



# ACTIVITY REPORT

AUG 2022 – MAY 2023

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## Can Saygin

Senior Vice President for Research  
Dean of the Graduate College

MAY 19, 2023



The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Actions and Outcomes

Immediately after I joined UTRGV on Aug 1, 2022, I carried out a 30-day investigation of UTRGV’s Research Operations and Outcomes. The investigation showed fundamental weaknesses (roadblocks) affecting overall research productivity in terms of proposals, awards, and expenditures.

While most of these weaknesses required development of new processes and tools, there was also immediate need to add more business functions and staff to the Division of Research, which would pay off in the long term.

To create immediate impact in terms of Research Expenditures, I initiated the following tactics:

1. Reduce number of no-cost-extensions.
2. Re-org post-award and grants accounting to proactively monitor expenditures (burn rate) and ensure timely invoicing.
3. Review PSoft function codes to ensure the Projects IDs and Cost Centers that are “for research” are actually set up under “PSoft Function = 200 Research”
4. Communicate extensively with faculty and staff in various formats to create a culture of “Research Excellence”.

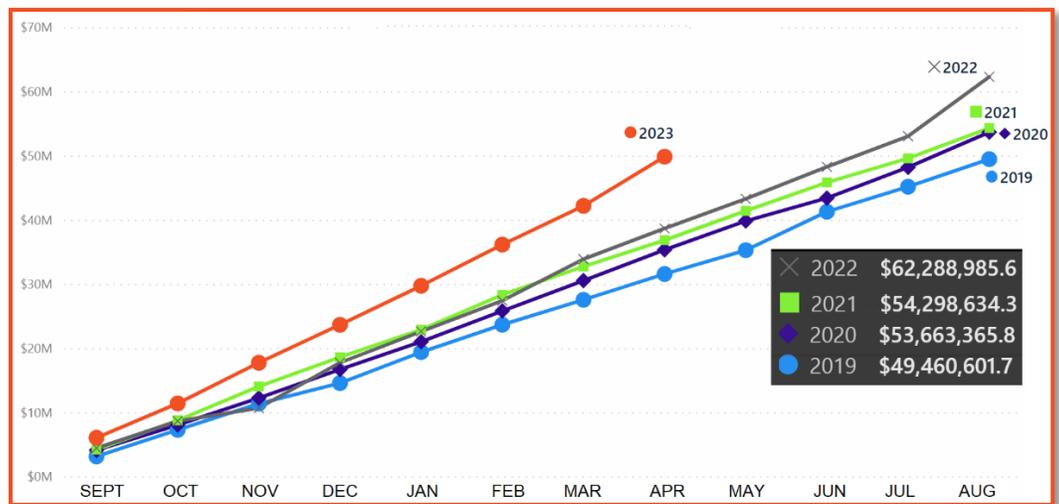
As shown in Figure 1. and Table 1., the immediate actions led to a dramatic increase in research expenditures compared to previous fiscal years. I anticipate that we will finish FY23 with over \$70M of total research expenditures.

### 10 Fundamental Weaknesses

1. No Cost Extensions
2. Delays in Spending
3. Lack of Metrics
4. Inefficiencies in Pre-Award
5. No Shared Credit
6. Delays in Monthly Recons
7. Financial Reporting and Invoicing
8. No Research Analytics
9. No Electronic Proposal Workflow
10. No Faculty Research Development

### Outcome in 9 Months

**73.4% increase  
in Restricted Research  
Expenditures...**



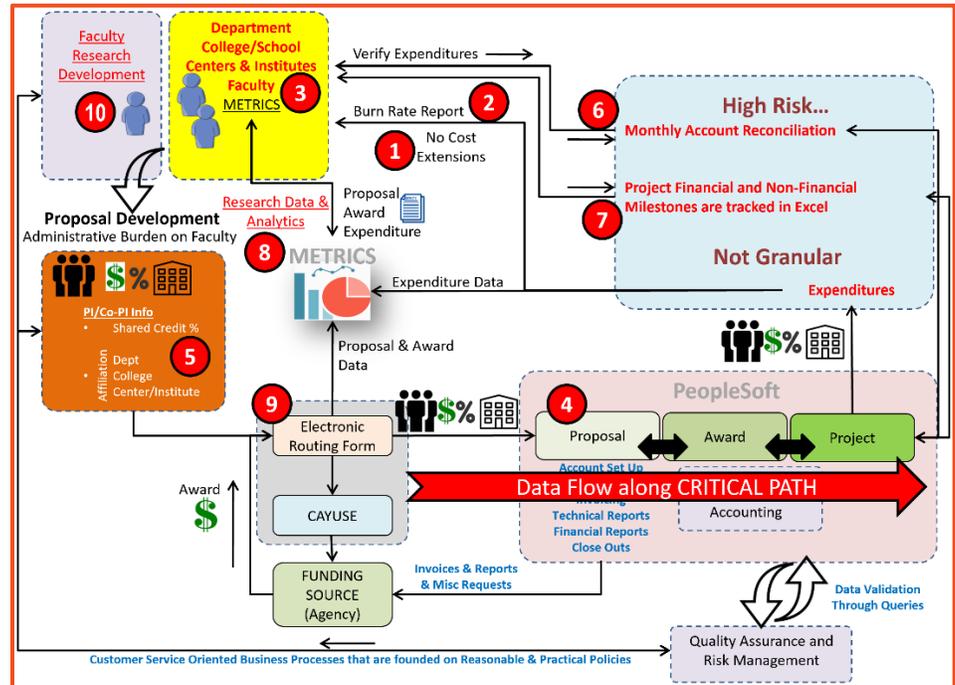
**Figure 1.** Total Research Expenditures

**Table 1.** Increase in Expenditure Metrics: Sept-Apr FY 22 versus Sept-Apr FY 23.

Expenditure Metric	FY22	FY23	% Change
Restricted Research (external)	\$13.7M	\$23.7M	73.4 % up
Unrestricted Research (internal)	\$25.0M	\$26.1M	4.6 % up
Total Research	\$38.7M	\$49.8M	28.9 % up

## Building a Foundation

My 30-day investigation led to identification of 10-Roadblocks, as shown in Figure 2. Of these 10 roadblocks, I immediately focused on #1, #2, #3, #4, and #5; the results are summarized in the Executive Summary (page 2).



**Figure 2. 10-Roadblocks**

### UTRGV Research Enterprise

10-Roadblocks Investigation was used to develop a roadmap for adding new functions, FTEs, and tools, with the mission to:

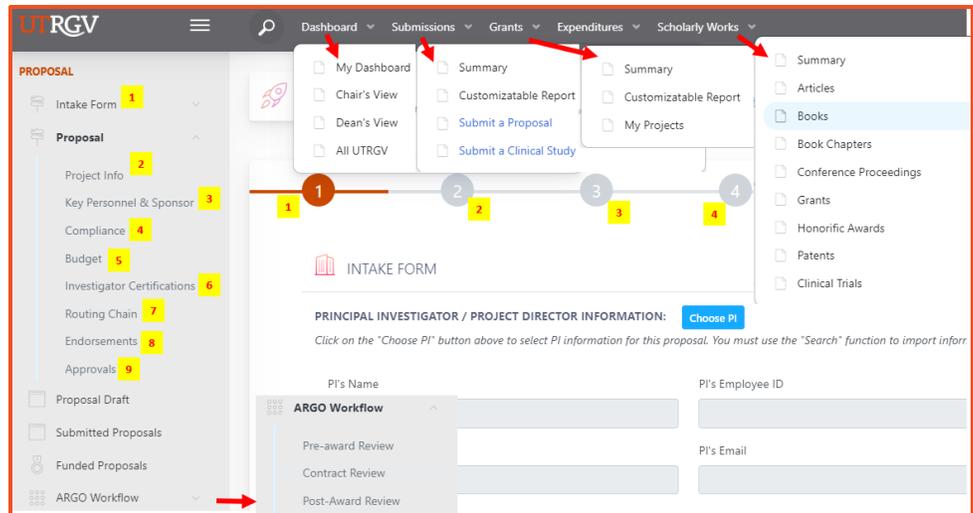
- Facilitate sustainable growth, ▼
- Enable productivity, ▼
- Pursue excellence...

