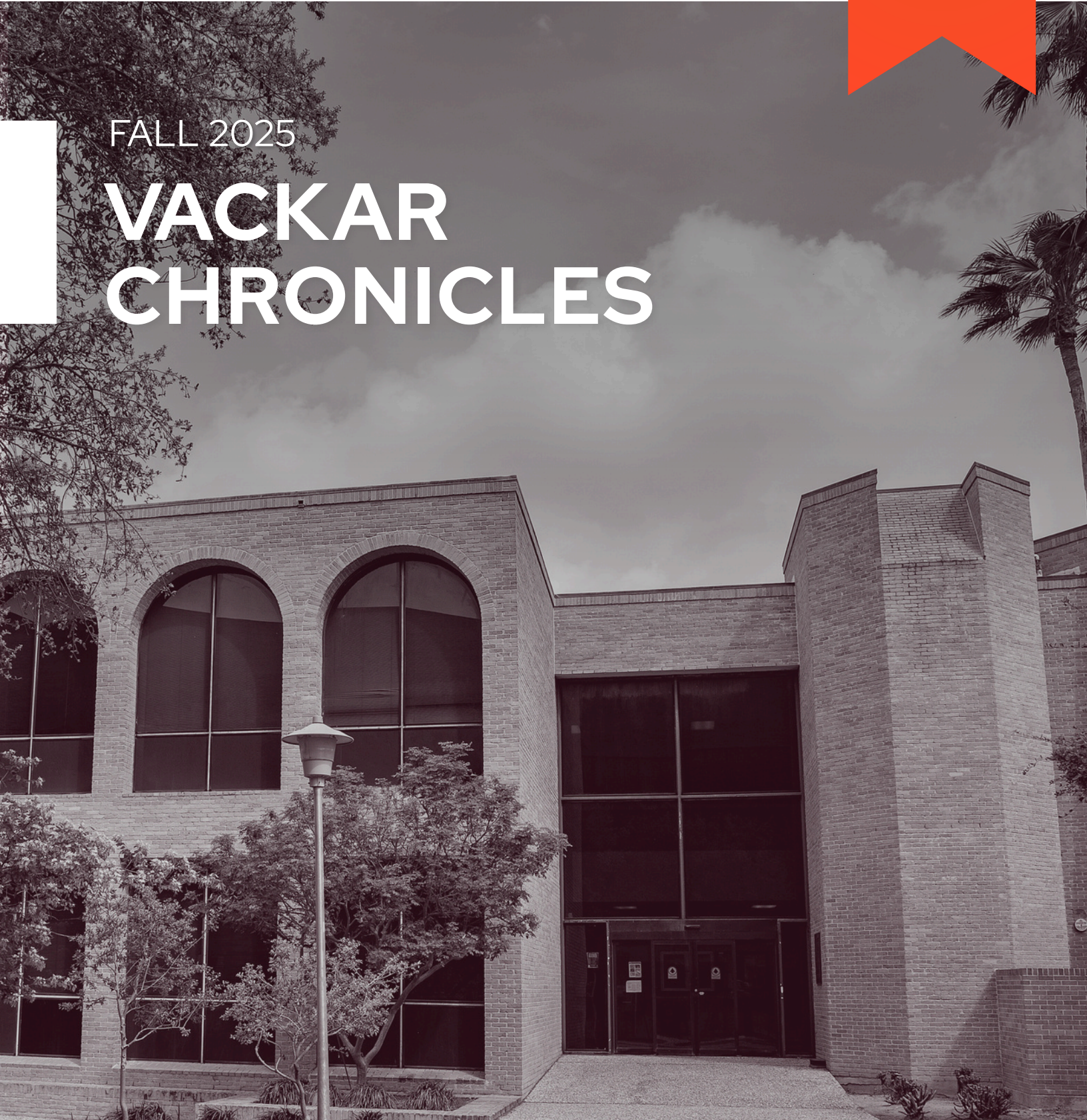


FALL 2025

VACKAR CHRONICLES



Welcome

As we reflect on Fall 2025, we recognize a semester filled with opportunity, growth, and collaboration. Together, we built on past successes, supported one another, and maintained our shared commitment to excellence.

In This Issue

- 03 Publications
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- 09 Student Success
- 23 News Around the College



Over the Fall 2025 semester, the Robert C. Vackar College of Business and Entrepreneurship built on its commitment to academic excellence, student success, and meaningful engagement. Across our programs, students strengthened critical thinking and professional skills through coursework and hands-on learning experiences, supported by faculty and staff dedicated to helping them succeed.

During the semester, we also expanded relationships with community and industry partners, creating additional opportunities for networking, mentorship, experiential learning, and career development. These connections reinforced the value of a business education grounded in real-world application and service to our region.

I appreciate the hard work, professionalism, and collaboration demonstrated throughout Fall 2025. Thank you to our students, faculty, and staff for the energy and dedication you brought to the college and for helping advance our shared mission.



