

ENGAGE

Transforming Lives Through Engaged Partnership

DIVISION OF GOVERNMENTAL & COMMUNITY RELATIONS NEWSLETTER

IN THIS ISSUE

86th Legislative Update
Community Engagement Recognition
STEM Outreach This Spring
FESTIBA Promotes Literacy
Meet the Team

UPCOMING EVENTS

UTRGV SBDC Seminars
May 14 - Power of QuickBooks Online:
Basic Tips & Tools

June 12 - Employment Lifecycle: How to Recruit,
Hire, Develop, & Terminate Legally

July 9 - Payroll Compliance

August 22 - IRS Regional Practitioner Meeting

September 10 - Wage & Hour for Small Businesses

Pre-registration is required.
Email sbdc@utrgv.edu or
call 956-665-7535 to RSVP

UTRGV Entrepreneurship and Commercialization Center

May 9 - Manufacturing Supervisor Certification:
Learn the interpersonal strategies to become a
productive and respected supervisor (By TMAC)

May 28 - Kauffman FastTrac 2019 en Español.
Pre-registration is required.
Email ECC@utrgv.edu or call (956) 882-4119

Exhibit WAR & PEACE ON THE RIO GRANDE: 1861-1867 UTRGV Edinburg, Visitors Center Exhibit ends June 19

8:00am - 5:00pm Monday - Friday &
Tuesdays open until 6:00pm
Highlighted in this exhibit are the multiple effects
that the Civil War had on life along the U.S. -
Mexico border, including economic trade & cotton
trails, U.S. Colored Troops, local Tejanos who
fought for the Union and the Confederacy, regional
military engagements, and Mexico's Civil War.

"Just a Ferry Ride to Freedom" Documentary
June 19
6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Cine El Rey, 311 South 17th Street, McAllen



FROM THE DESK OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR GOVERNMENTAL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Welcome to ENGAGE

Great things continue to happen at UTRGV.

A few weeks ago, we celebrated the opening of the new STARGATE Technology Center. A "tremendous day in the history of UTRGV," said our President Dr. Guy Bailey.

I had the honor of serving as the emcee for the ceremony and particularly loved the smiles on the faces of our physics students, as they helped cut the ribbon officially opening this facility.

STARGATE, an acronym for Spacecraft Tracking and Astronomical Research into Gigahertz Astrophysical Transient Emission, is located along Highway 4 about 25 miles east of Brownsville and not far from the SpaceX Commercial Launch facility.

At STARGATE, our students are learning about spacecraft design, as well as the testing, launching and all orbital operations involved with space missions. Very few universities have a facility like this, very few universities have a physics department like ours and very few universities have a facility down the road and a partnership with SpaceX. Pretty exciting.

We are also thrilled that UTRGV was highlighted as one of 10 universities recognized as a "frontier" of practice by advancing the field of Community Engagement.

The Field Guide for Urban University-Community Partnerships is the first-of-its-kind study on the growing phenomenon of institutional partnerships between urban universities and their local communities.

Community engagement is one of UTRGV's five core priorities. Each and every day we work at this; from organizing community outreach programs like our electrical car competition designed to inspire students interest in STEM-related careers, to hosting the Governor's Small Business Conference to benefit small businesses, to connecting students with volunteer and service learning opportunities via the Engagement Zone.

We are honored to be highlighted as a frontier institution, paving the way for other institutions to follow our lead in community engagement efforts. I invite you to read more about this recognition inside our newsletter.

And lastly, we can't stop bragging about our chess team. For the second year in a row, UTRGV won the national championship in chess, the President's Cup. Our students beat out Harvard, UT Dallas and Webster University in the Final Four competition. We couldn't be prouder of our talented students.

Yes. Great things are happening here at UTRGV. Thank you for your commitment, support and engagement.

Veronica Gonzales
Vice President for Governmental
and Community Relations

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE: 86TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION ENDS IN MAY

the current level of funding and formula funding increasing modestly. By comparison, UTRGV's state appropriations were cut by about 10 percent last session.

For most IHEs, it will not be until near the end of the 86th Session that the fate of requests for additional funding will be known. UTRGV's request for additional funding for its School of Medicine similarly will be in the hands of the conference committee.

