

UTRGV Robert C. Vackar College of
Business & Entrepreneurship

SPRING/SUMMER 2026

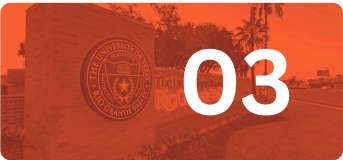
VACKAR CHRONICLES

Vol. 8
Issue 2

REVEAL
THE
FUTURE

Welcome to the Spring/Summer 2026 RCVCOBE Newsletter

As another academic year closes, we celebrate the achievements of our students, faculty, staff, and alumni, alongside key college initiatives. Thank you for your continued support.



Faculty Publications
Elite and High Impact Faculty Publications



Faculty & Staff Success
Spotlighting faculty and staff achievements



Center for Border and Economic Studies
Highlighting the publications and activities



PH.D. Program
Highlighting PH.D. students and alumni



Graduate Program
Highlighting graduate students and awards



News Around the College
Spotlighting collegewide events and department activity



Student Success
Showcasing CIC, VOICE and student organizations

Message
From the Dean

Reflecting on another outstanding academic year, I am proud of all that the RCVCOBE community has achieved together. Our students excelled academically and beyond the classroom, while faculty advanced research and scholarship and staff supported our mission with dedication. This Spring and Summer brought important milestones, including student achievements, faculty recognitions, and new initiatives strengthening academic programs and community partnerships. These accomplishments reflect the talent, collaboration, and commitment that define RCVCOBE. Looking ahead, I remain inspired by our students, faculty, and staff and confident this momentum will lead to continued success and opportunity. Thank you for your support and for being part of our journey. I look forward to all that lies ahead.

Javier Jota



FACULTY PUBLICATIONS **Elite Impact**

Click publication titles to view the abstract



Can Correction Messages Reduce the Spread of Fake News on Social Media? The Impact of Information Updates on the Effectiveness of Corrections

Journal of Management Information Systems

Dr. Kelvin K. King
Doctoral Alumnus, Information Systems

Dr. Diego Escobari
Professor, Economics



Beyond Words: Unraveling the Influence of Rhetorical Structure on Information Sharing and Backers' Support in Crowdfunding

Journal of the Association for Information Systems

Dr. Ehsan Ghasemi
Assistant Professor, Information Systems



Food for Thought: A Review of Food in Organizational Contexts

Journal of Organizational Behavior

Dr. Michael J. Matthews
Assistant Professor, Management



Crime, Economic Forces, and Trucks Crossings in the U.S.-Mexico Border Region

Regional Studies

Dr. André V. Mollick
Associate Dean for Research and Faculty; Professor, Economics

FACULTY PUBLICATIONS High Impact

Click publication titles to view the abstract

Facilitating or Constraining: The Influence of Governmental and Private Venture Capital on ESG Performance
Journal of Business Research
Dr. Wanrong Hou

Mitigating the Effects of CEO Overconfidence: A Group Information Processing Perspective
Corporate Governance: An Intl. Review
Dr. Wanrong Hou

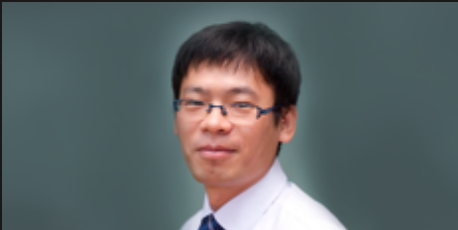
A Machine Learning Approach to Stochastic Frontier Modeling
Journal of Productivity Analysis
Dr. Levent Kutlu
Dr. Xi Mao

Decision-Tree Augmented Stochastic Frontier Analysis
Economics Letters
Dr. Levent Kutlu
Dr. Xi Mao

Social Media Engagement and Resource Gain Spirals: A Mixed-Methods Study of Digital Empowerment Among Marginalized Caregivers
Information & Management
Dr. Murad Moqbel

The Paradoxical Impact of Smartphone Addiction on Innovative Performance: A Conservation of Resources Theory Perspective
Information Systems Frontiers
Dr. Murad Moqbel

From Pixels to Purchase: A Study of Value Co-Creation in AR/VR Environments
Electronic Commerce Research
Dr. Hong Qin
Fardad Faress



Dr. Wanrong Hou
Professor, Management



Dr. Levent Kutlu
Associate Professor, Economics



Dr. Xi Mao
Assistant Professor, Economics



Dr. Murad Moqbel
Associate Professor, Information Systems



Dr. Hong Qin
Professor, Information Systems



Fardad Faress
Doctoral Student, Information Systems

FACULTY PUBLICATIONS **High Impact**

Click publication titles to view the abstract

Proactive and Reactive Motivation for Coopetition and the Role of Partner Trust: A Quantitative Study of Small Business Ventures
Small Business Economics

Dr. Leon Schjoedt
Dr. Mark Kroll
Krittaya Sangboon

A Commentary on Hong and Thoroughgood (2025): Exclusion Signaling as a Complementary Mechanism in Third-Party Reactions to Witnessed Gratitude
Group & Organization Management

Farzaneh Fouladi
Dr. Mai P. Trinh

A Values-Based Model of Contempt at Work: Elicitation and Functional Outcomes
Journal of Managerial Psychology

Dr. Alejandro Miranda Reina
Dr. Jennifer Welbourne

Resignation Typology and its Impact on Entrepreneurial Intention and Action
Entrepreneurship Research Journal

Dr. Shuaijun Zhang
Dr. Wanrong Hou
Dr. Sibin Wu



Dr. Leon Schjoedt
Assistant Professor, Intl. Business & Entrepreneurship



Dr. Mark Kroll
Professor, Intl. Business & Entrepreneurship



Krittaya Sangboon
Doctoral Student, Accounting



Farzaneh Fouladi
Doctoral Student, Management



Dr. Mai P. Trinh
Assistant Professor, Management



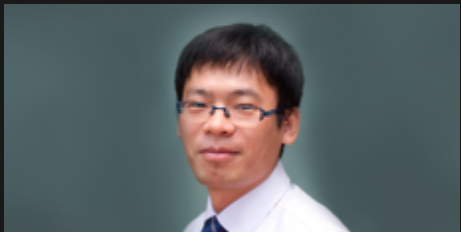
Dr. Alejandro Miranda Reina
Doctoral Alumni, Management



Dr. Jennifer Welbourne
Associate Professor, Management



Dr. Shuaijun Zhang
Doctoral Alumnus, Management



Dr. Wanrong Hou
Professor, Management



Dr. Sibin Wu
Professor, Management



Thirty Years of Vision: Honoring Dr. F.J. Brewerton

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley owes much of its foundational academic success to the visionary leadership of Dr. F.J. Brewerton. When he arrived in 1981 at what was then Pan American University, he accepted the role of Dean of the College of Business Administration with a singular goal: to transform a local business school into a nationally recognized institution.

