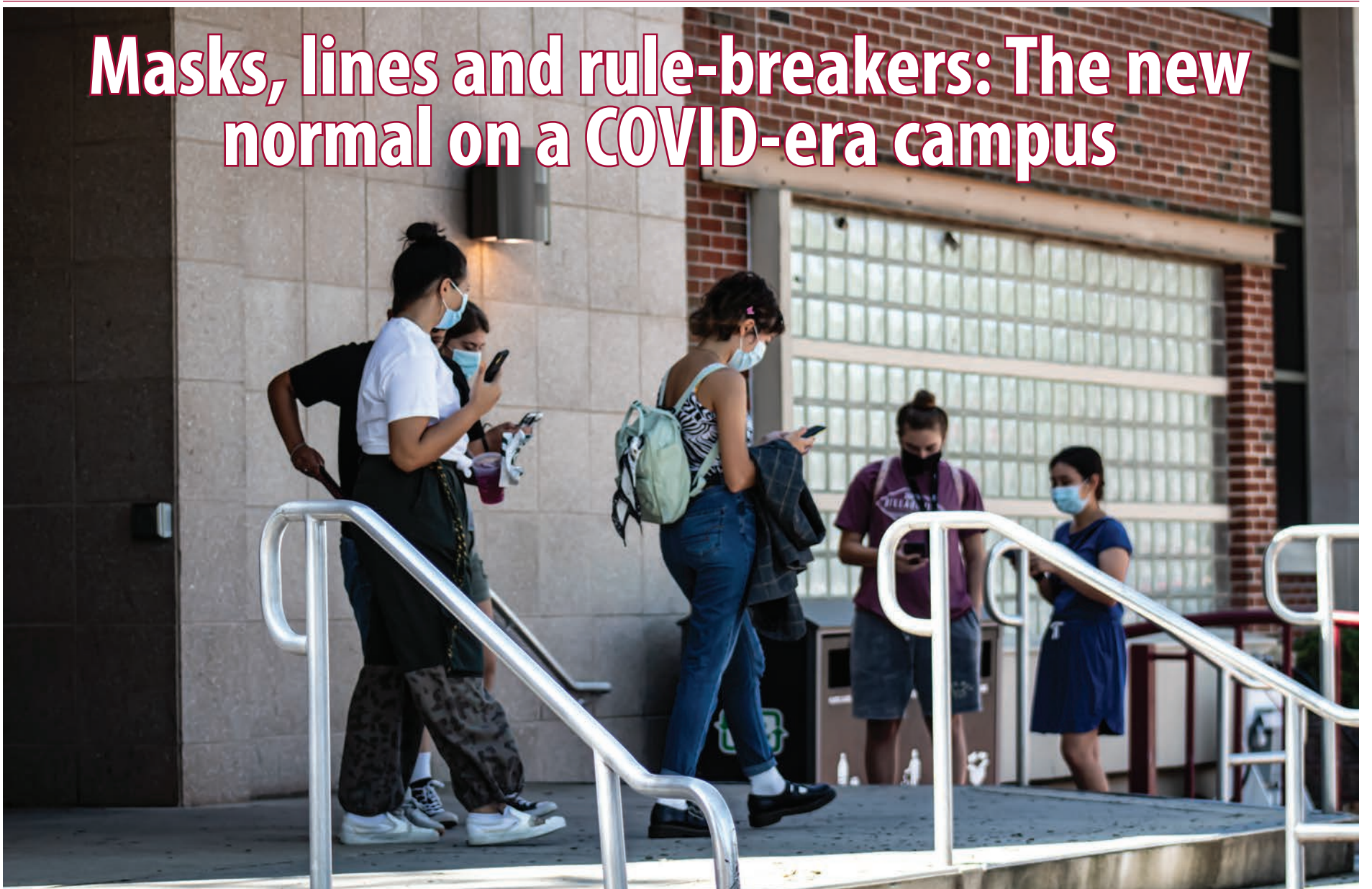


Masks, lines and rule-breakers: The new normal on a COVID-era campus



Carolo Pascale/The Rider News

Students are having to quickly adjust to new regulations put in place all over campus, with some bending the rules for social distancing guidelines.

“Lifting Barriers” initiative plans to reduce “sticker shock”

By Stephen Neukam

WHILE a college education becomes more expensive and unaffordable for students and enrollment fears echo throughout universities, Rider has rolled out a significant overhaul of its pricing model to encourage more families to pick the school.

This major change, which is generally known as a price reset, will slash tuition rates by over \$10,000. The decrease will drop the university’s tuition sticker price, or its price before discounts and aid, to \$35,000 a year.

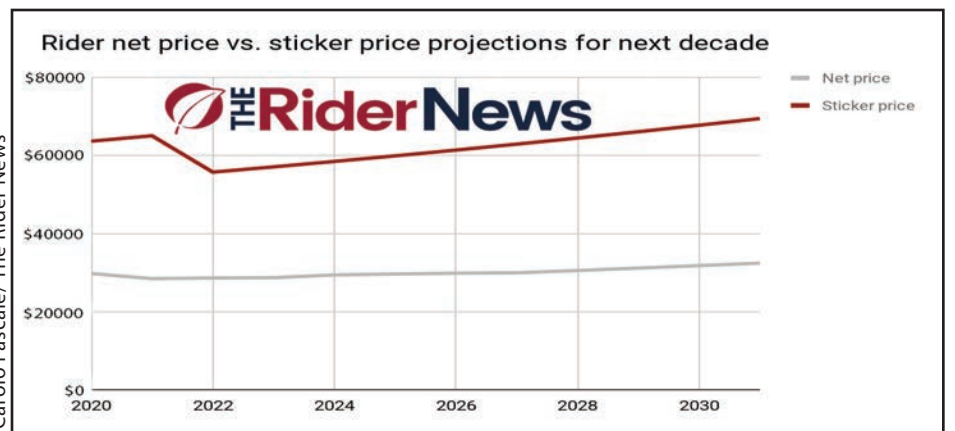
This five-figure decrease in tuition price will not mean lower net costs for students. The university makes clear in its announcement of the initiative, called “Lifting Barriers,” that financial aid commitments will be adjusted to ensure that “out of pocket costs to students will remain similar.”

The overhaul has been planned for nearly two years, with Drew Aromando, vice president of enrollment management, spearheading the initiative. Aromando said that the objective of the new model is to make Rider more accessible to families and students while also increasing the value of the school’s education.

While the reduction in tuition prices will not make the university more affordable for families, a reduced sticker price might retain students who are scared away by a high tuition rate, said Aromando. The plan also intends to personalize the pricing process for students, giving them more transparency and clarity about the real costs for Rider.

There was a sensitivity surrounding the announcement of the initiative — in the past weeks, students have voiced their demands for lower tuition and fees for this semester, given the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. Aromando said that the issue was considered but concluded that since the goal of the changes is to give students clarity about the costs of Rider, there was no better time to roll it out.

Student Government Association President Dylan Erdelyi, a senior musical theater major, praised the announcement, saying that it was a long-needed change to university pricing but raised concerns that no further action has been taken to



Carolo Pascale/The Rider News

While tuition prices will decline, net costs for students will continue of the same trajectory.

alleviate the financial burden on students right now.

“I think ‘Lifting Barriers’ is a great initiative — our sticker price has always been too high and I know that has been a big deterrent to families looking at Rider,” said Erdelyi. “Providing additional resources to career success is also incredibly important right now, as many students are entering a job market that is severely impacted by the effects of COVID-19. That being said, I wish there was a piece of this initiative that helped to lighten the financial burden many current students are feeling right now.”

Senior Class President Rhea Fryer, a senior political science major, applauded the initiative, saying, “I think that the ‘Lifting Barriers’ initiative has students’ best interests at heart, and some things have to be done in practice to see how effective they are.”

Along with the drop in tuition, the plan includes

SEE INVESTMENTS PAGE 2

INSIDE

BLACK LIVES MATTER

Rider Athletics takes a strong stance on social justice

PAGE 12



IS IT SAFE?

