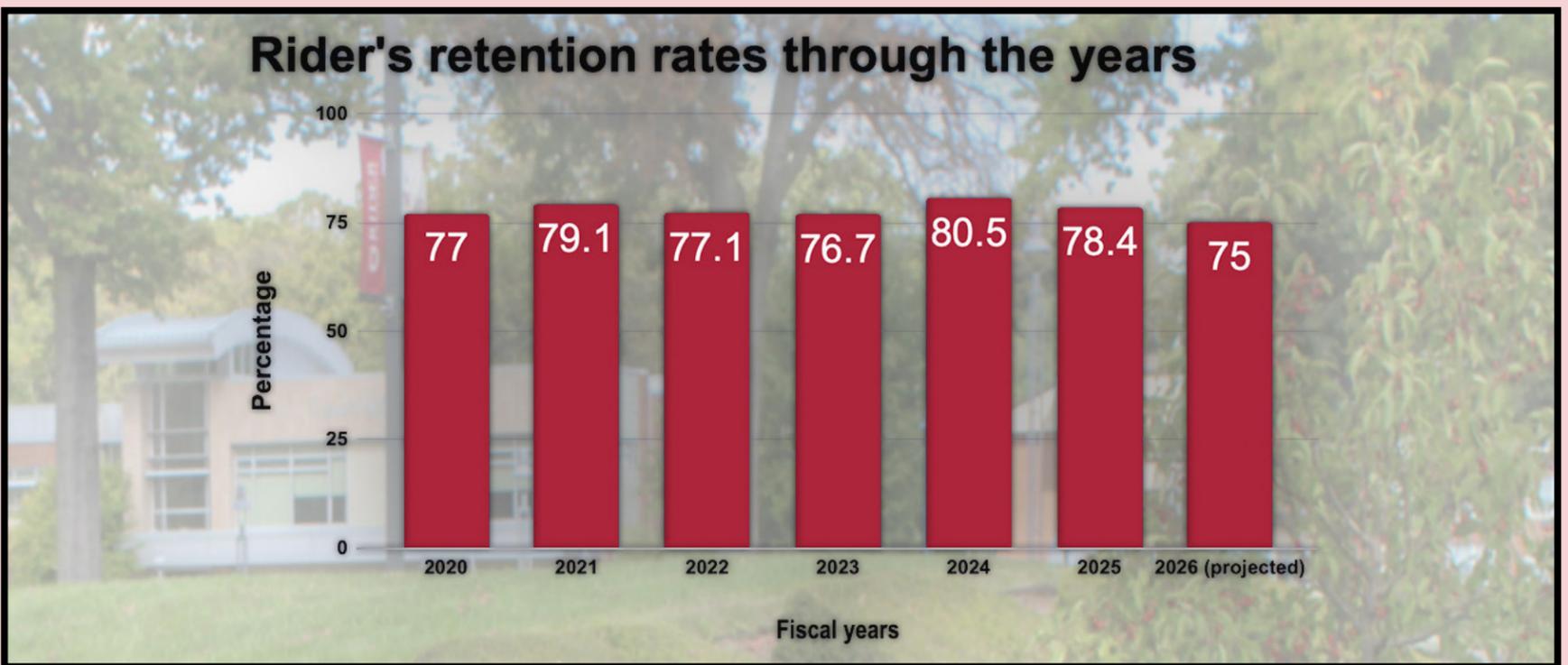


Chart by Grace Bertrand and Yanuel Santos/The Rider News



Rider administration predicts a drop in Rider's retention rate for fiscal year 2026, according to the full copy of the March to Sustainability Plan.

Enrollment dwindles, Rider community at odds

By Grace Bertrand

Rider is set to run out of cash by April 1, 2026, while immediate actions from the March to Sustainability Plan aim to reduce spending by \$15.7 million, according to Interim Chief Financial Officer Thomas Papa.

Rider's debt currently sits at \$130 million, with \$15.7 million due between March and June of 2026, with a 12.5% interest rate.

Rider's time-sensitive financial situation was discussed in a faculty and staff forum on Nov. 13 hosted by Rider President John Loyack, Papa, Board of Trustees Chair Joe McDougall and Provost Kelly Bidle, where the administration addressed various concerns employees had about the Plan.

"When you don't have enough cash to pay your bills, you have to breach that gap, and all of the strategies of the past that have happened — borrowing from the endowment, taking out more debt — that all goes to solve that hole," Papa said at the faculty and staff forum.

Following months of silence, Loyack released enrollment and budget statistics, projecting an operating budget cash deficit of \$4.7 million for fiscal year 2026, according to a full copy of the March to Sustainability Plan which was released in a Nov. 12 universitywide email.

This school year, Rider reported 3,052 undergraduates and a 75% retention rate, which the Plan states is pending the final fiscal 2025 audit. These statistics were collected from an annual census taken on Oct. 1 — a sharp deviation from the past 10 years where enrollment data was announced at the start of the school year.

"We're still bringing in pretty healthy incoming classes, not what they were, but pretty healthy incoming classes. We're also the highest-priced institution in our region," Loyack said at the faculty and staff forum.

The base cost of tuition for the 2025-26 academic year without accounting for room and board was \$41,700, according to Rider's website.

Rider currently has a federal composite score of 0.08, and according to Papa, "the last time [Rider] was at the acceptable range was five years ago." A federal composite score is used by the government to rank universities in their ability to draw in federal aid for students, with the acceptable range being 1.5 to 3.

Layoffs and concerns

The Plan pledged to eliminate several senior positions in order to "streamline" the administration. On the week of Nov. 17, the profiles of two high-ranking leaders were abruptly removed from Rider's webpages — Vice President for Enrollment Management Drew Aromando and Vice President for Student Affairs Nick Barbati.

Director of Communications Rachel Stengel declined to comment, stating it was a personnel matter.

Since April, the university has lost several other key leaders, including former Provost Donna Jean Fredeen, former Chief Diversity Officer Heeyoung Kim, former Chief Financial Officer Jim Hartman and former Assistant Vice President of Career Development, Engaged Learning and Leadership Kim Barberich.

Through 35 to 40 faculty layoffs, 14% reductions in salary, suspensions of the retirement match, changes in faculty workload and reductions in faculty benefits, the Plan is set to reduce labor expenses to make up 50% of revenues, which is an 11% decrease from where it currently sits.

"If I were to take the plan as to where we were today to a banker, he would laugh at me because we're running out of cash ... That's why these actions have to be taken today," Loyack said at the

forum. "I know you feel anger because I felt anger. And I know you feel like people weren't transparent in the past, because they probably weren't, right?"

During the Q&A portion of the forum, several employees called for colleagues to support Loyack and the Rider administration in their Plan, in an effort to save the university they have called home for years from closing down.

Director of the Educational Opportunity Program Reggie Walker, one of the staff members to speak up during the Q&A portion, said that members of the Rider community need to stick together through the university's financial troubles. He said, "We're out here talking bad about our university in public and then we're expecting people to come here and want to bring their children here ... If you're part of the problem, and if you don't see that Rider is going to change, and if you don't believe in this place, respectfully leave."

Other employees urged for further transparency from the administration, with one faculty member, who did not state his name, stating "I've been here for 11 years. The things I heard earlier, the new academic programs, refreshing the dorms, the previous administration suggested the same things."

A look back

Former President Gregory Dell'Omo had initiatives of his own that helped raise funds for Rider during his term, a key one being the capital campaign Transforming Students — Transforming Lives, which raised \$24.7 million for the university, according to the Plan.

Outlining past revenue enhancements and cost reductions made since fiscal year 2021, the Plan also reported other initiatives,



INSIDE **CRANBERRY COURT CROWNED**
The Student Entertainment Council hosts annual Cranberry and White Affair.
PAGE 4



A JOURNEY TO ALL-CONFERENCE STARDOM
Perales' transatlantic journey to Lawrenceville shaped who she is today.
PAGE 10



'EL GATO CON BOTAS' WOWS AUDIENCES
Read a review of Westminster Choir College's recent opera.
PAGE 6



SECURITY BRIEFS

BY MADISON LEWIS

Information provided by Public Safety Director Matthew Babcock

Locked inside out

Embedded key. On Nov. 11, at 9:12 p.m., Public Safety was dispatched to Ziegler Hall for the report of a student locked in their room. Upon arrival, Public Safety found a key stuck in the lock. This caused the door to remain locked, not letting the student out. Public Safety was able to open the door and get the student out. Facilities Management was contacted to make repairs.

Investigation of intention

Destroyed sign. On Nov. 17, at 9:31 a.m., Public Safety was dispatched to Delta Phi Epsilon House, for the report of a damaged exit sign. Upon arrival, Public Safety located a damaged exit sign on the top floor of the building in the main hallway. It appeared that the sign was damaged intentionally. Public Safety is investigating.

Non-member mischief

Reported ruckus. On Nov. 11, at 12:12 p.m., Public Safety was dispatched to the Fitness Center in the Student Recreation Center for the report of a disorderly person. Public Safety met with the Fitness Center staff member who reported someone who did not have a membership and would not vacate the premises. Public Safety located the individual, identified them and escorted them out of the SRC. They left without an incident.

Sarah F. Griffin/The Rider News

Shelter-in-place adds to security concerns

By Caroline Haviland

After Rider's second shelter-in-place in two years occurred on Nov. 10, campus security continues to come into question, leaving Public Safety with the need to inform community members how to properly respond to such emergency situations.

The recent shelter-in-place was in response to a confrontation between a suspect armed with a knife and several people within Poyda Hall, according to a press release from the Lawrence Police. Rider's last shelter-in-place occurred in April 2023 when the university received an anonymous call threatening gun violence on campus.

Director of Public Safety Matthew Babcock said in an interview with The Rider News on Nov. 18 that a student's possession of a weapon on campus is "out of [Public Safety's] control at a certain point."

"Unless you want to live in a prison type environment where you're behind bars and coming through metal detectors and screens," Babcock said, "but I don't think anyone wants to go to school that way. ... The best we can do is to educate everybody on how to respond appropriately."

