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THE RIDER FILE PHOTO

COVID-19 cases have climbed in the Rio Grande Valley, with 3,049 reported last month in Cameron County alone, officials say. Esmeralda Guajardo, the county's health administrator, said of the 3,049 cases, 719 were confirmed, 2,393 were probable and seven were confirmed via home tests. In Hidalgo County, 1,126 cases were reported in August, according to Hidalgo County's official Instagram page.

COVID-19 cases rise after school starts

Sofia M. Cantú Saucedá

THE RIDER

Now that students have returned to class, COVID-19 cases have climbed in the Rio Grande Valley, with 3,049 reported in Cameron County and 1,126 in Hidalgo County last month, officials say.

Esmeralda Guajardo, Cameron County's health administrator, said of the 3,049 cases, 719 were confirmed, 2,393 were probable and seven were confirmed via home tests.

"Unfortunately, right now we are in a position where we are seeing an increase in COVID cases," Guajardo

said. "They have increased dramatically in the last month and a lot of it, of course, I can probably attribute it to school starting."

Guajardo said the current number of individuals in hospitals due to COVID-19 is considerably low, which she attributed to the number of people who are vaccinated and still have some immunity.

With a new vaccine waiting to be rolled out "sometime in the fall, maybe possibly September, October, a lot of people are going to wait until that one comes out [to get the vaccine again]," Guajardo said.

The UT Health RGV

Student Health Center on the Edinburg and Brownsville campuses will also offer the new vaccines later this year.

"We plan on making that available when it's available to us," said Glenn Gray, director of Health Services. "I can't tell you what the price will be on it, but it is the cost of the vaccine."

President Joe Biden ended the COVID-19 national emergency on May 11.

"You can get [the vaccine] at no cost but once the state moves it to The Children Vaccine Program, we are going to treat it just like any See VACCINE, Page 3

Controversial ban sparks debate

Eduardo Escamilla

THE RIDER

Senate Bill 17, which bans DEI initiatives in public institutions of higher education in Texas, goes into effect Jan 1, 2024, but changes at UTRGV's Center for Diversity and Inclusion and the DREAM Resource Center have already begun.

"With this bold, forward-thinking legislation to eliminate DEI programs, Texas is leading the nation, ensuring our campuses return to focusing on the strength of diversity and promoting a merit-based approach where individuals are judged on their qualifications, skills and contributions," state Sen. Brandon Creighton (R-Conroe), the bill's author, was quoted as saying in a news release from the Texas Senate.

SB 17 will close DEI offices on the campuses of state-funded colleges and universities and put an end to all activities that

discriminate against students based on their race, ethnicity or gender, according to the Texas Senate.

The bill defines a DEI office as any unit of an institution that is established for the purpose of:

- influencing hiring or employment practices at the institution with respect to race, sex, color, or ethnicity, other than through the use of color-blind and sex-neutral hiring processes

- promoting differential treatment of or providing special benefits to individuals on the basis of race, color or ethnicity

- promoting policies or procedures designed or implemented to race, color or ethnicity

- conducting trainings, programs or activities designed or implemented in reference to race, color, ethnicity, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

In an email sent to The Rider on Aug. 24, Patrick

See DIVERSITY, Page 5

VAQUERAS SERVE



Ryan Lugo/THE RIDER

The UTRGV Women's Volleyball team practices defense drills Wednesday in the UTRGV Fieldhouse on the Edinburg campus. The team will face off against Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi at 6:30 p.m. tonight.

School of Medicine construction projects advance

Julissa Hernandez

THE RIDER

Construction continues on the UTRGV School of Medicine's Department of Human Genetics building in Brownsville and the Cancer and Surgery Center in McAllen.

The Human Genetics construction began in October 2021 and is expected to be completed by the end of next month.

James Rodriguez, the director of facility planning for the School of Medicine,

said that it was supposed to be completed in June 2023 but there have been delays because of certain equipment not arriving on time.

Now, construction is back on track and Rodriguez said it is about 93% done.

He said one of the reasons the Human Genetics building is essential is because the department focuses on diabetes research.

Sarah Williams-Blangero, chair of the Department of Human Genetics, said the new building will be

"transformative."

"There's a dedicated imaging genomics facility in the building that will allow us to really expand the types of research we do and [focus] on issues that are of great importance to the [Rio Grande] Valley," Williams-Blangero said.

She said fatty liver disease is an important public health problem for the local community.

"That [facility] will allow us to expand our studies of See BUILDING, Page 3



Ryan Lugo/THE RIDER

A group of the Vaughn Construction crew works on the cement structure on the first floor ceiling, knocking off excess cement on the east side of the site Aug. 29. This is a part of the first phase development of the UTRGV's McAllen Academic Medical Campus.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Today
K.I.S.S.
The Korean

International Student Society will host multiple events from 4 to 5:30 p.m. through Thursday in Liberal Arts Building South on the Edinburg campus.

Tuesday Involvement Fair (Edinburg)
The Center for Student Involvement will host an **Involvement Fair** from noon to 2 p.m. in the University Ballroom on the Edinburg campus. There

will be **free food and goodies.**

Wednesday
The Access for Sex-Education club will hold **educational sessions** from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the Student Union on the Edinburg campus.

Anthropology Club Meetings
All majors are welcome to attend the **Anthropology Club** meeting from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. in Liberal Arts Building North Room 109 on the Edinburg campus. Students will learn about linguistics, medicine, biology, evolution and archaeology.