As schools open up in the fall, students are anxious about campus safety

PAGE 8

R FACTOR CHAMPION CROWNED

The winner of the much-anticipated R Factor finale is crowned live in front of a virtual audience.

PAGE 6

An inside look at what the Rider ca



Carolo Pascale/ The Rider News

Students learn to accommodate new ways to dine on campus, including utilizing Grubhub.



Carolo Pascale/ The Rider News

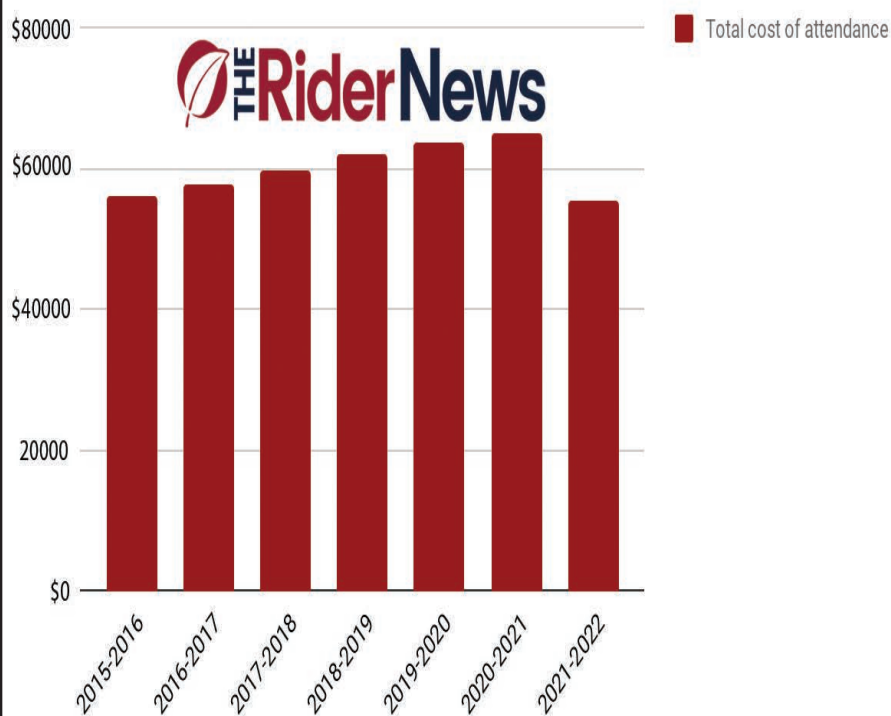
Students are expected to remain six feet apart whenever it is reasonably possible, both indoors and outdoors.



Carolo Pascale/ The Rider News

Tuition slash won't affect net costs for students

Cost of attendance at Rider, 2015-2022 (before aid and discounts)



Carolo Pascale/ The Rider News

The “sticker price” of Rider’s tuition will fall by over \$10,000 as a result of the new plan. The university hopes it will alleviate the shock that families feel when looking at high tuition prices.

investments into career preparation and academic success, a move meant to raise the profile of the university, said Aromando. The investments mean more staff, enhanced technologies and other resources for Career Development and Success.

Price resets are becoming more common, usually for smaller, private universities. A recent analysis of a number of schools that have adopted similar policies has shown that the move can boost enrollment, according to a report by Lucie

CONT'D FROM PAGE 1

Lapovsky, who runs her own consulting firm and is a former president of Mercy College.

Lapovsky told The Rider News that the aim of a price reset is to attract students that may be deterred by the high price of tuition — because of the change in sticker price, the school’s applicant pool should increase.

The key, Lapovsky said, to boosting enrollment is to have a competitive net price and good product.

“The number of students who choose to enroll after being accepted is influenced significantly by the net price,” said Lapovsky. “Thus the amount of financial aid that is offered is also important to increase enrollment.”

In her report, Lapovsky underlined the importance of pairing a tuition reset with programmatic improvements, which Rider is attempting with its planned investments into career support.

The decision by the university to reset its tuition rate may also be a timely tactic to combat the financial uncertainty because of the coronavirus pandemic, with Lapovsky pointing out that families may be less likely to consider high-priced schools because of the number of people “hurting” in the economy.

According to university projections, the school’s anticipated sticker price by 2030 would be over \$82,000 — the price reset will bring that number down to just under \$70,000. In terms of net cost, the university is forecasting a very gradual increase in price that is projected to be in line with inflation.

Campus looks like during a pandemic



Amethyst Martinez/The Rider News

Students all over campus are seeking to find the safest ways to visit with their friends after an unexpectedly long summer break. Some refuse to adhere to the mandated use of masks.



Carolo Pascale/The Rider News

Students are convening in various areas on campus, whether it's in tents or near hammocks.



Carolo Pascale/The Rider News

Petition to lower tuition reaches over 2,300 signatures

By Bridget Gum

NICOLETTA Feldman, a senior education major, recently started a petition on Change.org to lower the tuition at Rider University due to the coronavirus. According to the petition, students' "educational and social experiences will be of significantly reduced quality" because of the pandemic, with the school only committing to freezing a spike in tuition. The petition is currently at over 2,300 signatures, with a goal of surpassing 2,500.

As expected in her senior year, Feldman is beginning to transition into the workforce by doing fieldwork at a high school in her fall semester and student teaching in the spring. Remote learning has diminished those opportunities and she is extremely disappointed she will not be able to have the same experiences as other students.

"I believe that my professors, the faculty, and administrators are working their hardest and doing what they can, but I still believe that the university should be willing to make the same sacrifices for their students as their students have made for them and making sure the price tag matches the product, which I believe it currently does not," said Feldman.

"I struggle with staring at a screen for hours on end, which is very detrimental to your eye health, and I find that sitting still for a long portion of time is challenging because of my ADHD," said Feldman, who also struggles with missing the social component of college.

Feldman recognizes that these are uncharted waters and people don't know what to do, so this is the best and safest option. However, she said that "Rider's previous financial issues have made it more difficult for them to create more wiggle room for tuition

Stephanie Jessiman/The Rider News



Comments under the petition have expressed that they want lowered tuition based on the reduction of cost by some surrounding universities.

adaptations."

Based on the comments on the petition, many people have taken this position because "Princeton University and Rowan University, area schools, have decreased their tuition by 10% in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the struggles that it has brought upon our communities," according to the petition website.

The petition comments show that many students are also having issues taking pride in attending or graduating Rider when they feel that their thoughts, opinions and concerns aren't being addressed. Feldman said she "is frustrated with the fact that I have gotten no response from the Rider administration, even though I started the petition and worked on an article for The Rider News in the spring semester. If the university at least acknowledged the issue, I would feel better, more heard and respected."

However, there is another side to the tuition debate. Associate Vice President for University Marketing

and Communications Kristine Brown said Rider "reduced the fall semester tuition and fee costs by 3.3%, between additional tuition grants and reduction of fees" in May "to minimize the financial impact of the coronavirus pandemic." Unfortunately, because of fixed costs, "investments and the additional technical support we've put in place for remote instruction, the cost of instruction for Rider went up, not down," stated Brown.

"Unlike in the spring when all institutions had to pivot to primarily online instruction seemingly overnight, Rider has been preparing for months to develop high-quality remote courses, as well as engaging student experiences regardless of the mode of operation we will operate in this fall," said Brown.

Brown attributes the continuity of the tuition to the fact that Rider has many "fixed costs associated with remote instruction, such as the faculty who teach, counselors who advise and the academic support expenses, to name a few." These costs are covered by tuition, which is the main reason why tuition is not being reduced any further.

Copy editor, Nicoletta Feldman, was not involved in the editing process for this article.

CORRECTION

A digital version of this story published briefly online on Sept. 2 contained incorrect quotes from Associate Vice President for University Marketing and Communications Kristine Brown. The revised article published here accurately reflect Brown's quotes. The Rider News regrets the error.

Online Master of Science in Nursing program prepares students for nurse practitioner career

By Tatyanna Carman

RIDER has implemented an online master of science in nursing (MSN) program where students will “expand their scope of practice from a registered nurse to a nurse practitioner,” according to Assistant Professor Lori Prol.

