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THE RIDER

THE STUDENT VOICE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS RIO GRANDE VALLEY

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SPRUNG UP



THE RIDER FILE PHOTO

UTRGV students walk in front of the Interdisciplinary Engineering and Academic Building Sept. 9, 2024, on the Edinburg campus.

Spring enrollment sees increase

Daniela Chapa-Reyes
THE RIDER

Over the last three years, UTRGV's spring enrollment has increased gradually, according to an enrollment overview by the Division of Strategic Enrollment & Student Affairs.

In Spring 2023, UTRGV had an enrollment of 29,704 students; 29,789 in Spring 2024 and 31,510 in Spring 2025.

Maggie Hinojosa, senior vice president for Strategic Enrollment and Student Affairs, said there is a slight



Angel Ballesteros/THE RIDER

UTRGV students wait in line to board the bus Feb. 3 afternoon in front of the Visitors Center on the Edinburg campus.

decrease from fall to spring semesters.

"The fall is always where you have the largest enrollment," Hinojosa said. "In fall, we were at around

34,000 and so, for spring, we're at 31,500. So, you don't technically increase from fall to spring."

Census Day was Wednesday.

According to Hinojosa, there are currently 26,652 undergraduate students and 4,837 graduate and professional degree students, which include master's, doctoral, School of Medicine and School of Podiatric Medicine students.

"Typically in the spring, we don't have a huge transfer number ... less than a hundred students that are transferred," she said. "You don't get a lot of mid-year transfers. Typically, transfers are going to happen in the

See **SPRING**, Page 2

Officials discuss service, emotional support animals

Hugo Sepúlveda
THE RIDER

University officials explained the process and the importance of service and emotional support animals for students on campus and in the community.

Shawn Saladin, director of Student Accessibility Services, explained the difference between an emotional support animal and a service animal.

"A service animal is an animal that provides a specific service for a specific individual with a disability," Saladin said.

An example of a service animal would be guide dogs, which help a person who is blind to navigate.

"Emotional support animal is an animal that alleviates the symptoms of a type of disability," Saladin said. "For example, emotional support

animals are very common used for people with high-heightened levels of anxiety, so they can be productive in their environment."

Service animals are federally mandated and people with them are allowed to be anywhere on campus.

Saladin said emotional support animals have a different process and restrictions from service animals.

"[For] emotional support animals, you have to go through the office of Student Accessibility Services and demonstrate that you do have a documented disability that is professionally documented," he said.

Saladin said a professional needs to state the symptoms of the disability the emotional support animal alleviates.

"There's also an

See **ANIMALS**, Page 3



Mykel Del Angel/THE RIDER GRAPHIC

Vaqueros come home: honoring a legacy

Andres Estrada
THE RIDER

UTRGV is hosting Homecoming Week with several events for all students, alumni, faculty, staff and the community to enjoy the Vaquero spirit through Feb. 17.

Assistant Director for Student Activities Cristina Rodriguez said the event week is focused on bringing the students and alumni together to "orange out."

"We wanna make sure that people really enjoy and feel that spirit for our current students and, then, our alumni and even our faculty staff," Rodriguez said. "It's a cohesive family, you know, we want everyone at UTRGV to feel that warmth."

Free admission is provided for students with their ID.

She also said Student Activities and the other departments, such as the Center for Student Involvement, the School of Podiatry and the Student Union want to make sure students "get the most of it" since the funding for these events come from student fees.

On the Harlingen campus, one of the most famous events is the Dye Hard Orange 5K, which took place Saturday outside the Clinical Education Building.

The event promotes wellness and tradition.

On the Brownsville campus, The Block Party is a new event which will take place from noon to 4 p.m. today on the Student Union lawn.

"If you wanna make your own personal street sign or

you wanna decorate some cowboy hats or, you know, those are just two out of ... five or six different items," Rodriguez said.

On the Edinburg campus, the Burning of the Letters, one of the most important Homecoming traditions, will take place at 8:30 p.m. Thursday outside the UTRGV Fieldhouse.

"That one is open to everyone to really enjoy, and I think it goes back to wanting the alumni folks [and] ... the community to come out," Rodriguez said.

A variety of sports games will also take place during the week. UTRGV Baseball will play its home opener against Southern Illinois University Friday at the Baseball Stadium on the Edinburg campus.

For more information, visit utrgv.edu/homecoming.



