

UTRGV TM Robert C. Vackar College of Business & Entrepreneurship

NEWSLETTER

Volume 3 Issue 3 - Summer 2021

GIVE TO RCVCOBE

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN



The Spring 2021 semester presented another challenging term for RCVCOBE and once again the RCVCOBE family showed its resolve in fulfilling our mission and positively impacting our community. Enrollment growth has surged in the college – moving RCVCOBE into the top 100 business schools in the country based on enrollment. The college has been recognized as one of best business school for women in the country and

the college's student organizations accounted for the top two university awards for student organizations. It is very gratifying to see others outside of our college recognizing the contributions and impact of our faculty, staff, students, and alumni. As you read the following stories of success, I hope that you too will see the extraordinary efforts exhibited by the RCVCOBE family to have a sustainable positive impact on society. And help us wish a happy retirement to several valued colleagues with over 100 years of collective university service.

Go Vaqueros!

Lance Nail, Ph.D.

Dean and Distinguished University Professor

Robert C. Vackar College of Business and Entrepreneurship

IN THIS ISSUE

[Message from the Dean](#)

[RCVCOBE Rankings](#)

[VackarTalkX](#)

[Student Spotlights](#)

[Faculty Highlights](#)

[Staff Highlight](#)

[Engagement](#)

[Alumni Spotlight](#)

Do you, someone you know, or a program deserve recognition in the RCVCOBE newsletter? Or do you need help publicizing your event? Email us at cobe.media@utrgv.edu with the subject line "RCVCOBE Newsletter Content."

RCVCOBE RANKINGS

Enrollment Surge Moves UTRGV into Top 100 Business Schools

According to data provided by the Association to Advance Colleges and Schools of

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[RCVCOBE in the Press](#)

Business (AACSB), the recent growth in enrollment in the Robert C. Vackar College of Business and Entrepreneurship (RCVCOBE) has moved it into the 100 largest business schools in the United States. Of the 535 AACSB-accredited business schools in the United States 505 reported their enrollment to AACSB and the RCVCOBE ranks #81 on the list of reporting schools with a total enrollment of 4,095 students in Fall 2020.

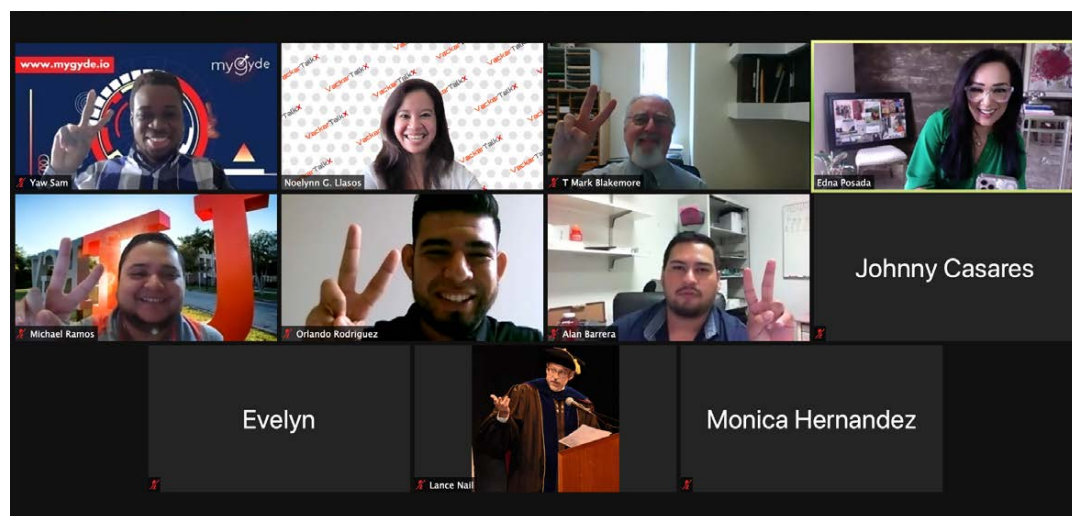
UTRGV is one of 12 Texas and five University of Texas institutions in the top 100. UT-Dallas is the largest in Texas with a business school enrollment of 8,410 students. The W.P. Carey School of Business at Arizona State reported the largest enrollment in the country with 16,482 students.

RCVCOBE moved into the top 100 after a 19.9% surge in enrollment this year. Undergraduate enrollment increased 11.8% from 3,010 to 3,366 students from last year – ranking UTRGV #72 on the list of schools reporting undergraduate enrollment. Graduate enrollment grew 70.3% from 428 to 729 students. The college’s growth bucked the national trend in business school enrollment. The average enrollment of reporting schools was flat last year – dropping slightly from 2,354 to 2,345 students. Undergraduate enrollments dropped 2.4% on average from 1,864 to 1,818 students.

