



Title IX director departs, Rider announces interim

By Amethyst Martinez

RIDER has faced serious grievances with the university's Title IX office: a revolving door of directors, with concerns of cases falling through the cracks as at least four workers have been placed in the position over the past year.

Pauline Lloyd is the latest to leave the university, departing right before Thanksgiving break after holding the director position for three months. Her departure was announced on Nov. 17, eight days after The Rider News published an article detailing serious student concerns regarding the handling of multiple cases from the Title IX office and reports that have been open for over a year.

According to an email sent university-wide by Rider President Gregory Dell'Omo on Nov. 17, a new interim director of Title IX and Equal Opportunity Compliance, attorney Christine M. Pickel, has been hired until someone can permanently fill the position.

Barbara Lawrence, Title IX coordinator, vice president for diversity, equity, and inclusion and chief diversity officer, said she could not comment on Lloyd's abrupt departure from the university, but said that the office is making changes to better assist students with their cases. In The Rider News article outlining student concerns with the office that was released on Nov. 9, among the biggest issues were lack of communication and the longevity of unresolved reports, which Lawrence specified as something they plan on fixing.

"The main priority [is] to make sure that we are connecting with as many folks who've been involved in cases," said Lawrence. "There are a few ... lingering cases that just needed some [closure] with just making sure that students involved were still wanting to move forward in the way that they wanted to, or because we had a few cases where students went back and forth. So that's going to be our main priority, is to make sure that we are focusing on cases that are still open technically."

Lawrence also said that she met with Student Government Association (SGA) President Andrew Bernstein recently to speak about student concerns.

"He shared some of the things that students mentioned about the Title IX process and the resolution of cases, and one of the things that he and I agreed on is there is an opportunity now for us to try to communicate with students a little more frequently as to what's happening," Lawrence said.

Bernstein called it a "very productive meeting."

"Not only did I try to [relay] the concerns we've been hearing from students to her," Bernstein said. "But also I wanted to emphasize the need to implement some actual changes. ... My goal was to understand some of the reasons as to why we're hearing complaints from students and to begin brainstorming how to actually solve these issues. Student safety and well-being is the most important part of a college community so it's imperative that we get this right."

In an SGA Senate meeting held on Nov. 17,

the day of Lloyd's departure announcement, a student voiced her concern with this constant "revolving door" of directors, and the worry that cases are slipping through the cracks due to this constant change of personnel within the office.

Lloyd's tenure & departure

Lloyd had only served as director of the office for three months, her arrival outlined in a student-wide email sent on Sept. 7, the first day of the fall semester. The email sent out by Lawrence stated that Lloyd brought previous experience as a senior associate sexual harassment/assault response and equal opportunity leader with the U.S. Army, along with also working as a planning associate of educational programs with the department of military and veteran affairs. It also said that she recently worked as an adjunct professor at the university and jumped into her new role as director on Sept. 1.

Since then, Lloyd had remained tight-lipped about her role at the university, declining multiple interview requests with The Rider News.

Lloyd's departure was abrupt, with Kristine Brown, Rider's associate vice president for university marketing and communications confirming that Lloyd left the university on Nov. 16, the day before Dell'Omo's email announcing the new interim director. Brown also said that the university cannot comment on personnel matters.

In Dell'Omo's email, he announced that Pickel will serve as the interim director of Title IX and Equal Opportunity Compliance and has a wide array of experience with Title IX related issues.

"Pickel has over fifteen years of experience conducting investigations, serving as a Title IX hearing officer, and advising on issues of regulatory compliance," said Dell'Omo. "She has worked with other institutions of higher education in a similar interim capacity and regularly consults with colleges and universities regarding Title IX compliance and best practices."

Lawrence said that Pickel is going to assist with configuring the office's new way of handling cases and helping students.

"She's going to come in and really help us move forward with the expansion and how we certainly address a few cases that are still lingering, but moving forward with any new cases with students that will be able to address them in a way that is better for students, and when I say better, I mean, where we have fewer challenges and complaints," said Lawrence. "Hopefully with [Pickel] here, we can be able to not only respond quicker, but resolve cases in a way that doesn't take as long as it does."

Earlier this month, Lawrence told The Rider News that the office has received fewer than five reports thus far this semester.

Pickel will have an on-campus office that was once Lloyd's, and also be available remotely outside of her campus hours as needed. Pickel could not be reached for comment.



Adrienne Unfreed/The Rider News

The search for a replacement

Now, Rider has begun the search for someone new to fill the shoes of the director role.

In Dell'Omo's email, he stated that the search will begin immediately.

Lawrence said that the office is looking for, "someone who's able to work with students, staff and faculty to coordinate a way that kind of speaks to cohesiveness."

One concern that Lawrence stated in the Nov. 9 article is the office's issue of understaffing, which has been a university-wide problem. Lawrence said that in the long term, the office wants to add other positions.

"I would say that's a long term goal," said Lawrence. "But right now, I don't want to say that we can afford to do that at this moment."

Brown said, "The current plan is to hire a full-time director for the office. Once that individual is on board, they will assess the office needs moving forward."

In addition, Lawrence said the office is now working on addressing student concerns.

"I'm just looking forward to how we can be ... more supportive to students," said Lawrence. "There's a perception out there that we haven't been that supportive over the years."

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'WE'VE GOT TO BE BETTER'

Women's basketball went 1-1 in a turbulent trip to Dublin.



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Student journalists provide insight of campus life to the Rider community.

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Cranberry Court winners discuss their passion for Rider.



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SECURITY BRIEFS

BY SHAUN CHORNOBROFF

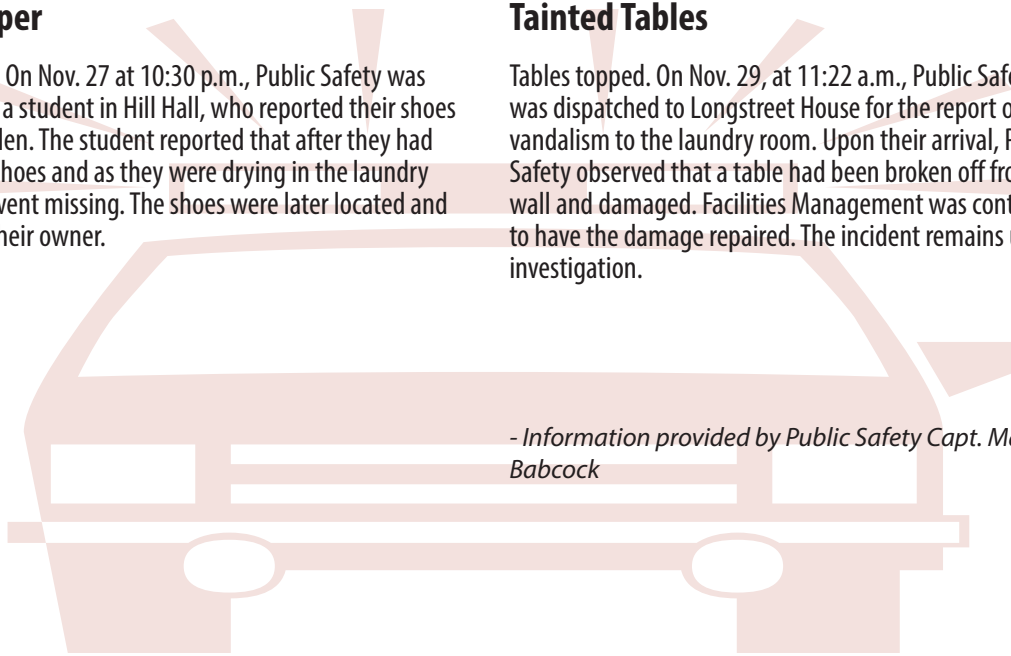
Shoe Swiper

Stolen shoes. On Nov. 27 at 10:30 p.m., Public Safety was contacted by a student in Hill Hall, who reported their shoes had been stolen. The student reported that after they had cleaned the shoes and as they were drying in the laundry room, they went missing. The shoes were later located and returned to their owner.

Tainted Tables

Tables topped. On Nov. 29, at 11:22 a.m., Public Safety was dispatched to Longstreet House for the report of vandalism to the laundry room. Upon their arrival, Public Safety observed that a table had been broken off from the wall and damaged. Facilities Management was contacted to have the damage repaired. The incident remains under investigation.

