with any other game. Only this game was a little more different.

We just played the Rockets the week prior on Jan. 20, to which we unfortunately faced a 106-111 defeat. In my eyes, this was a rematch against them, and we had to take back the win they stole from us.

It was a little scary at first as the Spurs ended the first quarter 26-26. They continued to trail behind the Rockets until the end of the third quarter where a 16-4 run by the Spurs brought the score to 79-78.

Thankfully, the Spurs kept up the momentum throughout the fourth quarter. In the end, we were able to come out on top and now have a 2-1 lead in the season series. It's really looking like we're making playoffs in April.

Overall, this game was an exciting ride to be on. The team put on a terrific performance for the fans, but I guarantee you it was also for someone else watching.

That same day happened to be the birthday of Gregg Popovich, president and former head coach of the Spurs. After his health scare last year, we have not seen much of Pop, but he still matters a great deal to us fans.

Personally, the win feels a little more special than others. I can only

imagine the team wanted to give him a victory to celebrate his birthday.

While many of us cried and celebrated at the best gift for Pop the Spurs could've given him, it seems like the other side was impacted as well.

What I saw scrolling through social media that night caught me off guard. Many fans of the Rockets were commenting under the Spurs' victory post, congratulating the team for winning.

One commenter mentioned how the team deserved to "bring home the dub" to Pop, and another mentioned how they couldn't help but get teary-eyed after finding out it was also Pop's birthday.

Usually, the rivalry among teams can be so intense that a team's comment section after games can be very toxic. However, this time it wasn't, at least not from what I gathered.

To be frank, it was a nice change of pace during these times where it feels everyone is at each other's throats.

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