Over a remarkable 30-year career, Dr. Brewerton navigated the rigorous path to American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business accreditation. This was a landmark achievement that positioned the college as the first of its kind with a predominantly Hispanic enrollment to receive such recognition. His influence extended far beyond administration, as he founded the Center for Entrepreneurship and Economic Development, served as a dedicated professor of management for 18 years, and championed the university's first endowed professorship.

Now serving as professor emeritus, Dr. Brewerton's relationship with the university has evolved into a meaningful philanthropic partnership. This transition is a natural extension of his life's work. His history of building the university's academic reputation has seamlessly paved the way for his current support of student futures. As a reflection of this commitment, the Rotary Club, in collaboration with Dr. Brewerton, established the Dean F.J. Brewerton Rotary Leadership Scholarship in the College of Business Administration in 2013 to provide ongoing support for student success.

It is rare to have a leader who helped shape the very halls of an institution continue to advocate for its mission so personally. His ongoing support highlights his belief in the power of education and his enduring pride in the students who will go on to shape their own communities.



Faculty Spotlight

Michael Flores, Marketing Rockstar

Michael Flores is a Lecturer in Marketing at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and serves as Graduate Program Coordinator for the Master of Science in Marketing program in the Robert C. Vackar College of Business and Entrepreneurship. His teaching focuses on marketing strategy, digital marketing, AI in marketing, personal branding, hospitality, and destination marketing, with an emphasis on applied learning and career-ready student outcomes.

Professor Flores is advancing marketing education through initiatives focused on emerging technology and global learning. He has developed and taught AI-focused marketing courses that prepare students to use generative AI responsibly for customer insights, content creation, campaign development, and strategic decision-making, equipping future marketers with skills for an evolving digital landscape.

His work emphasizes both practical skill development and ethical awareness, preparing students to understand how AI is reshaping the marketing profession.

He is also actively involved in expanding study abroad opportunities for business students. As part of this work, he is leading and supporting international programs that allow students to study marketing, hospitality, entrepreneurship, sustainability, and destination branding in global contexts. These programs are designed to help students build cultural awareness, professional confidence, and a stronger understanding of how marketing operates across different countries and communities.

Through his teaching, program development, and service, Professor Flores is committed to creating meaningful learning experiences and expanding access to resources that support student success. He also serves as an Affordability Advocate for the Textbook Affordability Project, supporting efforts to make course materials more accessible and affordable for students. His work reflects a broader commitment to preparing students for success in a rapidly changing business environment.

Chong Hong Tan
Systems Analyst II



Staff Spotlight

Behind the Screens with Chong Hong Tan

A motivated lifelong learner, Chong enjoys embracing new challenges, helping others, and making a positive impact within the community. After earning an Electrical Engineering degree from UTPA, he joined the Robert C. Vackar

College of Business & Entrepreneurship as a Computer Specialist. One of the most rewarding aspects of his role is connecting with new people and providing solutions that help make their work easier and more efficient.

Off the Clock

What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

I enjoy exploring new technologies and keeping up with the latest trends. When I need to unplug, gardening provides a relaxing change of pace.

What is the most helpful advice you've ever received?

One of the most valuable pieces of advice I've received is simple: "Work hard, stay humble."

What is one place you would love to visit?

I would love to visit Tibet to experience its breathtaking landscapes, rich culture, and peaceful atmosphere.

If you won the lottery, what would you do?

I'd spend more quality time with my family and friends, enjoying life's special moments with the people who matter most.

If you could instantly master one new skill, what would it be?

Artificial Intelligence, hands down. Things move fast — I want to keep up.

What was the last movie you watched?

Extraction 2—for its intense action and suspense.

Welcome to the Team!

As our team continues to grow, we're proud to welcome talented and dedicated professionals who share our commitment to excellence. We're excited to introduce the newest members of our staff and highlight the roles they'll play in supporting our mission, enriching our campus community, and driving continued success.



Clarissa Caballero
Program Coordinator, VOICE
"I am a black belt in Taekwondo, was previously a competitive dancer, and love playing video games in my free time."



Michelle N. Solis
Assessment & Accreditation College Administrator
"I love crocheting and turning bundles of yarn into cozy little creations!"



Kinsey C. Paez
Administrative Assistant II, Marketing
"I love reading medieval literature and singing in my free time!"



America Sanchez
Program Assistant, Dean's Office
"I have six chihuahuas!"



Alfred Wasielewski
Program Manager, Graduate Programs
"I hold a General Class amateur radio license."

Faculty Recognition



AMA Excellence in Global Marketing Research Award
Congratulations to Dr. Peter Magnusson, whose *Journal of International Business Studies* article on country stereotypes and brand use was praised for its impact on global marketing research.



Dean Gotti Honored with National Leadership Award
Dr. Giorgio Gotti received the Outstanding Dean Award from Beta Alpha Psi International, honoring his strong support of student leadership, service, career growth, and academic excellence at UTRGV.



Three-Time Advisor of the Year
Congratulations to Professor Maria Leonard, who was named university-wide Advisor of the Year for the third time, recognizing her commitment to student success.



