

# Walk the walk

## Outdoor graduation ceremonies planned



Silver Salas/ UNIVERSITY MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Students applaud during the Dec. 14, 2019, Winter Commencement for the College of Education and P-16 Integration, College of Engineering and

Computer Science and College of Sciences at the Bert Ogden Arena in Edinburg.

### Brigitte Ortiz

THE RIDER

Spring 2021 and the Class of 2020 graduates will have the option to participate in in-person commencement ceremonies in May. There will be five days to accommodate all graduates from both campuses.

Sofia Almeda, university registrar, said UTRGV decided to make the ceremonies optional, given that COVID-19 cases are decreasing and the vaccine is more widely available.

"We also know that not everybody has a chance to get the vaccine or may not be comfortable getting it, and so for that reason, students also have the option to participate virtually if they wish to," Almeda said.

For Spring 2021 graduates, ceremonies on the Edinburg campus will take place in the E16 parking lot May 7. The Brownsville campus will have its ceremonies May 8 in parking lot B3.

"The following week on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, the 13, 14 and 15, we'll hold ceremonies for all of our certified 2020 graduates, with the Brownsville campus ceremonies happening on Thursday, and our Edinburg campus ceremonies being held on the 14 and 15," she said. "This year, it's our 2021 graduates that have the option to participate virtually. Our 2020 graduates don't have the option to participate virtually since they already had a virtual ceremony last year."

Almeda said guests unable to attend can view the ceremony via livestream. She said the links will be provided before the ceremony.

"For students and guests who don't want to come to campus and be in person at

"[The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] does indicate that outdoor spaces are safer than enclosed ones, and we really need ample space to spread out and get seating right and have everybody socially distance," Alme-

electronically to students who RSVP. And families will fit in those groups of four, but they will be separated by six feet from any other family in attendance. Students who are being seated to cross the stage will also be six feet apart from each other. ... All guests and graduates and staff will be required to wear ... masks at all times."

She said RSVPs that are submitted to the university will determine what times the college ceremonies will take place. Almeda said they anticipate that the times will be announced for the designated dates sometime the week of April 12.

"We're very excited to be able to host an in-person ceremony, and we know that it will look a little bit different," she said. "But we also know this is the best way to have a safe but still joyous experience for students and their families. UTRGV staff has gone more than a year now without hosting a commencement ceremony, and it's something that we typically look forward to and enjoy with our students, so we're excited about it upcoming."

Enrique Soto, who graduated in December 2020 with a bachelor of science degree in kinesiology, said he was surprised to hear that his cohort will have an in-person ceremony this year.

"We wanted it to be during our year, December 2020, right," Soto said. "Since it already passed, I feel like I do want to go but at the same time, See GRADUATION, Page 5

**[The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] does indicate that outdoor spaces are safer than enclosed ones, and we really need ample space to spread out and get seating right and have everybody socially distance**  
*-Sofia Almeda*  
**University registrar**

all, they will have access to a link where they will participate virtually," Almeda said. "And it will be a series of images of all of the graduates being made available online along with their messages, so that will look a lot like what we already did for our 2020 graduates."

She said the ceremonies will be held in the parking lots because it is the safest option, given the number of people that will be attending.

da said. "And the only place that we could accommodate such a large area would be in the parking lot."

She said some of the safety measures include fewer university leaders on stage in order to maintain social-distancing guidelines.

"In addition to that, the number of guests for all of our participants is limited to four," Almeda said. "And those tickets will be made available

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Rio Grande Valley poet spotlight

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Lil Nas X vs. Conservatives

Editorial cartoon

Page 7

Valley vocalist competes on NBC's "The Voice"

## HB 695 awaits committee vote

Jacqueline Peraza  
 EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

House Bill 695, relating to the establishment of a new law school in the Rio Grande Valley, is pending without objection after Rep. Armando Martinez (D-Weslaco) presented it to the Committee of Higher Education March 25.

The committee met to hear from various representatives across the state of Texas in Austin.

Martinez gave his testimony in front of 10 Higher Education Committee members about a feasibility study, funding and other criteria needed for the creation of the school.

"If more than one system notifies the Coordinating Board, the board is required to determine which of these systems may open the law school and the decision must be based upon the need for the law school, potential student demand, available resources, feasibility and proposals and other criteria the board finds appropriate," Martinez said.

He also told the members about the disparity and need for attorneys in comparison to other cities in Texas.

"Along the Rio Grande Valley, you have one attorney for every 805 residents," Martinez said. "When you compare that to Austin and Round Rock, there is one attorney for every 172 residents. So, the disparity is very large."

He said in addition to the See HB695, Page 2



# THE RIDER

The Rider is the official, award-winning student newspaper of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Views presented are those of the writers and do not reflect those of the newspaper or university.

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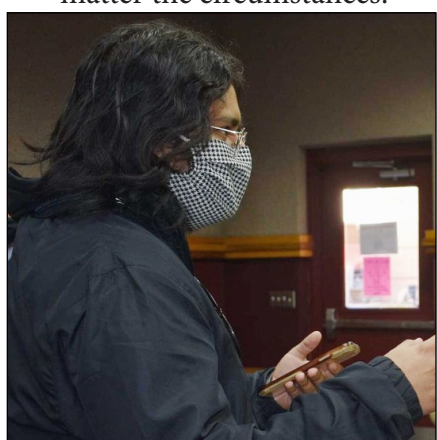
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## MORE THAN A NEWSPAPER

Delivering news to UTRGV no matter the circumstances.



Reporter Omar E. Zapata



### Today

### National Poetry Month

Celebrate **National Poetry Month** with

**Lady Caress**, a poet

who uses comedy, music,

beatboxing and storytelling, from 4 to

5:30 p.m. via Zoom. This event is hosted

by the **Campus Activities Board** in

collaboration with the **Student Union**.

Attendees will be entered in a giveaway.

RSVP is available on V Link.

### Women's Recovery

Join a **nine-week support group**

**for women** to come together, receive

support and empower one another at

noon via Zoom. The sessions are hosted

by the **Collegiate Recovery Program**.

Email [recovery@utrgv.edu](mailto:recovery@utrgv.edu) for Zoom link.

### Movie Monday

Join the **Cultural Council** as it

showcases **"Denial,"** a dramatization

of the **Irving vs. Penguin Books Ltd.**

case from 6:30 to 9 p.m. via Discord.

RSVP is available on V Link.

### Tuesday

### Sustainable Table Webinars

The **Campus Food Security Team**

will present a **Sustainable Table**

**Webinar series** twice a week in

April **focused on plant-based and**

**delicious food.** Tuesday's webinar,

**"Snacks and Cravings,"** will take

place from 5:30 to 6:15 p.m. and will

feature healthy and easy snack recipes.

