

Update on COVID-19 vaccines at UTRGV

Jacqueline Peraza
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The UTRGV School of Medicine and UT Health RGV continue to administer the Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines to residents across the Rio Grande Valley.

Individuals who receive either of the vaccines must return for a second injection after being vaccinated the first time.

Last Thursday, School of Medicine faculty members and students administered the second dose of the Pfizer vaccine to those vaccinated in mid-December.

School of Medicine faculty members, UT Health clinicians, nursing students, among others, were the first to be vaccinated after receiving the shipment from the Texas Department of State Health Services.

Dr. John Krouse, School of Medicine dean and executive vice president of Health Affairs, said they began with individuals who have direct patient contact and are at high risk of coming across an individual with COVID-19.

"We then moved into the Phase 1a in the community," Krouse said in a Zoom interview with *The Rider* and KVAQ-TV. "We opened



School of Medicine faculty members and students began to administer the second dose of the Pfizer vaccine last Thursday to those who were vaccinated in mid-December. Over 4,000 vaccines have been administered, according to a UTRGV Marketing and Communications news release sent last Thursday.

PAUL CHOUY/UTRGV MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

it up to first providers, EMS services, police and fire, home health aides, etc. We worked through the county medical societies to see if we could get the physicians in the community, who do not have hospital affiliations, vaccinated."

Eligible vaccine recipients in Phase 1a include physicians, nurses, respiratory

therapists, physician assistants, front-line vaccination and testing staff, medical examiners, among others.

In Phase 1b, individuals over the age of 65 and anyone over 16 with a qualifying chronic medical condition are eligible to receive the vaccine.

According to a UTRGV Marketing and Communica-

tions news release sent last Thursday, "UT Health RGV has vaccinated over 4,000 individuals at distribution sites in Brownsville, Edinburg, Harlingen and Mercedes."

In the release, the UTRGV community learned of a new personal digital vaccination profile that will be made available this week. The account

can only be accessed with a valid UTRGV username and password and will allow users to express interest in receiving the vaccine or notifying they have already gotten it.

"This proactive approach will allow UT Health RGV to continue serving UTRGV campus community members who are eligible to receive the vaccine now, and to also have a list of future vaccination candidates at our ready once the CDC and DSHS expand eligibility requirements and vaccines become more available," Krouse stated in the news release.

However, even those eligible to receive the vaccine cannot be assured they are vaccinated on such short notice. For that reason, the School of Medicine has temporarily suspended the registration to the public to receive the vaccine.

"We provided a temporary suspension because in a seven-day period we had 45,000 registrants," Krouse said. "We're only getting doses of vaccines in the range of [2,000] to 3,000 doses a week. So, if we're getting 45,000 registrants a week but only 3,000 doses a week, we're never gonna get those people covered."

See **VACCINE**, Page 2

New semester, same pandemic

UTRGV COVID-19 TESTING LOCATIONS

Brownsville Lot B-4 on FJRM Ave.	UTRGV Clinical Site hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday - Friday Student Health contact numbers Brownsville: 882-3896 Edinburg: 665-2511
Harlingen 2102 Treasure Hills Blvd.	
Mercedes 2810 W. Expressway 83	
Edinburg Lot E-10 on W. Van Week St.	

Roxanna Miranda/THE RIDER GRAPHIC

Alejandra Yañez
THE RIDER
In the last two months, the UTRGV COVID-19 Task Force Confirmed Cases

Dashboard reported a total of 100 cases on campus. This increase calls for a diligent start to the spring semester, according to a UTRGV official.

Doug Arney, vice president for Administrative Support Services and chair of the UTRGV Infectious Disease Committee, said he credits this uptick to gatherings during the holiday season.

"You have Halloween, you have Thanksgiving, you have Christmas," Arney said. "When people gather, they don't follow the protocols that are set in place."

The last time the university accumulated 100 cases was between July 30 and Nov. 3. Thus, UTRGV reported the same number of cases in almost half the time over winter break.

Patrick Gonzales, associate vice president for University Marketing and Communications, attributes the public's fatigue with the pandemic as another factor in the rise of cases.

"There are many people that are just tired of social distancing, tired of wearing masks and, you know, it's up to us," Gonzales said. "One thing we want to do as we get ready to start the spring semester is just to remind our students, faculty and staff that following social distancing guidelines, specifically the ones set up for our campus, is gonna be really important to keep everybody safe as we move forward."

Asked what the spring semester will look like in terms of COVID-19 protocol, Arney replied it will be much like the fall semester.

According to an email from Deputy President and Interim Provost Janna Arney sent to the campus community in November, the spring semester will be similar to the fall with some important changes.