THE RIDER FILE PHOTO

Students admire the Burning of the Letters Feb. 18, 2017, on the Edinburg campus. UTRGV will host this year's Burning of the Letters Thursday outside the UTRGV Fieldhouse on the Edinburg campus.

THE RIDER

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today Homecoming Block Party
Student Activities will host the Homecoming Block Party on the Student Union lawn on the Brownsville campus. The event will be an afternoon of live music, creative activities, and school spirit on campus, with former "American Idol" contestant, Brody Rivers.

Swiftie Karaoke
The Student Union Game Room will host Swiftie Karaoke from 1 to 2 p.m. on the Edinburg campus. Students can register on VLink or at the Game Room to participate. A student ID is required.

Tuesday Cycle Fit
University Recreation will

host a Cycle Fit session from 6:30 to 7:15 p.m. in UREC Studio 1 on the Edinburg campus. The class offers a cardiovascular workout featuring hill climbs, sprints and cycling drills.

Wednesday Leadership Bites: Love Language
The Student Leadership Academy will host a session from noon to 1 p.m. in the Main Building Courtyard on the Brownsville campus. Attendees can explore their love language and learn how understanding it can enhance leadership skills and relationships.

Wrapping of the Letters
Students are invited to take part in preparing the iconic UTRGV letters from 1 to 4

p.m. in the Academic Support Facility on the Edinburg campus. The tradition leads up to the annual Burning of the Letters signature event.

Vaquero Boots & BBQ
The Student Union will host Vaquero Boots & BBQ from 6 to 10 p.m. on the Quad on the Edinburg campus as part of the Homecoming celebration. Students are encouraged to wear their best boots for a boot-judging competition. The event will feature free food, games and country music. Activities include country line dance lessons and a mechanical bull. A valid student ID is required.

Thursday Burning of the Letters
UTRGV will host the Burning

of the Letters from 8:30 to 9:15 p.m. outside the Fieldhouse on the Edinburg campus. Students, faculty, staff, alumni and the community can come together to celebrate school spirit in a night filled with energy, pride and tradition.

Friday Boxing
University Recreation will host a boxing session from 6:30 to 7:15 p.m. in UREC Studio 2 on the Edinburg campus. The class offers explosive boxing rounds to deliver combinations and master the necessary footwork.

--Compiled by Ethan Maldonado



POLICE REPORTS

The following are among the incidents reported to University Police between Jan. 29 and Feb. 3.

Jan. 29 8:40 a.m.: Officers responded to a fire alarm in Heritage Hall on the Edinburg campus. Upon arrival, it was determined a student set off the alarm while cooking a meal.

12:59 p.m.: An officer on foot patrol observed a student using her personal transportation device on the Bronc Trail on the Edinburg campus. Upon contact, the student was informed of the policy and left

the area without further incident.

Jan. 30 2:08 p.m.: An officer was notified of a UTRGV-issued laptop that was stolen from a student in the Texas Southmost College Recreation Center on the Brownsville campus. The laptop did not contain any sensitive information. The case is under investigation.

6:26 p.m.: A student reported finding a scratch on her vehicle after she returned to it from class in Lot E-26 on the Edinburg campus. The case is

under investigation.

Jan. 31 9:38 a.m.: An officer responded to a two-vehicle traffic collision in Lot E-25 on the Edinburg campus. No injuries were reported.

10:44 p.m.: A UTRGV facility reported damage to a university golf cart when its front left tires came off near the Texas Southmost College Recreation Center in Brownsville. The vehicle was inoperable and left in the parking lot.

Feb. 2 12:08 p.m.: University

officers and Environmental Health, Safety & Risk Management personnel responded to a fire alarm in Troxel Hall on the Edinburg campus. Upon arrival, the building was checked and deemed safe for re-entry.

Feb. 3 12:35 a.m.: Officers responded to a vehicle robbery in The Village Apartments on the Edinburg campus. After further investigation, a timely warning was sent to the campus community. The case is under investigation.

--Compiled by Narda Serna

SPRING,
Continued from Page 1

fall.”

Frida Martinez, a social work junior, said the student population is getting too big for campus and its facilities.

“I think one of the major problems over the last couple of years has been parking space and ... it makes us late for class,” Martinez said. “I definitely do think that they don’t have to accept every student that applies here ... just because it is pretty hectic here in the morning, sometimes.”

