

TUESDAY, JANUARY 21, 2025 VOLUME 10 ISSUE 15

THE RIDER THE STUDENT VOICE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS RIO GRANDE VALLEY

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Drawing on a decade

Rebeca Salinas EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The beginning of Spring 2025 draws UTRGV a semester closer to its 10-year anniversary, a milestone in the institution's legacy since it first opened its doors Aug. 31, 2015, after the consolidation of legacy institutions University of Texas at Brownsville and University of Texas-Pan American.

At the forefront of their efforts, according to university President Guy Bailey, is getting scholarships for students.

When the university was consolidated, Bailey thought the biggest barrier for most people to go to college was financial.

"We thought, you know, that if we could make it affordable for students, that our enrollment would grow, students would do bet-



Mykel Del Angel and Angel Ballesteros/THE RIDER PHOTO ILLUSTRATION

ter," Bailey said. "It would solve so many issues."

During the initial

stages, the university set out to enable students to graduate with minimal debt—which, according

to Bailey, is an achievement they have reached leading up to a decade as an institution.

According to Patrick Gonzales, vice president of University Marketing and Communications,

UTRGV first opened its doors Aug. 31, 2015.

UTRGV has offered \$20.7 million in institutional scholarships to 6,727 students as of Jan. 14.

"This past fall, 90% of our full-time undergraduate students ... paid no tuition or mandatory fees," Bailey said. "That's a number we're very proud of. We want to continue that. And this spring, we'll continue to look for ways to make our university more affordable to students."

The number, according to Bailey, is the reason why UTRGV has grown in enrollment and graduation rates, because it allows students to graduate with minimal debt.

"It makes all the dif-

See UTRGV, Page 3

Spring toward Welcome Week



Sofia Cantú Saucedo/THE RIDER

Students roast marshmallows on the Student Union Lawn on the Brownsville campus during Spring 2019 Welcome Week. Welcome Week 2025 kicked off Monday with Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service.

Ethan Maldonado THE RIDER

To start the Spring 2025 semester, Student Activities will host Welcome Week, a series of events giving Vaqueros access to resources about different organizations and opportunities to interact with other students.

Junior Alejandra Rodri-

quez said Welcome Week is an opportunity for her to make friends and be more social.

"It's a little weird coming to campus and doing anything or talking to anyone," Rodriguez said. "Might as well take advantage while we're here."

She said she hopes to gain friends and learn more about campus life.

Cristina Rodriguez, assis-

tant director for Student Activities, said that they pride themselves on giving students the opportunity to connect with each other and explore student resources.

"Our goal is really to ... bring pride and traditions and a sense of belonging to campus and really make the students feel like staying on

See WELCOME, Page 3

UTRGV enforces PTD policies after campaign launch

Daniela Chapa Reyes THE RIDER

Departments across UTRGV launched a campaign last spring semester in order to help decrease the number of people that use their personal transportation devices (PTDs) on the Bronc Trail on the Edinburg campus in an attempt to ensure the safety of everyone.

According to the UTRGV Handbook of Operating Procedures, "Personal transportation riding devices are prohibited from use on covered walkways, breezeways, and pedestrian bridges on all UTRGV campuses."

University Police Sergeant Felipe Muñoz said in an interview with The Rider that within the last semester the department has been enforcing the rules more often.

"The numbers should slowly start to decrease, which is what we're looking for, but we're definitely doing our portion and making sure that we're enforcing it," Muñoz said. "So with that being said, the numbers do appear to be still at the same unfortunately, but we do want to see it come down."

Environmental Health, Safety & Risk Management Interim Director Matthew Moncus said two of the most commonly used PTDs on the Bronc Trail have been bicycles and electric scooters.

"So with the increase in the rise of transportation devices on the Bronc Trail, first of all, they're prohibited," Moncus said. "They've been prohibited for a long time, but we realized that not a lot of people realize they were prohibited and we didn't have

New hike-and-bike trail on Edinburg campus

See CAMPAIGN, Page 2

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 Business Tech Speed Mixer

The Center for Innovation and Commercialization will host a **mixer** from noon to 3 p.m. through Friday at 307 E. Railroad St. in Weslaco, where entrepreneurs can **connect** with tech professionals, and have a platform to **pitch ideas** and **garner support**.

Vaquero Bingo
Student Union will host a **bingo night** from 5 to 7 p.m. in the Student Union Game Room on the Brownsville campus and at the same time Friday in the Game Room on the Edinburg campus. Stu-

dents can earn **prizes** and **connect** with others.

