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The Prospector, April 20, 2021

UTEP Student Publications

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UTEP faculty discuss anti-Asian hate crimes

Victoria Rivas
The Prospector

UTEP faculty members discussed their own experiences with Asian hate in the borderland amid the aftermath of the Atlanta, Georgia shooting, resulting in the death of eight victims.

The shooting, which occurred on March 16, raised concerns of hate crime among the Asian community, after Robert Aaron Long, 21, opened fire at three different spas with six out of the eight victims being Asian women.

Long was found by police with a 9-millimeter gun and was charged with eight counts of murder and a count of aggravated assault in connection with the attacks. Long said he targeted the spas because he struggled with a "sexual addiction" and wanted to end with the "temptation." He was planning on heading to Florida to commit a similar attack.

President Joe Biden responded by saying these attacks were "un-



Graphic by Hugo Hinojosa/The Prospector via canva

According to Stop AAPI, between March 19 and July 1, 2020, 63 incident reports of anti-Asian hate were made in Texas.

American" and "very troubling." He expressed his sympathy towards the families of the Atlanta victims.

"I do want to say to our Asian-American community that we stand

with you and understand how this has frightened and shocked and outraged all people," Vice President Kamala Harris said.

UTEP professors have expressed their concerns over the rise of anti-Asian discrimination.

"Any violence against innocent citizens is unacceptable. It is tragic that we have lost so many lives to hideous hate crimes again and again," said Wen- Yee Lee, Ph.D., UTEP professor of chemistry and biochemistry. "The recent attack in Atlanta is one of recent heartbreaking attacks on Asians."

Other UTEP professors like Pei-Ling Hsu, Ph. D., professor of science education, believe more people should be educated about the topic to end with any anti-minority movement.

"I think the anti-Asian discrimination is an unfortunate and dangerous phenomenon. Any forms of discrimination would likely cause unfair hardship and painful suffering to human beings," Hsu said. "We should help people increase this awareness and be proactive to prevent any discrimination incidents."

According to the group Stop AAPI Hate, nearly 3,800 hate incidents against Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders have been reported nationwide since March of 2020. Between March 19 and July 1, 2020, 63 incident reports of anti-Asian hate were made in Texas.

"The rise in anti-Asian is definitely real. After reading all those news, Asian people have fears, insecure feelings in general," said Chuan (River) Xiao, Ph.D., UTEP professor of chemistry. "I remembered when the Walmart shooting happened at El Paso on Aug. 3, 2019; parents of my Mexican summer intern student from Juárez contacted me, asking their child to go back (to Juárez). This is the same feeling we, as Asians, have now."

According to UTEP's "Bhutan on the Border," the university is the only institution in the U.S. whose architecture is inspired by Bhutan's Kingdom in South Asia. All of UTEP's 97 buildings

See Hate Crimes page 4

El Paso reacts to New Mexico's legalization of marijuana

Nicole Lopez
The Prospector

With New Mexico and Mexico set to legalize the recreational use of recreational marijuana, UTEP staff and students discuss the effects it may pose on El Paso residents living in the middle of the two.

New Mexico is the 16th state in the United States to legalize marijuana for recreational use and sales, after Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed legislation Monday, April 12. According to the bill, adults 21 and over will be permitted to purchase and possess up to 2 ounces of marijuana outside their home starting April 1, 2022.

Lawmakers in Mexico also passed a bill March 10, that legalizes the recreational use of marijuana in a 316-to-129 vote, according to a news release by the country's Chamber of Deputies. The measure is expected to be approved by the Senate before being sent to President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who has expressed support for legalization.

Alison Alber, a multimedia journalism student at UTEP, finds

the legalization of marijuana from both New Mexico and Mexico could influence Texas' reconsideration of marijuana regulation.

"When we look at the map, Arizona already legalized it and I'm sure people on the border of New Mexico and Arizona are just waiting for us (Texas) to do the same," Alber said.

Alber acknowledges it can take Texas, a predominantly red state, a long time to even consider legalizing marijuana for recreational use.

"Texas is always doing its own thing," Alber said. "Texas is still predominantly conservative so it will take a while before the state realizes what they can do with new legislation on marijuana."

According to an article published by Harvard Medical School, marijuana is found to have health benefits when it comes to treating certain conditions, such as nerve pain, arthritis, PTSD, Parkinson's Disease, among many others, a healthy use of marijuana Alber advocates for.

"I am all for the healing power of plants and marijuana does exactly

that," Alber said. "In a regulated environment, it does more good than harm."

Regarding how the Mexican legislation of marijuana could affect El Paso, it could play out in several ways.

Armando Gonzalez-Stuart, a researcher in Herbal Safety at UTEP's School of Pharmacy, finds marijuana legislation on the Mexico border may decrease activity of illegal crossing of marijuana to either side.

"Importing or exporting into the United States is not going to be that much of a priority anymore," Gonzalez-Stuart said.

As for how Texans may react to the legislation in New Mexico, Gonzalez-Stuart believes the legalization of the recreational use of marijuana will not lead to an increase in the use of marijuana in the state of Texas.

"I don't really think there's going to be that much of a problem for Texas just because New Mexico legalizes it," Gonzalez-Stuart said.

Gonzalez-Stuart doubts El



Photo courtesy of MarihuanaYMedicina via CC By-SA 2.0

New Mexico becomes the 16th state in the United States to legalize marijuana for recreational use and sales, Monday, April 12.

See Marijuana page 3

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Getting the COVID-19 vaccine to help end this pandemic

Lennon Romo

The Prospector

The air was cold on the morning of Thursday, Jan. 14, and there I stood in line silently among hundreds of fellow El Pasoans, all of us waiting to get our first dose of the COVID-19 Moderna vaccine.

After months of controversy, debate, and human trial and error, the vaccine finally made its way to my hometown of El Paso, Texas. In a city of about 800,000 people, only small pockets of the vaccine were made available for the health impaired, including individuals like myself in Phase 1C, and there I was, awaiting my turn. A sort of tension seemed to wash over us all. A haunting stillness and unnerving silence fell upon the lines of people snaking about the lot.

There were several white tents set up in a parking lot outside of University Medical Center of El Paso. Beyond the plume of shrouded coverings, people would go through the process of signing disclosures, getting the vaccine, and waiting 15 minutes to be observed for any immediate side-effects. Due to the number of people as well as the length of time it took to go through each step, it was a process that spanned over three hours before my family and I were able to receive our vaccination and head back home.

Just as many others, rumors of reactions to the vaccine ranging from further illness to even death filled my mind. To date, the CDC's Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System, or VAERS, has noted that there have been 472 deaths following the Moderna vaccine, and 489 following the Pfizer vaccine. The vaccine laid out for me beyond the curtain felt like I was taking part in a game of Russian roulette. Could the unknown outweigh the certain, spiraled through my every thought.

As a young asthmatic Latina with a family history of ailments, I clenched my EPIPEN and inhaler all day, not knowing what the next few hours would bring. The irony of receiving this potentially life-saving vaccine, coupled with the true possibility that the effects could kill me, haunts me still.

After six weeks and my second dosage, I find I am still doing well. Albeit having experienced a few intense, yet, common side effects such as soreness and chills, to name a few, I can say getting the vaccine was well worth the temporary discomfort and risks. In a world where a virus is ravaging countless countries, including the United States, I am grateful we have the opportunity

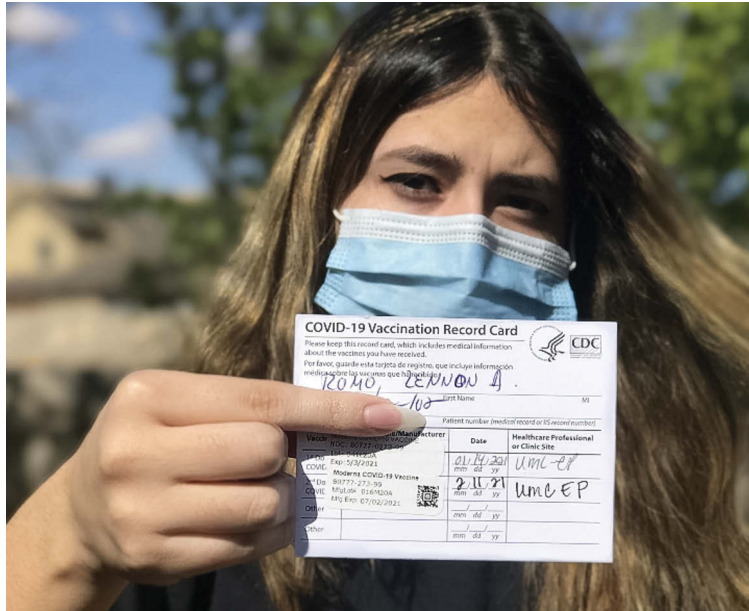


Photo courtesy of Rene Romo

Lennon Romo holds her COVID-19 Moderna vaccine record card while wearing a mask. Romo received her second dose of the vaccine on Feb. 11, 2021, as part of the Phase 1C high risk group.

to make strides in fending off and possibly stifling further upward trends.

