

Police investigating unknown racist Zoom intruders

By Stephen Neukam

RACIST intruders at a Valentine's Day Zoom event hosted by two Rider Black sororities spewed hate and drew bigoted imagery that left eventgoers stunned on Feb. 11, triggering an urgent response by the university and a police investigation.

The event, hosted by Zeta Phi Beta and Delta Sigma Theta, was meant to spread self-love when the Zoom meeting was disrupted by an unidentified group that blasted the screens with racist epithets, swastikas, anti-Semitic rhetoric and racial stereotypes at about 9:30 p.m. The deluge of imagery was scrawled by hand on the screen.

Senior biology major Alexandria Poole, president of Delta Sigma Theta, said the disruptive group of about 15 people showed up to the event early and caused havoc for about five minutes. Poole attempted to control the situation, asking for everyone to please stop shouting and drawing. The group refused, and Poole ended the event, which had an attendance of at least ten people.

According to Poole, the unwanted group used fake names and reentered the Zoom after being kicked out. The sororities were able to pull some of the emails that were used by the intruders, some of which had Rider domains, said Poole. The list of email addresses was turned over to the university.

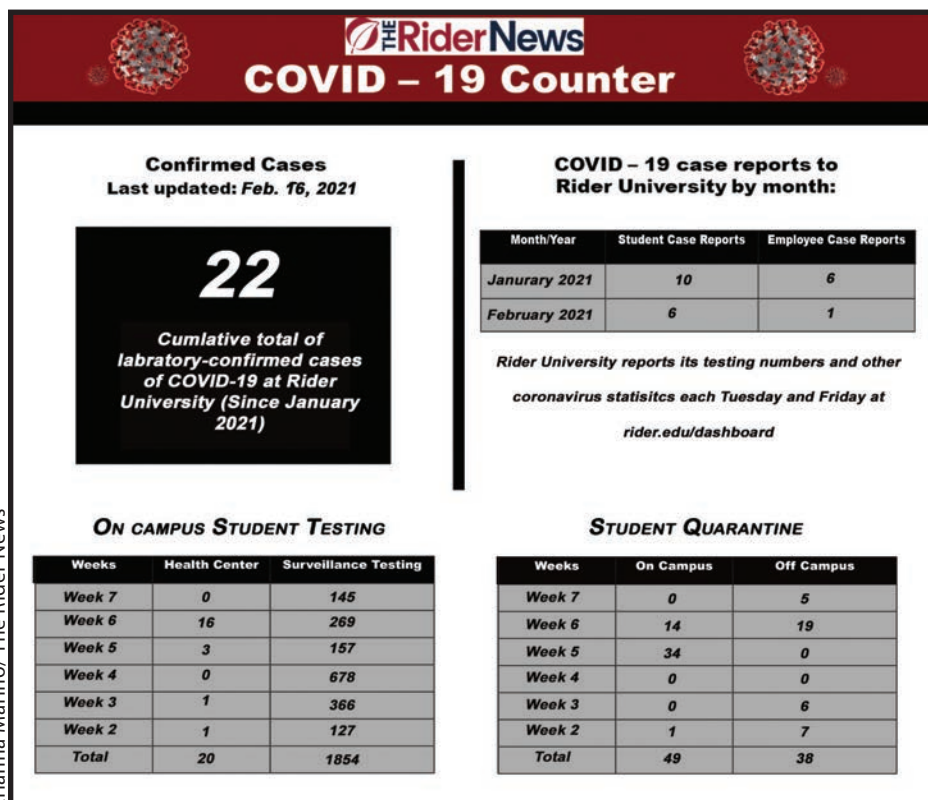
Earlier on the same night, at an event hosted by a Black fraternity at Rutgers in honor of Black History Month, the Zoom meeting was also invaded by racist agitators.

According to a social media post by the fraternity, the group was able to access the share screen feature on Zoom and slammed the meeting with Ku Klux Klan songs, graphic video of Black people being murdered and mutilated and more racist imagery. The post said the incident was under law enforcement investigation.



Courtesy of Rider University
Senior biology major Alexandria Poole, president of Delta Sigma Theta, said that the racist incident left her in "pure shock."

Rider reports one new coronavirus case with surveillance program in swing



Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Planning and Secretary to the Board Debbie Stasolla said the majority of cases that are being dealt with now involve an athletic team.

By Austin Ferguson

RIDER University reported that only one member of the Rider community tested positive for COVID-19 from Feb. 8 to Feb. 14, the university's online dashboard said on Feb. 16.

The lone positive, which was reported as coming from an on-campus student, is a drop-off from the reported five positive cases from Feb. 1 to Feb. 7.

The drop-off in positive tests came in stark contrast to the report in a large uptick in tests administered, with the university reporting 269 tests from Feb. 8 to Feb. 14,

compared to 160 the previous week.

The university also reported a significant reduction in students in quarantine over the past two weeks. Rider's dashboard reported 13 students in quarantine on campus on Feb. 9. As of Feb. 16, no students were quarantining on campus. The men's basketball team was previously in quarantine, with reports that it exited quarantine on Feb. 12 after previously receiving a positive test in its tier 1 personnel.

Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Planning and Secretary to the Board Debbie Stasolla said that it can be expected for a large portion of quarantine instances to be related to various protocols for Rider's athletics teams due to increased volume in testing.

"The majority of the quarantine cases that we're dealing with right now involve an athletics team," Stasolla said on Feb. 9. "Because of the nature of how they practice and compete... it's the nature of those interactions that will likely result in a full team or a portion of a team having to quarantine when we find a positive case."

According to Stasolla, COVID-19-related numbers in cases, testing and quarantining are included in the general population numbers on the COVID-19 dashboard.

As of Feb. 16, no students are actively isolating on campus, compared to one student who was isolated on campus the prior week.

For off-campus numbers, no students or employees have tested positive for COVID-19 since Jan. 31, five students are quarantining off-campus and one student is isolated off-campus as of Feb. 16.

Between Feb. 15 and 16, 145 COVID-19 tests were administered, all of which came through the surveillance testing system.

In all, 1,874 COVID-19 tests have been administered, which now surpasses the Fall 2020 total of 1,810 tests.

All but 20 tests administered in the Spring 2021 semester were taken through the surveillance testing program. The other 20 tests were administered through the university Health Center. At the end of the Fall 2020 semester, 82 total tests were given through the Student Health Center.

As of Feb. 16, 23 total cases of COVID-19 have been reported on the university dashboard for the Spring 2021 semester, with 16 of those cases coming from students. Though there were significantly fewer tests being administered, Rider reported six positive COVID-19 cases through the first seven weeks of the Fall 2020 semester.

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WINTER BREAK

The women's basketball team has a three-week break before the MAAC Tournament.

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THE YEAR 2020

As we move through the first months of 2021, here's a recap of last year.

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DANI JACKSON DOCUMENTARY

Passionate film student embarks on producing a 12-part documentary series revolving around African American veterans and the civil rights movement.

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Rider students alerted to potentially dangerous ex-employee of campus contractor

By Stephen Neukam

RIDER students were put on alert about a former university contractor employee that may pose a risk to the community through alert system emails, texts and phone calls at 8 p.m. on Feb. 16, telling anyone who sees the man to not approach him and call Public Safety.

The email, which features a photo of the male but not his name or where he worked, said that the potential threat was not directed at any individual but that the alert was made out of an abundance of caution.