Giorgio Gotti, Ph.D
Dean of the RCVCOBE

Giorgio Gotti

PUBLICATIONS Elite & High Impact

Click article titles to view publications



Geopolitical Risk and Corporate Capital Structure

Dr. Siamak Javadi, Associate Professor, Finance Dept.

Geopolitical risk sharply curtails corporate borrowing for years, as firms and lenders retreat. The impact exceeds inflation, GDP, and rates, especially for highly leveraged companies and those with hard-to-reverse investments.



The Dark Side of CEO Inside Debt: Evidence from Stock Price Crash Risk

Amir Gholami, Doctoral Student, Finance Dept.
Dr. Ahmed Elnahas, Associate Professor, Finance Dept.

CEO “inside debt”, like pensions and deferred pay, can encourage opacity and raise crash risk, especially in firms with weak governance and limited oversight.



CEO Cultural Heritage and Corporate Social Responsibility

Dr. Ahmed Elnahas, Associate Professor, Finance Dept.

CEOs’ cultural heritage shapes CSR: hierarchical traditions raise CSR, individualistic cultures lower it, with effects persisting across multiple generations.



Quantifying the Legacy of Trauma: The long-term Impact of the African Slave Trade on Contemporary Firm Corruption

Dr. Yu Liu, Associate Professor, Finance Dept.

Historical slave-trade exposure predicts firm corruption today, reflecting enduring and significant effects on trust, social divisions, and institutional strength.



Does Brand Capital Influence Corporate Environmental Policies? Evidence from Toxic Release Inventory Data

Md Ismail Haidar, Doctoral Student, Finance Dept.
Dr. Mark Kroll, Professor, Intl. Business Dept.
Nam H. Nguyen, Associate Professor, Finance Dept.

Firms with strong brands emit fewer toxins and act more sustainably, especially in pro-environment communities, as brand value fosters stability, innovation, and long-term investment in pollution reduction.



It’s Different: Examining the Effect of HRM Investments on Employee Downsizing Following Mergers and Acquisitions

Dr. Pingshu Li, Associate Professor, Management Dept.

Post-merger layoffs often harm performance, but strong HR investments before and after deals, such as employee support, development, and clear communication, help remaining staff adapt and significantly reduce negative impacts, as shown in data from 1,214 U.S. firms (2002–2018).



A Return to the Foundations of Social Information Processing Theory

Dr. Michael J. Matthews, Assistant Professor, Management Dept.

Social information processing theory explains how workplace attitudes stem from social cues, yet recent research often misapplies its core ideas. This paper offers a clearer model emphasizing job attitudes, social context, and prior behaviors, with guidance for precise future application.

High Impact Publications

Dr. Armando Lopez-Velasco
Assistant Professor
Economics Dept.
[View article](#)

Dr. Murad Moqbel
Associate Professor
Information Systems Dept.

Dr. Murad Moqbel
Associate Professor
Information Systems Dept.
Gabriel Owusu
Doctoral Student
Information Systems Dept.
[View article](#)

Dr. Yu Liu
Associate Professor
Finance Dept.
Gabriel Owusu
Doctoral Student
Information Systems Dept.
[View article](#)

FACULTY SUCCESS **Spotlights**

Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Michael Abebe

Congratulations to Dr. Michael Abebe, who was selected as the V. F. (Doc) and Gertrude M. Neuhaus Endowed Chair for Entrepreneurship for a two-year term. The distinguished endowment supported excellence in entrepreneurship across RCVCOBE and advanced innovation, engagement, and student opportunity.

Abebe earned his Ph.D. in Strategic Management from Southern Illinois University–Carbondale in 2008 and joined UTPA (RCVCOBE's legacy institution) that year. Promoted to Professor in 2020, he served as Ph.D. Program Director and Associate Dean for Research. His scholarship bridged strategic management and entrepreneurship and appeared in leading journals. A UT System Regents' Outstanding Teaching Award recipient, he strengthened RCVCOBE's entrepreneurship ecosystem and expanded engagement with students and the Rio Grande Valley community.



Faculty Honored at 70th ICSB World Congress in Cairo

Dr. Sylvia Robles presented at the 70th ICSB World Congress in Cairo, Egypt, and joined a panel with local entrepreneurs. The ICSB Board recognized her for five years of contributions through presentations, publications, Academy Cup mentoring, and conference collaboration since 2020.



CBEST Brief Evaluates Texas' School Voucher Policy and Outcomes

Dr. Maroula Khraiche, Dr. Elisa Taveras Pena, and Dr. Jean-Baptiste Tondji analyze Texas's ESA school voucher policy, examining trade-offs and impacts on students, families, schools, and state finances. [View article](#)



Professor Maria Leonard Recognition: Championing Global Learning

UTRGV's International Education Week honored Maria Leonard, MBA, for advancing international education and creating global learning experiences through study abroad in Costa Rica, Panama, and Spain.



