



SGA reveals top funded organizations on campus

By Sarah Siock

DESPITE the COVID-19 pandemic causing lower enrollment numbers at Rider, projected funds for clubs and organizations that are financed through the student activities fee on tuition bills still totaled over \$700,000, according to the Student Government Association's (SGA) Finance Board.

This year students paid \$145 per semester for their student activities fee. The Finance Board is responsible for allocating these funds to student programs across the university. The \$757,630 collected this academic year was given to 91 clubs and organizations with departments receiving some of the largest budgets.

University Athletics received \$35,000, the Office of Service and Civic Engagement received \$18,500 and Campus Traditions' budget is \$105,000 for this year. These three departments received the same budgets in 2020, prior to the pandemic. Associate Dean of Campus Life and adviser to the Finance Board Nick Barbati said departments who received funds must use the money for "student programming for the mission or the spirit of what that department is."

"While it's a department, the department doesn't get the money; it goes toward student programs. For example, it can't go toward staffing; it all has to go toward the general student body," said Barbati.

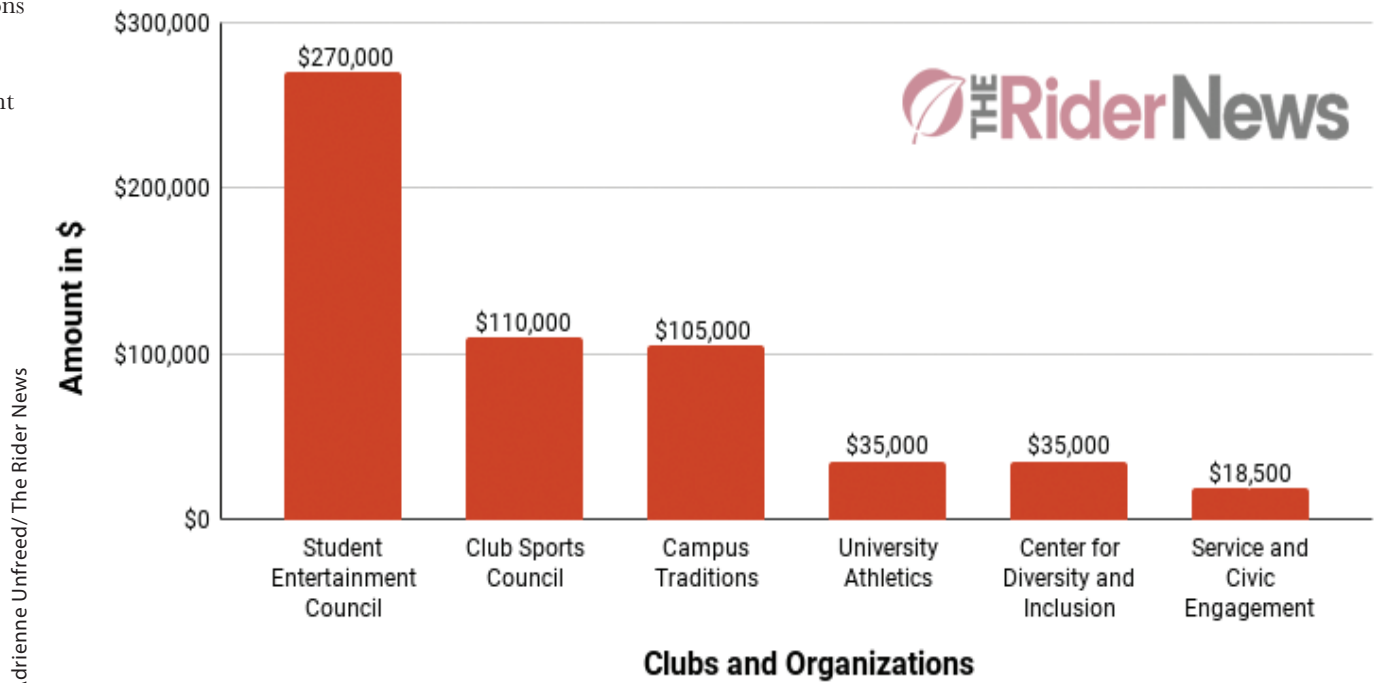
These departments use the funds for campus wide events such as MAACness, Relay for Life and Cranberry Fest. Barbati cited social distancing regulations resulting in fewer events taking place last year causing departments and clubs to receive budgets similar to pre-pandemic enrollment numbers. The money that clubs and organizations did not use in the 2020-2021 school year rolled over into this year's budgets.

The student-run organization that received the largest budget is the Student Entertainment Council (SEC) at \$270,000. The SEC is responsible for planning campus traditions and events. Barbati said the SEC receives a significant budget since they host large scale events such as Fall concert and "I Love College Party."

Club Sports Council received the second-largest budget for a student-run organization at \$110,000. However, this money is then allocated to the club sports at Rider.

SGA only allocates funds to clubs that Rider classifies as type one organizations,

Largest Club and Organization Budgets at Rider University



Adrienne Unfreed/The Rider News

Information provided by the SGA Finance Board.

which means they are open to the entire student body. Additionally, SGA does not allocate funds to student media organizations.

Senior finance major and Chair of the Finance Board Amanda Monte said, "For type one organizations there's no pledging process and restriction to join. All majors, races and religions can join. Type two organizations include Greek life which involves a pledging process so there are restrictions to get in. They would not receive funding from us."

Each spring, clubs must submit their budget allocation requests to the Finance Board. In the request, clubs explain how much money they need and what the funds will be used for. Purchasing guidelines for clubs and organizations state funds cannot be used for conferences, charitable donations outside of the university, the purchase of alcohol or drugs or to pay members.

"If it's really unclear why a club is asking for so much money or if their submission is really vague, we might not fund entirely what they want, it's good to be super specific with what they want," said Monte.



Cannabis certificate potentially coming to Rider next fall

By Shaun Chornobroff

AS recreational marijuana becomes legal in New Jersey in 2022, opportunities in the industry will soon be plentiful. With conversations changing around marijuana, Rider will be providing an opportunity to obtain a student cannabis certificate.

Sarah Trocchio, a sociology professor at Rider, is one of the leaders of the certificate program. She has studied the effects of marijuana since her days as a college student and has seen how society has pivoted its view of cannabis use.

She saw the changing landscape and recent legislation as an opportunity and is hoping to help students, as well as anyone outside the university, obtain a certificate that can give them a chance to start a career in a burgeoning industry.

"We're really trying to do something innovative for higher education and also innovative in the cannabis industry. ... I've been studying and working on cannabis related issues, particularly as they relate to social equity concerns, for the better part of a decade," Trocchio said. "One of the things that I was really interested in when I became a faculty at Rider, was thinking about how we could continue to engage in conversations about what was happening in terms of the shifting landscape with cannabis and bring some of that content directly to students at Rider."

Trocchio started this discourse by running a special topics course in the 2020-21 school year called "Reefer Madness: From Panic to Profit," which focused on the evolution of cannabis policy in the United States, and is building off the success from that course to design the certificate program.

The four-course program, which Trocchio hopes will debut in the Fall 2022

semester, is designed to educate students on all necessary facets of the industry. The course is specifically designed to introduce students to industry professionals to help them make the necessary connections to get a start in the field.

Nisha Azad, a senior criminal justice major, was one of the members of Trocchio's Reefer Madness class and used that experience to obtain an internship at the Kaufman Zita Group (KZG), a government and public affairs lobbying firm.

"I absolutely loved the Reefer Madness class. I'll admit, it was definitely strange to take such a project-based class over Zoom, but Dr. Trocchio made it incredibly fun and worthwhile. It was a great experience to work with cannabis industry insiders and get their perspectives and allow them to teach the students a few things," Azad said in an email to The Rider News. "Overall, the class helped me to create more informed and educated opinions on cannabis. The class helped show me that there's a place for cannabis in education. There's more than meets the eye with cannabis, and once you become aware of all its ins and outs, you really begin to change your thinking and be able to see things from a different perspective."

While the program may start as a four-course certificate, Trocchio sees the potential for the program to evolve into much more.

"I think [Rider] is located in a really strategic place to be doing a cannabis studies program like this, being so close to the state capitol, and we're really hoping that this is a smashing success," Trocchio said optimistically. "And then we can later build this out into something like a minor or a major or maybe even a minor and the major for matriculated Rider students."

INSIDE

BACK FOR REDEMPTION
After an ACL tear sidelined Corey McKeithan last year, the sophomore is ready to ball.



PAGE 11

EQUITY AND EDUCATION
First-generation and students of the minority discuss growing financial concerns at Rider.

PAGE 8

PUPPY PLAYTIME
Students relax with therapy dogs on campus.



