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GOODBYE, GRADUATES

Cadence Vaughan
THE RIDER

More than 2,500 students are set to participate in UTRGV's Fall 2024 Commencement Dec. 13 and 14 at the Bert Ogden Arena in Edinburg. The first ceremony will begin at 10 a.m. Dec. 13 for graduates in the College of Liberal Arts. At 4 p.m., graduates of the College of Health Professions, School of Nursing and School of Social Work will walk the stage.

"I know it's been a long journey, but [I am] very excited to be able to walk the stage in Edinburg less than a month from now."

--Jose Tabarez,
civil engineering
senior

At 10 a.m. Dec. 14, graduates in the College of Fine Arts will walk along with those from the College of Engineering and Computer Science and the Robert C. Vackar College of Business and Entrepreneurship. At 4 p.m., graduates in the College of Education and P-16 Integration will be recognized, followed by the College of Science.

Tickets are required to attend the ceremony. Each graduating student may request up to 10.

The four ceremonies are expected to last between two and two-and-a-half hours each.

"Overall, each ceremony is expected to include [anywhere] from 600 to 750 graduating students," UTRGV Registrar Sofia Almeda wrote in a Nov. 21 email to The Rider. "Across all ceremonies, Master's- and doctoral-level students comprise more than 27 percent of participants."

Almeda advised all graduating students who are participating in the commencement ceremonies to actively check their university email.

"As we get closer to the ceremonies, our office will initiate a series of emails, and every day there's a kind of different topic to discuss," she said. "We'll let students know what to expect on the



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

Monday Texas Rising Session

Texas Rising will host a session on how to advocate for an end to domestic violence from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in the Music, Science and Learning Center on the Brownsville campus.

Gift Wrapping Station

The Student Union will host a gift wrapping station from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Student Union on the Brownsville campus.

K.I.S.S Meeting

The Korean International Student Society will meet from 3:15 to 4:45 p.m. in Science Building Room 2.507 on the Edinburg campus. Students interested in Korean culture can attend and join the organization.

Student Nurse Meeting

The Student Nurse Organization will meet from 4 to 5 p.m. in Sabal Hall Room 1.104 on the Brownsville campus.

Engineers Concession Stand

The Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers and the Society of Women Engineers will host a fundraiser for the National Convention in 2025 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on the Outdoor Science Promenade on the Edinburg campus and at the same time and location Tuesday.

Christmas Tree Lighting

The Brownsville Parks and Recreation Department will host the Washington Park Tree Lighting Ceremony from 6 to 10 p.m. The park is located at 700 E. Madison St.

Tuesday

ASCE Steel Bridge Bake Sale

The American Society of Civil Engineers will host a bake sale from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in the University Library on Edinburg campus.

U.T.C.A.R.E.S. Meeting

The United Together Caring Adults Reaching Early Childhood Students organization will meet from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. in Education Complex Room 1.406 on the Edinburg campus. The meeting will cover general information about the organization, future community service, professional development and fundraising opportunities.

Breakfast Wrangler

The Student Union will host the Breakfast Wrangler from 10 a.m. to noon on the Student Union Lawn on the Brownsville campus and at the same time Wednesday on the Student Union Chapel Lawn on the Edinburg campus. A valid UTRGV student ID is required.

Wednesday La Posada Dinner

The HOPE Project and Caring for the Valley will host La Posada Dinner Feeding Program from 3 to 6:30 p.m. in the Good Neighbor Settlement House, located at 1254 E. Tyler St. in Brownsville.

Thursday Democratic Socialists Meeting

The Rio Grande Valley Youth Democratic Socialists of America will meet from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. in Liberal Arts Building North Room 207 on the Edinburg campus.

Friday Market Square Tree Lighting

The City of Brownsville will host the Downtown Market Square Tree Lighting Ceremony from 6 to 9:30 p.m. in Market Square, located at 1157 E. Washington St.

Zoo Nights and Lights

The Gladys Porter Zoo will host Nights and Lights from 6 to 9 p.m. The zoo is located at 500 E. Ringgold St. in Brownsville. Pre-sale tickets are \$5 each.

Night of Lights Parade

The Edinburg Chamber of Commerce and City of Edinburg will host the Night of Lights Parade from 7 to 9 p.m. in Downtown Edinburg, located along Clossner Boulevard.

South Pole Illuminated Festival

H-E-B will host the South Pole Illuminated Festival through Dec. 29 in the McAllen Convention Center. Hours are 5:30 to 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 5:30 to 9:30 p.m. Sunday through Thursday. The center is located at 700 Convention Center Blvd. Admission is \$12 and free for children ages 12

years and younger. The festival will be closed Dec. 24. Tickets are available at ticketmaster.com.

Brownsville Christmas Parade L&F Distributors

will present the annual Christmas Parade from 7 to 9 p.m. on Elizabeth Street in Brownsville.

McAllen Holiday Parade

H-E-B will host the 2024 McAllen Holiday Parade- Noche Magica! from 6 to 11 p.m. in the McAllen Veterans Memorial Stadium, located at 2001 N. Bicentennial Blvd. Tickets available soon at mcallenholidayparade.com.

Saturday 'La Pastorela Veloz'

The Latino Theatre Initiatives will present "La Pastorela Veloz" at 7 p.m. in the Albert L. Jeffers Theater on the Edinburg campus. The event will also take place at 2 p.m. Sunday.

Dec. 21

A Grinchmas 5K

The Pregnancy Resource Centers of the RGV will host A Grinchmas 5K at 11 a.m. in the Edinburg Municipal Park, located at 714 S. Raul Longoria Road. Registration is \$25 and \$15 for children ages 10 years and younger. Register at runsignup.com.