"We will have nearly 3% more hybrid courses, 3% more online synchronous, and 13% more traditional courses. This means a reduction of almost 20% in online asynchronous courses," the message reads.

Between Dec. 23 and 29, the UTRGV COVID-19 Task Force Confirmed Cases Dashboard reported five positives in the campus community. Among those five are three staff, one faculty member and one student.

Arney said the student is currently being quarantined on campus.

UTRGV continues to administer testing at its four locations in Edinburg, Brownsville, Mercedes and Harlingen.

Students in need of a COVID-19 test should contact the UTRGV Clinical Site during its hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The numbers to call for the Edinburg and Brownsville locations are 665-2511 and 882-3896.

All patients in need of a test must also complete a mandatory telephone screening before proceeding to schedule an appointment. The telephone number for screening is (833) 887-4863.

THE RIDER

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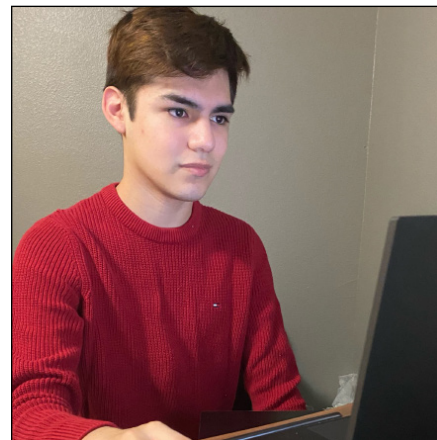
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MORE THAN A NEWSPAPER

Delivering news to UTRGV no matter the circumstances.



ANNOUNCEMENTS



Today
Info Depots

The **Student Union** will host a **Facebook live** from 2 to 3 p.m., where students can ask **questions** about living on campus, the **V OneCard Office**, dining and anything else. The Facebook live will be on the Union's Facebook page @UTRGVUnion.

Info Depots Day 1
Student Activities will host a **Facebook live** with the **Civic Engagement Alliance** and staff from the **Center for Diversity & Inclusion** and the **DREAM Resource Center** from 3 to 4 p.m. for students to learn about the resources these organizations offer. The Facebook live will be on the UTRGV Student Life page @UTRGVStudentLife.

Tuesday Info Depots
The **Student Union** will host a **Facebook live** from 2 to 3 p.m., where students can ask **questions** about living on campus, the **V OneCard Office**, dining and anything else. The Facebook live will be on the Union's Facebook page @UTRGVUnion.

Info Depots Day 2
Student Activities will host a **Facebook live** with **University Recreation**, the **Student Union** and **student organizations** from 3 to 4 p.m. for students to learn how they can get involved in **campus life**. The Facebook live will be on the UTRGV Student Life page @UTRGVStudentLife.

Wednesday Campus Activities Board Loteria
The **Campus Activities Board** will host a **virtual Loteria** from 4 to 5 p.m. via Zoom. CAB will be raffling 20 \$20

Thursday UTRGV Photoshoot
The **Student Union** will host the **UTRGV Photoshoot** from 2 to 3 p.m., where students will learn about the best selfie spots on the Edinburg and Brownsville campuses. The video will be posted via social media on the Student Union's platforms.

Game Show with Jay Black
Student Activities and the **Student Union** will host a **Back to School Game Show with three-time college comedian of the year, Jay Black**. The game show will consist of four lightning rounds of trivia, with **prizes** each round. The event will be from 6 to 8 p.m. via Twitch. RSVP is available on VLink.

Friday Virtual Lip Sync Battle
Student Activities will host a **Virtual Lip Sync Battle** to crown a champion from UTRGV from 3 to 4:30 p.m. via Zoom. Everyone who participates wins a **virtual gift card** and the champion will win the **Golden Mic trophy**. RSVP is available on VLink.

--Compiled by Omar E. Zapata

POLICE REPORTS

The following are among the incidents reported to University Police between Dec. 21 and Jan. 2.



Dec. 21

11:47 a.m.: A faculty member reported losing a university-issued key two weeks prior at an off-campus location.

3:24 p.m.: A non-affiliated man reported he struck an unoccupied vehicle and broke the taillight while operating a man lift at an off-campus location. The construction company supervisor made repair arrangements with the vehicle's owner. No injuries were reported.

Dec. 26

2:34 a.m.: An officer was waved down at Lot B-8 by a non-affiliated woman requesting assistance. She reported her boyfriend had physically assaulted her at their off-campus residence. The officer requested the Brownsville Police Department to be called to the location to begin the initial investigation.

Dec. 31

11:24 p.m.: An officer responded to Troxel Hall in reference to a fire alarm. The Edinburg Fire Department arrived and determined a dirty smoke detector

triggered the alarm. After checking the building, it was deemed safe for reentry. A work order was placed to service the smoke detector.

