

CDI official leaves, misgendering complaints surface

By Amethyst Martinez

THE university has lost a majority of diversity, equity and inclusion employees over the past eight months with departure reasons ranging from general unhappiness to job eliminations.

The most recent of those to part with the hollowed out department is the Center of Diversity and Inclusion's Assistant Director Shaun Williams.

No university communication was sent out regarding his departure; instead, an email was sent to the university community on Jan. 26 redirecting all CDI inquiries to Heeyoung Kim, Rider's chief diversity officer. Four days prior to the email, Williams was listed as the point person for Rider's Black History Month programming from CDI. After Williams' abrupt departure, he was quickly removed from Rider's website.

However, multiple students involved with the center agreed that his exit was not shocking. A history of disorganization and misgendering from Williams has been noted despite his position requiring him to work closely with LGBTQIA+ students and overseeing SafeZone training, a program used to educate staff, faculty and students about LGBTQIA+ issues.

Williams was unable to be reached for an interview after multiple attempts by The Rider News.

Misgendering

A nonbinary junior at the university involved with the Multicultural Student Leadership Institute, who wanted to remain anonymous to protect their privacy, stated that Williams consistently misgendered and deadnamed them, a term used to describe the usage of a person's birth name instead of their chosen one.

In emails viewed by The Rider News from Williams, the junior's deadname was used, along with the incorrect pronouns in multiple emails. Another email shows Williams apologizing for the errors.

In a SafeZone training, the student alleged that although they had introduced themselves with their pronouns and had a pin stating them, Williams continuously used the wrong one.

"It was only Shaun that was messing up my pronouns," the junior said. "Everyone else was really respectful of them in that room, but Shaun specifically, [it] almost felt like he went out of his way not to use them because it was so clear. I had something that said my pronouns, I introduced them. And he was still wrong."

In SafeZone training, a pinnacle factor of the presentation discusses pronoun usage and the importance of it.

Amy Atkinson, assistant director of the Academic Success Center and a SafeZone facilitator, stated that at least four of the slides shown in the presentation discussed pronouns.

She also said that she heard issues of misgendering at the CDI and across the university from students in prior semesters. She stressed the importance of recognizing and using the correct pronouns, especially from people in leadership positions.

"It's not just about a respect, it's also about embracing a person and what's important to them," said Atkinson. "I'm a part of the LGBTQ+ community, and I know what it's like to be worried about even letting someone know that part of yourself for fear."

The junior also mentioned they had been misgendered by Kim, who was put in the CDO position this summer after the departure of Barbara



Maggie Kleiner/The Rider News

The CDI intends to serve as a safe space for students of all identities.

Lawrence, former CDO, and Pamela Pruitt, former CDI executive director.

Tristan E. M. Leach, president of Spectrum, Rider's LGBTQIA+ organization on campus, who uses they/them pronouns, also mentioned that Williams repeatedly misgendered them when Spectrum and the CDI would work together.

"It was really persistent," said Leach. "I'm very honest and open about my sexuality in general. So I'm not sure what the missing link was."

Leach, another SafeZone facilitator, said that they would also avoid hosting training sessions with Williams due to his history of misgendering.

"I was very wary of conducting a SafeZone training with Shaun because of a reputation that he had been building," said Leach. "I had been hearing some trainers being misgendered by Shaun in front of groups of people that we are trying

SEE MISMANAGEMENT PAGE 4

Rider bond rating falls, while outlook stabilizes

By Jake Tiger

RIDER'S financial situation gained another layer of complexity on Feb. 1 when its creditworthiness took another hit, but a positive change in its outlook could be indicative of the university's post-pandemic slide coming to an end.

Moody's Investors Service, a major global credit rating and risk assessment provider, downgraded Rider's issuer and revenue bond ratings from B3 to Caa1, the university's fourth demotion since 2020; simultaneously, the agency upgraded Rider's outlook from negative to stable due to the university's reduced scope and steady enrollment, according to the full Moody's report on Rider's finances.

Debt 'double whammy'

Moody's attributed the downgrade in bond rating to Rider's \$119 million in outstanding debt, ongoing operating deficits and severely limited cash on hand, according to the report.

Bharat Sarath, an accounting professor at Rutgers University, said that Rider should be able to survive in the short term with a bit of "good luck," but there is a greater problem with the university's outstanding debt.

"When the interest rates go up and your rating is downgraded, then you're going to get a double whammy on the interest rates," said Sarath. "It will

be a struggle for a few years, but hopefully, without another pandemic or something like that, they will be able to pull through."

Investors use credit ratings to assess the likelihood a debt will be paid back, so a worse rating restricts the types of loans Rider can take out and causes increased interest rates.

According to Moody's long-term rating definitions, obligations graded in the Caa category are of poor standing, subject to very high credit risk and considered to be junk/non-investment grade. Of 21 possible grades, Caa1 is the fifth lowest ahead of Caa2, Caa3, Ca and C.

"I don't know that anyone is shocked by it necessarily, but it's certainly disappointing," said Quinn Cunningham, president of Rider's chapter of the American Association of University Professors. "There appears to be such a lack of interest in including the faculty in the recovery process, other than trying to just have us cut whatever we possibly can."

The AAUP twice voted no-confidence in Rider President Gregory Dell'Omo, last doing so in February 2022 when it asked for his removal, with its main complaint being yearly program budget cuts and a lack of raises.

Enrollment rises

Budget reductions have been a universitywide

obstacle, but the university has also resorted to cutting positions to chip away at its deficit. Rider's Path Forward included the elimination of more than 30 positions, saving the university approximately \$2.5 million.

After analyzing Rider's audit for fiscal year 2023, Sarath said, "It seems that the management is taking steps to correct [its deficit], and one of the things I saw is that the salary for employees has fallen. ... They must have laid off people."

In the April 2023 Moody's report, when Rider fell to a B3 credit rating, the firm said a return to stability would be a challenge given "the magnitude of projected deficits, the inflammatory environment and projected flat enrollment in 2023."

According to Dell'Omo, Rider has seen an increase in enrollment during fiscal year 2024, with approximately an 8% to 9% increase in freshmen and transfer students.

"We hit those numbers, then things look good; when you don't hit those numbers, that's when things don't look as good," said Dell'Omo in an interview with The Rider News on Jan. 25. "You try to get that balance between being sort of aggressive and trying to push yourself to get as many students here as possible, but ... you don't want to create budgets that are just unrealistic. You're going to fall short."

SEE DELL'OMO PAGE 4

WILD WEEKEND

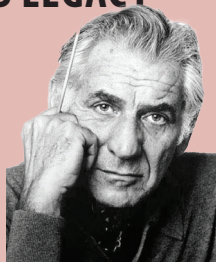
Rider flew high against Siena but fell to Iona.



PAGE 11

LEONARD BERNSTEIN'S LEGACY

Leonard Bernstein collaborated and recorded music with Westminster.



PAGE 8

SHINING LIGHT ON BLACK EXCELLENCE: NYSHEL NELSON

Nelson talks about her campus involvement.



PAGE 7

SECURITY BRIEFS

BY JAKE TIGER

Not-so-false alarm

Contriband candle. On Jan. 28 at 11:09 p.m., Public Safety received a fire alarm activation at Hill Residence Hall. Upon their arrival, Public Safety investigated the cause of the fire alarm and were able to determine that it was due to a burning candle, which was then confiscated. The incident was referred to the Office of Community Standards.

Breaking billiards

Shattered glass. On Jan. 30 at 9:28 a.m., Public Safety was dispatched to Lake House for the report of a broken window. Upon their arrival, Public Safety met with facilities management, who discovered broken glass inside the building's lounge. The window, which is near a pool table, appeared to have been shattered from the inside by a circular object. The glass was cleaned up by C&W Services staff, and facilities management are making repairs.

Wasted water

Blue-stained sinks. On Jan. 30 at 2:31 p.m., Public Safety received a phone call that the sinks in a Fine Arts building restroom were overflowing. Public Safety arrived on location and discovered blue-colored water flowing out of the sinks and covering the floor. Public Safety was able to shut off the water and contacted Facilities Management to assist with the issue. It was discovered that someone poured blue paint into the sinks. C&W Services was contacted to clean up the water. Public Safety was investigating.

-Information provided by Public Safety Capt. Matthew Babcock

'Rider Drag' fosters a welcoming community

By Jay Roberson

RIDER celebrates the art of drag through events like "Rider Drag" and "Drag Bingo," but the community has not always been accepted on campus.

Before it became mainstream through shows like "RuPaul's Drag Race," which premiered in 2009, drag was misunderstood at the university, according to Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs and Rider alum Nick Barbati '07.

"[Rider's drag race] was very different from what we know the drag performances to be today. It didn't have many student participants and it was not nearly as widely attended," said Barbati. "Then as the students who were involved graduated out, the event kind of morphed into more general talent shows."

Evolution of drag

It wasn't until 2017 that the Student Entertainment Council proposed that Rider host a drag show.

"The first year we brought back drag race we did it in the Rider pub. It was so packed we realized we needed to take it to a theater," said Barbati. "The next year we packed the [Bart Luedeke Center] theater."

