

INSIDE

Editorial: don't feel guilty about climate change, **see page 4 and 5**

Exploring the art form of bonsai, **see page 8**

Athletics director celebrates one year at UTA, **see page 10**

STUDENT LIFE

Welcome events encourage student solidarity

Maverick Stampede aims to help students find their place on campus with over 60 organized events across three weeks.

BY HANNAH GARCÍA
The Shorhorn associate news editor

The beginning of school brings out something in everybody. For some, it brings the buzzing excitement of leaving childhood behind as they move away from family for the first time. To the more broken in, it may bring a sense of apathy — school starts when classes start.

No matter the emotions conveyed, UTA is dedicated to ensuring at least one of them is a feeling of belonging. With more than 60 events, Maverick Stampede does just that. Held Aug. 17 through Sep. 9, from the silly agendas like topping waffles with as many ingredients as possible at Waffleopolis to the more informative ones like the Health Services Open House, there's sure to be something for everyone.

Formerly known as Welcome Days before 2006, the idea behind Maverick Stampede is not new. Student Activities director PK Kelly said most colleges in any given state will have some sort of "Welcome Week."

More than giving students class schedules, this gives organizations and departments on campus a chance to show the resources they offer. It also allows students to get involved.

The university uses the phrase "Welcome Week" lightly, as they are well past that now. With three weeks' worth of activities, almost every day has something new.

STAMPEDE continues on page 2

STAMPEDE

Return of the Mavericks

MavsMeet Convocation welcomes students to campus



The Shorhorn: Ronaldo Bolaños

A Maverick Marching Band member cheers during MavsMeet Convocation on Aug. 21 at College Park Center. The event celebrates the start of the academic year at UTA, featuring performances from the marching band, spirit groups, Vietnamese Student Association and cheerleaders.

CONSTRUCTION

What's new on campus

Troy Yoder, director of institutional construction, reviews completed work and sums up the plan for fall construction.

BY PEDRO MALKOMES
The Shorhorn staff

As the semester swings to a start, UTA is finishing several major renovations to the Central Library and University Hall, with future projects also coming.

Troy Yoder, director of institutional construction, said he believes the changes to the library will be one of the most significant renovations this fall. The building's roughly 350 windows have been replaced, and Yoder's team has resealed and power washed the library's exterior.

"The entire outside of the building is essentially brand new," Yoder said.

The roughly \$1.4 million project took about a year and a half of planning to develop. Construction of the windows began toward the end of March and was completed mid-August.

The library's interior was also renovated, receiving new furniture on floors three through five, as well as minor updates to the sixth floor. This process can become unexpectedly complex when power circuits and data need to be rerun to different locations.

"Nowadays when we do furniture, it involves utilities as well, especially the library," Yoder said. "It's not just an installation of furniture, it's a full coordination of all kinds of things."

According to Yoder, the interior library renovations took about 18 months to design, but not much was executed until the furniture arrived in April.

CONSTRUCTION continues on page 6

ARLINGTON

New Thornton Elementary building sprouts in Arlington ISD

After two years of construction, the school has reopened in East Arlington

BY JOSÉ ROMERO
The Shorhorn news editor

After the demolition dust settled at Thornton Elementary in December 2021, two of the location's original large oak trees remained, serving as the floral sentinels of what would become the school's main entrance.

The green-haired giants surveyed construction day after day. They observed the workers who labored over finishing the facilities. Then finally, last Wednesday, the trees watched students, parents and faculty pile into the refreshed building.

Two elementary schools reopened last week in East Arlington — Thornton and Berry. The initial buildings were both from the 1950s and, with the interior and exterior enduring the passage of time, entirely new buildings were in order.

Voters approved the construction through the \$966 million 2019 Arlington ISD bond proposal. As a result, these elementaries' resources and space have expanded. The bond also covers various areas around the district, from renovations to technology upgrades. All projects should be finalized by 2025.

Although the schools are now unrecognizable, they were built upon



The Shorhorn: Christine Vo

Families walk into school for the first day of classes Aug. 16 at Thornton Elementary. Over 90% of the school's student population is economically disadvantaged, according to the Texas Education Agency's 2022 report card.

the same sites they've always stood in, modernized to give students a 21st-century education.

Alicia Rodríguez, Thornton's principal and UTA alumna, has spent 18 years at Thornton — 14 in her current position. The fresh coat of everything left her on a "happiness high."

One of the final touches was a phrase floating on a wavy rainbow in yellow paint that read "be the change you want to see in the world." The day

after it was put up, Rodríguez walked into the school, exhausted from the extra work she'd put in. But seeing the piece, she said it brought it all together.

"We are the second home, and so just having that at the very front for the kids to see as they walk into the building, it's very nice," Rodríguez said.

The new establishment is state-of-the-art, she said. There are spaces

outside classrooms where students can come together to work on projects or for teachers to use in case they need an additional learning area. A STEM lab, an outside learning space and a large library are other new additions.

Each element emphasizes the sense of collaboration and community put into Thornton's rebuild.

Improved furniture, such as new desks, was chosen to allow teachers to create a synergistic environment for their students. Parents and guardians have also received a resource in the form of a parent center.

