



Dell'Omo undecided on extension, retirement

By Caroline Haviland

AMID a period of financial uncertainty, Rider President Gregory Dell'Omo remained undecided on his future at the university with his contract set to expire in July 2025, stating that he and the Board of Trustees had not begun a discussion regarding retirement or another extension, he said in an interview with The Rider News on April 16.

In January 2023, Dell'Omo told The Rider News that his contract was extended for one year by the Board, stretching his contract to July 2025, despite criticisms of his tenure from faculty and students.

Dell'Omo's first of three extensions was in 2018 when his contract was renewed for four years; the second time was in 2020 when his term was extended for an additional two years until 2024, followed by the latest one-year extension to 2025.

In the recent April interview, Dell'Omo said, "We're all too busy working on issues within the university. We have a lot of things we're working on, so we're just going to keep our focus on that. ... Roughly a year or six months before, you begin to talk about what you're going to do."

He had not decided if Rider was his final stop in his career, saying, "I'm taking it one day at a time."

The president came to Rider in 2015 after a 10-year stint as president of Robert Morris University, a private institution in Pittsburgh. Next year will mark a decade for Dell'Omo at Rider.

"An older president who I was very fond of as sort

of a mentor today, once told me ... 'Greg, max out at 10 years.' That's because 10 years [is] like a magic number, because after that, you're not really adding much value," Dell'Omo said in a January 2023 interview with The Rider News.

During that same interview, when asked if 2025 would be his final year at the university, Dell'Omo responded, "I think so," but when the article was published, he sent a universitywide email denouncing the claims.

The Rider News released the transcripts of the interview, and in a second universitywide email, Dell'Omo replied, "It is readily apparent that I was too ambiguous when speaking about the subject of retirement. I should have been much clearer. Though my contract currently ends July 31, 2025, I truly have not made any definitive decisions about retirement at this moment."

Rider's chapter of the American Association of University Professors has voiced its strong opposition of Dell'Omo's presidency, as most recently, union members silently protested Dell'Omo's university convocation in August 2023, holding signs commanding the president to resign.

AAUP President Quinn Cunningham said, "We've had two votes of no confidence in [Dell'Omo], and the second one was specifically asking for his removal. We are very hopeful that we will be getting a new president in the next couple of years."

Dell'Omo, unsure if he will extend his contract or



Maggie Kleiner/The Rider News

Rider President Gregory Dell'Omo was undecided on his future, with his contract set to expire in July 2025.

retire, remained focused on the university's current financial situation.

"We're so focused on working on all of these challenges we have; I don't really think beyond," Dell'Omo said. "We're trying to take care of the summer, the fall, just looking at those major milestones you hit every year in terms of running the university and making sure things are on track."

Title IX aims to regain trust of student body

By Jay Roberson

AFTER recurring vacancies and changes within the office, Ryan McKinney took over as the permanent Title IX director just over a year ago.

Now, as of March 26, McKinney determined that Rider's office of Title IX and Equal Opportunity Compliance dealt with 41 student reports in the 2023-24 academic year.

'The emergency room' at Rider

"We've sort of become the emergency room in a lot of ways because we triage things very quickly together, then make sure they go where they need to go," said McKinney. "I'm very proud that we created an office that is well known, accessible and hopefully trusted to do right for students."

Only two cases were under investigation by the anti-harassment and non-discrimination policy, which resulted in no hearings.

"Even if it isn't a violation, there's some things we can do to help remedy the situation. We've sort of developed this office that can manage anything that comes our way in some fashion," McKinney said.

McKinney explained that the higher number of reports indicates that students are beginning to trust the Title IX office after a year of rapid changes in directors.

"I would be more concerned if the numbers were very, very low; that would tell me that we're not doing our job," said McKinney.

Issues that are reported range from sexual and dating violence, managing the end of relationships and friendships to problematic interpersonal communications with peers, faculty and staff.

Title IX Coordinator Debbie Stasolla, who works alongside McKinney, said, "We try to work with them to really get at the issue at hand and make things better. Usually, they're reporting because they're very unhappy about something and they need help navigating it."

Stasolla and McKinney indicated that the complainant is "put in the driver seat" and chooses what they would like to do to remedy the situation.

McKinney said, "Sometimes [the students] are comfortable with just a no-contact order ... Sometimes it's as simple as an informal conversation, it just depends on what that student wants and oftentimes students just want to document it."

In unique circumstances, Stasolla said, "We might have to make a decision because we're concerned about the safety and well-being of the rest of the community."

Students express support from office

Junior acting major Emily Porter Siegel, who uses they/them pronouns, contacted Title IX in October after dealing with issues within their department in spring 2023.

"I reached out to them like, 'I don't know how to tell you about this issue, but I need to tell you about this issue because I don't want this to happen to anyone else.' Immediately they said they'd love to talk to me about it," said Siegel.

Title IX responded to Siegel's report on the same day they emailed the office.

"It was really interesting because [in the meeting] they were like, 'You're not like other people who've come to talk to us. You're being very reasonable and

level-headed and action-oriented.' I don't really know if I love the way it was said," said Siegel.

Siegel explained they did receive a fair amount of support from the Title IX office, but they were unsure if their additional comments were relevant to the issue at hand.

"If other people aren't comfortable saying something about this, then someone needs to say something about it," said Siegel. "So it was weird to have them say I'm not like other people. No, actually, I'm very much like other people and I had the whole summer to process and make my peace with it."

Similarly, an anonymous student had the Title IX office reach out to them on the same day they talked to a mandated reporter about a situation their friend was facing.

"I didn't even get a chance to talk to [my friend] before I went in ... So I spent



Jay Roberson/The Rider News

Debbie Stasolla and Ryan McKinney have worked together in the Title IX office over the past year.

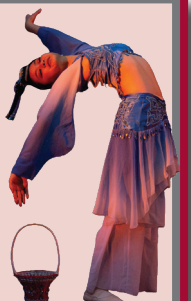
INSIDE BEST OF THE BEST
Check out the men's and women's players of the year.
PAGES 10 & 11



SENIOR SEND-OFF
Amethyst Martinez reflected on the time they spent with The Rider News.
PAGE 8



PULSE OF ASIA
The Asian American Alliance hosts a dance and culture extravaganza celebrating Asian identities.
PAGE 5



SECURITY BRIEFS

BY JAKE TIGER

Busted Bud

Moore marijuana. On April 17 at 6:58 p.m., Public Safety was dispatched to Moore Residence Hall for a report of the odor of marijuana. Upon arrival, Public Safety located the source of the smell coming from a student's room. Through a search of the room, Public Safety observed fire safety violations and found suspected marijuana and drug paraphernalia. The incident was referred to the Office of Community Standards.

Wake and Bake and Escape

Mysterious smoke. On April 19 at 3:56 a.m., Public Safety was dispatched to Gee Residence Hall for a report of the odor of marijuana. Upon arrival, Residence Life staff reported the odor was coming from outside of the building. Public Safety checked the exterior and interior of the building but was unable to locate the source of the smell.

Sign of Violence

Poyda problem. On April 22 at 12:50 p.m., Public Safety was conducting a park, walk and talk of Poyda Residence Hall when they discovered damage inside of the building. While walking through the third floor, Public Safety found one of the exit signs had been damaged. No other damage was found. Facilities Management was contacted to repair the sign.

-Information provided by Public Safety Capt. Matthew Babcock

FAFSA fiasco's effect on Rider's enrollment

By Jake Tiger

HOPING to recover from an unforeseen pandemic, Rider instituted its three-year "Path Forward Plan" in July 2023, which aimed to steer the university back to a positive revenue stream.

However, like many other institutions across the country, another unexpected obstacle has knocked Rider off course.

"We've never seen anything like this before. This is totally uncharted waters," said Rider President Gregory Dell'Omo in an April 16 interview with The Rider News.