Christian De La Garza, a civil engineering junior, said he feels the university is not that populated.

“I always see empty spaces in my classrooms or in my online classes,” De La Garza said. “There’s always room for more people. I see it more here [on] the Edinburg campus than [on] the Brownsville campus because they have smaller classes, so it looks more compact. But here in Edinburg ... I see more empty spaces.”

Alejandra Rojas, a psychology freshman, said there are a lot of students but plenty of space.

“I think there just needs to be more parking space, like, more availability for people to park,” Rojas said.

Correction: The Rider published the wrong key to the Jan. 27 sudoku. The correct solution is the following:

7	8	5	2	3	4	6	9	1
6	9	2	8	1	5	3	7	4
3	1	4	7	6	9	2	8	5
1	5	8	6	9	7	4	3	2
4	7	3	5	2	1	8	6	9
2	6	9	4	8	3	5	1	7
5	3	6	9	7	2	1	4	8
8	4	7	1	5	6	9	2	3
9	2	1	3	4	8	7	5	6

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Dance, eat, play the Vaquero way

Pete Mendoza
THE RIDER

The UTRGV Student Union will bring western culture to the university community with Vaquero Boots and BBQ 5 to 10 p.m. Wednesday on the Quad on the Edinburg campus.

Anahi Esquivel, Student Union program coordinator, said Vaquero Boots and BBQ is an event part of the Homecoming celebration.

"We barely introduced the event last year and, because of the great success that it had, we're going to introduce it again," Esquivel said. "But we're going to scale it up even more this time."

She said the event will include live music, free food for students and different activities and games.

"We're going to have a bigger stage, bigger bands," Esquivel said. "We're going to have student organizations offering a variety of treats by fundraising. We're going to be having two food trucks as well, with free food for students. The first 300 students

that attend are also going to be receiving a free Homecoming T-shirt to start the week of the Homecoming celebration."

The program coordinator said the Student Union wants to showcase the bands and make the event relevant for students.

"We're going to have a great band," Esquivel said. "It's called Red. It's a Taylor Swift tribute. We're bringing an even bigger stage and we're gonna have an opener. So, the opener is gonna be country; it's Eros Garcia country band. But those two elements, the two bands, [are] definitely the biggest

items we're gonna have in the event."

The event will also host a cowboy boot contest.

"We encourage a lot of cowboy boots [on] campus," Esquivel said.

She said the idea for the event was to celebrate cultural heritage and create an original event.

"We wanted to bring a little more knowledge into the culture of the Vaquero," Esquivel said. "We started with the idea of having an event where it was gonna be western-themed."

Management senior Cristian Martinez said the event could bring students together through culture and genre.

"Bringing [a western theme] to the university can bring in a lot of different genre of students that might not feel tied into the culture here and might feel more relatable to the environment around them," Martinez said.

English sophomore Guadalupe Diaz said the idea of a western-themed

"We wanted to bring a little more knowledge into the culture of the Vaquero."

--Anahi Esquivel

event would be a fun time.

"I think I went to [the event] last year and my friend and I had so much fun," Diaz said. "The food was really good and I'd like to go again."

Esquivel said students are encouraged to attend the event to be a part of the celebration and become aware of the Homecoming events.

"It's going to be a really fun event," she said. "Like I said, we're going to be scaling up from last year and we're very excited to offer all the games that we have planned for them."

For more information on upcoming Homecoming events, visit utrgv.edu/homecoming.



THE RIDER FILE PHOTO

Mechanical engineering senior Francisco Fernandez dances during the Spring 2024 Vaqueros Boots & BBQ event on the Student Union Quad on the Edinburg campus.



THE RIDER FILE PHOTO

Mechanical engineering senior Esteban Becerra participates in a lasso game at the Vaqueros Boots & BBQ event Spring 2024 on the Student Union Quad on the Edinburg campus.

Brewing up connections



Sofia Cantú Saucedo/THE RIDER PHOTOS

Armando Villarreal, volunteer coordinator for the eBridge Center for Business and Commercialization, presents 1 Million Cups Wednesday. Each week, two entrepreneurs are invited to present their story in 10 minutes followed by 10 minutes for questions, according to Villarreal.



The 1 Million Cups event takes place every Wednesday at the eBridge Center for Business and Commercialization, located at 1304 E. Adams St. in Brownsville. Coffee and tea are provided by Two Straws Co.