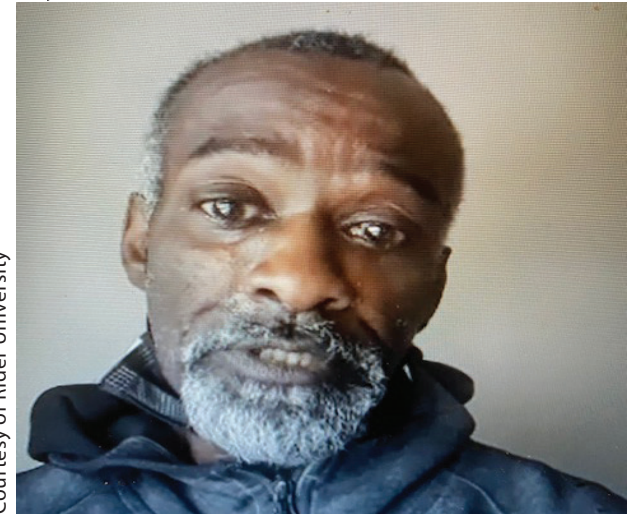
The Lawrence Township Police Department was contacted and was on campus as part of the investigation.

Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Planning and Secretary to the Board Debbie Stasolla said that the man was on campus earlier Tuesday, but the

university was not aware of the threat until after he was gone. Stasolla said the alert was sent out in case the man returned to the campus.

According to the email, additional Public Safety officers were posted throughout the campus and will remain for the rest of the week. Associate Vice President for University Marketing and Communication Kristine Brown said that extra Lawrence Township Police Department Patrols would be sent to the university as well.

Brown said Tuesday night that the university was not sharing the nature of the threat or the individual's name.



Courtesy of Rider University

University alert system sent community-wide messages about potential threat on Feb. 16.

University president denounces behavior at sorority event

According to Poole, the event at Rider did not enable screen sharing.

The university has yet to confirm whether the attack at Rider was part of a larger plot against other universities, according to Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Planning and Secretary to the Board Debbie Stasolla.

Stasolla said that the link to the meeting was posted publicly on the internet. The Office of Information Technology is setting up meetings to emphasize to students how to set up secure Zoom meetings.

Poole said she was in "pure shock," while other members were angry enough to be moved to tears.

Senior musical theater major and Student Government Association Vice President Dylan Erdelyi said that he was not aware of whether the agitators were students or an outside entity yet, but that Rider Public Safety and the Office of Technology Information were working to track down the IP addresses of the offenders.

A statement by President Gregory Dell'Omo on Feb. 12 said that initial findings suggested the group may have been external to Rider. The statement also said the university was taking steps to protect its virtual events from outside interference.

"We do not tolerate such shameful, reprehensible and degrading behavior," said Dell'Omo. "It has absolutely no place in our community — or any community — and runs completely counter to the values and expectations we hold dear."



Courtesy of Rider University

The disruptive group swarmed the screen with racist epithets, swastikas, anti-Semitic rhetoric and racial stereotypes at the beginning of the event.

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Students discuss qualities and qualifications for chief diversity officer position

By Tatyanna Carman

RIDER students and members of the Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) Search Committee attended the student listening session for the position on Feb. 10 at 6 p.m.

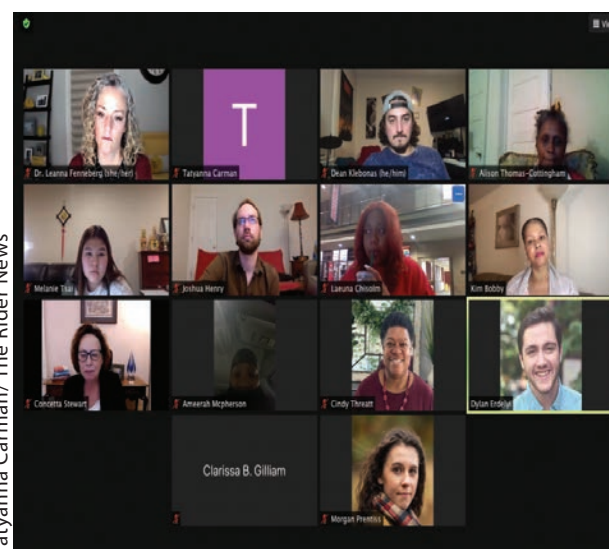
There were two other listening sessions for staff and faculty on Feb. 10 at 5 p.m. and Feb. 11 at 5:30 p.m., respectively. Fourteen people attended the student listening session.

According to an email sent by the university about the listening session on Feb. 2, Vice President for Student Affairs Leanna Fenneberg and Associate Professor of the Department of Psychology Alison Thomas-Cottingham, the co-chairs of the CDO search committee, worked in collaboration with their search partner, AGB Search, to, "schedule a number of listening sessions next week for different campus stakeholders."

"Our partners with AGB Search facilitated listening sessions with a variety of campus stakeholders (faculty, staff, students, Cabinet, Deans, President's Council on Inclusion, CDO exploratory committee) as an opportunity for individuals to share their perspectives on key characteristics of candidates for this position who would be successful and key opportunities and challenges for the person in this role," said Fenneberg and Thomas-Cottingham in an email statement.

Some of the responsibilities for the CDO include serving as a "support for faculty and staff of color," to "work collaboratively with Academic Affairs and with faculty to promote cultural competency, enhance knowledge on diversifying the curriculum and to prioritize the work of diversity and inclusion within departments" and to "serve as a collaborative partner to the Center for Diversity and Inclusion and other units and programs that focus on diversity, equity and inclusion goals," according to the Feb. 2 email.

Fenneberg and Thomas-Cottingham also explained the timeline of events that will follow after these sessions in regards to recruitment for this position.



Tatyanna Carman/The Rider News

Students discussed what makes Rider students special at the chief diversity officer listening session on Feb. 10.

"We are presently engaging members of the campus community to inform the search profile that will be used to inform and attract candidates," Fenneberg and Thomas-Cottingham said. "The search will officially launch (i.e. be publicized nationally) Mar. 1. As with most senior-level positions, we will solicit applications for about 6-8 weeks. Interviews will begin in May, with a hope to identify the candidate of choice in time to begin prior to the start of the fall semester."

Senior musical theater major Dean Klebonas, Student Government Association (SGA) campus life chair and search committee member, said that it is "super" important that the position goes to a person "who students will feel safe going to" and someone with "personality and approachability."

Senior psychology major Leanna Chisholm, SGA equity and inclusion chair, and search committee member, added that whoever is chosen for the position needs to "be able to hold students, faculty and staff accountable" and emphasized the importance of

reaching out to not only student leaders but also students who are not leaders.

"Now being that we are virtual, there are a lot of students who are falling by the wayside because they don't know where these groups are all the time, per se, or they haven't heard of them yet," Chisholm said. "So they're unspoken for. So maybe to get more insight on what a student is speaking for, reach out to students who aren't leaders. Because every student isn't going to be a leader. However, that doesn't mean they don't deserve a voice."

Klebonas referenced one of the responsibilities of the CDO position that involves a partnership with Title IX and said that the incoming CDO should be "a voice in cases with Title IX" if they are not working on the case, especially with cases of inequality or harassment.

"[In] my experience with Title IX, everyone was white," said Stewart. "...If there is like a racial inequality case, I feel like that representation is not really there. So if they can have a part in that, I think that would be super helpful in reassuring people that if you go to the school about something, something will be done, and they'll help you through it."

The students also discussed what makes Rider students special.

Senior musical theater major and SGA President Dylan Erdelyi said, "I think what's really amazing about our student body is that we have students that are so passionate in particular areas. We have amazing artists at Rider and we have an amazing business program, education, such dedicated educators. And I think that feeds into this position because it's really not one-size-fits-all in any way."

Fenneberg and Thomas-Cottingham said that the listening session offered "incredible insight and student perspective on the position and priorities related to diversity, equity and inclusion at Rider."

Chisholm said that she thought the session went well because she felt as though the

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Students talk expectations at listening session for new cabinet position

AGB Search representatives were genuinely listening. She also added that she felt as though they received a “genuine and raw student view.”

