

ONLINE:



New era for UTRGV
Mock Trial
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OPINION:

Do apples fall from coconut
trees?

[See page 4](#)

A&E:



Preserving a legacy

[See page 4](#)

SPORTS:



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STUDENTS DRENCHED WAITING FOR SHUTTLE

Natalie Lapsley/THE RIDER

Statistics senior Jasmin Maldonado (left) and Spanish translation and interpreting senior Vivian Elizondo ride the bus from Harlingen to the Edinburg campus Aug. 26. Maldonado and Elizondo were two of several Harlingen-based students who waited in the rain at the new pickup location.

Natalie Lapsley
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

About a dozen Harlingen-based students boarded the UTRGV shuttle to Edinburg soaked in water Aug. 26 after waiting in the rain at the new bus pickup location.

Criminal justice senior John Davis said the rain was “unfortunate” and that he wished there had been shelter.

“I also would have liked to

have known that the [location] was changed,” Davis said. “I didn’t get an email about it. ... I wish they would have put just a little roof or something, shelter, just in case something like this would have happened.”

History graduate student Julian Cruz, a passenger on the bus, said it was “not the happiest experience” but it was one he “unfortunately had to go through.”

“There’s no seating,” Cruz said. “The other bus stop had

have a ramp for the sidewalk, but not everyone just needs a ramp.”

“Starting today, we will put up three 12-by-12 tents daily ... so there’s shelter provided there,”

--Patrick Gonzales, vice president for University Marketing and Communication

all the proper, you know, necessities for handicapped. This one [does not]. It does

In an interview Thursday with The Rider, Patrick Gonzales, vice president for University Marketing and Communications, said the university made the change from the UTRGV Clinical Education Building to the Harlingen Soccer Complex to

[See SHUTTLE, Page 2](#)

Dining Hall: A feast of options

Fatima Gamez Lopez
SPANISH EDITOR

As the fall semester begins, the Edinburg Vaquero Dining Hall is introducing new meal plan options tailored for residents, students, faculty and staff.

“Historically, we had weekly meal plans and a few block meal plans, but most of them were traditional weekly meal plans,” said Melissa Ramirez, assistant director for Auxiliary Business Services. “... They would reset every week and then you would start with the new set. ... This year, we have changed the meal plans and the structure of the meal plan, so we no longer have the weekly meal plans. We are offering block meal plans.”

The Edinburg Vaquero Dining Hall offers meals during breakfast, brunch, lunch and dinner meal periods.

The meal plan options range from 25 meal blocks to an unlimited meal plan. For the full list of the resident and commuter meal plan options, visit utrgv.edu/mealplan.

To purchase a meal plan, log in to V OneCard on your applications, select “purchase meal plan” from the quick



Angel Ballesteros/THE RIDER

Corina Rosas, a member of the Vaquero Dining Hall staff, prepares a pizza in the Vaquero Dining Hall Aug. 26 on the Edinburg campus.

links menus, choose a plan that meets your needs, select a payment method and click “submit” to have your meal plan added to your account.

The meal plans range from \$280 to \$2,266 per semester.

Ramirez said the block meal plan allows the UTRGV community to use the block of meals anytime during the

semester without losing any of the value.

“We will be introducing employee meal plans, so that’s exciting,” she said. “We’ve got a block of 25 and a block of 40 that we are going to be launching. ... We’re going to launch a ‘Try Before You Buy’ campaign for

[See DINING, Page 3](#)

How to UREC

Andrew Mayo
THE RIDER

UTRGV offers different resources to its students, including the University Recreation Building on the Edinburg campus and the Texas Southmost College Recreation Center in Brownsville.

Every UTRGV student is required to pay a recreation fee, which incentivizes some students to utilize the UREC facilities.

“We already pay for school, so we have access to it,” said junior Sebastian Salinas, a frequent user of the recreation center on the Edinburg

[See REC, Page 3](#)



Angel Ballesteros/THE RIDER

Criminal justice junior Alvaro Valdez exercises Aug. 26 in the University Recreation center on the Edinburg campus.

THE RIDER

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

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today Dead Hang Challenge
University Recreation invites students to test their grip strength with the **Dead Hang Challenge**. The event will be held **through September** on the Fitness Floor in the University Recreation Center on the **Edinburg campus** and from **11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday** in the Texas Southmost College Recreation Center in **Brownsville**.

Greek Kickback
The **Center for Student Involvement** invites students to the UTRGV Sorority and Fraternity Kickback from 5 to 7 p.m. on the Quad on the Edinburg campus. Students will be offered **free food** and the opportunity to **discover a fraternity or sorority**.

Wednesday 1 Million Cups
The **Entrepreneurship and Commercialization Center** will host **1 Million Cups** at 9 a.m. every Wednesday in the eBridge Center for Business and Commercialization, located

at 1304 E. Adams St. in downtown Brownsville. **Local, regional and international entrepreneurs** are invited to exchange stories, **make connections, address challenges and find opportunities** within the community. The event is open to the public.

