

THE RIDER

THE STUDENT VOICE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS RIO GRANDE VALLEY

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA @UTRGVRIDER | VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT UTRGVRIDER.COM

'RIPPLE EFFECT'



MARIAJOSE GARZA /THE RIDER PHOTOS

Protesters hold up signs during the Be The Hero Walkout on Feb. 2 outside the Main Building on the Brownsville campus.

STUDENTS STAGE WALKOUT AGAINST ICE FUNDING



AARYKAH NAVARRO /THE RIDER PHOTO

Abigail Beaver, a theatre freshman, chants and shouts while holding a "Melt ICE" sign during the Be The Hero Walkout Feb. 2 on the Bronc Trail on the Edinburg campus.

ETHAN MALDONADO
THE RIDER

More than 100 students across both campuses walked out of classes Feb. 2 to protest U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement policies and the Trump administration's funding of the agency.

The student-organized Be The Hero Walkout began around noon outside the Main Building on the Brownsville campus and on the Bronc Trail on the Edinburg campus and drew participants, shouting chants such as, "El pueblo unido jamás será vencido."

Edinburg
Jasmine Flores, a psychology freshman, said the walkout was personal for her and her family.

"They're mistreating everybody of color, and I know my grandma fits the stereotype of who they're going after," Flores said.

She said she hopes the protest grows into future events and reaches people beyond campus.

"I'm hoping it has a lot of people joining so, hopefully, it goes a little bigger, and we can do it again some day," Flores said. "It can send a message to everybody that needs to hear."

Cindy Zamudio, a marketing junior, said she attended the walkout in response to violence connected to ICE activity and broader immigration enforcement.

"These are our people," Zamudio said. "This is all the people that have been trying to get a better life here in the United States and, now, they're being treated unfairly."

She encouraged students to continue organizing.

"This is for our community, and we will keep fighting for them," Zamudio said.

See ICE, Page 8



Protester holds a "Fuera ICE" sign during the Be The Hero Walkout on Feb. 2 outside the Main Building on the Brownsville campus.

See WALKOUT, Page 8

ICE PRECENSE IN BROWNSVILLE

PETE MENDOZA
COPY EDITOR

With the increase in Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Brownsville, some officials and residents have shown concerns for both safety and the future of the city.

On Jan. 29, Brownsville Mayor John Cowen spoke as a moderator during the U.S. Conference of Mayors 94th Winter Meeting in Washington D.C.

Cowen talked during the session titled "How Cities Are Responding in the Current Immigration Climate" and said the city assists the federal government.

"But at the local level, our [police department has] a separate but equally important responsibility," he said. "We have a responsibility to ensure public safety and maintain the trust of our community."

Cowen said the department does not work with ICE to make immigration-related arrests on a day-to-day basis.

"However, as we would work with any federal, state or local agency, the

Brownsville PD does and will respond to requests for aid or assistance when public safety is involved," he said.

Linda Macias, District 2 city commissioner, wrote in a Jan. 17 Facebook post ICE authorities would become more active in the city.

The Rider reached out to Macias for an interview regarding the agency's local activity in an email Jan. 28. On Jan. 30, she said she would not give out any interviews or comments and had declined 10 previous interview requests.

Cowen, during the session, said ICE operations have increased over the past month, mainly "targeting construction sites, hotels, restaurants and low-income neighborhoods."

The "ripple effect" in the economy has affected city finances and services, creating fear in the community.

"There are many children that are not going to school due to fear that their loved ones may be targeted," the mayor said. "These enforcement operations have had a chilling impact through our regional

communities. More importantly, as mayor, I am concerned that our members may not call the police or fire departments for emergencies out of fear, which fundamentally makes our community less safe."

THE PRIMARIES ARE AROUND THE CORNER

EMMA ALEGRIA CASTILLO
THE RIDER

Voters in Texas' 15th Congressional District will vote for a candidate to represent them in D.C., as Republican U.S. Rep. Monica De La Cruz will face the winner of the Democratic primary election, a race between Dr. Ada Cuellar and Bobby Pulido.

The primary elections will take place on March 3, with early voting available from Feb. 17 to 27. According to the Hidalgo County Elections Department website, an early voting polling location will be available in the Student Academic Center lounge on the Edinburg campus.

De La Cruz, who is running



PHOTO COURTESY BOBBY PULIDO

Bobby Pulido, Democratic primary candidate for Texas' 15th Congressional District.

uncontested in the Republican primary for her third term, is the first Hispanic Republican woman to represent Texas in Congress. According to her campaign website, she passed seven pieces of legislation,



PHOTO COURTESY DELACRUZ.HOUSE.GOV

Monica De La Cruz, Republican primary candidate for Texas' 15th Congressional District. De La Cruz is running uncontested.

including a bill targeting fentanyl trafficking that was signed into law.

Her campaign focuses on border security, protecting seniors' benefits and supporting agriculture. De La Cruz has received recognition from



PHOTO COURTESY DR. ADA CUELLAR

Dr. Ada Cuellar, Democratic primary candidate for Texas' 15th Congressional District.

groups including the National Border Patrol Council and the Texas Farm Bureau, according to her website.

Water security is also a central part of her agenda.

See ELECTIONS, Page 2

LOCAL:

A new program lands in Brownsville

Page 3

OPINION:

On the big screen

Page 4

ESPAÑOL:

Congelan nuevas visas de trabajo

Página 5

A&E:

A show is reborn

Page 6

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.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Daniela Chapa-Reyes

ONLINE EDITOR
Mykel Del Angel

COPY EDITORS
Carlos Castañeda
Narda Serna
Pete Mendoza

SPANISH EDITOR
Sofía Cantú Saucedo

A&E EDITOR
Eduardo Escamilla

REPORTERS
Hugo A. Sepúlveda
Sophia Cortez
Ethan Maldonado
Emma Castillo
Mariah Escobar

SPORTS REPORTER
Stephen Gutierrez

EDITORIAL CARTOONIST
Kayla Martinez

PHOTOGRAPHERS
Jose Rodriguez
Mariajose Garza
Karla Hernandez
Valeria Tokun Haga
Aarykah Navarro

MARKETING MANAGER
Yazmin Castro Adame

MARKETING SPECIALISTS
Jocelyn Garcia Serna
Leslie Benavides

FACULTY ADVISER
Michelle Escajeda

STUDENT MEDIA DIRECTOR
Jesus Sanchez

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS
Ana Sanchez
Maggie Castillo

CONTACT:
EDINBURG CAMPUS
1201 West University Dr.
ELABS 170
Phone: (956) 665-5085

BROWNSVILLE CAMPUS
1 West University Blvd.
Student Union 2.16
Phone: (956) 882-5143
Fax: (956) 882-5176

Email:
TheRider@utrgv.edu
© 2026 The Rider

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today
IMA General Meeting
The Association of Accountants and Financial Professionals in Business will meet from 12:30 to 1 p.m. in Liberal Arts Building North Room 117 on the Edinburg campus.
Delta Zelta General Meeting
Delta Zelta will meet from 6 to 7 p.m. in the Bronc Room on the Edinburg campus.
Mario Kart Deluxe Tournament
The Student Union will host a Mario Kart Deluxe Tournament from 1 to 2 p.m. in the Game Room on the Brownsville campus and at the same time in the Game Room on the Edinburg campus. Attendees have the chance to win V Bucks. A student ID is required.
Spanish Club General Meeting
The Spanish Club will meet from noon to 3 p.m. in the University Ballroom on the Edinburg campus.
Pre-Dental Society General

