

COMMENCEMENT

UTRGV™



UT Health
Rio Grande Valley™

.....
School of Medicine

CLASS OF
2023



MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN



Michael B. Hocker, M.D., M.H.S.

Dean

UTRGV School of Medicine

Senior Vice President

UT Health RGV

On behalf of The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley School of Medicine family, I want to congratulate you on this momentous accomplishment!

As your dean, I am proud of the legacy you are building at our School of Medicine. You are incredible examples of the young medical professionals we are training to lead medicine, here and around the world.

As you graduate from our UTRGV School of Medicine, you can take pride in knowing that you are now part of an extensive generation of physicians who, like you, have answered the call to serve others with dedication and compassion. Soon, you too, will be practicing physicians inspired to make a difference in the communities you serve.

As you join other physicians in the practice of medicine, remember you have faced and overcome difficult challenges with courage and humility, especially during the pandemic. That is why I am confident that you will conquer any challenges that come your way moving forward and as you establish your career as a physician.

Class of 2023, you bring so much pride to our UTRGV School of Medicine. You are a testament of our promise to train diverse and talented physician scientists for the benefit of the Rio Grande Valley and beyond.

Each of you represents UTRGV's commitment to provide high quality healthcare, life-changing research, and innovative education in the Rio Grande Valley.

A big congratulations to not only you – but to your friends, family, and all the champions who have helped you in your journey as a medical student.



School of Medicine

Mission

We will transform the health of the Rio Grande Valley and beyond by providing advanced academic medicine through these five pillars:

- Innovative Education
- Life-Changing Research and Discoveries
- High Quality Patient-Centered Care
- Serving our Community
- Sustainability and a Culture of Entrepreneurship

Values

In addition to the UTRGV Values of excellence; shared governance; diversity, access and inclusion; leadership; inquiry, discovery and creativity; health and well-being; and engagement and impact; the school of medicine's core values include:

- **Open Communication & Transparency:** Share information openly across all levels (of the school) to engrain a collaborative and trustworthy environment.
- **Community Focus:** Commitment to improving health outcomes and reducing health disparities of at-risk populations through community and population-based interventions.
- **Cultural Awareness:** Integration of knowledge, awareness, and empathy to successfully work with the diverse and unique needs of any community.
- **Empathy & Compassion:** Care for and understand others to provide support and achieve positive outcomes.
- **Good Stewardship:** Selfless service (for the common good) to promote accountability and a culture of responsibility.
- **Innovation & Transformation:** Embrace change and promote creativity to shape the future of academic medicine.
- **Integrity:** Act with honor, honesty, and truthfulness. Know and do the right thing in all undertakings – learning, discovery, patient care, service, and entrepreneurship.
- **Respect, Collegiality & Inclusive Citizenship:** Treat people with respect and kindness to create a community of Inclusivity, cooperation, and connectedness.

History of Medical Education in the Valley

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley School of Medicine is the realization of the decades-long effort of community leaders, legislators, and countless supporters to establish a medical school in the Valley to provide health care to a region that historically has been burdened by health disparities.

In **1997**, the Texas Legislature approved the creation of the Regional Academic Health Center (RAHC) under UT Health San Antonio, formerly UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, with sites in Harlingen and Edinburg.

In **2002**, the RAHC started training third and fourth year medical students.

In **2009**, the Texas Legislature approved for The University of Texas System Board of Regents to create a medical school, using the resources from the RAHC, for the Valley in the future.

Three years later, The UT System Board of Regents approved the creation of a new university and medical school in the Rio Grande Valley, using resources from two universities within the UT System—The University of Texas at Brownsville and The University of Texas- Pan American—and the RAHC.

In **2013**, the Texas Legislature authorized the formation of The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and its School of Medicine.

In **2015**, The UTRGV School of Medicine received preliminary accreditation from the LCME, which allowed the school to recruit its first class.

The UTRGV School of Medicine welcomed its charter class of 55 medical students in the summer of 2016, which graduated in 2020.

December 2019 - The School of Medicine submitted the briefing book for the limited survey visit to the LCME.

February 2020 - Limited survey visit conducted by the LCME at the School of Medicine.

March 2021 - School of Medicine submits status report to the LCME.

June 2021 - Provisional accreditation granted by the LCME for the School of Medicine.

February 2023 - First full LCME accreditation survey visit took place at the School of Medicine.

The UTRGV School of Medicine now has more than **220 medical students** and over **256 medical residents and fellows** serving in 19 hospital-based training programs throughout the Valley, with more training programs on the horizon.



KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Julieta Villarreal García, Ph.D.

**Presidential Medal of Freedom
Recipient**

Professor

UTRGV Department of
Communication

Former President

The University of Texas
at Brownsville

Named the first Latina to serve as president of a college or university in the United States in 1986, Dr. García spearheaded the creation of The University of Texas at Brownsville and then served as its president for 22 years graduating over 40,000 students and leading the design and establishment of the Brownsville campus.

During her time as President of UT Brownsville, she led the establishment of the Math & Science Academy, the physics program in gravitational astronomy, biomedical degrees to prepare students for medical school and the chess team that continues to win national acclaim.

She also led the expansion of the campus from 50 to over 400 acres and is responsible for establishing the unique and artistic design of the UT Brownsville campus. During her tenure as president, she was responsible for building a new library, a fine arts center, state-of-the-art science laboratories and classrooms, a recreation center, an innovative childcare center, student housing and inviting courtyards woven in and around the natural ecology of campus resacas to create a park like campus deeply rooted in the social and cultural fabric of South Texas and the border region.

In 2011, she helped lead an effort to envision a new 21st Century University model that eventually consolidated two UT universities, established a medical school, and created The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and a medical school. Her life's work has been focused on expanding higher education opportunities for the people of the Rio Grande Valley.

In Washington D.C., she has served on the Clinton and Obama presidential transition teams, chaired the Advisory Committee to Congress on Financial Aid and in 2021, served on the panel to select White House Fellows under President Biden.

After the election of President Nelson Mandela and the end of apartheid, she was selected to work in South Africa to help integrate higher education. She has served on the boards of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Ford Foundation.

In 2009, Time magazine named her one of the Top 10 College Presidents in the US and in 2014 she was recognized by Fortune magazine as one of the World's 50 Greatest Leaders. She has received honorary doctorates from Notre Dame, Brown, Smith, and Princeton.

She currently serves on the board for LLILAS, the Lozano Long Institute for Latin American Studies at UT Austin and Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley. Annually, she lectures at Harvard's Graduate School of Education IEM program for professionals seeking to become university presidents and with HACU – Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities Leadership Academy. She is also serving on the board of Texas 2036, a group of Texans studying how best to shape our future in Texas across seven core state policy areas.

On campus, she teaches public speaking and courses in organizational communication and Latinas in Leadership focusing on the key communication skills needed for next generation leaders.

On July 7th of 2022, she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Joe R. Biden for “transforming her hometown University of Texas Brownsville into a center of excellence for countless of students who were inspired by her example. A trailblazer and mentor, Dr. García is considered one of our Nation's top university administrators who understands the power of education as the great equalizer in America.”

ORDER OF EXERCISES

Introduction to Ceremony Leonel Vela, M.D., M.P.H., Senior Associate Dean for Education Resources, Professor, Department of Family and Preventative Medicine, Chair, Department of Population Health and Biostatistics, and Chief Physician for Community Health Partnerships and Outreach

National Anthem

COMMENCEMENT EXERCISE

Presiding Michael B. Hocker, M.D., M.H.S., Dean, School of Medicine and Senior Vice President, UT Health RGV

Dean’s Greeting and Address Michael B. Hocker, M.D., M.H.S., Dean, School of Medicine and Senior Vice President, UT Health RGV

Presidential Remarks Guy Bailey, Ph.D., President

Keynote Speaker Julieta Villarreal García, Ph.D., Presidential Medal of Freedom Recipient, Professor, UTRGV Department of Communication and Former President, The University of Texas at Brownsville

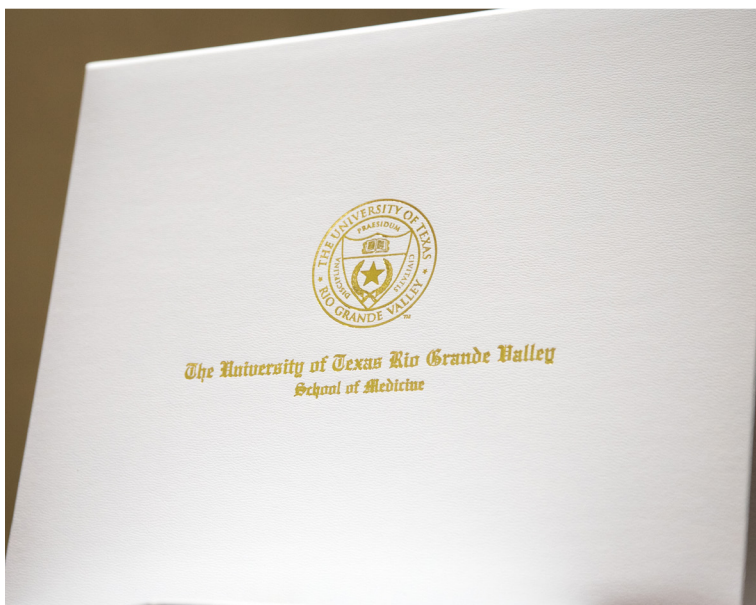
Conferring of Degrees Michael B. Hocker, M.D., M.H.S., Dean, School of Medicine and Senior Vice President, UT Health RGV

