

## Dell'Omo looks to future, contract expires 2025

By Amethyst Martinez

**A**FTER a whirlwind year at the university that included fear of layoffs, top officials leaving and financial uncertainty, Rider President Gregory Dell'Omo participated in a sit-down interview Jan. 25 with The Rider News to talk about what is next not only for Rider, but his tenure as president.

### Dell'Omo's contract

Dell'Omo, who has been president of the university since 2015, remained mum on whether or not he was planning to retire in July 2025, when his current contract extension ends.

In the interview, Dell'Omo declined to say whether there were plans for a contract extension.

"We haven't talked about it with the board yet," said Dell'Omo. "At some point in time, probably in the next six months, the board and I will have a conversation."

Last January, in an interview with The Rider News, when asked if 2025 would be his last year as president at the university, Dell'Omo responded, "I think so," among other comments discussing his retirement 10 years after his tenure began in 2015.

After the interview, The Rider News published an article entitled, "Dell'Omo's tenure extended, announces plan to retire." Following the publishing, Dell'Omo sent out an email describing the article as "inaccurate."

"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," said Dell'Omo in an universitywide email on Feb. 1, 2023.

In response, The Rider News released the transcript and audio of the interview the same day, standing by its reporting.



Kaitlyn D'Alessio/The Rider News

President Gregory Dell'Omo does not reveal whether or not his contract will be renewed after it expires in 2025.

Almost two weeks later, Dell'Omo sent out an universitywide email apologizing, saying, "Upon reviewing the transcript and audio of our conversation that was released by the paper, it is readily apparent that I was too ambiguous when speaking about the subject of retirement. I should have been much clearer. Though my contract currently ends July 31, 2025, I truly have not made any definitive decisions about retirement at this moment."

Last January, his contract was extended from 2024 to 2025, before the spring semester.

"Whenever I decide to retire or the board asks not

to renew me, I'm just hoping whenever that occurs, the university's in a much better financial position, and that's what I'm focused on," said Dell'Omo.

### Path Forward Plan

Dell'Omo also discussed the Path Forward Plan, his multiyear financial stabilization initiative, which is projected to be in effect until 2027.

The plan consists of ways to pull the university out of its financial crisis – through better enrollments and retention, increased housing numbers and extreme cost reductions.

According to the president, the goals for the plan were hit for the fall semester, with projections to make the spring semester, too, in terms of deficit reduction.

"This year, our goal was to get [the deficit] down to about \$7 million, so about a \$10 million reduction of the deficit that's coming in," said Dell'Omo. "The first year plan is on target."

### Payroll updates

After many students went unpaid for months in the fall semester due to disbursements errors and a failed integration of the payroll system ADP, Dell'Omo said that the new system, Banner Web Time Entry, was rolled out smoothly.

"We're pleased with how it's turned around, and now it's getting positive," said Dell'Omo.

The disbursements office will now use several unique email addresses; ap@rider.edu for account payable invoices and check requests; payroll@rider.edu for Rider employees and studentpayroll@rider.edu for student payroll. With the new emails, the hope is to segment the inquiries to go in the right place in a quicker fashion, according to the president.

## Rebovich Institute places 100th intern in five years

By Julia Train

**M**ICAH Rasmussen, the director of the Rebovich Institute for New Jersey Politics, placed over 100 interns throughout his five years in the role, a pivotal point in the history of the institute and its engaged learning opportunities.

The institute, founded in 2001 by the late professor David Rebovich and originally named Rider University Institute for New Jersey Politics, aims to connect students majoring in subjects that relate to politics with professionals in their respective fields of study.

Rebovich, who died in 2007 at the age of 58 after suffering a heart attack in the midst of class, was Rasmussen's political science professor and the institute's first managing director.

"He was a beloved guy. He was the go-to guy on New Jersey politics. If somebody was writing about it in New Jersey, you talked to him," said Rasmussen. "He set me up in my first internship and he brought speakers to campus. So it's a real honor and a kick every day to do the work that he did."

### What the Rebovich Institute does

Rasmussen said the institute helps students in three parts: connecting them with professionals by bringing them to campus, placing them in internships and

teaching them about public commentary.

Three times each semester, the institute hosts leading public officials in the state so that students can learn from those who are professionals in the field.

Past speakers have included individuals from both the Republican and Democratic parties, with congressmen, mayors, editors of political news platforms and every New Jersey governor of the past 20 years.

"Who better than the practitioners who are practicing politics every day in New Jersey to teach us?" said Rasmussen.

"It's a way for our students to get close to our public officials, and that helps them not only to learn, but it also helps when it comes time to apply for internships or for jobs."

Rasmussen also helps students find internship placements that match their interest in career and locale.

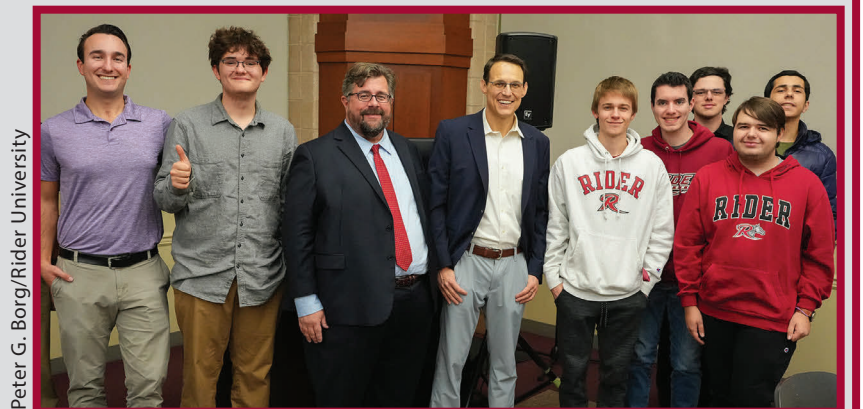
If a student wants to participate in an internship in a specific area or season, he looks for an opportunity that fits their criteria.

### An internship for everyone

Finding an internship close to home was important for Mikaela Hennig, a sophomore political science and environmental studies major who is one of Rasmussen's students.

Hennig, who wants to be an environmental lawyer, got involved with the institute last spring when she had Rasmussen as a professor.


SEE "EXPANDING" PAGE 2




Peter G. Borg/Rider University

Steve Kornacki, (middle) a political journalist, visits Rider to speak to students about his career.

**INSIDE** RIDER ALUM CASHES OUT  
*Travis Dufner '17 wins nearly half a million dollars off an NFL parlay.*  
PAGE 10



STUDENT MEDIA'S SERVER CRASH  
*A server crash has potentially deleted a multitude of content from TheRiderNews.com.*  
PAGE 8



RIDER'S GOT TALENT  
*"Rider's Got Talent" returns with great prizes and performances.*  
PAGE 6



## SECURITY BRIEFS

BY JAY ROBERSON

### Stinky smell

Mysterious marijuana. On Jan. 24 at 10:53 p.m., Public Safety was dispatched to Delta Phi Epsilon when the smell of marijuana was reported. Upon their arrival, Public Safety met with the Residence Life staff who reported the odor while conducting their rounds. Public Safety proceeded to check the building, but they could not locate the source.

### Backed up pipes

Stored sewage. On Jan. 26 at 3:45 p.m., Public Safety was called regarding a sewer back-up at Zeta Tau Alpha. Facilities Management contacted Public Safety to report the sewer line back-up and reported that they were aware of the issue. Facilities already contacted a contractor who was responding to repair it.

### Inescapable elevator

Tower of terror. On Jan 27 at 2:18 p.m., Public Safety was dispatched to Moore Residence Hall for the report of a student trapped in the elevator. Upon their arrival, they discovered a student in the elevator, stuck between floors. Public Safety attempted to open the elevator doors, but were unsuccessful. The Lawrence Township Fire Department was contacted and responded. The Fire Department arrived and was able to open the elevator doors and assist the student. Facilities Management was contacted to make any repairs.

-Information provided by Public Safety Capt. Matthew Babcock

# Students take trip to James Madison's Montpelier

By Jay Roberson

**S**TUDENTS taking Environmental Field Methods and Data Analysis in the fall semester had the opportunity to apply their researching skills on a trip to James Madison's Montpelier plantation, where they dated a recently discovered burial ground of those who were enslaved.

### Data collection from the field

Daniel Druckenbrod, professor of earth and chemical sciences, taught the class and was able to arrange a class trip to Montpelier through his connections from past research.

"The Montpelier foundation has known for some time that there are burial sites of formerly enslaved people at this portion of the plantation. They now think that instead of maybe 40 burial sites there may be closer to 300," said Druckenbrod.