RCVCOBE Among Best Business Schools for Women

RCVCOBE was recently named one of the Best Business Schools for Women for 2021 by [College Consensus](#). Among 50 schools surveyed, RCVCOBE was ranked 23rd, with 54.4% of our student body being female. [Read more](#)

VACKARTALKX COMPLETES INAUGURAL YEAR AND LOOKS FORWARD TO ITS SECOND



Fall 2020, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, saw the launch of a new program by the Robert C. Vackar College of Business and Entrepreneurship to engage students in career enhancing activities. The weekly series of virtual meetings to help kickstart the careers of our students hosted industry leaders and other business professionals in online,

interactive panel discussions and presentations. All RCVCBE and pre-business students were invited to attend.

Up to ten students each semester assisted in organizing the new program and events and engaged with the panel participants serving as online hosts for the discussions and presentations. Student hosts collaborated with our panelists in preparation for the virtual meetings held via Zoom. RCVCBE staff provided technical support for hosting the meetings and showcasing the events in RCVCBE social media outlets.

I took the opportunity this semester to partake in this newly founded organization and it has been one of the best decisions I've made while being a student at UTRGV. . . . I was seeking networking opportunities, work experience and content to list on my resume. The extra bonus was being compensated with \$250 per semester! I had the chance to establish new friendships, learn beneficial material regarding the work force, acquire advice from professionals and take the role of an event coordinator by organizing Zoom meetings, communicating with speakers, and presenting them to attendees. The experience was wonderful as we had meetings every Tuesday to better improve each session, the environment was welcoming since the beginning and I learned to put myself out there more through VackerTalkX. . . . I will still join sessions when possible to continue to advance myself as an individual and business professional. – Ricardo Montoya, BBA Student

I'm gratified to have contributed over the spring semester to VackerTalkx, an initiative . . . launched for students to network with outstanding business professionals from the RGV region and beyond. It was an opportunity for us to learn from their experience, listen to their personal struggles and outcomes, take a piece of advice, and find inspiration for our personal growth. – Orlando Rodriguez, MBA student

VackerTalkx, renewed for another season seeks a cadre of student hosts for Fall 2021. Preferred attributes for student hosts include friendliness, well-spoken, and confident with composure and patience. Compensation for student participants of \$250 per semester up to \$500 for an academic year is available from the college.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS

RCVCBE MBA Student and BBA Alumnus Received Texas Business Hall of Fame Award

Yaw Sam, RCVCBE MBA student and BBA alumnus, received the prestigious Texas Business Hall of Fame award in October 2020. While a BBA in marketing student, Yaw was a senator of the UTRGV Student Government Association representing the RCVCBE and was involved in several other student



organizations. His entrepreneurial spirit led to his development of a mobile app that helps young adults find and connect with their mentors for both academic and professional development. [Click here](#) to see the 2020 award recipients and read more about Yaw's accomplishments.

RCVCOBE Undergraduate Students Among UTRGV Third-Time U.S. Collegiate Chess Champions



RCVCOBE Management major **Kamil Dragun** (above left) and Finance major **Vladimir Belous** (above right) are among the UTRGV chess team that was crowned its third consecutive President's Cup at the U.S. National Collegiate Chess Tournament in April 2021. Dragun has been with the UTRGV chess team in all three President's Cup wins and was the highest ranked player in the team. After the start of the pandemic, the players adapted to online tournaments and have won the Kasparov Chess Foundation University Cup and the international FIDE World University Online Blitz Championship this year. [Click here](#) to read more about this story.

Student Organization Awards

Multiple RCVCOBE student organizations and their faculty advisors were honored for their outstanding student engagement at the 2021 Student Leader Recognition Ceremony hosted by the UTRGV Center for Student Involvement. **Dr. Sylvia Robles**, advisor for RCVCOBE student organization Collegiate Entrepreneurs' Organization (CEO), received the Advisor of the Year award.



RCVCOBE student organization **ENACTUS** received the Student Organization of the Year award.



RCV's **CEO** received the Image of Involvement Distinction award and the **American Marketing Association** chapter received the Virtual Service Project of the Year award.

