

ENGAGE

Transforming Lives Through Engaged Partnerships

DIVISION OF GOVERNMENTAL & COMMUNITY RELATIONS NEWSLETTER



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

Veronica Gonzales

Veronica Gonzales,
Vice President for Governmental &
Community Relations

WELCOME TO ENGAGE

Community engagement is one of UTRGV's five core priorities.

While we all have different ideas of what community engagement means, at UTRGV, we want to foster long-term community-university relationships that enrich learning, research and teaching while addressing critical societal issues and contributing to the public good.

We do this via community and outreach programs like HESTEC, Science Bowl, Science and Engineering Fair, FESTIBA and many other programs.

We work with nonprofits to help strengthen the nonprofit sector to increase services in the RGV while providing our students and faculty community-based learning and research opportunities.

We develop initiatives like "Vaqueros Vote" to stress the importance of voting to our UTRGV family, get them registered and then out to vote.

We help coordinate health promotion events to increase access to care and educate

the community on the importance of preventive care.

We facilitate and advance public discourse around issues of local, regional, national and global significance with initiatives such as our distinguished speaker series and our religious leaders' dialogue.

The list goes on and on, but the common denominator is ENGAGEMENT!

While we don't have a solution to all the problems our Valley faces, we are fortunate to have students and experts in various disciplines who stand ready, willing and able to work with our Valley residents to discover and create solutions to some of our more pressing problems and to create and advance opportunities.

Each and every day, we continue to explore how UTRGV can become further engaged with our communities to provide positive transformation. We welcome your thoughts. Share your ideas with us at vpgrc@utrgv.edu.

We look forward to working together towards a terrific 2017!



Richard Sanchez

Associate Vice President
for Governmental Relations

What do you like about your job?

Working with a fantastic team to build a new university on a campus filled with exciting ideas, challenging assignments, and pride to make UTRGV a respected brand.

What drives you in your job?

Being in a position to benefit our students by helping to provide the infrastructure and tools they need to succeed in school and in the workforce.

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

UTRGV will be a driving force for the economy in the Rio Grande Valley, in and of itself being an economic engine, and in the business of providing a well-educated and well-trained workforce for the region.

What do you do to relax?

Fix things, build furniture, hike, drive, and spend time with my girls.

**CONNECT WITH
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UTRGV'S **LEGISLATIVE** AGENDA

The 85th legislative session began on Jan. 10 and the Governmental Relations team is hard at work to ensure that legislators are aware and educated about UTRGV's priorities and funding needs. Prior to the January 10 beginning of the session, the GR team developed and vetted its legislative agenda with the local legislative delegation and community stakeholders in the region. Adequate resources are required to operate UTRGV's six Valley-wide locations, expand programs to meet an ever growing demand, and to achieve student success at all levels.

This legislative session will be challenging. There are an enormous number of requests to the Legislature, while less revenue is available to meet those needs. As a new university, it is critical for the state and other stakeholders to provide resources as programs are expanding and taking shape. State funding is a critical component that will allow

the University to reach its goals and fulfill its mission. Below are some of the requests and priorities for UTRGV.

TOP PRIORITIES

- **SCHOOL OF MEDICINE – EXCEPTIONAL ITEM FUNDING**

\$10 MILLION FOR THE BIENNIUM / 22 FTES

- **HRI FUNDING for the School of Medicine**

EXCEPTIONAL ITEM FUNDING REQUESTS

- **BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES RESEARCH**

\$8 MILLION FOR THE BIENNIUM / 10 FTES

- **COASTAL STUDIES RESEARCH CENTER**

\$6 MILLION FOR THE BIENNIUM / 9 FTES

- **BUSINESS INCUBATOR CENTER IN WESLACO**

\$900,000 FOR THE BIENNIUM / 5 FTES

- **B3 (BILINGUAL, BICLUTURAL, BI-LITERATE) INSTITUTE**

\$1 MILLION FOR THE BIENNIUM / 6.9 FTES

LEGISLATORS **TO TOUR** UTRGV



Three of the Valley's state legislators shared issues facing the Texas Legislature with Texas Tribune co-founder and CEO Evan Smith at a forum hosted by UTRGV last fall.