In order to reveal the age of the burial site, the students cored trees and recorded the ring width.

One of the students on the trip, sophomore environmental science major Alexis Burns said, "The people who knew how to use GIS [graphic information system] would put where the locations are, the trees are and what the ring diameters were. Then we would have some people take the ring width into Excel then see how big they are for the purpose of seeing what climate events they went through, to show them that all the tree ring widths line up."

### The history behind Montpelier

Though the students were on the trip for research, they were required to learn about the history of the plantation from Evelyn McDowell, the chair of the department of accounting, and Brooke Hunter, associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Hunter said, "The main point that Dr. McDowell and I wanted to express to the students in that class visit, and then again on the trip, is how amazing it is that they're getting this experience to contribute to the interpretation of history at such an important site."

Students were also taken on a tour through the plantation to learn more about the history behind it.

"The first day, we were mostly outside, doing the tree coring and recording data and actually seeing the depressions in the dirt," Burns said. "The second day we spent the whole time going through the property. They took us on a tour through the Madison's house and they showed us each room."

Burns also noted that there was not much done in memory of those who were enslaved on Montpelier at this moment, besides "a couple little houses outside that were dedicated in memory of the slaves and the stories that they can't tell."

### Using science for good

Through doing research and reporting their findings to the Montpelier Descendants Committee, which represents the descendants of enslaved people, Druckenbrod wanted to show students that their research can be beneficial for society.

"It's a course that has engaged learning points and civic community engagement, which sometimes might seem unexpected given that it's a science class, but it's intentional on my part because it shows that

science should and can help inform society," said Druckenbrod.

While James and Dolley Madison have their own cemetery with their parents, there's a mass grave for those who were enslaved, according to Burns, who hoped to assist the Montpelier Descendants Committee with their findings and to create a proper burial site.

Druckenbrod said, "It's neat to have the opportunity to help share this research with the Montpelier Descendants Committee and help them to tell a more full story of Montpelier."

Without Druckenbrod's connections to the research site, none of this would have been possible for the students.

"It's really cool and great for Rider that we have this professor with connections who's able to bring students into these research experiences. So it's not just about coring trees, but it's about telling critical stories about our past," said Hunter.



Photo courtesy of Matt Reeves

Students in Daniel Druckenbrod's class spend time at James Madison's Montpelier plantation to collect data.

# Expanding opportunities for political majors

CONT'D FROM PAGE 1

By Julia Train

"The first day he's like, 'If you guys need help getting internships, just ask me.' So I took that upon myself to ask," said Hennig.

Rasmussen and Hennig knew it would be a challenge to find an environmental policy internship because she wanted one close to her home in Warren County.

The hunt began with her going to her county's commissioner, James Kern, for assistance. He suggested she go to the New Jersey Highlands Coalition. Hennig contacted them, but was turned away due to an overflow of interns already and was advised to talk to the New Jersey Highlands Council.

She took the suggestion and contacted them.

The spring semester was almost done and Hennig hadn't heard an answer from the council. She was close to giving up on an internship for that summer, but Rasmussen emailed the council and within five minutes they responded, "We would love to have her."

Hennig became the first intern at the New Jersey Highlands Council, a government organization that focuses on water protection in partnership with communities and municipalities in the Highlands Region, implementing the 2004 Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act.

During the time at her internship, Hennig performed a number of tasks for the municipalities

alongside biologists, including testing bodies of water for harmful algal blooms, gathering and graphing information and attending council meetings.

She was able to witness representatives from 88 municipalities gather to discuss the politics involved in the area's water protection.

Along with learning about the environmental and political fields, Hennig said, "It has opened a lot of opportunities for me with the people in there. ... I made a lot of good connections ... and it's going to continue helping me when I start to actually look into fields."

### Success with stacking

Rasmussen prides himself on connecting students in any major with what they're looking for. He said Rebovich students have had an enormous amount of success with "stacking," which he describes as the process of starting off with a broader or more general internship and narrowing it down as the student progresses through their undergraduate years.

"By stacking a couple of internships down they get more specific about what it is that they want to do in their [area of] interest," Rasmussen said. "They are not applying cold ... they've got experience under their belts."

Rasmussen and the Rebovich Institute also teach their students about public commentary.

He said that as a respected voice and authority on politics with a multitude of political scientists who study American politics and political systems, it's important to be able to respond to journalists that will ask for their perspective on what's going on in New Jersey and its politics.

After five years in the position and 15 in politics, Rasmussen feels honored to have worked with over 100 young professionals, helping give them their start in the field.

Although geared toward politics-based majors, Rasmussen has also helped students with a variety of disciplines. He had education majors interested in jobs in education policy and a student who wanted to be an equine lawyer, which serves horse owners or professionals by reviewing contracts, handling disputes and litigation and working on tax or immigration issues, all unique to the equine industry.

"We try to be relevant to everyone on campus," he said. "At some point in all of our careers, [the] government is going to affect us, either because we're going to be certified by the government or because we're going to be regulated or funded by [the] government."

# Server crash disrupts two top campus media organizations

By Amethyst Martinez

**A**FTER a catastrophic failure from a university server, both The Rider News and 107.7 The Bronc required new websites to be built over winter break, the crash resulting in the loss of a multitude of stories from The Rider News' archives and knocking the radio station's streaming service offline for a time.

Moe Rahman, Rider's chief information officer, described it as a "nameless, faceless crime," where nothing could've prevented the server failure, which the university ended up being locked out of. Rahman said that multiple 12-to-14-hour days were spent trying to unlock the server to no avail.

Mike Reca, Rider's vice president for facilities and university operations, said "[We] kind of hit that point of 'Oh, OK, we have to move forward now.'"

That meant leaving behind the old server, which was hopelessly encrypted and starting new websites from scratch.

According to Rahman, other university websites were on the server, too, but were barely in use.

TheRiderNews.com, and 1077TheBronc.com, were down for a majority of winter break, leaving both student organizations with no websites for over a month — a critical time for both due to internship opportunities, award submissions and college applications from prospective students.

The server, which housed both sites, was only the size of about a suitcase, according to Reca. The age of the server is unknown, but was on the list of things to be replaced within the next few years — a difficult feat during a financially critical time at the university.

"Could it have been avoided? I don't know. If we replaced all of our servers and spent millions of dollars, but we're not at that place," said Reca. "No one did this. It just happened ... I just don't want this to ever happen again."

Reca stressed the silver lining of the event: now both websites have a webmaster with a focus on updating the sites to be within the Americans with Disabilities Act compliance.

Some of the criteria for the compliance encompasses consistent navigation, including descriptions for images and more.

Reca said, "It could've happened to any one of our servers. I looked at this like addition by subtraction ... subtracted the old one and now we're better."

## Stories lost to server failure

The Rider News lost a multitude of online-only articles and photo galleries due to the server failure, dating back to at least 2011. Stories published in the print edition survived the crash thanks to PDF archives, and more recent articles are gradually being uploaded to the new site.

The task is not easy, however.

Alye Ancianis, the former university web designer, has taken over as webmaster for both sites, and was assigned the task of helping rebuild.

"My job was to go in and tweak everything using internet archives, looking back at how the sites used to look, to basically recreate that feeling," said Ancianis. "The second part was then repopulating the sites with their information, the subpages, the articles ... that part was definitely the hardest."

Ancianis has manually uploaded over 400 articles back to the newspaper's website.

She said, although they were trying to find online-only stories through internet archives, it's still unknown if those will be fully recoverable.

Jake Tiger, managing editor of The Rider News, said that the loss of the online content was "unexpected and disappointing."

"While I'm glad that they were able to get us something before the beginning of the semester, it is unfortunate that a lot of stories that were important to the community are possibly lost for good," said Tiger. "Online-only stories are usually some of the most important—breaking news, university personnel changes, Westminster updates, the April 3 shelter-in-place and important sporting events

among other things...The loss really hurts."

The Rider News was also unable to cover winter men's and women's basketball online due to the downed website.

Benjamin Shinault, a sports editor for The Rider News, said, "I wasn't able to get compensated over winter break, which I was counting on. ... It took away some practice to better my basketball writing. I'm definitely glad to have it back up and running, but it leaves the question of: 'What [coverage] got left out?'"

## 107.7 The Bronc's website

Although 107.7 The Bronc's website crashed right after award nominations, John Mozes, general manager for radio station, said that the site was able to get a much-needed update due to the unexpected failure, which resulted in learning experiences for student workers.

"Now I feel like the website matches the product we have out now, and the studios we have as well," Mozes said.

The radio station's main goal during the crash was to find creative ways to keep their online streaming audience, where 56% come through their website, according to Mozes.