RCVCOBE Undergraduate Archer Fellow



During the 2021 Spring Semester, **Dariel Arostegui**, an RCVCOBE Finance major, was selected to attend the prestigious Archer Fellowship in Washington D.C. while working as a full-time intern at the Marathon Petroleum Corporation. Recently, he completed an auditing internship at Vantage Bank Texas, and served as a judicial intern for Judge Renee R. Betancourt in Texas's 449th Judicial District Court. Arostegui is engaged in various on- and off-campus initiatives to support funding for non-profits focused on helping the community needs in South Texas. Most notably, through his work in ENACTUS, an RCVCOBE student organization, he taught financial literacy to Pharr-

Alamo-San Juan students. He finds passion at the intersection of data and public policy. He plans to attend law school and return to serve the Rio Grande Valley.

Ph.D. Program Placement

- **Abdullah Al Masum** - Visiting Assistant Professor (Lecturer) of Finance at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh
- **Md Noman Hossain** - Assistant Professor of Finance at Central Washington University
- **Sarah Kimakwa** - Assistant Professor of Management at California State University Chico
- **Kelvin King** - Assistant Professor of Digital Misinformation at Syracuse University
- **Gerardo Miranda** - Visiting Assistant Professor of Management at University of Nebraska at Omaha
- **Swapnil Saravade** - Assistant Professor of Marketing, Utah Valley University

Ph.D. Student Excellence Awards

- **Md Noman Hossain** - RCVCOBE Ph.D. Student Excellence Award in Research
- **Gerardo Miranda** - RCVCOBE Ph.D. Student Excellence Award in Teaching
- **Rolando Sanchez** - Ph.D. Student Excellence Award in Research in Accounting
- **Joseph Manga** –Ph.D. Student Excellence Award in Research in Information Systems
- **Christian Bautista** – Ph.D. Student Excellence Award in Research in Management
- **Sasawan Heingraj** – Ph.D. Student Excellence Award in Research in Marketing
- **Massara Alazazi** - Ph.D. Student Excellence Award in Teaching Meritorious Recipient
- **Md Ruhul Amin** - Ph.D. Student Excellence Award in Teaching Meritorious Recipient

Marketing PhD Student Featured by American Marketing Association Doctoral Student Special Interest Group

AM> | SIG
Doctoral Student

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT:
SWAPNIL SARAVADE



5th Year Doctoral Candidate
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
Digital Marketing, Retail Strategies &
Consumer Neuroscience

Swapnil Saravade, RCVCOBE Ph.D. Candidate in Marketing, was featured as the Student Spotlight for April 2021 by the American Marketing Association Doctoral Student Special Interest Group (DocSIG). Swapnil's research interests focus on digital marketing, retail strategies and consumer neuroscience. He has published in the *Journal of Macromarketing* and *Journal of Business Research*. Swapnil received the RCVCOBE PhD Student Excellence Award in 2020. [Click here](#) to read more about the story.

FACULTY HIGHLIGHTS

Faculty and Staff Retirement

On May 26, RCVCOBE faculty and staff bid farewell to retiring faculty and staff members **Mark Blakemore, Tom Coyle, Kevin Cruthirds, Elia Ovalle, Raj Parikh, Pablo Rhi-Perez,** and **Lauran Schmid**, who have served UTRGV, its legacy institution UT-Pan American, and UT Brownsville, for as long as 43 years and witnessed the growth of the university and the region. Dean Lance Nail presented the retiring faculty and staff with retirement gifts honoring their service to the college and our students.