Meeting
The Pre-Dental Society/American Student Association Pre-Dental Chapter will meet from 5 to 6:30 p.m. in Engineering Building Room 1.300 on the Edinburg campus.
Tuesday
Lunar New Year
The Center for Student Involvement and International Student Services will host a Lunar New Year experience from 12:30 to 2 p.m. in the University Ballroom on the Edinburg campus.
Access for Sex-Ed Tabling
Access for Sex-Education will host a tabling event from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the Student Union on the Edinburg campus.
Wednesday
ALPFA General Meeting
The Association of Latino Professionals for America will meet from 2 to 3 p.m. in Robert C. Vackar College of

Business & Entrepreneurship Building Room 113 on the Edinburg campus.
GitHub Workshop
The Frontera Devs will host a workshop from 5 to 6 p.m. in Interdisciplinary Engineering and Academic Building Room 2.207 on the Edinburg campus.
Thursday
SWE Fundraiser
The Society of Women Engineers will host a fundraiser selling ribbon flower bouquets from 1 to 4 p.m. in the Engineering Building lobby on the Edinburg campus.
ASL Club Meeting
The American Sign Language Club will meet from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. in Health Affairs Building West Room 1.406 on the Edinburg campus.
RGV German Club Meeting
The RGV German Club will meet from 2 to 3:15 p.m. in Interdisciplinary Academic Building Room 2.204 on the Brownsville campus.
Vaquero Boots and BBQ

The Student Union will host Vaquero Boots & BBQ from 6 to 10 p.m. at the Quad on the Edinburg campus. Attendees can enjoy live music, activities and free food.
ACJA IKC General Meeting
The American Criminal Justice Association (Iota Kappa Chi) will meet from 3:15 to 4:45 p.m. in Sabal Hall Room 2.102 on the Brownsville campus.
Friday
TAIT Valentine's Event
Talk About It UTRGV will host a Valentine's event from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the University Ballroom 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



POLICE REPORTS

The following are among the incidents reported to University Police between Jan. 28 and Feb. 3.
Jan. 28
9:30 a.m.: Officers were dispatched regarding a two-vehicle traffic collision in Lot E-26 on the Edinburg campus. No injuries were reported.
11:34 a.m.: An officer responded regarding a possible disturbance involving several students in the University Center on the Edinburg campus. Upon contact, it was determined the students were horsing around and no crime had occurred.
3:01 p.m.: An officer stopped a non-affiliated man for lacking a front license plate. During contact, it was found the vehicle's rear license plate was registered to another vehicle. The license plate was confiscated and submitted as evidence, and the driver was cited.
7:01 p.m.: A student reported

his backpack was stolen, while he was attending band practice, from the Soccer and Track & Field Complex on the Edinburg campus. The backpack contained a laptop and its accessories. The case is under investigation.
Jan. 30
9:13 a.m.: A student reported an unknown man had followed her from a building into Lot B-2 on the Brownsville campus. After further investigation, it was determined no crime had occurred. The student was provided with university resources.
Feb. 1
3:57 p.m.: An officer responded regarding two men who had entered without permission by jumping the fence to the Soccer and Track & Field Complex on the Edinburg campus. Upon contact, both men were identified, one as a student and the other as non-affiliated. The men were informed they were not allowed at the location and

left the area without incident.
Feb. 2
7:36 a.m.: Officers responded regarding a City of Edinburg Waste Disposal Truck striking a power line in the area with its front lift in Lot E-10 on the Edinburg campus. Upon further investigation, Environmental Health, Safety & Risk Management determined the city employee had damaged inactive networking lines. The cable wire was safely removed from the roadway, and a work order was placed to have the cable wire repaired.
4:05 p.m.: An officer responded regarding a student who was vaping inside the University Library on the Brownsville campus. The officer contacted the student and informed him that smoking is prohibited on university property.
5:29 p.m.: Officers responded to an employee who reported a student in an adjacent stall had peeked into his stall in

the University Ballroom on the Edinburg campus. Officers contacted the student, who agreed to speak with them at the police station. The case will be prepared and forwarded to the Edinburg Municipal Court for a class C misdemeanor charge of disorderly conduct, as the victim has filed charges.
Feb. 3
12:09 p.m.: Officers responded regarding a student who had injured herself while walking down the stairs in the Education Complex on the Edinburg campus. Emergency Medical Services later arrived and transported the student to a hospital for further evaluation.
4:48 p.m.: An officer met with a student who had accidentally struck his head on a staircase pillar in the University Recreation Building on the Edinburg campus. Emergency Medical Services arrived and transported the student to a hospital for further evaluation.
--Compiled by Narda Serna

ELECTIONS

Continued from Page 1

De La Cruz created the South Texas Water Working Group to address the region's ongoing water shortages and has worked to hold Mexico accountable for water-treaty obligations, her campaign states.
As of press time, De La Cruz was unavailable for comment.
Cuellar, an emergency medicine physician and a third-year law student, is running as a Democrat and has not previously held elected office. She said her experience treating patients in Rio Grande Valley emergency rooms has shaped her understanding of how poverty, low wages and limited access to transportation affect health outcomes.
"I've never been in politics," Cuellar said. "The experience that I have is all educational, real-world experience."
She describes herself as

an "independent Democrat," saying she approaches policy decisions analytically and bases them on research, lived experience and conversations with constituents. Her campaign priorities include health care, the economy and education.
According to her campaign website, Cuellar supports reversing cuts to Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act, protecting rural hospitals, expanding telemedicine, and allowing uninsured individuals to buy into Medicare.
On education, Cuellar calls for increased funding for public schools, expanded access to technology for students, and greater support for universities, trade schools and community colleges. She also supports repealing tariffs, raising wages and diversifying the Valley's economy by attracting higher-paying industries.
Cuellar outlined an immigration platform that includes securing the border while opposing

large-scale workplace raids and supporting a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who work and pay taxes, according to her website.
Pulido, a Tejano music artist, also making his first run for public office, described his political ideology as "pragmatic." He said he is less focused on ideological labels and more interested in solving problems through action.
"I believe people should get into public service in order to fix things," Pulido said. "I'm more pragmatic about wanting to fix the issues that I see that need fixing."
He said his campaign centers on direct engagement with voters across the district's 11 counties. The artist emphasized listening to residents and addressing local concerns, particularly in the Valley, which he described as culturally distinct and often misunderstood by national political leaders.
Immigration reform is Pulido's top priority, he said, citing its impact on the local

economy and workforce. According to his campaign website, he supports a bipartisan approach to immigration that secures the border, targets violent criminals and expands legal workforce pathways without disrupting families or businesses.
Pulido's platform also includes support for a public health insurance option, stronger antitrust enforcement against insurance companies, raising the minimum wage, improving child care affordability, supporting agriculture and addressing the region's water crisis.
According to student voters, honesty and accountability are key qualities they want in a representative.
"Someone who tells the truth and wants the best for the people that reside in that area," said Christopher Cruz, a mechanical engineering sophomore.
John Reyes, a computer science junior, said representatives should care about their constituents.

BROWNSVILLE OPENS ITS WINGS

HUGO SEPÚLVEDA
THE RIDER

The Flight Academy of South Texas opened its doors for the opportunity of training and certification for private and commercial pilots in Brownsville, according to the owner.