Babcock said he encourages all students to "remain vigilant" to help ensure safety across the university is prioritized.

Upon the incident's initial report, Babcock said he made the call to get the shelter-in-place message to the campus community while en route to the residence hall due to the urgency of the situation.

With the police department located down the road, Babcock said law enforcement's presence on campus was "somewhere in a five-minute range" upon the initial report of the incident.

"We're very fortunate because Lawrence Police is only right up the road. And as we saw last Monday, when we called, there were four police cars on this campus moments later," Babcock said.

The incident resulted in the arrest of junior acting for television, film and theater major Alex Theis, who was charged with aggravated assault, terroristic threats and various weapon offenses.

Following his arrest, Theis was detained in the Mercer County Correction Center, according to Mercer County Prosecutor's Office Public Information Officer Casey DeBlasio. Theis' first court hearing was

on Nov. 12, where his release was ordered pending future court proceedings, DeBlasio said.

Theis' arrest marks the second time in 2025 that a person was charged with possessing a weapon on Rider's campus.

The first incident occurred in spring 2025 when former student Jordan Greene was charged with offenses including possession of a weapon on an educational institution's grounds and criminal trespass, according to an April 1 press release from Lawrence Police.

Greene was indicted in July and later had the weapons charges dismissed in October, according to DeBlasio. He is currently in a pretrial intervention program and upon its completion his criminal trespass charge will be dismissed, DeBlasio said.

Rider's safety procedure

In a Nov. 17 universitywide email, Public Safety sent out a standard procedure for university community members to follow should there be another shelter-in-place, such as taking shelter in the nearest building, securing any doors and windows and ceasing all activity.

The communication detailed dates and times for hostile intruder training sessions open to all students, faculty and staff. Babcock said these sessions have taken place since the April 2023 shelter-in-place.

"People can come in and get the full explanation. We can meet with people afterwards and talk specifics because lots of people have concerns about the environments they're in and how they would react," Babcock said.

The email also mentioned Rider's utilization of Rider Alert, which sends out mass communication to the campus community in the event of an emergency.

However, some students said they did not receive an alert during the Nov. 10 shelter-in-place.

Thomas Fabre, an international student from France, was in class giving a presentation when his classmates informed him of the campus emergency. When Fabre looked at his phone, he did not see the same alert everyone else received.

Fabre messaged his fellow friends studying abroad,



Caroline Haviland/The Rider News

Public Safety Director **Matthew Babcock** addresses safety concerns across campus.

and they also had not gotten the universitywide communication.

"That could be scary if we were outside and we would not know about that," Fabre said.

Babcock said while he had not been made aware of such situations, and would have to work with the Office of Information Technologies to fix this problem, he commended those students for informing those around them of emergency situations.

"Campus security is a shared responsibility of everybody here. There's only so many Public Safety officers here to keep an eye on things," Babcock said. "Everybody that comes and goes every day that has a general sense of what's right and what's not, it's up to them to kind of help us watch everything and report it to us."

Students left in silence after camera was found in Kroner bathroom

By Cal Sutton

After a universitywide email issued a timely warning on Sept. 30 about a camera found in a bathroom of Kroner Hall, students at the university have been left in the dark in regard to procuring any new information on the case.

In accordance with federal laws, the Rider Alert was sent out to members of the Rider community.

The email read, “We are issuing the following timely warning notice. On Sept. 30, a camera was discovered in a bathroom in Kroner Hall. In partnership with Lawrence Police, Public Safety is actively investigating the matter.”

Anna Dalessio, a senior arts and entertainment industries management major, lives in Kroner Hall and said that she has not received any new information about the incident, despite potentially being firsthand affected by the bathroom camera.

“I was shocked, ... disgusted and scared,” Dalessio said.

The camera, discovered in a gender neutral bathroom, left students on campus concerned for their own safety.

Mallory Hoelzl, a sophomore public relations major, lives in Kroner Hall as well and felt uncomfortable going to the bathroom after the incident.

“I definitely felt really nervous about even going into my own dorm bathrooms and I felt very uneasy,” Hoelzl said.

After the timely warning issued at 8:26 p.m., there was an influx of posts on Fizz, a social media app to connect students on college campuses. One post made 12 minutes after the timely warning was issued read, “I

wish there was more transparency on certain matters happening here. What bathroom was the camera found in ... etc. I always feel extremely in the dark.”

According to Ryan McKinney, director of Title IX and equal opportunity compliance and Title IX coordinator, “University investigators from [the Title IX office] have been assigned to investigate the matter. They are working with Public Safety, as well as [Lawrence] Police.”

The Title IX Office is available to connect affected students to resources and help through situations like these as well.

“Our office is available to ensure affected students are connected to the supportive resources that they need, we are happy to help in any way that we can,” McKinney said.

McKinney urged anyone who has any information on the incident to reach out to the Title IX Office or Public Safety directly.

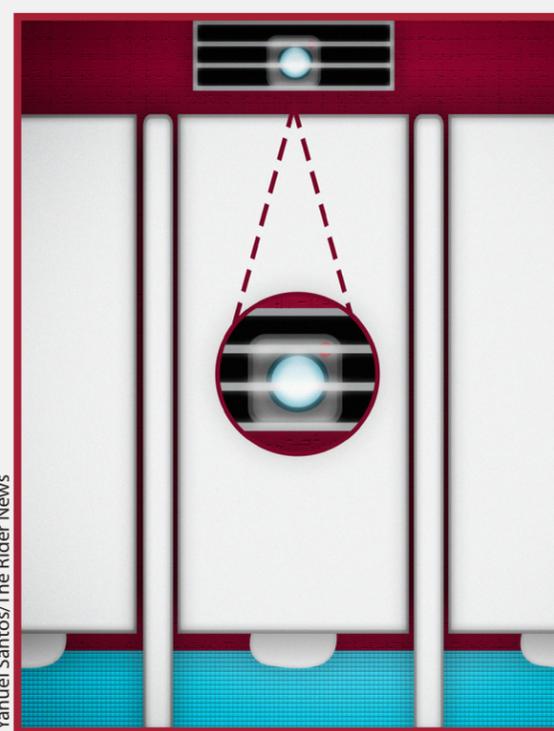
“I definitely think there is an effort [by the university] to preserve the safety of students,” Hoelzl said. “[But] who even knows how long the camera was in there for and how long the student was able to get away with it, which is also a concern.”

Director of Public Safety Matthew Babcock declined to comment in an email to The Rider News on Nov. 13.

“This is a Title IX case so I cannot comment,” Babcock said.

After numerous attempts to reach Lawrence Police for a comment or updates on the incident, The Rider News did not receive any information.

Situations regarding student safety on campus are



Yanuel Santos/The Rider News

The exact location of the camera found in a Kroner Hall bathroom was not disclosed.

concerning, said Hoelzl, but she also acknowledged that the university has a lot of aspects of student safety to worry about, saying, “I definitely don’t like [the lack of information], but at the same time ... if there’s no updates, then what can [the university] really do?”

Dalessio said situations like these are not particularly common, but being left without further information about safety issues affects students greatly.

“In general, I feel pretty safe [on campus],” she said. “My only issue comes when ... [students are] kept in the dark about things like this, that directly affect us.”

Plan outlines past and future revenue changes

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

including increases in parking fees, the addition of a digital course material program and an estimated 5% increase in tuition and boarding costs.

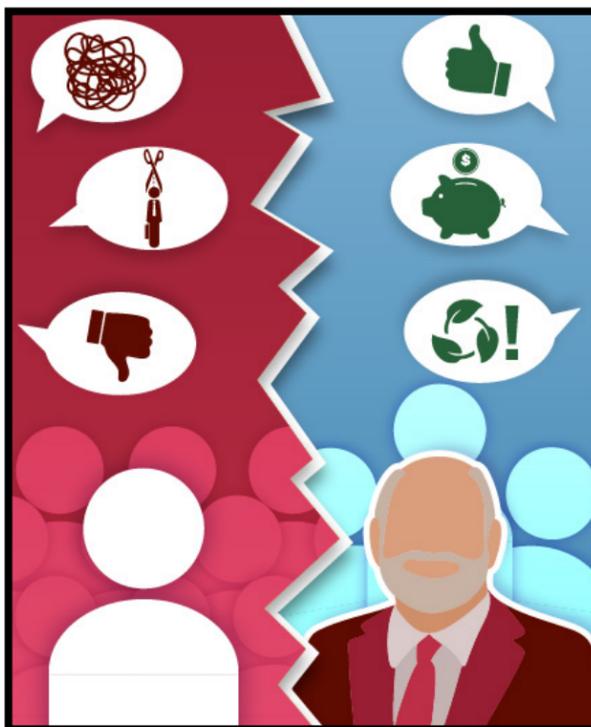
According to the Plan, the university also benefited financially from several changes in the last five years, such as \$745,000 in additional board and revenue from its partnership with Mercer County Community College, the addition of women’s lacrosse and new academic programs that attracted a total of 168 enrolled students.

However, none of those initiatives were enough to save Rider from deep financial distress.

Several cost reductions were also outlined in the Plan, including ones made in the student employment budget, the operating budget and the retirement contribution. A total of 10 graduate assistant positions were eliminated and hours reduced for undergraduate student workers in fiscal 2025. The campus shuttle students utilized for transportation between the Lawrenceville and Princeton campuses was also discontinued through fiscal 2026, saving \$35,000.

A total of \$700,000 is also projected to be cut in fiscal 2026 through the elimination of technology expenses and reductions in advertising and marketing. Additionally, Rider renegotiated a number of key contracts with third-party services, including food services, custodial services and mailing, print and packaging services.

Outlined in the Plan are several position eliminations and salary reductions for employees under Rider’s chapter of American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. In total, 179 vacant positions were eliminated, 79 occupied



Gail Demeraski/The Rider News

Rider President **John Loyack’s** March to Sustainability Plan rallied support by some, but many faculty members are facing hardship as a result.

positions eliminated and five were reduced from full-time to part-time, saving an estimated \$16.2 million across the years.