To date, COVID-19 has affected over 30.2 million Americans, and brought with it more than half a million deaths. Closer to home, El Paso has seen over 128,000 cases, and over 2,300 deaths, according to data released by the city. From the onset of the vaccine's creation, to the development of now numerous options, the debate on vaccinations remains prevalent.

In a response to the hesitance from people still worried about getting vaccinated, Dr. Anthony Fauci, who received the Moderna vaccine, said the following: "You need to get vaccinated when it (the vaccination) becomes available, as quickly and expeditiously as possible throughout the country. And the reason for that, is that there is a fact that permeates virology, and that is that viruses cannot mutate if they don't replicate."

The virus has proven to be almost magnetic to particular races and ethnicities. Here in El Paso, with a population of 81.4% Latinos, there is a cause for concern. According to the CDC, Hispanics's risk for COVID-19 comes with staggering upward trends. The infection rate for this population is well over that of its caucasian counterparts. Our minority group is 1.3 times more likely to become infected by COVID-19.

Additionally, the likelihood of hospitalization is 3.1 times higher, and chance of succumbing to the virus rests at 2.3 times more likely.

There are a variety of reasons why many remain reluctant to offer their arms to the needle; these can range from the fear of the unknown, concern over the rush to mass produce a vaccine, and the rare risk of death should your body reject the foreign substance. Though hesitancy is understandable, it is becoming even more important to get vaccinated if given the opportunity.

The term "COVID fatigue" has been coined for individuals seeking to get back to a "pre-pandemic" state. If this is ever to be achieved, a larger percentage of the population must progress towards becoming fully vaccinated.

The possibility for lessening state restrictions and giving rise to nodes of normalcy should be another driving force for individuals to consider. The rise of new and more infectious variants of COVID-19, like the California variant that makes up 50% of cases in 44 of the state's counties, bring about an even greater cause for concern. For a city that was in recent months known as the epicenter of Texas and the United States, we have clawed our way out from under this shadow; now we must continue to make strides.

One must acknowledge there could be concerns regarding the validity and rush for the mass production of COVID-19 vaccines. Some may question not only the effectiveness, but the ramifications yet to be discovered when it comes to long term health impairments.

Dr. Jaddish Khubchandani, a professor of public health at New Mexico State University, recently

"The hesitancy of many individuals to get vaccinated, the relaxing of restrictions, and the notion of "COVID fatigue" is brewing the perfect storm for a resurgence"

-Lennon Romo

addressed this skepticism when he conducted research about the hesitancy among Americans to get vaccinated.

In an interview with KVIA, he is quoted as saying he "hopes this study will make the government and public authorities find better ways to communicate with these populations (Latinos)...the vaccine work has been going on for decades. It didn't just happen over nine months. Yes, the vaccine was made in nine months but the prior research has taken decades and decades."

For those still pondering whether or not to and sign up for any opportunity to receive a vaccine, I say this: I was also scared of how taking the vaccine would affect my health. I remain concerned about what lasting impacts this might turn out to have in the long run. In the end, however, my fear of contracting the virus itself outweighed those concerns.

For your consideration, these are the symptoms I experienced with each respective dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine.

For the first dose, the side effect which I experienced was intense soreness of my arm. A burning sensation had begun to radiate at the injection site about 5 hours after receiving the vaccine. All through the night, I was unable to move without inflicting a sharp stinging pain, and my arm remained fully sore and stiff the next day. However, the pain began to subside two days later, and by the fourth day I was fully recovered.

With my second dose, I ended up having multiple side-effects. The sharp pain returned, but this time I experienced intense chills and had a temperature that rose to 99.5 Fahrenheit. Muscle pain spread throughout my body and lingered for three days after getting the vaccine but diminished almost entirely after that.

I share this information with the UTEP community as it is important to acknowledge the concern and

unspoken fears that are tied to being vaccinated. My minor discomforts pale in comparison to that of individuals who have experienced and/or succumbed to the disease.

To date, I have not experienced any long term effects from either dose of the vaccine. I feel that it is worth it cause for other El Pasoans to schedule their appointments and become fully vaccinated. I experienced side effects, nonetheless they were still temporary.

I believe college students should make every effort to increase the numbers of vaccinated people within Texas.

Across the city of El Paso vaccination sites and doses are being offered to our community, including at our very own UTEP campus. As of March 29, Texas had opened COVID-19 vaccine appointments to everyone 16 and older.

Imelda Garcia from the Texas Department of State and Health Services said, "We are closing in on 10 million doses administered in Texas, and we want to keep up the momentum as the vaccine supply increases."

The fact of the matter is COVID-19 isn't going away soon. People tend to think life will magically return to normal one day, perhaps it's wishful thinking. The hesitancy of many individuals to get vaccinated, the relaxing of restrictions, and the notion of "COVID fatigue" is brewing the perfect storm for a resurgence.

We have the opportunity to make inroads in the right direction. We may feel that we have given up too much already, but our experiences are not fully lost yet. We have the chance to make strides in the direction of progress versus stagnation. Now all that remains to be seen is what we chose to do for ourselves and the generations far beyond us.

Guest writer Lennon Romo may be reached at prospector@utep.edu

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UTEP administers over 12k COVID-19 vaccines

Julian Herrera

The Prospector

As UTEP prepares to begin welcoming students back to in-person learning, the university's vaccination clinic opened itself to a greater portion of the students and faculty population administering, 12,225 doses as of March 25.

After priority groups within the university received the vaccine, including student nurses, medical professionals and at-risk faculty and staff, UTEP opened its vaccine clinic to a greater portion of the student and faculty population on April 2. This includes students living in campus housing, student athletes, and student employees.

"The University receives approximately 1,000 to 1,200 first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine each week," report UTEP officials.

Each day the clinic is in operation, an average of 1,000 vaccines are administered. Still, some Miners have reported a fluctuating wait time at the Interdisciplinary Research Building, where the clinic operates.

"My appointment was at 11 a.m. I got there at 10:50, then there was an outside line where we waited

for a bit," said Corrine Boudreaux, a lecturer in the communication department at UTEP, who described her vaccine appointment experience at the university. "I actually got the shot at about 30 mins after I first arrived."

Despite the delay, Boudreaux said she had an overall pleasant experience.

"No discomfort, it was a relatively unpainful shot," Boudreaux said. "The registration was easy, and once I was in the eligible group, I got in within a few days after registering. It seems they had everything organized."

As the university's clinic turns to serving the general public outside of the immediate student population, such as students and staff household members, concerns were raised as to how UTEP is choosing to prioritize who will receive a vaccine.

"UTEP adheres to the guidelines set by the Texas Department of State Health Services," UTEP officials said. "In the coming weeks, we will provide opportunities for all students to be vaccinated."

According to a news release sent by the office of the president, UTEP will give priority for vaccination

to current students, faculty and staff, but if additional vaccines are available, they will be offered to household members.

Jaleen Avila, a graduate MPH student and program coordinator at UTEP, expressed her satisfaction and gratitude towards the professionals working in the university's vaccine clinic.

"I had a great experience receiving the COVID-19 vaccine at UTEP. I was surprised by how organized and efficient the process was, from registering for the appointment to receiving the vaccine," Avila said.

Despite the high number of people waiting in line to be vaccinated, Avila said all safety protocols were still followed, and unlike Boudreaux, she only waited 10 to 15 minutes in line.

