

HB 695: Possible new law school in Valley



Roxanna Miranda/THE RIDER GRAPHIC

Jacqueline Peraza

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



A state representative has filed a bill to establish a law school in the Rio Grande Valley.

Under House Bill 695, which was filed Dec. 2 by state Rep. Armando Martinez (D-Weslaco), the school would offer courses that can be found in other law schools across the United States.

Martinez said he has worked on this bill for several years, and it is not the first time it has been presented to the Legislature.

“Last [session], we had a very positive outcome because it passed unanimously out of the [Higher Education Committee]. ... Then it passed the House with over 100 votes,” he said. “So, that’s a super majority of votes that supported a law school in the Rio Grande Valley, and then it got to the Senate and it stalled.”

Asked why he believes the bill stalled, Martinez replied they ran out of time during the session.

“We were at the end of session by the time it got out to the House,” he said. “We just ran out of time in the Senate. I’m hoping that our senators look at this and say, ‘This is a proposal that’s a positive for the Rio Grande Valley.’”

Martinez said he received the support of other representatives from the Valley and Dallas for the bill, includ-

ing Representatives Sergio Muñoz Jr. (D-Mission), Ryan Guillen (D-Rio Grande City), Terry Canales (D-Edinburg) and Rafael Anchía (D-Dallas), chairman of the Mexican American Legislative Caucus.

“I think a lot of people across the state of Texas realize the importance of a law school in the Rio Grande Valley, and they wanted to show their support,” he said. “We drafted it, they read it, they all approved it and signed on, and we submitted.”

The bill did not specify a dollar amount for the funding of the new law school. Martinez said it is up to the public institution of higher learning that takes on the school to decide how much it will invest.

The proposed bill states, “the governing board of a university system may establish and operate, as a professional school of the system, a school of law in Cameron County or Hidalgo County as the governing board considers appropriate.”

Martinez said he would not have a say in where the school is built.

“I think that is totally up to the institution that would want to come into the Rio Grande Valley to do it,” he said. “So, if you have A&M that would want to come in and put a law school somewhere, this just gives them the flexibility to put it anywhere in the Valley. This also allows Texas Tech or other schools of law that would like to come

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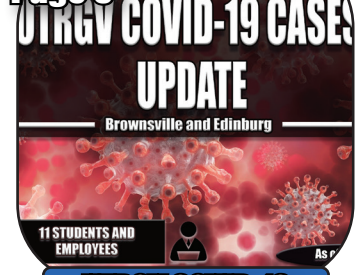
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SpaceX's SN9 will fly in due time

Alejandra Yañez

THE RIDER

Windy conditions scrapped a scheduled flight of Starship SN9 prototype last Thursday and a second attempt last Friday, SpaceX's CEO said on Twitter.

Starship SN9 was scheduled to take flight between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. last Thursday, Elon Musk tweeted last Tuesday morning.

The flight test was originally scheduled for Jan. 25 but was delayed due to wind conditions.

According to Cameron County Judge Eddie Treviño Jr.'s order to close State Highway 4 and Boca Chica Beach, SpaceX had until 6 p.m. last Thursday to get SN9 in the air. There was also an alternative launch scheduled between 8 a.m. and 2 p.m. last Friday, but this was also scrubbed due to weather conditions.

The prototype is expected to fly no earlier than today, according to SpaceX.

SpaceX fans took to Twitter to let the

SpaceX CEO know they were awaiting the launch.

“Waiting for FAA review ...,” Musk replied to a SpaceX enthusiast at 3 p.m. last Tuesday who posted that he was waiting for the hop.

SN9 is expected to have a similar hop to its predecessor, SN8, which took flight Dec. 9, leaving many Rio Grande Valley spectators in awe.

Starship will be the world's most powerful launch vehicle ever developed, with the ability to carry in excess of 100 metric tonnes to Earth orbit.

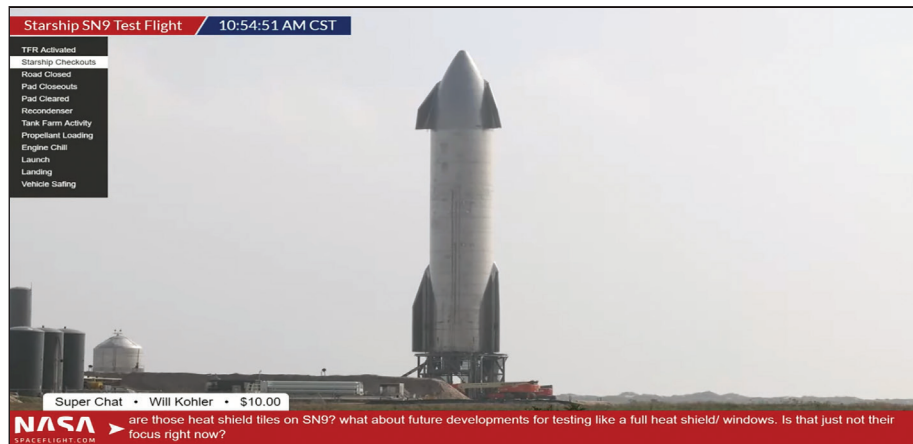
—According to SpaceX.com

”

SpaceX, was rough and resulted in an explosion. SN9 is expected to have a much smoother landing but follow the

As previously reported by The Rider, SpaceX described the launch as follows, “Starship serial number 8 (SN8) lifted off from our Cameron County launchpad and successfully ascended, transitioned propellant, and performed its landing flip maneuver with precise flap control to reach its landing point. Low pressure in the fuel header tank during the landing burn led to high touch-down velocity resulting in a hard (and exciting!) landing.”