PAGE 6

SECURITY BRIEFS

BY SARAH SIOCK

Closet cascade

Down the drain. On Dec. 1 at 6:30 p.m., while Public Safety was conducting rounds in Lincoln Residence Hall, they observed water flooding into the hallway from a custodial closet. The flooding appeared to be coming from a blocked drain in the closet which was not easily cleared by the officer on scene. Facilities Management and C and W Services were contacted to address the situation.

Suspected marijuana

The mysterious smell. On Dec. 2 at 9:30 a.m., Public Safety was responding to a student lockout in Conover Residence Hall, when the officer detected the odor of suspected marijuana in the building. The officer proceeded to check the building for the source of the odor, but was unable to locate it.

Suspicious smell

Searched and secured. On Dec. 2 at 9:08 p.m., Public Safety was dispatched to Conover Residence Hall for the report of the smell of suspected marijuana. Upon their arrival, the officers were able to locate the source of the smell coming from a resident's room. After speaking with the resident and obtaining permission to conduct a search, it was conducted in the presence of Residence Life and the student. The search resulted in the discovery of drug paraphernalia which was confiscated. The incident was referred to the Office of Community Standards.

-Information provided by Public Safety Capt. Matthew Babcock

SGA finance board explains club budget allocations

CONT'D FROM PAGE 1

Clubs can also ask for additional money throughout the year called "spontaneous funding." This pool of money is also financed through the \$145 fee on students' tuition bills and totals \$36,924 for this school year. The Finance Board accepts requests for spontaneous funds every week.

Monte said several factors determine how much money a club receives including, the number of active members and the amount of time the club has been established. The majority of clubs receive between \$1,000 and \$2,000 as their total budget, however, clubs that are newly recognized by the SGA Senate for this academic year cannot have a budget greater than \$250.

"For example, campus traditions get a big-budget because they service the entire campus, and students are really engaged with them. If a different

department or different club programs offered events and no one was going, that would show that there's not a lot of interest, and they might not need that budget," Monte said to explain the process behind budget allocation.



Photo courtesy of SGA



Andrew Xon/The Rider News

Campus Traditions has a large budget from SGA because they serve the entire campus.

Rider faculty receives grant to help public school students regulate emotions

By Kaitlyn McCormick

PROFESSOR Diane Casale-Giannola and assistant professor Lauren Delisio '00 from Rider's College of Education and Human Services received a \$13,000 grant from Janssen Pharmaceuticals that will be used to help public school students in the surrounding area.

With this funding, three classrooms from both Mercer County Special Services School District (MCSSSD) and Robbinsville High School — six total — will be able to set up a sensory space called "calm corners" for students who may have trouble regulating their emotions due to various disorders.

"Kids with the disabilities that we are focusing on in this grant, which are autism, ADHD and bipolar syndrome are really having a hard time because of the pandemic," Delisio said. "Knowing that they were going to be back full time in person, in classrooms face-to-face, we wanted to provide them with something that's going to help them regulate their emotions or deal with anxiety or trauma ... relative to the pandemic."

These corners will have tools and materials for self regulation, such as various seating choices, weighted objects like vests and blankets, as well as fidget toys for students to utilize.

Casale-Giannola and Delisio will be doing a research project in tandem with these "calm corners" that will hopefully benefit not only their instruction, but other teachers and professors as well. They will be holding professional development sessions as well as collecting data and feedback from the study.

Delisio explained that these sessions will be on "trauma-informed instruction, teaching emotional self-regulation and executive functioning ... and then at the end with their feedback, we are going to be collecting data ... to see whether or not these components have helped decrease any unwanted, anxiety or trauma



Peter G. Borg/Rider University

Professor **Diane Casale-Giannola** and assistant professor **Lauren Delisio '00** from Rider's College of Education and Human Services received a grant to help local public school students with various disorders.

kinds of behaviors."

"We're going to create five to six lessons, so kind of like a unit, that teachers can use in the future on trauma-informed instruction and teaching self-regulation. ... Dr. Giannola and I are both very big on using our own research to inform our own practice. So ideally, we'll learn something from this as well and then be able to apply it into our classes," Delisio said.

Casale-Giannola and Delisio will be writing a publication on their work and are hopeful to present at the Teacher Education Division conference for the Council for Exceptional Children that takes place in various locations every November.

Both professors will also be conducting at least three site visits at each school to talk with teachers and staff.

Rider's education programs have strong ties to both MCSSSD and Robbinsville High School, and this is

only one example. College of Education and Human Services Dean Jason Barr explained the strength of these community partnerships.

Barr said, "This is just another aspect of building our partners in the community building that goodwill. We placed a lot of our special education students at Mercer County Special Services, and a lot of our student teachers go to Robbinsville. In fact, several administrators and principals at Robbinsville have gone through our program, and so it just kind of continues this cycle of us working with them, them working with us, and all for the betterment of the K-12 student experience."

Assistant dean of students' journey to Rider

By Olivia Nicoletti

CHRISTINE Mehlhorn slowly recognized her passion for leadership when she was a student at The College of New Jersey (TCNJ). From being a student leader at TCNJ to becoming the assistant dean of students at Rider, Mehlhorn's long-time goal has been to help guide the lives of students.

After multiple shifts in a career path and doubts about her future, she found her passion for student affairs after meeting her college advisor, Magda Manetas.

Manetas, the current assistant counselor at Rider, served as Mehlhorn's mentor through her time at TCNJ but always kept in touch in the years following graduation. After Manetas secured a job at Rider a few years ago, their relationship shifted as they became co-workers.

"[Manetas] can still make it better with a single comforting or encouraging word. It's amazing having her here - just knowing she's here," Mehlhorn said. "She's the person who is the reason why I'm doing what I'm doing. She always thought I was good at reading people, reading situations and predicting how things would go. She would say, 'you always have your finger on the pulse of the student body.'"

Manetas' role as the dean of students at TCNJ led to her first interaction with Mehlhorn when she took the position of Student Government Association president from 2006-2008.

Manetas said, "She had been elected to the position of executive VP but suddenly and very early on in her administration she was thrust into the role of president, when that student had to step away unexpectedly. Although she hadn't sought the highest leadership role, she was a natural from day one and such a pleasure to work with. The traits I continue to observe to this day - an unruffled demeanor, dedicated advocacy for the student experience and student learning, the one you can rely on to 'get it done,' were all in evidence right away and I was thrilled when she decided to pursue a career in student affairs. Christine will never be the loudest voice in the room, but she'll very likely be one of the wisest. The students and staff at Rider are so lucky to have her."

Along Mehlhorn's professional journey she has met other people who have mentored her. Ira Mayo, the former assistant dean of students, played a major role in Mehlhorn's career.

Mayo said, "Christine was a joy to work with. She is innovative, creative and totally committed to student growth. In my 40 years of working in higher ed, I have never seen a person more effective at mentoring students than Christine. Numerous graduates have chosen to go into careers in student affairs due to her influence. She also was a person who never said 'This can't be done' but always said 'How can we make this happen?' Christine is well respected across campus because she communicates and includes other departments in her planning. Rider is fortunate to have her, and I am fortunate to have her as a friend."



Andrew Xon/The Rider News

Assistant Dean of students, **Christine Mehlhorn's** long-term goal is to help guide as many students as possible.

After Mehlhorn was promoted in the summer of 2021, she went from assistant to the director of student involvement in first-year programs to assistant dean of students. Her main focus has been to deal with students in crisis. What makes Mehlhorn admired by many is her desire to stay involved from the beginning to the end of a situation.

Mehlhorn said, "I know it seems small but I always send an email after our meeting to recap; 'Here are all the suggestions I made, here are the steps that I think would make sense.' I'm trying to help students who are facing some sort of obstacle that is preventing them from achieving their best in college by trying to help them navigate it."

She is very passionate about student involvement especially during Rider's Welcome Week when many are at a vulnerable stage of college.

"We put together orientation schedules and resources about transitioning here so that you can be successful," said Mehlhorn. "Try to put yourself out there and take a risk because that's the time when everyone else is trying to put themselves out there too."

Nick Barbati, associate dean of campus life, is a close friend and coworker of Mehlhorn. They have collaborated on multiple events through the years and Mehlhorn's dedication to students' well-being has not gone unnoticed by Barbati.

Barbati explained, "Christine is such an incredible staff member at Rider, and is a true mentor, advocate and role model for countless students over her time here. It is such an honor to work with Christine because she always shows up for the students of Rider and always makes sure they feel heard and seen which has made her a tremendous assistant dean of students."

For a two-time orientation leader and current Graduate Assistant for First-Year Programs Austin Ferguson, Mehlhorn has lent him more than just a mentorship.

Ferguson said, "I owe so much to Christine's leadership in the development of my own skills. As my supervisor, she taught me how to be an effective leader while also fostering a fun environment for employees. I learned what it meant to love work and how to make a job more than a job."

Mehlhorn and the staff she surrounds herself with encourage students to bask in the opportunities they have in front of them at Rider.

