By Gail Fagan

As a freshman at then-University of Texas-Pan American in Edinburg, Christina Rodriguez decided she wanted a livelier, more productive college experience than just attending classes and doing homework.

Then, a flyer highlighting jobs on campus available to students caught her attention. Rodriguez put together a résumé with the help of Career Services, applied and was hired in 2013 at the Student Union.

This year, she is one of five Student Union managers who supervise the set-up of events held there by student organizations, departments, faculty and the community. She also serves on its information desk, advising students, faculty, staff and visitors on directions or locations of campus events.

“The job helped me come out of my shell. I have learned leadership, delegation and networking skills,” said Rodriguez, an occupational therapy major. “I wanted to be a manager, so I came in and volunteered and learned everything a manager needed to know.”

Aside from the financial support her work-study job provides, Rodriguez also cites its convenience because she has no vehicle and lives on campus.

“Your employer – the university – works around your school schedule, so there are no worries that I am going to be late for class or for work,” she said.

She said she gets a lot more from the job than “just a paycheck at the end of the month.”

“Working here has made my college experience a hundred times better,” she said.

This fall, Rodriguez is among nearly 1,700 students at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley who work on campuses across the Valley in work-study or direct-wage positions, ranging from tutors and lab assistants to general office help.

Career Services administrators say assessments show that student employees rank higher in the following career competencies:

• Dependability
• Cooperation
• Work attitude
• Enthusiasm
• Initiative
• Leadership
• Professional appearance
• Judgment
• Job-specific skills and abilities
• And quality of work

The Career Center at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley helps undergraduates, graduates and alumni find or advance employment and planning for future careers. “We help the students identify what to do after they complete their undergrad, whether it be entering the workforce or graduate school,” said Juan Andres Rodriguez-Nieto, the center’s director.

### TOP 5 BENEFITS

1. **EXPERIENCE:** This allows you to be engaged in a field of study that can help in the real world.

2. **ENGAGEMENT:** Students become engaged in campus life and can learn about the various support groups on campus and what they offer. Also, you can connect with your boss as a potential mentor.

3. **CONVENIENCE & FLEXIBILITY:** You don’t have to travel far for work. And, you can go to work between classes because you are already on campus! “The departments know that student workers are students before being employees, so they are more accommodating and work with their schedules,” UTRGV Career Center Director Juan Andres Rodriguez-Nieto said.

4. **FAIR WAGES & HOURS:** Students working part-time jobs are capped at 19 hours, so studies remain a priority. Student wages range from $8 on hour to $13 an hour, depending on the job.

5. **INDEPENDENCE:** Being a student worker presents an opportunity for students to start earning money, feel independent and start making decisions.

Helpful links:
- my.utrgv.edu
- utrgv.edu/careercenter

**STUDENT EMPLOYMENT**

Here, students can find on-campus jobs. Career Center oversees student employment, work-study programs and the Student Employment Initiative (SEI). Rodriguez-Nieto anticipates there will be about 3,000 student employees by December.