International Meet & Greet
The **Office of International Student Services** will host an **International Meet & Greet Parade** at 11:45 a.m. in the Performing Arts Complex on the Edinburg campus and at the same time Thursday in the Main Building Courtyard on the Brownsville campus. The parade will have over **60 countries** represented by **international students**.

Boxing Training
University Recreation will offer **boxing training and workouts** from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday and Friday in University Recreation Studio 2 on the Edinburg campus. Students can learn how to

do jab, cross, hook and uppercut combinations.
Yoga Class
University Recreation will offer a **yoga class** from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. in University Recreation Studio 1 on the Edinburg Campus. Students can learn **basic foundational yoga postures, breathing techniques and meditation.**

Picnic with the President
The **Office of the President** will host **Picnic with the President** from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the University Ballroom on the Edinburg campus and at the same time Thursday in the PlainsCapital Bank El Gran Salón on the Brownsville campus. **Complimentary hamburgers and drinks will be served.**

Men's Soccer Game
The **UTRGV Men's Soccer Team** will play against **Texas A&M University-San Antonio** at 6:30 p.m. at the UTRGV Soccer and Track & Field Complex on the Edinburg campus.

Thursday Part-Time Job Fair
The **Part-Time Job Fair** will take place from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the University Ballroom on the Edinburg campus. Students of **all majors and classifications** can connect with **on-campus and regional employers** seeking to hire **UTRGV students.**

Late Nite Event
The **Late Nite at the Rec** will take place from 9 p.m. to midnight in the University Recreation Center on the Edinburg campus. Students can join this tradition to **learn about facilities, recreation programs, services and sports clubs** offered on campus.

Friday SGA Meeting
The **Student Government Association** will meet from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. in Student Academic Center Room 1.101 on the Edinburg campus. Students will have a **chance to voice a topic of importance to senators.**

--Compiled by Hugo A. Sepúlveda



POLICE REPORTS

The following are among the incidents reported to University Police between Aug. 20 and 26.

Aug. 20 1:25 p.m.: An officer noticed a vehicle experiencing mechanical issues on East University Boulevard in Brownsville. After speaking with the driver, the officer found the vehicle had incorrect license plates and a registration sticker that belonged to a different vehicle. The driver admitted to using another vehicle's plates and registration sticker. The officer confiscated the plates and registration sticker and issued the driver a citation for the violation.

10:47 p.m.: An employee reported a suspicious man possibly inside Sabal Hall on the Brownsville campus. Officers checked the building but were unable to locate anyone. Later, officers found the non-affiliated man sleeping inside the Music,

Science and Learning Center. University Police officers issued the man a criminal trespass warning and then escorted him off campus.

Aug. 21 9:46 a.m.: A student reported striking a parked vehicle while parking in lot H-2 on the Harlingen campus. No injuries were reported.

Aug. 22 8:19 a.m.: An employee reported shattering a window in the Education Complex on the Edinburg campus while trimming the lawn.

8:53 p.m.: Officers responded to a fire alarm in Heritage Hall on the Edinburg campus. Upon arrival, University Police found no signs of smoke or fire. It was discovered a smoke detector was triggered accidentally when

a student used body spray near it. The Environmental Health, Safety and Risk Management department deemed the building safe and recommended resetting the panel.

Aug. 23 1:14 p.m.: An employee reported a university state vehicle assigned to their clinic was involved in a traffic collision off campus on Aug. 20. The employee had already filed a report with the San Juan Police Department, which investigated, stating injuries occurred.

Aug. 24 12:45 p.m.: A non-affiliated woman reported she fell down the stairs in the Performing Arts Complex A on the Edinburg campus. The visitor sustained an injury to her left knee and left rib cage area but declined emergency medical services.

Aug. 26 2:40 p.m.: University Police officers were dispatched to the Life and Health Sciences Building on the Brownsville campus for a student stuck inside an elevator. Upon arrival, the officers assisted the student to exit the elevator with no injuries reported.

5:43 p.m.: A student reported tripping on the uneven sidewalk between the International Trade and Technology Building and the UTRGV Soccer and Track & Field Complex on the Edinburg campus. He sustained an injury to his left knee and elbow but declined emergency medical services.

8:04 p.m.: A university employee reported he observed a man in parking lot E-39 on the Edinburg campus, whom he recognized from a previous incident with University Police. Officers patrolled the area and located the man.

--Compiled by Rebeca Salinas

WEEK
Continued from Page 1

accommodate a need for more parking.

"Starting today, we will put up three 12-by-12 tents daily ... so there's shelter provided there," Gonzales said.

He said there are no long-term plans to build shelter or seating at the complex because the location is temporary, but the university has plans to construct a sheltered bus stop near the Institute of Neuroscience Building, located at 2902 Haine Drive in Harlingen, by the 2025-26 academic year.

UTRGV Police will monitor the temporary bus stop to address safety concerns,

Gonzales said.

Maribel Contreras, director of Transportation, said Parking and Transportation Services sent an email to inform Harlingen-based students of the change.

The department also announced the change and a new "Park & Ride" circulator route in an Aug. 23 Instagram post.

The circulator, which transports the UTRGV community from the education building to the parking near the soccer complex and back, runs from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday with a 10-minute interval.