In the old Thornton, faculty would use rooms such as the cafeteria or library to assist parents. The new center offers a dedicated space for parents to come and use the resources the school has available like computers.

"When we are able to provide the environment where we have the resources, the furniture, the space, it feels more like home," Rodríguez said. "You're able to provide everything that they need. It does help that we have all that here at this school, brand new."

The Texas Education Agency's 2022 report card stated that over 90% of Thornton's student population is economically disadvantaged.

"Your job is not the location, but the calling — the calling of the job that you have working with students."

Alicia Rodríguez
Thornton Elementary principal

The majority of the school, 89.7%, is made up of Hispanic students. The state-of-the-art facility serves as a way to give its students equal opportunities, regardless of where they're from, she said.

Cynthia Perez, bilingual dyslexia teacher at Thornton, has been with the school for 26 years. Perez said she couldn't believe a school like this was made for them.

"This is awesome," she said. "I never in my wildest dreams thought it was gonna be this big. Never ever."

Perez got a peek at the school during the last week of July. Donning a hard hat, she walked in, and her mouth dropped.

ELEMENTARY continues on page 7

Stampede

continued from page 1

Due to its growing population, UTA has been able to expand these events to accommodate the vastness of interests among students, Kelly said.

According to a 2006 *Star-Telegram* article, students at the time felt the university was lacking when it came to campus life, something UTA is still actively trying to improve. With the addition of events tailored to specific affinity groups, like the Latin Maverick Welcome and Snow Cones and Rainbows, he said this provides a way for students to socialize by participating in events they feel they connect with.

The Student Activities department makes sure to utilize the many venues on campus when herding the stampede.

Those with high energy can

expel that in Brazos Park with events like Welcome Back Foam Mania and the Maverick Cookout and Activity Fair. For the more lowkey, the Palo Duro Lounge has Thriving and Vibing, a health and wellness-focused activity where students can create a personalized “thriving kit.”

According to previous *Shorthorn* reporting, College Park Center has been home to the MavsMeet Convocation since its opening in 2012.

Jonikka Davis, associatedirector for marketing and communication in Student Affairs, said this annual event, which occurred Monday, is the university’s “official kickoff” to the school year. Filled with performers and remarks from various UTA leaders like the university president and provost, the event invites new and returning Mavericks.

This year, Laurie Hernandez, Olympian, author and “Dancing with the Stars” winner, was

featured as a guest speaker.

“Our goal is for the students, the faculty and staff, the community at large to really get a feel for what we hope they will experience during the course of the school year,” Davis said.

Started under former UTA President James Spaniolo in 2004, Convocation was originally used as the “traditional” onboarding experience for students. However, as they listened to students’ feedback, they found they wanted something with higher energy,

Davis said. This year they went for a more “pep rally” style event, with less formalities and more socializing.

Bringing UTA’s diverse population together is essential to supporting the sense of community the university works to establish, she said.

Kelly said Maverick Stampede helps to familiarize students with programs, departments and services the school offers while creating personal relationships. He said he hopes students can

move past the barrier of a name and face and actually establish a connection with one another. He feels sharing experiences with others helps students “find their people.”

This year, the Stampede’s slogan is “Meet. Connect. Make memories and friends!” Though the wording may vary year to year, Kelly said their team is always trying to accomplish these things.

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Photo courtesy of UTA Special Collections

University of Texas at Arlington President James Spaniolo cooks burgers for students during the Mav Cookout on Aug. 26, 2009.



Illustration by Yvonne Collier

CORRECTIONS/ CLARIFICATIONS

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COMICS

ROULETTE

A revolving comic based on randomly-generated prompts,
by *The Shorthorn* design desk

“a disappointing food truck”

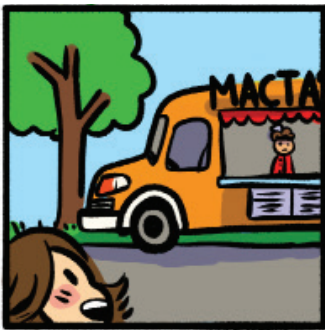


Illustration by Cristina Del Coro Trio

THE Daily Crossword

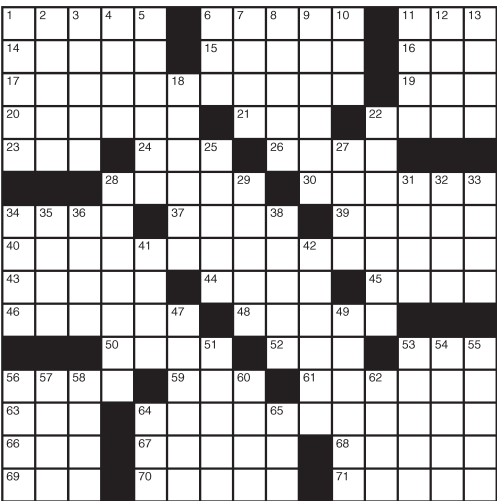
Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- Mooch
- Brief helpers
- Mouser
- Close, poetically
- Pago Paga's place
- In the past
- James Garner as P.I.
- Pas' partners
- Perfect place
- Sea eagle
- Disorder
- Tandoori-baked bread
- Civil War letters
- Continental cash
- Three-line poem
- Bombarded
- Woodwind instrument
- Points of pens
- Frilly and feminine
- Pierce Brosnan as P.I.
- Goatee, e.g.
- Heaps
- Lou or Willis
- Unbroken run
- The Velvet Fog
- Distort
- Shooter pellet
- Train unit
- Walton and Waterston
- Audience disapproval
- Fleet afloat
- Paid athlete
- Jerry Orbach as P.I.
- Capp and Gore
- More qualified
- Castle or Cara
- Cal. pages
- IBM feature from 1981
- Actress Mary