#6 - Next, I worked with Eloy Alaniz on Monthly Reconciliations, while its impact is not directly visible, timely reconciliations help the grants accountants to close out projects in a timely manner with financial accuracy.

#7 - I have worked with the UT System office to enable PSoft milestones function to be turned on for UTRGV (similar to what I had for UTSA).

#8 - One major function missing in Division of Research was a Research Analytics unit. After obtaining President Bailey's approval, I recruited a new Assistant VP for Research Analytics and two (2) software developers in November 2022. I moved other IT-related FTEs both in Research and Graduate College under this new unit.

#9 - The new Research Analytics unit immediately started to work on a proposal routing application project as an electronic workflow platform (similar to what I had developed at UTSA). We named the platform "Automated Research and Grants Organizer", ARGO in short. As shown in Figure 3, ARGO will be a system for pre-award business process orchestration and post-award project management with milestones and deliverables, timelines, and detailed reporting. ARGO will be deployed in Summer 2023 for testing and will be fully utilized in FY 24 (corrected from FY25 in this Rev).



**Figure 3. ARGO: Digital Workflow for Proposal-Award Management**

#10 – The current practice at UTRGV is that our faculty seek grants, look for partnerships themselves, and reach out to the Division of Research once they decide to submit a proposal. Research Universities focus on faculty research development and enhancement to build long term capacity and capability. Such a function leads to large grants, multi-institution proposals, interdisciplinary research, and a strong federal grants portfolio, while it facilitates faculty success.

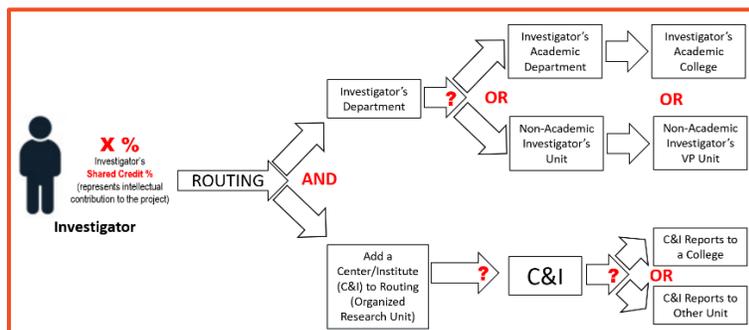
With President Bailey’s approval, I have added an Assistant VP for Research Enhancement position with three (3) program coordinator FTEs to establish this new unit. As of May 2023, we have campus interviews with the Assistant VP candidates and my plan is to start this unit in August 2023. In FY24, this unit will work in collaboration with Academic Affairs to deliver seamless faculty success initiatives.

## Operational Visibility, Awareness, & Accountability

### Shared Credit Percentage

It represents the intellectual contribution of a faculty member to a proposal, then an award, and towards expenditures. Based on faculty members’ department and college appointments, the “credit” for proposal, awards, and expenditures are given to their departments and colleges regardless of faculty members’ role of Principle Investigator (PI) versus Co-PI.

One major weakness in UTRGV’s research operations was lack of timely data and actionable information that leads to operational visibility and awareness in terms of proposals, awards, and expenditures related activities at the faculty, department, college, and institutional level. To facilitate “collaborative behavior” and give credit to all participating entities, I introduced the “shared credit” concept, as shown in Figures 4a and 4b.



**Figure 4a. Shared Credit Percentage concept**

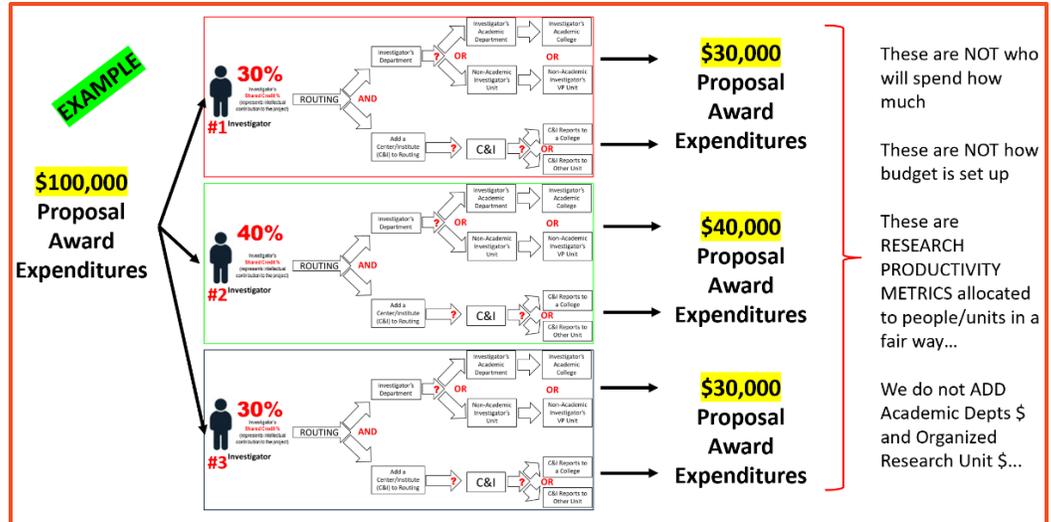


Figure 4a. Shared Credit to Facilitate Collaboration Across Departments and Colleges Regardless of PI versus Co-PI Role

Dashboards provide timely, actionable information at a granular level to assess research performance and take strategic actions...

Once the Shared Credit concept was introduced, I tasked the newly formed Research Analytics unit to develop dashboards. The first platform was Expenditures Dashboard, as shown in Figure 5. Based on Project IDs in PSoft, expenditures are multiplied by shared credit and displayed at various levels: faculty, department, college, sponsor, fiscal years, months. Building this dashboard required scrubbing of old data from FY2019 – FY2022 and putting them in the right format. Moving forward (FY23), this dashboard will be operating in real-time based on PSoft data.