Dec. 26

Magical Christmas Ballet

The McAllen Performing Arts Center will host the Nutcracker! Magical Christmas Ballet from 7 to 9 p.m. The center is located at 801 Convention Center Blvd. Tickets, which range from \$31 to \$71, are available at ticketmaster.com.

--Compiled by Hugo A. Sepúlveda



POLICE REPORTS

The following are among the incidents reported to University Police between Nov. 12 and 18.

Nov. 12

7:17 a.m.: A University Police officer responded to a report of two loose dogs in the University Center on the Edinburg campus. The officer was unable to locate the dogs and notified Edinburg Animal Control.

11:05 a.m.: An employee of the Market in the Student Union on the Edinburg campus reported a student left the store without paying for an item. The student admitted to eating a bag of chips without paying for them. The store manager did not want to file criminal charges, and the student was served with a criminal trespass warning for the Market.

Nov. 13

4:26 p.m.: A student reported that on Nov. 12, he found several posts made on social media about him which he reported to the Office for Advocacy and Violence Prevention. The case is under investigation.

4:53 p.m.: A student

reported an unknown person had removed the driver-side door handle of her vehicle in Lot E-17 on the Edinburg campus. The case is under investigation.

Nov. 14

5:29 p.m.: A student reported an unknown person stole three hubcaps off his vehicle's wheels while it was parked in Lot E-32 on the Edinburg campus. The case is under investigation.

6:31 p.m.: An employee reported that several men were riding electric scooters on the Bronc Trail and nearly collided with him as he drove a VOLT vehicle onto the service drive in Liberal Arts Building South on the Edinburg campus. No injuries were reported.

Nov. 15

10:28 a.m.: An officer responded to a fire alarm in the Academic

Services Building on the Edinburg campus. Environmental Health, Safety & Risk Management determined it was a faulty detector and cleared the area.

Nov. 16

5:40 p.m.: Two students reported an adult male, who appeared to be confused, approached them near Liberal Arts Building South on the Edinburg campus. When University Police officers located the non-affiliated individual, he claimed he had been walking on campus with his father. Shortly after, the father arrived, picked up his son, and left the area without incident.

Nov. 18

9:20 a.m.: A student reported a road-rage incident where an unknown man in a sedan followed her after she accidentally cut

him off while driving off-campus in Edinburg. After further investigation, it was determined no crime had occurred and the subject had already left the area.

3:38 p.m.: A female student reported being followed by a male student since Spring 2023. The case is under investigation.

4:32 p.m.: A University Police officer located five individuals, who entered the country illegally, in the wooded area next to Lot B-1 on the Brownsville campus. All five individuals were identified as Mexican nationals and released to the custody of the U.S. Border Patrol.

4:59 p.m.: An officer responded to the University Library on the Edinburg campus to evacuate the building after a power outage. Facilities personnel determined a transformer had malfunctioned, disrupting power to the building. The University Library remained closed for the rest of the day while the issue was resolved.

--Compiled by Rebeca Salinas



Abbott holds line on tuition UTRGV says no impact in the near future

Pete Mendoza
THE RIDER

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott announced on Nov. 13 he would attempt to freeze tuition for public universities and colleges once again for the next two years.

In 2023, Abbott signed a law prohibiting Texas universities and colleges from increasing or decreasing tuition and fees for the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 academic years, according to a letter sent to Texas colleges and universities by Abbott.

The governor wrote in the Nov. 13 letter he would “not support any tuition increase at any public higher education institution in the upcoming” two years. Abbott wrote Texas has been committed to improving “increased funding for universities and financial aid programs” to make public higher education more affordable.

Magdalena Hinojosa, UTRGV senior vice president for Strategic Enrollment and Student Affairs, said the university sticks to a baseline budget.

“We have this four-year guarantee,” Hinojosa said. “A student who comes in Fall of 2024 is going to pay the same tuition and mandatory fees for the next four years. So, if and when tuition is ever increased, it doesn’t impact that student or any of the students who would have

See **TUITION**, Page 8



Silvana Villarreal/THE RIDER PHOTO ILLUSTRATION

Gov. Greg Abbott plans to freeze tuition for public higher education for an additional two years.

GRADUATION *Continued from Page 1*

day of the ceremony from the beginning all the way to the end. Keeping really close tabs on the university email will be the most important thing you can do to prepare and have a really enjoyable experience on the day of [commencement].”

Priscilla Kiss-Applah, an applied statistics and data science graduate student, said she has mixed emotions about graduating.

“I’m excited to finish school, but I’m not happy to leave the friends and family I made here,” Kiss-Applah said. “I’m just looking forward to seeing my family once again.”

She said she plans to get a doctorate in computer science at the University of Rhode Island after graduating.

Kiss-Applah’s advice for students is to ask questions, take opportunities, go to conferences and present their works.

She said she is preparing for the ceremony by designing a Ghanaian dress that her family will bring to her from her home country.

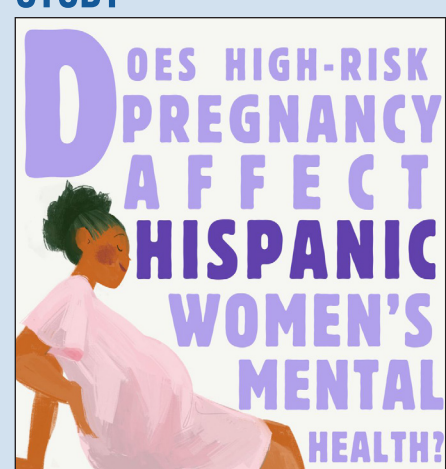
Jose Tabarez, a civil engineering senior, is excited to graduate this semester.