**"Chips, Salsa, Dips, y Más,"**

scheduled from 12:30 to 1:15 p.m.

Friday, will show viewers how to create

simple and delicious salsas and dips.

Participants who attend all sessions will

be entered in a drawing for a basket of

healthy goodies. To register, visit its

[Eventbrite page.](#)

### Open Recovery

A **support group** for those seeking

recovery from substance use, addictive

behaviors and/or process addition meets

at 3 p.m. Tuesday and noon Friday. The

sessions are hosted by the **Collegiate**

**Recovery Program.** Email [recovery@](mailto:recovery@utrgv.edu)

[utrgv.edu](mailto:recovery@utrgv.edu) for Zoom link.

### Wednesday

### Smart Recovery

The **Collegiate Recovery Program**

conducts **self-management and**

**recovery training,** a non-spiritual

based peer support, at 11 a.m. via Zoom.

Email [recovery@utrgv.edu](mailto:recovery@utrgv.edu) for Zoom link.

### Finding Journals and Specific Articles

The **University Library** will host an

event to learn about library resources

from noon to 12:30 p.m. via Zoom.

RSVP is available on V Link.

### Evening of Cumbia Dance

Join the **Student Union** for an

**evening of cumbia dancing** from

5:30 to 7 p.m. via Zoom. RSVP is

available on V Link.

### Thursday

### CEA Marvel Trivia

Test your knowledge on the **Marvel**

**Cinematic Universe** as the **Civic**

**Engagement Alliance** hosts a trivia

night from 4 to 5 p.m. via Zoom.

Winners will receive prizes. RSVP is

available on V Link.

### Pride Bingo

Join the **Campus Activities Board**

for **Pride Bingo** from 5 to 6 p.m. via

Zoom. The event will feature comedians

**Daniel Webb and Renee Santos**

Students who RSVP and attend will

receive a CAB LGBTQ+ Pride T-shirt.

RSVP is available on V Link.

### Friday

### SGA Senate Meeting

**Voice your concerns** to the **Student**

**Government Association** as it

conducts a meeting from 6 to 8 p.m. via

Zoom. RSVP is available on VLink.

### ASL Talent Show

The **ASL Club** will host a virtual **talent**

**show** from 6 to 8 p.m. via Zoom. RSVP

is available on V Link.

### Upcoming

### Meet the Deans

**Virtually** meet with deans from all

the colleges at UTRGV from 3 to 4

p.m. April 13 and 15 via Zoom. The

event will be hosted by the **Student**

**Government Association.** RSVP is

available on V Link.

--Compiled by Omar E. Zapata

## POLICE REPORTS

The following are among the incidents reported to University Police between March 21 and 29.



### March 21

**9:32 a.m.:** UTRGV Police

Communications observed on the

cameras nine

individuals climb

over the U.S. border

fence located by

Lot B-1 on the Brownsville campus.

UTRGV Police Department officers

and U.S. Border Patrol agents arrived

and detained the individuals without

incident. The Border Patrol agents

detained three more individuals located

by Texas Southmost College facilities.

Eleven men and one woman from Cuba,

Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras were

detained.

### March 22

**9:26 a.m.:** A staff member reported

receiving an email from the Texas

Workforce Commission in reference

to a filed claim for unemployment

benefits. The staff member reported she

was then contacted by UTRGV Human

Resources in reference to the claim. The

staff member informed HR that she had

not filed the claim, and a report was

generated for documentation purposes.

**1:53 p.m.:** A staff member reported

receiving an email from the Texas

Workforce Commission about a filed

claim for unemployment benefits.

UTRGV Human Resources contacted

her in reference to the claim, and she

informed HR that she had not filed

the claim. A report was generated for

documentation purposes.

**7:16 p.m.:** An officer and the Edinburg

Fire Department responded to a fire

alarm indicating a smoke detector had

been activated in the Research Education

building on the Edinburg campus. At

the scene, a staff member told the officer

that while decontaminating a room with

a fogger, it had accidentally activated

the smoke detector. The fire department

cleared the building for re-entry.

### March 24

**5:16 p.m.:** A non-affiliated contractor

reported a tractor-trailer used as

equipment storage was burglarized at the

Community Engagement and Student

Success Building on the Edinburg

campus. He reported a padlock used to

secure the trailer's doors was broken off

on March 22. Nothing was missing from

the trailer. After further investigation, it

was determined a forklift being used in

the area had broken off the padlock. The

case is unfounded.

### March 25

**12:27 p.m.:** An officer responded

to the Library Service Drive on the

Edinburg campus in reference to a non-

affiliated woman slipping and falling

on the pavement. The woman reported

feeling pain in her left leg and left arm.

emergency medical services were called

to the scene, but she declined to be

transported.

### March 26

**9:30 a.m.:** A faculty member reported

receiving harassing emails from a

current student. The case is under

investigation.

### March 27

**3:20 p.m.:** An officer observed six

individuals crossing the U.S. border

fence in the area of Lot B-1 on the

Brownsville campus. UTRGV Police

Department officers and U.S. Border

Patrol agents were able to detain three

men, who all claimed to be from Mexico,

in the brush area. The others fled back

toward Mexico.

### March 28

**11:21 a.m.:** UTRGV Police

Communications observed on the

cameras several individuals running

north on River Levee Road in

Brownsville. UTRGV Police Department

officers and U.S. Border Patrol agents

arrived and detained 11 individuals

from Cuba, Mexico, Guatemala and

Honduras without incident.

### March 29

**3:30 a.m.:** An officer responded to

Edinburg Police Department officers

requesting assistance with a combative

man they were trying to arrest in Lot

E-9 on the Edinburg campus. The

UTRGV Police Department officer

# Science of Teaching Reading

## — TExES Exam —



Roxanna Miranda/ THE RIDER PHOTO ILLUSTRATION

As of Jan. 1, students in the Early Childhood-6, Early Childhood 3 or English Language Arts/Reading 4-8 programs must pass the new Science of Teaching Reading TExES exam in order to be certified. The exam is part of the mandate passed in House Bill 3.

# STR exam now required for some education majors

**Alejandra Yañez**  
THE RIDER

UTRGV students who are in the Early Childhood-6, Early Childhood 3 or English Language Arts/Reading 4-8 programs must pass the new Science of Teaching Reading TExES exam for certification, in compliance with House Bill 3.

The Science of Teaching Reading exam is part of the exam mandate passed in the bill, which requires “that all teacher candidates who teach students in grades Pre-K-6 demonstrate proficiency in the science of teaching reading on a new, stand-alone certification exam,” the Texas Education Agency website reads.

The requirement took effect on Jan. 1.

