



Title IX failures: Rider students' unresolved cases linger

By Amethyst Martinez

A RIDER alumna who graduated in 2021 said Rider's Title IX office failed to communicate with her and left her feeling vulnerable after she filed a complaint that a male professor groomed and sexually harassed her. A current senior, whose complaint that a male student sexually assaulted her has remained unresolved for more than a year, believes the office has grossly mishandled her case. And a junior, who reported in December 2021 that she was raped off campus by another Rider student, said she has heard nothing from the university after the school official with whom she filed the complaint left Rider.

In each instance, each young woman voiced a similar experience: complaints filed with Rider's Title IX officials remain unresolved — frequently open for months or more than a year — caught in a system that leaves students feeling helpless and additionally traumatized.

Title IX is a landmark federal law designed to protect women and girls from sexual harassment, assault and gender-based discrimination, and Rider's Office of Title IX and Institutional Equity handles reports of violations of the law or the university's own Anti-Harassment and Non-Discrimination Policy.

But the alumna, who said multiple other students joined her complaint against the professor, remembered Rider officials left her feeling “completely in the dark of what was going on. ... I felt like I wasn't offered any sort of protection.”

“It just seems like they do their job and do the bare minimum and make sure that the job is getting done,” said the alumna, who wished to remain anonymous due to the personal nature of the incident, but allowed The Rider News to view university correspondence verifying her complaint. “But beyond that, they just don't seem to care about anyone's well-being.”

Title IX office

Rider's Title IX office is expected to provide support to the university community in creating a safe educational environment by addressing instances of discrimination, harassment and sexual misconduct through investigation, formal and informal problem solving and education, according to Kristine Brown, associate vice president of university marketing and communications.

The office has only two, fairly-new workers: Pauline Lloyd, director of Title IX and Equal Opportunity Compliance, and Barbara Lawrence, Title IX coordinator, vice president for diversity, equity, and inclusion and chief diversity officer. Lawrence started her tenure in Title IX in July after university restructuring, while Lloyd was hired in September.

Last school year, these roles were held by completely different employees: Thomas Johnson was the director until he left the university in March, and Rider Vice President for Human Resources, Affirmative Action/ADA and 504C Coordinator and Affirmative Action Officer Robert Stoto served as the school's Title IX coordinator before Lawrence was hired.

However, student victims said the university failed to notify them of these personnel changes.

In an email with The Rider News, Stoto said, “I did not step into a new role; I was and remain the Vice President for Human Resources. In June of this year, the Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion was formed. At that time, certain functions; including Title IX Compliance (including the university Title IX Coordinator responsibility), The Center for Diversity and Inclusion, and Student Accessibility and Support Services was moved under that umbrella.”

Student Government Association President Andrew Bernstein said in an email to The Rider News, “If students feel that processes aren't being

followed or their complaints are being ignored, that is something that needs to be addressed; we hope they will bring these concerns to the SGA so that we can consult Title IX and address any shortcomings.”

'It's completely ruined the Rider experience for me'

The senior female student, who wished to remain anonymous because of the intimate nature of the incident, has had her case open for over a year after filing a report against a male student on campus for sexual assault. The student, who shared documents with The Rider News verifying her Title IX complaint, claims that her case has been so mishandled that she now wishes to drop the charges and handle it on her own.

“At this point, I'm so fed up with how little Title IX has been responding to me and how ... little support they've given me and how little options they've given me that I think it would be more productive to just go talk to him myself under no legal pretenses, which is really awful,” she said as tears streamed down her face.

The student, who has a Rider no-contact order in place, said she had been advised by the office to have an informal resolution.

She still sees him on campus as a “constant reminder.”

“At the beginning of last year, I couldn't even look at him without feeling like I was going to start hyperventilating and throw up,” she said. “At this point, I've seen him so many times on campus ... I've lost all hope in getting the systemic justice in an already broken system. ... As much harm as I've been through with him, I've been through almost just as much harm with Title IX, and I am so tired of it.”



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Rider's rock climbing club lets students experience the thrill of scaling mountain faces.

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SECURITY BRIEFS

BY SHAUN CHORNOBROFF

Wright Response

Medical emergency. On Nov. 2 at 10:39 p.m., Public Safety was dispatched near Wright Hall for the report of a student laying on the sidewalk. Upon their arrival, it was discovered that the student was having a medical emergency, and an ambulance was quickly dispatched to respond to the area. The ambulance arrived on location and transported the student to the hospital.

Sign Slashers

Hill havoc. On Nov. 6 at 3 a.m., Public Safety was conducting rounds in Hill Hall when they noticed damage to an exit sign by unknown perpetrators. The faceplate of the sign was missing and the wires were left hanging and exposed. There were no suspects in the area, and the sign's faceplate was not located.

- Information provided by Public Safety Capt. Matthew Babcock

DISCLAIMER

Public Safety wants to remind students to secure residence hall doors and not prop doors open.

SGA holds town hall with university leaders

By Shaun Chornobroff

TOP university administrators, including Rider President Gregory Dell'Omo and Provost DonnaJean Fredeen among other higher-ups, touched on various topics concerning the student body in an open forum on Nov. 3.

The event, titled "Let's Talk Rider" and hosted by Rider's Student Government Association (SGA), included presentations and discussions about multiple topics prevalent to the student body, such as the university's transition to ADP for its payroll, deregistration and the overall state of Rider.

"With the immense amount of change over last semester and the summer, we felt it was ever so important to be having this conversation as soon as possible," said SGA President Andrew Bernstein.

A better system

Rider's Director of Procurement and Project Management Ann Marie Mead explained that the university's transition to ADP started more than a year ago.

The goal was to find a system that was more effective for the university community; however, faculty and students have had difficulties adjusting to the new system.

One of the most prevalent issues revolved around students who have more than one on-campus job, since ADP only allows one supervisor to sign off on timesheets at a time.

"That is a broad issue, and that's just the way they built it," Mead said. "Unfortunately that rule applies to Rider, where only one person, initially the primary supervisor, is the one who can sign it."

During her speech, Mead said there were approximately 150 students working multiple on-campus jobs "the last time [she] checked."

The university recently created an email for payroll issues, studentpayroll@rider.edu, and has employees dedicated to helping students get help in instances of issues with compensation.



Andrew Xon/The Rider News

Rider President Gregory Dell'Omo and other university leaders attended SGA's Town Hall to speak to students and staff.

Deregistration is a step for success

Rider's deregistration policy has also been a consistent source of discussion.

First put into place last fall, the new policy has removed a number of students with outstanding balances from classes; however, Drew Aromando, Rider's vice president of enrollment management, alongside the university's Executive Director of One Stop Services James Conlon, explained this policy was meant to help students.

"The mission of deregistration is not to put the brakes on people's path to success, it's actually to help them become more successful," said Aromando, who said Rider looked at what schools similar to it did before making a decision.

Among the concerns raised by the student body during this portion of the discussion was the

fear of losing access to Rider's resources due to deregistration, specifically the university's counseling center.

Throughout their presentations, Aromando and Conlon mentioned they send emails and text messages and have called students to try and help them pay their bills. They both emphasized that the university wants to help students, not abandon them.

"We don't cut them off of anything; all we are doing is removing them from the courses. That's it," Aromando said.

'What we're trying to do is get healthy'

In their presentation, Fredeen and Dell'Omo emphasized that the transition process the university is going through is ongoing, and decisions are made through constant evaluation of the state of the school.

When the floor was opened to questions, many revolved around Westminster Choir College, which was relocated from a separate Princeton campus to Lawrenceville in 2020. Westminster students opened up about not feeling heard as members of the Rider community and asked what the vision is for the future of the choir college.

"What we are trying to do is get the message out there that Westminster is still here, Westminster is still performing," Fredeen said, noting the difficulty the pandemic has caused in recruiting prospective students.

As the university transitions, Dell'Omo emphasized that he is attempting to formulate an institution that is functional in all facets.

"You have to not only have the resources to not only run the academic side, but all those support areas that make the academics worthwhile," Dell'Omo said. "So that's really what we're trying to do is get healthy, so we don't have to shortchange what areas to pay for."

Suspicious person lurking in Lincoln Hall arrested

By Shaun Chornobroff

AMAN who allegedly followed two Rider students to their dorm and looked into their rooms on Nov. 7 was charged with multiple crimes, according to Rider Public Safety and the Lawrence Township Police Department.

Johnny Rodriguez-Brito, 26, of Ewing, New Jersey, was charged with burglary, peering and harassment after allegedly following a pair of female Rider students into Lincoln Hall and attempting to peek under their door and into their room, according to a press release from the police department and emails from Public Safety.

In an email sent out at 1:48 p.m. on Nov. 7 alerting the university of the incident, Public Safety said the suspect, who the police department said was reportedly loitering around campus prior, was observed by the students touching himself. However, the Lawrence Police Department could not confirm that detail, stating they had no further information to release.

"Rider's top priority is to keep our campus community safe. We're grateful for the work of law

enforcement and the cooperation of our campus community during this incident," Rider's Director of Public Safety James Waldon said in a Nov. 8 email alerting the community of Rodriguez-Brito's arrest.

During the morning of Nov. 7, Public Safety was dispatched to Lincoln for a report of a suspicious person, according to Waldon.

Upon arrival, Public Safety identified an unknown male on Lincoln's third-floor. The man explained he was a delivery driver, dropping off food inside the building. The male was then escorted off campus, Waldon said in an email to The Rider News.

Waldon said that an hour later Public Safety received additional information that "prompted further investigation into the incident."

It was determined that the man identified in Lincoln had not been delivering food, at which point Lawrence Township Police was contacted and assisted with the investigation, Waldon said.