“I know it’s been a long journey, but [I am] very excited to be able to walk the stage in Edinburg less than a month from now,” Tabarez said.

His advice to students is to use campus resources, join student organizations and take leadership opportunities.

Tabarez said he plans to start his full-time position as a highway engineer in training at Jacobs Engineering Group Inc. in Dallas upon graduating.

STUDY



Silvana Villarreal/THE RIDER GRAPHIC

Hugo A. Sepúlveda
THE RIDER

A UTRGV occupational therapy doctoral student is conducting a preliminary study about Hispanic women in the Rio Grande Valley and their mental health after a high-risk pregnancy.

Neida Gutierrez said she has been gathering data for the study, focusing on Hispanic women who are pregnant.

“So, specifically, I’m trying to get data on women that have the label of high-risk pregnancy or that are on bed rest,” Gutierrez said.

She said previous research has shown some factors after a high-risk pregnancy or prescribed bed rest are either a decline or significant decrease in mental health and physical factors.

“So, as an occupational therapy student, our scope of practice is in both,” Gutierrez said. “So, it’s in physical health, the daily occupations that, you know, people do what they

See **STUDY**, Page 10

ATHLETICS

UTRGV poised to drop \$33M Regents approve spending for Vackar Stadium project



COURTESY UTRGV ATHLETICS

Renderings show the renovation plans for the Robert and Janet Vackar Stadium. On Nov. 20, the University of Texas System Board of Regents gave UTRGV the green light to spend \$33 million to begin renovation of the stadium.

Natalie Lapsley
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The University of Texas System Board of Regents gave UTRGV the green light to spend an initial \$33 million to begin renovation of the Robert and Janet Vackar Stadium, the future home of Vaqueros football.

UTRGV President Guy Bailey attended the meeting Nov. 20 to advocate for the project and request authorization, referring to the expansion of Athletics as an effort to give students a “more traditional college experience.”

“The first phase is a stadium repair and expansion of the existing home and visiting locker rooms,” Bailey told the board. “We also have some [Americans with Disabilities Act] code upgrades, some seating replacement, new south end zone bleachers ... press box expansion, elevators and so forth.”

Phase two of the renovations focuses on fairground improvements, including mechanical, electrical and plumbing upgrades, enhanced security systems and parking facilities, according to the meeting presentation.

Located off Highway 281, the stadium “couldn’t have a better location

in terms of access but also visibility,” the university president said.

Bailey added that the surrounding area would provide ample space for tailgating.

The total cost of the project is \$55 million, all of which will be covered from suite sales and season tickets, according to the president.

A unanimous vote authorized the spending of \$33 million for phase one of the project.

As reported in the Oct. 7 issue of The Rider, Athletics officials hope to have the facilities ready for the inaugural football season in Fall 2025.



THIS OR THAT

Eggnog

Hot chocolate

Gift

Cash

Christmas sweater

Onesie

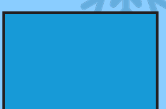
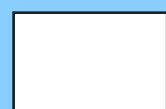
Tamales

Pozole

Gingerbread house

Gingerbread men

TEAM WHITE OR BLUE?



--Compiled by Natalie Lapsley, Viviana Infante, Pete Mendoza, America Salazar and Venisha Colón

Walking on a tightrope of beauty



Raquel Cazares
THE RIDER

would even go as far as to publicly bash women who did not fit into the body stereotype encouraged.

During the 2010s, however, the beauty standard drastically changed as women started publicly altering their appearances with cosmetic surgeries. Women in the public eye seemingly ignited a new glamorized body type, ideally achieved with extreme body alterations to have a curvy figure. As these new, unrealistic aesthetic ideals surfaced online, women obsessing on the internet felt the need to conform and change their appearance to fit society's expectations.

As for modern-day culture, beauty standards have circled back to glamorizing thinness instead of curvy figures like in the 2010s.

With new drugs, such as Ozempic, financially capable people race to get their grip on them so they, too, can fit the new ideal body type. All this is to say that beauty standards have always been unachievable, yet we continue to fuel the fire in hopes of being accepted in society.

Societal pressure to look a certain way will always continue because, sadly, women are not only the victims but also the aggressors when it comes to needing to achieve beauty standards. If you could ask all the women in your life if they've ever fallen into harsh comparisons, low self-esteem, and even, in extreme cases, eating disorders, many would tell you yes.

As a woman living in a constantly changing society, it is difficult not to fall under all the pressure put on a woman's appearance.

It is so exhausting to see a new trend, new aesthetics, new beauty standards and have lingering thoughts about whether I fit in or not. It is also a shame to see so many women absorbing toxic mindsets because

that is all we are exposed to on the internet and even in our daily lives.

The constant pressure so many people feel to look a certain way has always existed, and we cannot move forward if we don't realize how damaging it is to try to fit into strict beauty standards.

All this is to say that beauty standards have always been unachievable, yet we continue to fuel the fire in hopes of being accepted in society.

GOT NEWS?

TELL US ABOUT IT
therider@utrgv.edu

Abbott mantiene su postura en la colegiatura

UTRGV: No habrá impacto en el futuro cercano

Pete Mendoza
THE RIDER

El gobernador de Texas Greg Abbott anunció el 13 de noviembre que intentaría congelar la colegiatura de las universidades y colegios públicos una vez más durante los próximos dos años.

En el 2023, Abbott firmó una ley que prohíbe a las universidades y colegios de Texas aumentar o disminuir la colegiatura y las tarifas para los años académicos 2023-2024 y 2024-2025, según una carta enviada por Abbott a los colegios y universidades de Texas.