- Information provided by Public Safety Capt. Matthew Babcock



CORRECTION

The Rider News identified two female subjects of a previous story as freshmen. The students were a sophomore and a junior. The sophomore was the student interviewed for the story. The Rider News regrets this error.

University hoping to amend fraternity transfer credit policy

By Shaun Chornobroff

FROM the brightly painted walkways leading up to sorority houses complimented by big Greek letters, to the jerseys and the consistent fundraisers held, Greek life is a known part of the student experience at Rider.

For transfer students who long to identify as a member of Greek life, being forced to wait a semester to join a fraternity or sorority is a reality, due to a more than decade-old rule stemming from the aftermath of a campus tragedy.

The clause requiring any Rider student to have 12 credits with the university before entering Greek life was implemented as part of a non-monetary settlement with the family of Gary DeVercelly Jr., an 18-year-old member of the Phi Kappa Tau fraternity, who died of alcohol poisoning in consequence of a hazing ritual in 2007.

As a result of a cultural overhaul within Greek life and a university that looks much different than it did at the time of his death, the rule may be on its way to an amendment for transfer students, allowing them to become members of Greek life immediately.

"I think there's an opportunity for us to revisit the policy and also consider, potentially, amendments of the policy," said Kadi Diallo, Rider's assistant director of student involvement and fraternity and sorority life. "... I do think given the changing campus climate and the best practices of fraternities and sorority life, I do think this is something that we should consider changing."

'It's a lot of work for just one year.'

Chris Carney came to Rider excited to join a fraternity, something he says he's always wanted to be a part of one.

"I just liked the whole social aspect, getting to know the brothers and then branching out [with] those friends who last a lifetime," said Carney, a junior history major who is in his first semester at Rider after transferring from Brookdale Community College.

Carney said he likes "the overall aspect of being in a frat," and has looked forward to rushing a Greek organization for years.

Despite receiving encouragement that he may be able to join, Carney was told he had to wait before rushing Sigma Phi Epsilon; a saddening revelation for someone who was openly excited to be a member of Greek life.

Carney is still planning on rushing next semester, but said he does feel like he's missed out on opportunities due to this rule barring him from joining sooner.

"I feel like I'm going to be a frat member for just my senior year," Carney said. "It's a lot of



Photo courtesy of Julie DeVercelly

In light of **Gary DeVercelly**, the 18-year-old who lost his life to a hazing incident on campus, Greek life policies were put into place prevent this situation from happening again on Rider's campus.

work for just one year."

Carney's story is not unique at Rider, a school that admits between 200-300 transfer students each year, making up nearly a quarter of the new student body, according to Rider Associate Vice President for University Marketing and Communications Kristine Brown.

In the aftermath of the pandemic many college students are trying to find a new sense of normalcy. As a result, Diallo said she's seen a rise in transfer students wanting to join fraternities and sororities.

"We are finding that a lot more transfer students are interested in joining this semester in particular," Diallo said. "They're eager to be involved and just to find their people and find their home on this campus."

Changed policy

When the policy was instituted, Rider was a different school, one that had a larger reputation for partying and was in a state of re-evaluation and cultural shock following DeVercelly's death.

In the aftermath of the incident, Rider made a council to look at issues within the school's culture and what needed to change.

"When we started negotiating with the family, what we proposed was this set of recommendations that we had already begun implementing," said Debbie Stasolla, Rider's vice president for strategic initiatives and planning and secretary to the board, who co-chaired the council.

Among the recommendations: the policy ensuring all students earn 12 Rider credits before joining Greek life.

Over the past decade-and-a-half, Rider has maintained contact with the DeVercelly family, working cohesively to ensure an event like what happened to Gary DeVercelly Jr. is prevented from occurring again.

"Before Gary died, Rider had a much larger Greek life presence that was known for their parties and was out of control," Julie and Gary DeVercelly Sr., the parents of the deceased said in an email to The Rider News. "After Gary's death, Rider made many lasting positive changes to address and transform the hazing culture, especially with Greek life."

Despite the changes, the DeVercelly's, who were told of the potential removal of the transfer policy in March of 2021, still do not believe the potential policy change is positive for the university.

The DeVercelly's will have to consent to the 12-credit policy being overturned since it's part of a legal settlement, which is something Stasolla is optimistic of given her personal conversations with the family.

Engaged Learning challenges

Among the many adjustments facing incoming transfer students at the school is Rider's engaged learning program, requiring students to accrue a certain number of points in order to graduate through being involved at the university, doing volunteer work and participating in internships among other avenues.

For transfer students, the requirements can be even more of a burden.

"I know it's probably hard as a transfer student coming in with only two years to make those [three] points," said Chloe Verderber, a senior majoring in elementary education and President of Rider's chapter of Alpha Xi Delta.

For upperclassman transfer students who may want to earn points through being a leader in a Greek organization, the transfer policy makes it almost an impossibility if you enter Rider as an upperclassman.

However, changing the policy could relieve these concerns.

"This would help them meet their engaged learning requirements a lot sooner, if they were able to join," said Diallo. "The academic benefits of being able to join through the engaged learning requirement and also the overall benefit of getting acclimated to the campus community a lot sooner, I think it's something we should take into consideration."



Bridget Hoyt/ The Rider News

A photo of the Princeton campus that used to be home to Westminster Choir College.

Requiem or rebirth: the Westminster saga

By Kaitlyn McCormick

PINK dogwood trees blossomed in the spring, framing robust windows from which beautiful music would once flow out into the quad of Westminster Choir College (WCC) and into the surrounding Princeton area. Now, 101 Walnut Lane sits shackled in silence.

Since initial moves by Rider President Gregory Dell’Omo’s administration to sell the college and campus in 2017, the past five years have been shrouded in concern, confusion and a bevy of unanswered questions from WCC students, faculty and supporters as some cling to the hope of reverting to a pre-Dell’Omo era and others look to the future to rebuild.

“To hear it quiet like this is like standing in a tomb,” said composition and music theory professor Joel Phillips as he walked the abandoned campus quad on a recent fall day. According to Phillips, the location is so meaningful that the campus founders and even some alumni have had their ashes scattered over the greenery, vibrant in the late afternoon sun.

Phillips is just one of the many professors worried about the future of WCC. After Dell’Omo’s bid to sell the college to a China-based company collapsed, he embarked on a new plan to move WCC to Rider’s Lawrenceville campus and sell the valuable Princeton property. As a result, since Rider first announced plans to sell WCC in March 2017, a public saga has unfolded, burdening choir students and faculty alike.

Tides change under Dell’Omo

When Dell’Omo started his tenure with Rider and subsequently his relationship with WCC, “he kind of came to campus swinging,” said Phillips.

In a February 2015 interview with The Rider News predating Dell’Omo’s official start at the university on Aug. 1 of that year, he described WCC as a “jewel” and lauded its history and international reputation. “You don’t want to water it down in any way so it can stand out on its own,” he said.

But quickly, things changed.

In December 2016, Dell’Omo’s initial idea to move WCC to Lawrenceville and sell the Princeton land was met with fierce opposition from students, faculty and alumni.

“If you had dropped a bomb on this campus, it would not have had as big an impact,” Phillips said.

Just three months later, Dell’Omo announced that both the famous choir college and campus were up for sale. When that effort failed, Dell’Omo

moved WCC to Lawrenceville and tried to sell the land.

The process to sell the property is one that has quickly become riddled with lawsuits from students and alumni as well as from the Princeton Theological Seminary to block the attempted sale.

In March 2020, New Jersey Superior Court Judge Robert Lougy granted the motion to dismiss the lawsuits, indicating that the parties lacked grounds to sue. An appeal was heard in May 2022, and was still pending six months later.

The Princeton Theological Seminary’s 2018 lawsuit against Rider, arguing that it has beneficiary rights to the land, is also pending.

While an eager community waits for a decision, the campus remains in use by the Westminster Conservatory of Music, a community music school under the direction of the university. Rider also renewed a deal with the Princeton Council this year to lease a portion of the campus’s vacant parking lot for just \$2,000 a month.

On Sept. 6, the Westminster Foundation announced ML7, a real estate and investment firm, as a potential buyer interested in both the college and Princeton property, though the proposed sale remains at a standstill until court proceedings have ended.

Associate Vice President for University Marketing and Communications Kristine Brown said at the time, “Rider has received many inquiries as to purchasing the Princeton property, including from ML7, but is not in a position to sell until the litigation being pursued by the Princeton Theological Seminary is resolved.”

