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THE STUDENT VOICE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS RIO GRANDE VALLEY

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A SEMESTER IN SONG

KAYLA MARTINEZ
A&E REPORTER



ADRIAN HERNANDEZ / THE RIDER PHOTOS

Mariachi Vaquero, Mariachi Espuelas, Mariachi Juvenil Aztlán and Mariachi Aztlán performed their Fall 2026 Concert Thursday at the Performing Arts Complex on the Edinburg campus. The Fall Mariachi concert sold out.

UTRGV's Mariachi Program, home to ensembles Mariachi Vaquero, Mariachi Espuelas, Mariachi Juvenil Aztlán, and Mariachi Aztlán, performed their Fall 2026 Concert Thursday at the Performing Arts Complex on the Edinburg campus on evening to a sold-out house.

With 36 years of music and performance under the program's belt, the mariachi program celebrated a discipline that was amongst the first in the nation to be accredited, according to Clyde Guerra, co-director of the mariachi program.

Guerra said the night was particularly special before the show began.

"[The concert] is the culmination of the entire semester's work of all four groups and what they've done all semester," Guerra said. "We've learned a set repertoire that they're gonna be showcasing [Thursday]... you're really gonna get to see talent across every group."

Guerra opened the concert with an acknowledgement of the four groups' hard work to bring the night together, and introduced the first group set to perform, Mariachi Vaquero.

Mariachi Vaquero consists of a majority of freshmen and sophomores, according to Guerra.

Music education freshman and Mariachi Vaquero violinist Ezekiel Peña said the Fall concert was his first time performing since high school, and expressed he was nervous to perform in front of a sold-out house.

"It's a little bit nerve wracking, but also exciting," Peña said. "I've always loved performing in front of people."

Mariachi Vaquero performed songs from Álvaro Carrillo to Rocío Dúrcal, highlighting the range in Mexican music the ensemble set out to showcase.

Performing next was Mariachi Espuelas, consisting of a diverse range of students across all majors and classifications. Sung and played were traditional songs such as "El Jabali," "Luz De Luna" and "Petenera."

Following Mariachi Espuelas were Mariachi Juvenil Aztlán, an award-winning ensemble according to the College of Fine Arts website.

Francisco Loera, mariachi co-director and senior lecturer in the School of Music, said that Mariachi Juvenil Aztlán is to set out on a two-week Christmas tour this upcoming December, and some students from the ensemble were even selected to tour alongside Mexican singer and actress Aída Cuevas.

See **MARIACHI**, Page 6



UTRGV mariachi harp player Joseph Padron performs a solo during the Mariachi Fall 2026 Concert Thursday at the Performing Arts Complex in Edinburg.

ON CAMPUS

$2.2 million awarded for screwworm detection study



PHOTO COURTESY JOSHUA HARRIS

A female New World screwworm fly, the focus of a new research project aimed at improving detection and prevention of the parasitic insect.

MARIAH LYDIA ESCOBAR
THE RIDER

The university received a $2.2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to study whether thermal cameras can detect New World screwworm infestations and identify South Texas plants that may attract the flies.

The USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service selected the two-year project as part of its New World Grande Challenge awards in June. Researchers hope their finding will help ranchers and wildlife managers detect infestations earlier and identify areas where the flies are likely to gather.

Sarah Maestas, assistant professor and lead researcher on the project, said female screwworm flies lay eggs along the edges of open wounds. Once the eggs hatch, the larvae feed on living tissue and burrow deeper into the wound.

"Companion animals can become infested as well. People can become infested," Maestas said. "So, it's not necessarily just a livestock concern."

Researchers plan to begin using handheld thermal cameras and machine learning to identify signs of infestation in the images. Maestas said the team hopes to eventually mount cameras on drones to survey larger areas.

"We can't necessarily individually check every animal," Maestas said, explaining the challenges of monitoring wildlife.

Pushpa Soti, a biology professor and co-investigator, said the collaboration grew out of a guest lecture Maestas gave in her sustainable agriculture course. Soti had previously studied how invasive Guinea grass affects mosquitoes and wanted to investigate whether local vegetation might also influence where screwworm flies gather.

See **AWARD**, Page 2

ON CAMPUS

Univeristy considers reducing core curriculum

JORGE RIOS
THE RIDER

UTRGV's core curriculum is potentially shrinking from 42 to 30 credit hours as the university works to comply with a new state law, prompting concerns about faculty input and potential sustainability of academic programs.

On Sept. 1, 2025, Senate Bill 37 went into effect and abolished faculty senates, which held decision-making power over academics and curriculum, limiting faculty groups to advisory-only roles with no final authority over decisions.

According to the UTRGV website, the UT System Board of Regents may reestablish faculty senates consistent with Senate Bill 37's parameters.

Saygin outlined the university's plans to minimize the curriculum, seemingly in compliance with these anticipated changes.

See **CURRICULUM**, Page 3

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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ONLINE EDITOR
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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
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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today

Brownsville Farmers Market
The **Environmental Awareness Club** will host the Brownsville Farmers Market at 9 a.m. in the Main Building courtyard on the Brownsville campus. Students can stop by the campus market.

MCAT Prep and Info Session
The **Learning Center** will offer an MCAT preparation and information session at 9:30 a.m. on the Edinburg campus. The session is intended for students interested in preparing for the medical school admissions test.

BRW Union Unplugged: Caneluna Jazz Collective
The **Student Union** will present a performance by the Caneluna Jazz Collective at 11 a.m. at the Brownsville Student Union as part of the Union Unplugged music series.

Stop the Thud Rally: Protect Native Birds
The **Environmental Awareness Club** will hold a rally focused on protecting native birds at 3 p.m. in the Main Building courtyard on the Brownsville campus.

Personal Statement Workshop with William Gordon
The **Pre-Law Society** will host a personal statement workshop with William Gordon at 4 p.m. in Health Affairs Building East Room 1.114 on the Edinburg campus.

Justice Isn't One-Size-Fits-All: Exploring the Legal Spectrum
Paving Access for Legal Minds and Ambitions will host a discussion with attorney Aimee Trevino at 5 p.m. in the Music, Science & Learning Center Room 1.105 on the Brownsville campus. The event will explore different areas of law.

Tuesday

Edinburg Farmers Market
The Edinburg Farmers Market will take place at 9 a.m. along the Paseo Walkway on the Edinburg campus.

EDB Union Unplugged: Caneluna Jazz Collective
The **Student Union** will host the Caneluna Jazz Collective at 11 a.m. at the Edinburg Student Union. The performance is part of the Union Unplugged music series.

Gilmore Girls: Seventeen Days Party
Talk About It UTRGV will host a Gilmore Girls-themed event at 2 p.m. in the Sage Room 2.406 at the Student Union on the Edinburg campus.

Family Academy: Financial Aid
A Family Academy financial aid session will take place at 6 p.m. in the Bronc Room at the University Center on the Edinburg campus. The session is intended for students and families seeking financial aid information.

Wednesday

Algebra Foundations Boost: Exponential and Logarithmic Functions
The **Learning Center** will offer an algebra workshop on exponential and logarithmic functions at 11 a.m., 12:30 p.m. and 5 p.m. on the Brownsville campus.

Mierco-Loco: Friendsgiving Picnic
The **Student Union** will host a Friendsgiving picnic at 11:30 a.m. in La Sala at the Student Union on the Brownsville campus. The gathering offers students a chance to spend time together before the holiday.

