

Professors discuss their concerns with OIT issues

By Jake Tiger

AMID the bevy of technological issues across campus, Rider's Office of Information Technologies (OIT) hosted its first series of town halls in Rue Auditorium in Sweigart Hall on Feb. 1 and 2, allowing the university's disgruntled staff and faculty to voice their questions, suggestions and frustrations with the department.

The town halls came after a 2022 fall semester that was tainted by unreliable classroom equipment and insufficient support from Rider's OIT.

"To be fully transparent, it has been a nightmare. I said that in the town hall meeting yesterday, and I stand by what I said," Jessi Oliano, a professor who specializes in graphic design, said to The Rider News on Feb. 3. "The fall semester was extremely rough. ... When things in terms of technology aren't going well in such a visual course like graphic design, it really hinders our ability to deliver the content effectively to our students."

Senior Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer James Hartman, and Interim Transition Chief Information Officer Oliver Wendt conducted the discussions from the theater's stage, beginning each town hall with a breakdown of the OIT's top priorities going forward and how it plans to address them.

According to Wendt, one of the department's most dire concerns was replacing outdated



Adrienne Unfreed/The Rider News

Technological hiccups have plagued Rider classrooms in the 2022-23 school year.

technology throughout the university by means that both are realistic for Rider's budget and their dwindling team of technicians.

"We have quite a large fleet, but also a mostly aged fleet," said Wendt during the second town hall. "How do we not only update the legacy stuff,

but also create a plan that is sustainable going forward in terms of how we roll them out, deploy them and keep people working on the most cutting edge systems that they need to do their jobs."

Because of the outsourcing of Rider's OIT to Ellucian Services and the differing workforce strategy that comes with it, it has been difficult for Wendt and the reduced number of on-site OIT staff members to keep up with the constant flow of help desk tickets submitted everyday.

According to Associate Vice President for University Marketing and Communications Kristine Brown, Rider's OIT had 24 on-site employees and nine vacant positions when Ellucian took over. The OIT now has 18 permanent on-site employees, with many of the other positions being outsourced to Ellucian, such as operation of the help desk.

"The Ellucian model is one that works well at many college and university campuses across the country," said Brown in an email to The Rider News. "It is shortsighted to simply compare the number of staff employed by Rider before Ellucian arrived and now. The model of service delivery is very different, but we believe it will ultimately work very well for the Rider community."

At the second town hall, Wendt at one



**SEE OIT
PAGE 3**

Rider to lose over 30 professors over next two years

By Amethyst Martinez

AFTER teaching at Westminster Choir College (WCC) for 38 years, Rider professor Joel Phillips has reluctantly decided to retire.

"The first people I told were the students in my classes," said Phillips.

The composition and music theory professor isn't the only one, joining 25 other full-time faculty members who plan on retiring from the university within the next two years.

These full-time professors, along with 11 long-term adjunct faculty, have taken the incentive agreed to in the labor contract between faculty and the administration to retire from Rider, according to Rider's faculty union, leaving the potential for an exponentially growing hole in the university.

Jeffrey Halpern, professor and chief grievance officer for Rider's chapter of American Association of University Professors (AAUP), said there is no way to truly know how many of these positions will be filled, but knows it'll be "a very small amount."

Halpern also said that the largest college affected at the university would be the College of Arts and Sciences.

Part of the collective bargaining agreement reached this fall between the AAUP and the administration included a university incentive for those who chose to retire.

"The reason the university agreed to this is because they want to cut the number of full-time faculty," said Halpern.

According to Halpern, the agreement was that the faculty member would have to agree to fully

retire and declare whether or not it would be at the end of this academic year or the next, and, in return, the university would pay them their last year's salary over the next three years.

Although the reasons for retirement from the university vary, both Halpern and Phillips agreed many have chosen to accept the incentive due to low worker morale at Rider.

"I would say a vast majority of people who are taking this and who I've talked to have said their motivating factor was a feeling that it was not a good place to work anymore," said Halpern.

Phillips, personally, decided to retire for two reasons: the work environment at the university and the hope to protect his younger peers from faculty cuts.

"With the widespread destruction of this university, especially Westminster, layoffs are inevitable," said Phillips. "By leaving, I protect the job and health care of a junior colleague in my department who otherwise would get laid off and lose those things."

This year will be Phillips's 41st year teaching college classes. "That's the sort of long term commitment I have to our place," he said.

This fall, six adjunct professors were initially laid off after the university announced significant cuts of multiple programs across Rider this summer. Although those six layoffs were later rescinded, according to the AAUP, the fear for job security has become a considerable concern among faculty members.

Halpern said, "It's the constant worrying about: 'Will I be laid off?' 'Will the institution take other extreme measures?'"

Phillips, whose last semester at Rider will be spring 2024, said, "They chastise us because our enrollments are down, but they do everything they can to kill the program."

With over 30 professors retiring in the next two academic years, many long-tenured faculty who have developed deep ties with the university and its students will be leaving an open position in their department.

"I know from conversations why people are doing this," said Phillips. "A lot of them are doing it because [Rider] has become so toxic. There are people retiring who aren't old enough to retire, and they just can't take the toxic environment under this president anymore. They'd rather figure something else out than just endure this anymore."

Kristine Brown, associate vice president for university marketing and communications, said that decisions regarding faculty replacements will be determined by deans and departments after discussing requests that are brought forth to the university.

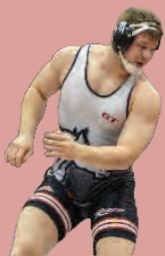
Phillips added, "The list of people I've seen that are going out is a list of people who have given their best for the institution. Like any organization, when people love it, they give themselves to it in ways that just can't be measured, and that's a list of people who represent that idea."

INSIDE

BALANCING ACT

As a wrestler, student, husband and father, David Szuba has his hands full.

PAGE 11



THE RIDER NEWS RESPONSE

The Rider News respond to Rider President Dell'Omo's university-wide email calling an article published in The Rider News "inaccurate."

PAGE 8

THE FEUD

Ten teams compete for \$25 Visa gift cards and bragging rights.

PAGE 5



SECURITY BRIEFS

BY SHAUN CHORNOBROFF

Catalytic Catastrophe

Stolen parts. On Feb. 1 at 9:42 a.m. a student reported to public safety that their catalytic converter was stolen off their vehicle. Through a subsequent investigation, it was determined that the theft occurred early in the morning of Jan. 31. After reviewing camera footage, a black four-door pick-up truck was identified as the suspect vehicle. This information was reported to and shared with local law enforcement agencies for further investigation.

Chairs on ice

Several swimming chairs. On Feb. 5 at 12:11 PM, Public Safety was on patrol in the area of the lake when they observed several chairs sitting out on the ice. A review of the camera footage in the area revealed that a group of unidentified individuals pushed the chairs onto the ice. This incident remains under investigation and if anyone has any information regarding this, please contact Public Safety.

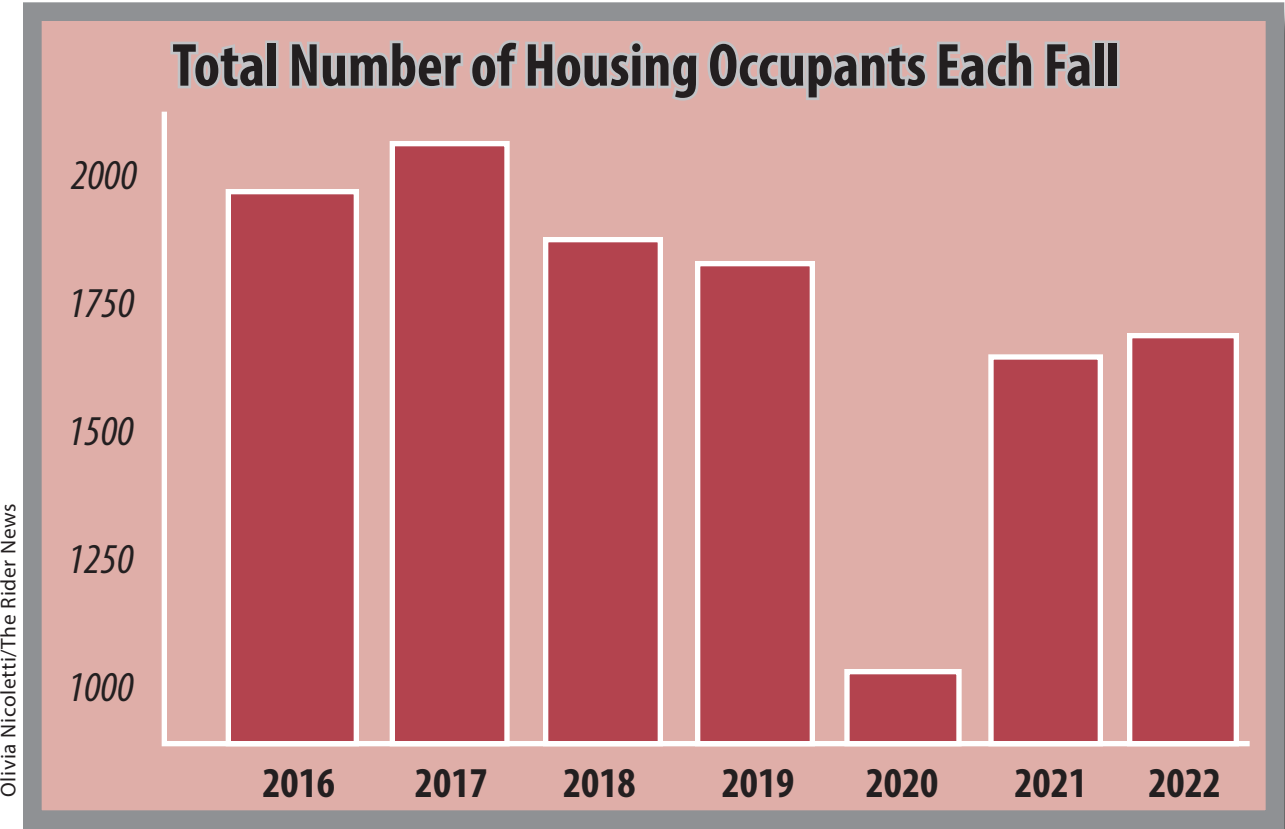
- Information provided by Public Safety Capt. Matthew Babcock