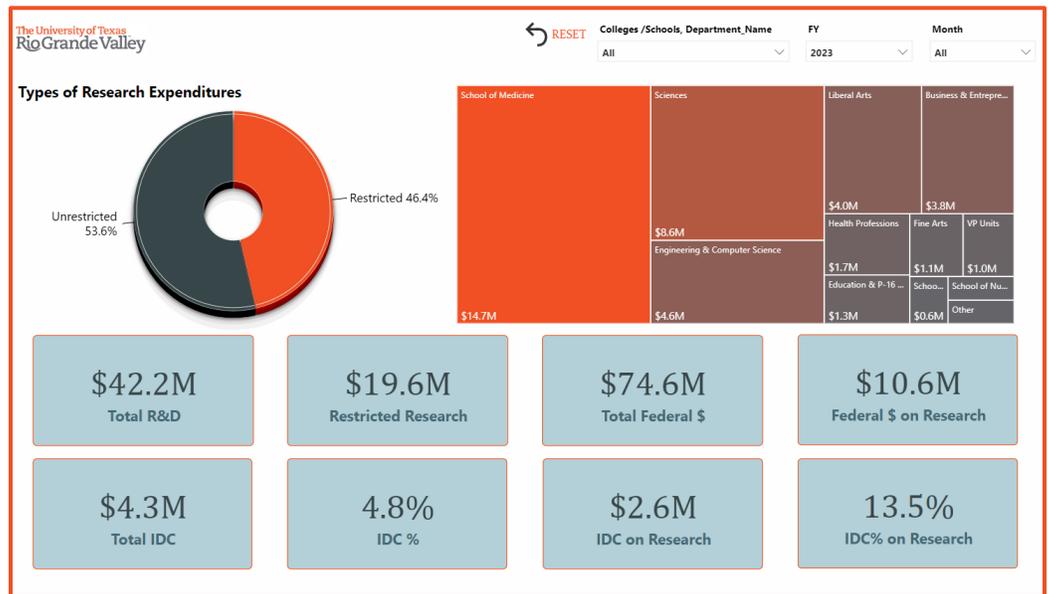


Figure 5. Expenditures Dashboard

**Proposals and Awards Dashboard** was introduced after the Expenditures Dashboard. Since UTRGV's old data (regarding proposals and awards) were based on pdf and Excel files, this effort required major data clean up. As a result, we were able to go back to FY2016 and reformat data to date. Figure 6. shows the Proposals and Awards dashboard; similar to the Expenditures Dashboard, it allows for display, report, compare functions at faculty, department, college, sponsor, and fiscal year levels.

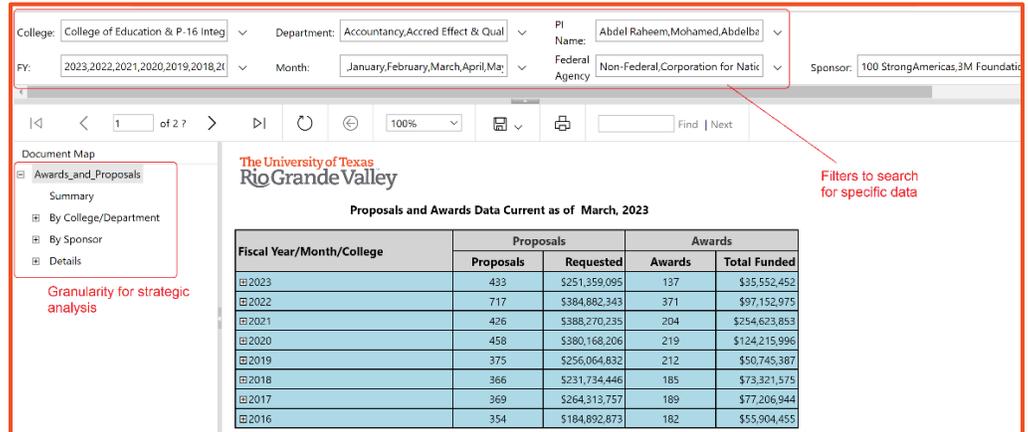


Figure 6. Proposals and Awards Dashboard

The dashboards are available at <https://www.utrgv.edu/research/reports/>.

As we look into the future of UTRGV in terms of its Research Destination, reaching Carnegie R1 status will be one of the major accomplishments. While Carnegie process is currently going through some major changes, I wanted to have a Carnegie Dashboard as a tool to show our progress towards the R1 zone. Figure 7. Shows the Carnegie Dashboard.

The Carnegie Classifications for Institutions of Higher Education are located within the American Council on Education (ACE). Adding of new attributes, such as Social Mobility Index, are yet to be introduced. We will then redo the Carnegie Dashboard to capture the new model.

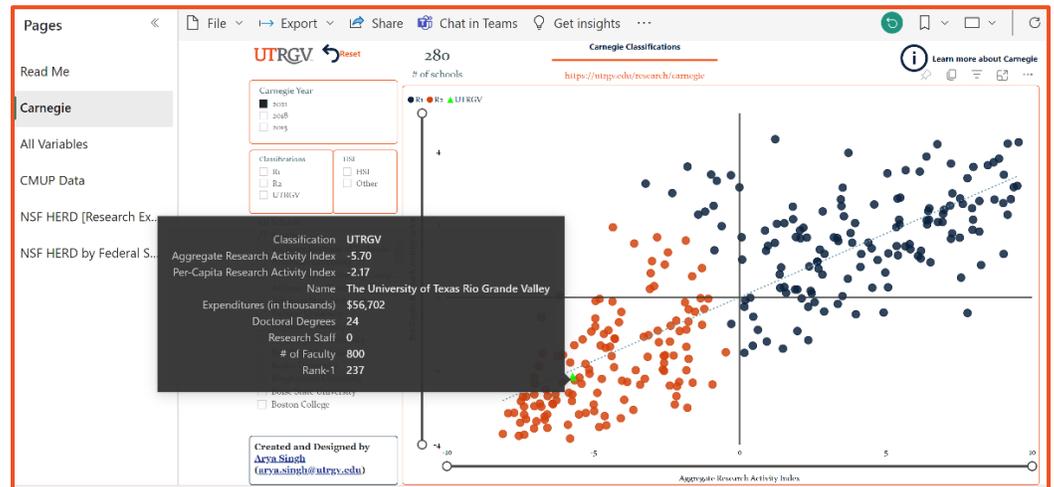


Figure 7. Proposals and Awards Dashboard

## Organizational Changes and Expansion

I have focused on the 1) Division of Research, 2) Graduate College, and 3) Clinical Research Infrastructure in terms of “people-functions”.

The changes in the **Division of Research** are shown in Figure 8. and Table 2.

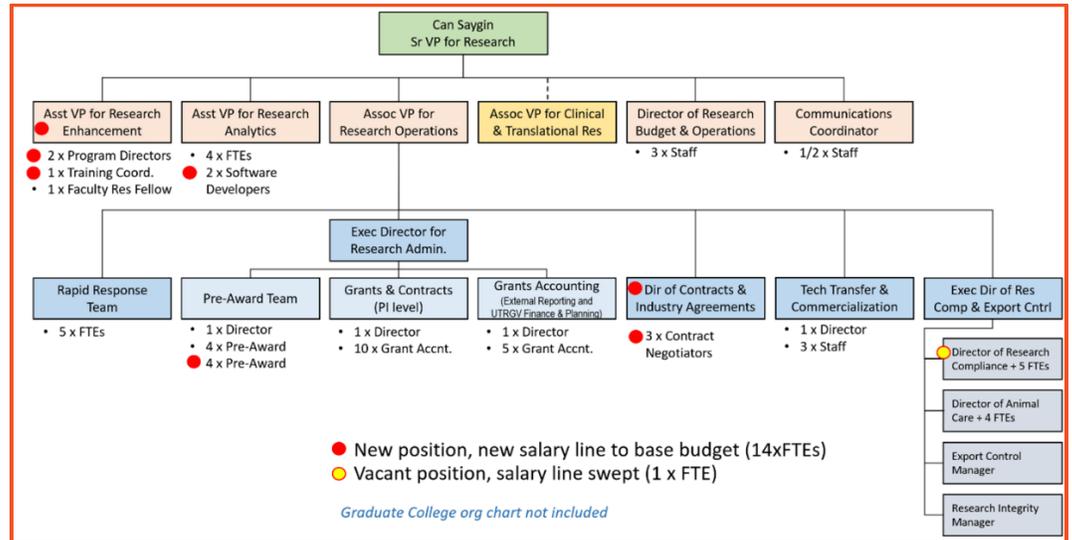
### Since August 2022...