“By expanding their scope of practice, I mean [that] they would be going from the nurse that knows how to assess, identify changes, identify healthcare needs of the patient and how to intervene with collaboration from a healthcare provider that can change the treatment plan,” Prol said. “Now the nurse practitioner is the healthcare provider. They are the ones that are making the clinical decisions, developing the treatment plans based on the changing health status of a patient.”

New students enrolled in the program will also be eligible for a 20% tuition remission, which was established by the university’s marketing team, according to Prol.

“I think it is an excellent strategy, especially when you are looking at [it], they are really marketing towards people that have already demonstrated a commitment and a passion for Rider,” she said.

Prol said that there are six start dates to the online program and explained that it was related to the six three-credit core courses.

“So in the beginning, you can start at any point, which is why we can offer the six start dates, because they can begin the program and pick up immediately in one of those core courses,” Prol explained. “They spend about a year completing those core courses. So, yes, we wanted to open it up so it was flexible, so when someone was [ready] to make a change and start a program, we did not want to have to make them wait until the beginning of the fall or the beginning of the spring or the beginning of the summer.”



Courtesy of Rider University

One of the advantages of being a part of the online program is the decreased exposure for working students, according to Assistant Professor Lori Prol.

She also said that three of the start dates are in the start of fall, spring and summer. They are also broken up into sessions A and B.

Senior registered nurse (RN) to bachelor of science in nursing (BSN) student Joseph Montenegro said that he thinks Rider’s MSN program “will be a great opportunity for students to further pursue education.”

“With Rider’s RN to BSN program already established, it serves as a great foundation for the development and recruitment of the MSN program,” Montenegro said.

He has been a registered nurse for over 13 years and had the opportunity “to serve in various leadership roles, such as nursing supervisor and nurse manager.”

“Offering some type of scholarship for the students who are currently in Rider’s RN to BSN and wish to continue onto their MSN would be great,” Montenegro said.

When asked what the advantages were to those that are a part of the program, as it pertains to the pandemic, Prol said that some nurses are unemployed so “this is an ideal time to go back and this may have been a lifelong dream or a passion they have had and now they have that opportunity to go back.”

She said that for nurses that are actively working, “the benefit for them is decreased exposure. You know, they are already in the hospital. For example, I have a student right now in my course that just started this fall, she had an exposure as a nurse and she is sitting at home [in] isolation, but it does not stop her schooling. There is no stop out, there is no, ‘we are going all remote,’ no, we are already remote. So there was really, when the university shut down, our program kept going.”

The program is projected to have eight students and there is a class “hidden,” in waiting for if anyone enrolls for fall B and courses “hidden” for the spring semester, according to Prol.

Prol said that the first concentrations that are “rolling out” are for the family nurse practitioner and the adult gerontology primary care nurse practitioner.

“Probably about almost 70% of students enrolled in nurse practitioner programs are enrolled in family nurse practitioner programs,” she said. “So we really wanted to reach out to people that were seeking that predominant degree.”

She also explained that other concentrations are going to be “rolled out” by fall 2021, including “the psych mental health [nurse practitioner] which we are in desperate need of mental health care providers. The psych mental health [nurse practitioner] can prescribe, can diagnose and can also do counseling. And then also the adult gerontology acute care [nurse practitioner] and they work in the hospital.”

Rider listed in “The Best 386 Colleges: 2021 Edition” by The Princeton Review

By Tatyanna Carman

RIDER was on the list for “The Best 386 Colleges: 2021 Edition,” and named one of the best northeastern colleges by The Princeton Review.

According to The Princeton Review website, it surveyed 143,000 students across the nation.

“I am extremely pleased and proud that Rider is included among the best 386 colleges. This publication highlights only 13% of four-year colleges in the country and inclusion is based upon the strength of our outstanding academic programs,” said Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs DonnaJean Fredeen.

Fredeen also explained what the factors she thought contributed to Rider being on the best colleges list.

“Given that inclusion in this book is based upon the authors’ opinion of the quality of our academic programs, I believe that a few of the factors that contributed to our inclusion are the high-quality, engaging classes offered by our faculty, the fact that our faculty are accessible to students outside the classroom, our ability to connect the learning that occurs in the classroom to the world outside the classroom through our Engaged Learning program, the academic support available to our students through the Academic Success Center, and the outcomes of a Rider education.”

Fredeen also said that Rider’s inclusion in the book is “yet another opportunity for individuals to learn about the quality of a Rider education.”

Senior communication studies major Regina Askew-Jones said that she was quite surprised that Rider was named as one of the best colleges and that she does not think Rider is horrible, but in comparison to other colleges, it is not a “shining star.”

“Rider could’ve been listed as such because of their academic programs like business, accounting and education,” Askew-Jones said. “The community aspect has been a major part of what I love most about Rider.”

Senior criminal justice and sociology double major Destiny Waters said that she agrees with Rider being named one of the best colleges by The Princeton Review “to a certain extent,” because there is “always room for improvement.”

“I do believe Rider is well rounded and very

intentional when picking professors because, from personal experience, I have not had a professor where I felt uncomfortable [or] that I couldn’t ask them a question,” she said. “I like Rider because it has a ton of programs that can help your professional development, programs such as the Leadership Development Program, Bonner Scholars and more.”

Waters said that Rider could improve on the lack of employment of faculty of color, the lack of diversity in orientation leader jobs and “the price of Rider.”

Associate Vice President for University Marketing and Communications Kristine Brown said that “steady progress” has been made toward the diversity of employees and faculty. She highlighted that 20% of the full-time faculty at Rider are from underrepresented groups and 19% of the entire workforce at Rider are from underrepresented groups.

“In 2019, the percentage of minorities increased 1.02% for a total of 18.66% and females increased .55% for a total of 57.99%,” Brown explained. “Over the past 10 years, our minority workforce has increased 5.52% and our female workforce has increased 2.94%.”

She also clarified that there are many initiatives that have been “established to seek a diverse applicant pool for open positions,” which include, “efforts to identify job sites serving underrepresented populations,” and “recruitment guides developed to assure open and inclusive search processes.”

Vice President for Student Affairs Leanna Fenneberg responded to the concern of a lack of diversity in orientation leader jobs.

“Student Affairs is committed to continuing to improve our selection processes to assure diverse representation and engagement, and have a specific goal this year to develop resources and tools for recruitment and selection to support our various searches.”

The new “Lifting Barriers” initiative will reduce the base undergraduate tuition from \$45,120 to \$35,000, according to the Rider University press release, but will not affect net price for students.

Askew-Jones said that Rider could improve its student relations and “help improve in areas we have been vocal about for years like dining, dorms,

bathrooms in academic buildings like Fine Arts.”

When asked if the university has plans for more investments in residence halls, Fenneberg clarified that within the past four years, “Rider has invested nearly \$20 million in residence hall improvements, spanning seven buildings.”

“Our campus master plan includes continuous investment in our residential facilities, but we do not have a schedule for the immediate next steps at this time,” Fenneberg said.

One of the residence halls is Lincoln Hall, which “completed a full renovation,” this summer, according to Fenneberg.

Vice President for Facilities and University Operations Michael Reca explained that complaints about dining services have been steadily declining over the past year and that some of the concerns made in the last academic year, “were tied to the staggered opening of new facilities at Cranberry’s.”

“Since then, dining services increased operational efficiencies, staff training and made menu modifications to decrease the wait times...,” he said. “As of August 2020, students are able to make reservations to dine-in at the dining hall and place mobile orders via Grubhub for delivery of food from on campus eateries. In addition, the new venues on campus such as Jersey Mike’s and Wendy’s have been well received and provided broader options for students, faculty and staff. Dining Services continues to keep open lines of communication with students to obtain feedback and increase customer satisfaction.”

Reca also said that bathrooms and common areas are incorporated into projects as the university continues to make investments in the academic buildings.

“We continuously evaluate the building needs as a whole, and address issues in [a] deliberate manner based on the funding available,” said Reca.

Askew-Jones noticed the improvements to housing and dining facilities but was aware of the fact that she will not be able to enjoy the changes.

“However, I have to say they have been continuously upgrading but unfortunately, I will not be able to reap the benefits,” Askew-Jones said.