Presentation of Diploma and Hooding of Candidates

Recitation of Physician’s Oath Sabrina Rene Orta, Class of 2023 student, School of Medicine

Ring of the Bell Sonia Vivek Wadekar, Class of 2023 student, School of Medicine

Closing Remarks Michael B. Hocker, M.D., M.H.S., Dean, School of Medicine and Senior Vice President, UT Health RGV





**Future Leaders in Medicine,
Research, and Patient Care**



UT Health : School of
Rio Grande Valley : Medicine

DOCTOR OF MEDICINE

Jennifer Adams
San Antonio, TX

Oluwatosin Ajiboye
Houston, TX

Samantha Guerra Alvarado
Weslaco, TX

Kimberly A. Ambrosini
Austin, TX

Joshua W. Ashworth
Conrad, MT

Lane C. Bannwart
Sugar Land, TX

David Barrera, Jr.
Pharr, TX

Jose A. Benitez
Mission, TX

Elizabeth N. Cook
Allen, TX

Niti Dharwadkar
Germantown, MD

Ruth Escalera
Brownsville, TX

Mohamed K. Ezz eldin
Alexandria, Egypt

Alexis Garza
Edinburg, TX

Hannah Maria Garza
Bryan, TX

Noel Garza
Edinburg, TX

David Lawrence Goldblatt
Moorestown, NJ

Daniel L. Habenicht
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Asbiel Hasbum
Sullivan City, TX

Lauren A. Herrera
San Benito, TX

Maxwell Robert Milton Hill
Fresno, CA

Ashley O. Ikwuezunma
Houston, TX

Dawn Odetta Marie Jensen
Decatur, TX

Sonal Jha
Edinburg, TX

Alessandra Jiménez
Brownsville, TX

Jooby Joy
Koothattukulam, India

Nicholas T. Krejchi
Belton, TX

Urvashi Mathur
Sugar Land, TX

Isha Mittal
The Woodlands, TX

Russell Harold Moreland, III
Harlingen, TX

Hari Movva
Harlingen, TX

Layla Nejad
Beaumont, TX

Hoang Anh Thi Nguyen
Gainesville, GA

Adaadinchezo Anita Oguejiofor
Missouri City, TX

Sabrina Rene Orta
League City, TX

Christian Peña
Roma, TX

Saisree Ravi
Pearland, TX

Keren Seyum
McAllen, TX

Khalid Nasser Sheikh
West Dundee, IL

Rene Roman Silva
McAllen, TX

Rodolfo Singleterry, II
Mission, TX

Saba A. Suleman
Brownsville, TX

Rachael A. Turner
Spring, TX

Chioma Victoria Uche
Cedar Hill, TX

Sonia Vivek Wadekar
Plano, TX

Richard Gayle Wagner, Jr.
Payson, UT





Hippocratic Oath

I do solemnly swear, by whatever I hold most sacred: That I will be loyal to the profession of medicine and just and generous to its members. That I will lead my life and practice my profession in uprightness and honor.

That into whatsoever house I shall enter, it shall be for the good of the sick to the utmost of my power, holding myself far aloof from wrong, from corruption, from the tempting of others to vice. That I will exercise my profession solely for the cure of my patients, and will give no drug, perform no operation for a criminal purpose, even if solicited; far less suggest it. That whatsoever I shall see or hear of the lives of all persons which is not fitting to be spoken, I will keep inviolably secret.

These things do I swear. While I continue to keep this Oath unviolated, may it be granted to me to enjoy life and the practice of the art, respected by all, in all times. But should I trespass and violate this Oath, may the reverse be my lot!