DOWN

- Bayou cuisine
- Singer Baker
- Evil spirit
- John Irving title hero



By Verna Sult
Silver Spring, MD

- Beethoven's Third
- Query
- Unscathed
- Campfire treat
- Distraught
- Blue
- Attended
- Turkish titles
- Light throw
- Sausage cover
- "Tartuffe" playwright
- Japanese dog
- Mil. division
- Will VIP
- Letter-shaped hardware
- Fig or fir
- Glamour rival
- Made blue, perhaps
- Poetic planets
- Borscht base
- Sharif or Epps
- Listen at keyholes
- Sask. neighbor
- Steady current
- Meals on sticks



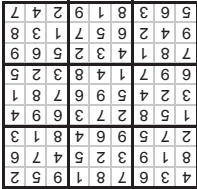
- Actress Strassman
- "As the Turns"
- Proofreader's mark
- Hersey's bell town
- Less cooked
- Junk email
- One Guthrie
- Rolling stone's lack?
- Popular cookie
- Dept. heads
- Spiral-sliced meat
- Mos. and mos.

su | do | ku

© Puzzles by Pappocom

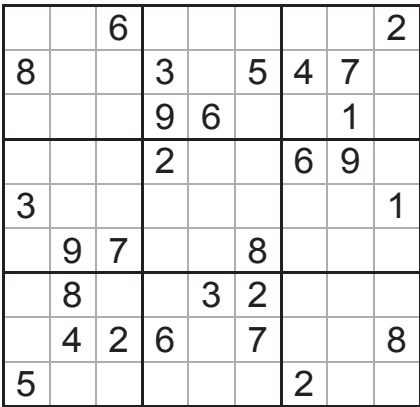
Instructions:

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 grid contains the digits 1 through 9 with no repeats. That means that no number is repeated in any row, column or box.



Solution

Solutions, tips and computer program at
www.sudoku.com





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AUGUST 17 - SEPTEMBER 9

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Visit
uta.edu/maverickstampede
for more event information.



Photo illustration by Ronaldo Bolanos, Abbas Ghor and Christine Vo

EDITORIAL

The Shorthorn Editorial Board urges citizens to advocate for large-scale anti-climate change measures

Excessive heat warnings line the weather app as the discussion surrounding global warming, like the sun, bears down on Texas.

The Shorthorn Editorial Board believes that climate change is not your fault. The biggest sources of climate change come from governments and corporations not prioritizing human lives. Changing the governing bodies' values might be the way to fight climate change.

This summer, like so many before, is record-breaking. In the past 10 years, there were over 1,600 days where the heat matched or broke a record in Texas. It's more than double the 561-day average in the decades before 2013, according to *The Texas Tribune*.

For many Texans, growing accustomed to the record-breaking temperatures is simply a part of life in the state. The danger of the heat is often swept to the side.

Heat is the deadliest form of weather — responsible for 148 deaths in 2022, with hurricanes responsible for 114 deaths and flooding responsible for 91 deaths, according to the National Weather Service.

With more frequent and intense weather due to climate change, the cost of repairing the damage becomes more expensive. Of the 363 climate disasters where the damages exceed \$1 billion since 1980, 166 disasters were in Texas, according to the National Centers for Environmental Information.

This makes Texas one of the most economically affected states by climate change.

While climate change might appear to be a divisive issue in the United States, there seems to be some agreement. Roughly, 74% of Americans believe that global warming is happening and 61% believe that it is at least somewhat caused by human activity, according to a 2023 survey conducted by Yale and George Mason University.

Many are becoming more aware of their carbon footprint with people using more products without plastic

to reduce pollution. These items are often great for the environment and do combat climate change, but making the switch might not fully stop it.

As difficult as it might be to accept, saving the sea turtles won't save the ice caps.

One of the main causes of climate change is greenhouse gas emissions. Many solutions to global warming revolve around cutting fuels like coal, gas and oil from our electric use, transportation and industrial production.

The average American cannot stop the use of fossil fuels in their daily lives; this is largely up to politicians and corporate leaders.

While there are ways for people to reduce their carbon footprint with things like electric cars and solar panels, these products are often expensive and many are unable to afford making the switch.

Fighting climate change should start with those in power, but the average citizen is not powerless and should advocate for how the earth and the environment should be treated.

Despite the agreement on the existence of man-made climate change, many Americans don't prioritize addressing it. When asked about what should be a top priority for the president, only 37% of Americans listed addressing climate change as a top priority, making it 17th out of 21 issues in a 2023 survey conducted by the Pew Research Center.