The academy held its opening ceremony on Jan. 22 at the Brownsville South Padre Island International Airport, according to a City of Brownsville news release.

According to the news release, "Interim City Manager Alan Guard said the arrival of FAST is a strong match with the City of Brownsville's strategic goals and the long-term vision for our airport."

Jorge Whitley, owner of the Flight Academy of South Texas, said the academy was founded with the purpose of giving the opportunity to Brownsville residents to explore careers in aviation or simply to enjoy flight.

"We do offer a private pilot certificate all the way up through a commercial pilot certificate," Whitley said.

He added the differences between a private pilot requires

40 hours of training and it will allow them to fly owned or rented airplanes, while for a commercial license it is 250 hours of training.

The academy owner said he chose Brownsville because he was raised here.

"This is my community, and I wanted something for my community," Whitley said. "We haven't had a dedicated flight school for a long time, and I know that students would have to travel."

He said he hopes to offer another opportunity to anyone interested to explore aviation.

"We do expect to have a school that will teach airplane mechanics," Whitley said. "... Those are higher paying careers."

He said the flight academy is already going and it functions as a Part 61 school.

"The classes, the ground school is all online," Whitley said. "It's all you go at your own pace, if there's something you're having trouble with, then you can come here. We have classrooms here and our certified flight instructor can go over it with you."

He added the academy

has a virtual reality flight simulator where attendees can practice instead of paying time in airplane, which can be expensive.

The cost of the academy is \$1,500 down payment, which includes all the flight-simulator time, all-ground school material and the first hour in the airplane with an instructor. After this, it is \$250 an hour.

According to the owner, the academy has "excellent" resources for scholarships.

"It is an [Federal Aviation Administration] sponsored program that, when students come in, they can explore over \$25 million worth of scholarships out there," Whitley said.

He said the long-term goal of the academy is to establish a Part 141 program, which is a collegiate program.

"We want to have a university come in and offer a [full] degree in aviation business or aviation science, that would include a four-year degree and a commercial pilot certificate," Whitley said.

Angel Sandate, a commercial pilot, who is getting certified as an academy instructor, said his

experience at the academy has been "great."

"Especially now, that since I was born and raised here in Brownsville, it's been a lot closer to home, you know, and I kinda like that," Sandate said.

He added the aviation community is growing, especially in the Rio Grande Valley, and he thinks the flight academy in Brownsville is a "great" idea.

"I'm very passionate of flying, and I'm very passionate at other people, especially down here in Brownsville, to be able to have the opportunity to be a pilot," Sandate said.

-- Valeria Tokun Haga contributed to the story.



VALERIA TOKUN HAGA/THE RIDER PHOTOS

Galvin Karels, a certified flight instructor, uses a flight simulator during a training session Tuesday in the Flight Academy of South Texas, located at 495 Amelia Earhart Dr. Suite 2C in Brownsville.



Galvin Karels (from left), a certified flight instructor, Fernanda Whitney, a flight student, and Angel Sandate Jr., a certified flight instructor student, participate in flight training in the Flight Academy of South Texas, located at 495 Amelia Earhart Dr. Suite 2C in Brownsville.

LOVE ON CAMPUS



MYKEL DEL ANGEL/THE RIDER PHOTOS

Carolina Bazan (left) and Seth Puente, mechanical engineering seniors, walk while holding hands Wednesday outside the Student Union on the Edinburg campus.



Zoey Rios (left), a psychology freshman, and David Aleman, a multidisciplinary studies freshman, eat together Wednesday outside the Student Union on the Edinburg campus.



Aracely Garcia (left), a music education senior, and Victor E. Cruz, a performance graduate student, practice together Wednesday outside the Performing Arts Complex on the Edinburg campus.

UTRGV CELEBRATES BLACK HISTORY MONTH

SOPHIA CORTEZ AND MARIAH ESCOBAR
THE RIDER

February marks the start of Black History Month, where it is important to celebrate and honor the traditions that Carter G. Woodson, an American historian and author, began when he conceived of Black History week, which eventually evolved into a month, according to a UTRGV senior lecturer.

"Any history of the United States that doesn't include the African American [people] is incomplete and discarded," said Kevin D. Butler, a history lecturer.

Butler said he has always been drawn to history and understanding his own people, which led him to teach history and African history.

He added W.E.B. Du Bois is "one of the greatest American historians" and sticks out to him as a historical figure.

The Center for Student Involvement hosted its annual Black History Month event with the purpose of honoring the impact of Black culture, its history and its impact on society, according to Giovanna Granados, program coordinator.

The event took place Tuesday in the Music, Science and Learning Center on the Brownsville campus and Thursday in the Student Union on the Edinburg campus.

Granados said it was an opportunity for students to learn more about the historical culture, incorporating hands-on learning experience by making traditional bracelets and participating in trivia.

"Wanting to showcase some of those important figures and spreading awareness and paying

homage to an important community at UTRGV as well," she said.

Granados added, since UTRGV's community is primarily Hispanic, she believes there is a lot of appreciation for different cultures on campus.

"Our diversity grows every year and so wanting to spread some of that love and appreciation, so it allows for students to encourage students to have cultural appreciation and even learn from other cultures other than their own," she said.

Janeet Davila, a psychology freshman, said one of the things she discovered during the event was about the dreams and difficulties the Black community faced.

"So honoring that, those who spoke up for their own people, it is actually really resonating until now," Davila said.

The program coordinator added a different range of identities and backgrounds are present in the university.

"The different wide range of identities and backgrounds we have at the university ... helps enhance that sense of belonging, creating a space or an environment or having an event where students from different cultures, in this case, Black students can feel seen, feel supported and valued as an important community," Granados said.

Bukola Awotoye, president of the African Students Association and a computer science senior, said the month is important because it serves as an opportunity to share the contribution that African Americans have made in the United States.

"This is the time for us to shine more light on more of the things that they've achieved to



MARIAJOSE GARZA/THE RIDER

Bukola Awotoye, president of the African Students Association and a computer science senior, speaks to a student about African history during the Black History Month event Tuesday in the Music, Science and Learning Center on the Brownsville campus. Members from the African Students Association shared the history of African countries to students.

"The African Students Association hosts cultural workshops, cookouts and workout sessions that are open to everyone to get the community involved in learning and appreciating the culture, according to its president.

"If we don't continue talking about history it can be forgotten," Awotoye said. "It's very good to stay informed on things, even though you might think it doesn't matter to you."

--Mariajose Garza contributed to the story.

Awotoye said there is not a big African American population at UTRGV, so celebrating the month and getting involved in different organizations helps those who feel far from home build connections.

COLUMN OF THE WEEK

I LOB DA MOVIES



JOSE RODRIGUEZ
PHOTOGRAPHER

it and keep moving forward till you find the perfect spot. You're enshrouded by the darkness with the screen being your only source of light; you experience thrills, comedy, action, all in one sitting.

That was my experience watching "The Three Stooges" (2012) inside the Cinemark Movies McAllen 6.

Movie theaters have been a place for people to have new experiences and watch the latest comedies, action movies and horror thrills.

Streaming services have been a commodity that spun heads in

the beginning. You can watch any movie at the click of a button in the comfort of your own home with a subscription to Netflix, Hulu, Disney+, HBO Max, Discovery+, Peacock and then some.