Wednesday 1 Million Cups

The Entrepreneurship and Commercialization Center will host 1 Million Cups from 9 to 10 a.m. at the **eBridge Center** in Brownsville. Students will have the opportunity to learn from **keynote speakers**, presenters and **connect** with other entrepreneurs and professionals.

Bible Study

Christians at Rio Grande Valley will host a **bible study** at 12:15 p.m. in Health Affairs Building East Room 1.138 on the Edinburg campus.

Thursday NSLS First General Social

The National Society of Leadership and Success will host its first general meeting at 2 p.m., in Music and Science Learning Center Room 1.105 on the Brownsville campus and again on Saturday at 11 a.m. in Interdisciplinary Engineering & Academic Building Room 1.206 on the Edinburg campus. Students can learn about the organization and grab **free food**.

Bracelet Making

Kappa Delta Chi will host a **free bracelet** activity at 6 p.m. in the Academic Services Center on the Edinburg

campus. Students can learn about the **sorority, community service and leadership opportunities**.

Friday UTRGV Trombone Concert

The music department will host a **free trombone concert** at 7 p.m. in the UTRGV Performing Arts Complex on the Edinburg campus.

Group Hike

University Recreation will host a **group hike** at 9:30 a.m. at **Estero Llano Grande State Park**. Attendees will meet at the parking lot near the entrance. --Compiled by Mykel Del Angel



POLICE REPORTS

The following are among the incidents reported to University Police between Jan. 2 and 13.

Jan. 2

7:45 a.m.: An officer was dispatched in reference to an active burglary alarm in the Student Academic Center on the Edinburg campus. The officer arrived on scene and checked the area, which was secured and undisturbed.

3:13 p.m.: A student reported she was a victim of an online scam which subsequently caused her to lose monetary funds. Student further stated that she disputed the unauthorized transaction and was going to receive a full refund

from her bank. The case is under investigation.

5:59 p.m.: An employee reported that his vehicle's windshield was struck by a stray bullet while it was parked and unattended in parking lot B-7 on the Brownsville campus. Employee stated that his vehicle was parked during the holiday break. The case is under investigation.

Jan. 5

12:59 a.m.: A student was found in possession of an open alcoholic beverage after hours in Emilia Schunior Ramirez Hall on the Edinburg campus. The student, who was over the age of 21, did not display signs of intoxication. The student

was advised of the rules and regulations regarding alcohol on campus and was later picked up by his mother.

Jan. 8

8:30 a.m.: An employee reported that during inventory check, they discovered nine laptops missing and unaccounted for since 2021 in the University Library on the Edinburg campus.

Jan. 9

1:24 p.m.: An officer was dispatched regarding a suspicious male in the Visual Arts Building on the Edinburg campus. Upon arrival, the officer made contact with a non-affiliated man who stat-

ed that he was looking for a woman, a former classmate from 2022. However, he only provided her first name and had no additional information about her. After further investigation, it was discovered that the man had a prior criminal history. He was issued a criminal trespass warning and escorted off campus without any further incident.

2:35 p.m.: A student reported her bicycle was stolen from the bike rack in the Student Academic Center on the Edinburg campus. She secured the bike on Jan. 6, and returned on Jan. 9, to find it gone. The case is under investigation. --Compiled by Narda Serna

CAMPAIGN, Continued from Page 1

a great alternative for people to get around campus."

He said UTRGV has created a hike-and-bike trail around campus primarily for the usage of those devices, which reserves the Bronc Trail "just for pedestrian traffic; anyone else who wants to get across or around campus can use the other trail."

Dean of Students Ismael Amaya said the hike-and-bike trail is an alternative to help keep pedestrians safe.

"It is going to be the alternative ... but those who do want that speed and the use of those devices can continue doing so; so they're safe, pedestrians are safe," Amaya said. "Unfortunately, people have gotten hurt. We want everyone to be safe."

Moncus said employees and students have been injured by people using PTDs on the Bronc Trail.

"What will likely happen is if we continue to see transportation devices on the Bronc Trail, we will prohibit all of them on campus," he said. "We have had some injuries. We've had employees and students injured by these and that's just not acceptable; it's all been due to people riding them on the Bronc Trail."

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University officials discuss dorm safety

Hugo Sepulveda
THE RIDER

The UTRGV Police Department and the Department of Housing and Residence Life advise students living in dorms to have a safe experience this upcoming semester.

Rebecca Gadson, associate dean for policy management and director of Residence Life, said what students can expect and gave recommendations that would help in their experience of living in dorms.