House Bill 3 is a school finance bill passed by the 86th Texas Legislature in 2019 and signed by Gov. Greg Abbott.

“The bill provides more money for Texas classrooms, increases teacher compensation, reduces recapture and cuts local property taxes for Texas taxpayers,” the Texas Education Agency website reads. “HB 3 is one of the most transformative Texas education bills in recent history.”

Erica Villarreal, director of UTRGV Educator Preparation, said anyone specializing in the pre-K through sixth grade levels must pass the exam to attain certification.

Asked how students reacted to the test requirement, Villarreal replied that the university took a proactive approach in notifying the students.

“We did let them know a year before the implementation of the exam,” she said. “So, we started preparing them with ample time so those candidates that were going to be impacted were ready, and they knew the implications of this exam, and they knew what to prepare for.

So, we didn’t necessarily have any type of negative pushback.”

Villarreal said the program requires candidates to go through preparation exams before taking the actual test.

Students are required to take a practice exam and participate in a content review and constructed response workshop.

“Once they have those three items completed, they are given approval to test for the exam,” she said.

Students do not need to pass every domain of the exam to pass.

“A candidate will be scored on the exam as a whole,” the Texas Education Agency website reads. “The scaled score for the selected-response sections will be combined with the scaled score for the constructed-response section to produce a total test scaled score.”

Students who are seeking certification in English Lan-

See SCIENCE, Page 5

# National Poetry Month Writing about life along the border



Photo Courtesy César De León

Rio Grande Valley poet César De León plans to release his first collection of poems this spring.

**Sol Garcia**  
THE RIDER

As someone who lives near the border, César De León, a writer, believes it is important to represent borderland areas accurately. Through poetry, he provides that authenticity.

Born in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico, De León moved to the United States when he was 4 years old. Now, he resides in Harlingen, writing about life along the border.

“It’s important to document life on the border, coming

### Poets of the Rio Grande Valley: First in a Series

from somebody that lives on the border,” De León said. “A lot of times, people get the idea of what the border is from the media, and it’s often wrong. It’s often depicted in ways that are not entirely true to the experiences that we have here on the border.”

While his focus is on the borderland area, De León also writes about other personal topics, including his childhood and “pandemic poems” that he

has written in the past year as the COVID-19 pandemic continues.

“My poetry, lately, probably since I started publishing outside of school publications—they do have a lot to do with life on the border, daily occurrences, personal themes or personal topics, but my poetry is mostly centered along the borderlands,” the 47-year-old said.

De León has been publishing poetry since 2010 but has been inspired to write poetry since high school.

“During the high school years, I was influenced by what I was reading, which were the canonical writers, like Emily Dickinson and [Walt] Whitman,” said the poet, who previously was an adjunct lecturer at UTRGV, where he received a Master of Fine Arts degree. “Now, I think my influences are more diverse, and I kind of wish that they had been more diverse to begin with.”

See POET, Page 8

# UTRGV recognized in journalism competition

**Jacqueline Peraza**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

On March 26, UTRGV Student Media and Gallery magazine received 35 awards for previously published/broadcast work from the Texas Intercollegiate Press Association.

Members of The Rider, Vaquero Radio, KVAQ-TV, Pulse and Gallery magazines earned eight first-place, five second-place and 12 third-place awards.

This year, the TIPA Convention was held via live broadcast to adhere to COVID-19 safety measures after the event was canceled last year due to the pandemic.

UTRGV competed against other universities, including the University of Texas at Austin, Texas A&M University and Baylor University, among others, in the Division 1 and open categories.

### Student Media

Newspaper, radio, TV and magazine received an honorable mention for Student Media with its piece titled, “UTRGV Investigates Lecturer’s Alleged Comments” in the Breaking News contest.



Roxanna Miranda/ THE RIDER PHOTO ILLUSTRATION

### The Rider

For the newspaper, photographer Roxanna Miranda received first place for her multimedia slideshow titled,

“UTRGV Pride.” Spanish reporter Paulina Longoria placed first for her news story, “¿Qué eres?”

Miranda and former reporter Maleny Ortega were awarded third place in the

Feature Reporting-Video category for “UTRGV Study Shows Benefits of Animal Crossings.”

Former photographer Amanda Vela placed third in the Multimedia Slideshow contest for her work in “UTRGV Week of Welcome 2020.”

Longoria placed third for her “Become Empowered” blog. She also received an honorable mention for her Spanish feature story, “Un momento agradable de música mexicana.”

### Vaquero Radio

Vaquero Radio garnered three first-place awards at the competition.

Former Assistant Station Manager Jerry Galindo won first with “Vaquero Radio on FX Radio App” in the Advertising/PSA/Promo-Video category.

Former Vaquero News Director and reporter Justin Elizalde placed first in the Feature Reporting-Audio category with his piece, “Competing to Inspire: UTRGV Latina Competes on NBC’s American Ninja Warrior.”

The radio staff garnered a first-place award for its “Vaquero Radio March 23

See TIPA, Page 8

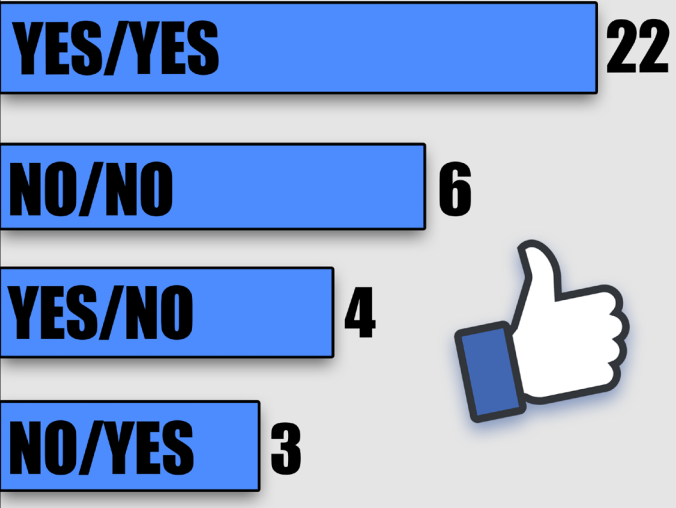
# VAQUERO VOICE



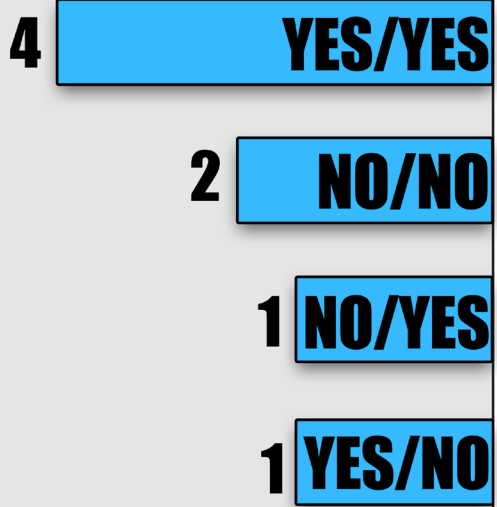
## COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY

On March 29, The Rider conducted a poll on social media asking students, "Graduating seniors, will you attend graduation? Do you feel safe doing so?" The results are shown below.

