



Rider professors give thoughts on marijuana legalization in college community



Andrew Xon/The Rider News

ZenLeaf, a company who owns marijuana dispensaries around the nation, has a location in Lawrence, New Jersey, less than four miles away from Rider's campus.

By Shaun Chornobroff

MICAH Rasmussen, the director of Rider's Rebovich Institute for New Jersey Politics, has been involved in the New Jersey political landscape since he graduated from Rider in 1992. The political science professor organizes his classes to be a hub for political conversation with the party lines that often split local politics represented in his classroom.

Yet in recent years, students in his classroom bipartisanly agreed to the recreational legalization of marijuana, something that went into effect in New Jersey for those 21 and older on April 21.

"I would say it's pretty rare to see a student who is opposed to legalization at this point and that's probably been the case for a long time," Rasmussen said poignantly. "Students always saw the benefit of legalization and always saw the futility of having [marijuana] criminalized and wanted to have that change."

Rasmussen helped grow an annual event called Model Congress more than 30 years ago where high school students come to Rider, pitch different bills and simulate the process of making it a law.

"When I started running Model Congress, [legalization] was very much a fringe

idea, it was very much a student idea, it was very much a pipe dream," Rasmussen said before clarifying there was no intention of a pun in the quote. "... Year after year, decade after decade, advocates kept chipping away and they won over public opinion."

Despite being legal in the state of New Jersey, marijuana is still prohibited on Rider's campus.

Section 5.2 of the university's Student Code of Conduct notes "although New Jersey state law permits the use and/or cultivation of recreational marijuana in limited circumstances, federal laws prohibit such use, possession and/or cultivation. Accordingly, the use, possession, and/or cultivation of marijuana (recreational, medicinal or otherwise) is a violation of the section."

Sarah Trocchio, an assistant professor teaching courses in sociology and criminology, has been studying the effects of marijuana in American society for more than a decade.

Trocchio expects to see "some really great economic gains" as a result of legalization in the state as well as plenty of job opportunities. ZenLeaf, a company who owns marijuana dispensaries around the nation, has a location in Lawrence, less than four miles away from Rider's campus.

Trocchio is hoping to bring job opportunities in the blossoming industry to the Rider community with the four course certificate she helped pioneer in Cannabis Studies. The certificate is designed to educate interested students as well as give them a pathway into the industry.

"The legal cannabis industry is one of the fastest growing sectors in the entire U.S. economy, and states where legalization is occurring now, like [New Jersey], are primed for incredible employment opportunities," Trocchio said. "Our cannabis certificate program is going to provide interested students with the terminology and concepts necessary to apply their other skills to this niche economy, to connect with others doing the same, and to network with industry insiders teaching and guest lecturing in the program."

In her time studying the societal effects of marijuana, past and present, Trocchio has seen the landscape and negative aura surrounding the product start to differ.

"I think we are very much still in the process of stereotypes and opinions changing, though in general, we're seeing more curiosity and excitement around various ways to consume cannabis, and the ability of folks to really curate their experience as to what it means to use the substance," Trocchio said. "With a rapidly expanding choice of products, from tinctures, to gummies, and topicals, I think that provides the opportunity to revisit and even challenge previous assumptions about what it means to consume cannabis far beyond traditional ideas of 'smoking weed.'"

Model United Nations team wins big at New York City conference

By Kaitlyn McCormick

RIDER'S Model United Nations team (MUN), representing Hungary, won outstanding delegation as well as three peer delegate awards at the National Model United Nations Conference in New York City this month.

Peer delegate awards were given to freshman political science major Christina Natoli and junior political science major Andrew Bernstein for their work on General Assembly First Committee, junior political science major Grace Kohansby and sophomore political science major Tray Ferguson for their work on United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Committee, as well as sophomore global studies major Paola Carlesso and junior political science major Devon Shaw for their work on the United Nations Women Committee.

This was the first time that Rider's MUN team won three peer delegate awards, which are voted on by all of the delegates within the respective committee, breaking a team record.

Rider's MUN adviser, political science professor Barbara Franz, explained the prestige of the team winning outstanding delegation.

"Every committee is judged by a dias, a dias consists out of three or four people that sit up there and watch what's happening...every committee had to agree that Hungary deserves this award...so that's why it's so important that the team really works well together. Every single pair of those people did outstanding," Franz said.

Rider's MUN team hosted a debrief and teach-in on April 21 to share their recent successes and experiences with the Rider community.

Head delegate and senior political science major Ryan Leighton stressed the benefits of participating in MUN.

"MUN is a little notorious for its hard work ethic and its demanding curriculum. There's a lot of research and writing," Leighton explained in addition to negotiation and public speaking. "All of these skills that we teach you are vital for most jobs, and

having something like MUN on a resume and proving that you have those skills and were taught them is really effective."

Sophomore political science major Nina Weber explained how these negotiating and leadership skills elevated her performance within the conference.

"There's so many delegates there, so there are a lot of conflicting views and you need to get over that hurdle and have everyone's voices heard, no matter if you agree with it," Weber said.

While many MUN students major in programs like political science or global studies, Rider MUN team members across many majors have benefitted from the experience and were able to integrate aspects of their course of study into their committee prep and competition.

Freshman vocal performance major Chris Simon said, "I was able to take some of my performance skills into MUN because I've done a lot of shows, I know how to act ... but it was a challenge to really get through the research and lead a group more succinctly than normal ... it was quite eye opening to see just how different it was and how big of an experience it was."

The conference, held at the New York City Hilton Hotel from April 10-14 after previously taking place online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, saw competitors from schools across the country and across the globe.

Kohansby said, "Going from the online to the in person was...[a] really eye opening experience ... you really miss out on a lot of the interpersonal communication you get with people if you're online because there is that kind of like block between communication."

Senior political science major Mark Immordino summed the conference up perfectly: "It's four days that go by, it just kind of melts together...it's the most unique experience you can ever do. It's a test of your ability to act and be the best person you can be, and it was great. It was the best experience I've ever had."

INSIDE

BRONCS RUN MANHATTAN

Rider baseball won two of three against conference rival Manhattan.

PAGE 10



SENIOR SWAN SONG

The Rider News seniors say their farewells to the university.

PAGE 8

ALUM TAKES ON GOLDEN STATE

Sophia Alarwi makes debut at respected theater.

PAGE 5



CORRECTION

In an April 20 article about a new study abroad course The Rider News incorrectly spelt the name of professor Drew Procaccino. The Rider News regrets this error.



FIND MORE STORIES AT [THERIDERNEWS.COM](http://THE RIDER NEWS.COM)

Without a leader, Veteran and Military Affairs looks much different at Rider

By Amethyst Martinez

SECURITY BRIEFS

BY SHAUN CHORNOBROFF

Vending Thefts

Pepsi Problems. On April 19 at 8:43 a.m., Public Safety was dispatched to Conover Residence Hall for the report of a theft. Upon arrival, they met with Pepsi Co. who reported a theft from one of their vending machines in the building. Pepsi Co. reported that all the remaining beverages were taken out of the machine as well as the money that was inside. The incident was reported to the Lawrence Township Police who are investigating. Anyone with any information is encouraged to contact Public Safety.

Gated Off

Cloudy with a chance of gate. On April 20 at 1:15 p.m., Public Safety was called to the Gated Admin lot for the report of property damage. Upon their arrival, they met with an outside vendor who reported that as they were driving through the gate arm to enter the lot, the gate arm came down, striking the van. There was no damage to the van and only minimal damage to the gate arm. Facilities Management was notified to check the gate for repairs.

- Information provided by Public Safety Capt. Matthew Babcock

Business team wins first place for the first time in history

By Olivia Nicoletti

As Associate Professor Larry Newman would say, April 22 was a historic day for Rider University.

A team from the Norm Brodsky College of Business won first place at the Johnson and Johnson National Business Case Competition, making them the first team from Rider in history to win.

After three teams from Rider competed against each other on March 24, the decision was made that the team consisting of sophomore finance major Zach Fernandez, senior accounting major Xander Praski, junior business analytics major David Lee, senior management and leadership major Lindsey Mulrooney, junior finance major Brittany Lavko and sophomore human resources major Giuseppe Scordato were going to continue on to the national competition to try and gain a title.

According to Praski, the national competition was among 10 schools, but 11 teams competed, two being from Rutgers University's different locations in New Brunswick and Newark.

Rider teams prepared well by dedicating an entire class to the competition. The Case Analysis and Presentation course taught by Newman and William Totaro guided students in the right direction to execute this presentation well.

