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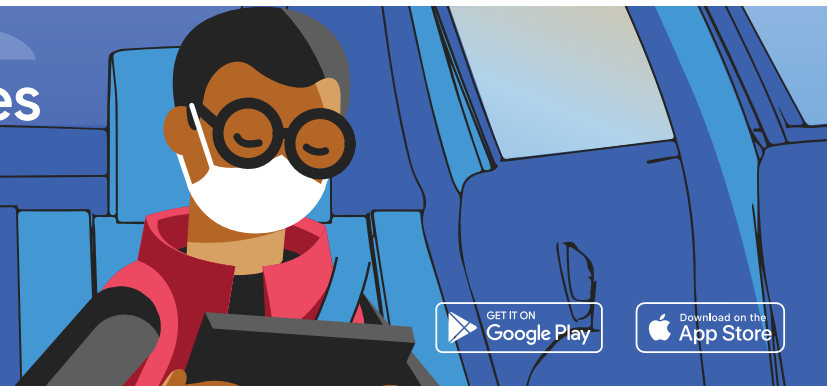
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UNIVERSITY

UT increases rent at three University-owned apartments by 41%

By Skye Seipp
@seippetc

UT will increase rent by an average of 41% for new residents and people joining the waitlist at three University-owned apartment complexes. The increase will not affect current residents or those who were on the waitlist before the increases were announced.

Justin Jaskowiak, assistant director for residence life for University Housing and Dining, said the rent increases at the Brackenridge, Colorado and Gateway complexes came after a University market analysis of similar properties from 2018. Jaskowiak said the University approved the initial increase in 2019 but waited to implement it because nearly 900 students were on the waitlist at the time.

“Even in doing that market analysis, our rates are still affordable and at up to 20% lower than comparable units, so that was still an important feature for us, to maintain affordability while also improving on the services and continuing to manage, maintain and make improvements,” Jaskowiak said.

The University complexes are all located west of Lamar Boulevard and near South MoPac Expressway. Rent for complexes offering one and two-bedroom units will range between just under \$500 to \$1,000, and rent for Brackenridge two and three-bedroom apartments will range between \$1,000 and just



SOFIA REYES / THE DAILY TEXAN STAFF

The Gateway Apartments serve as housing for UT students. Along with Gateway, two other University-owned apartment complexes are increasing by nearly 41% for new residents next year.

below \$1,500.

Each complex is available to graduate students or undergraduates who have completed 30 or more hours.

A Tenant Advisory Board, composed of six residents from all of the apartments, said in an email that some students will no longer find the housing to be affordable with the rent hike. The group said they were not made aware of changes in rates until after it was approved, but they helped ensure residents on the waitlist would not be affected.

Cynthia Lew, director of marketing and communications for UHD, said residents were not consulted before the rates were changed. Lew said UHD increases rent anywhere from 2% to 5% each year for

inflation, but this was a one-time rate structure change.

Lew provided The Daily Texan access to the 2020 market analysis, which compared UT’s rent to the rent of one and two-bedroom units in six different properties in the same area built in the same era.

“This big change was a rate structure change,” Lew said. “It’s a one-time thing that we did, so we could bring rates closer to or below the market rate.”

Lew also said UHD does not receive any state or federal funding, but it relies solely on room and board fees or dining and catering operations.

Priyadarshan Patil, a resident at Gateway since 2018, said UHD has not always been transparent when

it makes changes.

Last year, UHD changed their policies for two-bedroom apartments at Colorado and Gateway which caused residents living with their families to be forced to move to Brackenridge, according to previous reporting from The Daily Texan.

Engineering graduate student Patil said it would be nice if the University considered how much money graduate students were paid when deciding to increase the rent.

“As grad students, that’s going to be a steep price, especially because UT doesn’t allow non-UT students to live here,” Patil said. “It would be great if UT could ... tie (rent) in some way to graduate student salaries so that this housing remains affordable.”

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CAMPUS

UHD seeks student feedback

After Aramark cancels contract with UT, students can provide input on new campus food options.

By Brooke Ontiveros
@brookexpanic

The fate of the on-campus Starbucks and Panda Express rests partially in the hands of students, whose feedback on a

survey will help determine campus dining options next semester.

Aramark Educational Services of Texas, the company that previously operated all dining locations within the Texas Union and William C. Powers Student Activity Center, canceled its contract with the University effective Dec. 21, said David Anthony, director of business services for University Unions.