First-Ever Honor: Chong Hong Tan Sets the Standard
The Hospitality and Tourism Management Program launched its first Hospitality Spirit Award, honoring kindness, service, and professionalism. Congratulations to RCVCOBE staff member Chong Hong Tan, the first recipient!

Excellence Awards



Faculty Excellence Awards

- | | |
|---|--|
| Dr. Xuan Wang
<i>Research</i> | Dr. Sylvia Robles
<i>Teaching (Non Tenure-Track)</i> |
| Dr. Qinyu Liao
<i>Service/Societal Impact</i> | Dr. Nan Xiao
<i>Teaching (Tenured)</i> |

Outstanding Faculty of the Year

- | | |
|---|---|
| Dr. Andres Bello
<i>Accountancy</i> | James Gleason
<i>Intl. Business & Entrep.</i> |
| Dr. Diego Escobari
<i>Economics</i> | Michael Flores
<i>Marketing</i> |
| Dr. Ahmed Elnahas
<i>Finance</i> | Dr. Michael Abebe
<i>Management</i> |
| Dr. Geng Sun
<i>Information Systems</i> | |

Staff Excellence Awards

- | | |
|--|---|
| Brenda Castillo
<i>Teamwork</i> | Natalia De La Garza
<i>Work Ethic</i> |
| Magdalena Martinez
<i>Customer Service</i> | |

PhD Excellence Awards

- | | |
|---|--|
| Krittaya Sangboon
<i>Accounting</i> | Mustafa Raji
<i>Marketing</i> |
| Amir Gholami
<i>Information Systems</i> | Amir Gholami
<i>College Level Winner</i> |
| Issack Guyo
<i>Finance</i> | Thinh Nguyen
<i>Teaching Excellence Award</i> |
| Farzaneh Fouladi
<i>Management</i> | Dr. Fuat A. Firat
<i>Doctoral Faculty Excellence Award</i> |

CENTER FOR BORDER ECONOMIC STUDIES

Click publication titles to view the full paper



Border Business Briefs

Produced by CBEST at UTRGV, these briefs serve as newsletters that provide insights into economic indicators and forecasts specifically focused on the Rio Grande Valley, South Texas, and North Tamaulipas regions.

Summer 2026 - Vol 22, No. 2
Growth at the Border: Recent Investment and Job Creation in the Rio Grande Valley

Dr. Francisco Aldape, Dr. Maroula Khraiche, Dr. Andre V. Mollick, and Dr. Jean Baptiste Tondji

The Rio Grande Valley (RGV) is examined as a deeply integrated cross-border economy, shaped by manufacturing complementarities with northern Mexico and evolving patterns of investment, employment, and wages.

Spring 2026 - Vol 22, No. 1
Occupations, Wages and Artificial Intelligence in the Rio Grande Valley

Dr. Maroula Khraiche, Dr. Elisa Taveras Pena, and Dr. Jean Baptiste Tondji

Labor market outcomes in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) are analyzed here, assessing the extent to which jobs in the RGV are susceptible to AI-related transformation.

ERMAS Annual Meeting 2026

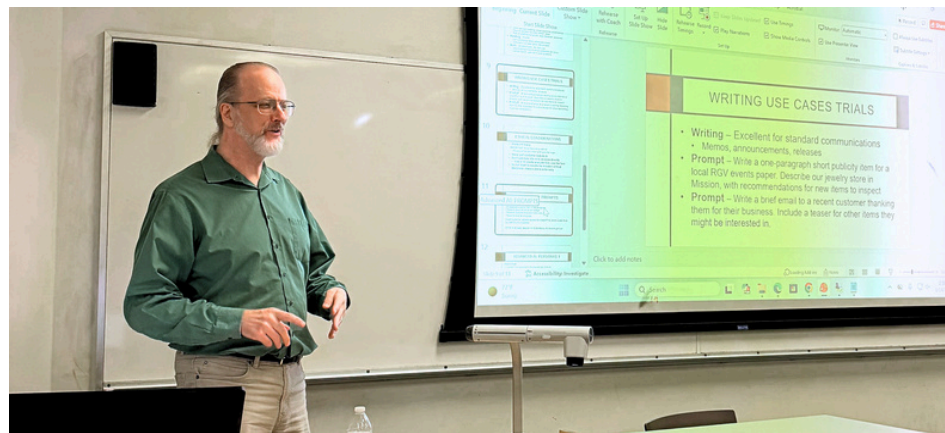
International scholars gathered for two days of research presentations, mentoring, and academic exchange exploring mathematics, economics, and risk management. Dr. Jean-Baptiste Tondji presented research on authenticity in strategic games, highlighting the role of trust in cooperative decision-making.



237 DIASPROF International Conference

The inaugural international conference unites global scholars, professionals, and African diaspora leaders to examine how artificial intelligence, research, and innovation can drive sustainable, inclusive development while strengthening interdisciplinary collaboration and lasting partnerships across Africa.





Artificial Intelligence Workshop

Dr. Hughes introduced entrepreneurs to practical AI applications for business growth and innovation.

Video Pitch Day

Official launch event onboarded thirty entrepreneurs into the Market Lab Spring 2026 cohort.



Market Mix

Large-scale focus group provided real-time customer insights with support from members of the AMA student organization.

Market Research Workshops

Three introductory workshops prepared participants for Market Lab through onboarding and market research training.



MARKET LAB

TURN YOUR IDEA INTO A BUSINESS

This spring, the Market Lab at UTRGV's Robert C. Vackar College of Business & Entrepreneurship connected faculty, students, entrepreneurs, and community partners through experiential learning. Five faculty members incorporated projects from participating businesses into their courses, giving nearly 200 students opportunities to address real-world business challenges.

Throughout the semester, participants took part in market research workshops, Video Pitch Day, an artificial intelligence workshop, the VIP Idea Lab, Market Mix, and final student presentations. These experiences provided entrepreneurs with practical strategies while helping students strengthen their research, communication, and problem-solving skills.

The semester concluded with student teams presenting customized recommendations to participating entrepreneurs, demonstrating how collaboration between higher education and the business community can strengthen local businesses, enrich student learning, and drive economic growth across the Rio Grande Valley.