**Hiring, promoting, and transferring of 46 positions**

13 new positions,  
24 vacancies filled,  
9 positions transferred  
within the division.

### Moving to Rio Bank Building

Relocation of over 30 staff members from Edinburg campus to the McAllen Rio Bank building



**Figure 8.** Division of Research: New Functions

**Table 2.** Division of Research: New FTEs

PROPOSED HIRING PORTFOLIO & TIMELINE						
	11/15/2022	SALARY	FY 2023			FY2024
FUNCTION/UNIT/FTE	(Estimated / HR)		Fall 2022	Spring 2023	Summer 2023	Fall 2023
Software Engineer - IV	\$95-\$100K		x			
Software Engineer - III	\$75-80K		x			
Director of Research Compliance	\$95-\$110K		x			
Director, Contracts and Industry Agreements	\$95-\$100K			x		
Contract Negotiator	\$65-70K			x		
Contract Negotiator	\$65-70K					x
Contract Negotiator	\$65-70K					x
Pre-Award Administration	\$65-70K			x		
Pre-Award Administration	\$65-70K			x		
Pre-Award Administration	\$65-70K					x
Pre-Award Administration	\$65-70K					x
Asst Vice President for Research Enhancement	\$125K			x		
1 x Program Coordinator	\$65-70K			x		
1 x Program Coordinator	\$65-70K					x
1 x Training Coordinator	\$55-65K					x
<b>TOTAL SALARIES (ANNUAL, w/o fringe)</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>1,210,000</b>	<b>3 FTEs</b>	<b>6 FTEs</b>		<b>6 FTEs</b>
Recurring Cost (Annual) for M&O, Prof Develop	\$	45,000	This list does not include Clinical Research related Capacity and Capability plan.			
One Time Cost for Computer/Laptop/Monitors	\$	52,500				
<b>TOTAL FTEs</b>		<b>15 FTEs</b>				

### Setting up a Business Service Center (BSC) in Research to centrally provide administrative services

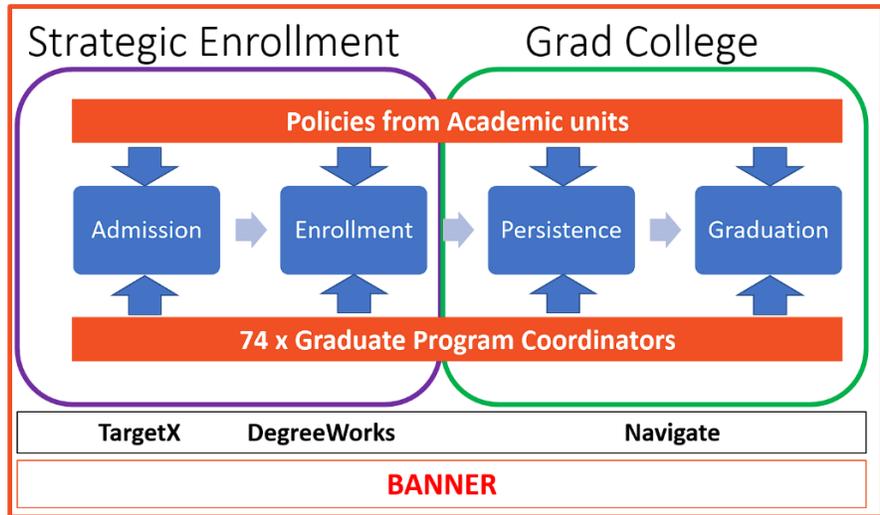
The Research Business Service Center provides critical support to our faculty who contact us for research-related assistance. By pooling all decentralized administrative staff under the BSC unit, we provide uninterrupted and standardized service.

Two major changes were made in the **Graduate College**. In November, we moved the Graduate Admissions and Enrollment (functions and FTEs) to the Division of Strategic Enrollment and Student Affairs. As shown in Figure 9., the Graduate College has become more focused on degree progression (persistence) and graduation.

**Graduate Student Success**

Depends on the integration between Strategic Enrollment and Graduate College in terms of:

- student data and metrics from admissions to enrollment to degree progression to graduation for timely decision making, and
- Coordination of “coaching” of the Graduate Program Coordinators (GPC).



**Figure 9.** Division of Research: New Functions

The second change is implementation of Navigate (EAB product for student success) for graduate program degree progression. To reduce data request overload on BANNER and provide flexibility, the Graduate College will be able to develop its strategies on the Navigate platform.

With these two changes, the Graduate College will develop new processes:

- 1) Monitoring “graduate degree progression” after enrollment is key to ensure we move our students at the right pace towards their degrees. Along the way from “admission/enrollment” to “graduate degree”, we must have tools to enable “proactive monitoring and advising” for timely degree progression. We will be using EAB’s Navigate platform to accomplish this goal so that suspensions and dismissals are minimized while we provide timely advice to graduate students.
- 2) As we increase our graduate student numbers and degrees awarded, we need to provide higher level of thesis/dissertation formatting services.
- 3) Currently, forms needed to capture milestones and progress throughout degree progression are based on static pdf forms or Word files. We do not capture any of the information digitally; thus, we cannot proactively monitor such milestones. Research Analytics unit will develop a new “degree progression milestones and workflow automation” platform for the Graduate College to capture not only these forms in digital format but also the data on these forms will be stored in a format that we can re-use, report, and follow up in a timely fashion.
- 4) Research Enhancement unit will support the Graduate College in terms of managing a new portfolio of services for post-docs.

The new organizational chart for the Graduate College is shown in Figure 10.

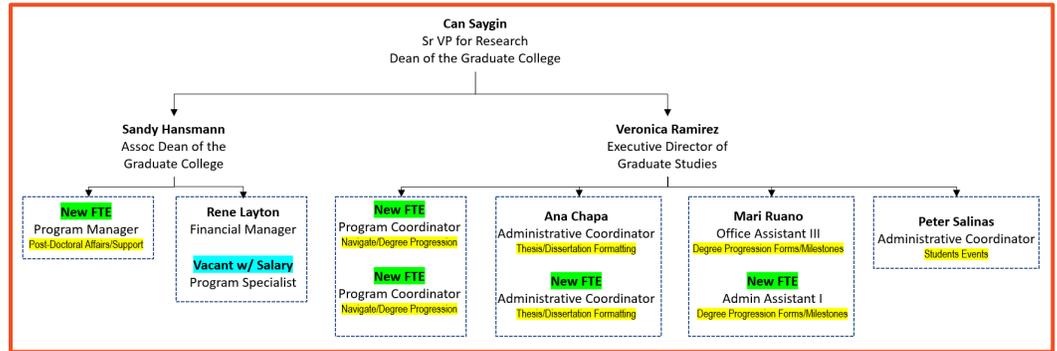


Figure 10. Graduate College Org Chart

**Clinical Research** requires new business functions at UTRGV. A set of new software applications, along with corresponding FTE/resources will be needed to deliver these functions and services. The Clinical Research Infrastructure Needs project, as result of a task force initiative, has been completed. The software architecture is shown in Figure 11, along with new FTEs needed in Table 3.

UTRGV Clinical Research will require eventual organizational changes at the institutional level to maximize the impact of UTRGV's research potential in this area.