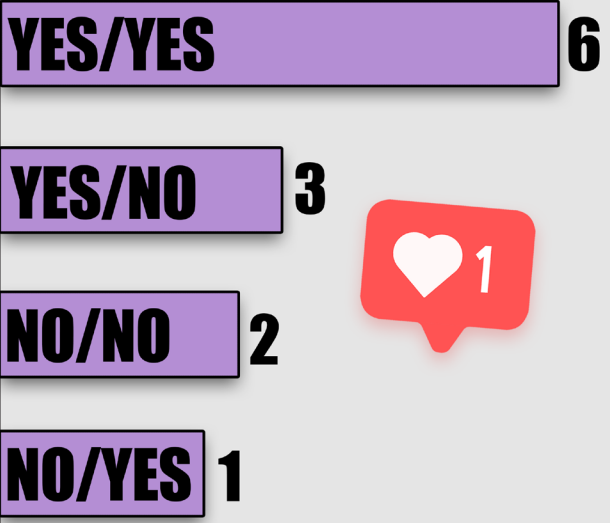
### facebook



### twitter



### Instagram



FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA TO PARTICIPATE @UTRGVRIDER

# Lil Nas X vs. Conservatives



## Confetti, vaccines and traditions



**Valeria Henderson**  
THE RIDER

Vibrant, colorful, confetti-filled eggs are laid out across the two acres of green grass while 17 cousins are lined up, waiting eagerly to run and collect as many hand-painted eggs as they can.

Easter Sunday has always been a day when my family comes together to play the annual Easter soccer game, eat delicious food, and, of course, hunt for eggs. Our Easter would not be traditional without our

children vs. adult soccer game.

The weeks of planning begin with my mother and aunts deciding who will bring the drinks, sides, plates and desserts. My uncles and father spend hours by the grill sizzling tender fajita and juicy hamburgers. Our mouths water as we smell the cooked meat before the soccer game.

As the sun goes down after the soccer game, my cousins and I spend hours cracking eggs, eating, and sharing laughs. Finally, we get ready for the night hayride with star gazing and scary stories.

We all have our different traditions here in the Rio Grande Valley for Easter,

whether it be the Easter egg hunt, hunting, family lunch or dinner and so many more.

Easter 2020 changed some of our traditions and plans. However, this year, we were happy to safely, with social distancing and limited numbers of guests, continue our Easter family traditions once again.

The community, schools and our families have adjusted to the norm of a COVID-19 lifestyle. We walked into 2021 with our heads high, masks on, and sore arms from the COVID-19 vaccine. Things are constantly changing, but the traditions remain the same.

## Submit a Letter to the Editor

The Rider encourages letters but does not guarantee publication. We reserve the right to edit letters for grammar and content. Letters for The Rider may be sent to [therider@utrgv.edu](mailto:therider@utrgv.edu). All letters must be typed and no longer than 400 words. Letters must include the name, classification and phone number of letter's author or the letter cannot be published. Opinions expressed in The Rider are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Rider or UTRGV administrators.

VISIT US ONLINE AT

UTRGVRIDER.COM





Paul Chouy/ PUBLICIDAD Y COMUNICACIÓN DE UTRGV

Los estudiantes de UTRGV y los administradores salen retratados durante la Graduación de Invierno del 14 de diciembre del 2019 para la Facultad de Ciencias Empresariales y Económicas

Robert C. Vackar, la Facultad de Ciencias de la Salud, la Facultad de Enfermería y la Facultad del Trabajo Social, la cual tuvo lugar en la Bert Ogden Arena en Edinburg.

# Planean ceremonias de graduación al exterior

**Brigitte Ortiz**

THE RIDER

Los graduados de la generación del 2020 y de mayo del 2021 tendrán la opción de participar en una ceremonia de graduación presencial en mayo. Habrá cinco días para acomodar a todos los graduados de los dos campus.

Sofía Almeda, la secretaria de registros académicos, dijo que UTRGV decidió hacer las ceremonias opcionales, ya que los casos del COVID-19 están disminuyendo y la vacuna está siendo más distribuida.

“También sabemos que no todos tienen la oportunidad de obtener la vacuna o puede que no estén cómodos en recibirla, y entonces por esa razón, los estudiantes también tienen la opción de participar virtualmente si eso es lo que desean”, Almeda dijo.

Para los graduados de primavera del 2021, las ceremonias en el campus de Edinburg tomarán lugar en el estacionamiento E16 el 7 de mayo. En el campus de Brownsville serán en el estacionamiento B3 el 8 de mayo.

“La siguiente semana el jueves, viernes y sábado, el 13, 14 y 15, tendremos graduaciones para todos nuestros graduados certificados del 2020, mientras que en el campus de Brownsville las graduaciones serán el jueves, y en el campus de Edinburg el 14 y el 15”, ella dijo. “Este año, nuestros graduados del 2021 son los que tienen la opción de participar virtualmente. Nuestros graduados del 2020 no tienen la opción de participar virtualmente porque ellos ya tuvieron una graduación virtual el año pasado”.

Almeda dijo que los invitados que no puedan asistir pueden ver la graduación

emitida en vivo. Ella dijo que proporcionarán los enlaces antes de la graduación.

“Los estudiantes e invitados que no quieren venir al campus ni estar presentes, tendrán acceso a un enlace donde pueden participar virtualmente”, Almeda dijo. “Será una serie de imágenes de todos los graduados junto con sus mensajes que estará disponible en línea, entonces se parecerá mucho a lo que hicimos para nuestros graduados del 2020”.

Ella dijo que las ceremonias tomarán lugar en los estacionamientos porque es la opción más segura, dado el número de personas que asistirá.

“[Los Centros para el Control y la Pre-

**Estamos muy emocionados de que podremos celebrar una ceremonia presencial, y sabemos que será algo diferente**

**-Sofía Almeda**

**La secretaria de registros académicos**

venición de Enfermedades] indican que los espacios exteriores son más seguros que los espacios cerrados, y de verdad necesitamos un espacio amplio para desplegar los asientos y que todos estén distanciados socialmente”, Almeda dijo. “Y el único lugar en el que podríamos acomodar un área así de grande sería el estacionamiento”.