There is a dissonance between American belief in climate change and the need for action. Often, Americans prioritize their individual wants over the needs of the environment.

This can be seen in the Maui's wildfire aftermath, which revealed a division between residents and the tourism industry. The fires are already the deadliest in modern U.S. history with 114 people confirmed dead as of Aug. 19, according to *NBC News*.

Despite the massive destruction and loss of life, the tourism industry continues to thrive, with Maui county mayor Richard Bissen encouraging

tourists to visit unaffected regions. There is a dependence on the visitor industry, being responsible for roughly 70% of every dollar generated on the island, according to the Maui Economic Development Board.

Even as Maui tries to rebuild and mourn, locals are being forced to cater to this massive industry, with tourists snorkeling in the same waters where crews are looking for survivors.

These large industries often prioritize their profits over the needs of the environment and the people who live in them. This can be seen even in Texas.

During the 2021 ice storms in Texas, millions of Texans experienced water and power disruptions, and these conditions resulted in the deaths of roughly 246 people, according to *The Texas Tribune*.

While many politicians were quick

THE ISSUE:

Climate change continues to worsen and is creating a dangerous planet.

WE THINK:

No single action a person can take will solve climate change.

TAKE ACTION:

People should push for systemic protection of humans and the environment.

to blame failing renewable energy sources for the power disruptions, natural gas power experienced the biggest decrease in production, according to *The New York Times*.

The main reason natural gas power sources failed was the lack of a winterized energy grid. While many politicians and regulators were aware of how susceptible the energy grid was to extreme cold weather after the 2011

winter storm, the legislature failed to enforce regulations that might have protected the grid from failure.

This allowed energy corporations to cut costs at the expense of protecting Texas. This attitude prioritizes profits over people and allows for the continued use of fossil fuels despite the catastrophic effects.

Often, the planet is protected when people are protected.

There is sometimes an overlap between civil rights advocacy and environmental protection. The United Farm Workers of America is a workers union founded in 1962, which advocates for the rights of farm workers, especially Latino migrants.

One of the things they fought for was worker protection from pesticides, some of which were causing birth defects, cancer and burns. This union was key in banning dangerous pesticides from commercial use, thereby protecting human health and preventing water pollution.

As climate change becomes more present in people's daily lives, the anxiety around stopping it increases. Rather than focusing on the actions individuals can take, advocating for systemic protection of people and the planet could bring real change.

The Shorthorn Editorial Board believes while you might not be responsible for climate change, everyone should fight it. Advocating for politicians and corporations to start valuing people over profits should be the first step towards a healthy planet.

The Shorthorn Editorial Board is made up of opinion editor Chris Huddleston, managing editor Drew Shaw, copy desk chief Deekota Diaz, associate news editor Hannah Garcia, engagement editor Ella Scott, multimedia editor Christine Vo and sports editor Isaac Appelt. Appelt was not present for this editorial decision, so news editor José Romero stepped in along with editor-in-chief Mandy Huynh.

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COLUMN

An environmental wake-up call

Held v. Montana showcased how the youth can protect the planet through activism

ASH GUERRERO



Guerrero is an English sophomore and copy editor for *The Shorthorn*.

Join the discussion by commenting online at theshorthorn.com.

Among the applause for the decision made in the *Held v. Montana* climate trial Aug. 14, the weight of the judgment dawned on me in a way I can't describe.

Although it wasn't a federal case, it marks the first climate case to reach the state and ending in victory for the plaintiffs in U.S. history. My generation, Generation Z, has been labeled as the 'soft' generation caught up in performative activism. Yet here we are, making the initiative to change that label with landmark litigation.

Held v. Montana was filed in 2020 by Our Children's Trust, a nonprofit law firm that provides youth strategic, campaign-based legal services to secure their right to a clean environment, according to their website.

They were the group backing the

sixteen young people testifying against the state of Montana. Montana's Environmental Policy Act contained a stipulation that forced the state to disregard the impact of greenhouse gas emissions on the environment, which the plaintiffs argued to be unconstitutional. The judge agreed, meaning the case has come to a close as a step forward for environmental law.

According to *The New York Times*, Montana's attorney general's office is seeking to take Montana's climate case to the supreme court — potentially pushing the issue to a national stage.

The plaintiffs brought up everything that we have been stressed about for ages. They validated climate science by acknowledging the fossil fuel industry has been a major source of pollution for Montana, bringing in scientists and other experts to testify.

The destruction of our planet, thanks to climate change, has always loomed over our heads, culminating in a phenomenon known as "climate anxiety," rates of which have disproportionately affected younger people.

In a survey conducted in 2021 by *Lancet Planetary Health* journal, out of 10,000 youths from ten different countries, 84% said they were at least "moderately worried" about climate

change while 59% said they were "very or extremely worried." *The Lancet* began as an independent general medicine journal in 1823 and eventually evolved as a family of journals covering various scientific topics.