The team's continuous dedication to the project throughout the semester allowed them to walk into this feeling confident in their abilities.

Newman said, "Professor Totaro and I were elated for the students. We were thrilled that the team's hard work and many hours spent analyzing the case and practicing their presentation was recognized by the Johnson and Johnson executives who were judging the competition."

According to Fernandez, he and his teammates met outside of class on many occasions when they eventually became close friends and formed a bond.

"We had class until 2:50 p.m. and then we'd stay after class and work until 9 p.m. or 9:30 p.m., sometimes even until 10 p.m.," Fernandez said. "We would meet for hours outside of class to prepare."

Regardless of the time sacrificed to make this happen, Fernandez said that the group chemistry is ultimately what made this so easy.

"We spent some days purely on what we called group cohesion, which was basically just kind of goofing around. We then got to a point where we were so close that we were a well oiled machine," Fernandez said. "I mean, we all understood each other's thoughts, and we understood the different perspectives in the group, and we were friends outside of the class. When we were competing, I

feel like that was maybe our best advantage is that we were so close to one another. We had such good chemistry as a team."

Newman thinks there are several reasons for the team's successes. The group members excelled "in applying their business knowledge to perfecting their oral communication to supporting one another to readily accepting the coaching offered by Professor Totaro and [himself]."

Newman along with Praski both agreed that the team was in it to win it.

"I was really confident because I knew all the work that we put in, and for them to finally say that Rider had won, feels great," Praski said. "All our hard work paid off, and now we don't have to worry about it."

Newman followed up by saying, "Perhaps the most important factor in their success was their shared belief from the start that they had what it took to win."

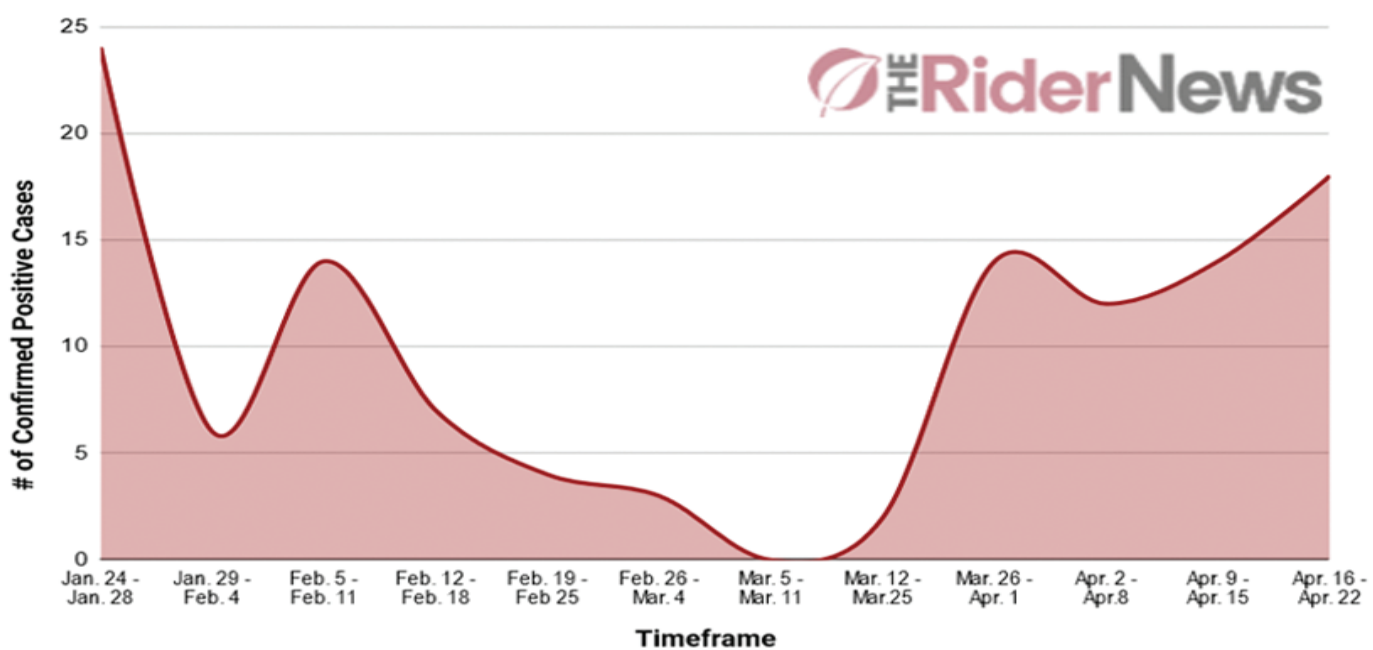
Newman said, "Certainly, winning this competition and placing ahead of some very solid larger schools, demonstrates that the Norm Brodsky College of Business prepares its students to be successful business professionals."



Photo courtesy of Rider University on LinkedIn

The team of six people who competed at the Johnson and Johnson National Business Case Competition on April 22.

Spring 2022 Cumulative Covid-19 Cases at Rider



Adrienne Unfreed/The Rider News

Information courtesy of Rider.edu

ADVERTISEMENT



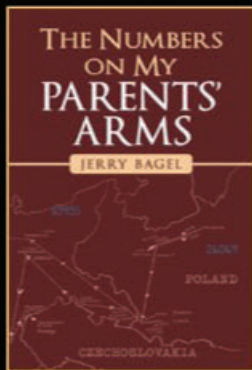
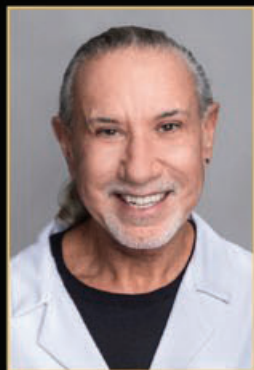
THE NUMBERS ON MY PARENTS' ARMS

HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27 | 6 TO 8:30 P.M.

Hybrid event | In-person at Rue Auditorium (Sweigart 115) or through Zoom
Register in advance, rider.edu/jerry-bagel

Join **Dr. Jerry Bagel**, nationally recognized physician and author, as he describes how his parents had both of their families completely slaughtered in the Holocaust. They survived malnutrition, typhus, sterilization techniques, and walking 15 miles barefoot in freezing snow. They survived like the phoenix bird to rebirth of a new family, success, and fulfillment.



CENTER FOR
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION
Unity + Diversity = University

Sponsored by The Julius and Dorothy Koppelman Holocaust
| Resource Center of the Center for Diversity and Inclusion

Approved by Campus Life - 4/28/22

Student expresses disappointment in university response following alleged rape



Andrew Xon/The Rider News

A freshman student who alleges she was raped in Switlik Hall is disappointed in the response from Rider's Title IX office.

By Jeremy Hester

On a Friday night she would later describe as deeply traumatic, a female freshman Rider student was invited to an off-campus party by a friend where she first met a male sophomore. Hours later, less than six weeks into her first semester of college, she said the other student attacked her.

"I was raped by him. He choked me so bad that there was a mark on my neck," the 19-year-old said in an April interview with The Rider News. "I didn't leave the room for weeks. I still don't like leaving my room. For me, it's like, I went through all this, and I'm still going through all this, and he is literally able to just transfer schools."

The male student, who is enrolled in spring classes at Rider but has publicly announced plans to attend a different school in the fall, did not respond to several requests for comment. (The Rider News is not identifying the woman or the man she accused of assault. The woman did not report the incident to police, and the man has not been charged with any crime.)

The woman said Rider issued a no-contact order in December, but she still sees him around campus.

Months later, she said, "I have a lot of anxiety. I don't walk anywhere by myself; I don't really do anything by myself. The one time I went to go get food by myself, he walked across from me. Right now, I think the biggest emotion that I have is anger, because they've done nothing."

Robert Stoto, Rider's current Title IX coordinator, explained the process of communicating with students. Stoto declined to be interviewed but said in an email to The Rider News, "Students who are directly involved in Title IX matters, either as complainants or respondents, are kept informed of the key developments of their case, such as the completion of the investigation process, the referral of charges to a Student Conduct board and the outcome of a hearing, as they occur."

But in this case, the woman told The Rider News that in the months since the December no-contact order, the university has failed to update her on the status of the investigation or explain why the student she says raped her still attends Rider and remains living on campus.

