

FALL 2025 SPRING 2026

A LOOK INTO OUR HIGHLIGHTS



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The 2025-2026 academic year brought wonderful opportunities for change, collaboration, and growth to our center. In fall 2025, our name officially changed to the Center for Bilingual Learning & Innovation (CBLI). CBLI builds upon the important work of its predecessor – the Center for Bilingual Studies – and re-envisioning our approach to supporting bilingualism/biliteracy development and promoting its benefits in PK-16 education contexts and beyond.



Dr. Christian E. Zúñiga
Director

We also worked to cultivate partnerships with local dual language districts through our Dual Language Bilingual Education in the RGV Symposium where we witnessed meaningful dialogue between school, family and university partners. The academic year culminated with our signature event, the Torneo de Ortografía & Batalla de los Libros, in which over 350 students from local school districts and UTRGV celebrated their bilingualism/biliteracy through academic excellence in Spanish literacy. Our initiatives would not be possible without the work of our team - Ms. Adriana Nelson (Program Manager) and Student Assistants (Vivian and Sofia) – who joined our team this year and worked diligently to accomplish our events and programming.

**Thank you to our UTRGV and local partners who helped make this year memorable and successful!
We look forward to what the upcoming 2026-2027 academic year will bring.**

MEET THE TEAM

FALL 2025 - SPRING 2026

Behind CBLI's activities is a dedicated team of hardworking student assistants and faculty fellows who help keep everything running smoothly. From planning and organizing events to supporting day-to-day operations, their contributions often happen behind the scenes, but their impact is felt in every successful event and initiative we deliver. Their support and positive attitudes help our programming thrive.

MEET OUR STUDENT ASSISTANTS



Vivian Palacios



Sofia Ayala

MEET OUR SERVICE FELLOWS



*Dr. GoMee Park
Research Fellow*



*Sarahi Pacheco,
MEd Service Fellow*

We want to give special recognition to our fellows whose leadership and initiative go above and beyond.

They support essential tasks and bring fresh ideas, problem-solving skills, and a strong sense of commitment to CBLI's mission.

*Dr. Nadeska Mayens-Robles
Service Fellow*



MESSAGE FROM THE TEAM

We are happy to share the second edition of our annual newsletter! We are grateful for the opportunities, experiences, and continued support that help make our community so special. This year has been filled with meaningful events, student achievements, and opportunities to celebrate bilingualism, biliteracy, and academic excellence.

**We look forward to sharing more stories, highlights, and accomplishments with you in the future.
Thank you for being part of our journey!**

VAQUERO ROUND UP

FALL 2025 - SPRING 2026

SHARING RESOURCES & OPPORTUNITIES

Throughout Freshman Orientation week, CBLI spoke with incoming students about the services and support we provide on campus. These presentations helped students learn more about how our programs support their academic and personal success. Students also had the opportunity to ask questions, connect with staff, and learn about ways to get involved throughout the year.



WELCOMING NEW VAQUEROS

Throughout the week, our team presented information about CBLI's programs, initiatives, and campus involvement opportunities. Students learned how our department promotes bilingualism, literacy, and student success while discovering ways to participate in future events and activities.

Through conversations, questions, and interactive discussions, we were able to build meaningful connections and help students feel more confident as they prepared for their first semester at UTRGV.