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 Everado Cobos, M.D. Chair, Department of Internal Medicine
 Michael Dobbs, M.D., M.H.C.M. Chair, Department of Neurology
 Sambandam Elango, M.D., F.A.C.S., M. M.E.D., Ed. Chair, Department of Medical Education
 Jimmy Gonzales, M.D. Interim Chair, Department of Family and Community Medicine
 Nausheen Jamal, M.D. Chair, Department of Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery
 Robert Nelson, M.D. Chair, Department of Pediatrics
 Tony Ogburn, M.D., F.A.C.O.G. Founding Chair, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology
 Ihsan Salloum, M.D., M.P.H. Chair, Department of Neuroscience
 Michael Sander, M.D. Chair, Department of Orthopedic Surgery
 Leonel Vela, M.D., M.P.H. Chair, Department of Population Health and Biostatistics
 Sarah Williams-Blangero, Ph.D. Chair, Department of Human Genetics; Interim Chair, Department of Immunology and Microbiology



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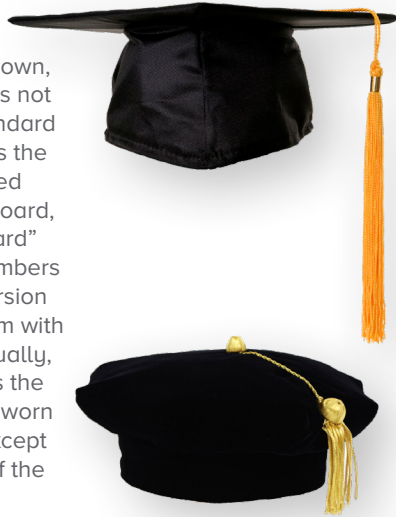


COSTUMES AND CUSTOMS OF COMMENCEMENT

The colorful costumes and traditional customs of college commencements trace their beginnings back to the origins of the modern university in medieval Europe. Modern American colleges and universities carry on many traditions that began at Oxford and Cambridge to demonstrate the continuity of learning over the centuries and to emphasize the importance attached to commencement exercises. Academic regalia refer to the distinctive attire worn by students, faculty and other university officials at commencement. The origins of academic dress date back to the 12th and 13th centuries, when universities were taking form. The ordinary dress of the scholar, whether student or teacher, was the dress of a cleric. Though the custom of wearing academic dress was brought to America in colonial times, it was not until 1895 that a standardized code of academic dress was established and followed by most colleges and universities. The gown, hood, cap and additional ornaments are the main categories of academic regalia and are distinctive for each degree.

CAPS

Headwear is an important component of the cap and gown, and the academic costume is not complete without it. The standard commencement headwear is the Oxford cap, a skullcap topped by a square cloth-covered board, the reason for its “mortarboard” nickname. Some faculty members wear a softer Cambridge version of the cap that is a velvet tam with four, six or eight corners. Usually, the color of the cap matches the color of the gown. Caps are worn throughout the ceremony except for men during the singing of the national anthem.



TASSEL

The tassel is attached to a button on the top of the cap and hangs down to the right for bachelor's candidates until their degree is conferred. Many universities ceremoniously have graduates move their tassel from the right to the left. Both master's and doctoral candidates tassels often begin and remain on the left.

GOWNS

The doctoral degree gown is the most elaborate of academic regalia. The doctoral degree gown is faced down the front and usually black. Three bars of velvet are used across the sleeves. These facings and crossbars may be of the color distinctive for the degree, or the institution's colors. The color associated with the medical discipline is green. In addition, the hood worn for the doctoral degree should only have panels at the sides.



HOODS

The hood is derived from the cowls worn by clerics in the Middle Ages for warmth. Today they are worn symbolically, hanging down the back. Master's hoods are 3 1/2 feet in length and have a velvet trim along the edge. Doctoral hoods are 4 feet in length and have a wider velvet trim. The satin lining of the hood, worn so that it can be seen, reflects the colors of the degree-granting institution. The color of the velvet trim signifies the academic discipline of the wearer's degree. As codified by the American Council on Education, some of the official colors associated with the various degrees and disciplines are:

White: Arts and Letters
 Drab: Business/Accounting
 Light Blue: Education
 Orange: Engineering
 Purple: Law
 Lemon: Library Science
 Green: Medicine
 Pink: Music
 Brown: Fine Arts
 Apricot: Nursing
 Olive Green: Pharmacy
 Dark Blue: Philosophy
 Sage Green: Physical Education
 Salmon Pink: Public Health
 Golden Yellow: Science
 Citron: Social Work
 Peacock Blue: Public Administration



In the case of the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree, the dark blue color represents the mastery of learning and scholarship in any field, not just the field of philosophy.