BILLS TO WATCH

Several bills have been filed that would address dual credit courses and the transferability of course credits. As the State looks for ways to make higher education affordable for Texans, the difficulty of transferring courses has resulted in additional time to graduate and cost to students and their families. This problem does not have a simple solution, the fragmentation of higher education means no one person or agency has the power to make a sweeping change.

S.B. 502 would require a yearly report describing any courses for which a student who transfers to the institution from another institution of higher education is not granted academic credit at the receiving institution. The report would also need to include information on why the course was not accepted.

H.B. 3055, S.B. 501 and S.B. 863 would require studies on the cost associated with dual credit, and H.B. 4010 would require dual credit students who earn 15 or more semester credit hours to file a degree plan.

CAMPUS FREE SPEECH

The issue of opening-up public campuses of higher education to free speech has been brewing since last session, and a handful of bills have emerged this session to do just that. Senate Bill 18 has passed the Senate, and its House supporters are looking to advance it through the legislative process as deadlines loom.

S.B. 18 affirms that it is the policy of the State to protect expressive rights of individuals by recognizing freedom of speech and assembly as central to the mission of public institutions of higher education. S.B. 18 also requires that institutions ensure that common outdoor areas are deemed to be traditional public forums and permit any individual to engage in expressive activities in those areas freely. Additionally, S.B. 18 requires public institutions to adopt a policy detailing students' rights and responsibilities regarding expressive activities.

DEADLINES & VETOS

A Texas legislative session is jammed with processes, restrictions, rules, and deadlines. In short, the legislative process is purposely designed to make it easier to kill bills than to pass bills. Most that are familiar with the process believe this is a good thing. In fact, it is the compressed timeline (140 days to consider more than 7,000 bills and write a two year budget totaling more than \$200 Billion) and deadlines when approaching the end of a session that marks the demise of the majority of bills filed.

- 2019 -	
DATES OF INTEREST	
MAY 27 - Sine Die (si-ni-di)	This is the 140th day and the last day of the 86th Texas Legislature. Sine Die is a term used by the Texas Legislature to signify the end of the session of the legislative body. The Latin origins of the term translate to "without a day".
JUNE 16 -	This is the 20th day following the adjournment of the regular session of the 86th Texas Legislature. This will be the final day the governor may sign or veto bills passed during the regular session.
AUGUST 26 -	This is the 91st day following the adjournment of the regular session of the 86th Texas Legislature. This is the date upon which bills without specific effective dates, other than bills with immediate effect, become law throughout the state of Texas.



UTRGV participated in the Rio Grande Valley RGV Day at the Capitol held on Feb 5.

UTRGV President Guy Bailey and the Governmental Relations team led by Veronica Gonzales, Vice President for Governmental and Community Relations have been hard at work meeting with as many legislators and stakeholders as possible to ensure they are aware and supportive of UTRGV's priorities and funding needs.

The Texas Legislature convened its 86th Session on January 8 and will continue its work until May 27. The Texas Constitution requires the Legislature to convene each odd-numbered year on the second Tuesday in January for 140 days.

The following are some of the highlights for higher education to date:

THE STATE BUDGET

Another constitutional requirement imposed on the Texas Legislature is to pass a biennial budget. As of this writing, Senate and House budget writers are busy formulating the 2020-2021 state budget, but the two versions of the budget will not agree, thus the members will ultimately meet in a conference committee to hash-out and reconcile the differences later in April and May.



For Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) and UTRGV particularly, thus far the budget has been favorable with most programs seeing at least

UTRGV STUDENTS WRAPPING UP THEIR LEGISLATIVE INTERNSHIPS

Jacquelynn Hernandez has spent the spring semester working in the Texas Capitol. She and ten other UTRGV students arrived in Austin a few days before the start of the 86th Texas Legislative Session on Jan. 8.

Hernandez is interning in the Capitol office of Rep. Ryan Guillen of District 31. She said she felt nervous, at first, but knew it would be a fun, learning experience. The best part of the internship was working for Rep. Guillen and helping people from her legislative district.

"As an intern handling casework, I have been able to gain firsthand experience on what a state representative does for his constituents. People from the district contact us with anything that they may need and it has been an amazing experience helping them," said Hernandez. "Throughout this

session, I have also learned that the job of a state legislator goes beyond creating new laws."