El gobernador escribió en la carta del 13 de noviembre que “no apoyaría ningún aumento de la colegiatura en ninguna institución pública de educación superior en los próximos” dos años. Abbott escribió que Texas se ha comprometido a mejorar “el aumento del financiamiento para las universidades y los programas de ayuda financiera” para que la educación superior pública sea más accesible.

Magdalena Hinojosa, vicepresidenta de Inscripción Estratégica y Asuntos Estudiantiles de UTRGV, dijo que la universidad se apega a un presupuesto base.

“Tenemos esta garantía de cuatro años”, dijo Hinojosa. “Un estudiante que ingrese en el otoño de 2024 pagará la misma colegiatura y las mismas tarifas obligatorias durante los próximos cuatro años. Por lo tanto, si alguna vez se aumenta la matrícula, no afectará a ese estudiante ni a ninguno de



Silvana Villarreal/FOTO ILUSTRACIÓN THE RIDER

El gobernador de Texas Greg Abbott planea congelar la colegiatura de la educación superior pública por dos años más.

los estudiantes que hubieran comenzado en el otoño de 2024 y años posteriores”.

Dijo que UTRGV no tiene planes ni “conversaciones detalladas” sobre el aumento de la colegiatura.

“Incluso si hubiera un aumento, no impactaría el presupuesto como en otra institución”, dijo Hinojosa. “[...] Y entonces, para nosotros, cuando analizamos los presupuestos, ya sabemos que nuestro presupuesto base se mantiene bastante estable y aumentará lentamente durante un periodo de cuatro años para luego acomodar ese aumento

en la colegiatura”.

La vicepresidenta dijo que al mantener el presupuesto, debe haber un “enfoque estricto y estratégico”.

“Entonces, lo que tenemos que asegurarnos de hacer, es observar ese presupuesto base porque la electricidad no se mantiene en un presupuesto base”, dijo. “Todo lo que necesitamos hacer para operar la universidad no se mantiene en un presupuesto base. Y entonces, tenemos que asegurarnos de que el presupuesto se adapte a esta colegiatura plana mientras aumentan las

cosas sobre las que no tenemos ningún control”.

Hinojosa dijo que la congelación no tiene efecto sobre la ayuda financiera o los ingresos.

“La ley nos exige reservar el 15% de nuestra matrícula para programas de ayuda financiera”, dijo. “Bueno, si tu matrícula no sube, ¿adivina qué? Ese presupuesto en particular no va a subir”.

Katia Valdez, estudiante de último año de enfermería, dijo que la congelación podría afectarla económicamente.

“En este momento no trabajo”, dijo Valdez. “Dependo de [la Solicitud Gratuita de Ayuda Federal para Estudiantes], y sé que se quedan sin ayuda muy rápido. Y además, con todo el nuevo proceso que tiene la FAFSA (por sus siglas en inglés) para las personas [cuyos] padres no tienen ningún seguro social, el proceso fue tan largo y, al final, mucha gente dijo que como se acabaron los fondos de la FAFSA, no pudieron recibir ninguna ayuda”.

Hinojosa dijo que la universidad siempre ha intentado mantener la colegiatura a un precio asequible.

“Trabajamos muy duro como institución para mantener los costos bajos y es algo que ha sido una de nuestras prioridades y algo en lo que nos basamos”, dijo. “¿Significa que congelar la colegiatura no tiene consecuencias? No, no es así, porque si las tiene. Pero siempre hemos trabajado duro para vivir dentro de nuestras posibilidades como institución”.

--Traducido por Fatima Gamez Lopez

Noche de Crepúsculo



Venisha Colón/FOTOS RIDER

Ximena De Los Santos (de izquierda), estudiante de tercer año en educación; Chantal Patiño, estudiante de tercer año en psicología; y Cassandra Guerra, estudiante de segundo año en ciencia de la salud integrada, reparten Hot Cheetos con queso durante “Twilight Night” el 20 de noviembre en el PlainsCapital Bank El Gran Salón del campus de Brownsville.



Estudiantes esperan el inicio de la primera película de la saga “Twilight” el 20 de noviembre en el PlainsCapital Bank Gran Salón del campus de Brownsville.



A los estudiantes se les ofreció una película, bocadillos y actividades divertidas, entre ellas la elaboración de pulseras durante el “Twilight Night” el 20 de noviembre en el PlainsCapital Bank El Gran Salón del campus de Brownsville.

An evening at 'Angelo's'



Angel Ballesteros/THE RIDER PHOTOS

Performance seniors Elyssia Razo and Tony Ballesteros III perform "Tea for Two" during "Angelo's Restaurant" Nov. 15 in the Performing Arts Complex on the Edinburg campus.

Eduardo Escamilla

THE RIDER

The stage in the Performing Arts Complex on the Edinburg campus was transformed into a vibrant, 1930s scene in Little Italy, Manhattan, with the production of "Angelo's Restaurant," a charming revue that transported audiences to a bygone era and captured the spirit of New York City's golden age.

UTRGV Opera Theatre showcased its talent on Nov. 15 and 16 in the show, which was created and directed by Richard Davis, a voice professor in the School of Music.

"I loved the show, [and] not just because my son is in it," said Edinburg resident Mayani Ballesteros after the show. "I loved to see their different styles in which they convey, you know, the meaning of the song. ... I just love opera."

The show's narrative, woven seamlessly through a series of timeless songs, revolved around the eponymous restaurant and its colorful cast of characters.

Angelo, the charismatic host played by performance junior Adam Garcia, welcomed the audience into his establishment, setting the stage for a night of love, loss and longing.