The night of the alleged assault

"From the get go, he was very flirtatious," the freshman said, describing her first impression of the older student on the night of Oct. 15, 2021. "I was like, 'I'm not doing anything tonight, I'm not doing anything sexual, I don't even want to, like, cuddle. I don't want to do any of that.' And I thought that he respected those boundaries."

When they first arrived at the party, the student noted that there were only six other people there.

"He started to come up behind me and hug me from the back, and I would move. He would touch my butt, and I would move," she said. "I was very uncomfortable with it, obviously. I kept trying to move and get out of the situation, but I didn't know how. So we went home."

The student recalled taking an Uber back to campus with him and a few other friends, during which she said the behavior continued.

"He put his hand around me. I had ripped jeans on, so he was putting his hands all up in there," she said.

She said that he insisted on walking her back to Switlik Hall, where she lived at the time. Once they arrived at the residence hall, she said, he insisted on walking her to her room as well.

"I said 'OK, bye,' and he was like 'let me see inside,' opened the door, and just walked into my room, which is not OK," she said.

She explained that while he was in her room, she felt the need to appease him.

"He was like 'do you want to watch a movie?'" and I said 'yeah we can watch a movie,' just because I thought maybe he'll leave," she said. "And then he asked if I wanted to cuddle, and I said 'I guess we can cuddle for a little bit, but I am sleeping by myself tonight.' Then things escalated."

It was after this, the student said, that she was raped.

"When everything was done, I put on his sweatshirt that was there really fast. I didn't have anything underneath ... I just ran out of my room. I vomited. There was blood," she said in a shaky voice.

"I came back, and my neighbor was like, 'Do you know about what's been going on with him?'" Her neighbor proceeded to inform her that the male student had a history of harassing women on campus.

"I just cried, I told him 'you need to leave right now' and made him leave. The next day I gave him his sweatshirt, and I haven't spoken to him since," she said.

The student said that she was in shock for several weeks after that night.

"I didn't eat, I wasn't leaving my room, I wasn't sleeping," she said. "I waited about a month, maybe a month and a half [to report it], but that was because mentally, I wasn't going to be able to do it right away, because I didn't even really fully process everything for, like, a week."

She explained that one of her professors initially reached out to her about missing classes, and they set up a Zoom call to talk about her situation. When she explained what had happened, her professor reported the incident on her behalf. She was contacted by Thomas Johnson, the then-director of Rider's Title IX and Equal Opportunity Compliance Office, "one to two weeks later" in November, and said she was told that the student's behavior was grounds for expulsion.

She said she was disturbed by the amount of time it took for someone to reach out to her after the incident was reported, stating, "It gives him enough time to do it again, and that's all I was thinking about. That's all I'm thinking about now."

She described the investigation as "very tedious and very traumatic."

"I wrote out what happened, and then at the meeting we went to, [Johnson] had to go through every single sentence and ask me about it to add in any other details I may have forgotten," she explained.

In December, she was told that the school would be launching a formal investigation. She said she has not been updated since. Johnson left Rider to work as a Title IX coordinator at DeSales University in the beginning of April, but the student said she was not made aware he left Rider.

Stoto said that any cases being handled by Johnson at the time of his departure were handed off to interim director Christopher Botti.

A growing reputation among students

Other students, however, were aware of the male student's growing reputation for improper conduct on campus.

One woman who lived in the same dorm as him said that he regularly made other women in that residence hall uncomfortable.

"He'd definitely made comments about my body. He also made a lot of comments about a lot of my friend's bodies," she said. "If a shirt was fitting us nicely, he would feel the need to say that. Or he would make comments about our weight, specifically he made a lot of comments about my one friend. She was on the heavier side, and he would always kind of point that out to her."

Other students who worked with him, including senior psychology major Erin Francis, said they spotted similarly problematic behavior, and reported it to university supervisors. Francis added that residents who lived in the same dormitory reported to their community assistants that he would enter women's restrooms without knocking.

Francis expressed frustration with how the situation was handled.

"For something as serious as sexual assault, why is he still at Rider? Why is he still walking around on campus as if everything is peaches and rainbows and all is right in the world? I do not understand," she said. "As a woman, I'm disgusted. When me and my other female co-workers see him in public — revulsion."



FIND MORE STORIES AT THERIDERNEWS.COM

Student details frustrating experience with Title IX after alleged classroom incident from professor

By Felicia Roehm

Find out more about

THE Rider News

Check out our website



Follow us
on Instagram



@theridernews

Rider alum shines on California stage

By Tristan Leach

SOPHIA Alawi has done it all. From waitressing to teaching, the actor has taken every opportunity and made the absolute best of it. Now, the Rider alumnus can add one more experience to her resume: Joan in the musical, “Fun Home.”

Last Thursday at 42nd Street Moon, a prominent theater in San Francisco, Alawi and her castmates had their opening performance of the Tony Award winning show. The New Jersey born actor has worked hard for years to do the thing she loves the most and it is paying off.

Alawi realized she wanted to pursue theater when she was in high school. Before finding Rider, the actor took a gap year for two years and headed to New York City. Alawi said, “I didn’t really have a lot of resources in high school in how to audition for schools and what to do really, so I took a two year gap year just to do some training programs in New York City, and I was waitressing, and then I figured out I needed to audition for this many schools to get a really fair chance.”

She auditioned for 18 schools, including Rider.

“I actually remember this audition very vividly. It was Robin [Lewis], Nathan [Hurwitz] and Louis [Goldberg] at the table,” Alawi said of her audition at Rider. “I did my set, and I just remember having a really good connection with them and just having a really good audition.”

After her audition, Alawi was accepted by Rider, and the actor took the opportunity. Not only was the school in her home state, but it was also close to home. Alawi came to see Rider and get a look at the musical theater program on campus. “I was so eager to get into school for musical theater and hone my training at that time. Rider just seemed like the perfect fit,” said Alawi.

Alawi trained hard and got as much as she could out of her time at Rider. Lewis, an associate professor in musical theater dance, was at Alawi’s audition and would later become her professor and director.

Lewis said, “Every student has a different journey; everyone has a different path that works for them. I know with Sophia that she’s always working on her craft and auditioning and showing up. Also [her] kindness, [she] is just personable, she is just a beautiful soul.”

Though Alawi was thankful for her time at Rider, there were aspects that she was happy to avoid in her college career. “Because I was already in a training program in the city and I was able to separate the drama of ‘oh I need my teachers to be obsessed with me’ or ‘I need their constant attention.’ I was like no, that’s not how it works ... I know that sometimes they will have favorites which isn’t the best setup for an educational program,” said Alawi.

Those feelings aside, Alawi was thankful for her training at Rider and felt fortunate to have so much stage time her junior and senior year.

During her senior showcase, Alawi caught the attention of 11 agents. Although she wished that there had been more business classes in the theater business to prepare her for the world of theater.

After college, Alawi went onto several regional theater productions and some independent films. Alawi found herself in California before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, but moved back to New York City to be with her family during the height of the pandemic. Later she made the decision to move back to California for her mental health. When theater started to slowly come back, Alawi had another opportunity to perform in California. After her contract ended for that show, she was given the opportunity to teach, cementing her choice to stay in the golden state.

In the midst of her teaching, Alawi auditioned for “Fun Home” and started a new chapter in her life. “I auditioned for this theater called 42nd Street Moon, and I did a virtual audition with them and a Zoom callback, and I got it,” Alawi said. She has since been doing what she calls “double duty” working as both a teacher and actor.

When Alawi is not acting on stage, she is honing her skills in front of the camera. She has not only acted in a few independent films but is currently working on her own short film. Titled “Hayawan,” the film is about a young Muslim girl growing up in New Jersey after 9/11. “Indie filmmaking is so hard. We have to pretty much fundraise all the money on our own,” said Alawi.

The actor started writing at Rider and found herself in need of a creative outlet during the pandemic. A friend of hers took the project, and the two ran with it. As of now, the project is in its infancy, but there is a plan for a promotional party that is expected to be held this summer.

Lewis said of Alawi’s film experience, “Just to be in this business you’ve got to be versatile, from commercial to film to radio. That’s just part of this business. Every student has a different journey. To explore, you have to keep yourself busy. You have to create; we can’t keep doing old works, so the fact that Sophia is creating new works, that’s what this generation should be doing.”

Sophia Alawi is everything a college could hope for their students to become: bright, talented, kind and ready to take on the world.

Sophia Alawi has been featured in past Rider News articles. Alawi was referred to as Sophia Introna.



Photo courtesy of Sophia Alawi

Sophia Alawi is in the process of making and producing her own film entitled “Hayawan.”