“When students live on campus one of the things that they can expect is to be able to have an opportunity to connect and meet their neighbors, their roommates, their suitemates and be perfectly positioned to be part of a community right here on campus,” Gadson said.

She said there is going to be live-in staff available for students to provide support and outreach for them.

“One student leader role is called a resident assistant and their role is to be a peer, coach, mentor, adviser and general assistant to the individuals who live on campus,” Gadson said.

She said a resident assistant helps students with their campus experience, respond to concerns they have, maintenance issues, monitor the building and explain community standards so everyone has an enjoyable experience.

Gadson said students living on campus can conveniently access all the services the university has to offer.

“Whether that’s going to a campus event, working out in the gym or University Recreation Center, or just quick access to student services like Student Health, counseling, food pantry, learning center, writing center, etc.,” she said.

Gadson recommends students to reach out, connect, communicate and be able to collectively work with their roommates or suitemates.

She also recommends students carry their key and card access and when en-



THE RIDER FILE PHOTO

Kourtne Hernandez, the former Student Government Association program coordinator, guides students and parents to Heritage Hall Aug. 23, 2024, on the Edinburg campus.

tering the building be aware of their surroundings.

“We don’t allow individuals to come in that they themselves don’t have access to do so,” Gadson said.

She said the residence halls have regular fire drills and other practice opportunities for students to become familiar with the emergency protocols.

Sgt. Fellippe Muñoz from University Police recommends students use the CampusShield app because it gives full access to the police department.

He said the app has different services that students can request.

“We do something called a safe walk program,” Muñoz said. “If they’re living

on a campus and they happen to get out of class late and they need an escort to their room. They can basically request our services through this app and we can provide them an escort to their dorm room.”

He said other services that they provide in the CampusShield app is assistance to unlock a vehicle in the case a student left the keys inside.

Muñoz said if students see something or spot something and they want to notify the Police Department about it, it is also possible via the CampusShield app.

He suggests locking your doors and leaving the lights on from time to time if you are not going to be there.

If you have any type of blinds, [make] sure those windows are closed,” Muñoz said. “The blinds are secure and don’t leave any valuables at access.”

He said the Police Department is available 24/7 for all students to feel safe on their campus.

“We also have, you know, security cameras for the majority of our campus set up,” Muñoz said. “For the most part, all our campuses [are] being monitored at all times.”

He said they do routine patrols through all buildings and dormitories on the Brownsville and Edinburg campuses.

“We’re always doing our patrols and making sure that people feel safe in the area they live in,” Muñoz said.

Kimberly Rivera, a senior nursing student, said that living at the dorms is just like a small community of just college students.

To report suspicious activity or concerns, call University Police at 882-4911.

WELCOME, Continued from Page 1

campus or, you know, having fun before you head home,” Cristina Rodriguez said.

The Student Union will host Vaquero Bingo Night from 5 to 7 p.m. today at the Brownsville Student Union Game Room and at the same time Friday at the Edinburg Student Union Game Room. The bingo will require you to bring your student ID to win prizes including college essentials.

Welcome Week will continue with the Welcome Back Bash from noon to 2:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Main Lawn on the Brownsville campus and at the same time in the Quad on the Edinburg campus.

“This is our first time doing a two and a half hour event,” Cristina Rodriguez said. “We try to have different times during the day ... to cater to as many as possible. For the [Welcome Back] Bash, we try to have a variety of options. So, we have the petting zoo, a DIY novelty station, and activities that are on the ground and up in the air, just depending on what attractions we got.”

Throughout the week, both campuses will have information depots sharing details about programs, job opportunities and organizations.

The UTRGV Women’s Basketball team will play against Nicholls State at 6:30 p.m. Thursday



THE RIDER FILE PHOTO

Students play a game on the Student Union Lawn on the Brownsville campus during the Spring 2019 Welcome Week.

at the UTRGV Fieldhouse on the Edinburg campus. There will be a watch party available at the Music Science & Learning Center in room 1.115 on the Brownsville campus. The game will also be Academic Recognition Night, where Student-Athletes who achieved a GPA of at least 3.25 in the fall will be honored at halftime.

Cristina Rodriguez said that Student Activities will try to make more watch parties for athletic games available. “There will be a location on the Brownsville campus so they can go ahead and hang out with fellow students, enjoy some pizza and wings, and just really enjoy that atmosphere for basketball,” she said.