"I think this one came out really good," Garcia said about the performance.



Performance senior Nestor Silva performs "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?" during "Angelo's Restaurant" Nov. 15 in the Performing Arts Complex on the Edinburg campus.

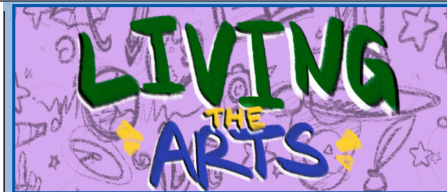
He was satisfied with the show's outcome, despite the challenges of working with a small group.

"We don't have as many voices to work with as a larger opera company," Garcia said. "So, sometimes, it can be a little difficult to put on something that's super well-voiced across the whole opera."

The Rider asked Garcia how opera singers achieve that distinctive, beautiful resonance that fills the theater.

"You breathe in really deeply and you, like, open your whole body ... and just let the air flow out," he replied.

See **OPERA**, Page 10



Who do you want to be remembered as?



Zachary Arellano
art education senior

"I want to be remembered as someone who is kind and always there for others whenever they need someone in their time of need."



Jada Sanchez
visual communication design sophomore

"I would wanna be remembered as someone who's always treated someone the best no matter how bad I was treated. A good person, someone who did everything they could."



Javier Rodriguez
computer science junior

"I would like to be remembered as a good student, good son and a good programmer in computer science."

--Compiled and photos by Silvana Villarreal



12/2

It's a yum-yummy world.

M

SUDOKU

8	3	6
4		2
9		

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

Nov. 18 puzzle answer key:

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

Review: Life is just a ride

Eduardo Escamilla
THE RIDER

“Ride the Cyclone,” written by Jacob Richmond and Brooke Maxwell, a dark comedic musical that takes audiences on a surreal journey through the afterlife with its unique blend of humor, depth and exceptional vocal performances by UTRGV students, left the audience wanting more.

The UTRGV community was treated to a dress rehearsal on Nov. 21 to get a first look of the production in the Albert L. Jeffers Theatre in Liberal Arts Building South on the Edinburg campus, and the official performances took place Nov. 22 to 24.

Guest director and alumnus Kent Smither said the play follows a group of six teenage choir students who tragically perish in a freak amusement park accident and find themselves in a strange limbo carnival.

In this limbo world, the choir students are confronted by the Amazing Karnak, played by early care and early childhood education freshman Kimberly Vela-Elizondo, a fortune-telling machine that tells the teens only one of them will be allowed to leave limbo and return to the mortal world.

As they await their fate, they are given a chance to plead their cases to the mysterious mechanical fortune teller, hoping to be resurrected.

The play’s unique premise allows for a wide range of characters, each more eccentric than the last. From the self-absorbed Ocean O’Connell Rosenberg to the passionate and misunderstood Constance Blackwood, each character offers their own unique perspective on life, death and the absurdity of existence.

One of the show’s standout performances is that of Jane Doe, a mysterious figure whose identity remains unknown.

Played by performance sophomore



Raquel Cazares/THE RIDER PHOTOS

Members of the cast of “Ride the Cyclone,” written by Jacob Richmond and Brooke Maxwell, are shown during the Nov. 21 dress rehearsal in the Albert L. Jeffers Theatre, located in Liberal Arts Building South on the Edinburg campus. The comedic musical, directed by alumnus Kent Smither, takes audiences on a surreal journey through the afterlife.

Mia Lopez, her haunting opera voice and captivating stage presence elevate her character to a tragic heroine.

The group’s empathy for her, as they write her a birthday song, is a touching moment that highlights the power of human connection.

Blending elements of rock, pop and cabaret, the musical numbers are both catchy and thought-provoking. The choreography, particularly in Noel Gruber’s number played by theatre freshman Tanner Mott, is visually stunning and adds to the overall theatrical experience.

The director’s lifelong passion for theater is evident in his approach to the play.

“I love theater, that is, theater not trying to be a movie, if you know what I mean,” Smither said. “We’re not trying to make reality. We’re trying to make an outlandish, strange, unique [experience].”

The collaborative vision for the show has been crucial to the production’s success, as the director worked closely with a team of student designers for the set, lights, costumes, props and sound effects.

“Everybody is bringing, like, such an amazing view of the world,” Smither said.

Shayna Isaacs, voice and lyric diction assistant professor and musical director, said the group of students all knew the music already.

“[The actors] were excited and prepared to work on these complicated harmonies because this music is not easy, and they did such an incredible job working on that challenge, and working with all the sound challenges and all of that,” Isaacs said.

The talented cast has embraced the physical and vocal demands of the show. Theatre senior Ariana Cruz, who played Constance Blackwood, said it was a “crazy learning curve” and the performance required immense stamina to balance singing, dancing

and acting.

“It’s definitely a process and a very, very, rough learning curve for me, personally,” Cruz said. “I don’t think I’m made for musicals, so, like, doing this is, like, very tough, but such a crazy learning experience.”

Theatre senior Brendan Lopez, shared his appreciation for the collaborative process.

“There’s so much passion within the show,” Lopez said. “Everybody, from cast to crew, brought their all to this with the costumes, the lighting, the sound and everybody just wanted to tell this beautiful and rich story.”

The costumes were a crucial element in bringing the characters to life.

Cruz said her favorite moment working on the production was when she received the final costume that she was going to wear.

“I was so ecstatic wearing that,” she said.

While the play’s humor is often dark and irreverent, it also explores deeper themes of identity, loss and the meaning of life wonderfully told by the ensemble.

