

THE RIDER

THE STUDENT VOICE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS RIO GRANDE VALLEY

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BVAC faces ongoing construction delays

GAEL ESPINOZA
THE RIDER

UTRGV’s Brownsville Visual Arts Complex remains under construction months after its expected August opening, leading to frustration among the staff, faculty and students.

Faculty members told The Rider there are

communication issues and construction-related disruptions, including classes moving online for a month, while university officials say renovations are progressing.

As The Rider reported on Aug. 31, the complex became possible after UTRGV’s lease with Texas Southmost College to use the Rusteberg Hall building ended.

A faculty member, who requested anonymity, said the building was still under construction when faculty moved in.

“It’s been under construction for this whole time,” the faculty member said. “We’re trying to conduct day-to-day active operations in an active construction zone, and it’s very frustrating, very difficult to do it.”

College of Fine Arts Dean Jeffrey Ward said the university has made progress and

all phase one classrooms, which include art, photography, ceramics, sculpture and the student lounge, are now being used for in-person instruction.

“We’re making really good progress,” Ward said. “Things are a little slower than anticipated, and that’s just part of renovating a new space. Sometimes, you encounter a lot of unexpected things. The good news is that all of our phase one classrooms, we are fully in now and teaching in-person classes in there. It’s not perfect. We still have a lot of touch-up things. ... I’m really so grateful to the faculty for just finding pathways to make it work for their students. It seems like they’re having a good experience.”



VALERIA TOKUN HAGA /THE RIDER

The Brownsville Visual Arts Complex is located at 2400 E. Van Buren St.

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GET OUT TO VOTE



MARIAH LYDIA ESCOBAR
THE RIDER

With early voting running through Friday and election day being Nov. 3, students and the community prepare to cast their ballots for the midterm election.

The ballot consists of races for Texas governor, U.S. Senate, U.S. House of Representatives and other local offices.

Republican Gov. Greg Abbott faces Democrat Gina Hinojosa and Libertarian Pat Dixon. Republican Ken Paxton, Democrat James Talarico and Libertarian Ted Brown are running for the U.S. senate seat currently held by Republican John Cornyn.

In the Rio Grande Valley for the 15th District in Hidalgo County Republican incumbent Monica De la Cruz faces Democrat Bobby Pulido. In the 34th Congressional District, incumbent Democrat Vicente Gonzalez faces off against Republican Eric Flores.

Dalila Martinez, a criminal justice freshman, said this election is her first time voting, so it is a nerve-wracking experience for her.

Martinez said it is challenging to decide what candidates to support because seeing names on the ballot can make her question if she is making the right choice.

She added attending class and city meetings have helped her learn more about politics and gave her the opportunity to speak with one of the candidates.

Maria Salas, an anthropology junior, said she was making plans to vote with her friends on Saturday because midterm elections are “super important.”

“I think just changing, being able to have more control of, like, the house and stuff like that, just getting ourselves a little more situated will help a lot,” Salas said.

She added she mainly considers candidates based on their policies and views on LGBTQ+ rights, immigrant rights and policies with current wars.

To stay informed, she said she uses several news sites such as The Washington Post, The New York Times and

The Guardian. She also uses social media and YouTube to keep up with current events.

For first time voters, Salas recommends for them to look up their ballot and research the candidates.

Alvaro Corral, assistant professor of political science for the School of Political Science, Public Affairs, Legal and Security Studies, said he recommends reviewing a sample ballot before heading to a polling location.

He said county election websites allow voters to navigate the races that correlate to their precinct.

“These sample ballots are important because it lets you see what your ballot is going to look like the day of,” Corral said.

EARLY VOTING CAMPUS POLLING LOCATIONS

For on-campus polling, visit Salón Jacaranda in the Student Union on the Brownsville campus and Student Academic Center on the Edinburg campus.

After reviewing the ballot, students can research candidates’ positions through various forms, including campaign websites, debates and news coverage. For incumbent officials, government websites can provide information about their work in office, according to Corral.

Students may also face challenges getting out to the polls to cast their vote.

Salas said transportation, balancing school and work can make voting difficult since some students do not have a car or someone that can drive them to a polling location.

“I think the campus polling sites help a lot, because then you don’t have to ... specifically drive out to a specific

location,” she said.

Salas added she believes many people are not interested in voting.

“I feel like some people don’t have the drive to get involved,” she said.

Corral said a major barrier for young voters is voter registration because the registration deadline for this year’s election was Oct. 5.

He said students have a stake in state elections because the Texas Legislature makes decisions affecting higher education, university policies and student life.

“It’s important to vote in this election because we have major offices that we voters will be deciding,” Corral said.

He said student turnout can be influential in local races, where relatively small numbers can determine the outcome.

Salas said there are many people who have a mentality that their vote does not matter and it is a reason why people miss out on votes.

“My vote isn’t going to make or break the election, but it’s the huge amount of people going, ‘Well, my vote doesn’t matter,’” Salas said.

Salas said she hopes to see certain laws readjusted and a little control and stabilization to come back to the state or the country.

“Don’t let anybody intimidate you into not voting, like, they’re safe places, like, on campus and stuff where you can go out and vote, but just take advantage of the right to vote,” Salas said.

Campus polling places for early voting are Salón Jacaranda in the Student Union on the Brownsville campus and the Student Academic Center on the Edinburg campus.

For Election Day, campus polling places will be Salón Cassia in the Main Building on the Brownsville campus and Student Academic Center on the Edinburg campus.