Month-long delays with the new Free Application for Federal Student Aid, also called the FAFSA, are currently styming Rider's enrollment, one of its primary revenue sources, as the university takes another hit while still reeling from the COVID pandemic.

'A perfect storm'

The U.S. Department of Education rolled out the redesigned FAFSA in December 2023 that was supposed to make the process easier, but the new system and cascading delays have created an unprecedented, nationwide nightmare in higher education.

"History helps us predict the future ... There is no comparable year," said Vice President for Enrollment Management Drew Aromando. "In the administration, there is apprehension that it could be a perfect storm."

Rider's fall 2024 enrollment was trending upward prior to FAFSA setbacks, with unique visits, applications and admitted students all up by at least 8% from the year prior, according to administrative data from April 4.

However, as soon as the FAFSA entered the equation, Rider's numbers dropped by 30% compared to last fall, receiving about 1,500 fewer valid FAFSAs due to the technical issues, according to the data from April 4.

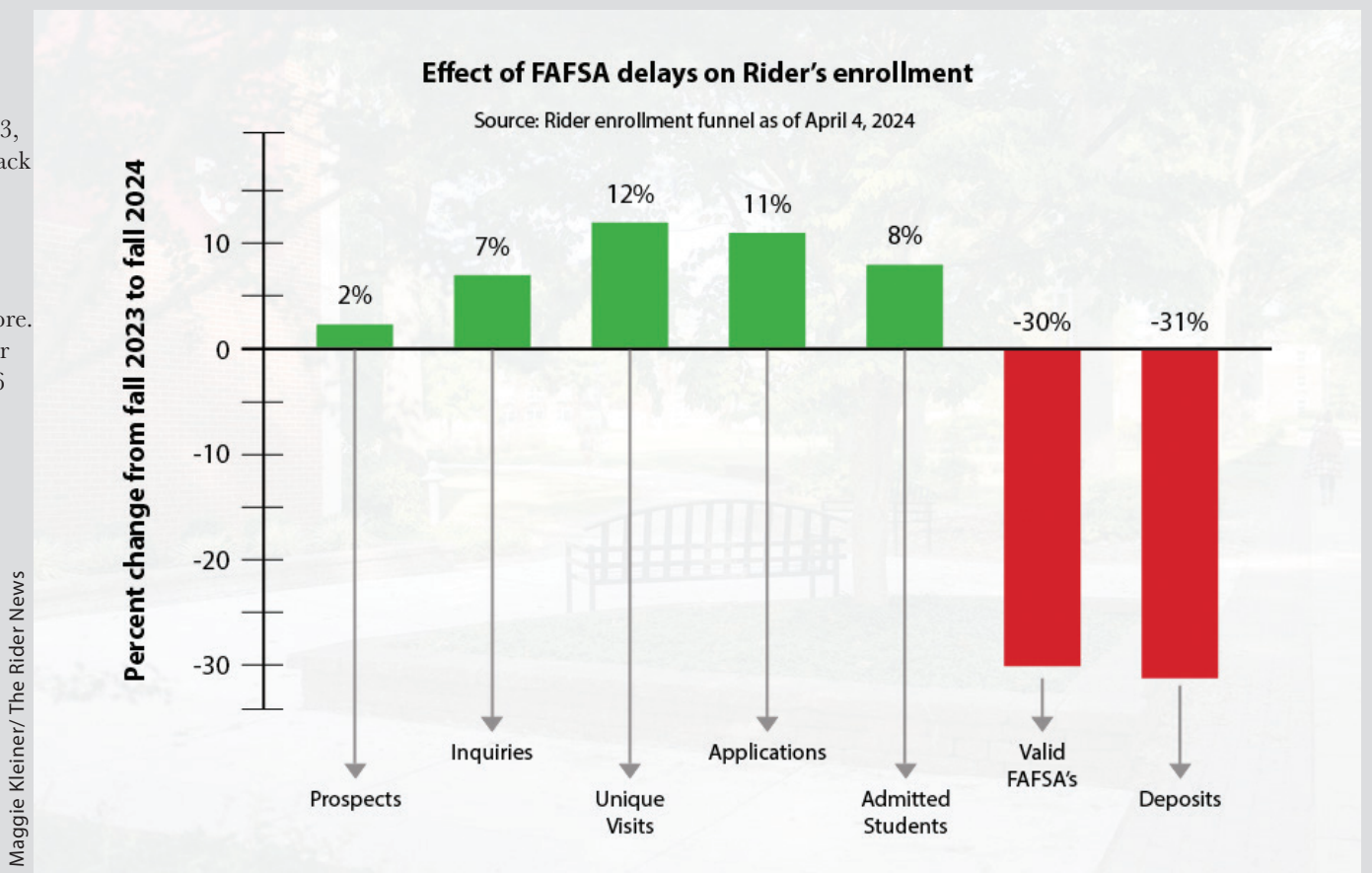
In February, Aromando said Rider's undergraduate deposits were down 24% from the previous year; as of April 4, that number had dropped to a 31% decrease.

Rider pushed back its deposit deadline to June 1, and Aromando said on April 22 that he expects that number to rise from -31% as the date approaches. He stated that the university typically sees about 50% of its tuition and housing deposits submitted in the three weeks leading up to the deadline.

Aromando said the university is largely unable to push the deadline back any further, as June 1 is already putting Rider right up against the start of its new fiscal year on July 1.

Rider started sending out the first batch of financial aid offers on April 15 to the 40% who had valid FAFSAs, which was about 1,800 admitted students, according to Aromando.

The other 60% of FAFSAs were rejected either due to errors by the filer or technical glitches in the new system. Rider will send out offers to those people as they receive their updated and approved applications, Aromando said.



FAFSA delays have impacted Rider's enrollment funnel, resulting in a drastic drop in deposits.

On April 22, Aromando said the university had sent out offers for all of the satisfactory applications, which was about 39% of all FAFSAs – valid or not.

He noted that, in a normal admissions cycle, Rider would have sent out about 3,300 (65%) more offers at this point.

Rider is ahead of many other institutions on dispersing financial aid packages, but Aromando said this likely won't offer much of an advantage in enrollment, as most students will still wait to hear back from every school they applied to.

The university is about six months behind where it should be, and Aromando described the situation as "embarrassing."

"There is no reason why they shouldn't have had everything in order for October 1, 2023, but they started missing deadlines," said Aromando. "They just did not really do what needed to be done."

National trends

The USDOE has seen FAFSA filing decrease by 29% nationally and by 21% in New Jersey, according to Aromando, which could certainly ding Rider's precious enrollment.

High school students who file their FAFSA are 84% more likely to pursue higher education, according to research from the National College Attainment Network that Aromando included in his email to Rider's staff and faculty.

Aromando said Rider and the USDOE have increased reminder communication with students to encourage them to file. Rider has also started calling students who have not yet submitted their FAFSA, urging them to do so.

Dell'Omo said, "We live and die on tuition revenue and housing revenue. If you're off by whatever percent, that immediately goes to the bottom line impacting the

resources we have to run the university, and that's our big concern."

Financially, enrollment is critical to Rider's longevity as a private, tuition-dependent institution. If there is a year with a dip in enrollment, that lack of revenue is felt for four years, Aromando said.

"The worry is, are families just waiting till they get the information, and they make a decision and the numbers come right back up," Aromando said, "or is this going to be a pandemic year where they just kind of go away?"

The drop in filings correlates with learning loss stemming from the COVID pandemic, as the incoming class of university students began high school in fall 2020 when many schools were still using remote or hybrid learning.

According to Harvard's graduate school of education, test scores have declined across all populations since the pandemic with grades three through eight specifically losing half of a year in math progress and a quarter of a year in reading.

The New York Times reported in November 2023 that the COVID generation of students has also seen significant increases in absenteeism and mental health difficulties, each hampering academic growth.

"It's hard for us to sit back and watch this unfold," said Aromando. "It's one thing when a pandemic has taken your ability to do your job effectively out of the equation. ... It's another thing when it occurs because the U.S. Department of Education has not done their job."