BUREK: Push-Up Hour
University Recreation will hold a Push-Up Hour at noon on the Student Union lawn on the Brownsville campus. The event offers a campus fitness activity.

Circuits AC Signal Workshop
The **Learning Center** will offer a workshop on alternating-current signals and circuits at 2 p.m. on the Brownsville campus.

Thursday

Abriendo Caminos Milkshake and Brownie Fundraiser
The **Abriendo Caminos Organization** will host a milkshake and brownie fundraiser at 9:30 a.m. on the east patio of the Student Union on the Edinburg campus.

Polsgiving
The Political Science Association will host Polsgiving at 6:30 p.m. in Student Academic Center Room 1.102 on the Edinburg campus.

Protect the Dolls: Queerspace Alliance
Texas Rising will host Protect the Dolls: Queerspace Alliance at 11 a.m. in the Sage Room 2.406 at the Student Union on the Edinburg campus. The event is centered on queer community engagement.

Financial Literacy Training
A financial literacy training session will take place at 12:30 p.m. in Liberal Arts Building North Room 111 on the Edinburg campus.

Guest Speaker Series: Judge Rigo Flores
The **Pre-Law Society** will host Judge Rigo Flores at 4 p.m. in Health Affairs Building West Room 2.212 on the Edinburg campus as part of its guest speaker series.

Friday

Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling Internship and Practicum Fair
The **Graduate Rehabilitation Counseling Association** will host an internship and practicum fair at 2 p.m. at UTRGV Rio Bank in McAllen. The event focuses on opportunities related to clinical rehabilitation counseling.

--Compiled by Diego Vita

POLICE REPORTS

The following are among the incidents reported to University Police between Nov. 3 and 9.

Nov. 3

11:29 a.m.: An officer responded to the Education Complex on the Edinburg campus for a student who felt ill. Emergency medical services transported the student to a hospital for treatment.

1:48 p.m.: An officer responded to a collision involving an unattended parked vehicle in parking Lot E9 on the Edinburg campus. The officer contacted the driver and the parked vehicle's owner and concluded the investigation.

3:10 p.m.: UTRGV police assisted Brownsville police in searching near Texas Southmost College for a vehicle reportedly involved in suspicious activity. The vehicle was not located.

Nov. 4

8:52 a.m.: An employee reported receiving unwanted emails from her unaffiliated ex-boyfriend off campus in Hidalgo County. The harassment case remains under investigation.

3:28 p.m.: An officer responded to a two-vehicle collision involving students in parking Lot B2 on the Brownsville campus. No injuries were reported.

Nov. 5

11:38 a.m.: An unaffiliated woman reported a work-related verbal disagreement with her manager Oct. 31 at Robert and Janet Vackar Stadium on the Edinburg campus. She said she was escorted from the stadium.

1:17 p.m.: A student reported finding a shattered window on his unattended vehicle parked in the 2000 block of West University Boulevard in Brownsville. Police learned city parks employees had been mowing nearby around the same time.

5:05 p.m.: Officers responded to a two-vehicle collision involving student drivers off campus in Hidalgo County. No injuries were reported.

5:05 p.m.: A student off campus in Hidalgo County reported feeling ill and requested emergency medical services but later declined transportation.

9:20 p.m.: A charter bus driver reported a student got off at the Weslaco campus, where her vehicle was parked, and said she felt ill. An officer and campus staff were unable to locate the student.

Nov. 6

8:06 a.m.: An employee at Portable Building 11 on the Edinburg campus reported a student had not returned a university-issued instrument and uniforms. The student told an officer transportation problems had delayed their return.

8:52 a.m.: A Parking and Transportation employee reported booting a student's vehicle at Casa Bella Apartments on the Brownsville campus because of multiple unpaid citations. The employee planned to contact the student before requesting a tow.

7:56 p.m.: An officer responded to a reported gas odor near the pool at the University Recreation Center on the Edinburg campus. Facilities staff said the odor was associated with a pressure-release valve operating normally.

9:46 p.m.: An officer responded to the campus bus stop near parking Lot E2 on the Edinburg campus for a student who reported an injury but did not know how it happened. Emergency medical services transported her to a hospital.

Nov. 7

3:04 p.m.: A woman off campus in Hidalgo County asked a university police officer for assistance locating her missing 14-year-old son. Edinburg police assumed the investigation.

3:26 p.m.: A student at The Village Apartments on the Edinburg campus reported a missing package. An officer helped locate it.

4:01 p.m.: An officer contacted two juveniles near the practice field benches at the Vaqueros Performance Center on the Edinburg campus. They were identified and released to a parent after an acceptance-of-responsibility form was signed.

5:34 p.m.: Officers responded to a report of a man yelling near The Village Apartments on the Edinburg campus. They could not locate him, but security footage showed him leaving toward Sugar Road.

Nov. 8

5:49 a.m.: Officers responded to a fire alarm at the Student Union on the Brownsville campus. No smoke or fire was found, and the alarm panel was reset after Environmental Health and Safety was notified.

Nov. 9

7:53 a.m.: An officer responded to the D.D. Hachar Building on the Laredo campus after heavy rain damaged ceiling tiles. Facilities were notified.

9:01 a.m.: An officer responded to the Dental Hygiene and Medical Laboratory Science portable buildings on the Laredo campus after heavy rain damaged ceiling tiles. Facilities were notified.

10:53 a.m.: An officer responded to parking Lot B5 on the Brownsville campus after a tree branch fell on a student's parked vehicle.

11:16 a.m.: An officer responded to the ROTC Building on the Edinburg campus after a woman requested assistance. She left before the officer arrived and could not be located.

11:55 a.m.: An employee in parking Lot B5 on the Brownsville campus sustained a minor cut to his hand while removing fallen tree debris. An officer provided first aid, and the employee returned to work.

12:14 p.m.: The School of Nursing's dean of students reported a student's email alleging harassment involving her ex-boyfriend off campus in Hidalgo County. The student declined to discuss the matter or provide more details to police.

12:17 p.m.: A student at the University Recreation Center on the Edinburg campus reported a wallet was stolen from an unattended backpack in the locker room. The theft case remains under investigation.

--Compiled by Diego Vita

AWARD
Continued from Page 1

The team plans to release flies into a central chamber connected to compartments containing different plants. Researchers will record where the flies go, how long they stay and which airborne compounds the plants release.

The researchers will study vegetation associated with adult flies to determine which plants may attract them. Maestas said the information could help officials decide where to release sterile male flies so they are more likely to encounter wild flies.

Releasing sterile male flies in areas where wild flies gather could increase their chances of mating with wild females and prevent the females from producing offspring.

The findings could also help ranchers determine when to monitor cattle more closely and help wildlife managers identify areas that need additional surveillance, Maestas said.

Soti said the project will help the university build trust with farmers as they find the answer to their concerns.

"We'll have a great relationship ... the university in their backyard is working towards addressing their problems," she said.

Two master's students will conduct thesis research through the project. Maestas said the team also plans to post undergraduate research positions as they become available and may accept volunteers.

"Students who are interested in volunteer research experience are welcome to reach out to me," Maestas said.

Soti said the USDA is also hiring for positions related to the project.

‘Legalize it all,’ Hidalgo county judge says

CHRISTIAN GONZALES
THE RIDER

Hidalgo County Judge Juan Zamora advocated for the legalization of marijuana during a discussion hosted by the UTRGV Pre-Law Society on Nov. 9 in the Liberal Arts Building North Room 125, arguing marijuana arrests waste county resources and jail space.