PH.D. PROGRAM

Click publication titles to view the abstract



Farzaneh Fouladi
Doctoral Student, Management



Krittaya Sangboon
Doctoral Student, Accounting

A Commentary on Bisbey et al. (2025): Unpacking the Coordination Dynamics and Contextual Contingencies of Team Resilience

Group & Organization Management

Farzaneh Fouladi

A Commentary on Sackett et al. (2025): Diversity as Potential Formation Artifact –Toward a Diagnostic View of Deep-Level Differences

Group & Organization Management

Farzaneh Fouladi

Entrepreneurs' Work: Do Their Core Job Characteristics Differ from Their Organizational Equivalents?

Journal of the International Council for Small Business

Dr. Leon Schjoedt & Krittaya Sangboon

Work and Family Conflict and Life Satisfaction: Comparing Self-Employed and Employed Women in the UAE

Behavioral Economics and Computational Intelligence for Sustainable Decision Making

Dr. Leon Schjoedt & Krittaya Sangboon

Doctoral Milestones: Our Newest Graduates

Taiwo Abraham
Management

Arizona State University
Assistant Teaching Professor

Chaitali Bonke
Information Systems

University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
Visiting Assistant Professor

Mahshad Ghazali
Management

University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
Clinical Assistant Professor

Amir Gholami
Finance

University of Wisconsin Whitewater
Assistant Professor

Fariba Gholami
Finance

Weber State University
Assistant Professor

Md Ismail Haidar
Finance

University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
Visiting Assistant Professor

Gabriel Owusu
Information Systems

University of Hartford
Assistant Professor of Business Analytics

Mustafa Raji
Marketing

Md Rezwan Hossain Ratul
Finance

Weber State University
Assistant Professor

Marketing PhD Students Conference Acceptances

Join us in celebrating 11 Ph.D. in Marketing students recognized for their conference paper acceptances and dedication to impactful research. [View the list here.](#)

GRADUATE PROGRAMS



Celebrating Excellence: Spring 2026 Graduate Hooding Ceremony

RCVCOBE proudly celebrated seventy-two graduates. Faculty hooded graduates representing six academic programs, and six students were recognized with Graduate Excellence Awards for academic achievement, leadership, and service. Entrepreneur Cristal Hernandez, founder and CEO of Cristal Cosmetics, delivered the keynote address, encouraging graduates to pursue their goals with confidence.



Leading with Purpose: Outstanding Leadership & Service Award

Annabel Muniz and Gisela Saldaña received the Graduate Business Leaders of America (GBLA) Student Organization Outstanding Leadership and Service Award. The honor celebrates their leadership, service, and meaningful contributions to student engagement and the college community.

A Rising Star: Graduate Student Leader of the Year

Congratulations to Jose Hernandez Limas, MBA student and GBLA President, on being named Graduate Student Leader of the Year by UTRGV's Center for Student Involvement. His leadership has strengthened professional development, networking, and community service opportunities while helping RCVCOBE graduate students connect with business leaders and sharpen executive skills.





Student Lounge Gets a New Look

The Robert C. Vackar College of Business & Entrepreneurship celebrated the grand opening of its newly renovated student lounge alongside Robert and Janet Vackar, whose generosity made the space possible. Natasha Del Barrio and President Bailey joined the celebration, marking a special milestone for the college and its students. The lounge gives students a comfortable, inviting place to gather between classes, study, connect with friends, and collaborate with class-mates; another opportunity to build connections and strengthen the sense of community on campus.



NEWS AROUND THE COLLEGE



Battle of the Colleges

RCVCOBE brought its Vaquero spirit to UTRGV Men's Basketball's Battle of the Colleges as the Vaqueros took on the Lamar Cardinals at the UTRGV Field-house in Edinburg.

Representing the college during the halftime free throw contest were Dr. Sedat Erdogan, Assistant Professor of Accountancy, and Skyler Howell, Entrepreneurship and Innovation major. The pair stepped onto the court to show their Vaquero pride.





Midnight in Paris: A Night to Remember

Under a Parisian night sky, RCVCOBE came together to celebrate its brightest talent. The Spring 2026 Gala: Midnight in Paris honored the dedication, achievements, and impact of student organizations, faculty, and staff advisors in an elegant, unforgettable setting. Ten award presentations recognized outstanding organizations and leaders, while the evening became a celebration of connection, a shared moment of recognition and community for all who attended.

Study Abroad: Learning Beyond the Classroom

This year, seventy-two RCVCOBE students expanded their education through study abroad programs in Italy, Spain, Switzerland, and United Kingdom. Building on their classroom learning, students toured companies, observed local business practices, and immersed themselves in new cultures. These experiences provided firsthand in-sights into global innovation and consumer behavior while strengthening adaptability, communication, and critical thinking. To make study abroad more accessible, the college awarded \$26,250 in scholarships.



NEWS AROUND THE COLLEGE



RCVCOBE Advisory Committee Meeting

Community partners joined college leaders for the Advisory Committee meeting, offering valuable perspectives on RCVCOBE’s strategic direction and priorities for the years ahead. Discussions included updates on innovation, student success, and faculty accomplishments, reinforcing the importance of collaboration in shaping the college’s continued growth.



Santa Fe Wine Classic

RCVCOBE students gained hands-on experience volunteering at the Santa Fe Wine Classic at Quinta Mazatlán, working alongside industry professionals in event operations, guest service, and hospitality. The opportunity strengthened skills, confidence, and professional growth while supporting community scholarships.

Distinguished Speaker: Dr. David G. Allen

The department welcomed Dr. David G. Allen for a discussion on how variance and human capital influence venture success. Sharing research and professional experiences, Dr. Allen provided perspectives on publishing and management research. The session encouraged faculty and students to explore innovation and leadership.



VIVA Fresh Produce Expo 2026

UTRGV EDGE students represented the university at the VIVA Fresh Produce Expo 2026 in San Antonio, gaining valuable industry insights and professional connections. Led by Jesse Jones, students engaged with growers, distributors, marketers, and industry leaders while exploring trends in sustainability, supply chain innovation, consumer behavior, and career opportunities. Through educational sessions, keynote presentations, and networking experiences, students expanded their knowledge beyond the classroom and strengthened their pathways into the fresh produce industry.