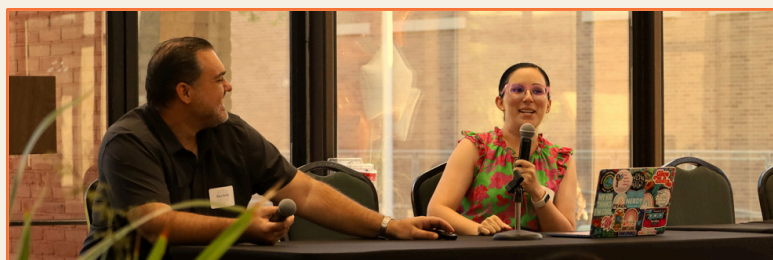


SIMPOSIO DE LA INMERSIÓN BILINGÜE EN EL VALLE DEL RÍO GRANDE

FALL 2025 - SPRING 2026

SUPPORTING BILINGUALISM THROUGH COMMUNITY & DIALOGUE

The Dual Language Bilingual Education in the Rio Grande Valley Symposium brought together educators, parents, UTRGV students, and community members to celebrate and discuss the impact of bilingual education in our region. Throughout the event, attendees engaged in meaningful conversations about the benefits, challenges, and future of dual language programs in the Rio Grande Valley.



INSPIRING CONVERSATIONS ON DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNING

Participants had the opportunity to hear from university faculty, educational leaders, and advocates who shared their experiences and expertise in bilingual education. Sessions explored topics such as the history and philosophy of dual language programs, translanguageing in the classroom, and the importance of supporting multilingual student voices.

SHARING EXPERIENCES AND CELEBRATING BILINGUAL VOICES

The symposium also created space for personal stories and community perspectives through engaging panel discussions. Parents and educators, reflected on how bilingual education shaped their academic journeys, self confidence and professional growth.



DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS

FALL 2025 - SPRING 2026

CELEBRATING TRADITIONS THROUGH ART AND COMMUNITY

Our Día de los Muertos event brought the UTRGV community together to celebrate this meaningful tradition. Attendees created colorful papel picado art, sipped hot chocolate, and shared pan de muerto in a warm and welcoming environment. Guests also had the opportunity to visit a mini altar that highlighted the importance of remembrance, which is at the heart of the celebration.



CELEBRATING TOGETHER

Guests created colorful papel picado art, enjoyed hot chocolate and pan de muerto, and spent time connecting with others in a welcoming environment that celebrated culture, creativity, and community.



LA LLORONA

FALL 2025 - SPRING 2026

AN EVENING OF FOLKLORE, ART, AND REFLECTION: EXPLORING THE LEGEND OF LA LLORONA

In collaboration with the Center of the Borderlands, the "Exploring Borderlands Folklore: La Llorona" event brought together community members for an evening of storytelling, art, and community reflection. Attendees gathered to explore the haunting legend of La Llorona through a short film screening by Silvia Vera (Professor, Writing and Language Studies), an artwork presentation by Dr. José Luis Canó (Assistant Professor, Writing and Language Studies), and an open mic session where participants shared their own stories and writings.

The event created a welcoming space for dialogue, creativity, and connection while celebrating the rich folklore traditions of the borderlands.



EXPLORING BORDERLANDS FOLKLORE THROUGH STORYTELLING

Guests enjoyed an engaging evening featuring a short film, artwork presentation, and open mic storytelling centered around the legend of La Llorona. The event encouraged community connection and cultural appreciation through shared stories and artistic expression.



MOVING

SPRING 2026



WE MOVED TO THE LIBRARY BUILDING!

We are excited to share that our suites have officially moved from the education building (EEDUC) to the library building (ELIBR 1.206) next to the bookstore. This new space provides a more accessible and welcoming environment, allowing for better collaboration, smoother operations, and improved support for CBLI's activities.

We appreciated everyone's flexibility during this transition and look forward to continuing our work from our new location.

MESSAGE FROM OUR PROGRAM MANAGER



Dear UTRGV Community,

As I reflect on my first year serving as Program Manager, it has truly been a pleasure to be part of the Center for Bilingual Learning & Innovation. This past year has been especially meaningful thanks to the dedication and collaboration of the people

who make our work possible. I sincerely thank our faculty, staff, and students, whose commitment to bilingual excellence continues to inspire and shape our initiatives. I am also grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the important work of the Office for Bilingual Integration and the B3 Scholar Seal Program at UTRGV.

As we look ahead to the upcoming year, we invite all faculty, staff, and students to participate in our initiatives, workshops, and programs. We also encourage you to stay connected by joining our email distribution list and following us on social media to receive updates, resources, and announcements about upcoming events. Thank you for being an integral part of our community.