Thursday
Feeding of the 4000

The Baptist Student Ministry will serve **free hot dogs chips and drinks to students** from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Chapel Lawn 1 on the **Edinburg campus.**

Involvement Fair
The Center for Student Involvement will host an **Involvement Fair** from noon to 2 p.m. in Salón Cassia on the Brownsville campus. There will be **free food and goodies.**
House of Fashion
The House of Fashion

is seeking photographers, models, graphic designers, hair stylists, makeup artists and videographers. The club will host its first meeting from 4 to 5:30 p.m. in Interdisciplinary Engineering & Academic Building Room 1.206 on the Edinburg campus.

Friday
SGA Meeting
The Student Government Association will conduct a meeting from 2 to 3 p.m. in the **Music, Science & Learning Center** on the Brownsville campus and via Zoom. The ID No. is

8053474337. Students are encouraged to present a concern or project to the senate.

Sunday
Mass Celebration
The Catholic Student Association will celebrate **Mass** from 3 to 4 p.m. in the St. Newman University Chapel, which is located at 1615 W. Kuhn St. in Edinburg.

—Compiled by Alfredo Garcia

POLICE REPORTS

The following are among the incidents reported to University Police between Aug. 23 and 29.



Aug. 23
8:53 a.m.: University Police observed a non-affiliated woman with an injured ankle sitting on the grass behind the Main Building on the Brownsville campus. The woman said she had injured her ankle while crossing the border fence. U.S. Border Patrol and Brownsville Emergency Medical Services were called to the scene. Emergency Medical Services later transported the woman to a hospital for further evaluation.

10:16 a.m.: A UTRGV employee reported that a male student had stolen a large number of cups used for the Vaquero Round Up event on the Edinburg campus. Officers responded to the scene and spoke with the student. The stolen cups were recovered and returned. Criminal charges were not filed.

12:51 p.m.: University Police responded to a male student who was experiencing a medical emergency in the Village Apartments on the Edinburg campus. Emergency medical services arrived on the scene and transported the student to a hospital for further evaluation.

11:22 p.m.: A student administrator for a university-affiliated Facebook group reported that there was a disagreement with a member of the group over a posting that was deleted. No crime occurred.

Aug. 24
5:40 a.m.: The UTRGV Police Department K-9 team on the Brownsville campus assisted the South Texas Community College Police Department with an explosive detection sweep of the Mission Events Center. The sweep was conducted at

the request of the South Texas Community College Police Department preceding the graduation ceremony at the Mission Events Center.

10:45 a.m.: A UTRGV employee reported that he discovered a metal utility sign knocked down. University Police reviewed the camera footage and determined that a sedan struck the sign at 6:23 a.m. and left the area.

2:57 p.m.: A UTRGV employee backed out of a parking space and struck a vehicle operated by a non-affiliated woman on the Harlingen campus. No injuries were reported.

3:36 p.m.: A student reported that his vehicle was struck while parked in Lot E-9 on the Edinburg campus. The case is under investigation.

3:58 p.m.: Two male students were involved in a traffic collision in Lot E-19 on the Edinburg campus. No injuries were reported.

4:06 p.m.: A non-affiliated man reported that his vehicle was struck while parked and in Lot E-42 on the Edinburg campus. The case is under investigation.

Aug. 25
11:12 a.m.: University Police responded to nine students who were stuck in an elevator in the Robert C. Vackar College of Business and Entrepreneurship building on the Edinburg campus. Upon arrival, the students had already exited the elevator. One of the students claimed to have claustrophobia and said that he had experienced a panic attack while inside the elevator. The students declined emergency medical services.

3:56 p.m.: A non-affiliated woman reported that she fell and hit her head in the Heritage Hall on the Edinburg campus. The woman declined emergency medical services.

Aug. 26
2:20 a.m.: A male student who resides in the Casa Bella apartments reported receiving harassing messages via social media from an unknown person. The case is under investigation.

11:46 p.m.: A UTRGV police officer responded to a male student in the Village Apartments after a hospital called the Edinburg Police Department advising that the student had failed to return for a follow-up appointment and had not answered their phone calls. The student said he was feeling much better and had not noticed any missed calls from the hospital. He said he would call the hospital.

Aug. 27
2:22 a.m.: University Police were informed by the Edinburg Police Department that a female student had been assaulted off-campus by her non-affiliated juvenile boyfriend. The juvenile boyfriend was located and arrested by the Edinburg Police Department. The UTRGV Title IX and Office for Advocacy and Violence Prevention offices were notified.

Aug. 28
9:51 a.m.: The UTRGV K-9 team responded to La Villa high, middle and elementary schools to assist the La Villa Police Department and the Texas Department of Public Safety with a bomb threat at the locations. A sweep of the schools was conducted. No explosives were located.

11:03 a.m.: A non-affiliated woman reported that her ex-boyfriend, who is a UTRGV student, had released intimate material of her online without her consent. The woman reported the incident to the university she attends. Information was taken and the case was generated for

documentation purposes.

11:26 a.m.: A female student reported being involved in a vehicle collision in Lot E-27 on the Edinburg campus. The second vehicle left the scene before providing the required information. No injuries were reported. The case is under investigation.

1 p.m.: University Police responded to a minor two-vehicle collision in Lot E-17 on the Edinburg campus. No injuries were reported.

1:09 p.m.: A UTRGV employee reported accidentally breaking a window on a vehicle while landscaping in Lot E-34 on the Edinburg campus. The owner of the vehicle was contacted and arrangements were made for repairs.

1:48 p.m.: A student reported that he struck a parked vehicle in Lot E-26 on the Edinburg campus. The owner of the vehicle was contacted and informed of the collision.

2:30 p.m.: Officers responded to the Medical Education Building in reference to an odor of gas. The Edinburg Fire Department arrived on scene while the building was evacuated. Upon checking the building, the Fire Department determined there were no leaks and cleared the building for re-entry.