While the flight of SN8 delighted spectators, its landing, as described by



SCREENSHOT TAKEN BY ROXANNA MIRANDA FROM THE JAN. 25 NASA SPACE FLIGHT WEBSITE LIVESTREAM

Shown is Starship SN9 during the Jan. 25 test flight at the SpaceX South Texas launch site at Boca Chica. The flight was delayed due to wind conditions and was rescheduled for no later than 2 p.m. last Friday, according to a Cameron County order to close State Highway 4 and Boca Chica Beach.

same 12.5 kilometer hop.

The SN9 prototype will be equipped with the same three Raptor engines as its predecessor, as well as a nose cone for aerodynamics and sported body flaps on its side to increase stability during flight.

SN9 is a small piece of the puzzle in Musk's plan for interplanetary exploration with Starship.

The SpaceX CEO plans to create a 165-foot-tall Starship vehicle that will

eventually launch from Earth attached to a giant rocket, Super Heavy.

Together, the Starship vehicle and Super Heavy will be 394 feet tall.

SpaceX's Starship spacecraft and Super Heavy rocket, which together are referred to as Starship, will form a fully reusable transportation system designed to carry both crew and cargo to orbit the Earth, Moon and Mars, according to the SpaceX website.

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THE RIDER

The Rider is the official, award-winning student newspaper of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. A PDF copy of the newspaper can be accessed online at utrgvrider.com. Views presented are those of the writers and do not reflect those of the newspaper or university.

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MORE THAN A NEWSPAPER

Delivering news to UTRGV no matter the circumstances.



ANNOUNCEMENTS



Today Movie Monday: 'Loving'

The **Cultural Council** will host its first **Movie Monday**, featuring "Loving," to celebrate the start of **Black History Month**. There will be a pre-party from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. to learn how to download the Teleparty browser extension. The screening will start at 7 p.m. RSVP is available on VLink.

Understanding Jim Crow

David Pilgrim will speak about **Jim Crow laws, diversity and race relations** from 5 to 7 p.m. via Zoom. Pilgrim, a sociologist and vice president of Diversity, Inclusion and Strategic Initiatives at Ferris State University, is the founder and director of the **Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia**. The event is hosted by **UTRGV Athletics**. RSVP is available here.

Tuesday Effective Meetings Training

Leadership & Mentoring will host an **effective meetings training** from noon to 1 p.m. Tuesday and 3 to 4 p.m. Friday via Zoom. The meeting will discuss how to **effectively plan and run meetings**. RSVP is available on VLink.

Wednesday The People Series: Harriet Tubman

American abolitionist **Harriet Tubman** will be the topic of **The People Series** discussion from noon to 1:30 p.m. via Zoom. The series is hosted by the **UTRGV Center for Diversity & Inclusion and DREAM Resource Center** and is designed for the UTRGV community to learn about **influential people** and to discuss the impact of their work. RSVP is available here.

Student Org Involvement Fair

The **Leadership and Mentoring** office will host a **virtual involvement fair** from noon to 2 p.m. via Zoom. The fair will be a chance for current and incoming students to connect with student organizations registered at UTRGV. RSVP is available on VLink.

Recruitment and Retention

Leadership & Mentoring will host a student organization **recruitment and retention training** from 5 to 6 p.m. via Zoom. The meeting will discuss how to **recruit and keep members engaged**. RSVP is available on VLink.

Thursday Service Org Involvement Fair

The **Leadership and Mentoring** office will host a **virtual involve-**

ment fair from 5 to 7 p.m. via Zoom. The fair will be a chance for current and incoming students to learn about **cultural, faith/spiritual and service organizations** registered at UTRGV. RSVP is available on VLink.

Saturday Kasparov University Cup

The **UTRGV Chess Team** will compete in the **Kasparov Chess Foundation University Cup** from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday and Sunday via Zoom. To watch the tournament's livestream, click here.

Zoom & Chill-Anime/TV Shows

The **Student Leadership Academy** will host its first **Zoom & Chill hangout** of the semester from 1 to 2 p.m. via Zoom. The hangout is for students to meet other students and talk about their **favorite anime show, book and movie** or what they are binge watching. RSVP is available on VLink.

Homecoming Virtual Party

Student Activities will host a **virtual homecoming tailgate and dance party** from 5 to 7 p.m. via Zoom. **DJ Phlex** will play music at the event. RSVP is available on VLink.

--Compiled by Omar E. Zapata

Have an announcement?
Email us at TheRider@utrgv.edu.

POLICE REPORTS

The following are among the incidents reported to University Police between Jan. 15 and 24.



Jan. 15

4:19 p.m.: A welfare concern was reported in reference to a faculty member not having contact with co-workers for a week. An officer conducted a

residential check and confirmed the faculty member was OK.

Jan. 16

8:43 p.m.: A student reported leaving her wedding ring on top of the sink on Jan. 14 at the Visitors Center restroom on the Edinburg campus. When she returned to the restroom, the ring was gone. The case is under investigation.

Jan. 17

6:48 a.m.: An officer responded to Lot B-7 in reference to a student requesting emergency medical services. The student had been experiencing body weakness, vomiting and depression due to school-related stress. While making contact, the officer did not observe any indicators of the student being a danger to himself or others. EMS arrived, but the student refused services and returned back to his on-campus apartment. A few hours later, an officer conducted a follow-up with him and found him to be OK.

Jan. 19

10 a.m.: An officer conducted a traffic stop on a vehicle for a violation off campus in Brownsville. The investigation revealed the temporary tag on the vehicle had not been registered to that vehicle. The officer confiscated the tag, which was submitted as evidence. The non-affiliated driver received traffic citations for the violation and for not having insurance.

Jan. 20

2:06 p.m.: A staff member reported that heavy construction debris had been dumped without proper authorization within the Academic Support Facility Complex on the Edinburg campus. The debris did not appear to come from university construction projects. The case is under investigation.