Co-President of AFSCME Victoria McLendon told The Rider News that the union has discussed alternative options for its 38 members other than 14% base pay reduction that the Plan calls for. She said, “We have lost our employees and our

workloads have shifted. No different than what’s expected of [the AAUP]. And fairness to them, it’s their turn for this hit.”

Since the release of the Plan, the Alumni Board of Directors and the Norm Brodsky College of Business Executive Advisory Council have shared support for the Plan. Loyack also met with the Student Government Association on Nov. 14 to further discuss the Plan, resulting in SGA endorsing the Plan through a Nov. 17 universitywide email.

“We believe this plan proposes the necessary steps to address Rider’s financial crisis, with the utmost care and consideration to the student experience,” the SGA email stated. “We understand the implications that the proposed cost-saving measures may have on faculty and staff, and we recognize that this may not be ideal for some. However, considering the severity of the situation, it is necessary for all members of the Rider community to unite and recognize that these are temporary sacrifices for long-term sustainability and growth.”

A student forum will be held on Nov. 20 between the administration and students, with a separate webinar taking place on Nov. 19 for curious and concerned parents.

SGA President Moira Geiger told The Rider News, “I think that by giving the plan a further look, it can help resolve any misconceptions or general questions. The forum is a great way to get further clarification on anything that might not have made sense ... I believe that when we share messages of concern without any messages of trust and belief, we are only harming the Rider community that has done so much for us.”

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Cranberry Court crowned on the royally red carpet

By Stacie Hueter and Teagan Rotella

Lights, camera, fashion! Rider's evening of glitz, the annual Cranberry and White Affair, entranced students into spending their Saturday evening at the Bart Luedeke Center's Cavalla Room.

The event was hosted by Rider's Student Entertainment Council and welcomed students at 7 p.m. in red carpet glamour, including suits, tuxedos and dresses, with some even tipping it off with accessories like faux-fur jackets.

The catering crew set up delicious finger foods, such as quesadillas and macaroni and cheese poppers, for guests to enjoy, and also fixed up a delectable dessert section, including cheesecakes and vibrantly colored macaroons, sampling classic flavors like raspberry and pistachio.

The DJ played remixes of famous songs, such as "Woman" by Doja Cat and "American Boy" by Estelle, featuring Kanye West, entertaining the students with groovy tunes.

Above the DJ was a giant "HOLLYWOOD" sign, similar to the one found in Los Angeles.

Two giant Oscar trophies stood in front of large red curtains, giving the appearance of a luxurious, coveted event.

The rosy curtains and stanchions outside of Cavalla appeared to mimic an Academy Awards ceremony entrance, a key award show for actors, separating students from the first-floor lobby to the red carpet.

The crimson lights complemented the Hollywood-esque theme and color pattern of the party.

One attendee, Mike Biamonte, a freshman music production major, said he was, "Not a big party guy, but I think it's alright."

Biamonte used his musicianship to play accompanying piano melodies along with some of the songs, surprising the guests with his skills.

Students nodded their heads to the beat of the

music while enjoying their food and sweet treats.

Meanwhile, the students anticipated the crowning of the event's Cranberry Court.

Students and nominees excitedly waited near the DJ booth as the executive board members of the SEC announced the winners of the occasion after voting for the best nominee based on their election video.

"Now, let's give a big round of applause as we recognize our Cranberry Court nominees!" senior finance major and Vice President of Student Affairs for SGA Cassandra Alicea said.

Alicea helped plan Cranberry Court this year and believed it was a great way to celebrate seniors.

Cranberry Court nominees walked out one by one on the red carpet toward the DJ booth, each entering with a song of their choice, including "Unstoppable" by Sia and "Won't He Do It" by Koryn Hawthorne.

After each nominee proudly walked the red carpet, it was time to announce the 2025 winners of Cranberry Court.

"Congratulations to our 2025 Cranberry Court winners: Journey New and Mekhia Gwynn!" Alicea said.

A round of applause erupted as senior criminal justice major Journey New and senior arts entertainment industries management major Mekhia Gwynn hugged each other then placed their new crowns on each other's head.

After putting on their crowns, they posed for some photos then thanked everyone for the votes and Rider for the countless opportunities.

Gwynn has been a heavily involved student at Rider. From being an orientation leader last year, director of hall relations for Rider's Residence Hall Association, to co-chair for Rider's Relay for Life chapter after being the marketing and social media chair last year, she's done it all.



Abby Ray/The Rider News

Senior criminal justice major **Journey New** (left) and senior arts and entertainment management major **Mekhia Gwynn** are crowned the winners for Cranberry Court 2025.

When asked about getting nominated for Cranberry Court, Gwynn said, "Truly, I was a bit nervous, but also, just [going] through it, I was just having fun."

Before the Cranberry and White Affair, the Cranberry Court nominees engaged in multiple different challenges to show off their Rider pride, such as a photo challenge, a scavenger hunt on campus, Rider trivia and a video they each made that showcased their own creativity.

Gwynn highlighted how, despite competing against each other for the crown, all of the nominees remained friendly throughout this experience.

She has cherished the countless opportunities Rider has offered throughout her college career.

Gwynn said, "As I said in my speech, I chose Rider, but Rider accepted me. Everything I got to experience and learn, the good and the bad, I really do appreciate Rider for that."

Zyheim Bell is a news editor and a member of the SEC and Journey New is a social media editor and one of the Cranberry Court winners. They both had no part in the writing or editing of this story.

From Rider to the Real World: James Green

By Jasmine White

College was not originally part of young James Green's plans, but his talents in track and field were undeniable. With the right support from his coaches and mentors at Dulaney High School in Timonium, Maryland, Rider gave Green a chance to excel in athletics and academics.

Two-time Rider alum, Green '22 and '25, took on the position of head counselor at Arthur J. Holland Middle School in Trenton, New Jersey, while juggling his involvement in Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., being one of two originators of the Trenton Run Club and pursuing his doctorate at Rowan University.

"Rider track and field opened up my eyes, especially when you're a small town kid from Baltimore, Maryland," Green said. "I think [Rider's track and field team] was the biggest thing for me, and it gave me a platform to really showcase what I am capable of."

Green became a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. during his sophomore year in fall 2019, and assumed the role as president of Rider's Rho Xi chapter.

Green had a very successful track and academic career at Rider, despite setbacks along the way. He overcame a brutal stabbing attack on Aug. 21, 2021, during his undergraduate years, almost succumbing to his wounds.

Green, left with scarring and trauma from the incident, used this event to motivate him to make strides forward, returning to the track within a week's time of being released from the hospital.

"If it wasn't for that situation, the trajectory of my life probably would have been a lot different," Green said. "That setback opened my eyes up to showing me that I needed to shift my focus ... to the long term and what can actually impact and benefit my future."

Green was introduced to the Associate Director of Student Support Services Dana Lopes through another one of his track teammates and, with her help, joined the TRIO program, a collection of



Photo courtesy of James Green

James Green (second from right) mentors young Black men and helps guide them in the right directions in the classroom setting and beyond.

student support services designed to help low-income individuals and those with disabilities.

After this first encounter, Lopes and Green became very acquainted with one another and Green looked to her as his mentor throughout his time at Rider. He described her as "very caring and considerate."

"[Lopes] brought me in and as time went on, she threw me different opportunities," Green said.

Lopes said, "I think what's important to understand about our program is that we really treat the students from a holistic approach, which means that we don't just address the academics, we address everything."

As time went on, Lopes learned about Green's aspirations and assisted by guiding him in the right directions for his preferred occupation to be a counselor.

"It was just so great for him to really find his path and his journey," Lopes said. "I'm so excited for him because the students that he's servicing are just lucky to have him."

Green also mentioned Nick Barbaty who was vice president for student affairs when he was a student was another mentor that "gave him a chance."

"Though I didn't really have a lot of mentors, the ones that did step in were more than enough," Green said.

In Green's counselor position, he established bonds with the students, creating a safe and welcoming environment in his office for them to come talk to him and hang out with him whenever they need. Some of the kids gave him the name "Mr. Green Bean" to express their gratitude, while others had specialized handshakes with him.

Green organized a clothing donation through the middle school to collect clothing for the young men, making a difference within his school system and throughout the Trenton community.

Outside of his continuation of schooling and his job, Green co-founded Trenton Run Club with his club partner Tyla Delgado, to bring a sense of unity within the community. What started off as just an idea came to fruition within a few weeks, drawing in 15 to 20 people every Saturday morning.

Green said, "As long as you continue to hustle and apply yourself, God is going to make sure you get exactly what you're working toward."

This is an installment of The Rider News' From Rider to the Real World series to highlight the accomplishments of Rider alumni.

Gail Demeraski/The Rider News



Culture brightens the Rider community

By Madison Lewis

The slogan for the annual Celebration of Lights, “We are one university” embodied the evening that highlighted identity-based clubs and organizations; a night that concluded with the Moore Library illuminated in a cascade of blue and white lights.

The Celebration of Lights is a 30-year tradition that encapsulates a variety of winter holidays, and students were able to educate audiences about the values and practices of their respective cultures.

Senior computer science major and Student Government Association President Moira Geiger commented about the significance of instituting cultural celebrations for diverse populations on campus.

“It’s such a great way to ... highlight every different group we have on campus and give kind of like a spotlight to share not only what their club has been doing, but like their own culture ... as a whole to the rest of the Rider community,” she said.

Attendees filed through the Cavalla Room doors and were greeted with a table in the middle of the room, donned with an assortment of cultural food, such as latkes, or potato pancakes and collard greens.

Each esteemed identity-based club and organization had a table with decorations, games and other materials that represented their holiday. The Muslim Student Association honored Ramadan, the Catholic Campus Ministry with Christmas, the Black Student Union with Kwanzaa, the Latin American Student Organization with Las Posadas and the Korean Culture Association encompassing Seollal.

Geiger emphasized that the student leaders spearheaded the planning of the event and how their organization and clubs were represented.

While attendees ate, mingled and visited the



The Celebration of Lights event drew in crowds of students, faculty and friends, creating a space for comradery and amusement.

different tables, Darryl Mace, vice president of Community Engagement and Belonging, gave a speech that called for Rider to embrace community values.