4:23 p.m.: A UTRGV employee reported backing up into a vehicle driven by a student while operating a university vehicle in Lot E-16 on the Edinburg campus. Both drivers claimed no injuries and both vehicles sustained minor damage.

4:34 p.m.: A UTRGV employee reported that an unknown woman was having an argument with an unknown man via a video calling app inside a women's restroom in the Main Building

on the Brownsville campus. The employee reported that the woman had her cellphone camera facing the restroom stalls, which made the employee feel uncomfortable.

6:41 p.m.: A male student reported striking a parked vehicle while backing out of a parking space in Lot E-9 on the Edinburg campus.

6:54 p.m.: University Police observed a two-vehicle collision at the intersection of Ringgold Road and Gorgas Drive. UTRGV police officers made contact with both drivers, and one claimed minor injuries but declined medical treatment.

11:58 p.m.: A student reported that he dropped his AirPods while traveling on a VOLT vehicle on the Edinburg campus. When the student went back to check the area, the AirPods were pinged at a residence located off campus. The case is under investigation.

Aug. 29
1:03 a.m.: University Police responded to the Community Engagement and Student Success Building in reference to a burglary alarm. Officers checked the building and stated everything appeared secure.

8:44 a.m.: Two students reported being involved in a vehicle collision that occurred in the 400 block of N. Sugar Road near the Edinburg campus. No injuries were reported.

4:18 p.m.: A student reported a former male student touched her thigh without her consent, which she found offensive. The case is under investigation.

6:11 p.m.: A student reported his vehicle was damaged by a broken tree branch that had fallen on top of his vehicle while it was parked in Lot B-1 on the Brownsville campus.

—Compiled by Rebeca Salinas



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UTRGV addresses accessibility issues

Yamilet Galvez
THE RIDER

UTRGV continues efforts to make its campuses accessible for individuals with physical, learning and temporary disabilities to ensure and promote equal learning under Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Students with a variety of disabilities can receive services from Student Accessibility Services. SAS provides students with accommodations that allow them to adapt in a learning environment with equal accessibility. Incoming and current students with a qualifying disability can contact SAS for an appointment to receive future services. They must provide documentation of disability.

Reynaldo Reyes, program specialist at Student Accessibility Services, said there are many accommodations provided for students.

"We have a mentoring program where we have peers, guiding peers and usually they're graduate interns, practicum students," Reyes said. "We also have pregnancy and parenting. All kinds of accommodations for expecting mothers or parenting. Also alternative format interpreters. There's quite a few, depending on the disability."

Approaching issues and resolving them is a responsibility for Reyes.

"In general, [UTRGV has] an [Electronic and Information Resources] committee to review software that students use," he said. "There is a physical plant. Ourselves, we take the input from students. I personally submit tickets to physical plant for access issues, sidewalks that are broken, doors that don't open. So there's different input from different areas. And of



Shown is a broken automatic door button for handicap access in the Student Union on the Brownsville campus, leaving users facing accessibility challenges. The UTRGV Student Accessibility Services department is working to restore full functionality to the building entrances on all campuses.

course, we need to know what the issue is before we approach it. We want to make sure there's inclusiveness on campus, on all the campuses," he said.

Parking and Transportation Services provides VOLT, a micro-mobility service that transports students from remote parking areas to the campus. The service is free on the Edinburg and Brownsville campuses. Riders can view different routes and "circuits" on the Ride Systems app.

VOLT services operate on a 15-minute frequency from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. Specific VOLTS are ADA accessible for riders, meaning they will accommodate a wheelchair.

Maribel Contreras, director of Transportation Services, said proposed service changes are presented in public meetings to receive comments and to make improvements in areas where the changes are going

to take place.

Contreras said public meetings were conducted Aug. 9-11 to propose service changes that would take effect Aug. 28.

One change is the suspension of the Edinburg Visual Arts Building evening service from 8:30 to 10:30 p.m. and the transition of the Brownsville to Weslaco connector service to the Orange Line.

Call stops are available on both campuses to request a pickup. Students must provide the vehicle's model, color and location to receive assistance.

For wheelchair assistance, students may call 665-2036 to request a pickup to be dropped at a VOLT stop if they are in an ADA parking space. The ADA VOLT vehicles have a maximum capacity of five passengers, and are limited to one wheelchair space.

Another change to the VOLT service affects the Blue Circuit.

Eduardo Cortez/THE RIDER

"So for the fall semester, we discontinued VOLT Blue Circuit in the Edinburg campus due to their low participation in ridership, and we introduced a new VOLT Purple Circuit, in the Edinburg campus," Contreras said. "So, through the new Purple Circuit, we were still going to be providing service in the areas of the Blue Circuit, where there was more demand and usage, which was the parking area E-31, E-32 and E-33."

Contreras said adjustments have been made to the Brownsville campus, too.

"There was a transition of Brownsville to Weslaco connector service to an Orange Line through a partnership that we have with Valley Metro," she said. "Those services being provided from Weslaco to Brownsville were going to be provided through that Orange Line. There was a modification

done to the schedule in order for us to meet the service demand for the students."

Diana Sobrevilla, an education sophomore, said she plans on using the VOLT services soon.

"I know that we can look it up on the UTRGV app, and that if you message them they can pick you up wherever you are located," Sobrevilla said.

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, students may be permitted a service animal or emotional support animal at on and off campus locations, according to the department's webpage.

"There's not a size limit, but it's the type of animal, there's a dog and a cat," Reyes said.

The dog or cat must be fully trained and only perform tasks directly related to the person's disability, according to the webpage.

If a student resides in campus housing, they must complete the Student Accessibility Services application process. The student must submit proof of disability through documentation. Any documents provided must meet the SAS Documentation Guidelines.