Jan. 21

4:39 p.m.: A faculty member reported that an unknown man entered her Zoom class. After the class, several students emailed her to report the man had been playing loud music, making it hard for them to concentrate. They also reported the man had obtained their cell phone numbers from the meeting and was texting them. The faculty member reported she would secure her Zoom meetings moving forward.

5:51 p.m.: A student reported finding damage to his vehicle's sunroof while parked in Lot E-16. The sunroof sustained a hole and shattered glass. The officer did not find any object that could have caused the damage. The cameras from the area were reviewed, and the sunroof appears shattered on its arrival to Lot E-16.

Jan. 22

3:19 p.m.: An officer observed an Edinburg Police Department unit with its emergency lights on at the University Recreation Center's crosswalk on the Edinburg campus. The EPD officer had been investigating an auto/cyclist accident at the location. After making contact with the parties involved, the officer confirmed the man who was struck, while riding his bicycle through the crosswalk, was a current student. The student said he was OK and refused medical attention.

Jan. 24

7:39 a.m.: An officer observed a truck stopped and impeding traffic on the southbound center lane of Expressway 77 in Brownsville. The officer found the operator asleep behind the steering wheel. The officer then administered standardized field sobriety tests on the operator, who completed them satisfactorily. The operator informed the officer he had fallen asleep because he had not slept all night. The operator received a warning for the traffic violation, and his mother arrived to drive him home.

11:07 a.m.: A staff member reported a theft of a personal item from his office located at the Environmental Health and Safety Building on the Edinburg campus. The staff member reported he last saw the item August 2020 when the building was undergoing renovations. The case is under investigation.

UPDATE

A detective was able to obtain an arrest warrant for a suspect in a case for assault, a class A misdemeanor. On Nov. 25, an officer responded to a disturbance between two staff members at the Behavioral Neurosciences Building on the Edinburg campus. Upon arrival, one staff member reported the other had assaulted her during an argument. Both staff members claimed injuries during the altercation, and they were both victims and suspects. After turning herself in to a detective at the UTRGV Police Department on Jan. 21, the woman was booked into the Edinburg City Jail without incident.

--Compiled by Sol Garcia

A chance to share everyone's stories



Photos Courtesy Berlyn Tijerina

Elijah Hernandez and theatre junior John Medrano pose during a 2019 theatre Halloween event.

Sol Garcia

THE RIDER

A new organization is forming to shine a light on UTRGV students.

Founded this semester by students Berlyn Tijerina and Annie Solis, Equal Arts Productions will strive to perform, film and distribute members' plays and films.

"Our main goal is to give every member the opportunity to create their own production, from start to finish," said Tijerina, a theatre and mass communication senior and president of the new organization.

The idea for Equal Arts Productions came from Solis, a theatre junior, who told a theatre class group chat that she would like to start an independent production company. Later, Tijerina, who is also a senator for the College of Fine Arts, messaged her that she would like to start a similar organization at UTRGV. They soon partnered up.

"We started talking," Tijer-

ina said. "We met over Zoom, and we started figuring out what we wanted to stand for."

The founders knew they wanted Equal Arts Productions to provide an equal chance to share every member's stories, because within the music, film and theatre industries, there is "not a lot of equality," she said.

"We want, really, to give everyone an opportunity, no matter their religion, no matter their race, their sex, their sexual orientation, no matter any of that," Tijerina said. "We just wanted to give everyone an equal opportunity to tell their stories that are authentic to them."

With this mission in mind, Tijerina and Solis, the vice president, thought of the organization's name.

After finalizing the club's constitution, it will be submitted to VLink, so Equal Arts Productions can be a step closer to becoming an official UTRGV organization, Tijerina said. It already has over 20 members.

"It grew quickly," she said. "Everyone's really passionate, and they understand the type of dedication it'll take to be able to make this organization prosper and grow."

Equal Arts Productions aims to create a board of directors that selects the productions made, with the advisers' approval. Members will be able to pitch their scripts to the board and receive feedback, Tijerina said.

"Since we are really small because of COVID, we're aiming for at least two to three productions to be completely finished this semester," she said.

Throughout the productions, members will prepare virtually until it is time to film. Tijerina will then contact UTRGV officials to arrange filming on campus, Tijerina said. Theatre performances will be filmed. There will be no live performances, for now.

"We actually have [imple-

See EAP, Page 8

Photos Courtesy Berlyn Tijerina

Equal Arts Productions, a new organization at UTRGV, holds its first meeting on Jan. 22 via Zoom. Shown are (top row, from left) John Medrano, Berlyn Tijerina and Ramiro Castro. Second row: Brianna Garcia, Marco Rodriguez and Annie Solis. Third row: Abelardo Treviño, Esmeralda Oliva and Laura Martinez. Bottom row: Eliza Garza, Ivy Vidal and Gloria Orta.





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COUNSELING

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- Online dream-sharing groups, with or without a therapeutic contact
- Individual dreamwork-assisted counseling
- Individual, couples and family counseling

For more information, visit onlinecounselinggroups.net

Roxanna Miranda/ THE RIDER GRAPHIC

UTRGV offers free online counseling services

Brigitte Ortiz

THE RIDER

DreamStar Free Online Counseling Services was created by a UTRGV professor in March 2020 in response to social-distancing guidelines set during the COVID-19 pandemic, and has helped over 300 individuals.

Gregory Scott Sparrow, a professor in the Counseling Department, said student counselors who normally see clients in person were suddenly unable to meet with them when the COVID-19 shutdown started.

"The university asked me what could we do since I'm a web designer and I do a lot of online work, so I [suggested] we start a telehealth counseling service," Sparrow said. "So, in a couple of weeks, I built a website and the students began promoting the service, which was DreamStar Free Online Counseling, to, you know, anybody that we could talk to. And pretty soon, we had a good number of people coming in to do counseling telehealth on Zoom."

DreamStar provides online dream-sharing groups, with or without therapeutic contact, individual dreamwork-assisted counseling, and individual, couples and family counseling.

