

## Can Saygin

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**From:** Research Communications  
**Sent:** Friday, August 14, 2026 12:47 PM  
**To:** utrgvfaculty@listserv.utrgv.edu  
**Subject:** Faculty Welcome Week Message



Friday, Aug 14, 2026

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome back! Whether you are returning to campus or joining UTRGV for the first time, I am glad you are here as we begin another academic year together. I am looking forward to seeing you next week (Aug 17-21, 2026) during the [Faculty Welcome Week 2026](#).

We begin this year with tremendous momentum and much to be proud of. This past year, UTRGV's total research expenditures reached **\$109 million**, and over the past three years, we have awarded **more than 210 research doctoral degrees**. Together, these achievements mean that UTRGV has now met the criteria required for designation as an **R1 institution in the Carnegie 2028 announcement**. These metrics and the recognition represent significant milestones in the life of our university. But their greatest significance lies in what they reflect: the collective work, talent, ambition, and commitment of our faculty, staff, and students across every college, school, program, and campus.

They also remind us that our greatest opportunities are still ahead.

### A NEW PERSPECTIVE

As we begin this new academic year, I will be sharing a framework I have been developing called [AIM: Align, Integrate, Maximize](#). At its core, **AIM** is about how we work together more intentionally to advance UTRGV's mission and increase our collective impact.

**Align** means connecting our priorities, resources, and efforts around the goals that matter most.

**Integrate** means working across disciplines, colleges, units, and traditional boundaries so that our combined strengths become greater than the sum of their parts.

**Maximize** means making the fullest use of our talent, ideas, resources, and opportunities to create meaningful outcomes for our students, our university, and the Rio Grande Valley.

**AIM** is not simply about doing more. It is about working with greater clarity of purpose, strengthening the connections between our efforts, and ensuring that the work we do translates into the greatest possible impact.

You can explore the **AIM [Booklet](#) and accompanying [slide deck](#)** here. In the weeks and months ahead, I look forward to continuing the conversation about what **AIM** can mean in practice and importantly, learning from the ways many of you are already bringing these principles to life across UTRGV.

## **ADVANCING RESEARCH AND FACULTY SUCCESS**

The Division of Research is launching a new research seed grants program with an annual investment of **\$1 million**. The new program, **Faculty Opportunities for Research Growth and Excellence ([FORGE](#))**, will support innovative research and scholarship that advances the university's strategic research priorities while fostering a vibrant and collaborative research culture across Academic Affairs and Health Affairs.

**FORGE** is a competitive internal funding program that provides strategic investments to help faculty generate preliminary data, establish new collaborations, and position their teams for successful extramural grant applications and greater scholarly impact. I encourage you to review the **FORGE** program and its upcoming deadlines [here](#).

In addition, the Division of Research will continue to offer the **Travel Resources and Investments Program ([TRIP](#))** and the **Faculty Award for Maximizing Expenditures ([FAME](#))** program during the 2026–2027 academic year.

Finally, the Divisions of Academic Affairs and Research will jointly develop and launch new **faculty success and development programs** this year. These initiatives will further support our faculty in advancing their teaching, research, scholarship, professional development, and overall success.

Our progress as a university has always been a collective effort. Every student we help succeed, every discovery we make, every program we strengthen, and every partnership we build contributes to something larger: expanding what is possible for UTRGV and for the communities we serve.

Thank you for the work you do, the ideas you bring, and the community you continue to build here in the Rio Grande Valley. I am excited about what we can accomplish together this year and about where we can AIM next.

V's Up,



**Can Saygin, Ph.D.**

Interim Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Senior Vice President for Research  
Dean of the Graduate College

# **THE FUTURE OF TEXAS**