Adriana Nelson, MA

SOCIAL MEDIA



JOIN OUR
DISTRIBUTION LIST



SCAN N' FOLLOW

COMMUNITY EVENTS

SPRING 2026

BROWNSVILLE CISD

CBLI had the opportunity to attend the **Brownsville CISD 8th Annual Emergent Bilinguals Parent Symposium**, where we shared information about the Office for Bilingual Integration's initiatives and resources with parents and families. The event provided a valuable opportunity to connect with the community, discuss the benefits of bilingualism, and highlight programs that support multilingual learners throughout their educational journey. We were grateful to engage with families and celebrate the importance of bilingual education together.



WESLACO ISD

CBLI was also proud to participate in the **Weslaco ISD Parent Conference**, where Dr. Christian Zúñiga and Dr. GoMee Park presented on the benefits of bilingualism and dual language programs. Their presentation highlighted the academic, interpersonal and professional advantages of developing proficiency in multiple languages while encouraging families to support their children's bilingual journey. The event fostered meaningful conversations with parents and reinforced the importance of multilingual education in our communities.



TORNEO DE ORTOGRAFÍA Y BATALLA DE LOS LIBROS

FALL 2025 - SPRING 2026

CELEBRATING BILINGUAL ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

CBLI proudly hosted the 2026 Torneo de Ortografía & Batalla de los Libros, bringing together students from elementary, intermediate, secondary, high school, and university levels to demonstrate their Spanish literacy skills while engaging in friendly competition. The event reflected the dedication of students, educators, and families who work together to promote language development and academic success. Through their preparation and participation, students showcased the value of maintaining and strengthening their bilingual abilities thanks to the educators, and families who support multilingual learning.



SUPPORTING FUTURE BILINGUAL LEADERS

More than a competition, the Torneo de Ortografía & Batalla de los Libros was a celebration of the linguistic richness of our region. Students from various gradelevels came together to share their passion for language, literacy, and learning in two languages. The event highlighted the power of bilingualism to unite communities and create opportunities for future generations. We congratulate all participants for their hard work, dedication, and commitment to academic excellence!

DÍA DEL NIÑO

SPRING 2026

CELEBRATING OUR INNER CHILD

To celebrate Día del Niño, CBLI invited students, faculty, and staff to reconnect with their childhood through a fun-filled day of board games, snacks, and shared memories. Participants enjoyed a welcoming space where they could relax, play, and reflect on the experiences that shaped them growing up.

As part of the celebration, attendees were encouraged to write down and share their favorite childhood memories. From cherished family traditions to unforgettable moments with friends, the activity sparked meaningful conversations while reminding us of the joy, creativity, and wonder of childhood.



HONORING CHILDREN WORLDWIDE

Children's Day is internationally celebrated on November 20, a date recognized by the United Nations and UNICEF to promote children's rights, well-being, education, and happiness around the world. This special day highlights the importance of helping children to grow and thrive. However, many countries celebrate Children's Day on different dates throughout the year, each with its own unique customs, traditions, and activities that reflect their culture and values.

COMING SOON!



Save the Date!

April 3, 2027

UTRGV

Edinburg Campus

THANK YOU!

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to everyone who visited and supported the Center for Bilingual Learning & Innovation (CBLI) during the **2025-2026 academic year**.

To our students, faculty, staff, and community members, thank you for participating in our events, programs, and activities throughout the year. Your enthusiasm, engagement, and support helped make each experience meaningful, successful, and memorable. We truly enjoyed connecting with you and sharing opportunities that promote learning, collaboration, and innovation.

As we conclude another wonderful academic year, we look forward to welcoming you back and continuing our work together through exciting new initiatives, events, and opportunities in the year ahead.

We wish you a relaxing, enjoyable, and safe summer break. Thank you for being part of the CBLI community, and we cannot wait to see you again soon!

¡HASTA PRONTO!

