

THE RIDER

THE STUDENT VOICE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS RIO GRANDE VALLEY

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LOCAL

COMMUTE EASE



VALERIA TOKUN HAGA /THE RIDER

John Cowen, mayor of Brownsville, speaks during the 2026 State of the City Address Wednesday in the Texas Southmost College Performing Arts Center.

Potential expansion may come to UTRGV

HUGO SEPÚLVEDA
THE RIDER

Brownsville and UTRGV are working together to increase the university's reach and reduce the need to travel to the Edinburg campus by adding two four-year majors to the city campus' curriculum and a possible expansion north of the city, according to Mayor John Cowen.

On Wednesday, the City of Brownsville hosted the 2026 State of the City Address at the Texas Southmost College Performing Arts Center.

Cowen announced updates to the Task Force of the Future, a partnership between the city and UTRGV to expand educational opportunities in Brownsville for Cameron County students.

"One of the most recent announcements has added more than 3,000 new student seats in Brownsville this semester," he said. "This gives our students the opportunity to learn, grow and earn their degrees right here at home while reducing the need to travel to the Edinburg campus."

Cowen added UTRGV is ready to add four-year degrees in mechanical and civil engineering on the Brownsville campus.

"UTRGV has invested more than \$514 million in Brownsville since 2015," the mayor said. "They're actively working to acquire 60 acres with the option to acquire

additional acreage on the north side of town for a future Brownsville campus expansion."

The university is waiting on pending approval by the University of Texas System Board of Regents. The board will next meet on May 20 and 21.

Cowen also highlighted the city's yearlong process of project innovations and economic and infrastructure growth. He said the past year has been about taking action on infrastructure, economic development and quality of life.

"Recently ranked the No. 1 metro in the U.S. for investment and named an emergent economic hotspot for 2025, we have become a magnet for opportunities," the mayor said.

He said one of the big responsibilities of any city is to build and maintain infrastructure. Now, the city is actively executing a historic \$357 million multi-year capital improvement plan.

From the capital improvement plan, \$215 million has already been used to modernize core infrastructure, improve quality of life and support long-term economic growth, according to Cowen.

He added, this year, the city secured \$27.8 million in grant funding from the Rio Grande Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization to bring smarter and more connected transportation. "\$10.3 million of this investment are

being used to implement a citywide intelligent transportation system, designed to modernize and optimize our traffic signals," Cowen said.

BROWNSVILLE INVESTMENT

UTRGV has invested > \$514 million in Brownsville since 2015

The mayor said the initiatives will transform Brownsville from one of the least-synchronized cities in the Valley into one of the most.

The city address presented companies that would bring a total of 24,000 new jobs and \$30.3 billion in capital investment, such as Linde plc, Amazon, Superior GHQ, SpaceX, and the America First Refinery and NextDecade LNG projects.

Cowen said there is a potential billion-dollar investment with the High Tech Advanced Manufacturing company looking at the Port of Brownsville as a possible location for its new plant, with the announcement expected in a few months.

"This is not just any project," he said. "[It] is one that pushes the boundaries of maritime innovation, technology and artificial intelligence as we know it."

STATE

Texas bans smokable cannabis products

EMMA CASTILLO
THE RIDER

The Texas Department of State Health Services adopted new rules that will take effect Tuesday, which effectively bans smokable consumable hemp products and introduces high-cost licensing for retailers.

State health officials created the new regulations in response to a Sept. 10 executive order issued by Gov. Greg Abbott, directing state agencies to establish stricter oversight of what Texas defines as CHPs.

The order came after a legislative stalemate, where lawmakers could not reach consensus on whether to regulate intoxicating hemp-derived compounds or pursue another outright ban. In June, Abbott vetoed an earlier bill, Senate Bill 3, that would have prohibited THC products, a measure strongly backed by Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick.

In a March 19, 2025, statement, Patrick praised the passage of SB 3, calling it a necessary step to protect public safety.

"Retailers across Texas have exploited a state agriculture law to sell life-threatening, unregulated forms of [THC] to Texans, including children," Patrick said. "These dangerous products must not be allowed to permeate our communities and endanger Texas children."

Bryant Sculos, a political science lecturer at UTRGV, argues the policy is not addressing any clearly defined public health issue.

See **CANNABIS**, Page 2

LOCAL

Vet training program aims to reduce stray populations

SOFÍA CANTÚ SAUCEDA
SPANISH EDITOR

A new \$384,000 grant is set to expand access to spay and neuter services in the Rio Grande Valley through a veterinary training program that brings together Be. Spay/Neuter Consulting, Palm Valley Animal Society and Donna North High School.

The grant was donated to Be. Spay/Neuter Consulting from Maddie's Fund, a national family foundation established by Dave and Cheryl Duffield, "committed to creating a safety net of care for animals in need," according to the fund's website.

Elsa Kohlbus, founder and executive director of Be., said the training program will be divided into two parts.

"First, we are going to be working with veterinarians in the Rio Grande Valley and nearby parts of Texas," Kohlbus said. "The second part is that we're going to be training students at Donna North High School as technicians and veterinary assistants."

See **GRANT**, Page 2

THE RIDER

The Rider is the official, award-winning student newspaper of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. The newspaper is widely distributed on and off campus in Brownsville and Edinburg, Texas. Views presented are those of the writers and do not reflect those of the newspaper or university.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today

Monday Tabling

The **Christians at RGV** will host a tabling event from 10 to 11:30 a.m. on the Student Union lawn on the Brownsville campus.

Sundaes on Mondays

The **Student Union** will host Sundaes on Mondays from noon to 1 p.m. in the Student Union veranda on the Brownsville campus. A student ID is required.

Spill the Tea with IFSO

The **Intersectional Feminist Student Organization** will host spill the tea with IFSO from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the Student Union on the Edinburg campus.

Student Nurse Organization

The **Student Nurse Organization** will meet from 6 to 7 p.m. in Health Affairs Building West Room 1.404 on the Edinburg campus and at the same time in Music, Science and Learning Center Room 1.105 on the Brownsville campus.

CAB Kpop Tabling

The **Campus Activities Board** will host a K-pop tabling event from 10 to 11 a.m. on the Chapel lawn on the Edinburg

campus.