ANIMALS, *Continued from Page 1*

interview between the student and the access coordinator to talk about the disability in general ... any other academic accommodation they need and, especially, how the emotional support animal alleviates the disability," he said.

The director said emotional support animals are not allowed into classrooms but can be in the dorms if students follow the process and have been approved by the Student Accessibility Services office. The Departmental Review Committee of Student Accessibility Services reviews the case, and Saladin has the final say on approval for all accommodations.

Rebecca Gadson, associate dean for Policy Management and director of Housing and Residence Life, said if a student resides on campus and has a request for an emotional support animal, after an approval of formal request from Student Accessibility Services, Housing and Residence Life will receive a formal notification and will work with the student to make a smooth transition for both to be on campus.

Gadson said some requirements are the animal's vaccination record up to date, compliance with city ordinance

in terms of type of animal allowed to be in residential facility, the living space has to be taken care of and cleanliness must be maintained.

The associate dean said the student would be responsible for any damage or additional type of cleaning as a result of the animal being within the living environment.

"It's incredibly important for individuals to have access and support that aids in a full range of experiences at the university, and making

Christopher Albert, director of the Counseling Center, said a service animal is a type of accommodation that is recognized by the American Disabilities Act.

Albert said if a student needs a service animal, it is based on a disability such as visual impairment or mobility impairment. The only animals that fall under the definition of service animals are dogs and miniature horses.

He said emotional support animals are not part of the American Disabilities Act, so it is not a federal protection to have a right to have them on various premises.

"For example, here at UTRGV, can't bring an emotional support animal into

a classroom, can't bring an emotional support animal into our Counseling Center," Albert said. "So, we allow service animals. We don't allow emotional support animals."

He said if a person wants or feels the need to have an emotional support animal with them at their residence, normally, an apartment does not allow pets. They can get the appropriate documentation to show that they have this need and they can have an emotional support animal with them on that property.

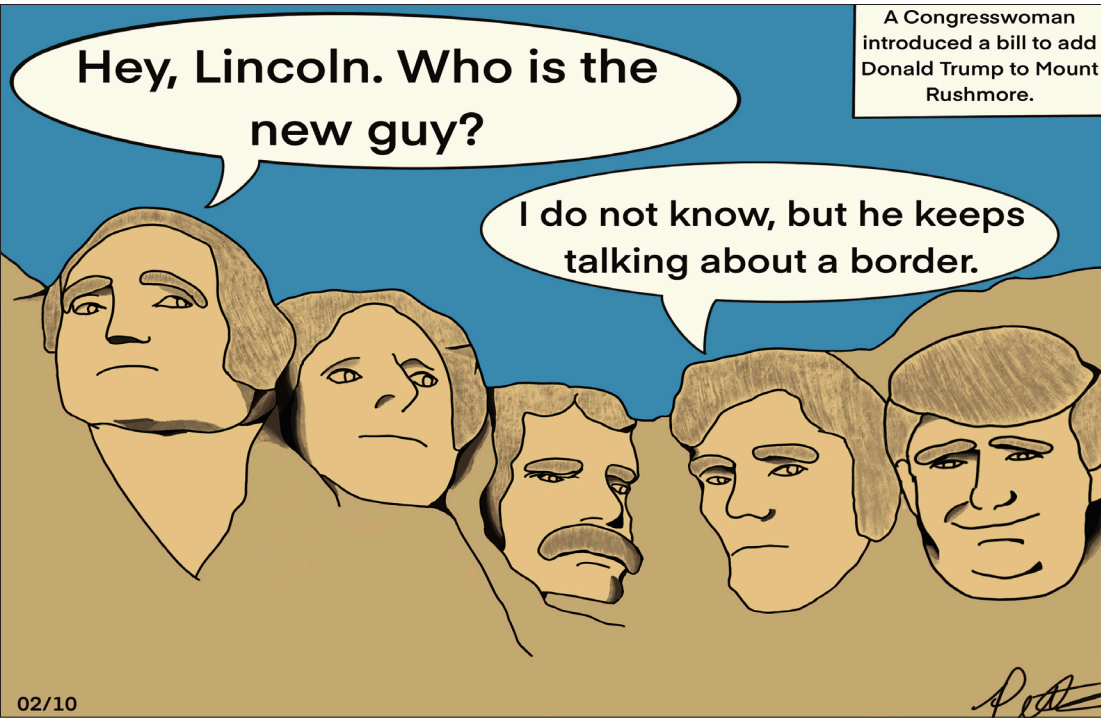
"It's incredibly important for individuals to have access and support that aids in a full range of experiences at the university."