"It was comforting to know someone with extensive experience from within our community was providing the vaccine," Avila said.

"One area where I believe the program is especially efficient is that your second vaccination is scheduled as you are receiving your first dose. This really does help to ensure that you receive your final dose on time so that you may have the full protection of the vaccine against

COVID-19."

The last opportunity to receive the first dose of the vaccine at UTEP is the week of April 19.

To get a vaccine at UTEP one must register at utep.edu/vaccineregistration, despite having previously completed the vaccination questionnaire and consent at vaccinequestionnaire.utep.edu.

Those who have already received a vaccine somewhere else, can email covid19vaccination@utep.edu to ensure appointments are given to those who needs them.

According to UTEP's COVID-19 dashboard, April 5-11, the university reported 5 proactive testing positive cases and 5 self-reported positive cases, with 4 individuals who reported to have been on campus in the 14 days prior to diagnosis.

UTEP officials are set to disseminate information on the availability of vaccines and the process of scheduling an appointment as more information becomes available.

Julian Herrera may be reached at prospector@utep.edu.

Marijuana from cover page

Pasoans will be bringing in more marijuana use and activity because there are limitations in New Mexico when it comes to purchasing marijuana from a dispensary.

"Santa Teresa is the closest marijuana medical dispensary that exists and it's only for New Mexico residents and of course people who have special permission from their medical doctors (MDs)," Gonzalez-Stuart said.

Accessing marijuana in New Mexico can be a challenge for El Pasoans, but Gonzalez-Stuart foresees a psychological impact more than anything.

"The impact, more than physical and economical, is going to be psychological," Gonzalez-Stuart said. "The U.S. is lagging behind because for so many years it's been so difficult to do research here."

In order to conduct research on marijuana, especially in collegiate settings, universities must outsource from other universities growing marijuana experimentally, Gonzalez-Stuart said.

Researchers must also go through the National Institute of Drug Abuse and the International Development Association to be granted permission to work with marijuana samples.

"Again, people will find themselves saying, 'if New Mexico has done this, if New Mexico has a better distribution of dispensaries, why not Texas,'" Gonzalez-Stuart said.

Dispensaries must have special permission from the Food and Drug Administration and the Drug Enforcement Administration to ensure that marijuana products are not laced with harmful products.

"If people don't get their marijuana through a controlled dispensary, they face the risk of purchasing products laced with pesticides and things that aren't even found in marijuana," Gonzalez-Stuart said.

For Gonzalez-Stuart, the solution to safely consume marijuana in states that have yet to legalize its recreational use is simple: educating people.

"We need to educate the physicians and the pharmacists and the nurses because here in the United States, most are not," Gonzalez-Stuart said.

According to Gonzalez-Stuart, by educating people, including those who consume and prescribe marijuana, quality control is much more possible.

"For example, in California, they do have a license and they are overseen by the state and federal authorities," Gonzalez-Stuart said. "The same thing can happen here in Texas. It would be good for people because then they know that the marijuana, they're purchasing is the true thing."

Nicole Lopez may be reached at theprospector@utep.edu or [@nicolelopez](https://twitter.com/nicolelopez) on Twitter.

SELC promotes self-care for students and faculty

Victoria Rivas

The Prospector

UTEP's Student Engagement and Leadership Center (SELC) hosted Mental Health Awareness on April 14, an event focused on providing tips and activities for students or faculty struggling with mental health.

The discussion is SELC's last Spring presentation as part of its "This Matters" program, which consisted of discussions surrounding women in activism, coping with grief, and mental health awareness. The program aims at providing a safe and educational space for participants to foster an atmosphere of education and awareness on campus.

The event was in collaboration with UTEP's Healthy Mind, Healthy Life, a program dedicated to understanding mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) among El Paso men and women 18 and older.

Natalie Arredondo, Healthy Mind, Healthy Life project coordinator, encouraged individuals to view mental health as a continuum.

"When we move up the continuum, we thrive, we feel content and fulfilled with our lives. When we move down the continuum, we may begin to feel lost, hopeless and begin to question our self-worth," Arredondo said. "They can lead to depression and anxiety."

Mood, personality, psychotic, and eating disorders are all considered

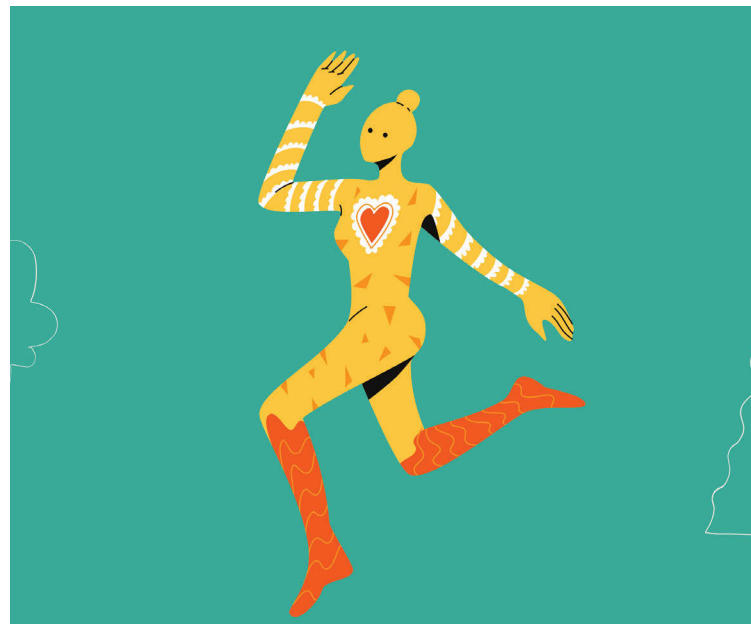


Photo illustration by Hugo Hinojosa/ The Prospector via Canva

UTEP's SELC hosted a Mental Health Awareness event on April 14, 2021. The event focused on helping students and faculty struggling with mental health.

mental health disorders but according to Arredondo, depression and anxiety are the most common worldwide.

Arredondo explained it is essential for individuals to ask for help, whether it means talking to a friend or seeking therapy.

"Now, I'm not saying that we are all perfect and that we should all keep going up. There is going to be those days where it is just hard. You just have too much work to do, you have too much homework to do, or

you have a bunch of deadlines, or your boss is giving you extra work," Arredondo said. "It's ok, that is why you need to practice that self-care."

Not practicing self-care can affect your physical energy, focus, lead to burnout, and turn into an emotional state of stress.

"Don't depend on others to practice self-care," Arredondo said. "It's ok to have that time alone, so you can recharge and practice your own self-care."

Although it is highly recommended to practice breathing exercises, participants mentioned taking their pets for a walk, reading a book, daily meditation, exercising, going to church, sleeping, and dancing to release daily stress.

"Tutoring my friends for math makes me feel good because I can help them," Viviana Morales, a UTEP student, said.

According to Arredondo, stigma is negative attitudes, stereotypes, language, and behaviors towards people with a mental health condition, causing isolation, rejection, bullying, and discrimination.

Arredondo explained stigma is caused by the lack of knowledge and understanding about mental health illnesses and encouraged participants to avoid using mental health conditions as adjectives.

"You are never too young to learn about mental health," Arredondo said. "Everyone has mental health. Our mental health is just as important as our physical health, and it is an essential component of your overall health."

Healthy Mind, Healthy Life can be reached at healthymind@utep.edu. The program provides mental health screenings, mental health education, HIV and Hepatitis C testing, and linkage to care for all UTEP students.

Victoria Rivas may be reached at prospector@utep.edu or [@VicRivas_18](https://twitter.com/VicRivas_18) on Twitter.

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SGA hosts first meeting with Texas Legislators

Julian Herrera
The Prospector

UTEP Student Government Association (SGA) held its first meeting with Texas Legislators to discuss the Texas Legislative Session on April 14.

The panel hosted Texas Senate Representative, César Blanco, and Texas House Speaker Pro Tempore Joe Moody, to educate and inform the UTEP student body of current legislative action being debated during the Texas Legislative session. Both representatives were actively on the floor debating significant and controversial bills, taking time between debates to speak with members of SGA.

“This is the place where politics begins, when you’re in college, with our eyes opening and realizing some of the disparities and things that are unfair in life or in our system,” Blanco said. “I’m really proud that you all have taken that step to run for something and to improve the quality of life for students at UTEP?”