Students selected to participate in the Valley Legislative Internship Program (VLIP) are placed in the capitol offices of a Rio Grande Valley State Legislator. The students work full-time during the legislative session. Students must complete assignments in two online political science courses, for which they receive course credit. They also receive monthly compensation through the VLIP program, thanks to the generosity of UTRGV President, Dr. Guy Bailey.

"I wouldn't trade this experience for anything in the world, and I encourage students to apply for the internships," said Hernandez, who plans to study law and hopes to practice corporate and criminal law.



UTRGV President Guy Bailey met with student interns in April at the UTRGV Foundation reception in Austin.

For information about the VLIP internship program, please visit <https://www.utrgv.edu/gcr/stay-engaged/press-releases/vlip-interns/index.htm>

UTRGV RECOGNIZED NATIONALLY FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

UTRGV is one of 10 universities highlighted in the *Field Guide for Urban University-Community Partnerships*, as a “frontier” of practice by advancing the field of community engagement.

The Thriving Cities Lab at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture at the University of Virginia conducted the groundbreaking, first-of-its-kind survey, studying institutional partnerships between urban universities and their local communities.

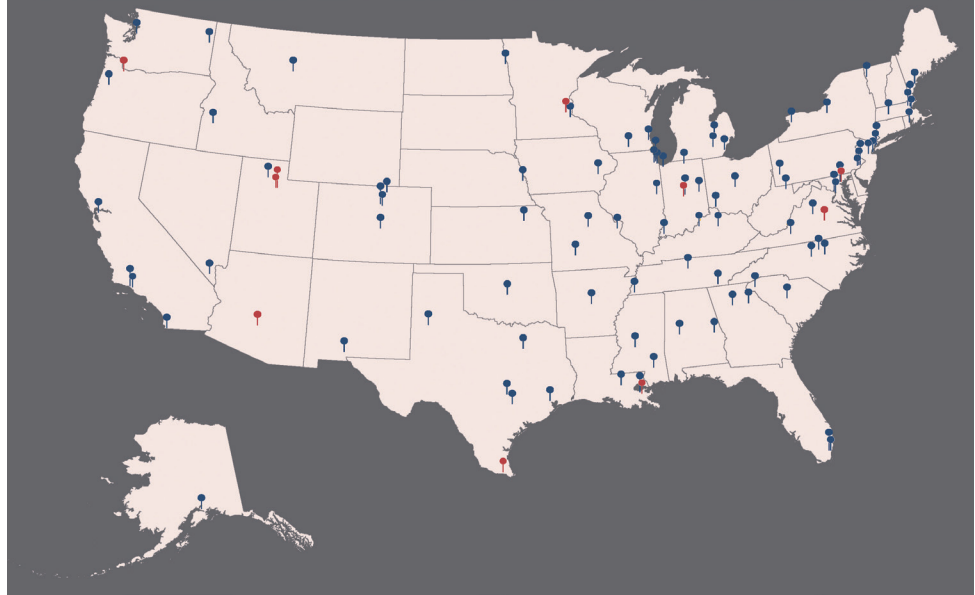
The survey, conducted in 2018, is a “field scan” that provides, for the first time, data on the purposes and practices of 100 American urban institutions of higher education regarding these partnerships. “Over the past three decades, urban university-community partnerships have moved from dispersed and provisional ad hoc relationships to intentional and systematic institutional commitments,” said Josh Yates, Director of the Thriving Cities Lab and coauthor of the report

The study noted areas of similarity and difference to enable the schools to assess their programs and determine ways to better strengthen and serve their communities. “We now find that 90 percent of the universities in our survey offer community-engaged student coursework, such as community-based student service-learning programs,” said Yates. “While 69 percent had dedicated funding for student and faculty community-based research, 95 percent had central offices dedicated to advancing community partnerships.”

At UTRGV, community engagement is one of five core priorities and a component of the university’s mission statement and the institutional strategic planning process. Students, faculty, staff, and community members are all included in these efforts.

“We are very proud of the progress our institution has made in creating a culture that supports and rewards community engagement at all levels.