On Saturday, the UTRGV

Women’s Basketball team will face off at 2 p.m. and the men’s team at 4:30 p.m. against McNeese State at the UTRGV Fieldhouse on the Edinburg campus. The games are part of Back to School night, with free food and merchandise available for UTRGV students.

Sophomore theatre major Isaac Garza looks forward to having events for sports available.

“I like attending the basketball and baseball games and would love to get more info with all of the games, schedules and events,” Garza said.

Students are encouraged to bring their student IDs with them when participating in these events.

UTRGV, Continued from Page 1

ference in the world,” he said. “If you can graduate with very little debt, that means the minute you get a job ... you can do all other things rather than have to worry ... about paying off your student debt.”

According to criminal justice junior Andrew Del Villar, scholarships are “really important.”

“They take less stress off of you ‘cause sometimes the FAFSA does not give enough money,” Del Villar said. “But, if you apply for scholarships early on time it helps you with any books you need.”

During the Spring 2025 semester, Bailey said the university intends to “continue what [they] have been doing.”

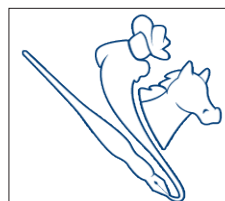
“We’ll continue to cultivate the alumni association,” he said. “We’ll continue to look for better ways to advise our students and help them

graduate. We’ll continue ... trying to raise money for scholarships, help our faculty get research grants. All of the things we normally do, we are going to continue those.”

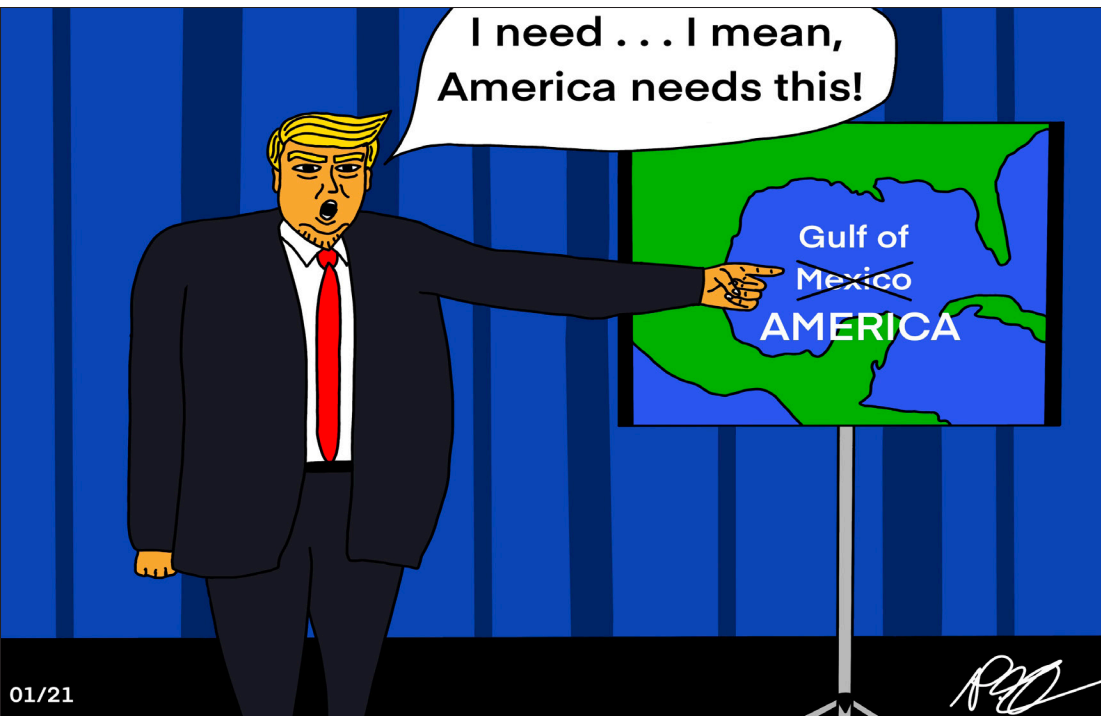
Dean of Students Ismael Amaya said it is an “exciting time to be at UTRGV.”

“That’s the best, shortest way I can describe it is an exciting time and there are those opportunities that make it exciting: the growth of the campus, the student body, the growth of services that we’re providing.

