

UTRGV ranks No. 4 nationally, No. 1 in Texas in Washington Monthly rankings

UTRGV ranks ahead of MIT, Harvard, Princeton in “Best Colleges for Your Tuition (and Tax) Dollars,” measures access, affordability, outcomes, public service

EDINBURG, TX, UNITED STATES, September 3, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- For the fourth consecutive year, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley has been ranked No. 1 in Texas by [Washington Monthly](#), while earning the No. 4 spot nationally in the magazine’s 2026 “Best Colleges for Your Tuition (and Tax) Dollars” ranking — recognition of universities that deliver exceptional value for students and the public.

Unlike rankings built largely around prestige, selectivity or institutional wealth, Washington Monthly evaluates how effectively universities create opportunity and contribute to the public good through access, affordability, student outcomes and public service.

“

We continue to create new opportunities for our students while protecting the affordability that makes those opportunities possible”

Guy Bailey

The magazine’s methodology considers whom universities serve, what students actually pay, how much debt graduates carry, whether students graduate and achieve strong economic outcomes, and how institutions contribute to their communities and the country.

For UTRGV President Guy Bailey, the recognition reflects the impact of a university built for and shaped by the Rio Grande Valley.

BEST COLLEGES FOR YOUR TUITION (AND TAX) DOLLARS

NATIONAL TOP 10

1. BERA COLLEGE
2. DUKE
3. CAL STATE NORTHRIDGE
4. **UTRGV**
5. MIT
6. HARVARD
7. PRINCETON
8. UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
9. CAL STATE LOS ANGELES
10. CAL STATE LONG BEACH

TEXAS TOP 10

1. **UTRGV**
2. RICE
3. UT EL PASO
4. UT SAN ANTONIO
5. UT ARLINGTON
6. HOUSTON-DOWNTOWN
7. TEXAS A&M INTERNATIONAL
8. NORTH TEXAS
9. HOUSTON
10. UT AUSTIN

2026 Washington Monthly Colleges Rankings

UTRGV has ranked No. 1 among Texas universities in Washington Monthly’s rankings every year since 2023, reflecting the university’s continued growth across the Rio Grande Valley.

“UTRGV is the Valley’s university, and this recognition belongs to the entire Rio Grande Valley,” Bailey said. “Our students and families deserve access to an exceptional education without having to leave home or take on overwhelming debt. Being ranked No. 1 in Texas for four consecutive years is a powerful reflection of what this university and this region are accomplishing together.”

AMONG THE NATION'S LEADERS IN VALUE AND IMPACT

UTRGV’s No. 4 national ranking places the university among the country’s highest-rated institutions under a methodology centered on educational value, opportunity, student success and service. The recognition is particularly significant for a university that opened its doors just 11 years ago.

Since then, UTRGV has focused on expanding access to higher education while keeping the cost of attendance low and creating pathways to meaningful careers for students throughout the Rio Grande Valley.

That combination is central to what Washington Monthly measures. Rather than asking primarily how selective, wealthy or well-known an institution is, the ranking examines what universities deliver for the students they serve and the public that supports them.

For UTRGV, the result is a national recognition built around a straightforward measure of impact: Who gets an opportunity, what does that opportunity cost and what happens because of it?

FOUR CONSECUTIVE YEARS AT NO. 1 IN TEXAS

UTRGV first earned Washington Monthly’s No. 1 ranking among Texas universities in 2023 and has held the top spot every year since.

The four-year run comes during a period of significant growth for the university, including the expansion of academic programs, research, healthcare education and services, and student opportunities across the Rio Grande Valley.



UTRGV

#4 IN THE NATION & #1 IN TEXAS

BEST COLLEGES FOR YOUR TUITION (AND TAX) DOLLARS

2026 WASHINGTON MONTHLY'S COLLEGE RANKINGS

UTRGV ranks No. 4 nationally and, for the fourth consecutive year, No. 1 in Texas in Washington Monthly's 2026 rankings. The ranking recognizes universities delivering exceptional value through access, affordability, student outcomes and public service.

UTRGV is the only university in the United States with schools of Medicine, Podiatric Medicine and Optometry. The university also launched the Rio Grande Valley's first Division I football program last year, with its inaugural season contributing to an estimated \$144.3 million in economic output through construction, operations and game-day activity.

"We continue to create new opportunities for our students while protecting the affordability that makes those opportunities possible," Bailey said. "Our responsibility is to ensure that students in the Rio Grande Valley have access to an education and experiences that can compete with those available anywhere in the country. That is what it means to be the Valley's university, and it is central to our mission as The Future of Texas."

2026 RANKINGS HIGHLIGHTS

UTRGV's performance extended beyond its No. 4 overall national ranking.

Among public universities nationally, UTRGV ranked:

No. 2 overall

No. 2 Best Four-Year Hispanic-Serving College; fellow Rio Grande Valley institution South Texas College ranked No. 6 among Two-Year Hispanic-Serving Colleges

No. 6 in number of Pell Grant recipients

No. 11 in number of Pell Grant graduates

No. 12 for lowest graduate student debt

Among Texas public universities, UTRGV ranked:

No. 1 overall

No. 1 in number of Pell Grant recipients

No. 1 in Pell recruitment

No. 1 in number of Pell Grant graduates

No. 1 for lowest graduate student debt

No. 2 for lowest net price

Together, the measures help explain UTRGV's performance in the ranking: The university enrolls large numbers of students with significant financial need, keeps the cost of earning a degree comparatively low and helps students progress toward graduation and economic opportunity.

WHAT WASHINGTON MONTHLY MEASURES

Since 2005, Washington Monthly has ranked colleges according to their contributions to the country, offering an alternative to college rankings that place greater emphasis on selectivity, institutional resources and reputation.

Its 2026 "Best Colleges for Your Tuition (and Tax) Dollars" ranking evaluates institutions across four broad areas:

Access: Measures how effectively universities provide opportunities to students from lower- and middle-income families. Among its measures, Washington Monthly considers Pell Grant enrollment and compares it with the number of Pell recipients an institution might be expected

to enroll based on factors including admissions profiles and statewide family income.

Affordability: Examines the net price paid by students from families earning less than \$75,000 after financial aid, along with the amount of debt graduates carry.

Outcomes: Measures academic and financial results, including graduation rates, differences in graduation rates between higher- and lower-income students, graduates' early-career earnings compared with their peers, and the number of graduates who go on to earn doctoral degrees.

Service: Assesses universities' contributions to public service through measures including AmeriCorps, Peace Corps and ROTC participation; enrollment in service-oriented fields; and efforts to encourage voting and civic participation.

Taken together, those measures look beyond who a university admits or the resources it possesses. They examine how broadly it creates opportunity, how affordable that opportunity is, what students achieve and how the institution contributes to the public good.

To view the complete Washington Monthly 2026 College Guide and Rankings, click [here](#). To learn more about UTRGV's latest rankings, visit www.utrgv.edu/rankings/

UTRGV - The Future of Texas

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley is shaping The Future of Texas by delivering a high-quality, affordable university experience centered on student success, academic excellence, research, healthcare and community impact. With tuition among the lowest in Texas, UTRGV gives its 35,000 students the opportunities of a major university, including Division I athletics and a new football program, while delivering exceptional value for Texas families. The only university in Texas with schools of Medicine, Podiatric Medicine and Optometry, UTRGV serves South Texas across nine communities while driving innovation and developing the talent that will move Texas forward.

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