Ella dijo que algunas de las medidas

de seguridad incluyen tener menos líderes de la universidad en el escenario para mantener el distanciamiento social.

“Además de eso, el número de invitados para todos nuestros participantes está limitado a cuatro”, Almeda dijo. “Y esos boletos estarán disponibles electrónicamente para los estudiantes que confirmen su asistencia. Y las familias estarán dentro de esos grupos de cuatro, pero estarán separados por un metro y medio de las otras familias que asistan. Los estudiantes que estarán situados cerca del escenario también estarán separados por un metro y medio. ... Todos los invitados, los graduados y el personal estarán obligados a usar ...

cubrebocas todo el tiempo”.

Ella dijo que las confirmaciones de asistencia que sean mandadas a la universidad determinarán el horario al cual las ceremonias de las facultades tomarán lugar. Almeda dijo que esperan que el horario de las fechas designadas sea anunciado para la semana del 12 de abril.

“Estamos muy emocionados de que

podremos celebrar una ceremonia presencial, y sabemos que será algo diferente”, ella dijo. “Pero también sabemos que es la mejor manera de tener una experiencia segura y feliz para los estudiantes y sus familias. El personal de UTRGV tiene más de un año sin ser anfitrión de una ceremonia de graduación, y es algo que siempre esperamos normalmente para disfrutar con nuestros estudiantes, así que estamos emocionados de que ya se acerca”.

Enrique Soto, quien se graduó en diciembre del 2020 con una licenciatura de ciencias en kinesiología, dijo que se sorprendió al escuchar que su generación tendrá una ceremonia presencial este año.

“Queríamos que fuera durante nuestro año, en diciembre del 2020, verdad”, Soto dijo. “Como ya pasó, siento como que no quiero ir pero a la vez, tenemos que seguir adelante”.

El dijo que sus compañeros están pensando en asistir para que sus padres puedan verlos graduarse.

Se le preguntó a Soto por su opinión acerca de las ubicaciones.

“Creo que están bien”, él contestó. “Primero, porque serán al aire libre, y eso es más seguro. ... Creo que podrían hacerse en un estadio, a lo mejor ... para que más personas vayan. ... Esa sería otra opción. Considero que podría haber sido mejor en el Sams Stadium aquí en Brownsville o el Sports Park, o hasta [en el H-E-B Park], aunque esté en Edinburg. No me molesta. Pero aquí en Brownsville, creo que está bien, mientras que la universidad tome las medidas de seguridad para distanciar a las personas y todos usen cubrebocas, todo está bien”.

--Traducido por Paulina Longoria

## SCIENCE

Continued from Page 3

guage Arts grade levels four through eight must also take the exam.

Additionally, students who are specializing in English grade levels seven through 12 may challenge the Science Teaching Reading exam but must pass the ELAR 4-8 content exam to be certified.

Alexandra Cantu, an English education senior graduating this semester, said she plans to challenge the exam after graduation.

Cantu said she is taking her exam after she graduates because she is an English seven through 12 content area student and will challenge the exam after she passes requirements for her content area this semester.

“Any extra certification exams, I can’t

take until I graduate,” she said.

Asked how she feels about the new exam, Cantu replied, “I kinda feel like that was just thrown at us just out of the blue, and we are not having enough time to prepare for the exam. For myself, I cannot take the exam until I graduate, but I know, for example, for students who absolutely need the exam before they graduate, it’s not enough time to prepare.”

She said she received study tools and materials from the university to help prepare for the exam.

“They just recently gave us some dates for a study workshop, and we need to take a diagnostic test prior to taking the exam,” Cantu said.

For more information about the Science of Teaching Reading exam, visit the [TEA website](#).

## GRADUATION

Continued from Page 1

we have to keep moving forward.”

He said his classmates are thinking about attending so their parents can see them cross the stage.

Asked what his opinion was about the locations, he replied, “I believe they’re OK. One, because it’s in open air, and it’s more safe. ... I think it could have been done in the stadium, maybe ... for more people to show up. ... That

would be another option. I think Sams Stadium here in Brownsville or Sports Park, I think it could have been better or even [H-E-B Park], even though it’s in Edinburg. I don’t mind. But here in Brownsville, I think it’s fine, just as the

university takes the safety precautions to separate all people and everybody uses face masks, we’re good.”

# Men's golf prepares for tournaments

**Karina Rodriguez**

THE RIDER

The UTRGV Men's Golf Team has had a successful season so far and is preparing to compete in more tournaments within the coming months.

On March 23, the Vaqueros finished in second place at The Big Texan Invitational at the Comanche Trace Golf Course in Kerrville with a three-round total of 865. The Vaqueros placed first at the Colin Montgomerie Invitational on March 8 and 9 in the Houston suburb of Spring.

UTRGV Men's Golf Coach Philip Tate said that he is preparing the players for upcoming tournaments.

"Well, I'm just going to keep the guys competing," Tate said. "[I am going to] let them also look at their own games and figure out the things that they need to work on, and we'll take a look at the golf course as well. [We also need to] mentally prepare ourselves for the tournaments."

He is excited for their next tournament, El Macero Classic in Davis, California, that is happening Saturday through April 12.

"I'm really looking forward to going to California," Tate said. "I think it's going to be beautiful this time of year and the travel should be great. It looks like a great golf course to fill. ... I'm looking forward to getting out there and letting the guys compete. I think



Alex Summers competes March 20 in the Big Texan Invitational at Comanche Trace Golf Course in Kerrville. Summers posted a final round

even-par 72 to finish tied for ninth with a three-round score of 218.

Photo Courtesy UTRGV Athletics

that they love competing, and I love competing. And so, getting out there and playing in a golf tournament against a bunch of California schools ... is exciting for us."

Graduate student and team member Luca Portelli said playing as a team at The Big Texan Invitational was a good experience.

"It was a lot of fun to play with the guys," Portelli said.

"We played in a group together and encouraged each other on every call [and] on every shot. I believe that was my favorite aspect of the tournament. Also, having other guys there ... was great for us, and we gave it our all."

Team member and graduate student Alex Summers said he hopes to work on his technical performance before the next tournaments.

"For me, personally, it's a lot of technical stuff [and] a lot of long-game stuff," Summers said. "[I want to] begin to start figuring out what the weak areas in my game are. It's just mostly my swing. If I can get it straight, then I know I can get good scores and help the team."

Graduate student and team member Euan Gill said the players' mentality is what helps them perform well.

"We feel a bit better than we did," Gill said. "That's the mentality, which is kind of, [just to] work quietly and then perform."

After El Macero Classic, the Vaqueros will compete April 30 to May 2 in the Western Athletic Conference Championships in Boulder City, Nevada.

The NCAA Regional Championships take place May 17-19. The NCAA Championships are scheduled May 28-June 2.