In an effort to keep listeners, the station redirected website traffic to links where the audience could listen on other streaming platforms while the site was down.

The station's advertisers were also notified of the shutdown due to contract commitments.

"Yes, it was awful, right? You never want to lose your website," said Mozes. "But in the long run, I think it turned out to be a really positive experience for the radio station as a whole, and I think for the students to learn."

According to Mozes, the radio station is expecting to get everything on their old website back, and restored to the new one.

"Everyone realized how important both leading institutions are to the university," said Mozes.

"They realized what happened and that we need to fix it, and they fixed it."

## The restoration of the sites

On Jan. 19, over a month after the crash, both TheRiderNews.com and 1077TheBronc.com were restored in time for the upcoming semester, which both Rahman and Ancianis said was a priority.

Although The Rider News is still in the process of uploading past articles dating back to over a decade ago, the plan is to continue restoring, although the total number of stories lost is currently unknown. Some online-only articles from the fall semester were not archived and were permanently lost.

"We've got to be prospective rather than dwell on what happened, because it's done," said Reca. "At some point, you've got to fish or cut bait, and we hit that point where we couldn't back down and we had to go forward."

*News Editors Julia Train and Jay Roberson and Sports Editors Benjamin Shinault and Logan VanDine work for 107.7 The Bronc and had no part in the writing or editing of this story.*



Photo courtesy of Rider University

Edgar J. Ress worked for the university for 34 years, since he was 19 years old.

# Longtime Rider employee passes away

By Julia Train

**E**DGAR J. Ress, director of construction and mechanical services in facilities management, died suddenly at his home in Hamilton on Jan. 26. He was 52 years old.

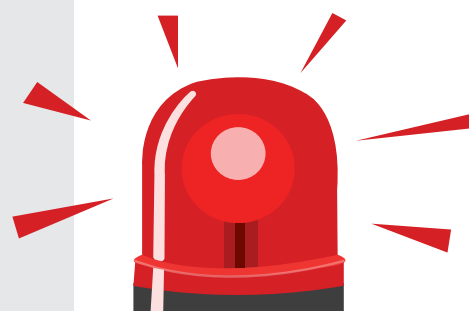
Ress received his Bachelor of Science in business administration from Rider in 2022.

He was first hired at the age of 19 in 1990 by Mike Reca, vice president for facilities and university operations, as a groundskeeper. Ress was a committed employee at the university for 34 years and held a variety of positions before assuming his most recent role in June 2022.

During his time at Rider, Ress was a building maintenance person, general mechanic, HVAC mechanic, manager of facilities operations at Westminster Choir College, and associate director of construction services.

He was predeceased by his father and survived by his wife of 23 years, Tanya Kutovy Ress; his mother, Kathleen Kachmar Ress; father-in-law and mother-in-law Anatoly and Luba Kutovy, and several cousins, aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews.

There will be a viewing Feb. 1 from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Hartmann Memorial Home in Mercerville followed by a funeral service. His burial will be in the Greenwood Cemetery.



Error: The Rider News no longer exists

Jay Roberson/The Rider News

# Hostile threat training held over break

By Jake Tiger

**R**IDER completed an emergency preparedness training on Jan. 12 that aimed to recreate the event of a hostile threat on campus, working with a number of groups throughout the state.

The drill took place in the Student Recreation Center from 8 a.m. to about 10 a.m., with multiple phases transpiring inside and outside the building.

## 'A good start'

The training sourced volunteer actors that played the role of victims and a perpetrator. Actors met in the Mercer Room in Daly Dining Hall prior to the training. Fake injuries and blood splatters were applied to them and they were given instructions before moving to the SRC. Some actors were supplied with scripts of cries for help to give a more convincing performance.

"I would have loved to have [the drill] during school so we could have brought in our theater majors ... so they could really put on a convincing performance for these guys," said Capt. Matthew Babcock of Rider Public Safety.

Including first responders, volunteers and actors, exactly 289 people participated in the recreation.

At 8:21 a.m., text and email alerts were sent out using the new Rider Alert system announcing the start of the training: "This is a drill. The drill has begun in the SRC. This is a drill."

Emergency vehicles began responding to the SRC from differing routes, most carrying a handful of officers that exited the vehicle and stepped into the SRC in a single-file line.

All law enforcement participating in the drill wore red armbands to distinguish themselves throughout the drill, and carried prop firearms carved from red and blue plastic.

"They did not have any kind of knowledge of what they were coming into, which was good because you want to be off-the-cuff ... so that when they come in, they have to react based on their training," said Babcock. "Most of them are not familiar with the school, so they don't even know the layout of the campus or this building."

On the courts of the SRC, officers participated in a drill that was meant to replicate a typical graduation ceremony, as actors were scattered across the open space, each demanding the officers' attention with mock life-threatening injuries.

"Any training is good training for them," said Babcock. "I believe they were going to go for a commencement-type exercise. ... Obviously if you're going to be responding to one of our academic buildings or residence halls, completely different set of scenarios that they're going to have to work through, so this is a good start."

The officers then moved to the second-floor offices of the SRC to simulate a close-quarters encounter with a hostile threat in the hallways.

Outside of the SRC, police piloted a drone with a 360-degree camera that relayed footage of the drill to the incident command center, a high-tech police



Peter Borg/ Rider University

Emergency personnel line the hall in the SRC during the Jan. 12 emergency preparedness drill.

trailer parked behind the building.

At 10:04 a.m., a second and final Rider Alert was sent out, reading, "This concludes today's drill. Thank you for your cooperation."

"It was an excellent recreation," said James Waldon, Rider's director of Public Safety, who was a law enforcement officer for over 30 years. "It's always good when law enforcement agencies get together and train together ... and make the mistakes here, because when the real thing happens, you've trained on it."

## A culmination of forces

According to Charlie Ambio, the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness division director of preparedness, the training was a collaborative effort from multiple New Jersey groups: the NJOHSP, Rider, the Mercer County Rapid Response Partnership, the Mercer County Office of Emergency Management and the state police.

"The purpose of this exercise being conducted that day was to test the MCRRP and the county's response plan to an active shooter incident," said Ambio.

According to Babcock, the drill included participants from each police department in Mercer County, along with several fire departments, local EMS agencies and public safety officers from Rider, The College of New Jersey and Princeton University.

"It's great to have our outside partners come to the university, learn the landscape," said Babcock. "We drew all of Mercer County, our partners from the state, and anytime we can get them on campus so that they can learn what's going on and better understand how they need to respond to the campus, I think that's huge."

Multiple Rider administrators said the training was not in response to the hostile threat hoax that occurred April 3, 2023, and that preparations for the training began months before the incident. The NJOHSP confirmed this, with their records stating that Rider was selected for the drill in December 2022.

"Basically, you're testing and evaluating your plans and policies," said Ambio. "You look at what worked, what didn't work and then maybe sometimes you come back into that cycle of rewriting plans or changing plans, educating people, retesting them."

Rider has held similar drills in the past, with the most recent example taking place two years ago in Lynch Adler Hall, which was of a smaller scale and only included local police, according to Babcock.

"The next time we do this, I would love to have it when school's in session, so we get a much larger response from the student population," said Babcock. "It'd be very important for them to be involved to actually see what happens, get [students] a little bit of training ... and it would increase the amount of actors we could have had today to make this an even more realistic scenario."

Currently, there are no plans for similar drills on Rider's campus going forward, but Public Safety officials expressed an interest in continuing them.

"I would like to see this twice a year, [that] would be fantastic," said Babcock. "The more we can get our emergency response team here, the more practice they get, the better we are in case anything were to ever happen."

Active shooter response training resources can be found on the NJDOHSP's website at [njohsp.gov/active-shooter-response](http://njohsp.gov/active-shooter-response).