"It also provides dream-sharing groups, which [are] very popular, ... and also relationship groups for adults," Sparrow said. "And now, we're going to have a group for teenage girls."

Students can meet with a counselor weekly or every other week. He said counselors set up appointments for 12 weeks since the semester lasts about 15.

"If they need counseling beyond the semester, like in May, when the semester ends, we may be able to see them through the gap," Sparrow said. "There's a gap of about a week and a half, and then they can continue working through

the summer and fall, for that matter, so we have provisions for letting them continue if they need too."

He said DreamStar has established an ecosystem that allows the students and clients to have a meaningful online experience.

"We are applying for federal tax, nonprofit status so that we can keep our project going and, perhaps, attract donations from people who might want to see the service continue," Sparrow said.

Amanda Guerrero, a graduate student, has been working at DreamStar for about five months and has completed 20 hours of direct counseling.

"We have clients coming in, we're trying to recruit clients constantly through social media, so hopefully our hours start rising a little bit more," Guerrero said.

She said she decided to join because she thought it was a great way to support what her professor, Sparrow, was doing.

"And not only that, DreamStar offers different services that I've never had the opportunity to try before, so like the dream-sharing groups," Guerrero said. "And I felt, like, that would be such an amazing opportunity to try something new."

Asked what her experience has been like, she replied that it has been good because they work with work with people from all over the world.

She said she would tell people who may be struggling, even though it is hard, to ask for help. Sometimes, it is essential.

"There's so many people here, at DreamStar, that are willing to help them and want to help them and make the changes that they want to make for themselves," Guerrero said. "So, even though the first step of reaching out might be hard, there's someone on the other side that is willing to help you."

To sign up for counseling, visit onlinecounselinggroups.net and fill out the intake form and symptom checklist.

“ DreamStar provides online dream-sharing groups, with or without therapeutic contact, individual dreamwork assisted counseling and individual, couples and family counseling. ”

VAQUERO VOICE



SUPER BOWL LV

On Jan. 25, The Rider conducted a poll on social media asking students, "Who will win Super Bowl LV?" The results are shown below.

facebook

TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS 23

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS 22

twitter

9 KANSAS CITY CHIEFS

7 TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS

Instagram

TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS 18

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS 8

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Behind the Administration



'Student reporter,' but not always in that order



Alejandra Yañez
THE RIDER

As a student journalist, I am no stranger to not being taken seriously. From the looks of disinterest to the condescending comments during interviews, I've had my fair share of "Why am I taking this?" moments.

With the Rio Grande Valley's current COVID-19 crisis and the first case in the U.S. being reported in January of last year, I am reminded of an interview I conducted where I was told the virus wasn't likely to affect the Valley.

I was laughed at and made fun of for "asking more questions than CNN," when I was trying to learn more about the virus.

It's amazing the sense of power and authority that some people feel just because they're the ones answering the questions instead of asking them. News flash! I'm not an expert in your field and that's why I am contacting you, but the arrogance I think we could all do without.

As a young person trying to find my voice, I do not appreciate being undermined for asking questions, which is the job of a reporter.

This "Us vs. Them" mindset that certain people in positions of power tend to have toward the news media is the main problem. People are so worried about being misunderstood and being published as a monster that they actually become one in the process.

I know I'm still green and have a lot to learn, but I'm a student for a reason.

It's insulting to be treated like a child when I have genuine questions and concerns for the well-being of the public, especially during the pandemic.

I like to believe that I can hold my own in a conversation, but what do you do when some man calls you mija in the middle of an interview? That's the kiss of death to a reporter. Might as well throw my credibility down the drain right there.

I'm not playing dress-up or pretend when I write these stories. I'm reporting on real events and issues.

While reporting on the pandemic, I've realized how difficult it is to get that truth when nobody wants to admit how many people are sick, much less when or how they got that way. It's a mess.

You wouldn't treat a medical student like they were playing doctor. In fact, some of them are being trusted to administer vaccinations during this pandemic, so why are student journalists different? Where's the trust? We have a role, too, and it's to inform.

I'm getting trained to do the best job possible just like anybody else in any other profession.

When I first got this job, I was impressed by how thorough our training was and how dedicated my advisers and director were, and still are, to having us write with integrity, accuracy and produce newsworthy pieces.

This program taught me how to use my voice, how to be inquisitive and how to handle even the most disrespectful people like a professional. And, believe me, that training has been utilized.

I've been laughed at, patronized, given the runaround and denied interviews to write some of these stories and, like me, are many others.

Interviewees have hijacked my interviews and not let me get through an entire sentence without interrupting me, then added insult to injury by telling me I don't know how to ask questions.

All I ask is to be taken seriously, especially with the current state of the Valley.

As you're reading this, maybe you're thinking, "Why is she still holding a grudge from over a year ago," and maybe I am.

Maybe that's just the way this works for women or for student reporters, but I'm here to say that it shouldn't and that I'm still not OK with it.

VISIT US ONLINE AT UTRGVRIDER.COM

11 COVID-19 cases in UTRGV community

Alejandra Yañez
THE RIDER

The UTRGV COVID-19 Task Force's Confirmed Cases Dashboard reported 11 positive cases on campus between Jan. 15 and 22.

Doug Arney, vice president for Administrative Support Services and chair of the UTRGV Infectious Disease Committee, said of the 11 cases on campus, six are students, including four student athletes; one is a student employee and one a graduate student. The remaining five cases are staff members.

Arney said UTRGV currently has six students, who previously tested positive, being quarantined on campus.

A female staff member at UTRGV died a few weeks ago of COVID-19, according to Arney. Dr. Michael Dobbs, vice dean of Clinical Affairs for the UTRGV School of Medicine and chief medical officer for UT Health RGV, said 92,199 COVID-19 PCR tests were administered by UTRGV between March 13, 2020, and Jan. 24. Dobbs said across the Rio Grande Valley, the positivity rate is about 20% at the UTRGV testing sites, many of which are repeat tests. "These are mostly people who had symptoms or exposures and came in to get tested because they were concerned," he said.