Service animals are welcomed on campus and in dorms, according to Reyes.

"We do recommend the students come to our office, and we will send a letter to Residence Life just to let them know, give them a heads up that there will be an animal in the dorms," he said.

Contreras invites students to ride Vaquero Express and VOLT.

"Service is free," she said.

Maps and schedules can be found on UTRGV Parking and Transportation website at www.utrgv.edu/pts. For comments or concerns, riders can email transportation@utrgv.edu.

For more information on transportation services, call 665-2036 in Edinburg and 882-2036 in Brownsville.

BUILDING

Continued from Page 1

liver disease in the local population," Williams-Blangero said.

The construction budget for the Human Genetics building is \$12 million provided from grants and the Permanent University Fund, Rodriguez said.

He said there are several companies working on these projects, including TreanorHL architects and SpawGlass contractors.

Biomedical sciences senior Ginelle Novilla said students are encouraged to conduct research.

"It's actually part of the curriculum," Novilla said.

Novilla said these new buildings will provide new opportunities for collecting research and will help students on their medical educational journeys.

Construction of the Cancer and Surgery Center started in late September 2022 and is expected to be completed in December 2024.

Rodriguez said the first floor is complete and the columns on the second floor are being built in order to support the third floor. Sewer and utility infrastructure is also complete and one of their priorities is to work on electrical overhead and IT infrastructure.

The budget for the Cancer and Surgery Center is \$147 million. Gifts and local funds contributed to the budget as well as the Permanent University Fund. The architecture firm is HKS Inc. and the contractor is

Vaughn Construction.

Rodriguez is passionate about the Cancer and Surgery Center because it is going to have cancer treatment and fusion therapy.

The MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston has partnered with the Cancer and Surgery Center to help with design and operation.

Rodriguez said this new development will contribute to the community.

"[It's] not only important for the university and for teaching purposes, but, obviously, for patients that are sick and, you know, don't have the resources to drive to Houston and have to pay a hotel," he said. "They'll be able to stay here in the [Rio Grande] Valley and be able to get their services here."

Novilla said it is important to "cater to people in the Valley."

"If we have research, more research, regarding cancer and genetics and tie it back to the [Rio Grande] Valley, I definitely do think it does have a great impact in our community and our society," she said.



VACCINE

Continued from Page 1

other vaccine," Guajardo said. "So, the cost can range but, as I understand it, they haven't set a price yet for the private sector."

Gray said any private health-care facility is going to have to charge for the vaccine because it is "no longer free to us, either."

"I can't tell you what Hidalgo County is going to charge, but it's a reduced rate based on income at the Hidalgo County Health Department clinics," he said.

The Rider tried to contact Eddie Olivares, chief administrative officer for Hidalgo County Health and Human Services through Carlos Sanchez, Hidalgo County Public Affairs Division director, but as of press time Friday, calls had not been returned.

However, Olivares stated in a news release posted on Hidalgo County's official Instagram page, "As our children return to school, we must all be mindful that COVID remains active in our community and remains dangerous. We urge everyone to take the necessary precautions."

Guajardo said the Texas Department of State Health Services Immunization Unit's Adult Safety Net Program has many vaccines and those who meet the criteria can get it at no cost.

"Sometimes, and based on your income, we can charge an administrative fee of \$8 for adults and \$5 for children," she said.

Gray said UTRGV Student Health now charges patients what the vaccines

cost the university, which is "around \$80 or \$82 per dose."

Health freshman Karen Pliego said, depending on the price, she would get a vaccine.

"If it's reasonable, I would pay for it," Pliego said.

"Any charges that may be generated go to your UTRGV student account and can be paid through ASSIST at any time later," Gray said.

Cameron County has vaccines in stock that will provide protection against new strains, Guajardo said.

"But the new vaccine will be the one specifically for the new strains," she said.

There are no places to get the COVID-19 vaccine for free, Guajardo said.

"It's gonna be treated like any other vaccine," she said. "So it all depends on whether a pharmacy, like Walgreens or CVS, decides they're going to charge \$10 like the flu shot. It's going to be up to them because they have purchased it."

Gray encourages students to use the clinics on campus.

"Students need to remember that they are paying for this clinic," he said. "It's their service; they need to use it. Don't let not having a dollar in your pocket stop you from getting health care."

Guajardo urges Cameron County residents to stay protected.

"The vaccine is the way to go about it, whether you want to wait or can wait," she said. "You know your body; you know your health."



The (un)certainty of being 20



Julissa Hernandez

REPORTER

At 12, I used to feel like I was indestructible and that I was running with the world by my side. Now, I feel fragile and like I can't keep up.

Is this what adulthood is like? Because I think I may have gone backward. I think I may have time-traveled back to the age of 5 when I had a heart of glass or when I couldn't open a jar of jelly. Back to when I would ask my mom for help on my math homework because I was still learning everything.

I am still learning everything. I'm realizing you can still learn things at 20 the same way you learn things at 5. And that even at 20, you can get the same feeling when you're 5 and you're scared and want someone to hold your hand.

I was always proud when people told me I was mature for my age. I knew how to

help take care of my brothers and my grades and myself. But I just turned 20 in July and I guess it's hit me like a ton of bricks.

Isn't it weird that you can make all these decisions about your future but you'll still go through the earthquake of 'What am I doing with my life?' It's like a second wave of puberty.

Maybe, these feelings are a little silly. I mean, I've seen girls on social media posting their age on big balloons on

I am scared. And to anyone who is reading this, whatever age you are, it's OK to be scared if you are, too. Uncertainty is scary.

their birthdays and I wonder if they feel the same way that I do. People say that you make a lot of fun and special mistakes in your 20s because your 20s are all about experimenting, but I haven't heard anyone say what I'm thinking out loud.