The Legislative Tour of the Rio Grande Valley will include a stop at the UTRGV Brownsville campus. Organized by the RGV Partnership, the four-day tour will take place from Jan. 26-29. Lawmakers from around the state will have the opportunity to see firsthand the unique challenges and opportunities of the region, learn about the area and issues impacting the Valley and hear from area leaders. Now in its 41st year, the tour alternates every two years between the upper and lower Rio Grande Valley.

Ten days later, Valley leaders will travel north for RGV Day in Austin on Feb. 7 at the Texas Capitol. The event coincides with the biennial legislative session and allows community representatives to meet with state lawmakers and share the region's legislative agenda.

VAQUEROS **VOTE**

The "Vaqueros Vote" Initiative is a nonpartisan coalition of UTRGV faculty, staff, students and community organizations.

Under the direction of Veronica De La Garza, Director of State and Local Governmental Relations, the campus community met weekly with representatives from the county elections offices and organizations to help get the message out to "Register, Educate and Get Out the Vote!"

UTRGV hosted early voting sites on both the Edinburg and Brownsville campuses.

6,842 took part in early voting. The figures were well above voting figures for the university's early voting sites in the 2012 general election.

To encourage South Texans, especially the younger generation to cast their votes, two campus events were held. Texas Secretary of State Carlos Cascos brought his statewide bilingual voting initiative, VoteTexas to UTRGV's Edinburg Campus. In addition, UTRGV students, faculty and staff were also invited to a pizza party to help get the vote out.

RAISING AWARENESS FOR SCIENCE AND MATH

The month of February will be busy with several events geared toward Science, Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education and career awareness.

About 200 students are expected to participate in the Regional Science Bowl competition on Saturday, Feb. 4 on the UTRGV Edinburg Campus. The students represent middle schools and high schools from throughout South Texas. The event is a fast-paced question-and-answer tournament designed to test student's knowledge in biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, astronomy, earth science and general science. The first-place team will advance to the National Science Bowl, which will be held in Washington, D.C., April 27-May 1.

On Saturday, Feb. 11, about 700 middle and high school students from throughout South Texas will converge on the UTRGV Brownsville Campus to participate in the Rio Grande Valley Regional Science and Engineering Fair for a chance to advance to the state and international level competitions. Now in its 57th year, the RGV



Ana Laura Treviño, the 2016 Grand Champion of the RGV Regional Science and Engineering Fair, explains her project to Dr. Michael Zolensky from NASA Johnson Space Center.

Regional Science and Engineering Fair supports students' interests in 22 different science-related fields of study.

MathCounts, designed to excite and challenge middle school students, will take place Feb. 17 on the UTRGV Edinburg Campus. The program offers four levels of competition featuring both a rigorous written competition and a fast-paced oral competition. More than 100 students will participate.

HESTEC EARNS "BRIGHT SPOT IN HISPANIC EDUCATION" AWARD



At HESTEC Week 2016, Alejandra Ceja, executive director of the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, presented U.S. Rep. Rubén Hinojosa and UTRGV President Guy Bailey with an award recognizing HESTEC as a 2015 "National Bright Spot in Hispanic Education."

For the second year in a row, HESTEC, the Hispanic Engineering, Science, and Technology Week, has been recognized as a 2016 "Bright Spot in Hispanic Education" by the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics.

HESTEC was selected for its work in promoting STEM careers and reaching out to Latinas.

"We are thrilled to receive this honor, especially this year, as we marked an important milestone, the 15th anniversary of HESTEC," said Velinda Reyes, Assistant Vice President for Community Programs and Operations. "We thank all our partners for their support in helping to make HESTEC a success."

HESTEC will be part of a national online catalog of more than 230 programs that invest in key education priorities for Hispanics.

UTRGV HOSTS WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE

The Brownsville campus served as host for the Leading with Authenticity Conference organized by the South Texas Women Leading Government chapter. More than 100 women leaders from across the state and country took part in the one-day conference.

The speakers included Veronica Gonzales, UTRGV Vice President for Governmental and Community Relations, who welcomed the participants on behalf of the university, and Dr. Aida Hurtado, professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Hurtado,

who grew up in McAllen, is the co-author of the book "Beyond Machismo: Intersectional Latino Masculinities."

The conference was geared toward women in public service careers who wanted to enhance their leadership abilities and network with other successful professional women in government. Several UTRGV students also took part in the conference.

MEET THE TEAM



Velinda Reyes

Assistant Vice President
for Community Programs
and Operations

What do you like about your job?