100 UNIVERSITIES



100 UNIVERSITIES MAP KEY

- Frontiers of Practice Universities
- Field Scan Universities

Over the course of 2018, Thriving Cities Lab conducted a National Scan of 100 urban institutions of higher education across the United States in order to understand the key trends defining how colleges and universities pursue partnerships with their local communities.

Cultivating authentic stakeholder engagement to inform the work is why we are being recognized in the field guide,” said Cristina Trejo, Associate Vice President for Community Engagement and Economic Development. “We help address needs identified by the communities and work with community partners to solve those issues, while providing our students valuable experiential learning opportunities.”

The field guide is not just a survey but also a workbook that helps universities assess their efforts, and serves as a resource for strengthening their partnerships with their own communities. Ten universities, including UTRGV, were profiled on the “frontiers of practice”. UTRGV’s program, “to assure that low-income residents are active participants in university planning and research processes”, was highlighted in the guide.



In March, staff participated in a workshop to gain a better understanding of what community engagement is and to identify ways staff members can engage with the community.

To learn more about community engagement at UTRGV, please visit utrgv.edu/gcr/departments/community-engagement.

The field guide is available at <https://iasculture.org/research/publications/thriving-citiesfield-Guide>.



More than 40 people participated in *From Recipe to Reality*. The staff in the ECC was pleased with the turnout and plans to present more seminars.

Out of a family recipe, Marigel and Corando Treviño brought Cilantro Sauce to the public in September of 2017. Now a developing, growing business, Cilantro Sauce was one of the businesses who participated in *From Recipe to Reality*, a round table hosted by the UTRGV Entrepreneurship and Commercialization Center, UTRGV Small Business Development Center

FROM RECIPE TO REALITY... HELPING NEW BUSINESSES SUCCEED

and sponsored by the Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center on March 5, in Brownsville. “The workshop offered important information that compared many aspects of our business with other businesses that have reached similar goals to answer all of our questions. This was something we appreciated to be invited to, and we recommend this program to anyone who would like to bring their recipes to the real world,” said Treviño.

At the workshop, entrepreneurs learned about preferences, food trends and food industry rules and regulations for a product or idea to have a successful launch into the market. They heard from successful food entrepreneurs who shared their experiences, best practices they utilized to achieve success, as well as the challenges they faced establishing a food product.

“We live in a region driven by its culture and traditions allowing for food entrepreneurs to create unique food recipes that can be commercialized,” said Linda Ufland, Manager of the UTRGV Entrepreneurship and Commercialization Center. “The workshop allowed food entrepreneurs to learn from a panel of experts. It was a great success, and we are excited to see our participants create a path of success for their products.”

Cilantro Sauce, LLC, a family owned and operated business, is now on the path to having its products available in stores.

For more information about programs and services, please call the Entrepreneurship and Commercialization Center at (956) 882-4119 or visit www.utrgv.edu/ecc.

UTRGV REACHES OUT TO INSPIRE STUDENTS TOWARD STEM



This spring, nearly 1,000 middle and high school students converged on the UTRGV campuses to compete in community-based outreach programs geared toward science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and career awareness.

Organized by the UTRGV Office of Community Relations, the staff worked with faculty, teachers, retired educators, students, and partner organizations who gave their time to serve as judges, scorekeepers and volunteers to promote STEM to middle and high school students.

“The contributions from everyone allow us to advance the best STEM-focused students to the state and international fairs,” said Milton Hernandez, UTRGV Program Coordinator. “We are grateful to our generous sponsors and commitment from our diverse group of teachers, volunteers and staff for their support.”



Regional Science Bowl

The Regional Science Bowl is a fast-paced question-and-answer tournament designed to test the students’ knowledge of biology, chemistry, Earth science, physics, energy and math. UTRGV hosted the regional competition on Feb. 16, which is part of the National Science Bowl competition coordinated by the U.S. Department of Energy’s Office of Science.

The Science Academy of South Texas, Team 1, and the Mission Jr. High, Team 1, were the top winners in the regional competition and now prepare for the National Science Bowl, to be held April 25-29 in Washington, D.C.

“Our children can compete at the highest levels of math and science with the rest of the country. We need our students to have these opportunities available to them, and we relish that challenge. The Science Bowl is a perfect arena for that test for our kids,” said David Land, coach of the Mission Jr. High, Team 1.

