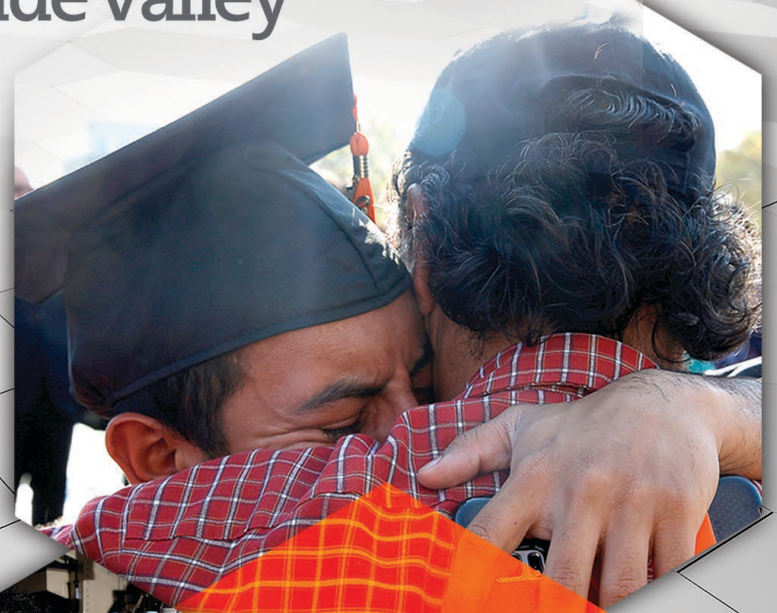


TRANSFORMING

• OUR WORLD •

STRATEGIC PLAN COMPREHENSIVE REPORT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The University of Texas
Rio Grande Valley™



SEPTEMBER 2019



The development of UTRGV's Transforming Our World Strategic Plan (TOWSP) began with the creation of the Strategic Planning Committee in December 2015. TOWSP was released to the UTRGV community in August 2017, after the UT System Board of Regents review and approval of the UTRGV mission statement. Section 7A of TOWSP incorporates the distribution of biannual briefs and a comprehensive annual report addressing progress made on strategic plan goals. Updates on the status of various strategic initiatives were distributed to the university community in August and November 2018, and again in March 2019. This document is the first Comprehensive Report to be provided, and, for the first time, it includes data on performance measures identified in the plan as well as other metrics. This Executive Summary provides a brief overview of the work that has been done since the TOWSP release.

Since its release, UTRGV has taken great strides forward on the goals and objectives outlined in the plan. Specific initiatives were undertaken, including the Campus Climate Survey and the Strategic Enrollment Initiative. In addition to administrative and programmatic initiatives, following the release of the plan, over \$130,000 was provided to fund ten research and creative projects that reflected the spirit of the strategic plan. This diverse set of projects range from the physical sciences to the social sciences to the arts; involve students, faculty, staff, and members of the RGV community; and impact the university, the Rio Grande Valley, and beyond. These funded projects truly reflect UTRGV's mission, vision, and values.

The TOWSP has been taken as a living document as the work toward implementation has progressed. In each core priority and other areas of focus, goals and measurable objectives have been identified for which action plans are being developed. These action plans identify the objectives to be met and set benchmarks and targets against which progress will be measured; lay out the steps to be taken; identify the offices or individuals involved; and provide a picture of what success looks like. Early in the Fall semester, the draft action plans will be released to the university community with opportunities to provide input prior to finalizing them.

Although the action plans are in development, we have made important strides in furthering our core priorities and other areas of focus. Following are some highlights from each.