Now, University Housing and Dining will take over operations and negotiate contracts with new and old dining locations, Anthony said. UHD released a student feedback survey Nov. 18 to gauge what students would like to see as food options, price

ranges and times of day students would frequently visit. The survey closes Dec. 4.

"What we're looking at for January, when students return, is making sure that we have continuity for food service with a minimum, the coffee service and espresso service with expanded grab-and-go offerings," Anthony said. "(Options) depend on student feedback through this survey, ... and it also depends on brand licensing agreements that the University has to negotiate."

Anthony said coffee services will be provided next semester even without a company brand contracted to the University. He said students will come to the same location

and will generally have the same menu to choose from. All dining locations will also accept Dine In Dollars, he said.

Political communication junior Cat Mouer said she wants some of the typical fast-food chain restaurants replaced with local Austin stores.

"We have two Chick-fil-As on campus, and there's a Chick-fil-A on (Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard). How many Chick-fil-As do we need?" Mouer said. "Especially because I think the corporation doesn't necessarily represent a lot of the student values."

The one dining location Mouer said she would hate to see go is her longtime source of comfort since high school: Steak 'n Shake.

"If I knew it was gonna be a rough day, or I didn't get a lot of sleep, I would just pop in, get it really quickly ... and enjoy a bit of peace and quiet," Mouer said. "I don't know that there's anywhere else on campus that I would go to in the same way that I would go there."

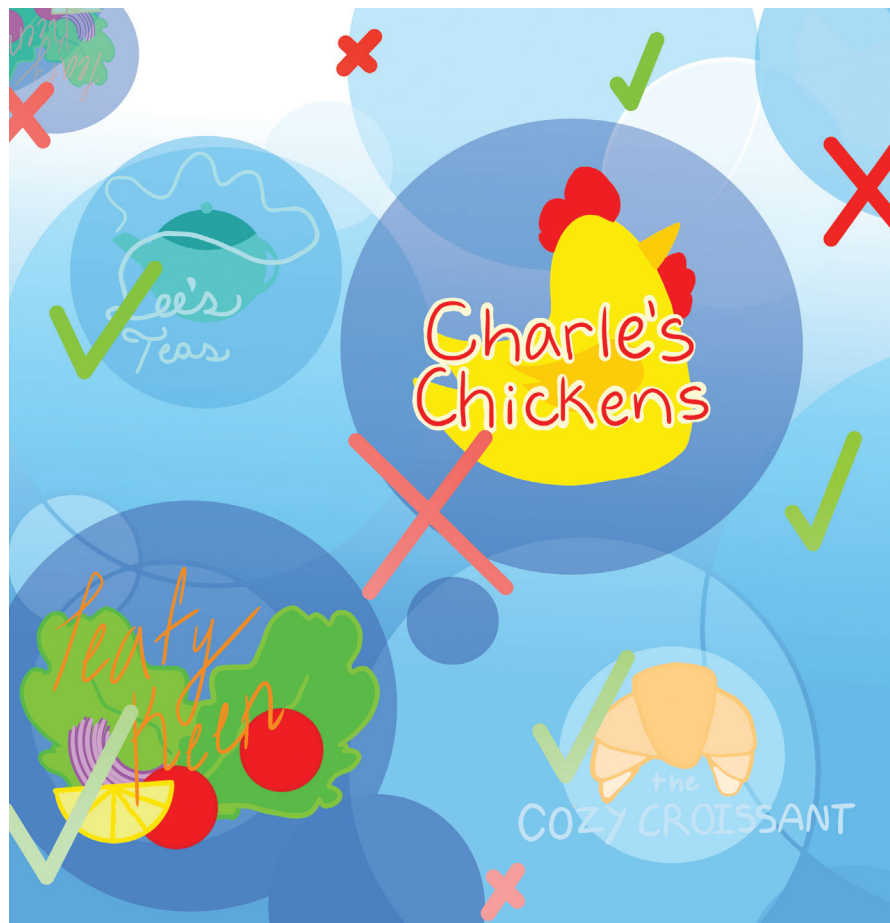
Annanya Chaturvedi, a psychology and international relations and global studies senior, said she wants to see an expansion of vegetarian

and vegan options.

"There's only so many days of the week that you can eat a salad," Chaturvedi said. "Zen basically has boiled vegetables, which are not very appetizing, and Chick-fil-A has fries for vegetarians. That's not a viable lunch or dinner option."