--Rebecca Gadson

sure that people can live independently and fully," she said.

Gadson said it is vital for individuals with disabilities to have a trained animal to assist with a skill or task, and those rights are protected on and off campus.

"We want our students to be successful in and outside of the classroom and we would hope that students who reside on campus are fully comfortable and in an environment that is conducive for them to be successful," she said.



02/10

Miedo a sangrar verde, blanco y rojo



Amara Cazares
THE RIDER

As 2025 rolls in, the state of this country becomes more oppressive, unpredictable and brutal. There is the sinking feeling upon opening social media, not knowing what terrible news you will be met with this time.

I, among other people, can agree on how the future of America is terrifying with recent administration changes. If I could describe the emotions I have felt seeing my people get detained, oppressed and abused all for the sake of "Making America Great Again," it is true overwhelming sadness.

As a queer, Mexican woman myself, waking up with this uncertainty flying over my head not knowing what the next thing will be put in order, it feels like I walk around with this fear, not knowing

which part of myself I will be targeted for. The terrifying questions float in my head: If I'll be the next person on the news for speaking Spanish in public, holding hands with my girlfriend or having the misfortune of being born a woman.

The fear that the sacrifice my parents made to come into this country for the futures of their children is going to waste

"It feels like I walk around with this fear, not knowing which part of myself I will be targeted for."

simply because people view us as insignificant. The fear of getting a phone call to inform me that my mother has been detained by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement due to her speaking Spanish in public. All these festering emotions need to be used for actual change in this country.

All throughout history, we learn how minorities fight

back against oppressive laws and systems set up to degrade minorities from society. I, myself, and many others are exhausted seeing rights being easily stripped away from people as if we are nothing.

Now more than ever, we need to show our pride for our "forma de ser." We need to show that laws will never erase identities as much as they want to. Our voices matter and, even if everything feels so isolating and definitive, they never are. Generations before us fought for the change they needed, and we will carry their strength to continue fighting for ours.

My identity as a queer, Mexican woman will never be erased or taken away from me despite how much people want it to. I am not a law or a political statement; I am a person who deserves rights just as much as everyone else in this country.

Everyone is deserving of kindness and respect regardless of race, gender identity or sexuality. Never let bigotry diminish your power or your identity. Y con esto, quiero declarar que mi gente y yo seguiremos perseverando y seguiremos sangrando verde, blanco y rojo.



What are your plans for this upcoming Valentine's Day?



"This Valentine's Day, me and my boyfriend are gonna go to JCPenney and do those ... photoshoots. We're kinda really excited for it."

Nidia Loza
multidisciplinary studies senior

"Well this year, since Valentine's [Day] lands on a Friday, I'll just have a usual day of class, go home and just spend time with my family."

Hector Salinas
engineering technology sophomore



"Besides work, I'll probably just have a Galentine's with my cousins and my sisters."

Elizabeth Veliz
civil engineering sophomore

"As a single guy, for me, it's probably just taking it as another day, probably enjoying the fellowship of one of my friends. ... Maybe even do a little single's day in protest, but other than that just enjoy it as a regular day."

Pedro Camacho
international business senior



"I don't know his name yet."

Tristan Padilla
finance freshman

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

Visit utrgvrider.com to participate

Wacky Web Poll

Did you bring your own lunch or buy lunch on campus?

58% Brought my own

42% Bought lunch

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.

A country star rising



Narda Serna/THE RIDER

Eros Garcia sings his new single "Better Off Alone" Wednesday on the Student Union veranda on the Brownsville campus.

Eduardo Escamilla THE RIDER

For rising singer Eros Garcia, there's one non-negotiable rule in country music: be authentic. The genre's power, Garcia said, lies in its ability to connect with listeners through genuine stories and heartfelt experiences.

"That's just the whole thing about country music, in my opinion, is that people want to listen to storytelling and, like, to something real, you know, straight from the heart," he said.

At 17, Garcia formed and began managing his band The Drifters, playing in honky-tonk and music venues across Texas. The band is scheduled to perform at "Vaqueros Boots and BBQ" at 6 p.m. Wednesday at the Quad on the Edinburg campus.

