



NJ Gov. Murphy makes return to Rider

Maggie Kleiner/The Rider News



Gov. Phil Murphy and Micah Rasmussen converse about Murphy's role in New Jersey and what his views are.

By Julia Train

NEW Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy was welcomed back to Rider's campus with a full crowd in Daly Dining Hall to discuss topics like nationwide book bans, plastic use in New Jersey, public transportation and more.

The Rebovich Institute for New Jersey Politics hosted the event on March 5, bringing the Democrat back to campus for the first time since 2019, a year after Murphy began his first term.

Micah Rasmussen, director of the Rebovich Institute, asked him to speak at the university and Murphy agreed, but said he wanted to get to know the director before visiting. So the two grabbed coffee and chatted.

This time, however, was Murphy's idea.

"Usually I'm the one reaching out, but he reached out. He said, 'It's been a while, I want to come back,'" said Rasmussen.

In a fireside-chat-style discussion, Murphy and Rasmussen sat on a stage in black, leather lounge

chairs at the front of Daly Dining Hall's Mercer Room.

Each table sat eight attendees with hors d'oeuvres on metal trays in the middle and a water bottle at each seat. State troopers, public safety officers and security personnel were scattered along the walls and outside the building.

Freshman political science major Tyler Harder introduced Murphy before he and Rasmussen started their conversation.

There were 150 people registered and 128 seats set up.

Due to the governor having a commitment after the event, the interview lasted exactly an hour with questions sent to Rasmussen beforehand.

'A three-legged stool'

The two covered a wide range of topics, from New Jersey's budget and its trajectory, to fixing NJ Transit and the state hosting the FIFA World Cup Finals.



Toxicity festers on Fizz since launch

By Amethyst Martinez

INITIALY seen as a way for people to connect on campus, Fizz, a new social media app where students can discuss university-related topics anonymously, has harbored a space for toxicity and negativity, according to past moderators and users.

The site first appeared on Rider's campus last semester through flyers slid under dorm doors, on the social media of Rider students, in LinkedIn direct messages and various other ways.

Posts reviewed by The Rider News on Fizz's app showed a stark reality of anonymous posting: bullying specific groups and people with the ease of keeping identity hidden.

"I [expletive] hate Greek life," read one post with 43 upvotes.

"One of the girls that lives with me is ... such a [expletive]," said another with 51 upvotes.

According to the moderators, many have seen an uptick in posts that violate Fizz's terms, such as hate speech, misinformation and more.

Fizz states it has no connection to the universities it is servicing, meaning that schools have no access to the content or data from the application. The app, which is currently expanding to other universities across the United States, was started at Stanford University in 2021 by two college students

who, according to their website, noticed a lack of connection among the community due to campus restrictions caused by the pandemic.

In October, the app was finally launched on Rider's campus, much to students' excitement;

however, Fizz has somewhat soured in terms of content posted, with student organizations on campus and users taking note.

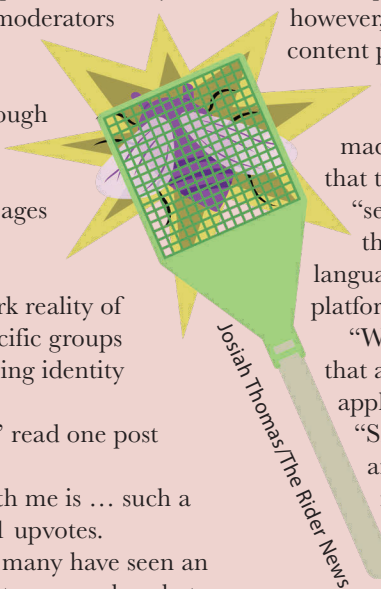
Rider University Greek Council made an Instagram post on Feb. 28 stating that the board has been made aware of "several inappropriate situations involving the Fizz app," and discouraging harmful language and even participation on the platform.

"We remind members of our community that all are held to a high standard, and this applies to social media," read the post.

"Should anyone be found responsible for any harmful or negative comment that involves our community, they will be held accountable."

Christina Natoli, vice president of membership for RUGC, stated that comments became harmful to those in the community, with posts featuring students' faces and all-around negativity on the app.

However, one Fizz post in particular prompted RUGC to respond: a post about Gary DeVercelly Jr., a student who died as a result of hazing on Rider's campus in 2007.



Joshua Thomas/The Rider News



Adjunct GoFundMe totals \$16,628, citing 'No Raises'

By Jake Tiger

AFTER a somewhat-viral social media push from Rider's musical theater students, an adjunct professor's GoFundMe campaign, titled "No Raises at Rider," amassed \$16,628 in donations, supporting an instructor who claimed to be facing bankruptcy, according to the campaign's page.

Louis Goldberg, who specializes in musical theater, has worked at Rider as an adjunct for almost two decades and has not received a cost-of-living increase in 10 years, according to the GoFundMe posted on Feb. 19.

Goldberg declined multiple interview requests from The Rider News.

After its conclusion, the campaign was renamed simply to "No Raises," removing all mentions of Rider and its employees.

The fundraising lasted for seven days in February, totaling 248 donations with the highest single contribution being \$555.

The donations included contributions from Goldberg's students, like senior musical theater major Avery Gallagher, who chipped in \$15.

Working with him extensively throughout her time at Rider, Gallagher sang praises for the adjunct, stating that he has been a valuable, dedicated professor and mentor to his students.

"He is just a library of information," said Gallagher, who is currently working with Goldberg for her "Senior Spotlight" performance. "He's just such a genuinely good person. ... He's been teaching here forever."

Gallagher said she received a thank-you text from Goldberg, and that he ended the campaign himself because he was overwhelmed by the support.

Before the GoFundMe went up, Gallagher said that she and Goldberg would talk about shared financial anxieties and "making ends meet" while inflation continued to increase.

"[Rider President Gregory] Dell'Omo's salary keeps going up, the cost of tuition keeps going up," said Gallagher. "We're not seeing that reflected in our teachers' salaries, and our teachers are what make up the school."

According to Quinn Cunningham, president of Rider's chapter of the American Association of University Professors, adjuncts at Rider currently make between \$4,120 and \$5,815 per course and can only teach up to two classes in a semester.

Cunningham said it was "almost guaranteed" that the \$16,628 Goldberg raised was more than what he typically makes in a semester at Rider.

"We're at the point where there's faculty getting on GoFundMe to raise money," said Cunningham. "I can certainly understand, particularly for our adjuncts, the struggle that they are facing, not having had any kind of substantial increase in over 10 years."

In 2021, members of the AAUP's bargaining unit, including adjuncts like Goldberg, received an average 3% increase in pay, amounting to a flat increase of about \$3,000 for full-time faculty and less for adjuncts, according to Cunningham.

Because it was an increase based on the average salary, the impact varied from member to member; the \$3,000 bump was around a 1% increase for some full-time business faculty, while liberal arts salaries went up almost 4%, Cunningham said.

"For some people, that may have qualified as cost of living, but I think for most people, that didn't even technically reach a cost-of-living increase at that point," said Cunningham, who is an associate professor of business management.

Adjuncts had their 3% raise broken up into 1.6% and 1.4% increases in the fall and spring, respectively. Cunningham said this was "definitely not" a cost-of-living increase.

The current AAUP collective bargaining agreement includes plans for faculty raises in the next few years, with raises of 0.25% in fiscal 2025 and 2% in each of fiscal 2026 and 2027.

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THE MAAC TOURNAMENT HAS ARRIVED

Rider men's and women's basketball have their eyes set on tournament play.

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P.U.S.H. BACK RESPONDS

Professors respond to the death of Nex Benedict.

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WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT MONTH

Heather Batezel discusses her involvement in the arts and her work on campus.