Chisholm said that the CDO position was needed, especially after the Feb. 11 Zoom bombing incident where discriminatory remarks were targeted at participants at a virtual Valentine’s Day event. She mentioned how the use of the word “alleged” in a university email sent on Feb. 12 about the incident could have been avoided if there was a CDO involved.

“I felt like that would have been avoided, because they would have looked at their email before it was sent out, they would have known that alleged is not the word. Because it’s not alleged. I was called the N-word on my own presentation. It’s not

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alleged. I have the screenshot, stuff like that. It’s things like that, where it’s like, it’s not a miscommunication on purpose, but that could have been avoided.”

The university sent out a follow-up email on Feb. 12 explaining why the term “alleged” was used and apologized. The word “alleged” was used because the incident was being actively investigated, according to the email.

Chisholm also said that the position can help non-white students on campus feel supported.

“I think that’s what a lot of students are looking for. I’m not saying that I don’t feel supported, but I’m also a student leader who’s also in a lot of rooms that a lot of students are not in,” Chisholm said. “And I don’t represent every Black kid on campus. So there are a lot of students who are not white, that just don’t feel supported. So yeah, I think that position can build that gap.”

Over a year into the pandemic, technology officials detail challenges



Courtesy of Rider University

Despite the university’s newfound reliance on technology, the Office of Information Technology’s Help Desk has not seen an increase in usage by the Rider community.

By Tatyanna Carman

THE shift in class modalities has made Rider students, faculty and staff alike more reliant on technology, which has created some challenges for Rider departments that specialize in the use of technology by the Rider community.

Chief Information Officer (CIO) Douglas McCrea explained how the Office of Information Technologies (OIT) has helped the university with these technological adjustments.

Aside from Zoom, OIT has implemented Apporto — a virtual Windows environment — added a new phone system, extended WiFi on campus, installed microphones in classrooms for hybrid learning and enabled department-specific software to assist with the transition into the various new learning environments. According to McCrea, some of the platforms were implemented before the pandemic, such as Zoom.

“I’ve been on a lot of calls with CIOs from around the state. They’ve had bigger nightmares than we’ve had — been much bigger nightmares,” he said. “And so I think about it, I’m pretty grateful for what we had in place, to begin with. A lot of people didn’t have Apporto, they didn’t have Zoom. They had 10 licenses and WebEx or something. And so they had to do that even faster.”

Academic Affairs Technology Project Manager John Gleavy added to this sentiment by saying that unlike Rider, other institutions, “did not have platforms like Canvas and Zoom fully rolled out campus-wide.”

“Rider has been offering distance learning courses for over 10 years and currently has 15 fully online programs — so we were confident that we could scale our systems to adequately meet the increased demand brought on by emergency pivot to fully remote learning,” Gleavy said.

Gleavy also explained that one of the ways academic affairs has helped the university adjust to the changes made as a result of the pandemic was by providing a “more rigorous training schedule for faculty.”

“Each week, we offer two to three sessions that are focused on effectively using instructional technology to facilitate remote/hybrid instruction,” he said. “We really emphasize running training sessions on using more video and multimedia in the classroom; in addition to regular sessions on using Zoom as an effective teaching tool.”

Gleavy also said that in 2019, academic affairs built a new “Faculty recording studio where instructors can record video lectures in a professional environment run

by Rider students” and in that space alone, they have produced “nearly 10,000 hours of content with instructors from nearly every discipline at Rider.”

This shift to online learning has led many people to request computer equipment from OIT. Since the start of the pandemic, 182 laptops have been given to students, faculty and staff that requested them, according to McCrea.

“Each one of those requires, you know, we have to set it up, we have to sit down, well kind of sit down, outside with the person or at least on the phone and go through it and get them working,” he said.

Gleavy said that one of the main challenges for his department was ensuring that students and faculty had adequate access to technology at home.

Despite the increase in the Rider community’s use of technology, the number of people that utilize the OIT Help Desk has stayed the same, which McCrea said he was surprised about as well. However, he said that usually at the beginning of the semester the “ticket numbers” for the Help Desk are up to five or 10% because of logistical challenges.

McCrea said that one of the main challenges OIT has faced since the start of the pandemic was adapting a lot of the technology for the various changes done as a result of the coronavirus.

“A lot of people, or a lot of pieces of software, were not ready for being kind of in the COVID environments or remote environment,” he said. “That includes physical changes to the equipment or logical changes, or even licensing structures were just not built for that. And so really adapting that and working with vendors working with people doing training and that type of thing have all been kind of a big, big change in how we dealt with people and dealt with work.”

McCrea also explained how not being able to have a lot of in-person communication has impacted OIT’s work as well as the difficulty of timing and scheduling.

Gleavy said that Rider’s Teaching and Learning Center has “worked tirelessly” since the start of the pandemic by providing additional training workshops to faculty on how to adjust to remote learning.

“Those first two to three weeks when the pandemic really hit and we all started working remotely were probably the most intense,” Gleavy said. “Our team was usually working a minimum of 10-12 hour days to keep up with the increased technology support demand from faculty and students.”

McCrea also mentioned how the changes implemented by the university have increased OIT’s workload.

“Every single thing that you see has a computer or an IT component in it,” McCrea said. “So any experience you have on campus, realize that you know, there’s a pretty big stake of technology behind that. And if it has technology, it’s us. So anytime there’s a change in that, that means that we have to be involved. And so obviously, it kind of lends itself to increasing our workload.”

According to McCrea, with required changes to licensing structures, OIT has had to learn on the job, which he noted was a challenge. He said that most people have “survived this through being flexible.”

McCrea also described how OIT overcame a few Zoom-related issues. He said that in the beginning, a few people had issues with Zoom bombing. According to McCrea, there were ten incidents of Zoom bombing at Rider, including the racist incident that occurred on Feb. 11 during a virtual event, which is currently under police investigation.

“Regarding the Zoom product, it is secure and I stand by that,” he said. “The issues, in this case, were that the Zoom meeting’s default secure setting requiring a passcode was removed, and the meeting was posted publicly. Both actions could and most likely would lead to Zoom bombings.”

McCrea explained that if a passcode is removed, the meeting can be found and entered by anyone who guesses the meeting numbers and that having a passcode alone does not protect the meeting if it is posted publicly.

“If the meeting link is posted publicly, the meeting will more often than not, be subject to a Zoom bombing,” said McCrea. “The latter is most likely the case here.”

He said other than that, the only Zoom-related issues that have occurred were a few minor outages that were related to a widespread internet outage.

McCrea said he thinks the university has adjusted well to the technological changes implemented as a result of the pandemic and that he was “pleasantly surprised.”

“I’ve been impressed by the ability of people to be able to kind of bring themselves up to this next level,” he said. “We’ve done something like I forget the number, but somebody said, between three to five years worth of technology updating in a, you know, a couple of months period, and everyone’s along for that ride. That’s impressive.”

Rider student directs documentary on African American veterans' fight for civil rights

By Sarah Siock

FOR most college students, the stress that comes with balancing classes, homework and extracurriculars is all-consuming. There is little time to relax, and it can be difficult to maintain a well-rounded social life. However, one Rider student manages to do all of the above and somehow still finds the time to direct a 12-part documentary series.

Junior film major Danielle Jackson made room in her already-busy schedule to step into the director's chair and create a documentary that centers around African American veterans' fight for civil rights. The project, titled "A Two-Front War," combines two of Jackson's passions — history and film.

"I am a nerd for this stuff. My crew does not particularly like history. However, it has been so rewarding during the process to hear them say, 'I just learned something new.' It makes me so happy," said Jackson.

Jackson's documentary began as a research project that was funded by Rider's Undergraduate Research Scholar Award (URSA). With guidance from her advisor, Chair of the Department of Film and Television Shawn Kildea, Jackson felt her work was strong enough to be made into a feature-length film.