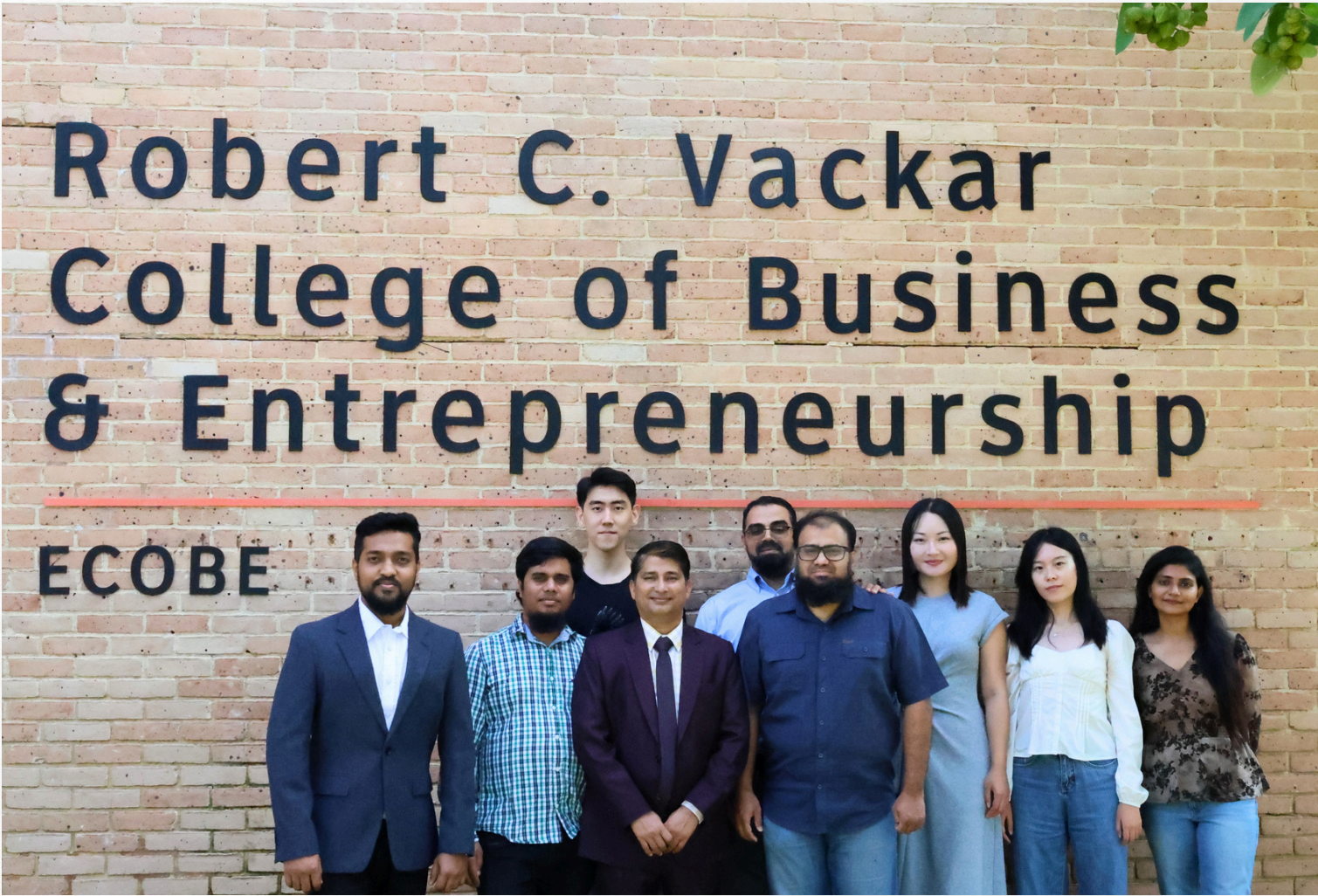
UTRGV Hosts Statewide Economics Scholars

On Oct. 24–25, UTRGV proudly hosted the Texas Economics Consortium Conference 2025, bringing together scholars from St. Mary's, Texas State, St. Thomas, Sam Houston, Dallas, and UTEP. Special thanks to Drs. Salvador Contreras, Diego Escobari, and Xi Mao.

Faculty Research Spotlight

On October 16–17, Dr. Diego Escobari presented research on asset pricing, climate change, and price discrimination at EGADE Business School, Tecnológico de Monterrey, and Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, while meeting students and discussing economic issues.

Drs. Jean-Baptiste Tondji, Diego Escobari, and Armando Lopez-Velasco presented their research at the Texas Economic Theory Camp, held October 25–26 at Southern Methodist University, fostering collaboration and scholarly exchange in economic theory.