So here it is: I am scared. And to anyone who is reading this, whatever age you are, it's OK to be scared if you are, too. Uncertainty is scary.

But maybe I've been looking at this wrong, because I have to admit, under my fear, I still have excitement.

I mean, it's a new era for me, right? I'm 20! It's like I've got this blank slate, an open canvas that is my life. I'm learning all these new things and it's me against the world, you know? I'm free to make my own decisions and I get to completely reinvent myself. We're allowed to change our values and ourselves if we want. We're allowed to grow.

At this point, the only one who can stop me from doing anything I want to do is myself. Isn't that cool?

Maybe the cracks of my glass heart are just based on insecurities because in reality, I'm still indestructible.

The truth is I'm really lucky and blessed to be where I'm at in my first year of being 20. I think if 12-year-old me could see me now, she'd think I'm cool and, in my opinion, that's a flex.

Although sometimes I can still feel the ground tumbling beneath me, I'll continue working on my step, and my placement. As for the big waves crashing over me, I'm hoping the tide will take me where I'm meant to be. Goodbye, my teens. Hello, metamorphosis. It's officially a new era.



What was your first impression of college?



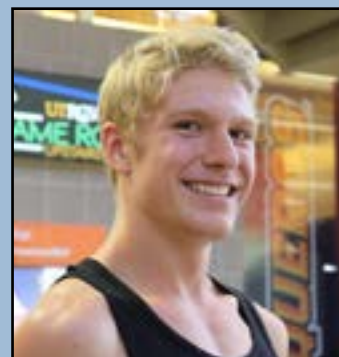
"My first impression of college, honestly, I thought it was like this new territory, and not even to be cliché, like, I thought it was going to be all of these big kids, but honestly, it is the same as high school, but just on your own."

Johan Daño
theatre freshman



"Mi primera impresión de la primera semana de esta escuela es que, gracias a Dios, que llegamos a salvo y la hicimos bien. Otro año que me ha dado de vida. Este campus está bien hermoso y mi primera impresión, la mera verdad, me da gusto de llegar a la escuela una vez más, porque me ha enseñado a ser más productivo y me ha dado felicidad estar aquí".

Elias Moreno
estudiante de tercer año de ingeniería eléctrica



"Honestly, it was a little scary at first, but now it feels a lot more free. I like the responsibilities, and the ability to kind of be myself and do my own thing."

Mason Aggus
computer science freshman



"Pues en general, este es mi primer semestre en UTRGV. Ha sido abrumador. Moverme de STC ha sido un cambio que hasta cierto punto da miedo, pero está en solo darle con ganas. Estar lejos de la familia puede ser difícil, pero es lo que se tiene que hacer. Y pues, espero que todo vaya mejor".

Diego Ivan Villarreal
estudiante de segundo año de ingeniería eléctrica

--Compiled and photos by Jose Medina and Daniela Martinez Salazar

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AIR MAIL
PAR AVION

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. 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.

DIVERSITY
Continued from Page 1

Gonzales, UTRGV vice president for Marketing and Communications, wrote that the university is “currently reviewing SB 17 legislation and working diligently to develop an implementation plan.”

On Aug. 15, The Rider tried to access the Center for Diversity and Inclusion page on the university’s website, which provided information on the DREAM Resource Center and the Learn, Empower, Advance, Promote program, but was met with the notification “page not found.”

However, an archived mission statement from the CDI is available on V Link. An online brochure is available under the “Departments and Programs” tab on the Dean of Students webpage.

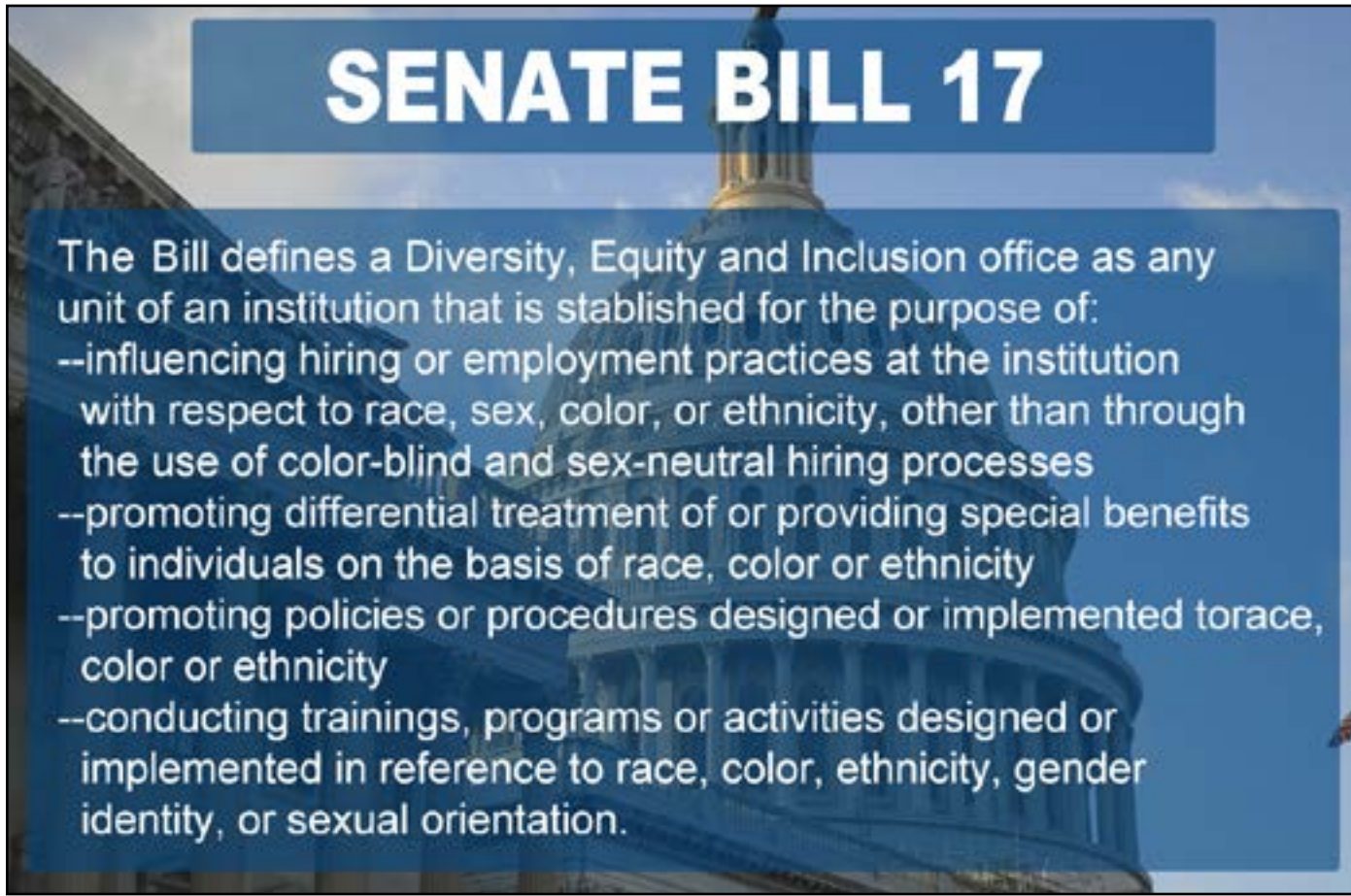
Gonzales said the CDI and DREAM Resource Center “will remain open until they receive guidance and instructions from the university regarding how to effectively comply with SB 17.”