Peter Borg/ Rider University

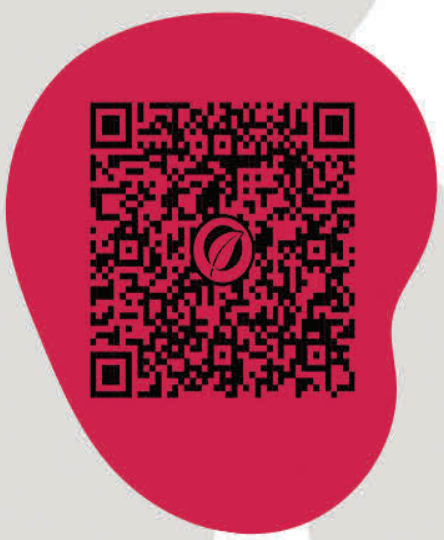
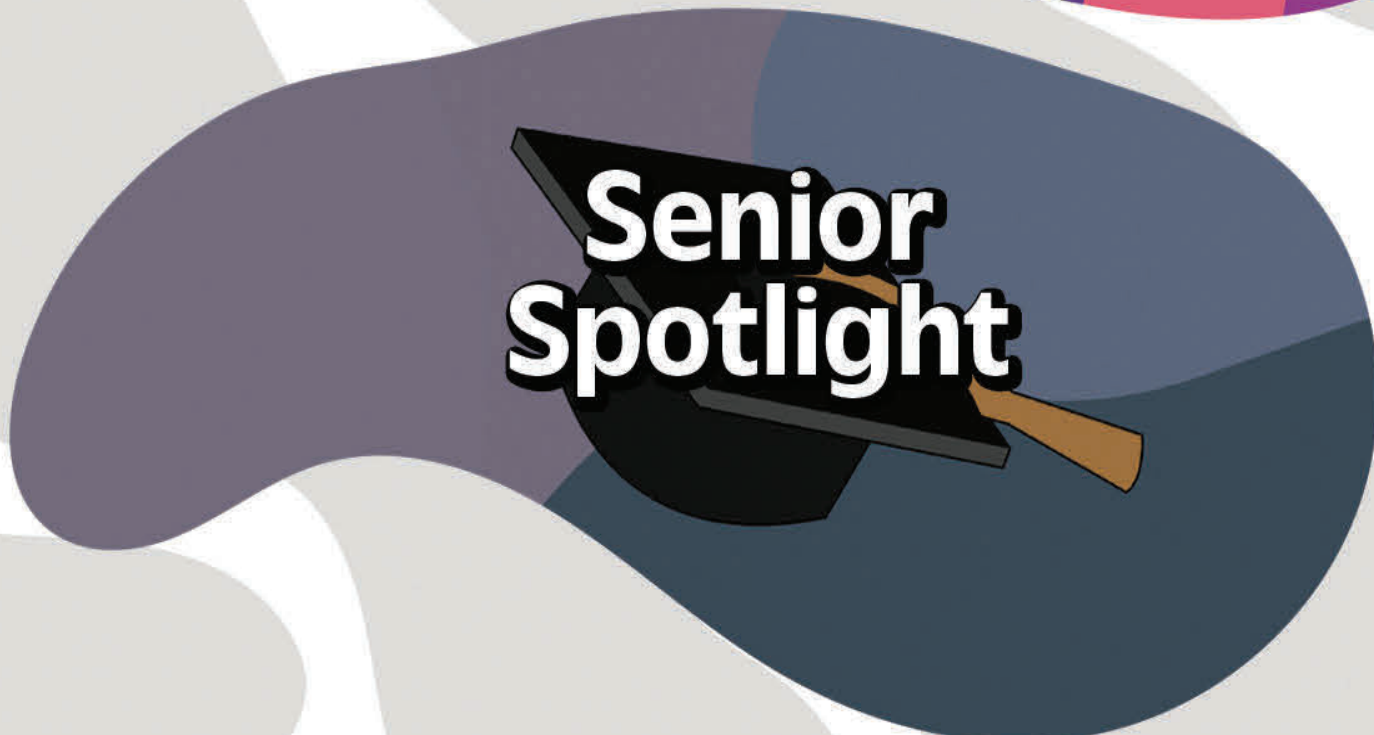
First responders demonstrate on the SRC courts.

Check out *The Rider News*' video covering the hostile threat training

Video by *Bridget Hoyt*



# FUTURE FEATURE — SPOTLIGHTS —



**Scan to nominate yourself  
or someone else!**

# Student drag queen brings home TV after winning "RGT"

By Hannah Newman

**A**FTER Lincoln Funderburk's return to the stage as drag persona Lexi Lagato, the senior musical theater major stole the show, taking an Amazon TV and bragging rights as the university's newest "Rider's Got Talent" champion.

The Student Entertainment Council brought the campus talent to stage on Jan. 27 with "Rider's Got Talent."

"Any chance to perform something on a stage I will run and grab," said Funderburk.

The idea behind bringing the show to life was to give students a place to display their passions aside from singing that "R Factor" embraces.

Six Rider students took the stage to showcase their talent for the Rider community.

First was sophomore music production major Najee Davis, who performed a song on the piano blindfolded, entrancing the audience.

The next to perform was arts and entertainment industries management major Mekhia Gwynn, who carried out a contemporary dance piece.

Entertainment chair for the SEC and sophomore film and television major Emily O'Connor hosted the show, being the bridge between the contestants and the crowd.

"My favorite part about that was just really seeing the talent, getting to know them ... [being] backstage with them and then seeing them perform," said O'Connor.

In the middle of the show, junior English major Joe Giambelluca and his collection of voice impressions had the audience amused— from impersonating characters like "Spongebob" and "Harry Potter" to politicians.

The show shifted to poetry as freshman environmental science major Emily Ivanauskas, who goes by she/they pronouns, shared an original poem.



Photo courtesy of Lincoln Funderburk

Senior musical theater major **Lincoln Funderburk** holds up his winning prize after competing in "Rider's Got Talent."

Ivanauskas said that her love for poetry began in middle school, but they didn't start believing in their

own voice until junior year of high school.

In continuation of bringing their own beat to the stage, freshman Mya McFarland and her hip-hop performance elicited a sea of head bopping from the audience.

To break up the heat of the competition, returning "R Factor" contestant and senior arts and entertainment industries management Ida DeMarco took the stage and performed "Back to Black" by Amy Winehouse.

Last but not least, Lexi Lagato, also known as Funderburk, performed. The drag performer had been a staple at performance events, recently participating in the drag show during the fall semester.

Funderburk was motivated to sign up for the show after Nick Barbati suggested it to him. Lagato's mouth dropping performance won her the title of "Rider's Got Talent" champion by the end of the night following former "R Factor" champion, freshman English Kamanay Belcher performance on the ukulele as a guest performer while the audience voted for a winner of the competition.

Funderburk's passion for drag sparked from his evolving background in musical theater and past experience as an athlete.

"I'm used to being on a stage and playing a character and singing and dancing and acting and doing all the things from head to toe," said Funderburk.

The passion and perseverance of the performers, along with support from the Rider community, drove the show to a victory in the eyes of O'Connor.

"Seeing [the performers] go out and show the talent that they love ... and seeing the Rider community come together and support people being vulnerable is what I love personally," said O'Connor. "It takes a lot to get on that stage."

## UPCOMING EVENTS

JANUARY

31

Wednesday

SWG 208  
7 P.M.

**DIY Beeswax Wraps**  
OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY

FEBRUARY

1

THURSDAY

ALUMNI GYM  
7 P.M.

**RIDER Women's BASKETBALL vs. FAIRFIELD**

FEBRUARY

2

FRIDAY

ALUMNI GYM  
7 P.M.

**GREEK NIGHT BASKETBALL Game**

FEBRUARY

3

SATURDAY

MULLER'S PUB  
7 P.M.

**CLUB In The PUB**  
SILENT DISCO



Caroline Haviland/The Rider News

Sophomore musical theater major **Lilli Doll** won R Factor Remix after three knockout performances.



Caroline Haviland/The Rider News

**Kyler Montague**, a junior communications major, performed in two rounds of R Factor Remix. **Montague's** first song was dedicated to his cousin who recently passed away.

## "R Factor ReMix": a new take on a beloved Rider tradition

By **Tristan E. M. Leach**

**S**TANDING hand in hand center stage, Ida DeMarco, a senior arts and entertainment industries management major, and Lilli Doll, a sophomore musical theater major, wait. After three knockout rounds of powerful singing, Doll and DeMarco are the last standing, and one of them will be the winner of "R Factor Remix."

On Jan. 26, the Student Entertainment Council brought back the beloved singing competition, "R Factor." The show celebrated its 12-year anniversary on the same day as the competition and invited students to send an audition tape for the opportunity to perform in front of a live audience and judges.

This version, however, was different from its fall semester sister production. Eight student singers started the show, whereas in the fall, 16 students were welcomed to the Yvonne Theater stage.

Nick Barbati, assistant vice president of student affairs, decided bringing back the show was a good way to get students to leave their dorms and connect with their community. Barbati's idea was proven correct as the Yvonne Theater filled with students excited to support their friends and family members.

Along with DeMarco, a returner to "R Factor," and Doll, six other students performed in "R Factor Remix." KC O'Brien, a senior global supply chain major, and Jennie Mae Sprouse, a junior sociology major, both returned to compete in "R Factor Remix" after performing in the fall 2023 competition.