## New UTRGV Baseball deal



Photo Courtesy UTRGV Athletics

UTRGV redshirt junior pitcher Ricky Gerik Jr. gets ready to pitch the ball during the March 16 game against the University of Texas at Austin. The Vaqueros will play against Texas State University Tuesday at the UTRGV Baseball Stadium in Edinburg. Game Day protocols will continue to be enforced.

**Ruben Mohme**

THE RIDER

The UTRGV Department of Intercollegiate Athletics announced the 5 for \$35 Western Athletic Conference baseball mini plan in a March 24 news release, according to GOUTRGV.com.

The deal will include any five WAC home baseball dates from any selected series, including games against

California Baptist University, Utah Valley University, Seattle University, Tarleton State University and the University of Northern Colorado. The dates are April 1-3, April 9-11, April 23-25, May 7-9 and May 14-16, respectively.

To purchase these tickets, go to UTRGVTickets.com, select "5 for \$35" and choose any five games to lock in seats at a reduced rate over prices at the door.

If games are canceled, plan holders will have the option to choose between another WAC contest or receive a refund.

A limited number of seats are available, as Athletics is capping capacity at UTRGV Baseball Stadium at 1,200 fans: comprising students, season-ticket holders, 5 for \$35 WAC plan holders, individual ticket holders, corporate partners and families of student athletes and coaches.

## This Week in Athletics

### Women's Soccer

- 1 p.m. Friday vs. Chicago State University at Chicago

### Men's Soccer

- Noon Monday vs. Dixie State University at home  
- Noon Friday vs. University of the Incarnate Word at home

### Men's Tennis

- 9 a.m. Friday vs. Chicago State University at home  
- 10 a.m. Sunday vs. Grand Canyon University at home

### Baseball

- 6 p.m. Tuesday vs. Texas State University at home  
- 6 p.m. Friday vs. Utah Valley University at home  
- 1 and 4 p.m. Saturday vs. Utah Valley University at home  
- Noon Sunday vs. Utah Valley University at home

### Men's Track and Field

- 8 a.m. Friday and Saturday at the Texas A&M University Invitational in College Station  
- 8 a.m. Friday and Saturday at the University of the Incarnate Word Invitational in San Antonio

### Women's Track and Field

- 8 a.m. Friday and Saturday at the Texas A&M University Invitational in College Station  
- 8 a.m. Friday and Saturday at the University of the Incarnate Word Invitational in San Antonio

### Men's Golf

- 8 a.m. Saturday and Sunday at El Macero Classic in Davis, California

### Women's Golf

- 8 a.m. Monday and Tuesday at the Cardinal Challenge in Beaumont

--Compiled by Ruben Mohme

# Valley vocalist on the rise

## 20-year-old on NBC's 'The Voice'

**Adalia Garza**  
THE RIDER

Gean Garcia, a native of New York and current resident of Pharr, is representing the Rio Grande Valley on NBC's "The Voice" with his performances on season 20 of the beloved show.

"The Voice" made its first appearance in 2011 and is primarily known for its unique approach in terms of auditions. Unlike other shows for aspiring singers, "The Voice" hosts blind auditions.

"Auditions--I wasn't nervous, but I wasn't not nervous," said the 20-year-old business major, who is taking a semester off from the University of Texas at Dallas during the competition. "It was so bittersweet just getting up on that [stage]. ... It was like the first time where I got to see the chairs turned around, so I was like, 'OK, at least they're not looking at me.'"

During Garcia's performance of Kodakid's "All I Want," coaches Blake Shelton, Nick Jonas and Kelly Clarkson turned their chairs. Specific to "The Voice," the show also offers four "blocks" on this season, allowing coaches to block another coach from having the chance to work with the singer.

He was grateful for having coaches turn around for him and even having a block used on him when Shelton blocked Jonas.

"It was crazy because I got three chairs and a block, and that's memorable because there are only four blocks this season," Garcia said. "So, the fact that a block was used on me, I was just like, 'Hold up, wait a minute, this is cool.'"

With the option of Shelton or Clarkson, he decided to choose Team Kelly.

"There is such a presence with your voice," Clarkson said about Garcia's performance during episode two of "The Voice." "It just sounds so beautifully broken, even your approach to it is so sad. It's so melancholy, and I love



Photo Courtesy NBC

Gean Garcia appears as a contestant on season 20 of the popular NBC show "The Voice."

that. You moved me, That's the whole point. I think you're going to go far no matter what team you end up on."

He had the opportunity to work with Clarkson and Luis Fonsi, a Puerto Rican singer

ly came to an end when he lost to Ryleigh Modig, but he earned another opportunity to remain on the show when coaches John Legend and Jonas pressed their buttons to "steal" Garcia onto their teams.

episode seven of "The Voice." "You have a home on Team Legend, and I would love to work with you."

Garcia is working with Team Legend to prepare for the Knockout Rounds that will air

to stay true to yourself and not change the way that you sing just simply because you're surrounded by all these amazing singers. It's very easy to get caught up with someone else's talent and try to be more like someone else just because it sounds amazing. Sometimes, you may forget how amazing you are. So, yeah, I just learned to stay true to myself."

Garcia intends to make his own mark, not only on "The Voice," but in his musical endeavors. He described that he wants to constantly add more "Gean" in everything he does.

"Of course, my goal is to win the competition, but an even bigger goal that I have is to make my mark--to stay myself," he said. "I want, in this competition, to leave a message saying 'You don't have to be better than anyone else. You have to be better than

See VOICE, Page 8

**“**  
*It is very important to stay true to yourself and not change the way that you sing just simply because you're surrounded by all these amazing singers.*  
**”**

**-Gean Garcia**

and Team Kelly's vocal adviser. Both Clarkson and Fonsi guided Garcia and his opponent, Ryleigh Modig, during the Battle Rounds.

His time on Team Kel-

During the show, Legend and Jonas fought for the chance to work with him.

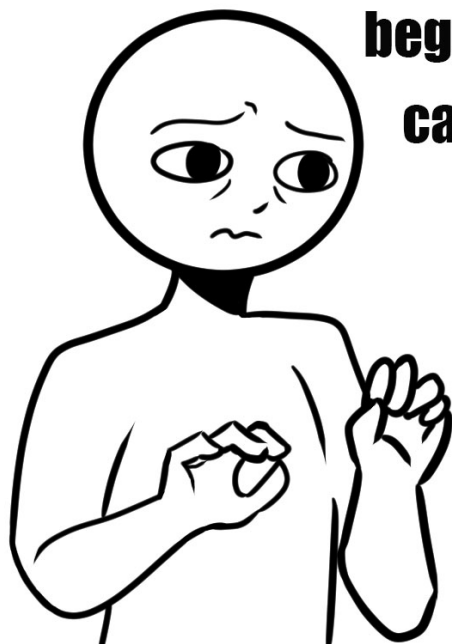
"Gean, I made a mistake in not turning for you in the blinds," Legend said during

in three weeks. He said he will apply what he has learned toward his artistic pursuit.