Rider announces death of senior organizational psychology major

By Olivia Nicoletti

On Jan. 27 Rider student Zachary Lodato, a senior organizational psychology major, died at the age of 24. According to a university email, a memorial service will be held on Saturday, Feb. 25 at 11 a.m. at Graceway Bible Church, located at 1934 Klockner Road in Hamilton. Donations to the church are encouraged in place of flowers. “As we respect the privacy of Zach’s family, we wish to convey our heartfelt condolences to all of his loved ones, including his mother Cathy Lodato,” the email said.

Rider reveals more than \$30 million housing revenue lost due to COVID



A graph depicting the total number of on campus residents each fall from 2016-2022

By Shaun Chornobroff

In 2017, Rider welcomed one of its largest freshman classes in recent memory. As a result, the school housed more than 2,000 undergraduate students that fall. When residents arrived at Rider University for the beginning of the school year from 2016 to 2019, the school reported more than 1,900 occupants each fall, according to statistics given to The Rider News. Once COVID-19 catapulted its way throughout the country, the university sent students home in March of 2020, expecting to return in a matter of weeks. Weeks became months, and Rider’s campus was one of many left desolate at the beginning of the 2020-21 school year, with classes mainly taking place via Zoom, in-person campus events nonexistent and strict social guidelines being enforced. For a university that was already trying to find itself financially, the consequence was more than \$30 million in lost revenue. “It really creates a challenge,” said James Hartman, Rider’s vice president for finance and chief financial officer. “The model is that you have certain baseline expenses that you have that is generally supported by revenue. ... You have a base model where you have to provide services, you have to provide dining options and everything for the students and that model generally doesn’t grow as much, sort of in conjunction as the residents grow.” Rider issued refunds after sending students home in the spring of 2020 because

of the pandemic and only registered 915 on-campus occupants in the fall; the result was approximately a \$34 million loss in auxiliary revenue, according to an email from Vice President for Student Affairs Leanna Fenneberg. The \$34 million figure accounts for the 2020 and 2021 fiscal years, a nearly two-year span from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2021. Nearly all of the vanished revenue is from refunds to students in the spring of 2020 and the more than 50% drop in residents the following fall. A small percentage of the auxiliary costs is from outside programs housed at Rider. Residential numbers rose to a more stable number as restrictions eased heading into the 2021-22 school year; however, the number of residents were still not back to pre-pandemic figures. In the fall of 2021, Rider welcomed 1,605 occupants, and at the beginning of the 2022-23 academic year, that figure only grew by 10 students. In a Jan. 27 interview, President Gregory Dell’Omo said Rider has a capacity of nearly 2,400 beds. “We’re talking anywhere from 500 to 800 empty beds on campus. That’s major revenue, and it’s just lost,” Dell’Omo said. Removing the pandemic-plagued 2020-21 school year, the average rate of undergraduate students living on campus is 56% and first-year students 82%, according to Fenneberg. When Dell’Omo interviewed for his current role, he said he met with Student Government Association (SGA) leaders and asked them the

biggest issue surrounding Rider. Housing was a nearly unanimous answer, according to the university president. Despite improvements in recent years, seven years after his appointment, Dell’Omo still sees housing as a problem for the university. “We still have way too many of the old fashioned kind of dorms. Double occupancy, bathroom at the end of the hall, as opposed to the more suite-like, apartment-like housing that students really want today,” Dell’Omo explained. The decrease in on-campus students that Rider faces mirrors a dip in enrollment the university is desperately trying to fix. When asked about the decrease in housing revenue since the fall of 2021 compared to that before the pandemic, Hartman said the university is facing an issue of “reduced revenue” rather than lost revenue. For the university to further itself on a path to financial stability, he emphasized the importance of Rider increasing the residents and overall enrollment. “Over 90% of our revenue is from tuition, room and board,” Hartman said. “So the more that we can raise that revenue and get back closer to that 2,000, it’s hugely helpful.”



James Hartman, vice president for finance and chief financial officer discusses the university’s spending decisions.

OIT Town Hall reveals widespread faculty dissatisfaction

CONT'D FROM PAGE 1

point mentioned the help desk’s growing backlog of cases, stating that it had accumulated over 200 open tickets as of that morning.

“There’s 130 academic spaces that are being utilized this semester, and how do we tackle those when they all are aging at about the same rate?” said Wendt during the first town hall. “It’s like a giant game of Whac-A-Mole: you fix one, then there’s another one.”

Following the opening statements, Hartman and Wendt opened up the town hall to the faculty and staff in attendance. What started as a back-and-forth discussion gradually trickled into a downpour of grievances as unified dissatisfaction with the OIT became painstakingly clear.

One such grievance came from Oliano, who recalled an instance where an OIT technician “stormed” into her classroom and started “screaming” at her in front of students for submitting too many tickets.

“I was so shaken and upset,” said Oliano to The Rider News. “I can’t picture myself acting like that and still having a job, to be honest. And I’m surprised that Oliver [Wendt] looked shocked when he heard this, it looked like he was hearing this for the first time.”

Librarian Sharon Yang also spoke up, stating that, despite Rider’s promises, the quality of service had taken a noticeable dip since Ellucian took over.

“We had a dedicated person from OIT to serve our needs, so we were very happy,” said Yang during the second town hall. “Suddenly he was gone, but we were told we would have the same level of support as when he was here. ... The new company came along,



Professor **Jessi Oliano** expresses uncertainty amidst OIT issues.

and suddenly, we find out the support level we used to have is not there anymore.”

Another complaint came from David Dewberry, professor of communication and president of Rider’s chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), who claimed that his computer

was outdated to the point of “no longer taking any updates whatsoever.”

According to Emre Yetgin, an associate professor on the AAUP’s negotiating team, Rider and the union agreed on a technology replacement system in September that would supply Rider’s faculty with new computers on a revolving four-year schedule. The system also ensured that full-time faculty always have a computer that is no more than 5 years old.

Hartman provided clarification as to why the technology at Rider has fallen behind as of late, citing the lingering, complex financial conundrum created by COVID-19.

“We’re coming up on three years when the pandemic started, and a lot of our resources shifted to make sure that we could work our way through the pandemic,” said Hartman during the second town hall. “Those machines that were 4 or 5 years old back in 2020 are now 7 and 8 years old because we had to shift our resources. Oliver and I are trying to put together a plan to address that backlog and get us back to a regular cycle of device release.”

While Hartman offered a valid explanation for the shortcomings and mentioned that there is a plan coming to fruition, the unfortunate reality for Rider’s faculty and staff is that this plan cannot be enacted until the necessary funds are available, whenever that may be.

“I’m hopeful that there’s something,” said Oliano. “[I’m] not sure what [it] is or when that something is going to happen, but we’ll see. I mean, I have tickets to put in this week. We’ll see what happens.”

Felix Bird gives a guide to composing in MCHAT forum

By Jay Roberson

FELIX Bird began his presentation “Composing for TV and Film” on Feb. 2 by giving each audience member a copy of his resume and a packet highlighting the key to obtaining a career in composition.

His lists of works in television and film extend from comedies like “How I Met Your Mother” to

dramas like “Switched At Birth,” but he reminded the aspiring composers that he once started somewhere just like them.

Junior musical theater major Nicole Duffy, who has previously recorded songs with Bird, spoke about what she took away from his presentation and how it related to her future career.

“It was really nice to see the application of what his work is and what he does because, I mean, I really just came in and sang and recorded, then I was done,” Duffy said.

Bird emphasized that as a composer, it is essential to learn about master recording and publishing, but one factor that determines the success of a composer is drive and ambition. He also included the importance of self-advocacy.

When asked what one piece of advice he would give to student composers, Bird spoke about the value of internships, even if they are unpaid.