Gonzales said parking at the new pickup spot is free and no permit is required.



Natalie Lapsley/THE RIDER

Wet footprints line the aisle of a charter bus leased by UTRGV for transportation between campuses. Students waiting at the new Harlingen bus pickup location Aug. 26 were exposed to the rain and tracked water onto the bus.

Zoo expansion project

Brownsville negotiates to buy Cummings Middle School

Hugo A. Sepúlveda
THE RIDER

The Gladys Porter Zoo hosted a forum Wednesday on its expansion plans after meeting with the city and school district to negotiate the purchase of Cummings Middle School.

In an interview Aug. 26, Brownsville Mayor John Cowen told The Rider about the importance and expectations of the zoo expansion.

“It was built over 50 years ago and, since then, the standards for operating and maintaining certain animal populations have changed,” Cowen said. “So, the bigger animals that we currently have—the lions, tigers, gorillas, bears—all require a lot more space.”

He said the purchase would be a “win-win” for the city and the Brownsville Independent School District.

Cowen said the expansion is needed because, to keep the accreditation for the zoo, it needs to expand and not lose the animals it currently houses.

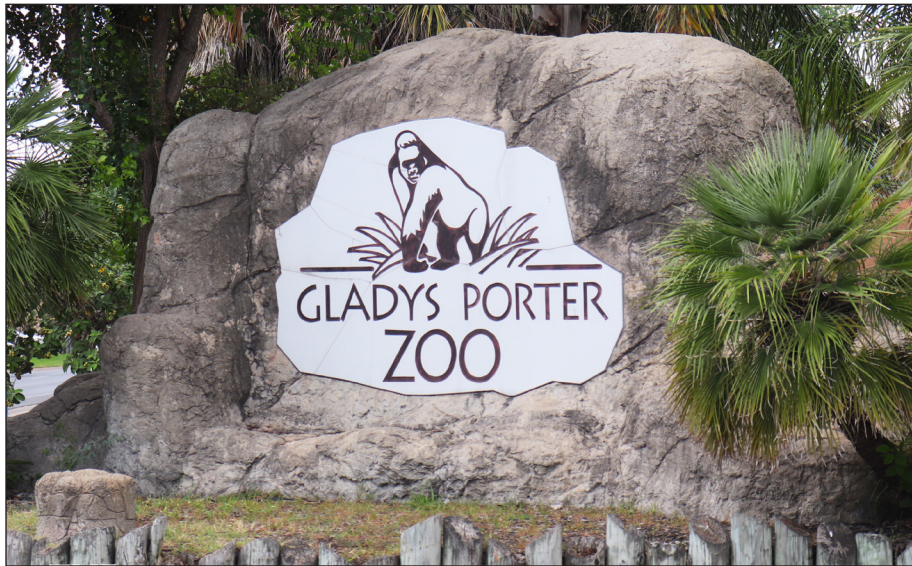
The Cummings building houses the BISD Career & Technical Education program, which “prepares students for career pathways in the global marketplace by offering experiential learning, postsecondary credits and industry certifications,” according to its website.

Cowen said the district is working toward building a new, state-of-the-art facility for the CTE.

“I think the city’s committed to providing, you know, that market value and helping relocate the equipment to a new facility,” he said.

Gladys Porter Zoo Executive Director and CEO Patrick Burchfield said residents can expect an increase in tourism and new job opportunities.

“People need places for recreation,



Andres Estrada/THE RIDER

The City of Brownsville plans to buy Cummings Middle School, located at 1905 E. Sixth St., for the expansion of Gladys Porter Zoo.

for children and themselves, so it’s a quality of life improvement,” Burchfield said.

In an October 2022 article, The Rider reported that the expansion would include a new zoo “entrance, retail, dining, office spaces and a four-story parking garage that would accommodate the zoo, resaca retail and Mitte Cultural District.”

Other additions would include new exhibits featuring animals, such as giraffes and cheetahs. A 125-room-themed hotel is also proposed for the area, according to the article.

City Manager Helen Ramirez told The Rider how the Gladys Porter Zoo, BISD and the City of Brownsville are working together for the expansion plan.

“Gladys Porter Zoo gets about 450,000 visitors a year and is the only zoo south of San Antonio,” Ramirez said. “It’s also an accredited zoo

by the American Zoological Association.”

She said the zoo is considered a city park and its expansion is not only for the zoo but also for a public space.

“The city is not only helping, it is actually offering to purchase above their market value,” Ramirez said about the city’s help in purchasing the BISD building. “... We also paid for a feasibility plan because it looked at different options of where they wanted to locate.

“CTE can grow and expand and have more students because right now they have a problem with the capacity. They have a waiting list.”

She said negotiations are still ongoing, but they hope to have an agreement by today’s Brownsville City Commission meeting and give the final disclosure on the final cost.

REC
Continued from Page 1

campus. “I don’t have to go to any outside gym and pay more money.”

The recreation centers have facilities, programs and equipment available for students.

“We do ask students to pretty much bring their student ID,” said Gilberto Lopez, the University Recreation program coordinator for Brownsville.