UTRGV COVID-19 CASES: UPDATE

11 STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES

As of Jan. 22

Brownsville and Edinburg

Roxanna Miranda/ THE RIDER GRAPHIC

Numbers reported as of Jan. 22

Last Tuesday the University Marketing and Communications team announced access to the UTRGV COVID-19 Vaccine Portal for faculty, staff and student employees. According to the email sent by the department, the portal will be available to the rest of the student body in a few weeks.

The purpose of the Vaccine Portal

is to account for every individual in the campus community and see if they are interested in getting the vaccine, if they qualify, and if they have been vaccinated already.

For more UTRGV COVID-19 updates and news visit, uthealthrgv.org.

"This is our attempt to try to figure out our campus community--faculty, students and staff--and see who's out there, who wants to get the vaccine, who's had it and then work our way down the list," Arney said.

He said the university is attempting to get everybody in by the rules and get them scheduled as soon as possible.

For people who do not currently qualify for the 1A and 1B categories, the portal is used to have names on record and get them in as soon as their category opens for vaccination.

"Let's say you don't qualify because you don't have any of these things wrong with you, your immune system's not compromised, your BMI is fine," Arney said. "So, really, you're not eligible yet, but we want to know who you are, if you are part of our campus community, so when you are eligible, we can get you in."

Asked how the university is scheduling patients for the second dosage of the vaccine, Arney replied that individuals are scheduled for the second dosage after the first is administered.

"We don't schedule you unless we have enough vaccines," he said.

Arney said in the case of a "no show," the university will call the next person in line to receive the vaccine. Due to the way the vaccine is stored and refrigerated, the vials that are scheduled to be used for a specific day must be administered that same day.

"We have to find someone to give the vaccine to; otherwise, they throw it away, and we don't want to do that," he said.

Farmers market goes virtual

Omar E. Zapata
THE RIDER

Due to COVID-19, the UTRGV Farmers Market has pivoted to e-commerce with the help of an urban farm that is run locally and sustainably by students.

A partnership between the UTRGV agroecology program and Edinburg First United Methodist Church created a farm called the Hub of Prosperity, which is located at 3707 W. University Dr.

Suzanne El-Haj, a sustainable agriculture and food systems senior and student employee of the farm, said the farm is operated by students who are employees or volunteers.

The project is a student-led initiative from its core, El-Haj said.

"We grow sustainable food with organic practices," she said. "So, that means we do minimal tilling, we do drip irrigation, we harvest rainwater, we do composting, we don't spray the vegetables with any chemicals."

The Hub of Prosperity came to fruition when Alex Racelis, agroecology program director and associate professor, noticed the church had a plot of land that it was not using.

Racelis said that the urban farm's name is inspired by 1920s advertisements seen

in the Museum of South Texas History that tried to recruit people to visit the Rio Grande Valley for its year-round growing seasons.

"Essentially, the university is leasing the land from the church and at a very low cost," he said. "In fact, it's \$1 per year."

Rebecca Gadson, associate vice president for Student Life and dean of students, told The Rider via email, that Racelis submitted a request for funding to the Student Fee Advisory Committee.

Gadson said the committee recommended \$30,000 to the UTRGV Office of the President for Fiscal Year 2021 in support of the Sustainable Campus Community Initiative, which pays the student employees and farm. Racelis said UTRGV and the church will partner for the next 10 years.

"So, in 2018, a group of students, myself and some faculty actually worked with the church to rezone the property back to agriculture," he said. "So, there was a bunch of conference calls, a bunch of meetings and, eventually, at the beginning of 2019, we were able to successfully petition that the area be rezoned to agriculture."

Racelis said it took about a year to get the farm ready. The Hub of Prosperity is also used for classes and research projects by students. The farm is run by six student em-



Jacqueline Wallace/ THE RIDER

Hub of Prosperity staff and volunteers pose with the produce they planted for their farmer's market last Thursday.

Shown are (back row, from left) Food systems graduate student Robert Oviedo, anthropology junior Fatima Garza and biology research associate Stephanie Kasper. Middle row: Sustainable agriculture and food systems senior Carlos Padia and biology junior Samantha Martin. Front row: Sustainable agriculture and food systems senior Suzanne El-Haj and School of Earth, Environmental, and Marine Sciences Assistant Professor Robin Choudhury.

ployees and one part-time farm manager. "I think it's really important for students to know that you can grow healthy fruits and vegetables right here in town," he said. "You know, this region is known for healthy fruits and vegetables and the fact that a lot of people who live here can't really get a hold of it, it's somewhat a sad story?"

The Hub of Prosperity's website takes orders

Monday through Friday, with Saturday as the pickup day from 10 a.m. to noon. The pickup location is behind the Edinburg First United Methodist Church.

El-Haj said the farm will offer a farm stand for customers, who did not order produce online, to shop from in person on Satur-

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PHOTOS COURTESY UTRGV ATHLETICS

The UTRGV Volleyball Team huddles during the Jan. 22 match against the University of Texas at San Antonio. Shown (from left) are senior Debora Nazario, senior Samaret Caraballo, sophomore Ioanna Charitonidi, freshman Revna Çakir, graduate student Mackenzie Coates and junior Sarah Cruz.

UTRGV volleyball players selected for All-WAC team

Karina Rodriguez
THE RIDER

Two UTRGV volleyball players have been selected to the Preseason All-Western Athletic Conference Team and the university has been picked to finish third, as voted by WAC head coaches.

UTRGV Volleyball Head Coach Todd Lowery said the selection of the players, senior libero Samaret Caraballo and junior outside hitter Sarah Cruz, allows for the program to receive more recognition.