“I’m asking you to live in this moment, step outside of your comfort zone, ask questions, suspend judgement,” he said. “Above all, let’s lean in, let’s laugh merrily and let’s learn with open hearts and open minds.”

Proceeding his heartfelt speech, Mace introduced the 2025 R Factor winner sophomore musical theater major Olivia Conti, who sang “Let It Go” from the movie “Frozen.”

After the performance, a representative of each identity-based club and organization had the opportunity to share the history and traditions of their culture, in addition to another musical performance.

Following the festivities, the attendees were asked to line up by the back exit and were handed a plastic candle.

The procession led to the front of the Moore Library where the Rider Pep Band was awaiting their cue. There was a countdown and the building lit up in festive lights, simultaneously, the iconic Rider hedge was illuminated in white lights.

Cassandra Alicea, vice president of student affairs for SGA, had a hand in coordinating the event with the intention of creating a welcoming space.

“The whole idea is to allow every student to feel seen, to feel understood,” she said. “I think right now, in a time that’s been pretty tense, we really could use that foundation of understanding where other people come from. What makes them, them.”

Matt Cirola is circulation manager and a member of pep band, Cal Sutton is a news editor and a member of pep band and Journey New is a social media editor for The Rider News and a member of pep band and SGA. They had no part in the writing or editing of this story.

Home Away From Home: Thomas Fabre

By Gabriela Tobar

What began as a temporary academic adventure for a visiting French student has grown into an unexpected lesson in community, connection and what it means to be welcomed.

Sophomore communications major Thomas Fabre arrived at Rider with expectations of a bigger university but, compared to his university back at home, it is “big enough,” Fabre described.

Fabre attends ISCPA Toulouse - School De Communication Et Journalisme in Blagnac, France, a small campus in the middle of Paris.

There were many differences that Fabre realized between the French school and Rider, one of them being living on campus.

“The fact that we can live here on campus and just go to class, we do not have that in France,” Fabre said.

Fabre is currently taking five classes and says that his everyday school schedule here is different from what he is accustomed to in France.

“Here I have a class in the morning and in the beginning of the afternoon, then I’m done. So that’s different because in France, it’s always a full day and here it’s a small day,” Fabre said.

Fabre comes from a small town named Les Molières, and even other students from his French university that joined him at Rider do not know where he is from.

Fabre stated that he likes the people here in the U.S. because they are, “nicer than he thought” and he has had no trouble making American and international friends.

“I met Finnish friends, Spanish friends, Moroccan friends and American friends. They know I don’t really know how to speak English very well but they just don’t care,” Fabre said.

He added, “That’s good, like if we can understand each other, that’s good. It’s also funny to see the differences between our cultures but that makes the relationships better.”

Annabelle Zendt, a junior elementary education major, met Fabre while working at Rider’s Office of International Education when he first arrived.

This is Zendt’s first semester working at the office in which she is an undergraduate assistant and specializes in their social media.

Zendt recalled the time they went to see the Statue of Liberty, in New York City, as one of her favorite memories with Fabre.

“I’ve never been there before and it was really cool getting to see him and our other two friends experience that very cliché, touristy thing along with them for the first time,” she said.

Zendt reflected on Fabre’s experience and said, “Oh my god yeah he loved it. Him and I were taking lots of photos together. Then we went back to the city, we were doing that all throughout.”

Zendt stated that she has also taken him to other places like Shady Brook Farm in Princeton, New Jersey and to her hometown, Hillsborough, so that “he could see what a cliché suburban town looks like” in Pennsylvania.

With Thanksgiving approaching, Zendt shared that Fabre and another international student will be spending the holiday with her family to experience an American Thanksgiving dinner.

“I have a really really big Italian family, so there’s a lot of food. I think he’s excited to see the dishes that they all make. I also hope he’s excited to meet 10s, however many family members are going to be there,” Zendt said. “He likes to meet a lot of people and it’s a perfect space for that.”

Zendt described Fabre as “dancing the line” between being an introvert and an extrovert.

“He’s breaking out of his shell a lot. He seemed very introverted when he first came. But over the past couple of weeks and months, he’s totally breaking out of a shell,” Zendt said.

With connections like these shaping his daily life, Fabre’s time at Rider has become more than an academic exchange, from experiencing student life events to trying new food.

Fabre shared how he would love to stay longer but because of his university back at home, he is obligated to return.

Before he flies back home, Fabre will be spending

Christmas with his family in New York City, something he and his family have never experienced before.

Apart from the experience of trying American food, Fabre will also be taking home new habits and perspectives. At the center of those new habits and perspectives is a friendship that has helped shape his semester abroad.

“It’s been a very, very special friendship. When I accepted my job, I was not expecting to even be interacting with international students the way I do now,” Zendt said.

Zendt shared that she has also studied abroad and because her and Fabre have that in common, their experience adds onto their special friendship.

“We get to talk about the culture shocks that we experienced. It helped with being able to relate with someone that’s from another country and different culture, but still having common ground to relate to,” Zendt said.

This article is part of the Home Away From Home series by The Rider News to highlight international students from the OIE.



Photo courtesy of Thomas Fabre

Sophomore communications major **Thomas Fabre** (right) meets A.J. The Bronc during one of Rider’s events, welcoming him to the cranberry community.

OPERA REVIEW

'El Gato con Botas' connected opera novices and lovers

Let me keep this one short and sweet: everyone should support Westminster Opera Theatre and attend at least one of their opera productions during their time at Rider. Going to the opera can certainly sound intimidating to many college students. You might imagine having to get those little spectacles and sitting through aria after aria where each performer stands still, center stage in a spotlight and belts their heart out in a foreign language. Prior to actually going to the operas at Rider, I was right there with you.

I have made it a point to go to at least one opera production here at Rider every academic year. I remember coming in as a freshman and being blown away by the fact that I could go see a performance for only \$5 with my student ID, so I figured why not spend an afternoon at the theater and expose myself to a different

kind of art than I am used to? As you can likely tell by the way this article is going, I was captured by this art form.

In my time at Rider so far, I have seen several opera productions, including, "Cendrillon," "The Medium" and "Suor Angelica and Hermit Songs," to name a few. This weekend I had the pleasure of adding to this list by attending "El Gato con Botas" in the Yvonne Theater.

This recent

production, with musical direction by Susan Shiplett Ashbaker and stage direction by Michelle Eugene, was the perfect example of how opera is not just watching someone stand center stage and belt aria after aria. "El Gato con Botas" was lively, engaging and not what most people would expect when they hear the word "opera."

The production featured two exemplary casts, one that performed on Friday evening, and one that performed the Saturday matinee. The vocal talents of these students is in and of itself worthy of standing ovations and high praise, but it would be remiss if I were to not acknowledge the incredible stage presence and physicality.

At several points the audience were laughing out loud at the witty lines and physical comedy. For example, the character of El ogro, a castle-dwelling and rather egotistical ogre, who was played by senior vocal performance major Grisha Ivanov in both showings, had audiences chuckling from the moment he stepped on stage in full green makeup and hulking presence.

The opera also featured junior musical theater majors Landon Winslow and Leah Miller and sophomore Trevor McCutchen as dancers who brought even more energy into the show and helped make the transition between each scene seamless.

Another aspect of Westminster Opera Theatre's performances that make them so valuable to audiences is that they most often feature a "talk-back" with the cast, where audience members are encouraged to ask questions about the production or production process. Being a novice to opera, this is an invaluable aspect of the experience that I always learn something from.



Photo courtesy of Leandra Acosta

The Friday night cast of "El Gato con Botas" takes a final bow.

A barrier I want to address that I think might prevent a lot of people from attending operas is that they are often in languages other than English. I just want to stress that this should not be a reason that keeps you from attending. "El Gato con Botas" was presented in Spanish; however, with the English supertitles and emotive expressions of the performers, I had no trouble following along and understanding what was happening in each scene.

Needless to say, everyone should go attend an opera, or several operas, at Rider and support the prestigious Westminster Choir College and the high-quality work they produce.

Libby D'Oreilliers
senior psychology major

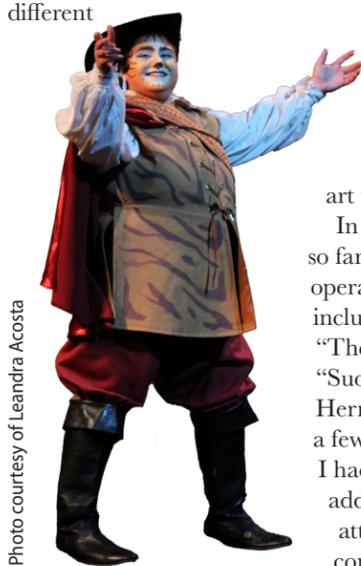


Photo courtesy of Leandra Acosta

Alexa Farah performed the role of El gato on Friday night.

Journalists deserve mental health support too

There is no denying the chaotic current state of our world: government shutdowns, revolution, environmental collapse, the dangerous rise of AI and much more.

Whenever breaking news of such hard topics occurs, journalists are among the first expected at the scene. No matter if it is crimes, scandals or natural disasters, the public needs a story. It is our way of staying informed through it all.

Eventually, after writing about challenging topics, especially when it concludes in misfortune, it is no surprise that journalists might experience secondary trauma.

According to Psych Central, an online psychology resource, secondary trauma, "occurs when someone is significantly impacted by someone else's trauma."

An example might include feeling bad for a close friend's family loss. This phenomenon involves a deep sense of empathic sorrow toward those affected.

When journalists are repeatedly exposed to these horrific atrocities, they often experience disturbances of their own in response. I cannot imagine the mental anguish that some types of journalists experience on the job. Investigative journalists might unveil disturbing details in their investigation of crimes, and political journalists often report on corrupt systems.

As a journalism major thinking about minoring in political science, I have considered how political discourse might impact me mentally. One example of such a headline includes the millions of low-income Americans in the United States on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program losing their benefits after the government shutdown.