Detective James Steimle of the Lawrence Police Department was able to identify the male in Lincoln as Rodriguez-Brito and he was arrested that night, according to the police department.

Rodriguez-Brito was charged with third-degree burglary, peering — a fourth-degree offense that falls under criminal trespassing — as well as harassment, according to Lawrence Township Police.

He was then transferred to Mercer County Correctional Center and was awaiting a detention hearing when Lawrence Township Police sent out the press release at 1:10 p.m. on Nov. 8.

"We commend the students who came forward to report this incident, and are grateful for our partners in law enforcement who were able to act so quickly. This is an example of how important it is for everyone in our community to work together. Safety is everyone's responsibility," said Rider's Associate Vice President for University Marketing and Communications Kristine Brown.

The incident was under investigation, according to Lawrence Township Police. Anyone with further information is asked to contact Steimle at jsteimle@lawrencetwp.com

If any members of the Rider community see a suspicious person or activity, report it to Public Safety at 609-896-5029.



Students speak out on their experiences with Title IX

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The student said she has tried to meet with the new management of the office for her case, citing Lloyd reaching out in September for a meeting with her. When she went to meet her at their scheduled time, she said she could not find Lloyd in her office. After waiting 30 minutes for Lloyd, she left.

As director, one of Lloyd's responsibilities is "overseeing the investigation and resolution of matters arising under Title IX and the University's policies against discrimination and harassment," said Brown, who declined to comment on the salary of the director position.

Lloyd declined to be interviewed, and instead directed all communications to Lawrence.

The upset senior student said, "I'm paying thousands of dollars to get an education, not talk about how I was sexually assaulted over and over again to a bunch of different people who will probably end up leaving because they realize their job is a fraudulent way of helping people."

She added, "It's completely ruined the Rider experience for me."

The student is now looking to drop her case in hopes that she can find "peace."

"It'll look bad on them that I've dropped a charge I've had for over a year," she said.

This isn't the first time the office has been under fire by students who claim that their case was mishandled and that they have to see the person they have filed a report against on campus.

In an article published by The Rider News in April, a different female student – then a freshman – claimed that the the university failed to update her on the status of the investigation, and had no explanation on why the student she says raped her still attended Rider and remained living on campus.

'It felt like I had done something wrong'

Another concern among students who have filed cases with the office is that they report not hearing anything for months and being left ill informed about their filings.

One female student, who is now a junior, filed a case in December against a male student for a rape that occurred off campus the summer going into her sophomore year. She wished to remain anonymous because of the nature of the assault, and shared documents with The Rider News verifying her complaint to the university.

"Every time I would see him on campus when I came back to school, I would have a full-on anxiety attack and I would literally feel my throat close [and] I couldn't stop crying," she said. "It's so hard seeing a person who has violated you, and it's like it didn't even faze him. ... Most of the time, I was very afraid to come to school, which is a horrible feeling ... that's a horrible way to live your life, being afraid every day."

When she filed her case with Johnson last year, she said it wasn't exactly a welcoming environment.

"Upon going to the office, it just felt very uncomfortable, like it didn't feel safe," she said. "It felt like I had done something wrong."

After filing her complaint, Johnson offered her two options: filing a formal report, which involves police and which the student described as "frightening," or file an informal report with an informal solution.

"The informal case didn't really do anything, because at most, they literally told me, all we can do is have a no-contact order," she said.

The student decided to keep the report within university bounds and filed an informal report in January, but has yet to hear from anyone regarding her case since Johnson's departure.

"I just kind of stopped hearing less and less, and was like 'What happened?' and [then] I found out that he had left," she said. "I haven't been contacted since."

The student says she still has to see the person she filed a report against on campus.

"[I am] left to my own devices. I just keep my head down when I see him, which is very sad, but my friends kind of hold my hand a little tighter when we're around him," she said, crying. "You learn to cope after a while."

She also worked with the male student at an off-campus job, and said that it was handled completely

differently than Rider's action. "My work handled the situation so swiftly," she said. At Rider, she said, "It seems like it took years, and there was no consideration or no empathy towards victims here."

She recalled that seeing him on campus frequently was one of the hardest parts about the process.

"I would be so busy trying to keep myself alive ... It was hard to work on school and work on thriving and growing because I felt like I was just surviving," she said.

The School of Fine and Performing Arts and Title IX

One thing that all of these students have in common is that they are all a part of what was formerly called Rider's School of Fine and Performing Arts (SFPA), which they have all claimed has a serious and longstanding problem in regards to Title IX cases.

In 2020, Rider launched an independent investigation after dozens of SFPA students and alumni created a 44-page document detailing over 120 anonymous complaints including allegations of sexual harassment, racism, inappropriate relationships and body-shaming done by faculty at the university.

In those cases, as with the current ones, students spoke bitterly about poor communication from the university.

"I tried truly as hard as I possibly can with the internal resources that I have to try and make sure that this doesn't happen to anyone else in the program or at the school," said the current senior. "I just know that in the fine performing arts specifically, we have this sense of community that's based on vulnerability, and sometimes people can mistake vulnerability for consent, or they think that the vulnerability we share on stage or in class translates into our dorm rooms and personal lives."

In September, Lawrence held a meeting in one of the performing arts labs with a presentation on Title IX topics such as how to file a report and what counts as sexual misconduct.

"It felt very performative," said the junior student, who attended. "I felt very unsafe in that room, and there just seems like a lot of passive aggressiveness that I was not fond of either. It sucked having to listen to that meeting with my rapist in the room."

The senior also held the same sentiment for the meeting and claimed that it felt like a joke.

"She [Lawrence] treated it like it was a pep rally, and she was a motivational speaker," said the senior. "She made jokes, she even made jokes about the manner in which I was sexually assaulted. ... As soon as the question section began, I left crying, as did several other students."

In a Nov. 3 interview with The Rider News, Lawrence confirmed that she did hold a meeting at a performing arts lab in September, which she referred to as a "training"

"I think the goal was to have that entire program of students there, [and] there were the numbers," said Lawrence, who claims there were over 200 people in the theater.

After victims in attendance both claimed the inappropriateness of the meeting, Lawrence said that "she was not cracking jokes at all about the topic."

She also said that a student approached her afterward mentioning the unsuitability of the presentation, but Lawrence said she "apologized that she felt that way about parts of the presentation."

"I did bring some levity to a tough topic and struck a balance with the content in a way that was not all negative and disappointing given the disturbing data and information," said Lawrence in an email to The Rider News.

'No one has gotten back to me'

The overall problem with Rider's Title IX office, however, is not limited to SFPA. Bridget Gum-Egan, a junior English major, wanted to make a report with the office after a male student made her uncomfortable in one of her fall semester classes. Gum-Egan, who also works as a copy editor for The Rider News, visited Lawrence's office located in the library in early October, knocking with no response. She then sent an email to Lawrence on Oct. 4 telling

her about a possible report, and that she'd like to speak to her in person. The Rider News was able to corroborate her story through the verification of documents.

"I [didn't] want to get into it over email," said Gum-Egan.

Over a month later, and after filing an additional report with her community assistant on Oct. 13, Gum-Egan said she has yet to hear from anyone from the Title IX office.

"I am still actively in this situation," said Gum-Egan, who is still in the class with the male student. "No one has gotten back to me, and I don't really feel like I have a ton of support where I should have it."

Rider's website states, "Any person may report discriminatory harassment, sexual harassment, or sexual violence (whether or not the person reporting is the person alleged to have experienced the conduct), in person, by mail, by telephone, by video, or by email, using the contact information listed for the Title IX Coordinator (below)." Rider's website also says that a complaint may be made at any time including during non-business hours by submitting a report through Rider's online system called "Report and Support," or by emailing titleix@rider.edu.

"I just wanted to talk to someone because I had an uncomfortable interaction," said Gum-Egan. "They should be more on top of this stuff because of the urgency, because I feel unsafe and anxious every time I go to class."

The office's response

When asked about these concerns that students are facing regarding lack of responses from the office, Lawrence claimed that they "try to respond to these cases as soon as possible."

"If it's something that's urgent, we certainly want to get the student to that right person," said Lawrence. She continued, saying "We want to take care of it as expeditiously as possible. When we run into delays, a lot of it has to do with we can't get in touch with students. ... Our goal is to try to make it as comfortable as possible."

Lawrence said that Lloyd is the main person who is directly responsible for coordinating cases, along with a Title IX response team who works in multiple areas across the university, including athletics, student affairs and public safety. Lawrence also stated that the office is understaffed, a problem that has affected all sectors of the university.

"We're just trying to be creative and [figure out] who can be available as quickly as possible," said Lawrence. "I think that contributes to the time lags because we don't have a standing office of three people."

Lawrence also said that lack of student responses after the office reaches out could also be to blame for the long response times.

"Some of these things that happen that are reported that are concerning and harmful, [and] we want to take care of them as quickly as possible. So I would say one of our biggest challenges, and I'm not trying to put it on students, but sometimes it's hard to actually get a time that works," said Lawrence.

The office has received fewer than five reports thus far this semester, according to Lawrence.

In an interview with The Rider News, Lawrence acknowledged students' complaints, negative experiences and frustrations, and she apologized.

"I'm very, very sorry, and I'm always disappointed," said Lawrence. "When I did this intake work, that was the biggest thing was [for] students: 'How quickly can we get this?' ... I'm so sorry that that's still an issue here, as it is in other places. ... It's not chaos, we're just trying to build that team."

Bridget Gum-Egan is a copy editor at The Rider News. Gum-Egan had no part in the writing or editing of this story.

If you have experienced harassment or assault at Rider, or had an unsatisfactory experience with the university's Title IX office, please contact the writer of this story, Amethyst Martinez, at martinezame@rider.edu.