Senior musical theater major Lincoln Funderburk, known by the drag name Lexi Legato, performed in Rider's drag race, "Drag Bingo" and "Rider's Got Talent."

"I do think drag is appreciated at Rider, because every time I've seen it on stage, whether I'm in the audience or on stage doing it myself, there's always such a huge amount of energy and enthusiasm and excitement, and it charges a room," said Funderburk.

Other students have found that drag has helped them express aspects of their femininity and masculinity, like freshman film and television major Cole Capriotti, who uses he/they pronouns.

Capriotti explained that drag gives them a sense of euphoria and allows them to feel more comfortable in their identity.

Sophomore game and interactive media design major Cassie Rudolph, who uses she/they pronouns and goes by the drag name Astral Projection, decided to participate in Rider's drag show in 2022 because they wanted to get themselves out there.

"I wanted to experience everything I can as a freshman, and it seemed like a really fun way to do that," said Rudolph. "It helped me get more comfortable with my femininity, and it's a fun way to ... perform gender, which we do everyday."

Barbati explained that when he was a participant as an undergraduate, students had to be secretive about their participation in the drag show.

"I remember being really nervous about walking on campus from my residence hall, covered in jackets because I didn't want to be seen ... yet it was a community of people that were really willing to take that risk to be involved and participate. So it had a level of warmth to it, because we were all in it together," said Barbati.

Appreciation for the art

In contrast to the past, student drag performers have received an overwhelming amount of positive feedback after their performances at university events in recent years.

Capriotti said, "I got a lot of positive reactions and a lot of positive comments. I still have people coming up to me and saying that they found one of my scrunchies during the show."

Junior English major Joe Giambelluca, known as Naughty Nurse Barbie, has participated in Rider's drag show two times, gaining more confidence each time he performs.

"I love the way it makes you feel, it gives you

confidence. It does that for me and I love how you're fighting the gender norms of society," said Giambelluca.

Funderburk expressed that drag isn't always meant to be a perfect or beautiful art form, saying: "There's literally no rules."

"There's people who call themselves drag things and paint clown makeup on their faces. They're walking around with spikes and leather jackets and blood running down them and spiked up hair and Mohawks. There's so many different things to do besides these super womanly figures and this one type of thing," said Funderburk.

Rudolph believes that drag is accessible and "anyone can do drag. It's for everyone."

At universities like West Texas A&M University, drag performances are banned because they're seen as discriminatory toward women.

Though drag hasn't always been accepted on Rider's campus, the art form has always been allowed and fostered a welcoming and warm environment for students of all sexualities and genders.

Funderburk said, "There's a lot of unfortunate persecution and microscopes on drag queens, drag artists and trans[gender] and queer people right now. The more that you can have it in front of people's faces, the more people that meet drag artists and go, 'Oh, that's a person I can talk to,' the better it's going to be. And it's also so fun, so sparkly, so exciting and so energetic."

Drag queens use performance as a means of expressing themselves.



Photos by Kaitlyn D'Alessio and graphic by Jay Roberson/The Rider News

Rodent residents invade Ziegler

By Lindsay Scarola

On Jan. 20, Ziegler Hall residents moved back in after break, unsuspecting of the surprise they were about to discover.

While they were away, mice had invaded the residence hall's third floor.

Sophia Tauer, a freshman actuarial science major, mentioned that she first saw tiny droppings.

"I was debating just cleaning it up and not saying anything about it, because I didn't want it to be a big issue," Tauer said. "Then I saw it was all over my roommate's desk as well, and there was a lot of it, so obviously it was an ongoing issue."

Because other dorms in the building had the same problem, students put in work orders for room inspections and mouse traps. Residents started to stuff towels under their doors in order to prevent more mice from invading. While this worked for some dorms, there were exceptions.

Charlotte Graham, a freshman elementary education major, was lying in her bed one afternoon working on assignments when she heard a rustling noise coming from under her bed. When she looked up, there was a mouse in front of her door.

"When I screamed it ran into my closet," Graham said. "I called my boyfriend in a panic to come help me, and he came quickly with some of his friends to help me get it out [of] my dorm room."

As her boyfriend, his friends and her neighbor attempted to catch the mouse, Graham waited in the hall. When she was trying to calm down, a mouse ran over her foot and down the hall.

Seeing a live mouse in her dorm affected Graham tremendously.

"I can't sit in my room without worrying about something in here with me," she said. "As someone who experiences episodes of anxiety, the anxiety I have been facing has been continuous, since this occurrence caused me to have difficulty sleeping and difficulty to complete my academics."

That night, Graham's family picked her up and drove her home to Long Island for the rest of the week.

Having uninvited guests scurrying around the third floor has made many residents overthink every noise they hear during the night.

Parents have been posting on the Rider University Parents Network group on Facebook, expressing their worry regarding their children finding droppings and more mice in their dorm rooms.

With many concerns rising because of the mice on the third floor, Mike Reca, vice president for facilities and university operations, sent an email to a concerned parent of a resident.

The email outlined the actions taken regarding the issue from Jan. 26-29. During that time frame, dorm rooms were inspected, cracks in walls and pipe chases were sealed and staff made daily rounds to check for any new mice.

By Jan. 29, the mice were gone and traps left in place. According to an email sent out that day, an exterminator inspected the residence hall, while facilities continued to monitor the area.



Photo courtesy of Rider University Parents Network Facebook group

A Ziegler resident posts a photo of a mouse they found.

Rider University Parents Network
Sharon Ivanauskas · 1h · 📷

Just another day in Ziegler 3rd floor.

I took my daughter back for an activity getting there around 1 PM. We went to her room and saw there was a dead mouse in a trap under her roommates bed. The trap had been placed there Friday evening while she wasn't there. I called it in and asked if somebody could come over and take the dead mouse. I was told by the lady speaking, that they can only come while my daughter is in the room. This makes no sense as they came into the room to place traps without either of the girls in the room. So if they are not there until Monday morning, there is a dead mouse sitting under the bed all weekend long.

Atoya Anderson
My daughter is in Moore and came back to the same thing but droppings all over her desk and inside her fridge was not happy at all! She is on the second floor smh

3d Like Reply 2 🙄

Lauren Aronson
That's awful. 😞 Mice can come inside because of cold weather and also even if she doesn't have open food left over break, it doesn't mean that her neighbors didn't leave open food, attracting mice. I think of dorms kind of like apartment buildings. You can be immaculate, but if your neighbor is not immaculate, you are subject to infestations because mice/roaches

Screenshots provided by Jackie Incollingo

Screenshots taken of comments posted to the Rider University Parents Network Facebook group.

Rider grant brings adult learners to campus

By Caroline Haviland

In an effort to bring adult learners back to college, Rider has received a grant through New Jersey's "Some College, No Degree" program that will provide non-tuition aid for essentials, such as childcare and textbooks, to its participants.

The state introduced the program to higher education institutions to promote degree completion for college students who were close to finishing school, but were blocked by financial difficulties.

Sean Levin, director of graduate, continuing education admission and university partnerships, operates as the grant's direct point of contact at Rider, as it falls under the continuing education enrollment program.

"Our goal is to provide students with resources to help these non-academic responsibilities in their lives, to then hopefully help them return to school and finish the degree they worked so hard for previously," said Levin.

The grant was introduced to the university in late October 2023, and Rider received their award from the state in November 2023.

Seton Hall, Ramapo, Rutgers, William Patterson and Montclair State among others also receive aid through this grant. The amount awarded by the state varies based on enrollment size.

Once enrolled, the school works with students to obtain financial information regarding their external expenses and offers what they can provide

each person specifically.

"The funding we provide is allocated for off-campus financial obligations that range from gas, childcare, home utilities, internet, groceries. We can find resources to provide monthly reimbursements to cover these costs," said Levin.

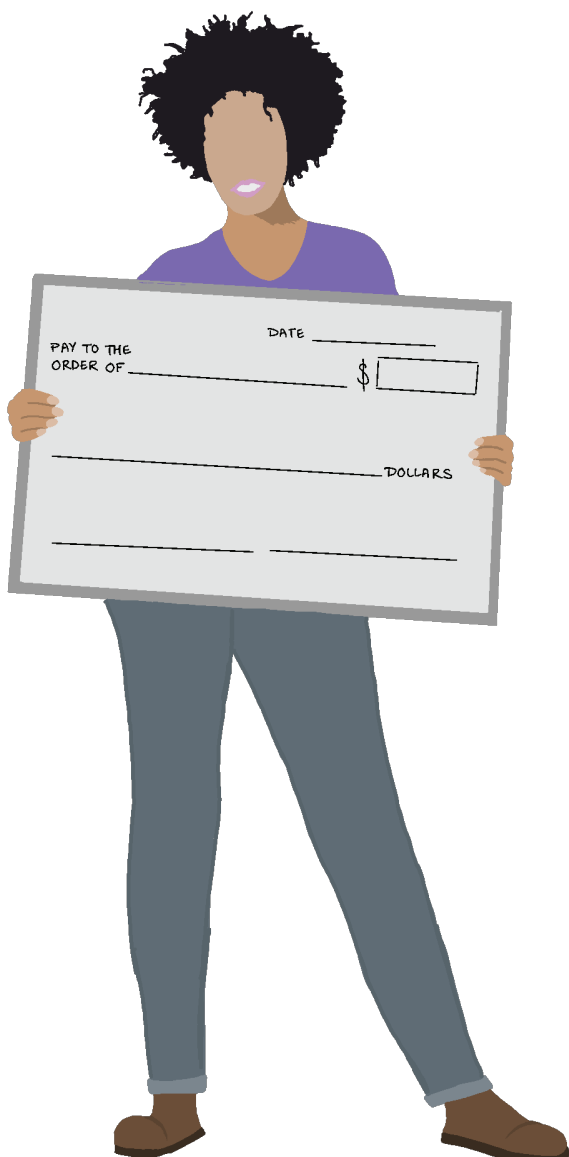
To qualify for the program, participants must be 25 or older and have taken at least one semester off.