59th Regional Science and Engineering Fair

More than 550 projects were submitted by students representing 60 schools from school districts across the Rio Grande Valley in the Rio Grande Valley Regional Science and Engineering Fair (RGVSEF) on Feb. 2.

The top three winners in the senior division will compete at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair, May 17-19, in Phoenix, Arizona. Pablo Vidal, a junior at the UTRGV Mathematics & Science Academy, was named the Grand Champion in the high school division.

“It felt amazing to win Grand Champion at the Science and Engineering Fair. It feels great to know that hard work pays off, and this award tells me that you should never give up,” said Vidal who plans to study mechanical engineering.

Students competed in 22 science and engineering - related fields of study. The top three winners from each category, both senior and junior divisions, represented the region at the Texas State Science and Engineering Fair, held on March 29-30, in College Station.



MATHCOUNTS

Designed to excite and challenge middle school students, the MATHCOUNTS program offered four levels of competition featuring both a rigorous written competition and a fast-paced oral competition.

"It was really nerve-wrecking. It's a lot of anxiety, but it gets you pumping to do better," said Hailey Aul, a member of the Sharyland North Junior High team who won first place at the competition.



This national program provided 84 middle school students from across the Rio Grande Valley the opportunity to compete in a live, in-person contest against and alongside their peers on Feb. 9 at the UTRGV Edinburg Campus.

"We believe middle school is a critical juncture when a love of math must be encouraged, and a fear of math must be overcome," said Lee Jones, Community Affairs and Customer Service Manager, AEP Foundation. "The RGV Chapter of Professional Engineers is proud to support this program."



Electric Car Competition

The excitement of using motorsport to inspire middle school, high school and college students to excel in STEM studies took place on April 5-6 at the UTRGV Brownsville Campus.

Students learned how to build and market their cars, and each team also had to produce a video about their team and the car they built.

"Jim Tipton, president of Tipton Auto Group, an event sponsor, said he firmly believes in supporting education." said David Land, Coach, Mission Jr. High, Team 1.

"I truly believe the future is electric vehicles, and now is the time to invest in learning. My hope is that many students are inspired by this project and will continue to be focused on innovation and refined performance to make these vehicles a reality for all," Tipton said.



STEM Report Card

Rio Grande Valley Science and Engineering Fair

- More than 700 students from 60 schools competed.
- 550 projects submitted in 22 science and engineering related fields of study.
- 132 students advanced to the Texas State Science and Engineering Fair.

Regional Science Bowl

- 200 students from 13 middle schools and 20 high schools competed.
- The first place winning middle and high school teams advance to the National Science Bowl.