Survivors of sexual assault can contact Public Safety or the Title IX Office at Rider or womanspace.org, a Lawrenceville nonprofit that helps people impacted by sexual and domestic violence.



Photo courtesy of Rider University

Due to Rider's student voting turnout, Rider was one of 230 colleges recognized for their efforts.

Rider recognized as one of the best colleges for voting

By Kaitlyn McCormick

COLLEGE students across the country showed up to the polls or mailed in their ballots for the Nov. 8 congressional election, and initiatives like Rider Votes are poised to make sure even more young adults register in the future.

Rider Votes was established in 2016 to encourage and increase student voting turnout, and this August, Washington Monthly recognized Rider as one of its 230 best colleges for voting in America. This polling was out of 850 considered institutions, according to a September press release from the university.

"Thinking about voting starts months before," Director of Service and Civic Engagement Joan Liptrot explained. Last May, she said, faculty, staff and students came together to create a loose action plan for what they wanted to accomplish through Rider Votes.

The plan included measures such as incorporating voter registration into popular events on campus and coordinating community-based voter registration efforts.

While not every goal in the plan was met, Liptrot estimated that through tabling at events like Cranberry Fest and collaborating with the Student Entertainment Council, she and her team of students still spoke to about 1,000 Broncs this semester alone.

It was "discouraging" and "disheartening," Liptrot said, to encounter the handful of students that had no interest in registering or voting.



Photo courtesy of Joan Liptrot

Fidget toys, stickers and pins handed out on Rider's campus to remind students to be involved in the voting process.

"Your vote today impacts your future," Liptrot said. "We don't care what party you register for, we just want you to register. We don't care who you vote for ... we just want you to vote."

According to Rider's 2022 National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) Report from the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education out of Tufts University, the number of students who registered to vote increased from 3,339 in 2018 to 3,778 in 2020, and the number of students who voted followed that trend, increasing

from 1,556 in 2018 to 3,280 in 2020.

While it's important to contextualize these increases by remembering that 2020 was a contentious year for the presidential election, when it comes to civil engagement, presidential elections are not the only ones that matter. Liptrot said, "Most decisions that affect our daily day-to-day life happen at a local level, so that means school boards ... county commissioners, town officials, things like that."

Junior political science major Maria Castillo is one student involved with Rider Votes. She gave her perspective on student voting registration and the importance of staying informed.

"I feel like now a lot of young college students are not involved in politics," Castillo said. "They have no idea who their senators or state representatives [are]. And they have really good points when they speak about what they want to see in America, but at the same time, they have no idea what's going on politically."

Castillo stressed how important it is for students to utilize the resources available to them to make informed decisions, not only provided by the university, but also the services available on the internet to research their legislators.

For students that may not have voted in the midterms, Liptrot asks, "What do you want your community that you live in to look like? ... You need to start being a part of building that community now."

Educating students on Kristallnacht to prevent repeating history

By Felicia Roehm

ON Nov. 9, the Julius and Dorothy Koppelman Holocaust/Genocide Resource Center of the Center for Diversity and Inclusion will remember the brutal anti-Jewish acts that happened 84 years ago. For 48 hours, violent behavior broke loose in Germany, Austria and the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia by mobs urged by antisemitic Nazi officials.

The Nazis named this day Kristallnacht, which means "The Night of Broken Glass." They demolished synagogues and destroyed Jewish religious artifacts, and homes and businesses were in ruin. The word Kristallnacht refers to the thousands of broken windows seen all around the streets.

On Nov. 9 at 7 p.m., Mercer County Community College is hosting a Zoom event called, "Warnings: Kristallnacht Then and Now" that students must register to attend. The event will feature professors from Mercer County Community College and special guest Dr. John K. Roth, a philosophy professor from Claremont McKenna College. The event will include discussing and paying respect to that day in history.

A second event is taking place at Esther Raab Holocaust Museum and Goodwin Education Center in Cherry Hill on Nov. 9 at 7 p.m., with home movie footage from 1938 called "Three Minutes A Lengthening" shown.

The footage is mostly in color and portrays the only known remaining images of Jews in Nasielsk, Poland. The producer's grandfather recorded the film, and there will be a discussion about how he identified the people and places that were abolished from history. The film was co-produced by Steve McQueen who directed "12 Years a Slave," and narrated by actress Helena Bonham Carter. This event is completely free.

Howard Joffe, a professor at Rider and faculty fellow of the Julius and Dorothy Koppelman Holocaust/Genocide Resource Center, says that there are not enough people educated about Kristallnacht, and he hopes that those who attend these events will learn how what has happened in the past can be similar to what's happening in the world today.

"I hope they are sensing the possibility of parallels in the world today," said Joffe. He expressed hopes that attendees can learn about tolerance, intolerance and what actions and ideologies can start a disaster.

Kristallnacht occurred right before WWII began in 1939, and Joffe explained that these moments in history could have been prevented. Six million Jews were killed during the Holocaust, and 1.5 million of them were children. Joffe explained that many innovations and discoveries were lost due to the number of children who were killed.

Joffe said, "25% of Nobel Prizes go to Jewish

people, and all that stuff was gone, it was obliterated."

Joffe expressed the feeling that many people don't know about Kristallnacht and that more should be taught about it. He said, "You don't have to be Jewish to pay attention to the Holocaust." The same sentiment stands for being informed about Kristallnacht.

Professor Scott Alboom has been practicing Judaism his entire life and went to Hebrew school three days a week until he was 13 years old. Alboom also thinks education is one of the best ways to prevent history from repeating itself.

"With the rise of antisemitism in the U.S., we must focus on educating everyone about the past," said Alboom.

Alboom's family came to the United States from Eastern Europe in the early 1900s, but he believes that some of his family never left Europe and likely didn't survive the Holocaust. Knowing this when he learned about Kristallnacht for the first time made him incredibly upset, but Alboom believes that everyone is important when making change.

He said, "We all play a role in making sure that history does not repeat itself. We must educate and preach tolerance of all religions so that this never happens again."

RHA pairs with Rider Resource Pantry for Thanksgiving drive

By Hannah Newman

GIVING thanks on Thanksgiving is tradition, but being thanked for donating your time and energy to help others provides good reason to cherish the holiday season.

Rider has been conducting a Thanksgiving Food Drive for over 25 years now. This year, their goal is to collect 150 boxes of food donations.

The Rider Resource Pantry and the Residence Hall Association (RHA), have partnered to strengthen the positive impact that the Thanksgiving Food Drive will have on the community around Rider.

Service and Civic Engagement Director Joan Liptrot said, “Parents are making decisions whether to pay their electric bill or buy food. We want to combine efforts so that our impact can be greater.”

The food drive was developed to collect food for the community around Rider, including the Lawrence Community Center, Womanspace and Millhill Child and Family Development Center in Trenton.

Any extra food collected is donated to Arm in Arm, a crisis

ministry in Mercer County.

“This is a huge time of need in our community and lots of organizations are trying to get families to food and now more than ever with the cost of everything going up, it is even harder for families to get food,” said Liptrot.

Liptrot discussed how many students live off of the hot meals that are sold at public schools, especially due to lower costs. When children under these circumstances go home for the holiday, their ability to obtain meals is compromised until school opens back up.

As a result of this setback, Liptrot is encouraging the donations of goods such as pasta, peanut butter and jelly, so that students can continue their school meal routine at home over their break.

Not only is the drive collecting goods, Venmo, a money transferring app, and other forms of payment will also be accepted and used to buy food items, which gives everyone on campus the opportunity to get involved.

Senior psychology major and President of RHA Megan Grimshaw said, “Personally, I have always helped out my local church or food pantry and I think the students and families

in need are very appreciative of that. Donations really do make an impact and I think this partnership was a great opportunity to not only make an impact but to get RHA’s name out there.”

The Thanksgiving drive allows students to get involved in the community around them and assist students that they may pass everyday without having known their story.

“This is the faculty, staff and students time to come together and be thankful for what we have and what we can do for others,” Administrative Specialist Victoria McLendon said. “If we all give a few items or a few dollars we can have a meaningful impact on families that live in our community that may not have a basic item we consider special on this special day.”

Any questions or concerns regarding the drive can be sent to rha@rider.edu or jliprot@rider.edu.

Features and Entertainment editor Tristan Leach is a member of Residence Life Association and did not have a part in the writing or editing of this piece.

Photo courtesy of Megan Grimshaw

New club on campus calls all graphic design enthusiasts

By Adrianna Jaccoma

LOOKING around at a Rider club fair, you’ll see that most of the majors in the communication department have their own clubs that correspond. The Rider News for journalism students, 107.7 The Bronc for broadcasting students and Rider University Network for film and television students to name a few, but one area of study that has been unrepresented is graphic design.

On Nov. 1, a group of students gathered for the first meeting of the graphic design club. Students packed into Fine Arts room 223, eager to learn more about the new club and make friends who share their interests.

According to an email sent out on Oct. 31, the graphic design club will focus on developing connections and portfolios. Students will also learn about potential career options and opportunities in the field. The club will host events that will give members the opportunity to gain professional experience within the graphic design field.

President of the graphic design club, junior graphic design major Jenna Krauss, realized Rider was missing something when she first toured the school.

“While I was touring colleges in the beginning of my college journey, a lot of the other schools had graphic design clubs and Rider did not,” said Krauss.

With the help of professor Jessica Oliano, Krauss and a group of students worked on the club over the summer and were able to get the club quickly approved by Rider’s Student Government Association (SGA) in the beginning of the fall semester.

Junior graphic design major Eva Tang had a role helping the club form before the fall semester.

“Over the summer, I helped Jenna [Krauss] and Adrienne [Unfreed]... and we were preparing the constitution and writing the bylaws [for the club],” said Tang.