There are currently seven students enrolled at Rider through the program for spring 2024 and one student for summer 2024 until the grant's statewide expiration.

"The grant officially ends on June 30, but we're hoping to provide smaller items such as a gift card to the book store or a laptop to extend beyond that time for some students pursuing online modality," said Levin.

Lindsay Smith, graduate recruitment specialist, works with students who apply for the grant to discuss their application, financial receipts and personal lives.

"They all loved their experience at Rider when they were here. For whatever reason, they had to leave, but they're so excited to have the opportunity to come back," said Smith. "This grant provides students with the chance to be proud of graduating soon, and some even discuss coming back for graduate school because they know how valued their Rider degree is."



Rashe Mishra/The Rider News

Rider hopes to attract academic adults to the university.

Mismanagement claims arise at CDI

CONT'D FROM PAGE 1

to educate and engage, and it was just very odd.”

Another MSLL student, freshman psychology major Chaniya Thomas, also mentioned both Kim and Williams misgendering students.

“We shouldn’t have somebody who isn’t used to [using pronouns,]” said Thomas.

Kim, who sat down in an interview with The Rider News on Feb. 6, stated that she was “guilty as charged” for the misgendering claims, but said she is “horrified” everytime she misstates a person’s pronouns.

“I’m practicing, and I believe that’s the same for the older generation folks, that we’re trying but don’t know how to fix those associations. It’s hard to kill those associations,” said Kim. “I’m always conscious of trying not to do it ... I’m not even close to perfect, I know I make the mistake. The only thing I can say is, I’m trying.”

Leach said that it was disheartening hearing that other students have also faced misgendering from CDI workers, especially as president of Spectrum.

“I truly wish that I had been the only person who had been on the receiving end of a lot of this stuff, because it’s so unfair,” said Leach. “It’s so hurtful, because when you’re a queer person, anywhere, you know that every other queer person in the room has had at least a very similar experience to you.”

Kim’s background

Before Kim was jostled into the CDO position, she already worked in the Teaching and Learning Center, where she taught faculty about the importance of DEI at the university.

Rider has recently ramped up DEI efforts in a time where universities nationwide have faced criticism and political pressure for DEI expansion, from adding the CDO role in 2021, electing a Student Government Association president with a main focus on DEI and recently adding an NAACP chapter.

In an interview with The Rider News in June after the departures, Lawrence, who was unable to be reached for this story, expressed concern for the university’s DEI work.

“It is a tremendous loss for Rider right now,” said Lawrence. “I think it speaks to where their real priority was with the diversity work, which wasn’t what I think people thought.”

Kim’s role at the university is a combination of Lawrence’s old position along with Pruitt’s, whose main focus was the CDI. She also continues to work as the director of the TLC and as a professor.

Pruitt, who worked closely with Williams in the CDI, declined to be interviewed for the story.

Disorganization within the CDI

Alongside misgendering claims, disorganization within the CDI was widely mentioned among students who spoke to The Rider News, such as poorly planned events, or lack thereof, from the center.

A sophomore peer leader at the center, who wished to remain anonymous, said that things were much more organized while Pruitt still worked at the university.

“It went downhill once she left,” said the sophomore. “When we did have events, you could tell it wasn’t much thought put into it or [Williams] didn’t know what he was doing, and he left it all up to student workers.”

In an interview with The Rider News in September, DonnaJean Fredeen, Rider’s provost, mentioned that Williams would be taking on more responsibility after Pruitt’s departure.

“We want all students to feel that they can come in [the CDI] and be a part of it, but Shaun will be taking a little more ownership,” said Fredeen. “We’re wanting to empower him to really do that day-to-day work.”

However, the anonymous student said that Williams fell short of the responsibility in the months following.

Fredeen declined during a Feb. 2 interview to engage in discussion about Williams’ departure.

The sophomore stated, “They had everything planned out, really... Then once [Pruitt] left, Shaun, of course, he was the one that had to take over ... I guess he wasn’t really trained on how to do everything because Dr. Pruitt leaving was so out of the blue.”

Leach also mentioned disorganization when Spectrum and the CDI would have partnerships, especially after Pruitt’s departure from the university.

“It started to become very clear to me that they were scrambling when Dr. Pruitt left summer of this year,” said Leach.

Students also mentioned massive failures during the annual MSLL trip in November, during which they were brought to the Chauncey Conference Center in Princeton, New Jersey, to learn about professional development and leadership skills. Issues included poor planning on Williams’ part, along with Williams accusing the group of students of smoking cigarettes, a claim that he retracted to the group the next day.

“We couldn’t even get through some of the activities we were supposed to get there because it’s so disorganized,” said Thomas. “Nothing was planned out properly, down to things being messed

up when we got there.”

The anonymous junior also mentioned disorganization for most MSLL events in general at the university. MSLL is a program for freshmen and transfer students, under the umbrella of CDI, to help students from diverse backgrounds adapt and thrive at the university.

“Nothing ever stayed on track,” said the junior. “We’d be told one thing, and then something else would be happening. It was definitely kind of hard to keep up because it was constantly changing.”

The future of DEI

A big concern is the current political climate around DEI at higher education institutions nationwide and the upcoming presidential election in November.

“As we think about our DEI work here on campus, we have to be forever diligent about the political forces that can have an impact,” said Fredeen.

Despite issues within the CDI, Kim promised that change was happening behind the scenes in a Feb. 2 interview with The Rider News.

“This climate of higher education, change takes time,” said Kim. “But what I want the student body to understand is, if they don’t see their immediate changes, that doesn’t mean that we’re not working on it.”

Damon Williams, a DEI specialist who came to campus last semester, created a report for the university on where it can improve in terms of inclusion on campus. Rider received that report recently, and Kim and Fredeen have been reviewing its content for where DEI can be strengthened.

Kim and Fredeen also announced a new position with a goal hiring date of two months: director of the CDI, which would oversee the center.

“You need thoughtful, thoughtful change,” said Fredeen. “And that’s the way Heeyoung has been approaching [it].”

Fredeen said that, with the director position hiring, the university is looking forward. When hiring, the plan is to make a task force that considers the vision of CDI for 2024, and how to bring that to fruition.

“I’d rather do it the better way than rushing it to show the outcomes,” said Kim. “That’s not me.”

Spectrum President Tristan E. M. Leach is a features and entertainment editor for The Rider News. Managing Editor Jake Tiger and Copy Editor Bridget Hoyt are both tutors for the Academic Success Center. Leach, Tiger and Hoyt had no part in the writing or editing of this story.

Dell’Omo: Path Forward plan hits financial goals

CONT'D FROM PAGE 1

Dell’Omo claimed Rider met all financial goals outlined in its Path Forward plan for the fall semester.

The projections, detailed in Rider’s August 2023 convocation, totaled at least \$2.91 million in revenue from enrollment/room and board, student parking fees, Rider First Day, the sale of the West Long Drive house and more.

“The first year of the Path Forward, based on the fall numbers, all hit our targets,” said Dell’Omo. “If the spring plays out the way we planned, and so far, we’re looking like we’re going to hit the spring numbers ... this first year of the Path Forward is going to be a success.”

The university began fiscal year 2024 with a goal of reducing the \$15.9 million budget to \$7.2 million via universitywide reductions and revenue enhancements.

According to Dell’Omo, Rider’s financial plan was a bit ahead of schedule as of Jan. 25, and the university could begin fiscal year 2025 with a deficit just above \$6 million. The university aims to eliminate the deficit entirely by the end of that fiscal year.

The administration is hoping Rider will be operating at about a \$5 million to \$6 million surplus by fiscal year 2026, and that is when the community can expect substantial reinvestment back into the university, Dell’Omo said.

“We are feeling confident that we will come down to a balanced budget next year, which is a tremendous success for the university,” said Dell’Omo. “Going forward, the plan is the plan.”



TRISTAN E. M. LEACH PRESENTS

February Horoscopes

What do the stars have in store for you this month?

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

Take time to prioritize your health and wellbeing this month, Aquarius. Last month, you may have felt stress and tension building, as the pressure of a new year is strong in you. Remember that each day is a gift and all is as it should be.



Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20)

This month, you may feel like hiding under a pile of blankets and hibernating. Commit to taking some time for yourself everyday, Pisces, and do something creative.

By allowing yourself to have an outlet, you may find you have a stronger social battery during this chilly month.



Aries (March 21-April 19)

In this month, you may find that your values and morals are at the forefront of your life. Relationships in your life may be changing or ending as you reassess your core values. Remember that you are the only person who has to be with you forever; trust your instincts, Aries, and follow where your values take you.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Things are changing for you this month, Taurus. You may feel called to rethink your career path or a significant relationship in your life. It may be time to take a step back and remember why you chose the path you are currently on and whether or not it is still the right choice.



Gemini (May 21-June 21)

February will be a month full of wisdom and understanding for you, Gemini. Recently, you have found someone who provides wisdom and advice that you have been seeking. You may find yourself beginning to think and act differently as this person will be a positive influence on your life and mental health.



Cancer (June 22-July 22)

This February, take time to heal old wounds that you have brought with you from last year. You are a vulnerable soul, Cancer, and often tend to others before yourself.

This month, pause for a while and begin the healing process. you can't properly love yourself and others until you acknowledge that you are also human.



Leo (July 23-Aug. 22)

February may be a rough month for people in your life, Leo, and therefore, you are going through the roughness with them. Remember that while it is great to support your loved ones, it is also important to support yourself. Take some alone time so as to give the best support to yourself and your loved ones.



Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

This month, the full moon is in your house, Virgo. The ever-powerful moon rules your instincts and ambitions this February. Follow your gut and don't let others tell you what is best for you; you already know.



Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

It is time to stop letting fear rule your life, Libra. This month, unpack what is holding you back from living your life to the fullest. Life is meant to be experienced, and you can't do that when you are hiding behind the walls you have built because others have told you to.



Scorpio (Oct. 23-Oct. 21)

February is a time of reflection for you, Scorpio. Experiences from January may have you questioning who you are and what you truly deserve. Think about how you want to look back at this time in your life when you are older.



Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

Life is a journey, Sagittarius. Lately, you have yourself only focusing on the big picture and not enjoying the little moments. Slow down and take this month one day at a time. It will be March before you know it.



Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

This month, stability will play a huge part for you. This year is only getting started and you are very aware of that, Capricorn. You are more than ready to take on life and make this your year.



Josiah Thomas/The Rider News



Students pose in their silent disco headphones that played jams all night.

Students dance the night away at silent disco

By Madison Lewis

STUDENTS who were on campus and looking to welcome the weekend observed the usually cluttered Muller's Pub apprehensively as the floor was cleared and flashing lights illuminated the room.

The "Club in the Pub" event, coordinated by the Office of Campus Life, was intended to begin at 7 p.m., but people did not show interest until about eight minutes later, when more and more guests became immersed in music and let loose.

At a conventional nightclub, guests can only personalize their experience so much. The concept of the silent disco, where music is played on headphones distributed to each guest rather than over speakers, innovated the club scene by accommodating different tastes and inviting introverts to feel comfortable, and on Feb. 3, Rider's silent disco sought to create a care-free environment for its students.

Upon entering, there was a bin of headphones that club-goers could choose from and place on their head to be transported to an exclusive nightclub.

The headphones connected to three stations, with each station corresponding to a color: red, green or blue.

The attendees grabbed their headphones and chose their stations, with some deciding to listen along with their friends and others straying from their peers, dancing to their own favorite tunes.

The three stations on the headphones did not have specific genres of music, with all three stations playing some combination of pop, rap and disco, but there were no complaints about guests' music

preferences not being met.

Throughout the night, people glided across the dance floor, enjoying each others company despite swaying to different beats.

Having below-average coordination wasn't an issue for the crowd, as the dancers were in their own worlds, and attendees took every opportunity to highlight each person who took to the floor. The energy was magnetic and encouraged more reserved guests to test the waters.

The students appreciated the ability to customize their experience and dance like no one was watching, in the same way one may dance alone in their room.

Freshman musical theater major Julia Almendra said, "You could pick what song you were feeling ... when you go to a regular party, you have to put up with what they play."

When club-goers needed to replenish their energy, there were trays of fan-favorite bar foods like mozzarella sticks, chicken fingers and tater tots.

Despite the overwhelming admiration and rave reviews for the event, many guests commented on the fact that the house lights were engulfed the room in what Graduate Assistant for Muller's Pub and Events Kayla Plunto described as a "technical difficulty," making it challenging to suspend disbelief for the attendees.

"Take me out of The Pub. Take me into the club," exclaimed Almendra.

According to Plunto, the event was successful in its goal to promote the dining establishment, as students

may not be aware that those under 21 are able to participate in events stationed in Muller's Pub.

Using the constructive criticisms from attendees, Plunto described her plans to revamp Rider's attempt at a silent disco.

She enthusiastically detailed how there will be glow sticks and that the house lights will hopefully be dimmed at the next silent disco.

Even with the house lights issue, Plunto remained optimistic for future events, as she believed that the silent disco brought people together in an unconventional and unexpected way.

"The amount of people that were all talking to each other that didn't even come in together ... [they] were all hanging out and dancing with one another," said Plunto. "It's about making Rider a community, regardless if you live here or [you] don't."

Check out *The Rider News' Silent Disco* video, created by Josiah Thomas.



Josiah Thomas/The Rider News

Freshman arts and entertainment industries management major Johnny Smith busts a move.

Shining Light on Black Excellence: Nyshel Nelson

By Hannah Newman

FROM the time her feet hit the field at 8 years old, junior criminal justice major Nyshel Nelson envisioned herself in the National Women's Soccer League.

However, when life handed her a dose of reality, she decided to repurpose her passion to make a difference in the world and demonstrate to others how to do so in the process.

"Everyone in the room you're in has something to offer," said Nelson. "I used to be narrow minded before I came [to Rider] when it comes to everyone's strengths and weaknesses and how they are different for everyone. I've definitely gained an understanding of people ... and embrace the things that I've done with an open mind."

Living a life that revolved around cleats and kicks, Nelson's world was struck down by the COVID-19 pandemic after her last season of high school was taken, bringing her varsity soccer career to an early end. No highlights, no clinics, nothing to add to her resume.

In addition, financial responsibilities that came with maturing and helping her family pushed her farther away from the field physically, but never mentally.

"Soccer is always going to be a part of me, but the energy and passion had to go someplace else. It's a mindset change when one door closes; it's not the end of the world," said Nelson. "At first I was a little distraught, but the setback of COVID-19 was the time for me to rethink my decisions."

Although soccer was the root of her drive for success, her goal of becoming an attorney fell adjacent to her passion for the game. Nelson decided to let college be the catalyst for her pursuit of a law degree.

Despite receiving offers from out-of-state schools, Nelson decided that staying close to home and family in Camden, New Jersey, outweighed the reality of playing soccer despite the scholarship offer.

Transitioning her life from a full-time athlete to college student was an immense step in Nelson's life, however she found a way to navigate through the change.

The spring of Nelson's freshman year was the first layer of her involvement as she began as a community assistant in Wright Hall. Acknowledging that her feet will always be facing the field, Nelson decided to join Rider's club soccer team.

"I played on the club team for a little bit my freshman year, and then I realized, 'OK, maybe this isn't what I want to do,' because I felt I was taking it too seriously, so I decided to up the time I would be giving soccer [and replacing it with] extracurricular activities," said Nelson.

After Nelson's departure, the club soccer team was



Photo courtesy of Nyshel Nelson

Senior criminal justice major **Nyshel Nelson** is involved on campus in multiple ways, including as a community assistant.

replaced with mock trial, Black Student Union, Gail Bierenbaum Women's Leadership Council, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, which she was just elected president of in the fall of 2023, and Rider Bonner Community Scholars Program, where she now sits as a communications and marketing intern.

Nelson's heavy involvement has not only fulfilled the new chapter of her life but has enhanced the organizations she represents as well.

Corrine Walton-Macaulay, vice president of BSU, said, "Nyshel is big on love. She will be the person to come up and talk to you and try to make you feel welcome and included." Nelson's incentive to join Rider Bonner Community Scholars Program came from a reminiscence of service work she participated in while living at home, such as food pantries and making hygiene kits for shelters.

Nelson became a site-based team leader at

Gregory Elementary School, where she dedicated 10 hours a week to helping students develop leadership skills through mentorship and activities. She organized a field trip to Rider, where students were given a tour of Rider, a meet and greet with the basketball team and a first-hand experience of getting to know Bonner with a hope that they will participate in it one day.

"I've always been involved in service at home in Camden, which is a very similar area to Trenton, so when I heard of Bonner I knew it was actually what I needed to do," said Nelson.

The leadership experience gained from the opportunities she has taken advantage of carried over into her efforts to chase becoming an attorney.

"What struck me about Nyshel is her interest in seeing the perspective of others," said associate professor in criminology and sociology and adviser James Wojtowicz.