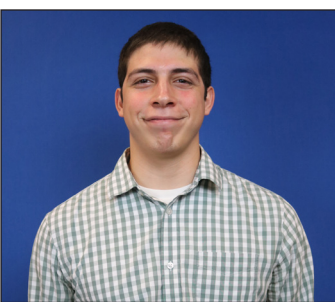
“And I think ... we’ve achieved a lot in 10 years. I know it’s ... built on the work that was done at the legacy institutions ... it’s not just those that have been here in the last 10 years, it’s everybody who’s ... been part of, these legacy institutions or UTRGV in the last years have gotten us to where we are. And, we’ll keep moving us forward.”



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The start of something



Andres Estrada
ONLINE EDITOR

The start of a brand new year and a new semester: the time when a lot of people start making changes in their lives to improve. By the end of the year, some of these end up failing.

Lifestyle, eating habits, exercising and studying, among others, are what most people end up changing in the beginning of the year. Before they notice, they are back to those habits they decided to change.

I saw on the news that the best way to start a change in your life is to do it in little steps and gradually increase these steps into new habits.

What better way to start a new year than to improve your quality of life and make your worldview wider with new hobbies or by getting rid of those horrible habits that make your life comfortable

but miserable at the same time.

You can start by having a healthy breakfast once in a while or getting that morning stretch routine going on.

Another example could be going to the gym or studying for an extra 30 minutes to clarify that question you think you know the answer to.

My mom says doing the same activity for 21 days makes it a habit and you no longer think of it as a burden, but this is not true for most people.

It is hard to wake up at 6 a.m. It is hard to go to the gym

to do them for attention, this motivation will soon run out.

Instead, do them with the motivation to make a better version of yourself. It's easier said than done of course.

At the end of the day this comes down to will power and wanting to create a better version of yourself.

You give up and think to yourself, "I'll start next month, I'll do it next year," and you never do because before you know it, 2026 is around the corner.

Don't wait for a better way to live your life, start a healthier lifestyle, and study not only 30 minutes but an extra hour.

Motivate yourself to do the things you don't like to do, discipline your mind and improve yourself.

Don't let new year resolutions be the finishing line and make it just a one year journey. Make this the start of a new part of your life where you change at least one thing you want.

Start this 2025 year not glued to your phone screen. Look up once in a while and you will see what you are missing.

"Don't let new year resolutions be the finishing line and make it just a one-year journey. Make this the start of a new part of your life where you change at least one thing you want."

and plan a workout routine. It is hard to keep reading for another 30 minutes to make sure you pass your next exam.

Not only are they hard to keep doing, but no one notices except yourself. So, if you try



Staff Edition: *What is your goal for the spring semester?*



"My goals for the spring semester [are] to just work out, probably read more and hopefully improve my GPA hopefully."

Pete Mendoza
Reporter

"My goal for the spring semester would be to perform better academically than I did last semester."

Daniela Chapa-Reyes
Reporter



"My goal for this semester is to improve our sports multimedia coverage at *The Rider* as well as showcase more of our play-by-play coverage across Student Media."

Ali Halloum
Sports Reporter



"One of my goals for the spring semester is to get good grades, preferably all A's, and then travel more, get new shoes."

Narda Serna
Copy Editor



--Compiled and photos by Daniela Martinez Salazar and Raquel Cazares

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Wacky Web Poll

Are you going to complete your New Year's resolution?

80% Yes **20%** No

'Jeopardy!' semifinalist, who is Yancey?

Eduardo Escamilla
THE RIDER

William Yancey, a lecturer in the UTRGV Department of History, advanced with \$13,800 to the semifinals of the "Jeopardy!" Champion Wildcard tournament on Jan. 13, an impressive victory that brought him one step closer to the Tournament of Champions.

In an interview with The Rider, Yancey said about his experience, "[the production team] take you into the studio, and when you walk up the steps, there's a big sign next to the door that says the Alex Trebek stage ... I was like, 'Whoa.'"

"... [And] the first time I stood on the stage behind one of the podiums, it really hit me like, 'Wow, I'm here, this is it.'"

The Champion Wildcard is a two-week tournament that brings back "Jeopardy!" champions who previously missed out on qualifying for the Tournament of Champions to Sony Pictures Studios in Culver City, California, to compete for the last remaining spot.

Yancey competed against opponents Paul Clauson, a tax analyst from Michigan, and Jen Feldman, a high school teacher from New York, who he said were "two very tough opponents."

Fate seemed to be on Yancey's side during the final

round of "Double Jeopardy!" when he correctly answered a historic currency question.

"To be a historian and I saw the final category come up as a historical currency question, I was like, 'phew must be livin' right,'" he said in his southern drawl.