NEWS AROUND THE COLLEGE



HCS and HITEC in San Antonio

RCVCOBE Hospitality and Marketing students traveled to San Antonio to explore hospitality, marketing, and technology. Led by Chef Marcel, students attended the Hospitality Creator Summit and HITEC, connecting with leaders and discovering artificial intelligence guest experience, and hotel technology innovations. The experience expanded knowledge and strengthened connections.



Medora Internships: Adventure Meets Opportunity

Students discovered how internships in Medora, North Dakota, can combine adventure with professional growth and hands-on experience. Karen Cummins and Stacey Watje of the Theodore Roosevelt Medora Foundation shared how the program helps participants develop skills, explore career paths, and apply classroom knowledge in real-world settings. Their insights encouraged students to embrace new experiences and take the next step toward career success.



Spurs Career Day

Forty-eight students and three RCVCOBE faculty members attended the Third Annual Spurs Career Day in San Antonio, exploring careers in sports, marketing, and event management. Students connected with professionals, learned about leadership and innovation, and heard from representatives from Visit San Antonio before concluding the experience at a Spurs–Mavericks game.

School of Accountancy Gala

The School of Accountancy honored students, faculty, and supporters for their excellence, leadership, and service. The event celebrated scholarship recipients and highlighted notable student and faculty achievements. Dr. Andres Bello was named Faculty of the Year, while Dr. Giorgio Gotti received the Beta Alpha Psi Outstanding Dean Award.



Charting a Path to Success

The School of Accountancy's Spring 2026 Orientation welcomed new students with insights from faculty and advisors. Students explored degree pathways, resources, and career opportunities. The session helped build connections, understand expectations, and begin their journey within the School of Accountancy community.

NEWS AROUND THE COLLEGE



RCVCOBE Competes at NCDMC in Nashville

Five RCVCOBE students represented the college at the 2026 National Collegiate Digital Marketing Championship in Nashville, Tennessee, showcasing their creativity, strategy, and digital marketing skills alongside top collegiate talent. The experience provided students with valuable opportunities to apply classroom knowledge, connect with industry professionals, and gain insight into the evolving world of digital marketing.



RCVCOBE Profiles in Excellence



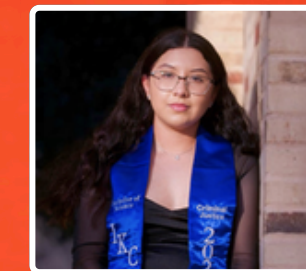
Carlos Botello
Accounting, BBA



Brizeida Ramos
Marketing, BBA



Seth Vega
Marketing, BBA



Elsa Hernandez
Business Admin., MBA

Vackar Scholar Spotlight

Eli Gonzalez, mentored by Dr. Esi Elliot through the Vackar Scholars Student Program, represented RCVCOBE at the 9th Annual UTRGV STEM Education Conference in South Padre Island. His participation highlighted student research, innovation, collaboration, and the impact of experiential learning.



2026 Economic Symposium

RCVCOBE faculty members Dr. Maroula Khraiche and Dr. Salvador Contreras shared insights at the 2026 Economic Symposium, highlighting economic trends, regional growth, and opportunities shaping the Rio Grande Valley's future.



NEWS AROUND THE COLLEGE



Civitas Institute: America's Latino Future

Dr. Salvador Contreras joined a panel of experts for America's Latino Future, hosted by the Civitas Institute at UT Austin. He discussed the RGV's changing economy, demographics, and regional growth while highlighting the important role Latino communities play in creating new opportunities and shaping the region's future.



Economist in Focus: Dr. Salvador Contreras

Dr. Salvador Contreras was featured in the Economist Profiles series of the American Economic Association's Committee on the Status of Minority Groups in the Economics Profession (CSMGEP), which spotlights economists making an impact in the field. Titled "The Right Tool for the Big Questions," the profile highlights his research on banking access, border economics, and automation, along with his commitment to mentorship and expanding access to graduate education.



AMOR: Opening Doors for Students

The Association for Management and Organizational Resources (AMOR) launched with an inaugural event that drew 57 attendees and welcomed 29 new members. Led by dedicated student leaders with support from volunteers and community partners, AMOR provides opportunities for professional development, career exploration, and meaningful connections. The successful launch established a strong foundation for the organization's continued growth and impact within RCVCOBE.

Court of Master Sommeliers Shares Expertise

For the third consecutive year, the Hospitality & Tourism Management program welcomed three Master Sommeliers to campus for a two-day experience focused on wine education, service excellence, and professional tasting techniques. Students gained firsthand insights from industry experts, developed skills aligned with global hospitality standards, strengthened career readiness, and earned valuable credentials for future careers.