“There’s a point where you can just see the world,” Lopez said about acting in the show. “[You] can see the story, and then from there, you could just fully immerse yourself into it. And then, to finally just present it, it’s just so beautiful.”



Theatre freshman Tanner Mott gives a visually stunning performance as Noel Gruber during a dress rehearsal of “Ride the Cyclone,” a musical comedy written by Jacob Richmond and Brooke Maxwell. UTRGV alumnus Kent Smither directed the production.



“I feel, and it doesn’t always happen, that I’ve got in front of me what I was wanting to share with the audience,” Kent Smither, guest director and UTRGV alumnus, says before a dress rehearsal of “Ride the Cyclone,” a musical comedy written by Jacob Richmond and Brooke Maxwell.

TUITION
Continued from Page 3

started Fall 2024 and past.” She said UTRGV has no plans or “detailed conversations” on increasing tuition.

“Even if there was an increase, it doesn’t impact the budget like at another institution,” Hinojosa said.

“... And so for us, when we’re looking at budgets, we already know that our baseline stays pretty stable and slowly would increase over a four-year period to then accommodate that increase in tuition.”

The vice president said when maintaining the budget, there needs to be a “strict and strategic approach.”

“So what we have to make sure that we do then is watch that baseline because electricity doesn’t stay at a baseline,” she said. “Everything we need to do to operate the university doesn’t stay at a baseline. And so, we have to make sure that the budget is accommodating this flat tuition while things increase that we don’t have any control over.”

Hinojosa said the freeze has no

effect on financial aid or revenue.

“We’re required by law to set aside 15% of our tuition for financial aid-type programs,” she said. “Well, if your tuition doesn’t go up then, guess what? That particular budget isn’t going to go up.”

Nursing senior Katia Valdez said the freeze could affect her financially.

“Right now, I don’t work,” Valdez said. “I rely on [Free Application for Federal Student Aid], and I know that they run out of aid really quickly. And also, with all of the new process the FAFSA has for the people [whose] parents don’t have any Social Security, the process was so long and, at the end, a lot of people said since the FAFSA funds ran out, they didn’t get to have any aid.”

Hinojosa said the university has always attempted to keep tuition at an affordable price.

“We work really hard as an institution to keep costs low and it’s just something that has been one of our priorities and something we’re founded on,” she said. “Does it mean that freezing tuition doesn’t have an impact? No, that’s not the case because it does. But we have always worked hard to live within our means as an institution.”

“A student who comes in Fall of 2024 is going to pay the same tuition and mandatory fees for the next four years. So, if and when tuition is ever increased, it doesn’t impact that student or any of the students who would have started Fall 2024 and past.”

**--Magdalena Hinojosa,
UTRGV senior vice president
for Strategic Enrollment and
Student Affairs**

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Don’t Follow The Wind

By: Anamarcela Guerra

A six-year-old boy played outside his home on a sunny and windy day. His name was Eddie, and he felt excited about the kite he recently got for his birthday. Eddie lived in a two-floor house established in a small neighborhood beside a large forest.

While Eddie was having the time of his life playing with his new kite, his mother cooked dinner for her only son and her husband, who was at work. As Eddie tried to fly his kite as high as he could, he felt a breeze of wind in his face and noticed his kite started to follow the flow of the wind. Eddie allowed the kite to lead him where the wind guided him. The wind led the kite as it arrived in the forest behind Eddie’s house, which had tall, beautiful trees and a variety of animals. The kite kept following the wind until it got stuck in a tree.

Eddie tried to grab his kite but didn’t manage to get it down. He realized where he stood. He couldn’t see his house or smell his mother’s cooking anymore. He stood in what appeared to be the middle of the forest as he could only see trees in the distance. By the look of his face, he seemed terrified of being alone in a place he had never visited before. His parents always told him not to go farther than the edge of the forest, as well as to the rest of the children living in his neighborhood.

As he was about to cry, he heard a noise coming from a bush. He saw a wolf with grey fur and pointy ears that walked nearby where Eddie stood. Eddie didn’t know what to do until the wolf started talking and said, “Are you lost, boy? I see your toy is stuck in the tree. I have a friend that could help you obtain what you lost.”



Eddie was shocked because he had never heard an animal speak before. The wolf kept speaking, “Follow me and you will get your kite back.”

Eddie nervously responded to the wolf, “I’m not supposed to talk to strangers.”

The wolf answered back, “Oh, my apologies, I haven’t even introduced myself. My name is Roger. What is your name?”

“Eddie,” the boy responded.

“See, we aren’t strangers anymore,” said the wolf. “Follow me.”

Eddie decided to follow the wolf, hoping to get his kite back. They arrived at an abandoned cottage, but surprisingly no one was there. After a few minutes, the screams of a child were heard inside the cabin. All the animals started to run away from the area. After a while, the screams stopped.

At dawn, the local police arrived in the forest due to the report of a missing child. The authorities walked farther into the forest and found a kite stuck in the tree. After a 48-hour investigation, the child was not found. Eddie’s mom stood outside her front porch, hoping to see her son once again.

The chief officer in charge of the investigation walked out of the forest and received a notice in the radio announcing, “It was reported that Roger Pearse escaped three days ago and hasn’t been seen.”

The day Eddie decided to follow the wind, he was never seen again.

UTRGV M.S.A



Authors’ Corner

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK:

Natalie Reyes



Angel Ballesteros/THE RIDER

Natalie Reyes is an exercise science junior and a serving specialist for the UTRGV Volleyball Team. This season, Reyes tallied 29 service aces in 22 regular season matches played for the Vaqueros.

Q: Who or what got you started in volleyball?