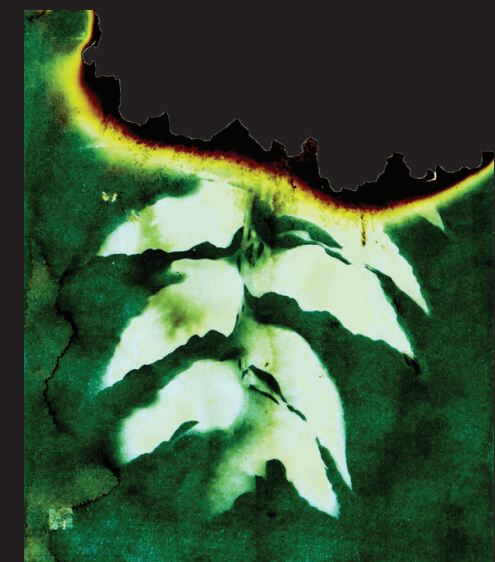


Photo illustration by Christine Vo

This case is just a step forward along a gravelly, long-winded road. Sure, it serves as a shift in the campaign to protect the planet — but we shouldn't let it stand on its own.

It's clear that no amount of reusable straws has stalled the inevitable

reality of climate change. It's time younger people start playing in the appropriate ballpark: politics and the law.

Many of us have felt that because climate change is such a mountainous problem, there's no way that the average person can hope to improve our situation. *Held v. Montana* proves us wrong.

If we take it step by step, it's a wake-up call that we can shape the world the way we want. The world is our stone, and the government is our chisel.

We should start realizing the value of participating in politics, whether through campaigns, pressuring those in power through emails and physical letters, attending rallies or even joining civil lawsuits such as this one.

Being educated on pressing issues is one thing, but taking your knowledge and applying it to your cause is another. There are multiple ways we can weaponize our worries into firepower for the betterment of our future.

With enough work, the implementation of stronger laws can become a nationwide phenomenon.

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ARLINGTON

Arlington Museum of Art plans relocation

CEO and President Chris Hightower outlines plan for the move to the Esports Stadium and Expo Center.

BY LEO ROSAS
The Shorthorn staff

The Arlington Museum of Art is nearing the end of its stay in downtown Arlington.

The museum has spent 32 years at its current location in the city. It is set to begin a new life in March of 2024 at the Arlington Esports Stadium and Expo Center on Ballpark Way, with construction beginning this October.

Chris Hightower, CEO and president of the Arlington Museum of Art, said the museum’s current space limits its potential.

“We’re getting bigger and better shows and we’re getting to a point where we’re limited by the space itself,” Hightower said.

He mentioned, for example, how they wanted to feature a *Star Wars* exhibit at the museum, but it would not have been possible because they don’t have loading docks and the artwork wouldn’t fit through the entrance of the building.

At the new location in the Expo Center’s hall, there will be ramps and even enough space for a car to drive into the interior of the building, Hightower said.

Fort Worth resident Grace Rhoden is a volunteer at the museum and expressed her excitement about the future capabilities they’ll have for bigger exhibits.

She’s warmly welcomed guests at the front desk of the museum for over a decade and has enjoyed several of their past exhibits, such as featured art by Keith Herring and iconic costumes from Hollywood films. Rhoden said she thinks about all the opportunities they’ll have with a new and larger museum if they’ve already accomplished this much.

Currently, the Arlington Museum of Art’s most prominent exhibit is the “Taylor Swift | The Eras Tour Collection.”

The exhibit is grouped alongside three others; “Girl in a Country Song,”



The Shorthorn: Ronaldo Bolaños

The Arlington Museum of Art stands Aug. 21 in the Downtown Arlington Cultural District. After 32 years, the museum will relocate to the Arlington Esports Stadium and Expo Center in March 2024.

“Hometown Harmonies” and “Toni Martin: Butterfly Kisses.”

The museum’s current building will be purchased by an organization that plans to convert the property into an event rental and office space, Hightower said. The organization also plans to remodel the interior of the building and renovate Gene Allen Park, located next to the venue.

He said construction of the interior of the new space will cost around \$2.5 million — the same price they’re selling the current

lot for. The funds from the sale will be invested back into phase one of the 42,000 square feet interior remodel.

Phase two consists of construction on the exterior of the Expo Center building for an additional \$15 million. Hightower said they will construct a facade on the front of the building, adding 40,000 square feet.

Currently, they are starting a capital campaign to raise funds for phase two, although they’ve got a couple of years to gather the money, he said.

Hightower said he believes this move is important for the “city’s health.”

“We want Arlington to be a place for creative people to live and thrive,” he said. “We want to make sure that young people are excited about living here, and wanting to live here, and not having to go to Dallas or Fort Worth for stuff like this.”

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Construction

continued from page 1

All the renovations were complete by the end of June. University Hall is also receiving renovations. When UTA completed the School of Social Work and Smart Hospital last spring, the fifth floor of University Hall — which previously held nursing-related programs — went vacant when the departments transferred to the new building.

The spaces that were vacated had to be combined and renovated into a space for linguistics and other departments, Yoder said. The project cost about \$1.1 million to complete.

The university is also replacing the roof of University Hall, as well as power washing and painting. As a result, students should expect the northwest entrance to be closed.

It is unknown when the entrance will open again,



Photo courtesy of construction project coordinator Paul Hughey

Yoder said.