Just like Doll, four other newcomers made their "R Factor" debut: Kyler Montague, a junior communications major; Maggie Kleiner, a junior graphic design major; Yusef Collins-Bryant, a senior music production major and Jeremy Burrell, a sophomore cybersecurity major.

Just as in the fall, Marques Merriweather, a graduate student in the business administration program, and Riley Mozes, a graduate student in the organizational leadership program, hosted the show.

Singers were guaranteed to perform once, each showing off their voices with a song of their choosing.

Songs included titles like "Don't Know Why" by "Nora Jones and "Turning Tables" by Adele. After finishing their songs competitors received feedback from three of the four judges.

This semester's judges were rapper Ezra Hill, "X Factor" finalist and returning "R Factor" judge Dani Knight, recording artist and "Rider Drag" performer Jolina Jasmine and Barbati.

In the first round it was up to the judges who would make it to round two.

After the first elimination, round two contestants were DeMarco, Collins-Bryant, Montague and Doll.

When speaking of Doll's first performance, Barbati said, "The feeling ... it just comes pouring out." The feeling of power and emotion as described by Barbati moved Doll to the second round.

Collins-Bryant's stunning performance of "Alfie," popularized by Dionne Warwick, had the judges in tears. His classically trained voice grabbed the audience's attention and got Collins-Bryant to the second round. Knight praised Collins-Bryant's voice for its power and beauty.

DeMarco sang Amy Winehouse's "Back to Black" with what Barbati called perfect pitch. Barbati's kind words moved DeMarco to tears, prompting her to tearfully ask him for a hug, which Barbati happily gave.

Montague was the final choice of the judges. His song's dedication to his cousin moved the audience and judges alike.

"We found a star tonight," said Barbati when giving Montague feedback.

In the second round contestants sang another song of their choice, a difference from the original competition, where judges become coaches and help their contestants pick songs that suit their personality and voice.

First up was DeMarco, who sang Taylor Swift's "Style" in a ballad style. After her song was finished, thunderous applause filled the theater.

Jasmine said, "You sang that so beautifully."

Collins-Bryant followed DeMarco, singing "I Am Love," by Jennifer Holliday. Collins-Bryant's sweet voice brought the judges to tears once again.

Knight said, "Your voice is so soothing."

Next up was Montague who performed "Clouded," by Brent Faiyaz, which left audience members a bit surprised by its sexually-explicit lyrics. After recovering from the initial shock, Barbati praised Montague for the brave choice.

"I want every artist to be their authentic self," said Barbati.

To finish up the second round, Doll, who goes by they/them pronouns, performed "Piece of My Heart," made popular by Janis Joplin. Doll's powerful vocals had the audience whooping and cheering throughout their performance.

Knight praised Doll saying, "Ezra and I agreed we're getting tickets to your first show. This is what you were made to do."

Now it was the audience's turn to decide who would make it to the final round. Using text message voting, it was decided that DeMarco and Doll would be the final two.

Before they would sing their last song, fall semester R Factor winner Kamanay Belcher, a freshman English major, performed "Riptide" by Vance Joy. The audience cheered for Belcher as she sang along with her familiar turquoise ukulele.

For her last song of the evening, DeMarco sang Billie Eilish's "idontwannabeyouanymore."

Doll followed with "I Have Nothing," performed by Whitney Houston.

After the two performances finished, it was time for audience members to vote on the winner. DeMarco and Doll walked onto the stage, side by side. Merriweather and Mozes came out on stage and together announced the winner.

Doll's name was called and the audience burst into loud applause and cheers. Doll broke into a wide smile. Giddy with excitement, Doll hugged their mom, who had flown in from Ohio to watch Doll perform.

When asked how they felt, Doll said, "So much joy and gratitude. To get that response from the audience from my performance. I have been telling people I can do what I did ... for months. I just needed the opportunity to show up and show people that side of myself. So getting such a positive response ... was so fulfilling."

*Maggie Kleiner is the photo editor for The Rider News and was a competitor in R Factor Remix. Kleiner had no part in the writing or editing of this article.*



Caroline Haviland/The Rider News

Senior arts and entertainment industries management major **Ida DeMarco** was the runner-up for "R Factor Remix." **DeMarco** performed three moving pop ballads.



Caroline Haviland/The Rider News

Sophomore cybersecurity major **Jeremy Burrell** was one of five newcomers to the competition. **Burrell** performed John Legend's "All of Me."

# Server crash shows value of student media

**O**VER winter break, 107.7 The Bronc and The Rider News both lost a valuable chronicle of not only the student organizations, but the university as a whole. A university server, where both of the organizations' websites were held, suddenly failed, taking all of the content along with it.

For The Rider News, articles on the website dated back to at least 2011. For the radio station, 56% of listeners come from their site, according John Mozes, director of 107.7 The Bronc.

The shutdown of the server has caused mass uncertainty on not only what can be brought back, but also, how much valuable content was lost.

Both websites, 1077TheBronc.com and TheRiderNews.com, had to be rebuilt because of the server failure.

Our student publication's website being reset resulted in the loss of a multitude of online-only articles and photo galleries that possibly cannot be recovered, according to Rider's former webmaster Alye Ancianis, who was contracted by the school to rebuild the student media websites. There is no way to tell how many are truly gone forever.

Both The Rider News and 107.7 The Bronc are immensely grateful for the university's efforts in rebuilding our websites before the spring semester, reuploading almost all of the radio station's website's content, and uploading some of The Rider News' most recent content.

Now, both of the websites are within compliance of the Americans with Disabilities Act for the first time in its history.

Despite this silver lining, the server failure affected The Rider News and its student workers in ways that could have harmful, long-term ramifications on their careers in journalism.

Our website was down while many prestigious internship deadlines approached, and our journalists had to quickly figure out alternative solutions that could compromise their chances at precious opportunities in a competitive field. We are all hoping that employers will be understanding of our situation, but the inconvenience posed by our workarounds certainly did not increase any of our chances at landing crucial summer internships.

For 107.7 The Bronc, the crash came just after being nominated for eight Intercollegiate Broadcasting Systems awards.

The Rider News was also in the middle of submitting articles for regional collegiate journalism awards, which caused major disruptions for student workers who wanted to nominate stories, photos, videos and graphic designs. If not for the print edition of The Rider News, they would not have been able to submit anything.

When it came to online-only content, writers and staff members had no choice but to completely pivot to other articles for submission that were perhaps weaker and brought down the quality of their application. There is still no guarantee that all our online-only content will be brought back. Some articles and all photo galleries were not archived and lost forever.

Similarly, multiple Rider alumni and former Rider News staff members reached out while the server was down asking where their work had gone, as they were hoping to submit it for graduate degree portfolios and to potential employers.

Among the lost online-only content was The Rider News' coverage of important events at Rider that occurred over the winter and summer breaks, from yearly winter basketball coverage to university personnel changes over the summer.

Additionally, The Rider News traditionally publishes online-only articles of Rider's men's and women's basketball teams over winter break, and the sports editors are paid for their coverage and work on the stories. Without a website, the usual winter basketball coverage was impossible this year, and staff could not receive pay that they otherwise could have counted on.

The Rider News publishes online-only content nearly every week, as all content that does not fit onto the 12-page print edition are posted digitally. As a result, some contributors had a significant amount of their writing catalog wiped from the internet, robbing them of well-earned legitimacy and convenience.

Rather than using links to our website, writers and staff members had to apply for internships with screenshots and PDFs of articles in the print edition of The Rider News, which are far less conducive to reading on digital screens. We are all hoping that employers will be understanding of our situation, but the inconvenience posed by our workarounds certainly did not increase any of our chances at landing crucial summer internships.

This also shows how critical both the print and digital editions of The Rider News are – without the print edition to reference, we may not have been able to retrieve anything.

We have learned our lesson. Going forward, The Rider News will ensure it is better prepared for server failures and similar mishaps. This lesson, however, shows not only the importance of student media on campus, but also the chronicle that we keep of the university.

It is up to The Rider News and 107.7 The Bronc's student workers, along with the university, to keep student media alive at Rider. Without these organizations, Rider loses incredibly valuable work that shows what we have learned at the university. Attending an institution with engaged learning at the forefront of our education distinguishes it from other schools.

Years of content may be permanently lost as a result of the crash. In the future, it is critical that student media organizations and the university work together to prepare for these events and ensure that resources like the print edition of The Rider News are preserved, because they contain valuable student experiences and the history of Rider as a whole.

*This editorial reflects the opinion of The Rider News editorial board*




Rashe Mishra/The Rider News

The Rider News website crash has potentially erased years Rider News history.