2 On Campus		Oct. 26 2026 THE RIDER	
THE RIDER		ANNOUNCEMENTS	
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.		Today Dirty Soda Fundraiser MEDLIFE Edinburg will host a dirty soda fundraiser at 8 a.m. at the University Library on the Edinburg campus. Visitors can buy flavored soda drinks and help support the organization’s activities. Find the Vaquero University Recreation will host a Find the Vaquero activity at 8 a.m. on the Edinburg and Brownsville campuses. Students can search for hidden Vaquero figures, explore campus landmarks and win prizes. NMDP Fundraiser Event The National Marrow Donor Program will host a fundraiser at 11 a.m. at the University Library courtyard on the Edinburg campus. Visitors can support the fundraising effort and learn more about the donor program. GOTV: Tabling Event College Democrats of Brownsville will host a get-out-the-vote tabling event at 11:30 a.m. at the Main Building East Front Lawn on the Brownsville campus. Students can receive information about voting and ways to participate in elections. BAP Fundraising Event Beta Alpha Psi – Xi Phi Chapter will raise funds with fruit served with Tajín and chamoy at noon and at the same time Tuesday at the University Library courtyard on the Edinburg campus. Students can purchase fruit with spicy and sweet toppings to support the accounting organization. Orange Crush Student Activities will host Orange Crush at noon and at the same time Tuesday at the Main Building East Front Lawn on the Brownsville campus. The Homecoming celebration will feature free food, music, cowboy-hat decorating and a custom playing-card activity. Bears and Blessing Outreach The Baptist Student Ministry will host Bears and Blessing outreach at 12:30 p.m. at the University Center Ballroom Lawn. Students can meet ministry members and take part in a friendly campus outreach activity. RGV College Democrats with Gina Hinojosa RGV College Democrats will host an event featuring Gina Hinojosa at 12:30 p.m. at the University Ballroom on the the Edinburg campus. Attendees can hear from Hinojosa and engage with the political organization. Lemonade Outreach The Baptist Student Ministry will host lemonade outreach at 1 p.m. at the Student Union on the Edinburg campus. Visitors can pick up lemonade and speak with members of the campus ministry. Tuesday NMDP Fundraiser Event The National Marrow Donor Program will host a fundraiser at 11 a.m. at the University Library courtyard on the Edinburg campus. Visitors can support the organization’s fundraising efforts and learn about its mission. IASA Halloween Fundraiser The Internal Audit Student Association will host a Halloween fundraiser at noon at the University Library lobby on the Edinburg campus. Students can support the association through a seasonal, Halloween-themed fundraiser. Fear Less Know More Talk About It UTRGV will host Fear Less Know More at 2 p.m. at the Student Union Sage Room on the Edinburg campus. The event offers students an opportunity to join a campus awareness conversation. Wednesday Rise & Grind University Recreation will host an early-morning Rise & Grind fitness activity at 7:15 a.m. at the University Recreation Center on the Edinburg campus. Participants can start the day with a guided workout focused on movement and fitness.	
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Daniela Chapa-Reyes ONLINE EDITOR Draya Rios SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR Alizzaya Guel COPY EDITORS Hugo A. Sepúlveda Emma Alegria Castillo A&E REPORTER Kayla Martinez REPORTERS Mariah Lydia Escobar Jorge Rios Danna Avalos Avila Gael Espinoza SPORTS REPORTERS Timothy David Tiana Meza PHOTOGRAPHERS Michelle Hernandez Valeria Tokun Haga Diego Vita Adrian Hernandez MARKETING MANAGER Yazmin Castro Adame MARKETING SPECIALISTS Leslie Benavides Jennifer Valdez Elisabet Villarreal Olazaran Rosa Aburto		AMA Fundraiser The American Marketing Association will sell elotes and Cheetos with cheese to raise funds at noon at the Main Building courtyard on the Brownsville campus. Attendees can buy elotes and Cheetos with cheese to help raise funds for the student chapter. Coffee and Convo Outreach Baptist Student Ministry will host a coffee-and-conversation outreach event at 2 p.m. at University Library courtyard on the Edinburg campus. Students can grab coffee and have conversations with members of the Baptist Student Ministry. Vaquero Games University Recreation will host Vaquero Games at 4 p.m. on the Student Union Lawn on the Brownsville campus. Student organizations can compete in recreational team challenges for Homecoming recognition. Thursday Express Circuit 30 GX University Recreation will lead a 30-minute circuit exercise session at noon at Texas Southmost College Recreation Center Multipurpose Room 1.202 in Brownsville. The 30-minute workout combines exercises in a quick circuit designed to build fitness. Volleyball I Practice The Volleyball Society will host a volleyball practice at 1:30 p.m. at University Recreation on the Edinburg campus. Participants can practice volleyball skills and play alongside other club members. Homecoming Parade Student Activities will organize the Brownsville homecoming parade at 7 p.m. at Campus Outdoor Grounds on the Brownsville campus. The same event will be hosted Friday at the Education Complex on the Edinburg campus. The parade will feature students, organizations and campus groups celebrating UTRGV Homecoming. Burning of the Letters Student Activities will host Burning of the Letters at 8 p.m. at Parking Lot B4 on the Brownsville campus. The same event will be hosted at Parking Lot E16 on the Edinburg campus. Vaqueros can gather for a Homecoming tradition featuring the ceremonial burning of university letters. Friday Bentsen State Park Garden Restoration The Environmental Awareness Club will meet at 7:30 a.m. at Bensten-Rio Grande Valley State Park in Mission. Volunteers can help restore garden areas and support environmental conservation work at the park. SGA Eighth Senate Meeting The Student Government Association will host its eighth Senate meeting at 2:30 p.m. at Main Building Room 1.224 on the Brownsville campus. Student senators can discuss university concerns, proposals and student government business. Saturday SGA Tailgate Cook-Off 2026 The Student Government Association will host a tailgate cook-off at 1:30 p.m. at the UTRGV Homecoming Tailgate Area at the Robert and Janet Vackar Stadium in Edinburg. Students can participate in a friendly cooking competition as part of Homecoming tailgate activities. Football Tailgate Party: UTRGV vs. Lamar The Student Union will host a tailgate party for the UTRGV–Lamar football game at 2:30 p.m. at Robert and Janet Vackar Stadium in Edinburg. Fans can gather before the UTRGV-Lamar football game and celebrate with other Vaqueros.	