Delta Zelta General Meeting

Delta Zelta will meet from 6 to 7 p.m. in Student Academic Center Room 1.101 on the Edinburg campus.

Tuesday

Save the Beach Tabling

Texas Rising will host a save the beach tabling event from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. on the University Library lawn on the Brownsville campus.

MSOC General Meeting

The **Mathematical Society** will meet from 5 to 6 p.m. in Math and General Classroom Building Room 2.416 on the Edinburg campus.

Access for Sex-Ed Weekly 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.

Beta Alpha Psi-Xi Phi Chapter General Meeting

The **Beta Alpha Psi-Xi Phi Chapter** will meet from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. in Health Affairs Building East Room 1.114 on the Edinburg campus.

Women's History Month

The **Center for Student**

Involvement will host a Women's History Month event from 1 to 2:30 p.m. in the University Ballroom on the Edinburg campus.

Wednesday Bible Study

The **Christians at RGV** will host a Bible study from noon to 1:45 p.m. in Interdisciplinary Academic Building Room 1.221 on the Brownsville campus.

Creative Writing Club Meeting

The **Creative Writing Club** will meet from 5 to 6 p.m. in Liberal Arts Building South Room 180 on the Edinburg campus.

Game Development Night

The **Valle Game Devs** will host a game development night from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. in Interdisciplinary Engineering and Academic Building Room 1.206 on the Edinburg campus.

Thursday ASL Club Meeting

The **American Sign Language Club** will meet from noon to 1:30 p.m. in Health Affairs Building East Room 1.114 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. Attendees can discuss **important topics** about the club.

HOF Pop-Up Shop

The **House of Fashion** will host a pop-up shop from 3 to 6 p.m. on the Student Union east patio on the Edinburg campus.

SARE Aguas Frescas Fundraiser

The **Society of Aerospace and Robotic Engineers** will host a fundraiser from noon to 3 p.m. on the Chapel lawn on the Edinburg campus.

Caring for the Valley and MedLife at UTRGV Blood Drive

The **Caring for the Valley and MEDLIFE at UTRGV** will host a blood drive from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on the University Library lawn on the Edinburg campus.

Friday 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 March 11 and 24.

March 11

4:39 p.m.: An officer responded regarding markings found on the northwest exterior wall in the Liberal Arts North Building on the Edinburg campus. The case is under investigation.

March 13

9:56 a.m.: An employee sustained minor injuries to his hand while placing a metal bollard back in place in Lot E-15 on the Edinburg campus. The employee refused Emergency Medical Services.

March 14

11:59 p.m.: A student reported,

via email, a vehicle striking a parked unattended vehicle in Lot E-38 on the Edinburg campus. The email stated after the collision, the second vehicle left the area and parked in a different space. The case is under investigation.

March 17

2:44 p.m.: An officer met with a residential assistant at Casa Bella who reported finding a vape pen inside a dormitory while conducting a health and safety inspection. The officer took custody of the vape pen, which tested positive for THC. The case is under investigation.

March 18

10:52 a.m.: An employee reported a fire extinguisher was missing, which was possibly

misplaced during a recent event, in the Performing Arts Complex on the Edinburg campus.

March 19

2:16 p.m.: An officer responded regarding statements written in pen on the first-floor men's restroom wall in Sabal Hall on the Brownsville campus. A work order was submitted to remove the markings. The case is under investigation.

March 20

10:29 a.m.: An officer met with a non-affiliated woman who tripped and fell while attending an event in the Health and Physical Education Complex on the Edinburg campus. The woman declined Emergency Medical Services and stated she would seek medical assistance

on her own.

March 24

10:33 p.m.: An officer contacted an employee who reported almost being struck by a vehicle while walking through a crosswalk on North Sugar Road in Edinburg. No injuries were reported.

2:34 p.m.: A student reported finding damage to the rear window on her vehicle while it was left unattended in Lot E-26 on the Edinburg campus. The officer was unable to determine whether damage occurred on campus.

--Compiled by Narda Serna

The Student Fee Advisory Committee (SFAC) advises the university president on the allocation of the student services fee in accordance with Texas Education Code Sec. 54.5043.

SFAC will begin review of Fiscal Year 2027 budget proposals.

UPCOMING MEETINGS 2026

Subject to change.

| Date | Time |
|------------------|------------------|
| Friday, March 13 | 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. |
| Friday, March 27 | 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. |
| Friday, April 10 | 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. |

All meetings will be in EUCTR 323

For more information, visit:



Please contact the Office of the Dean of Students at dos@utrgv.edu or (956) 665-2260 to RSVP and/or request accommodations.

CANNABIS

Continued from Page 1

"The Republican Party is trying to solve a perception that they support drug use," Sculos said.

He added he has found "no evidence that would indicate a widespread problem that the new policy will help address."

According to Sculos, certain regulations, such as clearer labeling and safety standards, could be beneficial, but he emphasized similar rules already exist in other states without requiring a full ban. Instead, he said the legislation is more about political signaling.

The lecturer said the policy is "massively misinformed," and the issue is shaped by political divisions within the state. He added he believes some leaders hold "unscientific views" about marijuana despite data from other states and pointed to inconsistencies in how substances are regulated.

"If you're not having a conversation about alcohol and cigarettes ... where is [the push] on banning cigarettes or banning alcohol?" Sculos said.

Research from states with legalized marijuana shows different outcomes than those cited by supporters of the ban, he said.

"One thing that we see ... is a decrease in overdoses from harder drugs," Sculos said, adding marijuana is "routinely recognized as a lot safer" than many alternatives.

The lecturer said restricting

legal access could have unintended effects on both consumers and public safety as consumers may resort again to the black market.

On top of a loss of accessibility in the market, consumers will now face restrictions in products they currently have access to.

According to Sculos, 50% of most dispensaries' products are smokable CHPs.

"It definitely decreases consumer choice," he said. "There's a social aspect to smoking. This is true for cigarette smoking. Some people just drink to get drunk but, other people, it's a social activity, right? You drink, you hang out with other people. It's the same thing with smoking marijuana. Except, well, no one's passing around an edible."