Financial struggles pose university changes

In a written statement provided by Brown this week, Dell’Omo explained the administration’s decision to move WCC: “When it was independent, WCC almost never was able to support itself. It was on the verge of closing in 1991 when Rider took it over and Rider has been underwriting its losses for almost 30 years. The decision to merge the campuses in 2020 was done for sound financial reasons for the greater good of the entire institution as well as to provide the opportunity to create new academic program synergies.”

Many have criticized the attempted sale as a means to help supplement Rider’s cash deficit, as the university has implemented major restructures and prioritization methods to stabilize the university’s future, recently including the elimination or archival of 25 programs, a number of which fell under WCC.

On the program cuts, Associate Dean Jason Vodicka, who started the position following the College of Arts and Sciences restructure in March and oversees WCC, explained that while certain degree programs have been eliminated, students can still utilize the college’s bachelor of arts in music degree to create their own focus area of study.

“We can do all the same things. It’s just that the degree itself might look a little different,” said Vodicka, who is an alumnus of WCC.

Part of that different look is the likely loss of longtime WCC faculty.

On Oct. 31, Provost DonnaJean Fredeen delivered a layoff notice to the Rider community via email, mentioning that while there was not yet a need to eliminate any full-time faculty, six adjunct professors were let go, though it has not been released how many were WCC.

“This work is currently ongoing and decisions will be driven largely by enrollment,” the email read.

Fredeen canceled an interview with The Rider News scheduled for Nov. 29.

Under these new changes, faculty were also offered a bid for early retirement. Composition and music theory professor Jay Kawarsky decided to take the deal and will be ending his almost four-decade-long tenure with WCC in June of 2024.

“I look at, even in the next year and a half, how many new students am I going to have for a freshman class?” Kawarsky said in an interview with The Rider News.

The choir college’s enrollment has been on a steady decline since 2007, with a precipitous drop starting in 2016 – the time of Dell’Omo’s proposed sale.

In 2016, WCC had 72 full-time freshmen. This year, there are only 18 – a 75% decline, sparking even greater concern for WCC’s future and the programs that remain.

Dell’Omo wrote, “We are working hard in our recruitment efforts for WCC, but, as with all academic programs at the university, we must continually evaluate their success and sustainability.”

Vodicka explained that the university has been developing a more focused advertising campaign and increased spending to boost enrollment, which will in turn benefit WCC, as well as catering to specific journals and periodicals that are popular amongst music students and teachers.

University, employee union resolve pay dispute

By Amethyst Martinez

RIDER'S American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) chapter and the university have come to an agreement following a grievance filed by the union in regards to pay discrepancies for workers' 2022 salaries.

The union, which represents over 50 members of Rider staff, filed the grievance on Sept. 2 and have since been in talks with the university regarding pay issues that occurred due to the new payroll system ADP, which was implemented in the summer.

From July 15 to Aug. 5, union members went without a paycheck due to the switch. Lynn Rugg, co-president of Rider's AFSCME chapter, who works as a sports information administrative associate at the university, claimed the missing paycheck was due to the change from a semimonthly pay period to a biweekly period. This made union members' schedules go from 24 semimonthly paychecks a year (at the middle and end of each month) to 26 biweekly paychecks, every other Friday. Since the timesheet change occurred in the middle of the year for 2022, members were paid 13 semimonthly payments plus 11 biweekly, which led to a discrepancy for the year.

According to an article published by The Rider News on Oct. 26, talks between the union and university were scheduled for Nov. 1 after Rider's AFSCME chapter received a response from management for their amended grievance relating to the terms of their labor contract being violated.

Rugg said that the union had their grievance meeting with Robert Stoto, vice president for human resources, Clarissa Gilliam, director of employment and employee relations, Eric Mayhand, human resources information system manager, and James Hartman, vice president of finance. Rugg also said that Stoto arranged for a group meeting for all members of the union's bargaining unit, and that other non-bargaining unit employees who were affected also attended the gathering on Nov. 2.

Rugg said, "The opportunity allowed everyone to explain the effects and hardships of the transition to ADP and from semimonthly to biweekly payroll in the middle of the calendar year. Respectfully, both parties came to an amicable agreement."

The union has said its members are among some of the lowest-paid Rider employees, and some faced serious financial difficulties during the pay lag this past summer.

The decision was finalized on Nov. 7, and the university agreed to pay union members what they are owed on Dec. 9, according to Rugg and Kristine Brown, associate vice president for university marketing and communications.

"After members of the administration met with employees who were impacted by the transition from semimonthly to biweekly pay, and discussing their concerns related to inconveniences caused by this mid-year change," Brown said. "The university announced that it will provide a one-time transition payment, totalling two weeks of regular pay, to those affected employees before the end of the calendar year."

Rugg said that this decision comes after management agreed with the union's assessment that they were not being paid their correct yearly salary for 2022.

"We began the inquiry in August, so I am disappointed that it took so long to resolve," said Rugg. "However, we are pleased with the outcome and we appreciate management's willingness to listen to our members and to conclude that the change in the payroll system was going to leave us with less money at the end of 2022."

Mourning the move and fighting for a future



Kaitlyn McCormick/The Rider News

A photo of a bench on the Princeton campus that displays Westminster Choir College's crest and motto.

have the community that the Princeton campus facilitated."

Adapting to Lawrenceville

On the future of WCC, Vodicka says he's afraid of a "self-fulfilling prophecy," when it comes to the concern surrounding the choir college.

"I think it's really important that all of us faculty, administration, alumni, that we put our efforts into getting students back to Westminster and to experience some of these opportunities that we are able to provide for them," Vodicka said.

Dell'Omo wrote, "Rider would welcome resounding support for WCC in Lawrenceville from faculty, alumni and other WCC supporters to help build enrollments. Unfortunately, negative publicity and lawsuits only serve to damage enrollment efforts."

Last spring, a number of students and alumni filed a petition with Rider administrators to air grievances about the change in campus, including mainly issues in facilities.

Vodicka maintains that efforts have been made in improving the quality of the Lawrenceville facilities, including fixing issues with the Gill Chapel rehearsal space and utilizing the Student Recreation Center seminar room as another rehearsal space.

Though students like McNamara still find that the facilities and spaces dedicated to WCC students and choirs are lacking in comparison to the Princeton campus, which included the Hillman Performance Hall, part of the Marion Bucklelew Cullen Center that WCC built in 2014 for \$8.5 million.

An uncertain path forward

On the upheaval surrounding the move from the beloved Princeton campus, Vodicka said it's something he chooses not to focus on: "It really is out of my hands," he said.

Instead, he said he remains centered on providing students with a good WCC experience and striving to grow the college's enrollment. "That's where I'm choosing to focus my time and energy because I think that's where I can make an impact ... As far as the courts go, we'll see where things land, but I'm dedicated to Westminster no matter where it is," Vodicka said.

However, the handling of the campus consolidation has inarguably left what Ibsen called a "bitter taste" in the mouths of many in the WCC community.

McNamara said, "It could have been acknowledged that our grief and frustration was warranted."

Ibsen added that Rider's administration has consistently disregarded WCC's students, faculty and alumni: "It's interesting to think about just how intensely you have to ignore ... hundreds of people and decades of history. You have to be so good at tuning it all out."

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WCC also hopes to spark enrollment through its annual choral invitational in March, which was previously on hold due to the pandemic.

In years past, WCC choirs have famously performed alongside groups like the New York Philharmonic and the Philadelphia Orchestra. In 2012, the Westminster Symphonic Choir performed at Carnegie Hall alongside the Berlin Philharmonic.

Phillips shared that challenges to enrollment pose a threat for the large symphonic choir to perform to this caliber due to a lack of participants.

Vodicka said the college is still providing students with unique opportunities, continuing its tradition of working with different conductors, expressing the importance of students being able to network with professionals in the business and experience various perspectives.

On Nov. 20 the Symphonic Choir performed El Mesias: Handel's Messiah for a New World in New York with guest conductor Ruben Valenzuela, founder and director of Bach Back Collegium San Diego.

Students caught in the crossfire

After years of turmoil, change and reductions at WCC, many students' experiences have strayed from their original expectations.

Music theory and composition major Charlie Ibsen, who graduated in May, was a member of the last class who got to experience the Princeton campus before the COVID-19 pandemic even further derailed WCC students' time in what he described as a "perfect little haven of choral music."