Other than that, he said all students need is “their gym attire, and then your shoes, and you’re ready to work out.”

Salinas said he often uses a lounge area near the front of the University Recreation Building on the Edinburg campus, which has microwaves, to “warm up food, do little homework before, then work out.”

Spanish senior Karen Barajas said she appreciates the center’s free water and likes the bathrooms.

“I love them,” Barajas said. “I shower there, and I feel like I have a lot of privacy. The rental lockers are also cheap, so it’s very convenient.”

Both recreation centers have pool facilities, though the Edinburg campus is distinct with its climbing wall feature and new six-lane lap pool currently under construction, according to Annette Livas, UREC associate director of programs.

The UREC will host its signature special event, Late Nite at the REC, as a part of Welcome Week from 9 p.m. to midnight Friday. Additionally, both recreation centers, in conjunction with TSC, will host the REC Bash in late September.

“These two special events are geared towards welcoming the students, either back to class or just to campus,” Livas said. “The purpose of these events is just to tell the student body who and what we are.”

Lopez said students who cannot or do not want to visit the recreation centers can still become involved through an online fitness tracking application called Strava, which also syncs with other apps, such as Samsung Health.

The hours of operation and amenities differ for each center, so students are encouraged to get the details online.

DINING
Continued from Page 1

employees to allow them to visit the dining hall. ... We’re going to be offering those meal plans through payroll deduction also, which is helpful to employees.”

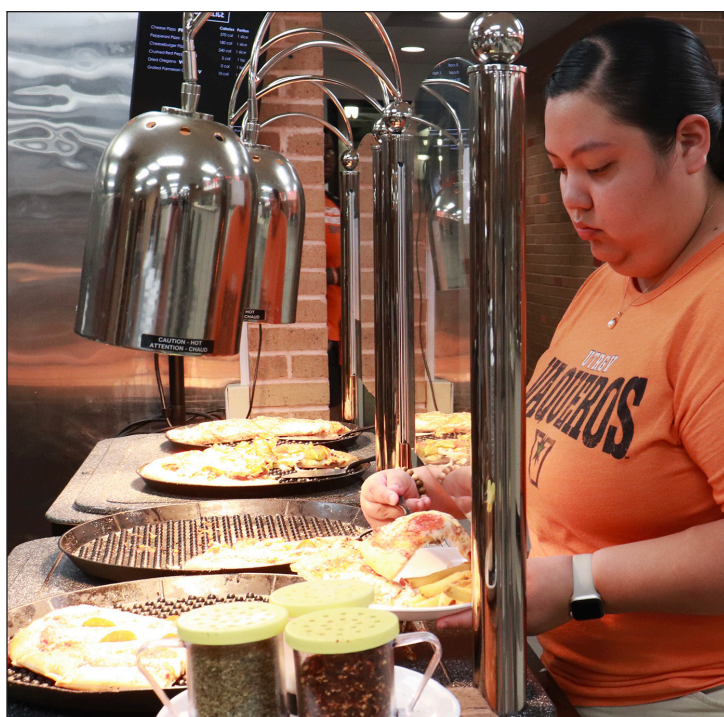
Marshall Saenz, lecturer in the department of Writing and Language Studies, said he has visited the dining hall a few times and thinks it would be helpful if it sold prepared boxes of food, since he may “not have 30 or 45 minutes to eat something.”

Saenz said the “Try Before You Buy” campaign can be helpful for faculty and staff to get a taste of the dining hall.

“It might let us know, you know, what the food options are, what things taste like, what’s available also with different dietary restrictions,” he said.

Asked about his thoughts on the option of payroll deduction for purchasing the meal plans, Saenz replied it would be beneficial depending on how the meal plan deduction would be implemented.

“Usually, we expect to have a certain amount in our paycheck and we kind of budget according to that,” he said. “It depends if there’s any kind of discount or bonus to getting a blocked plan versus just going in and buying, you know, there



Angel Ballesteros/THE RIDER

Criminal justice and psychology senior Lisa Garza serves herself a slice of pizza in the Vaquero Dining Hall Aug. 26 on the Edinburg campus.

on the spot or going somewhere else, too. So, I think what’s resonating out of this is the time efficiency and also the cost factor in it, because for some faculty, too, like we may not be able to eat lunch there every single day if we have one class after the next.”

The meal plan options for faculty and staff are expected to be available in the next couple of weeks.

The dining hall is open from 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday

through Friday and from 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

Every meal plan option includes dining dollars that can be used at the Chartwells-operated food venues on either campus.

The Edinburg campus offers different dining options, such as Chick-fil-A, Revolution Noodle, Community Corner, Tea Co., Rio Bravo Cafe, Vaquero Subs, Valley Harvest, Heritage Coffee, The Market and Pizza Hut.

The Brownsville campus

offers The Market, La Mesa, Pizza Hut, Southern Rose and Absurd Bird.

El Comedor will still host “Smoking Thursdays,” which will feature barbecue-based meals for campus community members.

Ramírez said the UTRGV Dining Services is considering bringing “Smoking Thursdays” to the Edinburg campus due to the success in Brownsville.