The origin of the band's name is rooted in a near-miss incident on a Texas road. While en route to a private event in San Benito, a last-minute directional change led to a drift through an intersection.

The close call left the band shaken but also inspired its name. Reflecting on the incident, the band members joked about being "drifters," and the name stuck.

"We're like, 'Golly, this is an experience. We're over here, like, drifters, man,'" Garcia said. "It kind of just came out. ... [We were] just drifting around, you know, just doing our thing."

While the name may have been born out of a chance encounter, the band's music is anything but accidental.

Garcia describes their sounds as "relatable," "vibing" and above all, good "ol' Texas country."

The singer said their 2024 single, "Better Off Alone," was written during a high school science class.

"I was always getting in trouble for not paying attention," Garcia said.

The song was later shared with the band but was initially set aside while it focused on cover songs. It was not until audience members began requesting original material that "Better Off Alone" was resurrected and added to its setlist.

connection with Keith and his crew after opening for him at several shows.

"Whenever we opened up for him ... we all, you know, him and the whole crew, we all just got kind of cozy together, and everything was pretty cool," Garcia said.

The vocalist said the impact of Keith's music and camaraderie has shaped their creative development, and he also acknowledges the honor of performing with artists they have come to admire over the years.

"When we got a chance to play with Wade Bowen, it was like, 'Man ... your covers are in our set,'" Garcia said.

Early in his music career, he faced a moment in Nashville that nearly derailed his goals. Offered the opportunity to record a pre-written song with a producer, the artist quickly realized the pop-country sound clashed with his vision of authentic Texas country music.

"It just sounded like real pop country, which wasn't anything that I was trying to get into," Garcia said.

A fan of artists, such as George Strait and Keith Whitley, he felt the song lacked the heart of traditional country.

He wanted to instead focus on putting together his band on his terms. While still in school, the artist formed a band, playing local gigs and honing their craft. The experience instilled a deep appreciation for authenticity and the importance of staying true to one's musical vision.

For upcoming tour dates and music releases, visit erosgarciamusic.com.

"I think that's one thing I would definitely tell other people or other artists ... just trust your heart,"

--Eros Garcia

The Rider asked Garcia if a debut album release could be expected soon.

"Hopefully, that's in the works," he replied. "We're kind of trying to get into the studio ... find time to do that but, definitely, it's in the works."

While Eros and The Drifters have shared the stage with established-country music stars, such as Wade Bowen, Clint Black and Eric Watson, the band points to a rising Texas artist as a key influence.

"It wasn't hard to make up my mind on that one," Garcia said. "As far as artists go, it's definitely Braxton Keith."

The band members formed a close



What is a movie or show you could watch for the rest of your life?



Allan Garcia
psychology sophomore

"The show that I would watch for the rest of my life would be 'The Office.'"



Hashim Elshafie
biology freshman

"The movie that I would watch for the rest of my life would be 'The Lion King.'"



Ana Campos
criminal justice freshman

"The movie that I would choose is 'Little Women.'"



Jose Gonzalez
biology freshman

"The movie that I would watch is 'Interstellar.'"

--Compiled by Sofia Cantú Saucedo

SUDOKU

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1		7			9			8
			5			4		2
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9						7	1	4
5	7					8	2	
		1	5	2				8
	5		8		6	1		7
		3	7	1	4			5

Astrology Rider: Weekly Horoscopes

Eduardo Escamilla THE RIDER

Aries (March 21 - April 19): Love is in the air, Aries! With Venus in your sign, you're feeling bold and passionate.
Taurus (April 20 - May 20): This week, you might be feeling a little more reserved in matters of the heart.
Gemini (May 21 - June 20): Your mind is buzzing with romantic ideas this week, Gemini!

Cancer (June 21 - July 22): Home and family are where your heart is this week, Cancer.
Leo (July 23 - Aug. 22): You're feeling confident and expressive this week, Leo!
Virgo (Aug. 23 - Sept. 22): Focus on the details this week, Virgo.
Libra (Sept. 23 - Oct. 22): Harmony and balance are key for you this week, Libra.
Scorpio (Oct. 23 - Nov. 21): Intensify your connection this week, Scorpio.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22 - Dec. 21): Adventure awaits you this week, Sagittarius!
Capricorn (Dec. 22 - Jan. 19): You're feeling more practical and grounded this week, Capricorn.
Aquarius (Jan. 20 - Feb. 18): Your innovative spirit is shining bright this week, Aquarius!
Pisces (Feb. 19 - March 20): Your intuition is heightened this week, Pisces.