The Rider asked Yancey how his family reacted to his victory, compared to the last time he competed and re-

Yancey said that in addition to history being his favorite category, he does well with Biblical and literature questions as well, but admits that pop culture is his achilles heel adding that if it happened after 2000 he's not interested.

"When I got invited to ["Jeopardy!"] Second Chance, I thought, well, maybe I'll try to study pop culture and my niece suggested I listen to some Taylor Swift," he said. "I got about half-way through a song and went 'I can't do it,' I'm too old, too much of a, you know, guitar nerd for that."

Yancey shared his connection with the popular game show extending back to his youth as a student competing in Quiz Bowls, but on a deeper level he said "Jeopardy!" kept him connected to his late grandmother.

"I started watching 'Jeopardy!' with my grandmother when I was 13 years old, and she liked to watch it and see how many questions I could get right," he said.

"... I originally started doing that because if I didn't watch 'Jeopardy!' with her, I had to go back out and work in the fields with my grandfather. So watching 'Jeopardy!' got me 30 extra minutes in the air conditioning."

The Rider asked Yancey what it meant for him to be a part of "Jeopardy!"

"It means a lot," he said.

"... I thought a lot about my



COURTESY PHOTO

William Yancey, a lecturer in the UTRGV Department of History, said it was an "unbelievable" feeling to advance to the semifinals of the "Jeopardy!" Champion Wildcard tournament that aired on Jan. 13.

grandmother while I've gone through this, she's been gone since 2006, but if it weren't for her, none of this would happen."

The history lecturer shared that his most memorable experience on the game show was during the second day of the two-game final on "Jeopardy! Second Chance," when he had the opportunity to thank his wife who was sitting in the audience.

"She's everything to me," he said. "I can't imagine my life without her. ... She was way more stressed about [the game] than I was, but I think the fact that they got to acknowledge her, and they got to show her on national TV

[meant a lot] because we're a team."

Yancey walked onto an iconic stage with a long Hollywood history and stepped off it now part of that history, becoming somewhat of a local celebrity in the Rio Grande Valley.

"I've only lived down here about eight years," he said. "... [But] I knew I had made it with people when [UTRGV] shared one of my wins, and in the comments section, somebody commented, 'puro Va-
quero.'"

For program scheduling and where to watch the "Jeopardy!" Champion Wildcard tournament visit jeopardy.com.

"... [And] the first time I stood on the stage behind one of the podiums, it really hit me like, 'Wow, I'm here, this is it.'"

--William Yancey

ceived grief for not correctly answering a question on the popular fantasy novel series, "Percy Jackson."

"My sister was out there with me for this tournament, and when I came off the stage, after that game against Paul and Jen, she looked at me and said, 'Well, you got lucky, didn't you?'" he said.

Yancey added that in his family if you're teased it's because you're loved.

"I think one of my cousins posted something on Facebook about, 'Well, he wins again. He's a nerd', you know? We just pick at each other," he said.

Astrology Rider: Weekly Horoscopes

Eduardo Escamilla
THE RIDER

Aries (March 21 - April 19): With Mars in Gemini activating your communication sector, you'll be buzzing with ideas and eager to participate in class discussions and group icebreakers. Be mindful of potential communication clashes with classmates - clear and concise expression will be key. The Sun's move into Aquarius highlights networking opportunities within your academic field and involvement in student organizations.

Taurus (April 20 - May 20) : Mercury in Capricorn emphasizes your career prospects and academic reputation. Focus on practical planning for your studies, setting realistic goals, and communicating effectively with professors and advisers. Venus in Pisces may bring inspiration for creative projects or research endeavors.

Gemini (May 21 - June 20): Mars in your sign gives you a boost of energy

and drive to tackle the new semester. You're ready to take on challenging assignments and engage in intellectual debates. The Sun entering Aquarius expands your academic horizons through new courses, study abroad programs or connecting with experts in your field.

Cancer (June 21 - July 22): Venus in Pisces highlights themes of research, in-depth study or connecting with the deeper meaning behind your chosen field. You may feel more drawn to independent study or exploring philosophical concepts. Mercury in Capricorn emphasizes communication with professors and mentors to guide you on your search.

Leo (July 23 - Aug. 22): The Sun entering Aquarius shines a light on collaborative learning and group projects. You may find yourself working closely with classmates or joining a student organization. Mars in Gemini adds a social and communicative flair to your first week back this semester, allowing

you to make new academic interactions.