Chaturvedi said she would most like to see Taco Bell brought on campus.

"You can substitute beans for anything," Chaturvedi said. "It's really vegan and vegetarian friendly, and I know people might not think of Taco Bell like that, but it's true and super cheap."



MEGAN CLARKE / THE DAILY TEXAN STAFF

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COLUMN

FIND NEW WAYS TO TEST STATISTICS STUDENTS

UT statistics professors should consider different ways of hypothesis testing without normal options to gather student surveys due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

By Anandi Barker
Columnist

Students face new challenges this semester against the backdrop of social distancing and online classes. Students in statistics classes, in particular, are finding it difficult to gather data from student sources for their final projects.

Biochemistry and psychology junior Megan Thomas' psychology course requires its students to conduct their own surveys.

"We had to make up our own experiment and collect our own data," Thomas said. "We made a survey with a bunch of questions and then had to send it out to about 100 to 150 people. You want as big of a sample size as you can get, so it was pretty difficult. We were kinda scrambling at the last minute to get 50+ responses."

In order to accommodate the challenges that stem from this semester's online format, UT professors should create different avenues for data analysis that do not involve collecting student surveys.

Without typical routes to find sources, such as standing out on Speedway to ask passing students, posting QR codes in the hallways or asking teachers to pass on the information in the classroom, statistics students are more pressed to find sources via

social media.

Student group chats, Facebook posts and Twitter call-outs are filled with final project surveys as Longhorns try to gather data for their question of inquiry. However, psychology sophomore Karishma Parikh, who is currently looking for sources to study for her psychology statistics class, said it can be tricky when everything is online.

“

I think the hard part about the online surveys is that sometimes it's hard to get enough responses.”

KARISHMA PARIKH
PSYCHOLOGY SOPHOMORE

"I think the hard part about the online surveys is that sometimes it's hard to get enough responses," Parikh said.

In addition to the difficulty in finding sources, the acquired data might be biased.

Data collected from surveys distributed online can be subject to voluntary response bias. The collected data will likely be from those with strong opinions about the subject of inquiry, and the statistician has little to no control over the population who chooses to answer the survey.

"I always encourage students to talk to their instructor about



TAYLOR SWEET / THE DAILY TEXAN STAFF

any difficulties they face during a course, especially during these challenging times," Kristin Harvey, statistics associate professor of instruction, said in an email.

While it is commendable that professors are willing to work with their students during this time, professors cannot always help students if their issue is gathering sources. The root of the problem could be resolved by considering other ways to test statistics students for a final project without hypothesis testing.

One possible solution is to focus on gathering data from

existing sources on the web.

For example, students could analyze national data from real-world economic trends, types of crime or mental health issues across age groups. This project would emphasize the analysis of given data using the techniques covered throughout the semester rather than collecting the data itself. In certain classes like Biostatistics, professors already encourage this practice because it alleviates the statistical biases mentioned before.

Another possible solution could be to offer students an

optional final exam, rather than a final project, if they are having difficulties finding sources.

Statistics students can learn and apply their skills in other meaningful ways without having to scramble for student sources that may only produce biased data. COVID-19 has forced many changes in our way of learning and acquiring information. It is time for statistics professors to make the necessary adaptations to their classrooms for the upcoming online semester.

Barker is a government sophomore from Arlington, Texas.

COVID-19

STUDENTS HEAD HOME FOR THANKSGIVING

UT officials urge caution before leaving campus as students go home to their families before the holidays.

By Cole Krautkramer
@ColeKrautkramer

Some students who came to campus for the fall semester are preparing to go home for Thanksgiving break amid the pandemic and plan to take a range of precautions before returning.

Susan Hochman, associate director for assessment, communications and health information technology for University Health Services, said in an email that students should take precautionary measures before leaving campus, such as limiting interactions two weeks prior to going home and being tested through the Proactive Community Testing program.

"If a student has not been able to limit their interactions prior to going home and still chooses to go, they should consider wearing a mask and physically distancing, even in their house or the place they are staying for the duration of the stay or for 14 days if they will be staying until January," Hochman said.

Business freshman Alexa Baker said she will get a COVID-19 test from the PCT program before returning home for the safety of herself and others.

"I am going to get a proactive test so I can make sure I'm negative before I go home to see my family," Baker said. "A lot of people, if they caught



CATE LOWRY / THE DAILY TEXAN STAFF

(COVID-19), won't have antibodies anymore, so the case numbers are probably going to rise."