FACULTY ADVISER Michelle Escajeda STUDENT MEDIA DIRECTOR Jesus Sanchez STUDENT MEDIA PROGRAM COORDINATOR Rodolfo “Trey” Alvarado 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		 POLICE REPORTS <i>The following are among the incidents reported to University Police between Oct. 13 - 19.</i> Oct. 13 12:21 a.m.: Officers responded to a report of graffiti in a second-floor men’s restroom at the Interdisciplinary Building on the Edinburg campus. The case is under investigation. 6:45 a.m.: An officer responded to a fire alarm at the University Financial Services Building on the Edinburg campus. No smoke or fire was found, and Environmental Health and Safety personnel assessed the fire panel. 1:39 p.m.: An officer met with three female students at the UTRGV bus stop at the Harlingen Convention Center after a man allegedly made a derogatory comment toward them. The man left before the officer arrived, and police determined no crime occurred. 3:05 p.m.: An officer on patrol witnessed a three-vehicle collision with injuries at the intersection of Nevarez and West University Drive in Edinburg. Emergency medical services transported a man to DHR Health for further evaluation. The officer completed a crash report. 4:16 p.m.: A student injured his right ankle while using the rock-climbing wall at the University Recreation building on the Edinburg campus. He declined emergency medical services and said he would seek medical attention on his own. Oct. 14 7:13 a.m.: An officer found a water leak during foot patrol at the University Center on the Edinburg campus. Facilities Management was contacted to repair the leak. 8 a.m.: UTRGV Facilities reported someone damaged a water pump inside the Center for Human Genetics on the Brownsville campus by manually removing a screw. The case is under investigation. 11:55 a.m.: UTRGV officers responded to the Texas Southmost College Recreation Center after Brownsville police detained a Brownsville Independent School District student for possession of a weapon. Brownsville police and BISD police contained the situation. UTRGV officers contacted student witnesses and provided them with university resources. 1:33 p.m.: An officer responded to a burglary alarm at UT Health RGV Dermatology in Edinburg and noticed an employee had accidentally activated it. Oct. 15 2:03 p.m.: An officer responded to a report of a student trapped in an elevator at the Interdisciplinary Academic Building Annex on the Brownsville campus. Facilities personnel opened the elevator, allowing the student to exit uninjured, and reset it. 2:33 p.m.: An employee reported minor scrapes on a new university-owned vehicle at the Academic Support Facility Compound. The case is under review. 3:34 p.m.: An employee reported a manhole assembly near Health and Physical Education 1 on the Edinburg campus appeared to have caved in. Security camera footage showed a charter bus driving over the manhole, possibly causing the damage. The case is under investigation. 6:29 p.m.: An officer responded to a fire alarm at the Academic Services Building on the Edinburg campus. No fire or smoke was found. A student said he might have triggered the alarm while testing a fog machine. Environmental Health and Safety authorized a reset of the fire panel. 7:54 p.m.: An employee reported finding a syringe containing an unknown liquid at Performing Arts Complex B on the Edinburg campus. An officer retrieved the syringe and secured it at the police department for destruction. 9:21 p.m.: Officers responded to an ill student near The Village apartments on the Edinburg campus. Emergency medical services evaluated the student and transported them to a hospital for further evaluation. Oct. 16 12:01 a.m.: A student reported slight damage to the front windshield of her vehicle while it was parked and unattended in Lot E36 on the Edinburg campus. The case is under investigation. 5:09 a.m.: An officer responded to a leaking water heater at the ROTC building on the Edinburg campus that caused water damage nearby. Facilities were contacted, and a plumber was sent to address the leak. 9:03 a.m.: An employee reported losing an access card at the Science Complex on the Edinburg campus. UTRGV PD notified its I.T. Division to deactivate the card. 11:57 a.m.: A student reported losing her wallet at the University Recreation center on the Edinburg campus. 1:04 p.m.: During a safety inspection at Heritage Hall on the Edinburg campus, a resident assistant found four vape pens in a dorm room. One tested positive for THC, while the other three contained tobacco. The case is under investigation. 6:53 p.m.: An employee reported minor damage to a university-owned golf cart at Emilia Schunior Ramirez Hall on the Edinburg campus. The case is under investigation. 11:59 p.m.: Several students were unable to leave an apartment at The Village apartments on the Edinburg campus because the main door would not open. A Facilities locksmith repaired the lock. No injuries were reported. Oct. 17 12:38 a.m.: Two students attempted to jump the fence at Unity Hall on the Edinburg campus after the access card reader stopped working. Officers advised them to contact university police for assistance and submitted a repair request. Oct. 19 10:42 a.m.: An officer responded to a possible traffic collision in parking Lot H2 on the Harlingen campus. The officer could not determine whether the collision happened on campus or elsewhere. 11:56 a.m.: An officer responded to a fire alarm at the Life and Health Sciences Building on the Brownsville campus. The local fire department had triggered the alarm while testing fire hydrant water flow. 12:29 p.m.: An officer responded to the reported theft of a bag containing a laptop and headphones at the Dining and Ballroom Complex on the Edinburg campus. The case is under investigation. 1:48 p.m.: An officer contacted a man experiencing a nosebleed at Liberal Arts Building South on the Edinburg campus. He declined emergency medical services and left with a friend.	
		--Compiled by Diego Vita	