I used to love streaming services because of the convenience. Some of my favorite movies would be available, and I would watch them nonstop. But recently, I have been going back to the movie theaters, and I forgot how much fun it was to just sit in a giant room with strangers and lose yourself in the movie.

I remember going to the dollar theater with my parents every

weekend and having to translate certain things for them since English isn't their first language. I haven't gone with them in a while, so my recent return to movie theaters would be a great excuse to go back with them.

I strongly encourage everyone to go to their local theater or drive-in with their friends or family. Think of the memories you'll make, the conversations you'll have after the movie and about having an entire dissertation in the parking lot with your friends about how "Sinners" is already the best movie of the year.

It's just an overall better

experience. You can argue about concession prices being too high, but you also have free will, which means your friend could sneak in an entire sushi platter in her tote bag.

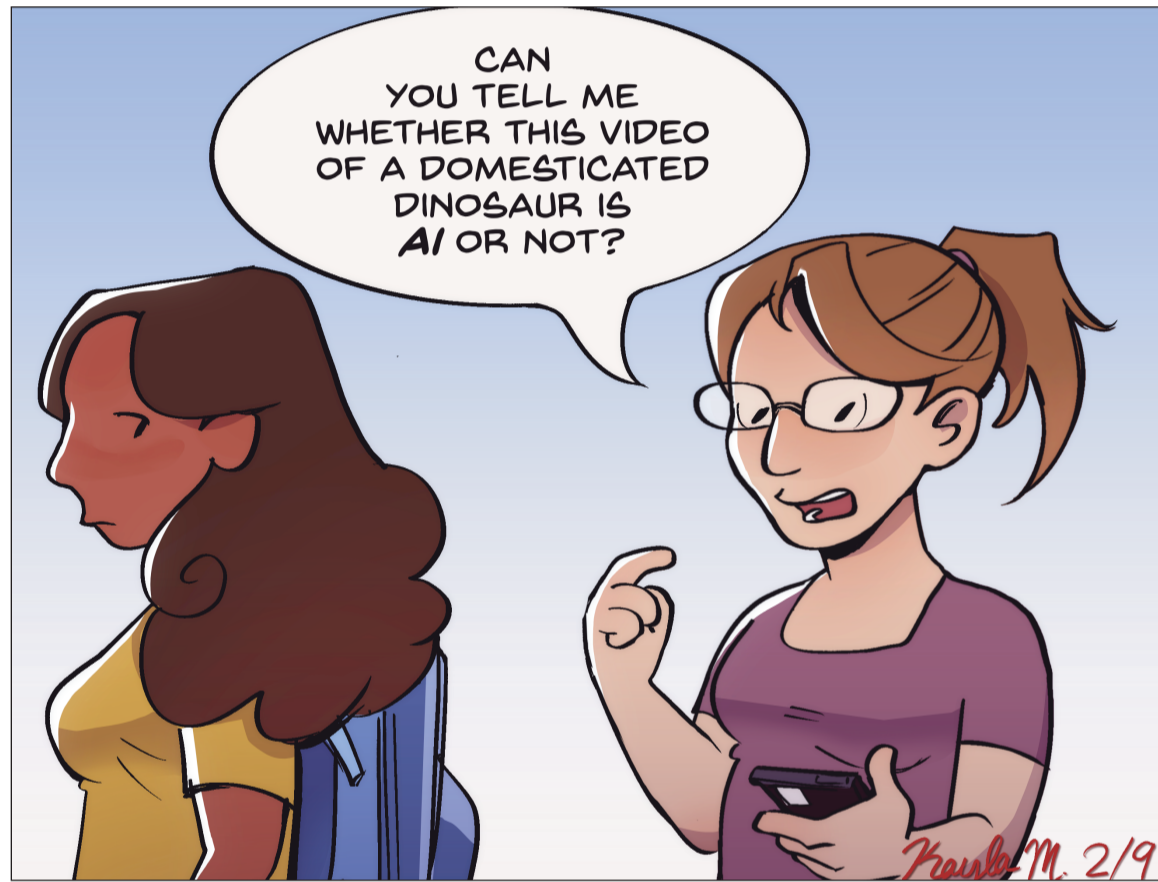
I'm all for convenience, and I don't want to sound pretentious, but movie theaters are just better to watch the newest blockbuster, rom-com and comedy in, as intended.

"I used to love streaming services."

CORRECTION: In the Feb. 2 issue of The Rider, the editorial cartoon "¿Y tu sobrino?" was incorrectly headlined "¿Y tú, sobrino?"

EDITORIAL CARTOON

THINKING'S CRITICAL



VAQUERO VOICE

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE LOVE SONG?

-Compiled and photos by Jocelyn Garcia Serna, Aarykah Navarro and Mariah Escobar



Deidrey Tidwell
biology senior
"I Wanna Be Yours" by Arctic Monkeys.



Alann Nunez
mechanical engineering sophomore
"The Moon Song" by beabadoobee.



Javier Alejandro Gonzalez
biology junior
"Paper Rings" by Taylor Swift.



Jenessa Reyna
integrated health science sophomore
"Love on the Brain" by Rihanna.

CROSSWORD

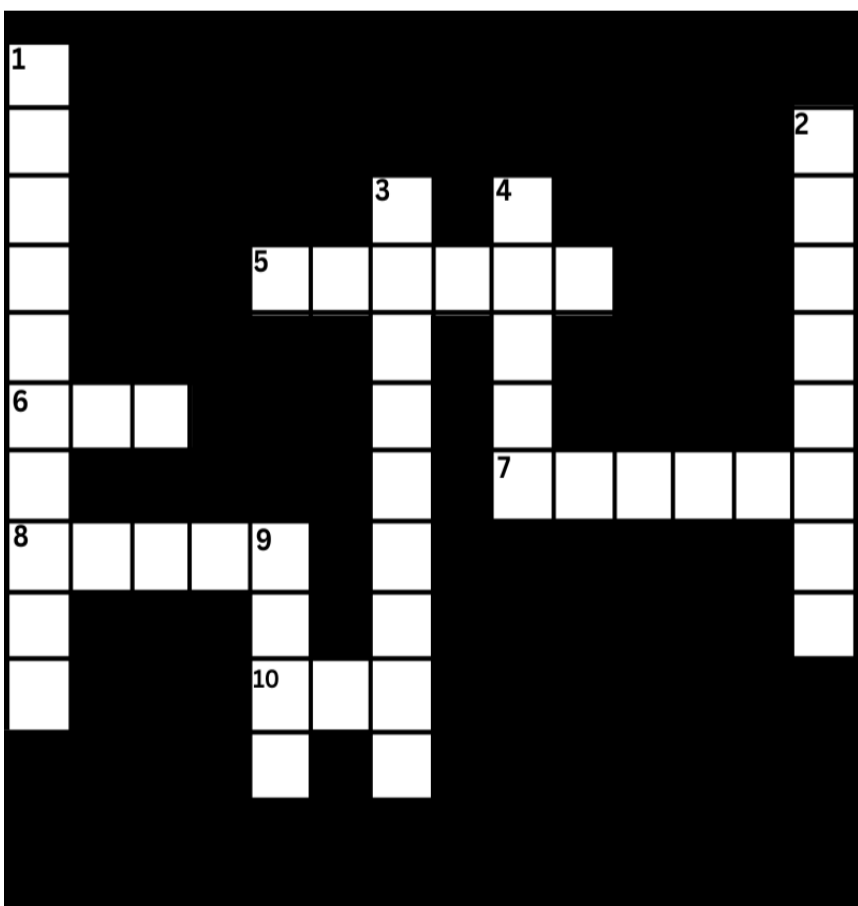
GRAMMY AWARDS

ACROSS

- 5. Noah ____, comedian and Grammy Awards' host
- 6. Name of Kendrick Lamar's Best Rap Album winner
- 7. Name of the Song of the Year nominee from "KPop Demon Hunters"
- 8. Kendrick ____, Name of the Record of the Year winner
- 10. Name of the network that broadcast the 2026 Grammy Awards