"Take advantage of resources, take advantage of people who want to help you to do things that you want to do for yourself. This is your time to really take risks and learn about yourself and do things so that you can figure out who you want to be," Mehlhorn said. "I don't like when students take a backseat to their own education."



Andrew Xon/The Rider News

Christine Mehlhorn in her new office in Room 108, located on the first floor of Bart Luedeke Center.



Adrienne Unfreed/The Rider News

Virtual webinar discusses eating disorders and behaviors

By Danielle Tyson



FIND MORE STORIES AT THERIDERNEWS.COM

Rider graduate student named National Rural Scholar

By Sarah Griffin



Tori Pender/The Rider News

Dell’Omo provides timeline for academic prioritization process

By Sarah Siock

DESPITE not having the support from Rider’s chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) the administration is moving forward with an academic prioritization process which will result in major cuts to departments and programs across the university.

In an email sent to the Rider community on Dec. 2, university President Gregory Dell’Omo said an academic prioritization task force has met four times this semester and narrowed down the academic programs that will be reviewed in the process. The task force is expected to complete its work during the spring semester.

“This fall we have begun work on two projects that will help us gather information about how Rider can operate more efficiently and effectively. The first project is an evaluation of our academic programs. Its goal is to help us understand which academic programs are excelling and which ones are contributing less to institutional success,” Dell’Omo wrote in the email.

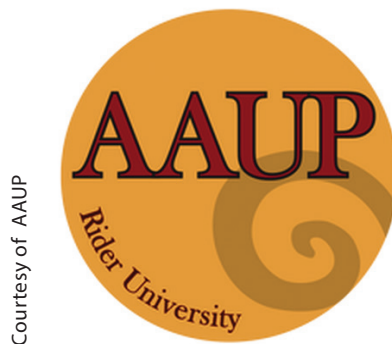
University spokeswoman Kristine Brown said all undergraduate and graduate programs older than three years are being reviewed.

Brown said, “The intent of academic prioritization is to conduct an internal comparison of our academic programs based upon our mission and strategic plan and to determine how we can better align our limited resources to support that mission. There is no predetermined outcome of the prioritization process. ... Through academic prioritization, as well as the concurrent administrative prioritization and efficiency work taking place, we will be more informed about how best to position Rider for success as we face an unfamiliar future.”

Brown did not give specifics but said the process may result in “change” to some academic programs.

The process stems from Rider’s partnership with the national higher education consulting firm Credo that launched in June. Credo is helping facilitate the academic prioritization and an administrative efficiency process at Rider, with the Board of Trustees making final decisions. Brown has previously cited “the complex and multifaceted challenges” the university faces as the reasoning for the partnership.

However, the AAUP claims that academic prioritization is not needed and is only a guise by the administration to cut programs from the university. Earlier this semester, in an email to union members, AAUP leadership condemned the Credo



Courtesy of AAUP

Rider’s chapter of the American Association of University Professors, has spoken out against academic prioritization.

partnership, claiming Credo has a “disturbing pattern of deep cuts of programs and departments, and reduction in student services” and asked members to not engage with the consultant’s representatives. According to Brown, no members of the union have stepped forward to assist in the process.

AAUP President and political science professor Barbara Franz described the prioritization process as “rigged” and a “farce” to find reasoning for program cuts and faculty layoffs.

Franz said, “In his email from Dec. 2, President Dell’Omo stated that prioritization will ‘ultimately demand hard decisions.’ Here, he makes clear that the outcome of prioritization has been predetermined, and that the process of prioritization itself is all window dressing to justify what this administration has always wanted to do: to gut the liberal arts and humanities, lay off faculty and drop programs.”

Franz continued, “Rider faculty members and support staff have to invest in order to deal with problems created by the administration. Miracles could have been achieved if our world-class faculty were not consistently dealing with these crises ... Students ultimately lose out on a number of fronts - paying a premium for a wildly expensive and incompetent administration, an exhausted and frustrated faculty, underfunded and lackluster facilities and the diminished future value of their degrees as the institution falters.”

Instead of faculty participation, Brown said administrators and all four academic deans make up the task force, but they will be asking department chairs to answer qualitative questions related to their programs.

In his university-wide email, Dell’Omo also provided information regarding the administrative efficiency task force, which has met three times this semester. This group is working to, “Review current activities to reduce or expand funding based on strategic priorities and financial concerns, as well as to identify new or improved ways to achieve and maintain acceptable outcomes with fewer resources.” Dell’Omo said this task force’s goal is to have recommendations ready by January 2022.

To close out his email, Dell’Omo said, “I know that the prospect of such change can be scary. But imagine if Rider never changed? Imagine if Rider was trying to compete in today’s marketplace as the institution it was in 1900, 1950 or even 2000? Higher education evolves, and we must evolve with it. That’s what this work is about.”

THE Rider News COVID-19 COUNTER

Confirmed Cases:

Last updated: Dec. 3, 2021

64

Cumulative total of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 at Rider University (Since September 2021)

COVID-19 cases reported to Rider University by week:

Month/Year	Student Case Reports	Employee Case Reports
Nov.27- Dec.3	9	3
Nov.20-26	2	3

Rider University reports its testing numbers and other coronavirus statistics every Friday at rider.edu/dashboard

On Campus Student Testing:

Weeks	Health Center	Surveillance Testing
Nov.27- Dec. 3	24	173
Nov.20-26	18	105
Nov.13-19	130	212
Nov.6-12	80	296
Total	523	2587

Student Quarantine and Isolation:

Students in quarantine have been identified as close contacts of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, are completing their travel advisory required quarantine or have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and are awaiting test results. Students in isolation have tested positive for COVID-19.

This week there are:

- 4 **student(s) quarantining on campus**
- 6 **student(s) quarantining off campus**
- 3 **student(s) isolating on campus**
- 8 **student(s) isolating off campus**

Adrienne Unfreed/The Rider News

Information courtesy of Rider.edu

ADVERTISEMENT



Catch Up or Get Ahead

**EARN 3 CREDITS IN 3 WEEKS
J-TERM WINTER SESSION**

January 3–20



[RIDER.EDU/JTERM](https://www.rider.edu/jterm)



Therapy dogs visit campus before finals

By Zachary Klein

THE Active Minds club, in conjunction with the Rider Counseling Center, hosted an event featuring therapy dogs on Dec. 2 in the Student Recreation Center atrium for students to play with.

A line to play with the four service dogs of various shapes and sizes was present all the way across the atrium as students were eager to pet the therapeutic animals.

Junior marketing major and event coordinator for the Active Minds club Jordyn Cascone organized the event. She was thrilled with how the event turned out.

“With self-care so important leading up to finals, this is like a de-stress event,” Cascone said.

The Active Minds club was recently revived on campus to advocate for mental health at Rider. This was one of the first major events that they had hosted since the full reopening of campus.

“We just thought it would be a really nice idea,” Cascone said excitedly. “Everybody likes dogs ... and we just contacted some dog therapy organizations to see if they were interested.”

One of the dogs present at the event was Clancy, a spinone italiano who was rather large but friendly and fluffy. He was popular among many students.

Clancy was accompanied by Jennifer Barkey, a representative from Bright and Beautiful Therapy Dogs.

“It’s really nice to get out and visit these places again,” Barkey said. She also mentioned that the group has done similar events at other schools including Mercer County Community College and The College of New Jersey.

According to Cascone, there used to be a faculty member who had a therapy dog that they brought to campus regularly. That faculty member is no longer at Rider, so therapy dogs have been absent since 2019.

Students, including freshman vocal performance major Jennie Mae Sprouse, were extremely happy to be interacting with the animals along with their friends in a community setting.

“I decided to come because I really missed my pets and to de-stress before exams,” Sprouse said.

Another student present was sophomore accounting major Stephanie Leung. She also said she was attending to relax in this very busy time of year.

Cascone and the other members of the Active Minds club agreed that this was a great showing for an event that they did not expect many people to attend.

Cascone said, “I think the turnout is pretty great, and hopefully we can do it again in the spring.”



Andrew Xon/The Rider News

Therapy dog **Rusty** lays on the floor and plays with students who circled around him.

Students newfound independence: studying abroad

By Amethyst Martinez

STUDYING abroad seems like a far out concept since the start of COVID-19, but Rider students aren't letting that stop them.

Natalie Leclair, a junior musical theater major, is one student taking advantage of the opportunity by studying abroad in London.

“I had the idea to study abroad since the fall of my freshman year, and I’m so glad it was able to happen despite the global pandemic,” said Leclair.

Leclair has been in London since September, and will be returning to Rider in the spring.

“London is truly a global city. It is like a more approachable [New York City] for me... I take public transport for up to two hours everyday to get from my flat, my school and my internship, which has been its own adventure. It has been an incredible semester. It has been so interesting to discover the theater world here, as well. I would love to live here one day,” said Leclair.

There are many places where Rider students have traveled to while participating in a study abroad program, such as the University of the Sunshine Coast in Australia or Edgehill University in Ormskirk, England.