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Admin listens to student's grievances in town hall

Jake Tiger/The Rider News



Rider President Gregory Dell'Omo answers questions submitted by students along with other members of the presidential cabinet.

By Jake Tiger

THE annual student town hall featured a smorgasbord of Rider-related news: gender-inclusivity updates from the Center of Diversity and Inclusion, residence hall renovations, an acai bowl takeover coming to Cranberry's and more.

On Feb. 29, Rider's Student Government Association hosted students and administrators in room 201 of the Science and Technology Center to discuss students questions, concerns and complaints.

Rider President Gregory Dell'Omo and his cabinet attended the event to answer pressing questions that were asked by the audience or submitted by students ahead of time.

CDI's response

Toward the beginning of the town hall, Provost DonnaJean Fredeen was asked how the university was responding to recent criticisms from its gender-nonconforming community, with students accusing Rider staff and faculty of frequently misgendering and deadnaming, a term used to describe the use of a person's birth name rather than their chosen one.

Some of the misgendered students were employees of the CDI.

Fredeen emphasized the importance and difficulty of using the correct pronouns and shifting toward gender-neutral language, comparing the inclusivity adjustment to teaching "an old dog new tricks."

"I was raised in West Texas, so I was always told to answer with 'Yes, ma'am,' or 'Yes, sir.' ... I have found myself recently, as I have started to say that, to stop,

because I'm not really sure that that is the appropriate response now," said Fredeen during the town hall. "We really need to pay attention to what our students are saying to us about their pronouns."

To prevent deadnaming and misgendering, Fredeen and Heeyoung Kim, Rider's chief diversity officer, encouraged students to communicate with professors directly and ensure that their Canvas profiles have up-to-date information regarding their identity.

Kim said an announcement will be sent out to the university soon with resources to help students update their Canvas accounts with their pronouns and preferred names.

The CDI's new director position, which Kim and Fredeen announced about a month ago in an interview with The Rider News, was officially approved and advertised, according to Kim.

She said the CDI will invite the position's final candidates to campus to meet with the community, and through these meetings, students will have input in the selection of the new director.

"I'll make sure that the final list has a chance to meet with the student body, not just introduce the director," said Kim during the town hall. "Look out for those ... forum requests for meeting with the final candidates."

Facilities fixes

Mike Reca, vice president for facilities and university operations, announced that Conover Hall will be renovated over summer break, receiving the same treatment as Poyda Hall last year.

Conover, which sits along Route 206, has not been

used this academic year due to a lack of residential students, according to Dean of Residence Life Roberta Butler.

Reca said a portion of Conover is currently being rented, but could not offer details beyond that.

The upgrades will include 56 new air conditioners, as well as updated bathrooms, paint and lighting throughout the building and fresh flooring in the common areas.

The renovations will either begin in May or July once the new fiscal year begins, but regardless, the residence hall will be ready for the fall 2024 semester, Reca added.

He told The Rider News that the university plans to update at least one residence hall every summer as long as enough funding is available, but ideally, he'd like to start tearing down old dorm buildings and replacing them with new ones.

"It's a continual process," said Reca. "We have all the plans, we have everything in place that we need, except a little bit of money."

Reca discussed Rider's long-term goal of a full renovation and addition to the Fine Arts building that would create a much-needed, dedicated space for the Westminster Choir College.

The Fine Arts overhaul was approved in 2019 when Rider transitioned WCC to its Lawrenceville campus, but the plan has since been shelved due to COVID-19-induced funding issues, according to Reca.

He was unable to offer a timeline for the plan.

Murphy works to make NJ a more 'trustworthy state'

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Murphy said he got elected based on "a three-legged stool," meaning his three main initiatives, which included growing the state's economy, addressing inequities and making New Jersey a "trustworthy state" again.

"Almost everything we do feeds into that," he said.

The governor spent a chunk of time at the beginning talking about what his administration has been working on education-wise.

"Education has been center stage in our administration every minute that I've been in office," said Murphy.

He said the administration is working on making higher education more accessible, fully funding grades K-12 and making full-day pre-K free, saving families tens of thousands of dollars a year.

Along the economic lines, he also mentioned affordable healthcare and housing, creating more jobs and getting the state out of debt.

He used an analogy that every state has a bumper-sticker saying, and New Jersey's is "The number one state to raise a family," affordability being a pillar of that quote's claim.

Murphy said that New Jersey is currently spending more money than it is making, keeping a structural deficit that has been in place since the late 1990s.

After about six and a half years in the position, he wants to set up the state to have money five years from now and thinks that it'll see a steep increase in revenue trajectory after he leaves the office.

"Hone your skills"

Murphy said that he grew up in a poor family, leading him to become obsessed with pursuing a career that would make him money. Because of this, he

majored in economics at Harvard University.

The 66-year-old governor said that when he hires people, it doesn't matter what they majored in at college; what matters is their talent, drive and loyalty.

Although Murphy said being governor is "an honor of a lifetime" and economics wound up helping him, he didn't do it for the right reasons.

He gave advice to the students in the room to "pursue something that lights you up," because he's a "big believer to start out wide and hone your skills."

Protecting different identities

Among widely discussed topics, not only in schools across the country, but also in local communities, are antisemitism and Islamophobia, which were already problems before the start of the Israel-Hamas war on Oct. 7.

Murphy said that one of New Jersey's assets is that it is the most densely populated and diverse state in the country.

He mentioned that the state is working on diversity in religion, race and LGBTQIA+ identities. However, rates of depression, drug use, homelessness and suicide are still high, specifically in the transgender community.

After the event, Murphy quickly took pictures with a handful of people and left, telling Rasmussen he wants to come back before he's finished as governor.

"It was good to have the governor here, talk about New Jersey and what it has to offer and what the youth can do to make the state better," said Naa'san Carr, a senior political science major and president of Rider's Student Government Association.



Maggie Kleiner/The Rider News

Gov. Phil Murphy advises the attendees to pursue a career they are passionate about rather than looking for money.

Influencer and alum shares career journey after Rider

By Hannah Newman

POPULAR content creator and Rider alum Meghan Longo '12 spoke to a filled Rue Auditorium where faculty, staff and students listened as she explained the importance of authenticity in her unexpected career as a social media influencer.

Longo, known as @MegThings_ on Instagram and @meglongo on TikTok, has amassed over 200,000 followers between the two platforms, where she shares her favorite places, foods and things across New Jersey.

In her presentation on March 5, Longo talked about the ups and downs of the social media industry, and how she has found her place amongst the crowd of influencers.

Longo graduated from Rider with a psychology degree and a minor in event planning, unsure as to what she wanted to pursue after college.

After some trial and error in her post-college job experiences, she soon realized that in order to succeed, she must pursue what motivates her to "get up in the morning."

Longo had an internship with fashion modeling agency IMG and different jobs in a wide variety of industries, but found her spark after getting a spray tan.

"When you go to get a spray tan, you are naked in front of someone getting tan and I thought to myself: 'When I go on spray tanning pages, everyone is a model,'" said Longo. "We're all normal people with rolls and stretch marks, so I decided to start a body positive spray tan company."

Longo then quit her job and began the spray

tanning business; however she found herself bored during the days, and spending a lot of time scrolling through TikTok.

Early last year, Longo decided to post every day on TikTok and let her undetermined success write its own future.

She began with posting videos about her favorite restaurants and recommendations in New Jersey.

"I was standing in my kitchen when I decided to talk about my favorite restaurants [for TikTok]," said Longo. "I was always fashion forward so I was posting Amazon hauls... but MegThings started when my friends would make fun of me for doing 'Meg things' which is trying all sorts of new things."