Welcoming the Next Generation of Ph.D. Scholars

On September 4, 2025, the Robert C. Vackar College of Business and Entrepreneurship proudly welcomed 14 first-year Ph.D. students into its doctoral programs. This diverse cohort of emerging scholars will contribute to the College’s research, teaching, and academic mission. As they begin their doctoral journey, students will engage in

advanced coursework, faculty mentorship, and impactful research activities reflecting RCVCOBE’s commitment to academic excellence and innovation. Their work will strengthen the College’s scholarly community and create opportunities for collaboration, discovery, and contributions to business education and practice.

Doctoral Student Research Featured in Top Journals



Amir Gholami
Doctoral Student, Finance Dept.
Dr. Ahmed Elnahas
Associate Professor, Finance Dept.
Journal of Corporate Finance
(elite, top-tier journal)
[View article](#)



Md Ismail Haidar
Doctoral Student, Finance Dept.
Dr. Mark Kroll
Professor, Intl. Business Dept.
Dr. Nam H. Nguyen
Associate Professor, Finance Dept.
Journal of Corporate Finance
(elite, top-tier journal)
[View article](#)



Gabriel Owusu
Doctoral Student, Finance Dept.
Dr. Murad Moqbel
Associate Professor, Information Systems Dept.
Journal of Computer Information Systems
(high-impact journal)
[View article](#)

Celebrating Ph.D. Student Excellence

Congratulations to **Krittaya Sangboon**, a second-year Accounting Ph.D. student, on receiving the 2026 AARE Best Paper Award (Tax Track) for her paper titled ‘*Earnings Management under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) 2017.*’

Congratulations to **Dilek Coskun Erdogan**, a third-year Management Ph.D. student, for earning the Best Reviewer Award at the 2025 Southern Management Association Conference.



From Dissertation to Impact: Taiwo Abraham Begins Career at PMI

Taiwo Abraham, a fifth-year Management PhD student, has successfully completed his final dissertation defense and will graduate in Fall 2025. He has accepted a position as Thought Leader Specialist in the Office of the CEO at the Project Management Institute, conducting research on sustainability. Congratulations to Taiwo on this significant academic achievement!

**Student Research
Spotlighted at
National Conferences**

[View Conferences](#)

STUDENT SUCCESS VOICE



Market Lab: Driving Business Growth

Market Lab connected UTRGV students, faculty, alumni, and community entrepreneurs with faculty-led teams that delivered research-driven solutions and strategic guidance. Designed to support both emerging ventures and expanding businesses, the program helped turn ideas into actionable plans and measurable outcomes, advancing innovation and strengthening the Rio Grande Valley's business community.



Passing the Torch: Lead with Confidence

Passing the Torch was a leadership development event for RCVCOBE student organizations that focused on smooth officer transitions and organizational continuity. The session equipped student leaders with practical strategies and tools to support long-term success, fostering confidence and purpose as they prepared to lead effectively.



Welcome Week

Kicked off the semester with an experience that brought new and returning RCVCOBE students, faculty, and staff together. The week strengthened community ties, introduced the VOICE Office, and previewed the programs, workshops, trainings, and events planned for the fall. It provided an opportunity to engage, collaborate, and discover what it truly meant to be part of the RCVCOBE.

STUDENT SUCCESS VOICE

Forbes Under 30 Summit

Funded by the Dr. John Sargent Memorial Endowment, this award sent one RCVCOBE student to the Forbes Under 30 Summit, covering travel and registration. The summit provided unparalleled networking and professional growth with young leaders and innovators, reflecting RCVCOBE's commitment to entrepreneurship, leadership, and innovation.



Cowboys Sports Business Panel: Inside the Industry

On November 19, 2025, students joined the Cowboys Sports Business Panel at AT&T Stadium for a closer look at careers in sports. Speakers from different areas shared tips, advice, and real-world views on the industry. Students also had time to network and take a behind-the-scenes tour of the stadium, including locker rooms and the field. The event gave students a rare chance to learn, connect, and see the business side of sports up close.



Collaborate and Connect: Build Your Network

The Student Mixer brought students and organizations together to spark collaboration and build meaningful connections. Attendees enjoyed networking, food, and giveaways while learning about upcoming initiatives and ways to get involved. The event provided a welcoming space to grow networks and strengthen the community.

STUDENT SUCCESS

Vaquero Roundup: Join the Team

Vaquero Roundup kicked off the semester with a football-themed event where students joined teams, won prizes, explored resources, and connected with organizations, helping freshmen transition and discover college opportunities.