Demonstrators protest against ICE, police brutality on campus

MARIAH LYDIA ESCOBAR & JULIAN J. SALAZAR
THE RIDER | PULSE

On Thursday, more than two dozen people took to the Quad on the Edinburg campus to take part in a demonstration in observance of National Protest Against Police Brutality Day, mainly rallying against ICE.

The Youth Democratic Socialists of America, along with other organizations, hosted the protest where organizers discussed recent incidents involving ICE, including one in Alamo.

Demonstrators marched across campus, wearing masks and holding signs in protest of ICE and police brutality. Some chants shouted included, “Good laws don’t need cops” and “Say it once, say it twice, we will not put up with ICE.”

The leader of the protest, UTRGV philosophy junior who identified themselves as Clark, said the organization tries to canvas on campus and push people to join organizations so they can become more educated on current events.

“We’ll just keep being that person who won’t shut up,” Clark said. “There are a lot of people like laughing at us and I think this just shows how voting is not



JULIAN J. SALAZAR / PULSE MAGAZINE

Protesters march around the UTRGV Student Union Quad in observance of National Protest Against Police Brutality Day Thursday on the Edinburg campus.

enough.”

Clark added the organization’s efforts would be pointless if the reasons behind it were not worth it. She added it is important to vote but that may not be enough.

Valeria Garza, integrated health science freshman and member of the UTRGV College Democrats, said she is in favor of the protest because the Rio Grande Valley consists mostly of a Mexican population. ICE being more involved means there is a need for people to protest, Garza said.

A criminal justice senior, who asked to be referred to as Tammy, said police brutality is a systematic problem that happens all the time.

“They don’t consider us as people; they consider us as property,” Tammy said.

She added police brutality goes back to slavery and the massacre of Native Americans, stating it has always been in a system put in place to oppress people.

“It has always been about repressing people despite ... what they want to label it,” she said.

Alongside the event on campus, there were other protests held across the country advocating against police brutality.

CONSTRUCTION

Continued from Page 1

Asked what is at fault for the hiccups in the construction, the dean replied there is no specific blame.

“I think everybody involved from the contractor to our own construction planning folks to folks in our college and in the School of Art and Design, [we] have all been focused on safety, making sure that it’s safe for our classroom and that we’re in there as quickly as possible,” Ward said.

Luis Garcia, a UTRGV Art and Design lab technical service supervisor, said the complex will eventually be a great facility, despite the challenges that have emerged during construction.

“We wish some of the communication was done a little sooner, but then there were also hiccups along the way, which kind of delayed [construction,]” Garcia said. “It’s a bunch of small issues, like, stacking on top of each other. I’m trying to encourage faculty to keep that morality up for the sake of the students, for them being here.”

Avril Godoy, a studio art junior, said she likes the complex but hopes construction improves.

“There are still a lot of rooms that are in the process of being done,” Godoy said. “I do think there could be some improvements, but they’re working on it.”

Trisha Brown, secretary and treasurer of the Sculpture Club and art education senior, said the construction caused the club to change its activities for the semester.

“We had to change up our entire approach for the semester, from things that we sell to what we do during our meetings,” Brown said. “We haven’t worked with our usual clay at all. So, we’ve just really had to reinvent the way the club functions, which provided a lot of good opportunities, but it was because there was a lack of communication on where our stuff is going to be, where we’re going to be, and how it’s going to work.”

Garcia said despite the issues stacking up, he believes the complex will eventually become a great facility for the university community.

Garcia said the building is going to be “awesome” when completed but still is a work in progress.

“We got to fake it until we make it,” he said. “Yeah, it’s frustrating, but we got a new building. We’re going to do awesome things here. ... We’re going to make it our home. ... I want to bring that [morale] into it where students are eager to be here, eager to enroll in classes here. ... It’s a work in progress. That’s been the motto that I’ve been telling people every time they come in about some issue.”



VALERIA TOKUN HAGA / THE RIDER PHOTOS

Francesca Lally, a printmaking professor, teaches a class Wednesday in the Visual Arts Complex in Brownsville.



Heaven Navarro, a studio art junior, works on a painting Wednesday in the Brownsville Visual Arts Complex located at 2400 E. Van Buren St.

CLUB SPOTLIGHT

Environmental club continues movement to protect birds



MICHELLE HERNANDEZ / THE RIDER

Couch’s Kingbird, a native bird of the Rio Grande Valley, perches Wednesday near the UTRGV Pollinator Garden on the Brownsville campus.

DANNA AVALOS AVILA
THE RIDER

The Environmental Awareness Club continues its work to prevent bird collisions through its movement, Stop the Thud, in collaboration with the UTRGV Office for Sustainability, as previously reported by The Rider on Feb. 23.

According to a statement from Stephanie Trujillo, program manager for the Office for Sustainability, the EAC primarily leads Stop the Thud with support from the office.

The Office for Sustainability’s primary involvement is through hosting “the bird-window collision reporting form” on the office’s website and providing the data to the EAC. At the same time, the club raises awareness and encourages reports on bird-window collisions.

In Trujillo’s statement, she confirmed as of Wednesday, there have been 23 bird-collision reports on the Office for Sustainability’s part, but there may be more based on what the EAC has collected.

Shannon Hernandez, a political science junior and recruitment officer for the EAC, said Stop the Thud is meant to prevent bird collisions with windows, which primarily happen on the Edinburg campus but also occur on the Brownsville campus.