## **THE** Rider News

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## SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

# The 'Golden Globes' was a major disappointment

**H**AVE always loved award shows. The deep red carpet, the glamorous (and sometimes bizarre) outfits and the excitement of each and every person in that room. Watching people who work so hard on their craft receive recognition will never not make me smile. Award shows are one of those times when excitement and joy are the only thoughts in everybody's mind, until someone changes that.

On Jan. 7 actors, directors, producers, costume designers and more made their way into The Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, California. With guests seated at tables with graceful centerpieces and white linen tablecloths, the night could finally begin. It was the beginning of the end.

Jo Koy, a comedian, was picked to be this year's "Golden Globes" host. Koy, a 52-year-old comedian, had what appeared to be a pretty positive track record when it came to his comedy and performance. Koy is accomplished, has a Netflix comedy special and has raised money for Filipino Americans to get involved in jobs they want. So, what exactly happened?

When a host is picked for any award show a group of writers and the host come together to put together a script. This is for the host and award presenters, and helps the show to run smoothly, keeping things appropriate for broadcast television. While Koy didn't drop a curse word or use vulgar language, he did make choices that will be hard to come back from.

"Oppenheimer," a film about the creator of the atomic bomb, was released on the exact same day as "Barbie." Film goers everywhere celebrated what was affectionately known as "Barbenheimer," the attending of both films consecutively. Both films have been praised by movie lovers for being well done, and fantastic discussions have arisen on their respective topics as a result. Koy seemed to miss the memo that the films are drastically different and therefore can not be compared when it comes to plot.

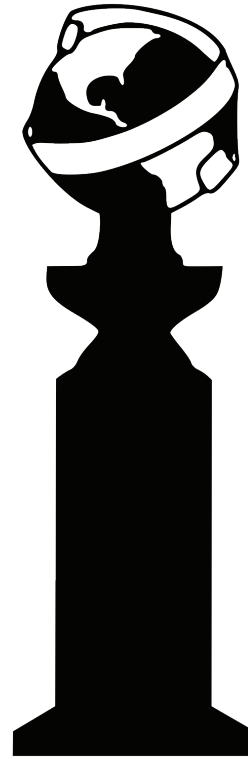
Koy's opening monologue missed the mark. For starters, Koy reduced the plot of "Barbie" to the titular character having big boobs while praising "Oppenheimer" for being one of the greatest films of the season. He then went on to insult Margot Robbie, the lead actress who played Barbie, telling Robbie that everything isn't about her. Robbie plastered on what can only be described as a "Well ... this is awkward" smile.

Right after insulting Robbie, Koy moved onto Taylor Swift, saying that there would be fewer shots of her than at an NFL game. Recently, Swift has been in the spotlight for frequently attending the football games in which her boyfriend, Travis Kelce, plays. Some have argued that Koy was not wrong in his assertions. Does a Barbie doll have big boobs? Yes. Was the movie about Barbie's boobs? No. Is Swift shown a lot on camera when she attends an NFL game? Yes. Does she control the cameras? No.

Koy's comments only prove the point of Barbie. No matter what a woman does, she will be subjected to ridicule, judgment and unwarranted criticism. If Robbie or Swift had gotten up and told Koy off, they would be labeled as overly emotional or just another hysterical woman. If Ryan Gosling, the actor who played Ken, had told Koy off, he would be praised for defending the women he worked with. Gosling has spoken multiple times about how Barbie is nothing without the women who made and played every Barbie in the film.

Swift is one of the most powerful women and entertainers on the planet. Robbie is an actress with over 30 successful film roles under her belt. Koy's default to make fun of and bully successful women in their respective field only proves the point of "Barbie." No matter how hard a woman works, how smart she is or how talented she is, someone will find a way to tear her down.

*Tristan E. M. Leach*  
senior journalism major



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

The "Golden Globes" took an unexpected turn after **Jo Koy** made inappropriate jokes.

## JUNIOR JOURNALS

# Minnesota city elects council of all women

**H**ISTORY was made in St. Paul, Minnesota, on Jan. 9 when the new city council was sworn in with all seven members being women and six of the seven being people of color. They are all under the age of 40, and some of the issues the women advocate for are affordable housing, access to child care and the climate crisis.

The council's new president, Mitra Jalali, was a former social studies teacher and organizer of policy aide. She has served as a council member for the past four years and was the first Iranian-American to be elected into the city council in 2018. She is prioritizing economic development, sustainability, public safety and homeownership. In an article by the New York Times, Jalali said: "I'm really hoping for the chance to have much more refined policy conversations and bring our community into this work in a new way."

Council member Rebecca Noecker, first elected in 2015, was the first woman to be elected into the city council for Ward 2, which spans the center St. Paul. Noecker graduated from Harvard University and was previously a middle school science teacher. Noecker prioritizes equity, economic development and creating opportunities for young people. In the New York Times article, she explains that at 39 years old she is a "senior stateswoman" which she shares is a good thing because, "that means we don't have this backlog or baggage of institutional memory holding us down."

Ward 6 council member Nelsie Yang has been a community organizer since 2015, and in 2019 became the first Hmong-American woman to be elected into the city council. In 1989, her parents came to America where they raised Yang as well as her four other siblings. She faced many struggles growing up, especially with economic stress, but she has used those experiences as a way to keep herself motivated. Yang prioritizes issues like sexism, racism and classism and has worked with organizations such as Take Action Minnesota and Hmong Americans for Justice.

Yang shares that she is thrilled about the all-women council in the New York Times article and said, "this is the vision I had when I first started organizing eight years ago. Change doesn't happen with the same voices at the table."

There are four newcomers to the council, the first being Anika Bowie. Bowie is a lifelong resident of St. Paul and a serial entrepreneur, a community organizer and a passionate advocate for improving people's lives through leadership and civic engagement. She is a graduate from Hamline University and has lived through homelessness, losing a loved one and trying to navigate the justice system while facing racism and sexism.

She is devoted to treating everyone equally no matter their race, religion, gender or economic status. She believes the difficulties that she has faced has made her a strong and compassionate leader. Bowie explains that for the all-women council she is "excited to see how we dance together," and although there

may be arguments she hopes they are "righteous fights."

Newcomer Cheniqua Johnson has worked in politics for the past decade and has worked directly at every level of government in St. Paul. She is a graduate from University of Minnesota with a degree in family social science and is a former congressional staffer for current Attorney General Keith Ellison. Johnson is dedicated to finding safe and stable homes for everyone as well as public safety. She has helped raise over \$2 million to improve health and wellness in her community.

On her website Johnson said, "Grounded in the values instilled in me by my family, I've dedicated my life to organizing and advocating to build a better Minnesota. I'll consistently work to ensure no family has to choose between having a nutritious meal or a roof over their heads."

*Felicia Roehm*  
junior journalism major



Angelina Fierro/The Rider News

St. Paul, Minnesota's new city council is all women for the first time in history.

## FEATURE

# Rider alum hits big on NFL parlay

By Benjamin Shinault

**D**URING a week-16 matchup between the Baltimore Ravens and the San Francisco 49ers, 49ers running back Christian McCaffrey put the final nail in the coffin for an incredible 14-leg parlay and stunning Christmas gift that paid Rider alum Travis Dufner, \$489,000.

Dufner, 32, grew up in Monroe Township, New Jersey, graduating from Rider in 2017 with a degree in finance. Dufner now works as a financial advisor at Millstone Financial Group; however, when the weekend comes around, he switches to football mode.

"I've always thought of myself as a person with a high level of sports knowledge, especially with football," Dufner said.

The elite level of sports knowledge came into play for Dufner when he decided to put some skin in the game for the Christmas set of football games.

All previous legs of Dufner's parlay hit and the only obstacle in his way from hitting a large jackpot laid all upon McCaffrey.

"It was Christmas day, my wife and I were at her parents house...we were watching the other games at my in-laws," Dufner said. "We were all pretty calm for the most part just because it was Christian McCaffrey, we were all kind of like, 'If anyone's going to do it, it's going to be him.'"

Dufner delved deeper into what the emotions were like in his head when he was anxiously waiting for McCaffrey to cross the plain and to ultimately give Dufner a big win.

"It got really nerve racking because San Francisco was really struggling against Baltimore ... so we were all like, 'This is getting rough,'" Dufner said with a smile. "McCaffrey broke a 30 or 40-yard run to get them down to inside the 10 and then it was the very next play that he wound up scoring."

When McCaffrey got into the end zone, the room exploded around him. Dufner went on to give details on what the feeling was like both in his head and in the basement of his moms house.