RCVCOBE Profiles in Excellence



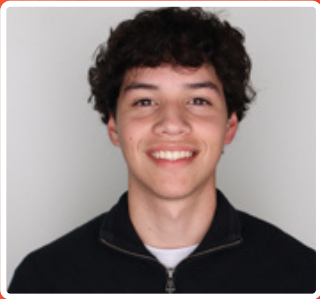
Cristina Urteaga
Marketing, BBA



Maximiliano Moreno
Accounting, BBA



Santino Pascual
Finance, BBA



Kevin Ramirez
Accounting, BBA

VOICE Staff Spotlights



Beyond the Classroom: Jerome Wiggins

This semester, the college offered high-impact career experiences, including “Bank On It,” the Cowboys Sports Business Panel, Hospitality and Tourism Career Connect, and an exclusive SpaceX tour, highlighting networking, internships, and engagement beyond the classroom.



Writing Support in Action: Brandon Melchor

This fall, Embedded Writing Tutors assisted over 600 business students through presentations, feedback sessions, and one-on-one support. For the first time, a tutor worked with a graduate-level Accelerated Online Program course, demonstrating its growing reach and impact.

Innovate, Create, Lead: VIP at UTRGV

Dr. Robles expanded the VIP Idea Lab to more than 780 participants, 450+ in the past year, including 100+ in Fall 2025, building design thinking and sustainable innovation skills across UTRGV and the RGV. In Fall 2025, she launched the first Spanish and bilingual cohorts with partners including the UTRGV Center of the Borderlands, Center for Student Involvement, Colectivo 50+1 Chapter Brownsville, the Mexican Consulate in Brownsville, Community Engagement, and International Student Services.



STUDENT SUCCESS



Vackar Business Solutions Challenge Bridges Classroom Learning and Real-World Impact

The Robert C. Vackar College of Business and Entrepreneurship, with CIC, hosted the first Vackar Business Solutions Challenge on December 11, 2025. This new experiential learning program links classroom knowledge with real business needs through hands-on projects. Led by Dr. Peter Magnusson and Natalia De La Garza, 19 student teams

researched real problems, built clear solutions, and shared ideas with 15 judges from UTRGV and the regional business community. The event awarded \$9,750 in scholarships and highlighted creativity, problem-solving, and teamwork, skills that help students succeed in today's fast-changing, competitive business world.



Texas Business Hall of Fame Honors UTRGV Student for Innovation

UTRGV's Emiliana M. Escobar earned the James and Kathleen Collins and Vantage Bank Texas Future Texas Business Legend Award and \$15,000 scholarship for pioneering bilingual, tech-driven trade education and entrepreneurship.



Startup Pitch Night: Big Ideas, Bold Moves

CIC's Startup Pitch Night, backed by a U.S. EDA grant, teamed with Rio Grande Valley Angel Network to showcase ventures and strengthen the region's fast-growing innovation ecosystem through investor pitches and mentorship.



CIC Staff Selected for Leadership Mid Valley

CIC proudly congratulates Natalia De La Garza and Claudia Gutierrez on joining Leadership Mid Valley, a Weslaco Area Chamber of Commerce program fostering community impact and collaboration with regional civic and business leaders.

STUDENT SUCCESS **CIC**



ELEVATE Strengthens Student Leadership and Experiential Learning

The fall ELEVATE Program launched in October to build leadership and career skills across RCVCOBE. Supported by RREAF Holdings, students met weekly with executives, trained for success, and will finish with a Dallas tour and graduation January 23, 2026.



CIC Showcases Next Generation of Innovators

CIC hosted UTRGV's 5th Annual Big Idea Competition on November 21. Supported by the Katusak Family Foundation, Desai-Patel Foundation, Sam's Club, and PNC Bank, the event awarded over \$17,000 in scholarships and prizes.

Top winners included Senso Baby (Ana Ilse Torres Martinez), OcuReach (Amin Ibrahim), and ICW Neural Engineered Scaffold (Wala Abbas). Finalists worked with SCORE mentors to refine pitches and advance ideas toward venture launch.



UTRGV Gulf Scholars Program Advances Sustainability and Community Impact

UTRGV received a five-year grant from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to support the Gulf Scholars Program (GSP). Led by Marla Perez Lugo and Maria Leonard, the program prepares students to address Gulf region challenges through interdisciplinary learning. Launching Spring

2026, 12 scholars will gain mentorship, hands-on experience, and design a Gulf Impact Project focused on sustainability, resilience, and social justice. Each receives a \$1,500 scholarship and the chance to present at the Annual GSP Conference. A kickoff was held December 5, with three RCVCOBE students joining the first cohort

STUDENT SUCCESS Student Organizations



Global Chapter of the Year: UTRGV Wins Big

The CEO Global Conference & Pitch Competition, held October 29–November 2, 2025, at the Tampa Convention Center, is one of the world's largest and most influential student entrepreneurship events. It drew 2,000 students, 200+ chapters, and top innovators. CEO-UTRGV made history by winning 'Global Chapter of the Year,' the highest honor among 200+ chapters, recognizing outstanding leadership, innovative programming, and significant community impact.