“The birds are physically unable to see the windows ... so they think it’s still the liberated sky, but then of course they bump into it, and they unfortunately die,” Hernandez said. “Our final objective is to get the university to be able to put tint on the windows so these birds stop colliding with the windows.”

Sofia Martinez, an environmental

science senior and president of the EAC, said through the bird-collision form, students used to be able to report bird collisions only from the Edinburg campus. Now they can report from the Brownsville campus as well.

Currently, according to Trujillo, Stop the Thud is still in phase one: collecting data on hotspots on the UTRGV campus where most bird collisions occur.

“The goal is to have enough numbers for the university to notice us,” Sofia Martinez said, referring to the movement’s current goal.

Further actions the EAC has taken so far include making cut-outs of birds and specifically meowls, an internet image of a cat with an owl’s body. The cut-outs were displayed throughout the Student Union Lawn on Brownsville campus during Sustainability Day on Oct. 15.

Sofia Martinez said the bird cut-outs, specifically meowls, are meant to attract students and raise awareness of the Stop the Thud movement.

Additionally, the EAC has confirmed two Stop the Thud protests on the Edinburg and Brownsville campuses. The protest will be at the University Library lawn on the Brownsville campus Nov. 2, and at the Quad on the Edinburg campus Nov. 4.

Valeria Martinez, an ocean, coastal, and earth sciences graduate student and the Brownsville coordinator of EAC, said the main way students can get involved with the Stop the Thud movement is by participating in EAC’s protest at the beginning of November.

Valeria Martinez added students who are interested in participating in Stop the Thud can also join the EAC to support preparation activities.

COLUMN OF THE WEEK

Los miedos pre-graduación



HUGO SEPÚLVEDA
COPY EDITOR

Con mi graduación cerca, muchas preguntas vienen a mi cabeza que me hacen cuestionarme mi día a día. ¿Qué será de mi vida cuando me gradúe? ¿Podré lograr algo en mi vida?

Por eso cuando me preguntan si le tengo miedo a algo yo solo contestó que le

temo a miedos reales. Es aquí cuando presento mi mayor miedo, el fracaso y ser un “don nadie”.

Estos miedos me hacen cuestionarme lo que hice en el pasado, lo que he hecho actualmente y lo haré en el futuro.

Me considero una persona que sobrepensa las cosas, incluso por más sencillas que parezcan, siempre encuentra una cuestión para no estar satisfecho con algo, incluyendo mi futuro.

No dudo ser el único con este miedo o estos pensamientos, pero el sentimiento se intensifica ahora que mi tiempo de universitario está cerca de llegar a su fin.

¿Por qué tememos tanto a la vida real o vida adulta? ¿Tantos años estudiando para

que en el último te cuestiones todo?

Estas últimas semanas reflexionando me han hecho entender que no hay una guía para ser adulto y que tal vez otros adultos toda su vida la han estado improvisando.

Tal vez ahora entiendo porque pensar demasiado sobre mi futuro desde pequeño no ha sido lo ideal. Creo que mi problema fue que me puse muchas expectativas sin saber que realmente cuando planeas algo nunca sucede como esperas.

Creo que siempre he sido alguien que teme salir de su zona de confort porque siento que si lo hago está fuera de mi control. Ahora entiendo que está mal y a veces lo mejor es dejar las cosas fluir.

Digo esto con la experiencia

de que estos últimos años he hecho tantas cosas que me han sacado de esa zona de confort a la que me he encerrado toda mi vida. Esto me ha hecho preferir dejar que las cosas fluyan e improvisar sobre la marcha.

A veces nos comprometemos tanto a una idea o un sueño que olvidamos que siempre habrá obstáculos que nos harán cuestionarnos si tomamos las decisiones correctas.

Al final, “la vida adulta” no es como un examen que te tienes que preparar y estudiar un día anterior; es un escenario donde el guión se escribe mientras actúas.

Tal vez mi miedo por ser un “don nadie” continúe, pero funcione como mi motivación para descubrir lo que realmente quiero ser.

Reflexionando, el futuro ya no me parece una amenaza, más si lo comparo con todo lo que he batallado para estar donde estoy y ser lo que soy.

Así que, a un mes y pico de mi graduación, con mi diploma en mano y mi orgullo en otra. Elijo aceptar y afrontar el vacío de lo que viene.