The club activities were soon underway when students played a game of Gartic Phone and showed off their artistic skills.

The rules of the game are simple yet complex. Each player has to write a sentence about anything, then the next player has to draw that sentence. The third player then has to guess what the player drew. The game keeps on going from there until the last

round. At the end of the game, everyone gets to watch the thread and see how the prompt started versus how it ended.

Sophomore marketing major Caheil Powell participated in the fun.

“Even when we played the game today, a lot of people had different styles, and I feel like I’m already learning so much from them,” said Powell.

When the drawing and guessing round was over, students watched each other’s guesses and drawings appear on the screen. Students enjoyed watching what each other drew and how prompts went from one thing to the next.

“I don’t get to be around graphic design all the time... I needed something that can get me out of my comfort zone and back into [a] creative space, that I could express myself and be around like minded individuals,” said Powell.

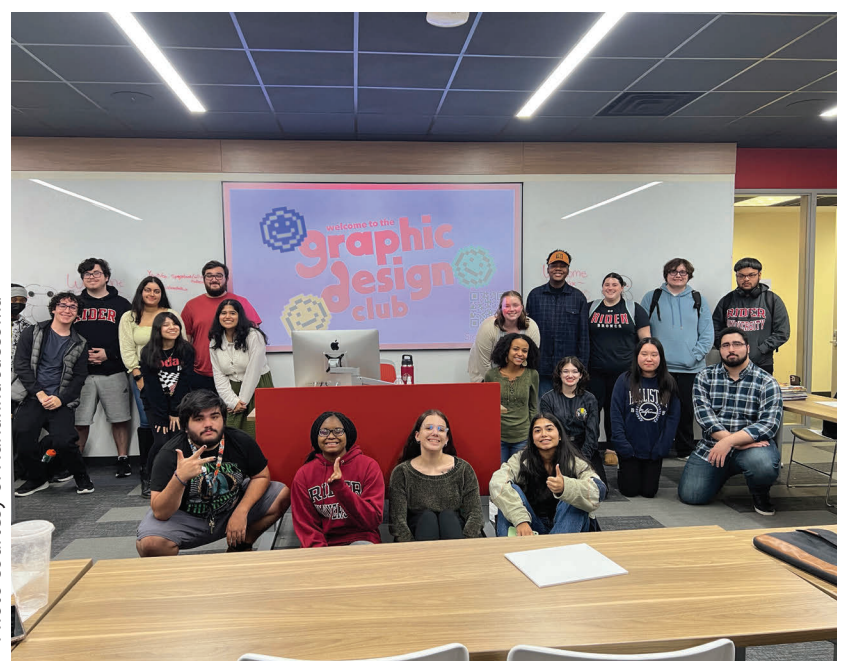
There are many goals that the club wants to achieve. The main one being a sense of community.

“We want to be a community for graphic design students... and also a way for kids in graphic design to grow,” Krauss said.

Graphic design manager Adrienne Unfreed is a member of this club and did not have a part in the writing or editing of this piece.



Students work on their designs individually in the Fine Arts building.



Members pose in front of the welcome sign at their first graphic design club meeting.

Photo courtesy of Adrianna Jaccoma

Photo courtesy of Adrianna Jaccoma

Photo courtesy of Anthony Rossidivito



Junior computer science major and secretary of the rock climbing club, **Ryan Carter** (left), observes a fellow climber with risk manager, **Rob Weidlich**, a sophomore marketing major.

Photo courtesy of Anthony Rossidivito



Junior business analytics major, **James Ehring**, shows off his skills while climbing to the top of a wall.

Rocking climbing club lets students reach new heights

By Asia McGill

ANTHONY Rossidivito, a senior criminal justice major, came to Rider as a transfer student in Fall 2021, and by the spring semester, became the president of Rider Club Rock Climbing.

“When I got to Rider, the first person I actually met at the SRC [Student Recreation Center] was the president of the rock climbing club,” Rossidivito said.

By fate, Rossidivito was no rookie to rock climbing, beginning some of his first climbs in his teenage years.

Since his inauguration, Rossidivito has been able to coach members that are new to the sport, teaching them techniques such as properly shifting their weight or keeping their body close to the wall.

Climbers of all experience levels are welcome, ranging from first-time climbers to those who have up to six years of experience.

“I wouldn’t exactly call myself an expert ... but I’m able to help those who are new to it. It’s always good to have those who have been climbing for four years, maybe six years,” Rossidivito said.

Rock climbing is a sport that involves more than reaching the top of a boulder or wall; it is strategic,

and requires physical and mental synergy.

“It’s not just pulling yourself up ... it’s using your whole body and mind connection,” Rossidivito said.

Junior computer science major Ryan Carter stands as secretary of the club, and has a connection to climbing that dates back to his childhood.

“As a kid I found it interesting ... [and] I do love puzzles ... so rock climbing was a nice way to get the best of both worlds,” Carter said.

Carter mentioned not only his enjoyment of climbing, but being able to climb affordably.

“It’s a great value for being around people who can also help you ... it’s a win-win-win,” Carter said.

The club meets for practice on Tuesday and Friday nights from 7-9 p.m. at the Rockville Climbing Center Inc., just 10 minutes away from campus.

There, climbers are able to test their skills with walls ranging by difficulty. A variety of different walls allows for beginners and experts alike to gain experience.

“We get them going on to the walls, they practice ... we make sure they get used to it at least, especially falling back,” Rossidivito said.

During the spring semester, the club switches to outdoor climbs where their techniques are challenged the most.

“It gives you the ability to actually go outside and see what an actual rock feels like and how you can climb one,” he said.

Though Rider Club Rock Climbing is recreational, members are encouraged to enter climb competitions. If a member is interested in competing, the coaches train them more extensively, preparing them for new challenges they may face.

Each spring, the club opens their gym to all Rider students where they share slices of pizza, inform about the organization, and of course, climb.

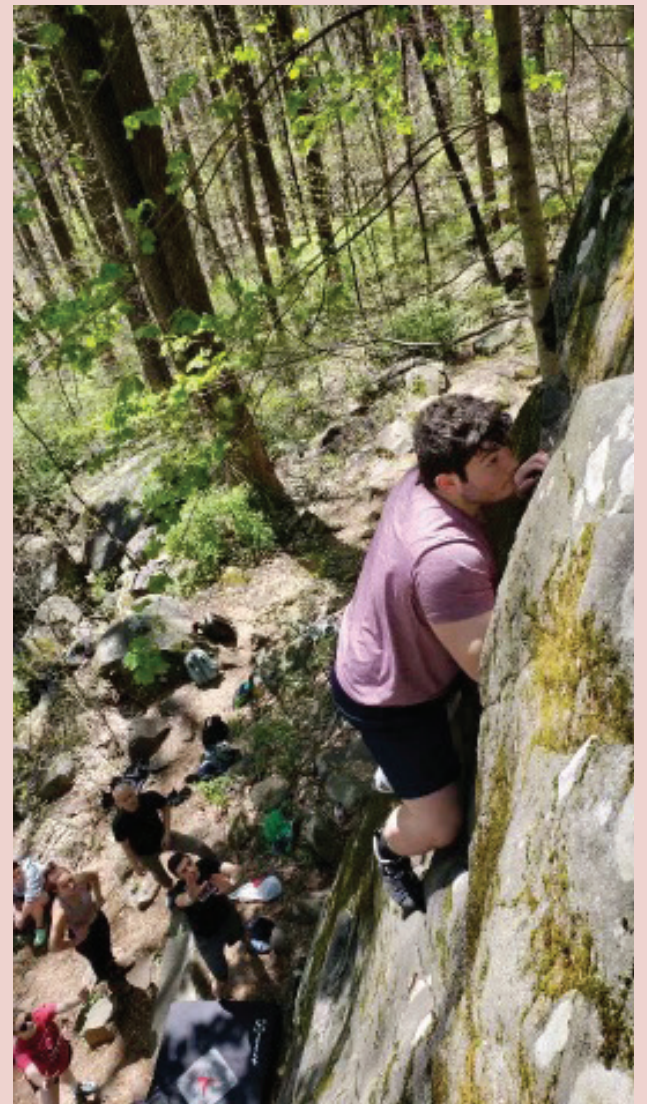
The Rider Club Rock Climbing can be contacted on their Instagram @riderbroncclimbers, or through their profile on Bronc Nation.

Photo courtesy of Anthony Rossidivito



Anthony Rossidivito belays (a running rope) to sophomore film and TV major, **C Colleton**.

Photo courtesy of Anthony Rossidivito



Senior criminal justice major, **Anthony Rossidivito** is president of Rider Rock Climbing Club.

Rider professor shares her love for traditional Indian dance

By Felicia Roehm

PROFESSOR Merli V. Guerra wore a red and beige pleated skirt called a fan while trying not to sweat under the sweltering lights. Her costume was made out of silk and a silver, sparkly belt was wrapped tightly around her waist. She had silver jewelry on her wrists and neck with a large, round, white headdress secured to the back of her head in her dark brown hair. Her nails were bright red, matching the accent color on her ensemble which is mainly the color of sand.

Guerra's movements were grounded in the floor while the scarlet red paint on the bottom of her feet seeped into the stage's floor with every stomp. The bells that covered her ankle rang with every step on the dark black stage floor. Her one arm was raised with her index finger touching her thumb. Guerra's other arm was lowered to her chest with her hand in a fist. With every move she made, she was telling a story. The narrative was told through her small, defined ruby lip curved to the left with her right eyebrow raised. Guerra's left hip was lifted, and her expression looked fierce.

Guerra was performing a traditional Indian dance called Odissi.

"Originally it started as a temple dance and it was devotional to the gods of that temple, and that is why we wear these headdress piece," Guerra said. "All of that costuming, jewelry and the headdress that we wear is pertaining back to when we were temple dancers."