Students Giving Back Through Enactus Cansgiving 2025

Enactus hosted its annual Cansgiving event, where students volunteered to assemble and distribute meal bags filled with food and produce to families in need across the RGV. The effort promoted community support and student engagement in service.



Leading the Way: IMA Student Leadership Experience

RCVCOBE IMA officers and Professor Delia Sanchez attended the IMA Student Leadership Conference in Cleveland, Ohio. Students participated in keynote sessions, interactive workshops, and networking with professionals. A highlight was touring Sherwin-Williams Global Headquarters, exploring finance operations, internships, and career pathways. This event strengthened leadership, professional development, and chapter visibility while sharing knowledge to benefit future members.



STUDENT SUCCESS **Student Organizations**

Historic Partnership with the RGV Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

In Spring 2025, CEO-UTRGV became the first UTRGV student organization to join the Rio Grande Valley Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. This milestone strengthens ties between students and the regional business community, offering access to networking events, mentorship, and leadership programs—empowering future entrepreneurs and connecting university-level innovation with South Texas business leaders.



Ask the Professor: Podcast Initiative

The Finance Hub launched a student-driven podcast where faculty answer real financial questions in clear, relatable language. This initiative strengthens student-faculty connections and expands financial education beyond the classroom, empowering students with practical insights for smarter money decisions.

AMA Marketing Week

AMA celebrated Marketing Week by hosting local agencies and industry leaders, including Olive Marketing, Brand Geniuz, RREAF Holdings, and Centurion Media, as part of a nationwide initiative highlighting the marketing profession. Students engaged in discussions on branding, analytics, and digital strategy, gaining real-world insights into diverse marketing career paths, agency operations, and professional practices across the industry.



Meet the Professionals

Meet the Accounting Professionals connected accounting students with industry leaders and potential employers for fast-paced, face-to-face networking. Students explored career paths, learned what firms look for in top candidates, and built connections that supported internship and full-time opportunities. Sponsored by the School of Accountancy and organized with Beta Alpha Psi (BAP) and ALPFA, the event bridged classroom learning with real-world experience.

NEWS AROUND THE COLLEGE Graduate Programs



A Milestone Achieved

The Fall 2025 **RCVCOBE Master's Hooding Ceremony** honored our graduates' accomplishments with inspiring remarks from the Dean, who emphasized purposeful leadership, and a keynote address by Mrs. Alice Rodriguez noting five key attributes for success.

The event celebrated this significant milestone with pride and reflection, bringing together graduates and their families to recognize achievements and look ahead to future opportunities.



Starting Strong: Graduate Orientation

RCVCOBE welcomed new master's students at Graduate Orientation, sharing program details, requirements, and campus resources. The event linked students to support services to help them start strong and succeed.



Industry Insights in Dallas

RCVCOBE master's students, including members of the Graduate Business Leaders Association, attended the 2025 Dallas Hotel Conference and visited Avion Hospitality offices, gaining industry insights, networking with leaders, and exploring career paths while strengthening academic-industry ties for future internships and job opportunities..



Grad Fairs: Edinburg and Brownsville

At UTRGV's Fall Graduate Fair, RCVCOBE faculty and staff actively showcased master's programs and shared valuable insights with prospective students, helping them explore opportunities for advanced study and career growth.

NEWS AROUND THE COLLEGE

Holiday Luncheon: Closing the Semester

The Holiday Luncheon wrapped up the semester with great food, festive décor, and lively conversations. Colleagues enjoyed a relaxed setting to connect and celebrate the holiday season.

This gathering offered a chance to step away from busy schedules, reflect on the semester, and appreciate the value of community, a meaningful close to a productive term. Thank you to everyone who joined us and made the event memorable.



DHR Health & Accountancy Partnership

DHR Health received the Career Center Champion Employer Award, highlighting its strong collaboration with UTRGV School of Accountancy to advance student success, professional growth, and career opportunities.



Marketing Certificate Achievement Ceremony

The Marketing Certificate Ceremony honors graduating seniors completing specialized certificates, showcasing skills and dedication. These credentials boost résumés and reflect the department's commitment to excellence and career readiness.



Tamalada Finals Kickoff

The RCVCOBE Tamalada in Edinburg and Brownsville brought tamales, holiday cheer, and community to students. Sponsored by BML, the event offered a festive, stress-relieving break to connect with faculty and celebrate before finals week.

NEWS AROUND THE COLLEGE

Industry Insights at THLA San Antonio

In October, HOST students traveled to San Antonio for the Texas Hotel & Lodging Association Annual Show. Guided by Chef Marcel, they attended workshops, explored cutting-edge innovations, and heard an inspiring keynote from humanitarian and world-renowned restaurateur Chef José Andrés, gaining hands-on exposure, networking opportunities, and valuable career insights within the hospitality industry.