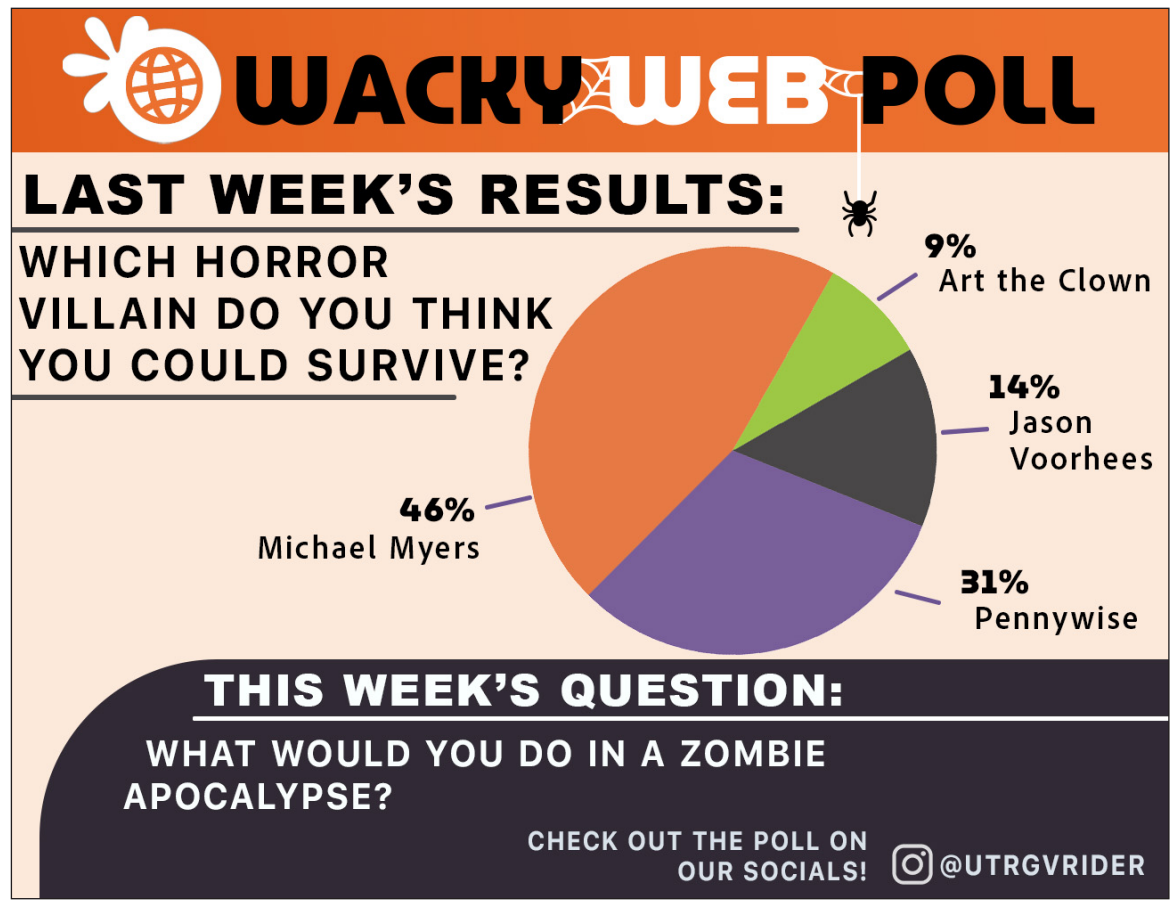
Si los adultos que admiro han estado improvisando todo este tiempo, yo también puedo hacerlo.

Si lo mejor que me ha pasado han sido las cosas que hago fuera de mi zona de confort, creo que es momento de dejar de planear la vida y empezar, sencillamente, a vivirla.

Así que se prepare la vida que estoy listo para afrontarla e improvisarle la mejor versión de mi.

EDITORIAL CARTOON

She has ICE on speed dial



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An immigrant author’s journey

KAYLA MARTINEZ
THE RIDER

Award-winning Mexican American author Reyna Grande spoke about immigration, representation and storytelling as an act of resistance during the Author Talk Thursday at UTRGV’s Edinburg campus.

UTRGV’s Mexican American Studies and Creative Writing programs hosted Grande in the Borderlands conference room in the Education Complex. During the event, Grande raffled 20 copies of her latest novel “Migrant Heart” in English and Spanish editions.

Grande, who was born in Iguala, Guerrero, Mexico, immigrated to the United States at age 9. She said she never imagined becoming a writer while growing up because she had not encountered works by Chicana, Chicano or Latino authors.

“If you had asked me in high school, ‘What do you want to be when you grow up?’ I would have never said, ‘Oh, I want to be a writer,’” Grande said during her talk. “I had never read any works by Chicana, Chicano, Latino authors. I didn’t even know that that was a thing.”

Grande said a community college teacher encouraged her to pursue creative writing and introduced her to Sandra Cisneros’ novel “The House on Mango Street.”

“She was the first teacher to put ‘The House on Mango Street’ in my hands,” Grande said. “And she said, ‘If Sandra Cisneros can do it, you can do it.’”

With her teacher’s encouragement, Grande transferred to University of California Santa Cruz to study creative writing. She later completed her first



KAYLA MARTINEZ/ THE RIDER PHOTOS

Mexican American studies professor Stephanie Alvarez (left) and author Reyna Grande draw names for a raffle of “Migrant Heart,” Grande’s latest novel, Thursday at the Author Talk event hosted by the Mexican American Studies and Creative Writing programs on the Edinburg campus.

novel, “Across 100 Mountains,” as her senior thesis.

Grande said she wanted to write about her experiences with her parents leaving Mexico and what it was like growing up as a child separated from them by the border.

“My desire was for people to acknowledge the pain that children go through and how immigration impacts kids,” Grande said.

Stephanie Alvarez, a Mexican-

American Studies professor who introduced the author at the event, said Grande was an immediate choice when the program considered speakers for its Humanity Speaker Series.

Alvarez said she wanted students to meet an author whose experiences and work they could identify with.

“Reyna, in her talk, for example, said only seven percent of all published authors are Latinos or Latina,” she said. “And so I think it was really important

for people to have a real-life example in front of them and get advice about the process, too.”

Kasandra Garcia, a counseling graduate student, said she connected with Grande’s work on a personal level.

“I feel connected through the words on the pages, and I’m grateful to see work like hers exist,” Garcia said. “I see myself through her work ... Never in my life would I have imagined that I would have met her. ... It’s a one-of-a-kind opportunity.”

David Bowles, a professor in the Department of Literature and Cultural Studies, attended the talk as a guest. He said Grande’s stories resonate with people in the Valley, even though she is not from the area.

“All of us came here from elsewhere,” Bowles said. “And [Grande’s] work reminds us of that. It reminds us to show one another grace and to open our arms to immigrants, whether they’re documented or not.”