Nelson was the only student invited by Wojtowicz to the American Society of Criminology conference last November located in Philadelphia, where she participated in a roundtable discussion regarding convict criminology courses.

Wojtowicz felt that Nelson's efforts in that class demonstrated reason why she should assert her student-based perspective to the roundtable, and Nelson did not fail to impress Wojtowicz with her ideas.

"It was a national conference, so for them it's a pretty big deal. She held her own and actually put out some really good suggestions to the group," he said. "In an environment that could have been intimidating for some students, she was very productive in the conversation of academics."

Her life-long leadership and mission to promote women's empowerment landed Nelson the position as president for Alpha Kappa Alpha soon after she joined in the fall semester. "It's been a dream of mine [to be a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha] since I was nine, so now that I've hit that dream it doesn't feel real," said Nelson.

Nelson will graduate in fall 2024 and plans to spend the following semester preparing for law school. On her way to becoming an attorney, Nelson strives to be a reminder that being a leader is the most important job anyone could have.

"Although playing soccer really encouraged what I loved to do, I questioned if that really served as my purpose because I really wanted to help people and pursue what I was meant to do," said Nelson.

This article is part of the Shedding Light on Black Excellence series by The Rider News to showcase impactful Black figures on campus.

Photos courtesy of Nyshel Nelson



Nyshel Nelson enjoys doing makeup in her free time.



Nyshel Nelson runs an Instagram account that showcases makeup looks she has done on different people.

Leonard Bernstein's legendary love for Westminster

Leonard Bernstein, a famous composer best known for his compositions of the musicals “West Side Story” and “On the Town,” collaborated with Westminster Choir College for many years sharing his talents with students.

He won 11 Emmys and one Grammy throughout his 50-year career, and he composed six musicals. Bernstein was born Aug. 25, 1918 in Lawrence, Massachusetts, to Ukrainian and Jewish parents. He began taking piano lessons as a child and attended Harvard University.

While at Harvard, he studied with American composers Walter Piston and Edward L. Burlingame, as well as musicologist Arthur Tillman Merritt. After graduating in 1939, Bernstein made his conducting debut with “The Birds” – one of the first pieces he composed.

In 1940, he studied with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and in 1943 became assistant director of the New York Philharmonic. From 1945 to 1947 he was the music director for the New York City Symphony Orchestra and returned to the New York Philharmonic as the music director in 1958.

Bernstein traveled as a conductor and wrote music for many famous Broadway musicals, movies and operas. He composed the music for “On the Town,” “Wonderful Town,” “Candide” and many more. Bernstein was also passionate about world peace which often inspired him musically. In 1980, he spoke at Johns Hopkins University and at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in 1983 about his dedication to world peace. In 1985, he went on his “Journey for Peace Tour” to Athens, Greece, and Hiroshima, Japan, for the 40th anniversary of the atom bomb.

The European Community Orchestra joined him on that tour and in 1989 Bernstein conducted the “Berlin Celebration Concerts.” The concert was performed twice on each side of the Berlin Wall as it was being dismantled. Bernstein and his wife, Felicia Montealegre, were very involved in the nonprofit organization Amnesty International, an organization focused on human rights.

Bernstein collaborated with WCC from 1956 to 1989 and the Westminster Symphonic Choir performed 14 times with Bernstein as well as made eight recordings with him.

Ronald Hemmel '78, a Westminster alum who teaches music theory and composition at the college, had the opportunity to work with Bernstein three times throughout his college career. Hemmel explained that working with Bernstein was a wonderful experience and Bernstein knew how to work with the choir very well.

“He was great, he was very energetic,” said Hemmel. “He knew how to get what he wanted from the musicians and not just the choir, but the New York Philharmonic, who I can tell played better from him than several other conductors in the same time period.”

One of the projects that Hemmel worked with Bernstein on was a recording of the music “Haydn” by Lord Nelson Mass. That recording was later nominated for a Grammy. Even when Bernstein wasn't working, Hemmel explained that he had a very big personality. “He was just this huge, huge personality,” said Hemmel.

He also explained that Bernstein worked well with Joseph Flummerfelt, the director of choral activities at that time. “[They] seemed to work very, very well together. I saw them in rehearsals, I saw them in the recordings, which is of course why he kept bringing Westminster Choir back to perform with him when he could choose any choir in the world.”

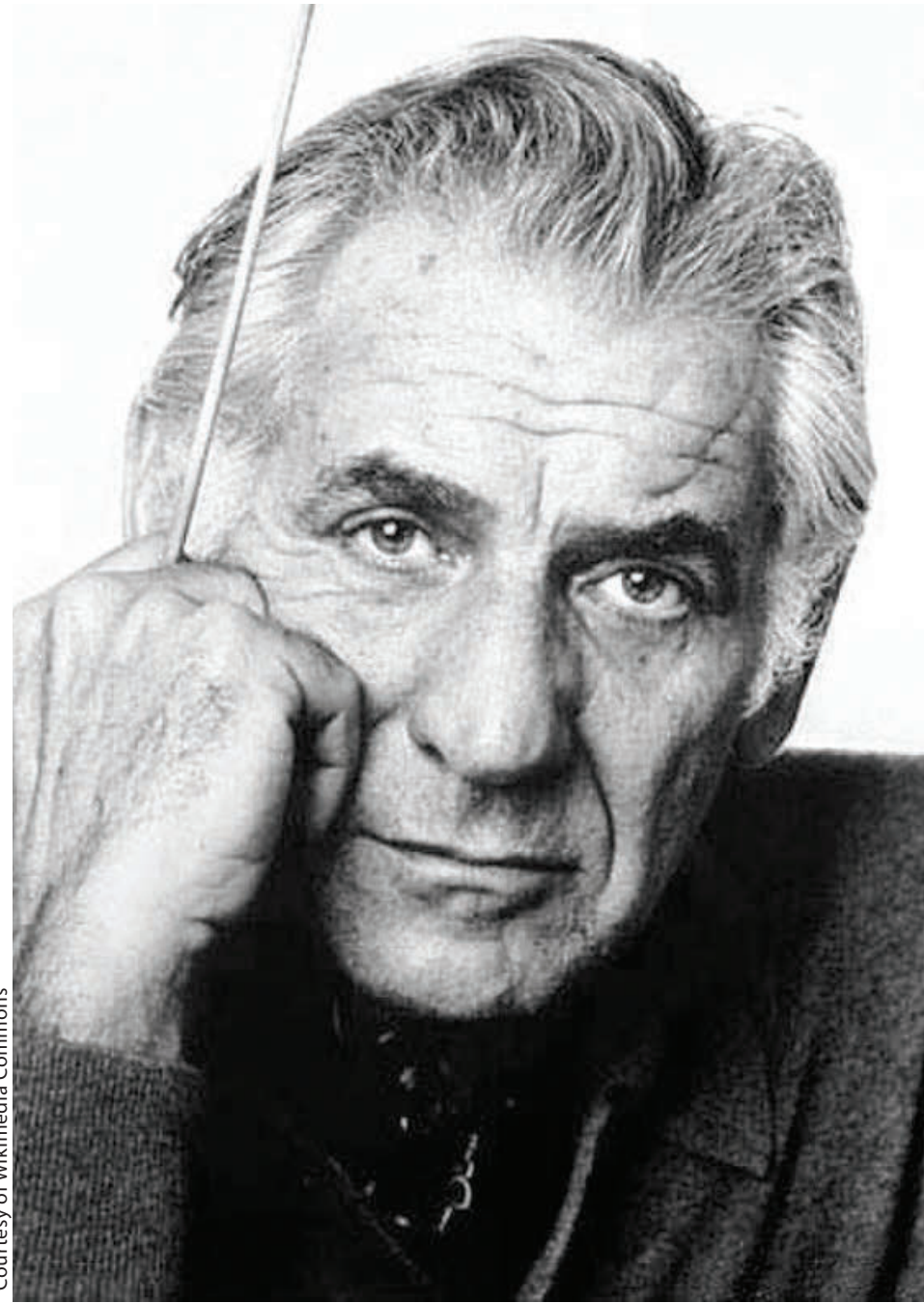
When Bernstein passed away in 1990, his family invited the Westminster Symphonic Choir to sing at his memorial concert at Carnegie Hall. In 2018 for Bernstein's 100th birthday, Westminster celebrated the release of a new recording by the Westminster Symphonic Choir of Bernstein's “Mass.” The Symphonic Choir performed with The Philadelphia Orchestra and was conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin. The recording was done in 2015 and the performance included Westminster Symphonic Choir, Temple University Choir and the American Boy Choir.

The Philadelphia Inquirer critic Peter Dobrin reviewed the recording and wrote, “The piece was written to help celebrate the opening of the Kennedy Center in Washington in 1971. It sounds like the '70s. Authentic listening practice would involve sitting in a dark room with incense burning and psychedelic posters aglow under black lights. It is pure America.” Bernstein's collaboration was a wonderful opportunity for students to learn from someone extremely accomplished and successful.

The collaboration also helped the reputation of Westminster and shows the achievement of the students and the education the students have received. Bernstein spoke very positively about WCC and said, “Westminster Choir College provides a great measure of beauty to a world that needs it badly.”