I enjoy being able to work with an amazing team that is truly interested in helping students obtain exposure to educational opportunities that will inspire them to achieve success.

What drives you in your job?

I am driven by several personal values of serving our stakeholders in order to empower development and success in others.

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

I envision a UTRGV that is highly regarded as the university of choice by students in the Rio Grande Valley and across the country.

What do you do to relax?

I like to spend time with my family and close friends barbecuing and enjoying a nice evening outdoors. My alone time is reading a book, gardening or watching Lifetime Movies.

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MEET THE TEAM

**Cristina Trejo-Vasquez**

Assistant Vice President
for Community Engagement
and Assessment

What do you like about your job?

I like the fact that my job is focused on helping create an institutional culture that encourages, supports and rewards community engagement campus-wide.

What drives you in your job?

I am driven by being part of a highly professional and collaborative team with a vision and commitment to service.

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

UTRGV will succeed in obtaining the Carnegie Foundation Community Engagement Classification in 2020. The classification is awarded to universities that meet core indicators of a community engaged university.

What do you do to relax?

I enjoy reading and spending time with family.

CONNECT WITH**CRISTINA TREJO****956-665-3281****CRISTINA.TREJO@UTRGV.EDU****THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION****ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION AWARDS GRANT TO UTRGV**

The Office of Community Engagement and Assessment was awarded a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a private philanthropy based in Baltimore, Maryland. The grant will help support the work of advancing and institutionalizing community engagement principles at UTRGV. In partnership with and informed by local constituency groups, the grant will help build UTRGV's institutional systems to continue strengthening the social capital of this region. While UTRGV's primary mission is to provide

educational opportunities, by intentionally and effectively leveraging its resources it also serves as a catalyst for economic and community development.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation helps federal agencies, states, counties, cities and neighborhoods to create more innovative, cost-effective responses to the issues that negatively affect children: poverty, unnecessary disconnection from family and communities with limited access to opportunity.

**CONNECTING AGENCIES
WITH VOLUNTEERS**

Affordable Homes of South Texas is one of 97 agencies that volunteers will help on Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service on Jan. 16.

Every year on Martin Luther King Day, UTRGV students, faculty and staff volunteer across the Rio Grande Valley to honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The Office of Community Engagement and Assessment, in partnership with the Office of Student Involvement, registered 97 nonprofit organizations as host sites for MLK 2017. Over 1000 opportunities for students, faculty and staff to spend the day volunteering were secured. It takes months of planning and coordination to reach out to the different agencies and to register volunteers for this very important day of service.

"We thank the campus community for embracing this federal holiday as a 'day on' rather than a 'day off'" said Cristina Trejo, Assistant Vice President for Community Engagement and Assessment.

**A CONVERSATION WITH
RELIGIOUS LEADERS AT UTRGV**

The Edinburg campus was the site for an interfaith dialogue that included Bishop Daniel Flores of the Catholic Diocese of Brownsville, Imam Noor Ahmad from Umar Al-Farooq Mosque, and Rabbi Claudio Kogan of Temple Emanuel.

The Office of Community Engagement and Assessment collaborated with All Faiths United, an organization created by religious leaders to create unity among different faiths.

Students representing the three faiths posed questions about maintaining their faiths in secular environments.



Bishop Daniel Flores of the Catholic Diocese of Brownsville speaks at "Faith & The Times We Live In", an interfaith dialogue hosted by UTRGV last fall.

The purpose of the interfaith dialogue was to build bridges that foster religious unity and understanding among faith traditions, embrace diversity, and bring about positive influence on society.



THE HEALING ARTS TO HIGHLIGHT **FESTIBA**

In celebration of the opening of the UTRGV School of Medicine, which welcomed 55 students into its charter class, the theme and focus for FESTIBA 2017 is "The Healing Arts: Arte y Salud – Una Buena Alianza!"

FESTIBA, The Festival of International Books and Arts, will explore the positive impact of the healing arts on good health by promoting literacy and appreciation for reading and celebrating the healing arts.

"Healing is more than the curing or absence of disease — it's about the heart, the mind and the spirit," said Dr. Dahlia Guerra, Assistant Vice President of Public Art. "Traditional healing arts include music, art, dance, creative writing, and drama."