Even if I am not directly affected by this loss, I cannot pretend to not feel bad for many that cannot feed their families adequately because they live in borderline poverty. In fact, my heart aches for these people every time I see the numbers.

Similarly, many of these news professionals feel that they have to suppress their feelings in order to get the job done. As someone who has read and reported on many unfortunate events for outlets such as The Bronx News Flash on 107.7 The Bronx, I myself sometimes experience this phenomenon.



Grace Juarez/The Rider News

Journalists' mental health concerns need to be taken seriously.

Sometimes, I do not even realize that I am so perturbed until I reflect back. Today's newscasters report such events with eerily placid or sometimes cheery expressions. The media often seeks to censor the brutality of some stories and often omit the dirty details. But the journalists doing the hard reporting know what lies behind the screen.

Because journalists did not directly experience the event occurring to others, does not mean they are any less impacted by them.

This is the essence of secondary trauma; it is akin to secondary smoking in the way that you still experience the negative outcomes, even though you are not the one engaging in it. All it takes is proximity.

Mental health and work-life balance is important to any job, but especially for journalists. The details of these harsh news stories tend to bleed into their lives, even personal.

So it is crucial to identifying this trauma and addressing it as soon as possible.

Below, I will share some resources I feel are valuable to share pertaining to mental health counseling for journalists.

First, there is the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma, a graduate school of journalism project at Columbia University. It conducts research on the links between journalism and mental health. The program provides workshops and services to journalists experiencing secondary trauma and burnout. They

partner with psychologists and counselors who give therapy and much needed reassurance.

Next, there is also the Journalist Trauma Support Network, started by the Dart Center at Columbia University. Similarly to Dart, it seeks to gather mental health experts who help address journalists' stress relating to their work. They do workshops and give tipsheets offering advice for struggling journalists.

Finally, The Self-Investigation organization assists media professionals with managing their mental health and work anxiety. According to their website, 60% of media workers experience daily stress on-the-job, emphasizing the importance of having these resources. They offer online resources, such as blogs and therapy sessions to help journalists and similar occupations with their stress.

These organizations prove that journalists' doubts aren't singular; those who work in the media experience anxiety. Intense vicarious trauma can lead to serious consequences, such as emotional burnout and depression.

People believe all the hardship and intensity of being a journalist is all "part of the job," but I feel that it should not be normalized to downplay such struggles.

As a budding journalist, I am expected to report everything, from obituaries, to crimes, to fullscale calamities. However, even as a young journalist, I am expected to suck it up.

We should never doubt the level of maturity journalists need to get by in this intensive field.

But I believe the industry can have a better, happier future if they continue to fund resources into such organizations.

Mental health is the very foundation for how we function, especially journalists, who have to endure the reporting of these serious topics. Acknowledging this trauma is the first step toward genuine healing.

Stacie Hueter
freshman journalism major

Erasing history must not go unnoticed

In the early hours of the morning on June 28, 1969, just outside Manhattan's Stonewall Inn, a revolution occurred that would change America's history forever.

What became known as the Stonewall Riots were a passionate rebellion against the brutalization of LGBTQIA+ people. Hundreds of marginalized people from all walks of life collectively decided that they were not going to be treated like subhumans because of their gender identity or sexual orientation ... at least, not without putting up a fight.

Within weeks of the 2025 presidential inauguration, an important part of this critical moment in history was censored and removed from government websites by President Donald Trump's orders. Despite transgender women being among the most influential figures during the riots, all mentions of transgender people were scrubbed from the National Park Service's website for the Stonewall Monument.

As a snapshot from the internet archival database the Wayback Machine shows, before Feb. 14, the website read, "Stonewall was a milestone for LGBTQ civil rights that provided momentum for a movement."

As of Nov. 10, though, the website has removed the phrase "LGBTQ" from all of its pages. The aforementioned quote now reads, "Stonewall was a milestone for gay and lesbian civil rights that provided momentum for a movement."

The website made this change to comply with President Trump's Executive Order 14168, "Defending Women From Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government," which declared, among other things, that "[a]gencies shall remove all statements, policies, regulations, forms, communications, or other internal and external messages that promote or otherwise inculcate gender ideology."

This executive order has led to the censorship of scientifically-backed research and verified history related to transgender people. According to NewsNation, over 3,000 datasets were erased from data.gov, a publicly-available source of statistics. Many were claimed to be removed because they contained content about gender identity or sexual orientation.

But it did not stop there.

Executive Order 11246, "Ending Illegal



Gail Demerski/The Rider News

LGBTQIA+ history has been censored on government webpages as a result of recent presidential directives.

Discrimination And Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity," demanded an end to diversity, equity and inclusion, which it claimed was a form of illegal discrimination.

A New York Times article published on Feb. 2 claims that around 8,000 government webpages removed or censored content to comply with this order.

The U.S. Department of Defense issued a memo that instructed all military media platforms to remove all content that "focus[es] on immutable characteristics, such as race, ethnicity or sex." The Army and Navy removed pages about the Navajo Code Talkers and the history of women in the military. Tens of thousands of historical photographs were marked for removal by the Pentagon, many of which featured war heroes, women and people of color.

While some content has been restored since the initial purge due to public backlash, many historical resources have been entirely lost, or are now only

accessible through internet archives like the Wayback Machine.

Having erased DEI initiatives across government websites, the Trump administration then turned its attention to museums.

In an executive order titled "Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History," the president took aim at museums and programs that "degrade shared American values, divide Americans based on race, or promote programs or ideologies inconsistent with Federal law and policy."

Trump notoriously said that the Smithsonian museums seemed too focused on "how bad slavery was," a comment that drew public mockery and ire.

Trump's actions bring to light a very important question: Should the president have the right to censor American history?

The answer, to me, is obvious: no. Of course not.

Integral to the American experience of freedom is the system of governmental checks and balances that prevent too much power from falling into the hands of any one individual. No one person — not the president, nor any other government individual — should have the power to forcibly remove publicly available information that is, by all accounts, historically accurate and reliable, solely because it does not align with their political agenda. It is a dangerous precedent to set.

If we allow this to continue, what will be targeted next? What groups will be forbidden to research? Which heroes will be forgotten or written out of our history textbooks? What will the next generation of children grow up learning?

History is crucial, and to erase it is criminal. After all, as the adage goes, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

Alyssa Roberts
sophomore English major

How you can improve Rider's financial situation

Rider is facing serious financial challenges due to significant deficits and substantial debts over the past five years. Rider's situation is akin to a person with a car loan and a home mortgage who relies on high-interest credit card debt to make ends meet. Banks eventually stop loaning money to this person because they consider this person too risky with a poor ability to pay off a loan. This is the situation that Rider is in right now.

This person must cut spending to be below the income, and start saving money every month to pay off interest and principal amount of loans. This is exactly what the "March to Sustainability" aims to achieve — reducing Rider's spending or expenses, particularly compensation and benefits of faculty, staff and administrators.

This expense-reduction plan will truly march Rider to sustainability only if Rider's income does not decline. However, Rider's most crucial source of income, tuition revenue, has been declining in the past years as a result of decreasing student enrollment and retention.

Rider has been trying to improve student enrollment and retention, but it has not succeeded in reversing the decline trend. Rider needs help from you and everyone in Rider's family and community to come together to effect a turnaround of our beloved university. Here is an easy way for you to help Rider achieve higher student enrollment and retention.

Please share anything memorable, positive, transformative or wonderful about Rider on your favorite social media platforms as often as you can throughout the years, regardless of whether you are

students, faculty, staff, alumni or administrators. Below are examples that you may want to post on social media:

- How a Rider family member, such as faculty, staff, alumni or student, touched you with kindness.
- How you touched another Rider family member with kindness.
- The profound impact of Rider's academic programs on your development as a professional and individual.
- Your career success if you are alumni. For students, securing an internship, a full-time job offer and a job interview, or engaging positively at a career fair or other career-development events.
- Experiential learning such as Business in Action, 107.7 The Bronc, The Rider News and your volunteer services on campus or beyond.
- Support that you received from Rider, including counseling services/programs, career coaching, free tutoring, the writing lab and the food pantry.
- On-campus activities you attended that reflect inclusiveness and kindness such as heritage month celebrations, Celebration of Lights and Thanksgiving basket drives.
- Other Rider activities or events you enjoyed including films, concerts, talent shows, performing-arts or athletic events.
- Your involvement in student organizations, or participation in any programs or activities at

- Rider that support your learning and growth
- Obtaining a scholarship, a fellowship, a grant or engaging in scholarly activities.

I am confident that, with your unwavering and persistent support, Rider will emerge from financial challenges stronger and more resilient. Let us show the world our powerful unity by embracing Rider and one another with kindness, positivity and love during this challenging period and into the future. Let us make Rider's uplifting stories go viral! Go Broncs!

Obeua Persons is an associate professor of accounting and has enjoyed being a part of Rider's Family since 1991.



Photo courtesy of Obeua Persons

BOOK REVIEW

'War Games' wins gold with historical fiction readers

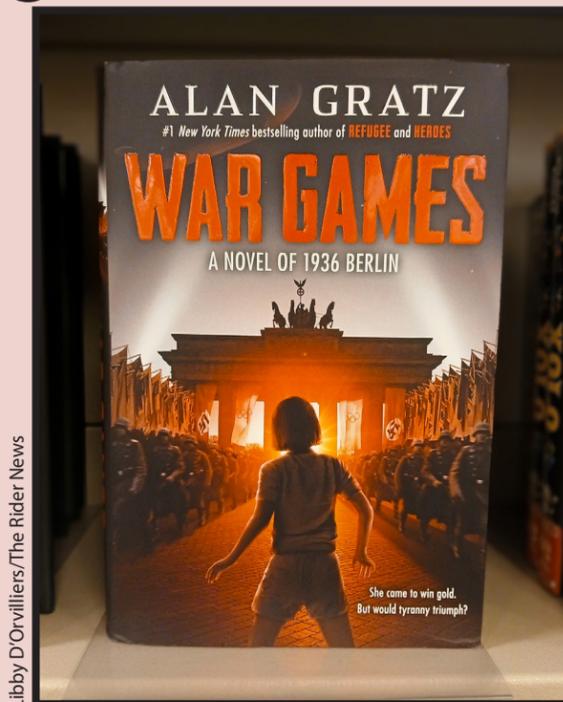
In "War Games," bestselling author Alan Gratz brings readers into Berlin for the 1936 Olympic Games. Known for turning historical events into page-turning adventures, Gratz once again delivers a story that mixes suspense, moral courage and heart.