STUDENT SUCCESS

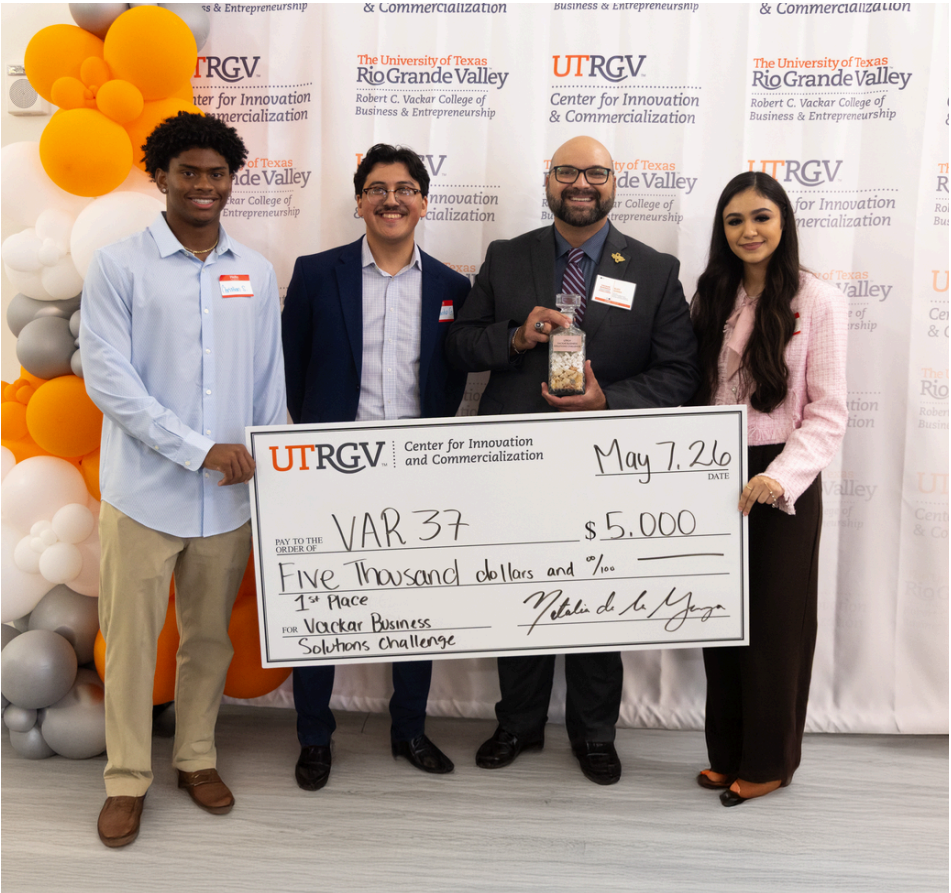
VIP Idea Lab

Led by Dr. Sylvia Robles, the VIP Idea Lab engaged 140 participants through four Spring and Summer 2026 workshops. The sessions explored customer discovery, creative empowerment, artificial intelligence, and brain health while applying sustainable design thinking to real-world challenges. The initiative also broadened its impact among healthcare and bilingual communities across the Rio Grande Valley.



Business Plan Competition: From Ideas to Action

Student entrepreneurs put their ideas to the test at the 2026 UTRGV Business Plan Competition, hosted by CIC. Through mentorship, strategic planning, and investor-style pitches, participants refined their ventures and strengthened essential business skills. The competition awarded \$21,000 in scholarships, supporting the next generation of entrepreneurs and innovators.



Celebrating Vackar Scholars

The fourth Vackar Student Scholars (VSS) cohort concluded the academic year with a poster presentation and recognition ceremony showcasing faculty-mentored research in cybersecurity, coaching and mentorship, and the effects of tariffs on trade. Five undergraduate and seven master's students participated in research workshops and explored academic pathways through the program, coordinated by Dr. Jennifer Welbourne.

Vackar Business Solutions Challenge Highlights Innovation

The 2026 Vackar Business Solutions Challenge, hosted by CIC and RCVCOBE, connected students with local businesses to address real-world challenges through innovative solutions. More than 300 students applied research, strategy, and consulting skills while gaining industry experience. The challenge awarded \$10,500 in scholarships, recognizing teams for creativity, collaboration, and impact on the regional business community.



STUDENT SUCCESS VOICE



Economics & Finance Student Research Showcase

The Economics & Finance Poster Competition, supported by Dr. Ghada Ismail, the Department of Economics and Finance, and VOICE, gave students a platform to showcase academic and research projects. Presentations explored topics including inflation, interest rates, and risk versus return, while strengthening students' analytical, research, communication, and professional presentation skills.

Vackar TalkX: The Entrepreneurial Journey

Vackar TalkX connected students with a panel of entrepreneurs who shared insights into transforming ideas into viable ventures. The event drew more than 220 attendees, including over 100 students who engaged with CIC and VOICE, highlighting the innovation, mentorship, and networking opportunities available to aspiring entrepreneurs.



Homecoming Recruitment

Homecoming Recruitment 2026 encouraged RCVCOBE students to join organizations by reducing financial barriers. The initiative enrolled 92 students, strengthening involvement and professional connections while demonstrating the impact of accessible opportunities for engagement, leadership, and growth.



Business Writing Student Competition

Seventy students partnered with seven local employers to address organizational challenges through professional business writing. After researching partner needs, participants presented strategic recommendations. Five outstanding submissions received a combined \$2,000 in scholarships for excellence in analysis and communication.



STUDENT SUCCESS VOICE



Runway to Success Student Fashion Show

Runway to Success Fashion Show transformed career preparation into an engaging experience for RCVCOBE students. Hosted on the Brownsville and Edinburg campuses, the event welcomed 182 students and provided insights on professional attire, personal branding, and first impressions. The collaboration with the Career Center and VOICE Office helped students build confidence and career-ready skills.

Vackar Talk X: A Professional Journey Rooted in Accounting

Hidalgo County Judge Richard F. Cortez shared how a background in accounting can open doors to leadership opportunities across sectors. Drawing from his professional journey, he offered students a broader perspective on how business skills can translate into diverse career paths. Hosted by IASA and BAP, the event welcomed 222 participants for a moderated discussion and interactive Q&A focused on career development and professional growth.



Charreada A Celebration of Culture and Community

Charreada brought the campus community together for a vibrant celebration of culture, tradition, and school spirit inspired by Brownsville's annual Charro Days festivities. Students, faculty, and staff enjoyed a lively afternoon featuring a cultural photobooth, Mercadito-style treats, games, and student organization fundraisers. The event created memorable experiences, encouraged community connection, and celebrated the rich heritage that makes the Rio Grande Valley unique.



Generative AI Workshop: Writing with Purpose

The Generative AI and Writing Workshop gave RCVCOBE students an exciting introduction to the future of artificial intelligence and its role in business. Through interactive discussions and real-world examples, participants discovered how to use AI ethically for writing, research, studying, and career preparation. By emphasizing responsible innovation, critical thinking, and effective prompting, the workshop empowered students to confidently harness AI as a tool for academic success and professional growth.