DOWN

- 1. City hosting the Grammy Awards
- 2. Name of artist who won Album of the Year
- 3. Name of the category won by Olivia Dean
- 4. Lola ____, winner of Pop Solo Performance
- 9. Name of the genre where Yungblud won a performance award



ABBOTT LIMITA H-1B

UNIVERSIDADES DE TEXAS, AGENCIAS ESTATALES DEBERÁN REVELAR DETALLES DE TRABAJADORES VISADOS

SOFÍA CANTÚ SAUCEDA
SPANISH EDITOR

El gobernador Greg Abbott ordenó a las universidades públicas y agencias estatales entregar datos sobre contrataciones con visas H-1B y congelar nuevas peticiones, con el objetivo de priorizar empleos para tejanos, de acuerdo a un comunicado del 27 de enero.

De acuerdo al Departamento de Trabajo de los Estados Unidos, la intención de las visas H-1B es ayudar a los empleadores que no pueden obtener habilidades y destrezas empresariales de la fuerza laboral estadounidense a autorizar, temporalmente, empleo de personas que de lo contrario no están autorizadas para trabajar en el país.

En el comunicado, Abbott afirmó que las agencias estatales y universidades públicas no pueden contratar bajo visas H-1B sin un permiso escrito de la Comisión de la Fuerza Laboral de Texas (TWC, por sus siglas en inglés) hasta el 31 de mayo del 2027.

Mark Kaswan, un profesor de la Escuela de Ciencias Políticas, Asuntos Públicos, Jurídicos y Estudios de Seguridad de UTRGV, dijo que el efecto de esta orden puede ser un “gesto vacío” o “muy serio”, dependiendo del liderazgo de la TWC.

“Puede ser muy serio y esencialmente hacer imposible que las universidades como UTRGV, una universidad muy internacional, contrate a las mejores personas”, Kaswan dijo.

Añadió que Abbott ha mostrado interés en la contienda presidencial del 2028, y esto puede ser visto como su modo de “tomar acción” en inmigración.

En su comunicado, dijo que inició la congelación debido a reportes recientes de abuso en el programa federal de visas H-1B y para asegurar que los trabajos americanos sean dados a trabajadores americanos, entre otras razones escritas.

“El programa se ha utilizado con demasiada frecuencia para cubrir puestos



>1% de la población de Texas trabaja bajo una visa H-1B.

El gobernador Greg Abbott ha ordenado a universidades públicas y agencias estatales que proporcionen datos detallados sobre las contrataciones de personas con visas H-1B y que congelen las solicitudes nuevas. Al 30 de septiembre, 41,517 personas trabajan en Texas bajo una visa H-1B, lo que representa menos del 1% de la población total del estado.

de trabajo que, de otro modo, podrían –y deberían– haber sido ocupados por texanos”, el gobernador escribió.

Las agencias estatales e instituciones

- Clasificaciones y descripciones de trabajo de cada persona con visa
- La fecha de vencimiento prevista de cada visa



H-1B VISAS EN TEXAS

>1% de trabajadores en Texas tienen visa H-1B

públicas de educación superior deben de presentar sus informes de contratación para el 27 de marzo, indicando lo siguiente:

- Nuevas peticiones y renovaciones de patrocinio la entidad pidió en el 2025
- El número actual de personas con visas y su país de origen

- Documentación que demuestre que se hicieron esfuerzos para brindar a los candidatos calificados de Texas una oportunidad razonable de postularse para los puestos que posteriormente fueron ocupados por titulares de visas H-1B.

Patrick Gonzales, vicepresidente

de Marketing y Comunicación de la Universidad, escribió a The Rider en un correo electrónico el 2 de febrero que el Sistema de la Universidad de Texas y las 13 instituciones de UT han enviado la información ordenada por el gobernador.

“Las instituciones están cumpliendo con la órdenes del gobernador al congelar las nuevas solicitudes de visado H-1B”, Gonzales declaró.

Agregó que UTRGV está esperando más instrucciones de la TWC en cómo las futuras contrataciones van a funcionar.

Kaswan dijo que la solicitud de proporcionar este tipo de información no plantea problemas de privacidad para contratar, pero los esfuerzos de proporcionar documentación sobre las medidas adoptadas para contratar a tejanos calificados son “preocupantes”.

“Por ejemplo, cuando anunciamos puestos para nuevos profesores, esto es algo que es muy estándar, y las personas en Texas tienen la misma oportunidad de aplicar como cualquier persona en el mundo”, dijo. “Esto se da a entender como que hay algún tipo de discriminación a la gente por parte del estado de Texas”.

De acuerdo al centro de datos del Servicio de Ciudadanía e Inmigración de Estados Unidos (USCIS, por sus siglas en inglés), hay 41,571 personas trabajando bajo una visa H-1B en Texas al 30 de septiembre, menos del 1% en comparación con la población actual del estado de 31.7 millones de personas.

UTRGV emplea a 45 personas contratadas con visas H-1B, de acuerdo a la lista.

Kaswan dijo que uno de los impactos a largo plazo de esto, específicamente en la contratación de profesorado, es que los aplicantes piensen que no pueden confiar en Texas cuando buscan un trabajo.

“No pueden tener ninguna expectativa de que serán tratados equitativamente por el estado de Texas”, dijo. “Esta política puede tener un efecto desmoralizador en nuestra capacidad para atraer a profesores altamente calificados”.

VALLEY SPOTLIGHT

Olive Marketing Firm: Una forma de conectar con la comunidad

SOFÍA CANTÚ SAUCEDA
SPANISH EDITOR



Mayra Olivarez, directora creativa principal y copropietaria de Olive Marketing Firm. Su firma se especializa en creación de marcas, adaptación bilingüe y mercadotecnia estratégica.

Con raíces en McAllen, una firma de marketing ha ayudado a negocios del Valle del Río Grande a contar sus historias a través de los proyectos y campañas que desarrollan para la comunidad.

Mayra Olivarez, directora creativa principal y copropietaria de Olive Marketing Firm, ubicada en 1100 E. Jasmine Ave. Suite 205, comenzó su carrera en KRGV Channel 5 con un puesto en lo que describió como “hacer de todo” para ayudar alrededor en lo que fuera necesario.

“Ayudaba en un poco de todo”,

Olivarez dijo. “Ayudé en un show llamado ‘Masterminds’, ‘Teach the Children’. Ayude en las noticias, en ventas, en realidad, en lo que sea para poder entender el negocio”.

Fue parte por dos años y medio. Después, tuvo la oportunidad de trabajar en Univision.

Durante sus diferentes experiencias de trabajo, dijo que tuvo la oportunidad de ir a Nueva York para aprender más sobre cómo entender la televisión y sus métodos de venta.

“Aprendí cómo leer el libro de Nielsen: antes no existía la posibilidad de consultar los índices de audiencia ni las cuotas de mercado, que es la forma de registrar cuántas personas están viendo y usando la televisión”, Olivarez dijo.