"Dr. Kildea and I had been talking for a long time about African American veterans and how they always get the shorter end of the stick in history books. We realized we had the potential to turn our project into a film. Once our proposed idea was accepted and our funds were secured, we just took the idea and ran with it," said Jackson.

The first episode of Jackson's film, which is set to premiere this spring, centers around two veterans named Charles Hamilton Houston (World War I) and Medgar Evers (World War II). Both individuals fought in the civil rights movement after returning home from war. Jackson explained that she wanted the film's subjects to not only be veterans but also civil rights activists, to properly showcase the contrast of soldiers fighting a war abroad for a country that denied them equal rights at home.

"There are many people who were soldiers that also participated in the civil rights movement. However, it is very hard to find documented evidence of those individuals. Charles and Medgar kept popping up in all the preliminary research I did so I knew I had to feature them in the film," said Jackson.

Extensive research was conducted by Jackson

for her to become an expert on the veterans. Despite being a history buff, Jackson was surprised by some of the information she discovered about the treatment of Black soldiers.

"One fact that shocked me was the separation of medical blood by race during the world war. In many cases, wounded Caucasian soldiers who needed blood would refuse it from a Black person. It was mind-boggling to see that they were willing to die before receiving the blood," said Jackson.

While Jackson was able to find subjects that adequately convey her message, there were still obstacles ahead in the filmmaking process that she would face. Jackson's next step was to find historians and professors for the interview portions of the documentary. Finding these individuals was no easy task. Jackson said she sent emails to over 30 professors in the tri-state area asking for their help with the film. Jackson and her team traveled to various states to conduct the in-person interviews with the handful of professors who accepted their request.

The next challenge Jackson faced was funding for the film. While Jackson had the money from URSA, the cost to produce the film continued to rise. Jackson said she put out her own money to buy the necessary personal protective equipment to ensure her crew's safety against the coronavirus pandemic while working. With plans to travel to Texas and California to interview the descendants of Houston and Evers, the decision was made to start a Kickstarter campaign that asked the public for donations. The Kickstarter quickly gained traction and exceeded Jackson's expectation with \$8,657 raised.

"Before the Kickstarter, my bank account was starting to dwindle. Once we received the money things started to come together much easier. Additionally, I had a whole bunch of people who decided to jump onto the project which helped me delegate responsibility," said Jackson.

Jackson's production team is made up of several Rider students with Kildea serving as an executive producer. Those who work with Jackson said her determined personality was what led them to join the project.

"Dani is extremely passionate and driven. I knew that whatever she would end up making was going to be excellent and it was something that I had to be a part of," said junior film major Benjamin Ross, who is an executive producer of "A Two-Front War."

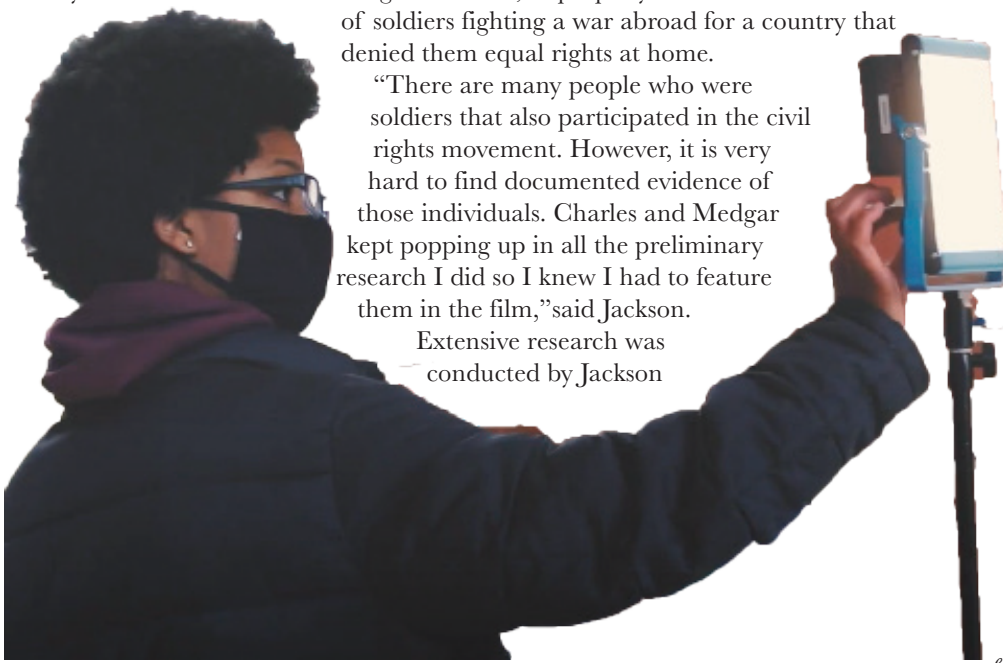
Other crew members praised Jackson's leadership skills.

"Dani is one of the smartest, most put-together women I have ever met. If anyone has any questions, she knows exactly what to say. She is going to do amazing things in this world, and I cannot think of anyone more deserving," said junior film major Sarah Waldron, who is the film's production manager.

Despite the praise, Jackson remains humble and hopes that her film will open the minds of viewers.

"I have never done anything this big. Time was our biggest challenge because we are doing this on top of classes and work. However, all of the obstacles are worth it," said Jackson "I want people to walk away from this film with an expanded worldview. If people can come away with a better understanding and empathy for these soldiers, that would be the greatest reward."

Jackson is the advertising manager for The Rider News. She was not involved with the writing or editing of this story.



Junior film major **Danielle Jackson** prepares for a live shot while on the set of her documentary, "A Two-Front War."

A Two Front War

The Fight for Civil Rights by
African American World War Veterans

A screenshot from the "A Two-Front War" trailer. The docuseries follows two world war veterans named Charles Hamilton Houston and Medgar Evers who fought for civil rights.



Danielle Jackson's film came to fruition thanks to the Undergraduate Research Award.



Danielle Jackson holds a camera on the set of her documentary, "A Two-Front War." Jackson has performed extensive research to find the film's subjects.

TikTok chef virtually visits Rider for Valentine's Day themed bake along

By Aaliyah Patel

HEREEN Pavlides, a social media chef and influencer, held a live bake along demonstration for students to celebrate Valentine's Day on Feb. 10 at 7 p.m. via Zoom.

Pavlides is popularly recognized for her TikTok video series titled, "Cooking with Shereen," which has earned her more than 3.2 million followers on the app. Through her custom-made recipes, she teaches her audience that cooking from scratch is much easier than it appears. She has gained followers globally through her social media presence.

Thanks to the Student Entertainment Council (SEC), students were able to participate in a cupcake baking demonstration with Pavlides remotely, titled "Love to Bake." The recipe made between 12-16 cupcakes. Pavlides' recipe also included red food dye in celebration of Valentine's Day.

Prior to social media, Pavlides worked in the food media industry for 15 years as a recipe developer for national food magazines and Fortune 500 food companies. Pavlides also appeared on the Home Shopping Network and QVC, to demonstrate cooking appliances live — which led her to promote her content on social media.

"After ongoing, viewer requests for recipes I demonstrated on-air, 'Cooking with Shereen' came to life in 2019, via YouTube and TikTok," Pavlides explained on her website.

Freshman criminal justice major Elena Lobo expressed how events like "Love to Bake" are wonderful opportunities to stay connected and safe through the coronavirus pandemic.

"My experience with Rider's 'Love to Bake' event was amazing. I had a lot of fun despite being a little messy and my cupcakes turning out nothing like the chef's," said Lobo. "Chef Shereen was absolutely amazing and so sweet, as well as the other hosts of the event."