Broncs get buff while staying safe at the SRC Bronc Barn

By Christian McCarville

AT Rider, the Student Recreation Center (SRC) has always been a great place for students to stay fit and engage in a wide variety of activities, such as group exercise classes and yoga.

Also located within the SRC is the Schimek Family Fitness Center, which is consistently filled with students working out and completing various exercises.

Due to the many nationwide safety restrictions imposed as a result of COVID-19, a large number of indoor establishments have been shut down or altered for the safety of consumers. This has made it very difficult for gym members to retain their fitness, as gyms are usually small, enclosed areas that could easily spread COVID-19 if not properly regulated.

As a result of these safety regulations, the Bronc Barn was born. Located behind the SRC, the Bronc Barn consists of two tents and a wide variety of workout equipment for students and faculty to use. This outdoor facility is open Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Brett Ashley Davis, the university's fitness manager, commented on the creation of the Bronc Barn.

"Planning for how Rider would be able to offer SRC facilities and programming has been ongoing since the spring semester," she said. "We had several scenarios in mind depending on what the state of New Jersey would allow. Our goal was always to be able to offer the most possible with a focus on the health and safety of the campus community. When outdoor gyms were permitted we quickly moved to have that in place for the start of the semester with the installation of the tents, the moving of equipment, and scheduling group exercise."

In regard to student safety, there are several guidelines and regulations set in place at the Bronc Barn to ensure that COVID-19 does not spread. Students and faculty must make a reservation to use the Bronc Barn in advance, which prevents overcrowding and allows for more effective social distancing.

Junior accounting major Cory Mayo frequently visits the Bronc Barn to keep active. "As someone who wasn't big on going to the gym before quarantine, I honestly love how the gym is set up now," said Mayo. "Setting reservation times lowers the capacity of who can be in the gym and crowded gyms were always a pain to be in."

Those using the Bronc Barn must also wear masks when entering, exiting and moving between workout equipment. Only while safely using equipment may masks be removed. Attendees are also asked to remain six feet apart from one another at all times.

"I'm really happy that the SRC created an outdoor space for students to come and exercise," said junior business analytics major Kevin Buckland. "It's been great and I feel totally safe there."

One must also wipe down machines before and after utilizing them. There is a designated area for smaller equipment, such as weights and dumbbells, to be placed after use. This equipment will then be properly sanitized by staff members.

"The SRC staff has done an amazing job of keeping the weights sanitized," said Mayo. "I clean the machines myself too after using them."

The SRC continues to provide fitness related events for Rider students to take part in, while simultaneously keeping participants safe. These events include yoga, cycling and Zumba.



Courtesy of @RiderUniversitySRC

The Bronc Barn can be found in the parking lot behind the Student Recreation Center (SRC). It consists of two large tents and a large collection of workout equipment.

Special events are also held on Fridays as part of the SRC's Fitness Friday program. "Fitness Friday is a monthly fitness program that occurs on the first Friday of each month during the Fall and Spring semesters where we promote the SRC along with general fitness and wellness information," said Davis. "We like to do regular incentive programs that motivate the campus community to use the gym and prioritize their overall health and wellness."

The majority of these activities take place in outdoor settings and all participants are spread out to promote proper social distancing. Virtual options for certain events are also available. A detailed schedule of SRC events can be found on the Bronc Nation webpage.

New indoor opportunities may also arise for students due to newly announced state restrictions. This will be especially beneficial once the weather grows colder.

"Now that the state recently announced indoor gyms can open, we are planning how we will offer more exercise areas inside the SRC," said Davis.

The Bronc Barn provides many opportunities for both students and faculty that are looking to stay in shape while also remaining protected from COVID-19. The SRC's commitment to both fitness and safety is in an effort to decrease the transmission of the virus while enabling many to exercise and stay active.



Courtesy of @RiderUniversitySRC

The SRC staff are dedicated to keeping exercise equipment safe for student and faculty use. However, those who work out at the Bronc Barn are also expected to clean the machines and equipment that they use.

SRC FALL Group Exercise Class Schedule

Monday

6:00 PM - ZUMBA with Pamela

SRC Court #1

*Masks must be worn inside

Tuesday

6:00 PM - OUTDOOR BRONC BOOTCAMP with TJ

Tent #1

7:00 PM - VIRTUAL YOGA with Laura

ZOOM

Wednesday

6:00 PM - OUTDOOR CYCLE with Dawn

Tent #1

Thursday

6:00 PM - YOGA with Laura (virtual option available)

SRC Court #1

*Masks must be worn inside

The SRC is still consistently providing the Rider community with free fitness-related activities. There are many different classes and group exercises available, both in-person and virtually.

R Factor virtually crowns season 11 champion

By Sarah Siock

RFACTOR contestants stepped up their game at the show's Sept. 4 finale with 13 hopefuls giving powerful performances.

The finale of the annual singing competition took place live at 7 p.m. as a completely virtual event. The contestants who advanced from the Aug. 28 auditions were given a second chance to impress the judges.

Each contestant performed a full song for the finals. After those performances, the three judges each picked one contestant to advance the final round. These three contestants were able to perform a second song, and then the winner was decided by students. The voting took place live and the winner was announced the same night.

After countless show-stopping performances that ranged from an Adele cover to a John Lennon rendition, only one student could be crowned the winner. Ultimately, senior musical theatre major Dean Klebonas took home the victory.

"When I heard my name announced as the winner, I was genuinely surprised. It was a thrill to hear. I was just so proud," said Klebonas.

In the first round of the night, Klebonas sang "What's Up" by 4 Non Blondes, which was met with a positive reception from all of the judges.

"That was a main stage performance that people will be watching for years. This performance will be shown in R Factor clips for the next decade. It was tremendous," said R Factor judge and Assistant Director of Campus Life Nick Barbat.

Klebonas was up against strong competition throughout the night.

Freshman business administration major Ragan Yates was another judge's favorite who made it to the final round. Yates sang "Shallow" from the movie "A Star is Born" and "Something in the Water" by Carrie Underwood.

"I've been singing literally since I could talk. I wanted to compete in R Factor because I am new to Rider this year. I wanted to get involved in something. I saw the email about it and thought it would not hurt to try it out," said Yates.

In his last performance of the night, Klebonas sang an original song titled "Rules." This was Klebonas' second year competing in R Factor. Last year, he performed a different original song for his audition, but he did not advance to the finals. Klebonas said he wanted to "stay true to himself" by singing another original this year.

"I came back to prove myself as an artist. I wanted to not only prove myself as a performer but as a songwriter. This was such an incredible reassurance that this is what I'm meant to do with my life," said Klebonas.

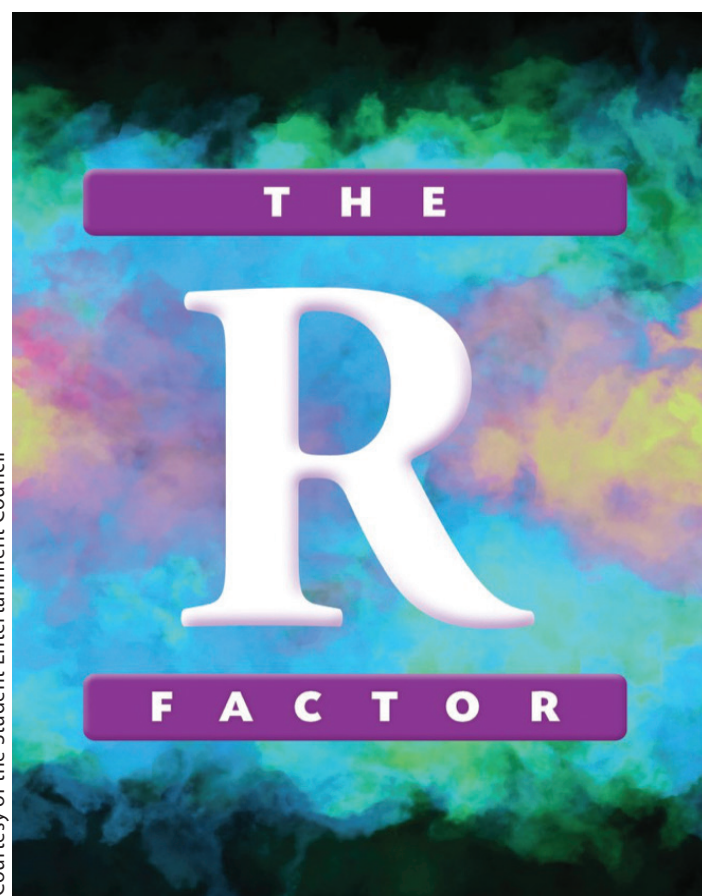
Klebonas said he plans to pursue his career as a musician after graduation. He added that he has been singing his entire life and began songwriting seven years ago.