“I recommend to anyone who’s considering a career in music to go and intern. You learn about music publishing, one of the performance rights organizations, so much more important. It’s so much more important to go intern and get the knowledge,” said Bird.

The guest speaker also recommended that if students have already composed music, it is important they register it in a music library or with another publishing company. This way, the composer has the rights to their own music and is able to profit.

His presentation was a part of the Music Composition History and Theory (MCHAT) forum series which is a series that gives music majors the opportunity to learn from and talk to professional musicians. Sharon Mirchandani, chair and professor of Musicology and organizer of the MCHAT forums, explained which parts of Bird’s presentation intrigued her the most.

“Well, he had a lot of insights into the behind the scene processes, like, you know, getting royalties and

copyright fees and the legalities of it that I thought was interesting,” Mirchandani said.

Composers publish their music to something called a music library, and filmmakers pay to use their work, so there is a profit on both ends. The combination of real experiences in internships, publication to music libraries and dedication to the craft can make for a successful composition career, as Bird proves.

Christopher Young, employer relations coordinator in the College of Arts and Sciences, spoke about how he found a speaker as notable as Bird through the Westminster Conservatory.

“I just figured it was a natural collaboration to bring a notable film score to Rider and specifically Westminster to, you know, just give some insight on a career in composition,” said Young.

Bird proved to be passionate about the craft of composition as well as the success of young composers.

“Someone came and gave a talk at college while I was there. He said he worked as a taxi driver for years to do this, and he said like you got to be willing to lay down and die for scoring, for composing, and I still think the same thing is true for any career in entertainment,” Bird said.

Mirchandani also noted that as the semester continues, MCHAT will have forums every other week which will include more composers and other guest speakers.

“So in two weeks, on Feb. 16, we have another speaker who’s coming. He’s a professor of Public Musicology coming from the University of Maryland, and he’s going to talk about a book that he’s written called ‘Industry,’” said Mirchandani.

Bird’s presentation started off the spring semester’s MCHAT forum in an inspiring way as students envisioned what their future career could look like.

Mirchandani said, “It just shows them one more opportunity out of many. So a lot of our students come here and they compose choral music, or musical theater, or they perform, they compose for ensembles or electronic music, so it shows just one more opportunity for them to go out and have a career after this.”



Guest speaker **Felix Bird** presents for Rider MCHAT forum.

Rider counseling takes a new approach to wellness

By Kaitlyn McCormick

EXACERBATED by the pandemic and pressing global issues, conversations surrounding student mental health and avenues for wellness have been pushed to the forefront of campus discussions; now, Rider is expanding its scope and continuing to employ a holistic approach to see students flourish, utilizing creative methods to redefine therapeutic intervention.

Faculty and staff gathered via Zoom on Feb. 3 for back-to-back presentations on student mental wellbeing, with a special interest in diversity. Anissa Moody, interim director of the counseling center and staff psychologist, discussed along with other counseling center members the resources available at the university to a digital audience of faculty and staff.

One main takeaway: Rider's move away from a traditional "closed door" model of treatment for servicing students, which Moody explained has often

led to the stigma that surrounds mental health.

Instead, outreach has become a main focus of the counseling center.

"We placed ourselves in circumstances and situations through our partnerships and collaborative relationships, where people can now come and talk with us and we go to them," Moody said in an interview after the presentation.

"When you have a prevention plan that allows for outreach across the campus, you have more access and also you're educating more of the student body," Moody said.

The center has an embedded counselor placed in the athletics department, and is working toward establishing stronger connections with the Student Accessibility and Support Services (SASS) office.

Staff psychologist Jill Siletski elaborated, saying, "I'm proud to announce that we have a workshop in collaboration [with SASS], specifically for neurodiverse, learning-diverse and honestly any other SASS student that struggles with interpersonal skills and expressing themselves."

Moody's presentation followed a workshop presented by guest speaker Dr. Desiree Byrd, an associate professor of psychology at the City University of New York, Queens College and neurologist at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai.

This workshop, entitled "Brief Interactions, Big Impact: Being responsive to student mental health and identity diversity Part 2," was made possible due to a 2-year, \$500,000 grant administered by the New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education and the United States Department of Education.

Vice President for Student Affairs Leanna Fenneberg explained that this grant has a specific focus on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on underrepresented and marginalized students, and a part of that focus has been dedicated to supporting student mental health.

Though requested, presence by The Rider News at Byrd's workshop was not permitted due to the sensitive nature of discussion, ultimately at the

discretion of Byrd and those involved in planning the event. Byrd was unable to speak separately with The Rider News due to scheduling conflicts.

Fenneberg responded to the request via email, writing in part, "We believe the knowledge of student and media presence in the discussion will potentially negatively influence active participation in conversation by attendees as the presenter seeks vulnerability in the space," though she expressed the group's excitement toward The Rider News' wish to address "critical issues of mental health" and agreed to an interview.

"Our collective traditional perspective around mental health is individual therapy, and that is very important for some people, but it's not the only way to help support mental wellbeing," Fenneberg explained. "With [Byrd's] workshop, we really wanted to surface the intersections of social identity with mental health."

Moody's presentation also focused heavily on the sense of self-awareness that this generation of students seems to have in terms of their mental health.

"A lot of students present and are quite aware of the impact of accessibility and social justice in terms of how it impacts their mental health and how they participate on college campus and seek us out for support for all of those issues," Moody said.

The counseling center is promoting demographic-specific groups and workshops, for example for LGBTQ+, minority, or male-identifying students, as well as promoting other methods to wellness like meditation and yoga.

"We're holistic and we believe in wellness," Moody said. "People don't necessarily thrive and flourish when we focus on their deficit. It's when you focus on the whole person and when you connect. ... Emotional support is for everyone."

Rider's counseling center is located in Zoerner House and can be reached via phone at 609-896-5157 or email at counseling@rider.edu



Courtesy of Rider University

Anissa Moody highlighted the services offered at Rider's counseling center in a presentation on Feb. 3.

Department chair hopeful for future of education

By Felicia Roehm

SUSAN Dougherty became the new department chair of the College of Education in the 2022 fall semester and hopes to help fight the teacher shortage, a systemic problem facing today's school districts.

"There are societal forces around pay, around respect for teachers, around opportunities for advancement in teaching that makes the teaching profession at the moment perhaps less desirable than some other professions," said Dougherty.

She believes that teaching is an awarding and satisfying career that helps both the world's and society's futures.

Dougherty hopes that with the teacher shortage, some of the issues in the education system will be forced to be solved, including compensation. She anticipates that with more teachers choosing to walk away, schools will give educators a salary increase.

The college's goals "are to make sure that [they] let students and prospective students and folks who are interested in a career that's very meaningful and impactful to know that the career of education can be incredibly fulfilling, exciting and is a great place for someone who wants to play that role in society," said Dougherty.

However, she wants others to realize that teaching does not have to be a lifelong career and she wants to discuss the idea with more students that if they choose the path of education they don't have to teach for their entire life. Those who leave education are often wanted in other professions.

"Educators, if they decide to leave the classroom, are very highly sought after. They have developed amazing skills as educators and they're wanted in business, wanted in the public sector in all kinds of roles and so I also think that what you learn as a college student preparing to be a teacher is also a great preparation for many things," Dougherty said.

She also seeks to develop students' skills when



Courtesy of Rider University

Susan Dougherty hopes to aid future educators in light of ongoing teacher shortages.

discussing controversial topics involving book bans and what is authorized to be discussed in classrooms in different states.

"One of the things I think we can do to help prepare students is to help them feel more comfortable discussing controversial issues and feeling comfortable knowing what their position is and supporting that position," said Dougherty.

She aspires to grow the number of faculty and students in the education department due to the teacher shortage.

According to an article by the U.S. News titled "New Federal Data: Too Few Applicants in K-12 Schools," over half of public schools said they are understaffed for the 2022-23 school year. Although some believe that this issue is caused by the

COVID-19 pandemic, many schools were already understaffed before the pandemic began.

Dougherty believes that Rider's education program can create teachers who are disciplined and ready for the workforce once they graduate.

Jacqueline Frazier, a former student-teacher, said she adored her experience. She loved creating fun-themed lesson plans and playing with the students, but the teacher shortage did impact the Lawrenceville Intermediate school where she was student-teaching as well.

The school was having a challenging time finding substitutes when the teachers were out, forcing it to decide which class got a substitute for the day. If the class already had more than one teacher in the room then the school would give priority to a class that only had one teacher.

Additionally, Frazier shared her own experience when one of her teachers was out for the day and, unfortunately, the school couldn't get a substitute to replace her until halfway through the day.

While Frazier really wants all her students to do well in class and believes that all teachers feel the same way, she also expressed that teachers deserve more recognition for their hard work and efforts.

She believes that more compensation should be given to educators but thinks that the more educational background a teacher has the more money they deserve.

Frazier is excited to continue teaching and loved being able to be in a classroom. "This is the best internship I've done, [I] definitely got placed really well, and I'm enjoying it," she said.

Frazier will begin a full time teaching position at Lawrenceville Intermediate on Feb. 16 and said she is excited to return to the school where she began her teaching journey.