In addition to testing, undeclared freshman Jocelyne Covarrubias said she decided to quarantine with her roommate before going home and talk with her family about her plans.

"As soon as I get the go-ahead for the negative test, I (will) try to isolate myself in my room as much as I can and communicate that with my roommate so we both are cautious," Covarrubias said. "My biggest worry is that my oldest brother is kind of careless when it comes down to the pandemic, so I just made a note to my family that I don't want to see him

unless he has gotten tested, and my family is totally on board with that."

Beyond wearing masks, limiting travel, washing hands frequently and maintaining adequate social distancing, PCT program director Michael Godwin said in an email that staying aware of one's surroundings is vital.

"Educate yourself about the conditions back home before you travel," Godwin said. "Whether or not you're traveling to an area with a high or growing positivity rate, be cognizant of your own health and that of your family and friends."

Some students, like Covarrubias, will not return to campus until the spring term as a result

of a decision in May to remove in-person class meetings between Thanksgiving and winter break. The decision poses concerns for some about what actions to take before returning back to school.

"I did think for a while about whether I wanted to try to break my housing contract and not come back for spring because it's one of my biggest worries that I take care of myself," Covarrubias said. "There should somehow be a way for (UT) to ... suggest that everybody quarantine (and) present a negative COVID test a couple days before we come on campus, and once we're here, make it mandatory for people to continue getting tested every two weeks."

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City of Austin provides extended rent relief

CITY



JACK MYER / THE DAILY TEXAN FILE

The Relief of Emergency Needs for Tenant program provides up to six months of rent assistance for Austin residents experiencing financial difficulties.

By Fiza Kuzhiyil
@fiza11k

Austin residents can now apply for up to six months of rent assistance from the Housing Authority of the City of Austin, expanded from the three months it previously covered.

The Relief of Emergency Needs for Tenant program provides up to six months of rent repayment for Austin residents experiencing COVID-19-related income loss, said Pilar Sanchez, vice president of Housing and Community Development for Austin Pathways. Eligible applicants are randomly selected weekly through the end of December or until all funds are dispersed, according to the program's website.

"We found that people had larger need than three months as we were processing applications," Sanchez said. "We

recommended to the city of Austin to go ahead and approve up to six months if the rent was still unpaid, and they approved that."

Sanchez said they have a total of \$12.9 million in the budget to give to qualifying families or individuals, and they expect to serve about 4,000 applicants by the end of the year. The program has already distributed \$8.2 million as of Thursday, Sanchez said.

"This is a really terrible time for so many of us, and we're really glad that the city of Austin asked the Housing Authority to help them with this program," Sanchez said.

Sanchez said students are eligible if they do not have other rent assistance, such as from their parents or through grants.

Business freshman Alex Mitchell said she pays her rent using savings from working during the school year and during the

summer, but her income was affected by the pandemic.

"Since I was unable to safely work my part-time job that I had in my hometown during the school year, I was unable to add anything to my savings for that time period," Mitchell said. "I missed out on a lot of money ... that could've helped pay my rent."

Mitchell said she had not previously heard of the rent assistance program, but will likely apply.

Business freshman Demetrius Garza said his parents planned to help pay his rent but were unable to do so after his dad lost his job. Garza did not apply for the program because he did not know it existed.

"Now that I know of this service, I will most likely look into it and apply for it," Garza said. "I'd also recommend it to my friends who may need it as well."



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UT Faculty Council approves pass/fail grading resolution

By Andrew Zhang
@andrewczhang

The UT Faculty Council passed a resolution allowing fall 2020 undergraduate classes to be taken as pass/fail courses and count toward degree requirements during an emergency meeting Monday morning. The resolution will go to UT President Jay Hartzell and Daniel Jaffe, interim executive vice president and provost, for final approval.

Once Jaffe receives the resolution from the council, he will make his recommendation to Hartzell, who will ultimately decide, said Kathleen Harrison, communications manager for the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost. No exact time is set on the process right now, she said.

If given final approval, students can change their course to pass/fail until the Dec. 9 extended deadline. The resolution would also make all Q-drops non-academic, meaning they would not count toward the six Q-drop limit. The changes will also apply to professional pharmacy classes.

The resolution would also rewrite OTE Q-drops and Q-drops completed earlier in this semester as non-academic, said Mark Simpson, assistant vice provost and University registrar. Students would have until Dec. 9 to Q-drop a class if the resolution passes.