STUDENT SUCCESS **Student Organizations**



IASA Networking Dinner

Made possible through the Kemper Foundation, the event provided a professional setting for select business students to engage directly with internal audit leaders from the IIA San Antonio Chapter and university leadership. The gathering fostered meaningful conversations about career pathways, industry

expectations, and the evolving role of internal auditing while allowing students to gain valuable insights and expand their professional networks. This unique opportunity strengthened connections between students, professionals, and the broader business community.

Enactus Named Student Organization of the Year

Enactus UTRGV was recognized at the Center for Student Involvement Awards Gala, earning Student Organization of the Year and Event of the Year for its Model UN High School Summit. The honors celebrate the organization's dedication to student leadership, innovation, service, and community impact, as well as its members' hard work and commitment.



Inside Edinburg City Hall with Omar Ochoa

Edinburg Mayor Omar Ochoa led members of the Collegiate Entrepreneurs' Organization (CEO) on an exclusive City Hall tour. Students gained insight into municipal operations, leadership, and community development, including how local decisions affect businesses and residents. The visit connected students with public service leaders and marked a milestone in strengthening university and community ties.

STUDENT SUCCESS **Student Organizations**



Financial Literacy Meets Career Readiness

Association of Latino Professionals For America (ALPFA) expanded financial literacy initiatives through workshops, Fajitas for Finance, and professional events. The chapter strengthened student career development by connecting members with industry professionals, hosting the Accounting Symposium, and partnering with organizations to provide valuable resources, mentorship, and growth opportunities.

Students Gain Real-World Hiring Insights

ALPFA welcomed Melinda Zamora, Human Resources Manager at Burton McCumber and Longoria (BML), for a career preparation session focused on résumés, interviews, and recruiter expectations. Students gained practical strategies for managing stress and presenting themselves effectively to accounting firms.



BAP Celebrates Success at 2026 Annual Meeting

Beta Alpha Psi's Xi Phi Chapter traveled to Baltimore, Maryland, to compete, connect with fellow members, and represent UTRGV at the 2026 Annual Meeting. The chapter earned third place in the Community Impact Activity and celebrated Dr. Giorgio Gotti, who received the Outstanding Dean Award. These achievements reflect the chapter's dedication to leadership, service, and meaningful community impact.



ASOC Attends State of the City

Accounting Society (ASOC) members Samantha Ambriz, Jose Martinez, and Alda Redner attended the State of the City event, where they learned about upcoming developments, economic growth, and community initiatives. The event also provided opportunities to connect with local leaders and gain valuable insights into leadership, civic engagement, and community involvement.

STUDENT SUCCESS **Student Organizations**

IASA Students Earn Recognition at IIA Global Conference

The Internal Audit Student Association (IASA) represented UTRGV at the 2026 IIA Global Student Conference in Orlando, gaining global professional experience through workshops, networking, and competition. Students achieved top international case study placements, highlighting their skills and preparation in internal auditing.



HOST Explores Hospitality Investment at ALIS Conferences

HOST Club members attended the Americas Lodging Investment Summit (ALIS) in Los Angeles and ALIS CALA (Caribbean and Latin America) in Miami, gaining exposure to the investment side of hospitality. Students participated in sessions covering hotel financing, technology, and leadership strategies while networking with industry professionals and peers. These experiences provided valuable insights, strengthened connections, and expanded members' understanding of hospitality investment, innovation, and career opportunities.



AMA Earns Top 20 Honors

Six members of the American Marketing Association (AMA) attended the 2026 International Collegiate Conference in Nashville, Tennessee. The chapter earned Top 20 honors in the collegiate case competition, demonstrating strong preparation, strategic insight, and marketing expertise.



Enactus Earns National Honors

Enactus won third place at the Enactus USA National Competition, recognizing its work in entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and community development. The achievement also earned the team an invitation to present at the Enactus Mexico National Conference in Mexico City.



CEO National Conference in Chicago

CEO represented UTRGV at the 2026 CEO National Conference in Chicago, where six student entrepreneurs showcased innovative business ideas after advancing through the organization's Shark Tank-style competition.



STUDENT SUCCESS **Student Organizations**



Enactus Global Economy Summit Event

This ENACTUS summit brought together 221 high school students from across the Valley to explore financial concepts and the impact of global markets. Participants learned about budgeting, financial decision-making, economic challenges, and global trade while examining how economic and geopolitical issues shape national economies. The event encouraged critical thinking and deepened students' understanding of global financial systems.



AMA Builds Community and Connections in Brownsville

AMA brought energy and flavor to the Brownsville campus with a fundraiser featuring papitas preparadas and corn in a cup. The event connected students, strengthened campus engagement, and supported future AMA activities.



From Classroom to Commerce: Port of Brownsville

CEO hosted an educational tour of the Port of Brownsville, giving members firsthand insight into one of the Rio Grande Valley's most important economic and industrial hubs. Students explored port operations, logistics, international trade, and the role of infrastructure in driving regional growth. The experience connected classroom concepts to real-world applications, highlighting areas such as supply chain management, manufacturing, and global commerce. Through this opportunity, members gained valuable industry knowledge and a deeper understanding of the diverse career pathways available within the business community.



STUDENT SUCCESS **Student Organizations**

ALPFA Represents UTRGV in Dallas

The Association of Latino Professionals For America (ALPFA) represented UTRGV at the 2026 Regional Student Symposium in Dallas. The event brought together students, professionals, recruiters, and corporate leaders from across Texas for workshops, panel discussions, and networking opportunities focused on career readiness and professional development.



CEO Expands Partnerships Across the RGV

CEO established its second chamber partnership with the RGV Women's Chamber of Commerce, expanding opportunities for members through networking, mentorship, and professional development. The collaboration strengthens connections between students and business leaders while promoting entrepreneurship, leadership, and economic empowerment throughout the RGV community.



Friends & Family Night

Enactus hosted an on-campus celebration ahead of the national competition in Denver, Colorado. Members, friends, and families gathered to recognize the team's achievements and celebrate graduating seniors, who received graduation stoles in honor of their involvement with the organization. The event highlighted a year of accomplishments as the team prepared for the national stage.