ADDITIONAL ORNAMENTS

Some participants in the commencement ceremony will wear additional ornaments such as colored cords, medallions, stoles, or sashes. These ornaments signify the wearer's membership in an honor society or special group.

CHAIN OF OFFICE AND PRESIDENTIAL MEDALLION

The presidential medallion is the official insignia of the university president and is worn at commencement and other ceremonial occasions. Like many academic traditions, the display of a heavy “chain of office” comes from medieval regalia and represents the weight of responsibility for the wearer.

The UTRGV medallion and chain was designed in 2015 and executed by the jewelry students, jewelry faculty, and craftsman Lino Guiza in the UTRGV School of Art. The medallion is made up of two parts – the seal of The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley surrounded by an abstract sunburst created with a brick and mortar design. The cactus flowers on the outer edges of the seal are placed at the four cardinal points with the largest flower pointing south. The counter weight to the medallion is a representation of the native sabal palm. The Chain of Office is a circllet of art deco-inspired links representing the past, while revealing an infrastructure of bridges, aqueducts and gears that speak to the importance of our solid foundation, water, and movement into the future. The chain features many aspects of the Rio Grande Valley that aid our growth and commitment to higher education:

Arches
Water
Turbine
Neuron Tree
Circuit Board

Abacus
Bone
Binary Code
Leaves/Quills
Butterfly

Tortoise
Finger Print
Road Junction
Satellite



BELL

Our stately bronze bell, circa 1850, lives on the Brownsville campus. It is rung during commencement to symbolize a rite of passage and proclaims that a worthy and well-qualified individual has passed from one station in their life to a loftier one. Our bell is also the icon for the Bell Scholarship Endowment. One outstanding student is selected to ring the bell at commencement.



CEREMONIAL MACE

In Medieval Times, the mace was a symbol of authority and carried before or set near a high official when ceremonies or sessions were being conducted. Today, the mace symbolizes the university’s governing authority and signifies the proceedings are officially sanctioned. Traditionally, the chair of the Faculty Senate acting as the Grand Marshal carries the mace to lead the academic procession at commencement and other special ceremonies.

The UTRGV 47” ceremonial mace was designed in 2016 by students in the School of Art and a committee of faculty from anthropology, archeology, geology, history, communication and art. The head and seals of the mace were 3D printed and cast at the UTRGV School of Art. The mace is intricately imbued with historical, cultural and architectural meaning.

The handles of the mace are made of mesquite wood locally sourced in the Rio Grande Valley and engraved with a decorative pattern of the state’s official turtle, the Ridley, and wind turbines.

The helix, between the handles, represents the coming together of the legacy institutions. The helix is made of petrified palm, the official stone of Texas.

The base is crafted from mesquite and inlaid with blue selenite, thought to be associated with mental clarity, truth and honesty, and to represent the Rio Grande River.

The tip of the mace is made of El Sauz Chert excavated and donated by Dr. Juan L. Gonzalez.



MEMORY STOLE

When students graduate from UTRGV they know they did not make the journey alone. The Memory Stole, a symbol of appreciation, is worn by graduates during the commencement ceremony. Following the ceremony they are encouraged to present the stole to a special family member, professor, or friend as a symbol of gratitude and appreciation for their support, inspiration or mentorship.

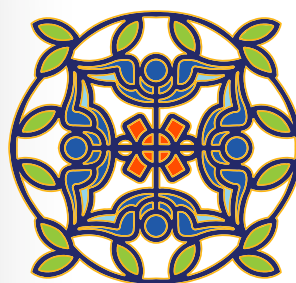
UTRGV SCHOOL OF MEDICINE'S GONFALON

The college gonfalon—or banner—with roots in the Middle Ages, was a symbol of units or family groups. Today, gonfalons are used at official university ceremonies as heraldic devices and are frequently carried during processions at commencement. At UTRGV, each college has a custom-designed banner signifying its academic unit. Each flag is rich in unique symbolism while also showing unity through size, shape, and color. The swoop at the bottom of each gonfalon represents the border of Texas, and the field of blue with gold stars of Texas represents the distributed nature of UTRGV—from Rio Grande City to South Padre Island.



SYMBOLS

The central pattern intertwines the caduceus—a symbol for medical practice—with the tree of life.



This pattern is surrounded by a DNA helix—the foundation for all living beings — and roots, which connect the human condition with all forms of creation.

COLORS

Blue for healing, green for earth, and white for air.

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School of Medicine