“So, I think we’re excited for them to get, you know, honored or noticed by our coaches,” Lowery said. “And, it’s always great to get kids noticed for individual awards and it’s just growth for our program.”

He also explained how the women were selected for the All-WAC team.

“We nominate our individual players from our team, people that we think are ... you know, capable of being

All-WAC performers,” Lowery said. “Then, the selection is the coaches’ vote on the All-WAC team. So, we’re allowed to vote for a 14 All-WAC team, and we ranked the kids 1 to 14. And we’re allowed to vote for anybody except for the players on our own team.”

Lowery aims to finish higher than third in the conference.

“Our ultimate goal is to be better once we get to confer-

“I think it’s my family because all I do is for them [and] to make them proud.”

**--Samaret Caraballo
Senior libero**

ence tournament than we are right now,” he said. “So, you know, being picked third is nice. I think that’s a tribute to our kids that are coming back that worked hard last year and put us in a position to win some matches. I think the other coaches inside the conference recognize the potential within

the roster.”

Caraballo said she plays volleyball for her family.

“Well, I think it’s my family because all I do is for them [and] to make them proud,” she said.

Caraballo was also honored as the All-WAC defensive player of the week.

“That makes me feel good, of course, because I’m showing what I work for,” she said.

Cruz said her parents inspire her to play volleyball.

“It would be my parents,” she said. “My father used to play for 10 years on the national team in Cuba because he’s Cuban. So he really pushes me every day. I have to call him before every match to, like, make sure I’m mentally good to go.”

Cruz said her role is to contribute in offense and defense.

“I think my role on the team is to help with defense and also attack to be good, I mean, mentally and physically for everyone,” she said. “So, that way, we are good to go and win and try to win everything.”

THIS WEEK IN ATHLETICS



Volleyball

- 7 p.m. Monday vs. Dixie State University in St. George, Utah
- 1 p.m. Tuesday vs. Dixie State University in St. George, Utah

Women’s Soccer



- 7 p.m. Wednesday vs. Texas A&M Corpus Christi at the South Texas Showdown in Corpus Christi



Men’s Soccer

- TBA Saturday vs. Seattle University in Seattle

Women’s Basketball



- 7 p.m. Friday vs. Grand Canyon University in Phoenix

- 7 p.m. Saturday vs. Grand Canyon University in Phoenix



Men’s Basketball

- 7 p.m. Friday vs. Grand Canyon University at Bert Ogden Arena
- 7 p.m. Saturday vs. Grand Canyon University at Bert Ogden Arena

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days. Fatima Garza, an anthropology junior and a student employee at the farm, said that it follows university and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 guidelines at every stage, from harvesting to giving people their produce. “We always, even though the farm is a very large and open space, keep our masks on, sanitize all the tools or anything that can be shared between us and keep 10 feet distance,” Garza said. “When it comes to the pickup, we’re also very careful with that. We clean, we rinse all the vegetables, we wear masks when bagging them and even if someone gets off to get their produce, it’s really quick and safe.” She said ordering online is encouraged but if somebody wants to buy something last minute, they will freshly harvest the produce they want. Garza said the UTRGV Farmers Market is open to the entire community. “It’s small as of now, but it’s consistently growing as well,” she said.



Jacqueline Wallace/ THE RIDER

Anthropology junior Fatima Garza tends to crops last Thursday at the Hub of Prosperity.

Garza said she enjoys being a part of the program and seeing the process, from planting seeds to selling produce. El-Haj said they will have lots of tomatoes coming soon and are hoping to have melons, peppers, cucumbers and potatoes in the spring.

“We’re really trying to be consistent, but since we’re small scale, we only have about six student employees, and it’s like five acres of land,” she said. “It’s a lot to manage, so we’re, just, we’re getting there. ... We’re trying to be more consistent and supply more vegetables every week.”

El-Haj said there are volunteer-specific hours, and they have been getting more volunteers since the semester started. To volunteer, visit the farm during the hours that are posted on the UTRGV Agroecology Instagram page, @utrgvagroecology or the Hub of Prosperity’s Instagram page, @hub_of_prosperity. “What [volunteers] should bring is, they should wear long pants, close-toed shoes, they should bring their own water bottle and their mask, of course,” she said. “We have all the shovels and everything, and we sanitize them regularly.” Samantha Martin, a biology junior, volunteered for her first time last Thursday. “I’m volunteering because I think initiatives like this are really important for food systems, especially here [in the Valley], because we have a huge food-health problem.” For more information on the available produce and future market dates, follow the UTRGV Farmers Market and the Hub of Prosperity Instagram pages, @utrgvfarmersmarket and @hub_of_prosperity, respectively. To order produce from the Hub of Prosperity, click [here](#).

Being in the spotlight



Roxanna Miranda/THE RIDER

Shown (from left) Mass communication junior Janet Valdez, multidisciplinary studies senior William Akio and mass communication junior Nolan Robert Navarro "fish."

Brigitte Ortiz THE RIDER

Three UTRGV social media influencers hope to inspire audiences with their content.

William Akio, a multidisciplinary studies senior and UTRGV Men's Soccer Team forward, runs a YouTube channel with over 3,500 subscribers.

Akio has 150 videos on his channel where he records his everyday life and gives soccer advice.

"My following began to grow when I started making different types of videos," he said. "I started reaching out to my fellow friends that are professionals ... in the league and around the country, and just ask them to talk about, you know, their life and the challenges they had to go through to get to where they're at, and a lot of young kids like that."

Akio said he thinks his

content can inspire people to achieve their dreams by working hard and having determination and discipline.

"As you can see on my YouTube channel, my slogan is 'Determined, Driven and Disciplined,' and I just follow those three rules for success," he said. "And I just, basically, want to tell kids that you can get anything you put your mind to. Don't let people bring you down. You're going to fail a lot, but if you just keep getting up, you'll be able to reach your dream."