When the dance form began in the temple, it was looked at as an honorable way of expression until colonization when the Odissi dancers were driven out. The dancers had nowhere to go and turned to prostitution. Many years later, when people wanted the dance form to return to being seen in a positive way, most of the Odissi dancers had passed away. For it to be resurrected, people had to go back to the older dancers who were still alive and look at the original temples and seeing the sculptures of the Odissi dancers helped them learn the dance moves in its true form.

During Guerra's freshman year of college at Mt. Holyoke College as a dance major, she took a beginner classical Indian dance class taught by Guru Ranjana Devi and fell in love with the art form of a culture she had no prior experience with.

"I had only ever done ballet previously. That was my strict upbringing, and I was really amazed by how emotional and expressive the facial expressions were in this dance form, and my use of hands, that was really different for me from ballet," Guerra said. "The fact that I had to weigh myself into the ground opposed to pulling myself up out of the ground, it was a huge transition for me."

Near the end of the semester, Guerra asked Devi if she teaching anymore classes. Devi wasn't teaching anymore classes at Mt. Holyoke College, but was teaching at the University of Massachusetts nearby. It was a year-long class to learn all about the history of India, including politics and culture. Devi told Guerra to take the class because she wanted Guerra to learn the history of Indian dance before continuing to learn anymore of the dance style itself. Guerra took the year-long class and went to India to study these different dance forms.

When the year ended, Devi invited Guerra to join her company, Nataraj: Performing Arts of India in Amherst, Massachusetts. She performed many times with the company, and when Guerra graduated in 2009, the company was invited to perform on tour in Japan with the dance company Kitanodai Gagakukai. She was one of four invited to go on tour. After the tour, Guerra was still actively performing with the company until 2017.

Odissi is the only classical Indian dance form that uses silver jewelry. In every other form of Indian dance, the dancers are dressed in gold. In Odissi, the musician and the dancer do a call and response. If the musician plays a song, then the dancer can respond using their ankle bells and footwork. Odissi dancers also paint their hands and the bottom of their feet so no matter where a person is sitting in the audience, the audience member can see the performers hands and feet clearly. "We do that with the intention of being able to really extend our hands and our feet

and have people see them from further away because the hands, the mudras, are so important," said Guerra. "Those are super important for storytelling purposes, and then our feet are really important for the rhythm. We also have ankle bells that help emphasize that rhythm as we perform."

The mudras are symbols made with someone's hands to portray a mood or emotion. There are similarities between Odissi's mudras and American Sign Language (ASL). Guerra explained that she once had a student that was fluent in ASL and told Guerra that in both Odissi and ASL, sweeping the hand across the face means beautiful. Guerra said, "There are some similarities there that are really interesting to me, like, we've come to this from two different continents and two different sources like American Sign Language and classical Indian dance."

Rider alumna Tanisha Anand, who majored in dance, is from Delhi, India, has been learning Bollywood dance since she was in the second grade. She grew up watching Bollywood movies and describes it as, "musical theater on camera." In Bollywood, the dancers are moving a certain way to depict what the situation is in the movie. Anand said she loves, "the energy, the rhythm and of course expressions. I do not like expressionless dancing, and I think if you're communicating a message through your dancing, there should be facial expressions for sure."

She loves Bollywood because there is no set technique. In Bollywood, the main goal is to have fun. Anand said, "There is diversity in your expressions, there is diversity of what story you are trying to tell, the costumes are colorful, the music and the rhythm is different." She has continued Bollywood and other forms of Indian dance since graduating.

Junior arts and entertainment industry management student Megyn Kukulka, who minors in dance, was first introduced to classical Indian dance her freshman year when she took a history of choreography class taught by Guerra. Kukulka had no previous knowledge of classical Indian dance and said, "Traditional Indian dance was really interesting to learn because it is very different than any other form I have ever learned. It is very intricate with the hand movements, but then also very grounded in the steps. It is also a lot about telling stories through movement, which is a lot similar to everything I've done in the past, except it's more about emoting with pictures rather than with just overall emotional movement."

Kukulka learned traditional Indian dance again last year in World Dance and Improvisation taught by Guerra. Learning it a second time, she explained she felt more prepared.

"It was a lot of fun to kinda step back into it. It was just almost like a different experience because I was surrounded by different people and I really enjoyed it," Kukulka said. She recommends learning about different cultures and trying something new from someone experienced.

In 2010, Guerra opened her own dance company in Boston, but still continued performing with Nataraj: Performing Arts of India. Her dance company is called Luminarium Dance Company, luminarium meaning "to give off light or to enlighten mankind." Her company is award-winning, and focuses on nontraditional lighting design. She is also a writer, award winning filmmaker, and teaches Odissi at Rutgers University. Guerra said, "I love how expressive it is, I love the storytelling nature of it and I like that I can be kinda sassy as I'm performing it. There's this posturing that I can do where it's like I'm telling you this story and I can be very emotive with the different characters that are involved. That's the part that I like, the acting."



Photo courtesy of Meril V. Guerra

Meril V. Guerra, an adjunct professor of dance, performs Odissi, a traditional dance that utilizes silver jewelry rather than the usual gold.



Photo courtesy of Meril V. Guerra

Meril V. Guerra, poses for a photo and displays her red painted feet. The paint allows audience members to see the dance from anywhere.

The SAT is not a proper representation of students skills

If every athlete was given one shot at scoring, one shot that would determine a college's offer, is the athlete really being evaluated on their skill, or are they being evaluated on one achievement they made? One opportunity to prove an individual's true potential and skill is simply impossible, and that is why all colleges and universities should shift to test-optional acceptance in order to see the potential talent and intelligence of students without considering a student's score on a singular test.

The Scholastic Aptitude Test has become a determining factor for a student's access to opportunities, where they will go to school, how much money they will get and essentially what options they will have in their future. Students are trained throughout their entire academic career to not get discouraged when they fail a test because there will always be another one to make up for it. However, if a student doesn't get a score at or above a certain designated level, they may not get accepted into the college they hope to attend.

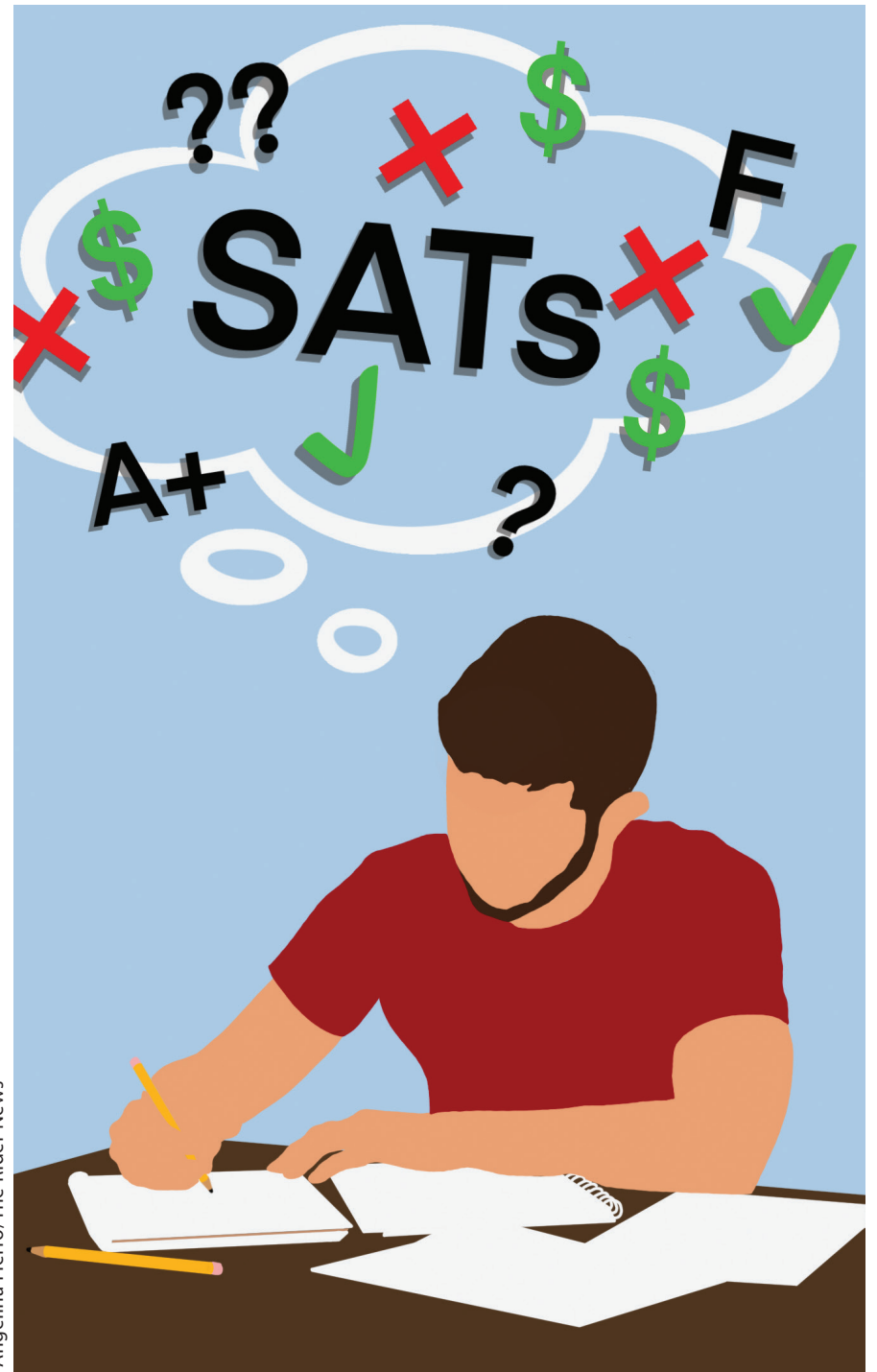
Although students have the chance to retake this test, they can only do so when the test is offered during the year, and in some cases, students have to travel out of town to find a place that is giving the test at a time that works best for them. Additionally, students are charged \$25 if they want to change their testing location and charged \$31 to get their score back in a time range of one to four days, which in some cases is critical if students need to meet an application deadline and the test itself is \$60.