Julia Train/The Rider News

Julia Train/The Rider News

Tau Kappa Epsilon (TKE) stands in anticipation before answering the question.

Senior global supply chain major **Brandon Rios** gives a chuckle to the audience, making the participants laugh.

Student Entertainment Council hosts “The Feud”

By **Julia Train**

When thinking of “Family Feud,” Steve Harvey immediately comes to mind. Clips from the show circulating constantly on social media often display iconic moments between the host and players.

On Saturday, Feb. 5, the Student Entertainment Council (SEC) hosted “The Feud,” a live game show based on the popular television show.

Ten teams of four students competed against each other to win a \$25 gift card, and the group with the longest winning streak won.

The Bart Luedeke Center Theater was half-filled with students who showed up to support their friends, watch the game or play.

Upon arriving, members of Tau Kappa Epsilon (TKE) helped students sign their teams up at a table outside of the theater to get a chance to play.

“Put your team name and your names. Once the event starts, teams will randomly be drawn and called up to participate in the game show,” said Michael Costa, a junior business administration major, to students approaching the table.

Costa, the president of TKE and a member of SEC, was in charge of the event and recruited his fraternity brothers to help with signing teams up and keeping score.

Inside, the stage was made similar to the set of Family Feud: a screen that displayed the questions with hosts guiding the game. Two white podiums with buzzers on them were in the middle of the room and there were three podiums for each team.

Once the game started, the hosts — Brandon Rios, a member of TKE and Kayelena Brimage, a member of SEC — welcomed everyone and proceeded to pick the first two teams from a glass bowl.

“I was just asked by a couple members from the Student Entertainment Council if I would like to [host] and I love to do it so I was more than willing to host,” said Rios, a senior global supply chain management major.

Rios has been a host for other SEC events in the past as well.

Team “Tyler” and Team “Better Call Saul” were the first to compete. Like the original show, a representative from each team was called to the middle podium. The first to hit the buzzer had to guess the number one answer given in a prior survey. If they didn’t answer number one, the other representative was able to guess.

The team of whoever said the highest ranked answer was able to “pass or play.” If they chose to pass, the other team took their turn and they would

hope for a steal. If they chose to play, all the answers on the board had to be said without reaching three strikes.

After three strikes, the opposing team would attempt to steal. If they guessed correctly, they would be able to stay on and the other team would leave. If they didn’t successfully steal and guessed incorrectly, they had to leave the stage.

“According to the survey, what is the best residence hall?” asked Rios.

“Better Call Saul” was the winning team of the first round, so they remained on stage while another team was picked.

By the 15th round, “The Drea’s” had the longest winning streak of six rounds.

Although the team was winning, they remained humble.

“I’m not too confident. I’m scared, but I’m having fun,” said Darren Rush, a senior criminal justice major, when Rios checked in with the eventual winning team at the top of the round.

Five rounds later, Team “Drea’s Team” kept their streak and was announced the winner.



Julia Train/The Rider News

The winning team, (left) senior marketing major **Justin Drea**, senior elementary education major **Allison Pitner**, senior elementary education major **Juliana Vierbuchen** and senior criminal justice major **Darren Rush** (right).

Julia Train/The Rider News

Julia Train/The Rider News

Junior business administration major **Mollie Brislin** leans over the table urgently to let out an answer.

Senior entrepreneurial studies major **Kayelena Brimage** holds the microphone for a contestant.

Shedding Light on Black Excellence: Black Men Unified

By **Tristan E. M. Leach**

BLACK History Month is a time to reflect on both the triumphs and struggles of Black people in America throughout history, and Rider actively participates with a list of events, discussions and meetings all month long. Promoting those events and meetings is Black Men Unified, a club that works to strengthen healthy perceptions of Black men on Rider’s campus.

Black Men Unified is one of four active clubs on campus that works to teach about the Black experience. Like many clubs on campus, Black Men Unified found that they were struggling after returning from the pandemic; however, there was a group of students who were ready to take up the torch and rekindle their fire.

Lorinda Laube, a senior behavioral science major, is the president of Black Men Unified. Laube joined the club last year after seeing the table at Broncapalooza, the club fair at Rider. At the time Justin Thomas, a graduate of Rider, was president and the only full time executive board member. Laube offered her help to Thomas, as she already had experience being on the e-board of Rider’s Haitian Student Association.

Laube became secretary of the club to help get it back on track. Through this, Laube and Thomas became close friends and soon, Laube was asked by Thomas to run for president.

“At first it was because Justin had asked me to [run for president] and I had told him I don’t want this club to die,” said Laube.

However, Laube discovered during winter break that her role had much importance than originally thought. Her perspective on the work she and her e-board does shifted to one of deeper understanding.

“It’s kind of changed for me now. Before it was for my friend, but now having gone through the experiences I have gone through and meeting the people that I meet, I genuinely do think I have a responsibility to make sure I create a space where they [Black men] can be themselves and connect with other Black men on campus,” Laube said.

Throughout history, Black men have had negative stereotypes imposed upon them and are held to impossibly high standards by their communities, their families and society in general. Black Men Unified works to combat the negativity and allows Black men to view themselves in a positive light.

Laube stressed the importance of Black women supporting Black men, but not contributing to the toxic masculinity that Black men are taught to live with.

“I see the way they [Black men] operate and they’re all very strong individuals. The world kind of negates how they feel or kind of shun them showing emotions. I’ve done my part in being toxic and bringing down Black men in terms of my brother. Now understanding how I played a role in the way he is, I want to make sure I’m not that way towards other Black men,” Laube said.

Greg Anthony Jones, is a junior political science major and secretary of Black Men Unified.

Jones stressed the importance of creating positive perceptions of Black men and how as a Black man, he is putting in the work.

“I feel as though the negative stereotypes, when it comes to Black men, is more exemplified through how we are perceived when it comes to athletics and our academic ability,” said Jones. “How the Black man or the Black presence on Rider’s campus is not really expressed through our creativity or anything that is relative to us besides being athletic or just being culturally Black.”

Both Jones and Laube stressed the importance of cultivating the Black experience on campus and appreciating the beauty of Black people. This includes finding more members to join Black Men Unified and increasing involvement at the events.

Laube’s current goals for the club is to get more Black men involved and interested in joining Black Men Unified. Laube noted that the club is mostly women and while she sees no problem with the allyship, she hopes more men will take note of the safe space. She hopes that when she steps down later this year, a Black man will be president.

Until that time comes, Black Men Unified will continue to meet and contribute to events happening during Black History Month. The club met for the first time this semester on Feb. 1 and played a spirited game of This or That. Black Men Unified next’s general meeting is Feb. 23 in Bierenbaum Fisher Hall 302, but the club is currently working on some events for Black History Month.

For both Laube and Jones, the themes of Black History Month are present everyday.

“What [Black Men Unified] means to me, is not just the mission of empowering Black men but also me doing my part in the community. If you had told me in high school I’d be president of two clubs I’d be like ‘Huh? I don’t know what you’re talking about.’ Being friends with all these people and understanding my role as a Black woman in our community in America and the representation that needs to happen, even at Rider,” said Laube.

Jones said, “For me, Black history is everyday. I appreciate the month and the time we have to be more fixated or to celebrate our history, our accolades and what not. I believe that everything we have accomplished should be recognized on a day to day basis.”

If you are interested in joining or learning more about Black Men Unified they can be found on Instagram @blackmenunified

This article is part of the Shedding Light on Black Excellence, a February series by The Rider News to showcase impactful Black figures at Rider University.



Photo courtesy of Lorinda Laube

The members and e-board of Black Men Unified pose for a photo at the end of their first meeting this semester.



Photo courtesy of Lorinda Laube

Lorinda Laube is a senior behavioral science major and president of Black Men Unified. Laube hopes to see the club grow in membership.

Photo courtesy of Greg Anthony Jones



Junior political science major **Greg Anthony Jones** is secretary of Black Men Unified.



Courtesy of Lorinda Laube

Black Student Union kicks off Black History Month

By Asia McGill

THE month of February means the honoring of Black History, and members of Rider’s Black Student Union (BSU) began the celebration with the raising of a Black Lives Matter flag outside of the Bart Luedeke Center (BLC) on Feb. 1. The ceremony began with junior global studies major and BSU President Kayla McIntyre, who spoke about the recent death of Tyre Nichols.

On the night of Jan. 7, 29-year-old Nichols was injured after a physical altercation with multiple Memphis police officers, and died of his injuries three days later. Nichols’ death has sparked national outrage.

“We call for justice for Tyre. The numerous men and women, Black men and women that have been brutally maimed and murdered at the hand of a police system that systematically oppresses minorities,” McIntyre said.

McIntyre invited the crowd into a moment of silence before her closing statement: “May his memory be a blessing, and may his family receive comfort during this time.”

For the BSU, McIntyre works alongside junior vice president Corrine Walton-Macaulay, junior public relations chair Naa’san Carr and sophomore member at large Faith Robinson-Hughes.

Walton-Macaulay, a health science major, is “focused on making the environment [Rider] more inclusive for other students,” and to be the “anchor” she wishes she had as a student of color.