"My goal as an artist is to always create music that allows people to vibe, but also think about the lyrics they are hearing. It is my personal outlet of expression and I can't

picture myself doing anything else with my life," he said.

Despite R Factor looking different this year due to its virtual format, students still showcased their talent with the entire Rider community. For Klebonas, the experience was one he will never forget.

"I'm just so grateful for the endless support from the Rider community. R Factor was a joy and a blessing," said Klebonas after reflecting on his win.



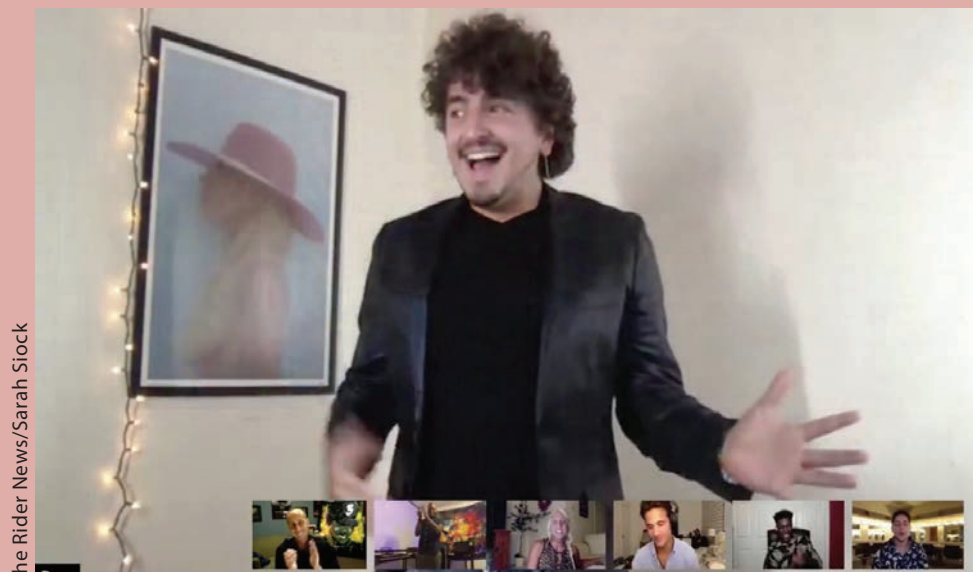
Courtesy of the Student Entertainment Council

The R Factor finale concludes the 11th season of the R Factor. Due to COVID-19, this is the first R Factor finale to be held remotely.

Starstudded screenshots from the R Factor finale



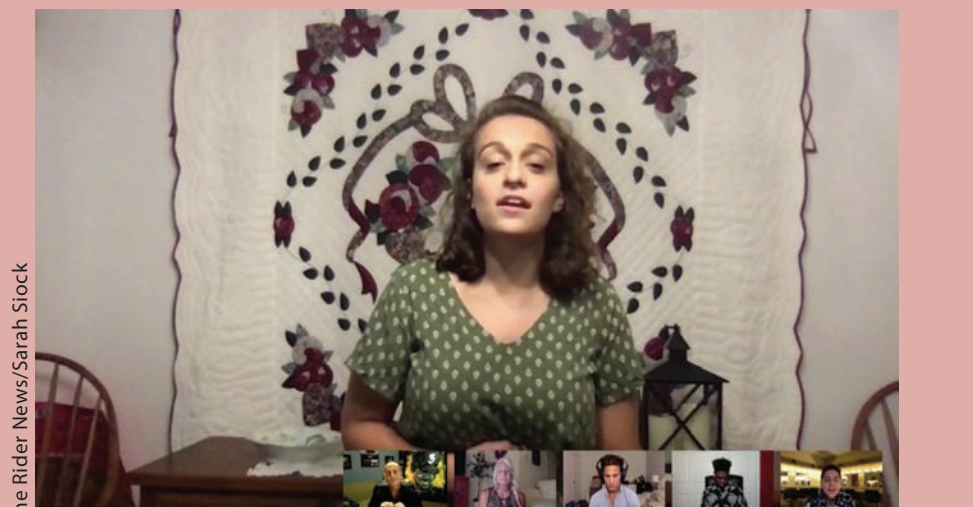
Nick Barbat judged the R Factor finale alongside senior business management major Goanio Chavarria and The Voice finalists Matthew Schular and Dez Duron.



Senior popular music performance and musical theatre major Dean Klebonas reacts to winning the R Factor. This was Klebonas' second year competing in R Factor.



Dean Klebonas sings his original song "Rules" during R Factor.



Freshman business administration major Ragan Yates sings "Something in the Water" by Carrie Underwood during the final round of R Factor.

UPCOMING EVENTS CALENDAR

FRI, Sep. 11

September 11th Memorial and Remembrance Virtual Ceremony
8:30 am - 9:30 pm

TUE, Sep. 15

The Green Film Series
Film: Cooked: Survival By ZIP Code
7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

&

WED, Sep. 16

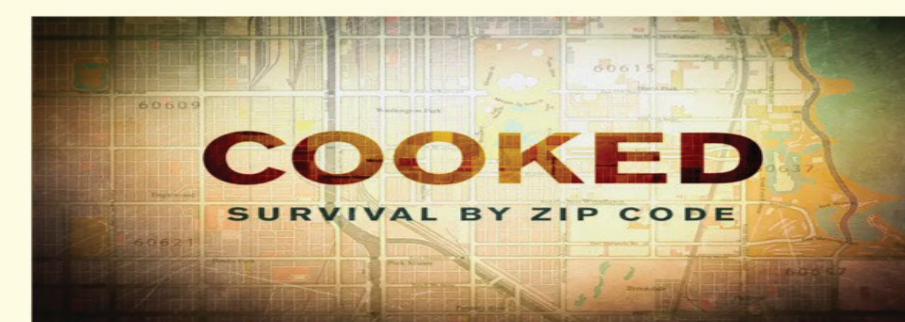
THU, Sep. 24

Accounting and Finance Virtual Career Fair
11:00 pm - 2:00 pm



ADVERTISEMENT

2020-2021 Green Film Series Presentation



Tuesday and Wednesday
September 15th + 16th
7P.M. | VIA ZOOM

In COOKED: Survival By Zip Code, Peabody Award-winning filmmaker Judith Helfand takes audiences from the deadly 1995 Chicago heat wave -- in which 739 mostly black, elderly, and poor Chicagoans died during the course of one week-- deep into one of our nation's biggest growth industries: disaster preparedness. Along the way, she forges inextricable links between extreme weather, extreme disparity, and extreme racism, daring to ask: what if a zip code was just a routing number and not a life-or-death sentence?

Brief discussion following the film.

Register at www.rider.edu/greenfilms to receive the Zoom Link





Come To Our Weekly Meetings:

Wednesdays 4:30 p.m.

Meetings on Zoom

Email Stephen Neukam for meeting info:
Neukams@rider.edu

THE Rider News

Opportunities:

The Rider News is looking for new writers, photographers and video journalists

Carolo Pascale/The Rider News

Questions for Qur'an

It's my last year at Rider and I fear that I am running out of time. Any advice on living in the moment?

A

Wow, I really like this question because it is relatable. As a senior citizen myself, I find it so hard to enjoy "right now" because I am always thinking about what is next. My life is a constant due date. Now I cannot go a day without looking at my calendar or checking my email. As a student, you follow a particular schedule from September to June and become consumed by time itself. It seems as you get older the faster time goes. That is why I cannot sleep past 10 a.m. in fear of losing my day. If it's not one class it's the other, working or finally finding the time to socialize, just constantly following behind time.