Council members cast votes via an anonymous Zoom poll. Thirty-nine council members voted to approve the resolution, 12 voted

against, and seven abstained.

Simpson said changes to the grading system would take time to process in the grading system.

"It will take us about a month to do the coding in all the degree audit systems to make sure that a pass/fail grade counts for all the University degree requirements," Simpson said during the meeting. "It's feasible if the decision's made soon that we can pull this off."

The council passed grading changes for the spring 2020 semester March 26 and then-President Gregory Fenves and Maurie McInnis, then-executive vice president and provost, approved them March 27, according to the council website.

The council's decision comes after UT Student Government, the Senate of College Councils and the Graduate Student Assembly voted to pass a joint resolution advocating for the grading changes as the pandemic continues to affect student lives. The resolution accumulated over 10,000 supporting signatures.

Student body president Anagha Kikkeri, vice president Winston Hung, Senate president Alcess Nonot and vice president Isaac James spoke in support of the resolution at the meeting, discussing multiple testimonies from students who desired the grading changes.

They also said mental health issues among the student body were a reason to support students with these grading changes, citing an earlier report that detailed pandemic-driven mental health decline

UNIVERSITY



CONNOR DOWNS / THE DAILY TEXAN FILE

The UT Faculty Council approved a resolution allowing fall 2020 undergraduate classes to be taken pass/fail and count toward degree requirements.

among UT students.

"The student response to this joint resolution was the most overwhelming we've seen during our tenure as students at UT-Austin," said James, a Plan II and government junior. "It's something that students are really passionate about and really need right now."

Eric Hirst, senior associate dean for academic affairs in the McCombs School of Business, said he reached out to three deans and six department chairs in McCombs, and they were "generally opposed" to grading changes despite their understanding of challenges students have faced. Hirst said the resolution fails to recognize student and faculty efforts this semester.

Brian Evans, electrical and computer engineering professor, who wrote the grading policy

changes during spring 2020, said he supported the fall 2020 changes but was worried about available advising resources.

"Engineering did allocate 200 hours of additional college time to backstop the department of advisors," Evans said. "That is not available this semester."

History professor Alberto Martínez, a member of the faculty council executive committee, said he is particularly concerned about mental health issues the student leaders presented. He did some research and found that 56 other universities had approved similar pass/fail policies.

"We're dealing with a serious, historic, unprecedented national crisis," Martínez said. "What I want to underline is that pass/fail is what (students) want."

STUDENT LIFE

Magazine features young voices

UT student channels writing passion into creating 'Uniquely Aligned' with her childhood friends.

By Dina Barrish
@dinabarrish

In 8th grade, Katherine DeBerry knew a boy with a knack for disappearing during class. She decided to poke fun at him in a creative writing assignment, and when she read the story to her peers, everyone — including the boy and her teacher — laughed. That's when she knew she wanted to become a writer.

"Everyone thought (the story) was so funny, and I realized, 'Well, I could (write) for a living,'" english freshman DeBerry said. "It wouldn't bring me a lot of money,

but it would make me so happy and bring people together."

When DeBerry's childhood friends, Vivian Chambers, a University of Southern California freshman, and Columbia University freshman Savanna Chada invited her to help start a weekly essay blog during their freshman year of high school, DeBerry jumped on board. By their junior year, the trio had transformed their blog into *Uniquely Aligned*, a magazine with a mission to share young people's voices and celebrate diversity.

"(The magazine is) definitely a passion project for me," said DeBerry, a copy editor for *Uniquely Aligned*. "It allowed me to have time to intentionally be creative

while also getting to gel in my friendships with people. I think it's so powerful."

Each month, DeBerry, Chambers and Chada choose a theme for the next issue and announce it via Instagram and their website. The past issues center around themes such as "Forever Young" and "Enigmas," and throughout the month, the team publishes writings, photography and art.

Over the summer, they produced their first print issue, "Don't Be A Stranger," which is available on the website.

"('Don't Be A Stranger') was our big turning point," DeBerry said. "We're reminding people that if you just like to make art, (you) have an impact on the world."

Studio art freshman Leah Blom has been contributing to *Uniquely Aligned* since 2018, and Chambers chose her to photograph the cover for "Don't Be A Stranger." At the cover shoot in early June, Blom took over 100 photos in film, and she spent the next two months editing the photos in Adobe Lightroom.

"We wanted a youthful, summer look," Blom said. "People together being themselves without it looking too

posed. We got it down to around 10 photos, and then from there, we just went with our gut feeling."