“I have chosen to use my experience as a Black woman, and as a student here to connect with other students of color,” Walton-Macaulay said.

Film and television major Robinson-Hughes

desired for her speech not to be about her personal experiences as a student of color, but what the Black Lives Matter movement means to her.

“As a community, as much as we celebrate our triumphs... We must remember the hardships of Black Americans,” Robinson-Hughes said.

The following speech was presented by Carr, a political science major that expressed what being a part of BSU meant to him.

“Black Student Union has not only enhanced our culture among Rider’s campus, but also allows us to create that safe space, and have a home where we can feel represented,” Carr said.

Carr emphasized in his speech that BSU is an organization that aims to help all students, and that “regardless of how challenging our lives may be, to not give up.”

McIntyre returned to the podium, and shared some of her experiences being a Black woman studying in the field of education.

“Being the only Black girl in my class, I feel like all eyes are on me because of my appearance... sometimes I feel like the ‘token Black girl’ in the education department,” McIntyre said.

McIntyre concludes her speech with a “call for transparency,” and reminds the crowd that though the raising of the flag is important, there is still a long way to go for “efforts of inclusivity.”

All members exited the podium as their speeches concluded and stood before the pole that would wave a new flag, a black flag.

McIntyre attached the Black Lives Matter flag to the pole outside of the BLC, and pulled the rope as it waved in the overcast sky.

If you are interested in contacting a member of BSU or want to be informed about upcoming events, they can be reached through Instagram @RiderBSU.



Asia McGill/The Rider News

Executive board members of Rider's Black Student Union hold Black Lives Matter signs at the flag raising. From left to right: **Faith Robinson-Hughes**, a sophomore film and television major, **Naa'san Carr**, a junior public relations major, **Corrine Walton-Macaulay**, a junior health science major and **Kayla McIntyre**, a junior global studies major.

Shedding Light on Black Excellence: Rashawn Burrell



Photo courtesy of Rashawn Burrell

Senior computer science major, **Rashawn Burrell**, hopes to work at N.A.S.A. someday.

By Hannah Newman

As a rocketship blasted off into space, the acronym N.A.S.A. (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) appeared in big bold white letters. Exhaust filled the television screen and captured the attention of an elementary school boy who locked his eyes to the screen and said to his mother, “I want to do this.”

Senior computer science major Rashawn Burrell has allowed his childhood dreams to drive his efforts throughout college and work toward his dream of securing a position as an employee at N.A.S.A.

“Sometimes I think to myself, ‘I want to make that child happy so let’s see if I can put myself in a position where I can say ‘oh I work here now,’ ” said Burrell.

Originally from Salisbury, Maryland, and now residing in North Brunswick, New Jersey, Burrell grew up with a dream of working in the aerospace industry. The more his mother would feed his craving with magazines and manuals from N.A.S.A., the stronger

Burrell’s aspiration of working there became. His interests growing up consisted of wrestling, football and animation technology. Burrell had a vision of going to college for animation, but found himself picking computer science when declaring his major at Rider, since animation was not an option and computer science was the most similar major. With a strong and strict dedication to academics, Burrell decided not to go to college for sports; however, he found it imperative to be involved on campus. Having had a friend from high school on the club volleyball team, Burrell took it upon himself to try something new and join. He then became the secretary of men’s club volleyball his sophomore year, and worked his way up to be president his senior year. “There’s so many people that come in and out of that club and the group that we have here I see as my brothers. Their passions makes you just want to do more for them,” said Burrell.

Coming out of his junior year, Burrell did not have any internships lined up for himself. Burrell’s adviser, Assistant Professor Md Liakat Ali, who works in the department of computer science and physics pointed him in a different direction, which opened the door to a new level of passion for his future career goals: a research opportunity that pays students to stay on campus and research anything they are passionate about.

The Ronald E. McNair research program was designed for underprivileged students with a desire to obtain higher education. Students are required to collect research about a subject of interest and attend conferences to present that research and hear about others.

Burrell, with a hope to obtain his Ph.D, dedicated his research to human interactions with artificial intelligence (AI) and how far it can advance before we can give it more prominent attention.

Burrell’s first conference was in Atlanta, Georgia, where he was introduced to other students around the country who studied all types of sciences, including computer science and biochemistry. He was also exposed to many different ideas from peers which sparked a love for this kind of work within him.

Soon after the conference, Burrell was given the opportunity to present his research at The University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) and travel to different universities across California to listen and connect with others who study similar areas of interest.

“The McNair program really sparked the travel in me so I’m really hoping that I can go out and see what I can do, because the Ph.D journey for me is more of an experience,” said Burrell.

Ali responded to Burrell's efforts with encouragement and a foreshadowed feeling of success for his future.

“Rashawn is very hardworking and eager to learn. With his unwavering determination and passion for computer science, especially artificial intelligence, it is clear that Rashawn is destined for great things in his career and foreshadows a successful future in the computer science field,” Ali said. "Rashawn’s positive attitude, ability to adapt with the new environment, willingness to take on challenges and determination to succeed, despite obstacles, make him a role model for those who wish to follow in his footsteps.”

This program has continued to play an influential role in Burrell’s life, both in terms of his career and experiences with others that he gained over just a few months.

“Just getting into the McNair program, the family and the connections that they have with each other is something that is almost like a fairytale,” said Burrell. “You don’t believe it's true until you can call up anyone in the program and have an old family conversation at any time.”

Burrell’s journey is only beginning as he will soon be receiving his bachelor’s degree. Even today, the little boy who dreamed of working for N.A.S.A. remains present within Burrell and has gained the support of others he’s crossed paths with while proceeding to build the bridge between his childhood vision and his future.

“Rashawn is one of the smartest people you will ever meet and he always accomplishes what he sets his mind to and he will especially when he goes to work for N.A.S.A.,” said senior marketing major and Burrell's junior-year roommate Blake Oramas. “He’s going to do big things and I couldn’t be happier to know him and have him as a roommate.”

This article is part of the Shedding Light on Black Excellence, a February series by The Rider News to showcase impactful Black figures at Rider University.

The Rider News response to Dell'Omo's university-wide email

THE worst thing a journalist or news organization can be called is inaccurate. A reporter's goal is to deliver the truth, whether it's what people want to hear or not.

When Rider President Gregory Dell'Omo sent out a university-wide email on Feb. 1 calling the headline of an article detailing his planned retirement at the end of the 2024-25 school year "inaccurate," our initial reaction was confusion.

Dell'Omo's email discredited the reporting in the piece and accused The Rider News of misconstruing a recorded interview conducted on Jan. 27 and failing to place his comments in context.

Upon reading his final paragraph, in which Dell'Omo wrote, "If and when I have retirement plans, please know that they will be announced formally and directly to the University community, not in the student newspaper," a feeling of disappointment was felt throughout the newsroom. The conclusion of this email that was sent to thousands of people was perceived as a direct insult, not only to our student newspaper, but the student journalists who run it. Every week, The Rider News staff works tirelessly to bring objective news, sports, features, and opinion to the university community.

At The Rider News, we strive to uphold the same standard of professionalism that any other newspaper in the country would follow. Many of the student journalists on The Rider News editorial board have interned at professional journalism organizations, including executive editor, Shaun Chornobroff, and managing editor, Amethyst Martinez, the author of the original article that faced public criticism from the university president.

Chornobroff's experience with the Asbury Park Press and Martinez's with NJ.com and The Star Ledger have proven that the process of reporting remains the same, both at The Rider News and these professional publications, the standard being: seek the truth and report it.

At a university that heavily promotes engaged learning among its core missions, The Rider News accomplishes and puts these ideals into practice every single week for all of the student journalists involved.

Every reporter on the newspaper staff follows strict guidelines to keep our organization reputable, an essential part of working in this field.

But when the president of the university that we represent publicly questions our accuracy, it can be shocking and disheartening.

The Rider News strives to provide information from all sides to the Rider community so that readers may come to informed conclusions at their own discretion.

After reading the email, we knew we had to defend our journalism to the university community and provide the proof supporting the accuracy of our article and headline. Immediately, The Rider News decided to release the interview audio recording along with a transcript.

It fell on us as reporters to pull together a rational and appropriate response that accurately represented the newspaper as well as our own journalistic integrity.

Although Dell'Omo questioned the integrity of the reporting, the audio and the transcripts speak for themselves.

"I'm hoping as I go out, my last two and a half years, I guess that I have left, trying to get the university to a position where whoever follows me as president hopefully can have a little bit easier time doing it," Dell'Omo said during his interview.

In the week since the transcript and audio were published, we have heard nothing further from Dell'Omo, nor have we received any apology for sending out a rash, university-wide email that had the potential to damage the reputation of student journalists and Rider's award-winning newspaper.

Being questioned by the sources that we feature is part of being a journalist, and we wouldn't be surprised to find out Dell'Omo has been unhappy about numerous articles covering his tenure as president of Rider University. However, the reaction to this specific article took not only The Rider News, but quite possibly the entire Rider community, by surprise.