Hannah White, a graduate assistant at the Office of International Education, said, “This semester we have about 12 students abroad... and then we have students who are signed up already to study abroad in the coming spring [semester]. One student is going to Barcelona, one student is going to Costa Rica.”

There are many reasons why students study abroad, such as internships, opportunities or something to cross off the bucket list.

Leclair is currently in a study abroad program called CAPA, which specializes in global education opportunities for students. She has an internship at a fringe theater in North London called Upstairs at the Gatehouse.

Leclair said, “I chose to study abroad because I may never have the same opportunity to live in a foreign country again. I think traveling and putting yourself out of your comfort zone is so

important for self development. Traveling and living in a completely new place forces you to question where you’ve come from, what you like, what you don’t like. It also gives you a fierce sense of independence, knowing no one, figuring it out yourself, where you want to go, what you want to do.”

White followed with the same sentiment as Leclair regarding independence, since she also traveled abroad during her undergraduate studies.

“Studying abroad inherently boosts self-confidence because it’s a very individualized experience. You go abroad by yourself and you’re by yourself for five, six, months, and you’re forced to lean on yourself, forced to be your own advocate when you’re abroad... because of that, [it] boosts your self-confidence and helps you grow as an individual,” said White.

Normally, over 30-40 students study abroad at Rider each year, according to White.

“COVID definitely played a big impact in studying abroad at Rider and every university in the world. Students [came] home early in the spring semester [of] 2020, when everything started happening. We didn’t see any students abroad for fall 2020 [and] we didn’t see any students for spring 2021. Our first student who went abroad again went abroad in the summer of 2021,” White said.

However, many students are going abroad in the future and are currently abroad, despite the hit traveling has taken due to the pandemic.

“This is actually our biggest year for our short-term programs, which is awesome and exciting. And I think students are feeling a little more comfortable,” said White.

When asked what they would say to students who are interested in studying abroad, White and Leclair agreed: do it.

Leclair said, “You will never have this type of experience any other time in your life... I have created memories to last me a lifetime.”



Photo courtesy of Natalie Leclair

Junior musical theater major **Natalie Leclair** in London, England, while studying abroad.

Black and Gold: professor writes new 'Wonder Woman' comic



The main character, **Nubia**, also known as Wonder Woman, is featured fighting an array of villains.

Sheena Howard's comic "Wonder Woman: Black and Gold #6" came out on Nov. 23.

By **Jeremy Hester**

On Nov. 23, Eisner Award winning writer and Rider communications professor Sheena Howard made her debut into mainstream comic books with a story about the "Amazing Amazon" of DC Comics: Wonder Woman.

Her love for comics began over 10 years ago at Howard University. As one of the youngest people in her doctoral program, she was less sure of what to choose for her dissertation topic than her peers.

"I started to just pay attention to the things I was interested in at the time," she said. "I happened to be really into 'The Boondocks' comic strip. Most people probably now are familiar with 'The Boondocks' animated series, but it was a comic strip first. ... I wrote my dissertation on the history of Black comics, with a focus on 'The Boondocks.'"

"The Boondocks," which ran from 1996 to 2006, was a popular yet controversial comic strip by Aaron McGruder that satirized Black culture and American politics. Howard explained that she was drawn to the strip because she enjoyed seeing how the main character, Huey's, social justice views contrasted with his brother, Riley's, gangster rap ideals.

"You kind of got two opposite perspectives on social issues, and it showed different sides of the African-American community," she said.

Howard's dissertation led her to continue studying the relationship between Black culture and comics, resulting in works such as 2013's "Black Comics: Politics of Race and Representation" and 2017's "Encyclopedia of Black Comics." It was because of all this research that she developed a deep appreciation for comic books, which continues to this day.

"When you think about the civil rights movement, you think of all the great speakers and orators, you know. The Martin Luther Kings of the world," Howard explained. "But I found it fascinating that comics were also a part of the civil rights movement. For me, I started to appreciate comics as a place to tell hard, difficult stories but through the lens of art."

One of her most recent deep dives into the history and culture surrounding Black comics comes in her book, "Why Wakanda Matters: What Black Panther Reveals About Psychology, Identity and

Communication" which was published earlier this year. Howard cited the success of 2018's "Black Panther" film as the main inspiration for editing the collection of essays. She explained, "I wanted to understand the psychology behind the excitement. Why was this movie so impactful on American culture and Black culture? That's when the seed of the book started for me."

In the book, Howard and several other experts were able to use the character T'Challa from "Black Panther," who is the king and protector of the fictional nation of Wakanda, as a jumping-off point to discuss topics like cognitive dissonance, intergenerational trauma and cultural and racial identity.

"I wanted to give back to my community, and this was a great way to do it because the book talks about mental health themes from an African-American perspective and how we can use these concepts for a more healthy, better life," Howard said.

Howard has spent the last several years balancing her career in writing and analyzing comic books with her role as a professor of communications at Rider. Her passion for teaching college classes came to fruition around the same time as she developed a passion for comics.

"I always wanted to be a teacher," Howard reflected. "I actually started out as an elementary education major. But in the first semester, in the first class, I was like 'yeah, I definitely don't want to work with little kids.'"

She paid her tuition at Howard as a doctoral student by teaching undergraduate classes, and the experience allowed her to find her calling as a college educator.

"The rest is history," she said with a sentimental smile.

Howard's comic book writing has also deeply affected the way she teaches at Rider. Not only has her experience allowed her to develop the Script Writing for Comic Books class, but her creative writing philosophy has deeply informed the way she teaches her students.

"I continue to try to be fearless in how I'm growing as a writer," she said. "I definitely think that attitude transfers into the classroom, in the sense of being able to empower students and talk about my journey and helping them be fearless in the things they want to create."

One student who was empowered by Howard's fearlessness was Christy Akinsanmi, a senior theater major who took her Gender and Communications class. Akinsanmi was inspired by Howard as a professor, remarking that it was a wonderful experience to have an educator "eager to engage with students, teach us and encourage our growth."

Akinsanmi mentioned how encouraging it was to look up to a successful woman of color.

"Discrimination is inescapable, and it's really easy to feel pessimistic about the future," she said. "Dr. Howard's career and journey are proof of how preparation, knowledge and creativity can help you succeed and do what you love even when the world is against you."

One of the most recent examples of Howard's creativity leading to success is her involvement in the new DC Comics anthology series "Wonder Woman: Black and Gold." Howard wrote a story in which Diana Prince's Wonder Woman and Nubia, who is Black and also goes by Wonder Woman, team up in Philadelphia to fight evil.

"I really love the story. I'm a little biased, obviously," Howard said with a chuckle. "But it was just great to give a shout out to my hometown and also write this iconic character which was really important to me. It was definitely an honor to write Wonder Woman as well as the Black Wonder Woman, and I'm looking forward to that book hitting the stores."

"Wonder Woman: Black and Gold #6" was released on Nov. 23, but Howard hoped that it wouldn't be the last Wonder Woman title with her name attached to it.

"Ultimately, I really would like to be a long-term writer for Wonder Woman," she gushed.

But wherever the future takes her, this writer and professor takes on each new project with the goal of uplifting diverse voices and challenging negative stereotypes surrounding black people.

Systemic inequity in higher education

MULTIPLE minority and first-generation students at Rider have had to drop-out of university due to financial constraints, especially after implications of the COVID-19 pandemic. In most of these cases, however, Rider's financial aid department's hands are unfortunately tied.

Now a bigger question is being posed: How can an equitable college experience be created in an inherently inequitable society?

Rider's website makes this promise: "We're committed to making your education affordable, and personalized to your financial needs, from start to finish." But, based on student testimonials, this statement is not always true.

Roberto Dacosta-Reyes story

Criminal justice major Roberto Dacosta-Reyes only had a semester and change left of his career at Rider when he realized, due to extenuating financial circumstances caused largely by the pandemic, that he would have to leave the school with three-and-a-half years of debt and no degree to show for it.

Dacosta-Reyes' individual situation involved many complexities, from his parents' financial situation changing due to the pandemic, being unable to find a co-signer for a private loan, not qualifying for certain endowment funds and being offered a payment plan that he said was still too high of a balance to make work.

What is even more upsetting in Dacosta-Reyes' case is the sheer amount of involvement he afforded Rider — peer mentorship in the Center for Diversity and Inclusion (CDI), involvement in the Multicultural Student Leadership Institute and work as a student panelist for diversity. Despite this extensive resume, there was still no way to supplement his remaining outstanding balance.

"It feels like they didn't care at all ... [the] amount of engagement I had in the school. And that sucks," Dacosta-Reyes said.

Rider has made big strides in committing itself to diversity, equity and inclusion, and one would think that Dacosta-Reyes's case, specifically as a Black male student, would be a great opportunity to practice creative and innovative solutions. While Rider's financial aid office may have only been able to alleviate Dacosta-Reyes's balance to an extent, there needs to be a push for greater problem solving.