Sculos said he believes the policy may not last long in its current form as the economic pressure could lead to revisions.

For smoke shops and hemp retailers, the policy could mean significant financial losses. Monica Garcia, manager of a Smoke King smoke shop, said the restrictions would directly affect daily operations.

Garcia said smokable hemp products are among the store's most popular items and removing them will likely reduce revenue and customer traffic.

"I do feel that regular customers ... [we are] losing all of them ... so it is a big hit," she said. "People are going to have to turn to ... illegal methods."

UTRGV to vacate TSC-leased buildings in Brownsville

Academic programs to be impacted by the change

MYKEL DEL ANGEL
ONLINE EDITOR

University officials confirmed UTRGV will vacate its leased facilities on the Texas Southmost College campus by Fall 2026. A lease authorization from the University of Texas System Board of Regents shows the agreement expires Aug. 31, with plans for the university to gradually reduce its footprint as operations are relocated to other facilities.

"We actually started two years ago when that new lease was signed in 2024, and so overall we are vacating 160,000 square feet of space that we were leasing," said Patrick Gonzales, vice president for University Marketing and Communications. "That was our choice. We signed a new lease with TSC in 2024 and until 2026, so we knew in 2024 that we wanted to be out."

He said UTRGV has already vacated the following TSC buildings within the past two years: Cavalry Hall, Cortez Hall, the Garza Gymnasium, the Bookstore and part of the Vocational Trade Shop.

"This is a major transition, but our goal is for students to experience minimal disruption and for them to be able to continue their classes," Gonzales said.

The move will shift academic programs, such as engineering and fine arts, into new and existing university buildings on the Brownsville campus.

Jeffrey Ward, dean of the College



MARIAJOSE GARZA / THE RIDER

Karla Lopez, a psychology senior, shapes a clay bowl on the pottery wheel Feb. 23 in Rusteberg Hall in Texas Southmost College. UTRGV art and music programs are planning moves into new spaces over the summer, according to Jeffrey Ward, dean of the College of Fine Arts.

of Fine Arts, said the university has long leased multiple spaces on the TSC campus, including Rusteberg Hall and a rehearsal space known as the "Red Room" in the TSC Performing Arts Center.

"We knew this day was coming, so it wasn't a surprise," Ward said, noting fine arts programs are inventorying equipment and planning moves into new or existing campus spaces over the summer.

Robert Jones, a professor of engineering and chair of the Informatics and Engineering Systems department, said relocating engineering programs

requires extensive preparation because of the specialized infrastructure used in labs.

"It's a fairly complicated move," Jones said. "These are engineering facilities, and they require unusual power requirements. Many require compressed air and other utilities that don't exist in the Brownsville Interdisciplinary Academic Building we're moving into."

He said the transition involves multiple construction projects, including modifications to existing classrooms, modular buildings and a new machine shop and materials laboratory. "We have three construction projects

going," Jones said. "None of the buildings are ready yet, and we have about five months to get everything moved."

Teviet Creighton, a physics professor in the South Texas Space Science Institute at UTRGV, said most of the institute's equipment in the Science, Engineering and Technology Building at TSC will be moved to the Interdisciplinary Academic Building and other campus facilities.

Creighton said one space affected is the Space Engagement, Entrepreneurship, and Research room, originally set up as a remote command center for radio astronomy.

"We'll move the computers and equipment into a room in BINAB," he said. "But we may not be able to replicate the same setup right away."

The Rider reached out to TSC for comment, but officials declined to be interviewed or did not respond.

Students who rely on specialized labs at TSC said the transition could impact coursework.

"Anything that has to do with a lab will be taken at TSC," said Darren Mora, an electrical engineering senior. "That's where all the power supplies, all the multimeters, all the equipment that we use for measuring circuits or testing anything is located."

Mora added the move to modular buildings may limit instructional capacity.

"The portables will not be at the same capability as the facilities here at TSC," he said. "The portables are just not large enough to be able to house all the equipment, on top of having all those students in there."

Student employees help keep UTRGV running

SOPHIA CORTEZ
THE RIDER

Waking up early for class and keeping offices running can sound challenging but, for some of the 2,600 student employees across UTRGV, it is a part of an everyday routine, according to a faculty official.

According to Emilia Trevino, director of talent acquisition and mobility for the Office of Human Resources, being a student employee is something to take pride in.

"It opens up a lot of opportunities for you, and I am a huge advocate for student employment because I see how much after you graduate, how important it is to have work experience," Trevino said. "And to have that experience on campus, I highly encourage it."

According to the director, student employees for the Office of Human Resources multitask on a daily basis. Their responsibilities include tasks such as reviewing job postings, approving requests, reviewing criminal backgrounds and helping at the front desk.

For students like Marieli Morales, a psychology junior from the Brownsville campus, working at UTRGV has been a great experience.

"I've been working in the Center for Student Involvement for two years now," Morales said. "My

favorite part about my job is the people. I've honestly met really good people. My supervisor is great."

For her, a typical day at work consists of responding to emails, meeting with her supervisor to help coordinate events and interacting with her coworkers.

A student from the Edinburg campus, Tristan Quintero, a psychology senior, started working for the Student Union Game Room three years ago.

"It started by luck," Quintero said. "I applied during the summer, and it was a very competitive application process, but they liked me and ended up giving me the job."

He added a typical day at work for him consists of collaborating with students and doing video game tournaments. His favorite part about his job is his coworkers.

Trevino mentioned they will host a National Student Employment Week from April 13 to 17 with different activities for students on both the Edinburg and Brownsville campuses.

The week will include activities such as Cookies and Coffee from 9 to 10:30 a.m. April 13 on the Student Union veranda on the Brownsville campus and at the same time in the Student Union east patio on the Edinburg campus.



KARLA HERNANDEZ / THE RIDER

Sofia Palacios (left), a student assistant for the Student Union and an integrated health science junior, and Edgar Villareal, a planning and programming leader for the Student Union and in integrated health science senior, work Tuesday in the Game Room on the Brownsville campus.

A wellness and refresh session will also take place from 2 to 3:30 p.m. April 13 in Student Union Salón Gardenia on the Brownsville campus and at the same time in the Cenizo Room on the Edinburg campus.