Blanco is appointed to various committees, including Veteran Affairs, transportation, higher education, and community health and human services. Currently, COVID-19 recovery concerns are taking the priority.

“My priorities for this session have really been centered around COVID-19 relief and recovery,” Blanco said. “On higher education, that committee has allowed me to continue to fight for keeping top college within reach for working families and making sure that we’re advancing policies that benefit students.”



Photo courtesy of UTEP SGA

UTEP Student Government Association (SGA) holds its first meeting with Texas Legislators to discuss the Texas Legislative Session, Wednesday, April 14, 2021.

Other higher education bills Blanco filed include one he authored to ensure college students who dropped classes during the pandemic are not penalized to reduce the impact on their GPA, which the Senate passed.

Blanco addressed student concerns regarding the lack of access to ADA parking, filing a bill to exempt disabled college students and staff from any kind of parking fees.

Blanco then spoke about the implications of recent bills such as SB7, a recent bill relating to election integrity and security.

“The Senate passed SB7, which is really just a voter suppression bill that’s going to disenfranchise voters,” Blanco said. “It’s going to open up the risk to voter intimidation and suppress turnout. Quite frankly, there is no election security problem in the state of Texas. We should be making it easier to vote, not harder.”

Moody then began by expressing his pride in the UTEP student body and SGA for remaining active in the community and in-touch with current legislative processes.

“They (SGA) care, they want to be engaged, they want to be involved, so

I certainly appreciate the opportunity to be here with you,” Moddy said.

Legislation Sessions are important, according to Moody, because institutions such as UTEP are funded through the state. Sessions also determine what types of grants, curriculum, training, and other factors are available to the university, as well as funding for other external and community things such as public education, healthcare, and the state park system.

On the topic of higher education, Moody expressed a cautious optimism, as the federal funds UTEP

received as COVID-19 relief did not pass through the state and instead went directly to the institution, which ensured the maximum amount of support.

The sessions also pertain to the El Paso community, as Moody addressed a current proposition he referred to as “permit-less carry,” which would allow individuals to carry a weapon without having to obtain a permit, the first time such proposition will be debated on the House floor.

“After what we experienced on August 3, 2019, I think it’s offensive,” Moody said. “We have done nothing to address the issue of people who shouldn’t have weapons in their possession... one of the first bills we plan to take up on Apr. 15 is that bill, and we plan to make sure El Paso is well remembered in that conversation.”

Moody promoted public engagement with all bills to be debated by Congress, stating anyone can participate and voice their concerns to their representatives, whether it be in-person, by mail, or virtually.

“Stay engaged, stay involved,” Moody said.

A full recording of Wednesday’s conversation may be found through SGA’s Facebook page.

Julian Herrera may be reached at prospector@utep.edu.

APRIL IS SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH 2021

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Hate Crime from cover page are characterized by the classic Bhutanese design.

Many UTEP’s Asian professors agree that both Asian and Hispanic communities share many similar values and cultures.

“For example, both Asian and Hispanic people appreciate the value and importance of family relationships and cherish the close connections across different generations in a family,” Hsu said. “Thus, as an Asian, I feel connected and welcomed in a Hispanic community.”

Despite hosting its Bhutan Days celebration earlier in April, UTEP President Heather Wilson has yet to release a statement regarding the recent anti-Asian violence in the country.

Xiao and Hsu believe the university could provide more resources to the Asian community to maintain an inclusive and diverse culture.

“With the increasing anti-Asian hate crimes in the U.S., UTEP may consider offering special support for Asian faculty, staff, and students. Asian people are normally shy for asking help, especially as a minority who can be extremely vulnerable,” Hsu said. “Particularly, I worry about our UTEP Asian students who might encounter hate crimes during this difficult time and might not know where or how to get help or support.”

According to UTEP, the Campus Advocacy, Resources and Education (CARE) office seeks to empower students who have been impacted by any crime by providing private advocacy, resources and supportive services. UTEP’s Counseling and Psychological Services encourages all those traumatized by ongoing news reports of violence toward others to call the Miners Talk Crisis Line at 915-747-0291.

“Today, they can devitalize Asians; tomorrow, all the minority will suffer if we don’t speak out for each other,” Xiao said. “Although we might not have anti-Asian events at UTEP, as an institute with strong impact to the whole city of El Paso, UTEP should lead and stand strongly against discrimination of any minority groups.”

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UTEP’s SGA townhall introduces 2021 executive candidates

Lhaxhang Cultural Center tour celebrates Bhutan Days

ENTERTAINMENT

APRIL 20, 2021

EDITOR EXODIS WARD, 747-5161

UTEP theater students advance to national festival

Katrina Villarreal
The Prospecter

Three UTEP students finished at the top at the Kennedy Center American College Region 6 Regional Theater Festival, which was held virtually February 19-28. Isabelle Rivera, Kalina Gallardo, and Sarah Curtis are all advancing to nationals in April.

Kennedy Center American College Region 6 Theater festival is a national organization that exists to celebrate the educational and creative process of university and college theatre. Through state, regional, and national festivals, participants celebrate the creative process, see one another's work, and share experiences and insights within the community of theater artists. The festival honors excellence of overall production and offers student artists individual recognition through awards and scholarships in playwriting, acting, criticism, directing, and design.

Isabelle Rivera, a senior musical theatre major, is set to graduate this semester. Rivera's goals for the future include moving out of El Paso during the summer months.

Rivera won several awards at this year's Regional Theatre Festival, including excellence in arts administration/ASPIRE Initiative, excellence in directing a 10-Minute Play award, and dedication to representation equity and diversity (RED) initiatives award.

"I had to come up with my own theatre company and prepare a presentation for the ASPIRE Initiative. It was a lot of hard work and it took me so long to finish," Rivera said. "Something I decided to do that the selectors really resonated with was that I played music during my presentation and no one else did that."

Through the ASPIRE initiative, Rivera will participate in a fellowship with leaders around the country that hold different positions on the administrative side of theatre. This also allows her to meet with different speakers for the next two months.



(From left to right) UTEP students Kalina Gallardo, Isabelle Rivera and Sarah Curtis win their competition at the recent regional Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival. They will be participating at the finals on April 2021.

"There are some pretty important people we get to meet, and I am super excited about that," Rivera said.

For the Excellence in Directing a 10-Minute Play award, Rivera was paired with fellow award winner Kalina Gallardo, where she directed her play *Into the Mystic*.

"I love working with Kalina so much, she is so talented and such an amazing writer. I was so lucky to be able to direct *Into the Mystic*," Rivera said.

Rivera explains that the playwright, actors, and herself only had about three days to prepare, which required them to put a lot of their time aside to rehearse.

Lastly, Rivera won the RED Dedication award for her hard work, where she helped some directors in charge of RED spread the word about events they will be holding and assisted them whenever they needed.

Kalina Gallardo is a sophomore creative writing major with a minor in Theatre.

In the future, Gallardo says she will continue writing. She explained that she admires multi-genre writers; when writing she is inclined to playwriting, poetry, essay, memoir, and more. She imagines her future involving an array of praxis which

includes mutual aid, community organizing, activism and making art.

"As a brown, femme person, my entire existence is an act of resistance and that is reflected in my writing," Gallardo said.

Gallardo won the Jim Anderson Outlaw Playwright award. This award honors a playwright that is fearless and passionate, with a humor that defies the laws of the land.

"I didn't know there was an award as such," Gallardo said.

Gallardo explains that she wrote her play, *Into the Mystic*, in Georgina Escobar's playwriting two class at UTEP, where she and her peers were encouraged to submit their work to the festival. After incorporating some rewrite suggestion from her peers and Escobar, she decided to submit her play.

"Upon learning that my play had been accepted as a regional finalist, I felt affirmed in my creative practice and was thrilled to work with Angela Guerra who read for Maxine, Carolina Flores who read for Juana, and Isabelle Rivera the director, all UTEP students," Gallardo said. "It's them who brought the play to life with their energy and commitment to the characters."

Gallardo explains her play, *Into the Mystic*, is a short glimpse of a supernatural reunion between a grandma and her granddaughter. They each need something from one another in order to move on, but neither of them will budge.

