About 29,000 Vaqueros rode onto The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley’s campuses in Brownsville and Edinburg on Aug. 31 celebrating a historic moment – a new university – for the Lone Star State.

Students received a warm welcome on their first day of classes from UTRGV Founding President Guy Bailey and University of Texas System Chancellor William H. McRaven, who wanted to be part of this momentous day.

“One hundred years from now, Texas will look back and say that this day changed Texas forever,” said McRaven, an admiral and Navy SEAL who played a key role in capturing Bin Laden.

UTRGV opened its doors with more than 5,000 courses in 61 bachelor’s, 54 master’s and four doctoral programs. President Bailey said the university’s kickoff “is one of the most important milestones in American higher education.”

With a new university come new traditions. UTRGV introduced its #FirstClass to the Best Week Ever (Aug. 31-Sept. 4) which premiered several events for the Vaqueros. One was the Toss for Luck, where students threw coins into fountains on both campuses for good luck in this inaugural UTRGV year.

Best Week Ever also showcased “The Stomp,” a big campus party complete with fireworks, attended by 2,000 people, and featuring 100 booths staffed by various student organizations, university departments and local businesses. President Bailey also hosted his first Picnic with the President, where he served hotdogs to more than 2,000 students.

“I like the way everything is expanding and I like that it’s going to be something big that’s going to help everyone,” said Mikayla Martinez, a freshman majoring in psychology.

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