CDI fields student feedback in new director selection

By Jay Roberson

FOLLOWING the departure of Center for Diversity and Inclusion Assistant Director, Shaun Williams, in January, Rider’s Chief Diversity Officer, Heeyoung Kim, is allowing Rider students to voice their opinion on the three finalists for the CDI director position.

Williams took the role of CDI director after Pamela Pruitt departed last June, but was met with criticism from students, specifically for claims of misgendering.

Kim said, “It’s important for me to get feedback from the student body so students are actually able to see the finalists ... When I search for other positions that work with faculty members, I open invite all the faculty members to meet the finalists. It’s the same way I’ve been doing it.”

The three candidates include Jasmine Johnson, Anthony Jones and Rider alum Mike Jackson ’92, who came to campus on April 16, 18 and 23, respectively.

Each candidate had the opportunity to talk with students in an open forum and give a training presentation to faculty members, each forum lasting about an hour.

Following the open forum with Rider students, surveys were sent out via email to those who attended so that their opinion on the candidate could be considered.

“Many students and faculty members said all of the candidates were qualified to do the job, so they were happy we had good finalists,” said Kim.

All the candidates have a background in higher education and a passion for diversity, equity and inclusion, according to Kim.

Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs Nick Barbati emphasized that the students’ voice is essential in selecting the new director.

“For me personally, I think it’s so important for



Jake Tiger/The Rider News

Chief Diversity Officer **Heeyoung Kim** occupies the office that once belonged to former CDI Director Pamela Pruitt.

someone to be able to build community and develop relationships with our students,” said Barbati. “That, to me, is the paramount element of, first of all, anyone that works at Rider University, but particularly for this position.”

Kim hopes that the university will be able to pick a new CDI director before June, which is when an orientation is being planned for the chosen candidate.

Kim anticipates the integration of the new director to be a bit smoother, as each candidate has already met many of the students, staff and faculty they will be regularly interacting with.

“It’ll be hard to pick one, but in general the

in-person feedback was [positive for each candidate]. I’m looking forward to seeing the anonymous feedback,” said Kim. “I hope I can make the decision in two weeks, because it takes time to see references.”

All student feedback will be taken into consideration when choosing the finalist for the CDI director, Kim said.

Barbati said, “I think students need to be a part of this process and I’m so happy that they are. It’s definitely going to be weighted significantly.”

With the departure of Williams, the assistant director position also sits vacant. Kim hopes to eventually fill that position after a new director is appointed, but she could not offer a timeline.

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Grand-prize car returns to campus

By Jake Tiger

No, the SUV parked on the grass outside of the Student Recreation Center does not belong to a student who was running late to their intramural basketball game.

The 2024 Toyota Corolla Cross L between the SRC and Bart Luedeke Center is the grand prize for 107.7 The Bronc's "Cruisin' from Commencement" contest where one Rider graduate will ride away on a fresh set of wheels.

Despite holding the event each year, the radio station has not had the "Cruisin' from Commencement" car on campus since 2019 due to supply chain issues stemming from the COVID pandemic, according to John Mozes, 107.7 The Bronc's general manager.

"There were just no cars on the lots," said Mozes on the shortages. "In 2022, we didn't know what the car was until literally 10 days before."

The car, courtesy of Team Toyota of Princeton, New Jersey, is awarded as a two-year lease rather than complete ownership, said Mozes. This decision is more financially friendly to the winner, as the recipient of the car would have to pay higher federal taxes on a owned vehicle.

The Corolla is a gray-blue color that Toyota calls "celestite," according to Mozes. He said 107.7 The Bronc is able to choose the color of the car each year, stating that the station used to opt for a cranberry red, but in recent years has switched to white and now celestite.

Having the car on campus helps build excitement around the competition, teaches student-workers lessons about marketing and creates interest for prospective students at open houses, Mozes said.

Sophomore film and television major Emily O'Connor, 107.7 The Bronc's social media director, said the social media team plans to promote the contest by posting "Carpool Karaoke" videos modeled after the popular late-night segment, where different communities on campus, like Greek Life and athletes, will sing their favorite songs in the car.

"Getting the word out that that is the car for the contest will push the student body, especially the seniors, to kind of go for the contest and enter," said O'Connor. "It's always good to see the thing you're possibly winning right in front of you as a reminder."

To enter the contest, seniors must submit a two-and-a-half-minute video about their experience at Rider. The deadline to enter is May 5 at 11:59 p.m.

More details about "Cruisin' from Commencement" can be found on 107.7 The Bronc's website.

Section editors Jay Roberson, Grace Bertrand, Kadie DiGiuseppe and Benjamin Shinault work for 107.7 The Bronc. They had no part in the writing or editing of this story.



A lucky graduate will win a Toyota Corolla Cross L.

Rider News wins multiple state awards



Courtesy of Jackie Incollingo

The Rider News received multiple state collegiate journalism awards from the New Jersey Press Foundation, including second place for general excellence, first place for news writing, and first place for layout and design.

Changing the reputation of Title IX

CONT'D FROM PAGE 1

the first half of that meeting trying to figure out if I should give her name," said the student.

The anonymous student gave McKinney their friend's name, but the friend did not want to report the incident.

"I got an email that she didn't respond to their emails," the anonymous student said. "She doesn't have to. They said 'You should tell her to report,' but it's not my issue. It's not my incident, and I already got put in a bad position by being placed there in the first place."

After a series of four emails the anonymous student said, "McKinney said, 'She's not obligated to talk to me, I just want to make sure you and her are aware of what this office provides.' I was aware, but it wasn't my decision."

Though the emails were overwhelming for the student who did not want to report, the Title IX office wanted to assure her that they have an open door.

In regards to solutions for their report, Siegel said, "[The results] are not perfect, but I feel like something has shifted and we're moving in the right direction. I just haven't seen any concrete changes implemented, but I see an overall shift in the tone of how things are working now."

History of the office

In November 2022, The Rider News released an article outlining serious concerns from students

and the handling of reports from Title IX staff at the time: Barbara Lawrence, former Title IX coordinator, and Pauline Lloyd, past Title IX director. Lloyd departed eight days after the article was published.

After an interim director left and Lawrence transitioned to focus solely on her position at the time as chief diversity officer, McKinney and Stasolla took over the office and vowed to fix things. Stasolla has held many roles at the university, with McKinney joining after working in Title IX work prior. Lawrence left the university in July 2023.

"We're going to do our damndest to make sure that nothing falls through the cracks, and that we address any complaints as soon as possible," said Stasolla after taking over in March 2023. "I know that's easy for me to say ... but I've got to prove myself, and so does [McKinney]."

Now, a shift has been seen since issues surfaced from the student body in 2022, with students mentioning support from the office.