"Every student can go," she said. "Of course, our main audience are student employees because it is a week for the students to celebrate."

On April 13, collaborating with the Career Center, students will have an opportunity to have their resume and get a professional headshot to prepare themselves for the summer job fair April 16 during the week.

GRANT
Continued from Page 1

She added Be. Spay/Neuter Consulting decided to bring this program to the Valley because of the need.

"It is one of the highest places in need in the country for these kinds of services, so it really made sense for us to try and bring it here," Kohlbus said.

She said the main idea of the program is to increase the local capacity of spay and neuter to help serve the community.

The grant will pay to bring the "highly experienced veterinarians" to do hands-on training with staff, veterinarians and students in the Valley, according to Kohlbus.

She added the first couple of veterinary trainings will take

place from May 18 to 20 and June 19 to 21. Further dates will be announced later. Interested veterinarians can email info@bespayneuter.org.

Suzette Cruz, executive director at Palm Valley Animal Society, said the collaboration came from a previous meeting between her and Kohlbus during a local conference.

"They're all professional and experienced in the field, but they just were starting out their own company," Cruz said. "They were willing to help [at Palm Valley] with clinics to offer the services."

She said, after a few months, Kohlbus reached out to her with the idea, a "no-brainer."

Cruz added Palm Valley Animal Society will be in charge of providing their facility

and animals for the training program.

"The facility will be used for training purposes, and the animals that are going to be used during these trainings will be from here too," she said.

Cruz added the training program will be at no cost for participating veterinarians because they will be helping the shelter with the procedures at the facility.

"We have a lot of animals that need the surgery, so it benefits the shelter and it benefits the animals," she said. "We see up to 10,000 animals a year and about 60-70% of them are not altered."

Cruz added the addition of Donna North High School into the training program will give students the tools they need to

learn.

"We definitely need a lot more veterinarians," she said. "... There is a shortage, so I think it gives them the tools and the stepping stones to pursue that as a career."

Amanda Cedillo, a veterinary science teacher at Donna North High School, said she wants her students to learn to spay and neuter by actively serving.

"We saw firsthand that it's overwhelming: the need for affordable spay and neuter, and prevention services in the Rio Grande Valley," Cedillo said. "We really wanted our students to be part of it and be part of the solution."

Cedillo said students will not only observe in the training but will have first-hand experience. She added shadowing hours will

be given to students for their Certified Veterinary Assistant Level I certification during the training.

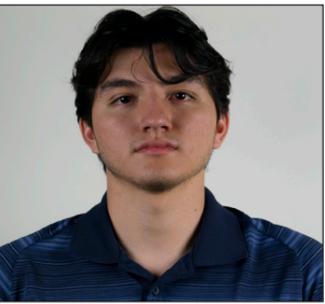
"It focuses on patient intake, wellness exams, assisting with procedures, anesthesia monitoring and recovery, all under the guidance of the veterinary professionals," she said.

Cedillo added the program will create a pathway for students after high school.

"This is going to open them for career exploration, advancement and building their confidence," she said. "... It's going to set them apart when they go to college or if they go get a career."

COLUMN OF THE WEEK

Is AI helping or making students lazy?



DIEGO VITA
PHOTOGRAPHER

solution. Today, that solution is often artificial intelligence. In just a few seconds, AI can write a paragraph, explain a concept, or even complete part of an assignment. It feels almost like magic. But also raises an important question: Is AI actually helping students learn, or is it slowly making them lazy?

There is no doubt that AI can be a helpful tool for students. Sometimes lectures move too fast, or textbooks explain things in a complicated way. When that happens, AI can break down difficult ideas into simpler explanations. It can give examples, summarize information and help students organize their thoughts before writing.

For many students who feel lost while studying, AI can feel like a tutor that is always available, even at late night when no one

“If AI does most of the thinking, students may slowly lose the habit of challenging themselves.”

else can help. The real issue begins when AI stops being a tool and becomes a shortcut. Some students start

depending on it for almost everything. Instead of struggling with the question or thinking through the problem, they ask AI to solve it for them. The assignment gets finished faster, but something important is lost in the process. That moment of relief after submitting the work can hide the fact that the student may not have learned anything at all.

Learning is not supposed to be easy all the time. Struggling with a problem, thinking deeply about a topic and even making mistakes are all important parts of learning. These moments help students grow and develop critical thinking skills. If AI does most of the thinking, students may slowly lose the habit of

challenging themselves.

Over time, this could make them less confident in their own ideas and abilities. At the same time, AI itself is not the enemy. Technology has always changed education, from calculators to the internet. The difference is how students choose to use it. AI can be a powerful support system when it is used to understand ideas better or review information. But when it becomes a shortcut to avoid effort, it can reduce the value of learning.

In the end, AI is just a tool. It can either help students grow or hold them back. The real question is not what AI can do, but how we as students decide to use it.

It's late at night, and the clock is getting close to midnight. Your assignment is due soon, and you're staring at a blank page. Many of us know this feeling—the stress, the pressure and the temptation to take the fastest

EDITORIAL CARTOON

Thank you, big oil



VAQUERO VOICE

What's your take on opera and ballet in modern times?

--Compiled and photos by Ethan Maldonado and Alizzaya Guel

Carlos Alarcon
management junior

“It's something that [is] going to be appreciated over time ... but as AI grows and unfortunately keeps pushing and maybe taking away certain things.”



Ysabella Ponce
marketing senior

“Even if it seems like they aren't as relevant as before, there is definitely still an audience out there for both. And it's something that can still be kept up with times, you know, there's context innovation.”



Samantha Salcedo
economics and finance senior

“Art has always been around and it will still be around, and I also know that people or artists now, whether that be any kind of artist that like to draw or musical artist. I just wanted to quickly say: you guys shouldn't feel discouraged at all, and that music will forever be human.”