- **Student Success:** As the most central of UTRGV's core priorities, the university is taking a comprehensive approach to student success, with several new initiatives. A new institution-level Student Success Steering Committee works with college-level Student Success Teams (SSTs) to identify populations of concern, develop support strategies, and assess their effectiveness. Each college's SST is developing Promise Programs, pioneered in 2018-19 by the Vackar College of Business and Entrepreneurship, that offer students a guaranteed four-year path to degree completion, and that include high-impact practices such as engaged learning, career development, and advising and mentorship. The pilot program in VCOBE was a success, with a significant improvement in first-year retention rate.
- **Research and Creative Works:** The increased attention and support UTRGV is giving to research in our efforts to attain Emerging Research University status is paying off. Research expenditures doubled in 2018-19 over the prior year. Five new STARS hires have brought top researchers to the university, and the number of graduate assistantships and fellowships increased by nearly 50%. In addition, new professional development opportunities have been added to help existing faculty strengthen their research and creative works agendas and enhance the university's ability to ensure regulatory requirements. Undergraduates have also found expanded opportunities for getting involved in research through the Engaged Scholarship and Learning program.
- **Health and Medical Education:** The new School of Medicine (SOM) is one of the most exciting and dramatic new developments for UTRGV, and the first class of medical students came on board in Fall 2016. The new medical school has enabled the new UTHealth RGV program to establish clinics across the Valley, which saw almost 43,000 patient visits in 2018-19. The SOM established partnerships with 60 healthcare providers across the region in order to provide educational opportunities for students as well as expand access to healthcare. In addition, the Division of Health Affairs has initiated new Masters-level degree programs with University of Houston in public health and bioinformatics.





- **Expanding Educational Opportunity:** Since 2016, 13 new degree and certificate programs have been or will be launched at UTRGV. A new initiative has been launched to expand the use of open educational resources in the classroom to address the high cost of textbooks. In the area of PK-12 outreach, a new Early College High School in Harlingen doubles the number of ECHS partnerships for UTRGV, and there has been a significant increase in the number of K-12 camps offered by the university.
- **Community Engagement:** UTRGV made significant progress in its efforts to achieve the prestigious Elective Classification on Community Engagement from the Carnegie Foundation. Two different assessments have been completed, that have identified strengths and gaps in the university's infrastructure related to community engagement.
- **Campus Climate and Professional Development:** The Campus Climate Survey conducted in Spring 2018 became the basis for all campus units to develop action plans to address weakness associated with the campus climate. Those plans were completed in Spring 2019. A number of new professional development opportunities have been added for both faculty and staff, as well as increases in the number of awards given to both faculty and staff.
- **Becoming a Bilingual, Biliterate, and Bicultural Institution:** The establishment of the B3 Institute has given the university a basis from which to begin building toward its goal of becoming a bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural institution. The number of bilingual or Spanish-language classes, and number of students taking those classes, increased dramatically. Several programs are currently working on getting certified as dual-language programs.
- **Globalization:** The Office of Global Engagement has expanded its presence of campus, organizing events with international themes on campus, providing funding for research and programming on international themes, and establishing partnerships with universities around the world. In addition, study abroad programs sent students to more countries in 2018-19 compared to prior years.
- **Sustainability:** UTRGV became the first institution in the UT System and only the third in Texas to be awarded "Gold" status from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). New Sustainability Graduate Fellowships significantly increases the number of graduate students engaged in sustainability-related research.
- **Critical Components for Success:** In the TOWSP, we recognized that three areas are particularly important in ensuring progress: ensuring that the diverse voices of the UTRGV community are heard as we move forward; that we ensure that students, faculty, and staff all have the resources they need to be effective, regardless of which campus they call home; and that we continue to strengthen our information technology infrastructure. The first of these is reflected in the UTRGV Transforming Our World Strategic Planning website, the Strategic Initiatives Newsletter that was distributed throughout the 2018-19 academic year, and the diverse membership of the committees that have been involved in the development of the action plans. A new Campus Connect Committee was established in 2018 to ensure that the university's needs as well as the needs of each campus are equitably addressed. A number of important initiatives identified by the committee were implemented in 2019, and further work is being done to ensure that issues of the equitable distribution of resources are identified and addressed. Finally, IT infrastructure continues to expand, with more classes being technology-enabled, with higher-speed and -capacity networking technology getting put in place, with increased redundancy and security.



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