DeBerry, Chambers and Chada are from Fort Worth, Texas, but their 44 contributing writers are from all over the world — from Boston, to Saudi Arabia, to Memphis, to Sydney, Australia.

"I've made lifelong internet and 'IRL' friends through this little magazine we made, and I feel so, so lucky to have built those relationships," said Chambers, *Uniquely Aligned* editor-in-chief.

Now, the magazine's Instagram account has over 3,800 followers, and they receive over 50 submissions per month.

"Every single day is an accomplishment," Chambers said. "Every Instagram DM, every email, every amazing submission — I count it all (as) success. I feel really lucky that people enjoy the content we put out."

DeBerry said she wants to encourage more people to be confident in their writing and art through the expansion of *Uniquely Aligned*.

"I just hope that we can continue to grow and get an even broader range of voices and topics," DeBerry said. "No harm can come from taking creative risks."

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Co-founders of *Uniquely Aligned*, a magazine with a mission to share young people's voices and celebrate diversity, Vivian Chambers, Katherine DeBerry and Savanna Chada transformed their blog into a magazine.

COVID-19

Lasting side effects impact students post-COVID

By Ikram Mohamed
@ikramxmoham

Kelly Ludwig's film lecture at a community college in New York was drowned out by loud coughs as the person sitting next to her began to "hack up a lung." Two days later, on March 7, Ludwig said she woke up with a sore throat.

According to the UT COVID-19 dashboard as of Monday, 1,568 UT students and faculty have tested positive for COVID-19 since June 1. For most, recovery is quick. For others like Ludwig, the virus has had a lasting effect on their health.

"I had a dry cough that was unreal," radio-television-film freshman Ludwig said. "I started coughing up blood. Doctors were not really concerned. My primary (doctor) initially said, 'It's not (COVID-19). You have an upper respiratory infection, but you're fine.'"

Ludwig's symptoms worsened quickly, and two weeks later she went to urgent care with a persistent low-grade fever, chest pressure, chronic fatigue and heart palpitations. The doctors told her that while they didn't have the resources to test her for COVID-19, she was "presumed positive" and had pneumonia and a collapsed lung.

Now, Ludwig only leaves her home in Rochester, New York, to go to doctor's appointments, and she has had to defer UT for a year. The 32-year-old plans to move to Austin in fall 2021.

Ludwig said she's suffering from what doctors describe as "post-viral syndrome," an autoimmune condition triggered by COVID-19.

"(COVID-19) itself suppresses your immune system, so now I'm immunocompromised," Ludwig said. "I've been having heart palpitations. I have atypical scarring in my lungs. Most recently, I had a stroke (on Oct. 8)."

Esther Melamed, a neurologist at Dell Medical School, said "post-viral syndrome" is common among people with autoimmune diseases, as the body begins to mistake its organs and cells for the virus.

On Aug. 31, computational engineering freshman Alessandra Kessler



MARISSA XIONG / THE DAILY TEXAN STAFF

received a rapid test for COVID-19. She said she was told her test was positive less than an hour later.

Kessler said after 10 days, her doctor cleared her to return to campus. Though her energy level is back to normal, she still hasn't fully regained her sense of smell.

"I was super tired, had full body chills and overall just felt very poor," Kessler said.

Melamed said loss of sense of smell and taste is a common symptom of COVID-19 due to the way the virus enters the body.

"We've learned ... that the virus is getting (into the body) through the

nose ... (and) damages the cells in the nose," Melamed said. "Another explanation for why people develop the loss of sense of smell, is that the (area of the) brain that controls smell ... gets damaged."

On Oct. 29, mechanical engineering junior Sam McClair said he tested positive for COVID-19 after experiencing flu-like symptoms and body aches.

"Lung-wise, there were times where I was coughing up a little bit of blood, but mentally, (I'm feeling) much better, which is nice," McClair said.

McClair said he tested negative for COVID-19 on Nov. 9 but he is still coughing from lung irritation.

"The immune system becomes dysfunctional in a viral infection," Melamed said. "Initially, (it) does its job ... (getting) rid of the virus, but after the virus (is) gone, ... the immune system stays revved up and keeps trying to fight with an invisible enemy."

Ludwig, who still has COVID-related complications, said this experience has caused her to change her outlook on life.

"It's humbling in a way," Ludwig said. "I'm just thankful to be here. I'm thankful to wake up at six in the morning. I'm thankful when my 5-year-old screams at me because at least I'm here."