FESTIBA will take place from Feb. 27 to March 5 with events at the Edinburg and Brownville campuses. Please visit <http://www.utrgv.edu/festiba/> for information.

LITERACY TO HIGHLIGHT **SYMPOSIUM**

The Office of Public Art is proud to collaborate with the South Texas Literacy Symposium and Literacy Texas to host a regional symposium on Saturday, Jan. 21 at the UTRGV Edinburg campus.

The symposium is geared to those who work in the field of literacy. Professional development opportunities and training topics that promote adult literacy awareness and initiatives will be the focus of the symposium.

Literacy Texas is the statewide literacy coalition connecting and equipping literacy providers through resources, training, networking, and advocacy. The South Texas Literacy Coalition is a nonprofit organization that serves as a resource to literacy providers through the facilitation of professional development opportunities.

For information, please go to <http://literacytexas.org/events/symposiums/>.

UTRGV **ENRICHES LIVES** ACROSS THE VALLEY

World class guest artists and chamber music performers from throughout the nation will descend on the Edinburg campus on Wednesday, March 8 for Music on the Border The International Chamber Music Festival and Competition. The event is part of the PAC Distinguished Artists Series and is made possible by a gift from the Brown Foundation. Please visit utrgv.edu/OfficeofPublicArt for information.

Fall 2016 also provided unforgettable cultural experiences for children and adults with concerts and performances. Since it opened last fall at the Visitors Center on the Edinburg campus, more than 20,000 students and the public visited the exhibit, A T. Rex Named Sue. The Distinguished Artists Series also featured the acclaimed Ballet San Antonio. There were also workshops, masterclasses, and performances also made possible by the Brown Foundation.



The Office of Public Art together with the College of Fine Arts share the joy of music, dance and theater with concerts and performances year-round like the Bravo Opera Company's production of "Hansel and Gretel".

On the Brownsville campus, the Bravo Opera Company delighted hundreds of elementary school children with Engelbert Humperdinck's "Hansel and Gretel". The students performed with the theme of Día de los Muertos woven into Grimm's fairy tale. More than 400 students also took part in the workshop Enhancing Mariachi Education Across the RGV.

MEET THE TEAM



Dr. Dahlia Guerra

Assistant Vice President
for Public Art

What do you like about your job?

I am very happy for the opportunity to work with our Division and the College of Fine Arts to highlight the visual and performing arts on our campuses, promote our very talented students and faculty, showcase our beautiful performance venues, and enhance the cultural and intellectual environment of the Rio Grande Valley.

What drives you in your job?

I am passionate about promoting the value of the creative arts in education. I strive to inspire pride in the cultural arts and heritage of the Hispanic/Latino population. I believe that the arts empower our students to level the "learning field" across socio-economic boundaries, as they add to their overall academic achievement and school success.

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

I look forward to an academic environment that continues to embrace the arts with programs that enhance the cultural and intellectual growth of our student body and community.

What do you do to relax?

I love to make music, whether it is classical or folkloric. I am immediately transported to a happy place.

CONNECT WITH

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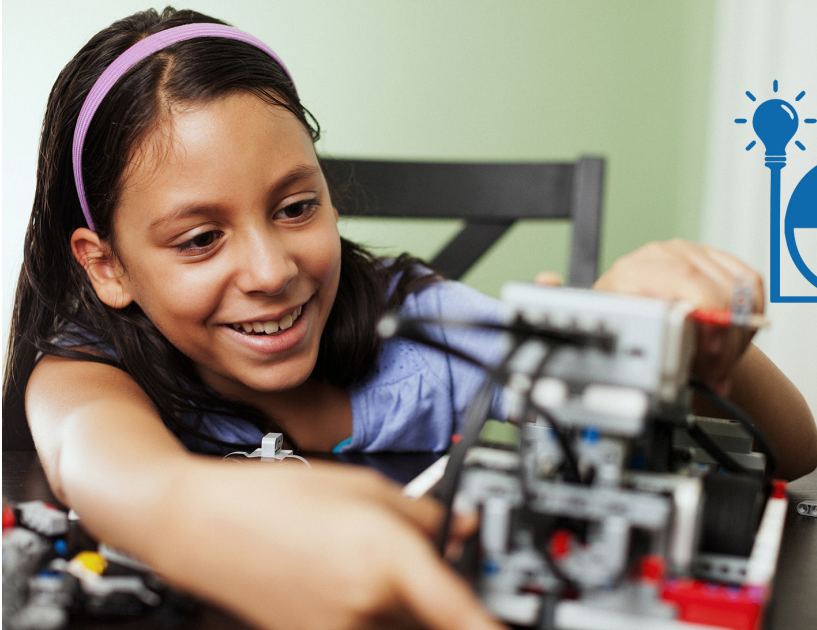


February 4, 2017
UTRGV Edinburg Campus
8 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.