Photo courtesy of Sophia Alawi

Sophia Alawi is currently starring in the musical “Fun Home” in San Francisco.



Rider Pep Band practices in the Alumni Gym.

Rider Pep Band writes unofficial fight song

By Amethyst Martinez

It was the day of the 2020 Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference basketball tournament, long before the coronavirus pandemic took a hold of the world.

The pep bands from each university were set to participate in a spirit event called “Band Jam” alongside their school dance and cheer teams. The groups closed off their performances with their fight songs.

The newly revived Rider Pep Band looked around and realized: Rider University had no fight song to play for their sports teams.

Vice president of the pep band and junior elementary education major Angela Rizzo, and Rider alums Antonio Lombardi and Kaden Mobley, took it upon themselves to create the new unofficial fight song for Rider.

Rizzo said, “We decided it would be such a great opportunity for the band, for years to come, to have something that is uniquely ours and written by members.”

The pep band consists of 23-25 members, playing flute, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, trombone, percussion, guitar, keyboard, and more. The group was recently revamped by students before the pandemic.

Rider Pep Band performs on campus at a variety of events, such as Admitted Students Day, basketball games and more. The band has also held fundraisers in the past, last year raising money for Trenton Music Makers, a music education school near campus.

The group began to write the song, but the project was halted when COVID-19 shut down universities. However, during quarantine, the three bandmates got to work again and met together through online video chat services such as Discord and Zoom to write the new song.

Lombardi said, “Our minds kind of got together, and over the course of a few weeks, we were able to write it up.”

The end result is completely Rider oriented, down to a drum part incorporated that

mimics horse galloping in a nod to the Bronc mascot. All of the parts were written by Rider students, including alumni who previously participated in the pep band.

Rizzo said, “We kind of ran with the Bronc theme and had certain elements [incorporated] that were surrounding the school.”

Lombardi described the importance of using multiple eras of students' input who were able to work alongside one another and create the fight song.

“Now, we can all come together and create something that can be timeless,” said Lombardi.

The pep band currently awaits administration approval to make it the official fight song for Rider University.

The Rider Pep Band proudly has something to add to their legacy on campus, which can last for many new generations of students.

Rizzo said, “You can have this opportunity to lead and write something within a student run group. I think that’s like, a really unique opportunity that you don’t get [in] a lot of places.”

The fight song, performed by the Rider Pep Band, can be viewed on our website using the QR code.



Professor from Poland encourages students to engage in reading

By Sarah Griffin

RIDER Professor Iwona Ionescu seemed charming, warm and extremely welcoming to everyone she came across.

Ionescu’s auburn-hair was cut neatly into a bob, with short bangs that didn’t cover her crystal blue eyes and a wide smile covering her face most of the time.

As an English professor, Ionescu tried to encourage her students to use their imaginations in their writing and to read as much as possible, two things she believed to be the most important skills of a college student.

Ionescu wanted to help students focus on reading and writing skills, which, in her view, improve with increased reading.

In terms of the importance of reading, Ionescu said that reading connects us to history and marveled at the fact that “someone sat down and wrote these ideas to connect with people this way.”

Ionescu tends to remember the students she loved more than the students she found to be difficult. She believed that in order to have a good class, a professor would benefit from “a couple of students who are really good” and motivated to do their work.

Ionescu, a Poland native, met her husband at a dance when they were both living in Europe.

After the two dated for some time, her husband got accepted into a Ph.D. program in education at the University of New Orleans. She moved to the United States to join her husband, where they got married and started a family.

During the time when Ionescu and her husband were in a long-distance relationship, she began teaching English at a community college for a couple of semesters.

Ionescu described her experience learning English

in Poland as bland and used it as an example of what not to do as an educator. Instead, Ionescu aimed to get her students to love writing. Describing teachers in Poland, Ionescu said, “[Teachers] wouldn’t even provide feedback. They just said this is bad, and that was it.” This inspired her to teach her students differently than she was taught.

Ionescu says that after a few semesters, she began to love the idea of teaching “because you work with students, which is great, but also every semester I learned so much.”

One of the most rewarding aspects of teaching, in Ionescu’s view, was learning lessons from her students in return for the lessons that she taught them.

Ionescu said that the best class to teach would have students that are always involved; she thought that one of her writing classes was very engaging because “it’s a research class, so I allow the students to select their own topics.”

From her student’s perspective, Ionescu taught her class with understanding and kindness. Psychology freshman and a former student of Ionescu, Noelle Hazel, said that her former professor was “warm” and “made it really easy to learn from and made you feel supported and comfortable to ask for help when you needed it.”

Julia Bayait, a junior elementary education major, worked as an embedded tutor for one of Ionescu’s classes in the fall 2021 semester.

Bayait called Ionescu “hard-working” and said Ionescu taught her many lessons: “Not only was she extremely supportive the entire semester, but I learned a lot about tutoring students and writing ... The fact that she valued my input was very encouraging, especially as an education major.”

As an immigrant, Ionescu said that Rider University is very welcoming and that she personally has never had an experience of feeling ostracized by other professors.

Ionescu, an adjunct professor, has in the past felt like there was some type of hierarchy between full-time and adjunct professors, but added that she does not feel that way anymore.

Ionescu moved into a house close to Rider after she started working as a professor. She soon began to feel that Rider was “just an extension of my home.”

Ionescu found that she loved the campus because “the people are very nice, and I just love the students.”



Photo courtesy of Sarah Griffin

Iwona Ionescu, an English professor, poses for the camera in her office.

Council for Exceptional Children links communities together



Photo courtesy of Allison Pitner

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) held their latest event, the CEC Carnival.

By **Hannah Newman**

THE Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is a program designed to bring together those with disabilities and the Rider community through games, events and activities that allow both communities to learn from one another and build a stronger sense of unity throughout campus and beyond.

Although this is an education club, students do not need to have experience in special education to join this council and can get involved as much or as little as they would like to.

Council meetings and events are created based on the contributions of members so that everyone can find their connections to the community in their own personalized way.

Co-President and junior elementary education major Danielle Spalding described this program as a chance to spread inclusion and gain more experience conversing with community members.

Spalding said, "It is open to anyone who is willing to develop an open mind about working with people who may be different than themselves to erase that stigma, and also that we are making a move to more professional

development opportunities as well as more in person and Zoom events with our community members to tighten the community we've worked so hard to maintain."

The executive committee discussed how working with a community of people with disabilities appears to be intimidating to people who have never done so before; however, she mentioned how community members are able to teach Rider students a thing or two about how powerful human connection is and that it can be demonstrated without a verbal exchange of words.

Treasurer and junior elementary education major Juliana Vierbuchen explained what she has personally learned from this experience and how it has shaped the growth of her social abilities.

Vierbuchen said, "This club has given me the ability to work on communication skills with our community members along with the Rider community as a whole. I remember one of our community members was nonverbal, and I could tell through his facial expressions that he was having a great time. You can have a conversation with these members without them having to speak a word."

The general members of CEC are Rider students,

but the community members come from all different places as well as ages. Rider students are able to engage in activities with people who range from high school students up to those in their 40s.

Co-President and junior elementary education major Allison Pitner described the passion that all members contain for each event and how they yearn for the next one by the time the event is over.

Pitner said, "Everytime you walk away from an event as a participant you feel really great after seeing all of the community members just so excited for the next event."

The next event will be held on April 29 in the Mercer room inside of Daly's Dining Hall. This event will be Luau themed and include activities such as tie-dyeing T-shirts, life-sized games, pizza and desserts, as well as a limbo competition.

For further details pertaining to the event or council, please contact riderucec@gmail.com.



Photo courtesy of Allison Pitner

A group of community members and students participate in different activities at a CEC event.



Photo courtesy of Allison Pitner

The executive committee of the Council of Exceptional Children pose for a photo at their latest event.

Senior send off: students say goodbye to The Rider News

BETWEEN transferring schools, commuting for four years and a pandemic halting in-person classes, I've had far from the traditional college experience. Yet, there has been one constant throughout my college career: my love for the degree I was pursuing.

I chose to be a journalism major on a whim, thinking it seemed like the right choice for someone who liked to write. However, I quickly realized that my major was so much more than that. Working as a student reporter for The Rider News and being at the center of major events on campus showed me how essential journalism is to a community. Journalists work not only to inform but to motivate change, and I feel so lucky to be entering a field that values those ideals.