“In anticipation of the new law, Student Affairs has taken steps to prepare for upcoming transitions of programming facilitated by CDI and the DREAM Resource Center, by centralizing under the Center for Student Involvement,” Gonzales said. “Consolidating resources will allow Student Affairs to support affinity-based student organizations, while continuing to provide cultural programming for students to attend.”

On Aug. 29, The Rider visited the CDI and DREAM Resource Center on the Edinburg campus, and was informed by the student employees that it was no longer in operation or providing resources to students.

The student employees confirmed there are no faculty employed by the university working at the center any longer, and UTRGV students do not have access to the resources provided by the CDI and DREAM Resource Center.

The Rider requested an interview with Dean of Students Rebecca K. Gadson, who played an integral part in the development of the DREAM Resource Center, but in an email on Aug. 28 Gadson replied, “Patrick Gonzales shared that he would be



Christina Vasquez/THE RIDER GRAPHIC

reaching out to you regarding the requests for interviews related to SB 17 and the Center for Diversity and Inclusion and DREAM Resource Center.”

In an interview with The Rider, Texas Rising member and psychology

responsibility of the university?”

Martinez is the Edinburg campus organizer for the nonprofit and nonpartisan organization that focuses on progressive issues. Texas Rising conducted chapter meetings on recent bills that were passed during

that’s going to be on us to be able to provide these spaces for support.”

The Rider contacted the Student Government Association office on Aug. 30 and confirmed UTRGV student organizations requesting the special event fund, which helps with the cost of hosting educational and humanitarian events, would not be impacted by the bill.

On Aug. 28, The Rider requested an interview with Paul Corliss, the UT System’s associate vice chancellor for External Relations and Communications, regarding the Center for Diversity and Inclusion,

but he requested questions be sent in advance.

The Rider told Corliss that it does not release questions in advance of an interview.

Asked what type of message SB 17 sends to students, Martinez replied, “A lack of support and a lack of care. That’s really what that communicates to not just myself, but all other UTRGV students.”

“In anticipation of the new law, Student Affairs has taken steps to prepare for upcoming transitions of programming facilitated by CDI and the DREAM Resource Center by centralizing under the Center for Student Involvement.”

**-- Patrick Gonzales,
vice president for Marketing and Communications**

junior Melanie Martinez said “the concern for the passing of SB 17 has been the destruction of the DEI offices” statewide.

“The deficit of support that there will be surrounding people of different ethnicities, sexual orientations, races, abilities, physical abilities,” Martinez said. “Now, these people are not going to have the support they need. ... How are we going to be able to supplement that, now that it’s not going to be a

the Texas legislative session, she said.

Activity from a student organization relating to diversity, equity and inclusion registered with or recognized by an institution will not be affected by SB 17, according to the legislation.

“Now, those responsibilities that were once the universities’ will now be delegated to student organizations, such as Texas Rising and other similar organizations,” Martinez said. “Now,

Agriculture, art and dreams

Silvana Villarreal
A&E REPORTER

The School of Art and Design is hosting “Art: Mission CISD Agriculture Poster Exhibition” at the Charles and Dorothy Clark Art Gallery, which features art pieces by students from the FARMERS program at Mission Veterans Memorial High School.

Jesmil Maldonado, a professor in the School of Art and Design and the new director of all galleries at UTRGV, said the main goal of the exhibit is to educate and inform people of the importance of agriculture.

The exhibit is composed of photographs accompanied by text.

Maldonado said many of the photos are of the students in the garden and the process of how they turn dirt to plants until they flourish with fruits.

“It’s not just about the act of working with the earth and getting produce,” Maldonado said. “It’s more about how the students are also reflecting on their life, on how they are understanding that things take time and you as a human being will also take time to flourish, to grow and to achieve the things that they want.”