"I think that the drama with the consolidation and then the sale and then the cancellation again. It absolutely put a nasty spin and kind of bitter taste on at least the last three years," Ibsen said.

The alumnus drew inspiration from the chaos that surrounded his undergraduate experience, composing a five-movement choral piece for his senior thesis, entitled "Spectemur Agendo," the college's motto and Latin for "let us be judged by our deeds." He interviewed dozens of alumni and focused on the history of the school.

Ibsen explained that the piece is written in the style of a requiem, traditionally a Latin mass for the dead. "In most composers' cases, they're writing requiems for other people, but I wrote one for what I was mourning," Ibsen said.

Junior music production major Bela Nakum, who uses the pronoun they, started their WCC experience on the Lawrenceville campus, a new path from the childhood they had spent on the Princeton campus attending lessons at the Westminster Conservatory and High School Vocal Institute, a program sponsored by the college's continuing studies program that is popular amongst future WCC students.

Though music production is technically not a WCC major, Nakum spent their freshman and sophomore years in WCC and is still involved in multiple choirs that are also open to Rider students, including Jubilee Singers.

"Most people in the class ... that I entered Westminster with were aware of the situation with the campuses ... the few people who weren't aware became aware pretty quickly," Nakum said.

Senior music education major Rachel McNamara is a prime example; despite knowing the issues surrounding the campus, McNamara still made the choice to transfer to WCC her sophomore year, but she nonetheless shares some of the disappointments and worries expressed by other students.

While she expressed positives like the ability to meet more friends at Rider or take different courses, it's still "disappointing," McNamara said, "to not

Crowning the 2022 Cranberry Court



Adrienne Unfreed/The Rider News

By Asia McGill

CRANBERRY Court is a tradition at Rider that has become beloved by seniors each year.

To enter the court, seniors who are interested submit a video introducing themselves and explain why they should be nominated as a member of the court.

“Typically 10 seniors are nominated and the student body picks their top 10. This year we had a tie for 10th place so there were 11 on the court,” said senior criminal justice major Darren Rush.

Rush stands as the campus life committee chair. His adviser, Barbara Perlman, is the director of student involvement; both are in charge of arranging the moving parts of Cranberry Court up until the winning nominees are announced.

While Perlman recently became the adviser for Cranberry Court, she notes the history of the tradition and how things have changed in terms of the election process.

“Before I was here, it used to be a Cranberry king and queen. [Student Government Association] decided to make it gender neutral, so anyone can win the two crowns,” Perlman said.

Since the beginning of the semester, Rush and his committee host campus events for nominees to not only promote themselves for votes, but to earn points toward their standing in the court.

The point system the court uses supplements the amount of votes a nominee gets and pushes them further in the competition.

Nominees can rack up points and votes through events such as “MAACness” or the Halloween costume contest that was held at “Scream Screen.” These events are where court members can appeal to larger voter audiences and get closer to the crown.

After all of the votes are counted and the points are evaluated, it all comes down to two winners that claim the Cranberry Court crown.

Senior information systems major Tyler Approvato and senior psychology major Kyllah Harley were the 2022 Cranberry Court winners, and both expressed immense gratitude toward their voters.

“It felt spectacular winning. I honestly didn’t think I was going to because everyone I was running against were such heavy hitters,” Approvato said.

Approvato expressed how much he loved all of the support he received from his voters, while also



Photo courtesy of Darren Rush

The 2022 Cranberry Court dresses up for Halloween.

acknowledging the responsibility that comes with being king.

“We now also have a higher standard to uphold with our actions and the way we hold ourselves around campus,” Approvato said.

Approvato has always looked for ways to be involved as a student, whether it was being a Bronc Buddy, working multiple jobs on campus or being president of Gamma Nu Gamma Chapter of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity.

Approvato explained that being on Cranberry Court focuses on the “engagement with the community and just the all around leadership you exemplify on campus.”

While winning was a shock for Harley as well, she said she felt a sense of honor being able to represent the court as a student of color.

“It matters because if you see people that look like you ... you feel a sense of comfort and confidence. I want people who look like me to know that they can

do it too,” Harley said.

Harley’s efforts toward representation did not begin during her election process, but have been prevalent throughout her years of involvement on campus.

Being a student peer leader, vice president for Generation Action and orientation leader are just some of the few ways Harley has made her mark.

As holders of the crown, Approvato and Harley share new responsibilities around Rider’s campus, like hanging up Christmas lights for “Celebration of Lights,” a campus tradition for the holiday season.

There are no specific qualifications that requisite the nominations of Cranberry Court, but winners do share one thing in common: true representation of the student experience.

“People who have been good leaders of the community, good role models, love Rider and bleed cranberry ... that’s what we are looking for when we ask for nominations,” Perlman said.

Barbati puts the life in student life

By Maddie Caccavale

THROUGH an open door, Nick Barbati sat cross-legged in his homey office across from the former associate dean of students at Rider University, Ira Mayo. Mayo retired from the university a few years prior, but always made time to visit Barbati, the associate dean of campus life. It is safe to say that Barbati has made a strong impact on many people during his 19 years at Rider, his office representing his collection of memories he has made at the school through the photographs, award plaques and event posters that decorate the walls.

A New Jersey native, Barbati grew up close to Rider and eventually became a student there, but attending the school was not a part of his original plan.

"I wasn't supposed to go to Rider. I wanted to go to St. Joe's in Philadelphia, and through some crazy kind of story, my application got lost there, so I ended up being waitlisted," said Barbati. His older brother went to Rider for his undergraduate studies, so Barbati followed in his footsteps, but it was only supposed to be temporary.

"The plan was for me to just come to Rider for one semester and then transfer to St. Joe's, and that plan suited me just fine. And then it was weird. I'm definitely the type of guy that when I get comfortable, I stay, and that is exactly what happened at Rider," Barbati explained.

In the beginning of his student experience at Rider, Barbati struggled with getting involved on the campus, until one day, the woman who was the associate dean of campus life at the time approached him and asked why he was not involved.

"Because of that conversation, I started getting involved in our Student Government Association, along with other organizations. That really opened the door for me to get more involved and fall in love with the campus. I was meeting people all the time, and the best part of Rider is the people, [and] that is what has led me to today," said Barbati. After graduating from Rider in 2007, he was offered a full-time position at the university, and has been there ever since.

When he became the associate dean of campus

life, Barbati became responsible for supervising the majority of the out-of-classroom activities the students get involved with throughout their college experience. This included overseeing community service opportunities known as Service and Civic Engagement, the university's radio station, 107.7 The Bronc, recreational programming, clubs and organizations, Greek life and the Student Entertainment Council (SEC) which is in charge of campus entertainment programming.

The SEC has been one organization that holds special significance to Barbati; he attends the council meetings with the students every Friday.

Senior digital marketing major Kayla Wagner serves as the current president of SEC and has worked closely with Barbati throughout her college experience. Wagner has been in the organization since her sophomore year.

"Nick has always been a supportive person. I can go to him about anything, even if it is not related to the SEC. I can always go to him with any questions, and he is willing to do anything to help any student," Wagner explained.

One of Wagner's favorite memories from working with Barbati on the SEC was when she was in charge of putting together "Rock Fest" last fall.

"Rock Fest was my first big event. It was amazing to work with him and see my ideas come to life. It was a huge success," said Wagner.

"Rock Fest" has been a beloved campus tradition at Rider since 2015, but the backstory is not well known. There was a student who was getting into continuous trouble with the judiciary system at Rider. In this particular instance, the student had gone into the backwoods of the campus with their friends and tried having an illegal bonfire. Barbati knew them peripherally since this student had an entry level role on the SEC.

"I heard they were in trouble over this bonfire attempt. I called them into my office and I said, 'What are you doing? What is happening?'" said Barbati. The student went on to tell Barbati that they wanted to create fun on campus.

"Well, you have the means to do this on a bigger scale. Why don't you put energy into creating a large

bonfire for the campus instead of getting in trouble?" Barbati reflected.

The student did not initially believe Barbati. "I said to them, 'If you work with me and follow my guidance, I promise you, we will make it happen,'" Barbati said.

That is how "Rock Fest" was born. The student still writes to Barbati every year when the campus hosts "Rock Fest," thanking him and the students for keeping the event a tradition.