The discussion, led by Judge Zamora and criminal defense attorney Zachary Zamora, covered the moral implications of legalizing THC and marijuana, criminal penalties for drug-related offenses and the future of drug law in Texas.

“We need to do it. We have a big portion of the people that get arrested in our county in jail for marijuana. It is a waste of resources. It is a waste of jail space,” Judge Zamora said.

Judge Zamora mentioned other states where marijuana is legal, including California and Colorado, as examples of how marijuana taxation can generate revenue for public services.

“[California and Colorado] can pay for their public education system by the taxes they put on marijuana,” he said.

He also advocated for legalizing other drugs, arguing doing so could weaken drug trafficking organizations.

“I go a little further. I believe everyone’s an adult, so if you wanna do meth, do meth. ... If you really wanna take away power from these drug trafficking organizations, legalize it all,” Judge Zamora said.

When asked about the future of marijuana legalization under Texas’ changing political environment, Judge Zamora expressed interest in the possibility of legalization within the next two years.

“I think within two years ... [Gina Hinojosa] won. That’s going to be one of the major platforms she should ... do, legalize marijuana,” Judge Zamora said.



ADRIAN HERNANDEZ / THE RIDER
Hidalgo County Judge Juan Zamora and criminal defense attorney Zachary Zamora speak with UTRGV students about their thoughts and experience on THC and cases they both represented Monday at the Liberal Arts Building North on the Edinburg campus.

Zachary Zamora also shared how his personal experiences and legal background influenced his opinion on marijuana.

Before practicing law, he studied pre-med before changing majors and graduating from Baylor University.

“It’s super common for people to be smoking. ... I’m sure everybody knows somebody who smokes,” Zachary Zamora said.

He said his experiences representing criminal defendants has also shaped his opinion on drug-related offenses.

“For one example, we had [a case] the other day where he had multiple cases of sexual assault of a child,” Zachary Zamora said. “And [then] I have somebody with a vape pen. I mean, this guy’s a saint, right? Compared to this [other] guy.”

Students also shared their opinions on marijuana legalization and the penalties associated with marihuana-related offenses.

Hector Barrera, a senior management, said he does not personally smoke marijuana but believes it should be legalized.

“Me personally, I’ve never really smoked. A lot of my friends do,” Barrera said. “I don’t think it’s necessarily bad. I think if you’re not allowed to do marijuana, then you shouldn’t be allowed to drink. ... I think it should be legalized if [alcohol] is legalized.”

He added the current felony classifications for marijuana-related offenses as “insane.”

“I think they’re insane. They shouldn’t be felony twos. They should either go back to being felony threes, or misdemeanors,” Barrera said. “Overall, the goal is to make it legal.”

Not all students think that THC, marijuana or other substances are beneficial. Eric Gonzalez, a political science graduate student, said ignoring the negative health effects of marijuana is an obstacle to making it safe.

“Most people know the negative effects of alcohol,” Gonzalez said. “Unfortunately, the growing body of scientific evidence and the general basics of psychology seems to indicate that any behavior that gives you a large spike of feel-good chemicals in the brain has a potential to become compulsive, potentially addictive.”

Gonzalez said executive action changes in the brain while regularly using substances like THC and marijuana.

“This can cause you to struggle with things like motivation,” Gonzalez said. “If you smoke THC products in the morning, you’ll find that your motivation to do things, like study or tackle other challenging things throughout the day, ... is reduced.”

Gonzalez also said other substances have more severe health effects, and shouldn’t be legalized, however, he believes in decriminalization and rehabilitation.

“People confuse ... decriminalization with legalization,” Gonzalez said. “I don’t think anyone should go to prison for struggling with an addiction ... but I don’t think [illicit substances] should be legalized. These drugs have potential to cause severe mental and physical abuse. Sometimes people can’t stop, no matter how hard they try to stop.”

ON CAMPUS

IT Tech Days connect students with resources

DANNA AVALOS AVILA
THE RIDER

UTRGV’s Information Technology department hosted its annual IT Tech Days on Nov. 4 and Wednesday on the Edinburg and Brownville campuses, respectively, giving students an opportunity to explore technology services, career opportunities and resources available at the university.

Both events took place from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., with the Edinburg event held in the university ballroom and the Brownsville event in El Gran Salón.

The events featured a variety of booths showcasing different IT services and departments, including IT Data Center Services, the Project Management Office and the IT Support Center.

Students who participated in IT Tech Days signed in and received a bag and paper to have stamped at each booth they visited. After completing all the booths, students could submit their papers with their names to enter a raffle for a prize.

Irma Hermida, director of the Strategy and Business Relationships department, said IT Tech Days is a student-focused event where staff members from different IT units and departments speak with students about career opportunities, jobs and available services.

She said the event benefits students because “it increases awareness about the services and products that [IT] offers.”

IT Tech Days also featured technology professionals, including representatives from AIRIA, a company that develops software to track building occupancy through existing Wi-Fi signals. The technology helps organizations, including universities, monitor building usage, manage space and save energy.

Evan Moss, AI SaaS account director for AIRIA, said the company works closely with UTRGV’s IT department, which led to its participation in the event.

Moss said his advice to students interested in pursuing a career in IT or tech is to find something they are passionate about.



MICHELLE HERNANDEZ / THE RIDER
Allison Bochas (left), an accounting sophomore, learns about technological sources from Diana Castilleja, a technology specialist, at IT Tech Days Wednesday in the PlainsCapital Bank El Gran Salón on the Brownsville campus.

“You never know where you’re going to end up. If you do something that you love and that helps other people, that’s really all that’s important,” Moss said.

Students can learn more about UTRGV’s Information Technology department by visiting the IT department’s website.

CURRICULUM
Continued from Page 1

Can Saygin, UTRGV interim provost and executive vice president for Academic Affairs, said the bill shifts final decision-making over academic policy onto university leadership rather than faculty.

“The way I interpret [SB] 37 is that the state, the federal government ... [wants] the executive leadership to make decisions as opposed to putting more on the faculty,” Saygin said.

Under administrative guidelines obtained by The Rider, state law mandates core courses to better prepare students for the workforce and professional life, while the UT System Board of Regents holds final authority over the curriculum.

The document also states the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) is expected to release new guidelines by December, which may reduce the number of courses in the core curriculum.

In a separate institutional framework document, Saygin outlined the university’s plans to minimize the curriculum, seemingly in compliance with these anticipated changes.

The document states the initiative treats the core curriculum as a program in its own right, redesigning it from the current 42 semester credit hours to 30, adding the updated curriculum will also feature AI-teaching material.

Saygin said any courses removed from the core curriculum may still be available as part of the major courses requirements, making the core more general and transferable.

“We did not eliminate any courses,” he said. “We just said, ‘These courses don’t belong in the course because they’re either major-specific, or they are too specific in [another] sense.’”

Saygin said this change can help students be more career-ready, find a job as soon as they graduate and minimize the number of narrow courses. The goal is to aim for a core curriculum applicable to all majors, with changes to the currently in process and expected to be issued around January 2027.

Regarding faculty’s role, Saygin said the university has already implemented faculty advisory bodies and is maintaining college committees to help rethink the core curriculum.

However, some faculty members said the university has been struggling to collaborate with them.

Kristine Wirts, UTRGV professor of history and treasurer of the local American Association of University Professors (AAUP) chapter, said faculty involvement has been further paused and the administration “pretty much dictates who gets to serve on the committees.”