But, the irony is, I find myself dreading having too much time on my hands and needing a schedule to validate the use of my time. It is wanting to do something meaningful with your time without the deadlines and obligations stressing you out or spreading you thin. Well, that is not life. Life is always about finding time or making it, you choose.

I can only say what I think and how I feel because I struggle with staying in the present, especially when life gets too chaotic. When you finally find time or when time finds you, utilize it with things that stimulate you, give you fuel. The hardest part is preparation, planning ahead so that there is less pressure on the future. But don't get ahead of yourself. Find a comfortable pace, listen to your body if you are feeling overworked or overwhelmed. There is always a sense of guilt with living in the moment because we feel like we could be doing more with our time. Do not feel guilty for taking breaks or doing absolutely nothing with that time. I think being present in the now is realizing although life consists of due dates and deadlines, you are in full control on how you occupy your precious time.

As a fellow peer, you are not running out of time, you have just become busier. Now that you have reached the finish line in higher education there is that sense of urgency that we need to get our lives together because there is comfort in security. But as you get older, especially as a young adult, there is insecurity in the unknown and sometimes the anxiety becomes overbearing. Just know there will always be time and that you are in full control, take a step back and be present.

This week's question reminded me of a fortune cookie that read: "Life is not a problem to be solved, but rather a mystery to be lived."

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

Stephen Neukam

Managing Editor

Austin Boland-Ferguson

News Editors

Tatyanna Carman

Hailey Hensley

Features and Arts & Entertainment Editor

Christian McCarville

Opinion Editor

Qur'an Hansford

Sports Editors

Dylan Manfre

Shaun Chornobroff

Photography Editor

Carolo Pascale

Video Editors

Drew Jacabacci

Ben Ross

Gerard Blandina

Copy Editors

Emily Kim

Cristalia Turck

Nicoletta Feldman

Jenna Dean

Sydney Jeffery

Design Manager

Arianna Marino

Business/Advertising Manager

Danielle Jackson

Circulation Managers

Drew Jacabacci

Kaylee Ettinger

Social Media Editors

Hannah Drew

Juliette Eddings

Faculty Adviser

Dr. Jackie Incollingo

The Rider News serves as a public forum for student expression and welcomes letters to the editor from all members of the university community. Letters must include the writer's telephone number and email address for verification. Letters that constitute personal attacks on individuals or groups are unacceptable. We reserve the right to edit letters to the editor for length, clarity, accuracy, grammar and libel. Letters must be appropriate in terms of taste and civility. Brevity is encouraged. All decisions are at the sole discretion of the editorial board, which may reject any letter. Send to The Rider News via email at ridernews@rider.edu. Letters must be received by midnight on the Monday preceding publication. Any tips or suggestions can be sent to ridernews@rider.edu.

 @theridernews

 www.theridernews.com

 @theridernews

 facebook.com/theridernews

 ridernews@rider.edu

OPINION

WOULD be lying if I said part of the reason for writing this article was because I am slightly envious of those who are currently residing on campus but the main reason for this week's editorial is to raise the question, is campus really safe? Regardless of the answer, if I had the ability to live on campus I would, but when I actually took the time to think about it, I might have actually dodged a bullet. As a number of schools and universities across the country reopen for the fall, parents and teachers have become worried about how safe it is for students to return back into the classroom.

To start, there are countless reasons why students do indeed need in-person school as opposed to at-home virtual learning. Students already missed out on a third of their school year due to the stay-at-home order that went into effect in March and the data is beginning to show a shift in learning efficiency.

"U.S. public school students will go into this new school year having learned less than half of the math and just under 70% of the language arts skills they would have acquired had schools remained open last spring," according to Brown University's Annenberg Institute for School Reform.

Even college students have expressed their dismay with remote learning, Zoom classes and meticulous assignments. One thing that I can personally relate to is the lack of motivation to successfully finish the year. Going to school all my life, my performance as a student was based heavily on that classroom environment, being able to see and interact with my professors and my peers. I especially miss my alone time in my dorm, the talks with myself and my solo study dates, things that helped me succeed as a student. It is hard trying to keep up this identity when there is nothing left to make it real.

There was always a stigma around school, the long hours, the discipline and the extra work assigned to do at home. Whereas, for some, school also became an escape for students whose home life may be unpleasant, to say the least. Although school gets a bad reputation, it is the one place where kids are kids. This argument holds weight in this discussion because the pandemic condemned a handful of students to the domestic abuse commonly found at the home.

"School is also a refuge for many children, especially for those suffering from abuse, neglect or food insecurity at home. Under the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, school employees are mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect, and report nearly 20 percent of the child maltreatment cases in this country. That means if schools do not reopen to some in-person education, an estimated 807,700 cases of child abuse and neglect could go unreported this academic year alone," according to the Washington Post.

Since the virus made its way to the western world and the pandemic altered our social lives, we have seen public health become political. There have been protests on whether masks are effective or about reopening the public during the lockdown, claiming it is an attack on human rights and their First Amendment right to protest the government.

Anthony S. Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, told Congress in June that he feels very strongly we need to do 'whatever we can to get the children back to school,' according to the Washington Post. President Trump tweeted in favor of opening schools for in-person learning and threatened to sever funding for districts that do otherwise.

As the virus continued to kill and sicken thousands of Americans with no signs of subsiding, the American Academy of Pediatrics clarified in July that "schools in areas with high levels of COVID-19 community spread should not be compelled to reopen against the judgment of local experts. A one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate," according to the Washington Post.

With the competing messages of politicians versus public-health professionals, education administrators are confused with what the "right" decision is to make. Rider has seen their own form of this unfold when the university declared it would be strictly remote for the fall semester until New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy announced that in-person instruction was going to be permitted. It makes you wonder (especially those who are on campus) if campus is actually safe when administrators are saying one thing but the governor says another hours later.

"As far as the university is concerned, we spend the entire summer planning and preparing to bring students safely back to campus. Every place we've developed lands on erring on the side of caution, which is why you see reduced on-campus residency and a great deal of remote instruction. I think the precautions we've put in place in the classrooms for in person instruction, as well as in the residence & dining halls, are sound in keeping with best practices espoused by the Centers for Disease Control and scientific guidelines (e.g., mandatory mask wearing, 6 feet of mandatory social distancing)," said Biology Professor and Dean of Liberal Arts & Sciences Kelly Bidle.

The scary part about attending school during this time is the unknown about how the virus will react to the fall and winter months. Will the virus mutate? Will there be a vaccine by the time the leaves begin to change and the days get shorter? There is still so much we do not know and as the outdoors begin to open again, we see individuals jump at the opportunity to return back to normalcy. High school

seniors entering into their first year of college, no prom, some did not even have graduation, you take all those things away from a teenager getting their first taste of freedom, they're definitely going to party. The concern that arises is how do you protect thousands of students who crave the traditional college welcome, not one with masks, social distancing and Zoom events? How will professors who might be older or with families of their own to go back to be protected from the spreading of the virus?

"I think the really hard part comes in the spaces that we can't control (e.g., off campus activities). This is where we are seeing the issues arise at other universities that are seeing outbreaks (parties, lack of wearing masks, etc). It is incumbent upon all of us to abide by the rules to protect ourselves, and each other. I've been really pleased to see all of the mask wearing and other good behaviors on campus so far. Time will tell if our entire community respects these critical guidelines on keeping us safe," said Bidle.

A question I have heard being asked was should schools remain closed until fall 2021? I believe that is a lot of valuable time being taken away from the students but when I think about the overall safety of not only the students but the faculty and those in charge of making sure the environment is safe to study, I am conflicted on which is more important. This is the time for administrators in all sectors of education to be transparent about public health and being candid about whether things will get worse before they get better and how they choose to combat conflict and implement solutions. Students, parents and teachers have put their health on the line in order to educate or be educated and it is everyone's duty to do their part in ensuring a safe and healthy school year.