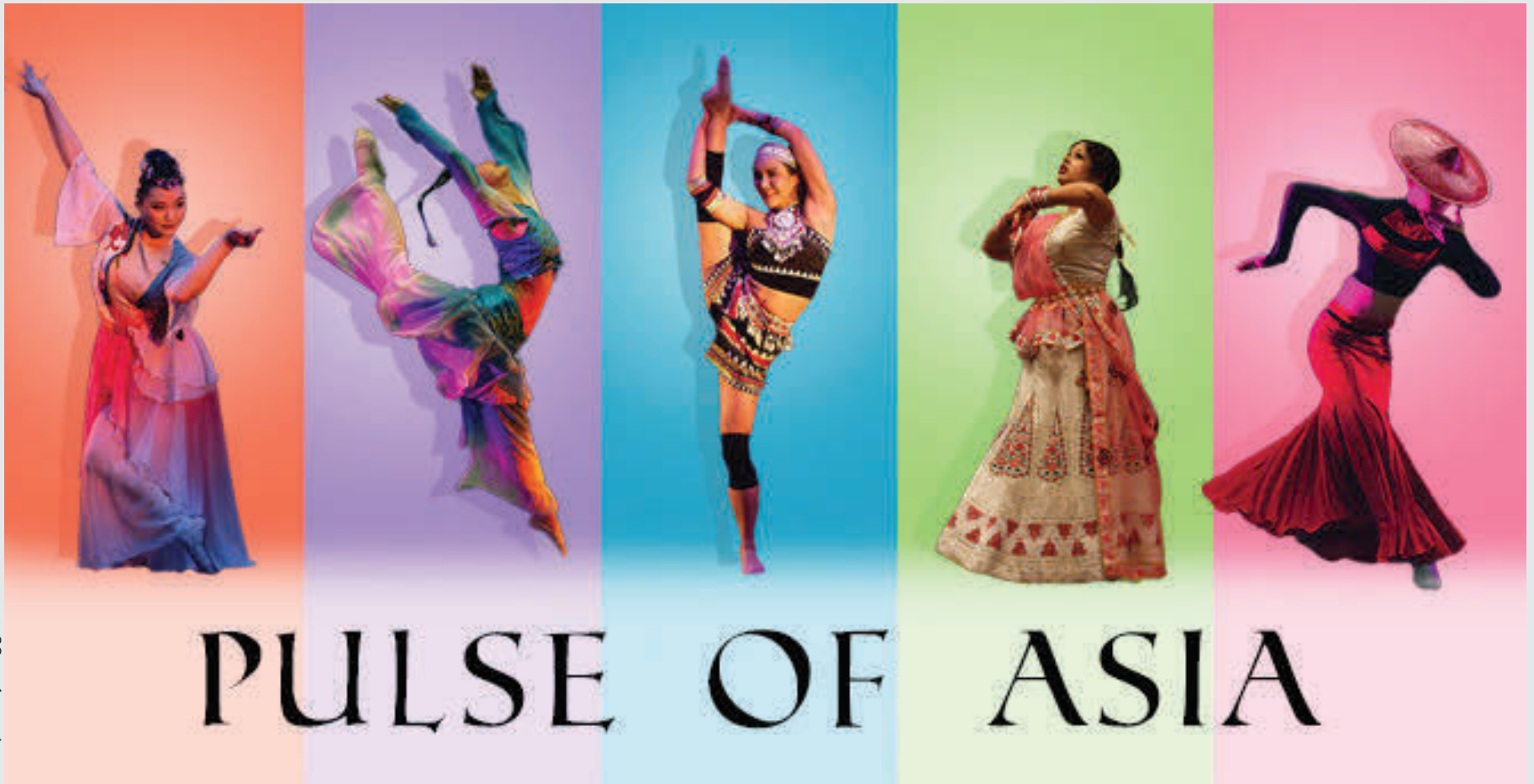
Siegel said, "It's good to be secure in that feeling that I can go to these people and things will change to a degree or people will listen more here."

Outgoing executive editor Amethyst Martinez contributed to the writing of this article.

THE Rider News

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Graphic by Maggie Kleiner/The Rider News

The "Pulse of Asia" event included dancers and performances from a number of different Asian cultures.

Students dazzled by collection of Asian culture

By Grace Bertrand

WHEN the lights dimmed and the spotlight centered on the first set of performers of the night, a silence settled over the audience as they were immersed into the heart of Asia.

Although Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month is nationally celebrated in May, Rider celebrates it before commencement in April.

In honor of AAPI Heritage Month, the Asian American Alliance, also referred to as the Asian Affinity Group, partnered with the Center for Diversity and Inclusion, Student Affairs, Norm Brodsky College of Business and Human Resources on Wednesday to put on an eye-catching show that allowed people of all different backgrounds to experience Asian cultures ranging from Chinese, Korean, Indian, Mongolian, Nepalese and Japanese.

Wrapped around the perimeter of the Cavalla room, students, faculty and families lined up for a taste of Asian cuisine, jaw-dropping performances and sounds that transported some natives back to their childhoods.

Professor of Chinese language and literature Shunzhu Wang and cybersecurity professor Zhengping "Jay" Luo, who organized and hosted the event as part of the Asian Affinity Group, looked to communities and families to join Rider students, faculty and alumni in participating in the event.

"We wanted to make people feel at home and have a sense of not only solidarity, but also a sense of belonging and at the same time promote Asian culture to the whole community," said Wang.

Programs listing the itinerary for the night were distributed to everyone in the audiences as they made their way into the Cavalla Room.



Maggie Kleiner/The Rider News

QYDS HXPAT performs a Mongolian dance called "Nomadic Time."

Throughout the night, dancers of all ages from the Qing Yang Dance Studio took the stage as they performed both solo and group acts that honored their respective cultures with dance names like "Appreciating Lotus," "Withered Plum Blossom" and "The Enchanting Dai Girl."

Qing Yang, dance instructor at Qing Yang Dance Studio, shared that her studio was invited by Sharon Yang, member of the Asian American Alliance and supervisor of Library Management Systems and Technology. Yang, a former dance student of Qing Yang's, invited the studio to elevate the prestige of Pulse of Asia.

Apart from the studio, Rider clubs and alumni lit up the stage with their own performances that consisted of Korean dances from the Pulse Dance Crew and Korean Pop Culture Club, an Indian dance titled "Kathak" from Rider '23 alum Sanjana Butala and a Nepalese dance from mother-daughter duo Sunita Mainali and Sanvi Mainali.

Sanvi Mainali, daughter of Rider '23 alum Sunita Mainali, said it was her first time performing in front of people and that dancing was something she enjoyed doing alongside her mother.

As the night went on, unique acts like martial arts and peking opera made their way to the stage and were greeted with gasps and applause that echoed throughout the entire room.

Opera performer Xiaoyan Huang left the audience stunned as he gracefully delivered an emotional rendition of "Lan Hua Hua in My Dream," a Shanbei original folk song, hitting notes at the top of his register and belting in a flawless falsetto.

Another mother-daughter duo, Jaeyeon Chung and her daughter Gloria Chang, sang "Arirang," a Korean folk song that translates to "my beloved one," and later played a heart-touching ballad together on the piano. Their performance moved

Korean natives in the audience who missed their loved ones back home.

"I chose this song because I miss my country and my family," said Chung. "I wanted to stay with a Korean song because that experience is really important and she [Chang] wants the next generation to know Korean culture too."

As they welcomed a high audience turnout and were greeted by all of the deans and provosts at a Rider event for the first time ever, Wang and Luo agreed that their expectations for the night were far exceeded.

"We are so lucky that we got the support from so many different departments on campus and with each of the groups and members, we were running this whole event operation like a family business," said Luo. "It's like a big family where we all have our different kinds of talent that we add to in a different place."

Chief Diversity Officer and Director of the Teaching and Learning Center Heeyoung Kim expressed her admiration and pride in the AAG for hosting such a successful event with the help of funding and promotions from the Center for Diversity and Inclusion and Student Affairs.

"I was especially impressed and proud that my colleagues really embraced inclusion by trying to invite everybody and not just focusing on Chinese cultural programs," said Kim.

The Asian American Alliance plans to host Pulse of Asia again in the future, hoping for an annual celebration of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders Heritage Month with just as big of a turnout as this year's.

"We think this is a great opportunity to let the whole local community know that the university isn't just a white dominant institution, as many of them thought, but that we are actually very diversified," said Luo.

Check out *The Rider News' Pulse of Asia* video, edited by Josiah Thomas and filmed by Grace Bertrand.



Maggie Kleiner/The Rider News

QYDS Youth Dance Troupe (A) performs a folk dance called "Mountain Elf."

Preview: SCEO hosts 'Saxbys Sing-Along'

By Jasmine Parrott and Grace Bertrand

GIVING students a “voice,” Saxbys Student CEO and sophomore marketing major Madison Rattiner, will host the first student-run event for Saxbys since its opening on campus in 2021.

“Saxbys Sing-Along” is an open-mic event Saxbys is hosting on April 25 on the Sweigart Hall patio from 5-7 p.m.