The event allowed students to interact with Pavlides directly, helping them gain confidence in their baking skills. Pavlides offered guidance throughout the event as students were able to ask her questions directly.

She provided tips such as telling students to place the cupcakes trays in the oven side by side rather than on top of each other to have the batter cook evenly. Pavlides baked from her kitchen just like the students. While her kitchen had several professional amenities, like two ovens and an electric mixer, she assured students that their personal kitchens were more than capable of producing delicious cupcakes.

"It is best to place the cupcakes trays in separate ovens to have the best results. Obviously, everyone does not have two ovens like me, but we can make it work with whatever you have at home," said Pavlides during the event.

Senior behavioral neuroscience major Emily Horton said participating in the event helped her improve her skills as a professional baker.

"The most memorable part is her taking a look at some cakes I have decorated over the years and giving me advice on how to grow," Horton said.

The SEC encourages students to sign up for these virtual events so they can stay involved.



The Rider News/Sarah Stock

Shereen Pavlides is most commonly known for her TikTok series "Cooking with Shereen." On the app, she has amassed over 3.2 million followers.



The Rider News/Aaliyah Patel

Pavlides is very experienced in both baking and social media. She has worked in the food media industry developing recipes.

Students continue to maintain fitness in midst of pandemic

By Christian McCarville

LIFE has certainly changed in many ways since March 2020. COVID-19 has resulted in many establishments either being shut down or forced to adapt and improvise. A new set of rules and guidelines were created with the intent of reducing the spread of the virus.

Many individuals underwent major lifestyle changes as a result of the widespread pandemic. For many people, fitness is an aspect of their lives that was greatly impacted.

With the shutdown of gyms across the country, it became hard to maintain one's physique. Many people had to get creative to establish at-home workout routines and ways to stay in shape.

For some, the extra time spent at home was an excellent opportunity to put more time into improving their fitness. For others, the inability to simply go to their local gym was demoralizing.

Junior entrepreneurial studies major Tolhan Guven explained how his motivation was impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

"I definitely worked out a lot less after the pandemic hit," said Guven. "I think that's where I need to improve on, my motivation."

Senior film and TV major Anthony Collesano explained how he is now in better shape than ever before as a result of the pandemic.

"At first, my motivation decreased just because it was a weird time and everyone's schedule got mixed up," said Collesano. "Now there's stuff I would normally do in the middle of the week that I don't, so I have more time to do this. It's honestly kind of a



The Rider News/Gerard Blandina

The Student Recreation Center has enforced several guidelines that ensure the safety of all students.

blessing because now I'm in better shape and better health."

Collesano routinely travels a short commute to Rider with his housemate to access the Student Recreation Center (SRC). The majority of his workouts are done in the Schimek Family Fitness Center where there is a wide variety of workout machinery and equipment.

In the fall 2020 semester, students were at first limited to an outdoor gym, dubbed the Bronc Barn. Since then, the SRC staff have worked to create a safe and sanitary environment within the indoor fitness center. This is increasingly more useful for students as weather conditions grow colder.

Anyone that is using the SRC is expected to fully comply with the rules and regulations and must wear a face mask at all times. Gym equipment must also be properly sanitized before moving on to the next workout.

Senior finance major Josh Lim commented on how the ability to utilize the SRC has improved his motivation to work out.

"I think my motivation is definitely up more now that the SRC has opened," said Lim.

While gyms have begun to open with carefully implemented safety protocols, the SRC remains committed to providing students with the opportunity to maintain their fitness levels while also staying protected.

The ability to work out in a safe environment is sure to have a positive impact on both the mental and physical health of Rider students.



The Rider News/Gerard Blandina

The Schimek Family Fitness Center is open to both resident students and commuting students that wish to work on their fitness during the pandemic.

Semester in LA students adapt to COVID-19 with production of a feature-length film

By Giavanna Troilo

WHAT do 22 film students who were set on spending their semester interning in Los Angeles, California, do when Hollywood shuts down? They make their own movie, of course.

For the past several years, the communications (now film & TV) department has sent over 20 of its seniors to LA to spend an immersive semester interning in the working world. The participating students have previously interned at places like Viacom and NBCUniversal.

During the fall 2020 semester, it became clear that COVID-19 would prevent the program from running as usual. With the film industry at a halt and LA becoming a virus hotspot, the program had to adapt.

"COVID hits, productions close — Los Angeles essentially closed," said film professor Barry Janes, who typically spends every spring with the students in LA. "Our big concern [was] what can we do for those students who had prepared so long for an engaged, professional experience in LA?"

The team of faculty in charge, including Janes, Chair of the Department of Film and Television Shawn Kildea and film and TV professor Jay Stern, met with Rider administration to discuss options for the students. They landed on the best option they could think of — a production of a feature-length film.

"I proposed creating a film project in which students would get to work with experienced filmmakers on a professional-level project," said Stern, who also is a professional director. "If we could not give them professional experience in LA, we could at least give them experience and training in conceiving, planning, shooting, and posting a professional-level film."

On Jan. 4, under the direction of Stern, and with the help of industry professionals Joan Grossman, Alan Smith and Lauren Page Russell, the students began pitching concepts to the faculty and each other. The subject matter? The short stories of Argentinian author Jorge Luis Borges.

"The stories are evocative and broad enough to be interpreted in many different ways," said Stern. "They're also short and mostly involve just a few characters, so we felt they could be achievable given our time and budgetary constraints."

Now, with scripts at near completion, the crew has broken out into teams to tackle location scouting, casting, production design and scheduling. Production is set to begin in March.

As for the students, while in agreement that the forced semester was a major upset, they collectively express excitement for what's to come.

"I am really thankful for what the professors have put together for this semester in place of the semester in LA," said senior film major and assistant director for the film Victoria Francesca. "I believe that we are getting a thorough experience in what it takes to create a high quality and successful film, and we are only a few weeks into the process."

Keeping the film local also allows for the involvement of students who could not commit to flying out for the semester in LA.

"It's pretty much a class-wide project," said senior film major Austin Charlesworth. "It's a good collaborative experience to have, as that is how the film world works—everyone coming together to make something great happen."

The multi-faceted project also allows for students in majors other than film to contribute their knowledge and skills.

"Being a sports media major, I have not really done anything [in] filmmaking since high school, when I was heavily involved in that," said senior sports media major Marcus Frierson. "This is like going back in time for me."

As for a post-pandemic future, both Janes and Stern agree they are open to diving into a student-produced film again.

"This has been such a great and valuable experience that we have already started talking about how we can most effectively integrate it into our filmmaking program," said Janes. "Stay tuned."

Follow the filmmaking process on Instagram @cranfilmcollective.



Courtesy of Giavanna Troilo

Many were disappointed to see the cancellation of the spring semester in LA program. However, seniors in the communications department are evidently excited to be able to work closely with professionals in the film industry.

WANT TO SEE MORE ABOUT THIS WEEK'S STORIES? CHECK OUT THE FOLLOWING VIDEOS ON THERIDERNEWS.COM

DANIELLE JACKSON
DIRECTOR OF "A TWO-FRONT WAR"

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The Rider News

The Rider News/Arianna Marino

The Rider News/Arianna Marino

Let's recap: The year 2020

To say the least, 2020 was an eventful year. To say the most, 2020 felt like a century-long sentence into a Hunger Games-like arena, circa “Catching Fire,” where just when we thought things couldn’t get any worse, they most definitely could and did. What better way to kiss the last year goodbye than to take a trip back down nightmare lane and reflect on the lessons, losses and every painstaking moment in between?