"This play started as a poem in which I try to remember my own Grandmother who transitioned beyond this realm about 10 years ago. I found that in trying to remember her, it was the artifacts she left behind that created a bridge of sorts," Gallardo said. "Allowing me to see and feel her, a process that inspired the use of artifacts in *Into the Mystic*."

With the National Festival coming up Gallardo is trying not to have any expectations.

"I know the work resonates with people and I am glad to participate in another round of the creative process from casting to rehearsals, to performance," Gallardo said. "I'm along for the ride and am grateful to my ancestors who have helped along the way."

Sarah Curtis is a senior theatre art major. Her goal is to get into an MFA program for directing and become a theatre professor in the long run.

"I love how theatre and education come together in that profession," Curtis said. "It will give me the opportunity to teach and be able to explore any professional theatre goals for the future."

Curtis was awarded the Kennedy Center Student Directing Initiative Region 6 Fellowship, where she prepared a director's prompt book (plan of production) from a list of selected plays.

Curtis explained that her prompt book included research, concept statements, script analysis, blocking plans, and videos that detail her hopes for the production and emotional response for the play.

"At the festival I participated in round robin interviews and presentations of my book and directing philosophy," Curtis said. "It was daunting, but one of the best creative experiences I've ever been a part of."

Curtis directed a play called *Old Flame* by Mira Gibson. The play is about a woman who runs into an ex-boyfriend at a grocery store. It's all about challenging cycles in peoples' lives and reevaluating the routines they're used to so that they can become the happiest versions of themselves. Curtis talked about this premise during interviews.

"We're all going to be reevaluating the situations we're in as things open back up," Curtis said. "This festival was an amazing way to get that started for me, both artistically and personally."

Curtis explained that there are guest artists set to work with her and the group of winners from each region, along with the mentors from the festival.

Although this year's finals will be virtual, Curtis is very excited.

"We'll be working together a couple of hours a day and learning from professionals in our field," Curtis said. "I'm so grateful for the opportunity to learn from and create with these artists!"

Nationals for the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival will take place virtually in mid-April 2021.

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Godzilla vs. Kong doesn't stand up to its predecessor

Sven Kline
The Prospecter

The infamous titans of Toho and Hollywood, *Godzilla* and *King Kong*, returned to the big screen April 1, clashing once again after the original predecessor film was released in 1962.

It has been seven years since *Godzilla* last appeared in theatres with "*Godzilla*" (2014). Since its release, it has teased audience members with minor hints of future rivals and allies to arrive to the series, most notably *King Kong*.

The oversized gorilla kaiju, *King Kong*, appeared at the end credits of "*Godzilla*" (2014), foreshadowing "*Kong: Skull Island*," released in 2017. A confrontational film starring the two giants was just on the horizon, but not before a second *Godzilla* entry, with the atomic lizard facing off against the three-headed dragon, *King Ghidorah*, in "*Godzilla: King of the Monsters*" in 2019.

Released during a global pandemic, "*Godzilla vs. Kong*" is playing not only in theaters. It is available to stream on HBO Max for thirty days after release, which begs the question: "Is it worth the watch?"

This review will contain spoilers:

Die-hard fans of the original *Godzilla* series, and anyone who roots for the atomic lizard should know that in the original 1962 film "*King Kong vs. Godzilla*," *Godzilla* is not the victor. This can lead viewers to believe *Kong* will be the victor, especially because all the trailers suggest that *Godzilla* will be the antagonist of the film.

The Good

The action sequences are phenomenal overall, I am usually an advocate for practical effects, but the editing crew did a splendid job with the CGI. The monsters look fluid and detailed to a point, but this can be overlooked as the shots the monsters are seen in are short, unlike the other films that had longer shots of the

monsters.

Other aspects that are done incredibly well, such as the plot and plot twist. *Mechagodzilla* was featured in this film. In my eyes, a high point was that *Mechagodzilla* was engineered using a remnant skull of *Ghidorah*. It held the end credit scene from "*Godzilla: King of the Monsters*," making this a truly fascinating in narrative.

That is where the positives end.

The Bad

Looking back at the plot, it's solid, but there are three subplots occurring at the same time. They could have gotten away with the one subplot surrounding Millie Bobbie Brown's character (not her character per se, but the characters she is accompanied by.) She is only there for comedic relief.

One character the series has followed since the 2014 film was Dr. Serizawa, the Monarch scientist who had given insight to the

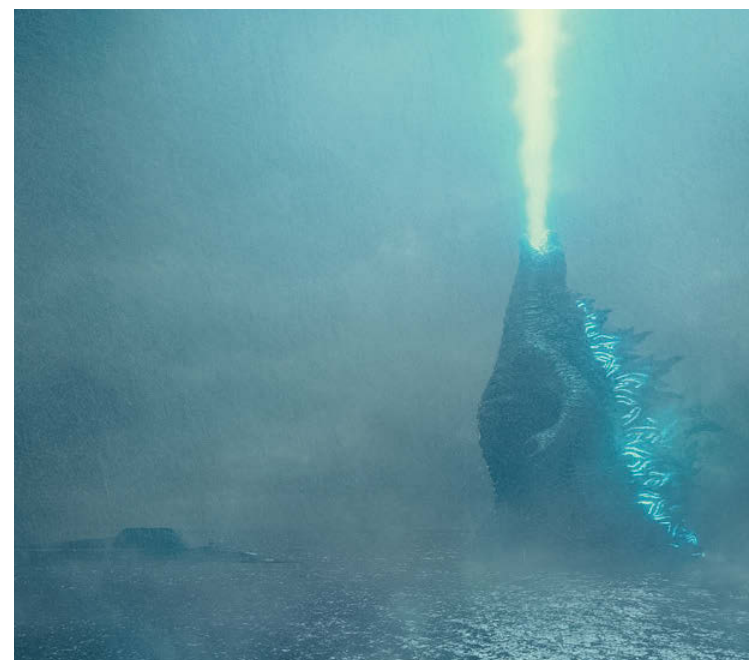


Photo courtesy of AntMan3001 via CC BY-SA 2.0
Godzilla and *King Kong* return to the big screen on April 1, 2021. *Godzilla vs. King Kong* is now available in theaters.

See *Godzilla* page 6

Trans Day of Visibility hosted virtually

Julian Herrera
The Prospector

A UTEP Student Engagement and Leadership Center member hosted an inclusive and holistic virtual discussion in celebration of International Transgender Day of Visibility.

Dominique Huerta, inclusion and advocacy intern for SELC, hosted a virtual discussion that sought to amplify the voices and experiences of transgender individuals on the eve of International Transgender Day of Visibility. Trans Day of Visibility is an annual event that occurs March 31 and is dedicated to celebrating the lives of trans people, raising awareness of discrimination they face worldwide, and acknowledging their contributions to society.

The audience was engaged and active throughout the discussion, as the event featured two transgender guest speakers that held an open discussion with the audience about life as a trans individual.

“This is a brave and safe space for everyone, we want you to feel comfortable as well as brave enough to speak up,” Huerta said. She encouraged everyone on the meeting to include their personal pronouns in their names on screen, so everyone was respected and addressed properly.

Andi Rose Tiscareno, a senior majoring in English and American literature, was the first to speak. A member of the Alpha Sigma Alpha Panhellenic sorority and on the board of directors of the Borderland Rainbow Center, Tiscareno stated that the “visibility” of trans people is of utmost importance.

Tiscareno has been openly transgender for over five years.

“I try to use my visibility as essentially an opportunity to educate,” Tiscareno said. “Whenever I meet someone who either finds out that I’m trans or the opportunity comes up to identify myself as trans, I always try to be open to questions and to whatever curiosity people have.”

Tiscareno explained that, while she is comfortable discussing most topics related to her identity, she does not represent all trans people, and it is important to note that not every trans or non-binary individual may feel the same level of comfort discussing those topics, so it is important to establish consent before asking about personal subjects.

“Trying to discover your gender identity after having grown up in another identity is different and scary. It is a big change and it is not



Illustration by Hugo Hinojosa/ The Prospector via Canva

Transgender Day of Visibility, March 31, celebrates unity and life among transgender people.

necessarily something you can get away from,” Tiscareno said. “You have individuals who don’t transition until later in life, but it is still a wonderful moment to be who you really are.”