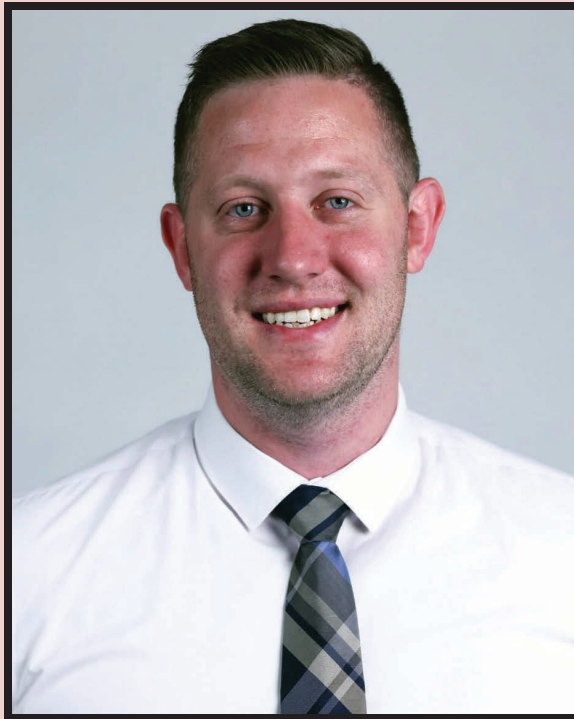


Photo courtesy of Travis Dufner

**Travis Dufner '17** won nearly half a million dollars after his NFL parlay hit.

"My first reaction was ... we have to watch the replay," Dufner said.

His first step was to make sure there were no flags. The next was to make sure his knees weren't down and elbows didn't hit the ground.

"Because if that happened and they do a quarterback sneak, I'm going to kill someone," Dufner said with a laugh.

When the news got out about Dufner's huge hit, every media outlet up the stream contacted Dufner to hear about his story.

"It would have been easier to tell you which ones didn't, it was everybody," Dufner said. "The Wall Street Journal, ABC, obviously DraftKings and Bleacher Report, News 12 New Jersey and I was on CNBC."

The days following the big parlay hit, Dufner

stated that people would always reach out to him to see what his picks were looking like for the week.

"It was a crazy week after that, it really was just like everybody wanted to talk, everyone wanted to follow whatever picks I had coming up," Dufner said.

Dufner still posts his picks, props and parlays on his Instagram but he states that will not pursue anything further or anything larger within the ever-growing sports betting industry.

"It was cool but as a financial advisor, I can't really make money off doing this," Dufner said. "I can't sell picks, I can't have a sports betting page endorsing me, you would just give off the wrong vibes."

Dufner went on to say that he does sports betting for fun and just likes to have some money on the game when he sits on the couch and flicks the games on.

"I'm only doing five to 10 dollar bets, it's not like I'm some degenerate gambler where I'm losing all my money or have an issue with it at all," Dufner said.

Now when it comes to spending the big win, being a financial advisor comes in handy as Dufner has an extensive list of what he wants to do with his big hit and what he has already done.

"Everyone is getting a boring answer from me, I'm doing the right thing with my money and I'm investing it," Dufner said. "I paid off student loans for myself and my wife... we got some work done on the house that we bought a few years ago, I paid my car down."

Dufner continued with, "I bought myself a Rolex, I've always wanted to spoil myself with that and one vacation, me and my wife have always wanted to go to Aruba together ... and like I said, the rest of it is invested."

Sports betting is based on luck and it takes little to no skill, Dufner added.

"I'm just your average guy, nothing special, it can happen to anybody and I'm not saying it's going to because the odds are it's not going to."

## WRESTLING

# Broncs reach .500, sweep weekend matches

By Logan VanDine

**H**EADING into Rider wrestling's matches against Lock Haven and Bloomsburg, the Broncs were on a 12-day break, looking to come back strong. That time off did just that as the Broncs won handily in both home matches to improve to .500 on the season.

## 'Feeding off each other'

Despite a rusty start with their match against Lock Haven, the Broncs rallied to win the final six bouts of the night to defeat the Bald Eagles 27-11 on Jan. 26 in their first of two home matches.

It was not an ideal beginning for Rider as they lost three of the first four matches to fall behind 11-3 with frustrations by the wrestlers, coaches and fans on full display. The one-bout win the Broncs earned in the first four came dramatically with graduate student Richie Koehler winning by sudden victory.

"I was just comfortable the entire time, we're a very good in-shape team, probably one of the best in-shape teams in the whole entire nation," Koehler said.

With the score at 11-3 in favor of the Bald Eagles, Rider went on to win the final six bouts of the night with an impressive 16-point victory to get its fourth win of the season.

"You can see they come to win and they come to wrestle, but our kids did just that in return," Head Coach John Hangey said. "That's what we have been trying to get them to buy into: be stubborn with points, be stubborn in scoring points ... fight everything and we can wrestle."

Hangey also spoke about his team's comeback and how they were able to get it done against a Lock Haven team that they lost to by nine points a season ago.

"It's that fight for each other, for your brother, and that's really what got us there," Hangey said.

Junior Isaac Dean talked about how he was able to "wrestle his tail off" in his bout that helped extend the Broncs' lead to 16-11.

"I've been trying to find my movements, find out to fight with toughness, and I feel like I was finally able to and I was confident in myself," Dean said.

## A Senior Day victory

Looking to build off their win over Lock Haven, the Broncs did that and then some as they cruised past Bloomsburg 42-3 on Senior Day to get the .500 mark on Jan. 28.

The first bout of the afternoon set the tone for the entire match with senior Tyler Klinsky winning his bout by fall, followed by Koehler again picking up his second bout win of the weekend, giving the Broncs a quick 11-0 lead over the Roongos.

That afternoon, the Broncs won all but one bout, picking up the dominating win, which came as no surprise to Hangey.

"Bloomsburg has been struggling with a lot of injuries and stuff of that nature, but it's always business as usual. It does not matter who you're wrestling; if it's Penn State or Bloomsburg, you have to go out to do your job from start to finish, and they did just that," Hangey said.

One of those wrestlers who worked to win was



Maggie Kleiner/The Rider News

Redshirt senior **Quinn Kinner** completes the takedown on his opponent.

senior Quinn Kinner. After his loss to Lock Haven, he was able to bounce back with a win by technical fall.

"I've been putting a lot of pressure on myself last season and it's no secret I've been in a slump and not the season I've envisioned," Kinner said. "All that really matters at the end of the day is March to win an NCAA Title."

The Broncs now move to 5-5 on the season with their next matchup against Drexel on Feb. 3 at 2 p.m. "Together as a team, we'll stay on track," Hangey said.

The Broncs now move to 5-5 on the season with their next matchup against Drexel on Feb. 3 at 2 p.m.

The Broncs are 6-8 on the season and travel to Connecticut to play a conference game against Fairfield at 3 p.m.

## MEN'S BASKETBALL

# NOTEBOOK: Rider starting to win at right time

By Benjamin Shinault

RIDER men's basketball's season kept moving along as winter break came and went. With the student body returning to campus and filling the seats of Alumni Gym once again, Rider's record sits at 7-13 and its in-conference record settles in at 4-5, one game below .500.

With preseason expectations of finishing atop the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference, the Broncos have their work cut out for them heading into the winter months ahead with 11 games remaining in the regular season.

## Rocky roads

As of Jan. 28, the Broncos are slotted in at seventh place in the MAAC and have struggled with defending the hoop, ranking ninth in the conference in points allowed per game. Rider has also struggled with shooting the ball from the field, sitting at eighth in the conference in FG%.

With the Broncos in the middle of MAAC play and finally bringing their tough out-of-conference schedule to an end, they finished the gauntlet as they faced Penn State, nationally ranked Marquette and Nebraska.

In its loss against Marist on Jan. 14, Rider was shut down, 83-60. After the game, Head Coach Kevin Baggett didn't hold back discussing his team's effort against the Red Foxes.

"It was a lack of toughness, a lack of being able to keep the ball in front of guys that came off the bench and had no understanding or idea of what we were doing," Baggett said to Rider Athletics after the loss. "It was definitely a major step back." In the Jan. 19 game after the tough Marist loss, the Broncos lose again, this time to the Niagara Purple Eagles. It was



Jayden Walker/The Rider News

Senior forward **Tariq Ingraham** reaching for Rider men's basketball opening tipoff.

a high-scoring affair but the Broncos would ultimately drop the game, 78-74.

"Too many broken assignments, our basketball IQs have got to get better," Baggett said to Rider

Athletics. "The things that we do in the game at key moments ... not good, not good."