During her talk and an interview with The Rider, Grande also addressed violence, prejudice and discrimination against immigrant communities. She urged people to continue sharing stories about life along the border, particularly when those voices face attempts at censorship.

“There comes a point where you wonder,” Grande said. “How can we end [discrimination] once and for all, you know? Why do we need to be subjected to this?... We gotta continue to tell the story of the border life... especially at a time where our voices are being silenced, where our stories are being banned. Storytelling for us in our community is an act of resistance.”



A stack of Reyna Grande’s newest novel “Migrant Heart,” presented at the Author Talk event Thursday at the UTRGV Edinburg Education Complex.



Author Reyna Grande presents her work at the Author Talk event Thursday. The event was hosted by the Mexican American Studies and Creative Writing programs at the Education Complex on the Edinburg campus.

Cadaver Conversations: Coworkers #7



Rnjak sets the standard

TIANA MEZA
THE RIDER

Freshman setter Lana Rnjak is proving she is truly built for the net and making an immediate impact in her first season at UTRGV, leading the Southland conference with an average 9.58 assists per set.

As of Oct. 19, Rnjak earned her fourth Southland Conference Setter of the Week honors, making her the only SLC player to win a weekly award four times this season. “We knew how talented she was when we recruited her, and it’s just kind of shining, but I don’t think those things get to her head,” head coach Todd Lowery said. “I don’t think the individual words or accolades get to her. She’s very team focused, she’s very culture focused, so I think she’s going to become a huge leader for this team over the next two or three years. She definitely has all the things to be a captain and has that mindset.”



HEAD COACH TODD LOWERY
ADRIAN HERNANDEZ/THE RIDER PHOTOS

Rnjak made her debut Aug. 28 against West Virginia, recording 36 assists and four kills in four sets. Despite UTRGV ultimately losing the season opener 3-1, Rnjak’s performance set a strong foundation for her ongoing career.

A week later, following UTRGV’s sweep of Texas State, Rnjak earned her first Southland Conference Setter of the Week award.

As a setter, Rnjak directs the offense by delivering the ball to the hitters and deciding which players to utilize during each play. Throughout the season, she has developed on-court chemistry with redshirt junior hitter Julianna Bryant and junior hitter Martina Franco.

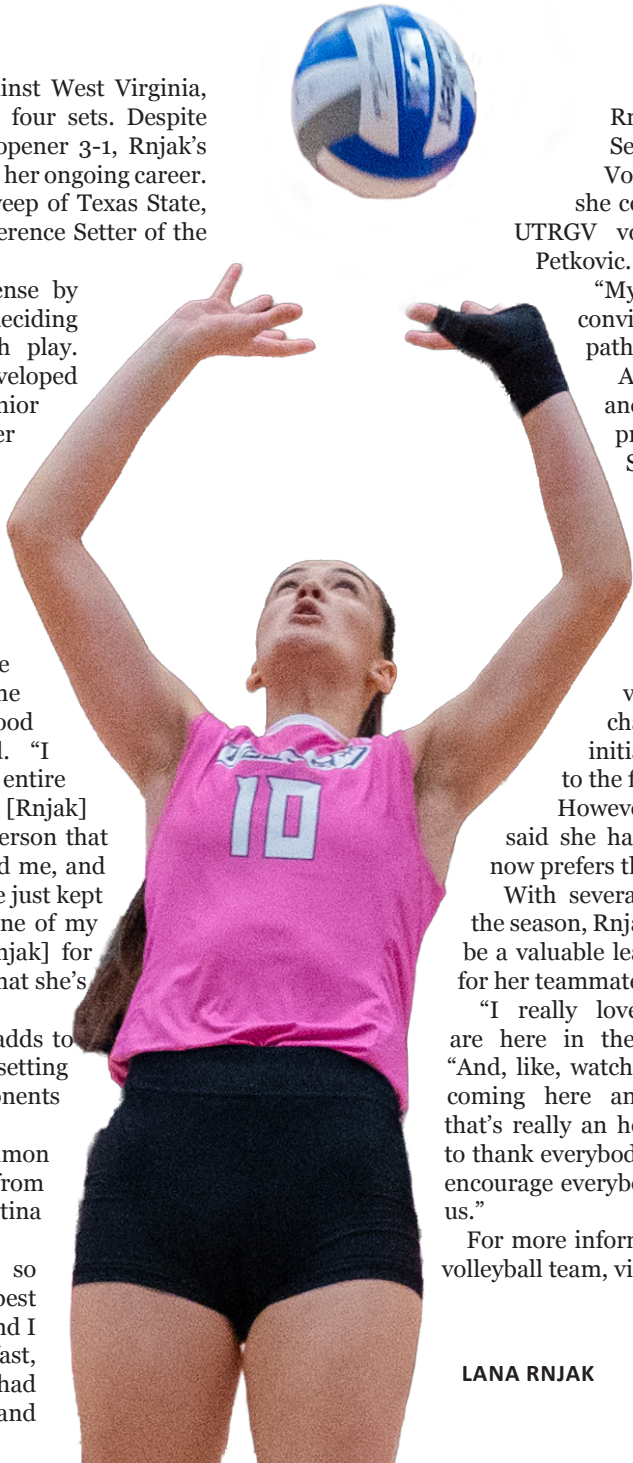
During UTRGV’s match against Stephen F. Austin, Rnjak tallied up 40 assists, allowing Bryant to garner 13 kills.