The event was created in hopes for students to not only share their talents with peers, but also end the spring semester on a high note.

“One of my biggest goals was to have a big event at some point during the semester,” said Rattiner. “It’s nice to be able to have my vision come to life.”

Rattiner, who accepted her position last fall, planned the event with the help of a marketing leader from Saxbys’ headquarters who aided when it came to making the budget and knowing how to execute it.

“It’s been difficult, but hopefully it will be rewarding,” said Rattiner.

The event will also feature giveaways and raffles, with the most anticipated prize being a care package of Saxbys merchandise given out to the owner of the winning raffle ticket.

As of now, the open-mic spotlights about 10 performers, but Rattiner encourages anyone who is looking to perform, whether solo or in a group, to sign up by using the QR code posted outside Saxbys or to show up to the event and perform on the spot.

Sophomore musical theater major Lilli Doll, who uses they/them pronouns, is one of the performers and looks forward to sharing their passion for the arts to a different kind of audience.

“Now that I’m on a college campus, I’m trying



Photo courtesy of Madison Rattiner

Saxbys 2023-24 staff pose with current SCEO Madison Rattiner, who is wearing a beige flannel.

to find ways to branch out that aren’t just within my major, because I think it’s really easy to get involved with what’s around me,” said Doll.

Having performed on a handful of stages, including R-Factor and more recently, Broncs Go Green’s Earth Day event, Doll hopes to hear new voices at the event.

“I think there’s a lot of pressure when deciding to pursue art as a career and stick to it and have that be your only option, but I genuinely don’t think it’s the only way to do it,” said Doll. “There’s so many incredibly talented people that aren’t pursuing this as a major and I think giving them opportunities to do it is so important.”

Being a singer herself, Rattiner revealed that she

drew a lot of inspiration for the event from R-Factor, Rider’s version of the infamous singing competition “X-Factor.”

“I like the fact that R-Factor has something where people who aren’t musical theater or acting majors can go, perform and feel included,” said Rattiner. “I kind of wanted to do another one of those since it’s only once a year.”

As Rattiner wraps up her term as SCEO, she is excited to leave her mark and have one last hurrah with her team members before she exits the position.

“I’m looking forward to bringing the community together and having fun with Saxbys before the semester ends,” said Rattiner.

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Photos courtesy of Sam Haines

Senior computer science major **Sam Haines** receives the 2024 National Transfer Student Ambassador award at the National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students annual conference.

Senior Spotlight: Sam Haines' involvement at Rider

By **Madison Lewis**

SENIOR computer science major Sam Haines is the epitome of the adage “there is nowhere to go but up.” Proclaiming her start at rock bottom, she detailed her ascent into success as an employee of two Fortune 500 companies and commencement speaker for Rider’s 2024 graduating class.

Haines found her home at the university through the Transfer Student Association, which she founded and was the president of. She also demonstrated her love and knowledge of the campus through her role as a lead tour guide.

Haines dropped out of college in 2017 for financial reasons. Instead of giving up in the face of hardship, she worked toward receiving the Trustee Scholarship in 2021, a full-tuition scholarship at Rider.

The Gail Bierenbaum Women’s Leadership Council, a women-led organization that fosters relationships and develops essential management skills, introduced Haines to dabble in resume writing and marketing herself with confidence. The members of the organization are paired with external mentors that are established in their fields to guide the student. Haines worked for NBC Universal as a principal data engineer.

Haines relayed advice that she received from her mentor, which she has used to encourage her peers that may need motivation.

“Out of the hundreds of rejections you could get, there is that one opportunity that could come up that changes the trajectory of your life, and that’s exactly what happened to me,” said Haines.

In 2022, Haines had her first internship with International Business Machines, a Fortune 500 company, and one of the leaders in GenAI, according to Haines.

She was a part of IBM’s accelerate program in the consulting track, where she was awarded for her work. Haines was offered the internship the following summer as a business transformation consultant.

In October of that year, Haines received a sponsorship from Google to go to the Great Minds in STEM Conference in Pasadena, California, which she found in a connection she made through Rider.

Through the conference, Haines met her manager at Lockheed Martin, who offered a part-time software engineering aide senior while finishing school.



Photos courtesy of Sam Haines

Sam Haines and other tour guides take a group photo.

Following that, Haines went back to IBM for a full-time job.

Despite her extensive lists of achievements, awards, leadership roles and professional experiences, Haines experienced adversities when presenting herself the way she wanted to be seen. She wanted to be able to mentor people, especially through the GBWLC, to aid them in creating a foundation that leads to success.

“Going from a college dropout, no money, no car, I had emotional family support, but financially, it wasn’t there, to now being the commencement speaker ... and working with these Fortune 500 companies,” said Haines.

Haines shared her story of triumph through keynote speaking as a National Transfer Student Ambassador, where she made suggestions to help industry professionals foster relationships with students and help them.

She applied for an engineering leadership development program, a three-year rotational program that could pay for her graduate school, where she would like to study artificial intelligence or something within the data space.

Haines revealed that a potential theme of her commencement speech is “creating light in the darkest situations.”

“Moving forward, after you’ve overcome all these things as a student. ... One of the things I note is to continue to shine your light through the darkness of life. I want them to find ways to continue to grow themselves and to make sure the growth does not stop [at graduation] ... they can do that in a way that makes our world a better place.”

Junior cybersecurity major Angelina Messina, the

incoming president for the TSA, advocated for Haines and her role as commencement speaker.

“Haines] really can get in the mind of every senior and ... express how everybody’s feeling in that moment,” said Messina.

Haines urged the hypothetical audience to introduce themselves, to start a conversation and ask questions, even when the idea of rejection and uncertainty becomes overwhelming.

“[Maintain] curiosity and eagerness to learn, continue to ask questions and build confidence, and just don’t be afraid to go for it because if you don’t, you never know what you may have missed,” said Haines.

Haines implored the graduating class to celebrate the accomplishment of moving forward and to tell themselves, “Just go for it. Do it. It doesn’t matter. I don’t care if you’re anxious. Just ‘pop off’ and go for it.”

‘Senior Spotlight’ is a series created by The Rider News to celebrate upstanding seniors on Rider campus prior to their graduation.



Photos courtesy of Sam Haines

Sam Haines (left) stands with **Polly Dell’Omo** (right) when receiving the Bernice Sussman award for women in leadership.

Martinez reflects on time with The Rider News

WHEN I first began contributing to The Rider News four years ago as an unpaid photographer and writer, I remember looking at the job of executive editor in awe. It felt like an unattainable dream, something that I never could accomplish during my time at Rider. I looked up to my executive editor as a leader, trailblazer in the Rider community and someone I wanted to be during my journalistic career. I remember thinking to myself: "That's incredible. But not me, of course."

When I landed the job as features and entertainment editor my sophomore year, it felt unreal. Now, I had a place in the newsroom and a desk I could call my own. I had an incredible co-editor who I immediately clicked with, and I felt so lucky every single Monday and Tuesday we'd work alongside all of the other editors and copy editors.

"I found my people," I thought.

Then, a pinnacle point in my life toward the end of my sophomore year spring semester put me on a split path. Feature and entertainment writing wasn't my style – but I thought journalism was just a bust and not what I wanted to do. I told myself that I was going to run for managing editor, and if I got it, it was my sign to continue journalism.

I remember winning managing editor like it was this morning. The shaky hands, the jumping and crying with joy as soon as I walked out of the newsroom after finding out. I felt like I had just won the election of a lifetime, and maybe I did have a chance at being a journalist. I knew that everyone that chose me took a risk, and I wasn't the safe choice. I knew I had to prove myself, and I took the responsibility incredibly seriously.

I remember winning executive editor a year later. I cried all the way home. I was going to run the newsroom with every single fiber of my being.