The year 2020 started on fire — literally. With global concern for the devastating Australian bushfires, there soon compiled a resume that includes, but is not limited to, a brief concern for World War III after Donald Trump issued an airstrike that killed Iranian General Qassem Soleimani, the first impeachment of President Donald Trump, rumors that North Korea’s Kim Jong Un died and even a short-lived frenzy over Asian giant hornets being found in the United States. Even the lovingly dubbed “Murder Hornets” decided that 2020 was just too much for them to partake in.

Additionally, last year brought with it the deaths of many beloved public figures, such as Kobe and Gianna Bryant, Chadwick Boseman, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Eddie Van Halen and Alex Trebek.

Following the deaths of 26-year-old Breonna Taylor, who was shot by police eight times in her Louisville, Kentucky, apartment and George Floyd, who died under the knee of a Minneapolis Police officer after 8 minutes and 46 seconds, 2020 was a monumental year for Black Lives Matter protests taking place both within the United States and around the world. During this time, activists called yet again for the dismantling of America’s centuries-old systems of oppression. The Black Lives Matter movement is not new or exclusive to this past year, but the needed call to action remained prevalent throughout 2020.

After days of counting mail-in ballots in the historical 2020 Presidential election, Democrat Joe Biden was chosen by the American people to serve as the 46th president of the United States. This win also includes Kamala Harris, who will serve as not only the first female vice president but the first Black and South Asian vice president as well. Besides the presidential ticket, this past year’s election brought forth humungous wins for the LGBTQ+ community with a historic success rate of LGBTQ+ candidates, including the nation’s first openly transgender state senator, Delaware’s Sarah McBride.

Finally, the year 2020 was responsible for bringing with it the brunt of the widespread COVID-19 pandemic, which completely changed life as we knew it. This pandemic is responsible for 106 million infections worldwide, as well as 2.31 million deaths, according to statistics provided by The New York Times. Of these numbers, and due in part to the Trump administration’s mismanagement of the pandemic, America makes up

27 million cases and over 487,000 deaths, with those numbers still rising.

The year 2020 was simultaneously devastating, enlightening, historic, painfully long and comedically terrible, but hey, at least all of the billionaires got richer.

While the new year is well underway and already off to a busy start — dare I mention insurrectionists at the Capitol, Trump’s second impeachment and Reddit users banding together to teach hedge funds a lesson — one can only hope that with a new political administration in power, a COVID-19 vaccine in circulation, the dismantling of Donald Trump’s Twitter account and all of the lessons learned in the past year, 2021 will pale in comparison to its predecessor when it comes to exasperating breaking news headlines.

This editorial expresses the unanimous opinion of The Rider News Editorial Board. This week’s editorial was written by freshman English major Kate McCormick

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www.DineOnCampus.com/RiderDining

DID YOU KNOW...

We host a Food Committee Meeting the last Wednesday of every month 11:30am-12:30pm.

Join us in an open forum to discuss dining service outlooks, upcoming events and dining trends. To participate in the Zoom meeting, email RiderDining@rider.edu and we will send you a link to join. Upcoming meetings are held on: February 24th • March 31st • April 28th

DID YOU KNOW...

There are 4 ways to dine this semester:

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Get your meal delivered to your residence hall’s delivery zone:
Monday - Friday 11:30am-2:00pm AND 4:00pm-8:00pm.

DID YOU KNOW...

You can meet and talk with the on-campus dietitian by emailing nutrition@rider.edu.

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THE Rider News

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SENIOR SEARCHINGS

Drama in the stock market: Gamestop stops the stocks

OVER the past few weeks, a lot of attention was drawn to the stock market, but when looking at the market as a whole, it would not have seemed that way. Luckily, it was not hard to find which company's stock was causing all of the fuss as of late: Gamestop.

Before diving deeper into the peculiarity of Gamestop's volatile stocks, basic prospects of why common investors buy and sell stocks need to be understood. Normally, a certain company's stock is appealing to an everyday investor when the company is a goliath in its field and has no signs of going out of business soon, such as Coca-Cola or Apple.

Stock could also be appealing if they belong to a company with long-term potential for growth, which explains the rising popularity in companies providing COVID-19 vaccines, such as Pfizer and Moderna, or the rise in stock prices for various cannabis companies as the marijuana legalization process across multiple states speeds up.

For separate reasons, each of these main motives to buy a stock indicate general trends of supply and demand of those stocks. It is popular to buy a stock like Coca-Cola because there is no indication that they will lose a lot of business anytime soon, which means people will not be likely to sell off a lot of Coca-Cola stock, keeping the supply and demand and the value of the stock rather stable.

For those "future growth" companies, people will quickly buy up stock at a low price, banking on the company's projected future success to raise the value of the company. This steep decline in supply drives the price of stock up, which has been seen multiple times with electric car manufacturer Tesla.

In the case of Gamestop, supply was quickly going in the latter half of January, despite the video game retailer having no real prospects for future success. With an increased move toward a video game world without discs or cartridges, as seen with the release of all-digital versions of the newly-made Xbox Series S and Playstation 5 consoles, the middle man role that Gamestop played to distribute old and new video games has dwindled and may be non-existent by the end of this decade.

With a company as seemingly down in the dumps as Gamestop, how did they end up becoming the subject of one of the most meteoric rises the U.S. stock exchange has ever seen? The answer lies within hedge funds and a market tactic that is known as shorting.

A hedge fund, in oversimplified terms, is a collective of investment funds that pool assets together to be able to use well-studied, advanced methods of trading stocks to mitigate the risk of losing money and maximize efficiency in terms of using large amounts of money to make money. One of those methods is the shorting of stocks.

The process of shorting a stock is intricate but has the opportunity to make a lot of money when done correctly. Investors will borrow several shares from a stock of a certain company that is owned by someone else with an agreement to give that stock back after a certain amount of time, along with a commission fee for borrowing the stock.

For example, say an investor had a good hunch that Apple's stock was going to be worth less in a month than it is now. The investor would go to borrow, for argument's sake, 500 shares of Apple's stock, with each share being worth \$10, with a \$100 commission fee once the stock is returned. The investor immediately sells those 500 shares, meaning they now have a hold of \$5000. To the investor's delight, a day before they are due to return those 500 shares to the original owner, each share of Apple is now only worth \$5. The investor now only has to spend \$2500 to get those 500 shares back, which when paying the \$100 commission along with returning the shares, the investor has pocketed \$2400 in the process.

Plenty of investors, namely within large hedge funds, were salivating over the seemingly guaranteed downfall in Gamestop stock. They were so certain of this drop that, according to Reuters, over 20 million shares of Gamestop were being shorted at one time or about \$400 million worth of the stock around Christmas of 2020.

For the first few weeks, betting on the fall of Gamestop's stock was seeming to be a worthy investment. Share prices of Gamestop fell to as little as \$17.25 in the first half of January, which would have left those collective shorted shares with about \$55 million in profit before fees. A large, easy payday was for those who bet against the game retailer — until the internet came into the picture.

Headed by the Reddit page "r/wallstreetbets," an exponentially growing group of internet retail investors, many of which who take high-risk moves on the stock market with large amounts of money, started to point out an opportunity that could present two benefits to those on the forum: To try to bankrupt those who shorted Gamestop's stock and

make a lot of money in the process.

The process to accomplish those goals is extremely risky, yet quite straightforward: Buy large amounts of Gamestop stock using mobile investing apps such as Robinhood and hold onto them through thick and thin.

Through this, average consumers were able to 'squeeze' the supply of Gamestop's stock, which with a sudden high demand for the stock, inflated the price of a share by large amounts, taking the \$20 share up to as much as \$483 in late January, which meant that those who shorted the stock would have to pay over \$400 more per share when it came time to return the borrowed shares.

With some hedge funds losing billions of dollars and a large number of new, at-home investors making small fortunes of their own, creating a Robin Hood (pun intended) moment for the average investor.