Agregó que lo más importante para ella era cómo entender los hábitos de visualización del mercado hispano para regresar al Valle.

“Al principio, mi trabajo era tratar de traducir a mis compradores americanos que están perdiendo una gran oportunidad al no anunciar en español”, Olivarez dijo.

Después de haber trabajado en los medios en diferentes lugares alrededor del Valle, decidió abrir Olive Marketing Firm durante la pandemia.

“Estaba trabajando con un amigo que también era nuestro cliente; entonces, decidí con mi esposo que íbamos a trabajar con pocos clientes y más organizados y con estructura”, Olivarez dijo.

Dijo que una de sus partes favoritas de poder tener un negocio como este es el proceso creativo y el poder enseñar a otros.



Oficina de Olive Marketing Firm, ubicada en 1100 E. Jasmine Ave. Suite 205 en McAllen.

“Me encanta asegurarme que estemos transmitiendo pasión y comprensión”, Olivarez dijo. “Me gusta mucho que mis clientes quieran venir y ser parte del proceso”.

Olive Marketing Firm representa a grandes negocios locales como J. Gonzalez Injury Attorney, Fred Loya Insurance and Judge Juan Ramon Alvarez.

Olivarez agregó que quería tener una conexión con la comunidad que se mostrara en su trabajo. Describió a Olive Marketing Firm como un negocio que tiene conexiones con la comunidad y un toque local.

“Trabajamos mucho en diseños de marca”, dijo. “Pero mi parte favorita son las campañas donde podemos contar una historia”.

Olivarez dijo que todo lo que hacen

con las campañas es intencional desde los gráficos hasta los diseños, cosas importantes que ayudan a conectar con las personas.

Aunque su experiencia con marcas locales ha fortalecido su presencia en el Valle, la firma también enfrenta desafíos propios de una industria en constante cambio.

“Siento que existe una necesidad constante de asegurarnos de que estamos demostrando nuestro valor”, agregó.

A quienes desean iniciar un negocio en el Valle, Olivarez enfatiza que es importante experimentar un trabajo de primera línea.

“Esas son las personas que conectas con otros y conocen gente,” dijo. “[...] Así puedes entender el valor del trabajo en equipo”.

UNDER THE CIRCUS TENT

EDUARDO ESCAMILLA
A&E EDITOR

The Vazquez family, the legendary circus dynasty, is bringing their new Flip Circus to the Rio Grande Valley, betting a smaller, 800-seat tent, closer-to-the-action experience will do what a smartphone screen never could: make the audience feel the vibration and excitement of the circus, according to ring master Jan Vazquez.

Flip Circus will run until Feb. 24 outside the McAllen Convention Center and from Feb. 27 to March 9 at the Sunrise Mall parking lot in Brownsville.

Vazquez, a fourth-generation circus performer, said the show was born from a need to bring the circus experience to dense urban areas such as New York City.

This year, the family “switched places,” sending the larger Circus Vazquez to New York while Flip Circus makes its debut in the Valley.

Growing up in the industry had its perks, Vazquez said.

“We got to play different ways than other kids,” he said. “We could get on the trapeze and jump on trampolines and learn to juggle and stuff like that.”

Vazquez said carrying the family legacy is

demanding, though.

“We are involved in everything concerning, not just the show, but the operations of it,” he said.

In an age of instant

see the visuals, but you cannot actually feel it.”

Flip Circus distinguishes itself through intimacy, Vazquez said. The smaller

bring to the aerial acts,” he said. “Just overall, the vibe is completely different.”

Vazquez is also taking a personal plunge this year,

standing high above the crowd is a mental battle.

“It might be the hardest thing that I’ve done in my life,” he said. “The very first time that I swung on

Audiences will experience the acrobatics and the athleticism of the circus but can also find entertainment in the quieter moments—specifically with the clowns.

Misha Usov, a 38-year veteran of the ring, who is the founder of the Professional Clown Institute and author of the book “The Invisible Clown,” has elevated clowning from slapstick to a masterclass in silent narrative.

“If you study it ... you will see how difficult [clowning] is,” Usov said.

He said he takes inspiration from legendary clown Joe Jackson, particularly his ability to move audiences without a single word.

“I will not steal his act, I will not steal his joke, I will not steal his costume and makeup,” Usov said. “But I will steal his attitude.”

Unlike other stage actors, he is his own “writer, director, light designer.” For Usov, the relationship with the audience is vital.

“You can’t ask a fish how it feels without water, right?” he said. “For me, it’s the same. I cannot [live] without this; it’s my destiny.”

For the performance schedule and to purchase tickets, visit tickets.flipcircus.com.



EDUARDO ESCAMILLA/ THE RIDER PHOTOS

Trapeze artist Marharyta Koniechnykh executes a mid-air maneuver on a suspended bar to rehearse her thrilling act Tuesday outside the McAllen Convention Center. The show comes to the Rio Grande Valley, and will run until Feb. 24 outside the McAllen Convention Center and from Feb. 27 to March 9 at the Sunrise Mall parking lot in Brownsville.

digital entertainment, Vazquez insists live performance remains king.

“You cannot get that same feeling, that immersion from a phone,” he said. “You can

tent ensures every seat is close to the action, sitting no further than 50 feet from the ring.

“You can get really creative with the way you set up the lights and the type of artists that you will

performing his first-ever trapeze act.

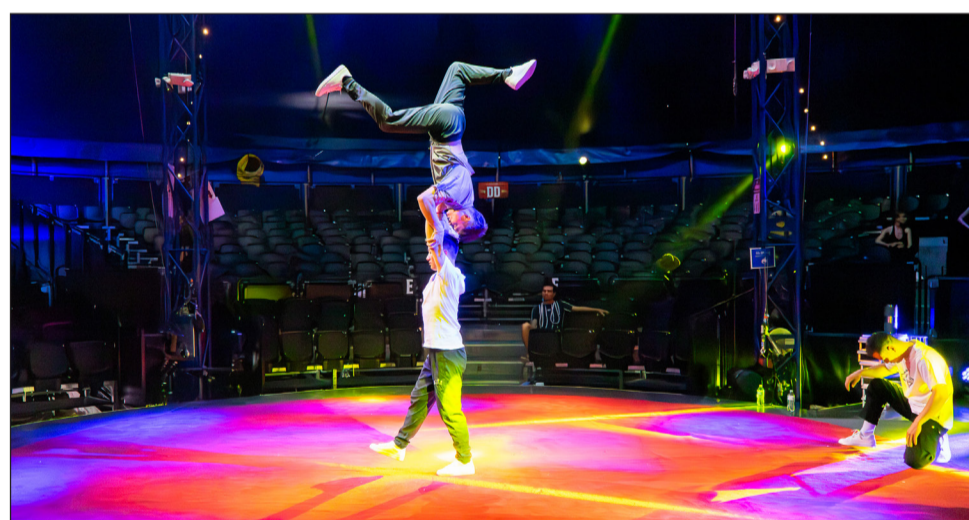
“Since it is a smaller circus, we do fly really near the audience,” he said “... It’s a great visual experience.”

Vazquez added

the trapeze, my heart was gonna jump out of my chest. And so, each time, you have to confront that emotion, and the adrenaline is buzzing through your body at all times.”