Other spaces around campus follow the same process as the University Hall renovations. When a new building is finished,

departments relocate to better their circumstances.

Similarly, the College of Education moved to Trimble Hall and Hammond Hall, leaving vacancies in Carlisle

Hall and Science Hall. Now, the university is refreshing those spaces for the next tenants, Yoder said.

“We’re always working behind the scenes to try to

manage space usage and space utilization,” he said. “That’s a big project that nobody really sees because it’s moving vans, and it’s painters.”

Current projects aside, the campus has several projects scheduled for the future. There are plans to construct an MRI machine in the Science and Engineering Innovation and Research building’s basement, and the Greek Life Center will likely begin construction to be finished toward the end of the spring semester.

UTA also made progress in remodeling the Cooper Street bridges since the student design contest last semester. A contractor has been hired to continue moving the project forward.

All construction projects on campus go through the same selection process before being considered for approval.

Typically, a department head will reach out and

request design services. Then, the campus assigns an architect or interior designer to work with the departments on drawings and specifications, Yoder said.

After the designs and drawings are complete, they are evaluated and priced so a budget can be created for the project. If the department is ready to move forward with the project, they submit a space request to the Space Allocation Resource Committee. If that’s approved, they can move forward with construction.

Students interested in keeping up with more construction information can sign up for the university’s MavWire newsletter, since updates usually arrive there first, Yoder said. Occasionally, the president and senior administrative staff will also make the announcements.

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The Shorthorn: Christine Vo

Students hold hands during the first day of school Aug. 16 at Thornton Elementary. The school, initially built in the 1950s, was entirely demolished and rebuilt, excluding two of its original oak trees.

Elementary

continued from page 1

A design element that surprised her was the light fixtures.

They’re inspired by traditional Mexican folklórico dresses, affixed with rippling lines that resemble how the clothing flows through the air as the dancers perform.

The entrance’s color scheme took similar cues from the garment.

Perez sees the new school as an opportunity to clean 26 years of teaching buildup, along with being a chance to welcome new families to Thornton. She said she’s had some former students bring their children, and that’s incredible to her.

ESL pre-K teacher Paula

Page is looking forward to having a dedicated STEM lab instead of having to conduct experiments or demonstrations in the classroom. The playground, the collaboration areas and all the extra spaces excite her.

“We have a beautiful teacher’s lounge and work room, it’s just like so much,” Page said. “It’s a good overwhelming.”

She said the enhanced atmosphere will make it easier and more exciting for the kids. The staff have a lot of reasons to feel blessed and have pride in what they’re doing.

As Thornton was being demolished and rebuilt, the teachers and students were housed at Knox Elementary. Even though it was temporary, Rodríguez said it felt like home. As she walked around the school, she saw her staff



The Shorthorn: Christine Vo

Kindergartener Luis Hernandez laughs with friends during the first day of school Aug. 16 at the newly reopened Thornton Elementary. The 2019 Arlington Independent School District bond proposal resulted in rezoning eight, closing three and rebuilding three, which will be finalized in 2025.

and the students there.

“Your job is not the location, but the calling — the calling of the job that you have working with students,” she said.

Now that Thornton’s staff has moved back, Knox will be torn down and turned into the new Carter Junior High School. Berry Elementary staff underwent a similar protocol.

They were housed at Roark Elementary, which will now be demolished and turned into a city park. Knox and Roark’s students were rezoned, meaning many are attending Berry and Thornton this year.

On the first day of class, parent Monekia McCray sat in the cafeteria with her nervous kindergartner, awaiting the impending

bell that would start the school year. McCray said she was floored when she walked into the building.

“It’s really, really pretty,” she said. “Everybody’s so friendly.”

When she was a kid, McCray said she didn’t have a dedicated kindergarten section in her school, just a hallway, so that was neat to see.

Outside the cafeteria windows, the oak trees are in plain view.

Stiff and tall, their roots envelop the community, serving as a reminder of the past, but also guaranteeing growth in the future.

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
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CULTURE

The art and history of bonsai



The Shorthorn: Drew Shaw

A bonsai tree sits for sale July 20 at Sunshine Miniature Trees in Dallas. The wire twined between the branches trains the tree to grow in a specific shape.



The Shorthorn: Drew Shaw

Daniel Hammack trims his bonsai tree Aug. 17 at Sanderson Creek Bonsai in Fort Worth. The tree is named “Big Tex” and is over 67 years old.

Requiring dedication and slowness, the art form is a peaceful hobby for many

BY DREW SHAW

The Shorthorn managing editor

As he trims his bonsai trees, Daniel Hammack doesn’t furrow his eyebrows. He doesn’t bite his lip or tremble in focus. Instead, he talks freely, effortlessly snipping stray stems with precise care.

Hammack knows what he’s doing, and he knows his plants. Each of the hundreds of miniature trees in his and his wife’s backyard-Fort Worth shop, Sanderson Creek Bonsai, has been intentionally trained and shaped out of their love for bonsai.

The term “bonsai” could be used to name any potted plant, often a tree, that’s dwarfed and trained into an artistic shape. The art form developed in Asia, and its name means literally “pot tree” in Japanese, Hammack said.