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Vaqueros bucked by COVID-19

UT-RGV is still catching up after COVID-19 tests forced the cancellation of October practices.

By Nathan Han
@NathanHan13

The 14-day quarantine period is the shadow looming over the college basketball season, and it has already affected Texas' first opponent of the season: UT-Rio Grande Valley. The Longhorns will

play UT-RGV in their home opener Wednesday.

In October, the Vaqueros paused practice after positive COVID-19 cases on the team forced players and coaches to quarantine.

"It put us back a little bit, as far as conditioning, as far as the young guys knowing certain things, but we're catching up now," UT-RGV head coach Lew Hill said in a Nov. 17 teleconference. "It's like trying to cram for a test."

UT-RGV hasn't been the only team affected by the virus before the season starts Wednesday. Big 12 favorite Baylor withdrew from its first game of the season after head coach Scott Drew tested positive for COVID-19. Duke postponed its first game of the season after scheduled opponent

Gardner-Webb had a positive COVID-19 test.

The 14-day quarantine period could prove costly for teams once the season actually gets underway. During any given two-week period in Texas' 27-game schedule, the team, or any player undergoing quarantine, would miss at least four games.

To limit travel and the impact of the virus, UT-RGV's non-conference slate includes only teams from Texas, just another quirk of a season plagued by COVID-19. But the Vaqueros' schedule is still strong, with UT-RGV playing Texas as well as Texas A&M. Hill joked his non-conference schedule was "probably too competitive."

"We wanted to stay in Texas as if we could," Hill said. "We

reached out to Texas and a few other Big 12 schools, we started talking, and Shaka (Smart) made it happen."

The matchup against Texas will also be the first athletic competition played by a UT-RGV team since mid-March. The university does not have a football team and did not play any fall sports.

"For our student-athletes and those around the country, to have the opportunity to compete this year, it's really a privilege because there are so many little things that go into it," said Chasse Conque, UT-RGV vice president and director of athletics. "It's the behind-the-scenes things, like protocols, the way we structure practice and everything from travel

to testing."

UT-RGV conducted tests once a week when an unknown number of UT-RGV men's basketball players tested positive for the virus in October. Conque said the school would ramp up testing to three times a week as the season began, meeting both NCAA, Big 12 and Western Athletic Conference standards.

The Texas team has been testing three times a week during the preseason, and in September, head coach Shaka Smart said "some, not many" players had tested positive. In a Monday teleconference, Smart said nobody on his coaching staff has tested positive for the virus, "knock on wood."

The Texas head coach also said he had to undergo the

14-day isolation period before his players returned to campus over the summer.

"It's tough," Smart said. "You can't go anywhere, you can't do the things you normally do and for these guys who are used to playing basketball and being very active, that's a heck of an adjustment. It also is a disruption to their progress and what they're trying to do."

However, the message that Smart, Hill and other Big 12 coaches have reiterated across the offseason is to just adapt to whatever the season brings.

"We're hoping there aren't any cancellations, but we've prepared for that," Hill said. "You've just got to prepare for everything."



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Senior guard Rob McClain Jr. conferences with UT-RGV head coach Lew Hill during a timeout. UT-RGV had multiple positive COVID-19 cases in October, forcing the team to quarantine for 14 days and miss valuable preseason practice time.