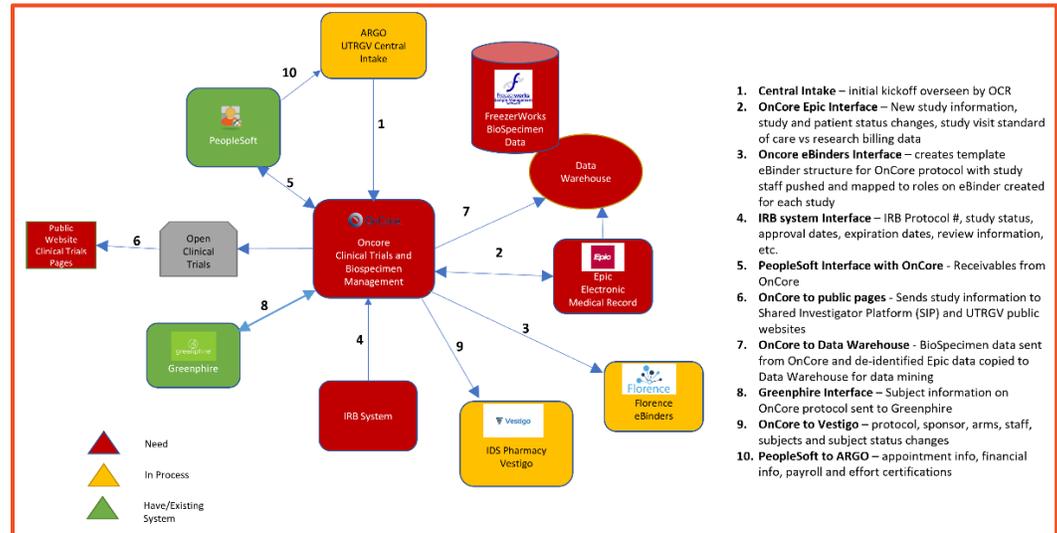


Figure 11. Clinical Research Infrastructure: Software Platforms

Table 3. New FTEs Needed to Support the Clinical Research Infrastructure Needs

FY24 Positions – 3xFTEs	FY25 Positions – 4xFTEs
1 FTE - Program Coordinator	1 FTE - Coverage Analyst
1 FTE - Regulatory Coordinator	1 FTE - Billing Specialist
1 FTE – Technical IT for EPIC	1 FTE - IT/System Admin/Support for OnCore
	1 FTE - Regulatory

# Maximizing Research Expenditures

In Fall 2022, I mapped the “plumbing” behind “what affects research expenditures”. The 10-Boxes model is shown in Figure 12.

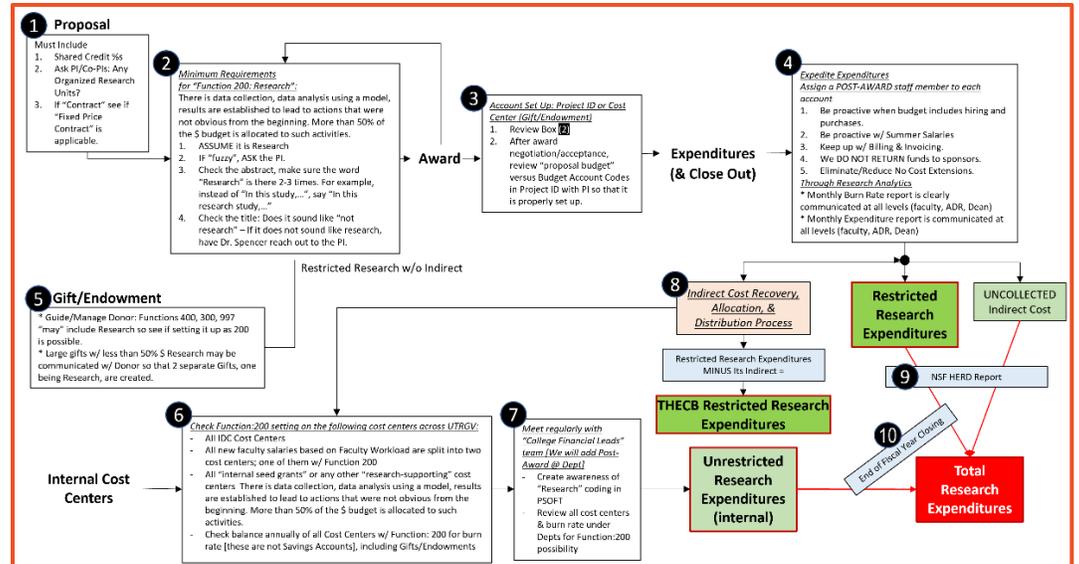


Figure 12. 10-Boxes: What Affects Research Expenditures

Paying attention to how the funds are coded across the institution is extremely important. Creating awareness about “color of money” (PSoft function coding) will help us reach our Research Expenditures targets.

I have assigned these boxes to my team (accountability) and have gone through several training sessions at various levels within the Division of Research. Currently, we are defining “metrics” for each box and this level of attention to detail will further improve the research expenditures.

## Policies

- I re-wrote the Institutional Base Salary (IBS) and Organized Research Units (ORU) HOP policies.
- Dr. Arney and I have met with the deans to map the currently listed 65 centers/institutes onto the new ORU model, which led to a small number of ORUs and the rest were categorized as institutional/administrative centers.
- I issued a memo on “Do not ask for IDC Waiver”, explaining how IDC supports institutional infrastructure.
- I created the “Shared Credit” concept and an operational model to implement it.
- I revised the IDC Revenue return, allocation, and distribution model. The “generating units” percentage went up from 20% to 30%, following the shared credit model, as shown in Figure 13. The FY23 IDC will be distributed in Oct 2023 according to this new model after the year-end closing of FY23 is completed in Sept 2023.
- I initiated monthly Associate Dean for Research (ADR) and Graduate Associate Deans (GAD) meeting.
- I created the “Deans Research Council (DRC)” and initiated monthly meetings.

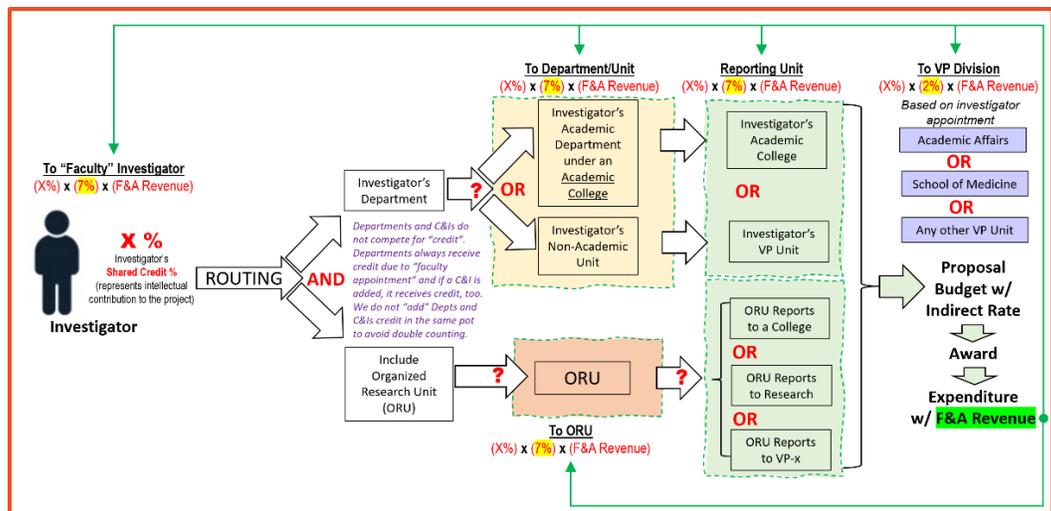


Figure 13. New IDC Revenue Return to Generating Units Model

## Faculty Out-Reach

In August 2022, I created a faculty satisfaction survey and disseminated it to all faculty members across the institution. 241 faculty members responded. The numerical results showed weaknesses in pre and post award processes while the staff were highly ranked for their professionalism.