While I now reflect on my time at The Rider News with great pride, I have to admit I started at Rider with many hesitations. In fall of 2020, I came to the university as a transfer student from a community college in Pennsylvania. I spent my junior year and first year at Rider taking online classes in my bedroom nearly an hour away from campus. I felt detached from the community, with my short time at Rider becoming even more limited by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite feeling out of place, I knew I wanted to write for The Rider News. I spent the summer before transferring worrying if the newspaper would have a role for me to step into. However, my worries were somewhat subdued when I reached out to Stephen Neukam, the former executive editor, a few weeks before the semester began. I was then set up with my first story assignment before I even started classes at Rider.

After a few weeks of writing for the paper's arts and entertainment section, I was asked to fill the section's vacant co-editor position. I immediately accepted and was ecstatic to feel like I was finding my place at Rider. Due to working for the newspaper, I spent that school year feeling much less isolated from the Rider community, despite it being such an unusual time.

My expectations at Rider were exceeded once again when I was elected executive editor of The Rider News for the 2021-2022 school year. I am so thankful to the staff for believing in me and trusting me to lead them during a time of transition as we switched back to in-person classes.

During my time as executive editor, I have grown as not only a journalist but as a person. The job has shown me the need to be persistent and not become discouraged when faced with challenges or unwarranted pushback. The role also helped build my confidence (I've always been my biggest critic).

I am so fortunate to have worked with such a wonderful Rider News staff this year. Each person is unbelievably hard-working and made coming to the newsroom the best part of my day. It is rare to find a group of people that can make late nights and endless hours of editing enjoyable.

However, I would not have been able to lead The Rider News without our incredibly dedicated adviser Jackie Incollingo. She teaches us the importance of resilience and determination when working on a story. Incollingo is always there to answer our questions and give advice but also allows us to grow as students. I strive to become a journalist with just a fraction of her talent.

My next step in my academic journey is the University of Maryland where I will be working toward a master's degree in journalism on a full-tuition scholarship. I want to thank The Rider News for preparing for what comes next and for letting me be a part of something truly special.

*Sarah Siock,
senior journalism major*

ENDED a blog post when I was about to graduate from Metuchen High School in 2018 saying, "Well, I guess it's off to covering Rider." Four years later as I prepare to depart from Rider, I can say I have told the stories about some of the most incredible athletes I have ever met.

I always knew at some point this day would come. It is time for me to say farewell to The Rider News, the best organization I will ever know.

When I DM'd the former sports editor Rob Rose on Twitter in July 2018 asking for a story, I never could have imagined everything that followed after writing that first field hockey season preview.

It transformed into covering women's basketball and some amazing moments like Stella Johnson getting drafted to the WNBA, Rider field hockey winning the Northeast Conference championship in 2020 and, of course, men's basketball senior guard Dwight Murrari Jr. hitting a floater to defeat Iona ending the men's basketball team's quarterfinal curse.

Because of The Rider News, I accomplished my goal of covering the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) basketball tournament — even if the 2020 one was canceled because of COVID-19. Many people know the tournament's logo was my iPhone lock screen for two years because that event was my biggest dream to cover.

But even through the pandemic, The Rider News persevered. When sports were canceled, my former co-editor Shaun Chornobroff and I kept things going with stories that otherwise would not have been told and I firmly believe that. Now, Shaun is going on to lead the paper next year as the executive editor. I always knew he would do that and I'm so proud of him.

Working for The Rider News has been the best experience I ever could have asked for and it has made me who I am today. After graduation, I'll be covering the Maccabiah games in Israel and attending graduate school at the University of Maryland. None of that is possible without the newspaper and the multitude of people associated with it.

I will miss working with the staff, laughing at the jokes our editors make and seeing the conversational critiques the copy desk makes on our stories. Those are small moments I will always cherish.

I am so proud of the work The Rider News has done and will continue to do in the future. I know the new editors will serve the Rider community with the same passion that I and all those who came before me have for this award-winning publication.

When I quit track and cross-country in high school after I developed tendonitis in my ankles, I stopped trying to be a great athlete because I wanted to write and report on those who will be great athletes.

Thank you, Rider, for always supporting and uplifting me. It has been the biggest honor to be your sports editor.

Nobody needs any advice from me but I will leave you with this: support women's sports, support the mid-major conferences, always try to find the stories that are not being told and most importantly, love what you do.

Well, I guess it's off to covering the 21st Maccabiah in Israel and then Maryland.

Farewell, The Rider News.
May we meet again.

*Dylan Manfre,
senior journalism major*

Rider News

Longstreet House, 2083 Lawrenceville Road, Lawrenceville, NJ 08648

©2022 General Meetings: Wednesdays at 4:30 p.m.

Executive Editor Shaun Chornobroff	Copy Editors Bridget Gum-Egan Logan VanDine Jay Roberson
Managing Editor Amethyst Martinez	Design Manager Adrienne Unfreed
News Editors Olivia Nicoletti Kaitlyn McCormick	Business/Advertising Manager Danielle Jackson
Features and Arts & Entertainment Editors Tristan Leach Hannah Newman	Circulation Managers Jordan Wilson Karagh Tait
Sports Editors Carolo Pascale Jake Tiger	Social Media Editor Zada Penick
Photography Editor Andrew Xon	Faculty Adviser Dr. Jackie Incollingo
Video Editor Bridget Hoyt	

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](https://twitter.com/theridernews)

 [@RiderNewsSports](https://twitter.com/RiderNewsSports)

 www.theridernews.com

 [@theridernews](https://www.instagram.com/theridernews)

 facebook.com/theridernews

 ridernews@rider.edu

Olivia Nicoletti/ The Rider News



Senior journalism major Sarah Siock with her painted brick in The Rider News newsroom.

Olivia Nicoletti/ The Rider News



Senior journalism major Dylan Manfre after painting his brick in The Rider News newsroom.

FRESHMAN FINDINGS

Is the dance industry sexist?

I HAVE been dancing since I was four years old and danced competitively from 13 to 18 years old. Throughout my experience at various competitions, it was predominantly women competing, but when there was a boy, it seemed that the judges attention was focused only on the male dancer.

Many other female dancers including myself knew that if there was a male dancer competing, he would win no matter what. But this raised the question of why are men and women treated differently in the dance world? An article from Dance Magazine titled “The Boy Factor: Do Boys Get An Unfair Advantage at Competitions” written by Sarah Nagle explains that the ‘The Boy Factor’ is the theory that if a competitive dance has a boy in it then that performance is more likely to win.

Owner of All Star Studios Rysa Childress in Forest Hills, New York, explains that if a boy has good stage presence, judges will usually give him a higher score than a girl with better technique because in dance, the boys are idolized more often. Boys are highlighted throughout their dance experience beginning in their childhood; when there is only one boy in a dance routine, the dance is often created to divert all attention to the male dancer.

When there was a boy at my home dance studio, he was always put in the front and center. He would be dressed differently, all the girls would have to dance around him and the ending pose would center around him being the main focus. Always having the boy in the front and diverting all attention on him is teaching the young dancers that the boys are more valuable. The judges praise the men more because there are fewer in the dance industry, but this sexism can carry into the future after the dancers graduate high school.

If a woman wants to pursue dance as a career and become an artistic director, she will find that the majority of artistic directors are male. An article by Forbes “A Gender Gap in Ballet, Seriously?” by Kim Elssesser describes that the Dance Data Project which promotes equity, leadership and salary data for the top 50 ballet companies in America collected some shocking information.

The article says, “According to DDP, a whopping 72% of ballet companies have a male artistic director. Those women who do get the title of artistic director earn only 68 cents for every dollar earned by their male counterparts.” Of the 467 dance pieces choreographed for the 2019-2020 season, 79% were done by men.”

Unfortunately, decisions made on the role of artistic director are made based on word of mouth, not credentials. This can cause a lot of bias when these men

enter a female-dominated field. They get put on a fast track to succeed and be in a higher position. This causes women to fall behind more often because they are not receiving the same assistance.

Men hear the word “no” less often than women, giving men the opportunity to get ahead, but this mindset can change. If judges realize the message they are promoting, then all dancers, no matter the gender, can succeed based on skill and technique.

I have competed against men at many competitions and knew that even if I tried my best, they were going to win. This was extremely frustrating. The male dancers I went up against were all very talented; however, seeing the same guys go up for numerous awards in different categories is upsetting. Once, I competed against three boys, and they took home the first, second and third place awards.