He left his mark on the world and benefited WCC by sharing his talents with dedicated students who were eager to learn about music.

*Felicia Roehm
junior journalism major*



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Bernstein inspired students at Westminster for many years by sharing his talent.

THE Rider News

Longstreet House, 2083 Lawrenceville Road, Lawrenceville, NJ 08648

©2024 General Meetings: Wednesdays at 4:30 p.m.

Executive Editor Amethyst Martinez	Photography Editor Maggie Kleiner
Managing Editor Jake Tiger	Video Editor Josiah Thomas
News Editors Julia Train Jay Roberson	Copy Editors Asha Burtin Madison Lewis Caroline Haviland Bridget Hoyt
Features and Arts & Entertainment Editors Tristan E. M. Leach Hannah Newman	Social Media Editor Kaitlyn Seawood
Opinion Editor Felicia Roehm	Design Manager Eric Buckwalter
Sports Editors Logan VanDine Benjamin Shinault	Circulation Manager Libby D'Orvilliers
	Faculty Adviser Dr. Jackie Incollongo

The Rider News serves as a public forum for student expression and welcomes letters to the editor from all members of the university community. Letters must include the writer's telephone number and email address for verification. Letters that constitute personal attacks on individuals or groups are unacceptable. We reserve the right to edit letters to the editor for length, clarity, accuracy, grammar and libel. Letters must be appropriate in terms of taste and civility. Brevity is encouraged. All decisions are at the sole discretion of the editorial board, which may reject any letter. Send to The Rider News via email at ridernews@rider.edu. Letters must be received by midnight on the Monday preceding publication. Any tips or suggestions can be sent to ridernews@rider.edu.

 @theridernews

 @theridernews

 www.theridernews.com

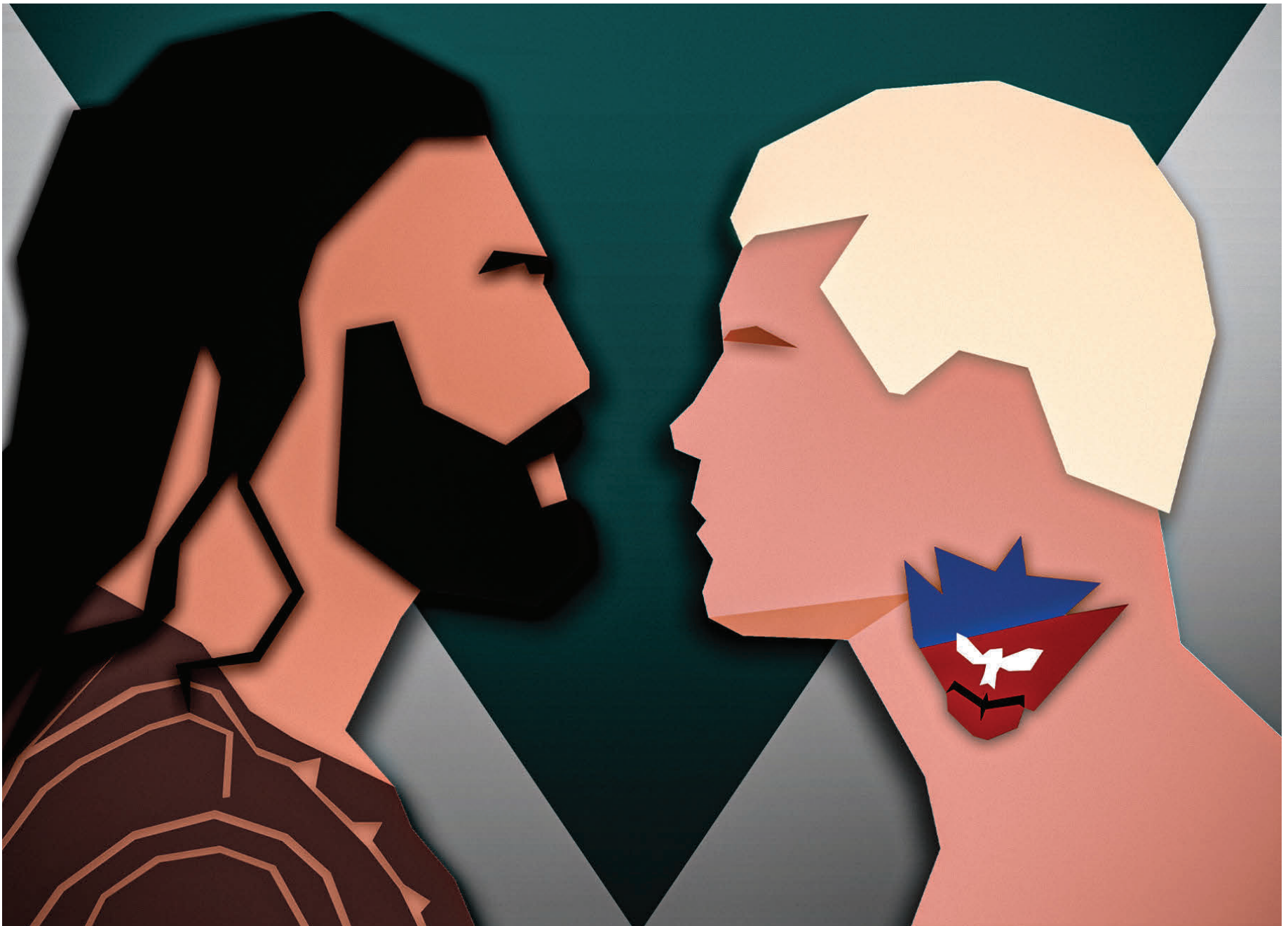
 @theridernews

 facebook.com/theridernews

 ridernews@rider.edu

One copy per person, bulk copies available for purchase at \$1 each

JUNIOR JOURNALS



The Royal Rumble event of the year in wrestling included surprise guests and smackdowns.

Eric Buckwalter/The Rider News

WWE's Royal Rumble featured the ultimate 'SmackDown'

On Jan. 27, the WWE hosted its 37th annual Royal Rumble event, an important night for professional wrestling fans, as it marks the start of the road to WrestleMania.

In the event's signature Royal Rumble match, 30 participants enter in timed intervals of 90 seconds. Wrestlers are eliminated by being thrown over the top rope and having both feet touch the floor. The last person standing is declared the winner and is rewarded with a world championship match of their choosing at WrestleMania.

The first match of the night was the women's Royal Rumble. The winner had the choice to wrestle either WWE Women's Champion Iyo Sky or Women's World Champion Rhea Ripley. Wrestlers representing all three major WWE shows appeared: "Monday Night Raw," "Friday Night SmackDown" and Tuesday's "NXT."

Surprises started early, as No. 2 was the return of Naomi, a former champion who had not been seen in the WWE in two years. No. 3 was Bayley, the leader of villainous "SmackDown" faction Damage CTRL, which also included champion Sky.

The biggest surprises of the match came when wrestlers from other companies appeared. Knockouts Champion Jordynne Grace, representing Total Nonstop Action Wrestling, had a dominant showing in the rumble. Grace traded blows with Naomi, whom she had defeated for the Knockouts Championship just weeks before.

No. 28 Jade Cargill debuted. A former All Elite Wrestling talent who held the TBS Championship for over 500 days, Cargill made her long-awaited WWE debut and showcased her strength by eliminating powerhouse Nia Jax.

In the end, Bayley outlasted 29 other women to win the match. This past Friday on "SmackDown," Bayley confronted Sky. Former friends Asuka and Kairi Sane attacked Bayley, who used a metal pipe to fight back and declared that she had challenged Sky for the WWE Women's Championship at WrestleMania.

Bayley has been at times the most beloved woman in the WWE roster, but has never had a moment in the spotlight until now. It feels great to see Bayley potentially in the main event of WrestleMania this year, and fans definitely hope to see her defeat Sky and win her fifth championship.

The next event of the night was a fatal four-way match for the WWE Undisputed Universal Heavyweight Championship, a title that consists of two separate lineages. Wrestler Roman Reigns has held the Universal Championship for over 1,200 days and the historic WWE Championship for over 600 while leading the infamous Bloodline faction. Challengers in this match included Randy Orton, AJ Styles and L.A. Knight.

During this match, Reigns ordered his cousin Solo Sikoa to attack Orton. This gave Reigns the opportunity to pin AJ Styles unopposed and retain his championships. Fans have grown tired of Reigns, as interference from The Bloodline has become commonplace. For such a long-reigning champion, Reigns is rarely able to defeat opponents on his own and almost always relies on The Bloodline to remain on top.

The third match saw the WWE United States Championship put on the line, as controversial social media star and champion Logan Paul defended against Kevin Owens. The ending of the match was fitting to Paul's reputation.

Paul attempted to use brass knuckles and had them taken away by Owens who was able to knock Paul out with his own weapon. Owens pinned Paul, but the referee noticed the brass knuckles on Owens' hand and declared Paul the winner by disqualification.