"The fact that I've been here for four years, the fact that as soon as I got here, I was implemented into diversity groups. And I was in a lot of committees. ... I've done so many open houses, admitted students days," Dacosta-Reyes said.

Political science professor Sarah Trocchio worked closely with Dacosta-Reyes as both his adviser and a scholar versed in inequity. Trocchio described him as a "vocal and leading sort of voice for the student community at Rider."

"There's so much institutional discussion about the disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. ... But we know that the impacts financially of this crisis, and in terms of public health, have been not fairly borne by race and ethnicity, just like everything else," Trocchio said.

A common experience

English major Andrea Iragorri is another student whose enrollment suffered following financial difficulties. She was forced to leave Rider just before the start of her senior year.

Iragorri, a Hispanic first-generation student, explained the difficulties of navigating financial aid as someone putting themselves through college without anyone at home to be a sounding-board for the experience.

"I'm just another student who can't go to school anymore," Iragorri said.

It seems likely that issues such as these will continue to occur, especially as demographics continue to shift in Rider's student body. Roy Onfroy, a sophomore computer science major, has already run into concerns surrounding financial aid and the cost of tuition.

Following an issue with scholarship and other financial resources the summer before his sophomore year, Onfroy's account balance remained larger than expected, which he described as "kind of a spooky number."

Onfroy said the experience gave him a lot of stress and anxiety.

While Onfroy was able to work out his specific situation with the financial aid office and remain at Rider, not every student is so lucky. This specific success does not occur without unforeseen emotional tolls — in Onfroy's case, feeling as though he had to portray himself as an "angry black man" to get the help he needed.

Its students are the heart of Rider — students who genuinely want to be involved in the community. There needs to be a harder push to keep them here, especially those who have already dedicated so much time improving the university.

Restrictions in financial aid

James Conlon, executive director of Rider's One Stop Services and Edward Hill, executive director of financial aid, further explained the specific strictures and regulations that make it harder to remedy strenuous financial situations in certain student cases.

Conlon said, "There are a lot of cases where we can't do anything because of regulations or because of the situations. We have to follow specific federal regs [regulations] and state regs.

"With university funds we have to be fair and equitable to everyone. ... We have to be able to make the case as to why somebody got a certain amount versus another amount. ... We can't give one person one thing who doesn't qualify for it just because we feel like it. ... We have to provide documentation

around it."

Working with in-depth student cases requires a look at specific documentations, incomes and maneuvering within hard rules, and due to these restrictions as well as just general funding, Conlon emphasized that the university is not in the position to foot the bill for multiple students.

Hill said, "Even if, you know, our hearts bleed for those students that tell us this, if they cannot have the documentation, we don't have the authority to make a change."

Although the financial aid staff only has so much power around a student's outstanding balance, Rider needs to re-evaluate what makes a student valuable enough to be awarded special university-funded scholarships. In Dacosta-Reyes' case for example, it is unfathomable that a university that has made diversity, equity and inclusion a cornerstone of its marketing would not fight harder to keep a student who has become a face for diversity, participating in photo shoots for CDI and being overwhelmingly involved diversity programs and events on campus, in its ranks.

Rider's plans

Rider's Inclusive Excellence Plan, implemented during the 2019-2020 academic year, outlines plans and commitments made by the university.

One objective covered is "identify[ing], assess[ing] and enhanc[ing] programs that support financial stability for all students, with an understanding that these may have an additionally significant impact on under-resourced students."

Actions taken within these objectives include, but are not limited to, "Enhanced communication with new students and families as a part of orientation regarding financial aid processes and resources. ... Continued to provide financial literacy sessions for students and families. ... Formalized application and decision process and criteria for student emergency aid."

While this plan is new and continuing to grow, students are still experiencing the adverse effects of systemic inequity associated with higher education in real time.

The need to think outside the box

While there may only be so much Rider's financial aid department can feasibly do from a legal and financial standpoint, there needs to be a greater push on the administrative level to employ creative and functional solutions to keep students enrolled, especially students Rider claims to care about.

In the words of Onfroy, "I know it takes time for change, but it can't take that much time."

One solution worth exploring? A fund to benefit underrepresented and minority students experiencing unexpected financial changes that may prevent them from graduating.

According to an email from University spokeswoman Kristine Brown, "Rider does not have a fund specifically for underrepresented and under-resourced students as financially struggling is not limited to just those groups of students."

Brown added that Rider does have a Student Emergency Relief Fund, however that resource typically aids with textbooks and smaller outstanding balances.

The experiences of students at Rider struggling with financial aid are only a small reflection of society's larger issues of inequity. Rider is just a microcosm of students impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and larger, interconnected issues surrounding the price of higher education. These issues will only continue to grow if not combatted on both national and school-specific levels.

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

Kaitlyn McCormick

THE Rider News

Longstreet House, 2083 Lawrenceville Road, Lawrenceville, NJ 08648

Phone: 609 896 5256

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

Executive Editor

Sarah Siock

Managing Editor

Shaun Chornobroff

News Editors

Tori Pender

Olivia Nicoletti

Features and Arts & Entertainment Editors

Amethyst Martinez

Tristan Leach

Opinion Editor

Kaitlyn McCormick

Sports Editors

Dylan Manfre

Carolo Pascale

Photography Editor

Andrew Xon

Video Editor

Tiffany Hartman

Copy Editors

Emily Kim

Logan VanDine

Jeremy Hester

Michelle Pellegrino

Design Manager

Adrienne Unfreed

Business Manager

Danielle Jackson

Circulation Managers

Jordan Wilson


Karagh Tait

Social Media Editor

Gerard Blandina

Faculty Adviser

Dr. Jackie Incollingo

 @RiderNewsSports

 @TheRiderNews

 www.theridernews.com

 @theridernews

 facebook.com/theridernews

 ridernews@rider.edu

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

COVID-19 contact tracing and campus safety regulations

Dear Editor,

I very much appreciate the work The Rider News is doing to help provide COVID-19 related information to our campus community.

I would like, however, to clarify a few things. Contact tracing is one of a number of important tools to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Based on Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidance, contact tracing is a standard process implemented across the country. It requires working with the COVID positive individual to determine close contacts while also keeping the identity of the COVID positive individual as confidential as possible. A close contact is anyone who has been within 6 feet of a COVID positive individual for more than 15 minutes in a 24-hour period during the individual's infectious period as well as someone who lives with or had physical contact with a COVID positive individual.

Our contact tracers, who are trained and experienced Rider employees, have the advantage that they know Rider and our students, faculty and staff well and can dig deeper with COVID positive individuals to jog their memory and determine close contacts. They can act much quicker than state contact tracers can when a positive case is identified, providing much more specific information and support including their direct contact information so they can respond quickly when students or others have questions or concerns.

I understand why some believe our contact tracers should employ the assistance of faculty in all student cases. But we have to remember that we also have the responsibility to protect individuals' privacy. Where we feel it important or helpful to request faculty or other assistance in the contact tracing process, we do so, particularly when someone's memory or knowledge of names is a bit "fuzzy." But it is not necessary for every case and should be employed with great care. The fact that our cases are still relatively low speaks, in part, to the success of the contact tracing process as we have employed it to date.

I would also like to clarify that our testing protocols are based on CDC guidance and rooted in the knowledge of how the virus spreads. In addition to attending to ill students, the Student Health Center provides testing to those who require it as per CDC guidance – symptomatic students and those who are identified as close contacts. Off-campus testing options are available should

anyone wish to get tested outside of those circumstances. Knowing of someone who is positive or being a roommate of a close contact without you, yourself, being identified as a close contact, for instance, does not mean that testing would be meaningful nor is it recommended by the CDC. I understand that it may provide some peace of mind but that peace of mind may be misplaced if you are not getting the right test and at the appropriate time.

There is much understandable anxiety surrounding COVID-19, making it all the more important that we provide information and communicate regularly as part of our work to mitigate the spread of the virus and to help keep our community as safe as possible. Our robust Resolved and Ready website provides a great deal of detailed information. We send regular, but not too many, updates via email and we meet with students and departments when requested. We also reach out to and share very detailed information with those who are COVID positive, symptomatic or who are identified as close contacts, making ourselves available beyond working hours to address questions and concerns.

That alone, however, is insufficient. Each of us has the responsibility to keep up to date with COVID related information, reading thoroughly what we send and adhering to our guidelines. In particular and just as important as contact tracing and testing is the responsibility we have to wear masks indoors, be honest about being symptomatic, not coming to class or campus when we are ill and reaching out immediately to the Student Health Center [students] or our primary healthcare provider [employees] when we are symptomatic to determine next steps. Together, we can continue to enjoy more normal operations, help keep one another safe and gradually learn to live with this virus.