Students Dive into iOS App Development at the CIC

On October 30, 2025, six UTRGV undergraduates joined App Lab Manager Oscar Ramos at the CIC for a three-hour iOS Swift workshop. Students explored Swift Playgrounds, built in Xcode, and reinforced concepts through a Kahoot review. We look forward to hosting Level 2 soon. Let's code!



National Consulting Competition at Baylor

The Marketing Department sent ten students and two faculty to Baylor University for a national consulting-track competition. Students applied marketing and strategy concepts in live case rounds, quizzes, and simulations, showcasing analytical skills and decision-making under pressure while networking with recruiters and industry professionals.



Next-Generation Accountants Connect

The Fall 2025 Accounting Symposium brought students, faculty, and industry professionals together for a day of learning and networking. Expert-led sessions and interactive panels highlighted emerging trends and innovations in the accounting field. Featured panelists included Felida Villarreal, MACC, CPA (VIDA, President & CEO); Artemio Lopez, CPA (Owner); Billy Cuellar (Financial Auditor, BML); and Iris A. Aguilar, CPA, MACC (Manager, Novogradac & Co. LLP). The event fostered collaboration, insight, and career-building connections.

NEWS AROUND THE COLLEGE



Kemper Scholars: Investing in Future Leaders

The Kemper Scholars Program supports high-achieving students through a partnership with the Kemper Foundation, expanding scholarship access at Hispanic-Serving Institutions and Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Beyond scholarships, the program connects students to faculty initiatives and internship opportunities through Kemper Corporation. This year, five UTRGV students earned Kemper Scholarships, highlighting the program's lasting impact preparing future business and accounting professionals for success ahead.



Exploring the Road to Financial Freedom

The Finance Hub Student Organization, in collaboration with the Finance Department, hosted Journey to Financial Freedom, a event featuring presentations by Dr. Javadi, Dr. Elnahas, and Professor Mathew Keyes. Students explored how financial decisions impact long-term success and gained practical insights for managing personal finances. Participants also earned a financial literacy certificate, adding value to their academic experience while reinforcing essential money management skills for future financial independence.



Shake It Up! HOST Club Learns Mocktail Mixology

HOST Club members honed hospitality skills in a mocktail mixology class led by Logan Fortuin. The session blended creativity with lessons on precision, showmanship, and bar management, emphasizing non-alcoholic options and real-world experience in today's evolving hospitality landscape.

NEWS AROUND THE COLLEGE

From the Kitchen to the Cosmos: HOST Students Tour SpaceX

UTRGV HOST students toured SpaceX’s South Texas operations to explore hospitality’s role in supporting workforce needs. Led by Dr. Arjun Singh and Chef Marcel, the visit also launched an internship partnership, with two students already securing positions and gaining valuable career-connected learning opportunities within a unique high-security environment.



Leading with Purpose

RCVCOBE recently kicked off **LEARN to Lead**, a selective, high-impact leadership development program for UTRGV undergraduates. Grounded in research and focused on real-world growth, the program combines coaching, peer and AI-supported learning, and hands-on leadership development experiences.



Path to Global Learning: Study Abroad Fairs

This fall, RCVCOBE hosted two Study Abroad Fairs showcasing nine programs across destinations such as Italy, Barcelona, London, Brazil, Dubai, India, and Switzerland. Students explored global learning opportunities, asked questions, and learned how studying abroad supports academic, cultural, and professional growth. Special thanks to Michael Flores and the VOICE Team for their support.



Maria Lillis (center)

Alumni Spotlight: Top 10 CPA

Congratulations to Maria Lillis (Accountancy, Fall 2022), who passed the CPA Exam and was recognized by the Texas State Board of Public Accountancy on

June 21, 2025, as a Top 10 highest-scoring candidate. We proudly celebrate her remarkable achievement and continued excellence beyond RCVCOBE.



MACC Alumni Night Out

Alumni, students, and industry professionals gathered for networking and mentorship, strengthening connections and supporting professional growth within the accounting community.

RCVCOBE Advisory Committee

Norma L. Villarreal

District Manager
Farmers Insurance

Leslie G. Bingham

CEO
Valley Baptist Medical Center-Brownsville

George Harold Cardenas

Regional President
Vantage Bank Texas

Sonia Aurelia Falcon

Senior Vice President
Lone Star National Bank

Todd Garner

Senior Vice President and Chief Product Officer
Sam's Club

Michael Gorges

Senior Advisor
Gorges Investments

Jorge A. Gutierrez

Chief Administrative Officer
Bert Ogden Auto Group

Leah Luedeker

VP General Manager Border Region
HEB

Reba Cardenas McNair

President
Cardenas Development Co.