The dining hall in Edinburg offers meal options for people with dietary needs.

“We do have a station in the dining hall called ‘Delicious Without,’” she said. “All the food prepared in that station excludes the top allergens. ... If there’s specific dietary needs that you have, our general manager, our chef [is] always willing to have the conversation and tailor your meal to your needs.”

Asked about plans to add a dining hall on the Brownsville and Harlingen campus in the near future, Ramírez replied they are currently exploring different options.

“I don’t know about a dining hall,” she said. “... That’s pretty costly, but we are looking to explore options to maybe bring a food truck park to the Brownsville campus. ... We are looking to expand food options on the Harlingen campus.”

Jaslyn DeLeon, a social

work junior, has been on the resident meal plan for over a year and finds the dining hall food options to be repetitive.

De Leon said incorporating a wider variety of meal options would be a good idea.

Simone Griffith, an art education senior who has the resident meal plan, said her experience at the dining hall has been positive.

Griffith said it would be a good idea to extend the dining hall hours.

“I do have a late class, and last year I had to run to the dining hall just to make it,” she said.

Brownsville-based criminal justice senior Francisco Ortiz said it would be “hard” to put a dining hall on the Brownsville campus due to a lack of space and resources.

Ortiz said the options Brownsville already has available is good.

“It may be small, but the fact is, they have good-working chefs,” he said, motioning over his shoulder at El Comedor. “The food is still delicious and, the fact is, it’s easy to find.”

For more information on the meal plans, contact Campus Auxiliary Services at dining@utrgv.edu or call 665-2224.



What do you think about the new UTRGV Stadium?



"I think it's pretty cool and [I'm] really excited to see some football games and soccer games there, and I can't wait."

Bryan Morales
criminal justice freshman



"Well, it's my first time hearing about it, but I heard it's gonna be pretty big. So ... I feel like there will be more student involvement, doing more spirit. It'll just be like a better environment."

Bryan Alfaro
psychology sophomore



"I think it's pretty cool, 'cause we're gonna be able to [show] off our Vaquero colors and have some spirit."

Daniel Herrera
biology sophomore

--Compiled and photos by Vanessa Aguilar and Venisha Colón

Do apples fall from coconut trees?



Venisha Colón
PHOTOGRAPHER

My 2024 summer playlist was dominated by Charli xcx's "brat" album. A "brat summer" filled with late nights, wild encounters and overall fun was on just about everyone's wish list.

You could imagine my surprise when Vice President and presidential candidate Kamala Harris decided to embrace brat culture. In an attempt to garner the youth vote, the Harris campaign has undergone a Generation Z-oriented transition in its online marketing strategy.

It began with a July 21 X post from the "Apple" singer that reads, "Kamala IS brat."

Soon after, the Harris HQ X account revamped its header to adopt the "brat" aesthetic with a brat green background and minimalist black text that reads "harris hq."

At the time, I found it an odd move to associate Harris with an album that romanticized being a "party girl" in a

political climate that already sought to label Harris as the unserious candidate. However, the gamble seems to have paid off with the 18-to-29 crowd, aka potential Gen Z voters.

In a matter of days, my social media feeds were flooded with memes combining Harris' infamous "coconut tree" quote with music from xcx's "brat," which generated a new wave of political engagement from young people who labeled themselves as "coconut pillers."

While I can't say I took the coconut pill, for a brief moment, I found myself setting aside my issues with Harris as I enjoyed the content being pushed to me.

Once the novelty wore off, I found that the "brat-ification" of Harris and the "coconut-pilling" of youth voters seemed to be an effective online strategy. I saw many of my peers, who previously had no interest in politics, suddenly posting Kamala edits and talking about how voting is "so brat."

Whether this support is superficial and ironic or genuinely endorses Harris, the impact will be revealed at the polls. An increase in youth voter turnout across the country could potentially launch Harris to a 2024 win.

Over 40 million members of Gen Z will be eligible to vote in the November election and 45% of the Gen Z electorate are people of color, according to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement. Harris could even have a shot at turning Texas blue if voter turnout increases.

Adam Carlson, senior vice president and head of Research of Fishbone Advisors, posted data on his X header that shows Texas moving consistently left at about 16.2 points since 2000, with the largest demographic in Texas being Hispanics under 25, according to Texas 2036. Texas 2036 is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy research and advocacy organization.

It will take more than a few clips of Harris dancing to "360" to get me to vote for her. As far as I'm concerned, Harris is just a more approachable version of her opponent, who also wants to fund the border wall and Israel.

A CIRCLE poll found that 49% of people ages 18 to 29 believe there is a genocide occurring in Palestine, with 28% supporting an immediate ceasefire. With these issues being hot topics among my generation, Democrats need to stop trying to be relatable to young voters and actually listen to us.

Once the novelty wore off, I found that the "brat-ification" of Harris and the "coconut-pilling" of youth voters seemed to be an effective online strategy.

Texas 2036 is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy research and advocacy organization.

It will take more than a few clips of

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WACKY WEB POLL

WOULD YOU RATHER ATTEND 8 A.M. OR 8 P.M. CLASSES?