“Faculty has been completely [powerless] because our role is pretty much a token,” Wirts said. “We can’t really make any meaningful contributions and given the chilling climate at this time with SB 37, even faculty who have tenure are afraid to speak out.”

She added it’s a situation where the administration has overriding power.

“Making all kinds of decisions that would have traditionally been the faculty’s role,” Wirts said.

When asked what his response was to concerns about faculty not making meaningful contributions and afraid to speak out, Saygin replied he takes the concerns seriously.

“Faculty should feel comfortable sharing their perspectives, confident that their contributions matter, and informed about the decisions that affect their programs,” Saygin said in an email statement. “Concerns about how changes to the core curriculum may affect program sustainability and the breath of academic offerings deserve careful consideration.

“This is my first semester as Interim Provost, and I began sharing my vision and operational plan in August 2026. That vision centers on three pillars: Student Success, Faculty Success, and Program Success. The initiatives outlined in the documents below are intended to create meaningful opportunities for faculty, students, and staff to help shape improvements and advance UTRGV’s institutional impact.

“Building trust, strengthening communication, and turning engagement into tangible results will take time and sustained effort. My commitment is to make steady progress through open dialogue, clear communication, and meaningful opportunities for faculty input.”

For curriculum in particular, Wirts said faculty would at least have a role and were provided with greater transparency during the process, noting this is not the case anymore.

She said while she understands the importance of the careers readiness for the university, there has currently been an imbalance where career readiness completely overshadows academic quality.

Regarding specific curriculum changes Saygin noted, Wirts said while courses removed from the curriculum are still available, not having them as required under the core curriculum loses guaranteed enrollment and funding for whichever department loses that course.

She said humanities and creative sections in particular may be at risk of losing guaranteed enrollment provided by the core curriculum, noting a change like this hurts a program’s sustainability.

Wirts said students have more power than they realize, encouraging them to speak up for changes they want for themselves and others they care about.

COLUMN OF THE WEEK

Art block, be gone!



ALLISON MUÑOZ
THE RIDER

As a fine arts major, I'm expected to make art for many of my classes. However, no one ever told me about the art block that comes with it.

Art block is the state of being unable to create art. In other words, it's struggling to turn your own thoughts into something creative. Most people that make art for fun have probably experienced the same problems I've faced, but everyone's experience is different, and I'm here to tell my story.

I have struggled with art block for several years, and I always believed it would go away if I kept making art. However, the lack of inspiration eventually catches up to you. You start losing your art style over time and eventually lose the motivation to draw in your own free time.

The way I was able to overcome this was by finding a piece of media that I enjoyed and starting to create art based on it.

Whether it's drawing characters from a show, movie, book or even a YouTube series, many art pieces are either inspired by or created entirely from the mind of the creator. Even so, there is always something that sparks the creativity that drives someone to make art.

I'm aware that art classes of any kind often come with critiques. I love receiving critiques because they show me where I need to improve and what I can fix in future drawings. However, I also find myself getting hurt by criticism, even when that isn't the intention. I've worked so hard on a piece, so being told, in a sense, that I could've done better WILL hurt internally. Still, I know it's necessary to receive that kind of feedback.

With every assignment I've been given, I've pushed through because the urge to give up and drop everything has crossed my mind more than once.

> "It's not that I want to give up. It's more that I want to freestyle what I want to do without placing limits on myself."

It's not that I want to give up. It's more that I want to freestyle what I want to do without placing limits on myself, such as having to use realism or draw a very detailed background. However, I know if I don't step out of my comfort zone, I'll never learn the different forms of art within my major.

As I mentioned earlier, a piece of media can help you get out of the mental block that keeps you from putting your creativity onto the canvas.

A huge cause of art block is the pressure and high expectations that come with trying to perfect a drawing. From an art student's perspective, much of that block is caused by burnout from assignments.

Many of my art friends have experienced this exact same struggle where they lost motivation to create their own art after working on assignments.

What helped me to get rid of my art block was the show "Twisted Wonderland" that is heavily based on Disney villains like the Queen of Hearts, Scar, Ursula, and many other villains.

From my experience, when you really get into a piece of media, you CAN'T escape it, no matter how much you try to stray away from it.

For a good while now, I've loved "Twisted Wonderland," so whenever I struggle to draw my own art, I always resort to drawing the characters from the show or even drawing my own characters into the world.

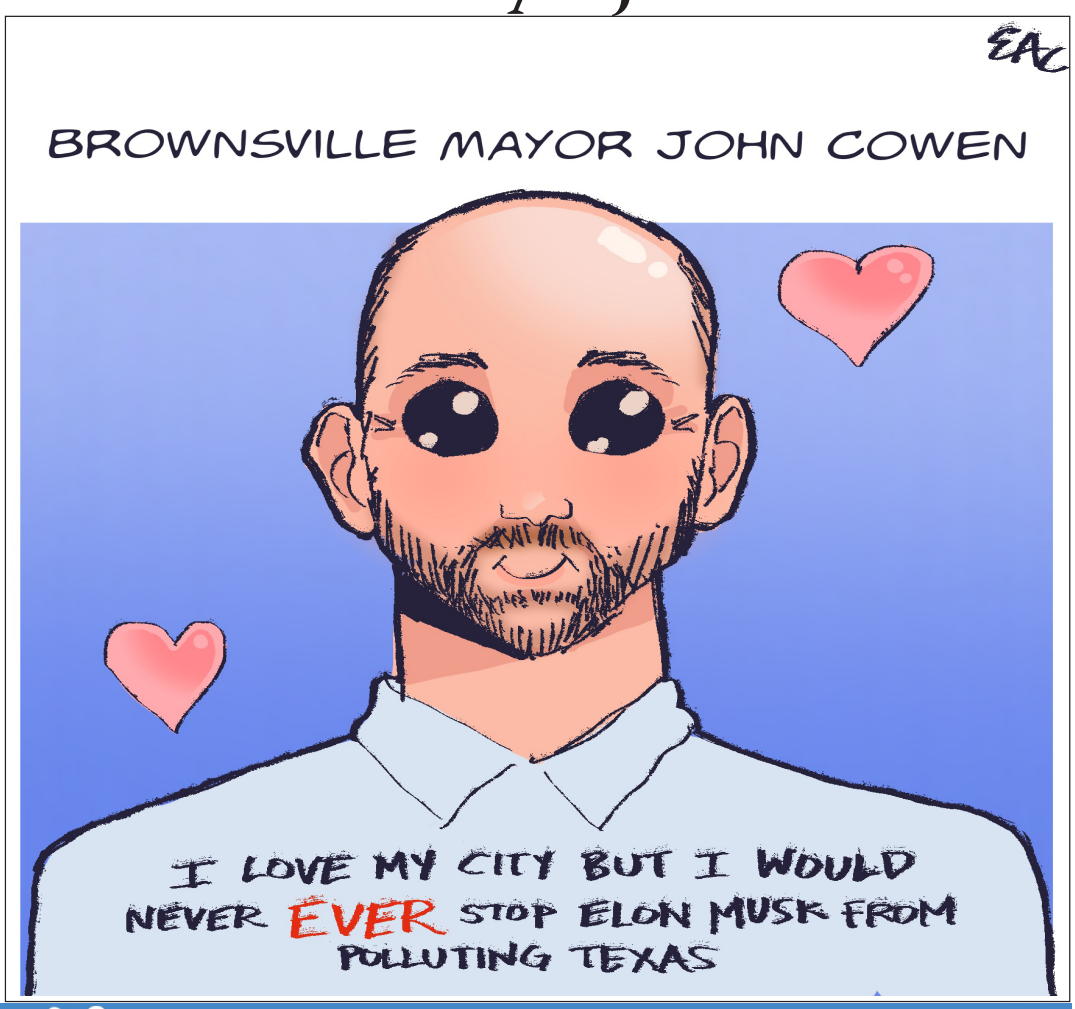
This show has singlehandedly removed me from the state of art block, and I cannot thank this piece of media enough for helping me indirectly.