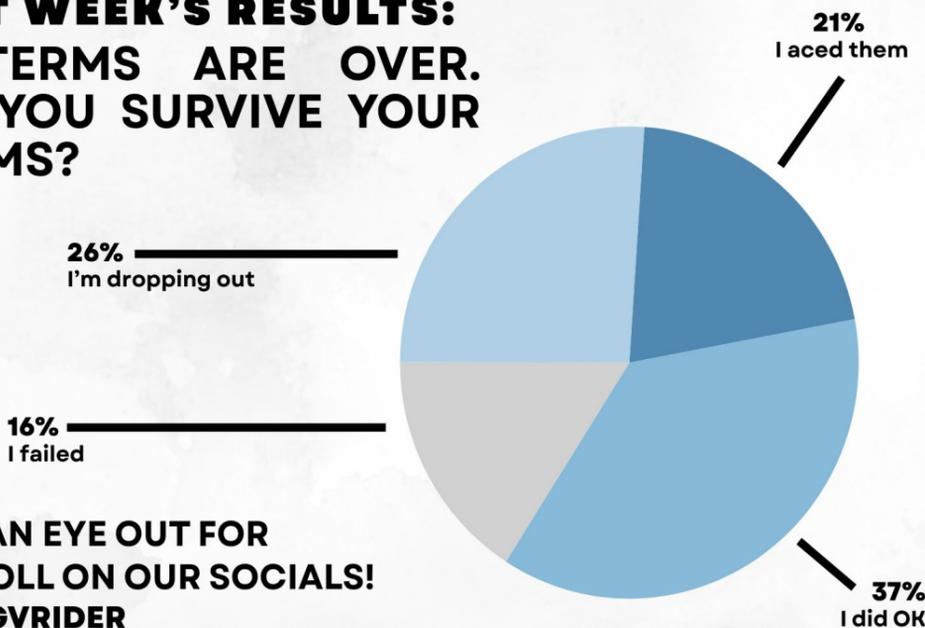
Victor Moya
computer science junior

“Well, I don't think that this should be discredited as old art forms or art forms that are not as relevant as other art forms. I think that's kind of silly. Art has always been very important, since, I mean, like, caveman times.”



WACKY WEB POLL

**LAST WEEK'S RESULTS:
MIDTERMS ARE OVER.
DID YOU SURVIVE YOUR
EXAMS?**



**KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR
THE POLL ON OUR SOCIALS!
@UTRGVRIDER**

UTRGV desaloja edificios de TSC en Brownsville

MYKEL DEL ANGEL
ONLINE EDITOR

Funcionarios de la universidad confirmaron que UTRGV desalojará sus instalaciones rentadas en el campus de Texas Southmost College para Otoño 2026. Una autorización de renta de la Junta de Regentes del Sistema de Universidad de Texas muestra que el acuerdo expira el 31 de agosto, con planes de que la universidad reduzca gradualmente su huella mientras las operaciones son reubicadas a otras instalaciones.

“De hecho, empezamos hace dos años cuando el nuevo contrato de renta se firmó en el 2024, y en general estaremos desocupando 160,000 pies cuadrados de espacio que estamos rentando”, dijo Patrick Gonzales, vicepresidente de Marketing y Comunicaciones de la universidad. “Esa fue nuestra elección. Firmamos un nuevo contrato con TSC en 2024 hasta el 2026, entonces sabíamos desde el 2024 que queríamos estar fuera”.

Dijo que UTRGV ya ha desalojado los siguientes edificios en los dos años pasados: Cavalry Hall, Cortez Hall, el Garza Gymnasium, el Bookstore y parte del Vocational Trade Shop.

“Esta es una gran transición, pero nuestra meta es que los estudiantes experimenten mínimas interrupciones y que ellos puedan continuar con sus clases”, Gonzales dijo.

El desalojamiento moverá diferentes programas académicos, como ingeniería y bellas artes, a nuevos y existentes edificios de la universidad en el campus de Brownsville.

En un correo el jueves a The Rider, Gonzales dijo que los estudiantes de UTRGV seguirán teniendo acceso al Recreation Center de TSC.



Estudiantes de la Escuela de Música ensayan ópera el 17 de febrero en el cuarto 1.217 del Music, Science and Learning Center en el campus de Brownsville.

Jeffrey Ward, decano de la Facultad de Bellas Artes, dijo que la universidad ha rentado varios espacios durante mucho tiempo en el campus de TSC, incluyendo Rusteberg Hall y un espacio de práctica conocido como “Red Room” en el TSC Performing Arts Center.

“Sabíamos que este día iba a llegar, entonces no fue una sorpresa”, Ward dijo, destacando que los programas



Se muestran los edificios modulares ubicados a un lado de Interdisciplinary Academic Building en el campus de Brownsville.

de bellas artes están haciendo inventario de sus equipos y planificando traslados a espacios nuevos o ya existentes en el campus durante el verano.

Robert Jones, un profesor de ingeniería y director del departamento de Informática y Sistemas de Ingeniería, dijo que reubicar los programas de ingeniería requiere preparación extensiva debido a la infraestructura especializada que se usa en los laboratorios.

“Es una mudanza complicada”, Jones dijo. “Estas son instalaciones de ingeniería, y requieren requisitos de energía inusuales. Mucho requiere de aire comprimido y otras utilidades que no existen en el Interdisciplinary Academic Building de Brownsville al que nos estamos moviendo”.

Dijo que la transición involucra múltiples proyectos de construcción, incluyendo modificaciones a salones que ya existen, edificios modulares, un nuevo taller mecánico y un laboratorio de materiales.

“Tenemos tres proyectos de construcción por el momento”, Jones dijo. “Ninguno de los edificios están listos todavía, y tenemos aproximadamente cinco meses para mover todo”.

Teviet Creighton, un profesor de física del South Texas Space Science Institute en UTRGV, dijo que la mayoría del equipo que se encuentra en el edificio

de Science, Engineering and Technology de TSC se moverá al Interdisciplinary Academic Building y a otras instalaciones del campus.

Creighton dijo que un espacio afectado es el cuarto de Space Engagement, Entrepreneurship, and Research, originalmente diseñado como un centro de mando remoto para radioastronomía.

“Moveremos las computadoras y el equipo a un cuarto en BINAB”, dijo. “Pero probablemente no podremos replicar la misma distribución de inmediato”.