UTRGV Homecoming

V A Q U E R O S

February
7 - 17,
2025



7 Friday

Window Painting Contest

Student Union Windows
ESTUN/BSTUN

Begins at 2:00 PM

8 Saturday

Dye Hard Orange 5k

Clinical Education Building
(HCEBL)

Check In: 7:15 AM
Race Time: 8:30 AM

10 Monday

Homecoming Block Party

Student Union Lawn
(BSTUN)

12:00 - 4:00 PM

12 Wednesday

Wrapping of the Letters

Academic Support Facility
(EASFC)

1:00 - 4:00 PM

Wednesday

Vaquero Boots & BBQ

The Quad (EQUAD)

6:00 - 10:00 PM

13 Thursday

Women's Basketball vs. Incarnate Word

UTRGV Fieldhouse
(EHPE1)

6:30 PM

Thursday

Burning of the Letters

Fieldhouse
Parking Lot E16

8:30 PM

14 Friday

Baseball vs. Southern Illinois

UTRGV Baseball Stadium
(EBSBL)

6:30 PM

15 Saturday

Women's Basketball vs. Houston Christian

UTRGV Fieldhouse
(EHPE1)

2:00 PM

Men's Basketball vs. Houston Christian

Battle of the Colleges

UTRGV Fieldhouse
(EHPE1)

4:30 PM

Baseball vs. Southern Illinois

UTRGV Baseball Stadium
(EBSBL)

6:30 PM

17 Monday

Men's Basketball vs. Incarnate Word

UTRGV Fieldhouse
(EHPE1)

6:30 PM

Other Exciting Events!

Thursday, 13
UTRGV Tennis Doubleheader vs. Texas A&M-Corpus Christi
South Texas Showdown, presented by Rally Credit Union

Women's Tennis - 10:00 AM
Men's Tennis - 1:30 PM
Orville Cox Tennis Center (ECOXT)

Sunday, 16
Baseball vs. Southern Illinois

UTRGV Baseball Stadium (EBSBL)
12:00 PM

Current UTRGV students receive free admission to all home athletics games with a UTRGV student ID.

Check out the full calendar at GoUTRGV.com



FUN

Vaqueros add 38 on Signing Day

Ali Halloum
THE RIDER

The UTRGV Football Team welcomed its 2025 recruiting class on National Signing Day, which consists of mostly transfer portal additions from other programs, Athletics announced Wednesday.

National Signing Day is the first day that high school seniors can sign a letter of intent to join an NCAA Division I or II program. Although every sport has a signing day, Wednesday was for collegiate football.

Vaqueros head coach Travis Bush said he's "fired up" to add talent to UTRGV's roster, emphasizing recruiting players at or above the level they currently have.

"We're excited to get them all in there," Bush said. "High school, seniors, junior college. We got grad transfers, all of them. We're just excited to get them out there and see who's the best on the field."

This new slate of additions to the program includes 14 freshmen, all of whom originate from Texas high schools. Bush said he is "excited" to see what the incoming freshman class can bring.

"[We have] another good, young [and] talented freshman class of high school guys coming in here," he said. "[We are] excited about seeing where they fit in."

Outside of the freshman class, Bush emphasized adding veterans who had previous experience in college



Angel Ballesteros/THE RIDER

UTRGV Football head coach Travis Bush answers questions regarding the recently signed football players Wednesday afternoon in the Athletics Pavilion on the Edinburg campus.

football. He said it was a "goal" to add more upperclassmen to the team.

"[We] definitely needed to add some maturity," he said. "That will continue to be our goal as we

add more to the roster in the next few months moving into

this first season."

This includes three redshirt sophomores, with wide

(Big 12), tight end Ismael Smith Flores from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (B1G) and

defensive lineman Nicholas Fernandez from the University of Arizona (Big 12) transferring from Power

5 schools.

The Vaqueros will

"We're just excited to get them out there and see who's the best on the field."

--Travis Bush

also include Rio Grande Valley-native senior quarterback Eddie Lee Marburger from the University of Texas at San Antonio. He announced his intention to join UTRGV earlier this year and brings with him Division I experience, according to Sports Illustrated.