The novel follows Evie Harris, a young gymnast thrilled to represent her country on the global stage. She trains alongside famous athletes like Jesse Owens and has aspirations of winning gold. But once she arrives in Berlin, Evie realizes the games are not what they seem. Beneath the bright banners and cheering crowds lies a sinister reality: Adolf Hitler's regime is using the Olympics as propaganda to hide its growing violence and hate.

When Evie accidentally uncovers a dangerous plot involving stolen Nazi gold, she is thrust into a web of spies, secrets and betrayal. Suddenly, her dream of Olympic stardom becomes a fight for survival — and the truth. Evie must decide what matters more: a gold medal or doing what is right when the stakes could not be any higher.

Gratz' storytelling is fast-paced and cinematic. Readers are able to feel every twist and turn of Evie's moral dilemma with every leap she takes, both on and off the balance beam. Through her eyes, we see the terrifying contradictions of Berlin in 1936 — a city celebrating unity while hiding oppression.

"War Games" succeeds not only as a thrilling historical fiction mystery, but also as a reminder of how individual courage can shine in the darkest times. Evie's journey from ambitious athlete to reluctant hero makes her one of Gratz' most memorable protagonists.



Libby D'Orvilliers/The Rider News

"War Games" by author Alan Gratz was an instant hit with readers.

For fans of Gratz' previous novels "Refugee," "Allies" or "Prisoner B-3087," this novel is a must read. It is a powerful story about bravery, integrity and the choices that define us, proving that sometimes, the hardest battles are not fought on the stage, but in our hearts.

Gratz is a New York Times bestselling author known for his emotionally charged historical fiction for young readers and for their realistic portrayals of courage and humanity in times of crisis. Gratz' books are taught in classrooms worldwide for their ability to bring history to life and connect it to modern-day themes of justice, empathy and resilience. "War Games" continues that legacy, blending real-life events with gripping fiction to inspire readers to think critically about the past and the choices that shape the future.

Overall, I give "War Games" a 5 out of 5 star rating and would highly recommend it to not only young readers, but readers of all ages who love historical fiction and love stories with grounded characters.

Terrell Munford
junior journalism major



Gail Demeraski/The Rider News

EDITORIAL

Financial sacrifices target the 'backbone' of Rider

Rider's March to Sustainability Plan, formally announced in a universitywide email on Nov. 12, will potentially be at the cost of many students' education and the livelihoods of many faculty members.

Outlined within the 27-page document are layoffs of 35 to 40 full-time faculty members, with a reduction in all remaining faculty members' salaries by 14%.

Student leadership positions are in danger with this plan as their honoraria, or scholarships, are being slashed, in hopes to save approximately \$208,000 through the erasure of benefits earned from leadership positions.

Faculty and students, who are also the "backbone of our university" as senior executive editor Grace Bertrand puts it, are enduring the pain of the university's debt and going through hardships, such as job losses and slashes to salaries and scholarships.

"In a general sense, Rider was just dealt a bad hand. I guess it's just unfair that the people being targeted are the backbone of the university," Bertrand said. "Students, student leaders, athletes, faculty, just all of the different communities that really make Rider what it is today."

Rider would not be the institution it is known to be without the fruitful opportunities for students and the mentorship of faculty who are experienced in their fields.

Marissa Spencer, a senior social media editor said, "I think everyone here has a Rider story, and a professor that they've been really influenced by and that has changed their life. We have so many amazing professors here, and that's what I've realized over time is the best part of Rider."

The actions taken to save money within the university have been backed by different groups, such as the Student Government Association, the Alumni Board of Directors and Norm Brodsky College of Business' Executive Advisory Council.

The Rider News understands that the university needs to do anything possible to pull us out of financial distress. We also want to acknowledge that some of these necessities, though, come at the detriment of university members, such as students, staff and faculty.

Senior opinion editor Libby D'Orvilliers, who is hoping to complete a graduate degree at Rider, said, "I want to graduate from an accredited program ... So, therefore I understand that sacrifices need to be made ... It's just frustrating that we're in this position, but I do understand that things need to get done."

The March to Sustainability Plan also aims to eliminate tuition remission from faculty, which senior news editor Zyheim Bell said could be a concern. "I was able to learn that the tuition remission that [faculty] get, because Rider is a private institution ... applies to their kids, even if they send them to other schools. When you lose something like that as a teacher, ... [the Plan] is not only affecting Rider students anymore."

According to the March to Sustainability Plan, student honoraria is greater at Rider than it is at other nearby institutions, and therefore can be cut comfortably. The Plan states, "these honoraria do not support recruitment or retention."

While The Rider News' editorial board is trying to hold out hope, we have been finding it hard to feel motivation when our hard work and commitment to our positions are not being acknowledged.

The Rider News staff emphasizes that this comment made by the Plan does not reflect the feelings of all students in our organization. There are some students on the editorial board who stayed at Rider due to their shot at a great scholarship.

Sophomore news editor Cal Sutton commented on this notion, stating that, "It's outlined in the plan that [President John Loyack] says that he doesn't see a change in whether students either come here for scholarships or stay here for scholarships, but I have to disagree with that, because one of the main reasons I have stayed at Rider is because of the opportunities for scholarships. ... I just think that part of the Plan does not do students justice."

The Rider News celebrated its 95th anniversary in 2025. The support our student-run newspaper has garnered since 1930 has inspired generations of Rider students pursuing careers in student media, and we cannot let that end now.

We, as student journalists, need to stick together and face these adversities as a cohesive group, but it is hard when it feels like student media is actively being targeted.

The March to Sustainability Plan is eliminating around 20 honoraria-based positions in student media across The Rider News, 107.7 The Bronc and Rider University Network. In addition, 13 Student Government Association positions' honoraria will be eliminated.

Student media at Rider is exemplary. For example, The Rider News is an award winning paper, holding the title of 2025 "Best college newspaper in New

Jersey," presented by the New Jersey Press Foundation's Sweepstakes Award.

107.7 The Bronc is also an award-nominated and award-winning college radio station, most recently being nominated for the National Association of Broadcasters Marconi Award for College Radio Station of the Year.

The Rider News staff's hard work and late nights meticulously crafting articles and digital layouts seems to go unnoticed, as we endure hefty budget cuts and now our leadership positions are being squeezed dry of benefits.

Senior copy editor Madison Lewis compared the 2024 budget cuts that The Rider News faced to Rider's current financial situation, stating, "If you think about how much hardship we have faced, ... we had our budget cut, we had to let go of people ... but we were able to prosper." She reflected that "There's ways to overcome this, ways to adapt ... If we really care about student media, we're going to push for it."

The Rider News' editorial board is frustrated with the March to Sustainability Plan's detrimental impacts on student media, but we also recognize the dire need for financial stability so our home, Rider University, can continue to allow students to flourish for years to come. We express our empathy and grace to President Loyack in these times of trial and error.

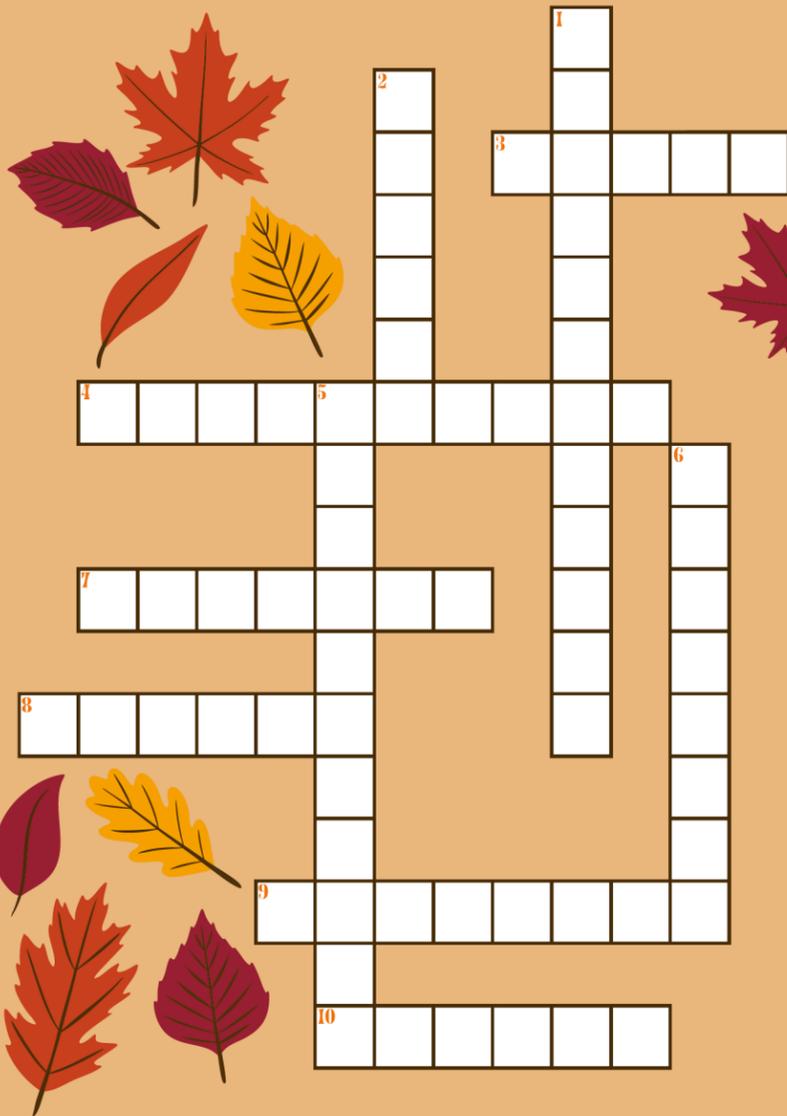
"Yes, President Loyack sent out the emails, but at the end of the day, he's just a man doing his job. I don't want people to attach everything that's happened, the bad things that's happening to Rider, the jobs that are going to be cut, to his name. Don't misdirect your anger," senior news editor Jasmine White urged.