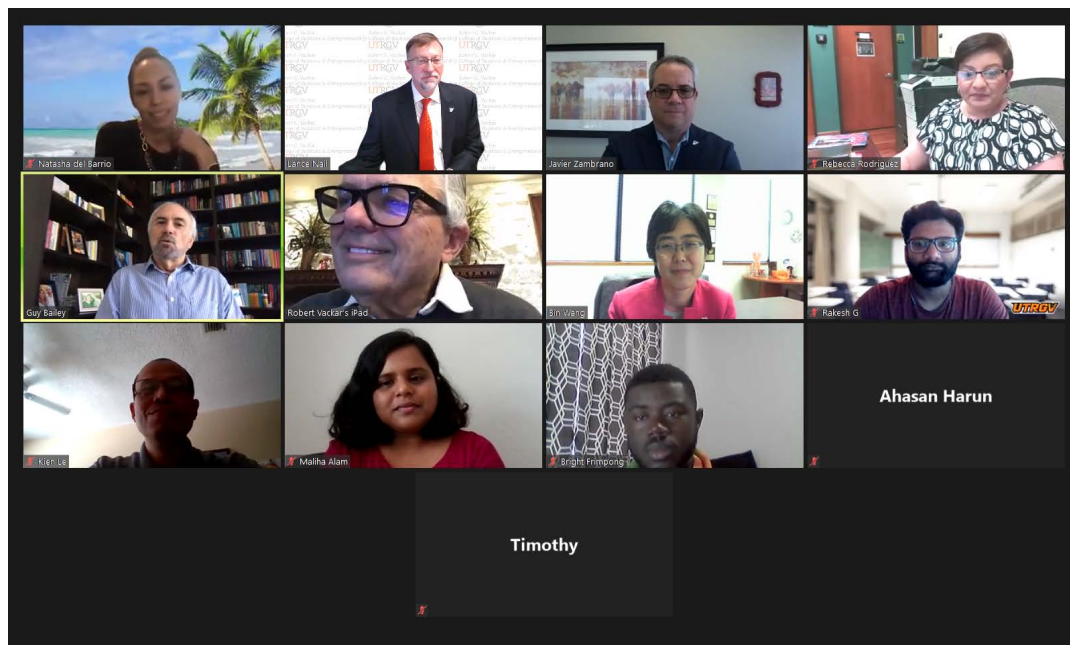


Faculty Research Spotlight



Dr. Dan King, Assistant Professor of Marketing, reveals how the alphabetical order of brand names affects consumer perception of the brands' trustworthiness in his research entitled "Symbolic Sequence Effects on Consumers' Judgments of Truth for Brand Claims" published in the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, a leading business journal. Based on a series of experiments, Dr. King shows that consumers are subconsciously more likely to believe statements by brand names starting with letters higher in the alphabetical order due to the natural order of the alphabets. That is, communications from a brand with a name starting with A are perceived to be more believable than those from a brand that starts with B. Dr. King's research highlights the importance of carefully choosing a brand name in enhancing brand communication effectiveness. [Click here](#) to read more about this research.

Faculty Awards and Honors



Dr. Bin Wang, professor of information systems, was named the inaugural RCVCOBE Professor of Business on April 8, 2021. [Bert Ogden Auto Group](#) owner **Robert C. Vackar** and CEO **Natasha del Barrio**, UTRGV President **Guy Bailey**, UTRGV Associate Vice President for Development **Jay Zambrano**, as well as students in her doctoral class joined the award event hosted by RCVCOBE Dean **Lance Nail**. Dr. Wang's research focuses on social media, e-commerce, and IT adoption and has published over fifty articles in leading academic journals in information systems and business including the *Journal of Management Information Systems*, *Information Systems Journal*, *Information and Management*, and *Journal of Business Research*. Her research has been cited over 3,000 times according to SCOPUS, and she serves as a senior editor at *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications* and an associate editor at *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*. She received the UTRGV Faculty Excellence Award in Teaching in the tenured/tenure-track category in 2018.



Dr. Xiaojing Sheng, Associate Professor of Marketing, received the Doctoral Faculty Excellence Award in spring 2021. Dr. Sheng has chaired three doctoral dissertations and served as a member on 11 dissertation committees. She has also supervised two doctoral students' scholarship seminars. Her collaboration with PhD students has resulted in three journal publications and multiple academic conference publications and presentations.

Dr. Sylvia Robles, lecturer of international business and entrepreneurship, shared her experience on using experiential learning in online instruction to transform students and business communities during the Excellence in Online Learning Conference hosted by the UTRGV Center for Online Learning and



Teaching Technology in March 2021.

STAFF HIGHLIGHT



After 43 years of service at UTRGV and its legacy institution UTPA, **Ms. Elia Ovalle**, Administrative Assistant II for the Department of Management, will retire in May 2021. RCVCOBE faculty, staff, and alumni, together with Elia's family, celebrated her service to our students and faculty and her retirement on May 12. Thank you and we will miss you, Elia!

EVENTS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Big Idea Competition



ANNOUNCING THE WINNERS !!!



1st Place & Green Innovation

PowerGen Pitcher

Dr. Naomi Fang Dr. Isaac Choutapalli



2nd Place

South Coast Oyster Company
Shelby Bessette



3rd Place &
Audience Favorite

Odigus
Evan Garcia



Social Entrepreneurship

Weaving Food Webs
Katie Lavallee &
Jorge Trujillo

UTRGV : Center for Innovation
& Commercialization

RCVCOBE **Center for Innovation and Commercialization (CIC)** hosted its inaugural Big Idea Competition on March 10, 2021. Nine finalists were selected by a panel of judges to participate in the virtual competition from among 46 teams across the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) that applied including 38 UTRGV student teams, one UTRGV staff employee team, one UTRGV alumni team, and three RGV community member teams. PowerGen Pitcher, a project by Dr. Naomi Fang and Dr. Isaac Choutapalli, was selected the winner based on its potential to commercialize the product and took home the grand prize of \$7,000. This event was made possible through the generosity of the [Blackstone Charitable Foundation](#) and **Dr. Russell Adams**, the V.F. (Doc) and Gertrude M. Neuhaus Chair for Entrepreneurship. Read more about the competition by [clicking here](#).