Another popular Rider tradition that Barbati started is "R Factor." It is a spoof of "The X Factor," and every year student singers sign up to compete in a two-weekend-long singing competition. The first weekend is the auditions and the second weekend is the final competition where the students that were chosen go head-to-head to be crowned the R Factor Champion.

"I love the 'R Factor' for reasons that people don't see. Eric Craig was the first student who won the show. After winning, he left his own CD under the door in my office with a post-it note on it that said 'I never thought that I would ever be able to perform my own music on a stage with a large crowd and I want you know, it changed my life,'" Barbati said. "That's the reason why we do the 'R Factor,' because it's deeper than just a talent show. It's letting students live out their dreams."

Last year's R Factor Champion was current senior elementary education and English major, Moe Mahmoud. "The R Factor" has impacted my college experience tremendously. Prior to college, I never sang on a stage in front of people. I was so scared, and Nick was the one that pushed me out of my comfort zone and told me to sing. Looking back now I realize that helped me with my confidence," said Mahmoud.

Barbati has impacted so many lives during his time at Rider and continues to do so everyday. "If in 10 years from now I'm still working in education, it will be at Rider," said Barbati. "I wouldn't want to work at another school."



Photo courtesy of Maddie Caccavale

Nick Barbati, standing with his President's Award plaque that he received upon his undergraduate graduation from Rider in 2007.



Photo courtesy of Maddie Caccavale

Nick Barbati, the associate dean of campus life, sitting in his homey office on the first floor of the Bart Luedeke Center of Rider.



Photo courtesy of Lauren Van Dyk

The Associate Director of the Rider University Academic Success Center (ASC) **Amy Atkinson**. She is responsible for communicating with tutors and providing them with assistance.



Photo courtesy of Lauren Van Dyk

Amy Atkinson is proud of her position and looks forward to the future.

'Once a tutor, always a tutor': a director's love for helping others

By **Lauren Van Dyk**

AMY Atkinson grew to love her position to help others the more she saw their academics thrive. Knowing that she could help her peers and fellow employees was one factor that gave her confidence in her decision to leave her previous job.

Within the cranberry walls of an office that shouted Rider school spirit sat a woman holding her forever half-full cup of Lavazza coffee. Her bookshelf was extremely unique, filled with fun knick-knacks and books ranging from tutoring practice guides to poems and classic novels.

At her large desk sat Atkinson, writing her "immediate to-do list" on the tiny whiteboard that sat atop her desk — a gift from her colleague Shane Conto, director of the Academic Success Center.

"I take being a leader extremely seriously, holding myself to very high standards," said Atkinson.

With her constant perseverance and determination in keeping her tutors engaged and entertained, she set aside a little desk in the corner of her office with two chairs for guests to sit, giving her office an "open-door" feeling to it. Atkinson kept a poster hanging in her office of an inspirational quote from Maya Angelou that read, "I've learned that people will forget what you say, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

Atkinson took a deep breath and released a small sigh, and replied, "Maya Angelou's quote is the epitome of me. Each unique individual that walks through the door has a 'reflective Amy' that can help guide them. I like to make sure that the rest of my life I will be the 'reflective Amy.'"

Before she worked in higher education, Atkinson went through an array of career paths.

Atkinson grew up in Honesdale, Pennsylvania, attending Fordham University after high school. She commented, "English degrees all the way."

After studying English while obtaining her undergraduate degree, Atkinson believed she would become a teacher. "I originally thought that I would teach in higher education. I wanted to teach English courses and English lit[erature] theory with an emphasis on poetry," she said.

Without knowing it, Atkinson fell into the world of

veterinary services and realized her abundant love for animals. Not only was she a veterinary technician in Cape May, New Jersey, she also practiced these talents in Maine and Virginia.

"I always wanted to be a veterinarian, but I didn't have it in me to 'hurt' the animal, so the vet tech was the next best thing," Atkinson said. "When I saw the opportunity to do hands-on learning first, I took it."

Despite her love for animals, Atkinson still had a difficult time deciding whether to stay in this position or not. Not only did she know that her love for tutoring and education was never going to go away, she also knew that her time working for a veterinary office would likely be limited.

"I hated the part where we had to be expected to be involved in putting animals down who were sick. The animals being sick was one thing, but if they were young and beyond repair, we had to hold veins off to administer the euthanasia serum which became too difficult after a while," Atkinson said. "I felt like I abandoned the animals when I left being a vet tech, but I felt like, for my emotional well-being, I had to leave."

Later in life, someone had come up to Atkinson and told her to be a teacher because of how good she was with others. They said that she was both patient and understanding, always listening to all the details of different situations. She recalls asking this person, "Why does that mean that I should go into this position?" They then replied, "The way you tutor is the way some others need to tutor."

This encounter eventually led Atkinson to her very first job at Rider: a tutoring position in a classroom. Atkinson later realized that "the teaching part and desire to help others made [her] want to go into this position."

Conto first met Atkinson when he was a student worker at the Academic Success Center and she became a professional tutor. Since then, Conto has noticed that Atkinson "has created a Writing Studio that is rooted in community but also growth and the craft of writing. The Writing Lab was by far our least effective program and Amy has morphed it into something respected and rooted in quality."

"Amy is an inspiration," said Conto. "Her story and how she made it to her present place ... is a story

that I think would benefit every student to hear. It has certainly inspired me."

Atkinson always knew she wanted to teach but never knew how much of an impact she would have when she stepped into her position at Rider. "If I can help one person, I can get the chance to help another," said Atkinson. "It is really important to me to make sure that I stay humble in everything that I do because, without that, we lose a lot of opportunities to grow as human beings. We need to learn as humans that we are all works in progress." Atkinson knows that "tutoring is [and always will be] a part of [her] heart."

Rider's Coordinator of Composition Tutoring Iwona Ionescu commented on the many positive impacts that Atkinson has left on the university.

"Amy brought up the issue that tutoring often has a stigma attached to it. She is working hard to change that. She wants students to recognize that tutoring is for students of different skills. Everyone will benefit from talking about their writing with someone else," Ionescu said.

As for Atkinson, she has kept a glass jar with sparkly lights in her office all these years to remind her of a "jar of fireflies." Her office has remained welcoming with the addition of a blackboard on the wall, displaying various family and group photos. "This board is there as a reminder to me that if I am having a hard day, those are the people and things that love me," said Atkinson.

With her consistent love for education and tutoring, Atkinson grew to adore her life even more. At the end of the day, Atkinson agrees on one sentiment: "Once a tutor, always a tutor."

Shaun Chornobroff and Bridget Gum-Egan are employees of The Rider News and the Academic Success Center. Neither had any part in the writing or editing of this article.

Student journalism provides insight to campus life



Angelina Fierro/ The Rider News

THE Rider News has been working incredibly hard to bring the students and faculty at Rider legitimate news since 1930. Student journalists have reported on various events and topics that carry truth and sincerity to their readers for the past 92 years. The Rider News staff has worked persistently this semester to educate the Rider community through their accurate and reliable articles. This semester, the students have written hard news stories about Title IX, Westminster Choir College, contract negotiations and so much more. Student journalists have stayed up late finding proper documentation, gathering credible sources and checking their facts over and over again. Collegiate investigative journalism is tremendously important because students pay to attend these institutions of higher education. Student journalists also want to give a voice to those who are silenced and shed light on issues that may not be known by many.

The Rider News prides itself on educating the Rider community on a wide variety of topics, from news to sports, entertainment and opinion. Investigative journalism is something that The Rider News has done immensely throughout this semester alone; however, none of these investigations have come with ease. Often people are afraid to speak up about sensitive subjects because of the inevitable backlash. They continued to go the extra mile to receive the factually correct information. These difficult topics weren't just tough on those affected but also on The Rider News staff. Amethyst Martinez, managing editor of The Rider News, wrote an article about concerns students faced with the Title IX office and the handling of their cases. The story took three months to make after countless setbacks. "The biggest thing that I learned in the investigative writing process is that you have to be persistent. That is the only way that you'll be able to dig and find things because you aren't going to get the answers that you want at first or the answer that you think needs to be uncovered," said Martinez.

The reporting process is intense, and the news staff has continued to ask hard-hitting questions. Members of the staff explained that often during interviews many other questions arise and one interview could lead to another. There is always more to a story than meets the eye and investigative journalism requires a lot of effort, but the outcome is incredibly rewarding. When students write about something they are passionate about and it takes a long time to compose, the students are proud of all the effort and work they put into it. The Rider News staff encourages any new journalism students to be careful when doing investigative journalism, but to get invested and cherish what they are writing about because although it is strenuous, it can make them become better journalists. It is intimidating and difficult, but taking on a challenge will benefit writing, investigation and interviewing skills.