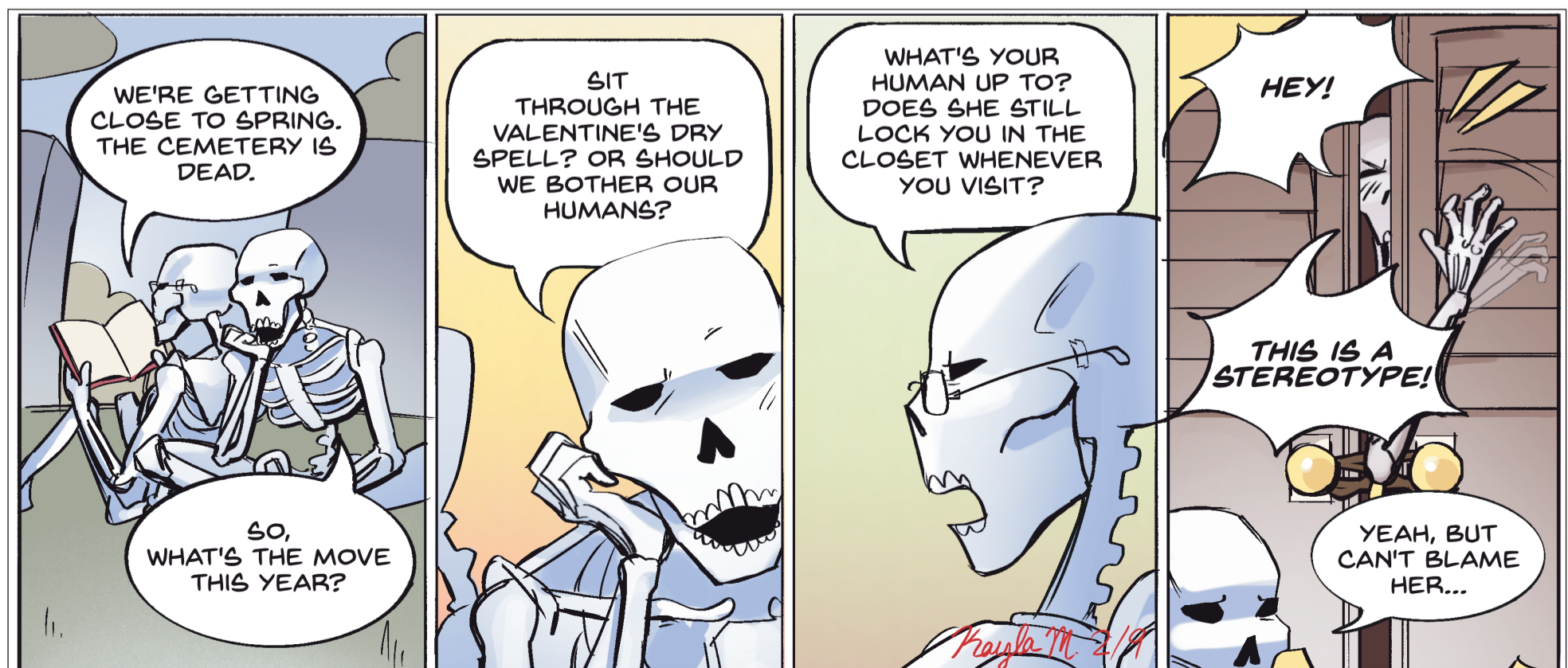


Thirty eight-year veteran Misha Usov rehearses his signature act Tuesday, that incorporates bags poetically dancing in the air, outside the McAllen Convention Center.



The Kung Fu Boys rehearse their acrobatic act testing their agility, strength and balance Tuesday outside the McAllen Convention Center.

CADAVER CONVERSATIONS #5



VAQUEROS ASSEMBLE FOR A WEEK OF GAMES

STEPHEN GUTIERREZ
THE RIDER

UTRGV Athletics announced the start of #RallyTheValley Week, a new campus tradition in partnership with McAllen International Airport.



THE RIDER FILE PHOTOS

Jalayah Ingram, a UTRGV junior guard, drives down the court for a layup as Kamryn McLaurin, a Houston Christian University freshman guard, tries to guard during the Jan. 29 game in the Fieldhouse on the Edinburg campus.

The week will bring the opportunity for students and fans a chance to win two round-trip tickets to a destination of their choice and themed merchandise, according to Jonah Goldberg, senior associate athletic director for Communications and Championships.

#RallyTheValley Week spans from Thursday until Feb. 17, containing eight home games shared between baseball and basketball in the six-day period. According to the Jan. 16 Athletics news release, the

UTRGV Women's Basketball Team will kick off the week against Lamar University on Thursday, followed by the Vaqueros Baseball Team starting its season with a three-game series against the University of Kansas from Friday to Sunday.

Goldberg said the department wanted to turn the stretch of games into "something special" and saw the opportunity when Homecoming was moved to the fall.

"With Homecoming now being a part of football, we thought, 'How can we keep that week just as special?'" he said. "We didn't want it to lose its luster ... so that's where the idea for #RallyTheValley Week was born."

Sara Hernandez, senior associate athletic director for Marketing and Strategic Initiatives, said the event will be a "little bit different," but that it is still about spirit and an opportunity to celebrate UTRGV.

Hernandez added she thinks it is a good opportunity to bring everybody together, encouraging fans of each sport to "see what the other has to offer."

She said the week could help "get baseball off to a good start" in its season and "give basketball a little bit of an extra push."

Fans will each receive a themed passport that will be stamped for each game they attend, with the opportunity to earn prizes.

"You get your first gift at five [games], your second gift at sixth, your third at the seventh and the final at eight," Goldberg said.

According to Hernandez, these



Easton Moomau, a UTRGV sophomore infielder, slides to first base and avoids a tag out by Cecil Lofton, a Southern Illinois University senior infielder, during the Feb. 14, 2025, game in the Baseball Stadium on the Edinburg campus. The Vaqueros defeated the Salukis 8-4.

include a #RallyTheValley tote bag, T-shirt, water bottle and hoodie, with each given out in the previously mentioned order.

Goldberg said he acknowledges going to all eight games is a "big ask," but those who do will also have a chance to win two round-trip non-stop plane tickets from McAllen International Airport.

Hernandez added that at most games fans will also have the opportunity to win prizes from giveaways hosted by various UTRGV athletic sponsors, such as Fork to Fit Kitchen, BlueWave Express Car Wash and Vaquero Outfitters.

"It's not only the passport drive," she said. "Every game

is going to have something to incentivize our students to come by."

According to the news release, fans can purchase tickets for all eight games for \$30, while students can attend for free with their ID.

Goldberg said he is "anticipating a lot of people" to attend these games.

"I think you're going to really see a lot of people who are going to all the games," he said. "It's a really unique opportunity to really let it all out and cheer on your teams in a short span."



The UTRGV Men's Basketball Team practices its defense and offense during a five-on-five practice game Jan. 15 in the Fieldhouse on the Edinburg campus.

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK PITCHAYAPA PUNGPHO



PHOTO COURTESY UTRGV ATHLETICS

UTRGV golfer Pitchayapa Pungpho finished with 233 points at the Texas State Invitational Feb. 2 at the Landa Park Golf Course in New Braunfels. The team finished fifth.

Pitchayapa Pungpho is a psychology sophomore from Bangkok, Thailand, and plays for the UTRGV Women's Golf Team. Pungpho had a scoring average of 78.4 last fall and finished tied for 19th at the Lady Clerico with a three-round score of 222.