Longo's first video got 300,000 views and the result gave her the clarity she needed to realize she was onto something.

The mixture of different places and brands she talked about gave a wide variety of audiences the chance to find something they enjoyed on her platform whether it be a certain brand, food recommendations or clothing items.

"Find your niche, what do you love? Make sure you are passionate about what you are talking about and provide value," said Longo.

She stressed the importance of content being filled with purpose, whether it be something that should be sent to someone else or used to influence a mindset or lifestyle.

"You have to be so yourself that it's almost embarrassing. But it's going to pay off," said Longo. "It's really important to treat the people that follow you like your best friend. Have a two-way

conversation, post stories, polls and ask for their opinion because they are the ones supporting you and they need to feel supported."

After walking through her journey with the audience as well as the equipment and tips to making a successful post, Longo highlighted that if anything is to be taken away from her presentation, its consistency. According to Longo, she posted 30 videos before one went viral, and that following a structured schedule keeps audiences coming back for more.

Longo walked through how to create a relationship with brands that will sponsor influencers and what key elements are essential to creating a business from posting.

A.J. Moore, professor of sports media and one of Longo's former teachers, said, "It's impressive for someone who was an event planning student to use those skills in a related but totally equal way of becoming a social media influencer. She has taken all different skills she learned through communications and found a unique way to meld them all together."

Although Longo's journey and work ethic has resulted in immense success, she strives to build a stronger name and community for both herself and those impacted by her work.

"I think definitely growing it [her social media presence] and thinking about how I can make it more of a brand beyond social media," said Longo.

Executive Editor Amethyst Martinez and Sports Editor Benjamin Shinault were student moderators at the event and had no part in the writing or editing of this story.



Maggie Kleiner/The Rider News

Rider alum **Meghan Longo '12**, speaking to an auditorium filled with students, faculty and staff.



Courtesy of Zoie Penick

Senior communication majors **Zoie Penick** (left) and **Zada Penick** (right) pose for a photo with **Meghan Longo** (center).



Courtesy of Zoie Penick

Meghan Longo is a content creator based out of New Jersey who gave a presentation to Rider students.



Maggie Kleiner/The Rider News

Meghan Longo stresses the importance of content being filled with purpose.

Green Team finds SGA funding after budget cuts

By Grace Bertrand and Caroline Haviland

DUE to Rider's universitywide financial crisis in the last fiscal year, the Office of Sustainability's Green Team, a club for those interested in being a part of the green movement, lost its funding, along with other organizations on campus.

Not deemed necessary to the university's operations, the group was forced to get creative and find other ways to raise money and awareness on sustainability.

Beginning last spring semester, efforts were made by a handful of motivated students, including senior environmental science major and Green Team President Maddy Beucler, to have the group become an official club on campus through the Student Government Association.

"We decided to move forward officially with SGA so we could have a student budget to really make our meetings more broad and widespread," Beucler said.

SGA is able to fund clubs that are accepted as an official organization on campus by the committee through student activity fees to ensure that organization funding is not affected by university struggles.

Budget Cuts Aftermath

In light of the recent budget cuts that occurred, the Office of Sustainability took a hit when it came to the funding of supplies, events and giveaways such as reusable utensils, straw kits, tote bags and more.

Rider Director of Sustainability Melissa Greenberg explained how the Green Team has gotten creative in terms of funding events since dealing with the budget cuts.

"Not having the budget for the giveaways hasn't been too much of an issue. We've had to just learn to educate without props," Greenberg said.

Although she understands Rider's decision, she hopes that the budget cut was placed as a temporary measure, rather than a permanent effect of the university's financial struggles.

"It is what it is," said Greenberg. "With the projection for enrollment to rise, I am very hopeful that I get somewhat of a budget back next year."

Meeting with over 30 clubs in the fall semester,

SGA placed the Green Team on the back burner, according to Greenberg, meaning the club was not able to make its case until the first week of spring semester, although members were ready to present.

Beucler said, "Everything ran really smoothly, but just getting over that mountain was difficult."

According to Beucler, SGA accommodated each organization's needs and made sure each club was heard while they navigated an increase in aspiring clubs.

Prior to their official status, the task of organizing events without funding from the university had been a collaborative effort from the entire Green Team.

"We've always had a pretty smooth process, because a lot of our Eco Reps and volunteers are involved in so many other things too," Beucler said. "We've always had a pretty open communication with our team."

Eco Reps are paid positions in the organization that host major campus events to educate different areas of campus on sustainability, which include the annual Beach Sweep in collaboration with Clean Ocean Action, Earth Day and Sustainability Day.

The future of the Green Team

Moving forward, Beucler remains hopeful that the Green Team will continue to hold similar budgets to the one given this semester.

For now, it will focus on electing a new executive board as three of the six current members are



Photo courtesy of Skyler O'Kelley

The Eco Reps (from left to right) Alexis Burns, Maddy Beucler, Bailey Poe, Bailey Adams and Skyler O'Kelley pose together for a picture.

graduating in May.

The Green Team plans on having its first official meeting after spring break in hopes of meeting new people interested in joining at their flower pot painting event.

The Green Team also aims to continue past events on campus with other organizations, such as Active Minds, Arts & Crafts Club and the Transfer Student Association.

As the Green Team looks ahead, Greenberg gave advice for passionate students who may be looking to start a club of their own.

She said, "Students that are going through the same process, it's kind of long and it can be a little frustrating, but they should hang in there ... and persevere because they can get their student club."

Former Fizz student moderators speak out

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"Sippin on that [expletive] that killed Gary DeVercelly Jr.," read the Fizz post. A screenshot viewed by The Rider News sent from Natoli showed that the post, which is listed as anonymous, had been upvoted 143 times.

When students sign up, they are required to put in their Rider email address to confirm they attend the university; however, users have virtually no way to tell who is posting what.

"It feels to us that this app has turned from an anonymous community forum to one that breaks up members of a community," said Natoli, a junior political science major. "It seems to give people a platform to share things they would never say themselves, which has unfortunately not progressed in a positive way."

Natoli said the RUGC is in contact with Fizz support to find solutions that combat these types of posts on the app.

Bianca Bracey, a senior radio and podcasting major, has used the app since January, and has seen the atmosphere shift in the short amount of time she's been active on Fizz. Once a lighthearted place for students to interact with each other, Bracey said that quickly changed.

"It feels like high school again, to be honest," she said. Posts she saw on the app included misinformation, mentions of specific students and their personal information and gossip.

Bracey said some of the most concerning content was demeaning posts against women.

"It's just wild...to think our generation is still degrading women about trying to be more sexually open," said Bracey. "It's just so upsetting and sad."

She said that she has no plans to continue using the app, referring to the content as a "headache."

Student moderators

A number of students were offered \$500 a month to moderate, with the workload seeming simple: posting 30 times every day, including winter and holiday breaks, and taking down posts of those who violated Fizz's guidelines. Many student moderators were contacted on LinkedIn for the job opportunity.

In a Rider News interview with an anonymous moderator in October, they estimated that around 1,000 Rider students were using Fizz during its launch period.

Included in the contracts for employees are non-disclosure agreements, meaning moderators were unable to speak with The Rider News unless they were granted full anonymity.

Two moderators who spoke with The Rider News were recently fired from the app with no explanation except that it was a "business decision," according to documents reviewed. Their contracts with Fizz were month-to-month.

"As a reminder, the confidentiality agreement we have executed with you remains in effect beyond the term of the consulting agreement," said an email to one of the moderators notifying them of their termination.

As soon as both were notified, they lost moderator privileges on the app immediately.

"In the first month, I feel like it was fine. People just wanted to get to know each other, they wanted to try the app out," said one past moderator. "Over the next few months, I feel like it's just become more negative."