I hope to see the industry change in the future and acknowledge that every dancer on the competition stage deserves to be recognized for their talent even if they are not placed in the top three. There are numerous categories and awards for a reason, and spreading them out fairly will make the dance competitions honest and more enjoyable.

Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons



*Felicia Roehm
freshman journalism major*

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Emeritus professor speaks on Westminster graduation ceremony cut

THE decision by Rider’s administration to rescind the promise made to the Westminster community to continue to hold commencement ceremonies in Princeton through 2023 is significant for two reasons.

First, this message reveals that Rider’s central administration remains either tone-deaf to, or treats as a lower priority, the feelings of many in the Westminster community. The announcement reveals people who are out of touch; it alienates rather than unifies. One wonders if any in the administration spoke out against this decision.

Just this academic year the frustrations of Westminster students with the inadequacies of their hastily-constructed facilities culminated in a well-publicized petition presented to the president and his administration. Many believe that the construction of those facilities was, one, entirely unnecessary, and two, with other pressing needs, a surprisingly unwise expenditure of scarce Rider dollars in the midst of a revenue-sapping pandemic.

A reply to the petition by President Dell’Omo was criticized by the petition organizers and others as unsatisfactory, defensive and dismissive. Many, many months later there are conditions cited in the petition that remain to be addressed, according to an April 13 Rider News story.

The transition of Westminster to Lawrenceville was an undertaking that had to be successful, and President Dell’Omo is ultimately responsible for its shortcomings.

A second reason why the announcement is significant is because the ceremony’s cost is mentioned as a reason for terminating the Princeton commencement after this year.

It’s revealed here that Rider will continue to experience revenue issues through 2023 – the eighth year of this president’s tenure. As recently as last week, the president cited continuing problems with student enrollment in a town hall meeting with Rider’s Student Government Association.

With a second and overwhelming 86% vote of no-confidence and a resolution and rally calling for the president’s replacement, the faculty have indicated for the first time in Rider’s history that it does not believe Rider’s current president and his team have the ability to create financial stability for the University – to “turn things around,” in the recent words of the president. Achieving financial stability is vital for students and all associated with the University, and for Rider University’s very future.

The president and his team have had many years to achieve this and have failed, and absolutely nothing has been communicated by this administration about the future except the desire to cut costs. What follows that? They have borrowed to the hilt – to the University’s limit – and built it, and they have not come.

In the five pre-pandemic years of this president’s tenure, similar regional universities were notching enrollment and net revenue increases while Rider was notching losses. Rider now carries a lower Moody’s bond rating – that is, is most risky as a borrower – than any other university in this region rated by the company. Moody’s continues to assign a “negative outlook” for Rider.

The members of Rider’s Board of Trustees need to reflect on this history and take action. As they well know, and as any issue of The Wall Street Journal reveals, organizations quickly replace executives that aren’t meeting targets and getting the job done. It is well past time for the Board, as the designated stewards of the university, to move quickly and select a new leadership team, one more eager and able to compete effectively with other regional institutions, effectively promoting Rider in many student-rich geographical markets. Rider’s competitors, large and small, are doing this today.

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

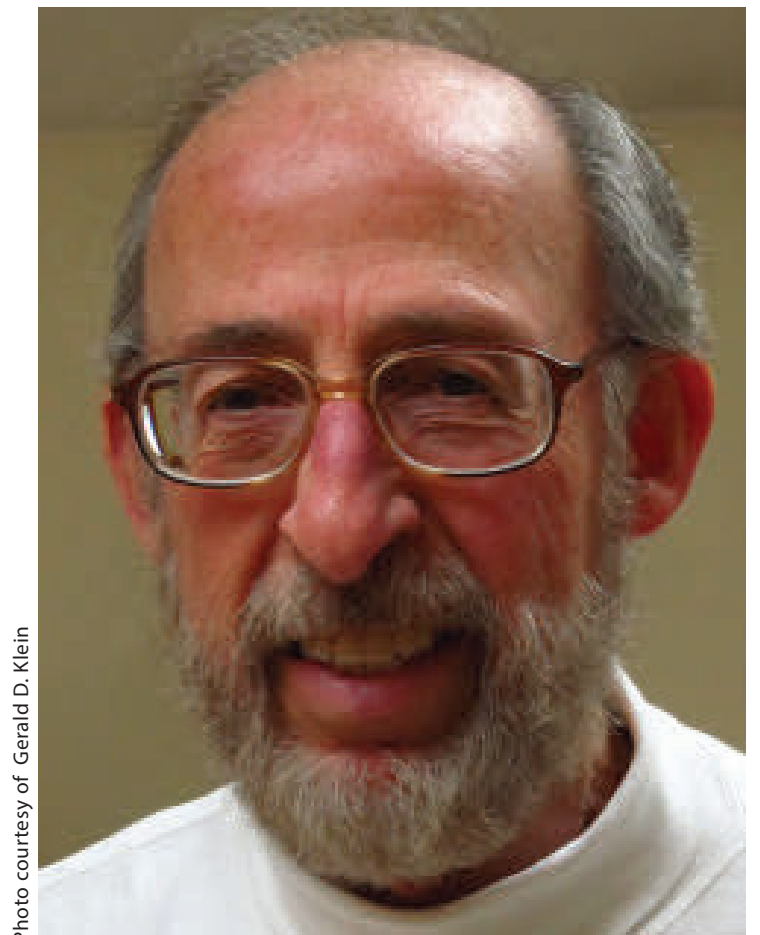


Photo courtesy of Gerald D. Klein

BASEBALL

Rider takes two of three against Manhattan

By Carolo Pascale and Andrew Smolar

RIDER baseball notched two wins in four action-packed games, defeating the Manhattan Jaspers 6-4 on April 22 and 11-1 on April 23, before falling 7-5 in game three of the series on April 24, and then lost again to Seton Hall 6-2 on April 26.

Stress in the series opener

Game one of the three game series ended in a close victory for the Broncs, who survived the late attack of the Jaspers, edging them out 6-4.

"We gave up too many opportunities," said Head Coach Barry Davis. "I thought we swung the bat well early. We didn't get much help out of the bullpen. It was like we were in control, but we weren't in control."

The Broncs were looking to bounce back from a difficult weekend against Niagara, and they got off to a decent start in game one, with graduate student Joe Papeo on the mound once again.

The first run of the game came when the Broncs hit three singles to center field in the second inning, which allowed junior outfielder Scott Shaw to score, putting the Broncs up 1-0. This was Shaw's first game back from injury.

The Broncs scored two more times in the bottom of the second, putting the Broncs up 3-0 early.

The bottom of the fifth saw the Broncs score once again, this time coming off a deep single to right by junior first base Luke Lesch, which allowed Bardatsos to score, making it a 4-0 ballgame.

Rider kept the bats swinging in the sixth, scoring two more runs on a single to left by junior infielder John Volpe and a long double by Bardatsos, leaving the Broncs with a comfortable 6-0 lead.

But just as the Broncs got their lead, the Jaspers woke up and rattled hit after hit to cut the lead all the way down to three runs the very next inning. Manhattan hit five singles to get them back in the game, and just like the Broncs, were able to continue the momentum into the following inning, scoring one more run on a single to right field, making the score 6-4.

After that, the Broncs were able to compose themselves and close out the game with graduate student Cal Stalzer on the mound, who earned his sixth save of the season, which is tied for 1st in the MAAC.

"It was just mental mistakes," said Bardatsos. "Our confidence has to be better, and our enthusiasm has to be better."

Bardatsos hit 3-of-4, and both him and Volpe had two RBIs. Papeo allowed seven hits through 6.1 innings pitched before coming out in the seventh inning.

Broncs send five to the moon

Riding off the momentum of the game one win, the Broncs walked back onto the repainted base paths of Sonny Pittaro Field and promptly walked the Jaspers off them with a five home run, 11-1 victory.

The Broncs started their decimation of the Jaspers off early, with Lesch hitting another RBI single to get the Broncs on the board 1-0. The Broncs scored again off of a ground out to third base before the Broncs' bomber, junior outfielder Brendan O'Donnell, stepped into the box.

"They were pounding me inside, which I really hadn't seen all year; everything's pretty much been soft away on me all year and yesterday," said O'Donnell, "So I took that and backed up off the plate a little bit."

O'Donnell promptly crushed a hanging curveball deep out the back wall for a ridiculous 416 foot, three-run home run, giving the Broncs a 5-0 lead after just one inning.

Meanwhile, on the mound, senior Frank Doelling was throwing gas with six strikeouts through three innings.