Tiscareno has just recently joined the Borderland Rainbow Center, a huge honor for her because of the support the center provided her over the course of her journey and transition.

“The more visible you are, the more ‘you’ you are, and the more impact on the world, society (there is.) Just show that we are here and human,” Tiscareno said.

The second speaker introduced herself as Isa. A graduate student attending the University of Texas at San Antonio and secretary for the Trans Youth Coalition in El Paso, Isa spoke about the various ways that transgender individuals continue to fight against the harmful narratives and legislation imposed against them and how the community can provide support.

“People in El Paso recognize that we need to support trans people and I think the TYC has helped me to see that. It makes me feel better as a trans person, seeing that people actually want to support us,” Isa said. Isa averted reading about the political landscape surrounding transgender rights bills and the societal rejections of the LGBT community for some time due to the emotional and psychological stress it brought on them, but they felt honored to take advantage of this event as an opportunity to discuss those topics that have weighed on their mind.

According to Isa, there were roughly 79 bills regarding transgender rights that were debated in 2020, but the number

has increased to 82 in 2021, with the most recent in Arkansas seeking to remove healthcare availability for transgender individuals.

“Limiting our access to trans healthcare has been something I’ve dealt with. I should be able to just look up what our insurance covers and find a doctor, but it’s not like that,” Isa said.

The rights of transgender individuals have been contested in court since the 1960s, with many legislators still proposing bills today that openly discriminate against them. Proposed laws range from barring trans people from participating in sports teams that align with their gender-identity to laws that would allow coaches to “inspect” the genitalia of prospective athletes. Many of the narratives and arguments for these legislative proposals stem from ignorance about the research surrounding transgender studies and the LGBT+ community as a whole.

Isa and Tiscareno agreed that educating others is not the responsibility or obligation of trans people, but for those that choose to educate voluntarily, it is important and helpful for themselves and the community.

Isa said that the Trans Day of Visibility is important to the community as a celebration of unity and life, in contrast to previously only recognizing the Trans Day of Remembrance. They initially believed their identity as a trans individual to be something they did not need to discuss with anyone, but the support of the TYC gave them both the resources and the inspiration to be visible and open about their identity.

“TYC holds as many fundraisers as possible, we want to raise as much

money as possible all so that we can put it towards giving free transitional products to youth that don’t have access,

either due to a financial problem, they are not supported, or they don’t even know where to look,” Isa said.

While it is reported that the trans community makes up less than one percent of the U.S. population, Isa believes that number seems unreasonably low, and could possibly be contributed to only a small number of individuals actually being comfortable enough to identify themselves as trans. Isa says that they would love to see a world where everyone feels safe and comfortable enough to simply say they are trans and not feel overwhelmed by the obstacles of being made to feel strange by societal pressure.

Isa stated that one of the best ways to support the LGBT community and combat the oppressive bills without delegitimizing the experiences of transgender people is to listen and treat the bill as a threat to the rights of everyone. Being empathetic and openly discussing trans rights and topics will help combat the stigma and raise awareness to many who may otherwise not even realize the scope of discriminatory and derogatory acts trying to pass. Tiscareno said that treating the topics as normal will help normalize them and integrate the discussions into the social conscience.

“Trans day of visibility is a time where I can actively see support, but we should be visible every single day of the year. You don’t have to be an advocate to be an ally,” Tiscareno said.

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Godzilla from page 5

understandings of why and what the titans were doing. Serizawa was removed from the narrative toward the middle of “King of the Monsters.” In “Godzilla vs. Kong,” we are introduced to another Serizawa character. Where did he come from? Was he the original Serizawa’s son or a relative? The film never explained who he was, leaving questions unanswered. It felt like a cash grab for fans to have a returning character.

One of the best plot points was the return of Ghidorah through Mechagodzilla, but it was not really focused. In one scene, the cerebral link between Serizawa and the mechanism are broken, killing him in the process. It is never added upon further, but we get a fight scene between the three titans before the film ends.

Conclusion

As a fan of Godzilla, there is a lot to address in this film, if not the series, thus far. First off, the terrible acting and consistent monologuing is noticeable. It is an action film, sure, but this poor quality of acting reaches the monstrous titans. We see Godzilla make active expressions of emotion as though he could actually communicate, where in past films, we see him displaying only animalistic tendencies such as having territorial routes, and even displaying intimidation techniques. The same goes for Kong. It does not make sense why they would choose to show them communicating in such personified ways.

In the 2014 film, the added human narrative complimented the film. It made the movie about more than just giant monsters fighting. This time around, however, the characters are very one-dimensional. The film would have benefitted from less human screen-time.

Despite that, I would recommend going to theaters to watch this film. It is certainly a film worth enjoying because of its amazing action and cool plot twists. The film has problems, yes, but it’s definitely a fine way of enjoying an afternoon at the theater or evening at home.

This film compared to its predecessors has a solid 3.8 out of 5 stars in my rating. The 2014 film set a high expectation bar that “Godzilla vs. Kong” did not meet.

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Music on the Plaza kicks off with jazz performances

Sven Kline
The Prospector

UTEP’s department of music debuted its first Music on the Plaza concert, an event free to attend the heart of UTEP’s creative center of art, Fox Fine Arts Plaza on April 9.

The event, which will take place every Friday in April, at 12 p.m., featured the UTEP Jazz Ensemble, led by Kenny Capshaw, the director of Jazz Bands and was hosted by the Student Engagement and Leadership Center (SELC) and Dean of Students.

Attendees enjoyed food and activities while strolling around during the event to the jaunty jazz rhythms presented by their very own local UTEP music students and artists.

Future Music on the Plaza will feature different UTEP musical

groups including the Percussion Ensemble on April 19, the Symphonic Band on April 23, and the Wind Symphony on the 30, giving a fresh sound at each event.

Friday’s performance was a show of talent and fortitude as the Jazz Ensemble, as students like Johnathon Melendez gave an exceptional performance on trumpet and Javier Velasquez on piano.

Jaunty and uplifting, the tunes performed at the show bolstered the essence of newly arrived spring with even cheerful laughs between switching conductors, as well as a special surprise guest, Paydirt Pete, who wandered into the plaza during the performances.

Other well-known groups around UTEP, who setup stands for attendees to peruse, included the National Honor Society in

International Psychology, the UTEP Bookstore, the Institute of Cardiology El Paso, and SELC among several others.

The Music on the Plaza will continue to run throughout the month of April on Fridays. Special event parking for attendees is located on the top floor of the Sun Bowl Parking garage.

Attendees are required to abide by UTEP’s COVID-19 regulations, which include wearing a mask and social distancing.

A full list of UTEP’s upcoming events may be found at <https://minetracker.utep.edu/events>.

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Photograph by Alberto Silva/ The Prospector

Joshua Cebollero plays the trumpet with the UTEP Jazz band UTEP at the Music On The Plaza on March 9th 2021 at the UTEP Fox Fine Arts center.

SPORTS

APRIL 20, 2021

EDITOR MICHAEL CUVIELLO, 747-5161

UTEP welcomes Joe Golding as new basketball coach

Michael CuvIELLO

The Prospector

With great fanfare, Joe Golding was introduced as the Miners 20th coach in its history by Athletic Director Jim Senter and UTEP President Heather Wilson, April 14 at a news conference at the Don Haskins Center.

"We were very pleased that he wanted this job as much as we wanted him and we could put it all together," said Senter. "He's a high energy guy and he's going to bring energy to this arena and our fanbase."

"We wanted someone that is a man of character, a man of integrity that could run a good program," Wilson said. "I think we found that coach. He has shown himself with a sticktoitiveness to build a program at Abilene Christian and who fits in El Paso and UTEP's culture of care."

Golding walked to the podium and gave a resounding "go miners" along with a picks up.

"This place has history, this place has tradition, this place knows how to win and it's ready to win," said Golding. "I believe every institution and every program can be built to win a different way. I didn't come to UTEP to spend 10 years in building this program. This program has already been built. My job at UTEP is to win in year one."