Table 4. Number of Responses: Faculty Titles

Number of Responses	Assistant Professor	Associate Professor	Full Professor	Lecturer, Prof in Practice, and Clinical Faculty	Non-faculty Research Staff	TOTAL Participants	% College/School Response
College of Business & Entrepreneurship	2	6	5	0	0	13	5.4%
College of Education and P-16 Integration	8	2	6	2	0	18	7.5%
College of Engineering and Computer Science	15	5	18	3	1	42	17.4%
College of Fine Arts	2	2	3	0	0	7	2.9%
College of Health Professions	10	2	3	3	0	18	7.5%
College of Liberal Arts	8	19	12	12	0	51	21.2%
College of Sciences	13	13	17	3	0	46	19.1%
School of Medicine	15	8	14	0	1	38	15.8%
School of Nursing	0	1	1	0	0	2	0.8%
School of Podiatric Medicine	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.4%
School of Social Work	1	1	1	1	0	4	1.7%
University College	0	0	0	1	0	1	0.4%
<b>TOTAL RESPONSES Per Title</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>241</b>	
<b>% Responses Per Title</b>	<b>31.1%</b>	<b>24.5%</b>	<b>33.2%</b>	<b>10.4%</b>	<b>0.8%</b>		

Table 5. Survey Responses

112 of 241 respondents provided a total of 256 comments	Number of Times	% of Comments
1) Pre-Award & Post-Award Disconnect, including contracts and compliance	56	21.9%
2) Facilities: Maintenance, Equipment, Physical Access	48	18.8%
3) Dept/College/School level Post-Award Admin/Staff	43	16.8%
4) Faculty Research Development	24	9.4%
5) Faculty Workload, Faculty Titles, and Buy-Out Policies	21	8.2%
6) Student Recruitment, Hiring, & Onboarding	17	6.6%
7) Internal Funding & Seed Grants	15	5.9%
8) Research Awareness Across the Institution	14	5.5%
9) Research Space	9	3.5%
10) IT Support for Research	9	3.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>256</b>	

Based on commonality across 241 faculty members, we made 10 commitments to start implementing immediately in Fall 2022:

1) We will provide **full proposal budget preparation assistance** to all proposals. We still need your approval and supervision during the planning phase of your proposal, but you will not fill out budget Excel files by yourself from scratch, and you will not go through lengthy emails for budget revisions.

2) We have established a **Rapid Response Team (RRT)** that brings together experienced pre-award, post-award, and grants accounting team members. RRT will report to Dr. Thomas Spencer and provide technical support for complicated proposals, high-risk awards, and any active project that needs holistic assistance instead of a sequential process that takes longer.

3) We will provide **Grant Writing services** through third-party providers for large grants. While you bring scientific merits in your draft version of the proposal narrative, we will provide professional grant writing/editing services.

4) We will make our **pre-award/post-award technical team members available online** every Friday afternoon for questions. The online link and time will be announced. Any questions or any topic will be welcome.

5) To improve our customer service to our research community, we have initiated an **internal ticketing system**, which will facilitate timely tracking and response, as well as coding of every request that comes from you so that we can develop a frequently asked questions knowledge base and develop awareness and training programs to address these issues effectively.

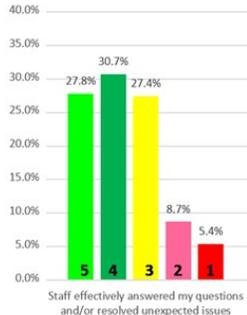
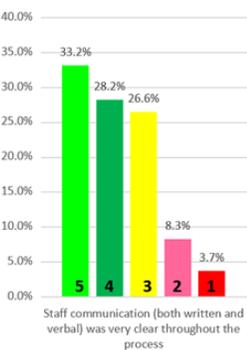
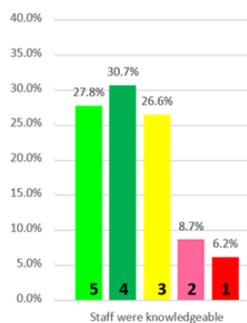
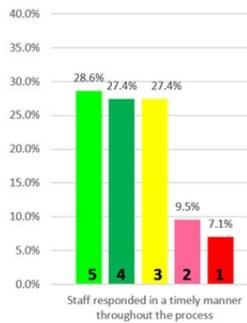
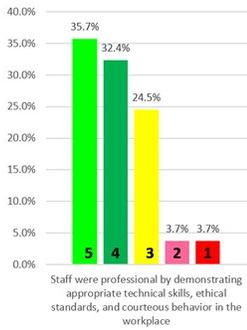
6) To facilitate accountability on our part, we will deploy **customer satisfaction surveys** after proposal development and submission, and upon completion of major financial/accounting transactions where researchers interact with the Division of Research. The results of the surveys will be broadly shared and used as metrics for further improvements in our business processes portfolio.

7) Many requests for various sponsored project administration-related processes are being sent to us via email. We will develop **electronic forms to replace email-based requests** to capture the correct data and facilitate timely response to you.

8) While we typically focus on award notices, we will also focus on **unfunded/rejected proposals**. We will provide the researchers with unfunded proposals an opportunity for improvement through review sessions. The objective is to provide faculty research development opportunities to learn from unfunded proposals and build successful proposals in the future.

9) We will use the **“shared credit percentage”** provided on the Proposal Transmittal Form (PTF) to calculate “credit given to faculty member” regardless of serving as PI or Co-PI. This “credit percentage” will be used to report proposals, awards, and expenditures and calculate indirect cost (IDC) revenue return to faculty and associated generating units.

10) We are launching a new initiative to facilitate **interdisciplinary research**, namely Collaborative Networking for Excellence in Research and Graduate Education or CNER&GE (“synergy”). Under various themes, the CNER&GE initiative will provide a forum for UTRGV researchers from across disciplines and the extended research community to collaborate on emerging transdisciplinary fields in academia.



Likert Scale:

- 5  
Strongly Agree
- 4  
Agree
- 3  
Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- 2  
Disagree
- 1  
Strongly Disagree

We also discovered issues outside the Division of Research. Based on these non-Research issues, I initiated a task force approach to investigate IT, HR, and Space issues that affect research operations and outcomes. I brought the Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center (TMAC) into these 3 task forces to map out the current “problematic” processes, find out root causes for inefficiencies, and develop new processes with collaboration from various other divisions outside the Division of Research. The findings from these task forces will roll into the portfolio of “Institutional Task Force - Emerging Research University” (as recently released by President Bailey).

## Research Communication Strategy

Having the right communications strategy is key to change the research culture in an institution. In August 2022, I immediately established a protocol for communications and formed a team within the Division of Research to provide timely out-reach when I need, in coordination with the Division of University Marketing and Communications (UMC). I implemented different initiatives and strategies to highlight and promote the UTRGV Research Enterprise by recognizing and highlighting faculty research achievements through various means:

1) **Congratulatory Letters to the Research Community:** By personally crafting congratulatory letters, I have made it a point to express sincere appreciation and support for our faculty's accomplishments. The congratulatory letters are personally signed by me and delivered by a research communications staff directly to faculty who have received commendable awards. Faculty members have responded positively to this new initiative.

2) **Social Media Engagement:** As part of the communication initiatives, I am guiding our research communications team to highlight and promote research enterprise at UTRGV using social media platforms, particularly LinkedIn, to recognize our university's research excellence. Through various means, including photography, congratulatory mentions, and engaging content, I seek amplify the impact of our researchers' work to reach a wider audience. The total number of reactions, comments, and reposts for our organic posts during this time has reached Over 2,500 engagements.