Journalism as a whole is supposed to provide accurate reports to people, and The Rider News gives journalism students the needed experience to prepare them for the workforce. The Rider News is proud to continue investigating issues that affect the Rider community and is committed to providing readers with correct and credible news for years to come. "We take pride in telling the stories of The Rider community and accurately representing it no matter what section," said Shaun Chornobroff, the executive editor of the Rider News. "The Rider News has been an important part of this community since 1930, and it intends to stay that way."

This editorial expresses the unanimous opinion of The Rider News Editorial Board. This week's editorial was written by Opinion Editor Felicia Roehm.

Felicia Roehm

THE Rider News

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SOPHOMORE SIGHTINGS

Social media can dictate people and society

On an average day, it has become normal to walk through campus without seeing a single face: everyone is looking down. Some students often unknowingly escape a collision while crossing the street and not paying attention to their surroundings. Others barely miss brushing elbows with the people walking near them. This constant distraction is the product of a new standard in today's society: social media and cell phone addiction. Civilization is held hostage to its personal devices as a result of the endless reliance on them for everyday necessities.

Although it is the fastest way to communicate and reach those that need to be contacted as soon as possible, personal devices are a distraction that people face each and every day. Social media in particular has fabricated reality into an idealistic lie that encourages people to produce content that confuses expectation with reality. For instance, the Kardashians use social media as a way to advertise their daily lives, marketing them as somewhat normal. They eat lunch, take care of their kids and work like the majority of society; however, the features of their pictures speak louder than the actions being demonstrated within them. For example, on Oct. 23, Kim Kardashian posted a selfie of herself without a filter eating lunch. This photo is unrealistic because her makeup is professionally done, which contributes immensely to her overall appearance in the picture. This gives society, particularly the youth, a false perception of what an average person looks like as they eat lunch and perform other everyday activities.

With this constant falsified illustration of what real life looks like, digitally native societies, or societies that are introduced to electronics at a young age, are raised watching the world revolve around electronics. People raised in this society tend to pressure themselves with convenience and trends that are encouraged through social media and the advancement of technology. For example, if two groups of friends run into each other somewhere and take a photo and post it, signifying that they ran into each other at the store without stating it, it can give viewers the impression that those people were together the whole time. This can be followed by a negative reaction from other friends who may feel excluded from either party.

This constant fear of missing out has made people reliant on their phones and the specific function of having a first-hand view of people's lives. The ability to see what others are doing at any given moment, including who people are with, what they are doing and a scale of how much fun they may or may not be having, can be debilitating. Similar to Kim Kardashian's post, if a group of people are hanging out and post pictures of themselves smiling for a photo on social media, it is typical to assume they are all having a good time together even if, in reality,

there was a massive fight or someone got hurt, but how would anybody know the truth unless it was documented? People do not expect anything to be wrong unless it is documented as such on social media, thus manipulating people's perspectives of reality and lowering their self-esteem, motivation and human interaction. This has resulted in an increasing rate in mental illnesses among the youth.

Two highly-used social media platforms among college students are Instagram, which came out in 2010, and Snapchat, which came out in 2011. In the past decade, the rate of mental illness in the United States has spiked by nearly 4 million, starting at roughly 46 million in 2010 and reaching 50 million in 2022 according to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health and Mental Health America. Although this may not seem like a significant increase, many signs of poor mental health include avoidance, a loss of engagement and a shift in behavior, all of which can be found across campus as people walk from class to class unable to make eye contact with those they pass. The dining hall is filled with people sitting across from one another as they study their phone screens, not exchanging a single word.

The concept of being disengaged in the moment is what drives people toward poor mental health and depressive behaviors. How is it that a device that is supposed to make staying in contact with people the easiest it has ever been in history is the reason that everyone has grown so far apart from one another? A similar question should be asked each day as people pick up their cell phones: Am I looking at a better version of myself as I search for different jobs and make plans with my friends for the week, or am I belittling myself by overanalyzing the content? Am I reminding myself of all that I do not have and berating myself for being someone that I can never be?

Hannah Newman
sophomore journalism major

Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons



SENIOR SENTIMENTS

Antisemitism continues to 'Parade' through society

LAST week, as part of its annual gala presentation, off-Broadway's New York City Center produced the timely story of the trial of Leo Frank, performed by the musical powerhouse Ben Platt, in a seven-performance production of Jason Robert Brown's "Parade." The 1998 Broadway classic tells the tragic story of Leo Frank, who was wrongly convicted of murder in 1913. As seen in the show, Frank's trial more closely resembled the acts of a circus than those of a court of law, as his offense was largely based on blatant antisemitism.

While Frank was sentenced to death, his wife, Lucille, performed by the shining Michaela Diamond, fought tirelessly to appeal his sentence. Still, just as it seemed public opinion could be swayed and Leo Frank could walk free, he was lynched in 1915.

After nearly 25 years since its last performance, the revival of "Parade" could not have come at a better time.

"Parade" feels more like watching a live-action rendition of the weekly headline than it does a piece of musical theater. It was hard to take notice of the larger-than-life, sensationalized spectacles often exploding all over a Broadway stage because this true story retold today felt too real.

While the musical talent in this production was nothing short of phenomenal as the voices of Platt and Diamond performed together, they often were subdued and crushed under the heaviness of the subject. As an avid Platt apologist who agreed with his performance in the Dear Evan Hansen movie, I have been convincing myself that his lackluster performance was a creative choice to subordinate himself as his character had been.

Still, I acknowledge that it could have also been just that — lackluster. You know it was a bad night if he was being outshone by Gaten Matarazzo who played Dustin from "Stranger Things." The most memorable moment of the show came during intermission. Such a statement may seem facetious, but I mean it when I say the intermission was truly remarkable.

As the first act comes to a close, the last notes are sung, the actors scurry off stage and the lights come up, the curtains never close, and Ben Platt never leaves the stage. Immediately people pop up to get a good spot in line for the bathroom or to refill their drinks, but do they not realize Ben Platt is still on stage? Are we allowed to be moving around, talking?

After the initial shock subsides, if you are one of the lucky ones whose bladder is not yet full, your eyes are glued to the stage where Platt sits at a small wooden table with his back turned to the crowd. At this moment in the show, Frank has just been sentenced to death, and we watch him sit with his sentence hopelessly. Eventually, your mind begins to wander as you feel the despair radiating off the stage as people just walk on by. It makes you think of the climate for Jewish people today.

While the set design and wardrobe largely rely on shades of brown to mimic a sepia washing over the stage to symbolize the story taking place in the past, is this really a distant story? Every day in the news, another synagogue is targeted or another celebrity is committing hate speech and we all just carry on with our lives, but as for the rest of us in the Jewish community, you can't help but wonder — how long until I'm next?

Jillian LaFeir
senior english major

Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons



WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

NOTEBOOK: Rider weathers turbulent Dublin holiday

By Jake Tiger

RIDER women's basketball's trip to Dublin showcased both its strengths and weaknesses, as the 2-3 Broncos continued to weigh down their hot shooting with inconsistent, sloppy defense.

Rider put together a well-rounded, 76-67 win against North Florida on Nov. 18, before Eastern Kentucky sent the Broncos home on Nov. 19 with a 85-64 blowout loss.

Fire-land

The Broncos were seeing green in Dublin, putting together one of their best offensive stretches in recent memory. Collectively, they shot 41.5% from three, and a season-high 76 points in their win against North Florida.

"I thought we did some really good stuff on the offensive end," said Head Coach Lynn Milligan. "When you have veteran guards ... they can have a kind of feel for a game and when you know you need a big bucket, and I felt we did that."

In all of last season, the Broncos could only eclipse the 70-point mark three times in 30 games, but this season, they've already done it twice in five games.

"We're shooting the ball well," said Milligan. "I think overall, offensively, we're in a pretty good place for five games in the season."

Junior forward Makayla Firebaugh has particularly found her groove after a sophomore slump. As Rider's top scoring option, she is averaging a career-high 16.6 points and shooting 42.9% from

beyond the arc on extremely high volume. The long-range specialist is fifth in the country in three-pointers made per game with 3.6, and of 86 players with at least 40 three-point attempts, Firebaugh ranks 12th in efficiency.