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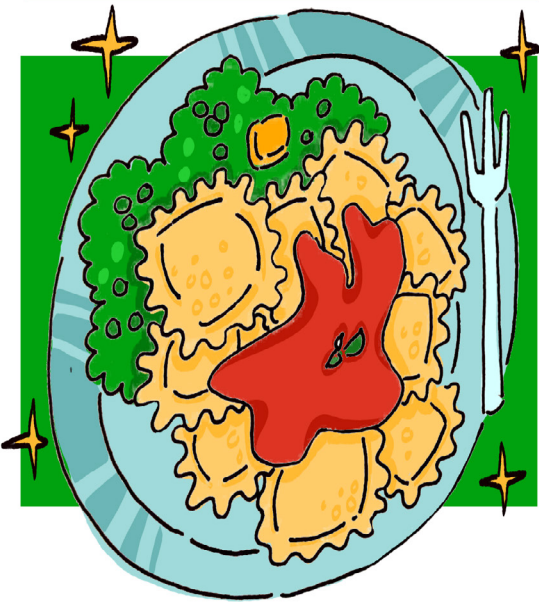
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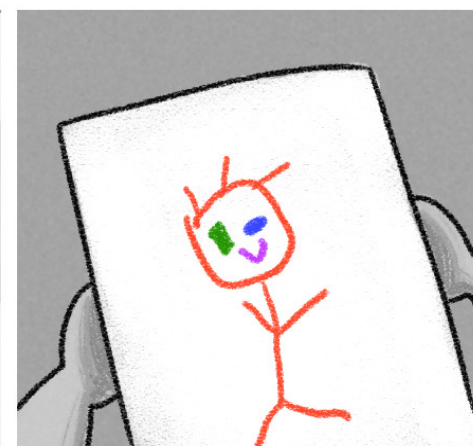
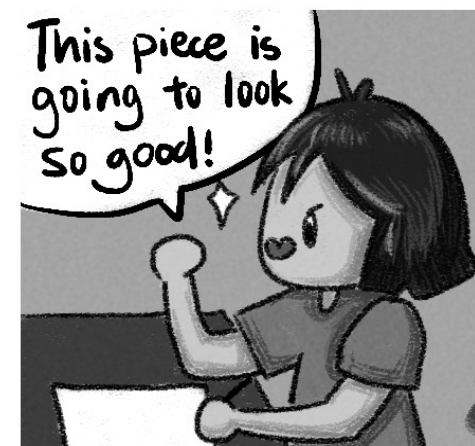
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MEN'S TENNIS

Holden makes impact in final collegiate tennis season

By Yazmin Dominguez
@yazminceleste_

Payton Holden spent four years in New Jersey making his mark in the Intercollegiate Tennis Association as one of the highest-ranked doubles competitors, and now he's returned home to Texas.

The graduate student joined this fall after transferring from Princeton — one of the nation's top tennis programs.

Like many other spring sports athletes who had their senior seasons cut short due to the pandemic, Holden was granted an extra year of eligibility by the NCAA. As a graduate student, Holden would not be allowed to compete in athletics under

Ivy League rules, leaving him to either search for a new school or graduate without playing his final tennis season.

Luckily for Holden, who hails from Austin, his next chapter was right in his own backyard.

"After my time away from home, I realized that Austin is definitely the best place for me," Holden said. "So when I had the opportunity to go to grad school and compete for another year, UT was right on the top of that list."

Holden's family moved to Austin from Michigan when he was 9 years old. With a newfound passion for tennis, Holden enrolled at the Austin Tennis Academy as opposed to traditional schooling. There, he played under the

instruction of CEO and lead coach Jack Newman.

Newman coached Holden from the time he enrolled at the academy at just 9 years old until his high school graduation. While Newman has had many successful collegiate athletes pass through his program, he still remembers what it was like to coach Holden.

"Payton was super fun to work with on a weekly basis as a young, talented player," Newman said. "He's a very charismatic player and he has a lot of abilities."

Holden's work ethic from

such a young age earned him the No. 1 player in Texas title during his U12, U14, U16 and U18 seasons. He also won a Junior Team National Championship.

With his success at the academy making him a five-star recruit, Holden had a wide variety of schools to choose from to pursue tennis at the collegiate level. He said he'd wanted to go to an Ivy League school from a young age, and tennis was a way for him to achieve that goal.

"It's kind of funny because, at my tennis academy, we would always set goals and stuff and

share them with other people in the group," Holden said. "One of my rivals was like, 'Oh, I want to go to Harvard,' and I was like, 'I can't put the same thing that he did,' and the only (school) I could think about was Princeton. I didn't really think about it, and then five years later I was like, 'Holy crap, I can actually go to Princeton.'"

After enrolling at Princeton, Holden quickly made an impact, leading the team in both doubles and singles his freshman year. He came in full force when he joined Texas this fall, winning six of the seven singles

matches he's competed in, and eight of the 12 doubles matches he's competed in.

"Just seeing him be able to compete with the Longhorns would be a dream come true for all of us, and to have him on home turf will be awesome," said Holden's father, Brad.

Although Holden has only one semester left to be a Longhorn, he looks forward to what the dual-match season brings.

"I only have one year at UT, so one of my personal goals is just to try to help the team as much as I can, in any way, for this one year," Holden said.



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Graduate transfer Payton Holden strikes a forehand shot. Holden, who spent four seasons on the Princeton men's tennis team, has gotten off to a fast start at Texas, winning six of seven singles matches and eight of 12 doubles matches.

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