ASH HINOJOSA DÍAZ

83.33%

09.03

16.67%

Creciendo la cultura Latinx

UTRGV introduce nuevo programa y experiencias



FOTO DE CORTESÍA ANDRES AMADO

Peter Avila, vicepresidente del Salón de la Fama y Museo de la Música Conjunto de Tejas en San Benito, habla con estudiantes, padres y profesores de UTRGV sobre el funcionamiento del museo.

Pete Mendoza

THE RIDER

La universidad está trabajando con el Instituto de Servicios de Museos y Bibliotecas para introducir el Programa de Pasantías y Becas para Museos Latinx, que expandirá la cultura latina en la comunidad a partir del verano de 2025.

A través de este programa, los estudiantes trabajarán en dos museos latinos: el Salón de la Fama y el Museo de la Música Conjunto de Tejas en San Benito y el Centro Nacional Cultural Hispano en Albuquerque, Nuevo México.

Andrés Amado, profesor asociado de la Escuela de Música de UTRGV y director del proyecto de la beca que financiará todos los gastos del programa, dijo que la fecha límite para solicitar fondos será al final del semestre de otoño de 2024.

Con el inicio del programa, también estará disponible un nuevo curso académico centrado en los museos.

Los pasantes y becarios ganarán \$12 la hora, según la propuesta del proyecto del Programa de Pasantías y Becas para Museos Latinx.

Amado dijo que el programa de becas es para que los estudiantes adquieran experiencia trabajando para un museo y, al mismo tiempo, financien los museos.

“Estos museos que se centran en esta cultura no suelen tener fondos suficientes”, dijo. “Además,

los estudiantes de instituciones como la nuestra a veces no tienen la oportunidad de tener esta clase de desarrollo profesional”.

El profesor asociado dijo que tanto los consejos asesores estudiantiles como los de los padres ayudaron en la creación de la propuesta y desarrollar la solicitud de la beca.

“Estamos tratando de incluir diferentes voces en el proceso”, dijo Amado.

Dijo que UTRGV comenzó los preparativos para la beca en el verano de 2023 visitando los museos y su personal.

La propuesta del proyecto establece que, aunque el Valle del Río Grande está compuesto principalmente por latinos, aún hay un museo latino en la región: el Salón de la Fama y Museo del Conjunto de Tejas.

Patricia Avila, directora ejecutiva del Salón de la Fama y Museo del Conjunto de Tejas, dijo que la beca ayuda porque es una organización sin fines de lucro que opera principalmente con voluntarios.

“Los estudiantes que participarán en la pasantía realmente tendrán una idea un poco más clara de cómo era administrar un museo”, dijo Avila. “Creo que saldrán con un sentido de orgullo de ser parte de la cultura mexicana”.

Rene Ballesteros, un estudiante de posgrado en antropología, dijo que poder ayudar a coordinar el programa para futuros estudiantes fue una

oportunidad increíble.

“De esa manera, [los estudiantes] tienen esa perspectiva de cómo es trabajar en la carrera de museos en el sur de Tejas”, dijo Ballesteros. “No siempre es fácil. No hay muchas oportunidades, por eso esta pasantía será realmente importante porque les dará a los estudiantes una experiencia realmente sólida en museos y una oportunidad de viajar, de ver lugares fuera del Valle también”.

Amado dijo que hay una variedad de trayectorias profesionales disponibles en los museos.

“Este es un esfuerzo universitario amplio que espero que los estudiantes puedan aprovechar

y nos ayuden a crecer y desarrollar nuestra experiencia profesional, que los ayudará en sus vidas profesionales, pero también al Valle y también a estos museos que muestran lo mejor de nuestras culturas locales y nuestro patrimonio”, dijo.

El profesor asociado dijo que los detalles de la beca se están finalizando y las solicitudes se abrirán pronto.



FOTO DE CORTESÍA ANDRES AMADO

El Salón de la Fama y Museo de la Música Conjunto de Tejas, ubicado en 402 W. Robertson St. en San Benito, colaborará con UTRGV para el Programa de Pasantías y Becas del Museo Latinx en el verano de 2025.

Preserving a legacy

Eduardo Escamilla

A&E REPORTER

“*Leyendas*,” an annual performance that celebrates heritage and culture, brings together multigenerational dancers from the UTRGV Ballet Folklórico to support future generations and continue sharing the traditions of Mexico.

The event will take place at 7:30 p.m. Saturday in the UTRGV Performing Arts Complex on the Edinburg campus, said Miguel Peña, director of the UTRGV Ballet Folklórico and dance lecturer.

A genuine representation of Mexican culture plays a very important role in the show, Peña said. The costumes are all made in Mexico, and the music remains authentic to the tradition.

“The audience not only enjoys what they see but also learns about their roots,” he said. “A lot of people that come ... maybe have never been to Mexico and this is one way to keep in touch with their Mexican side of their identity.”

Dance senior Elsa Vasquez said folklórico is deeply rooted in her culture and is a unique dance form because “you get to experience all of Mexico and, [as a dancer], you get to share it everywhere.”