The anonymous former moderator said that posts became more inappropriate as time went on, and that many posters began oversharing, including using students' names and making comments about

specific campus groups in posts — a violation of Fizz's terms of use.

The other past moderator stated that sexual content and slut shaming also found a home on the app, which violate Fizz's rules as well.

"It's way toxic now," said the former moderator.

One of Fizz's top posters at Rider, who wished to remain anonymous due to the nature of the app, stated that the atmosphere has shifted since they began using it during its launch.

"It started out as crazy, insane things that people kept in their mind," he said. "And then it sort of became [a place] to gossip."

The anonymous top poster, who also moderates without being paid, said that he is just there to post memes and jokes on a usually bleak app.

"My role is just lightening the mood and making people laugh and have a good time," he said. "I like to mind my business."

Other social media sites like 2013's YikYak demonstrated that anonymous posting apps may not work at universities, so proving how it's different from the rest will be a challenge for Fizz, starting with its plan to combat hate. YikYak shut down in 2017 after content on its sites prompted criminal charges against violent posters, lawsuits and school lockdowns after gun and bomb threats, bullying and discriminatory content.

"The safety and well-being of students in our communities is our top priority," Fizz's website stated. "To achieve this goal, our community moderators are trained to remove content that violates our community guidelines."

Keith Kemo, director of community standards at Rider, said that the university has not received any complaints related to Fizz or its content.

TRISTAN E. M. LEACH PRESENTS

MARCH HOROSCOPES

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

Aquarius (Jan.20-Feb.18)

This month focus on your financial well-being. Aquarius. You may find yourself wanting to make some reckless decisions when it comes to money. Do not be surprised if people in your life do not agree with these choices; they are doing you a favor.



Pisces (Feb.19-March.20)

March is the time to stop comparing yourself to others. Pisces, you can not measure your self-worth against others and their accomplishments. You do not need to reinvent yourself to feel better about who you are; you are the best version of yourself at this time.



Aries (March.21-April.19)

This month will test your ability to differentiate between confidence and arrogance. Aries, be open to improving and changing yourself and your life. It is important to love yourself but it is also important to be loving to others, especially those close to you.



Taurus (April.20-May.20)

As you move into March, Taurus, remember to express yourself. You may feel closed off and conflicted about how you truly feel. There is no shame in having emotions and needing to express them.



Gemini (May.21-June.21)

In March your career will take center stage, Gemini. Take the opportunity that is given to you and allow yourself to try this new job. You may feel unsure of whether or not this is the right choice for you; turn to trusted peers who support you.



Cancer (June.22-July.22)

This month will call you to share your opinions, Cancer. You often hold back how you truly think or feel to make others happy. Work on releasing this behavior, as it does not serve you and never will.



Leo (July.23-Aug.22)

New love may be coming your way this month, Leo. Open your heart to the possibility of a new adventure in life. This person may not be new to your life, but the love will be; do not close yourself off to this opportunity.



Virgo (Aug.23-Sept.22)

March is the month to start acting on your dreams. Go after what you want, Virgo. You have all the tools you need to become the successful person you dream of becoming.



Libra (Sept.23-Oct.22)

This month the full moon is in your house Libra. On the same day a lunar eclipse will take place, it may re-energize you, and you may find yourself thinking clearer. Do not allow yourself to get stuck in an endless cycle of "to-dos" and "should have dones."



Scorpio (Oct.23-Oct.21)

In February, you may have experienced a loss that you felt was long coming. In this new month, focus on yourself, Scorpio, and allow yourself to practice self-love. A new chapter is beginning for you: embrace it.



Sagittarius (Nov.22-Dec.21)

In this month you will have no problems expressing yourself, Sagittarius. Whether it is a desire for relaxation, a raise or a new outfit, you will put in the work to get it. Remember, though, that temporary pleasures will not fulfill long term wants.



Capricorn (Dec.22-Jane.19)

March may be filled with turmoil, Capricorn. Try to take a step back and breathe; getting heated will not help you. It is okay to take time alone and clear your mind.





Maggie Kleiner/The Rider News

Three of the student actors who participated in "Murder Mystery Masquerade." From left to right, **Yanira Crawford**, a junior graphic design major, **Brianna Mall**, a freshman arts and entertainment industries management major and **Victoria Annunziata**, a freshman accounting major. **Crawford** played Jessica, **Mall** played Ella Vador and **Annunziata** played Mort Peacock.

RHA hosts "Murder Mystery Masquerade"

By **Tristan E. M. Leach**

WITH bated breath, the audience waited for the detective to reveal the murderer. Heads turned from suspect to suspect as anticipation began to build. As he brought the microphone to his lips with a sharp inhale, the story was about to unravel.

On March 1, the Residence Hall Association and the Office of Campus Life hosted "Murder Mystery Masquerade," an interactive performance that allowed students to step into a world of money, scandal and murder. RHA and OCL brought in The Murder Mystery Co., who wrote the story and provided costumes, props and a killer time.

Before the story began, audience members were assigned characters to play. Among these characters were a wealthy Dr. Feelgood, a doctor who was afraid of dead bodies; Ella Vador, a journalist with a love for gossip as well as Mort and Bertha Peacock, a bickering couple with marital secrets.

Four actors from the company joined the cast, playing Sal Fee, an egotistical billionaire app developer; Maid Lunatic, the head maid; Enrique Estrada, a handsome ladies' man; Reed Diculous, the jilted ex-roommate of Fee and Detective Pe Ness, a foul-mouthed detective determined to solve the case played by the same actor as the night's murder victim.

The story began in The Billionaires Club, a club for the extravagantly wealthy and powerful. Fee started the night of entertainment with an introduction of himself and bragged about his wealth, looks and the app he created. His self-righteous attitude is what would get Fee killed. With a swaggering step, Fee crashed to the floor in front of the audience, eliciting the terrified scream of Maid Lunatic.

Now it was time for the audience to participate and for the student actors to play their parts. Team

members asked questions and actors exchanged fake money for information that may be valuable to solve the mystery.

Among the student actors were Emma Poeckh and Yanira Crawford, both junior graphic design majors. Crawford played Jessica, a mysterious insurance adjuster. Poeckh played Reginald Sawbucks, an extremely wealthy man who lost the bid for president of The Billionaires Club to Fee. Both came to the event for a night of fun and found themselves being selected to play parts.

Crawford said, "I thought [the event] was cute and I thought it would be fun to get dressed up and wear a mask."

Crawford and Poeckh, both transfer students attended the event to see what RHA and other groups on campus do.

After audience members and actors spent some time investigating among themselves, Detective Pe Ness made his way into the room. Ness questioned each suspect and searched for clues that the others might have missed.

Truths were revealed that kept audience members on their toes and second-guessing everything they thought they knew. One of the most shocking truths was that Bertha and Fee were having an affair.

For the next hour, secrets, clues and lies were spread. One by one, Ness dismissed each suspect from the last official line of questioning. From here, it was up to the audience to vote on who the murderer was out of 10 suspects. If just one group, determined by which table guests sat at, could guess the murderer right, then the murderer would not get away with it.

While the groups debated who the killer could be, some certificates were handed out. The students who played Mort and Bertha Peacock won best actors of

the evening. The RHA group won an award for the "stupidest guess" as to who the murderer was, RHA guessed Juan Tidmam, the butler of The Billionaire's Club.

No group correctly guessed the culprit, leading Ella Vador to get away with murder. Vador's motive stemmed from Fee trying to ruin her journalistic integrity when it was revealed that she was also a cheater like the men she exposed.

Brianna Mall, a freshman arts and entertainment industries management major, played Ella Vador. Mall works with RHA as a representative for Switlik Hall.