Akio wants to let his followers know that it takes a lot of time to achieve your dreams, and you have to dedicate yourself to almost everything you are doing.

"You have to learn, you have to watch videos, you have to struggle, you know," he said. "You'll have to have your ups and then, you'll

have your downs, as well. So it's one of those things where

“

I like to, really, just get people questioning on Instagram whether they're looking at someone who's human or someone who's not human.”

**--Nolan Robert Navarro "fish"
Mass communication junior**

you have to, just, stay committed because it's very easy to

give up. You'll not see glory and stuff right away, even me. I'm still working really hard. But, honestly, you just have to work hard and just enjoy the process. Don't get upset. Live in the moment."

Mass communication junior Janet Valdez has over 2,200 followers on her Instagram (@janetvaldez) and is known for modeling and fashion.

"Some of the things I post are my outfit of the day, like daily, Instagram stories," Valdez said. "I also post like Instagram Reels, which are like TikToks, which are 30-second videos of whatever I like, and what I do is I post outfits like some videos of me changing outfits or how to model. That's what I basically film and [post] pictures of me when I'm feeling good."

She said her content can inspire people to be creative

in what they wear and to be themselves.

Asked what advice she would give someone wanting to pursue the same path, Valdez replied, "Just post."

"Honestly, if you're comfortable with yourself, well at first you won't get a lot of followers and all that, but if you start being yourself, you start posting things that you like, people are going to start recognizing," she said. "I do feel you can portray that on your pictures and videos, if you're liking it. You're having fun or stuff people can tell. So if somebody wants to start to do that, just to do it."

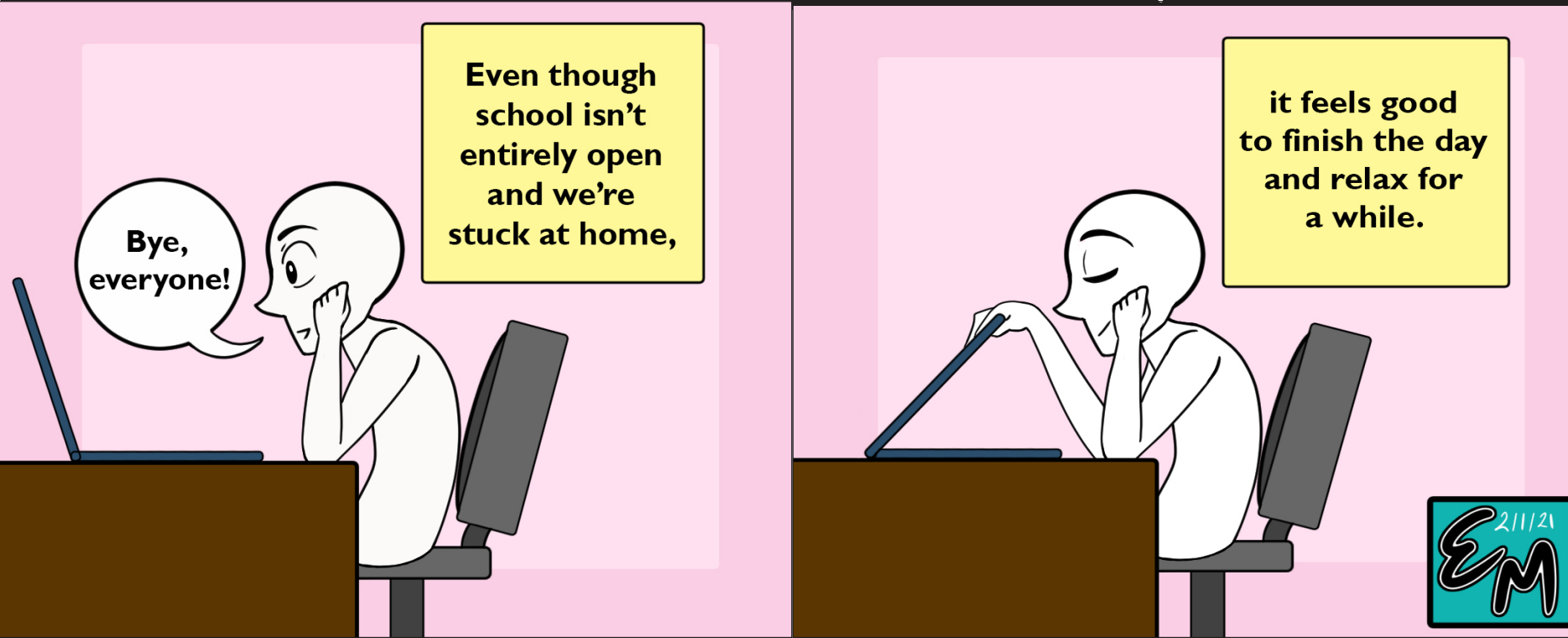
Nolan Robert "Fish" Navarro, a mass communication junior, is a model who has traveled the world and has 10,000 followers on Instagram @fishfiorucci.

In 2017, they noticed their

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The Doodler

By Elizabeth Mendoza



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“Starship will be the world’s most powerful launch vehicle ever developed, with the ability to carry in excess of 100 metric tonnes to Earth orbit,” according to SpaceX.com.

In other SpaceX-related news, the company successfully conducted a pressure test on SN7.2 last Tuesday morning.

Musk confirmed the success by tweeting a reply to a photo of the prototype, “Passed initial pressure test,” at 3 p.m. last Tuesday.

Have a story idea?
Let us know at
882-5143 or 665-5085

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following start to grow when they were featured in Vogue magazine while modeling in New York Fashion Week.

“My following really skyrocketed, from me being an average Texas model to me being the next level, making-it-in-the-industry model, so it’s definitely an upgrade,” Navarro said.

Their content is inspired by their gender identity.