Q: What is a fun fact about yourself?

A: "I have been to five countries for golf."

Q: Who or what got you started in golf?

A: "My dad."

Q: What has made you continue golf?

A: "My older sister also played golf and got a scholarship here, too."

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

A: "I would say [Atthaya 'Jeenoo' Thitikul]. She is Thai, too, and is the No. 1 player."

Q: Who is your favorite golf player?

A: "I like Lydia Ko."

Q: How do you mentally prepare for a game?

A: "I usually practice until I feel confident."

Q: What kind of music do you listen to?

A: "I listen to R&B, hip-hop and pop."

Q: Which shows or movies do you like to watch?

A: "I like 'Stranger Things.'"

Q: Do you have any hobbies?

A: "I like to watch soccer and listen to music."

Q: What do you like most about UTRGV?

A: "I would say all the activities and the campus; it's pretty nice."

Q: What are your biggest goals?

A: "To have an average even par or under par."

--Compiled by Mariajose Garza

NOTHIN' BUT CANE'S




OFFICIAL PARTNER OF UTRGV ATHLETICS



ORDER ONLINE



RAISINGCANES.COM

VISIT US AT
718 WEST UNIVERSITY DR.

f X @ d raisingcanes

SUBMIT A STORY IDEA TO
[THERIDER@UTRGV.EDU](mailto:therider@utrgv.edu)

ICE Continued from Page 1

Mark Kaswan, a UTRGV professor in the School of Political Science, Public Affairs, Legal and Security Studies, said Rio Grande Valley contractors gathered to make a plea to local political leadership and members of Congress.

“[The plea was] to ask ICE to back off of the enforcement on construction sites,” Kaswan said. “Which there had been several raids and this was having a very significant impact on construction in the Valley.”

Kaswan said the effect can already be seen in the city as fear may prevent people from going out of their homes.

“They’re not shopping; they’re not eating out,” he said. “So, it can have a pretty significant economic impact on the consumer side.”

Branton Puente, a cyber security sophomore, said his family feels the concern and worry.

“One of my tios had a whole two-week period of ... staying in his house and not going to work because there was major ICE activity at Los Fresnos,” Puente said.

Yesenia Reyes, a marketing freshman, said she does not support the agency.

“I don’t think it’s the way to go or the way to do something,” Reyes said. “Obviously, it’s extremely wrong because of the events that have been happening with the few people that just passed away because of the ICE raids.”

Christina, an accounting senior, who declined to give her last name, said she has not noticed any ICE activity.

“I’ve mostly just heard about



Protesters hold up signs during the Be The Hero Walkout on Feb. 2 outside the Main Building on the Brownsville campus.

MARIAJOSE GARZA / THE RIDER PHOTOS

it on social media, but I haven’t seen anything on my side,” Christina said. “... I think just the media is kind of taking it out of context.”

She added she supports the agency and its efforts to remove individuals living in the country illegally.

“They’re just doing their jobs,” Christina said. “They’re just doing what they’re being told to do.”

Kaswan said ICE’s main authority is law enforcement, focusing now more on the immigration part of its responsibilities.

“They’re also responsible for customs,” he said. “Customs means goods that are imported into the country. They’re the folks who collect the tariffs that have been imposed.”

Kaswan added the agency has the authority to arrest and detain people who are believed to lack permanent legal status and initiate deportation proceedings.

He added, however, since the crime is a misdemeanor, individuals who are detained are not supposed to be jailed.

“Their detention is not supposed to be a punishment,”

the professor said. “It’s intended to be kind of a holding place until their immigration status is resolved.”

Kaswan said people who come into the United States have the right to apply for asylum, giving individuals legal status that needs to be adjudicated. In some instances, adjudication could take up to two to three years.

He added many people being detained have asylum claims and are legal residents.

“They’re picking up citizens,” Kaswan said. “They’re picking up tribal citizens, people

from indigenous tribes who happen to be brown. So, they’re pretty significant numbers of people who do not fit under the classification of an illegal resident. Let alone the [Donald] Trump administration’s [claiming] they’re only going after dangerous criminals.”

The professor said there are several proposals in Congress working to limit the agency’s authority.

“For example, respect for civil liberties, making sure that ICE agents don’t have an immunity if they break the law when they are in the process of enforcing the law,” Kaswan said.

Cowen said Brownsville is a place for international trade, aerospace, manufacturing, higher education and innovation.

“And our future depends on stability, collaboration and trust of our government institutions,” he said.

The mayor added as policies change, the city will continue its responsibility to keep residents safe and progress its economy.

“We encourage individuals to follow the law, find the resources they need to be able to go through proper legal process to obtain legal citizenship in the U.S.,” he said.

“And we encourage Congress and this administration to pass comprehensive immigration reform and expand pathways and work authorizations for those that contribute positively to our communities and our country.”

To find someone who was detained, call the ICE Harlingen Field Office at (956) 389-7884 or visit ICE Online Detainee Locator System.



Protesters hold up signs during the Be The Hero Walkout on Feb. 2 outside the Main Building on the Brownsville campus.



Protesters hold up signs during the Be The Hero Walkout Feb. 2 throughout the Brownsville campus.

WALKOUT Continued from Page 1

Javier Mendez, a psychology junior, said he thinks the protest was about making students’ voices heard and pushing back against policies they believe harm immigrant communities.

“The significance of this to me is that everyone, no matter how small you are, has a voice,” Mendez said. “We are not happy with the constant funding of ICE. We are not happy with the treatment of the people.”

Dafne Escamilla, a sophomore, said the issue affects everyone.

“At some point we were all immigrants,” Escamilla said. “People should have an opportunity to live the American dream.”

She added she believes the current approach to immigration is wrong.

“I love my country,” said Escamilla, who holds dual U.S. and Mexican citizenship. “But what it’s doing is wrong, and I do not stand for it.”

Noah Ramos, a social studies sophomore, said even a small turnout felt like an important first step.

“I feel like it’s a start,” Ramos said. “We got to start somewhere.”



Cal Cavazos (from left), a biology junior; Juan De Dios-Porras Jr., a psychology senior; and Sarah Yzaguirre, a biology freshman, hold signs during the Be The Hero Walkout Feb. 2 on the Bronc Trail on the Edinburg campus.

AARYKAH NAVARRO / THE RIDER

He said he hopes to see similar actions across campus and in Brownsville, adding his family’s background motivated him to participate.

“I grew up in a Mexican household,” Ramos said. “I think to myself, ‘What would happen if that happened to

my grandparents?’”

Brownsville

Austin Garza, an organizer and an education freshman, said he coordinated with Edinburg organizer Diego Alejo, a philosophy junior, to plan the demonstration.

Garza said Brownsville students helped create flyers, held sign-making meetings and organized chants ahead of Feb. 2.

“I feel like everyone has rights, even people that are undocumented here,” he said. “I think everybody has the right to due process.”

Nicole Logan, an art senior, said she learned about the walkout after seeing a flyer on campus and helped spread the word within her department.

“I think it’s super important that people show up for our community,” Logan said. “There’s a lot of people that feel hopeless, and I feel like there’s nothing to be done. But it’s things like these, like these walkouts, that change perspective.”

Gustavo Sanchez, a history junior, said he believes ICE should be abolished, while Amy Morales, a marketing freshman, said she opposes the level of funding the agency receives.

--Mariajose Garza contributed to this report.