Now, here I am, leaving my post as executive editor to someone who I know will be amazing. I'm leaving a newsroom that I have watched grow. A newsroom that I have found a home in, just as those who came before me have done for generations. Some of the students in that newsroom in Longstreet House I have seen as worried freshmen turning in their first story, to section editors, and executive and managing editors. All of them deserve this. It's in safe hands, and I know they will continue the legacy of this campus newspaper so that journalism students can take over afterward.

This past year, this newspaper has been my everything. I have nurtured it, cared for it, given so much of my time and resources to it – and I wouldn't change it for the world.

To the students reading, I want to thank you for letting me tell your stories the past four years. Some of you have told me the hardest points in your life, times where you struggled. Some of you have also told me the best points in your life. I am so incredibly grateful for all of those conversations, including the in-betweeners who may have just been my last-minute source.

To the faculty, staff and administration reading this, thank you for allowing me to practice being a journalist, and for dealing with me when I needed a quote from you the night before we went to print. Now, you no longer will have to read my constant follow-up emails if you didn't answer me for a day. Some of you have become my mentors, people I look up to. I extend my deepest gratitude for everything you've done for me.

And for my newsroom, I will miss you. I will miss the unvacuumed floors, the painted bricks of those that came before us. The squeaky chairs and Cranberry's runs. I will miss every single thing.

As for me, it's time to move on. I will never forget this place, but The Rider News has done what it does best and will do for many years to come: provide a safe space for student-journalists to learn, in this case, be myself. I'm so happy I didn't give up being a journalist. I'm so happy that I get to continue doing the thing I love the most, something I thought I wasn't made for just two years ago. But I wouldn't have been able to without my sources, my friends. This experience has changed my life for the better, and I will never, ever forget what The Rider News has taught me.

I am leaving not only a better journalist, but a better person.

Signing off,



Amethyst Martinez
senior journalism major



Maggie Kleiner/The Rider News

Outgoing executive editor **Amethyst Martinez** expressed gratitude for years with The Rider News.

THE Rider News

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THEATER REVIEW

Energetic 'Anything Goes' wows audience

A SHOW full of friendship, funny surprises and feel-good moments, “Anything Goes,” directed and choreographed by Robin Lewis, captivated audiences this weekend at Rider. As I settled into the Yvonne Theater on April 20 and the lights dimmed, I was slowly transported back in time to 1934 as energetic tap-dancing sailors made their way on the stage to set the scene. The second the curtains opened, I was brought aboard the S.S. American by the dazzling set and lighting design. I knew I was in for a treat.

Running April 19 to 21, Rider’s final mainstage musical theater production of the semester, “Anything Goes” follows the story of a host of characters: debutante Hope Harcourt, played by senior musical theater major Rylee Carpenter, love-struck stowaway Billy Crocker, played by senior musical theater major Trevor Shingler, nightclub singer Reno Sweeney, played by senior musical theater major Abby Bohn, and Lord Evelyn Oakleigh, played by senior musical theater major Ricky Cardenas. While the story follows a few central characters, it truly is an ensemble show with the entire cast working together to bring fun dynamics and an energetic atmosphere to the stage.

Silly scenes abound in this production. One of my favorites occurred in Act 1, when gangster Moonface Martin, played by junior musical theater major Aidan Kelly, sneakily swipes the glasses of broker Elisha Whitney, played by senior musical theater major Evan Blackwell, leaving the character struggling to see throughout the performance. This particular scene was extremely well-timed and had me in stitches laughing.

Freshman environmental science major Emily Ivanauskas, who uses she/they pronouns, expressed that her favorite number was “It’s De-Lovely,” stating that Carpenter and Shingler “were great together.”

One of my favorite numbers was as Act 1 came to a close with a rousing tap dance number that had the audience, myself included, practically dancing along in their seats. I was extremely impressed with the entire cast’s high energy maintained throughout the entirety of this physically demanding number. The act came to an end with an impressive final perfect harmony of the titular phrase “Anything Goes,” leaving the audience cheering with praise and excited for the next act as they processed out of the theater to the concession stands.

Rider’s production kept the energy up into Act 2, giving the audience a tightly choreographed dance number of “Blow, Gabriel, Blow.” During this number, Bohn’s vocals stunned the audience, often prompting mid-song applause and cheering from viewers.

I would be remiss if I didn’t mention the beautiful live musical accompaniment, directed by Louis F. Goldberg, that made sweet songs such as “Easy to Love” sound even sweeter and kept livelier songs such as “Friendship” full of life. The orchestra did a beautiful job of bringing life into classic show tunes and kept me humming the tunes long after the final bows concluded.

Rider’s recent production of “Anything Goes” was a wonderful showcase of talent that transported the audience to a toe-tapping, horn-blowing good time.

*Libby D’Orvilliers
sophomore psychology major*



Peter G. Borg/Rider University

Ellis Foreman (left) and Jaden Foreman (right) perform a dynamic tap sequence.



Peter G. Borg/Rider University

Trevor Shingler is surrounded in toast by cast members during a musical number.

ALBUM REVIEW

Taylor Swift's new album lacks uniqueness

TAYLOR Swift published a new batch of pages from her private diary in the form of her newest album, “The Tortured Poets Department,” which she released on April 19. Riding the wave of the massively successful Eras Tour, Swift’s newest record saw more anticipation than any of her previous albums. Or at least, it was supposed to.

From the day she announced the album in February, the hype train always seemed to be low on steam. Whether that could be attributed to the cautious optimism resulting from her lackluster previous album “Midnights,” the embarrassing album title or the equally embarrassing song titles, including “But Daddy I Love Him” and “Down Bad,” is up for debate. Critical Swift fans entered her newest era with trepidation.

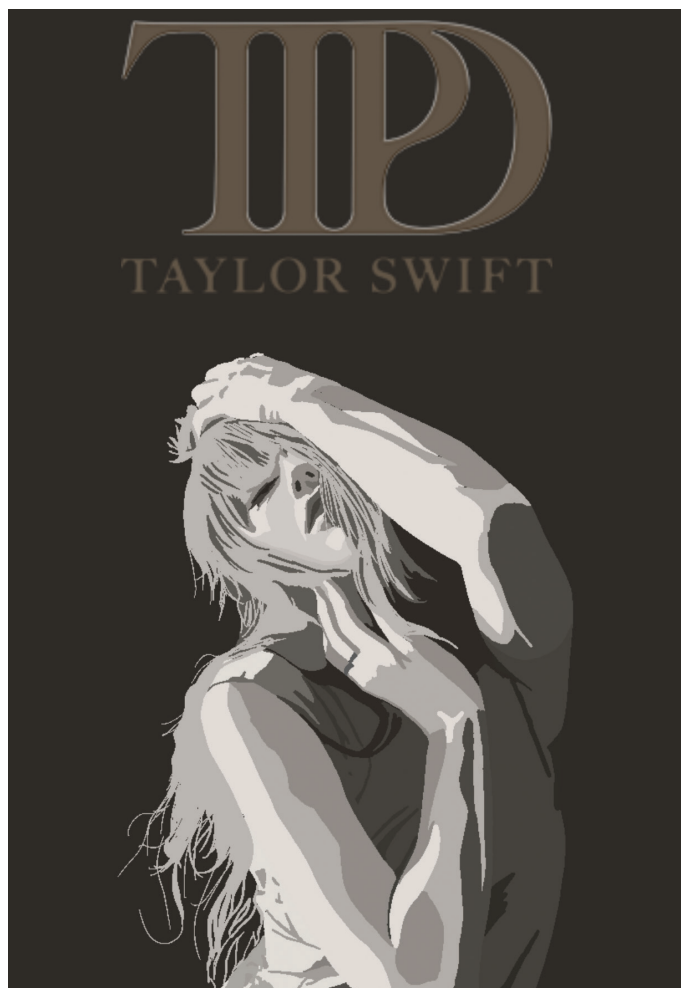
When the clock struck midnight, fans flocked to streaming services to listen to Swift’s latest work and breathed a collective sigh of relief: the album was not entirely terrible. However, it’s not spectacular either. It feels like it just exists.