Abilene Christian (ACU) was built into one of the best defenses in the NCAA. Still, Golding said he would not necessarily run the same system but defense would be essential to



Photograph by Michael CuvIELLO/ The Prospector

New UTEP Head Coach Joe Golding is introduced by Athletic Director Jim Senter and UTEP President Heather Wilson as the 20th coach in Miner history, April 14, 2021.

whatever he decides to run at UTEP. In the NCAA tournament, ACU forced Texas into 22 turnovers in its upset win.

"We want to win and we'll run whatever system we need to run to win basketball games," said Golding.

"We found a niche for us that worked at Abilene Christian. We recruited to that model and we played to that model, but UTEP is a different deal. We are going to recruit the best players and then we'll figure

out what they do best on both sides of the floor. At the end of the day, the main objective is to win and win the right way. We're not in bed with anything in terms of how we are going to do offense and how we are going to do defense."

Golding spoke about how he looked up to UTEP's basketball history as a native of West Texas.

"Growing up in Midland, I'm a West Texas boy; in this process, I was thrilled when I saw the 915 area code

popping up," said Golding. "I felt like I was back at home. I was born and raised in West Texas. This is home to me. This fit is really good."

"In elementary and junior high, I grew up when coach Haskins was coaching the Miners. I knew what he was about. I watched Glory Road a hundred times. I got my picture taken today in front of the national championship trophy, I got goosebumps and I almost cried."

Stressing that he was going to

hit the ground running, Golding spoke about talking with the current players on the team on day one to see where his team is at and who wanted to be a part of it.

"The first thing I'm going to do is these guys sitting right here; they are the most important thing right now," said Golding. "From that point moving forward, we are going to recruit. This is a different model than Abilene Christian. We are going to use every resource we have out there to recruit the best players to El Paso and this university."

With UTEP fans starved for a return to glory, Golding's energy and enthusiasm compounded with his former team's recent trip to the NCAA tournament have Miners fans excited. He already has more tournament wins than UTEP has had in the last 27 seasons, with one. The question is, will Golding be able to build a program fast enough to please a rabid fanbase?

Overall, Golding says and does all the right things, even a scheduled meet and greet with fans the morning after the news conference at Lucy's Café to drive season ticket sales. From day one, Golding comes off as much more fan-friendly than previous head coach Rodney Terry. But at the end of the day, his product on the court will be what endears him to the UTEP faithful.

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Miners swept by Mean Green over weekend

Heriberto Perez, Michael CuvIELLO

The Prospector

The UTEP softball team (8-20, 3-9) lost all four games over the weekend against the North Texas Mean Green (24-9, 6-2), scoring only six runs in four games while giving up 31 to its opponent.

Game one Friday, April 16, ended up 9-1 for the Mean Green, beating the Miners on fifth-year infielder Bryanna Molina's senior night. Sophomore pitcher Isabella Kelly opened Friday's game for the Miners with a scoreless first half-inning where she had two called strikeouts.

Senior second baseman Ilena Santos made an RBI double to tie the game in the second inning of the game, but in the third inning, North Texas retook the lead off a solo home run by Tuesday DerMargosian. After that, North Texas came to life offensively in the top half of the fifth inning, scoring seven runs off three home runs, two doubles and eight total hits.

A pair of games were played Saturday, April 17, with the Miners losing both by scores of 4-1 and 11-2, respectively, at Helen of Troy Field. Once again, struggling with its pitching, the Miners allowed 25 hits over both contests. UTEP was anemic on offense, with only eight hits and three runs total in both games.

In-game one, senior pitcher Zaylie Calderon recorder four strikeouts and tossed 4.2 innings in her start. Tuesday, DerMargosian once again led off the Mean Green at the fifth inning, scoring a solo homer to the

left-center field. Following up the inning, UTEP had back-to-back singles by freshman right fielder Lexi Morales and Santos. Over the last two innings of the game, UTEP had Morales as its only baserunner who recorded her second single of the day for her third multi-hit game of her career.

Game two Saturday finished 11-2 for North Texas, as the Mean Green had a 14-hit performance and scored in each of the first three innings right before the team had a six-run, six-hit fourth inning. For UTEP, it was redshirt sophomore Idalis Mendez who hit the Miner's only extra-base

hit with a double in the bottom of the fourth inning. Freshman outfielder Ashlynn Allen had UTEP's only runs with a single to the center-field bringing in sophomore catcher Karina Somoza and Mendez to score.

UTEP's rounded out the weekend series with a 7-2 against loss to North Texas Sunday at Helen of Troy Field before a sellout crowd.

Junior third baseman Kasey Flores hit her sixth home run of the season to drive in the Miners only two runs of the day, driving in Morales with a two-run dinger to center field.

See Softball page 8



Photograph by Michael CuvIELLO/ The Prospector

Junior UTEP third baseman Kasey Flores connects for her sixth home run of the season in a 7-2 loss to the Mean Green, April 18, 2021.

Miners track and field win eight gold medals

Heriberto Perez, Michael CuvIELLO

The Prospector

The UTEP track and field made its second trip of the season to San Antonio and competed at the Roadrunner Invitational April 15-17, claiming eight first-place finishes overall on the weekend.

On day one, Ruth Jerubet claimed her first career 5000m run victory and Karoline Daland won her second 3000m steeplechase of the season at UTSA Park West Athletics Complex Friday evening.

"Daland and Jerubet did a wonderful job today by opening the meet for the Miners with wins," distance coach, Paul Ereng, said. "The times were a little slower today due to the weather. It was a little windy but the most important thing is that these young ladies took command of their races from the gun till bell lap."

On day two, the women's and men's 4x100m relay teams both won gold medals, Maribel Caicedo (100m hurdles), Carolyne Chepkosgei (800m), Jevaughn Powell (200m), and Sean Bailey (400m). Eight other UTEP athletes claimed silver-medal finishes for the meet.

"Chepkosgei on the women's side, and Powell and Johnson on the men's side were the highlights for us today," UTEP Head Coach, Mika Laaksonen, said. "Wind ruined the distance events when it came to times, but we still competed hard in those events, which was great to see.

We also got a reasonable amount of personal bests from this meet which is always good at this point of the season. I wish there were more teams, since bit a 'stiffer' challenge would have brought more out of our best people."

The men's team composed of Shakeem Smith, Bailey, Chevannie Hanson, and Dennis Johnson won its first relay of the season and recorded a time of 40.54, beating out Incarnate Word finishing second with a time of 46.75.

The women's 4x100m relay team won its second race of the season, composed of Brume, Caicedo, Chinique Brown and Denae McFarlane with 46.32 time beating out Incarnate Word, finishing second at 46.73.

Other UTEP's track and field highlights of the meet were:

Aleks Hristov placing second with a mark of 54.51m (178-10) in the discus.

Bailey winning his second 400m dash of the season with a time of 48.14. Joshua Hill was runner-up at the 400m dash with a time of 48.24.

Powell placed first in the 200m dash, recording a time of 20.92. Josh Hanson finished third in the 200m dash, clocking in 21.08.

Smith claimed silver in the 400m hurdles, clocking in a 51.51.

Titus Cheruiyot competed in his first career 1500m run and placed

See Track page 8

Transfer portal has big impact on UTEP basketball

Michael Cuvillo

The Prospector

Since the season ended for both the UTEP men's and women's basketball teams, the university has combined 10 players who have entered the transfer portal.

For those not aware, the transfer portal was created by the NCAA in 2018 to simplify and bring uniformity to the process for athletes to be able to change schools. Before the formation of the transfer portal, each school had a complicated process where they had to ask the coach for permission to switch schools and if denied, they continued with appeals up the chain of the school and NCAA. Each transfer request was limited to one particular school, so each transfer possibility had to go through the entire process again.

Currently, a player informs the school of his intent to enter the transfer portal and is placed with the opportunity to change schools. Once a player enters the transfer portal, any university can recruit them for its team. The one major downside is that a school can reduce or end athletic aid to the player once the current academic term ends. If a player withdraws from the portal and wants to return to the university, it is up to the school if the athlete can return and regain scholarship and aid. The risk to many players is that they are giving up their scholarship for the possibility of getting one from another school but if no offers of interest come, the athlete could end up without a scholarship.

The UTEP men's team just had its sixth player enter the transfer portal, with third-team all-conference center Bryson Williams deciding he wants to play elsewhere. Williams started 56 straight games for the Miners in his two seasons and averaged 16.7 points and 7.3 rebounds a game. Williams is receiving interest from multiple Power Five schools, including Texas, USC, Texas A&M, Oklahoma and Texas Tech. On Twitter, Williams said, "Feels like I'm in high school again with this recruiting process."