Jan. 2

6:18 p.m.: UTRGV Police Communications observed, via border cameras, a man jumping the U.S. border fence adjacent to Lot B-1. U.S. Border Patrol agents detained the man without incident. The man claimed to be from Florida but was taken into custody for further investigation.

--Compiled by Sol Garcia

VACCINE

Continued from Page 1

He said the decision was made in agreement with the offices of the president, provost and Health Affairs to hold off on allowing residents to register until they have a more secure and reliable supply of vaccines.

"We have the capacity to get more doses," Krouse said. "Once we know that we're getting more doses on a

weekly basis, and we're working our way through that list, we'll reopen it again."

Even though the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have proved to be 95% and 94% effective, respectively, after the second dose in preventing disease, he advises everyone to continue practicing CDC guidelines, such as mask wearing and social distancing.

Asked what information he would like to share with the community, Kro-

use replied, "No one should be reluctant. When your time comes and you are prioritized to receive the vaccine, you should. It's the way you're going to keep yourself safe. It's the way you're going to keep your family safe. It's the way we're going to get back to a normal lifestyle. ... And by all indications, this is a very, very safe vaccine. ... We'll get there. So, just be patient at this point."

The Doodler





2021 MAIN GOALS

On Jan. 5, The Rider conducted a poll on social media asking students, "What is your main goal for 2021?" The results are shown below.

facebook

STAYING FIT 18

STAYING COVID FREE 12

GRADUATING 8

RECEIVING GOOD GRADES 2



twitter

2 SAVING MONEY

2 RECEIVING GOOD GRADES



1 STAYING COVID FREE

1 STAYING FIT

Instagram

STAYING FIT 8

STAYING COVID FREE 8

SAVING MONEY 5

RECEIVING GOOD GRADES 5



FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA TO PARTICIPATE @UTRGVRIDER

Increase the check



I will hold myself accountable



Jacqueline Peraza
THE RIDER

The end of 2020 was the perfect time for everyone to do a little self-reflecting on the year we all lived through. It seems as if everything we experienced last year came straight out of a movie, and not the fun kind.

Wildfires in Australia and California, the unexpected deaths of numerous legends, including Kobe Bryant and Chadwick Boseman, a toilet paper shortage, Black Lives Matter protests, the chaotic 2020 presidential election and, above all, the Coronavirus, which took the lives of millions of people, all seemed like unlikely events until they happened. In one year.

Many people, including

myself, are hopeful that a new year will bring more positive worldly events. However, I do know that will not happen overnight. So, to ensure I keep my sanity and anxiety in check, I will focus on what I can

“ I will hold myself accountable and not let distractions or lack of motivation become an excuse for failure to reach my goals. ”

control in my everyday life. I will focus on meeting my new goals that include getting

in shape, saving money, drinking more water, avoiding social media to promote productivity and continuing to practice proper hygiene to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

This year, I will hold myself accountable and not let distractions or lack of motivation become an excuse for failure to reach my goals. I know I let myself down in many ways last year and used the excuse, "We're in the middle of a pandemic," too many times. It's time I hold myself accountable and take back my life. It's time I find my purpose in life.

American author John C. Maxwell once said, "Dreams don't work unless you do," and that is the mentality I am walking into 2021 with.

Last year, the world stopped. But 2021 will be the year the world moves forward. So, will you move forward, too, or stay in 2020?

Submit a Letter to the Editor

The Rider encourages letters but does not guarantee publication. We reserve the right to edit letters for grammar and content. Letters for The Rider may be sent to therider@utrgv.edu. All letters must be typed and no longer than 400 words. Letters must include the name, classification and phone number of letter's author or the letter cannot be published. Opinions expressed in The Rider are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Rider or UTRGV administrators.

A different MLK Day of Service

Brigitte Ortiz
THE RIDER


MLK Day of Service is a national holiday that has been observed by Americans as a day to come together and serve the community. This year, the Leadership and Mentoring office will find alternative ways for students to volunteer due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Vanessa Sandoval, program coordinator for Leadership and Social Change, said this event has been observed by UTRGV since it was established.

“The slogan is, ‘Make it a day on, not a day off,’” Sandoval said. “And so, they gather and they serve the community. ... Different opportunities that are available for them to give back to the community and to continue the dream that Martin Luther King [Jr.] had once. So one of the quotes that has been like, ‘Why do you serve on that day?’ is he said, ‘Everybody can be great because everyone can serve,’ and so we really take that, and we have been celebrating that as UTRGV and as previous legacy institutions [The University of Texas at Brownsville and the University of Texas-Pan American.]”