As we've done for more than nine decades, The Rider News will continue to cover prevalent and pressing topics to the university and bring news to the Rider community objectively. Like all professional news organizations, we publish corrections or clarifications if we make an unfortunate mistake. We also stand together behind our work when it is unjustly discredited, as in this instance. Right or wrong, we will provide our audience with the evidence, the facts and, most importantly, the truth.

This editorial expresses the unanimous opinion of The Rider News Editorial Board. This week's editorial was written by Executive Editor Shaun Chornobroff and Managing Editor Amethyst Martinez. .







THE Rider News

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Former AAUP leader calls for trustees to remove 'a man who admits no failure'

On Jan. 17, John Guarino, the current chairman of Rider's board of trustees, announced the extension of Rider President Gregory Dell'Omo's contract as president of the university. As with the two previous announcements of Dell'Omo's reappointments, the chair's message did not specifically identify any 'accomplishments' to explain the board's decision, though he states there are 'many', but instead provided hollow business rhetoric which claimed, without irony, that Dell'Omo was 'transform[ing] Rider into a financially viable institution.'

Unfortunately, the reality is the opposite. Anyone bothering to monitor Rider's financial performance during Dell'Omo's tenure would know that he has ravaged Rider's finances while pursuing a series of failed 'strategic initiatives.'

While Dell'Omo constantly deflects any responsibility for these failures as the result of 'the environment' or, 'these are challenging times,' Rider's peer institutions have presidents who have increased enrollment and provided prudent financial management for their institutions, and they have managed this in an 'environment' of moderately fluctuating student demographics and a pandemic.

Perhaps it is time to shift focus from Dell'Omo, a man who admits no failures and is determined to stay, and appeal to those who hired him and who have, to the detriment of the university, continued to extend his contract in the face of these failures: Rider's board of trustees.

Rider's self-appointed, self-perpetuating board is composed of 25-30 members. No current members have had experience as full-time members of a university faculty.

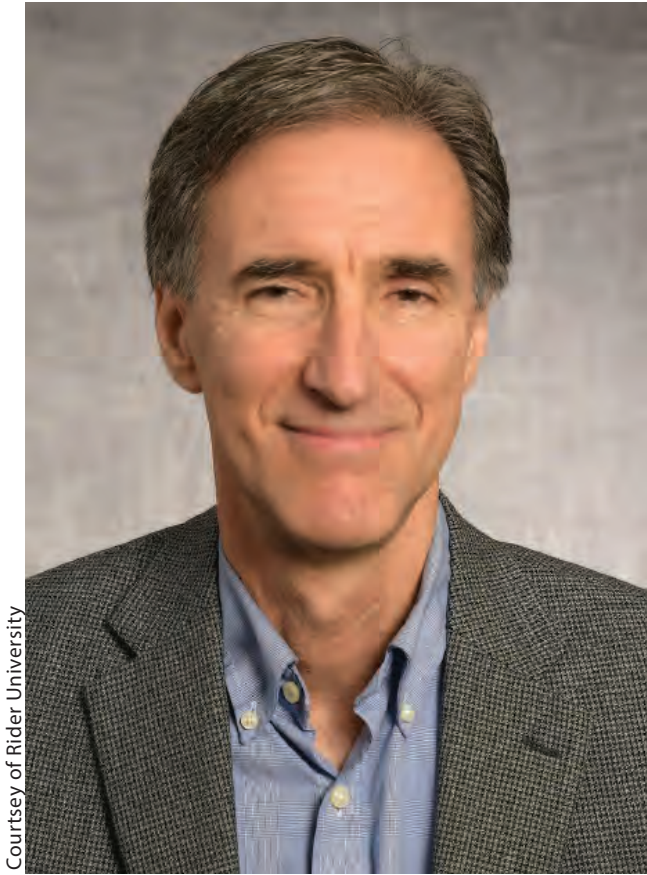
The operation of the board is opaque. They do not hold public meetings and they do not publish minutes of their meetings. They operate based on bylaws that are not published, and they operate with little oversight from the state.

But what is most troubling is that they suffer from information asymmetry. All of the information they receive concerning Rider's operation is fed to them by the very people they are tasked with supervising.

Given the questionable decisions made by this board, it is reasonable to assume that this information asymmetry, coupled with their limited knowledge of higher education administration and academic work, has distorted their decision making.

So if Rider is being 'transformed' as we are being told by Rider's board chairman, then we should also expect Rider's board to transform. They should be willing to hear from other stakeholders, and they should be willing to have those stakeholders participate in key decisions on the future of the university. Faculty, students and alumni from all of the colleges should have representation on Rider's board since, unlike the current members of Rider's board of trustees, they all have a significant stake in whether or not Rider survives the next three years.

Arthur Taylor
professor of information systems



Courtesy of Rider University

GREEN CORNER

Gen Z and the endgame of sustainability

As a college student having grown up in the turbulent 2010's, this generation has witnessed a barrage of political, social, economic and environmental disasters. After a decade of sensationalized politics, a recession and a seemingly endless news cycle of natural disasters; this generation is fed up with the self-serving nature of the capitalist machine. Our experiences as well as our unique access to information have led to a heightened awareness of social, political and environmental issues.

The advent of social media has only amplified the voices of concerned scientists and activists and increased the pressure to be socially conscious or 'woke.' Defined as slang by Merriam Webster, woke means, "Aware of and actively attentive to important facts and issues (especially issues of racial, environmental, and social justice)." Obviously, awareness and action towards these issues is needed and should be a priority for everyone.

The problem is that our society has become so obsessed with appearing woke both on social media and in real life, that the appearance of wokeness has begun to replace the action.

After being exposed to countdown clocks and earth overshoot days, it is not surprising that, in the United States, more than 50% of Gen Z members rank climate change as one of the top three issues facing the world— but only 20% say they take action to minimize their waste. Similarly, only 37% say they reduce their energy and utility usage.

This is a problem. If we really want to be remembered as a generation marked by civil and social action, we need more than pixels to back it up. Internet activism on its own is not enough to show our capitalist overlords that we will no longer consume mindlessly, satisfied by cardboard labels and allowing billionaires to tell us our plastic bottles are being recycled.

It has become so easy to publish material online that many 'news' sources are not backed up with fact, and users must be on the lookout for false information. Morgan O'Leary, sophomore elementary education major, said, "I feel like I'm most likely to get information about climate change from social media, but that information would need to be backed up with more research." Without further research, many individuals buy into the tales woven by corporations, often contradicted by the actions of their perpetrators.

One of the earliest public announcements regarding the environment was known as the "Crying Indian" campaign, which showed a supposedly indigenous person finding litter in nature, and with the voiceover, "Some people have a deep, abiding respect for the natural beauty that was once this country," reads the voiceover. "And some people don't...People start pollution and people can stop it," the voiceover concludes, as the camera zooms in on a tear rolling down the person's cheek.

This ad was first aired in 1971, and was paid for by Keep America Beautiful, a group established in the 1950s by leaders from packaging companies like the American Can Company and the Owens-Illinois Glass Company. This is just one historical example of the millions of inaccurate claims being made by companies about their impact on the environment everyday. Large-scale corporations use these claims to deflect responsibility off of themselves and place it onto the individual.

Senior Arts and Entertainment Industry Management major Natalie Leclair said, "I think people our age have witnessed so much environmental destruction that they have become desensitized to it. The surprise I used to feel when I heard about a wildfire or oil spill has been replaced with a sense of impending fear about the future of earth." The 'sense of impending fear' experienced by so many Rider students has developed into a diagnosable mental disorder. The blame we should be placing on corporations has been deflected back to us through false media.

This false media has fed us a narrative that we are individually at fault for the current state of our environment. A landmark study of ten thousand young people across ten countries demonstrated that only 5% of surveyed individuals were 'not worried' about the climate crisis. A later question indicated that of the other 95%, nearly half feel like they have personal responsibility for the crisis. This is due to the complete deflection of responsibility from governments and big companies.

Whether we like it or not, climate change and its effects will be the crisis which defines Gen Z. Time is up. Recognizing the false claims fed to us through consumerism is the first step to taking actual concrete steps away from being a society which consumes resources like a melting popsicle. Using social media and other online tools to educate is the first step, but our dollars are our most powerful tool. In a capitalist culture, we speak loudest with our choices, and if these choices are informed by science and research instead of propaganda, we can begin to make real changes.

Muriel Baki
Rider Eco-rep



WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Broncs add two more losses, fall to 2-11 in MAAC play



Carolo Pascale/The Rider News

Senior center **Victoria Toomey** goes up strong in the paint. Toomey leads Rider in field goal percentage at 50.7%.

By **Jake Tiger and Hannah Newman**

RIDER women's basketball continued its midseason tumble, taking two more bitter conference play losses to Quinnipiac on Feb. 2 and Fairfield on Feb. 4.

Having lost six straight Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) games, the losing streak became the Broncs' longest in conference play since an eight-game slide in 2016.

'Physically off balance'

Despite giving up less than 60 points, the Broncs suffered another grueling defeat on Feb. 2, falling 59-42 to Quinnipiac after Rider's worst offensive performance of MAAC play.