The moment I heard that Season 2, based around my favorite character, Leona Kingscholar, was coming out in December, I gained even more motivation and it inspired me to continue with my own art journey.

Now this isn't a guarantee that it'll work if you're struggling with your own art block, but it can definitely be a start to pushing through the barriers your mind has put up within your creativity. With the topic of "Twisted Wonderland", I suggest checking out the show on either Disney plus or Hulu, because who knows, maybe you'll like it, and if you don't, at least you tried it.

EDITORIAL CARTOON

Mayorjak



VAQUERO VOICE



Angie Mendoza Reyes
integrated health sciences sophomore

Q: What are you most excited for about Thanksgiving break?

A: "I'm looking forward to seeing my friends. Uh, they're gonna come and visit down here so I'm excited."

Q: What is the perfect Thanksgiving Plate Layout?

A: "I would say probably, you have to have turkey. Like you have to have a turkey leg, mashed potatoes, gravy. Like a very American Thanksgiving, yes."

Q: And what drink to wash that all down?

A: "I would just say a soda. A Coke Zero."

Q: Do you think Thanksgiving is under-appreciated?

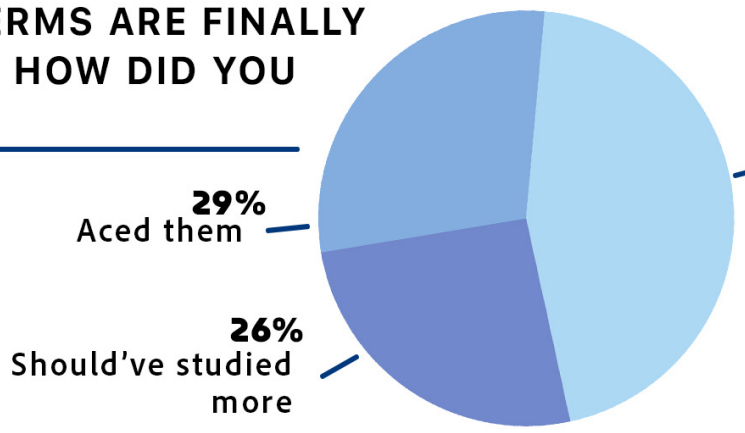
A: "It could be yeah, because it's in the middle of Halloween and Christmas. I feel like people tend to forget about it but, guys, the food is so good too."

--Compiled by Alizzaya Guel

WACKY WEB POLL

LAST WEEK'S RESULTS:

MIDTERMS ARE FINALLY OVER; HOW DID YOU DO?



THIS WEEK'S QUESTION:

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE THANKSGIVING SIDE DISH?

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UTRGV contempla reducir las horas de crédito del plan de estudios básico

JORGE RIOS
THE RIDER

La currícula básica de la UTRGV podría reducirse de 42 a 30 créditos, ya que la universidad está trabajando para cumplir con una nueva ley estatal, lo que ha suscitado inquietudes sobre la participación del profesorado y la posible sostenibilidad de los programas.

El 1 de septiembre de 2025, el proyecto de ley del Senado (SB) 37 entró en vigor y suprimió los senados docentes, que poseían un poder de decisión considerable en materia académica y curricular, limitando al profesorado a funciones exclusivamente consultivas y sin autoridad definitiva sobre las decisiones.

De acuerdo a un comunicado en el sitio web de UTRGV, la ley permite a la Junta de Regentes del Sistema de la Universidad de Texas restablecer senados docentes, conforme a los parámetros del Proyecto de Ley del Senado 37.

Can (John) Saygin, rector interino y vicepresidente ejecutivo de Asuntos Académicos de UTRGV, dijo que el proyecto de ley traslada la toma de decisiones definitiva sobre la política académica a la dirección de la universidad, en lugar de al profesorado.

"La manera en la que interpretó el [SB] 37 es que el estado, el gobierno federal, ... [quiere] que la directiva tome decisiones, en lugar de cargar con más responsabilidades al profesorado", Saygin dijo.

Según las pautas administrativas obtenidas por The Rider, la legislación estatal exige la inclusión de asignaturas fundamentales para preparar mejor a los estudiantes para el mundo laboral y la vida profesional, mientras que la Junta de Regentes del Sistema de UT ostenta la autoridad definitiva sobre la currícula.

El documento también establece que se espera que la Junta Coordinadora de Educación Superior de Texas (THECB, por sus siglas en inglés) publique nuevas pautas para diciembre, las cuales podrían reducir el número de cursos en el plan de estudios básico.

En un documento independiente sobre el marco institucional, Saygin dijo los planes de la universidad para reducir el plan de estudios, aparentemente en consonancia con estos cambios previstos.

El documento establece que, "Esta iniciativa aborda el plan de estudios fundamental como un programa con entidad propia, rediseñando para pasar de las actuales 42 horas de crédito semestrales a 30". Asimismo, añade que la curricula actualizada incluirá material didáctico sobre inteligencia artificial.

Saygin dijo que cualquier curso eliminado del plan de estudios básico seguirá disponible como cursos de la especialización, lo que hará que el plan de estudios básico sea más general y transferible, independientemente de la especialización.



ADRIAN HERNANDEZ / THE RIDER
Estudiante de tercer año Isaiah Torres estudia entre clases los viernes en el campus de Edinburg.

"No eliminamos ningún curso", dijo. "Simplemente dijimos que, 'estos cursos no pertenecían al programa porque son específicos de la especialidad o demasiado específicos en [otro] sentido'".

Saygin dijo que el cambio puede ayudar a los estudiantes a estar preparados para su carrera profesional, encontrar un trabajo tan pronto se graduen y buscar reducir la cantidad de asignaturas. El objetivo es crear un plan de estudios básico aplicable a todas las especialidades. Actualmente se están llevando a cabo cambios en el plan de estudios, cuya publicación está prevista para enero de 2027 aproximadamente.

De acuerdo al papel del profesorado, Saygin dijo que la universidad ya ha establecido órganos consultivos docentes y mantiene comités en las facultades para ayudar a replantear el plan de estudios fundamental.

Sin embargo, algunos miembros del cuerpo docente dijeron que la universidad ha tenido dificultades para colaborar con ellos.

Kristine Wirtz, profesora de historia de UTRGV y tesorera de la sección local de la Asociación Americana de Profesores Universitarios (AAUP, por sus siglas en inglés), dijo que la participación del cuerpo docente se ha visto aún más paralizada y que la administración es quien, en la práctica, "decide quien forma parte de los comités".

"El profesorado se ha visto completamente [impotente] porque nuestro papel es prácticamente simbólico", dijo Wirtz. En realidad no podemos aportar nada significativo y dado el clima intimidatorio que se vive en estos con la ley SB 37, incluso los profesores con plaza fija tienen miedo de alzar la voz".

Añadió que se trata de una situación donde la administración tiene un poder absoluto.