Qur'an E H

Qur'an Hansford
senior journalism major

Is campus really safe?



COLUMN

The loss of sports and its path back



Photo courtesy of Rider Athletics

Rider's newly-renovated Ben Cohen Field will have to wait until at least the spring to host games.

By **Dylan Manfre**

Hello again. It's been a while.

One hundred and eighty-two days ago was the last time I wrote a story that was printed in The Rider News sports section. Man, does that feel like an eon ago.

Let's do some catching up, shall we?

The United States has endured the anguish and continued agony of the novel coronavirus pandemic. We are still feeling the lasting effects of everything that has transpired since March.

I can only speak for myself but I certainly did not expect anything in the above paragraph to still be prevalent when The Rider News covered the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) Basketball tournament in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in March, yet here we are.

How did we get here?

I was cautiously optimistic when Rider University released its "Resolved and Ready" plan for the upcoming semester on June 24. I pondered how we would cover sports under the assumption they would still be held.

Rider Athletic Director Don Harnum told The Rider News back in July there was no plan in place for stopping fans if they wanted to come to a game but said, "I have to think there's going to be some kind of distancing or crowd limitations but I would hope that students outside could come to a soccer game or field hockey game."

So, how did we get from wondering how many fans would be in the stands at a Rider soccer game to now debating whether the college basketball season will start on time? Or throwing around the possibility of a bubble format for college basketball as the NBA and NHL have eloquently executed.

Things began to materialize on July 17 when the MAAC set the first day of fall sports competition for Sept. 11 for soccer and volleyball (Sept. 18 for field hockey per the Northeast Conference). Maybe there

would be fans at Ben Cohen Field after all.

Spoiler alert — the MAAC canceled fall sports 10 days later on July 27. So, no fans, unfortunately, however, it probably was the right move.

"A lot of it is the timing of when we had to bring athletes back, if we were going to play a normal schedule that usually is Aug. 3, and things were spiking nationally at that time," Harnum told The Rider News. "The news was not good in terms of how different regions were handling the virus even though things were slowly looking better in New Jersey — even though we've had some hiccups along the way."

Harnum added the factor of rapid COVID-19 testing still not being readily available where a result can be produced in an adequate time frame to know if an athlete is infected.

"We were trying to work with the NCAA by setting reasonable expectations for the start of fall sports, and within the MAAC we felt we shouldn't rush athletes back earlier than the student body because of all the questions surrounding testing and the pandemic and infection rate levels," MAAC Commissioner Rich Ensor told The Rider News.

"So there were so many open-ended questions initially, we said no summer conditioning, and then we said nobody comes back until the student body comes back and we thought with that and Sept. 11 as a start date, if everything was moving along as most hoped, that we would have been able to have competition. As it turned out the infection rates went through the roof ... So it all went into the mix and then we started having some other conferences around the region drop fall sports. It just escalated. It was one ... problem after another."

Ensor believed the federal government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic was problematic simply because there was no concrete directive.

"We have not had national leadership saying 'Americans do x, y and z,' so it's been dropped to the governors to do all that and as a result, we got mixed messages all over the country and so students are no different than any other part of the population," Ensor said.

To Harnum's credit, operating college in the COVID-climate was difficult because of the mixed messages sent by the state of New Jersey in regards to quarantining, or even if New Jersey would allow in-person college at all.

"If you're going to start in any normal fall schedule, you had to bring athletes back 14 days earlier just to quarantine before you could start and that kept changing every day," Harnum said. "The Presidents of our conference who made the decisions just wanted a better, more secure environment to say 'Yeah we're going to play.'"

Where we can go

The decision to cancel the fall season and formulate a plan for students to safely return to campus was by no means easy and people in athletics and beyond deserve credit for the measures being taken.

Teams are now holding voluntary 30-minute workouts until Sept. 14 when official practices can begin.

According to multiple reports, the NCAA will decide in mid-September whether or not a delay to the college basketball season is necessary. The start date would likely eliminate games for the remainder of 2020 — who needs any more dread in this year anyway — and have the season begin around Jan. 1. This is just one of the things the association is looking into.

Ensor even went as far as to say the chances of seeing sports played in the 2020 calendar year are "greater than 50%," adding "I feel confident we're going to have sports, I'm just not sure what the format is going to be."

50% seems pretty high given what has transpired from last spring and this fall.

Buckle up people. It is not going to get any easier but the clock to decide the fate of winter sports has officially begun.

Originally published online on Sept. 2.

MEN'S GOLF

Devereux wins NJ Amateur Championship

By Luke Lombardi

AUSTIN Devereux, a senior on the men's golf team, won the New Jersey State Golf Association Amateur Championship on Aug. 6, by shooting a four-round score of 282 during the tournament.

Devereux shot a combined seven-under par in the final two rounds, shooting 68 and 69. This was a drastic improvement from the first two days, as Devereux shot a 72 and 73 in those rounds.

Devereux's victory can be described as surprising, considering he bested opponents from Power Five schools like Rutgers, Penn State and defending national champions Stanford.

"To be honest with you, it doesn't mean a lot to me ... I've never been big on ranking myself with other players from different schools," Devereux said of defeating high-major opponents. "But, I will say, being able to put my name out there and say I'm from Rider University and beat those guys, means a lot to our program and a lot to the Rider family."

Devereux felt like it was a fair competition since it was an amateur tournament which is similar to college-level play. Head Coach Jason Barry had similar feelings.

"[Devereux] has been playing great since February," Barry said. "He was consistently shooting low scores in practice. We knew if he played like how he had been in practice that he would have a chance to win."

Devereux trained a lot heading into the championship.

"[Devereux] and I talk on the phone almost every day. He sends me swing videos three times a week and we set up a weekly practice plan for him to make sure his game is peaking for tournaments," Barry said.

It wasn't until late in the tournament that Devereux felt he had a good shot at winning.

"I knew going into the final round, I was one shot



Brian Foley/Foley Photography

Senior Austin Devereux won the NJ Amateur Championship on Aug. 6 with a late push.

back. If I did what I did the day before and lost, I wouldn't be upset. I also knew if I shot anything in the

60s, I would get it done," he said. "I played smart but not too aggressive."

While Devereux knew he could win, his confidence grew as the last round progressed.

"Basically, we got to the 13th hole and the guy I was playing with chipped in on 13 for birdie. I had about a 40-footer for birdie and when he chipped in, that tied him momentarily for the lead with me," Devereux said. "When I made that putt, I knew everything was going my way. On the 16th hole, I told myself he isn't going to make three straight birdies. I didn't really realize I was going to win until I got on the green in the 18th hole, but the 13th hole was when I knew I had a good shot."

Barry knew that Devereux had the talent to not only compete, but to win the event.

"[Devereux] and I talked after each round and we had the same game plan throughout the event," Barry said. "We knew that if he played patiently and didn't try to force anything that he would have plenty of opportunities. He had chances to win before and came up just short. I told him the night before that when he took the lead the next day to keep his foot on the pedal and never look back. I told him he was the best player in the field and that it was his time. That is exactly what he did."

The reactions were all of delight. Devereux said, "It honestly took me a solid 24 hours to settle in that I won the event. Connor [Befki] is going to be a sophomore and I play golf with him at the Pine Barrens five days a week and he was the first person to come up to me after. We're one big family at Rider, and that proves how good of a kid and teammate he is. Unfortunately with COVID-19, a lot more people would have been there without it."

Devereux's coach and teammates were as excited as he was.

"I love [Devereux]. I am so proud of him," Barry said. "We worked so hard. He deserved it."

ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT

Athletics among first to get mental health certification

By Dylan Manfre and Bridget Gum

Rider Assistant Athletic Trainer Priya Mehrish wants student-athletes to place the same emphasis on their mental health as they do on their physical health.

"Let's put it this way, all of us go every year for a physical right?" Mehrish said via Zoom. "You go see your primary care or physical; we don't do anything about mental health."

Mehrish spearheaded an initiative which resulted in all of Rider's head coaches and lead assistants from its 20 sports, administrative staff and athletic trainers, receiving certification in Mental Health First Aid, a national program committed to education about mental health for adults.