The idea for “*Leyendas*” was conceived in 2018 as a tribute to the legacy left behind by Francisco Muñoz III, the former director of UTRGV Ballet Folklórico, according to Peña.

The director brought together alumni from various decades to form a new company.

“I started contacting everyone ... from previous years,” Peña said. “... I said ‘OK. This is like the dream team’ because they were ... superstars in [their time]. ... I’m gathering all the legends. ... That’s why it’s called ‘*Leyendas*.’”

The alumni company, along



Abigail Ollave/THE RIDER

Biology senior Omar Lopez and dance senior Paola Cantu Gonzalez rehearse Aug. 21 in the Health & Physical Education Building II on the Edinburg campus.



Eduardo Escamilla/THE RIDER

Dance senior Juan Jose Gonzalez shows off a traditional folklorico dress made in Jalisco, Mexico. The dress is part of the wardrobe for the one-night performance of “*Leyendas*” which takes place 7:30 p.m. Saturday in the UTRGV Performing Arts Complex on the Edinburg campus.



Abigail Ollave/THE RIDER

Dance senior Elsa Vasquez leads the upcoming group of folklorico dancers Aug. 21 in the Health & Physical Education Building II on the Edinburg campus.

with current dance students, have joined together for a one-night performance that not only combines their shared passion for folklórico but also gives back to the program.

“The highlight of the show is that all revenue goes to the [Francisco Muñoz Endowed Ballet Folklórico Scholarship],” Peña said. “Last year, we fully funded the endowment, allowing us to start providing scholarships to dance majors studying folklórico.”

He said the endowment gave the dance majors the financial freedom to focus on

their passion.

For Vasquez, performing on stage is a profound experience. “It’s something you can’t describe,” she said.

She added that from a performer’s viewpoint, the audience sits in darkness, but, on one occasion, she spotted her family, and it evoked strong emotions.

“My tears started rolling [on stage],” Vasquez said. “It’s a different feeling to actually see ... that they’re there, present, you know? Supporting what you’re doing—it’s just one of the best feelings ever.”

Dance junior Juan Salinas

said he has danced for 10 years and was first introduced to folklórico through his sister’s open house in middle school.

“I saw them doing a section of ‘Nuevo León’ ... and they had these jackets with some fringe on it,” Salinas said. “They were like whipping it, and I was like, ‘what is that?’”

He said, in folklórico, partnering plays an important aspect in the performance and, sometimes, it can be challenging acting out a romance with a partner.

“You have to create this false illusion for whoever is watching that you’re in love

with them,” Salinas said.

He said it can be hard when there is no chemistry, but “sometimes, it’s not faking it. ... Sometimes, you get to dance with, you know, people that you do have a connection with, and it’s just beautiful.”

This will be Salinas’ fourth performance in “*Leyendas*.” He said he is proud to be part of a performance that honors the veterans that laid the foundation for the current generation of dancers.

Vasquez said she values sharing the stage with the alumni.

“It’s good to always have them come back and still be part of, like, this tradition,” she said.

Peña said “*Leyendas*,” and its contribution to the Francisco Muñoz Endowed Ballet Folklórico Scholarship, is the legacy the UTRGV Folklórico dancers will leave behind.

“I hope this goes on for a very long time, so we can fund the future students of the Ballet Folklórico and, of course, enjoy Mexican culture through dance and music,” he said.

Salinas said he hopes his legacy is “to be known as the guy who was not just a folklorico dancer but just an amazing dancer overall” and be remembered for his versatility in ballet, jazz and tap.

Vasquez said she wants to leave a legacy of “sharing your presence, sharing the love, the passion that you have for this culture, this art.”

She said it is important for her to always perform like it’s her last.

“We go through all these peers,” Vasquez said. “... You see them, and they never get to share this love with us anymore, or outside, or with anyone else, so you just have to treat it like it’s your last.”

Tickets are now on sale on showpass.com for the one-night performance of “*Leyendas*.”

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'Time to Rally the Valley!'

The man behind Athletics' in-stadium voice

Ali Halloum

SPORTS REPORTER

Those who have been to any university athletics event have most likely heard Tony Forina, the voice behind games at UTRGV and legacy institution University of Texas-Pan American.

Forina has been a public address announcer at the university's athletics venues for 31 years and has witnessed many standout moments in the history of several athletics programs.

He began his career at the age of 19 as a public address announcer for youth baseball games in Alamo.

As a student at the legacy institution, Forina was visiting the Fieldhouse when Doug Duff, former marketing director for UTPA athletics, offered him an opportunity to announce at basketball games.

"[Duff] saw me and said ... 'Hey, you're that kid that's announcing the baseball tournaments,'" Forina said. "He said, 'Well, how would you like to announce our basketball games?' and I just kinda looked at him like, 'Sure.'"

He has voiced a lot of history at UTRGV's sports venues, including game winners and walk-offs.

Forina said he is at a point in his career where it is more "fun" to see former student athletes that he has announced.

"I've had the opportunity to announce so many different players," Forina said. "And I'm kind of thrilled because now I'm getting to announce their kids and see these former players

come back."