The world would not lose anything if “The Tortured Poets Department” were not to exist; we gain nothing from its release. The songs dance between one genre and another while invoking little emotion and generating minimal thought.

From the album’s opener “Fortnight,” a Post Malone collaboration, the album is devoid of identity. The quiet, lifeless song would probably be better without Malone’s voice. Swift’s distinct songwriting style that garnered her unthinkable levels of success is seemingly absent in an attempt to ape Lana Del Rey to an uncanny degree.

Swift has never necessarily been a happy artist in terms of lyrics, yet when revisiting some of her classic albums like “Speak Now” and “1989,” Swift’s special talent is clearly an ability to make misery fun. Fan favorites, such as “Out of the Woods,” “The Story of Us” and even her most recent hit “Cruel Summer,” are all lyrically negative. However, each one is loud and energetic, commanding a stadium of 70,000 people to sing and dance with enough energy to move mountains.

Where “The Tortured Poets Department” falls flattest is that the songs are simply not fun. Swift’s typical high energy, charisma-oozing vocal performances are largely gone in favor of songs that sound ready-made for department stores. These quiet songs never get louder and the misery never gets a release.



Rashe Mishra/The Rider News

Taylor Swift's album "The Tortured Poets Department" falls flat with fans.

There are a few songs that sound like they were supposed to have energy. “I Can Do It With a Broken Heart” feels like the audio equivalent of “Weekend at Bernie’s.” Off-sounding instrumental and cutting-edge lyrics from a true poet such as “I’m so depressed, I act like it’s my birthday every day,” help turn this song into one of Swift’s worst.

Other low points include the ugly Florence and the Machine collaboration “Florida!!!” and the absolutely hollow four minutes of “Down Bad.”

The album does have some highlights. The still questionably-named “But Daddy I Love Him” is fantastic. Every aforementioned complaint goes to the wayside with this song, whose energy and emotion, lyrics and country-tinged instrumentation are done perfectly. Swift factors humor, sorrow, sarcasm, anger and pure joy into just under six minutes, all while her vocals soar over the music.

The majority of the album exists between these two extremes. Some songs are pleasant to listen to, others not as much, but most of them make me forget I’m listening to music at all. In what I can only imagine was a calculated attempt from a marketing team to appeal to as many people as possible, Swift created an album that only appeals to the subconscious. Most of these songs are not worth discussion because they provide nothing to discuss.

There is no unique sound to “The Tortured Poets Department.” There is no unique anything. As someone who got swept into “Swiftmania” over the past year and became a huge Swift fan myself, this album does nothing for me. I wouldn’t say I am disappointed because that would mean this album evoked an emotional response.

Taylor Swift is too big to fail, which also means she is apparently too big to make appealing music anymore or try new things. If Swift wasn’t already a product to be bought and sold, she certainly is now. Fans of consumerism will find great joy in “The Tortured Poets Department,” but fans of music will not.

*Elijah Newlin
junior marketing major*

Senior forward **Mervin James** has had quite the journey before he made his way to Rider.

Graphic by Josiah Thomas/The Rider News

MEN'S BASKETBALL

'Midrange Jesus': James' journey to Rider

By **Benjamin Shinault**

St. Thomas, a territory within the U.S. Virgin Islands located in the Caribbean, is pleasurable to the eyes with its sandy beaches, crystal blue waters and squawking seagulls. Within the shores is the hometown of a Rider men's basketball great, senior forward Mervin James.

"We had basketball courts on the waterfront, we had a ton of other sports. We had baseball, people played cricket, soccer, volleyball; we really played every sport down there," James said.

For middle school, James packed his things and headed to the United States. When the plane tires touched down on the hot asphalt of Georgia, James' basketball career took flight.

'I couldn't even understand him'

"I moved to Georgia when I was 10 ... the transition wasn't bad," James said.

This new home is where he would meet his life-long friend, teammate and true brother, Dwight Murray Jr, a former Rider Bronc.

Within his time at Rider, Murray was spectacular, landing on two All-MAAC teams and being 27th on the all-time scoring list. Murray was also known for his leadership skills on and off the court, something that made James gravitate towards him.

"DJ [Murray] is a really big piece in my life,"

James said. "DJ's dad was a coach and with him, that was my first year playing organized basketball."

Murray said that when he first met James in middle school, he was quiet, something Bronc fans would not expect considering his persona on the court.

"When I first met him, he really wasn't talking as much and honestly, I couldn't even understand him, but we really started to get close around eighth grade," Murray said.

James and Murray went on to play Amateur Athletic Union basketball with Murray's father. From there, the chemistry between them only got stronger.

"In high school, we got even better. Whenever I was in the gym, Merv would be in the gym," Murray said.

James and Murray clicked as teammates in high school. James went on to average a double-double in high school with 19 points and 13 rebounds, and Murray was named an all-state and all-conference guard.

In high school, James and Murray played against future NBA stars like Jaylen Brown, Ben Simmons and RJ Barrett. They would also join forces with NBA players Collin Sexton and Jared Harper.

Under the two, they led the Falcons to a 22-3 record, the best in school history and during the season, they had a 21-game winning streak.

"We were supposed to win the championship, but long story short, I blew it for us," James said.

A new chapter

After high school, the pair went their separate ways for the first time since middle school. Murray committed to Incarnate Word, nearly 1,000 miles away from his home in Georgia, and James went to North Alabama.

At North Alabama, James didn't waste any time getting onto the score sheet. In his freshman season for the Lions, James was a starter who averaged nearly 10 points and 4.8 rebounds a game, and shot just under 50% from the field. With those averages as a true freshman, James was selected for the all-freshman team.

The very next season, James improved even more, with averages of 14 points and 7.2 rebounds on 46%

efficiency, which were good enough to put him on the All-Atlantic Sun Conference second team.

'Midrange Jesus'

After that season, James packed his bags once again and moved to New Jersey to play for Rider.

"The transition was really all on me, I came here knowing how to play already," James said. "To come here and learn the new system ... it wasn't something I was doing already, so it took me some time to understand it."

The system turned out to be the least of James' worries, as he had a clean transition on the floor when he debuted for the Broncs. In his first year wearing cranberry and white, "midrange Jesus," as Murray called James, averaged 11.1 points and five rebounds on 46% shooting.

Similarly to his days at North Alabama, James only got better as time went along. This past season was easily James' best year. This season alone, James was a finalist for the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference player of the year, was the MAAC player of the week three times and totaled over 20 points 16 times.

What's next

When a college athlete finally puts the seal on their college career, they always have to think about the next step in their journey. James plans to enter the NBA Draft and try his luck with the Summer League and individual workouts. If that doesn't work out for James, he hopes to once again follow Murray and take his talents overseas.

"His game developed well in college. He can dribble way better than I ever could ... he's got a pro game now, there is no reason why he shouldn't be in the league," Murray said.

Although this season was successful for James, it was less fruitful for the Broncs, as they were eliminated for the second time in three years, both by the Peacocks of Saint Peter's in the quarterfinal round of the MAAC tournament.

But with such a tough exit to his Rider career, James is happy with what Rider has given him.

"For the most part, everything went smoothly here," James said.



Josiah Thomas/The Rider News

Senior forward **Mervin James** led Rider men's basketball in scoring last season.

2023 PLAYER OF THE YEAR

TAYLOR LANGAN

13.8 PPG

8.1 RPG

399 POINTS

ALL-MAAC SECOND TEAM



Graduate student guard **Taylor Langan** made herself known on the floor in her first and only season at Rider, leading her team in scoring.

Graphic by Destiny Pagan/The Rider News

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

One-year wonder makes lasting impact

By **Kadie Digiuseppe**

AFTER only one season with Rider women's basketball, Taylor Langan, a 5-foot-10-inch graduate student guard, was able to capture the hearts of fans. Scoring 399 points for the Broncs this season, Langan scored her season-high 31 points in a single game at the end of 2023 at Lehigh which led to her being named the MAAC player of the week. "I look back at that game and I can't believe that that happened," Langan said.