In her artist statement, Emily Saenz, an 18-year-old senior at Mission Veterans Memorial High School, said that without teamwork, their garden would have failed.

“By uniting as a team, we witnessed our garden grow from little sprouts here and there to a thriving garden,” Saenz said.

Maldonado said the exhibit is the students’ reflection of the garden and the Farmers, Agriculturists, Ranchers, Machinists, Engineers, Researchers and Suppliers program.

Alexia Vasquez, an 18-year-old senior at Mission Veterans Memorial High School, wrote that in the garden, they are not only



Aura Velasquez/THE RIDER

The “Art: Mission CISD Agriculture Poster Exhibition” is on display through Oct 15 at the Charles and Dorothy Clark Art Gallery in the Liberal Arts Building South on the Edinburg campus.

growing vegetables but growing as individuals.

“My dream is to become an educator and continue the legacy of growing the next generation,” Vasquez wrote.

students and the local food bank, they are combating food insecurity in the community.

“I’m proud to be part of the MCISD FARMERS program,” Gonzalez said in the artist statement.

The exhibit is different from others showcased before at UTRGV because the featured artists are from a high school.

Maldonado said she wants to make the UTRGV galleries more accessible to the community, and this started by opening the gallery’s doors to programs within high schools and not solely art students.

The gallery is located in Liberal Arts Building South on the Edinburg campus.

Visiting hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. today through Oct. 15. Admission is free.

“It’s more about how the students are also reflecting on their life, on how they are understanding that things take time and you as a human being will also take time to flourish, to grow and to achieve the things that they want.”

--Professor Jesmil Maldonado

Maldonado said the Mission Consolidated Independent School District students have benefited from the garden by helping them make career choices, as well as helping other students experiencing food insecurity and providing produce for food banks.

“It’s not just something for their own purpose, but they’re using it to expand out to the community as well,” she said.

Fellow senior Alondra Gonzalez, 18, wrote that by growing and donating their vegetables to

UPCOMING EVENTS

Arts/Museums

Textile Exhibition

The **Brownsville Historical Association** will host “**Soul of Tehuana**,” a **Día de los Muertos** textile exhibition, which pays tribute to Mexican painter **Frida Kahlo**, Tuesday through Jan. 5, 2024, at the Costumes of the Americas Museum, 1004 E. Sixth St. in Brownsville. The museum’s hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday.

Art Class

The **Art Business Incubator** on **South Padre Island** will host a workshop on **making abstract art** from 3 to 4 p.m. every Thursday this month. The incubator is located at 2500 Padre Blvd., Suite 1. The cost is \$40 per week and includes materials.

Comic and Cartoon Drawing

The **Art Business Incubator** on **South Padre Island** will host a comic and cartoon drawing workshop from 4 to 6 p.m. this month at 2500 Padre Blvd., Suite 1. The cost is \$15 per week and includes materials.

Community events

Chalk the Walk

The **South Texas Health System Behavioral hospital** is looking for volunteers for the **Chalk the Walk Hope & Inspiration Walk** from 9 to 11 a.m. Saturday at 2102 W. Trenton Road in Edinburg. You can register for the free event online. For more information contact Jennifer Crist at 388-2021 or email jennifer.crist@uhsrgv.com.

Film Race

The **South Texas International Film Festival** will kick off at 6:30 p.m. Friday with the **48-Hour Film Race**. Contestants will have 48 hours to write, film, edit and upload their short films. Filmmakers who meet the 48-hour deadline will have their films screened at the ninth annual festival and be eligible for awards. For more information, visit stxiff.com.

Theater Musical

The **Camille Playhouse** will present “**Rock of Ages**,” a jukebox musical, at 8 p.m. Friday, 8 p.m. Saturday, 2 p.m. Sunday, 8 p.m. Sept. 15 and 16, and 2 p.m. Sept. 17. Tickets are \$25 each and can be purchased at the box office or online at camilleplayhouse.net/tickets. The playhouse is located at 1 Dean Porter Park Dr. in Brownsville.

Musical Auditions

The UTRGV **Department of Theatre** will host auditions for the musical “**Fun Home**,” based on the graphic novel by Alison Bechdel, from 7 to 10 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday at the Albert L. Jeffers Theatre in Liberal Arts Building South on the Edinburg campus.

--Compiled by Silvana Villarreal



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Vaqueras ready to serve another season



PHOTO COURTESY UTRGV ATHLETICS

Abraham Morales is a sophomore distance runner for the UTRGV Men's Cross Country and Track & Field team. Morales is majoring in management and hopes to one day become the athletic director at his former high school in Brackettville, Texas.

Q: What made you choose that career?
A: "Well ... I'm going into, like, sports management later, but ... first I wanna get my teacher's certificate and I want to be [the athletic director] back at my high school."

Q: Why do you enjoy running?
A: "Well, since I was small,-- I started in seventh grade and like, I just fell in love with the sport and just the thought of just getting better. Just, you know, I love it. I love ... competing. It's fun."

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

A: "My biggest role model would have to be my older brother. He's the one that got it all started. Really, I just followed his footsteps, and I saw that he, well, he runs for [Angelo State University] and I saw that. And I just wanted to be like that, too, you know?"

Q: What is a piece of advice you would like to give your younger self?

A: "Just stay consistent with workouts and, like, running 'cause running isn't that linear. ... Some days you're going to have off days. And I wish I could have, you know, stayed consistent 'cause when I was younger ... I wouldn't do so hot. And then I would just, like, you know, put myself down and I wouldn't continue running. So, I wish I could have told myself just to keep going."

Q: What is your favorite childhood memory?

A: "Probably my grandma's cooking, like after track meets. I would always go over there. I really miss that."

Q: What was your favorite dish?

A: "Carne con chile."