On April 1, starting forward and junior Tydus Verhoeven announced his intent to depart the Miner program. After becoming a starter midway through the 2019-20 season, Verhoeven has been a staple in the lineup for the Miners. Verhoeven started all 24 games this season and increased his points per game to 4.9 along with 4.4 rebounds per game. Although limited offensively, Verhoeven was



File Photo by Michael Cuvillo/ The Prospector

Senior Bryson Williams becomes the sixth Miner to enter the transfer portal for the men's basketball team.

known as a stout defensive presence for the Miners during his time on the team. Previously transferring from Duquesne, this would be Verhoeven's third team if he leaves.

One day after new head coach Joe Golding was announced, sophomore Kristian Sjolund announced his entry into the transfer portal. Sjolund 6-8 forward transfer from Georgia Tech this past season enters the portal for the second time in a year. Last season Sjolund appeared in 24 games, averaging 4.9 points on 48% shooting. As the team's best three-point shooter, the Miners will sorely miss his 47% shooting from the arc on 66 attempts.

Junior Efe Odigie broke onto the UTEP scene with an outstanding freshman season that landed him on the Conference USA (C-USA) all-freshman team averaging a double-double on the season with 12.7 points and 10.1 rebounds per game. Odigie was the first UTEP player since the 81-82 season to average double figures in rebounding and scoring. Unfortunately, since his freshman season, Odigie has fallen out of the starting lineup and seen his minutes cut in half. Over the past two seasons, Odigie has averaged 5.7

points and 2.6 rebounds a game.

Also in the transfer portal are freshman guard Vuk Vukilic and little-used transfer guard Adam Hess. Vukilic as a freshman, appeared in 14 games for the Miners and was only able to score 15 points and dish out 16 assists on the season. Hess, a sharpshooting transfer out of Salt Lake City Community College, was only able to appear in seven games this season, scoring 17 points while shooting 30% from the floor.

Currently, the Miners have eight players on the roster from the season and there is still the possibility of more players entering the portal. Over the past two seasons, more than a dozen Miner players have entered the transfer portal.

At his introductory news conference April 14, Golding spoke about players entering the transfer portal.

"I think everyone knows the world we are living in with the transfer portal. College basketball changed two or three weeks ago," said Golding. "If players want to stay here and be Miners, we'll make it the best opportunity for them. If they do not want to be Miners, we will help them get to the opportunity they

want. From that point, we're going to recruit."

UTEP women's basketball was able to secure a second seed in the west division finishing 17-8 before falling to the eventual C-USA champion Middle Tennessee State in the conference semi-finals. Overall, the Miners had its best season since the 2015-16 season in which the team finished 29-5.

By midseason, head coach Kevin Baker had lost both Ariana Taylor and Tatyana Modawar to the transfer portal. Taylor had previously been a starter last season, averaging 6.6 points a game but appeared in no games this season. Modawar played in five games averaging 10 minutes and 4.6 points per game.

Since the end of the season, five more players have entered the transfer portal leaving three full-time starters from last season in sophomores Katia Gallegos and Avery Crouse, along with freshman Arina Elike. Junior Elina Arike also returns after starting 15 games last season. Two freshman Dagne Apiste and Brenda Fontana, also return for the Miners.

Sophomore guard Isis Lopes is among the most significant possible losses to the transfer portal. Averaging 25 minutes a game after becoming eligible as a transfer from Clemson, Lopes was UTEP's best outside shooter hitting on 37% of her shots from the arc. Lopes averaged 25 minutes and 9 points per game for the Miners this season.

After earning substantially more playing time for the Miners, senior Michelle Pruitt became a key contributor for the Miners averaging 9.3 points and 6.7 rebounds per game. Pruitt's inside presence leaves a massive hole on the roster.

UTEP's longest-tenured player, junior Sabine Lipe, who has been with the team since 2018, has been a steady presence off the bench for the Miners during her three years with the team. Known for her toughness and ability to draw charges, Lipe has averaged 4 points a game for her career with the Miners.

Sophomore Arina Khlopkova, who had a promising freshman season averaging 4 points a game, saw her minutes fall in half due to the promising play of freshmen and transfers entered the portal after only averaging eight minutes and two points per game this season.

Also leaving the Miners is backup point guard senior Tia Bradshaw, who averaged 11 minutes and 2.6 points per game this season.

Currently, the women's basketball

team has six scholarship players remaining on the roster and has announced two incoming players to this point.

Transfer guard Eliana Cabral is transferring from New Mexico Junior College, where she averaged 9.4 points a game. Over the final five games of the season, she averaged 15.4 points game. Cabral, a native of Portugal, is also on the Portuguese national team.

"We have been recruiting Cabral for several years now," Baker said. "We have watched Eliana grow into a solid, all-around basketball player. She has the ability to attack the rim off the dribble, score from mid-range and has become a great shooter from the three-point line. She is very athletic and can defend well.

Also joining the Miners will be high school recruit Gracelynn Alvarez, a point guard from Heights High School in Houston. As a senior, she led Heights to a 24-5 record averaging 15 points, four rebounds, four assists and 2.4 steals per game as a senior in 29 games.

"Alvarez is one of the top high school players in the state of Texas," Baker said. "She is a point guard that can score the ball multiple ways, create scoring opportunities for others and can rebound at a high level. Grace has terrific court vision and speed. She will fit in well with our high tempo and fast-paced offense. She has tremendous range from the three-point line."

Both the men's and women's teams will be busy in the transfer portal to replace critical players and replenish depth. Some players currently in the portal may decide to return to the university. For the men's team, losing a head coach always creates an abundance of transfer candidates and the women's team is somewhat a victim of its own success with players looking to benefit from more playing time elsewhere.

Much of the success of either squad will depend on the ability of each coach to convince players of the viability and virtues of UTEP basketball. Baker has proved himself as a top coach in C-USA, while Golding has a lot of buzz after leading his team to an upset over Texas in the NCAA tournament. Both coaches have a busy offseason to improve their squads with all the players in the portal.

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Softball from page 7

Flores is currently tied for seventh in C-USA for home runs and is eighth in slugging percentage with .646.

Senior infielder Ariana Valles celebrated her senior day with a hit to center field as a pinch hitter in the bottom of the fourth inning.

In this final game of the series, the Mean Green recorded seven runs on nine hits and took advantage of two UTEP errors. Hope Trautwig started for North Texas in the circle, pitched five innings and recorded seven strikeouts, adding to her C-USA-best 146 total strikeouts.

The Miners currently reside in fifth place of the West division and have only won one game of its last eight in the conference. Santos continues to lead C-USA in batting average with a .464 average, with her closest competitor batting .417. UTEP as a team is batting .275, which is fifth-best in the conference.

UTEP's Achilles' heel, as it has been over the past few seasons, is pitching, currently with the worst team earned run average with 7.53 and the least amount of strikeouts from its pitchers with 66 in C-USA. Making matters worse is the team leads C-USA in errors with 50 and has the lowest fielding percentage in the conference.

UTEP will be traveling next week to Ruston, Louisiana, to take on Louisiana Tech, sitting at 14-22 and 4-4 in C-USA in a four-game series starting with a doubleheader, noon Saturday, April 24.

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Photograph by Michael Cuvillo/ The Prospector

Junior shortstop Pate Cathey stretches out for home plate as she is called out versus North Texas, April 18, 2021.

Track from page 7

second with a time of 3:59.82.

Johnson finished second in the 100m dash with a time of 10.35.

For the women's team, McFarlane placed second with a time of 11.60 in the 100m dash.

Oghenekaro finished third in the 400m dash with a personal-best 56.04.

Caicedo claimed gold for the first time during the season in the 100m hurdles, recording a 13.51 wind-aided time.

Chepkosgei won the 800m, registering a time of 2:08.95. It was her first 800m win of the season.

Jerubet finished second in the 1500m with a time of 4:39.64.

Now the UTEP track and field team will travel to Albuquerque, N.M., to compete at the New Mexico's Don Kirby Tailwind Invitational Thursday, April 22.

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