Rafael Munguia

CEO / Wealth Management Advisor
Caribella Homes/ Lone Start National Bank

Barry Patel

Mayor of SPI / President
SPI / Perspective Hospitality LLC

Ben Peña

BML Partner, CPA, CFE, CVA
BML LLP

Paul A Penler

Managing Director
Ernst & Young (EY)

Joaquin Spamer

Founder and President
CIL Group

Tyler David Killian Stone

Vice President of Private Equity
Rioco

Alicia Torres

Chief Financial Officer
FreightVerify

Raul Federico Villanueva

Executive Vice President
Texas National Bank

Al Villarreal

President and CEO
IBC



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

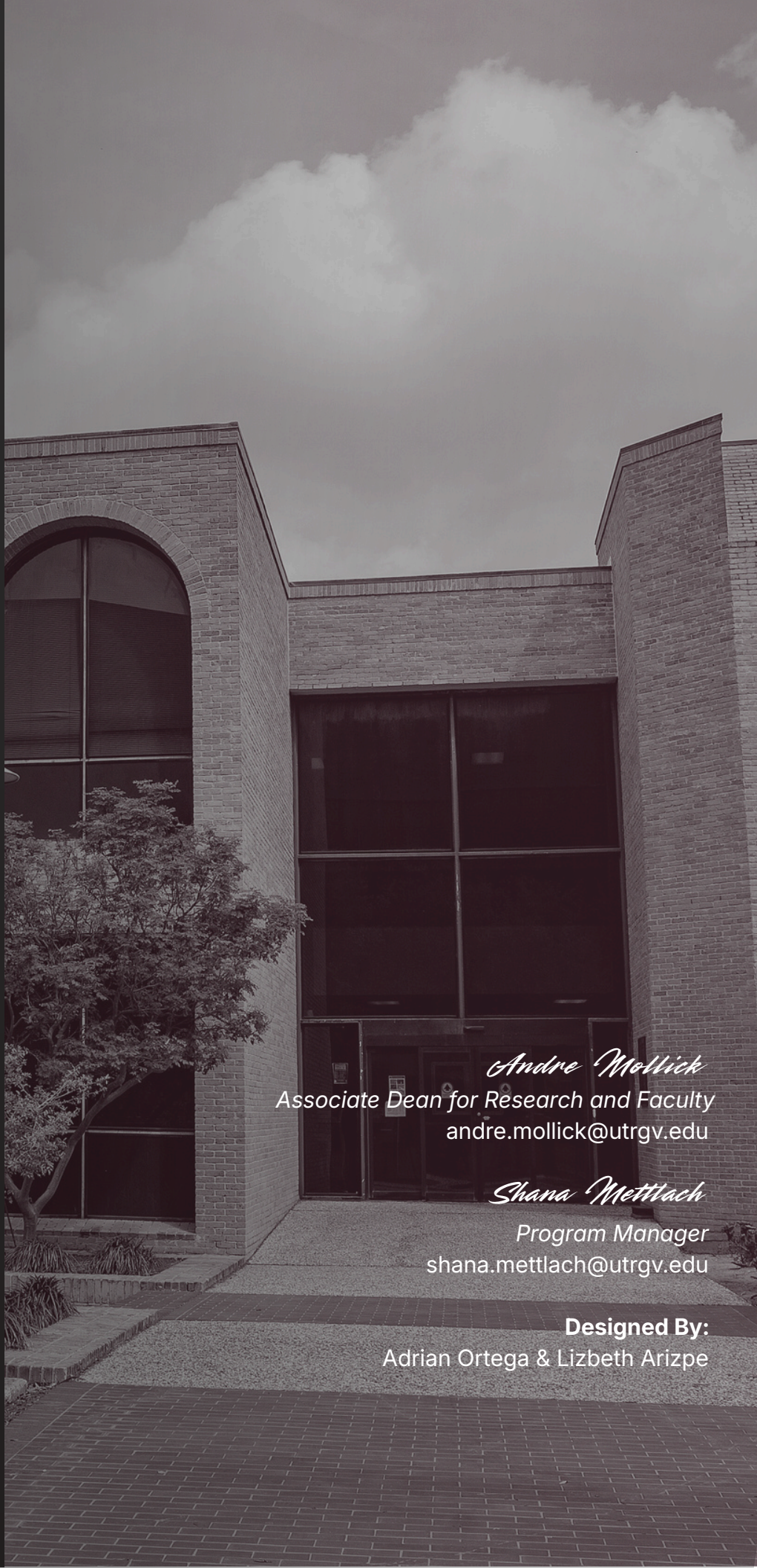
Cherish and support our positive role in the economic transformation of the Rio Grande Valley.



I want to thank you for the dedication and hard work that made the Fall 2025 semester at the Robert C. Vackar College of Business & Entrepreneurship a season of growth. Our students reached new milestones, supported by the commitment of our exceptional faculty and staff. Your efforts continue to strengthen our college and its impact. Thank you for being part of our journey. I look forward to all we'll accomplish together in the months ahead.

Freddie Jottu

UTRGV :: Robert C. Vackar College of
Business & Entrepreneurship



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