Perhaps the biggest reason for Rider's loss was the nullification of senior center Victoria Toomey, who was quickly sidelined after picking up two personal

fouls in under six minutes of play.

"I have to hold myself accountable and be better about fouls as it does take me out of the flow of the game, but I am confident in anyone who comes on the floor to be able to run our stuff," said Toomey in an email interview with The Rider News.

Throughout the rest of the game, Toomey saw the court sporadically, before eventually fouling out with just under three minutes left to play.

As a result, the Bobcats feasted on the glass, outrebounding the Broncs 39-27 and outscoring Rider 26-8 in the paint.

"They've got good size. I think they kept us physically off balance inside a little bit with their size," said Head Coach Lynn Milligan. "[Toomey] picking up two early ones did hurt us. We needed to try and stay as big as we could with them."

Toomey's limited availability loomed large over an already lean Rider frontcourt, with the Broncs managing to make more 3-pointers than 2-pointers against the Bobcats. In all, they hit 8-of-19 shots from deep, while only making 7-of-29 attempts from inside the arc.

On layups in particular, Rider was 3-of-15.

"Offensively, they did a pretty good job taking us out of flow, but we got to make more shots," said Milligan. "I thought we got some really good looks, shot the ball well from three, but we missed a lot of layups."

The loss dropped Rider to 4-19 all-time against Quinnipiac, its last win being on March 10, 2021 at the MAAC Tournament.

'Couldn't get that big basket'

The outcome of Quinnipiac's game stuck after the Broncs took home yet another loss from Fairfield on Feb. 5 leaving with a loss of 62-49. This brings the Broncs to 2-11 in MAAC play.

"I thought we took a big step defensively, you know we spent a lot of time over the last week really trying to get ourselves back on track defensively and I thought we did that both games," said Milligan. "We held the leading scorer in the conference to two points so I felt we did some really good things but we couldn't make that big basket you know we couldn't

get that run going on the offense but I thought we held strong defensively in both games."

The first quarter began strong with Toomey getting a firm grip on the ball first. Both teams balanced their shots scoring one after the other, unable to find a steady dominance over the other until the quarter reached a little over the four-minute mark where Fairfield scored a 2-pointer which put the quarter at 8-6 in Fairfield's favor.

The Broncs refused to let this slight superiority last for Fairfield after stealing the quarter 19-17 courtesy of a 3-pointers from senior guard Jessika Schiffer and graduate student guard Amanda Mobley. Although their efforts raised the stakes after Fairfield decided to match their energy by tying it at 24-24.

After Fairfield shot a 3-pointer 30 seconds into the third quarter, Mobley took charge by taking back two points just seconds after Fairfield scored in the first minute, but Fairfield got a good taste of Mobley's threatening techniques and took control of the third quarter leading 47-32.

The Broncs score crept up by 17 points in the fourth quarter, but it was not early enough to surpass Fairfield where they emerged victorious with a 62-49 lead.

"Being connected throughout entire games is something we have been working on. Calls we didn't like, turnovers, missed shots and anything that has us overthinking is what pushes people apart sometimes," said Mobley who led the game in field goals with seven. "I think it's gotten better for sure and we have been more and more connected in each game lately."

In response to Mobley's efforts, Milligan said, "I thought she did a terrific job, I think she's playing like a fifth year senior captain point guard that knows that her career has an expiration date as they say and I think she's playing that way. She's leading her team, she's leading it all out there and I thought she did a great job today and I think it's something she's going to continue to do for the rest of the season."

The Broncs will be back on the road Thursday, Feb. 9 where they will take on Marist at 7 p.m. The game will be streamed on ESPN+.

MAAC SPORTS

New MAAC commissioner ready to 'take chances'

By **Jake Tiger and Carolo Pascale**

THE Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) announced Travis Tellitocci as its next commissioner on Feb. 7, via a press release.

Tellitocci is in line to be the conference's fourth commissioner, and will replace current commissioner Rich Ensor following his retirement at the end of the 2022-23 academic year.

"We will not be afraid to take chances in the MAAC," said Tellitocci during a press conference following the announcement. "That's been a hallmark of my career. We'll be strategic, calculated and steadfast in our approach to those chances, but we definitely want to be bold, innovative and have vision."

Prior to becoming commissioner of the MAAC, Tellitocci was with the Ohio Valley Conference (OVC), serving as assistant commissioner for football, basketball and officiating since September 2016.

Tellitocci also has roots within the MAAC, having earned a bachelor's degree in communication from Marist College in 2004, before working for the school in a variety of roles starting in 2006. Before his departure in 2016, Tellitocci served as Marist's deputy athletics director, working with all 23 of the college's Division I teams.

"We were impressed with Travis' rich experiences in both professional sports and college athletics, which position him well to elevate the MAAC Conference and help set a bold vision for its programs," said Quinnipiac University President Judy Olian, who helped facilitate the search for Ensor's replacement. "The 11 institutions participating in the MAAC today embody excellence in both athletics and academics, and we look forward to the continued growth of the

conference under Travis' leadership."

With the longest term of any NCAA Division I commissioner, Ensor will leave Tellitocci with big shoes to fill. Under the 35-year leadership of Ensor, the MAAC nearly doubled its number of sports, jumping from 13 in 1988 to the current total of 24.

"Throughout the search process, Travis demonstrated that he is an emerging leader in college athletics, and is well-suited to build on the incredible success of Rich Ensor," MAAC and Niagara University president, the Rev. James J. Maher, C.M. said in a press release prior to the media conference. "The MAAC has never been stronger, and Travis' breadth of experience will be critical as we face the challenges of Division I athletics, strengthen our focus on the well-being of the student-athletes, grow the inclusivity of their experiences, and build on the storied legacy of the conference."

Rider Athletic Director Don Harnum got to speak with Tellitocci alongside the 10 other athletic directors from the rest of the conference, and believes that this will be a big challenge for him, but is excited to see what he can bring to the MAAC.

"I thought he understood the challenges of our conference. I thought he had some pretty good ideas of how to advance the conference and I thought he had a pretty good idea of what he was walking into," said Harnum. "I think he had a pretty good understanding of what we are as a conference, and then what we aspire to be."

Harnum has been at Rider for 26 of Ensor's years as commissioner, and while Ensor's parting signals a changing MAAC, Harnum said he and the rest of the athletic directors believes that Tellitocci will be able to step in and make an impact regardless of how big or

tough of a job it will be.

"I think it's an extremely challenging job. There's big shoes to fill because there's been things set in stone that Rich's done for 35 years. I'm sure there's going to be a learning curve," said Harnum. "Anytime someone steps up, either from an assistant coach to a head coach or an assistant athletic director to an athletic director or associate commissioner, to the big chair, there's always an adjustment and a learning curve. But I think we were all confident."



Photo courtesy of MAAC Sports

After a national search, **Travis Tellitocci** was announced as the fourth commissioner in MAAC history on Feb. 7.

Photo courtesy of David Szuba



The Szuba family, Rose (left), David (middle) and Kayle Rose (right) are constantly balancing academics, athletics and family life.

WRESTLING

Szuba wrestles Rider, marriage and fatherhood

By Logan VanDine

NOT many student-athletes are like sophomore David Szuba. Szuba is not only one of Rider’s best wrestlers, but finds himself juggling his life as a student, athlete, a married man and a father all at the same time.

For Szuba, wrestling was a “character-building experience” that his father introduced him to at the age of 4.

“It was something that we always did. Traveling in high school, we traveled all across the country for tournaments. That was something we did together, and I really started loving it, and it made me really good at it,” Szuba said.

‘David’s growing, he’s maturing’

Szuba, who was homeschooled up until middle school, fell in love with the sport during this time, but was never on the same level as other wrestlers until he reached high school. Once Szuba got to high school at Brick Memorial, he took off as a wrestler and strived to become the athlete he knew he could be.

“That’s when I really started getting good at the sport,” said Szuba, who was a state champion his senior year. “I started taking it more seriously and actually working on moves that were important in every position, and it kind of went from there.”

When it came time to further his athletics and academics, Szuba wanted to go to a place where he wouldn’t have to cut any weight. As a result, he was not heavily recruited until Rider showed interest.

“We needed a heavyweight, so we talked to him. And we know that he made the state finals at 190, and we knew he was big, and we liked his athleticism and the way he can score points. He was competitive in matches, and we had a really good Zoom call with him and his parents very early on in the process, and it kind of clicked for all of us, so we felt it was a good fit for us,” said Head Coach John Hangey.

Hangey, a former Division I All-American, who has mentored many successful wrestlers during his time at Rider, spoke glowingly of Szuba.

Photo courtesy of David Szuba



Sophomore wrestler David Szuba uses his size and strength to overpower his opponents.

“David [Szuba] is extremely talented, extremely strong and extremely gifted when it comes to wrestling, but David has to learn discipline, patience. But David’s growing, he’s maturing and David is going to be very good, very soon,” Hangey said.

For Szuba, a college athlete with the responsibilities of a grown adult, Hangey is more than just a coach.