The Rider intentó ponerse en contacto con TSC para comentarios, pero los oficiales declinaron a ser entrevistados o no respondieron.

Los estudiantes que dependen de laboratorios especializados en TSC dijeron que la transición podría afectar los trabajos de clases.

“Todo lo que tenga que ver con los laboratorios será quitado de TSC”, dijo Darren Mora, un estudiante de último año de ingeniería eléctrica. “Ahí es donde se encuentran todas las fuentes de alimentación, todos los multímetros y todos los equipos que utilizamos para medir circuitos o realizar cualquier prueba”.

Mora agregó que el traslado a los edificios modulares pueden limitar la capacidad de enseñanza.

“Los edificios portátiles no tendrán la misma capacidad que las instalaciones aquí en TSC”, dijo. “Los edificios portátiles no son de tamaño suficiente para ser capaz de soportar todo el equipo, sobre eso todos los estudiantes ahí dentro”.

The Rider entregó una solicitud de información pública para obtener una copia del contrato de arrendamiento entre UTRGV y TSC.

--Traducido por Sofia Cantú Saucedo



Karla Lopez, una estudiante de psicología, moldea un cuenco de arcilla en el torno de alfarero el 23 de febrero en Rusteberg Hall en Texas Southmost College.

VALLEY SPOTLIGHT

Hispanic Women's Network of Texas

SOFÍA CANTÚ SAUCEDA
SPANISH EDITOR

A medida que marzo, mes de conmemoración de la Historia de la Mujer, llega a su fin, organizaciones como Hispanic Women's Network of Texas (HWNT, por sus siglas en inglés) continúan impulsando el liderazgo, la representación y el crecimiento de las mujeres hispanas en Texas.

HWNT es una organización sin fines de lucro que se extiende por todo el estado, con el objetivo de promover el avance de las mujeres en la vida pública, corporativa y cívica a través de la educación y el desarrollo personal y profesional, de acuerdo a su página web.

A nivel local, en el Valle del Río Grande, Esmeralda Adame, presidenta del capítulo, describe el trabajo que realizan para estos esfuerzos, directamente a la comunidad.

“Promovemos el avance por medio de mentoría, dando visibilidad a las demás y empoderando a las mujeres para que sean su mejor versión”, Adame dijo.

Desde que el capítulo se abrió en el 2012, dijo que la organización no solo ha crecido en miembros, sino también en su participación con la comunidad.

“Ha crecido en los eventos que hacemos, en lo que hacemos por la comunidad y las líderes de la comunidad que participan”, Adame dijo. “A medida que estemos involucradas, el impacto



FOTO CORTESÍA ESMERALDA ADAME

Se muestra el equipo directivo del capítulo del Valle del Río Grande de la organización Hispanic Women's Network of Texas.

será mayor en las jóvenes”.

Recalcó que el capítulo ha trabajado mucho para llegar a donde están establecidas. Y que la representación de las mujeres sigue siendo importante tanto en el ámbito profesional como en la comunidad.

“Pero todavía hay mucho trabajo por hacer”, Adame dijo. “En realidad, hay mujeres en todas partes; simplemente, hay una falta de mentores”.

La organización tiene distintas oportunidades para las mujeres que son miembros.

“Tenemos oportunidades de networking; tienes la oportunidad de

promocionar tu negocio, de conversar con otras profesionales y estudiantes, y de ampliar una red compuesta por mujeres que realmente desean impulsar a las demás”, Adame dijo.

Agregó que las relaciones que se establecen en la organización pueden “convertirse en amigas, mentoras o simplemente colegas”.

Una de las iniciativas más grandes que HWNT tiene es “Lady in Red Scholarship Gala”, donde las mujeres y empresas de la región pueden ayudar a impulsar a jóvenes latinas por medio de ayuda financiera. “El dinero va para su educación”, Adame

dijo. “[...] Cuanto más podamos recaudar, más las podamos ayudar”.

Agregó que también les dan la oportunidad de aprender sobre diferentes profesiones para su futuro.

“Queremos asegurarnos de invitar a personas de la comunidad [...] líderes, propietarias de negocios para que hablen con ellos”, Adame dijo. “Contamos con abogadas, ingenieras, enfermeras, médicas y dentistas que vienen a conversar con ellas sobre las distintas áreas profesionales que podrían seguir en el futuro”.

La presidenta dijo que la celebración de las mujeres es importante para la organización, no solo este mes.

“Celebramos a las mujeres en cada evento que realizamos [...] en cada reunión, en cada encuentro, en todo lo que hacemos, nos dirigimos a ellas”, dijo.

Agregó que este mes significa brillar más alto: “no solo nosotras mismas, sino que tenemos la oportunidad de alumbrar a otras”.

Pensando en las nuevas generaciones, Adame dirigió unas palabras a las jóvenes que buscan abrirse un camino profesional y marcar la diferencia en su comunidad.

“Les aconsejaría que se unan a una organización [...] no solo donde te beneficies, sino a la que también puedan aportar valor a las demás”, dijo. “No hagan esto solas. Ya existe una comunidad de mujeres, toda una red de apoyo”.

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GALLERY

From screens to costumes



AARYKAH NAVARRO / THE RIDER PHOTOS

Viviana Salinas (left), a studio art sophomore who dressed as Momo Ayase from Dandadan, and Sebastian Tamez, a biology senior, wait in line during the Union Con event Wednesday in the Student Union on the Edinburg campus.



Diego Gonzalez, an accounting freshman who cosplayed BoJack Horseman, waits for a T-shirt Wednesday at the Union Con event in the Student Union on the Edinburg campus.



Manuel Perez (left), a mechanical engineering sophomore, and Sophia Williams, a history sophomore, use inflatable lightsabers during the inaugural Union Con event Wednesday on the Chapel lawn on the Edinburg campus.

ALBUM REVIEW

'Kiss All The Time. Disco, Occasionally.'



MARIAH'S TOP 5 PICKS

1. American Girls
2. Paint By Numbers
3. Taste Back
4. The Waiting Game
5. Aperture

MARIAH ESCOBAR
THE RIDER

Album releases have become a rite of passage for music lovers everywhere, and the anticipation of waiting for an album to drop has become the norm as people instantly announce their opinions on social media.