Virgo (Aug. 23 - Sept. 22): Mercury in Capricorn emphasizes organization, time management and efficient study habits. Focus on creating a structured study schedule and prioritizing your tasks. Venus in Pisces brings a touch of inspiration, helping you to find a new and creative form of note-taking and study methods.

Libra (Sept. 23 - Oct. 22): With the Sun moving into Aquarius, your creativity and intellectual curiosity are heightened. You may feel inspired to explore new academic interests or pursue independent research projects. Mars in Gemini adds energy to your travel for conferences or academic exchanges.

Scorpio (Oct. 23 - Nov. 21): Venus in Pisces emphasizes in-depth research, exploring complex topics, and connecting with the emotional or philosophical aspects of your studies. Mercury in Capricorn highlights communication with family about your academic progress or matters related to your living situation during university.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22 - Dec. 21): Mars in Gemini activates your interactions with peers and study partners. You may be more assertive in express-

ing your ideas and collaborating on group assignments. The Sun entering Aquarius emphasizes communication, networking within your field, and attending academic conferences or workshops.

Capricorn (Dec. 22 - Jan. 19): Mercury in your sign emphasizes your ability to focus, plan and communicate your academic goals effectively. You're likely to be very focused on achieving your educational objectives. Venus in Pisces may highlight connecting with your local community through volunteer work related to your field or exploring local learning opportunities.

Aquarius (Jan. 20 - Feb. 18): With the Sun now in your sign, you're feeling more confident and intellectually energized. This is a time to pursue innovative ideas and explore new areas of study. Mars in Gemini adds energy to your creative projects or expressing your unique academic perspective.

Pisces (Feb. 19 - March 20): Venus in your sign enhances your intuition and creative thinking, which can be beneficial for brainstorming and problem-solving in your studies. Mercury in Capricorn encourages you to reflect on your past academic experiences and connect or reconnect with your long-term educational goals.

Read online:
A sublime
sojourn through
Chopin's World



Angel Ballestros/THE RIDER
Brendan Kinsella, a professor of piano at the UTRGV School of Music, plays the piano during the "Frédéric Chopin: Poet of the Piano" recital Jan. 12 at the International Museum of Art and Science in McAllen.



Angel Ballestros/THE RIDER
Mission residents Rajshree Singh (from left), Anantvijay Singh and Ratna Singh take in the works of Chopin during the "Frédéric Chopin: Poet of the Piano" recital Jan. 12 at the International Museum of Art and Science in McAllen.

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Vaqueros turn around this season



Ali Halloum / THE RIDER

UTRGV Men's Basketball head coach Kahill Fennell addresses the team during practice Jan. 8 at the UTRGV Fieldhouse on the Edinburg campus. The Vaqueros will play their next game at 4:30 p.m. Saturday at home against the McNeese State Cowboys.

Ali Halloum THE RIDER

With the calendar turning to 2025, the UTRGV Men's Basketball team has found itself in the middle of a turnaround, bringing a new playstyle and winning ways to Vaqueros fans.

As of press time, the Vaqueros are currently 11-6 overall, and 3-3 (6th) in the Southland Conference, nearly doubling its win total from the entirety of the 2023-24, a dismal 6-25 campaign that saw them finish last in the Western Athletic Conference (2-18).

The Vaqueros parted ways with then head coach Matt Figger, hiring former BYU assistant Kahill Fennell, and announced a move from the WAC to the Southland Conference.

In an interview with The Rider, Fennell said that the key for the Vaqueros, is to continue to improve as the team goes through "the ups and downs" of the season.

"I think by and large, we continue to improve and get better," Fennell said.

"That really is the key; and the focus for the rest of the year is to continue to progress and be a better version of ourselves every time we step on the floor."

Fifth-year guard K.T. Raimey, who's averaging 12.1 points and 21 minutes per game this season, said that the Vaqueros have exceeded their preseason expectations.

"Coming off of how everybody rated us in the preseason, I feel like we lived up to a higher expectation than what everyone looked at us as," Raimey said.

Senior guard Hasan Abdul Hakim, who played for the Vaqueros last season, said that the biggest changes between last season and this season has been both in culture and in playstyle.

"The culture [has changed]," Hakim said. "Everybody understand[s] their roles, and obviously [we're] in a position that we weren't in last year with a [new] kind of playstyle."

This season, Hakim is averaging just under 7 rebounds a game and said that remaining physical is what helps him

get his team those second opportunities.

The underlying statistics behind the Vaqueros' offensive success this season tell a story of, according to Raimey, a team that shoots "so many threes that we live by the three and die by the three."