In the bottom of the third, O'Donnell whacked the first pitch he saw out of the park for his



Kaitlyn D'Alessio/The Rider News

Junior outfielder **Brendan O'Donnell** hit two home runs in game two of the Manhattan series, putting him at 12 on the season.

second home run of the game, giving the Broncs a 6-0 lead.

From then until the bottom of the seventh, it was the Doelling show, with him throwing four more strikeouts.

"I struggled a little bit earlier in the year with my command and stuff like that," said Doelling. "And in the Fairfield start, I really started to get some of my confidence back... then today, just trusting the process of what I've been doing the last few weeks."

That bottom of the seventh saw the Broncs hit their third home run of the game, this time coming from Skettini. The two-run homer, hit to left field, put the Broncs up 8-0.

After Doelling dealt out 10 strikeouts through seven innings, he was replaced by senior Frank DelGuercio. Just a few pitches later, the Jaspers finally got on the board with a solo home run, making it an 8-1 game.

But scoring that run seemed to just make the Broncs bats even more hungry, as Bardatsos hit a long two-run home run, and Lesch hit a 427 foot moonshot that would have gone out of every MLB ballpark. The two runs were on back-to-back pitches and gave the Broncs a 11-1 lead that was the final score.

'Wasted opportunities'

Rider dropped the final game of the weekend series with Manhattan on Sunday afternoon. The Broncs ended up dropping the finale in a 7-5 decision.

The highlight of the day offensively for the Broncs came in the bottom of the second. Five hits and a walk led to a 5-2 lead for Rider after two innings of play.

Unfortunately for the Broncs, they couldn't score any more runs the rest of the game. Despite finishing the game with 13 hits, the five run second proved to be all the offense they could muster. Neither team scored a run after the fifth inning.

"Too many wasted opportunities," said Davis. "I am disappointed in the final outcome. On a positive note, we won the series. A big week ahead with five games, all on the road. A tremendous challenge awaits."

One bright spot for Rider was its relief pitching. Junior Dylan Heine and Senior Danny Kirwin combined to give the Broncs 5.2 innings of no earned runs allowed.

On April 27, Rider took a bus ride to South Orange, New Jersey for an afternoon bout with the Seton Hall Pirates, who handed the Broncs a 6-2 loss.

The Pirates' earned their six runs by amassing 15 hits as a team, completely wrangling the Rider bullpen. Junior pitcher Kenny Quijano started the game for the Broncs, allowing seven hits and three earned runs in just 3.0 innings pitched.

The Broncs will get little rest as they turn right back around to face Penn on April 27 before getting another shot at MAAC competition next weekend when they travel to face in-state rival Monmouth for a three game weekend series starting on April 29.

BASEBALL

Ex-Bronc blossoms for rival Manhattan

By Jake Tiger

COMING off a glorious Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) Championship victory in 2021, Rider baseball was ready to defend its first title in 11 years.

However, junior infielder David Bermudez, an instrumental piece of Rider's run, was not as eager to saddle up for the Broncs.

Though Bermudez was one of the most important players on a championship-caliber squad, he still felt that he was being underutilized by Rider and was ready for a more substantial role. Unhappy with his situation and seeking a fresh start, he entered the transfer portal and eventually settled on conference rival Manhattan University.

"I just felt like my time here was at an end. I wanted a fair opportunity to play everyday, and I don't think I was getting that at Rider," said Bermudez. "I felt like if I wanted that, I had to go somewhere else."

The move was a rare and shocking instance of an interconference transfer made even more perplexing by Bermudez's undeniable success and importance to the Broncs.

"We discussed at the end of the year and [Bermudez] felt like it was the best move for him ... so we supported him," said Rider Head Coach Barry Davis. "That's kinda just the way it went."

While in the transfer portal, another key factor for Bermudez was furthering his academic career as a graduate student. The junior had just graduated from Rider a year ahead of schedule, earning degrees in business analytics and sports management.

Bermudez felt that Manhattan was a place where he could thrive academically, but he ultimately made the move because of the Jaspers' coaching staff and the belief they had in him as a player.

"I chose Manhattan because of the coach," said Bermudez. "He contacted me, he believed in me, he wanted me on his team ... that's all I wanted was a coach to believe in me."

Through 36 games in his new green and white threads, Bermudez has seamlessly sewn himself into the front of the Jaspers lineup, undoubtedly being their most integral piece. He currently leads his new squad in batting average, on-base percentage, hits, runs, homers and the list goes on.

Bermudez already has eight home runs in his first season at Manhattan compared to just one home run in 80 games and 207 at bats across three seasons as a Bronc. He has also already set career-highs in hits and runs with 57 and 40 respectively, while still having 14 regular season games to improve on those totals.

"[Bermudez is] a good player ... great kid. He gave us great effort everyday," said Davis. "As you can see he's having a great year for [Manhattan.]"

Despite his recent success as a Jasper, the revamped Bermudez was rather tame when he made his highly-anticipated return to Lawrenceville.

When the Jaspers took on Rider in a three-game series from April 22-24, Bermudez hit just 3-12 across the trio of games, a noticeable drop from his team-best .383 batting average.

Rider claimed the series by winning two of the three contests, spoiling Bermudez's revenge tour.

Fortunately for both parties, there seemed to be no bad blood between Bermudez and the Broncs, as he made an effort to catch up with some of his former teammates whenever he could.

"I'm still boys with all the players, and I respect the coaches," said Bermudez. "I enjoyed my time here. I'll always be thankful for the opportunity they gave me, but like I said, it just had to happen."

MAAC SPORTS

How Saint Peter's helped the MAAC

By Dylan Manfre and Shaun Chornobroff

METRO Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) Commissioner Rich Ensor and his wife, who wore a MAAC branded jacket, were shopping in a Raymour and Flanagan. Ensor did not actively promote or show that he is the head honcho of an NCAA conference.

When a patron started talking about Saint Peter's and the conference, his wife chimed in and said "that's our conference," to the man who Ensor said had no connection with the tiny Jersey City university.

Any conversation about Saint Peter's University was scarce until the Peacocks went farther than any MAAC school had before in the NCAA Tournament.

Saint Peter's became a household name after a miraculous run to the Elite Eight after they won a fully-functional conference tournament in Atlantic City, New Jersey, which for the first two years, had been suffocated by the cloak of a pandemic.

"Now here comes Saint Peter's — great excitement. Well, that's going to translate into next year into more brand awareness in the marketplace," said Ensor who is an alumnus of the school and was a former sports information director. "People are excited about us coming back ... hopefully it shows up at the gate."

A Perfect March

Atlantic City in March of 2020 was supposed to be the dawn of a new era for MAAC basketball. Moving the conference tournament from Albany, New York to the New Jersey vacationing hotspot was supposed to make the tournament a better experience for fans, as well as a more neutral location for the MAAC schools.

COVID-19 swiftly made that more difficult for the conference, completely shutting down the tournament while still in its opening stages in 2020 and limiting attendance to family and friends in 2021.

In a much more normalized scene, the MAAC finally got to see the potential Atlantic City offers this past March. Combining the tournament's success with Saint Peter's unprecedented run, what eventually became reality was far-fetched in the minds of most when the month first started.

"It doesn't get any better unless they won the whole [NCAA Tournament]," Ensor said with a smile. "For Atlantic City, they invested in the MAAC and they've been good partners through some weaning days."

The successful tournament comes after the MAAC experienced losses over the previous two years as a result of the pandemic. Ensor estimated the conference incurred a loss of \$400,000 in the 2020 fiscal year.

The New Jersey schools took over Atlantic City on the men's side with three of four semi finalists being from the state. Saint Peter's, Monmouth — who is departing the MAAC for the Colonial Athletic Association (CAA) — and Rider.

Rider had its own Saint Peter's-esque upset, taking down tournament favorite and top-seed Iona on a game-winning shot with less than 10 seconds left.

With Monmouth leaving the conference, the postseason performances from Rider and Saint Peter's were more important than ever.

"We need, with Monmouth leaving, for Rider and Saint Peter's to have a good presence in Atlantic City," Ensor said. "It'll help with that process and I think

overall, it was a really good feeling for the MAAC what came out of that."

Respect your mid-majors

The brass of Rider men's basketball and the athletic department are not immune to knowing a Saint Peter's esque run will happen again. Head Coach Kevin Baggett said it was all but inevitable.

"What [former Saint Peter's Head Coach Shaheen Holloway] did set the precedent, set the bar, but I won't be surprised if there's another 15-seed down the road that comes along and does the same thing they're doing," Baggett said.