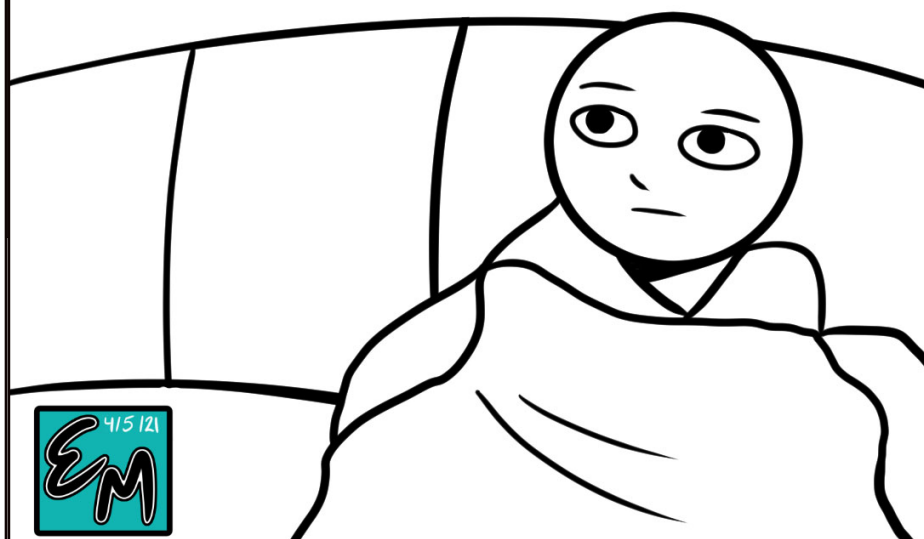
"I'm learning that individuality really does matter," he said. "That it is very important

### The Doodler By Elizabeth Mendoza

**Your inner self  
begging you to take  
care of yourself.**



**You not listening to  
your own advice.**



**POET**

*Continued from Page 3*

Now, De León's works are influenced by such writers as Gloria Anzaldúa, Gwendolyn Brooks, Pat Mora and Lucille Clifton.

"Those writers began influencing my current writing," he said. "Also, contemporary poets and local poets are really a great source of inspiration for my writing."

In an email to The Rider, De León wrote that some of those local contemporary writers are Jose Antonio Rodriguez, Rodney Gomez, Emmy Perez and Edward Vidaurre.

De León's works have been released

in various anthologies that focus on borderland themes, immigrant or first-generation voices and more. However, he has never released his own poetry collection--until now.

Sometime this spring, De León will release "speaking with grackles by soapberry trees" with FlowerSong Press, a local publishing company for borderland authors, founded by UTRGV Associate Professor David Bowles, according to the publisher's website.

The collection will include many poems based on his childhood memories, growing up along the border and his recent pandemic poems, and De León is excited to share them with the world.

"I'm a little nervous, but I'm also ex-

cited," he said. "Now, I can direct people to my poetry by saying, 'Here's my collection of poems,' instead of referring them to a bunch of anthologies," he said with a laugh.

De León is also an organizer for the grassroots organization, Poets Against Walls, which aims to "record voices, narratives of the borderlands of the Rio Grande Valley and beyond, also, that are affected by all these divisions that are put upon us," he said.

For De León, poetry is a personal art form, like songs.

"Poetry can be very personal [and] takes some things, like these really big issues, and condenses them and presents it to us in the form that we can

not only understand but also feel," he said. "Poetry is a song. There's so many songs that speak to us and touch us, either emotionally or psychologically, and I think poetry does that as well."

De León advises aspiring writers to engage and read from diverse authors, including local writers.

"Due to the pandemic, there aren't a lot of poetry readings, like live poetry, but once that changes, I would highly recommend for young writers to get connected to other writers locally or find communities online ... but definitely read as much as you can," he said.

Visit [De León's website](#) to learn more about his previous and upcoming work.

**VOICE**

*Continued from Page 7*

yourself. You have to top every performance that you do--in your own way. Make it better, spice it up, add more Gean in it."

Garcia said he is honored to repre-

sent the Valley and his home state with the current platform he holds on "The Voice."

"Coming partly from the Valley, I know that it's a small place--there's not many things that go on, so, to be able to represent them on a platform big enough like 'The Voice' ... I feel hon-

ored," he said. "I'm very appreciative of all the support from the Valley. I've been reached out [to] by hundreds, if not thousands of people. I'm just excited to keep representing the Valley, as well as New York."

Garcia said music has always been a

part of his life, and he will continue to pursue it.

"It's all I've ever known," he said. "It's something that I want to do and something that I will strive for. I've always been inspired to take on music."

**TIPA**

*Continued from Page 3*

Newscast" in the Newscast-Audio contest.

The staff also received second place for its "Vaquero Radio College Radio Day: Virtual Concert" and "Vaquero Radio on FX App" advertising campaigns.

Former Vaquero Radio Station Manager Samantha Garza garnered second place for her story, "Texas Set to Reopen," in the General News Audio category.

Elizalde received second place for his audio, titled "A Changing Tide: Unanticipated Loss and RGV Voter Shift," in the In-Depth News Reporting category.

Luis Rubio, Vaquero Radio sports reporter, received a third-place award for his Live Sports Coverage audio, "UVU vs. UTRGV."

Rubio also won third place for

"UTRGV takes down New Mexico State 74-63," that was entered in the Sportscast-Audio category.

Radio received four honorable mentions:

--Station Manager Victor G. Ramirez, Advertising/PSA/Promo-Audio contest, "The Chunky Funky Radio Hour";

--Former reporter Hector Tamez, Feature Reporting-Audio contest, "Students Set Sail to New Horizons";

--Garza, General News Multimedia Story contest, "Arrests Made on UTRGV Brownsville Campus"; and

--Ramirez, In-Depth News Reporting-Audio contest, "COVID-19 Vaccine: The Light at the End of the Tunnel."

**KVAQ-TV**

The television staff received third place for its "UTRGV-TV Oct. 19 Newscast" in the Newscast-Video contest.

KVAQ-TV reporter Alan Martinez garnered a third-place prize for "La Real Academia Española Retira la Palabra 'Elle'" that was entered in the Spanish

Multimedia News Reporting contest.

Former television sports reporter Victoria Cantu's "UTRGV-TV Sports-cast Jan. 27" received third place in the Sportscast-Video category.