Despite a large amount of loss from hedge funds during that time, many already have and will recuperate those losses from doubling down. Once they had returned stocks for a huge loss, many investors put into short the stock again, as many small-time investors were bound to sell the stock and cash in on the gains from Gamestop's ballooning stock, eventually opening up the supply of stock again to bring the share price back down to Earth.

Though the stock is still above its pre-boom price, about \$52 per share as of Feb. 15, the 'big guys' still won, with many smaller investors still feeling jaded over various trading services' temporary stop on buying a certain stock, whether it was to protect new investors from buying into a company to lose a lot of money or larger investors, who could be a major client of the service, from losing any more money from the anomaly.

So what happens now? On the upside, there is now a large community of people, especially young people, who are learning the basics of investing, hopefully learning to make wise decisions that, with a bit of luck, will provide for them in the future.

Austin Boland-Ferguson
Senior sports media major
Managing editor



Courtesy of Cagle Cartoons



Courtesy of Cagle Cartoons

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Transfer De Sousa ready to get on the court

By Shaun Chornobroff

EVERY time the Rider men's basketball team has taken the floor this season, Malachi De Sousa has had the same routine.

Before a typical game, De Sousa talks to his teammates to see "where their minds are at, what they think the game is going to be like." Then, when it comes time for the game to tip-off, the six-foot-six forward takes his place on the bench and cheers his team on for the next 40 minutes of play.

The junior forward was supposed to make his long-awaited debut for the team on Feb. 6, but the team had to be put on pause days before because of a positive COVID-19 test among tier-one personnel — something it had been lucky enough to avoid since early November when De Sousa and many other members of the team tested positive.

"It was tough because after working out, practicing and trying to get ready to play games, then randomly someday you'll get told that you have to sit in a box for two weeks," De Sousa said bluntly. "It's kind of frustrating and annoying, I feel like you do everything you can to try and avoid this COVID-19 and then you just end up with it anyways... It's irritating, annoying, it feels like it gets in the way."

De Sousa isn't on the floor because of a lack of experience or talent. The junior forward is one of the more experienced members of a Rider roster laden with young players, starting 26 games in his collegiate career. He's stuck on the bench because he's ineligible to play due to NCAA transfer rules.

De Sousa was originally expected to sit out the entirety of the season after transferring to Rider from the University of Albany, as most transfers do, but in December the NCAA passed a rule allowing transfers to compete immediately. Unfortunately, De Sousa did not have enough credits for the rule to apply to him, meaning he would be forced to wait until the spring semester to start to play.

"Coming here for a new opportunity and right away you have to sit and watch and cheer your guys on and not really being able to do anything about it. It's a bummer in that sense," De Sousa said about having to sit out for his first semester.

The junior may not be the most talkative member of the team, but even he admitted that there were many times he was wishing to be on the floor.

"Honestly, every game, even in practice it kind of sucked because you really weren't allowed to do



Brent Warzocha/University of Albany Athletics

Junior forward **Malachi De Sousa** is anxiously waiting to make his Rider debut after nearly a year off of the court.

much," the New York native explained. "The game days were the worst part because you practice all week, help your team out all week, then you just have to sit there and watch them go to battle and go to war with another team."

Despite being forced to miss three months of game time, Head Coach Kevin Baggett has not noticed De Sousa complain or be anything different than the player he recruited.

"He's been quiet on me, I've not noticed anything different from him," Baggett said. "I mean he's practiced the same, I'm sure he'll be nervous when the time comes after not playing almost a whole season at this point being that we only have six games remaining... It's a long time waiting for him, but I think he had his mind prepared before they passed this rule that they allowed all transfers to be eligible right away to play this year."

The two-time Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) Coach of the Year said De Sousa "goes about his business the right way," and brings a different element to his team.

"He goes at it pretty hard, not different than most of our guys who go at it pretty hard, just because he









doesn't talk doesn't mean he's any more of a high energy or low energy guy," Baggett explained.

"First and foremost he's a great young man, he's going to give you everything he's got on the court," Baggett said. "But what I've seen as far as him playing at Albany, now being in our program since September, I see an energy guy that will bring something different that we don't have, especially at the [power forward] position."

Rider is in dire need of experience and depth at the power forward position, meaning De Sousa's return could not be more timely. The junior forward has been anxiously awaiting the chance to step on the floor in a Rider uniform.

"I can't wait for it because you work all this time and that's what you're working for at the end of the day," De Sousa said.

De Sousa prides himself on being a good defender and team player. The six-foot-six forward will finally have a chance to show that to the Rider faithful on Feb. 20 when he and the rest of the team will travel to Hamden, Connecticut, to take on Quinnipiac at 4 p.m.

 <p>Rider Men's Basketball Remaining Schedule <i>(Schedule is subject to change)</i></p>  <p>Home: Away: </p> <p>*MAAC Tournament on Mar. 8-13 in Atlantic City, New Jersey*</p>	Feb. 20		Quinnipiac	Time: 4:00 P.M.
	Feb. 21		Quinnipiac	Time: 4:00 P.M.
	Feb. 26		Saint Peter's	Time: TBA
	Feb. 27		Saint Peter's	Time: TBA
	Mar. 4		Monmouth	Time: TBA
	Mar. 5		Monmouth	Time: TBA

WRESTLING

No. 25 Rider avoids upset against Drexel



Gerard Blandina/The Rider News

Redshirt sophomore **Jake Silverstein** upset Evan Barczak at the 165 pound weight class in Rider's victory over Drexel on Feb. 11

By **Mike Ricchione**

On Feb. 11, a dual-meet between the Rider and Drexel wrestling team's came down to the last match, with the nationally-ranked Broncs, needing an Ethan Laird win to secure a victory at Alumni Gym.

And then the senior heavyweight never set foot on the mat.

Surprisingly, Drexel forfeited the heavyweight bout after No. 22 Bryan McLaughlin's 4-3 victory over graduate student Matt Correnti at 197 pounds, giving Rider the 20-16 victory.

"I did not know that [Drexel] was going to forfeit. I knew that they weighed one in but I thought, 'Hey, we're down by two points. That kid's definitely going out,'" Head Coach John Hangey said. "If we were up by three or four, I would think differently. I don't know what their thought process was on that at all."

The Broncs started strong with three decisions from redshirt senior Jonathan Tropea, redshirt sophomore Richie Koehler and freshman McKenzie Bell at 125, 133 and 141 pounds, respectively, for a 9-0 advantage.

Drexel cut the lead down to two before the media intermission with a decision from Luke Nichter and a major decision from 21st-ranked Parker Kropman, who was ranked 21st by WrestleStat, at 149 and 157 pounds respectively.

Redshirt sophomore Jake Silverstein had to wrestle into overtime for the second straight match, coming away with an upset victory of Evan Barczak at 165 pounds, who was ranked as high as 23rd by FloWrestling.

"When it comes down to the third period, overtime, I'm that guy to come out on top," Silverstein said. "I'm not gonna give up on those situations, even when it's close. I'm always gonna come out on top and that's how I train and that's what'll happen when I go out there."

Silverstein's victory gave the Broncs an 11-7 lead. Rider had one team point deducted for unsportsmanlike conduct.

The lead changed hands after each match the rest of the way. Michael O'Malley, handed freshman Angel Garcia his first collegiate loss at 174 pounds.

Redshirt junior George Walton earned a 10-4 decision over Joshua Stallings at 184 pounds.

Before the match, the home team had taken the last seven matches in the all-time series between Rider and Drexel. That pattern continued.

"I think [Assistant AD for Sports Communications] Greg [Ott] wrote it in his article, the last seven years, the home team has won every year and the streak continues. The good news is that I'm 5-3 on that side of it, so we'll just keep wrestling here instead of going to Philly." Hangey joked.