“If [Rnjak] sets me a little low, but she still tells me to rip it, I’m gonna rip it, because I know that even if the block is there, [Rnjak] is right under me to cover it, so I think she was really good about communication,” Bryant said. “I think it shocked not only me, but the entire conference alone that no matter where [Rnjak] is on the court, she’s gonna find the person that she trusts, and at that time, she trusted me, and she just knows that I put the ball in. She just kept feeding me, and I had probably had one of my best games that day, so props to [Rnjak] for really finding me in any circumstance that she’s in.”

Franco, who also plays as a hitter, adds to the offense alongside Rnjak. Rnjak’s setting and Franco’s attacking are key components of the Vaqueros offense.

Franco and Rnjak share a common background of coming to UTRGV from another country, Franco from Argentina and Rnjak from Serbia.

“I remember my [first year] was so hard,” Franco said. “It was not the best memory I have of my freshman year, and I see [Rnjak,] I see she’s developing so fast, and she looks happy here, and she also had a good relationship with every player, and she’s friends with everybody.”



LANA RNJAK

Before joining UTRGV, Rnjak was a part of the Serbian Youth National Volleyball Pipeline, where she competed against fellow UTRGV volleyball player, Ema Petkovic.

“My dad was pretty convinced that that was my path.

And I believed him, and from, like, [the] first practice, I experienced in Serbia. I fell in love with sports,” Rnjak replied when asked why volleyball is special to her.

Moving from the European club system to American college volleyball presented challenges for Rnjak, who initially struggled to adjust to the faster pace of the game. However, Lowery and Rnjak said she has adapted quickly and now prefers the faster style of play.

With several games remaining in the season, Rnjak has proven herself to be a valuable leader, player and friend for her teammates and coaches.

“I really love how supported we are here in the Valley,” Rnjak said. “And, like, watching all those little kids coming here and watching us play, that’s really an honor, and I would like to thank everybody for coming here, and encourage everybody to keep supporting us.”

For more information on the women’s volleyball team, visit goutrgv.com.

Cross Country taper into SLC season

TIMOTHY DAVID
THE RIDER

UTRGV’s men’s and women’s cross country teams will compete in the Southland Conference Championship Oct. 30 in Lake Charles, Louisiana, with an opportunity to earn the program’s first conference championship.

The Vaqueros are coming off the Arturo Barrios Invitational on Oct. 16 in Bryan-College Station, where Senior N. Vanee Anchike set a program and personal record in the women’s 6-kilometer race, finishing 73rd in 20 minutes, 51 seconds. She broke the previous program record of 20:53, set by Mercy Chelangat in 2018.

The women’s team finished 24th out of 46 teams with 705 points, while the men’s team placed 36th out of 38 teams with 1070 points.

Director of Track & Field and Cross Country Shareese Hicks said the team’s biggest adjustment heading into the conference championships will be

improving their positioning and pacing as they prepare to compete against fewer teams.

“The biggest adjustment that we’ll have to make is making sure that we’re a lot more together, because it’ll be less competitors compared to the Barrios meet that we just competed in,” Hicks said. “Everything is gonna be very close, and by close, I mean from second to sixth place, we’re going to have to do a really good job of making sure we stay in contact with each other and work together on those trails.”

Hicks said one major change she has noticed this season is the growing support and outreach each runner has made for their teammates, particularly between upperclassmen and newcomers.

“The main growth we see is that upperclassmen and newcomer connections,” she said. “Before, there used to be a little bit of intimidation, if you’re a freshman coming in and competing division one, you look up to those upperclassmen ... but now our freshman



ADRIAN HERNANDEZ/THE RIDER PHOTOS

UTRGV Men’s Cross Country freshman distance runner Brock Morales speaks about his experience racing and how it motivates himself to improve Tuesday at the UTRGV Soccer and Track & Field Complex on the Edinburg campus.

are fearless ... and our upper classmen are really big in making sure that we take everybody under our wing and help them progress.”

According to some runners, the Arturo Barrios Invitational also gave the team an opportunity to evaluate their performances and set goals for the conference championships.

Freshman distance runner Brock Morales said the meet helped him recognize the level of competition.

“I got, like, a reality check, ... I went out there and I was like, ‘Wow, there are some big dogs,’ but I mean, I know I belong up there, I know the team belongs up there,” Morales said.

He said competing as a freshman has helped him develop a new perspective on races in his athletic and emotional courage.

“So even if I [don’t] place ... the way I want or don’t get the time I want, just being there and having that experience, it’s a win ... Not everyone gets this experience

to go out there as a freshman and compete in conferences,” Morales said. “I’m gonna take everything I do, even if I do good or bad, I’m gonna take it just the best I can and improve ... you know, most bad races, that’s where you learn the most from, so even if it’s bad I can take it with me next year.”

Senior distance runner Kailey Salazar said she has also focused on learning from each race and adjusting her training.

“I think I’m giving myself more grace, and learning that not every day has to be a hard day, just to prove to myself that I can go out there and compete,” Salazar said. “I think I’m being smarter about my training this year, which I think has been showing in my results.”

Following the conference championships, the Vaqueros will have an opportunity to compete in the NCAA South Central Regional Championships on Nov. 13, in Bryan-College Station.



Director of Track & Field and Cross Country Shareese Hicks shares her view of the adjustments for the Vaqueros after the Arturo Barrios Invitational Tuesday at the UTRGV Soccer and Track & Field Complex on the Edinburg campus.

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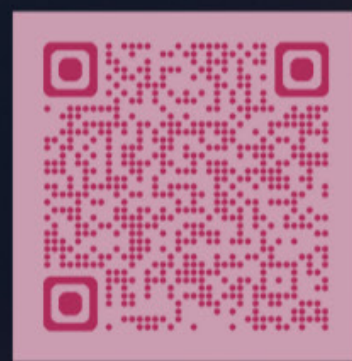
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