If you have questions or concerns, you can always reach out to us at resolvedandready@rider.edu or covidtesting@rider.edu. We monitor these accounts regularly. You can also contact the Student Health Center at healthcenter@rider.edu.

Debbie Stasolla

*Co-chair, COVID-19 Implementation Team
Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Planning*

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Not afraid of change: professor critiques Dell'Omo administration

Last Thursday President Dell'Omo wrote to faculty about refusing to participate in academic program prioritization.

Dell'Omo wrote, "I know that the prospect of such change can be scary. But imagine if Rider never changed? Imagine if Rider was trying to compete in today's marketplace as the institution it was in 1900, 1950 or even 2000? Higher education evolves, and we must evolve with it. That's what this work is about."

Setting aside the demeaning paternalistic tone, Dell'Omo presumes faculty are afraid of change.

We are not.

For years faculty have pleaded for change in the form of management that respects the central role faculty play in a university. An administration that respects its faculty would never decide entirely on its own what it wants to do and how it wants to do it. Is it surprising that no faculty member will agree to be an unwitting tool to implement this administration's plan to eliminate programs and fire their colleagues?

Faculty would embrace change in the form of competent respectful leadership. However, senior management serves at the pleasure of the Board of Trustees. Are the Trustees open to change? To date the Trustees have supported this administration. But on what basis? Are there no objective measures that would demonstrate a need for changed management?

The blueprint for prioritization comes from a book by Robert C. Dickeson, who runs a consulting firm called Academic Strategy Partners (ASP). Like Credo, ASP helps universities decide what programs and faculty to eliminate.

One such institution, Columbia College Chicago (CCC), appears on Dickeson's site as a "Proven Success" Story. The press is filled with stories of the massive turmoil their prioritization process caused, the plummeting student satisfaction, and the concern for CCC's long-term viability.

Chicago Magazine wrote in 2016 that "Prospective students, and the cautious parents who support them, are increasingly wary of Columbia. The question trustees are grappling with is whether the damage can be contained, if not reversed."

Perhaps nothing demonstrates Columbia's "success" as well as a 31% decline in overall enrollment since its prioritization (data from The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System [IPEDS]).

All the information on Columbia's disastrous outcomes was available before Rider's administration chose to follow the same process that produced them years

ago. Now the administration demands that we must undertake this task again. But was Rider's first prioritization a "success?"

Rider's enrollment "success" looks much like that of CCC — a 39% decline in first-year enrollment and a 19% decline in overall enrollment (data from IPEDS).

Perhaps there are other objective measures, such as the benchmarks from the President's Strategic Plan.

Did Rider's full-time undergraduate enrollment increase 12%? Spoiler: It dropped 19%.

Has freshman-sophomore retention increased to 85%? Spoiler: It remains the same.

Is Rider a workplace of choice? Spoiler: Faculty and staff have left in droves.

Do Rider's faculty and staff believe in this administration's direction? Spoiler: For some reason the administration refuses to share the full results of its climate survey.

Has Rider's financial stability improved? Spoiler: Not according to Moody's, whose repeated downgrades place Rider deep in junk-bond territory.

Did local and regional media/social media exposure increase? Here the answer is a resounding yes.

Rider made national news by being sued by a theological seminary and its own faculty, students and alumni for failing to uphold Rider's promises. The self-inflicted disaster by attempting to sell Westminster has cost Rider millions in lost revenues and legal expenses. Reneging on Rider's promise to allow students to select which fast food chain could open a campus restaurant brought us additional national recognition. The controversy surrounding the vendor had been in the press for years.

Locally, 60,000 cars pass Rider's new slogan — Free to Roam — every day. "To roam" is to wander about aimlessly. Is that what families want in exchange for \$40,000 per year?

No one thinks senior administration has purposefully run Rider into the ground. It is the product of being allowed to wander aimlessly for years. Demonstrable incompetence has placed Rider's future in peril. The change Rider needs is new leadership.

Joel Phillips, Professor of Music Composition and Theory and faculty member who has devoted 37 years to this institution

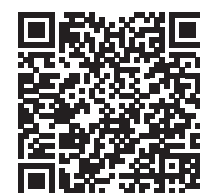
LOOK ONLINE...



Professor emerita chimes in on prioritization process



American Studies in Sondheim: how we can help finish the hat



Positive innovations in climate change

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Column: Let's hope it's just jetlag



Carolo Pascale/The Rider News

Head Coach **Kevin Baggett** remains confident in his team despite recent struggles against top MAAC competition.

By **Shaun Chornobroff**

RIDER men's basketball opened its Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) competition with a chance to make a statement.

The return of graduate student forward Dimencio Vaughn after a brief voyage to Ole Miss to the hard-working, grueling nature of MAAC basketball, alongside preseason All-MAAC first-team guard Dwight Murray Jr. and a litany of scoring options was supposed to be the formula for the Broncos to announce that after a poor 2020-21 season, they were ready to be back among the MAAC's elite.

Instead, the Broncos were easily dismantled 80-54 against the runaway favorites for the conference in Iona on Dec. 3 before getting handily beaten 79-67 two days later against the Marist Red Foxes, who were third in the conference's preseason poll.

All in all, the Broncos did not look the part against two of the MAAC's top-tier programs.

Unfazed and exceedingly confident in the talent of his team, Head Coach Kevin Baggett admitted his team has plenty of work to do before traveling to face Rutgers on Dec. 18, but offered another reason for the

duo of poor showings over the weekend.

"We've been on the road three weeks, we've played every other day or every two days wearing everybody out. ... We've had a lot of different things, guys play a lot of games and we've just played two SEC schools, that physically wears down" Baggett said. "We've been on the road, that's all on me."

The Dec. 5 loss against Marist was Rider's first home game since Nov. 14 and wrapped up a seven-day span in which Rider not only played two Southeastern Conference (SEC) schools but also faced an Iona team that recently upset a ranked Alabama squad before playing a decent game against No. 8 Kansas.

Preceding that four-game gauntlet was a trip south of the border for the Cancun Challenge where the team was missing senior starting center Ajiri Ogemuno-Johnson due to issues with his visa.

Exhaustion, along with constant travel since the middle of November is a definite possibility for the poor performances. But that doesn't mean there isn't a reason to worry.

The strength of this Rider team was obvious in the preseason. These guys were going to score, and they were going to do so often and efficiently. Yet, that hasn't been the case so far, as many of the exotic weapons in Baggett's offensive arsenal have yet to truly reach their potential.

After being one of the MAAC's breakout stars last season, Murray has seen his scoring output drop from 15.8 points per game to 14.2. While that drop-off isn't overly significant, it's the drop in shooting efficiency which gives cause for concern. In the 2020-21 season, Murray shot 46% from the field and 41.7% on 3-point attempts. This season, the senior's percentages have dropped to 40.3% from the field and a whopping low of 29.5% on attempts beyond the arc.

This is a trend that trickles down to the rest of Rider's significant scoring options.

Allen Powell established himself as one of the premier snipers in the MAAC last season. Murray's backcourt complement shot an astounding 44% on his 3-point attempts. The junior guard hasn't been able to replicate last season's exploits. Far from it, converting on only 27.8% of his 3-point attempts.

From 2017-2020, Vaughn shot 47.6% from the field and earned numerous all-conference honors. The graduate student was virtually unguardable in the loss against Marist, dropping 28 points on the 10-of-16 shooting. Even with the recent display of scoring prowess, Vaughn's efficiency has been down compared

to his past years in a Rider uniform, with the forward's field goal percentage numbers and 3-point percentage numbers currently at a career-low.

While Mervin James was not a member of the team last year, the junior's arrival was highly touted. A second-team all-conference selection in the ASUN, James was supposed to be another consistent option for this Rider offense. He hasn't quite hit his stride in 11 games, only making 32.6% of his attempts. A cataclysmic drop from the 47.7% the 6-foot-7 forward shot in his first two seasons at North Alabama, and in Rider's most recent game, James came off the bench.

Despite the scoring struggles, Baggett's confidence in his scorers has not wavered.

"I'm not worried about anybody, we'll be fine. You all can worry about it, I'm not," Baggett said to the media after the disappointing loss against Marist.

Exhaustion and a gauntlet of tough competition could be the reason for Rider's struggles. However, if the side effects of that issue, like inefficient scoring, don't fix themselves over the next few weeks, Rider's glorious rebound from last season's nightmare won't be a rebound. It will be a repeat.

WRESTLING

Rider falls to Central Michigan 24-12

By **Trey Wright**

AFTER a much-needed rest period after the Keystone Classic, the wrestling team made the long haul up to Central Michigan on Dec. 3 for their second Mid-American Conference (MAC) match of 2021, ultimately coming up short, losing to the Chippewas 24-12.

The match began with great momentum for the Broncos, with junior Bryan Miragila defeating his opponent in his first bout of the season at 149 pounds.

"It felt great to be able to go out there and get a win for the team; the crowd was into it, and I'm always grateful to compete," Miragila said afterwards.