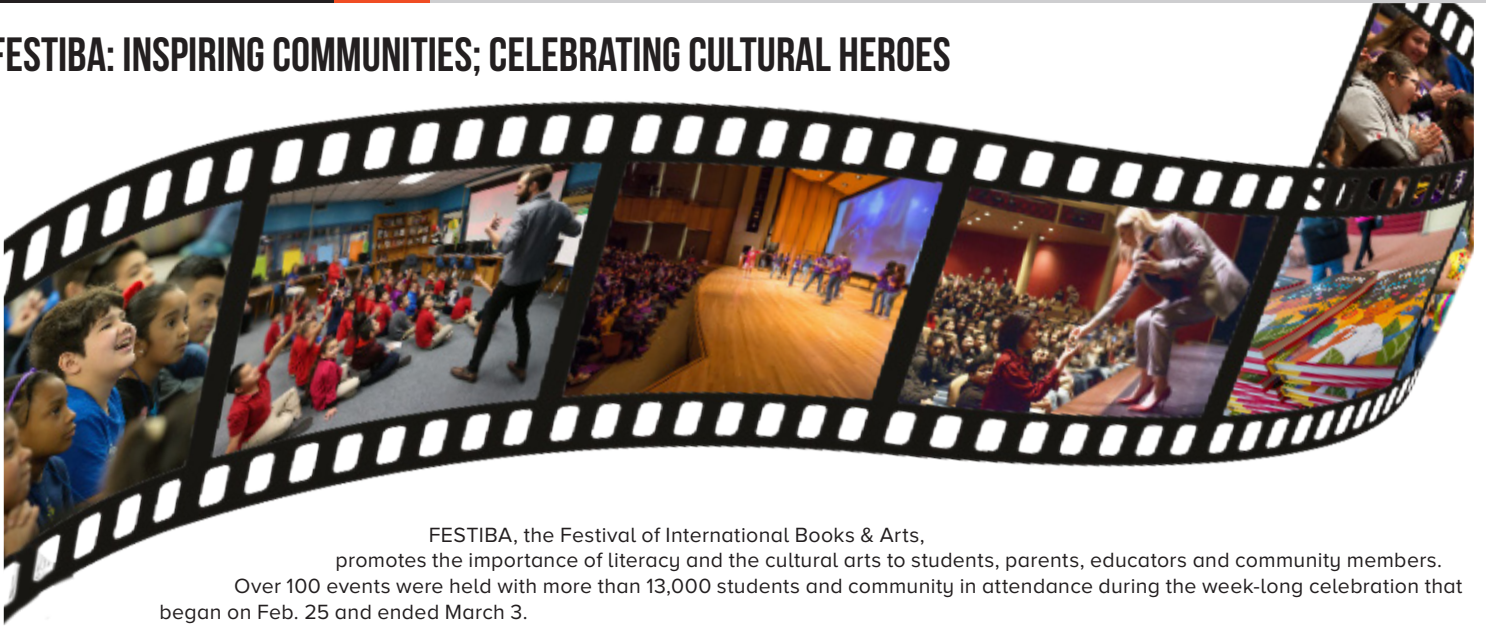
MATHCOUNTS

- 10 teams and 84 middle school students competed.
- 2 teams and 2 individuals advance to Texas MATHCOUNTS.

Electric Car Competition

- 25 teams representing middle schools, high schools and colleges competed.
- 9 teams won awards at the second annual competition.

FESTIBA: INSPIRING COMMUNITIES; CELEBRATING CULTURAL HEROES



FESTIBA, the Festival of International Books & Arts, promotes the importance of literacy and the cultural arts to students, parents, educators and community members. Over 100 events were held with more than 13,000 students and community in attendance during the week-long celebration that began on Feb. 25 and ended March 3.

“We thank everyone for making FESTIBA a great success,” said Dr. Dahlia Guerra, Assistant Vice President for Public Art. “In addition to presenting a variety of events promoting literacy across south Texas, we had outstanding community outreach with artistic, cultural and musical productions. Many of our faculty took the opportunity to engage their students and our communities on a variety of different research topics with numerous academic presentations.”

- The exhibit WAR & PEACE ON THE RIO GRANDE: 1861-1867 focused on the multiple effects that the Civil War had on life along the US-Mexico border, and a special book talk with the authors of “Chicana Movidas: New Narratives of Activism in the Movement Era”, highlighted Chicana organizing, activism, and leadership in the 1960s and 1970s. The Mexican Consulate of McAllen collaborated this year with a “Celebration of the Golden Age of Mexican Cinema.”
- FESTIBA partnered with the UTRGV and Region One GEAR UP programs. 3,500 high school students from throughout Rio Grande Valley attended presentations designed to inspire them to discover the power of creativity and develop skills of literacy and self-expression for life success and college readiness.
- 120 librarians, teachers, and childhood-literacy stakeholders attended the South Texas Literacy Symposium. FESTIBA, together with the South Texas Literacy Coalition and Literacy Texas, collaborated to explore the effectiveness of implementing teaching approaches that empower students. Krystal Contreras, fourth-grade writing teacher at Dr. C.M. Cash Elementary School in San Benito and recipient of the Texas 2018 Milken Educator Award, and Dr. Ida Acuna Garza, CEO of South Texas Literacy Coalition were selected as Community Heroes for having significantly touched, enriched and impacted lives in the Rio Grande Valley.
- The “Reading Rock Stars” is a popular mainstay of FESTIBA. The Texas Book Festival funds and coordinates visits by the nationally recognized authors in collaboration with FESTIBA. Over 3,600 free books were distributed during FESTIBA 2019
- More than 600 students from all over the state competed in the Middle School and High School Mariachi Competition. The winners in the competitions performed in a grand concert which featured guest artists Mariachi Reyna de Los Angeles and UTRGV Mariachi Aztlán.
- FESTIBA partnered again with the City of Edinburg to present the Community Festival which attracted over 2,000 people. Four elementary schools were honored as “Top Readers”, and the school librarians and principals were recognized for their excellent leadership in promoting literacy. Over 3,000 books were distributed at the Community Festival in partnership with the South Texas Literacy Coalition.



