

UTRGV™



UT Health
Rio Grande Valley™

College of Health Professions

Excellence Awards
Ceremony

2025



Order of Events

Musical Performance

UTRGV Jazz Ensemble

Deans's Welcome

Dr. Michael Lehker

Staff Years of Service

Presenter – Sandra Guajardo

Staff Excellence

Presenter – Sandra Guajardo

Student Excellence

Presenter – Dr. Lin Wang

Faculty Excellence

Community Engagement - Christopher Ledingham

Research Presenter – Dr. Murat Karabulut

Teaching Student Success - Dr. Wang

Innovation and Scholarship Teaching - Dr. Wang

Distinguished Excellence Awards

Presenter – Dr. Christopher Ledingham

Staff

Student

Faculty

Group Photo

Reception



College of Health Professions

Leadership

Dean/Associate Deans

Dr. Michael Lehker
Dean

Dr. Christopher Ledingham
Senior Associate Dean

Dr. Murat Karabulut
Associate Dean

Dr. Lin Wang
Associate Dean

Ms. Sandra Guajardo
College Administrator

Department Chairs/Directors

Mr. Fidencio Mercado
School of Rehabilitation Service & Counseling

Dr. Ruth Crutchfield
Department of Communication Disorders

Dr. Saraswathy Nair
Department of Health & Biomedical Sciences

Dr. Christopher Ledingham
Department of Health Sciences

Dr. Daniela Gill
Department of Medical Laboratory Sciences

Ms. Rachel Villarreal
Department of Nutrition & Dietetics

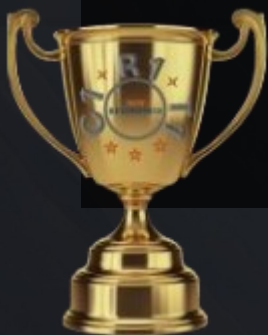
Dr. John Luna
Department of Occupational Therapy

Dr. Mark Lester
Department of Physical Therapy

Dr. Juliann Garza
Department of Physician Assistant Studies

Dr. Murat Karabulut
Department of Health & Human Performance

Director Doreen D. Garza
Border Health Office



Staff Excellence Awards

Years of Service Awards

Sylvia Leal	30 years
Martin Pena	25 years
Tammy Munoz	20 years
Bianca Farrell	12 years
Victoria Hernandez	11 years
Adriana Vela Roman	10 years
Elva De Luna	5 years
Noemi Martinez	5 years

Staff Excellence Awards

Carlos Ayala, *Department of Health & Human Performance*
Bianca Farrell, *Department of Health Sciences*
Lori Garza, *Department of Occupational Therapy*
Ericka Hernandez, *School of Rehabilitation Services & Counseling*
Esmeralda Herrera, *Department of Nutrition & Dietetics*
Karina Ibarra, *Department of Nutrition & Dietetics*
Maria Lazo, *Department of Health & Biomedical Sciences*
Noemi Martinez, *Department of Communication Disorders*
Armando Ortiz, *Department of Health & Biomedical Sciences*
Elizabeth Resendez, *Department of Health & Biomedical Sciences*
Jennifer Ross, *Department of Occupational Therapy*



Student Excellence Awards

School of Rehabilitation Services & Counseling

Graduate

Rebecca Gonzalez, *Rehabilitation Counseling, (Doctoral) Research*
Cynthia Luna, *Rehabilitation Counseling, (Doctoral) Academic Excellence*
Miguel Reyes, *Rehabilitation Counseling, (Doctoral) Community Engagement*
Violet C. Soto, *Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling, (Masters) Academic Excellence*

Department of Communication Disorders

Graduate

Edessa Reyes, *Communication Sciences & Disorders, (Masters) Research*

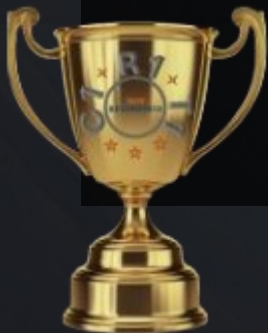
Undergraduate

Ashely Gomez, *American Sign Language Interpretation, Community Engagement*
Joeli Robledo, *Communication Sciences & Disorders, Academic Excellence*
Jade Rodriguez, *Communication Sciences & Disorders, Community Engagement*

Department of Health & Biomedical Sciences

Undergraduate

Angel Rodriguez, *Biomedical Sciences, Research*
Alejandro Villanueva, *Biomedical Sciences, Academic Excellence*
Martha Villanueva, *Biomedical Sciences, Community Engagement*



Student Excellence Awards

Department of Health & Human Performance

Graduate

Jabeth Azpeitia Aranda, *Exercise Science, (Masters), Academic Excellence*

Bryan Mixumi, *Exercise Science, (Masters), Research*

Mary Galindo, *Health Science - Health Professions Education and Technology
(Masters), Academic Excellence*

Undergraduate

Dreida Villegas, *Exercise Science, Community Engagement*

Department of Health Sciences

Undergraduate

Jordan Cottrell, *Integrated Health Sciences, Academic Excellence*

Grace Ochoa, *Integrated Health Sciences, Community Engagement*

Department of Medical Laboratory Sciences

Undergraduate

Daniel Martinez Jr, *Medical Laboratory Sciences, Community Engagement*

Raisha Velarde, *Medical Laboratory Sciences, Academic Excellence*



Student Excellence Awards

Department of Nutrition & Dietetics

Graduate

Sophia Alvarado, *Dietetics, (Masters) Community Engagement*

Dania Garza, *Dietetics, (Masters) Academic Excellence*

Undergraduate

Yozeline Guerrero, *Nutritional Sciences, Research*

Carmela R. Poja, *Nutritional Sciences, Community Engagement*

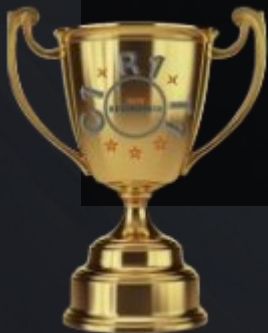
Department of Physician Assistant

Graduate

Michael Aguilar, *Physician Assistant Studies, (Masters) Research*

Jenna Brown, *Physician Assistant Studies, (Masters) Community Engagement*

Jesus Armando Gonzalez, *Physician Assistant Studies, (Masters) Academic Excellence*