Last year, the "American Nightmare," Cody Rhodes, won the match but was cheated out of his WrestleMania championship match by The Bloodline. This year, he entered at No. 15 and accomplished the incredible feat of winning back-to-back Rumble matches.

The final two of the Royal Rumble were Rhodes and CM Punk. CM Punk is a twenty-year veteran who had not wrestled on WWE programming since losing the 2014 Royal Rumble match. CM Punk was hungry to earn the WrestleMania main event match that had always evaded him, planning to challenge "Raw's" World Heavyweight Champion Seth Rollins for his championship.

Rhodes instead vowed to "finish his story," a mission statement for Rhodes to defeat Reigns, win the WWE Championship, and put an end to The Bloodline. Rhodes eliminated Punk to win the match, putting focus toward Reigns and making his goals for WrestleMania clear.

Rhodes' actions at the rumble made it confusing when on this past "SmackDown," Rhodes stepped aside and allowed The Rock to challenge Reigns himself. After years of chasing the WWE Championship, Rhodes fought and earned a grand opportunity, and had given it up without question. To invest in a wrestler, wanting nothing more than to see them succeed, and for them to give up on their goals is not fun to see.

We are still months away from WrestleMania XL, so anything can happen with Rhodes and his Royal Rumble opportunity. Regardless, the 2024 Royal Rumble featured great surprises, unique moments, and millions of fans still wanting to see Rhodes finish his story.

Elijah Nevlin
junior marketing major

MEN'S SOCCER

Bronc joins professional soccer team

By Logan VanDine

FRESH off Rider men's soccer's first Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference Championship since 2018 and a trip to the NCAA Tournament, one member of the team saw another dream come true which may actually top winning a MAAC title.

Senior forward Babacar Diene surprised the Rider community when he signed a professional contract with the Pittsburgh Riverhounds SC of the United Soccer League, making it the first signing since 2018 when fellow Bronc Jose Aguinaga joined New York Red Bulls II.

'I'm really excited'

Diene, who is originally from Thies, Senegal, talked about his excitement on joining the Riverhounds for their upcoming season.

"I'm really excited, it feels so amazing right now," said Diene. "This is my first experience with a professional team ... even though it's a different experience for me, I'm ready."

Being just the second Bronc since 2018 to join a professional soccer league, Diene highlighted his tryout experience for the USL and how there were three teams that reached out to him.

"After our season ended, I received an invitation to tryout," Diene said. "After tryouts a week later, the head coach [Bob Liley] called me and gave me an offer and I accepted it."

Besides Pittsburgh, the other two teams that Diene tried out for were Real Salt Lake and Charlotte Independence.

'I was not nervous'

Despite having to try out for a professional soccer team, the intimidation of that feeling did not faze the former Rider Bronc.

"I was really comfortable, I think the experience of me playing the sport really helped me for this tryout," Diene said.



Peter G. Borg/Rider Athletics

Senior forward **Babacar Diene** becomes the first Bronc since 2018 to sign a professional contract, joining Pittsburgh Riverhounds SC.

Playing for the Riverhounds in the city of Pittsburgh was very special for Diene because he had a friend that lived in the area that he considered family and for his love of the city of Pittsburgh.

"I love the city, I know the city very well and I'm very comfortable here," said Diene. "I told myself that this is the place I want to play."

'Had to work hard'

Playing soccer at the professional level is something that has always been on Diene's mind ever since he was at a young age.

"I've dreamed about it for a really long time before I even came to America," Diene said with a huge smile on his face. "I've always said to myself that I wanted to be a professional soccer player so I really had to work hard to get to this level."

Diene also could not go without thanking his coaches and teammates at Rider.

"Charlie [Inverso] has helped me a lot to get me into this position and I did a lot of work with him. After he left, Chad [Duernberger] did the same thing, he would always check in on me and see how I was doing and how school was going and he was like my dad here," Diene said.

Head Coach Chad Duernberger, who concluded his first season as the head coach for the men's soccer team, spoke very highly of his former forward.

"I'm really proud of Babacar to have this opportunity as he deserves it. A lot of players want to be pro but they don't have pro habits. Babacar went about his work in our program every day as a professional and it showed on the field with his success scoring goals and helping our team win a Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference Championship," Duernberger said.

With Diene well underway practicing with his Riverhound teammates, he gave his overall feelings and thoughts about adjusting to playing for a professional team.

"It's been going very well right now," said Diene. "I really like my teammates, they've helped me out a lot and the coach showed me how much he wants me to be here and just very excited to play for them and to see how our season ends up going."

Diene and the Riverhounds will suit up for their first regular season game at home against New Mexico United on March 9 at 4 p.m. and can be streamed on KDKA.com.

WRESTLING

Wrestling splits road matches, remains at .500

By Logan VanDine

LOOKING to build off last week's back-to-back home wins, Rider wrestling embarked on a weekend road trip to take on Drexel and George Mason. After falling short against the Dragons on Feb. 3, the Broncs were able to take down the Patriots on Feb. 4 to split their road matches.

Winning streak snapped

In a rivalry dating back to 2002 with Rider entering the day with a 15-7 all-time record over the Dragons. Rider and Drexel met once again on Feb. 3, with the Broncs looking to extend their winning streak to four. In a back-and-forth match throughout the afternoon, the Broncs lost the final two bouts of the match, which proved to be the difference maker, as they fell to the Dragons 20-16.

The match started well for the Broncs with senior Quinn Kinner winning the first bout of the day by decision, followed by junior Colton Washleski winning his bout also by decision to give Rider an early 6-0 lead.

Midway through the match, momentum started to shift toward Drexel as they won three of the next four bouts that saw Rider's lead evaporate. Afterward, junior David Szuba and senior Tyler Klinsky won the next two bouts, giving Rider a 16-14 lead.

That lead was no more with graduate student Richie Koehler and junior Will Betancourt losing the last two matches of the day, making the final score 20-16.

Head Coach John Hangey had an interesting take on what he thought went wrong for his team, saying, "You can think of the craziest things that can

happen at a dual meet and write it in a script and that's my depiction of this dual meet. It always seems like when we're at Drexel it can happen. It's bizarre and it happens."

Despite the losing outcome, Hangey highlighted a few wrestlers he thought had a good day, particularly Szuba.

"I would say David stood out the most because of the way he dominated his kid, his confidence is really starting to come," said Hangey.

Szuba also talked about his bout performance on the day, which was his 14th bout win of the season and fifth straight bonus win.

"I wrestled to the best of my ability, I was just going out there to score points. I need bonus points to at least put us back into the match, so I knew I had to get the job done," he said.

'Testament of their character'

After a crushing loss at the hands of Drexel one day prior, the Broncs had to quickly turn things around as they traveled to Fairfax County, Virginia, to take on George Mason.

The day could not have gone any better for the Broncs as they handled the Patriots winning 30-9 to remain at the .500 mark.

Just like in the Drexel match, Rider started out fast with Klinsky winning the first bout of the day by technical fall followed by Koehler bouncing back, winning his bout by fall to give the Broncs an instant 11-0 lead.

They would not slow down from there as they only lost three bouts on the day with Szuba finishing off the day's action.



Maggie Kleiner/The Rider News

Junior **David Szuba** secures one of his two wins against Drexel.

"They took yesterday hard on themselves and what we had to do is to make sure we didn't let yesterday affect today," Hangey said.

The Broncs now have nine days off before their next match. "We first need to rest up, we got a couple of minor injuries that we have to make sure we take care of and it's just a matter of training them the right way and making sure we are trending in the right direction," Hangey said.

The Broncs return home on Feb. 16 when they take on Clarion at 12 p.m.

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Rider returns home, splits MAAC duels

By Benjamin Shinault and Dain Smith

THE Broncos did not take it easy on baskets this past weekend as they scored 184 points over the last two games against Siena and Iona. The Broncos were only able to take one of two high-scoring affairs as they steamrolled Siena 91-50 but fell short of a historic comeback as they were bested by the Gaels 94-93.

Saint's marched out of town

It was Greek Night on Feb. 2 when the Broncos welcomed Siena, who was in the midst of a six-game skid.

From the moment the whistle was blown, the atmosphere in the Broncos' Zoo was electric. Something as minute as a layup off the glass would cause a booming cheer coming from the packed student section.

"I want to give it up to our crowd, it was awesome," Head Coach Kevin Baggett said at the postgame presser. "It was good to have our fans back in the house. They were spectacular and I think they helped us get off to a great start."

What also helped the Broncos get off to a great start was graduate student guard T.J. Weeks, who splashed home two 3-pointers right at the beginning of play, one of them resulting in a 4-point play. Weeks finished with nine points and six rebounds.

The reasons for the Broncos' explosive home win kept stacking up as the Broncos' shooting percentages in the first half were elite. The Broncos shot 55.6% from the field and sank 8-of-9 from three.

Senior guard Corey McKeithan spoke highly on the fan presence in the Broncos' Zoo: "We were more confident in shooting it. The crowd was all into it, so once T.J. hit that first one, that's when we were like, 'Yeah, we're good now, we're going to hit more.'"