The SAT will only send a student's score to four schools for free, and if students wish to apply to more than four schools, it is an additional \$12 per school thus discouraging students from applying to as many schools as they can. However, the fight to get to college involves battling financial conflicts, transportation inconveniences and endless hours studying the algorithm of this test, which takes away time from their regular study hours.

Many students are encouraged to get private tutors for the SAT, which can cost hundreds of dollars. A test that has to be studied intensely requires training and preparation, as well as expenses, is not a test that evaluates a student's academic performance. Instead, it is a test that evaluates a student's place in society and illuminates the disadvantages students face growing up in terms of money, transportation and time that may have to be spent working rather than studying for this test. The fight to become successful in life is a battle that will be faced regardless of how intelligent an individual is. Adversity has built the most monumental figures of success in society.

Howard Schultz, the founder of Starbucks, who was born in poverty, was rejected over 200 times when he proposed the idea to turn Starbucks coffee bean company into the \$100 billion cafe that it is today. This is a prime example that all students will be thrown into the competitive world of finding a job and sustaining a sufficient living despite how knowledgeable on one test they may be. That is why students should be recognized for their academic abilities rather than the result of a standardized test. This encourages the chance that they may get to go from impoverished to experiencing the unimaginable.

*Hannah Newman
sophomore journalism major*



Angelina Fierro/The Rider News

THE Rider News

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Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons **SAT**

JUNIOR JOURNALS

Behind smiling eyes: mental health and misconceptions

ONE week. That's how long my dad gave me to find a therapist before he would do it for me. If I could not cough up a name by Friday then that meant I was incapable of helping myself, which wasn't a bad thing, but after years of struggling with underlying anxiety and toying with the idea of therapy with no follow through, my parents decided to put their foot down for me.

One year. That's how long I've been logging onto a telehealth appointment every Thursday at 4 p.m. on the dot to talk through my moderate anxiety and depression. I've always known that I had anxiety on some level, constantly running a tight ship, booking every second of every day in an endless cycle of burnout, a genetic predisposition if I'm being entirely transparent, but I'm still realizing at 20-years-old how misconstrued my idea of mental health was.

I wake up every morning and put myself together for the day. I perform well in my classes on a full-tuition scholarship, I carry a 3.98 GPA and work two jobs successfully. I have friends and ambitions and a family that loves me. That's not what depression looks like – until it is.

I've always had some weird reverse imposter syndrome about fully acknowledging that I was struggling with something. This intangible feeling that followed me everywhere and yet slinked into the shadows when I tried to grasp it and pick it apart. Anxiety and depression did not fit into this gold-plated picture of perfection I had pigeon-holed myself into, and neither did being gay.

I wouldn't say that my issues with mental health stemmed exclusively from my sexuality, but I wouldn't be telling the truth if I didn't acknowledge their linking. I spent so much of my young adult life under this pretense that if I could get the best grades, be the highest achieving, have the most friends, be pretty and likable, be perfect, that it would make up for the fact that I wasn't straight.

While I was lucky enough to grow up in a household that was loving and accepting, I would be lying through my teeth if I told you it didn't feel like the world was crashing down when I realized that there were people in this world who would hate me for something I could not change. So I decided that I had to overcompensate, and that behavior is something that I'm still dismantling.

Additionally, I think as a college student, it is so easy to fall into this trap of thinking, "Well I'm supposed to be overwhelmed, this is what I signed up for," or, "It's that point in the semester, things are just picking up right now." And, while on some level those ideas are true, there is also a line at which you need to decide whether or not your relationship with your mental health is serving you.

Mine wasn't.

I found it so easy to minimize what I was struggling with the second I started to feel marginally better - until the cycle started all over again.

It was hard for me to fully see what depression was and how it presented itself in my life until I finally started going to therapy and allowed myself to acknowledge that I was not okay.

I may get out of bed everyday and step into the world seemingly ready to go, but my depression is the overwhelming mental and emotional exhaustion that makes that everyday process really, really hard, some days whether I want to admit it or not.

I may bounce from class to class to job one and then job two throughout the week and look like I'm handling everything fine, but my depression and anxiety, and the heaviness they bring are more often than not an incessant background noise that never seems to fully go away.

Depression and anxiety are the phone calls to friends through tears that say, "I don't want to do this anymore, there's nothing wrong, but it still feels like there's everything wrong."

They are the deep breaths and moments of grounding that weave their way into days that are particularly overwhelming.

To use the most cliché of sentiments, you really never know exactly what another person is experiencing or what hurdles they're leaping over until they tell you - and sometimes they won't.

Mental health does not have to be this taboo topic, and it certainly does not exist strictly in black and white.

No matter what you are carrying, you are not weak on the days that your struggles feel like the heaviest weights on the planet. You are not dramatic or attention-seeking for being vulnerable about your experiences. And you are never a burden for asking for help.

*Kaitlyn McCormick
junior journalism major*



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

LETTER FOR THE EDITOR

Professor calls for new leadership at Rider

RECENT stories in The Rider News report how rolling cuts purported to be required by university finances, like others before, are hurting and stressing students and staff. Students quite rightly point out that they're paying a lot of money to be on the receiving end of diminished opportunities and hollowed-out academic programs. A different Rider was marketed to students, raising a profound ethical issue.

Honor students in liberal arts should not find it difficult to complete their capstone requirements. Students should not be mourning diminished opportunities in the fine and performing arts — always a target of Rider's current business-obsessed administration. There was also the end of an opportunity to acquire a career-enhancing credential through the Leadership Development Program. This administration has a history of, and knack for, trashing Rider's assets.

With a my-way-or-the-highway approach, Rider President Gregory Dell'Omo, unlike truly collaborative leaders, has failed to seek and utilize the ideas and energy of Rider faculty and staff to build enrollment and preserve Rider excellence. His administration continually seeks to increase the number of the less qualified to teach in Rider's classrooms. Very significant for students and the university's reputation, Rider is no longer a coveted place of employment for outstanding faculty prospects.

In seven years, the president and his team, who are generously compensated and who were rewarded when others were not, have been unable to establish financial stability for Rider. They've demonstrated an inability to turn things around. It is well known that decisions made and actions taken prior to the pandemic, proposed by the president and accepted by the Board of Trustees, significantly worsened Rider's financial situation. These have led to tens of millions in lost university revenue and many millions in costs. Rider students, faculty and staff are absolutely living with the effects of those decisions today, including the cuts reported by The Rider News.

After eight long years - abundant time - it's clear that the strategy and efforts of the president and current team are not working. A telling statistic: 73% of Rider's first-year students this year are from New Jersey. The continued reliance on New Jersey for students is, and has been for years, astonishing and a recipe for disaster. Is this the best we can do? It certainly is not.

Institutions similar to Rider would have sought replacements at the top long before now, and I can tell you that business organizations would have intervened long before now to stop this downward spiral. Rider's business-trained president knows this; examples of this abound. It is well-established that you cannot cut your way to restoring excellence,

and Rider had excellence in my time there. This administration has no confident view of the way forward.

Time is of the essence, and it's time for Rider's board to take action and bring to Rider individuals who believe in collaboration and can turn things around. The top team has been extended too much rope — that horse has been ridden too long - and it's time for that to end. The long-overdue and recently announced capital campaign can easily be transitioned to new campus leadership.

*Gerald D. Klein
Emeritus professor of organizational behavior and management*



Courtesy of Gerald D. Klein

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Johnson raised to rafters; Broncs humbled by NJIT



Andrew Xon/The Rider News

The women's basketball team and coaching staff pose for a photo with **Stella Johnson** after her emotional acceptance speech.

By **Jake Tiger**

A BRILLIANT white banner now hangs as a permanent fixture in Alumni Gym next to the likes of Rider legends '93 Darrick Suber and '08 Jason Thompson, with the No. 4 jersey of '20 Stella Johnson becoming the first-ever to be retired in Rider women's basketball history on Nov. 7.

"This was something that had to be done," said Head Coach Lynn Milligan. "There was no question that Stella's number needed to be hanging in the rafters here. This program is built on heart and soul, and Stella exemplifies that every single day."

Taking place before Rider's 68-60 season-opening loss to NJIT, the ceremony celebrated the illustrious career of the program's most decorated athlete.

Johnson's crowning achievement as a Bronc was her 2019-20 season, in which she led the Broncs to their first Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) regular season championship by leading the nation in scoring with 24.8 points per game. After COVID-19 unexpectedly canceled that year's postseason, top-seeded Rider was deemed the MAAC Champion for

the first time in program history.

Johnson left Rider women's basketball as its all-time leading scorer with 2,167 points, shattering '94 Debbie Snyder's prior record by 451 points.

"When you get to an arena, you see players up there all the time, but I never thought I would see mine," said Johnson after the ceremony. "I don't think I really processed it until I actually walked out. ... I was very emotional... seeing everybody in the stands."

On April 17, 2020, the Phoenix Mercury's drafted Johnson 29th overall in the WNBA Draft, making her the first player in program history to reach the pinnacle of professional women's basketball.

Across two seasons, Johnson played in 15 WNBA games, including a 25-point performance with the Washington Mystics. Now, she plans to continue her professional career overseas with hopes of one day rejoining the WNBA.