On March 6, Harry Styles released his album "Kiss All The Time. Disco, Occasionally."

The album instantly received mixed reviews all over social media as listeners all over the world shared their thoughts on Styles' new tracks, after he returned roughly from a three to four-year hiatus, stepping away from music after the end of his "Love on Tour" in July 2023.

The new album marks Styles' fourth studio album, encompassing a new look into his discography following his third Grammy-winning album, "Harry's House," and the end of One Direction.

The style of this album strays away from Styles' usual pop albums by taking inspiration from Berlin culture, electronic music and nightlife.

The opening track, "Aperture," creates a slow opening not expected by many.

Listeners were hesitant about the new sound as it contains a heavy production and unique vocals that contribute to the experimental album, which has divided listeners.

The first time I heard the song it didn't grab my attention, but I found myself with it stuck in my head, humming the chorus.

While departing from his usual performances, Styles remains true to some of his old sound, as inspiration

from '80s artists is still prominent. After a busy day, I listened to the album on a car ride home, not knowing what to expect, and was pleasantly surprised to enjoy the genre change.

Although this is considered a disco album, when I think of the term disco, the band Bee Gees immediately comes to mind, and I don't believe Styles will be considered a disco artist since he's known for his boy band.

The 10th song on the album "Dance No More" sounds the most disco-inspired throughout the entirety of the tracks as it's the most high-energy and danceable song.

When I first listened to the song, I was surprised by the change as I didn't think the album lived up to its title until this song, as nothing sounded extremely like a disco song.

Other songs on the track list, such as "Coming Up Roses" and "Paint By Numbers," offer a slower sound to the album that is reflective, somber and vulnerable ballads.

The songs reflect Styles' public image and the struggle with identity while in the public eye.

The lyric, "They put an image in your head, and now you're stuck with it," from "Paint By Numbers" stood out to me because it made me reflect on my own life, which I appreciate in the media.

From melancholic to upbeat songs, the record creates a unique atmosphere for listeners everywhere that may attract new and old fans.

The album offers a feel-good soundtrack that is good for working out, doing homework or a long commute, highlighting Styles' shift of genres.

Interview with a kitty cat



Mayla M. 3/30

From proposal to play

What adding a new sport consists of

Gael Espinoza
THE RIDER



THE RIDER FILE PHOTO

The UTRGV Swimming & Diving Team warms up for practice Sept. 30, 2025, at the Pharr-PSJA-UTRGV Natatorium.

programs that we aspire to be to make sure we have the resources," he said. "... Obviously, the regulations ... [it is] making sure you're complying with all the NCAA regulations that are prescribed to us."

Sponsorships and partnerships for new programs can help get funds and make deals by improving budgeting because a portion is obtained from an Intercollegiate Athletic Fee of \$26.50 per credit hour, capped at \$315 per semester, charged to every UTRGV student in their bill.

Conque added a partnership was needed for the Swimming & Diving

program "because natatoriums aren't easy to come by, right?"

He also mentioned football went through a little different process.

"Football, very similar, but on a little-bit different scale, right?" Conque said. "And so, we had to make sure that we had not just our student support on campus. ... We had to make sure that we had the community support because it takes, you know, for a football program to be successful, you need thousands of people to come to your games ... interested in what you're doing."

Athletics invested \$30 million to upgrade existing departmental facilities

and build its new Vaqueros Performance Center, according to an April 7, 2022, report from The Rider.

The department bought the former H-E-B Park for \$39 million, according to a March 4, 2024, report by The Rider, and turned it into Robert and Janet Vackar Stadium after another \$35 million in renovations, according to an Oct. 7, 2024, report.

For Women's Swimming & Diving, Athletics, in partnership with the City of Pharr and the Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District, built the Pharr-PSJA-UTRGV Natatorium for \$26 million, according to a Feb. 7, 2022, report by The Rider.

"Yeah, that's one of the biggest pieces to this," Conque said. "Those facilities are critical. And it's not just where we're going to play, but it's where we're going to practice and train and really live everyday life."

He said the department will focus on the newest, existing programs before planning a new one.

"We've got to continue to do what we're doing with our two programs now," Conque said. "But as we look ahead, I do think there [are] opportunities for sport expansion. But we have to make sure we follow the blueprint that we put in place with these two programs and, then, make sure that our two current programs that are really brand new are in a good position here where they can fly."

SPORTS COLUMN

The first but not the last



STEPHEN GUTIERREZ
THE RIDER

During my time at UTRGV, I've had two goals that I aim to accomplish. The first one, like many of us, is to graduate, and the other is to somehow leave my mark on this university.

Earlier this month, I was able to accomplish the latter during a trip to Lake Charles, Louisiana. And no, it wasn't gambling at the Golden Nugget, but this visit was the result of a chance I took with my director, Jesus Sanchez.

When both the men and women's basketball team clinched a spot in the Southland Conference Tournament, I asked him if I could cover the programs' matches like I normally do with any other.

Honestly, I expected the idea to be shot down as many of my colleagues told me it hadn't been done in the past. So when he told me that he would try his hardest to make it happen, I was completely blown away. ... I was officially going to be the first.

The week before the big tournament, I got confirmation I was being sent out to report on UTRGV's games, and Jesus told me if I did a great job, this could become a regular occurrence for sports reporters down the line.

As I prepared for my departure, many of my colleagues said the same thing: "Make us proud." That request really stuck with me, making me realize just how much what I was doing mattered to not just The Rider, but Student Media as a whole.

There was a lot of weight on my shoulders, especially with the bigger workload as I was not only a sports reporter, but also a photographer, sideline reporter and video editor, all-in-one.

Maybe this sounds corny, but I felt very connected to the Vaqueros during the tournament: We were both fighting to prove how much of an impact we could make and come out of Louisiana successful.

For them, success was making history in their programs, and becoming SLC Champions. While for me, it was making my team proud and pioneering the way for Student Media to continue covering post-season tournaments.

While I say that it was stressful, my time at Lake Charles was still a wonderful experience. I feel it helped me grow as a sports reporter as I had the chance to connect with other reporters attending the tournament, learning new skills and techniques from them.