When it came to ball security, Rider only committed two turnovers through the first half and



Maggie Kleiner/The Rider News

Senior guard **Corey McKeithan** drives in for a layup to add on to Rider's big lead.

its defense was stout – a pleasure in the eyes of Baggett.

"We can score the ball, we know that, but can we get stops when it matters the most?" said Baggett. "These guys sitting next to me, they know they can score and they are also two of our better defenders."

Rider sure did score as the 50 points it put up in the first half was the most scored in the first half against a Division I team this season.

With the Broncos stringing some wins together, both the players and coaches sensed a turn of the tide on the floor and in the locker room.

Senior forward Mervin James spoke out about how the team is feeling moving forward, "Everything's good right now, we're in a good grace, good space so we're just going to keep taking it game by game."

Much to Baggett's relief, Rider got its revenge against the Saints after they slipped right through the Broncos' fingers on Dec. 1, 67-65.

"We just had a bad taste in our mouth because we gave them opportunities to beat us at Siena," Baggett said. "The whole thing this week was to dominate the matchups."

The Broncos did that and more to secure the big Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference victory at home.

Almost had them

Fresh off their dominant outing against Siena, the Broncos took the bus to New Rochelle, New York, to face off against the Gaels, who took down the Broncos 94-93.

It was a back-to-back first half with the score knotted up at 38. Coming out of halftime, the Broncos looked flush as they allowed the Gaels to rattle off 15 of the first 17 points scored in the second half.

"When you turn the ball over inbound and allow that to speed you up ... then take quick shots, you play into their hands," Baggett said after the tough loss.

Despite the big deficit in the second half, the Broncos were able to climb all the way back from a 24 down, but they couldn't quite snag the lead.

Baggett said, "We just had to go back and regather our composure and play the way we've been playing of late, that's why we were able to make a run."

In spite of the loss, some Broncos had some standout performances such as freshman guard DJ Dudley, who was the leading scorer with a career-high 28 points.

Senior forward Tariq Ingraham reeled in a career-high 18 rebounds and also scored 18 points.

The Broncos, who are now slotted in at eighth in the MAAC standings, will hit the floor once again on Feb. 8 when they travel to Fairfield, Connecticut to face off against the Stags. Tipoff will be at 7 p.m. and the game will be broadcasted on ESPN+.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Broncs lose sixth straight in MAAC play

By Kadie Diguseppe

TRYING to break its four-game losing streak, Rider women's basketball faced Fairfield and Quinnipiac to start off the new month, ultimately adding two more games to their losing streak.

Dropping to 5-15 with less than 10 games left in the regular season, the Broncos are trying everything to get back into gear.

'We just got a little sloppy'

On Feb. 1, Rider tried to get something going at home against one of the best teams they've seen all season so far: Fairfield University. The Broncos put up a hard fight during the first half, but things started to snowball in the second half, resulting in a 67-44 loss.

During the first quarter, both teams were back and forth on both sides of the ball. At the end of the quarter, it looked like it could be anyone's game when the score of 15-14 in favor of Fairfield flashed on the screen.

The second quarter started off scrappy between the two teams but resulted in Fairfield figuring out Rider's strategies, taking the ball away and making shots to put Fairfield up 35-23 at halftime.

At the start of the second half, the Broncos had a great attitude coming out of the locker room but couldn't get their defense together to stop the Stags' offense.

"We just got a little sloppy with some things, but I know that those are things that we can correct," said Head Coach Lynn Milligan.

However, graduate student guard Taylor Langan put up some more impressive numbers on Thursday night, when she had 15 points, nine rebounds and one block.

Langan talked postgame about how "The game



Maggie Kleiner/The Rider News

Junior guard **Sanaa Redmond** makes a move on the baseline against the Purple Eagles.

came down to turnovers." During regulation, the Broncos turned the ball over 22 times.

Senior guard Makayla Firebaugh also shot 50% from the field, put up 10 points and had a steal.

Including the Broncos regular starters, new rotations and more players started to be added in place. When Milligan was asked about more players getting playing time, she had nothing but good things to say about them.

"Everybody's working hard in practice, everybody's doing what they gotta do. They know when their number is called to be ready, whenever that opportunity is. I would like to go deep in our bench, because I think we have some players that can help us, players that know their role and can do different things," said Milligan.

Losing streak continues

Two days later, the Broncos traveled to Connecticut to play Quinnipiac, hoping to redeem

themselves from their game earlier in the week. That redemption will have to wait, as they dropped their sixth straight to the Bobcats 65-54 on Feb. 3.

The game started as a give-and-go between the two teams in the first quarter, but Quinnipiac kept hold of the lead. Rider picked up offensively in the second quarter, shooting over a majority from the field.

The Broncos were able to keep the game close toward the end, even cutting the score to as close as five points.

Langan and Firebaugh both put up impressive offensive numbers again, with Langan scoring 20 points, nine rebounds and four assists. Firebaugh put up three 3-pointers and scored 13 points overall.

The Broncos will be back on the road to play at Mount St. Mary's on Feb. 8 at 4 p.m., and the game can be streamed on ESPN+.

Sports

ONLINE

FOLLOW US ON X

Be sure to follow the sports section on social media to stay in the loop for all things Rider sports!

FIND MORE SPORTS COVERAGE ON [THERIDERNEWS.COM](https://www.ridernews.com)



LACROSSE

PREVIEW: Lacrosse has arrived at Rider



The first-ever Rider lacrosse team poses for a picture as it prepares for its first game.

Maggie Kleiner/The Rider News

By Benjamin Shinault

Collegiate lacrosse is on the rise in the United States, becoming one of the most watched college sports. With 74 clubs within Division I play, lacrosse has finally made its way to Rider, and it will begin its tenure on Ben Cohen Field this month.

In August 2022, Rider Sports Information announced that women's lacrosse would be coming to the university. The Broncs are set to join their Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference rivals in lacrosse play as Rider was the last team to add the grueling sport.

"We are excited to be adding women's lacrosse to our portfolio of sports offerings for women," Rider Athletic Director Don Harnum said in a statement. "Women's lacrosse is a sport that continues to grow and thrive, both nationally and in the MAAC, and fits extremely well into our geographic recruiting footprint."

Homebodies

A bulk of Rider lacrosse's roster is transfers from other programs, with the rest being freshmen. Head Coach Evan Mager, who is the former women's lacrosse head coach at Fairleigh Dickinson, spoke on the state of the team.

"We are definitely getting back into the flow of things," said Mager. "A lot of the players have not played in a real game in some time just because of transferring and setting everything up, but overall, I think they are excited every day that we are getting closer to that first game."

The first game will be on Feb. 10 when the Broncs face off against Mager's former team and New Jersey rival, FDU. The Broncs then play five straight games at home, something the Broncs are truly grateful for.

"It's a great opportunity for us to be able to play at home a lot. We have 10 home games this season, which is more than most schools," said graduate student midfielder Emily Wesoky. "Our first game is away but after that, we're home for a while."

Wesoky is a player that Mager has been a big fan of thus far in practices and scrimmages and she was named a captain for this season. Wesoky is coming from Wagner College, where she finished second on the team in total points.

"We're in New Jersey, we have a lot of home games which is great for the university and great for the players, great for parents," Mager said. "But, when building the schedule, some of it we can control, but we got lucky enough to be here a lot throughout the entire season," Mager said.

'We have a lot of talent'

With the Broncs hitting Ben Cohen Field for the first time as a team, Mager wants to start the team's history in the right way, but he does not feel pressured by the situation.

"There is obviously a lot at stake when you're a brand new program," said Mager. "It's less about pressure and more just excitement to be here and to represent the university and bring some benefits for it."

Both Wesoky and sophomore midfielder Katie Walsh, a New Jersey native and transfer from FDU, are slated to bring a lot to the Broncs this season, as they lead the first team in Rider's history.

"There's a good pressure on us to show well for the whole school," Wesoky said. "Usually teams, when they build a program, they have two years to

build it. We're doing it in less than a year."

Walsh is not a stranger to success on the field, as last year with the Devils, Walsh registered 89 goals and 21 assists for 110 points. With this, Mager listed Walsh as one of the team's captains but states that the whole team has done a great job of creating a welcoming environment on and off the field.

Walsh said, "Being here for a year and not having a season last spring, I'm just ready to go out there and play."

'Come see what we got'

When a new team comes along, so does a fan base. Players and coaches are urging their fellow classmates and faculty to come to the games and support the newest addition to Rider's elite sports rotation.

"We would love to have as many people as possible, lacrosse is a very fast, physical and exciting game," Mager said. "For people who don't know what lacrosse is, I think they would enjoy the experience just based on the pace of play, and people who do like lacrosse usually love lacrosse."

Wesoky and Walsh brought the same idea to play: support would be crucial and both the sport and the team are fun to watch.

"Everyone should come to see what we got ... and we are going to be loud and fun no matter what the outcome is," Wesoky said.

Rider lacrosse debuts on Feb. 10 against FDU and they will play their first home game against Saint Francis on Feb. 22.



THE Rider News
OFFICIAL MERCHANDISE
NOW AVAILABLE