“I like to push the gender norm, and I like to just be androgynous with my work,” Navarro said. “I like to play both male and female. I like to have no gender at all sometimes. I like to, really, just get people questioning on Instagram, whether they’re looking

at someone who’s human or someone who’s not human.”

They have also worked with Lady Gaga in a promotional video for her new makeup line, Haus Laboratories.

“That was like a really big accomplishment in my career, happened just about a year ago,” Navarro said. “It was such a secret, like an undercover project that could not be released to anybody in the public yet because nobody knew about it, so they weren’t able to tell me who we’re working for until we got there.”

Asked how their content can inspire people, they replied that they hope people feel inspired to work on themselves a little bit more.

“I was a really disturbed, sad kid when I was growing up,” Navarro said. “I was getting bullied a lot. I didn’t have any confidence, and I was just, like, a little

random kid that always sits in a corner all alone. I went through therapy for so many years but none of that helped until I started working on myself with the way I dress, the way I hold myself and the way I present myself to people.

“The way I present myself to people I would hope that it would encourage other people to want to embrace themselves a little bit more and maybe start eliminating things in their life that are holding them back from becoming the person they want to become.”

They want to offer the knowledge they have from their experience in the model industry and give back to the community.

“I never paid a single dime to get to where I am today, and people in the [Rio Grande Valley] shouldn’t either,” Navarro said. “There’s many opportuni-

ties down here for fashion and modeling, but there’s a lot of people here who ask for money or who try to take your money. So, I’ve been working on creating my management agency that’s open to people of all color, ages, size and gender. And, I leave it open to where people don’t have to pay anything. All you have to do is come to the castings, you know, put yourself out there, really get to know what our agency’s about and submit yourself.”

They said they believe in the community and see so much beauty that comes from the Valley, where not a lot of people do.

“There is not really a marker for fashion here in Texas, and I think I have the ability to change the perception of what people think it is down here, for fashion,” Navarro said.

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down and open one up. ... I’m not going to dictate where it goes. The only thing I want to do is make sure we do have one in the Rio Grande Valley.”

Veronica Gonzales, UTRGV vice president of Governmental and Community Relations and a lawyer, said she commends Rep. Martinez for wanting to expand educational opportunities.

“That’s one of our goals here at UTRGV and it’s always a good thing for students in the Rio Grande Valley,” Gonzales said.

If the bill passes, it would grant the

opportunity for higher education systems to expand their program in the Valley, she said.

“If that happens, the [Texas Higher Education] Coordinating Board has to get involved [and] they have to do a feasibility study to determine: Is there a need for a law school? Is there a student demand for it? Are there available resources? ... And then, how do you begin the accreditation process?”

Gonzales said. “So, it’s a really long process to do this, but this is the first step.”

She said if a law school were to become a reality in the Valley it has to be done “top notch.”

“It’s very important that if one is to be created, that the proper foundation be laid in order to make it a success,” Gonzales said.

educational opportunities in whatever field it may be is really important to UTRGV and the Rio Grande Valley.”

Martinez said when asked what he believes is the definition of success he always replies: opportunity.

“The only way we can provide an opportunity is through an education,” he said. “I believe a law school is an additional opportunity for a lot of our bright, young students here from the Valley who would like to stay in the Valley and continue their education, instead of having to travel to other parts of the state.”

As of press time, the bill had passed Stage 1 and was to be reviewed by a House committee in Stage 2.

“The only way we can provide an opportunity is through an education.”

Rep. Armando Martinez (D-Weslaco)

EAP
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mented] a safety manager for every single production,” she said.

The safety manager will ensure COVID-19 protocols are followed by checking for proper facial covering usage, limiting the number of people in the room, disinfecting the area between shots and more. Students must also take a COVID-19 test to ensure they do not have the virus before filming, Tijerina said.

“In order to be there in person, you have to have a negative test,” she said. “UTRGV does do testing, so we’re seeing how we can work with the universi-

ty to make that happen.”

Once the productions are finalized, Equal Arts Productions plans to distribute them to film festivals and other events that accept submissions, Tijerina said.

“I’m so happy that they have this ambition to aim towards distribution of their films, towards film festivals, because of the community that you can make at a film festival,” said Linda Belau, one of Equal Arts Productions’ advisers and director of the Film Studies Program.

Distributing work at festivals can also involve participating in Q&As, attending workshops and being able to network with others, said Belau, also a literature

and cultural studies professor.

“I would really like to see our students have those experiences,” she said.

Equal Arts Productions’ other adviser is Dustin Pruitt, a lecturer in the Department of Communication.

John Medrano, a theatre junior and the organization’s treasurer, looks forward to creating more content with other members and acting, which will help his aspiration to professionally act.

“I just hope that for all of us, we get to share our own creativity as directors, writers, actors, producers, etc.,” Medrano said.

On Jan. 22, Equal Arts Productions held its first meeting, which had a “good turnout,” he said, adding that he hopes

membership continues to grow.

“The more people we have, the more help that we could receive and share ideas, these concepts and whether we like it or don’t like it,” Medrano said. “We just want to make sure that we get enough people to where we could have many opinions on this certain production.”

All majors are welcome to join Equal Arts Productions, regardless of experience level, Tijerina said.

“If you have a passion for it, and you’re willing to dedicate some time and effort to us, then we’re welcome to have you,” she said.

For more information, students may contact Tijerina at berlyn.tijerina01@utrgv.edu.

THIS WEEK'S PROGRAMMING

VAQUERO NEWS
W/ JUSTIN ELIZALDE
9 - 9:30 A.M. - MONDAY



FALLOUT SHELTER
W/ DJ FALLOUT
11 A.M. - NOON - THURSDAY



THE CHUNKY FUNKY HOUR
W/ EL NONO MALO & BIG VIC
3 - 4 P.M. - WEDNESDAY



OFFICE HOURS
W/ DJ DOC V
10 - 11 A.M. - FRIDAY



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