

# Computer Science student takes advantage of opportunities UTPB offers, graduates debt-free

*JP Chavez transferred to UTPB after earning his associate's degree. He said becoming a Falcon was the best decision he made.*

ODESSA, TEXAS, UNITED STATES, February 1, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Jose Chavez, better known as JP, is ready to walk the stage after earning his degree in computer science with a focus on cyber security.



"All the classes have been small and you're able to approach your professors and have conversations with them," said UTPB student, JP Chavez.

JP transferred to UT Permian Basin after earning his associates degree from Frank Phillips College in Dalhart. When deciding where he should go next, all it took was a quick google search for "most affordable universities in Texas"

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*UTPB student, JP Chavez.*

"UTPB was pretty high up there so as soon as I got accepted I was like that's where I want to go!"

Affordability is something UT Permian Basin is proud of. In fact, JP will be graduating debt-free but beyond that, he

realized quickly, UTPB provides so much more.

"I came without knowing anyone here so I came wanting to get involved in stuff and there's a great opportunity to do that here. I have been in SGA for 3 semesters, I've been an RA for about 6 semesters, a part of the RA socials committee, I've helped with Catholic Student Association, Baptist Student Ministry."

"Here at UTPB we have as many of the opportunities as you would get at any other larger institution but you're going to compete for those opportunities against a smaller pool of students," said Becky Spurlock, Senior Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management.

Some of those opportunities for JP also included a trip to Washington DC representing the University.

"It was a surreal experience being from Perryton Texas with a population of less than 10,000 people, going to DC paid for by the college and representing them it was crazy," explained JP.

For JP, the trip came with another milestone: his first time on an airplane.

"Dr. Spurlock, I feel like she kept on looking at me because she said she was in my shoes at one point so to have that experience with someone like that is great!"

"It was so special to me to be on the plane with JP on his way to Washington DC because the first time I ever went on a plane was when the University I was at sent me to Washington DC for conference when I was a college student so it was really a full circle moment for me and I really loved sitting next to JP on the plane and sharing that moment," added Spurlock.

JP, like many other Falcons, is a first-generation college student. In fact, more than 40% of UTPB students are first-generation, meaning they're the first in their families to go to college. Recently UTPB was designated a first-gen forward campus.

"That's a designation we've been given because of our commitment to first-generation students," said Spurlock. "We are so committed to them because we know how much a college degree can change somebody's life and the life of their family."

UTPB is also changing lives with our new tuition assistance program called: Falcon Free. Falcon Free covers tuition and mandatory fees for those who's household annual income is \$100k or less. 40% of our undergraduates for fall 2022 are Falcon Free.

"Falcon Free is transformational for so many students and their families. Our biggest barrier for students to attend college and to be able to enroll full-time is financial and Falcon Free really changes that equation because it provides the necessary financial support for somebody to give more of their focus school," said Spurlock.

"We served over 7,000 students last year," said UT Permian Basin President, Dr. Sandra Woodley. "We have one of the highest freshman classes ever, we had the highest transfer class ever from our community college partners and we know that the financial support is a real plus for those students and we just want to make sure that we can keep that going in every way that we can so that more students can choose The University of Texas Permian Basin for their degree."

"Everybody here wants to help you succeed," shared JP. "President Woodley, I mean It's crazy to

just to see her around campus and just be so involved as a President.”

“We do what we do at this University because of our students and its a pleasure to walk around campus and see students and hear a little bit about their story and the challenges that they may have and more importantly its really a lot of fun to listen to what they love about the University,” added Woodley. “It really warms my heart when I talk to students. They have good experiences here at the University and they enjoy it here and that just makes me want to work harder everyday to make sure that they are successful here.”

As for JP, he plans to stay in the Permian Basin and give back to the community that has helped him so much. UTPB’s career services team was able to help JP land a summer internship at Stark Tech Group, which turned in to a fulltime job.

“JP you were a gift that I didn’t see coming and I absolutely loved getting to know you as a student and our time in Washington DC really was incredibly special,” said Spurlock. “Since then I’ve been able to see you present your undergraduate research, see you as student leader on campus, support your career aspirations and it’s been my great gift to be involved in your life thank you.”

“My parents came from Mexico, it was always a big thing for my mom for someone in our family to graduate and so I actually finished it, I’m trying to make them proud,” said JP.

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