Faculty Excellence Awards

Community Engagement Award

Maria T. Castaneda, *Department of Health & Biomedical Sciences*
Nathalie Chacon de Alvarez, *Department of Physician Assistant*
Esperanza Garza, *Department of Nutrition & Dietetics*
Janet Martinez, *Department of Health & Human Performance*
Elizabeth Olatunbosun, *Department of Communication Disorders*

Research Impact on External Funding Award

Upal Roy, *Department of Health & Biomedical Sciences*
Mengxuan Wu, *Department of Communication Disorders*

Research Impact on Discipline Award

Wen-Pin Chang, *Department of Occupational Therapy*
Juanito Gonzalez, *Department of Health & Human Performance*
Alejandro Lopez-Juarez, *Department of Health & Biomedical Sciences*
Kim L. Nguyen-Finn, *School of Rehabilitation Services & Counseling*



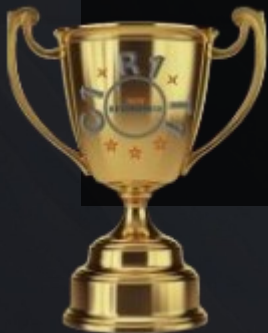
Faculty Excellence Awards

Student Success Award

Chelsea Alamilla, Department of Nutrition & Dietetics
Mary Barrientos, Department of Communication Disorders
Roy Chen, School of Rehabilitation Services & Counseling
Melissa Gonzalez, Department of Health Sciences
Virginia Miller, Department of Medical Laboratory Sciences
Thelma Ochoa, Department of Occupational Therapy
Guillermo E. Perez, Department of Health & Human Performance
Hugo Rodriguez, Department of Health & Biomedical Sciences
Cassandra Whetstone, Department of Physician Assistant

Teaching Innovation & Scholarship Award

Roel Garcia, Department of Occupational Therapy
Christina Gonzales, Department of Physician Assistant
Ulku Karabulut, Department of Health & Human Performance
Maria Quinones-Pena, Department of Health & Biomedical Sciences
Lisa Salinas, Department of Nutrition & Dietetics
Cristal Villarreal, Department of Medical Laboratory Sciences
Marivel Willingham, Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders



Special Acknowledgment

COHP Trailblazers Advisory Council

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Edwin Estevez, Chair
Value Based Care Innovations

Aissa Garza , Vice Chair
Forensic Accounting & Litigation Firm

Emma Maria Montes-Ewing , Secretary
South Texas Health System McAllen

Eliza Alvarado
Region One

Wally Cantu
Valley Aids Council

Kane Dawson
Mission Regional Medical Center

Dr. Lydia Aguilera
Community

Lance Ames
Edinburg Regional Medical

Francisco Almaraz
Texas Workforce Solutions

Leslie Bingham
Valley Baptist-Brownsville

Esmeralda Guajardo
Cameron County Public Health

Joe Ochoa
Ochoa Pharmacy

Rene Lopez
Knapp Medical Center

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Dairen Sarmiento Rangel (F)
Hidalgo County Health & Human
Services

Michael Cline
Valley Baptist Health System

Patty Rosenlund
Easter Seals

Onuwa Terry
Terry Physical Therapy

Laura Disque
Rio Grande Regional Hospital

Joe Hernandez
Valley Regional Medical Center



Special Acknowledgment

To All the Faculty and Staff that made
this night possible,
Thank you

Dean/Associate Deans

Dr. Michael Lehker
Dean

Dr. Christopher Ledingham
Senior Associate Dean

Dr. Murat Karabulut
Associate Dean

Dr. Lin Wang
Associate Dean

Ms. Sandra Guajardo
College Administrator

STAFF

Dominga Delgado
Administrative Assistant I

Carmen Cisneros
Accountant II

Luisa Guerra
Administrative Analyst

Victoria Hernandez
Administrative Associate

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Grant Proposal Writer

Romeo Ortega Jr
Administrative Assistant I

Janey Pizana
Administrative Coord

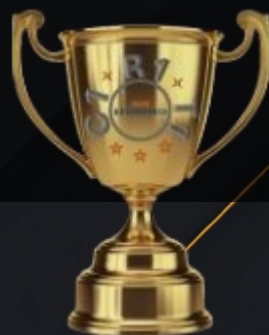
Victoria Medellin
Administrative Assistant I

Paula Delgado
Administrative Assistant I



On behalf of the College of Health Professions

We would like to extend our warmest welcome and heartfelt thanks to our guests for your attendance and support in recognizing our student , staff, and faculty.



Support the College of Health Professions Donate Today

Your support transforms lives.

Every contribution helps the College of Health Professions empower our students, faculty, and staff to strengthen the health and well-being of the Rio Grande Valley and beyond.

Together, we're shaping the future of healthcare, one student, one discovery, one act of generosity at a time.

Scan the QR code and select the College of Health Professions as the recipient of your gift.