A: "Definitely my family. My family is a group of coaches [and] I've been around the gym my whole life. I think it was pretty natural for me to continue playing volleyball. ... Being around it my whole life definitely kept the spark going and kept the love for the game."

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

A: "My grandfather has always pushed me to keep the faith and keep the faith in God and just put everything in Him. ... As far as a volleyball role model, I'd say Audrey Smith. She's [a graduate] of Sharyland Pioneer [High School] and played at Texas Tech [University] and [the University of Texas at San Antonio]. And she was a really big impact when I was younger."

Q: Who is your favorite volleyball player?

A: "Right now, I would definitely say Maddie Skinner. She plays for [the University of Texas at Austin]. She's really strong, she's really confident and she's fun to watch."

Q: What is your biggest motivation?

A: "My biggest motivation ... is just representing something bigger than me. The [Rio Grande Valley] has given me so much. And I think that just being able to ... represent the young children here, I mean even my family members, again, I think that's just my biggest motivation. Just continue to pursue this degree and playing at the Division I level. Being able to represent this community means a lot to me."

Q: What do you like the most about UTRGV?

A: "I love the culture behind it. Not just the school in general, but I think the team that I'm playing with right now. We're such a diverse team and I enjoy getting to learn from my teammates from across the world."

Q: What are your biggest goals?

A: "My biggest goal is ultimately to obtain a degree and, then, I think right now is creating relationships and networking as I've gotten older. Playing volleyball and pursuing my degree."

--Compiled by Ali Halloum

2025 baseball schedule released

February 14 - 16
vs. Southern Illinois

February 18
@ Dallas Baptist

February 21 - 23
vs. North Dakota State

Ali Halloum SPORTS REPORTER

The UTRGV Department of Intercollegiate Athletics has announced the schedule for the 2025 Vaqueros Baseball Season.

The season will begin at home with the Al Ogletree Classic Feb. 14-16, a three-game set against the Southern Illinois University Salukis, according to a Nov. 19 news release.

This season will also be the first Vaqueros Baseball campaign as a member of the Southland Conference, as the university announced its intention to join last spring after leaving the Western Athletic Conference.

UTRGV Baseball skipper Derek Matlock was an assistant coach for the Texas State University Bobcats when they were in the Southland Conference, where he coached 2022 National League MVP Paul Goldschmidt.

Matlock told The Rider he is "honored" to return to the Southland, saying the Vaqueros will face "quality" competition in 2025.

"[The Southland has] a bunch of great, quality teams," he said. "And then the nonconference schedule that we were lucky enough to put together is one of the toughest schedules we've ever played here."

Matlock also said the Southland is a "blue-collar type conference that plays hard," and that how the Vaqueros do will come down to how they play when the time comes.

"It comes down to us more than anyone else," he said. "It doesn't matter who we play, it's how we play. If we play like we're capable of playing, we have an opportunity to win."

UTRGV's nonconference opponents in the upcoming season include Texas, Texas Tech, Rice, Houston, Texas Southern, Louisiana, TCU and Baylor, Matlock said.

"It's about as fun of midweeks as

you can ask for," he said. "[It's] very challenging, but it's not about your record. It's about how you learn to get better throughout the year and you're definitely gonna have a chance to see what you're made out of 'cause everybody we're playing is really, really good."

Redshirt senior pitcher Angelo Cabral said he is "excited" about the upcoming schedule. Cabral is 11-3 with a 3.74 ERA as a Vaquero and is seeking a return to the pitching staff after missing most of last season with an elbow injury.

"All of our Tuesday games are pretty huge and we're joining into the Southland Conference," Cabral said. "We're pretty confident coming into this. We have a pretty old group and we're pretty excited to get things going."

He said the pitching staff's approach to facing hitters will be similar to those of years past, as he expects the offensive environments in the SLC to be similar to those in the WAC.

"[We're] going in there with the same game plan," Cabral said. "I know all of our pitchers are going in there [with the] same mentality, throwing strikes [and] getting guys out."

Redshirt senior infielder Isaac Lopez said this season has "one of the best schedules we've had" in his time at UTRGV.

"I'm actually very excited for this group of guys to just go out and compete," Lopez said. "These guys have been working hard all

Angel Ballesteros/THE RIDER GRAPHIC

fall, and we look pretty promising in my eyes. So, I'm excited."

The Robert Vela High School alum slashed .286/.408/.435 last season, setting a single-season high in walks (25). This year, he will take over at shortstop following Kade York's senior season.

The Vaqueros will open the 2025 season at 6:30 p.m. Valentine's Day, opening a three-game series at home against Southern Illinois in a Friday night contest.



RIDER FILE PHOTO

Senior pitcher Zack Tjelmeland throws a ball during practice February at the UTRGV Baseball Stadium on the Edinburg campus.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

6:30 p.m. Wednesday
vs. Abilene Christian University
2 p.m. Saturday
vs. Stephen F. Austin State University

in the UTRGV Fieldhouse

THIS WEEK IN SPORTS

MEN'S BASKETBALL

6:30 p.m. Thursday
vs. Stephen F. Austin State University
4:30 p.m. Saturday
vs. Lamar University

in the UTRGV Fieldhouse

STUDY

Continued from Page 3

cannot do and also mental health.”

She wants to understand women’s mental health and dive more into the physical health of these women, their motivators and resilience.

“I think that’s really important for any practitioners, whether they’re occupational therapists, or anyone here in the Valley, to understand these situations,” Gutierrez said.

She said physicians prescribe bed rest to women after a high-risk pregnancy and, based on her preliminary literature review, in some cases, it had more negative than positive effects.

Gutierrez explained some of the mental effects on Hispanic women who participated in the study were postpartum depression, anxiety, depression, stress and feeling of isolation.