Honorable mentions earned by KVAQ-TV:

--Staff, Advertising/PSA/Promo-Video, "UTRGV-TV is Back!";

--Staff, Television Program, "UTRGV-TV;" and

--TV reporter Hector Tamez, Feature Reporting-Video, "UTRGV Freshman Shares His Experience with Cancer Treatment."

--Former TV reporter Kenya Correa's, Spanish Multimedia News Reporting, "Hidalgo ISD No Ha Proporcionado Computadoras."

**"Pulse magazine**

The Pulse staff garnered first place in the Overall Excellence-General Magazine contest.

Michel Flores Tavizón, graphic editor, received first place in Static Ad Design

for her work titled, "Call for Illustrators."

In the Story Package Design-Magazine category, the Pulse staff received second place for "In the Mind of Manuel 'Raid' Zamudio."

In Overall Magazine Design, Pulse garnered third place for "Pulse 005."

Tavizón placed third in the Static Ad Design category for her work, "Pulse Mockup."

**Gallery magazine**

Gallery received a first-place award for its magazine, "Gallery 2020," in the Overall Excellence-Literary Magazine contest.

Yazmin Sanchez Cortez and Sydney Ribera received second place for the "Gallery 2020 Cover" in the Cover Design-Literary Magazine contest.

Maritzabel Salinas placed third in the Illustration contest for her work, "Safe Way Out."

For the full list of awards, click [here](#).

**Don't Become A Zombie**  
By Mike Panuelos

As my teeth rots and my skin peels, I carry my limbs within a repetitive cycle around what used to be my high school's parking lot. I remembered how my teachers always told us to chase our desires and follow our dreams. Sometimes, I wonder how I ended up like this. I am constantly starving, always looking for a meal that will satisfy me, but no matter how much I eat, I still feel empty from within. My name is Garth, well at least I think it is. The zombie virus that seems to mostly infect young adults has contaminated my school, and I wasn't lucky enough to be immune.

If I asked you to imagine what a zombie is like, what would you answer? I am sure you will reply with the typical, "Ugly, rotting, and brain-eating monster," but in reality, we all don't like brains. I personally prefer the heart although I have never tasted one, or at least that is what I think I desire. My friend Chad prefers eating arms, and I know these two twin sisters, Katy and Sam, that prefer eating ears and eyes. There's also this one guy, Bob, that really prefers the belly. He eats it fast as if it would explode in a couple of seconds if he didn't. Bob is a pretty skinny dude, and he doesn't like being called any other names. He will get mad. Katy and Sam were the second set of twins from their family. They told me that it was difficult growing up when they were still humans because their parents gave most of their attention to their older sisters. I think that's why Katy became a cheerleader and why Sam became the president of her debate club. To be honest, I was pretty hungry while they were telling me about their past lives, so I'm not sure. Chad was the star athlete in our high school. He played every sport. It amazed me how big he got after the 8th grade. He seemed to get bigger and stronger every year of high school. It is quite amazing; Chad was a pretty small dude in middle school. Earlier, I said that we do not all prefer eating brains, but this one guy named Fred loves them. The kid was a genius in high school. He

would talk about quantum mechanics as if my little brain could understand. He probably could have gone to UTRGV if the circumstances were different.

As for me, I probably would have been out on a date with MaryAnne. Wait, no, Sofi, yeah Sofi, or was it Linda? I don't recall. I guess my little mind doesn't want me to remember, or maybe I just don't want to remember. Anyways, I don't really mind being a zombie. I have people by my side, and I don't really feel any pain at all besides this empty feeling from within. But other than that, you can kick me, push me, and shoot me. I am basically indestructible from the outside. But sometimes, on my 300th lap around my old high school, I question if I am truly alive. People say that zombies eat to stay alive, but honestly, I don't really feel like I'm living at all, but maybe when I get the chance to eat a heart I will.

I walked past an old, parked Corolla and saw my reflection off of the driver's window, and my reflection asked, "Who are you?" I stood still for a while and wondered. Then I smiled and continued walking my zombie path. For the reader reading this, if I could share one zombie tip,

**No Denying It**  
By Karalynn Hansen

"Oh my gosh. No way." Ari brought her hand up to her mouth, interrupting Krystal mid-sentence and holding back a laugh. Krystal raised an eyebrow in confusion. "What is it? There wasn't anything 'oh my gosh' worthy in that sentence." "Maybe not that exact sentence, but what I figured out is," Ari said with a grin, her chocolate brown eyes sparkling as she leaned back against the couch. "You like him." Krystal blinked, her heart seeming to freeze in her chest. "What? No I mean, yeah, I like him. We've been friends for a long time, so-" The older girl held up a hand. "That's not what I meant, and you know it." "Then you're definitely wrong," Krystal shook her head, ignoring her twisting stomach. "There's no way. I've never thought that way about any of my guy friends." "Krys, look at me." Krystal sighed and looked Ari in the eyes. Ari wasn't usually this invested in Krystal's relationships with her friends, mostly sticking to knowing what's been going on with her rather than the specific interactions. Still, Krystal decided it would be fine to humor her. "What?" "Have you ever had a crush before?" Ari asked, her face surprisingly serious. Krystal shook her head, causing her bangs to fall back into her eyes a bit. As she brushed her hair back to the sides, she answered, "No, but I've seen people who have them and I definitely don't act like that." Ari pinched the bridge of her nose. "Krystal. Jay, Donnie, and what's-his-name are the probably the worst examples of crushes for you to base what it's like on. They were way over the top and you know it." "Well yeah, but they're still examples." "They're also all guys." "So?" "So guys have crushes differently than girls," Ari shrugged. "You don't have to act exactly like them for it to be a crush." "What about Mabel?" Krystal looked at her skeptically. "She was crazy in general. Not bad crazy, but definitely not normal crazy. She's not the best example for normal crushes. Think more similar to that other girl you met there, the one closer to my age." "Her boyfriend was weird." Ari sighed. "That's not the point. You talk about Lloyd all the time, and whenever you're hanging out with the group, you're always next to him. You know how good I am at reading you. I wouldn't pull your leg on this. You have to have noticed you feel differently about him. You're not usually that oblivious with this stuff." "I don't..." Krystal trailed off, and began to absent-mindedly fiddle with the strap of her satchel. Ari had a point. Especially since she met up with him after she was away for a year, she'd been way closer to Lloyd than the rest of the group. And that would explain why she'd felt so upset when he was interested in someone else. She'd thought it was just her instincts telling her that girl was no good, which turned out to be right pretty fast, but it could have also been jealousy. And when she compared how she acted around Lloyd to her other friends that were guys... "Oh my gosh," Krystal whispered, eyes widening. "I like him." Ari smirked.