The voluntary training was an effort for coaches and staff to be able to expose student-athletes to resources available to them so they can make smart decisions about their mental health.

Rider Athletics became one of the nation's first athletic departments to have a majority of its staff become certified in Mental Health First Aid, per a release from Rider Athletics.

"All of the coaches were totally involved. They have seen the need for it," Mehrish said. "They are working with athletes so closely and they are one of the first people who get to see if there are any signs or concerning signals that an athlete is exhibiting."

Hearing that few schools have athletic programs that are certified in Mental Health First Aid surprised women's basketball sophomore center Victoria Toomey, who encouraged others to participate in similar training.

"It honestly surprised me a lot," Toomey said. "I'm proud to go to Rider and I think it's awesome that they're one of the schools out there that have done that. I think it's definitely important for other schools to jump on that bandwagon and join them because athletes are more than just athletes. They're a person too, behind that skill and that player. I think it's important for all coaches to know how to deal with that because so many athletes go through these things

and don't tell anyone about it."

The participants were engaged in self-paced training for two hours prior to joining a five-hour group Zoom call with Dr. Jennifer Ostrowski, the program director for the doctorate in athletic training at Moravian College. Everyone involved had to complete a test as a precursor to the Zoom training.

Mehrish went through the same training with Dr. Ostrowski when she was a graduate student at Moravian College.

Women's Basketball Assistant Coach Steve Harney, who went through the training, said one of his takeaways from the program was the A.L.G.E.E. method. This stands for: Approach, Listen, Give Advice, Encourage Out and Encourage In. He mentioned the acronym served as a guide for people who are less educated on how to handle potential mental health scenarios.

"It's like [an] Approach. So how do you approach somebody that appears to be going through some type of mental health scenario. So it's Approach, Listen, Give Advice and stuff like that. Encourage Out and Encourage In," Harney said on a Zoom call. "Encourage Out, have them seek out professional help outside of you because your job is not a mental health professional, your job is essentially a mental health advocate and kind of to guide them along the way if you will. And then Encourage In, encourage them to work with different coping skills. Introduce them to different coping skills that work in the meantime as they start working toward getting the professional help they need."

Mehrish believed the training was beneficial to everyone because of the multitude of "hats" student-athletes have to wear, along with their lives on campus. They experience added stressors that regular college students may not which causes them to sometimes carry a heavier burden.

"The athlete 'hat,' that role has many responsibilities. They have a responsibility to show

up for strength and conditioning training. They have a responsibility to be at practice. They have a responsibility to show up for any other training program their coaches do. They have a responsibility to perform," Mehrish said. "So that is a lot of added stress to a student-athlete, so studies, sports, performance — because their performance is linked to expectations of coaches, expectations that parents have from their kids. When there's a scholarship attached [so] there's the money component on their performance."

Toomey would agree. Student-athletes face an incredible amount of pressure. She has been vocal about her mental health struggles and said her mindset had affected her play during her first season at Rider. Basketball served as "an escape" for her, however, the performance anxiety took a toll.

She was no longer the star center at Dunmore High School in Pennsylvania. Last season, she averaged 5.7 minutes off the bench on a Rider team with six seniors, two of whom now play professionally.

"Just the confidence factor [of the game]," said Toomey, who started a blog called 'In the Clouds' to help cope with the lockdown. "I was a lot more hesitant and nervous and anxious overall. I really couldn't help it. Now I have a better handle on that. And part of that was being a freshman and being new and getting used to the game."

Mehrish was excited to know Rider became one of the only institutions in the nation to complete this certification and realizes the importance of having tough conversations.

"That is huge, and I hope that other schools follow because it is important to recognize the need to have training in this field. It's more important now than ever," Mehrish said. "We need to put an end to the stigma that is attached to mental health, have conversations on campus, talk openly about it because that is the only way we can help."

Sports

INSIDE

UPSET ALERT

Senior men's golfer defeats Power Five opponents in NJ Amateur Championship

FIND THIS STORY ON PAGE 11



BLACK LIVES MATTER

Rider, MAAC make stand for social justice



Rider Athletics

Rider men's basketball Head Coach **Kevin Baggett** has made multiple powerful statements calling for social justice within the United States.

By **Shaun Chornobroff**

In the midst of an ongoing conversation about racial injustice and police brutality in the United States, the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) announced the "MAAC United for Justice" campaign on Aug. 20, designed to educate and combat racial injustices within the country.

The campaign came as a result of the MAAC Council of Presidents' June 2 statement on racism and the public outcry in the aftermath of George Floyd's death.

"The MAAC is committed to work with others in college sports to seek ways to foster understanding and achieve permanent change to reverse the legacy of racial injustice and discrimination in this country," the conference said in its June statement.

The campaign, like many of the important conversations in this country, was pushed by the young voices who are members of the MAAC Student Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC).

"The campaign was established by the MAAC SAAC during the course of the summer as a result of all the issues within the country and the killings of the different members of the community, whether it be George Floyd or Breonna Taylor," MAAC Commissioner Rich Ensor told The Rider News.

"It was really one that they developed, we just nurtured from the conference office by providing resources and other support so they can get the campaign together."

The campaign has already started to show within the 11-member conference, as the MAAC launched an initiative for voter registration. Ensor explained that the SAAC believes, "that through the ballot box they can affect social change."

Rider Athletics launched the "Bronc the Vote" initiative in part with the MAAC's Voter Registration Initiative on Aug. 27.

"The conference-level student athlete advisory committee has been working hard alongside the

MAAC to prepare our athletes, coaches and community members for the upcoming elections," said senior Matt Siley, Rider's SAAC president and a track and field athlete, as part of the Aug. 27 announcement.

"Through a multi-step process, our goal is to register every athlete to vote across the respective 11 institutions of the MAAC. We seek to professionally inform our community about the process of registering, provide information on various parties and candidates, and contribute to both federal and local elections. It is estimated that around 100 million people did not vote in the previous election, and whether that be due to lack of knowledge or lack of means, we want our community's voice heard."

The MAAC SAAC is putting together a number of other initiatives, according to Ensor. At the time of speaking with Ensor, a diversity committee was being formed, along with a reading program being put into place. Ensor added that he's been "pretty pleased" with the campaign thus far.

The MAAC has concentrated a large part of the campaign's visual efforts towards the basketball season.

This upcoming season basketball programs will be displaying Black Lives Matter messaging on their warm-up shirts and patches. The conference will likely put Black Lives Matter decals on basketball courts and is allowing programs to produce video messages to be displayed.

Ensor is particularly pleased that individual athletes now have a voice within the conference.

"We encourage our student athletes to have the opportunity to express their views on important issues," Ensor said. "The mental health of the student athletes is important. This ties into that because it gives them a way to express some of the angst their feeling with some of the recent events in our society, so to an extent we can provide an outlet for that, through positive change and messaging."

Ensor said that players' voices were "extremely important" to many of the coaches, adding that coaches "were very active right from the get-go ... this was an opportunity for them to show positive change for their athletes who are so concerned with these issues."

Rider men's basketball Head Coach Kevin Baggett has been very active and outspoken in the past few months about the racial issues plaguing the country, making multiple powerful statements.

"We are trying to promote unity and equality for all mankind. Break down social biases when it comes to Black/brown people and all people of color. The MAAC's goal when it comes to men's and women's basketball, which is dominated by Blacks, is to promote that Black Lives Matter on behalf of our players and Black coaches," Baggett said in the campaign's press release.

"My personal goal is to educate as many people on the importance that Black Lives Matter, just as all lives matter. To continue to carry out Dr. Martin Luther King's message 'that one day we wouldn't be judged by the color of our skin, but by the content of our character.' This is very important to me because it's time for change. We have been dealing with these same issues for over 400 years and enough is enough. We will no longer put up with it and I think there are a lot of white Americans who are finally waking up and saying enough is enough on our behalf."

Baggett also made a statement on June 3, as racial tensions were growing within the United States. Baggett also showed his support for a new non-profit organization called the "Advancement of Blacks in Sports" on Sept. 3. The organization's mission is to help Black people within sports attain economic, racial and social justice.