"[Acting] was really fun. Steve [Carmona], who decided to give me the role last minute, and then everything worked out in my favor," said Mall with a chuckle.

The night ended with a thank you and bow from the actors. Students and actors mingled, talking amongst themselves and chattering about how the event had gone.

Steven Carmona, a graduate student in the organizational leadership program, is one of the graduate advisers for RHA.

Carmona said, "[The event] went really well. I got to step out of my comfort zone and play a role. I created a character for myself ... the [ditz] little blonde one."

It is nights like these that keep the actors of The Murder Mystery Co. coming back to perform. Charlene Baquero, played Maid Lunatic. Baquero expressed her joy at getting to bring fun and mystery to people's lives.

As students trickled out of the room a sense of joy hung in the air, marking another successful event for RHA.

Photos Courtesy of Maggie Kleiner/The Rider News



Detective Pe Ness (far right) interviews a suspect.



Students mingle amongst each other to ask questions about the murder.

Women's Empowerment Month: Heather Batezel

By **Hannah Newman**

SENIOR arts and entertainment industries management major Heather Batezel had a vision to pursue musical theater; it had always been a part of her life growing up. After a while, she felt herself parting ways with that passion and seeking something different that was still related to the field, but more fulfilling. "I was kind of falling out of that passion [performing] just because the audition process is very intense," said Batezel. "I didn't understand there were other ways in the business." Batezel came to Rider in 2020, when COVID-19 was at its peak and campus hit a low point with virtual classes and less room for the full experience of extra curricular activities. After moving into Lake House, the musical theater dorm, Batezel was still auditioning for the program. When these attempts did not work out in her favor, Batezel decided to shift gears and pursue the AEIM major. In spring of her freshman year, Batezel joined Alpha Xi Delta sorority. During her time in the sorority, Batezel served as the chapter's events director and external marketing chair. Current president and music education major Julia Wilder said, "Heather has always encouraged me to get involved and has been a key factor in the success of our formal and social events. She has also encouraged many sisters to get involved in the radio station and showcase their creativity." Batezel first heard about the opportunities at 107.7 The Bronc radio station from Alpha Xi Delta and began working seven days a week doing the Bronc Buzz, an entertainment segment described as "Hollywood Insider." "I was so determined at that point to find new skills, so I just walked into the radio station my sophomore year," said Batezel. She quickly realized that radio was something she loved and would help continue the AEIM major with more stability. "It's just another skill set that has made me more



Photo courtesy of Heather Batezel

Senior AEIM major **Heather Batezel** holds a rose at a Alpha Xi Delta sorority event.

marketable to employers and my future," said Batezel. "They saw that I was there every day eager to learn more, and I started helping out with social media." Batezel started a podcast her sophomore year that was born from a class project. "Grow Up Blondie" is a show that focuses on maturing as a woman through exploring college experiences. General manager of 107.7 The Bronc John Mozes said, "Heather believes a lot more in her skills than she did four years ago and now is asking to take on more challenges. I think being on the air has helped her with that." Batezel was elected to be the social media director at 107.7 The Bronc spring of her sophomore year. In addition to the full-time position at the station, Batezel juggled two on-campus jobs at the help desk and university bookstore as well as positions in Alpha Xi Delta. However, Batezel expressed that the station allowed her to explore her new passions and grow in many different ways.

"Junior year was definitely my most pivotal time, because that's when I realized I loved this [working at the station]," said Batezel. "I really understood what responsibility was and my work ethic. I always want to continue to learn, grow from my mistakes." Experiencing the Marconi Radio Awards and the Intercollegiate Broadcasting System Awards was a highlight and an immense point of growth in her experience. "I was introduced to all of this and became eager to network and grow," said Batezel. Mozes added, "When we were at the Marconi awards, Heather came prepared ... 99% of the awards are for commercial markets, radio, and there were heavy hitters in the industry. I give her a lot of credit. She was out handing her cards to everyone." Coming into the fall semester of senior year, Batezel took on an internship at Warner Bros., working in podcasting operations and network strategy.

The position consisted of weekly operations, managing production schedules and working with the production team to provide feedback for podcasts. "I've met a lot of contacts through that and I've been kind of networking," said Batezel. "The experience really told me that I love being in a corporate atmosphere." Although the internship took up more of her time and lessened her involvement at the station, Batezel's contributions have never died out. Her full-time efforts at 107.7 The Bronc were quickly weaved back into place when the Warner Bros. internship ended in December 2023. Batezel currently works on 107.7 The Bronc's TikTok. Batezel holds her time at Rider close to her, taking the skills she's learned on campus far beyond her days as a student. She said, "Rider is home."

The Women's Empowerment Month series is a collection of articles by The Rider News to celebrate the excellence of the women at Rider University.

Photo Gallery: Rider Dances 2024



Peter G. Borg/Rider University

Thirty-three students dance in the Latin-style finale.



Peter G. Borg/Rider University

Junior dance performance major **Jamie Peña** performs a jazz piece.



Peter G. Borg/Rider University

Students perform a comedic hip-hop dance that made the crowd laugh.



Peter G. Borg/Rider University

Sophomore musical theater major **Deryn Kraner** performs "Twilight of the Clowns."



Peter G. Borg/Rider University

"Twilight of the Clowns" performer and sophomore dance major **Adrianna Noel** takes center stage.

Ethical struggles of artificial intelligence

ARTIFICIAL intelligence is as it continuously seeps into our daily lives from our smartphones, to inside our classrooms and even future careers.

AI — machine intelligence that makes it possible for computers to learn from experience and perform human tasks — has become a backbone for many industries and markets in the world.

It has not only the way we do things, but also how we interact with others; completely transforming school and job spaces for better or for worse.

While there have been many positive impacts from the use of AI in fields like science, medicine and engineering, the most controversial fallout has taken place, specifically, in creative arts fields like graphic design, music production and even journalism.

Is AI art ethical?

Viral chatbots like ChatGPT and text-to-image programs like DALL-E 2 and Midjourney are being used across the nation to generate digital art in place of man-made art and music.

This caused an uproar of backlash from creative arts communities that consider art to be their passion and career, feeling as though it is being stripped away and belittled.

Does this mean all AI is bad? Not at all.

A Forbes article of last year, titled “How AI is Changing The Future of Creative Enterprise,” by Jean-Baptiste Hironde explains that as virtual assistants and chatbots become more common, there has also been enormous potential in “folding AI technology into existing mobile apps and tools to elevate what they can offer to creatives.”

When the relationship between AI technology and creative users is collaborative, we’re able to make vast advancements in the creative world.

Wil Lindsay, associate professor and program director of game and interactive media at Rider, explains that pertaining to game design, AI will definitely be used in the industry, saying, “It’s important for us to help students navigate that and learn how to use it effectively in order to understand where their sources are coming from.”

Although he teaches specifically game design, which has fallen victim to AI in recent years, Lindsay explains that he is also a practicing artist and designer as well and understands the importance of properly incorporating AI into one’s art.

However, when AI technology starts replacing human artists and creators, ethical questions arise.

Text-to-image apps like DALL-E 2 and Midjourney are able to generate pictures by scraping millions of images from the web and teach their algorithms to recognize patterns and relationships in those images in order to create the same style of art.

That means that artists who upload their work to the internet are unintentionally training their “algorithmic competitors.”

The consequences of this is that AI is entirely replacing hired graphic designers, game designers and newswriters, leading to many layoffs from different companies across the globe.

This means a lineup of jobs and careers, possibly including yours, are being filled up with intelligent machines instead of people.

How do we outsmart machines?

How do we compete with machines that are programmed with the skills to do exactly what we do, if not better? We don’t have to.