Q: Do you have a fun fact about yourself?

A: "I love to ride horses. I have two ranches back home [in Brackettville], and I love going out to ride and, like, be with the cattle and stuff like that."

Q: What do you like to do in your free time?

A: "I like playing basketball and, like, lifting weights, just trying to get better."

Q: What is your favorite show/movie and why?

A: "Probably 'Outer Banks.' Yeah, I'm ready for the new season to come out."

Q: What would you do if you won the lottery?

A: "I'll probably invest and, like, get into, probably buy houses and, like, rent them off, kind of like real estate. I'll probably get into that and, like, just buy houses and rent them out to people."

Q: What's the most daring thing you have ever done?

A: "Over there, where I'm from, we have, like, cliffs like really high cliffs, and one of my friends made me jump off one of them [into a body of water] ... and like the currents, it was really bad, like to get out. They had to get a boat out there to get me, 'cause I was stuck, like, on a rock 'cause, like, the currents were going and my friends, they bet me I wouldn't jump in so I was like, 'OK, all right,' and I just went for it. It didn't look that bad. The currents didn't look too bad but once I got in there, I was getting thrown around. It was pretty bad."

--Compiled by Abigail Ollave



Ryan Lugo/THE RIDER

The UTRGV Women's Volleyball team practices defense drills Wednesday in the UTRGV Fieldhouse on the Edinburg campus.

Jose Medina

SPORTS REPORTER

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley's Volleyball team started its 2023 season with a 3-0 win against Montana State University on Aug. 25.

As of press time, the Vaqueras sit with a 1-2 overall record.

They competed in the Molly Howard Gerwig Memorial Tournament on Friday and Saturday in Houston. Results were not available at press time.

UTRGV finished its previous season with a 27-7 overall and 13-1 Western Athletic Conference record.

Volleyball head coach Todd Lowery said there are a lot of new faces on the team and he already saw some of them make a "big impact" during their first games.

"I'm excited about the recruiting class that we brought in," Lowery said. "And now, it's just going to be teaching them our system, the way we do things. And then same things for some of the freshmen that are new and may not be playing as much right now. But setting the groundwork for them to be patient and continue to put in work because their opportunity is going to come before they leave here."

He said Athletics has a core set of values that they want to see in the athletes.

"We're definitely a team first kind of mentality, everybody accepting their role," Lowery said. "And I think we look overall at what we have, as far as weaknesses, from the year before, and ... address those weaknesses to overall push the team

forward."

He said they look for unselfish people with great attitudes and work ethic since it is what the program is built upon.

Lowery said making the team better and improving everyday was their goal.

"Ask anyone who is in the WAC

"Coming off a year where you win more games than ever in program history there's a lot of high standards ... but I think we're in a position to be really successful,"

--Club President Diego Torres

what their goal is, and they're gonna be like, 'Oh, win the WAC and go to the NCAA tournament,'" he said. "I think, as a division one program, if you don't have those expectations, then you're probably not pushing your team forward at the right pace."

Lowery said the team is different with different personalities and different coaching styles. He also said he was excited about the group they have because "they have all the potential in the world."

"Obviously, coming off a year where you win more games than ever in program history and all the other stuff that happened, there's a lot of high standards ... but I think we're in a position to be really successful," Lowery said.

Junior outside hitter Claudia Lupescu said the team has been preparing a lot for the season and working on its defense and passing, and it still has room to improve.

Lupescu said they have a diverse team and they like to stay together and get to know each other.

Asked if there were any schools they were looking forward to play against, she replied she was "excited" to play against the University of Pennsylvania, saying it was a great opportunity.

Junior outside hitter Ilana De Assis said she was excited to play all the universities.

"I think each new university is going to be different," she said. "So, like, it's a new challenge every time."

De Assis also said she is excited to see herself improve from starting right now compared to the

end of the season.

The WAC Tournament will take place from Nov. 16 to 18 and the NCAA Tournament, from Dec. 1 to 17.

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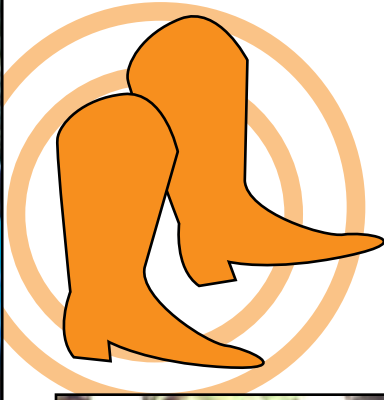
THIS WEEK IN SPORTS
VOLLEYBALL
6:30 p.m. Today
vs. Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
AT THE UTRGV FIELDHOUSE

Vaqueros stomp into Welcome Week



Estefania Ramirez/THE RIDER

General education sophomores Grecia Ortiz (from left), Angela Deleon and Ruby Resendez Torres show their Kona Ice cones during The Stomp Aug. 29 on the Student Union lawn on the Brownsville campus.



Silvana Villarreal/THE RIDER

Sculpture Club member Amy Ortega paints on international business freshman Wesley Martinez during The Stomp Aug. 29 on the Brownsville campus.



Estefania Ramirez/THE RIDER

Nursing junior Nicole Gomez eats a slice of pizza from El Comedor during The Stomp Aug. 29 on the Brownsville campus.



Estefania Ramirez/THE RIDER

The UTRGV mascot holds up The Rider newspaper during The Stomp Aug. 29 on the Student Union lawn on the Brownsville Campus.



Estefania Ramirez/THE RIDER

Agricultural, environmental and sustainability sciences graduate student Kabir Shah (right) plays basketball pong with kinesiology senior Alberto Ruiz during The Stomp Aug. 29 on the Student Union lawn on the Brownsville campus.