This season, the Vaqueros lead the Southland Conference in three pointers attempted (35.1 3PA) and made (11.6 3PM) per game.

This aggressive approach behind the arc has yielded results, as the Vaqueros rank second in the conference in points per game (79.9) and third in point differential (+9.1). All statistics are current as of press time.

UTRGV has also led the conference in assists per game (18.3). Junior point guard Trey Miller, who leads the team in assists (68), said as the Vaqueros enter a stretch of conference matchups, they must control what they can.

"[We have to] control all the controllables, and do everything we need to do to win," Miller said.

As the season progresses, Fennell said that discipline is the area where the team has the biggest room for improvement.

"Whether it's shot selection, fouling three-point shooters or some of our disciplinary issues as far as techs or getting into it with people," he said. "... Our general discipline has to continue to improve and that's gonna be a big fight for us moving forward."

On shot selection, Raimey said that although the team attempts many three point shots, they also need to find more buckets in the paint and from mid-range.

"We're gonna get [three point shots] up but at the same time we wanna take good ones," he said. "We want to get good shots and find ways to get twos in the game too."

The Vaqueros are currently playing out the conference portion of their schedule and will play their next game at 4:30 p.m. Saturday at home against the McNeese State Cowboys.

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK:



Raquel Cazares / THE RIDER

Kade Hackerott is a business graduate student and a guard and forward for the UTRGV Women's Basketball team. Hackerott is currently leading the Southland Conference with 82 free throw attempts, 65 of those made.

Q: What/who inspired you into getting into basketball?

A: "Probably my dad. He was a basketball coach all throughout my life growing up so I was around the game a lot. So probably seeing that led me to be more involved in basketball."

Q: Who is your favorite basketball player? Why?

A: "Tim Duncan, honestly. I just liked his game when he was in the NBA. I enjoyed it, so him."

Q: What is your favorite music genre and who

is currently your favorite artist?

A: "I like some pop and R&B music, but kind of everything. Taylor Swift is my favorite; kinda basic."

Q: Do you have any game-day superstitions or rituals?

A: "No, I just like to make sure my hair is slicked back so I don't have flyaways, but that's about it. No superstitions, just prepared."

Q: Do you have any hobbies?

A: "I like reading. I really like 'Percy Jackson'; anything by that author. I like walking, baking, just stuff like that. Hanging out with my friends, doing puzzles. We do puzzles, which maybe is lame, but we have fun."

Q: What would you say serves as your biggest

motivation?

A: "I think the joy for the game. I love playing basketball. So that's why I do it because I enjoy it. I think I wouldn't do it as much or do it at all if I didn't enjoy it. So, you know, just really appreciating every chance that I get to step out [on] the floor and compete."

Q: What is something you like

about

UTRGV?

A: "I love the atmosphere here, especially on game days. We draw a great crowd. People really come and support us, which is really, really awesome. And then just the whole staff throughout the athletic department is fantastic."

Q: What do you hope to achieve by the end of this spring semester?

A: "Basketball wise, winning the conference would be great. Winning the conference tournament, going to the NCAA tournament ... Outside of basketball would just be to keep my grades up and get closer to graduating with my MBA, move on to real life after college."



WELCOME WEEK


January
Mon. 20 - Sat. 25



MLK Day of Service

Sponsored by Center for Student Involvement

Mon. Jan. 20



Vaquero Bingo: College Essentials

Sponsored by Student Union

Tue. Jan. 21 **Brownsville** 5PM - 7PM | BSTUN La Sala

Fri. Jan. 24 **Edinburg** 5PM - 7PM | ESTUN Game Room




WELCOME BACK BASH

Sponsored by Campus Activities Board & Student Activities

Wed. Jan. 22 **Brownsville** 12PM - 2:30PM | BMAIN Main Lawn

Thur. Jan. 23 **Edinburg** 12PM - 2:30PM | EQUAD



Women's Basketball vs. Nicholls

Thur. Jan. 23 **Brownsville: Watch Party** 6:30 PM | BMSLC 1.105

Thur. Jan. 23 **Edinburg: In person Game** 6:30PM | EHPE1 Fieldhouse

Sponsored by Campus Activities Board & Student Activities




Women's Basketball vs. McNeese

Sat. Jan. 25 **Edinburg** 2 PM | EHPE1 Fieldhouse

Men's Basketball vs. McNeese

Edinburg 4:30PM | EHPE1 Fieldhouse Sat. Jan. 25

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