3) **Research Events and Press Conferences:** During my 9-month period at UTRGV, I have actively supported the research faculty at our university by participating in various research-related events and press conferences. My presence at these events demonstrates my commitment to providing support and assistance to the faculty, to our community, and UTRGV's visibility. More importantly, this has allowed me to establish strong connections with our faculty and community members. Activities include:

[□ College of Health Professions Cohort Research Fellows Program's meeting – I gave a "Research Excellence: Strategic and Operational Directions" presentation to the new research fellows to share the Division of Research services, including faculty research enhancement support, one-on-one funding searchable database training, and Office of Sponsored Programs services. \(Oct. 7,2022\)](#)

Dr. Hilda Medrano's  
(Professor at the Department  
of Human Development and  
School Services)  
response to my  
Congratulatory Letter:

*"Greetings, Dr. Saygin,  
I want to thank you for  
the wonderful letter  
that you sent me last  
month. I have been  
writing proposals for  
external funding since  
the 1990s and this is  
the first time that my  
work has been  
acknowledged by  
anyone in upper  
administration. It  
means a lot and is very  
motivating."*

□ Stakeholder engagement session with Shalanda Baker, Director of the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Economic Impact and Diversity and UTRGV faculty to discuss current research at UTRGV. (April 14, 2023)

□ DHS Science and Technology Officials Visit UTRGV to Discuss Funding Opportunities, Paid Internships, and Progress of UTRGV-led Border Protection Project. (April 19, 2023)

□ Collaboration engagement session visiting Nano Dimension in Waltham, MA, to explore potential collaboration opportunities. Nano Dimension is a leading manufacturer of additive electronics solutions and a recognized leader in the field of nanotechnology. (April 2023)

□ Open forum for the faculty of the School of Medicine to provide clarification, provide feedback, and address any questions or concerns they may have had regarding research policy or processes. (May 3, 2023)

□ UTRGV Press conference with Laredo ISD and United ISD to announce a \$5.6 million MHS ACCESS 2 grant. (May 4, 2023)



Key visits to Federal Labs, Industry Partners, Conferences, and Texas Capitol



4) Media Advisories: One initiative that has impacted The Research Division's communications is promoting faculty achievements through news releases and media advisories to increase recognition and awareness of the outstanding work conducted at UTRGV. Below is a screenshot of a press release shared by Congressman Vicente Gonzalez featuring my statement supporting an award and research project. In the fourth and fifth paragraphs of the press release, I express my support for the recognized achievement and ongoing research and the impact. To read press release click here: <https://gonzalez.house.gov/media/press-releases/congressman-gonzalez-announces-over-26-million-train-mental-health-service>

5) Collaboration with UMC: The Research Communications team consists of only one Communications Coordinator and a Program Specialist; they work in collaboration with the University Marketing and Communications (UMC) to unite forces and bring UTRGV to the spotlight. Some examples of the Research Communications team's coverage include:

□ UTRGV's Razo awarded a \$5.7 million grant to improve area mental health services for children. Link: <https://t.co/6pSnOxstD3>



With Shalanda H Baker



(Laredo)



(Weslaco)

□ The Honorable Shalanda H. Baker, director of the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Economic Impact, visited UTRGV to deliver a keynote address on energy justice. Link: <https://t.co/d67PX93KCH>

□ DoD Under Secretary Shyu visits UTRGV to deliver inspirational keynote at National Manufacturing Expo. Link: <https://t.co/ljlbUASita>



With H. Cuellar, President Bailer and SVP Veronica Gonzales



(4<sup>th</sup> from left – Ms. Heidi Shyu)

□ UTRGV receives \$2.2M grant for 'Climate-Smart' Commodities project. Link: <https://t.co/4LVqSxRWq9>

□ Dr. Hamidreza Ramezani, associate professor in the Department of Physics and Astronomy, has received an \$800,000 NSF grant to perform research in quantum optics. Link: <https://t.co/kDxOxZNR17>

6) **First new faculty 2022 research and graduate college introduction event:** Continuing my commitment to enhancing communication and fostering an environment towards achieving ERU status, the Research Division and Graduate College hosted the inaugural new faculty orientation. During the orientation session, faculty members were provided with information about services and resources offered by the Research Division and the Graduate College, including proposals and project closeout, research enhancement, research compliance, and graduate studies services for faculty.

7) **Upcoming Research Annual Report Magazine:** The Research Communications team is working on the inaugural annual research report magazine at UTRGV. This publication will feature a summary of 2023 expenditures, the top awards, expenditure details, proposal highlights, and the excellence of our research faculty. This magazine-style report aims to highlight and promote our research enterprise.

## **GRADUATE COLLEGE – Policies & Events**

From a strategic perspective, I will make major changes in the Graduate College in coming months based on the new focus on degree progressions and maximizing degrees awarded.

Meanwhile, the graduate college led various policy revisions since August 2022:

**AY 2022-2023 Catalog – Policy Revisions**

Vaquero Pathways

Concurrent Degree Policy

Leave of Absence Policy/Procedure

Second or Subsequent master’s degrees

Comprehensive Exam Policy

Course Repeat Policy

**AY 2023-2024 Catalog – Policy Revisions**

Application Fee Policy

Thesis & Dissertation Committee Policy/Procedure

Expired Coursework Policy/Procedure

Master Academic Standing, Probation, Suspension, and Dismissal Policy/Procedure

Doctoral Academic Standing, Probation, Suspension, and Dismissal Policy/Procedure

**The Graduate College was also very active in connecting with graduate students through various meetings and orientation events:**