Human art is something unique and original that can never be stripped away. While AI might be able to generate more detailed art versus human artists, it will never be able to replicate the emotion and human experience that goes into making any kind of art.

The real question is: why does AI have to be an ethical issue at all?

Originating in the late 1800s to early 1900s, photography was also once just as new and alien of an art form as AI is to society now.

While many fearful artists thought they would soon be replaced with the new technology of pictures taken by a click of a machine, it has become obvious over time that human art will continue to prevail alongside the new developments in technology.

Instead of trying to fight against the invasion of AI in many forms of art, we need to learn to incorporate it into our craft and use it as a tool, just as artists of the past did with photography.

“We’ve decided in game design [classes] that we’re actually going to embrace it and teach it as part of the program. I suspect we’re going to have a full class on it within the next year or so,” Lindsay said.

Rider Provost DonnaJean Fredeen has recently created a task force on academic integrity, specifically dealing with AI, to take on the job of analyzing the current policy and seeing if it needs to be extended to include AI accommodations and restrictions.

AI is not something that is going away any time soon, so Lindsay advises his students, as well as past and future designers to view it as a tool and embrace it. “There might be some cultural shun, but it’s here. It will be part of the industry,” he said.

*Grace Bertrand
sophomore journalism major*



Eric Buckwalter/The Rider News

AI is advancing, but what does that entail for everyone's future.

THE Rider News

Longstreet House, 2083 Lawrenceville Road, Lawrenceville, NJ 08648

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

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JUNIOR JOURNALS

Are luxury beauty products worth the price?

I HAVE been interested in makeup since I was 10 years old, and I would always get the sparkly makeup at Claire's. It wasn't good makeup, as it had terrible pigments and it would only last on my face for a few hours, but it was cheap. It was fun to experiment and learn before buying more expensive products. I have now been using drugstore makeup for quite a while, and I find the products to be just as good as luxury makeup. They last all day, look nice when blended and don't break the bank.

However, when it comes to more expensive products by brands such as Chanel, Dior and Estée Lauder, is the quality better and worth the price? I have never been able to afford a \$100 lipstick, but for those who can, I question if the products are just as good, if not better. The article on Glam Convo "Drugstore vs. High-End makeup: Does A Makeup Look Require to Break a Bank?" by Vlera Ibrahim explains there isn't much of a difference between the ingredients, but there is a difference in packaging.

As for the ingredients, both drugstore and luxury makeup are supposed to be safe for your skin, have a wide range of colors and are wearable for a long period of time. The packaging on luxury products often have more designs, grooves and gold embellishment. Ibrahim wrote, "While there may appear to be a significant rivalry between drugstores and high-end makeup products, the reality is more nuanced. The quality, longevity and benefits of makeup products exist on a broad spectrum rather than being strictly divided by a rigid border." Some of the products have designs pressed into products like eyeshadow or powder. These can cost well over \$200 just because they are aesthetically pleasing. If it is a limited time product the price can rise even higher.

Jamie Peña, a junior dance performance major, has been interested in makeup since age 10. She used to be a competitive dancer, which forced her to learn how to do makeup for performances. Peña loves to experiment with makeup and try new looks.

"It's an extra way for me to express myself. I wear a lot of the same outfits all the time just because it's less to think about when I get dressed in the morning, but also as a dance major I basically have to wear the same stuff everyday ... there's not a lot of creativity there," said Peña. "So it's something that lets me have fun, something to look forward to about getting ready and that makes me feel more like myself."

Peña enjoys wearing different kinds of eyeshadow and finds that the more expensive eyeshadow pallets have more pigmentation and vibrancy. She also believes that more expensive eyeliner is worth the money.

While drugstore eyeliners are decent to experiment with when learning how to

properly apply makeup, Peña believes it is better to use higher quality eyeliner for performances so it doesn't run while dancing on stage.

"If I'm going to go on stage and I'm going to be sweating like crazy, that's not the [eyeliner] I want, because it will run a little bit with my sweat, versus if I'm just going out and when I come home I don't want to spend forever taking off my eyeliner," said Peña. "Then I don't have to waste my money on my stage makeup just to go to class one day because I felt like having fun with my makeup."

Peña added when buying makeup it really depends on what you're buying if it is worth the price.

"I feel like it depends what you want to do. ... It's more so for your skin type of if it's going to make you crusty and dry or oily and slimy. I feel personal preference rather than expensive or not," said Peña. "The only thing I feel like is worth it is maybe the pigment of eyeshadow."

Overall, makeup is subjective to each person's self-expression and budget. It is a form of creativity that is supposed to be fun, and all makeup is made to be worn and enjoyed.

*Felicia Roehm
junior journalism major*



Is the only difference between luxury makeup products the packaging?

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Professors respond to the death of Nex Benedict

EARLIER this month in Oklahoma, Nex Benedict, a 16-year-old nonbinary high school student, was the victim of bullying by three other students in a school bathroom. While the facts of what exactly transpired are unclear, the next day, Nex died unexpectedly. Their death has brought national attention to anti-transgender legislation — like Oklahoma's S.B. 615 passed in 2022 — and increasing discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people.

Articles about the incident have appeared in national news outlets such as the New York Times and the Washington Post, and a vigil was hosted in Tulsa, Oklahoma, this past weekend. We understand that, even though this incident occurred thousands of miles away in another state, Rider's LGBTQIA+ students might be feeling concerned, fearful and unsafe as we enter another contentious election season in which the rights of LGBTQIA+ individuals, and especially transgender youth, are politically weaponized, and as many state legislatures across the U.S. enact restrictive policies that actively harm gender-nonconforming youth.

We also recognize how this harmful rhetoric that denies the existence of transgender, non-binary and two-spirit people works alongside coordinated attempts to censor not only books and curricula that concern marginalized people — particularly Black people — and the history of the U.S., but also to censor the idea of racism itself. These attacks and many more in the so-called "culture war" intersect across gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality, class, religion and other identities to perpetuate abuses of power and privilege. Even as their persecution is part of a larger system of oppression, the attacks against LGBTQIA+ people, particularly transgender, non-binary and two-spirit people, have been particularly violent.

To that end, we, the undersigned faculty of Rider's Professors United for a Safe Haven (P.U.S.H.) Back group, want students to know that we are here to support you in this uncertain time. Every student, regardless of their sexuality, gender identity and gender expression, deserves to feel safe and thrive in their educational environment. Violence and hate — against LGBTQIA+ students or anyone else — have no place at Rider.

We are fortunate enough to live in New Jersey, where discrimination in schools based on sexual orientation and gender identity is prohibited by law. Individuals have the right to choose which facilities they feel most comfortable using. However, we cannot rest, because the attacks are local as well, as with New Jersey's recent book challenges centering on LGBTQIA+ themes. Know that we, as educators and advocates, will continue to challenge false narratives and expose deliberate disinformation to further the empowerment of marginalized identities and progress towards a more equitable and inclusive society for all.

If you or someone you know is struggling with depression or at-risk, please know that there are confidential resources available. You can contact Rider's Counseling Center by email at counseling@rider.edu.

The Trevor Project provides counseling services to queer youth. Call 1-866-488-7386 or text START to 678-678.

Rider University P.U.S.H. Back



Rashe Mishra/The Rider News

Professors share their condolences for the sudden death of nonbinary teen Nex Benedict.



RIDER
BASKETBALL

MEN'S

BASKETBALL

1ST
TOTAL REBOUNDS

2ND
IN FREE THROW %

4TH
RANKED OFFENSE

(STATS AS OF MAR. 5)

Graphic by Eric Buckwalter and photo by Josiah Thomas/The Rider News

Rider men's basketball is riding its high horse as the MAAC Tournament approaches.