We, as Rider students, need to stick together even when it is hard and when it feels like there may be no hope. Hard times call for resilience and unity. Stand tall Broncs.

This editorial expresses the unanimous opinion of The Rider News editorial board. This week's editorial was written by news editor Cal Sutton and sports editor Samantha Clark.

Cal Sutton
Samantha Clark

THANKFUL CROSSWORD



DOWN

1. The recently announced initiative to help support students with financial hardship pay for their schooling: The ___ Hope Fund.
2. The Westminster Faculty fall recital featured songs by all ___ composers.
5. Rider's annual ___ of Lights was on Nov. 18, 2025.
6. Students showed support for ___ at Rider's annual Plant-A-Flag event.

ACROSS

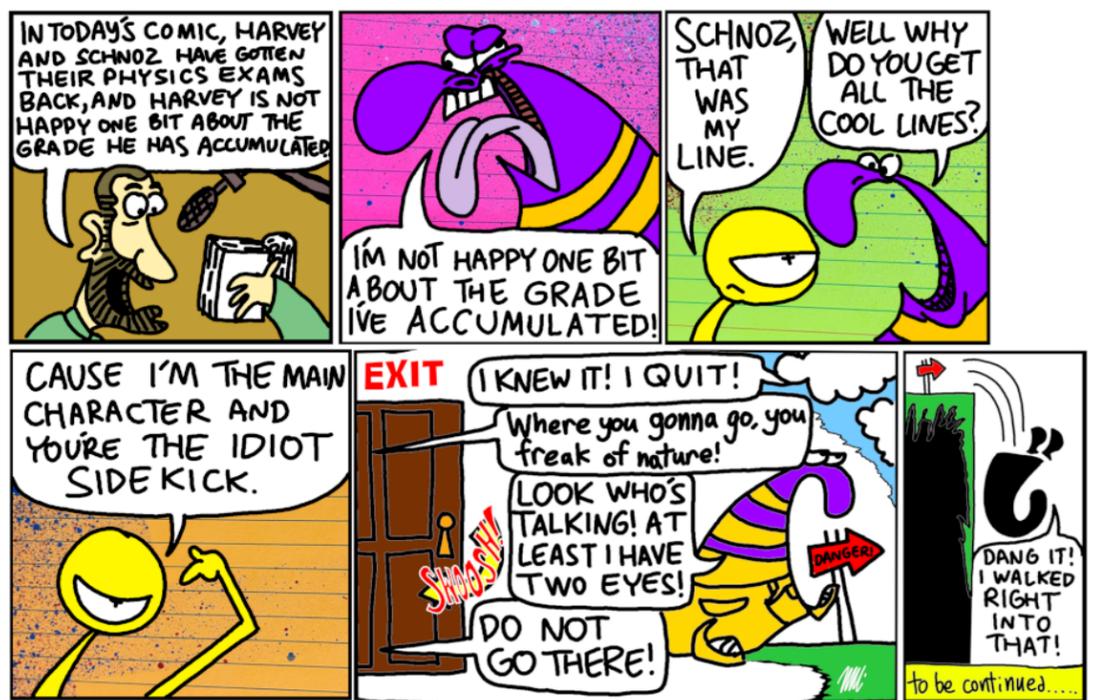
3. Rider works with this organization to deliver food in the local community: ___ on Wheels.
4. Rider's Resource Pantry is located here. (two words)
7. This month, students can compete in a basketball tournament in the Student Recreation Center to win the ___ Cup.
8. Rider ___ Community Scholars engage in service projects all semester to support the local community.
9. Nov. 13 was World ___ Day.
10. November is ___ American Heritage Month.

Written by Libby D'Orvilliers/The Rider News, Designed by Gail Demeraski/The Rider News

COMIC:

The Twisted Ventures of Harvey J. Cedars

By N. D. Medal



Scan here for crossword puzzle answers:



Scan here to play an interactive version of the crossword:



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FEATURE

Reinvented: Valeria Perales' journey to Rider stardom

By Samantha Clark

For senior forward Valeria Perales, field hockey has never been just a sport. Carrying her from Madrid to the United States, as an inexperienced young recruit to a heavily decorated natural leader, field hockey has served as the flagship of her journey overseas, both on and off the green.

Crossing continents

Growing up in Madrid, Perales began playing field hockey at five years old at the Hocquet Club, with sports only being offered outside of school.

Despite beginning her athletic career at a young age, becoming a long-term athlete was never in the picture until December 2019, when Rider field hockey gave her a spot on their roster in her sophomore year of high school.

"All three of us coaches were like, 'we gotta get this kid, this kid is dynamic,'" Head Coach Gina Carey-Smith said.

In contrast to the experiences of many high school athletes who are faced with the challenges of choosing a college, Perales had her mind set on Rider from her first conversations with the coaching staff, with her loyalty to the Broncs never wavering.

Perales arrived in Lawrenceville, New Jersey, on move-in day, which was her first time ever stepping foot on campus.

With new people to meet and new places to see, Perales found comfort in the two former international seniors on the team, defender Kiki van Ommen from Amsterdam and goalkeeper Kaitlyn Tomas from Ontario, Canada.

In addition, Perales was joined by three former international Bronc freshmen who were experiencing that same level of newness: midfielder Indy Zontjens from the Netherlands, defender Jess Rochat from South Africa and forward Berta Tutusaus from Spain, along with current senior forward Semra Said from Germany.

The team eventually grew close enough to become each other's second family. Whether it be growing close with their teammates' families, or taking trips together over spring break, the girls quickly became "friends inside the field, but also outside of it," Perales said.



Liliana R. Basile/The Rider News

Senior forward **Valeria Perales** (left) poses for a picture with freshman forward **Martina de Cespedes**, also from Spain.

Accolades upon accolades

As a member of the 2022 Northeastern Conference Tournament champion team, Perales emerged as a standout performer in her freshman year. In her first season as a Bronc, she started every game and led both her team and conference in goals and points per game.

"I'm really grateful for my freshman year and winning the NEC because I've realized how hard it is... playing at Division I has been a really big accomplishment," Perales said.

Nationally, she ranked fourth in points and sixth in goals, earning Second-Team All-Mid-Atlantic Region honors. Perales also excelled academically, earning the National Field Hockey Coaches Association Scholar of Distinction award and a spot on their Academic Squad.

Despite this ongoing list of honors and recognitions in her first year alone, Perales claimed to not be up to par with what was expected of her at the Division I level.

"I was pretty inexperienced. I came here with no experience," Perales said. "The team was always giving their best, and I feel like that is what made me a better player."

In her next three years on the team, Perales went on to match her first-year performance and continued to shine on and off the field, as she earned First-Team All-NEC honors all four years, was named a three-time NEC Prime Performer, three-time NEC Offensive Player of the Week, NFCA Division I Offensive Player of the Week, two-time NEC Academic Honor Roll student and Rider's Athlete of the Month in October 2025.

"She's gonna go somewhere in life, because she's got great drive. When she puts her mind to something, it's 'whole go,'" Carey-Smith said.

A leading legacy

For Perales, her efforts on the field were always bigger than what was logged on the stat sheets. Believing that the sport is what makes an athlete grow, she followed the philosophy that the challenges and obstacles she faced when playing overseas is what has shaped her as a person.

With her attempt to mirror the influence the seniors had on her experience, Perales worked to connect with her team, showing them that, no matter the outcome of a game, teammates are the constant foundation, and "that's just the culture of Rider field hockey," Perales said.

Carey-Smith noted the effort from Perales forced her into a leadership role in her senior season. Taking the time to personally meet with each freshman and attempting to open up to the entire team marked her as not only a leader, but a captain of the Broncs' program.

As one of the rare athletes who elevates everyone around her, Perales stood as not only a driving force on the roster, but a light to all those who had the privilege of meeting her.

"There's not one person that doesn't like Val," Carey-Smith said. "I always say this to her, I'm like, 'I'm a better person because I met you'... and she just laughs at me every time."

VOLLEYBALL

Sweep after sweep, Broncs advance in MAAC tournament

By Lindsay Scarola and Benjamin Shinault

In the Broncs' final home stretch before the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference championship, Rider took on Siena College on Nov. 14 and Marist University for Senior Day on Nov. 15, achieving back-to-back victories.

Home match secured

With a 3-1 win over Siena, Rider secured a first-round home match in the MAAC tournament.

Tied 1-1 in the first set, the Broncs got the lead from a 3-0 run with an ace from senior libero Keegan O'Connor.

Up 5-4, two kills each from senior opposite hitter Kiannisha Santiago and graduate middle hitter Carley McAleavey sparked a 9-3 run to extend their lead by seven.

Up 19-11, the Saints scored six-straight points but another run by the Broncs closed out the set, 25-18.

After Rider built an 11-8 lead in set two, Siena countered with a 4-0 run to take the lead. Seven more points extended the gap.

The Saints took set two 25-22.

In set three, Siena led 17-14 but the Broncs scored six-straight points.

Up 20-19, Rider gave itself some wiggle room on a 4-0 run taking the set 25-20.

Down 2-0 in set four, junior middle hitter Molly Rohde had back-to-back blocks.

Siena was able to pull within one but Rider added five more points with a pair of kills from senior hitter Brynn Johnson.

Up 20-16, Rider had a 4-0 run. The Saints fought off three of those match points but the Broncs came marching in Rider took set four 25-19, and the win 3-1.

Senior Day victory

In the last game of the regular season was Senior Day where Santiago, Johnson, O'Connor and senior middle hitter Anji Vishwanathan were honored, Rider came out on top, beating Marist in three straight sets.

Head Coach Jeff Rotondo shared his thoughts about working with these four seniors during their Rider athletic career.

"They are such selfless leaders and people, so we just continued to work with them on enhancing those values that were already there," Rotondo said.