Aug. 2022 - Fall & Fall Mod I 2022 Orientation – 173 attendees

Aug. 2022 - Fall & Fall Mod I 2022 Orientation – 31 attendees

Oct. 2022 - Fall Mod II 2022 Orientation – 75 attendees

Dec. 2022 - Spring & Spring Mod I 2023 Orientation – 120 attendees

Jan. 2023 - Spring & Spring Mod I 2023 Orientation – 104 attendees

March 2023 - Spring Mod II 2023 Orientation – 53 attendees

Sept. 2022 – Fall Welcome Week Event – 247 attendees

Jan. 2023 – Spring Welcome Week Event – 210 attendees

Feb. 2023 – Love Our Grad Student Event – 120 attendees

April 2023 – Grad Student Appreciation Event – 300 attendees

***Over 1,200***

**number of attendees in various Graduate College meetings and orientation events since August 2022..**

## Misc Communications & Networking Events

DATE	LOCATION	NAME	DESCRIPTION
9/7/2022	Edinburg & Brownsville Campus	Graduate Welcome Back Event	UTRGV Graduate College hosted an event to mark the start of a new fall semester for both new and current graduate students. This event provided a valuable opportunity for our students to come together, engage with one another, and connect with our graduate college team members.
9/9/2022	ZOOM	Submittable launch & training	Research Enhancement hosted its first online Submittable training session. The Submittable platform is an online tool used by our research community to submit and manage grant proposals, applications, and other research-related materials.
9/12/2022	Edinburg Campus & ZOOM	Keys to Research #1 (9/12/2022 - 05/26/2023)	Over 100 faculty members & research staff attended the "Keys to Research" - Faculty Research and Professional Development workshop #1 (ongoing workshop)
9/22/2022	Edinburg & Brownsville Campus	New Faculty Fall 2022 Intro to Research/Grad College	The Division of Research (DOR) and the Graduate College hosted their first faculty orientation event. This event provided an opportunity for new faculty members to learn more about the services and resources available to them through the DOR and Graduate College.
9/23/2022	Women Faculty Network	Zoom	Introductions
9/27/2022	Main Event Center	Annual Retreat	The Division of Research hosted its 2022 annual retreat. The retreat was split into two parts, with the morning dedicated to team building and reporting sessions, followed by lunch. The theme for this year's retreat was "Managing Purpose, Performance, and Perception," which focused on exploring strategies for enhancing the DOR's performance.
Nov-22	Denver, Colorado	2022 Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) Annual meeting	Dr. Can Saygin attended the 2022 APLU Annual Meeting representing UTRGV. APLU is a research, policy, and advocacy organization dedicated to strengthening and advancing the work of public universities in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico.
11/4/2022	Edinburg Campus	(IPCP) Workshop	The College of Health Professions and School of Social Work presented the Fall Interprofessional Collaborative Practice (IPCP) Workshop on Substance Use and Mental Health for Healthcare Professionals. Comms support.
11/9/2022	ZOOM	¡Juntos al Éxito! Path to R1	In this session, Dr. Spencer and Dr. Saygin talked about Journey to Research Excellence: Strategic and Operational Initiatives.
11/19/2022	Brownsville Campus	FIESTA Symposium	The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley hosted its 2022 FIESTA (Family Integrated Education Serving and Transforming Academia) Symposium on November Saturday 19th.
12/1/2022	Edinburg, TX	Sustainability Fellowship Awards	The Division of Research Co-Sponsored the 2023 Research Sustainability Ceremony, which recognized the successful completion and outstanding achievements of graduate fellows.
Dec-22	San Francisco, California	CGS Council of Graduate Schools	Dr. Saygin attended the Council of Graduate Schools meeting in San Francisco, along with members of our UTRGV Graduate College team, Juan Pablo Calderón and Veronica Ramirez.
1/17/2023	Online	Dr. Saygin's 'welcome to Spring 2023' video message	Research Communications team and the University Marketing and Communications (UMC) collaborated to provide communications services to coordinate the delivery of Dr. Saygin's "Welcome to Spring 2023" video message.
1/26/2023	Zoom	Teaching and Research Integration in the Classroom and Community	The Division of Research and the Center of Teaching Excellence are collaborating to present the TRICC Speaker Series for Spring 2023. The TRICC (Teaching, Research, and Innovation in the Curriculum and Classroom) Speaker Series is an event, which brings together faculty from various fields to share their insights and perspectives on critical issues in teaching and research.

DATE	LOCATION	NAME	DESCRIPTION
1/26/2023	Edinburg & Brownsville Campus	Graduate College Welcome Event	The UTRGV Graduate College recently hosted an event to express our gratitude and appreciation for our graduate students. The Graduate Student Appreciation Day provided an opportunity for our students to connect with one another and engage with our Graduate College team members.
2/3/2023	Weslaco	MPH Access Press Conference	The Division of Research provided media coordination and communication services for the successful announcement of the MPH Access award.
2/7/2023	Brownville, TX	eBridge Center Discussion	Dr. Saygin recently attended a panel discussion at the eBridge Center for Business and Commercialization in Brownsville. The panel discussion was held in front of state lawmakers and policymakers who were visiting the region as part of the 2023 Valley Legislative Tour, hosted by the Rio Grande Valley Partnership.
2/28/2023	Edinburg	TX DOT visit	The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Research and Technology Implementation Division (RTI) Research Portfolio Manager, Chris Glancy and Research Project Manager, Wade Odell visited The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley today to meet with researchers and faculty to discuss program participation and Idea Solicitation, project oversight, and research communication.
Mar-23	Oak Ridge, TN	Research Collaboration Engagement	Dr. Saygin met with Dr. Ilias Belharouak at the prestigious Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) to explore potential opportunities for collaboration. As a leading institution in research and higher education, we are committed to expanding our research portfolio and fostering collaboration with members of the research community.
3/30/2023	Edinburg/Brownsville/Online	Second Annual Conference for Interdisciplinary Research (3/30/2023 - 4/1/2023)	UTRGV Research Provided communications and marketing services to the Research & School of Interdisciplinary Programs and Community Engagement (SIPCE) to support the Institutional Transformation Project.
Apr-23	Waltham, MA	Research Collaboration Engagement	Dr. Saygin and UTRGV faculty members recently visited Nano Dimension in Waltham, MA, to explore potential collaboration opportunities. Nano Dimension is a leading manufacturer of additive electronics solutions and a recognized leader in the field of nanotechnology.
4/5/2023	Edinburg & Brownsville Campus	Graduate Student Appreciation Day	The UTRGV Graduate College hosted an event to express our gratitude and appreciation for our graduate students. The Graduate Student Appreciation Day provided an opportunity for our students to connect with one another and engage with our Graduate College team members. .
4/14/2023	Edinburg Tx	DOE director Ms. Shalanda Baker visits UTRGV	More than 100 students, faculty and staff attended the keynote "Energy Justice and Justice40: Made for this Moment. This notable event was an excellent opportunity for our community to come together to explore issues of energy justice and its implications for the broader social justice movement.
4/19/2023	Edinburg, TX	DHS visit to UTRGV	Officials from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) recently met with UTRGV faculty, students, and researchers to explore funding opportunities available through DHS, paid internship opportunities, and to review the progress of the UTRGV-led project, DUST. The meeting was a valuable opportunity to foster collaboration and engagement with DHS, as we work together to drive progress and innovation in areas of mutual interest.
4/20/2023	Edinburg, Brownsville, Harlingen	Division of Research hosted Biomedical Research Awareness Day (BRAD)	Division of Research hosted Biomedical Research Awareness Day (BRAD) to increase public awareness about the crucial role of animals in biomedical research.

DATE	LOCATION	NAME	DESCRIPTION
4/24/2023	Washington, DC	Visiting representative.	With Dr. Bailey and Veronica Gonzales, Dr. Saygin visited with the representatives.
5/3/2023	Edinburg, Tx	Open Forum to Discuss Research Policies and Processes	Dr. Saygin held an open forum for the faculty of the School of Medicine (SOM). The forum was an excellent opportunity for faculty members to seek clarification, provide feedback, and address any questions or concerns they may have had regarding research policy or processes.
5/4/2023	Laredo, Tx	UTRGV/LISD/UISD Press Conference	Dr. Saygin attended a press conference with Congressman H Cuellar, PI Dr. Razo, and the research team to discuss the MHS ACCESS 2 project. This notable project has been funded by the Department of Education and is a significant milestone for our institution.
5/4/2023	Edinburg, TX	Sustainability Fellowship Ceremony	The Division of Research Co-Sponsored the 2023 Research Sustainability Ceremony, which recognized the successful completion and outstanding achievements of graduate fellows. We understand that fostering a sustainable research culture is critical to achieving lasting impact, and we are committed to supporting and celebrating those who share our passion for driving progress through research.
5/11/2023	Edinburg, TX	College of Business Master's Hooding Ceremony	Dr. Saygin delivered remarks to the attendees, students and parents, at the Robert C. Vackar College of Business & Entrepreneurship Graduate Program hooding ceremony.
5/16/2023	Weslaco, TX	DOE Award Announcement	Dr. Saygin delivered remarks at the upcoming DOE grant announcement, where we will be announcing the grant recipient, Dr. Nancy Razo, as the Principal Investigator. We are honored to have personnel from various educational institutions such as Mercedes ISD, Valley View ISD, IDEA Public Schools, and South Texas ISD in attendance.