"Stella's a professional," said Milligan. "She's gonna be back in the [WNBA] because she does the little things that I think a lot of teams want, so we'll see her there again."

It was important for Milligan and the Broncs to cap Johnson's special night with a win in their first regular season game, but perhaps those jitters got the best of them, as they fell to the NJIT Highlanders 68-60 for the first time in nearly a decade.

"We didn't hold up our end of the bargain," said Milligan. "We don't want to lose in front of our home fans. We wanted to win for Stella tonight. ... We just didn't get it done."

Rider quickly fell behind in the opening quarter, NJIT already claiming a 19-13 lead by controlling the paint and setting an imposing, physical tone for the rest of the game.

"I just don't think we were, overall, ready for the physicality that they brought to the game," said graduate student guard Amanda Mobley. "We weren't ready to combat that and play as hard as we should have."

NJIT led by as much as 18 in the third quarter, but slowly, the Broncs chipped away at the deficit, using superb play on both ends to spark a 15-2 and eventually cut the lead down to six late in the fourth.

In the fourth quarter, Rider shot 41% from the field, while the defense held the Highlanders to a measly 25%.

This was a completely different team.

"It was just an emotional shift," said senior center Victoria Toomey. "We came into this game knowing what we needed to do, we just didn't do it from the jump. ... If we start that way, it's a completely different game."

But Rider's comeback effort proved to be too little, too late, and the Highlanders held on for a well-deserved 68-60 win on one of the most important nights in Rider women's basketball history.

"When push came to shove, we just made too many mistakes tonight," said Milligan. "That was one of 30 and we got 29 more chances to get this right, and we will."

Before they head to Ireland for the MAAC/Atlantic Sun Conference (ASUN) Dublin Basketball Challenge, the Broncs will undertake a less strenuous road trip, visiting Drexel on Nov. 10 and St. Francis Brooklyn on Nov. 13 in search of their first win.

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Fouls and trip-ups sink Broncs in opening night

By **Carolo Pascale**

THE opening game of the Rider men's basketball regular season ended in heartbreak as a second-half stumble sent Rider home with a 66-65 loss to the Providence Friars on Nov. 8.

"I'm proud of our guys, and I'm proud of our effort," said Head Coach Kevin Baggett. "We gave ourselves a chance to win but didn't come away with it. There's no moral victory, but I am proud of how our guys persevered and continued to fight and get back into this game."

With a full roster ready to make a statement, Rider stormed into the newly named Amica Mutual Pavilion in Providence, Rhode Island, jumping to a quick 8-4 lead off the hot hands of senior guard Dwight Murray Jr., who nailed two 3-pointers in the opening minutes.

Despite having the early lead, the Broncs made a change on the posts quickly, subbing out graduate student forward Ajiri Ogemuno-Johnson for junior forward Tariq Ingraham to add more muscle on the boards.

Rider continued the torrid start by amassing a 32-17 lead with 5:32 left to go in the half, which was spurred on by senior forward Mervin James, who was making his return from a sprained shoulder, and senior guards Allen Powell and Allen Bertrand. Bertrand had a nice play earlier in the half, saving a ball that deflected off a Friar before it went out of play.

Providence got back in the game after a familiar foe for the Broncs returned: foul trouble. Rider was victim to a large amount of fouls, with Providence being in the bonus territory with nine minutes left in the half.

The Broncs continued hit the 40-point mark off a Bertrand 3-pointer with 1:16 left to go in the half. Rider did not score any more in the half, and it ended with the Broncs leading 40-30.

The Broncs shot a great 47.2% from the field and a fantastic 60% from the 3-point line. Murray and James both had 10 points, Powell had eight and Bertrand had six in the first half.

"We weren't scared. We came in, we felt like we're going to win, and we still felt like we were going to win towards the end," said Murray. "I just felt like in the beginning we were more physical than them."

The second half was a completely different beast. The Broncs essentially vanished from the court for the first 12 minutes, letting Providence go on a very long run that gave the Friar's their first lead of the game with 10:40 left to go in the half.

Providence continued to run the floor as it pushed the lead further; however, Rider finally responded after Murray hit a 3-pointer with 4:45 left.

Fouls continued to haunt the Broncs as both James and Ogemuno-Johnson fouled out in the minutes leading up to the Murray 3-pointer, with Powell also having four fouls.

"Guys need to be smarter. They can't reach in the open court. We've got to block out better," said Baggett.

As the minutes continued to run down, the fire the Broncs had in the first half returned as they were able to claw back into the game in the final two minutes with Powell and Murray leading the charge.

Rider cut the lead to just a single point on a mid-range jumper off a rebound from Powell, putting the score at 66-65 with 39 seconds left.

On what was most likely going to be the last possession of the play, Providence put up a few chances, but a rebound of the rim bounced through the hands of redshirt senior forward Tyrell Bladen and bounced off a Friar player.

With 10.1 seconds remaining and a chance to

win the game, the Broncs got the ball to Powell who tripped over his own foot just outside of the 3-point line and lost the ball, sealing the Broncs' fate with a 66-65 loss.

"Really I just tripped over my own feet," said Powell. "That's basically it."

The Broncs shot 9-for-14 (64.4%) from the 3-point line and 24-for-58 (41.4%) from the field. Murray led the Broncs with 18 points, and Powell finished with 15. Rider ended the game with 15 fouls.

The Broncs will return to the court of the Alumni Gym on Nov. 12 to face-off against their proximal foe: TCNJ.



Carolo Pascale/The Rider News

Senior guard **Dwight Murray Jr.** (left) led the Broncs with 18 points, while senior guard **Allen Powell** (right) scored 15 points in the loss.

CLUB ICE HOCKEY

Seeing red: Broncs take down Marist, Montclair



Jake Tiger/The Rider News

Senior defenseman **Eddie Coyne** hits an encroaching Marist attacker.

By **Jake Tiger**

HAVING lost four consecutive games, a 3-6 Rider club ice hockey team went into another two-game weekend feeling desperate and frustrated. After some soul searching in their first game, the Broncs came to life, snagging victories against both the Red Foxes and Red Hawks to curtail their slide.

‘Compete for each other’

In the midst of a four-game losing streak, Rider hosted the Marist Red Foxes on Nov. 4 with hopes of turning its season around. However, against an opponent it bested 4-0 last year, Rider continued its losing ways for much of the game, playing sloppy, impatient hockey.

Fortunately for the Broncs, they made a late push off the back of two goals from junior forward Anthony Zito, and in overtime, freshman forward Aaron Pape secured the 3-2 comeback with the game-winner.

“We saw that we definitely were the better team in terms of talent, but we weren’t the better team in terms of cohesiveness, and that’s a struggle,” said

Head Coach Sean Levin. “One of the big mindsets that we really preach... is to compete for each other, not with each other, and I think we did a lot of competing with each other tonight.”

For most of the contest, Levin hollered from the bench, urging his men to communicate more. In reality, the Broncs were doing plenty of communicating with each other, only it was in the form of arguing.

The dysfunction allowed Marist to take the lead midway through the second period, as the Broncs failed to get anything of their own going offensively.

“Just as a whole, we weren’t playing our game,” said freshman forward Aaron Pape. “We were playing down to them, but towards the end of the third we started to come together.”

With just over seven minutes left in the game, Zito, who was scoreless on the season, hopped on to the ice for sophomore forward Cole Schneider.

Thirty-five seconds later, a stolen puck deep in Red Fox territory gave Zito a one-on-one opportunity.

Gliding in, Zito threw a fake to his right. The goalie bit and widened his stance. Zito pulled the puck back, slicing it through the five-hole and into the twine to knot the game at 1-1.

“We’d been shooting all game and we just couldn’t connect,” said Zito. “I just had the confidence, and I got the opportunity to come in on a breakaway. It kind of gave us a jump.”

Zito’s first goal of the season could not have been more timely, as it lifted the Broncs out of their lethargic funk and charged the team with an energy that had previously been missing.

Not even two minutes later, senior defenseman Eddie Coyne came crashing down on the left side of the goal and had a good look at the net. Instead, he opted for the extra pass to Zito who only had to tap the puck in to suddenly put Rider up 2-1.

While the Broncs thrived on offense, their defense was still fallible. With 2.4 seconds left, the equalizer slipped by freshman goalie Shawn Mika, and the Red Foxes sent the game to overtime with a score of 2-2.

Four minutes into the overtime period, Pape

squeezed in a shot from the bottom of the left circle to ice the Red Foxes and Rider’s four-game losing streak.

“We still have a lot to really improve on before we even consider ourselves a team that can be competing in the Southeast [division],” said Levin. “We have a lot to work on, but I’m happy for the boys.”

Broncs of prey

After their completed comeback effort against Marist, the Broncs traveled to Montclair State on Nov. 5 for a bout with the Red Hawks.

With lessons learned from their game the day before, Rider cruised to a 4-1 win over Montclair State behind a strong performance from Mika, and goals from four different players.

“I think it was, it was an understanding that the scoring changes are going to come when we play a team game,” said Levin. “Tonight, we really buckled down on doing some simple things.”

Coyne got the Broncs on the board 10 minutes into the opening period, scoring on a shot that he lobbed all the way from Montclair’s blue line.

While primarily anchoring the Rider defense, Coyne has been essential all over the ice. The senior leads the Broncs in points (12) and assists (8).

“[Coyne’s] been kind of our quiet calming factor,” said Levin. “On the back end, he logs a ton of minutes. ... The game is slow for him. Sometimes we want to see Eddie’s intensity pick up, but it’s ironic when you think about it... he’s playing very intensely, but he’s so calm with the puck that it comes off as he’s not... and it does allow him to make those cute plays.”