## King of the MAAC

One of the positive storylines that emerged for the Broncos so far this season has been senior forward Mervin James' jump in production. In his already decorated statistical season, James was awarded MAAC Player of the Week on Dec. 26.

In the two games James played that week against Penn and Delaware, James averaged 22.5 points per game, 9.5 rebounds, 3.5 assists and three blocks all while shooting 56% from the field.

James was bestowed the honor once again on Jan. 29 after averaging 23 points and eight rebounds while shooting 46.9% from the field.

This season, James has scored 20 or more points in 10 games and has finished under 10 points in only two games. James was only able to score eight points against Marist on Jan. 14 and the Niagara on Jan. 19.

James leads the MAAC in scoring; he is sixth in rebounds and 10th in field goal percentage.

When it comes to team success, the Broncos worked on building upon their current winning streak of two games as they took down the Saint Peter's Peacocks 62-57 on Jan. 25 and the Mount Saint Mary's Mountaineers 66-62 on Jan. 27.

## Looking ahead

The Broncos are hungry for redemption and thirsty to get back to playing in front of their home fans.

The Broncos hit the floor on Feb. 2 when they take on Siena at home at 7 p.m.

## WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

# Broncs fall to last in the MAAC, lose back to back

By Logan VanDine and Kadie Digiuseppe

ENTERING the games against Niagara and Saint Peter's, Rider women's basketball had gone 3-6 over their last nine games and are in the middle of a three-game losing streak.

Rider saw its losing streak extend to four as the Broncos fell to Niagara and Saint Peter's, dropping to 5-12 on the season.

## 'I thought we battled'

After a tough week of two straight losses, the Broncos tried to kick things back into gear during their game on Jan. 25 at home against Niagara. All night, Rider struggled on defense letting the Purple Eagles outscore them 81-62 in the end of regulation.

At the start of each quarter, the Broncos came out with energy and drive to take charge of the game but ultimately couldn't get things done.

After the first half, Rider caught onto Niagara's and started finding open shots after being outscored 45-22 at the end of the first half.

In the third quarter, the Broncos got going on offense and scored 23 more points with help from lead scorer and senior guard Makayla Firebaugh, who had 16 points at the end of regulation and two 3-pointers.

"Obviously it feels good, I guess," said Firebaugh on being the leading scorer in harder games. "But at the same time if the outcome is not a win, at the end of the day it doesn't feel as good."

Graduate student guard Jessika Schiffer also helped the Broncos get back on track offensively, shooting for 50% and scoring 13 points, including three 3-pointers.

Head Coach Lynn Milligan said, "I thought that we battled really well and I knew we weren't going to quit or go away, it was just a question of getting a little beat up, getting a little down."

## 'Disappointing'

After the Broncos 20-point loss to Niagara at home, they had to turn around quickly to take on Saint



Maggie Kleiner/The Rider News

The Broncos celebrate after taking a timeout in their game against the Niagara Purple Eagles on Jan. 25.

Peter's on the road.

After a close game in the first half, the second half was where it fell apart for Rider as they fell to the Peacocks on Jan. 28, 68-58.

"I thought our bounce back from Thursday night would be better," said Milligan. "Saint Peter's played a very good game and I thought defensively we were half a second late and offensively we're still turning the ball over too much."

The game started close with Saint Peter's up by just one at the end of the first quarter, 19-18 and just two by the end of the second, 15-13. This made the score 34-31 by the end of the first half with a thrilling and close finish looking almost certain.

The second half proved difficult for Rider as the Peacocks looked like the better team that day. The

Broncs were outscored in the third quarter 22-7 which proved to be the difference as the Broncos dropped their fourth straight to fall to last place in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference.

"Late in the third quarter was when we had too many defensive breakdowns," Milligan said.

The leading scorers for the Broncos on the afternoon were guards, graduate student Taylor Lagan and senior Molly Lynch who both had 15 points and Firebaugh who had another strong game with 14 points.

The Broncos return home to the Alumni Gym on Feb. 1 where they host the top-seeded Fairfield Stags at 7 p.m.

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WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

## Transfer brings veteran presence and elite scoring

TAYLOR

# LANGAN

RIDER WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

BEFORE JOINING RIDER WOMEN'S BASKETBALL, TAYLOR LANGAN HAD BUILT UP A REPUTATION AS ONE OF THE BEST HIGH SCHOOL PLAYERS IN NEW JERSEY. BEING A MCDONALD'S ALL-AMERICAN NOMINEE FOR THE 2017-18 SEASON, LANGAN SHOWED MAJOR POTENTIAL IN HER LONE SEASON AT MILLERSVILLE, AVERAGING 15.9 POINTS AND 6.9 REBOUNDS PER GAME.

14.3

8.8

1.7

PPG

RPG

APG


32.8

37.9

MFG

3P%

(STATS AS OF JAN. 30)



Graduate student guard **Taylor Langan** has taken the MAAC by storm with her elite offense and stellar leadership. (Graphic by Eric Buckwalter/The Rider News, photo by Kaitlyn D'Alessio/The Rider News)

By **Logan VanDine**

**R**IDER women's basketball is in the midst of their 2023-24 regular season, and the team is looking to rebound after only winning 10 games last season. Upgrading the roster was not easy for the Broncs, with many key players transferring or graduating.

The fresh-faced team also had new players with graduate student guard Taylor Langan being one of them.

Langan, who is from Lake Hopatcong, New Jersey, first opened up about how she first got into basketball.

### 'That's all I wanted to do'

Langan, who attended Jefferson Township High School in Jefferson, New Jersey, also played both soccer and lacrosse and ran track, compiling a multi-sport resume.

"When I was growing up, my mom and dad said I was always strong enough to play basketball," said Langan. "They knew that was going to be my passion because ever since I was little, that's all I wanted to do: play basketball."

Despite participating in a number of sports, Langan always knew that basketball was the sport for her.

"I've actually known for forever," Langan said bluntly. "Even when I was in fourth or fifth grade when people asked, I said I just wanted to play basketball."

Langan did just that playing on her varsity high school basketball team throughout all four of her years in high school and had a chance to play with someone very special to her.

"At the time, my sister was a junior on the team so I already knew that they needed a point guard, and playing with her was the best feeling ever," said Langan.

When it came time for Langan to decide where

she wanted to play basketball at the collegiate level, she initially committed to the University of Delaware, where much of her family had attended, but when the school changed coaches and athletic directors, she decided on Colgate University.

Langan attended Colgate from 2019-22 and played 30 games off the bench, averaging 6.4 points and 3.1 rebounds per game.

However, Langan did not see much action on the court at Colgate, as two ACL and meniscus tears and a stress fracture in her femur kept her on the bench, costing her two seasons.

"I love the game more than anything, and it makes me appreciate every moment I have," Langan said.

Langan then decided to take her talents to Millersville University for the 2022-23 season, where she already knew someone who was originally with her at Colgate.

"Sharay Hall, who is now the assistant coach at Rider, was my position coach my sophomore year, and her and I became 'thing one and thing two.' ... she's been a mentor for me," Langan said.

Hall, who is in her first season as an assistant coach for the Broncs, spoke about the special relationship she has with Langan.

"I would describe my relationship with Taylor as a once-in-a-lifetime thing," said Hall. "We, as coaches, pride ourselves on building relationships with players but to be a part of someone's journey at three different stops, it's rare."

After her one-year stint at Millersville, where she averaged a team-leading 15.9 points again, Langan and Hall wanted to run it back one more time at the Division I level and luckily, they had the same place in mind.

### 'I knew I could do it'

Langan certainly found a home at Rider as she's averaged almost 14.3 points per game this season including a career-high 31 points against Lehigh and has scored 10 points or more in 15-of-17 games thus far.

"I wanted to get back to the Division I level. I knew I could do it. She loves coaching, she loves mentoring and being a position coach, she wanted something new, too, and I actually committed to Rider before her," Langan said.

When Hall was asked about how much Langan had grown since being at Colgate and Millersville, she could not be more proud of her.

"I cannot even put into words how much Taylor has grown since I met her at Colgate," Hall said. "Now, three years later she is mature, a leader both by example and by action, she is the biggest cheerleader of those around her and still can perform at a high level. It's simply amazing."

Lynn Milligan, who is in the middle of her 17th season as the head coach of the team, spoke highly of how much of an impact Langan has on the team.

"She came in as a mature older player, very confident and natural leader, and I think she's been as consistent as she can be on a day-to-day basis," Milligan said.

With this being her last season eligible to play college basketball, Langan is determined to keep playing basketball beyond college.

"I would love to continue to play basketball," she said. "I want to continue to play over in Europe professionally [as] that has been on my radar for after this season."




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