Today, bonsai is an international industry composed of different schools, techniques and innovations. It’s an evolving art form, but to most people, its roots are still the same: a plant in a pot.

It might seem like a simple hobby, but it requires slowness, dedication and perseverance — things countercultural to modern life’s hustle. Artists could spend hours using wire to train a tree’s branches to grow into a specific shape, or spend weeks finding a fertilizer their plant responds well to.

Hammack’s found it all to be a de-stressing, creative outlet

that lets people escape from their busy lives, he said. Bonsai has a way of relaxing, which could be what makes it particularly attractive to teenagers and the elderly, said Richard Sunshine, owner of Sunshine Miniature Trees in North Dallas.

Since 1969, Sunshine’s plant nursery has operated within a small, bright yellow house off a busy city street, nestled between the business buildings and fast food chains.

Amid the developing metroplex, the nursery has housed a haven for thousands of houseplants and bonsai. Although there’s little pressure for visitors to purchase anything, many end up fumbling out the front door carefully carrying their first bonsai, starting what could become a new lifetime hobby.

According to the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, several studies have tried to quantify the psychological effects of the hobby. They’ve drawn the same conclusion: bonsai makes people happier.

Sunshine has felt these positive effects from his own plant nursery, which he called “more than a shop.” The house’s hallways smell thick and earthy. Its rooms are crowded with life, but still, quiet and isolated from the surrounding city. The sun streams from the windows and bounces off the white walls of chipped paint, giving

the leaves of bamboo, bonsai trees and blooming houseplants a soft, green glow.

This atmosphere has drawn psychiatric professionals to regularly visit the shop and meditate in the plant-packed

the easiest to care of, it’s nothing you really liked. Then, after the years go by, you may get tired of that. And the tree may suffer.”

He encourages them to look through the different types of plants and find their favorite



The Shorthorn: Drew Shaw

Plants pack the shop’s corner July 20 at Sunshine Miniature Trees in Dallas. The store sells thousands of bonsai trees, bamboo and other houseplants.

rooms. Sunshine said he’s bought bonsai trees from mental health facilities that use “plant therapy,” where patients practice focusing, calming down and creating miniature trees.

At Hammack’s shop, “which is the easiest to take care of?” is a question new visitors often ask as they’re looking for their first bonsai tree, he said.

“Well, let’s consider that,” Hammack tells them. “If it’s just

instead. Just like shopping for a car, buying a miniature tree should be done carefully and from a trustworthy bonsai dealer, he said. Caring for a tree is a time commitment.

As Hammack trims, styles and shapes his trees, he melds math, art and nature. He considers every little aspect of the tree, like the negative space between the leaves and how the pot blends with the triangle of the plant.

This intentionality shows on the shelves spanning his yard, where he’s had some trees over 100 years old. Hammack has found bonsai to be a “hands on” art form, although he owns a bookcase full of literature on the practice, he said.

In both Hammack’s and Sunshine’s lives, bonsai has been more of a hobby. Over the decades of running the plant nursery, Sunshine would often come home from work only to spend another hour on the roughly 1,000 bonsai trees in his yard. Since his first tree, he said he’s been fascinated with how it responds to his action.

“It was like I was playing tennis with a plant,” he said. “I hit the ball one way, and it would return the service in another way. It was back and forth between me and the plant. There was a relationship.”

In Hammack’s yard, an over-four-foot bonsai tree named “Big Tex” sits at 67 years old. For years, it’s dominated the greenhouse, slowly maturing its shape as the world changes around it.

The tree has kept its character, indifferent to time. The same can be said about bonsai as an art form, which people have practiced for thousands of years, never branching too far from the pot.

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The Shorthorn: Drew Shaw

Daniel Hammack cares for the bonsai trees Aug. 17 at Sanderson Creek Bonsai in Fort Worth. The art form developed in Asia, and the word “bonsai” means “pot tree” in Japanese.


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ATHLETICS

Jon Fagg celebrates one year as Athletics director



The Shorthorn: Mary Abby Goss

Athletics director Jon Fagg spent 14 years at the University of Arkansas and over 25 years in college athletics. Fagg was announced as UTA's Athletics director June 14, 2022, and he officially began his tenure Aug. 1, 2022.

Fagg reinvented the Athletics department's culture through communication and respect

BY ISAAC APPELT

The Shorthorn sports editor

A figurine sits inside Athletics director Jon Fagg's office. It immortalizes Sisyphus, a Greek mythology figure who the gods sentenced to push a boulder up a hill for eternity.

Fagg wrote a thesis on the figure in high school. For him, the tale is all about perspective. While most hear the story and think about the negative, Fagg focuses on the simplicity of Sisyphus' life and jokes that pushing the rock will keep him in great shape.

"Most people would take Sisyphus and think about trudging and boredom and a lot of things," Fagg said. "I think about opportunity."



The Shorthorn: Christine Vo

Athletics director Jon Fagg laughs during the School of Social Work and Smart Hospital Ribbon Cutting on April 14 at the building's courtyard. Fagg attended the event alongside other faculty members.

Fagg spends his life focusing on solutions rather than problems. When he was announced as the Athletics director last June, it was the start of the next chapter of his life. After 14 years at the University of Arkansas and over 25 years in college athletics, Fagg finally ascended to the top position in an Athletics department.