"Honestly, I don't really think," said Firebaugh. "I just shoot and just kind of feel my shot when I'm open. ... It just felt like it was there."

Firebaugh continued to roll overseas, riding the momentum of her game-winning three against St. Francis Brooklyn on Nov. 13. In Ireland, the junior scored 42 total points and hit 11 of her 20 three-point attempts, and dropped 25 points in the 76-point win over North Florida.

Upon returning home, Firebaugh was greeted with Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) player of the week honors for her success in Ireland, receiving the award for the second time in her career.

"I wanted to show Dublin what Rider's about, how we can play," said Firebaugh.

However, Firebaugh's heroics on offense could not compensate for a slew of defensive blunders.

Stumblin' in Dublin

Despite an inability to be consistently two-dimensional, the Rider defense still found ways to look flat, and at times, clearly lacking depth.

Out of 349 NCAA Division I women's basketball teams, the Broncos are 326th in opponent field goal percentage with an average of 45.9%.

"I think, defensively, we are not [in a good place]," said Milligan. "We've got to get better."

Rider was on the wrong side of the turnover battle in both games, ultimately coming home with a differential of -16 across both games. In its second game in particular, Rider committed 21 turnovers, while Eastern Kentucky finished with seven.

Among all Division I women's basketball teams, Rider ranks 315th in turnover margin.

"We just had too many turnovers, too many fouls, gave up too many boards," said Milligan. "Just a lot of things that are not really a good formula for success."

On the defensive end, the Broncos continued to let the ball escape them, as the Colonels commanded the boards en route to 15 offensive rebounds. Rider was left picking at table scraps, tallying only four.

The abundance of extra possessions created by turnovers and offensive rebounds allowed the Colonels to put up 18 more shots and 14 more free throws than the Broncos, granting Eastern Kentucky the win despite lower shooting efficiency across the board.

"We just have to get better, and by better, a lot of times it just means consistent," said Milligan.

The game was emblematic of Rider's entire season thus far, with great offensive performances often being overshadowed by repeated defensive breakdowns.

The Broncos have had a knack for fouling under the basket and giving their foes free points. In Dublin, Rider committed 41 personal fouls which handed 47 free throws to opponents.

"[Fouling] has been something that has plagued us," said Milligan. "... Playing defense for 25 seconds and then the outcomes, or playing defense for 25 seconds and then giving up that [offensive] board. ... That's just being disciplined with our defensive fundamentals for the entire possession, and just recognizing that one little misstep on a fundamental can really, really mess us up as a whole."

Between transfers and players returning from long-term injuries, key defensive pieces like senior guard Maya Hyacienth and junior forward Toni Blanford are sharing the court for the first time, so some growing pains are to be expected.

Rider has also been without senior forward Anna Ekerstedt this season, who was first on the team in blocks and fifth in points a year ago. After the game against Eastern Kentucky, Milligan stated that Ekerstedt was day-to-day, and should be returning soon.

Now with 11 days of rest and recalculation, the Broncos return to Alumni Gym on Nov. 30 to test their defense against the 2-5 Lehigh Mountain Hawks, who have two players averaging 18.7 points per game. The game begins at 5:00 p.m.



Kaitlyn D'Alessio/The Rider News

This season

16.6 PPG

39.2 FG%

42.9 3P%

3.6 3PG

All career highs



Kaitlyn D'Alessio/The Rider News

Junior forward **Raphaela Toussaint** guards a player on the baseline. Toussaint leads the team in fouls through five games.

THE RIDER NEWS

WREST = WRESTLING
WBB = WOMEN'S BASKETBALL
MBB = MEN'S BASKETBALL
IH = ICE HOCKEY

■ = Home
■ = Away

RIDER UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS WEEKLY RIDER SPORTS SCHEDULE

Nov. 30	Dec. 1	Dec. 2	Dec. 3	Dec. 4	Dec. 5	Dec. 6
<p>WBB VS LEHIGH 5:00 P.M.</p> <p>MBB VS MONMOUTH 8:00 P.M.</p>		<p>WREST VS PENN STATE 7:30 P.M.</p> <p>IH VS STEVENSON 8:30 P.M. (TWITCH)</p>	<p>WBB VS NAVY 11:00 A.M.</p> <p>MBB VS MOUNT ST. MARY'S 4:00 P.M.</p> <p>IH VS MARYLAND 7:00 P.M. (TWITCH)</p>	<p>IH VS ARMY 8:30 P.M. (TWITCH)</p>		

VOLLEYBALL

Rider bounced in MAAC Tournament semifinals

By Hannah Newman

RIDER volleyball took their season to Lake Buena Vista, Florida, for the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) Tournament, and with a 7-11 record in conference play, the Broncos entered as the seventh seed, determined to make a run at the title.

Rider managed to earn a ticket to the semifinals by beating No. 10 Manhattan and sweeping No. 2 Marist, but ultimately fell in four sets to No. 6 Quinnipiac, the tournament's eventual champions.

"We know the No. 7 seed was not a true reflection of how good we were, or how good we can be moving forward," said Head Coach Jeff Rotondo during the tournament. "Don't get me wrong, there are a lot of things we need to clean up on the court and off the court, but foundationally our athleticism is better than this program has had for a long time."

In the opening game of the tournament off the serve of sophomore middle hitter Carley McAleavey, the Broncos dove into a 7-2 lead with a 5-0 run, which was followed by a final set of 25-10. Throughout the second set, the Broncos' dominance remained consistent with a 7-1 run and two kills courtesy of McAleavey. With a 16-12 lead, the Broncos continued to sustain a strong run of 6-0 with another two kills and a block by senior middle hitter Morgan Koch which handed them the win for this set.

After the Jaspers attempted to match the Broncos winning energy in the third set, Rider came out of their first game of the tournament successful with a tight win of 25-21, which earned them a spot in the quarter finals.

"I think for us we saw consistency in our energy and focus. This is something we battled throughout the year, some of it due to dealing with 16 players in and out of the lineup due to COVID-19, concussions and injuries," said Rotondo. "It was hard to find a groove, but I felt we were able to mesh a lot more down in Florida as we were relatively healthy for the first time in a while. That helped us be more consistent offensively and defensively, as we competed great on the court in a lot of moments, and the sidelines were really instrumental in helping us maintain that energy."

The Broncos got out to a 11-5 lead in the early parts of their quarterfinal match against Marist, and built up enough momentum to carry them through the rest of the opening set. With back-to-back kills from Koch, the Broncos took the first set 25-15 and let their errorless start keep them fired up for their second set.



Andrew Xon/The Rider News

The Broncos take the court in Alumni Gym. They had a 4-5 record at home in 2022, their worst since 2011.

Rider again took the lead early, going up 5-1, although this time, Marist vigorously came back to tie the set at 6-6. This comeback energy drained after the Broncos went on a 5-0 run off the serve of senior libero Pamela Loh. While the Broncos were back in the lead with a score of 13-10, Rider closed the second set at 25-19.

Wrapping up the game in the third set with the help of junior setter Julia Slivka, who made three-straight aces and two kills from senior opposite hitter Morgan Romano and senior outside hitter Jenna Amaro, the Broncos secured their spot in the semifinals with a 25-15 win against Marist.

"I think the team was most confident in each other's ability on and off of the court. We knew we had to come out strong and play our game with confidence. We had nothing to lose, so going out and giving it our all and staying aggressive was the only way we were going to win games," said Romano. "Our bench in the three games was super supportive and very energetic, which helped translate our energy on the court. In the game against Marist, all of our hitters were on, which was what we really needed."

While the Broncos faced the semifinals with back-to-back wins behind them, it was not enough to put them in the finals as Rider surrendered their season to Quinnipiac with a 25-11 set that determined their fate.

"We lost 24-26 and 26-28 in the first two sets versus Quinnipiac in the semifinals. Had we come away with a victory in one or both of those sets, I think we are

in a really good spot to move on to the finals," said Rotondo. "We had opportunities to capitalize on some miscues by Quinnipiac, but were unable to finish in those situations."

Although the end to the season was heartbreaking, having been a match away from the finals, the Broncos still used this experience as a milestone in their career and an outlet to develop more in depth connections with one another as they continue to strengthen themselves as a team.

"I think the team connected very well in Florida and formed some bonds that maybe were not fully attached yet," said Rotondo. "It was great to see the love and joy they played with and had for one another through the journey down there."