Rider was once again without its star, graduate student Jesse Dellavecchia, who missed his second consecutive dual with a high ankle sprain. Dellavecchia is expected to be back for the MAC tournament, according to Hangey.

The Broncs closed out the regular season on a four-match winning streak and hope to keep their momentum into the MAC Conference Tournament, which is scheduled for Feb. 26-27 at CURE Insurance Arena in Trenton.

Rider mulls options over next few weeks

By **Dylan Manfre**

THROUGHOUT the entire 2020-2021 season, college basketball teams have felt the full brunt of the pandemic with extensive pauses. The women's basketball team is about to go on pause for three weeks — and it is not because of COVID-19 on Rider's end.

Canisius' women's basketball team canceled the remainder of its season after only playing five total games in the 2020-2021 season. The Golden Griffins in particular have been one of the league's most troubled teams when it comes to COVID-19, injuries and health and safety protocols, having not played a game since Dec. 20.

Rider was slated to play Canisius on Feb. 19 and 20 to wrap up its season but since then, the series against Niagara on Feb. 13 and 14 became the regular-season finale. This leaves the Broncs 21 days without a scheduled game until they leave for the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) tournament on Mar. 7.

"Three weeks [off] is a long time when you've been playing as much as we have, we haven't really had any weeks off." Head Coach Lynn Milligan said. "Based on other people's pauses and things like that, we've always been put in there. In that regard, we've got to make sure we come up with a good plan for

those three weeks to make sure that we keep ourselves sharp."

Rider has not had a regular-season game canceled because of a positive COVID-19 case in its tier 1 program. It did, however, record a positive case during the preseason period on Oct. 31, but no games were impacted as a result. This is a testament to the Broncs' diligence to adhere to health and safety protocols for navigating through this unprecedented season.

Milligan said if the opportunity presented itself, she would be open to playing a game during the extensive off period, but did not go into specifics saying, "it depends."

MAAC commissioner Rich Ensor told The Rider News on Feb. 9 that teams are allowed to seek out games against a conference opponent they have already played. The game can count to the team's overall record but does not count toward its league record.

Ensor said the league is denoting this type of game as a "nonconference conference game." These games do count toward the NCAA minimum of 13 games required to be eligible for the NCAA tournament in March.

These games would not affect seeding for the MAAC Tournament in any way, according to Ensor.

"I can suggest teams play each other. There are some opportunities where a couple of teams are not playing on a given weekend, they might want to play a third game," Ensor said. "I did that with Saint Peter's [men] last weekend and asked them to play Saturday at Manhattan for that ESPNU game scheduled there, but I can't require that they do it."

Milligan was vocal about wanting to incorporate a much-needed break into their schedule especially since Rider has played a total of 23 games as of Feb. 14, so a potential third game against another MAAC team would not come in the first "off week."

"We do need some rest, there's not going to be any doubt about that," Milligan said. "So that first week would be good, but yeah would two weeks [off] be better than three? Probably. But like I said, we'll come up with a plan and then try to use it to get ourselves better."

Rider entered the "break" period off a desperation win over Niagara on Feb. 14. The Broncs were down as many as nine in the game and gave up a multitude of offensive surges to the Purple Eagles. Senior forward Daija Moses knocked down two critical 3-pointers in the final quarter in what ended as a 12-point win.

Sports

ONLINE

RESILIENCY IS THE WORD OF THE WEEK
Sports Editor Dylan Manfre recaps the women's basketball team's split series vs. Niagara
 FIND THE MATCH RECAP ONLINE AT THERIDERNEWS.COM

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Firebaugh fueled by winning mentality



Carolo Pascale/The Rider News

Freshman guard **Makayla Firebaugh** has been one of the go-to scorers for the women's basketball team this season.

By **Dylan Manfre**

MAKAYLA Firebaugh has one thing on her mind when it comes to basketball — winning. And she will let you know it. She despises losing more than anything. “Who doesn’t hate losing? That’s the obvious thing, but I hate it a lot,” the freshman guard said after the Broncs fell to 0-5 in December. “I just don’t lose. Like, I know that’s like cocky sounding and whatever, but I’ve never had a losing season since the time I picked up a basketball and I don’t plan to start that any time soon.”

That being said, it was not taken lightly when she began her freshman year of college ball losing seven straight games. She has experienced some rough patches previously, such as an 0-for-11 performance in 30 minutes of action against Saint Peter’s. After the loss, Firebaugh said she was “agitated” and “irritated.”

Head Coach Lynn Milligan said she likes those types of players because they “are more coachable ... But when you’re determined to be good, I mean, there’s a little bit of an edge to that and an awareness.”

But that was only the second time she has been held scoreless this year. The first time was on opening day when she saw 14 minutes off the bench.

Even though she has a bad game, her confidence never wavered. Freshmen as confident as Firebaugh is what Milligan looks for when recruiting.

“I think she has a very strong confidence in herself and a deep work ethic, but she’s not afraid of hard work,” said Milligan who described her as a “basketball kid.”

So, it was not surprising that Firebaugh’s first few words when asked to describe herself were: “Strong, confident, strong work ethic.” It matches up with her play on the court.

“She loves the game, she’s got a passion for it. When you have that things tend to become a little bit easier,” Milligan said. “She’s set herself some strong goals as a freshman: she wanted to play, she wanted to start, she knew what she was working for and wanted to be a part of what we were doing. And everything she’s said she wanted to do she’s done.”

Four games into the season, she accomplished that goal. Firebaugh was inserted into the starting lineup in place of junior guard Lenaejha Evans. Although Rider dropped its first three games, she averaged four points and as many assists per game.

Firebaugh is the team’s most consistent scorer and averages a team-high 10.3 points per game. She also had the best individual scoring performance of a Bronc this season when she had 26 against Monmouth.

Though she has had some individual success, Firebaugh took it all as a learning process. After all, she is juggling virtual schooling, practice, a season schedule that can change at a moment’s notice and being the furthest away from home for the longest time in her life. It is a 247-mile drive from Rider University to her home in Winchester, Virginia. Her previous longest stay was in Cancun, Mexico with a friend for one week.

She has adapted to a lot early in her collegiate career. But she’s also learned a lot during this time too.

“Probably be more confident with myself,” Firebaugh said on Dec. 11 when asked what she has learned about herself. “Because coming in as a freshman and just getting into a Division I basketball game. It’s pretty scary. Not gonna lie. You have some nerves in you. But it’s scary. But then I’m like, ‘I deserve to be out here. I can be out here. I’m just as good as these people’ and then you just play yourself.”

Firebaugh has done a lot to help her team win. Especially in a stretch of games when the Broncs won three of four. Since that abysmal Saint Peter’s performance, Firebaugh has averaged 13.1 points per game and scored in double figures in five of those six games coupled with making 32% of her shots from the field. She was even the first player this season to be named MAAC Player of the Week and Rookie of the Week in the same week.

She has always had the winner mentality. Firebaugh said she arrived early for a 5 a.m. practice when she played for the Winchester Rising Stars in the Amature Athletic Union and left a separate practice at 1 a.m. It was not surprising when she mentioned her favorite athlete was Michael Jordan, arguably one of the greatest basketball players ever.

“That’s what I liked about him, his determination and just like his fire in whatever he did,” Firebaugh said. “Whatever he did, he did it at 100%.”

She added that she would have worn No. 23 because of Jordan if it was available, but it is occupied by junior forward Teresa Wolak. Firebaugh wears No. 24 in honor of her friend Brenna Prunty, who wore that number when the two played together at James Wood High School.

Firebaugh has handled the pandemic-riddled season exceptionally well despite the fluid situation everyone is in. But one day it will be a good story to share.

“I think it’ll be an experience that we’ll all get to tell our kids one day, or just in the future, that we did get to experience all of this and that we did play during a pandemic,” Firebaugh said.