"It definitely gave our guys a momentum builder," said Rider Head Coach John Hangey.

However, Central Michigan swung the momentum its way by winning three straight bouts until George Walton struck back for Rider in a 7-6 decision at 184.

The Broncos continued to struggle against the Chippewas, with Matt Correnti going down at 197, and David Szuba being pinned at 285 by Central Michigan's Matt Stencel.

"The difference between [this match] and the NIU [Northern Illinois University] match was that we didn't win the [bouts] we expected to win," said Hangey.

Rider, down but not out, battled back briefly, with Tyler Klinsky defeating No. 32 Brock Bergelin at 125, and Richie Kohler, continuing the momentum from his third place finish in the Keystone Classic, with a 13-6 decision at 133.

"Richie got back to being himself tonight. Tyler also beat a good kid and George found a way to win," said Hangey, "We knew we needed a full team effort tonight and just didn't get it at a few weights."

However, it was Central Michigan with the final word of the matter, with Quinn Kinner losing the final bout, finishing the win for the Chippewas.

"We need more discipline and patience in positional wrestling moving forward," said Hangey.

"Believing in our preparation and ability was key," said Miragila.

The Broncos, with a record of 1-2 to close out the semester, return to action on Jan. 1 and Jan. 2 when they travel to Chattanooga, Tennessee, to compete in the Southern Scuffle.

THE SPORTS SECTION PODCAST

A PODCAST BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE RIDER NEWS

Carolo Pascale/The Rider News

MEN'S BASKETBALL

'We're struggling right now'; Broncos open MAAC play 0-2

Carolo Pascale/The Rider News

Graduate student **Dimencio Vaughn** scored a season-high 28 points for the Broncos in the Dec. 5 loss to Marist.

By **Jacob Tiger**

AFTER traveling thousands of miles across the U.S., and even to another country, the Rider men's basketball team ended a torturous eight-game gauntlet with contests against Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) rivals, Iona and Marist.

Against Iona on Dec. 3, Rider was dominated in every metric, losing 80-54. When the Broncos returned home on Dec. 5 to take on Marist, they lost 79-67 and fell to 3-8 on the season.

"We've been on the road [for] three weeks. [It's]

wearin' everybody out," Head Coach Kevin Baggett said of the Broncos struggles. "That's all on me. That's on me."

'Punched in the mouth'

In the finale of their seven-game road trip, Rider opened conference play against a fearsome Iona squad led by Head Coach Rick Pitino.

It was clear that defeating the Gaels would be a tall task for the Broncos, but the gap between Rider and Iona, along with the fatigue of a 13-day road trip, proved to be too much.

Iona came away with an 80-54 victory as they effortlessly dismantled the exhausted Broncos.

"I don't remember having a team get punched in the mouth from start to finish the way we did today," said Baggett, "We didn't fight back."

The Broncos put themselves in a hole early, going down 32-12 after just 10 minutes of play, and by halftime, the score was 45-26 in Iona's favor.

"We gotta stop getting off to slow starts like that. When teams get big leads, it's hard to come back," said junior guard Allen Powell.

With a massive lead, the Gaels were able to coast through the second half to secure the victory, as the Broncos repeatedly tried and failed to get something going.

"We're tired. We're struggling right now. They kicked our behind at the end of the day. There was nothing that we did well," said Baggett.

While Iona was certainly the better team, the loss was more a result of Rider's inability to make shots than anything else. The Gaels shot a mediocre 41.9% from the field, but the Broncos could only muster 30.4% including a tragic 5.6% (1-18) from 3-point line.

"Today we just had a slump, and we gon' get through it. Today just wasn't our day," said Powell.

'We're not this bad'

Two days after its loss to Iona, Rider finally returned to "The Zoo" only to see yet another challenger, the Marist Red Foxes.

Compared to Iona, defeating Marist was a much more realistic task for the Broncos, as they only possessed a 2-4 record before the game. However, the Broncos were merely running on fumes and couldn't put their best foot forward, ultimately falling 79-67 even with a 12-6 run to end the game.

"We're not playing well right now," said Baggett. "We just gotta do a better job playing as a team. We're playing as individuals right now."

Again, Rider's play was sloppy, uncoordinated and ineffective to start the game, resulting in a 37-24 deficit at halftime.

"Definitely [need to] pick up the energy, stop being slouches in the beginning and just letting people charge it down our throats," senior forward Dimencio Vaughn said.

Vaughn was one individual who managed to show up for the Broncos, putting together a double-double by snatching 10 rebounds and scoring a game-high 28 points while making 5-of-7 3-point shots.

Aside from Vaughn, no one else was able to show up in an impactful way. The rest of the starting lineup combined for just 21 points, and excluding Vaughn, the Broncos only shot 20% (2-10) from the 3-point line.

"We wanna win. We wanna make this place proud. Right now, We're struggling to make ourselves proud," said Baggett.

Baggett was surprisingly unconcerned after the game, making it clear that he still has faith in his team.

"I'm not worried about anybody. We'll be fine. I know what kind of talent we have ... on this team," said Baggett. "We're not this bad. Trust me when I tell ya."

The Broncos will finally get some much-needed rest before heading to Rutgers on Dec. 18.

MEN'S BASKETBALL

McKeithan 'glad to be back on the court'

By **Carolo Pascale**

THE afternoon of Nov. 6 was special for the Rider Men's Basketball team. Not only was it the team's first home game since March 5, but it was also the first time that Broncos sophomore guard Corey McKeithan stepped onto the court of the Alumni Gym to play for Rider.

"It was a lot of adrenaline. I was just glad to be back on the court with my team," said McKeithan.

McKeithan, who tore his anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) in August of 2020, didn't play for Rider last season. Despite not playing, McKeithan was still able to learn and develop skills from the bench.

Head Coach Kevin Baggett said of McKeithan's injury to The Rider News in September of 2020, "I'll tell you what he was down early on, but right away he turned his attention to saying I'm going to come back bigger, faster, stronger, I'm going to study the game more, I'm going to be a coach on the sideline."

Baggett could not be reached for current comment.

Having not played at all last season, getting back on the court was certainly an exciting moment for

McKeithan. But obviously, not playing for so long came with challenges.

"A lot of it was learning to understand college basketball. As soon as I got cleared, I just went out and said, I'm gonna go play as hard as I can," said McKeithan.

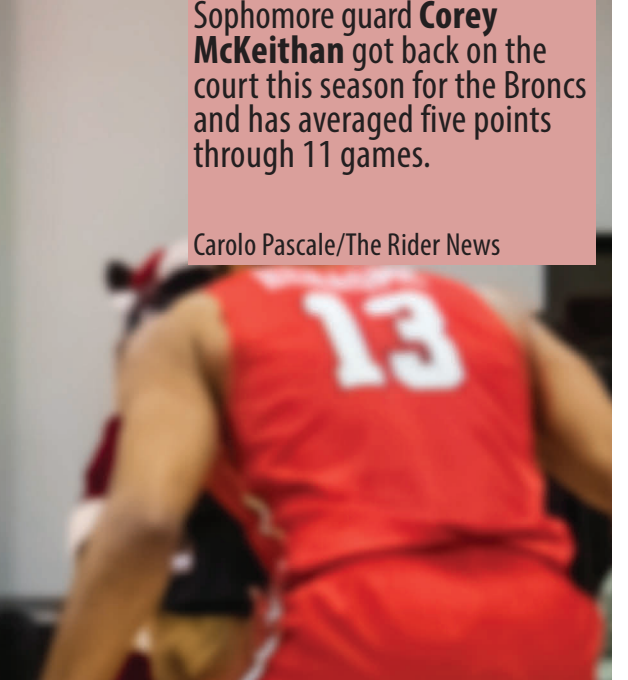
Looking to the 2021-2022 season, the Broncos and McKeithan were ready to face tough competition and lots of travel. While on the road, McKeithan had his two best games in terms of scoring against Buffalo and Bucknell. The Connecticut native played a season-high of 34 minutes against Bucknell, being a starter for the first time for the Broncos and scoring 12 points in an 85-79 win.

McKeithan has helped the Broncos when needed, averaging just over 21 minutes and five points per game. He scored a career-high 13 points against Buffalo during the Cancun Challenge and has 20 assists on the season.

McKeithan got his first taste of playing against top Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) competition in Iona on Dec. 3 and Marist on Dec. 5.

Sophomore guard **Corey McKeithan** got back on the court this season for the Broncos and has averaged five points through 11 games.