The Red Hawks did get by Mika in the second period with a well-placed shot, but the Broncs were quick to respond. Schneider and junior forward Mark McDermitt scored within five minutes of each other, sending Rider into the third with a 3-1 lead.

Last to the party was Pape, who scored on back-to-back nights to wrap up the Broncs’ fruitful weekend.

Having improved to 5-6, Rider will confront much-anticipated dates with Penn State on Nov. 11 and the University of Delaware on Nov. 12. The Penn State game begins at 8 p.m. and will be streamed on Twitch.

MEN’S SOCCER

Inverso says goodbye to Rider with a win

By **Shaun Chornobroff**

AFTER an underwhelming opening half in Rider’s Nov. 2 matchup against Canisius, men’s soccer Head Coach Charlie Inverso knew he had one more halftime outburst left in him.

“I really wanted to win this game, and I thought we started really sluggish,” said Inverso, who was coaching his final game after announcing his retirement the previous day. “You know, I let them have it.”

What ensued was an exceedingly satisfactory effort and a 1-0 win, courtesy of a 65th minute goal from sophomore midfielder Jack McGeechan.

Despite a season that was abnormally unsuccessful to what had become customary during his tenure, McGeechan’s goal secured a fitting end to what can only be described as a resoundingly successful tenure for Inverso.

“It feels really good to get him out with a win, and I think he deserves it after having such great seasons for the long time he’s been here,” McGeechan said.

Leaving the school with three Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) titles, Inverso reversed the fate of a program that was near the conference’s basement upon his arrival, turning it into one of its most formidable in his 12-year stint at the school.

“I’ve been blessed. I never thought when I took over that I’d experience the things that I did here,” Inverso said in a teary-eyed post-game interview, that occurred after a bevy of hugs and a celebratory gatorade bath from his players.

“Leaving with a win, really, really feels good,” he said.

Despite the plethora of accolades he has received, like being National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA) Northeast Region Coach of the Year in 2015, among other accolades, Inverso has

never been one to get caught in the awards or the wins and losses.

This job has always been more than that to him. “It goes way beyond just being out on the field with guys,” Inverso said. “You have to teach them life lessons and most importantly, you have to teach them how to care about other people. If we can do that: mission accomplished.”

While the goal of having a purpose beyond the field may just be coachspeak for many in Inverso’s position, the admiration his players and the Rider community show that it’s not when it comes to him.

“He’s even more than a coach to me,” McGeechan said. “He’s just been guiding me through everything, even with school, but on the field, he’s showing me and making me a better player.”

Prior to taking over at Rider, Inverso enjoyed a successful 24-year stint at Mercer County Community College, winning five national championships and being inducted into the school’s Hall of Fame in 2021.

Outside of his normal coaching duty, Inverso is one of the founders of Mooch Soccer, an organization that makes soccer available to underprivileged children in Trenton. Multiple former members have gone on to play collegiately and at least one former player making the jump to the professional level.

“He loves the game. He does it for the love of the game and the love of the kids,” said Mickey Forker, a longtime friend of Inverso’s and a member of the Mercer County College Hall of Fame.

As Forker walked away at the end of the interview, he emphasized that of anything he could say about Inverso, a fellow member of the “Mercer County soccer family,” his love for his players stands out the most.

Inverso said in the press release announcing his



Shaun Chornobroff/The Rider News

Players shower Head Coach **Charlie Inverso** in green Powerade after his final win with Rider men’s soccer.

departure he hopes to continue coaching in some capacity. For now, he retires with a 530-137-39 record across his 36 years as a head coach and a 96-91-25 mark during his time at the helm in Lawrenceville, New Jersey.

When asked what his favorite memory was over the past dozen years, the first moment that came to his mind was not winning a conference title, or any of the moments during the trio of NCAA Tournament appearances Rider made with Inverso.

Inverso’s instinct brought him back to an early season non-conference match.

“The day my daughter left for college in 2016, and I was just a wreck, we won in overtime at Villanova,” Inverso recalled. “I think God gave me a break that day. That was one that comes to mind right away as very happy.”

Sports

ONLINE

AN EVERLASTING LEGACY

Check out the women's basketball photo gallery of Stella Johnson's jersey retirement and the game that followed.

FIND THE PHOTOS ON THERIDERNEWS.COM OR SCAN THE QR CODE



Maddie Boyd/Rider Athletics

Field hockey won its eighth NEC Championship against Fairfield, securing the trophy for the second time in three seasons. The Broncos now move on to the NCAA Tournament for the first time since the 2020-21 season.

FIELD HOCKEY

Broncs win NEC Championship in overtime thriller

By Logan VanDine

To say this season has been magical for the Rider field hockey team would be a huge understatement.

After entering with expectations of rebuilding, the Broncos proved all doubters wrong and cruised through the Northeast Conference (NEC) Tournament, defeating Saint Francis and Fairfield to win the conference championship and qualifying for the NCAA Tournament.

Senior goalie Kaitlyn Tomas was awarded NEC Tournament MVP, making eight saves and allowing just one goal on the NEC's highest stage.

'We played very smart today'

The Broncos started the 2022 NEC Tournament in a big way, shutting out the Saint Francis Red Flash, 2-0, to get their 10th win in a row and advance to the NEC Championship on Nov. 4.

After a scoreless opening quarter, the Broncos, who've been reliant on strong freshman play all season, counted on one of their young stars again. Freshman forward Valeria Perales, who was already having an excellent freshman season, got the scoring started for Rider as she shot and scored the first goal of the game making the score 1-0 heading into halftime.

"For me, I feel that I played really well, I was nervous at the beginning but as the time passed by I felt more relaxed and that gave me the possibility to play as best I knew," Perales said.

Early in the third, the Broncos created some breathing room making the score now 2-0 courtesy when freshman forward Semra Said scored her ninth goal of the season.

"Today's game was a tough one. Anytime a team

is involved in tournament play, it's the team that capitalizes on their chances and plays with the most emotion and heart that has the best chance to move on. Today our team played tough as nails and got the job done," Head Coach Lori Hussong said.

Hussong also explained how the Broncos approached Saint Francis differently than before after losing to the Red Flash 3-2 on Sept. 30.

"We were a totally different team than the first time we played Saint Francis, as our freshmen are more experienced and are more acclimated to our style of play," she said.

'There is no better feeling'

In overtime, the Broncos clinched their eighth NEC Championship as they took down the Fairfield Stags in Staten Island, 2-1 on Nov. 6 to advance to the NCAA Tournament.

It seemed like it was going to be a defensive battle from the get-go. After the Broncos and Stags scored back-to-back goals in the first quarter, the game remained deadlocked at one for three straight quarters.

In overtime, the Broncos played better than they had all season, scoring early in the period and again it was their young freshman stars who contributed.

Perales, coming off her strong performance over Saint Francis was able to knock in the Broncos' second and winning goal of the game, clinching the NEC Championship for Rider.

"I think our team played with a lot of heart. That's been the motto of our season this year. I think we've worked tremendously hard to get to where we are today. I'm just so proud of every single one of them on the team. It's a great feeling for them," Hussong said. "We couldn't be happier and prouder of our

team's effort today. Everyone gave their best and came up big when we needed them to. Our defense and second effort was key to our win. Kaitlyn [Tomas] is playing the best hockey of her career and the entire defense is playing smart and tough. We are so happy that our team gets to experience winning an NEC Championship. There is no better feeling than having all of your hard work be rewarded in the form of a championship."

Hussong also spoke about all the emotions she and her team and staff went through the moment she saw Perales' goal reach the net.

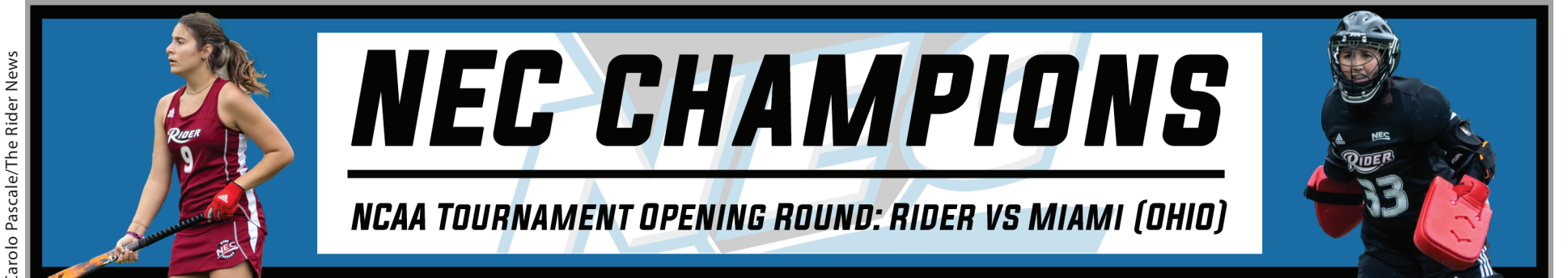
"When Val [Valeria Perales] scored to win the game our entire staff had tears of happiness," said Hussong. "It's so rewarding as coaches to watch your team play with pride and determination and to see our players get what they deserve. All year long every single player on the team has sacrificed and supported each other through the highs and lows and given their all to our team. They bought into our 'team first' philosophy, believed in each other and followed the game plan."

Perales also described how she was able to execute the game-winning shot along with her emotions she had winning the game for her team.

"We just waited until the moment. We just stayed to get this opportunity to, at the end, make the goal. I was just holding composed and then the ball came to me and I just shot it in," Perales said.

Next up for the Broncos is the NCAA Tournament on Nov. 9 when they face-off against Miami (Ohio) and Hussong is feeling confident in her team's chances.

"It's NCAA Tournament time and anything is possible," Hussong said.



Carolo Pascale/The Rider News