Baggett cited the revolving door of college basketball transfers leveling the playing field for mid-majors. Players who do not succeed at Power Five institutions leave for a mid-major program in hopes of a better opportunity.

He experienced this too a few short years ago when Frederick Scott joined Rider after leaving the Big East and DePaul University. More recently the MAAC has seen examples of this when Walker Miller and Shavar Reynolds left the University of North Carolina and Seton Hall, respectively, for Monmouth.

Harnum took the perspective of a fan. As a former coach and now leader of a Division I athletic department, a mid-major upset in the NCAA tournament is what cultivates the allure of each year.

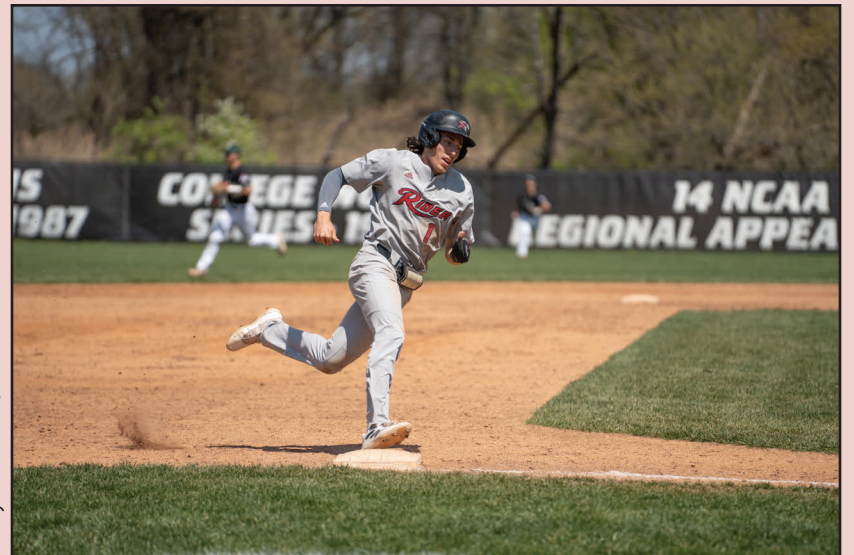
"You need that opening weekend where people see teams they've never seen before and are like 'Holy cow, somebody's upset somebody,'" Harnum said. "That's what makes March Madness the enormous [event] that it is."

Photo Gallery: Rider baseball vs Manhattan



Kaitlyn D'Alessio/The Rider News

Junior outfielder **Scott Shaw** returned to action in the weekend series against Manhattan, being sidelined with an injury since March 6.



Kaitlyn D'Alessio/The Rider News

Junior catcher **Socrates Bardatsos** hit 3-for-4 and recorded two RBIs in the first game against Manhattan.



Kaitlyn D'Alessio/The Rider News

The Broncos recorded five home runs in the second game of the Manhattan series, winning the game 11-1.



Kaitlyn D'Alessio/The Rider News

Graduate student pitcher **Vincent Vitacco** recorded three strikeouts in 3.1 innings in the final game against Manhattan.

Sports

ONLINE

BRONCS SUFFER FIVE LOSS SLIDE

Rider softball was dealt a difficult five loss weekend after a stong stretch of play.

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



THE RIDER NEWS 2021-2022 MEN'S AND WOMEN'S PLAYER OF THE YEAR



HT: 6'0 WT: 180
HOMETOWN: AUSTELL, GA
HIGH SCHOOL: PEBBLEBROOK HIGH SCHOOL

DWIGHT MURRAY JR.

RIDER BRONCS
GUARD



One of the star players on the Rider men's basketball team this season was Dwight Murray Jr. His clutch abilities helped the Broncs get past the quarterfinal round of the MAAC Tournament for the first time in 11 years.

PLAYER STATISTICS

YR	GP	FG%	FT%	3PM	RPG	APG	STL	BLK	PPG
21-22	32	38.8%	81.3%	41	6.3	4.7	28	4	13.1
CAREER	55	41.8%	83.5%	76	6.1	4.5	50	4	14.2



The Rider News



HT: 5'8 WT: N/A
HOMETOWN: CONWAY, SC
HIGH SCHOOL: CONWAY HIGH SCHOOL

LENAEJHA EVANS

RIDER BRONCS
GUARD



Lenaejha Evans was a much-needed constant in a season plagued by uncertainty. Her reliable and efficient scoring earned her a spot in Rider women's basketball's starting lineup and All-MAAC Third Team honors.

PLAYER STATISTICS

YR	GP	FG%	FT%	3PM	RPG	APG	STL	BLK	PPG
21-22	30	44.5%	74.2%	10	3.3	1.4	44	7	14.0
CAREER	56	40.8%	73.1%	14	3.3	1.0	60	12	10.0



The Rider News



Dwight Murray Jr.

By Carolo Pascale

THE man who slayed the dragon, otherwise known as Rider men's basketball shining star, Dwight Murray Jr., is The Rider News 2021-2022 Men's Player of the Year. The award was decided on by a poll sent out to the university and displayed on social media. Murray had a stellar year for the Broncs, helping them get past the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) quarterfinals for the first time in 11 years. He did so in incredible fashion, taking down the No.1 seeded Iona Gaels with a pull-up dagger with 7.3 seconds left to lift the Broncs into the semifinals.

"First off, I want to thank God and thank everyone who voted for me," said Murray in an email. "It means a lot to me. I have always been the underdog in anything, and when I got to Rider, they gave me the love and the support that I felt like I always needed, but I will always have that chip on my shoulder because the job is not done yet."

Murray had a great MAAC Tournament. He averaged 17.6 points in three games with his high of 21 coming in the game against Iona. He also posted nearly 6.4 rebounds and 6 assists per game and shot 48.7% from the field, all while playing 38.6 minutes per game. It's safe to say that Murray was the Broncs MVP of the tournament.

There were a few standout moments from Murray this season. From the very first game Murray, made it clear that he wasn't playing around this season. He dropped 17 points on 7-for-14 shooting against Duquesne in the season opener.

In the regular season, Murray was just as good averaging 13.1 points per game, shot 38.8% from the field, averaged 6.3 rebounds and 4.7 assists per game, had four blocks and played 37.3 minutes a night.

Murray, who still has one more year of eligibility left, has declared for the 2022 NBA Draft per his Instagram, but left the door open for a return to Lawrenceville.

"The goal is to go undefeated, win the conference championship, and make it to the championship in the NCAA Tournament," said Murray, "After that, I will be in the league next year, so I will be putting in work so I can get all my goals I want to accomplish and I will be player of the year next year for the conference."

Lenaejha Evans

By Jake Tiger

Senior guard Lenaejha Evans is The Rider News 2021-2022 Women's Player of the Year. The award was decided on by a poll sent out to the university and displayed on social media. It's only fitting that she scores one more time on her way out.

Whether it was as a spark plug or starter, Evans reliably carried the majority of the Broncs' offensive load during the 21-22 season, finishing the season averaging a team-high 14.0 points per game, while leading all Rider guards in field goal percentage with 44.5%.

"It feels amazing," said Evans in an email. "I honestly didn't expect to win, but I'm glad everyone voted and showed their support."

Evans began the year as Rider's sixth player, coming off of the bench and torching opposing reserves. Through the first three games of the season, she averaged 15.3 points on 68% (17-25) shooting from the field and cemented her name into early Sixth Player of the Year discussions.

After this initial offensive burst, Evans was promoted to the starting lineup and retained the primary guard spot for the remainder of the season.

"I would like to thank my teammates and coaches for everything they have done," said Evans. "To my fans and supporters, I would like you to know that the support does not go unnoticed. I appreciate you all coming to the games and bringing energy."

Evans caught fire on Jan. 15 and put up a season-high 30 points against Niagara, making 12 of her 15 shots and elevating Rider to a 92-70 victory.

On March 7, Evans was named to the All-MAAC Third Team, as she was the only member of the team to be given an all-conference distinction.

"This season I would say I had fun, being able to finally play in front of a full Rider University crowd," said Evans. "I don't know any other team I would rather do this with."

Evans will finish her collegiate playing career as a graduate student at Elon University, she announced on her Instagram on April 26.

"I'm so thankful for my time here at Rider. I met so many amazing people in a short amount of time that made a huge impact on my life," Evans said. "I was able to grow as a person, network and understand the meaning of Heart N Soul. I will always be a Bronc."