Transferring from UTSA, Marburger became a household name in high school football in the Valley during his four years under center for Sharyland Pioneer.

For a complete list of the student-athletes that joined the UTRGV Football Team on signing day, visit utrgvrider.com.

The Vaqueros are not done adding players to the program as the spring transfer portal will open in April, and the team will be hosting tryouts on Feb. 19, looking for walk-on additions.

They currently have about 102 players on the roster, not counting incoming student-athletes yet to arrive on campus. The maximum roster size allowed in college football, set by the NCAA, is 105.

The team will look to the portal and to walk-on additions to fill out its remaining needs, and should have a complete roster ahead of summer practice before the season begins.

The Vaqueros will open the 2025 football season on Aug. 30 against the Sul Ross University Lobos (3-8, 2-7 LSC) at the Robert and Janet Vackar Stadium in Edinburg.

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK: ISAAC LOPEZ



Isaac Lopez, an international trade redshirt senior from Edinburg, is a shortstop for the UTRGV Baseball Team. In the 2024 season, Lopez had 28 runs batted in and 30 runs.

Q: What's a fun fact about yourself?

A: "I like playing pickleball and golf, and I have two border collies."

Q: Who or what got you started in baseball?

A: "I think it was just me playing with my pops. I started playing golf and baseball at the same time and just played those since I was young. But I just really fell in love with baseball because of the team aspect and being around the guys. It was just so much fun; the camaraderie and playing team sports in general just hooked me."

Q: Who is your biggest inspiration or role model?

A: "I would have to say my family. They've been my biggest supporters and they come watch me play and sit on the same side of the baseball park when we play. I'm just doing it for them 'cause they've done so much for me and I just can't thank them enough."

Q: Who is your favorite baseball player?

A: "I would have to say Chase Utley."

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

A: "It's very broad. I have a big range of music that I like to listen to, from

reggaeton and cumbia to a little bit of hip-hop. And I really like house music as well. I like a little bit of everything"

Q: What shows or movies do you like to watch?

A: "I just finished watching 'The Recruit' on Netflix and 'The Night Agent' on Netflix as well. Some of my favorite shows, I would have to say 'Peaky Blinders', easily, I also really like 'Silicon Valley.'"

Q: Do you have any hobbies?

A: "I like pickleball, golf and throwing frisbee with my two dogs."

Q: What's your biggest motivation?

A: "When I was younger, I used to come to the [UTRGV Baseball Stadium] to watch the Roadrunners play, and I remember standing up here. I'm trying to be that person that I was watching when I was younger when it came to the ballpark. I wanted to play on this field when I was 6 years old and I just wanted to do it for myself because I know a lot of kids come and watch us. So, that makes me happy: to see that

I'm on the other side of the ball this time."

Q: What do you like most about UTRGV?

A: "I would have to say the staff, the coaches, the whole community that we have, from the city. Like, everybody comes and supports us. Chase [Haselhorst, assistant strength & conditioning coach], calls it like a village, and I can really say that this is really a village, especially for the baseball team. They really come around for us through thick and thin."

Q: What are your biggest goals?

A: "In baseball, I want to be an inspiration to the little kids, to the person that I was up there watching the games with when I was younger. For life, I just want to grow up to be better than how my parents treated me, 'cause they were the best role models and the best people. I can't thank them enough."

--Compiled and photo by Jose Rodriguez

BASEBALL

6:30 p.m. Friday & Saturday vs. Southern Illinois

Noon Sunday vs. Southern Illinois

in the UTRGV Baseball Stadium

THIS WEEK IN SPORTS

MEN'S BASKETBALL

4:30 p.m. Thursday vs. Houston Christian

in the UTRGV Fieldhouse

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

6:30 p.m. Thursday vs. Incarnate Word

2 p.m. Saturday vs. Houston Christian

in the UTRGV Fieldhouse



Vaqueros

BOOTS & BBO

Student Union

Wednesday, February 12

6:00 PM - 10:00 PM | EQUAD

For more information or accommodations: studentunion@utrgv.edu / (956) 665-7989



Games • Photos • Food



Red: A Taylor Swift Tribute Band

Country Line
Dance Class

Eros Garcia
Country Band

Calf Walk
Competition

PART OF **UTRGV**

Homecoming



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