“There’s a lot of different aspects,” she said. “Negative aspects that we, kind of, have against us, but ... there’s also a lot of positive, which is what I also try to highlight.”

Gutierrez said the study is to give physicians and practitioners more data on what women are facing, so women can get better quality clinical decisions.

She recommends women who have been prescribed bed rest to read, listen to music and adapt to the environment, so they still feel that sense of independence.

“It’s really important the support

that these women have in order to make sure that they feel like they are moms,” Gutierrez said. “That transition of motherhood might be very challenging.”

In an email to The Rider on Nov. 15, Gutierrez wrote that she started gathering information for her

women with ‘normal’ pregnancies and women who have the labels of high risk and/or prescribed bed rest.”

She said the findings of the study will be shared by the end of the spring or summer.

“It’s really important for us as students to do research that motivates

approached her with the idea.

“I actually fit this criteria when I had babies,” Castillo said. “My kids are 29 and 26, so I was on bed rest for both of my babies. So, this is something that really interested me.”

She said the specific aim of the study is to determine if anxiety and depression exist at the levels that they expect them to.

“There really is a major gap in current research findings, primarily for Hispanic women,” Castillo said. “A lot of the research out there is on other ethnicities or non-Hispanic individuals.”

She said it is important to know in order to develop some sort of intervention for these individuals to help them with their anxiety and depression.

Leila Rodriguez, a nursing student, said she was not aware of the study but believes it is important for women to be aware of the mental health factors after a high-risk pregnancy.

Accounting freshman Elena Morales said she was not aware of the study but believes it is important to know about the possible complications a high-risk pregnancy may bring.

Morales said it is important to have a study that focuses on Hispanic women in the Valley since the number of Hispanics is higher than other populations.

Those interested in being part of this study may email neida.gutierrez01@utrgv.edu for more information.

“It’s really important for us as students to do research that motivates us and that is going to ultimately help our populations that are underserved and underrepresented.”

--Neida Gutierrez, UTRGV occupational therapy doctoral student

literature review in May. The survey for the study went live in August and will close around mid-January 2025.

She said the research will be presented to the Entry-Level Doctor of Occupational Therapy Department faculty and students, and shared in conferences such as the Engaged Scholar Symposium by the Office of Engaged Scholarship & Learning, and in the Texas Occupational Therapy Association conference.

“So far, we are still needing more participants,” Gutierrez said. “Our goal is to reach about 30 for each group,

us and that is going to ultimately help our populations that are underserved and underrepresented,” Gutierrez said.

Dahlia Castillo, a UTRGV occupational therapy assistant professor, said the study is important for the community because in 2022, one in 10 live births in the United States were preterm births.

“And while this has improved over time, this is still quite a significant number, that’s 10%,” Castillo said.

She said the process for the research began when Gutierrez, who is required to do research for the class,

OPERA

Continued from Page 6

“... The space that you create creates the sound.”

The talented ensemble brought the New York personalities to life with captivating performances.

Music education freshman Zarah Zamora’s enchanting voice soared in “Someone to Watch Over Me,” written by George and Ira Gershwin, painting a picture of a hopeful romantic searching for love in the city.

Performance seniors Elyssia Razo and Tony Ballesteros III delivered a poignant rendition of “Tea for Two,” composed by Vincent Youmans and lyrics by Irving Caesar, capturing the complexities of a relationship on the brink of collapse.

Music education junior Melodee Rodriguez’s heartfelt performance of “The Man I Love,” music by George Gershwin and lyrics by Ira Gershwin, provided a moment of solace.

Performance senior Elijah Adame’s confident swagger and smooth vocals in “You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby,” lyrics by Johnny Mercer and music by Harry Warren, added a touch of comedic relief.

Rodriguez said it was hard work putting the production together but was very pleased with the result.

“We did it,” she said. “It came together, but it was kind of scary, especially for me, because I’m not used to performing on stage.”

Music education senior Nestor Silva’s rendition of “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?” written by E.Y. Harburg and Jay Gorney, evoked a sense of empathy for the city’s struggling population.

The production’s highlight was undoubtedly the captivating dance numbers



Members of the UTRGV Opera Theatre perform “Angelo’s Restaurant” Nov. 15 in the Performing Arts Complex on the Edinburg campus.

performed by the ensemble after both acts.

Choreographer and dance postbaccalaureate student Analisa Ochoa’s energetic and innovative choreography brought a contemporary flair to the classic jazz style.

Ochoa said she dove headfirst into researching the dance style of the 1930s, drawing inspiration from classic Hollywood icons, such as Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers.

She also used social media platforms, including YouTube and TikTok, to further research dance styles and techniques while also incorporating her own training in modern jazz dance to create an authentic yet fresh take on the period choreography.

“It’s OK to not have that 180-degree turnout,” Ochoa said. “You don’t have to be the best professional dancer. If you just enjoy what you’re doing, if you just

love dancing, then that’s perfect enough.”

Rodriguez praised the choreographer’s good work in collaborating with the opera students and said singing and dancing is no easy task.

“We learned the music first, and it was great,” she said. “And then, we learned the choreography. We put it together and our director said, ‘Why are you guys not singing? Like, you need to sing more.’ So yeah, it’s a little difficult.”

Before the ensemble’s final number, music education senior Alyssa Salinas serenades Angelo with her rendition of “I Wanna Be Loved by You,” by Herbert Stothart and Harry Ruby, after declaring she wants more out of their relationship.

In the show, Salinas asks the restaurant owner, “Why do you think I come here every night?”

“For the meatballs?” Garcia responded.

Angel Ballesteros/THE RIDER



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