The environment in the Townsley Law Arena was also a fantastic one to be in, especially during the semifinal matches where you could just feel how important these games were to not only the teams but the fans watching as well.

I also had a great time connecting with UTRGV's Spirit program. My first interaction with the band was quite hilarious as a couple of the members had approached me to ask if I was our mascot, Victory the Vaquero. (Obviously, I'm not the man under the suit, but I will say I know THOSE who are).

I'm not sure if the groups realize it or not, but our small interactions throughout the tournament all had a big impact on me. It was those moments that helped bring me back from being overwhelmed, or feeling like I wasn't doing a good enough job.

In a way, while they were all at the tournament to cheer for the Vaqueros, they indirectly cheered for me as well, and that helped me continue to work my hardest. I can't thank them enough for their support, nor will I forget it.

Was that effort and stress worth it? Definitely, 100%. Before I got back to the Valley, my director, along with many of my colleagues, reached out to congratulate me on my work and express how proud they were.

I might not have come out of the Townsley Law Arena with a trophy, but I still came back home accomplishing my goal. I'm extremely grateful for having the opportunity to write Student Media history and leave my mark on the university.

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Vaqueros four-peat in North Texas

Student Media, Gallery magazine awarded at state convention

DANIELA CHAPA-REYES
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The UTRGV Student Media team celebrated on March 21 after Julie Reed, Texas Intercollegiate Press Association executive director and student media adviser for Baylor University, announced the Vaqueros had won the Director's Cup, marking it as a fourth-consecutive win and fifth time in program history.

The convention was held March 19-21 in Denton, Texas, where members of The Rider newspaper, KVAQ-TV, Pulse magazine, Vaquero Radio and Gallery magazine represented the university and secured 47 state awards, including the Director's trophy, beating schools such as Baylor, Texas A&M University and Texas State University.

TIPA is the oldest state collegiate press association in the nation, after its first meeting in 1909, and is one of the largest and most respected collegiate groups in the country, according to its website.

The Director's Cup is awarded to the school that secures the most points by placing during the on-site live contests during the convention.

The live contests consist of 31 categories in which students test their skills, featuring real-world scenarios. Some of these include video production, public relations, copy editing, print news writing, TV advertising, social media and more.

Student Media claimed 12 live-contest awards.

The Rider won honorable mention for Best In Show - Newspaper website. Editor-in-Chief Daniela Chapa-Reyes won third place in Public Relations Release Writing; Editorial Cartoonist Kayla Martinez, first place in Editorial Cartoon; Copy Editor Carlos Castañeda, first place in Spanish News Writing; Arts and Entertainment Editor Eduardo Escamilla, second place in Editorial Writing; and Reporter Hugo Sepúlveda, second place in Radio Sports Writing.



PHOTO COURTESY UTRGV STUDENT MEDIA

UTRGV Student Media and Gallery magazine won 47 live and previously published awards at the Texas Intercollegiate Press Association convention held from March 19-21 in Denton, Texas. The team also took home the Director's Cup for the fourth-consecutive time and for the fifth time in the program's

KVAQ-TV Assistant News Director Perla Cortez won first place in Live Video News; TV Web Producer Juan Carlos Marquez Jr., second place in TV Advertising; Multimedia Journalist Víctor Otrega, third place in Spanish TV Announcing; and Multimedia Journalist Ian Juarez, third place in TV News Writing.

Pulse magazine Editor-in-Chief America Salazar won second place in PR Crisis Management.

Vaquero Radio Reporter Diego Montañó won first place in Spanish Radio Announcing.

In the previously published competition, Student Media and Gallery magazine won 38 awards, including 11 for Vaquero Radio, six for The Rider, eight for KVAQ-TV, three for Pulse magazine, four for the Student Media Marketing Team and five for Gallery.

Vaquero Radio won second place for

Newscast - Audio.

Former Sports Reporter Leonardo Guajardo won first and third in Sports Reporting - Audio, first and honorable mention in Sportscast - Audio.

Former Reporter Joseph Zambrano placed first and second in Program Production - Audio.

Former Reporter Victoria Gonzalez placed second in In-Depth News Reporting - Audio.

Reporter Emilio Suarez won honorable mention in General News Audio Story.

Station Manager Ariana Gallardo won honorable mention in Advertising/PSA/Promo - Audio.

For The Rider, former Editor-in-Chief Rebeca Salinas won first in Sports Page Design.

Former Editor-in-Chief Daniela Martinez Salazar won honorable mention for Cover Design-Newspaper.

Spanish Editor Sofia Cantú Saucedo

won first and second in Spanish Feature Story.

Former Photographer Jose Rodriguez won first in Breaking News Photo.

KVAQ-TV won first in Live Newscast - Video and Overall Excellence - Social Media and second place in Overall Excellence News Production - Video.

Ortega won first and second in Spanish Multimedia News.

Former Multimedia Journalist Desiree Villanueva and Cortez won second in Sportscast - Video.

Marquez, Cortez and TV News Director Dathan Treviño won honorable mention in Social Media - Breaking News.

For Pulse magazine, former Section Editor Nikole Salinas won second in Feature Photo.

Former Graphics Editor Devin Garza won third in Interactive Ad Design.

Former Online/Social Media Editor Adrian Gamboa won third in Advertising Campaign.

For Student Media Marketing, Marketing Manager Yazmin Castro Adame and Marketing Specialist Jocelyn Garcia Serna won first and third place in Advertising/PSA/Promo - Video and second place for In-House Marketing.

Student Media had collaboration wins. Garcia Serna, KVAQ-TV Multimedia Journalist Jasmin Espinosa and The Rider Reporter Sophia Cortez won first in Advertising/PSA/Promo - Video.

Rodriguez and Marquez won first in Program Production - Video.

Gallery magazine won second in Overall Design - Literary Magazine and third in Overall Excellence Literary Magazine.

Gallery magazine contributor Robert Martinez won first in Cartoon Strip/Panel.

Gallery magazine contributor Charlotte Hinojosa won first in Literary Writing.

Gallery magazine contributor Paola Medina won honorable mention in Static Information Graphic.

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