Like Sisyphus, Fagg has pushed that rock to the top of the mountain. Now, "I hope it doesn't roll back down," he chuckled.

Fagg celebrated his one-year anniversary as Athletics director. When asked to grade his performance for the year, Fagg gave himself "hopefully a solid B."

"We're on the right track. I do think that our culture is shifting," he said.

Between having more meetings to encourage communication, playing weekly pick-up basketball games with the staff and building relationships with everyone in the Athletics department, Fagg is cultivating a culture he can be proud of.

The pick-up games give Fagg a chance to bond with his staff in a way that's not possible in an office. Trash talk over missed jumpers and foul calls are common. Fagg

ings, but Fagg said they're wonderful as long as there's a purpose. Consistent meetings help people stay updated and are easier to make up for if one gets canceled, he said.

If he's not in a meeting, the door to Fagg's office inside College Park Center is always open, baseball head coach Clay Van Hook said. If Fagg sees someone walking through, he'll peek his head out to say hello. Fagg's relational style is what makes him a powerful leader, Van Hook said.

While previous Athletics directors were largely institutional hires with UT System experience, Fagg was an outsider. Garcia said his curiosity and thirst for knowledge have helped create more communication and collaboration.

"His process of learning about us and learning about how we operate and everything has triggered us to communicate a lot more with one another, which has been a really positive thing," Garcia said.

Fagg's process goes deeper than learning about the university. He takes the time to build personal relationships with his staff, which matters a lot with the wide range of emotions during a day in the department, Garcia said.

"I think that people who feel valued but challenged will find a way to operate at peak performance," Fagg said.

Working together through those emotions requires people to have respect for each other. This office-wide respect helps people understand one another on a deeper level, Garcia said.

That respect comes from Fagg as well.

He said he represents an incredible university, and he wants to bring the respect he has for everyone with him

into the office every day.

"It makes you feel very supported," Garcia said. "It makes it OK to stop and take a second and back away because they understand that piece of your life."

It also makes it easier to deal with adversity. Fagg said the toughest parts of his first year were firing Greg Young, former men's basketball head coach, and not winning more. Fagg stressed the decision had nothing to do with Young as a person.

The coaching change was a risky move for Fagg. Young had been with the university for 14 years and held close relationships with a lot of the Athletics staff. Garcia said Fagg did a good job keeping the dynamic professional.

"He gave those of us that experienced it at a personal level some time and space to go through that, which is really important," Garcia said. "And then tried to manage the conversation to be about expectations or goals for the program."

The firing was Fagg's third coaching move in his first year. When he came to UTA, the department had two coaching vacancies after the baseball and softball coaches resigned following the 2022 season.

During Fagg's transition period, he filled both positions — hiring assistant coaches from Power Five schools to lead the teams. Van Hook got the nod for baseball July 1 and Kara Dill took the reins for softball July 8.

"We both had our heads on a swivel the whole time because [Fagg] had just gotten hired and I was in the process of getting hired, so there's always going to be that relational piece for us," Van Hook said.

During the hiring process, Van Hook said Fagg sold a vision of the university that he

aligned with. Since both were new hires, Fagg didn't have a UTA-centric pitch and the two bonded over their Power Five ties and coaching relationships with Fagg being a coach's son.

"He was basically selling me on himself," Van Hook said.

With new coaches on campus, Fagg wanted them to communicate with each other more. He said when he first arrived at the university, the Athletics department felt "siloe'd" with each sport doing their own thing. The department was doing great work, but not communicating, so things often fell through the cracks, Fagg said.

"We're on the right track. I do think that our culture is shifting."

**Jon Fagg
Athletics
director**

Now, Van Hook said coaches are constantly talking about how to improve the university.

When meetings aren't happening, people can find Fagg at any number of sporting events. His passion for athletics shows with his attendance. He comes early and stays until the end of each game, shaking each athlete's hand as they leave the playing field.

One of Garcia's favorite

moments with Fagg came at the softball team's home win over Texas Tech University in February. It was the team's first win of the season, and Garcia brought flowers for the three new coaches she helped hire as a member of the hiring committee. Fagg saw the flowers and said "that was you," referring to the coaches on the field.

"As a leader, he knew that was really important to me at that moment," Garcia said. "And he was like, 'go enjoy it.'"

With Fagg's culture of communication and collaboration, Van Hook compared the Athletics department to an arrow pointing up, ready to fire like a rocket. In Fagg's first year, the department notched two regular season championships, men's and women's tennis, and one conference tournament championship — men's tennis.

Fagg said some of his favorite moments this year have been experiencing campus life and enjoying the university's diversity. He said it was cool the first few times student-athletes recognized him at practices and games.

During Fagg's first year, there was a theme of newness. A new conference, a new university president, new coaches. Fagg said there was some uncertainty at the beginning as people settled into their new roles. It felt like a blur at times, but as he enters his second year, he is fully comfortable in his role and ready to hit the ground running.

"I think we've been making progress," Fagg said. "I don't think I should give myself that much credit. I'm pretty hard on myself. I think we're on the right track."