SHRM and CEO Build Future Leaders

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and Collegiate Entrepreneurs' Organization (CEO) hosted a Leadership & Team Management workshop for students focused on developing essential workplace skills. Participants gained insights into effective leadership, teamwork, and professional development while building connections and preparing for future careers.



STUDENT SUCCESS **Student Organizations**



Inside Toyota: CEO Explores Industry and Innovation

CEO hosted an exclusive tour of Toyota Motor Manufacturing Texas in San Antonio, giving members firsthand exposure to manufacturing operations, innovation, and corporate culture. The event included engineering student organizations, fostering collaboration between business and technical disci-

plines. Participants gained insights into Toyota's production systems, efficiency strategies, and continuous improvement practices. The experience emphasized the importance of teamwork, innovation, and entrepreneurship while strengthening connections among students from diverse academic backgrounds.

IMA Explores the World of Forensic Accounting

The Institute of Management Accountants (IMA) hosted a "Forensic Accounting Insights" event featuring Aissa Garza, CPA, attorney, and business owner. Garza shared her professional journey and experience in forensic accounting, giving students a closer look at the field and its career opportunities. The session highlighted key industry skills and the value of combining accounting expertise with legal knowledge.



Meet the Accounting Professionals

The Association of Latino Professionals For America (ALPFA) and Beta Alpha Psi (BAP) hosted Meet the Accounting Professionals, connecting UTRGV students with CPA firms from across the Rio Grande Valley. Students shared their resumes, engaged with industry professionals, and explored career and internship opportunities while gaining valuable insight into the accounting profession.

RCVCOBE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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MISSION STATEMENT

The Robert C. Vackar College of Business and Entrepreneurship promotes student success and serves as a catalyst for innovation, knowledge discovery, and economic development in South Texas, Northern Mexico, and beyond. We do so by offering relevant academic programs, committing to impactful research, and fostering community engagement and sustainable partnerships in a way that supports the university's mission.

VISION STATEMENT

The Robert C. Vackar College of Business and Entrepreneurship will positively impact its local and global stakeholders through the discovery, integration, application, and teaching of business-focused knowledge addressing the critical needs of society.

CORE VALUES

Our Commitment to Excellence

Invest in our students' success by offering high quality and relevant academic programs.

Our Dedication to Thought Leadership

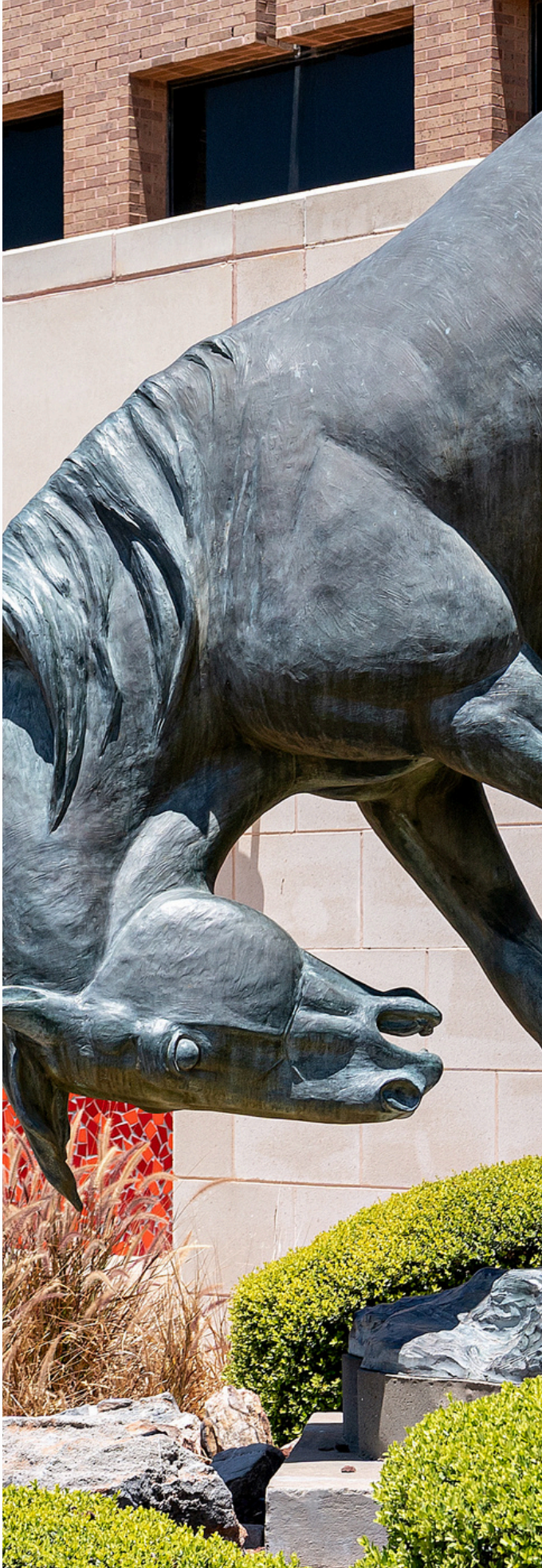
Promote rigorous and high-impact scholarship. Improve the academic reputation of our college through impactful engagement with the scholarly community.

Our Passion for Empowerment and Impact

Empower and support our students, faculty, and staff to make a difference in their communities through high impact teaching and learning practices.

Our Role as Agents of Transformation

Cherish and support our positive role in the economic transformation of the Rio Grande Valley.

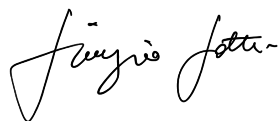


As we look back on Spring and Summer 2026, I am grateful for everything our faculty and staff have done for our students and our college.

Our students achieved important milestones, took on new challenges, and continued to grow. None of that happens without the time, care, and dedication you bring to your work every day.

Thank you for making RCVCOBE a place where students can learn, succeed, and build a brighter future. I am proud of what we have accomplished together and excited about what comes next.

Stay connected. Get involved. Be part of what's next at RCVCOBE



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