In set one, it was tied 3-3, and Rider scored four-straight points with a pair of kills from Santiago.

Marist came back to tie the set 15-15 before a 5-1 run, led by three kills from junior outside hitter Rylah Robinson.

Up 20-18, the Broncs closed out the opening set on a 5-1 run. A combo block from Vishwanathan capped off a 25-19 set win for Rider.

It was all Rider early in the second, as the Broncs jumped out to a 7-0 lead powered by three blocks and two kills from Santiago.

Rider extended the lead to 11-1 before Marist started to close the gap, getting within four points.

Still leading 18-14, the Broncs countered with a 4-0 run including an ace from O'Connor to pull away.

A 25-17 secured the win in set two.

After the Red Foxes took the lead 5-4 from a 4-0 run, Rider countered with an immediate 5-0 run to go ahead 9-5.

Up 17-14, Santiago had two kills and an ace sparking a Rider 4-0 run.

Rider pulled away and never looked back to take set three 25-17, completing the Senior Day sweep.

Heading into the tournament, Rotondo shared the overall take away from this weekend.

"We have to prepare well, and make sure we are playing even emotionally... We can't let any doubt outweigh the dream."

Sweep at home

On Nov. 18, Rider took on the Siena Saints in the opening round of the MAAC tournament.

From the first set of the game, it was all Rider as they took set one, 25-20. The dominance continued on from their for the Broncs as they took sets two and three, completing the sweep of Siena.

Rider will advance to the next round of MAAC tournament action.



Destiny Pagan/The Rider News

Senior libero **Keegan O'Connor** (right) sets up a hit for junior hitter **Rylah Robinson**.

Sports

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Rider soars over Eastern in home-opener

By Samantha Clark

In the Broncos' home opener on Nov. 15, Rider hosted the Eastern University Eagles in the Alumni Gym, putting up an 86-54 win for the programs' first ever matchup.

'All the credit goes to the players'

With an assist from sophomore forward Cole McCabe, senior forward Mohamad Diallo shattered the rim with a dunk in the first 20 seconds.

Strong defensive efforts from junior guard Caleb Smith and the rest of the Broncos allowed for little successful shots from the Eagles, leaving them scoreless for the first minute-and-a-half of play.

"Guys flying around, us pressing [the opposing team], guys diving on the ground for loose balls... That's the type of team that I like to see," Head Coach Kevin Baggett said.

Smith continued his impressive performance with a layup in the paint while being swarmed by two Eagles.

After the basketball was knocked out of bounds, the Broncos gained possession, which Diallo converted to another dunk. Diallo went on to successfully complete all of his shots throughout the entire game, going 5-5 in field goal attempts.

Eastern continued on another scoreless drought, and on the other side of the court, McCabe tossed one up and multiple foul shot attempts followed, putting up easy points on the Broncos' scoreboard.

Sophomore guard Flash Burton proved that the defense remained strong, diving into the courtside seats to maintain possession, and later laid up a jumper off an offensive rebound.

The Broncos went on a three-minute period of no points, and in this time, the Eagles only went 1-4 in field goal attempts and 1-6 in 3-pointers.

Sophomore forward Davis Bynum snapped the scoreless streak with a field goal, and Rider did not



Josiah Thomas/The Rider News

Head Coach Kevin Baggett aimed to place defense at the flagship of his program, which the Broncos exemplified on Nov. 15.

allow another Eastern point for two straight minutes.

McCabe assisted senior forward Shemani Fuller for his first points of the game, who later went on to reach his career high as a Bronc with seven points.

Defended by three Eagles, senior guard Zion Cruz attempted a jump shot, and with the help from Diallo's defense, the basketball slipped into the net.

Eastern drove to the basket with a dunk attempt, until McCabe snuck behind with the block, smacking the ball out of their possession.

Smith was fouled at the buzzer, and with less than two seconds put back on the clock, he made one out of three to end the half with the score locked 36-36.

In the Broncos' first two performances of the regular season, against the University of Virginia on Nov. 3 and Rutgers University on Nov. 5, second-half woes were a repeated theme in both matchups.

However, coming out of their players-only halftime meeting, the team's energy was anything but woeful.

"All the credit goes to the players," Baggett said. "Zion and Flash asked us to remove ourselves out of the locker room, and whatever they said worked."

Once again, Diallo opened the half with an

impressive performance on the wood, with a block that prevented early Eagle opportunities.

Smith followed with a drive to the basket for an easy layup, and later jumped over a pair of defenders for back-to-back points.

Cruz stepped out in the second with a reverse layup in the paint, and Burton continued the momentum with an alley-oop to force an Eagles timeout.

The Broncos held Eastern scoreless for the first six-and-a-half minutes, where they went on a 20-0 run to open the second half.

Burton continued to protect the possession after a potential steal attempt from the Eagles, which he later converted into a 3-pointer.

Cruz soared past the Eagles for a deep dunk from the arc, McCabe hit a 3-pointer and the entire Alumni Gym erupted in noise, matching the vigor on the court.

"That energy was felt through every shot. Every time we hear somebody in the stands yell, we just wanna be better for them," Burton said.

Diallo spun through two defenders for a tip in, and although Rider went on a two-minute scoring drought, they only allowed three points from the Eagles.

Cruz broke the streak with a drive to the basket, and followed up almost immediately with a 3-pointer.

Freshman guard AB Coulibaly attacked the net with a fastbreak dunk for his first ever field goal as a Bronc, closing the matchup at 86-54.

Burton matched his career high of 21 points, more than Eastern put up in the entire second half.

"We wanted it more tonight," Burton said. "Coming off two losses, it's a learning experience, so we just wanted to get better and come out and win on our home court."

The Broncos look to continue this momentum as they face off the University of Houston on Nov. 20 at 9 p.m. The game will be streamed on TNT.

Dreary road trip, Broncos get swept up north

By Benjamin Shinault

The Broncos' three-game road trip did not treat them well, as over the course of four days, Rider women's basketball did not walk away with a win. During those three non conference games, the Broncos surrendered an average of 83 points. With these consecutive losses, Rider is in an early 1-3 hole.

Eagles fly away

Coming off a strong outing against Lafayette in their home opener, the Broncos migrated north to face off against the Boston College Eagles on Nov. 12.

The first quarter for Rider was one to forget, as the team only totaled nine points as Boston College exploded for 31.

The Eagles got right into it against the Broncos as they laced a 3-pointer about 10 seconds after the tipoff. Sophomore guard Emmy Roach was able to respond a bit later in the first minute of the ballgame with a clean jumpshot, but soon after, the Eagles splashed two more 3-pointers to get out to an 11-2 lead.

Roach got another bucket to go in and freshman guard Aina Perez Mesquida followed with her first make of the game, but Boston College went on a strong run and their lead swelled to 22-6.

During the course of Boston College's 31-point performance in the first quarter, they knocked down six of their 10 3-point attempts and cashed in nine of their 17 field goal attempts.

Meanwhile in the first quarter, the Broncos did not have the same success. Rider went 0-6 from beyond the arc and only made four of their 13 field goal attempts.

The Broncos' defense stiffened up in the second quarter though, only allowing Boston 18 points, but Rider's offense struggled again to score. By the end of the first half, the Broncos only totaled 16 points.

Down 49-16 at halftime, Rider's offense exploded in the third quarter as a new gameplan was rolled out.

Junior guard Aliya McIver scored seven points in the third quarter while graduate student Kristina

Ekoko scored six. McIver and her 14 points set a new career-high in points scored.

"Obviously those two are going to be our go to players," Head Coach Jackie Hartzell said.

The Broncos closed the gap to 76-40 by the end of the third quarter, but the damage was already done. Boston College went on to add 16 more points in the fourth quarter while Rider could only rummage up 12.

The final score was 92-52, delivering the Broncos their first loss of the season in a big fashion. The 92 points was the most allowed by Rider since a January 2023 matchup against Siena College.

Massachusetts mashed Rider

Rider stayed overnight in Massachusetts to play another northern school, this time against the Stonehill College Skyhawks on Nov. 13.

However, Rider fell again, 77-55. Unlike the Boston College matchup, the Broncos played well in the first quarter on the defensive side of the basketball, only allowing 12 points and walking out of the first quarter with a narrow 15-12 lead.

In the second quarter, Stonehill flipped the script and went off for 22 points to tie the game at halftime, 34-34.

Coming out of the break, freshman guard Alena Cofield hit a 3-pointer to give the Broncos the lead right back. 28 seconds later, Ekoko hit a 3-pointer of her own to give the Broncos a six point lead.

The Broncos held on to the lead until there was four minutes left in the third quarter, but after a 3-pointer from Stonehill, the Skyhawks took the lead and went on a 12-0 run and never looked back.

"We have to limit teams to less points if we wanna give ourselves a chance to win games," Hartzell said.

Rider came close to bringing the game back to within 10 points in the fourth quarter when they were down 61-52, but Stonehill went on another impressive



Yaneul Santos/The Rider News

Head Coach Jackie Hartzell experienced her first losses on the road with Rider women's basketball.

'I am a little disappointed'

In the final game of their roadtrip, the Broncos headed south to Rhode Island to take on the Bulldogs of Bryant University on Nov. 15. It was the same for the Broncos, as they lost their third straight game.

For the second time on the roadtrip, the Broncos began the game down by the end of the first quarter. But, also for the second time, the game was close by halftime as the Broncos only trailed by five, 37-32.

Entering the third quarter, the Bulldogs got off their chain and ran off for seven straight points to extend the lead to 12 points before a free throw shot from graduate student guard Deb Okechukwu.

In the fourth quarter, the Broncos were only able to score eight points while the Bulldogs scored 20 to put the game out of reach. The buzzer sounded and the Broncos lost 81-57.

"Even with the tough losses, our morale is strong. We are staying together, stay motivated, and using each game as fuel to get better," Cofield said.

With Rider dropping three straight games, the team will quickly turn the page on look toward Nov. 19 when they take on Navy. The game will tip off at 7 p.m. and will be broadcast on ESPN+.