Carolo Pascale/The Rider News



Sports

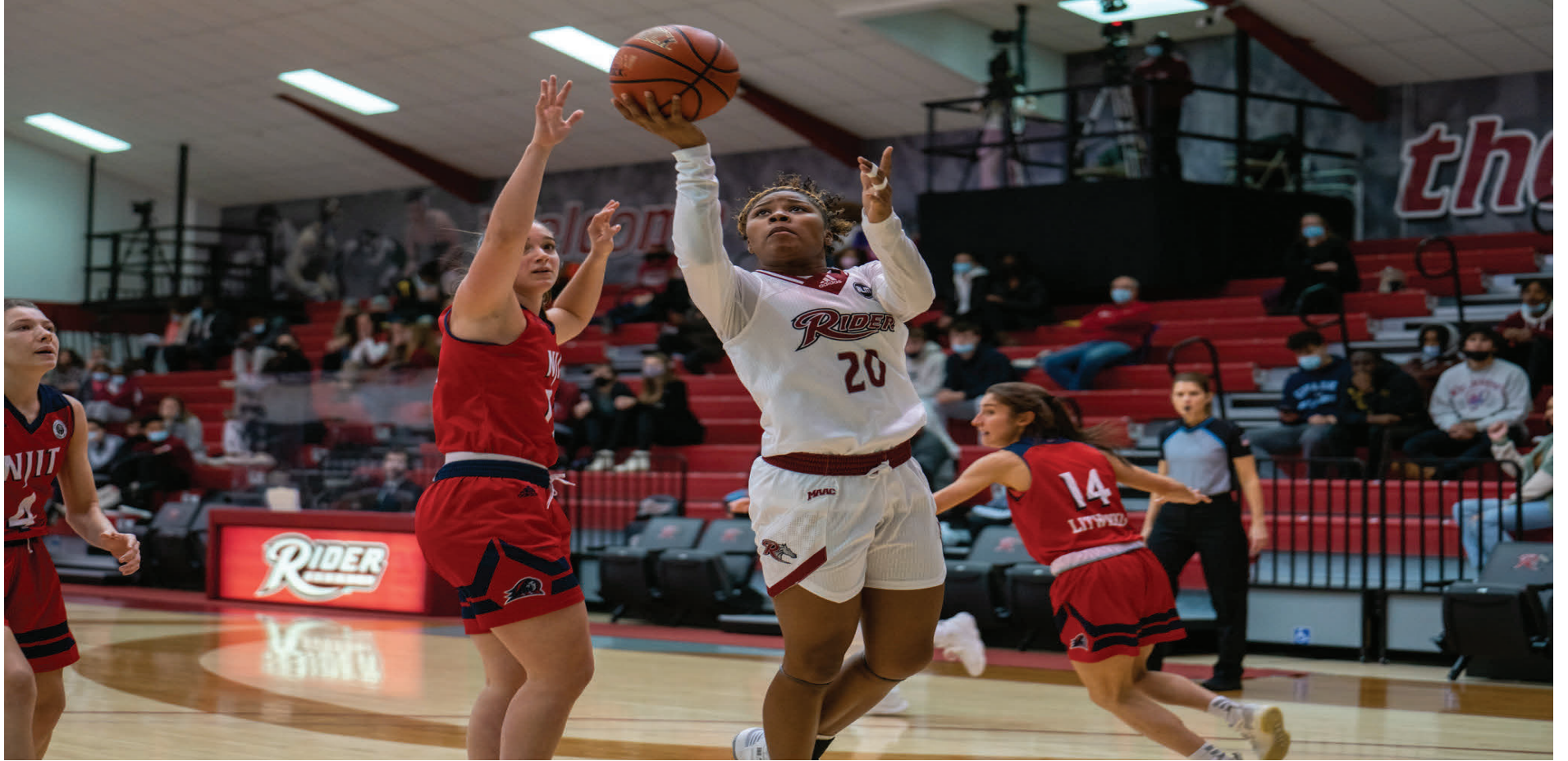
ONLINE

'WE'RE TIRED'
Men's basketball opens its first weekend of MAAC play with big losses to Iona and Marist.

FIND THE STORY ON PAGE 11

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Wins don't come easy for Rider this season



Andrew Xon/The Rider News

Senior guard **Lenaejha Evens** had a career-high of 23 points on Dec. 7 and helped the Broncos get two wins in their last three games.

By Dylan Manfre

WINS are wins no matter how painstakingly hard Rider makes it and the Broncos got two in its stretch of three games in eight days.

Win number one

Rider entered its NJIT matchup coming off of a well-played game against Columbia where it only lost by three. The Broncos earned their first win last season against NJIT and did so again against the Highlanders on Dec. 1 which ended with a 64-59 win at Alumni Gym.

The Broncos had great flow and continuity through a majority of the first quarter, despite some questionable foul calls.

Rider played some quality defense in the second quarter but had to deal with NJIT's 6-foot-4 center Kimi Evans. Rider responded by putting out a 6-foot-4 center of its own in, Sofie Bruintjes.

Bruintjes limited Evans in the paint in a way that Junior center Victoria Toomey couldn't and held her scoreless for quite a bit of time.

"Vic's probably the stronger of the three to hold her ground. [Bruintjes] being long and tall, I think bothered her a little bit and Anna being a little bit quicker," Head Coach Lynn Milligan said. "So they can all do different things to hopefully disrupt."

With under a minute left in the period, junior guard Jessika Schiffer, who had been in the starting lineup the last three games before Dec. 1, hit a 3-pointer putting Rider up 45-34.

"It was really big," senior guard Lenaejha Evens said excitedly. "That was a big shot in a big moment and something that we really needed and it kept us going."

At the final media timeout of the game, with 6:14 left on the clock, NJIT's Ellyn Stoll helped pull the game within two. Rider was outscored 12-5 in the quarter and desperately needed a spark of offense to expand off of Schiffer's 3-pointer.

Even though the game saw a tie, NJIT did not regain a lead. Sophomore forward Raphaella Toussaint who had 13 points and 11 rebounds enroute to being named MAAC Player of the Week on Dec. 6.

"We work on it constantly in practice and we've been building that mentality of keeping people in front of us and just playing team defense and relying on one another," Toussaint said.

Down to the Buzzer

Rider makes it exceptionally difficult to win games given how the result of the first seven contests have gone.

Against NJIT, and on Dec. 4 against Army, opponents mounted double-digit comebacks in the final quarter. Yet, the Broncos were still able to finish the game against Army with a 59-57 win.

Army completed a 10-point comeback, and with one second left, Army's Sabrina Hunter was fouled and scored. She intentionally missed the free throw, given the situation she had to, but then Hope Brown was fouled as the buzzer sounded.

A lengthy review followed from officials, but ultimately, the crew decided the foul occurred before the horn and sent Brown to the line for two foul shots, an opportunity to tie the game for Army, who was down 59-57.

Brown missed both free throws, and Rider won a game that saw some of its best and worst play of the non-conference slate.

"We're in the middle of five games in an 11-day stretch," Milligan said. "Nine kids out there busting their butts playing really hard, good defense."

The Broncos trailed by four at halftime, but that was not glaring on the stat sheet. What jumped off the page was Rider's lack of offensive rebounds, having only four after 20 minutes of action. Army, on the other hand, had 14.

Rider's third quarter seemed to be where it played

the most complete basketball, as it outscored Army 22-8 and held the Golden Knights to shoot just 2-for-16 from the field. Sophomore guard Makayla Firebaugh helped wash away the slight Army lead to begin the quarter and Rider ended it having its largest lead of the game, 49-39.

"I thought that was one of our better quarters of the year on both ends of the floor," Milligan said. "I thought we executed extremely well, made some shots and thought we had some really big stops, caused some turnovers and took advantage of them."

Short-lived success

While Rider's winning streak was nice, it was also short-lived after a 62-58 loss to Wagner on Dec. 7.

"[I'm] disappointed with our start, we put ourselves in a big hole early," Milligan said. "Fought back like we do in the second half, but I don't think we handled their pressure well early."

Even though the Broncos lost by only four points, they did not come easy as they shot under 40% from the field. Lenaejha Evens had a career-high 23 points in the loss, and Toussaint and Schiffer each had 10 points on 3-for-7 shooting.

"I know there was a couple shots I could've made ... but I was just focused on bringing the team back and getting everybody hyped up," said Lenaejha Evens.

The Broncos had their fewest first-quarter point total of the year only netting eight points, but Rider was able to mount a second-half comeback as it has had to do multiple times this season.

Milligan chuckled and said of the second-half comeback, "Sometimes it just doesn't workout that way. You've got to perform on the floor and get the production that we need and we just didn't get it today."

Rider's next game will be against Navy on Dec. 12 after a four-day break from action.

ONLINE MEN'S BASKETBALL PHOTO GALLERY

Check out men's basketball photos from its match against Marist this weekend.

FIND THE GALLERY AT THERIDERNEWS.COM

NEW EPISODE

Dylan Manfre, Carolo Pascale and Jacob Tiger have a new episode of *The Sports Section* podcast up on all platforms.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO LISTEN TO SEASON 2



ONLINE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL PHOTO GALLERY

Check out women's basketball photos from its first win of the season against NJIT.

FIND THE GALLERY AT THERIDERNEWS.COM