“He’s like a second father ... he’s there to push you, he’s there to critique you, and he’s also there to give you a hard time if you’re not doing the right thing so he’s just all around the best family guy I know,” Szuba said.

‘I always knew’

On top of being a wrestler at Rider, Szuba is married to his high school girlfriend, Kayle Rose Szuba, who he shares a daughter with.

Kayle Rose and David Szuba first met in middle school but did not start a relationship together since there was an age difference between them. Sometimes love finds a way, and once they started dating, they knew they were going to be together forever. The two officially became a couple in David Szuba’s junior year, saying “we were single and pretty much perfect for each other.”

Kayle Rose Szuba recalled first getting to meet David Szuba and eventually falling in love.

“He was everyone’s friend because he was rather friendly, and he was a really good wrestler. He always was winning, so that was kind of my first impression,” Kayle Rose Szuba said. “He was a really respectful kid, he got along with my family and we hung out a lot.”

David and Kayle Rose Szuba have been married for more than two years, doing so with the knowledge that getting married at a young age was a serious commitment, but David Szuba said he knew she was the one for him.

“I always knew, I travel a lot and been to many places with [Kayle] ... we planned on traveling and do[ing] many different things Ever since going to Hawaii with her, I knew I was going to marry her,” Szuba said. “The plan was to propose to her during my junior year of college. I planned on taking her back to Hawaii to propose to her on the same mountain that I said I was going to because we were hiking on massive mountains and we found out she was pregnant and I just said, ‘Let’s get married now, this is a blessing.’ We got married probably three or four weeks after finding out she was pregnant.”

Kayle Rose Szuba also described her initial reaction to the proposal, calling it “a big decision.”

“Life is an adventure, so I just kind of went for it,” Kayle Rose Szuba said. “It was definitely a big decision. ... I knew I was going to spend the rest of my life with him, so when I got pregnant, it was kind of something like, ‘Let’s do it now.’”

‘Kids are a blessing’

David Szuba has a 10-month-old daughter named Rose. He explained the challenges he faces being married and a father, along with balancing school and wrestling life.

“It’s stressful at times because you want to please everyone, and it’s hard to juggle school, wrestling and being home as much as possible because I commute. ... Even though it’s only 45 minutes, I still want to go home as soon as possible because I don’t want to miss a beautiful moment: when the baby crawls, or she’s rolling around and she’s saying things now,” said Szuba. “I don’t want to miss those moments, but I know some stuff has to come first because my family is relying on me to do it, and I’m the father figure, I’m the rock of the family, and as the man in the relationship you have to put your emotions aside and do what’s best for your family.”

Despite everything David has to maintain, Kayle Rose Szuba could not commend him enough for the work he has done as a father.

“I don’t know what I imagined it would be like, but he definitely topped it, and he’s one of eight siblings, so I had a feeling he was going to be a great dad,” Kayle Rose Szuba said. “If he goes away for tournaments, when he gets home, she’s so happy to see him.”

David Szuba also pondered the possibility of expanding his budding family in the near future.

“We’re definitely holding off now for at least another year and a half, maybe two years, but the Bible says that kids are a blessing,” Szuba said. “So we’ll probably wait for another two years and see where we’re at. It’s in God’s hands.”

Photo courtesy of David Szuba



Kayle Rose (bottom left) and David Szuba (right) hold up their daughter, Rose.

Sports

ONLINE

'I LOVED THE EFFORT'
Wrestling fell 24-10 to Oklahoma on Feb. 5, marking the teams third-straight loss.

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MEN'S BASKETBALL

Rolling with the Broncs: winning streak reaches seven



Rider men's basketball pushed their winning streak to seven after wins against Saint Peter's and Manhattan and are now sole owners of the top spot in the MAAC.

By **Carolo Pascale and Matthew LoPuzzo**

SEVEN games. Seven wins. The No. 1 seed in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC). That's what these Broncs have been up to. Rider has been cooking with kerosene, pushing its winning streak to seven with a dominating 82-61 win against Saint Peter's on Feb. 3 and another double-digit, 67-56 win against Manhattan on Feb. 5

First half masterclass

With the reigning MAAC Champion Saint Peter's Peacocks strutting into town on Greek Night, the Broncs knew they had to ruffle some feathers and put on a show, doing so with a dominant and electrifying first half that saw Rider score 46 points en route to a 82-61 victory, extending the winning streak to six games.

"I thought it was a great job from start to finish. I thought our guys defended their behinds off today," said Head Coach Kevin Baggett.

It was a committee affair in the scoring department for the Broncs, with five players breaking double-digit points, three of them being starters. Per usual, senior guard Dwight Murray Jr. led the way with 15 points in another solid performance, while both senior forward Mervin James and sophomore guard Adetokunbo Bakare scored 11. Senior guard Allen Powell and graduate student forward Ajiri Ogemuno-Johnson each collected 10 points.

The excellent first half was powered by two main factors: a relentless and smothering defense paired with a ball-moving and sharpshooting offense.

The defense has been getting increasingly stronger as of late, and the first half was where it all seemed to come together. The Broncs were all over the Peacocks from tip off, which forced 10 turnovers and three steals in just the first half alone. Rider was able to force Saint Peter's into double or even triple coverage consistently, pushing the Peacocks to use almost the entire shot clock on every possession and take difficult shots.

"There was more energy during the warm ups. Everyone was talking more," said Murray. "We were very vocal on defense today. I feel like that was why we were more energized in the first half."

The entire team was superb defensively, but a

three-guard combo of Murray, Bakare and junior guard Corey McKeithan played a huge role in keeping the Peacocks from scoring points. The trio was able to completely eliminate the Peacocks perimeter shooters and their mid-range game, with Saint Peter's shooting just 5-for-21 from the field and 2-for-10 from the three.

Alongside the defense, the offense was kicked into high gear with the Broncs shooting an incredible 60.9% from the field and a perfect 4-for-4 from behind the arc. Rider's regulars made their usual contributions, while being helped by 23 bench points, something Rider hasn't had for most of this year. Both McKeithan and Bakare were stellar off the bench, with McKeithan having a breakout game in terms of offensive prowess.

McKeithan played with a confidence that hasn't been seen this year, driving hard to the net, making great passes, and even throwing down a dunk with the and-one to boot. He finished with eight points.

"It's been tough for me from the beginning of the season. I was just in my head a lot, but coach preached to me and told me I got this and I'm getting better," said McKeithan.

The Broncs finished the game shooting 54.2% from the field, with a season high 66.7% from the three. It's only the second time that the Broncs have shot over 45% from the three in a game this year, the only other time coming in the season opener against Providence.

Magnificent seven

The Broncs stretched their winning streak to seven after a 67-56 win over the Manhattan Jaspers Sunday, with the pillars of the Broncs keeping stable and a sprinkle of help from the supporting cast.

"This group is together more than any other team I've ever had," said Baggett after clinching Rider's 10th MAAC win of the season.

Starting off the same way as they did last time they played the Jaspers, the Broncs came out the gate slow with both teams shooting 2-for-8 to start off the game.

One of the main adjustments the Broncs made was the containment of St. John's transfer Josh Roberts, who dropped 18 points and six rebounds last time matching up against the Broncs. Coming off a 17 rebound performance against Siena, Roberts put up

14 points and five rebounds.

"We went to the classroom with these guys," said Baggett about making changes from the previous matchup against the Jaspers in late January.

James got off to a quick start with four points, courtesy of mean low post bullying, while junior forward Nehemiah Benson contributed with a soaring skyhook over the defense.

The Broncs were able to get a big game from Ogemuno-Johnson, started by Murray giving a Manhattan defender some free salsa dancing lessons with some slick dribbling, then dishing the ball to Ogemuno-Johnson, leading to free throws.

Ogemuno-Johnson converted an and-one to give the Broncs a 14-point lead heading into the locker room. In just eight minutes, he would have eight points and six rebounds going into halftime.

"When I come off the bench, I'm already set in. I'm ready to go," said Ogemuno-Johnson on how he's felt being the sixth man.

The second half commenced with a layup from Powell at the rim who finished the game with seven points. Then, James gave everyone in Riverdale, New York, overpowering a helpless Manhattan defender, finishing strong and giving the Broncs a 19-point lead.

The Jaspers kept on fighting to cut the lead to single digits with multiple miscommunications on the Broncs' behalf on defense. The lead was diminished to seven before Powell made a tough shot in the face of Manhattan guard Samir Stewart.

Ogemuno-Johnson kept soaring for rebounds and kept capitalizing, finishing the game with 14 points and 11 rebounds. The Broncs lead was cut down to four, but efforts from graduate student Zahrion Blue, Murray and James, who finished with 20 points and 12 rebounds, sealed the game for the Broncs.

With the win over the Jaspers, the Broncs now hold sole possession of first place in the conference, while Iona and Siena sit at the two and three spot. This puts Rider in the driver seat as they continue to prove they are a true contender for a MAAC title.

The Broncs will be looking to extend their winning streak to eight games on national television against Fairfield on Feb. 10 once again in the Broncs' Zoo. Tip off is set for 7 p.m. on ESPN.