When she was asked who her biggest inspirations are, Langan responded with the people that are the closest to her: her parents, Andrea and Dave as well as her older siblings, Bryan and Megan.

"They are definitely my number one reasoning for why I play," she said. "I look up to her a lot and I look up to my brother."

Before Rider

Langan realized at a young age that out of all her sports, she gravitated the most toward basketball. When her parents made her decide between basketball and soccer during her junior year of high school at Jefferson Township, Langan said the decision was easy.

"Growing up, it's kind of been easy but hard. I always knew I wanted to play basketball but my parents were like 'Let's stay busy,' but I was just always around basketball," she said.

Langan admitted that while growing up, she constantly followed in her siblings' footsteps and even played with her sister's fourth grade team while only being in second grade.

"I kind of always played up which was really cool to play with my older sister but the competition was more intense," she said.

Langan seemed to easily live up to her sibling's legacy during high school, winning numerous awards in three different sports.

After graduating with her degree from Colgate University in 2022, where she played only two out of four seasons due to injury, Langan followed her position coach from Colgate to Millersville University and played there for a year.

In just a single season at Millersville, Langan led the PSAC in steals, led the team in points per game,

as well as being named All-PSAC east first team, PSAC defensive athlete of the week and a PSAC athlete of the week.

"[My coach] has been a mentor for me," said Langan. "She's someone I talk to every single month since my sophomore year to graduating. Every year we talked and during my injury, she was there for me through it all."

One thing that Langan does not take lightly is her teammates and relationship with them.

"I really think that these awards that I've been winning this year and things that I have been recognized for this year come from them. Without them, I wouldn't be in the position to do what I do," said Langan.

When asked how the adjustment to a new team and a new coach was, Langan said it was easy.

"I love my team," she said. "There could be a lot of egos that come into this but honestly, our team is not selfish at all. We really care about one another," she added.

Langan also gives a lot of credit to her teammates and coaches for her successes as well as giving her the capability to be a leader on the team.

"They made me a leader on this team," said Langan. "I was really thankful for that role because it just allowed me to be myself."

Langan also had great things to say about her coaches adding that she is very thankful for everyone that helped her this season.

"I think the coaching staff, when they recruited me, they only knew I was going to be here for one year so coming in for one year kind of just showed that they were betting on me and they believed in me," she said.

'She's a terrific young woman'

Not only that, Head Coach Lynn Milligan believes that Langan is a good person all around.

"She has the right mentality and I'm proud of how she represents Rider women's basketball for this year," said Milligan.

Since this was Langan's first year as a Bronc, she said that being a leader for this team has taught her a lot. Milligan congratulated Langan as one of the main leaders of the team for this season.

"Taylor is one of those natural born leaders. She's comfortable and it's not forced for her. She can lead the team but also hold people accountable. She brings out the best in the team," Milligan added.

Langan said the game against Boston and at Lehigh were two of her favorite moments.

In the game against Boston, Langan led the team in scoring with 18 points and eight rebounds. In the game at Lehigh, not only did Langan have her Rider season-high 31 points, she also led the team with 16 rebounds and contributed both a block and a steal. "I just knew there was a big missed match for me and my team gave me the ball a lot," she said.

Langan said the game against Lehigh was "going to be a good day," after making her first shot off an off-balance step-back with only a couple seconds left.

She said being awarded All-MAAC second team was a great way to leave college. "I was really excited and I think it was one of the best things to happen was to leave college on such a high note. Also to get recognized for that made me feel like, 'Okay, I can do this,' and I made the right decision by coming here," she added.

Langan has recently signed with an agency to play pro-basketball in Europe.

Langan said that leaving college basketball will be a new experience for her but she is excited to see what the pros have in store for her.



Graduate student guard **Taylor Langan** left her mark in just one season.

Josiah Thomas/The Rider News

Sports

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The Rider News 2023-24 men's and women's player of the year



Eric Buckwalter/The Rider News

Mervin James

[Men's Player of the Year]



Taylor Langan

[Women's Player of the Year]

By Benjamin Shinault

RIDER men's basketball senior forward Mervin James will close out his short yet electric Broncs career as player of the year, decided by polls on The Rider News social media and newspaper.

James, who transferred to Rider from North Alabama before the 2021-22 season, made an immediate impact when he stepped on the hardwood in the Alumni Gym. In his junior season with the Broncs, James averaged 11 points per game and five rebounds.

In his next two seasons, James only continued to grow into his athletic build, scoring averages of 12.9 points per game in his senior season and then closing out his Rider career with about 18.9 points per game in his redshirt senior season.

This past season for James was the best of his collegiate career and it was one of the best single seasons that Broncs fans have seen for quite some time. James recorded over 20 points 16 times in the 2023-24 season and was named MAAC player of the week three times.

Last season, James was named to the All-Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference second team. In the 2023-24 season, James was named to the All-MAAC first team and the National Association of Basketball Coaches all-district first team. James was a second-teamer for the All-Met team and a finalist for MAAC player of the year.

"I work super hard for everything I have and want, so some of these rewards aren't a surprise to me," James said.

James was one of the fiercest players in the MAAC during the 2023-24 season, leading in scoring, 10th in rebounding and blocks, eighth in field goal percentage and third in free throw shooting percentage.

"This year, I ended up leaving with something that will last for the rest of my life: a brotherhood. I learned how to lead my first team in the process of all this, and it showed me people look up to me, so I should never give up," James said.

In the final game of the 2023-24 season, which ended up being James' last game of his Rider career, James scored 17 of the Broncs' 48 total points in the quarterfinal round against the Saint Peter's Peacocks in the MAAC tournament.

Although this past season has come to an end and James' career at Rider came to a close, his basketball career as a whole might not be done.

"I plan on testing the waters for the NBA or the G-League," James said. "I want to try to exhaust all my possible options towards getting a chance to go to the league."

By Kadie DiGiuseppe

AFTER her first season as a Bronc, graduate student guard Taylor Langan was voted The Rider News' 2023-24 women's player of the year for her efforts as a key part of Rider women's basketball. The award was decided via a poll sent by the newspaper and social media.

Langan had a remarkable season. She scored her 1,000th career point, she was named All-MAAC second team and her buzzer-beating shot in a midseason matchup against Iona made SportsCenter's Top 10 Plays of the week.

Langan said that finding out she had been featured on SportsCenter "was the craziest thing ever."

A native of New Jersey's Lake Hopatcong, Langan grew up playing soccer, basketball and running track at Jefferson High School. During her senior year, Langan was named New Jersey Morris County player of the year, the New Jersey Herald's co-player of the year and New Jersey Mugs Media player of the year.

Before coming to Rider, Langan attended Colgate University for four years but only played two basketball seasons due to an injury. In the 2019-20 season, she played 30 games off the bench. In the 2021-22 season, Langan played nine games and started six.

After her four years with the Raiders, Langan played one season at Millersville University, where she led the league in steals, led the team in scoring points per game and was also named All-PSAC east first team, PSAC defensive athlete of the week as well as PSAC athlete of the week.

Coming into a completely new conference, Langan explained that the adjustment took a lot of scouting. Rider women's basketball Head Coach Lynn Milligan praised Langan for adjusting so well to a new team and coaches.

"She came in with the right mentality. Taylor had goals and desires for us and she did that pretty much perfectly," Milligan added. "It meant a lot that she was able to lead, be successful and be all-in with us."

Langan saw the moment she made All-MAAC second team as bittersweet, as she wasn't able to carry the team to victory in the end.

She also noted that she was surprised when she received the call from Milligan. However, Langan said, "It was definitely a personal goal of mine."

She also recalled the joy of finding out that she had scored 1,000 career points, but her favorite moment was scoring the game-winning shot against Iona in the middle of the season.