"Toma todo tipo de decisiones que tradicionalmente habrían correspondido al profesorado", Wirtz dijo.

En lo que respecta al plan de estudios en particular, Wirtz dijo que al menos, el profesorado solía tener un papel y se le ofrecía mayor transparencia durante el proceso, pero dijo que ya no es el caso.

Dijo que aunque comprende la importancia de la preparación para la vida profesional para la universidad, actualmente existe un desequilibrio en el que dicha preparación eclipsa por completo la calidad académica.

Cuando se le preguntó cuál era su respuesta ante las preocupaciones sobre el hecho de que el profesorado no realizará aportaciones significativas y tuviera miedo de expresar su opinión, Saygin respondió que se toma en serio esas preocupaciones.

"El profesorado debería sentirse cómodo a la hora de compartir sus puntos de vista, con la confianza de que sus aportaciones son importantes, y estar informado sobre las decisiones que afectan a sus programas", Saygin dijo en un comunicado enviado por correo electrónico. "Las preocupaciones sobre cómo los cambios en el plan de estudios básico pueden afectar a la sostenibilidad de los programas y a la variedad de la oferta académica merecen una atención cuidadosa.

"Este es mi primer semestre como vicerrector interino, y en agosto de 2026 comencé a compartir mi visión y mi plan operativo. Esa visión se articula en torno a tres pilares: el éxito de los estudiantes, el éxito del profesorado y el éxito de los programas. Las iniciativas descritas en los documentos que figuran a continuación tienen por objeto crear oportunidades significativas para el profesorado, los estudiantes y el personal, con el fin de contribuir a dar forma a las mejoras y potenciar el impacto institucional.

"Generar confianza, reforzar la comunicación y convertir la participación en resultados tangibles llevará tiempo y un esfuerzo constante. Mi compromiso es lograr un progreso constante a través del diálogo abierto, una comunicación clara y oportunidades significativas para que el profesorado aporte sus opiniones".

En cuanto a los cambios específicos en el plan específicos en el plan de estudios que menciono Saygin, Wirts dijo que aunque las asignaturas eliminadas del plan de estudia seguirán disponibles, el hecho de que ya no sean obligatorios en la currícula hace en el departamento que pierda esa asignatura deje de tener garantizada la matriculación y la financiación.

Dijo que las secciones de humanidades y creativas podrían correr el riesgo de perder la matrícula garantizada que ofrece el plan de estudios básico, y dijo que un cambio así podría perjudicar la sostenibilidad de un programa.

Fatima Cuellar, estudiante de primer año de psicología, dijo que se trata de una situación difícil, ya que, aunque le gusta la idea de tener menos asignaturas de currícula básica obligatorias, comprende el riesgo que esto puede suponer para las opciones académicas.

Cuellar dijo que espera que el profesorado tenga más voz en este asunto y pueda contribuir a un plan de estudios más equilibrado.

Wirts dijo que los estudiantes tienen más poder de lo que creen, y les animó a alzar la voz para reclamar los cambios que desean para sí mismos y para las personas que les importan.

--Traducida por Hugo Sepúlveda

Detección del gusano barrenador en el Valle

MARIAH ESCOBAR
THE RIDER

La universidad recibió un subsidio de $2.2 millones del Departamento de Agricultura de Estados Unidos para probar si las cámaras térmicas pueden detectar infestaciones del gusano barrenador del Nuevo Mundo y para estudiar qué plantas del sur de Texas podrían atraer a las moscas.

El servicio de la Inspección de Sanidad Animal y Vegetal del USDA incluye el proyecto de dos años entre los premios seleccionados del New World Grande Challenge award. Los investigadores esperan que sus hallazgos ayuden a ganaderos y manejadores de fauna silvestre a detectar infestaciones más temprano e identificar las áreas donde es probable que se congreguen las moscas.

Sarah Maestas, profesora asistente e investigadora principal del proyecto, dijo que las moscas hembras del gusano barrenador depositan sus huevos a lo largo de los bordes de las heridas abiertas. Una vez que los huevos eclosionan, las larvas se alimentan del tejido vivo y se adentran más en la herida.

"Los animales de compañía también pueden infectarse. Las personas pueden infectarse", dijo Maestas. "Así que no es necesariamente sólo una preocupación para el ganado".

Los investigadores planean comenzar con cámaras térmicas de mano y usar aprendizaje automático para buscar señales de infestación en las imágenes. Maestas dijo que el equipo espera, con el tiempo, montar cámaras en drones para vigilar áreas más grandes.

"No podemos necesariamente revisar individualmente a cada animal," dijo Maestas sobre el monitoreo de la vida silvestre.

Pushpa Soti, profesora de biología y co-investigadora, dijo que la colaboración surgió de una conferencia que Maestas dio como invitada en su curso de agricultura sostenible. Soti había estudiado antes cómo el pasado invasor Guinea afecta a los mosquitos, y quiso averiguar si la vegetación local también podrían influir en donde se congregan las moscas del gusano barrenador.

Soti dijo que el equipo planea liberar moscas en una cámara central conectada a compartimentos con diferentes plantas. Los investigadores registraron a dónde van las moscas, cuánto tiempo permanecen y qué compuestos transportados por el aire liberan las plantas.

$2.2 MILLONES A UTRGV

Para probar cámaras térmicas que detectan infestaciones del gusano barrenador del Nuevo Mundo y estudiar qué plantas del sur de Texas podrían atraer a las moscas.

Durante el periodo de dos años del proyecto, los investigadores planean comenzar con cámaras térmicas de mano y esperan usar cámaras montadas en drones para inspeccionar áreas más grandes.

"Esto va a ser, con suerte, particularmente útil para cosas como la vigilancia en la vida silvestre, donde no podemos necesariamente revisar a cada animal individualmente", Maestas dijo.

El equipo estudiará la vegetación asociada con las moscas adultas. Maestas dijo que la información podría ayudar a los funcionarios a decidir donde liberar moscas macho estériles para que sea más probable que se encuentren con moscas silvestres.

Los hallazgos pueden ayudar a decidir si monitorear al ganado más cerca y ayudar a los funcionarios a dirigir la liberación de moscas macho estériles, de acuerdo a Maestas.

Liberarlas donde se reúnen las moscas podría aumentar las probabilidades de apareamiento con hembras silvestre y evitar que las hembras produzcan descendencia.

Soti dijo que el proyecto ayudará a mantener la confianza con los agricultores mientras encuentran la respuesta a sus problemas.

"Tendremos una gran relación ... la universidad en su patio trasero está trabajando para atender sus problemas", dijo.

Dos estudiantes de maestría realizarán investigación de tesis a través del proyecto. Maestas dijo que el equipo también planea puestos de investigación de pregrado remunerados conforme estén disponibles y podrían aceptar voluntarios.

"Los estudiantes interesados en experiencia de investigación voluntaria son bienvenidos a comunicarse conmigo", Maestas dijo.

Según Soti, el USDA está contratando personal para el proyecto. Si están interesados, las personas pueden aplicar aquí de martes a jueves.

--Traducida por Valeria Tokun Haga

MARIACHI
continued Page 1

Joining Mariachi Juvenil Aztlán for their performance was UTRGV's Ballet Folklorico.

After the intermission, the concert continued with the university's premiere mariachi ensemble, Mariachi Aztlán.

"We're extremely proud of these students," Guerra said while introducing the ensemble. "They work extremely hard ... they have jobs, and they come, and they practice hours and hours to sound as good as they do right now."