Photo Credit: The Monitor



Juan Santos, MBA
Program Director,
Veterans Business Outreach
Center (VBOC)

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What do you like about your job?

There are many things I like about my job at UTRGV. However, above all I would say that I like the mission we (VBOC) have assisting the military community accomplish their dreams of becoming a small business owner. The interaction with each person and being able to see step-by-step how one of their dreams comes true is something special. For me, especially being able to give back to my fellow Veterans through this job, it is a great feeling.

What drives you in your job?

What drives me in my job on a day-to-day basis is the impact we have on real life stories of people wanting to start their businesses. I am able to see their progress from just a business idea, all the way to opening the doors to their new business. This definitely is a dream come true for them, and for me, it is very satisfying being able to see how impactful my work is.

What do you envision in the next five years for UTRGV?

What I envision in the upcoming five years for UTRGV is to continue increasing and expanding services in both areas (internal and external) and, continue to do an outstanding job through community engagement and economic development here in the Rio Grande Valley. Besides that, I envision growing our program in order to reach out to a greater number of people in the military community here in the RGV and other parts of our coverage area throughout the state.

What do you do to relax?

I like spending time with my family at home or visiting a new place. We are a tight family and try to spend weekends together with our extended family when possible. We enjoy cooking and trying different foods. Similarly, we enjoy watching a good movie, at the theater or at home.



Michael Uhrbrock
Associate Director,
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Information Systems Center

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What do you like about your job?

I'm a researcher at heart, so I enjoy the analytical part of my job--designing, collecting, and analyzing data.

What drives you in your job?

I get satisfaction in helping individuals and organizations in the community through the services our Data & Information Systems Center provides.

What do you envision in the next five years for UTRGV?

I believe UTRGV is well-positioned to capitalize on the demand for higher education as the population in the Rio Grande Valley grows. I see more students, faculty, staff, and degree programs approved in the next five years.

What do you do to relax?

I like getting outdoors and riding my mountain bike or my skateboard. Exercise relieves stress and does the body good.



Maria Juarez
Executive Director,
UTRGV Small Business
Development Center (SBDC)

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What do you like about your job?

I like my job in that one day is not like the next. If one day you have to work on reports, you can count on the next day taking you out of the office to meet with partners, engage in outreach, present a workshop, or other activity. It is rarely boring, and I get to work with great people.

What drives you in your job?

What drives me and the SBDC team is existing businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs - knowing that we make a difference. Owning a business is tough. We seek to meet the needs of the business community and support entrepreneurs on their path to success and job creation.

What do you envision in the next five years for UTRGV?

For UTRGV over the next few years, I envision a well-coordinated, effective, educational institution, putting behind the upheaval of the creation of a new university, rising to the challenge of community expectations, and continuing to garner success after success for the community, students, staff, and faculty.

What do you do to relax?

After work is done, I relax by sleeping as much as I can, spending time with family, traveling, and catching up on current shows that reflect what is going on in the U.S.



Aaron Gonzalez
Senior Business Advisor &
Innovation Advisor,
UTRGV Small Business
Development Center (SBDC)

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What do you like about your job?

What I like about my job is that I get to work with entrepreneurs. It is not easy to start or grow a business and therefore I feel a sense of pride when I can see a thriving business, and say that I helped them. I envision that UTRGV will continue to be a valuable resource to the community, as we continue to brand ourselves as such.

What drives you in your job?


As a Senior Business Advisor, I work with aspiring and existing entrepreneurs. I offer assistance and guidance to help them with their business venture. I have been at the University since 2009. Since then, I have worked with over 800 entrepreneurs on a one-on-one basis.

What do you envision in the next five years for UTRGV?

I envision that UTRGV will continue to be a valuable resource to the community, as we continue to brand ourselves as such.

What do you do to relax?

To relax I like to cook, competitively and recreationally. Some people find it stressful, but for me it's relaxing. I also enjoy taking my dog on long walks. It's the highlight of her day, and I benefit from the exercise.



THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY CIVIL WAR TRAIL

War and Peace on the
Rio Grande
1861-1867
A Traveling Exhibit

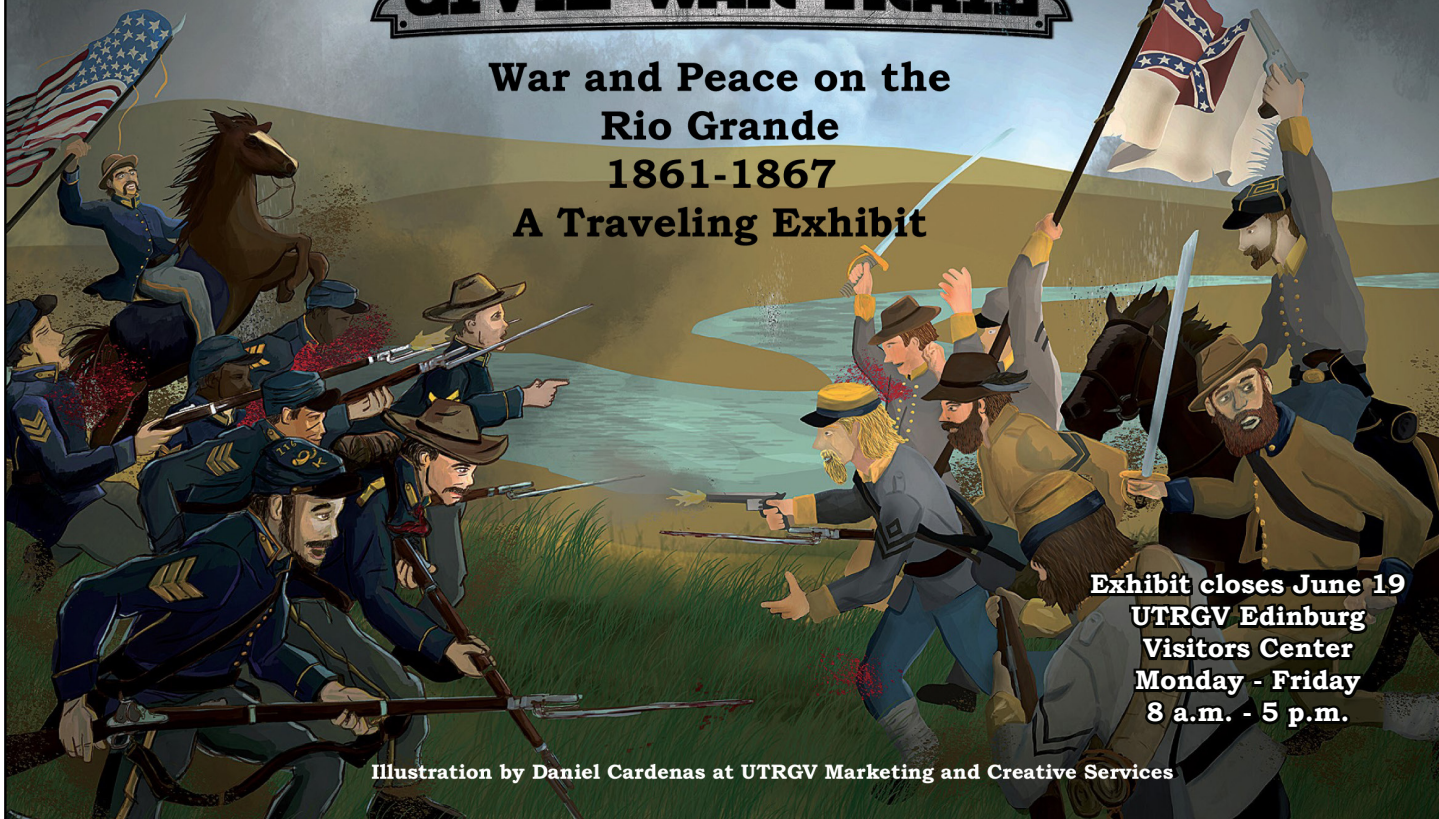


Exhibit closes June 19
UTRGV Edinburg
Visitors Center
Monday - Friday
8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Illustration by Daniel Cardenas at UTRGV Marketing and Creative Services

The University of Texas
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