With the finalization of a long 2022 season, Romano led the Broncos in kills with 353, leading in assists was Slivka with 529, leading in service aces was Romano with 31, leading in digs was senior libero Alicia Iafrate with 237 and leading in blocks was McAleavey with 55.

As Romano reflected on her last games as a Bronco, she was sure to take note of the real reason her and her teammates took the court with pride.

"We came into this tournament and knew that we were going to be in for some tough matches, and we handled it well but had some dips in energy," said Romano. "We were able to come out strong and play together because we knew the only way we were going to win games is by playing together and playing for the people around us."

WRESTLING

Broncos place third in Keystone Classic



Peter G. Borg/Rider Athletics

Graduate student **Ethan Laird** takes on a wrestler from Northern Illinois.

By Logan VanDine

THE Rider wrestling team headed to the Keystone Classic in Philadelphia, riding high after winning their first two matches of the season against Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and Purdue. The Broncos kept the good times going as they placed third in the Keystone Classic on Nov. 21 with 120 team points.

A total of 10 Broncos reached the podium during the tournament, most notably juniors McKenzie Bell

and Shane Reitsma.

"I thought they wrestled well overall. There were matches that [I] would have liked to have back to reverse the outcome, but I thought that we competed hard, wrestled hard. We were in good shape, but there's always things to work on ... they'll get better from going through in this competition," Head Coach John Hangey said.

Perhaps the most notable moment from the competition was when graduate student Ethan Laird took home the 197-pound crown at the Keystone Classic. Laird came into the match as the No. 2 seed. After receiving a bye in the first round of the tournament, he dominated his opponents in the second and third bouts. He took both of them by fall which put him in the finals against Arizona State's No. 15 seed Kordell Norfleet.

Laird later won the final bout by a score of 7-6, winning the Keystone Classic for the first time in his career.

"Ethan [Laird] keeps doing his thing. He's wrestling really well this year. I think the freestyle success he had in the offseason helped him out a lot. It's really helped him grow and mature and slow the sport down in his eyes, and he's just a quiet leader. He's a very good wrestler as well. He just calculates things and figures things out and uses people's weaknesses against [them] during matches, so he's doing really well and I'm

pleased where he's at, but we have to continue to get better," Hangey said.

Laird gave his input on his top finish in the Keystone Classic and noted that there is still room for improvement in his performance.

"I wrestled pretty well, but I wouldn't say I'm impressed with my performance. I expected to win the tournament and I did, but I had a close match in the finals and found some things I still need to work on. It was a good tournament to see some good competition and find some of the things I need to work on and the team needs to work on," the 285-pound wrestler said.

Laird also talked about how his team performed overall, but didn't shy away from talking about how first place was something they wanted even though they finished third.

"As a team we did alright. Coming into the tournament, we were looking to place first, but we definitely didn't wrestle our best. So still taking third when we didn't wrestle our best gives us some positives, but it also showed us a lot of stuff we need to work on," Laird said.

The Broncos' next matchup will be against a tough opponent in Penn State as they look to keep up the momentum when they play the Nittany Lions on Dec. 2 at the Cure Insurance Arena in Trenton, New Jersey, at 7:30 p.m.

Sports

ONLINE

GARDEN STATE SHOWDOWN

Check out the men's basketball photo gallery of its in-state matchup against Rutgers.

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



Carolo Pascale/The Rider News

The Broncs have struggled over the last three games, falling to Stetson, Central Arkansas and Rutgers over the course of a five-day span.

MEN'S BASKETBALL

NOTEBOOK: Broncs show cracks that need patching

By Carolo Pascale

FIVE games into the season, Rider men's basketball sits at a disappointing 1-4, as the Broncs nearly upset Providence in the regular season opener, had a difficult trip across the pond in Ireland and were most recently embarrassed by Rutgers.

It's been a hard first handful of games for Rider, excluding the Nov. 12, 87-50 win over TCNJ, but the Broncs haven't found a consistent rhythm yet this season. With just one non-conference game left before their Dec. 3 Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) play opener, the Broncs have to find a way to pull together their season.

A trio of losses

Coming off of the 37-point win over local foe TCNJ, the Broncs revved up the jets and headed to Dublin for the MAAC/Atlantic Sun (ASUN) Dublin Challenge against Stetson on Nov. 18 and Central Arkansas on Nov. 19. Things didn't go as planned for the Broncs as they dropped both games despite two great performances from senior guard Dwight Murray Jr.

Game one of the Ireland trip was against Stetson, who the Broncs hadn't played since 1993. The Hatters were coming off two big wins against Florida State and South Florida and handled the Broncs as well, topping them 78-68.

"We continue to fight and come back. The guys never gave up, the guys continued to play together. We just didn't play smart," said Head Coach Kevin Baggett.

Murray led the team with 17 points while three others joined him in double-digits.

The second game of the trip versus Central Arkansas was about the same for the Broncs, as Rider ultimately ended their overseas escapade 0-2 after falling 90-85 against the Bears.

A career-high, 30-point outburst from Murray was a highlight for the Broncs, but he didn't get much help as senior forward Mervin James was the only other player to break double figures in the game with 13 points.

"[Murray's] been great, been great all weekend,

playing with a lot of passion and love for the game. I gotta get the other guys to do the same," said Baggett.

Coming back stateside didn't change the Broncs' favor as they were speared by the Scarlet Knights 76-46 on Nov. 22. The lopsided loss was the Broncs' worst offensive output since losing to Wisconsin 65-37 on Dec. 31, 2019.

"We're not shooting well at all right now," said Murray. "We've been through this last year, so we know what to do. Everybody's got to get in the gym."

The only bright spot for the Broncs was another 17-point performance from Murray, but everyone else was incredibly pedestrian with none of them cracking 10 points.

A secondary scoring conundrum

When a team has a special player like Murray, it also has to have a great supporting cast that can score when needed. The Broncs, at least right now, are definitely not getting that from the rest of the team.

While Murray has been averaging 19.8 points, 47.2% from the field, 43.5% from the three and five rebounds per game, only four of his teammates have eclipsed 10 points in a game this season. The only one who has done it more than once is James, who has hit double-digits three times.

In a post-game media scrum after the loss to Rutgers, Baggett was asked why the team couldn't make shots. His response: "If I knew, I would tell you how to go play the lottery."

Baggett also pointed out two guys that have been struggling recently, those being James and senior guard Allen Powell.

Powell has been off as of late, severely struggling to make baskets from pretty much anywhere. Over the last three games, Powell has shot just 6-for-34 from the field and a measly 2-for-21 from the three, not scoring in double figures since the game against TCNJ.

James has been better than Powell in terms of scoring, but the foul trouble that plagued him last year has persisted into this season. He's already averaging 3.6 fouls per game, tied for the 21st most in the NCAA so far this season.

On top of those two, Rider's bigs have been

unreliable through the first five games, one being junior forward Tariq Ingraham who notched more than 10 points in a game.

"My bigs are struggling to be alert out there," said Baggett.

Murray himself is also looking for more scoring support, but would be happier if the team just gets back in the win column.

"You know, 17 points and 30 points ain't nothing unless we get a win. I'd be happy to just have 10 points and my other teammates have 20 if we win the game," said Murray after the Rutgers loss.

A lingering issue returns

You can certainly call it a comeback, as the foul issues have once again resurfaced for the Broncs.

The fouls were a problem for Rider last year, with the Broncs averaging 17.2 fouls per game and James committing 115 fouls over the course of the season, which was tied for the third highest total fouls in the entire NCAA.

As for this year, since the regular season opener against Providence, the fouls have played a major factor in the Broncs 2022-23 campaign.

James' recent foul troubles haven't been the only fouls that have been hampering the team. The Broncs have committed the ninth most fouls per game in the NCAA this year, committing 22 fouls per game. Three other players alongside James have foul numbers in the teens so far this season, with those being Ingraham, redshirt senior forward Tyrel Bladen, and junior forward Nehemiah Benson.

"It's a problem. They're just not doing what we're asking them to do," Baggett said. "We're not alert. They're a second late on everything and then we end up fouling so we have to get better."

Rider will have to improve all around as it inches closer toward its first MAAC play game against Mount St. Mary's on Dec. 3. Before that, the Broncs have one more non-conference matchup against the team that knocked them out of the semifinals of last year's conference tournament and former rival, the Monmouth Hawks, on Nov. 30 at 8 p.m.