Sofia Ozuna, music education senior, performed as a singer and violinist for Mariachi Aztlán, and mentioned she is set to graduate this fall.

"This is my senior year, so preparing for my recital, preparing for my exams and then preparing for this concert, it's been very hectic," Ozuna said. "But not the end of the world ... I live for this type of thrill, that's what I do."

She added she was happy to conclude her year with a full house.

"I am completing everything successfully, and with my friends, and my colleagues, and everything," Ozuna said. "I'm so glad to be part of this university, in this program."

With a repertoire of 12 songs that highlighted their vocalists and harpist, Joseph Padron, who embarked on multiple solos throughout, Mariachi Aztlán closed the concert with a performance including all four ensembles and the Folklorico team for a final traditional folk song, "La Negra."

Michael Morales, a junior at Edinburg High School, said that he attended the concert to support his friends performing, and music is a form of escapism in his own life.

"Mariachi is a big part of my life right now. ... I just truly love the culture and the music," Morales said. "Just seeing how other groups interpret the music and share their love of mariachi through their performance on stage. ... We apply that to ourselves in high school as well."

When asked what mariachi meant to Loera, he replied the intergenerational tradition in his own family.

"It's just a part of who we are," Loera said. "For example, my dad was a mariachi, my grandma was a mariachi, my daughter plays here. ... [The program] feels like we're all relatives. ... It's our life, basically."

Guerra added he believes everyone has their own journey, having been a part of Mariachi Aztlán himself while attending UTRGV.

"I was part of the program here," Guerra said, having received his bachelor's in music education and violin performance in 2019 and his master's in music education and violin performance in 2021. "I think it's just special to be back, you know?"

The Mariachi Program will host a Mariachi Festival this upcoming spring on Feb. 26 and 27, where high schools from across the Rio Grande Valley will compete. Mariachi Sol de México will make a guest appearance.

For more information on future events, visit @utrgvarts on Instagram.



ADRIAN HERNANDEZ / THE RIDER PHOTOS
Music education senior Sofia Ozuna performed as a singer and violinist for Mariachi Aztlán Thursday at the Performing Arts Complex on the Edinburg campus.

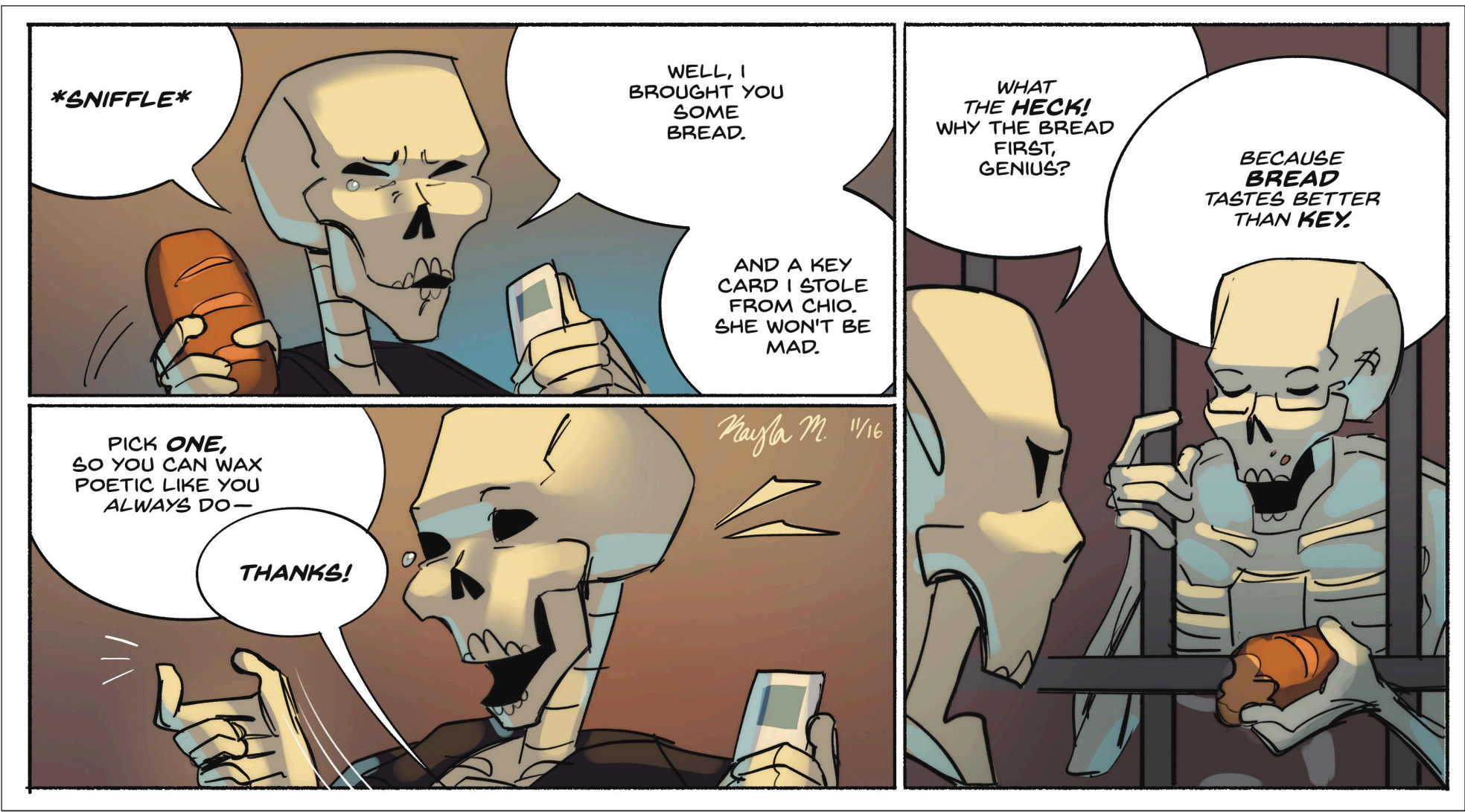


Mariachi Vaquero, Mariachi Espuelas, Mariachi Juvenil Aztlán and Mariachi Aztlán performed their final performance together Thursday at the Performing Arts Complex on the Edinburg campus.



UTRGV Mariachi Juvenil Aztlán took the stage and performed Thursday at the Performing Arts Complex on the Edinburg campus.

Cadaver Conversations: Coworkers #10



Best friends setting the Vaquero way in tennis season finale

TIMOTHY DAVID
THE RIDER

Ending the women's tennis season at the States Up Slam in San Marcos, junior singles and doubles player Luna Buijtenhuijs finished with a perfect 4-0 record.

During the tournament, Buijtenhuijs won her two singles matches against Allison Blanco of St. Mary's University, 6-3, 6-4, and Julia Richardet of Texas State University, 6-0, 6-1.

On the doubles side, Buijtenhuijs played two matches with her partner, senior Madeleine Joffe.

The pair defeated freshman Avery Arant and sophomore Olivia Collins of Texas State University, 7-5, and sophomore Naomi Hagi and senior Erica Hagi of McNeese State University, 6-2.

Buijtenhuijs and Joffe are the only two players on the roster from France, with Buijtenhuijs from Lanton and Joffe from Paris. Sharing a similar background while adjusting to a place like Texas has helped create a unique dynamic between the two tennis players.

Head coach West Nott said he noticed a "best friend-like" bond between the two from the beginning. He said their friendship has translated into strong performances together on the court, something Nott wants to continue moving forward.