She said the Leadership and Mentoring office partners with different agencies to find opportunities for

MLK Day of Service



Jan. 18, 2021 is the 26th anniversary of the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, which celebrates the civil rights leader's life and legacy.

It is recognized by Americans as a day to come together and serve their community.

This year, the UTRGV Leadership and Mentoring office will find alternatives for students to volunteer due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Aaliyah Garza/THE RIDER GRAPHIC

students to volunteer.

“Every year we’re so excited, and I love having set like a goal [of] like 500 or 300 [students] or keep growing,” Sandoval said. “And unfortunately because, and it’s understandable, some of the sites are like, ‘I can’t have more people because there’s not enough space in there to, like, have everybody social distance.’ And so we’re hoping, look-

“The slogan is, ‘Make it a day on, not a day off.’”

Vanessa Sandoval
Leadership and Social Change
program coordinator

ing for opportunities that might be available, like, online that students may want to be able to serve and still be a part of that day.”

Cielo Cruz, a mass communication senior, volunteered for the first time on MLK Day of Service last year at the Food Bank of the Rio Grande Valley in Pharr.

“The experience I had was a pleasant one, a memorable one, that is,” Cruz said. “I got to go

with my sorority, and we were given the options to either help inside, which was I think they were stocking cans into boxes, or we could go to the garden and do some garden work. I decided to go to the garden and first, they had us feed the chickens they had. We fed some turkeys, and we moved on and we went and did some weeding, taking out some roots out of the plants, raking, planting flowers.”

She said they worked from 8 to 11 a.m. and after they were given a tour and were told the history of the food bank, what they do and how they help the community besides providing meals.

“It was a pleasant experience because I got to work alongside, not just my sorority sisters, but other people who were there as well from other organizations, and get to talk to them and network as well,” Cruz said. “It just opens your eyes to help out more, and now that we can’t do any work, it’s something that you miss, and you wish you could still go and do the same thing that we did last year.”

She said she is looking forward to volunteering and helping others whether that be virtually or in person while following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s guidelines.

SPORTS

The return of UTRGV Athletics

But women’s basketball paused--for now

Karina Rodriguez
THE RIDER

UTRGV Athletics has tried to provide a glimmer of hope by bringing back games but has been met with many obstacles, such as the recent pause of women’s basketball due to a COVID-19 case within the program.

UTRGV Vice President and Director of Athletics Chasse Conque provided information about the sports that will be returning during the Spring 2021 semester.

“So, it will be all 16 of our sports [and] all of our student athletes from those 16 sports,” Conque said. “As you know, basketball is competing and they’ve been training and competing since the end of November. Then, all of our other sports will start competition in the spring.”

He also explained when fans can anticipate being able to attend games.

“So, right now, it is basketball,” Conque said. “We’re working with the IDC, the Infectious Disease Committee, on campus just like we did with basketball. We’re now looking at our plans for soccer, men’s and women’s soccer, for baseball, and for men’s and women’s ... tennis. And we will do the same for track.”

UTRGV Athletics will not comment on whether the recent COVID-19 case was a student athlete, trainer, coach, medical personnel or physical thera-

pist, but did clarify that it was a member of Tier 1 personnel. People classified as Tier 1 personnel are members of the program who come into direct contact with the players.

Conque said that fans can expect the game experience to be different from the experience they had pre-COVID.

“So, we do wellness checks, temperature checks on every fan, every media member as you come into the venue,” he said. “You’ll see a lot of social distance markers to make sure that folks are mindful of social distancing. The restrooms look different to promote social distancing. Concessions, like I said, we’re contactless with our concession sales. ... It’s inconvenient, but it’s really, it’s necessary. We don’t allow food or drink in our venue, and so fans must keep their masks on at all times.”

UTRGV Head Basketball Coach Lew Hill said his apprehensions are not just for the safety of his athletes but for his fellow staff as well.

“I think we don’t talk about the coaches’ health and safety a lot,” Hill said. I mean, everything is about the kids, which it should be. But I have assistant coaches that have families as well and I have a family. So, it’s just, we’re putting our lives on the line, just like the players are. So, I think that needs to be brought up more as well.”

UTRGV Men’s Basketball forward Jeff Otchere said he feels comfortable playing basketball amid COVID-19



UTRGV Men’s Basketball senior guard Rob McClain Jr. shoots a layup during last Wednesday’s practice at the Fieldhouse in Edinburg.

Jacqueline Wallace/ THE RIDER PHOTOS

because of the precautions that are being taken.

“I don’t really have any concerns,” Otchere said. “I feel like everybody’s taking this pretty [seriously]. I feel like we’re taking it pretty [seriously].”

I feel like the people that we play against [are] taking it serious and I feel like the whole NCAA in general is taking it [seriously]. So I do feel like I am safe.”