MEN'S BASKETBALL

PREVIEW: Rider steams as regular season ends

By Benjamin Shinault

THE buzzer sounded and Rider men's basketball walked off the floor at Jim Whelan Boardwalk Hall with a loss to Saint Peter's hanging over its bowing heads.

Fast-forward to now, the 2024 Broncos are in the midst of a six-game winning streak and are looking to lock down a first-round bye in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference Tournament.

Rider secured a first-round bye last season but were unable to do much with it, as the team was tackled by the 10-seeded Saint Peter's Peacocks 70-62. A new opportunity has dawned for the Broncos, who are ready to face it.

The duality of a season

It has been quite the season thus far for Rider, getting into a tumble as it faced a seven-game losing streak back in November and early December. Since then, the team slowed the roll as it started to engage with MAAC opponents, with an 11-8 record as of March 5.

The Broncos had an eerily similar occurrence last

year as they went on an eight-game winning streak late in the season.

This year, they have a legitimate chance to bring that momentum into Jim Whelan Boardwalk Hall as their final matchup of the regular season is against the Peacocks, who are slotted in at third in the MAAC.

With Rider slowly working its way through the higher ranks of the conference standings, it has landed among the leaders of statistical categories such as rebounding, free-throw shooting and overall offense.

The Broncos have been adamant on getting the mid-range going as well as trying to get the ball in the hands of their forwards down low in the paint. A big piece to the overall climb in offensive sovereignty by Rider has been senior forward Mervin James.

The marvelous Mr. Mervin

On March 4, James was named MAAC player of the week for the third time this season. His two games this week against Niagara and Cansius averaged 22.0 points, 4.0 rebounds and shot above 50% from the field at 51.7%.

James, along with his teammates, has been playing at a high level recently to ensure the Broncos have a chance at clinching the first round bye.

He's the first Bronc to receive the honor multiple times in the same season since Dwight Murray Jr. did back in the 2021 season two times.

James ranks high in the MAAC in multiple categories: scoring with a season average of 19.2 points, placed at eleventh in rebounding averaging 5.9 per game and top ten in shooting percentage from the field at 52%.

An interesting tidbit about James' offensive greatness is that the Broncos haven't lost a game in which James has scored 20 or more points since Jan. 5, when the Broncos lost to Quinnipiac. As a whole this season, James has scored at least 20 or more points in 17 games.

The road ahead

The Broncos have one game left this regular season, as they look to win one more at the Alumni Gym. With the MAAC tournament looming, it may be easy to look ahead to that some players want to take care of business first.

"We haven't thought about the tournament at all," Head Coach Kevin Baggett said. "We have another game to play ... we will get to the tournament when it comes time, we are just worried about winning."

During the six-game winning streak that the Broncos are riding, it is important to mention the defense that Rider has displayed. Over the stretch, the Broncos' defense, which is ranked at ninth in the MAAC, held their opponents to averages of 65 points per game, which would be enough to put them in second place in the tournament. With this, it's easy to say that Rider has changed mightily from the beginning of the season to now.

"You want to play your best basketball going into the tournament, which I think we are," Baggett said.

Early on in the season, the Broncos dropped seven straight games and at some times, the locker room was not filled with high energy; instead, it consisted of anguish, that same feeling and lack of energy surely present during Rider's elimination in the quarterfinal.

"I feel like the guys from last year learned from their mistakes from last season," graduate student guard TJ Weeks Jr. said. "They told all the newcomers about the mistakes that they had last year and for us this year to build upon them."

Heading into the MAAC Tournament, it will be an almost completely new squad rolling onto the floor, which can turn out to be a positive for the Broncos as eight out of the 15 players were not on the team last season. Rider has a new team with new expectations.

Seeding scenarios

Seeding is always critical when it comes to tournament play. As of March 4, the Broncos are fifth in MAAC, which would give them a bye in the first round.

The MAAC Tournament will be played at Jim Whelan Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City, New Jersey, from March 12 to March 16.

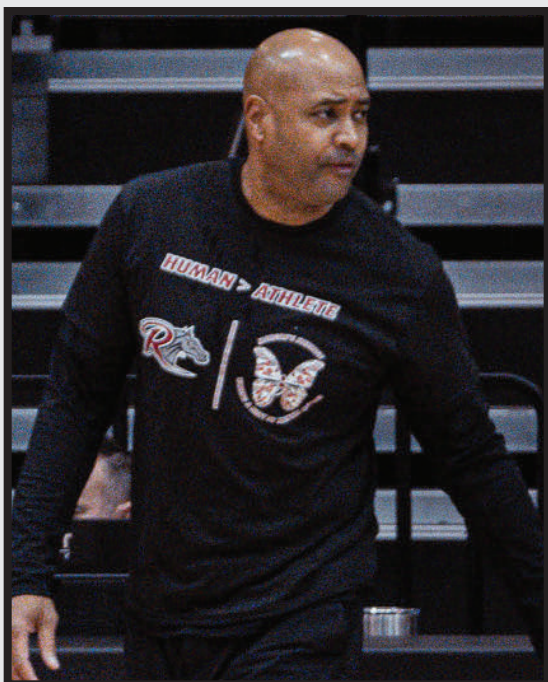


Photo by Josiah Thomas/The Rider News

Head Coach **Kevin Baggett** has a ton of MAAC Tournament experience.



Rider women's basketball is looking to make a deeper run in the MAAC Tournament after exiting in the second round last year.

Graphic by Eric Buckwalter and photo by Josiah Thomas of The Rider News

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

PREVIEW: Broncs embracing underdog mentality

By Logan K. VanDine

WITH the 2023-24 regular season winding down for Rider women's basketball, eyes are set on the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference Tournament, which is slated to begin on March 12.

The Broncs will be motivated when they set foot in Atlantic City, New Jersey, after their crushing loss in the second round a year ago.

With that loss behind them, Head Coach Lynn Milligan and her squad are hoping to build off a nice finish to the regular season which including a four-game winning streak.

'Playing some good basketball'

Milligan, who is wrapping up her 17th season as the Broncs' head coach, gave her overall assessment of the team with one more home regular season game to go on March 7 when they take on Siena at 5 p.m.

"We've been playing some good basketball," said Milligan. "We know we have some tough games in front of us, but the end of February and beginning of March is about tightening things up."

Heading into the tournament as a likely lower seed and underdog, Milligan still trusts and believes in her squad's ability to go on a deep run in the tournament.

"I think just with who we are and how we relate to one another ... those are the things we have to rely on in the MAAC Tournament," said Milligan. "Early in the season, you're building chemistry with players ... when you get to March, you're counting on that."

Graduate student guard Taylor Langan who is averaging a team leading 14.4 points this season in her first season at Rider, echoed Milligan's sentiment.

"After a while when you have so many new players and a lot of returners it takes a little longer than what people anticipate," said Langan, "but luckily for us, basketball is a long season."

'Critical wins'

The Broncs have also been in their best stretch of the season, as they've gone 4-2 over their last six games and have scored over 50 points in five of those

six games. Milligan thinks is vital for her team to be playing well especially on the offensive side of the ball at this point in the season.

"It's critical. We've won home games, we won road games, we won a game at the buzzer, we won a game in overtime, so those are all things that are lessons for us," Milligan said.

Senior guard Makayla Firebaugh and Langan expressed the significance of playing their best at this point in the season.

"You don't want to have continuous losing streaks going into the tournament, because, like people say, your mental state is going to be defeated," Firebaugh said, who has averaged 12 points per game for Rider.

Langan added, "Basketball is a game of runs. Some teams go on winning streaks and some go on losing streaks, and luckily for us, we've actually peaked at the right time and we just have to keep showing our best."