His favorite memory was when the UTPA Men's Basketball Team upset ranked Air Force Academy (No. 27 ESPN) at a packed Fieldhouse in 2004. The Broncos defeated the Falcons 37-35.

"It was an incredible game," Forina said. "Really, to watch the Fieldhouse come to life the way it did. Obviously, the other games that are so historic and monumental, [such as] Texas coming to play men's basketball, women's basketball, baseball ... those have all been great memories there."

Forina said he looks up to late New York Yankees public address announcer Bob Sheppard as an example.

"One of the takeaways I took from Bob Sheppard of the Yankees when he would announce a player, he would always come back and announce it a second time," he said. "I do it for the opposing team so we can work our fans into it."

He used Sheppard's repeating of player names and places his own spin on it to engage crowds at the UTRGV Baseball Stadium for the "who ... cares" chants.

"I've had the opportunity to announce so many different players, and I'm kind of thrilled because now I'm getting to announce their kids and see these former players come back."

--Tony Forina, UTRGV home game announcer and assistant Athletics director for Development

Forina said the opportunity to announce games for the Broncos and, now, the Vaqueros "means the world" to him.

"When other teams have told me not to come back, the university was always there for me," he said. "It's an

opportunity to give back to the community and give back to the school I attended, and it's just something I really enjoy."

Sara Hernandez, the associate athletic director for Marketing and Strategic Initiatives for UTRGV Athletics, has worked alongside Forina for almost 10 years and said working with him has been "great."

"One of the best things working with him is he's also taught me a lot," Hernandez said. "Not only do

I get to lead him on the department side, but he also gets to teach me a lot."

Valerie Castillo, a graduate of UTRGV's Class of 2023, has attended several UTRGV games and has heard Forina over the mic.

"[Forina] makes it exciting," Castillo said. "I like how he announced the games, he does a good job."



PHOTO COURTESY KRISTELLA CRUZ

Tony Forina, UTRGV home game announcer and assistant Athletics director for Development, serves as master of ceremonies at the 2024 Hall of Fame Induction ceremony March 23 in the University Ballroom on the Edinburg campus.



Abigail Ollave/THE RIDER

Tony Forina announces a goal made by the UTRGV Women's Soccer Team Thursday at the Soccer and Track & Field Complex on the Edinburg campus.

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK:

ONEEKO ALLEN

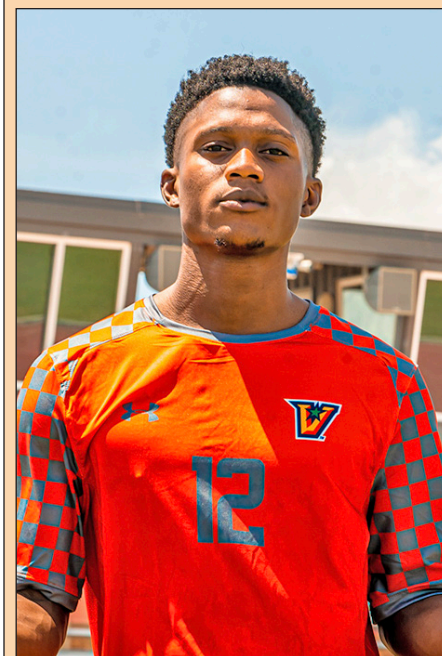


PHOTO COURTESY UTRGV ATHLETICS

Oneeko Allen, a management senior from Montego Bay, Jamaica, is a forward for the UTRGV Men's Soccer Team. Allen started the 2024 season by netting an assist away against Lindenwood University. The Vaqueros won that match 3-1.

Q: Can you tell us a fun fact about yourself?

A: "Fun fact, I love swimming."

Q: Who or what got you started in soccer?

A: "My dad. I grew up seeing my dad playing soccer and my bigger brother. So, I saw them both."

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

A: "I would say my parents, to be honest, because they always helped me move forward in whatever I do."

Q: What kind of music do you like to listen to?

A: "I like Jamaican music, so like dancehall, reggae. I would listen to some American rap, too."

Q: Any shows or movies you like to watch?

A: "I just finished watching a series, '[The] Blacklist.' Yeah, I like that series."

Q: Do you have any hobbies?

A: "I would say listening to music because I like listening to music a lot. ... I would [also] say singing."

Q: What is your biggest motivation?

A: "Just to see my family smile, just to see them happy—that's my biggest one."

Q: What do you like the most about UTRGV?

A: "I think what I like the most is the environment. It's similar to back home. It's in a tropical climate, the palm trees and all that."

Q: What are your biggest goals?

A: "My biggest one is to help my family and put them in a comfortable position, and to play professional soccer."

--Compiled by Ali Halloum

MEN'S SOCCER
6:30 p.m. Wednesday
vs. Texas A&M University-San Antonio

6:30 p.m. Saturday
vs. University of the Incarnate Word

at the UTRGV Soccer and Track & Field Complex

THIS WEEK IN SPORTS

WOMEN'S SOCCER
6:30 p.m. Friday
vs. Howard Payne University

Noon Sunday
vs. University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

at the UTRGV Soccer and Track & Field Complex



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