RCVCOBE Student Organization Volunteers for Grocery Distribution

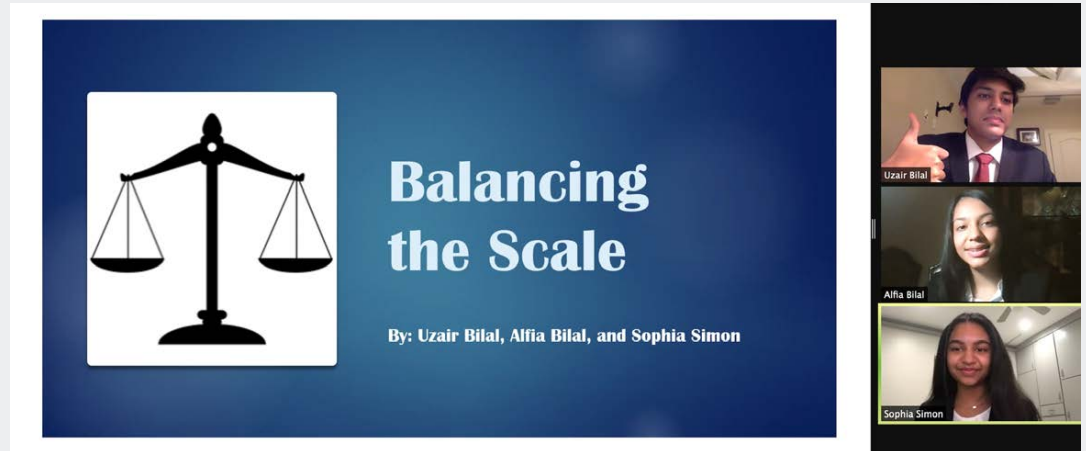


RCVCOBE **CEO students** and faculty advisor **Dr. Sylvia Robles** volunteered for grocery distribution in Brownsville to help the local community in the fight against hunger. The group has volunteered for grocery distribution three times in April and has another two events planned.

RCVCOBE Students Help Build Local Superfood Business

Under the supervision of **Dr. Sylvia Robles**, RCVCOBE students **Yasena Cantu** and **Gerardo Reina** teamed up with students from the College of Engineering and Computer Science to help Cappadona Ranch, a local business that sells mesquite bean products, to improve productivity and identify potential markets. As the engineers developed a 3-D model of the mesquite beans to design a device to speed up their harvest, the RCVCOBE students interviewed local retail store customers and managers as well as ranchers in South Texas and northern Mexico to understand the interest in a harvest device. Victoria Cappadona, owner of Cappadona Ranch was excited about the possibility: “I thought they came up with something really, really promising. And I'm hoping we can test it out or something, maybe this summer.” [Click here](#) to read more about this story.

Two Economics Professors Mentored Valley High School Students to Place 5th in National Competition



We are periodically reminded of the essential role we play as a community university. In March, a team consisting of three high school students of South Texas ISD Health Professions, Mercedes, placed First in Texas in a research project competition organized by Business Professionals of America (BPA). The topic concerned the examination and generation of solutions to resolve the U.S.'s trade deficit. The students, Alfia Bilal, Sophia Simon, and Uzair Bilal, thus qualified to participate in the national phase of the competition. Upon the urging of their high school advisor that they seek the guidance of economists at UTRGV, Uzair Bilal contacted **Drs. Rafael Otero** and **Gautam Hazarika** of the Department of Economics and Finance. The expert guidance and mentoring that they received enabled the students to ultimately place 5th in the nation. This is an excellent achievement for high schoolers from one of the nation's most underserved and economically disadvantaged regions. Drs. Otero and Hazarika exhibited the kind of community engagement that the college seeks to positively impact the success of local students and the community.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



Dr. Cristhian Mellado Cid, Ph.D. in Business Administration with a concentration in Finance, '14, has been named President at Universidad Católica Santísima Concepción in Chile, to start in June 2021. He had been serving as Dean in the College of Economic Sciences and Business since 2017. The announcement came from Fernando Chomali, the Archbishop of the City of Concepción.