'We are prepared'

Heading into the MAAC Tournament, the Broncs will most likely be a lower-seeded team again, having been a 10-seed and a nine-seed the last two seasons. Despite this record, Milligan still said she always finds her team playing their best basketball of the season at Jim Whelan Boardwalk Hall.

"The MAAC Tournament has always been a place where we've been relatively successful," Milligan said. "I want to say we have been in the semifinals five out of the last seven years ... as a staff and as a program we are prepared for that week," Milligan said.

Firebaugh, who will be playing in her fourth MAAC Tournament, was asked if she has felt a difference in playing in the tournament each season.

"I kind of feel the same except freshman year when ... I was nervous out of my mind, but years after that, I was fine and felt the same nostalgia and simply excited to be here because everybody plays different basketball when you're in the tournament," said Firebaugh.

For Langan, this will be her first time playing in the MAAC Tournament, and with this year being her sixth and final season playing college basketball, excitement is what's going through her mind.

"I'm just excited, this is my last year ever playing

college basketball, so ... I'm excited to end on the note that we all are ending as a team ... we have a lot of good people that can help us get the job done," said Langan.

Rider is also hoping to bounce back after a crushing loss in the second round against Niagara 67-64 just a year ago, where Firebaugh led the Broncs in scoring with 27 points. Firebaugh said the game still motivates her now.

"Obviously after losing in the MAAC Tournament, I'm fueled every year and ready to just come back and prove it, because I believe in this team, I believe in this program," she said. "We have a shot to win it, so it's all about believing in each other and in our team."

Milligan felt that same determination that Firebaugh and some of her other returning players have from last season's heartbreaking exit.

She said, "Our returners have been in some close games and have had success in Atlantic City, so yes, we will absolutely be relying on our veterans."



Kaitlyn D'Alessio/The Rider News

Head Coach Lynn Milligan thinks she has her team playing well right now.

Sports

ONLINE

SWING INTO SPRING SPORTS

Basketball, baseball, softball and lacrosse were all in action for the Broncs this weekend. Read up on all of them!

FIND THE STORIES ON [THERIDERNEWS.COM](https://www.ridernews.com) OR SCAN THE QR CODE



FEATURE

The reality of sports betting: how major is the wager?



The sports betting industry is growing everyday, with FanDuel totaling \$307 million in bets during the 2024 Super Bowl, according to PBS.org.

Graphic by Eric Buckwalter/The Rider News

By Hannah Newman

INSTANT money, marketing and gratification are synonymous with a single concept that many know by name but not entirely by effect: gambling. Today, there isn't a need to visit a casino, just access to a smartphone app.

After the U.S. Supreme Court made the legalization of gambling a state matter in 2018, it made its way to universities, as approximately 75% of college students gamble and 67% sports bet as of May 2023, according to CollegeGambling.org and the NCAA.

As the Supreme Court ruling approaches its sixth anniversary, the growth of betting has created more jobs, attention to sports and quicker ways to win money.

However, the growth of something as compulsive and casual as gambling has also created problems for vulnerable people with poor finances and addictive habits, particularly college students.

Some states have considered banning sports betting apps from being used on college campuses to prevent young adults from creating lifelong addictions.

A decision and a collision

As sports betting slowly spread across the nation, companies like FanDuel and DraftKings became frequent sponsors of ESPN, prompting the network to discuss gambling more than ever before.

ESPN also signed a licensing agreement with Penn Entertainment in August 2023 to create its own U.S. sportsbook, ESPN BET.

The collision between gambling companies and sports media outlets has made sports betting a mainstream topic in the industry, according to Rider sports media professor AJ Moore.

"The legality of [sports betting] has just given the opportunity for more people to be heard in a public forum," said Moore. "People who are critical are also finding a way to get their voices heard."

Whether it's positive or negative coverage, sports betting has carved out a spot in the media's everyday output.

"You can't turn a sports event on television without seeing an ad for FanDuel and DraftKings," said sports media professor Chuck Bausman.

Companies like FanDuel have strategically used their digital presence to market gateway gambling by making enticing offers to first-time bettors. FanDuel offers a "No Sweat First Bet" of up to \$1,000. If someone makes a \$1,000 bet and loses it, the money will be returned to their account.

"[Sportsbooks] want to get people to sign up," said Bausman. "The philosophy is, if you wait, you're going to keep playing, and if you lose, you're going

to probably keep playing. You want to get back what you've lost."

For many, the thrill of sports has effectively become a regular trip to the casino, as people now tune into games with both their eyes and wallets, hoping for more than just a win for their favorite team.

The 2024 Super Bowl had 14 million bets placed on FanDuel totalling \$307 million, which set records, according to PBS.org.

However, DraftKings was the leading sports betting operator by coverage with licenses to operate in 20 states, according to GamblingIndustryNews.com. Fifteen million bets were placed via DraftKings, according to oddschecker.com

Stitching the game's fabric

An understanding of sports betting has become critical for the sports media industry, making senior analyst at SportsHandle and professor Jeff Edelstein motivated to make it as prominent in his students' education as it is in reality.

Edelstein teaches Covering the Sports Betting Industry at Rider, a course that was introduced in fall 2022 and is now required for the sports media major.

"I took a job three years ago covering the gambling industry and I realized that it's created a massive swell of new jobs that are adjacent," said Edelstein. "Just like you know what an RBI is in baseball or a touchdown in football is, you're going to have to know what a three-team parlay is."

Covering the Sports Betting Industry teaches students how to break down financial reports from both state governments and gambling operators, how to cover legislative action on gambling and how to navigate the business.

Former student of the class and Rider alum Carolo Pascale '23 said, "It adds something that's very unique to the major. ... It's pretty much being shoved down people's throats to a point where you kind of can't ignore it anymore."

The weaving of sports betting into the everyday relevance of the industry has left no doubt that the fast-growing prospect of gambling has a secure future in the business.

"It's only been five years; it's very quickly becoming the fabric of the game," Edelstein said.

The expansion of jobs within sports betting all revolve around the principle of promoting gambling, which from certain perspectives could be opening a gateway to addiction.

Harmful or helpful?

The amount of advertisement in the industry

has led to increased numbers of both revenue and gamblers over the years.

According to GamblingIndustryNews.com, "Commercial sportsbooks and mobile sports betting operators combined to generate more than \$7.5 billion in revenues during 2022. This marked a 72.7% increase on the previous year."

DraftKings alone hit a \$13.38 billion budget cap in 2023, according to GamblingIndustryNews.com.

Although there has been some discussion as to whether or not promoting gambling falls parallel to advertising tobacco, the certainty of it remains unknown.

"There's a federal bill floating around that seeks to ban advertising of gambling, turning it into the rules of tobacco, but it hasn't gained any traction," said Edelstein.

In response to the science that young adults ages 18-24 are more likely to develop gambling habits, some college campuses have attempted to prevent students from falling victim to the habit of betting, one state being Maryland.

The state just announced a bill that bans students from using legal sports betting apps, in addition to passing a bill just last year that bans universities from partnering with sports betting operators, according to sportshandle.com.

Connecticut is looking to move forward with banning betting companies from partnering with universities.

Bausman responded to the idea and said, "If you buy into the power of advertising, that's what makes it difficult for any addiction."

Although there is no sign of abolishing betting apps at Rider, students and faculty acknowledge the high usage of betting apps and the mental battle students face deciding whether the chances of losing outweigh winning.

Although the future is unwritten, the rapid progress of the sports betting industry makes its effect on future generations an open-ended question.

If you have a gambling problem, call 1-800-GAMBLER.

This article is a part of a series following college gambling. Those interested in being interviewed for upcoming stories can take the survey through the QR code, or reach out to writer Hannah Newman at newmanha@rider.edu.