57TH ANNUAL RGV
Regional Science
& Engineering Fair

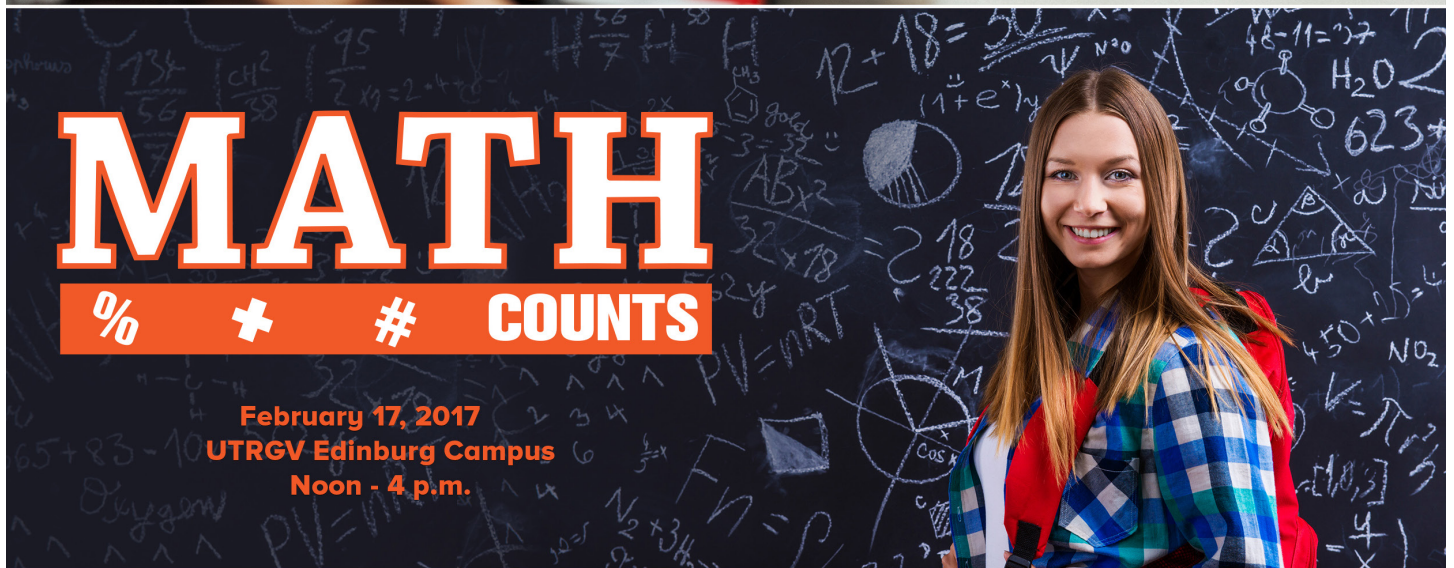
February 10-11, 2017
UTRGV Brownsville Campus
Friday: 4 - 7 p.m.
Saturday: 7:30 a.m. - 7 p.m.



MATH

% + # COUNTS

February 17, 2017
UTRGV Edinburg Campus
Noon - 4 p.m.



The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley is proud to join the celebration and traditions of Brownsville's Charro Days with its first

CHARREADA UPDATE UTRGV

Thursday, February 25, 2016 • 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.
UTRGV Brownsville Campus • Student Union Lawn



Featuring:

- Lots of fun activities
- Live music and entertainment
- Food booths by UTRGV student organizations
- A special appearance by “Mr. Amigo”–Mexican actress/singer Itatí Cantoral

UTRGV student organizations and departments interested in participating, contact Student Involvement at 956-882-5111.
For event information, contact the Office of Community Relations at 956-665-3361 or 956-882-5058.

2016-17 Patron of the Arts

Premiere performances valley-wide

For more information about Patron of the Arts at UTRGV, visit paton.utrgv.edu.



The University of Texas
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