

From: Office of the President <president@utrgv.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, March 26, 2025 1:15 PM
To: Vaqueros <Vaqueros@utrgv.edu>
Subject: Message from the President: Spring Semester Update



March 26, 2025

Dear UTRGV Family,

I hope everyone had a safe and relaxing Spring Break. As we enter the homestretch of the semester, I want to reflect on all we have accomplished together.

Our [2023-24 Annual Report](#) highlights record-breaking enrollment, graduation rates and fundraising, national recognition, and expanded academic programs and research. These achievements are a testament to the dedication of our students, faculty, and staff. Simply put, UTRGV's success is because of you.

As we move forward, we remain focused on new opportunities, strengthening our impact, and ensuring UTRGV continues to lead in higher education. Thank you for being part of this journey—the best is yet to come.

Strengthening Health Affairs to Serve the Valley

As we look to the future, UTRGV is establishing a [Division of Health Affairs](#) to (1) help grow UT Health RGV and ensure the participation of all health-related programs and (2) create a stronger framework for collaboration and impact among those programs. Led by an executive vice president, the division will align the Schools of Medicine, Podiatric Medicine, Nursing, Optometry (launching 2027, pending accreditation), and the College of Health Professions. The goal is for the division to boost interdisciplinary learning, enhance patient care, and support UT Health RGV's growing clinical services, including the upcoming Cancer and Surgery Center and Diabetes Center of Excellence.

The EVP for Health Affairs will be supported by two senior leaders: one leading education to drive curriculum development and interdisciplinary opportunities and another overseeing clinical affairs to strengthen the connection between the academic enterprise and patient care. Dr. Michael Lehker, a UTRGV leader since 2015, will serve as senior vice president overseeing educational efforts; for the time being, he will maintain his role as dean of the College of Health Professions.

As the division continues to take shape, additional leadership appointments will follow. Our goal is to have the division fully in place by the start of the new academic year, ready to enhance collaboration and advance healthcare education and service across the Valley. As UT Health RGV expands, we must ensure our clinical enterprise provides world-class care while creating more hands-on learning opportunities for future doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals.

UTRGV was founded on a promise to transform health care in the Valley. We have made incredible progress, but there is more work ahead. By uniting our health programs under one vision, we will strengthen our ability to educate, innovate, and serve—ensuring a healthier future for our community.

Expanding Opportunities in Brownsville

As we grow, we remain committed to expanding educational access across the Rio Grande Valley. To further this, UTRGV and the City of Brownsville recently signed an MOU to establish a [Task Force of the Future—an initiative to enhance student success on our Brownsville Campus.](#)

This partnership will aim to reduce student travel between campuses, expand academic programming, increase access to full degree pathways in Brownsville, and align student resources with workforce needs. As we approach our 10th anniversary, this initiative builds on the strong foundation we've established in Cameron County and on the Brownsville campus.

I want to thank Senator Adam Hinojosa and Brownsville Mayor John Cowen for their leadership and shared vision for student success. Together, we are shaping a future where every UTRGV student has the opportunity to excel.

Looking Ahead

Strengthening Health Affairs and expanding opportunities in Brownsville, even as we move toward Carnegie R1 status, are just two ways we are enhancing the student experience and serving our region. Thank you for your dedication to our mission and for being part of UTRGV's incredible journey.

Sincerely,

Guy Bailey
President

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