"What makes them special is they're both from France, they're best friends with each other, and the moment I picked them up from the airport and they got in the car, they didn't say any words to me or Kate, my previous assistant coach," he said. "They were just talking to each other the whole ride to UTRGV, so we knew there was something special there."

Their friendship from the get-go has made tennis a more enjoyable experience for Buijtenhuijs and Joffe, with their connection making a notable difference in their doubles partnership.

"I think it's because we are friends outside the court, so it's way easier to play together and you will feel very connected to each other, and it makes it a pleasure to play with her. It was really fun," Buijtenhuijs said. "... I think that's what makes the biggest difference."



ADRIAN HERNANDEZ/THE RIDER PHOTOS
UTRGV tennis head coach West Nott discusses the doubles partnership between Luna Buijtenhuijs and Madaleine Joffe Thursday at the Orville Cox Tennis Center on the Edinburg campus. "What makes them special is they're both from France [and] they're like best friends with each other," Nott said.



Senior Madeleine Joffe, a singles and doubles tennis player, talks about her partnership with teammate Luna Buijtenhuijs Thursday at the Orville Cox Tennis Center on the Edinburg campus. "I think it's because we are friends outside the court, so it's easier to play together and you will feel very connected to each other," Joffe said.

Joffe values what Buijtenhuijs brings to their friendship and team, describing her as someone who brings positive energy and resilience to the court. "I think Luna is a really great person. She's a team player," Joffe said. "... and she's always the one who brings the energy up whenever it's slowed down, she's always fighting on the court too ... so she is a really reliable person, and I think she brings a lot to the team."

Beyond her doubles partnership, Buijtenhuijs has committed to developing her skills and contributing to the team since arriving at UTRGV as a freshman in the 2024-25 season.

During her freshman year, she was benched for most of the season and appeared in only two matches against UT Permian Basin. She earned her first two collegiate wins, competing at No. 3 in doubles and No. 5 in singles.

In the 2025-26 season, Buijethuijs continued to show relentless dedication during her sophomore year, earning a team-high 10 singles wins. She finished with an 8-1 record in Southland Conference play and went 3-1 at the No. 4 position, 2-0 at the No. 1, 2-0 at No. 3 and 1-0 at the No. 5.

By then, Buijtenhuijs was no longer sitting on the bench and had opportunities to show what she was capable of, marking the beginning of continued growth over the following 18 months.

Nott credited Buijtenhuijs for her consistency and ability to adapt to any obstacle in her way of improving.

"I think she really bought into consistency. I think she always worked hard but I don't think she was playing the right way, which credit to her she really adapted and ... they say that being benched your freshman year ... really changes your mindset, and I think that's what happened," Nott said.

"She wanted to add value to the team and waswondering how she could do that. She's completely changed how she views tennis and how she's gonna go get the win, She wins in the hard way, as they say, 'not the easy way.'"

Buijtenhuijs and Joffe are only one example of the friendships and sense of community that can develop among UTRGV athletes across different sports. The women's tennis team will return in spring 2027 for the start of its dual Wmatch season.



Junior Luna Buijtenhuijs, a singles and doubles tennis player, speaks with reporter Timothy David about her goals for the spring dual season Thursday at the Orville Cox Tennis Center on the Edinburg campus.

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK



UTRGV ATHLETICS COURTESY PHOTO
Sophomore forward Rylie Whitehair spoke to a reporter about her recent performance at women's basketballs first game of the season. The Vaqueros won this game with a record breaking performance of 14-47 at the UTRGV field house on Nov 2.

RYLIE WHITEHAIR

TIANA MESA
THE RIDER

Rylie Whitehair is a sophomore forward from Gallup, New Mexico who set the standard for her UTRGV athletic career at the first women's basketball game of the season, where she set her career-high with 19 points and a perfect 8-for-8 in free throws Nov. 2 at the UTRGV fieldhouse

Q: What drew you to basketball, and what inspires you to play the best you can?

A: "I've been playing basketball since I was six years old. And, you know, I also have my dad who played in high school and in college. I guess it would mainly all be because of him, you know, just looking up to him and, you know, taking after him. He was the one that really encouraged me to play basketball and to be the player that I am today. For what inspires me, I would say it really is my community back at home. You know, not everyone in my community gets this opportunity to go to a D1 school and to play basketball. You know, it's very hard only because of the equipment and everything that we don't usually have back at home. But, you know, I really push myself, or my community, and show everyone that it is possible to make it to D1 and to play."

Q: Do you have a very sporty family, or was basketball something you pursued on your own?

A: "I have a very sporty family, you know, mainly on my dad's side. Everyone played basketball in high school, but mainly my dad was the one who really went to college. And I also have an older brother. He played in high school, too. So I also look out for him, too."

Q: Are there any other sports you played in the past?

A: "So, yeah, I actually played volleyball in high school, and had been playing volleyball since fourth grade. And then around my sophomore year is when I started playing golf. I got interested in golf only because my brother and my dad also play golf too, and I wanted to try something new. And honestly, I liked golf. It's very peaceful and quiet, you know, takes time away, like, from the world and everything."

Q: What is your favorite native american food or part of your culture that you get to share with others?

A: "I think my favorite Native American food would be it's called mutton stew. So basically, it's like what mutton is called for Native Americans. It's like another word for sheep and then there's vegetables in there, like carrots, celery, potatoes. To me, that's really good. And then we also have this like bread. It's called fry bread. It's really good. I mean, if people would try it, I think they would all like it. As for native culture I think it would be like all the ceremonies, I know in the winter time, they have these ceremonies called the Yeibichai the shoe game, And there's more others, but there's different kinds of ceremonies for each of the seasons. And, you know, it's just a way of getting like our people together and to celebrate and to come together and just to pray for each other and just be grateful for everything that we have."

Q: What has been your favorite thing about South Texas since moving to the RGV for college, and what is your least favorite thing about it?

A: "My favorite thing about here is, I would say mainly like, how everybody is very connected and everyone wants to be a huge family. You know, everywhere I go, everyone's very welcoming.
And it just feels more like home, because everyone back at home is very welcoming as well and loving. And, I just kind of got that feeling when I got here that everyone's just, you know, kind of the same back at home. One ... thing I don't like, I think there's not that much scenery. It's just building after building, there's like no mountains or anything. It's very flat. Back at home, I'm used to seeing mountains, trees, like, just beautiful scenery ... only because that's kind of, like, basically all of New Mexico."

Q: Coach Lane Lord has said he believes by the time you're done at UTRGV, you have the potential to be an All conference player. What about Lord's coaching and the team's energy initially attracted you to the team?

A: "With Coach Lord, I feel like he pushes me every day to be the best player that I can be. And, you know, without his coaching and everything, I wouldn't be the player I am today. You know,
he pushes me in practice every day, and so do my teammates. And my teammates are another reason why I keep going. I do it for them too, because I know that we have a lot of potential between us, and I feel like we can really win this conference. And with practices and everything going, I feel like the connection between me and my teammates have really grown, and even my connection with Coach Lord."

Q: What do you hope to accomplish this coming season and in the long term for your utrgv career?

A: "Well, what I really want to accomplish this year is getting to the NCAA tournament. I know that it's been a while. I think that would be my main goal. And then, you know, making an all-team conference, that would be very great. And in the long run, I think just like I said, setting an example for my community that it's all possible and that everything that I went through, that all my hard work is going to pay off in the end."

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PULSE

BETWEEN SEASONS

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Pulse Magazine